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The Home School: Why Students with Severe Intellectual Disabilities Must Attend the Schools of their Brothers, Sisters, Friends, and Neighbors

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A home school is the one a student with severe intellectual disabilities would attend if he or she were not disabled. A clustered school is a regular school attended by an unnaturally large proportion of students with intellectual disabilities, but it is not the one any or most would attend if they were not labeled disabled. Students who have severe intellectual disabilities should attend home schools so that (a) all children can be prepared to function in a pluralistic society; (b) the most meaningful and individually appropriate instructional environments and activities can be used; (c) parents, guardians, brothers, and sisters can have reasonable access to schools and services; and (d) a wide range of social relationships with students and others who are not disabled can be developed, maintained, and enhanced over long periods of time. The individualized educational program (IEP) of each student should include individually determined kinds and amounts of instruction in chronological age-appropriate regular education classrooms; on school grounds, but not in regular education classrooms; and in a wide variety of integrated nonschool environments that will actually be used during nonschool hours and days. Individually determined kinds and amounts of direct therapy and other needed services also must be provided from a home school base. Once a student with intellectual disabilities attends a home school, the next major issue becomes whether the student should be based in a regular education or in a special education classroom.

DESCRIPTORS: community integration, educational placement, mainstreaming, natural environment

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Each handicapped child's educational placement is as close as possible to the child's home. (34 CFR 300.552 (a) (3) [Placements])

Unless a handicapped child's individualized education program requires some other arrangement, the child is educated in the school which he or she would attend if not handicapped. (34 CFR 300.552 (c) [Placements])

The environments in which students with severe intellectual disabilities receive instructional services have critical effects on where and how they spend their postschool lives (Brown, Rogan et al., 1987; Piuma, in press). Segregation begets segregation. We believe that when children with intellectual disabilities attend segregated schools, they are denied opportunities to demonstrate to the rest of the community that they can function in integrated environments and activities; their nondisabled peers do not know or understand them and too often think negatively of them; their parents become afraid to risk allowing them opportunities to learn to function in integrated environments later in life; and taxpayers assume they need to be sequestered in segregated group homes, enclaves, work crews, activity centers, sheltered workshops, institutions, and nursing homes.

There are almost 5,000 segregated activity centers and sheltered workshops in the United States, and more than 70,000 adults are on waiting lists, mostly for segregated day services. Tragically, thousands of future detainees are trapped at home doing nothing, awaiting the day when they too can go to segregated day programs (Buckley & Bellamy, 1985; Davis, 1987).

Fortunately, we also know what can happen when children with intellectual disabilities attend schools with brothers, sisters, friends, and neighbors; receive therapy services from competent professionals in integrated settings; and experience direct, comprehensive, individu-

alized, and systematic instruction in a wide variety of integrated school and nonschool environments and activities. When they complete their public school careers, they can live in supported homes and apartments that contain no more than two unrelated people with disabilities; they can perform real work in the integrated workplace within sight, sound, and touch of nondisabled coworkers; they can function in the buses, streets, and stores of their communities; and they can have fun with friends with and without disabilities in the rich and varied recreation/leisure environments and activities used by all (Brown et al., 1986; Brown, Rogan et al., 1987; Johnson, 1985; VanDeventer et al., 1981). It is now time to engender a society that allows all people, regardless of disability, race, creed, language, gender, or sexual preference, reasonable opportunities to live, work, and play in integrated environments and activities. One of the best ways to approximate such a society is to have all children grow up together in schools with their brothers, sisters, friends, and neighbors; that is, in their home schools (Brost & Johnson, 1986; Sailor, in press).

A Rationale for a Home School Service Delivery Model

In the 1950s, the Madison Metropolitan School District established a segregated school for 75 selected students labeled "trainable mentally retarded," "severely emotionally disturbed," and "autistic" in an abandoned building constructed prior to 1900. Condemned for use as a neighborhood school, it was located on the far east side of the city, far removed from the homes of almost all who attended. It was closed in 1971 and the students were moved to Badger School, an empty former elementary school located at the far south edge of the city. It too was segregated and far removed from the homes of almost all students who attended.

In the early 1970s, parents and professionals began to question the appropriateness of the segregated school because it placed many logistical hardships upon students and their families, it denied access to nondisabled peers, and it disallowed the development of many important skills and attitudes. School officials then started to move the students to special education classrooms in regular schools. It soon became obvious that the educational services that could be offered from a regular school base were less restrictive than those that could be offered from the segregated school. All remaining students were then transferred to special education classrooms in regular, but clustered, schools; and the only remaining segregated school was closed in 1975.

A clustered school is a regular school attended by an unnaturally large percentage of students with intellectual disabilities. Typically, a regular school in a specific attendance zone is selected, and three to five classes of students with intellectual disabilities are established

therein. Concomitantly, the schools immediately surrounding the one that contains the cluster will serve few, if any, students with intellectual disabilities. In most clustered schools, some students with disabilities who attend live nearby. For them it is the school they would attend if they were not disabled; it is their *home school*. However, for the overwhelming majority of students with disabilities, the clustered school is not the one they would attend if they were not disabled.

Once the decision was made to close the segregated school, a major issue became to determine where the remaining students would be based. Concurrently, the pressures of Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 started to affect the practices of local school districts (Turnbull, 1986). The Madison Metropolitan School District arranged for 17 of its 41 schools to be architecturally accessible. Specifically, 3 of 4 high schools, 4 of 8 middle schools, and 10 of 29 elementary schools were provided ramps, modified restrooms, elevators, and other adaptations at a cost of more than one million dollars. This decision was made because it would have been much more expensive to make all 41 schools architecturally accessible and because many professionals believed that special education teachers and physical, occupational, and speech and language therapists needed to function in close proximity to discuss ideas and strategies, to share equipment and space, and to minimize staff travel time between schools.

After 16 years of experience with home and clustered schools, the local realization is that any important skill, attitude, or value that can be developed in a clustered school also can be developed in a home school. However, there are many important skills, attitudes, and values that can be developed in a home school that cannot be developed in a clustered school. Thus, placement in a clustered school is more restrictive and less appropriate than placement in a home school.

The primary focus of this paper is why students with severe intellectual disabilities must attend their home schools. Whether they should be based in regular education or in special education classrooms therein is addressed in the companion article which follows (Brown et al., 1989).

Four Major Reasons for Converting to Home Schools

Many are now in the process of closing segregated schools and many others who have been involved with clustered schools are looking for more educationally tenable options. There are four major reasons why home schools should replace segregated and clustered schools.

To Engender a Pluralistic Society

The millions of nondisabled students currently enrolled in schools are future firefighters, nurses, store

clerks, teachers, job coaches, legislators, secretaries, physicians, school board members, employers, voters, doctors, lawyers, budget determiners, policy analysts, coworkers, police officers, and taxpayers. Approximately 15% of them will become parents of children with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 1988). A larger proportion will have a friend, neighbor, or relative who is the parent of a child with a disability and many others will be paid to provide services to people with disabilities.

We believe there is no better way to prepare those without disabilities to function responsibly in integrated environments and activities during adulthood than to have them grow up touching a natural proportion of students with disabilities in their schools and neighborhoods. If all students with intellectual disabilities attend their home schools, *all*, not just some, nondisabled students will grow up with peers who have disabilities.

To Use the Most Meaningful Instructional Environments

Due to well-documented transfer and generalization difficulties, the best environments in which to provide instruction are those that will actually be used during nonschool hours and days, that is, the criterion environments (Brown et al., 1983). It is logical to assume that when students attend home schools, more frequent direct instruction in the actual environments they will use during nonschool hours and days can be provided.

There are several other important reasons why instruction must be provided in criterion environments. If the nondisabled people who function in neighborhood environments continually witness someone with severe intellectual disabilities learning to function effectively, they are more likely to get to know, learn to communicate with, protect, and assist that person. Additionally, nondisabled neighbors will realize how important it is to help someone cross a street, get off at the right bus stop, and push a grocery cart down a busy aisle. Learning when and how to provide voluntary personal assistance comes best from direct experience over long periods of time in real life situations. If nondisabled people know their neighbor, they are more likely to learn and assume the extremely important natural supervisory responsibilities (Brown, Udvari-Solner et al., 1987a, 1987b). Direct instruction in the actual environments used by brothers, sisters, friends, and neighbors also increases practice probabilities. If parents are aware that their son can purchase three items in their neighborhood grocery store, they are more likely to take him when they go, send him with brothers and sisters, or send him alone (Horner, Meyer, & Fredericks, 1986).

To Enhance Family Access

When students attend home schools, the logistics associated with planned and unplanned visits both dur-

ing and after school hours are more convenient for all involved. We believe that the time and money needed to get to and from school conferences are decreased, after school activities can be coordinated more efficiently, disruptions in family life are minimized, and communication and cooperation between parents and school personnel can be enhanced.

To Develop a Wide Range of Social Relationships with Nondisabled Peers

The overwhelming majority of children with severe intellectual disabilities do not experience the same opportunities to develop the range of social relationships allowed their nondisabled peers (Meyer, McQuarter, & Kishi, 1984). As a result, they spend inordinate amounts of time in solitary activities; they spend excessive amounts of time with adult family members and paid caregivers who almost always become unnaturally intrusive in their lives; extraordinary pressures are placed upon family members to arrange, provide, pay for, and transport their children to and from time-filling activities of dubious social value; and the activities most often arranged are segregated. The Special Olympics and camping, swimming, and bowling "for the retarded" are examples.

A social relationship refers to a positive personal interaction between a student with severe intellectual disabilities and a peer or other person who is not disabled. Without the premeditated, systematic, and longitudinal interventions of people in authority from an early age, the development of critically needed social relationships is impeded.

Eleven nonmutually exclusive kinds of social relationships that should be parts of the life of every individual who has a severe intellectual disability are presented in Table 1. These relationships are just a sample of the range of possibilities for meaningful social interactions in schools and communities. Each IEP should include a component specific to the development, maintenance, and enhancement of a healthy range of at least these 11 social relationships. In fact, one school day should not pass without a student experiencing at least three or four of these relationships.

It is our experience that the chances of developing and maintaining these 11 social relationships are far better in home schools as opposed to clustered schools. Table 2 contains our assessment of the feasibility and likelihood that each type of relationship would develop and be maintained.

We believe that students with severe intellectual disabilities who attend home schools can be expected to develop, maintain, and enhance all 11 of the social relationships over long periods of time. Conversely, those who attend clustered schools do not for four important reasons. First, as unnatural proportions of students with disabilities attend clustered schools, segregated areas and services for them almost always are

Table 1
Eleven Kinds of Social Relationships

Social Relationship	Definition
Peer tutor	An instructional relationship between a student who is not disabled and one with severe intellectual disabilities. The primary purpose of the relationship is for the nondisabled student to teach something that has been approved by an adult in authority.
Eating companion	A nondisabled student who agrees to be with a peer with severe intellectual disabilities during lunch time. Although the nondisabled student may provide personal assistance, the relationship is primarily for companionship rather than instruction.
Art, home economics, industrial arts, music, physical education companion	A nondisabled student who provides guidance, assistance, and encouragement to a peer who has severe intellectual disabilities in integrated environments or activities arranged by relevant professionals. In art class, the students were instructed to paint a sunset. Tom, a nondisabled student, sat next to Dan and offered suggestions and guidance about the best colors to use and how to complete the task.
Regular class companion	A nondisabled peer who agrees to sit next to, monitor, or assist a student who is severely intellectually disabled function acceptably in an appropriate regular classroom activity. A fifth grade class is doing a "know your town" lesson in social studies. Ben, a student without disabilities, helps Karen plan a trip through their neighborhood.
During school companion	A nondisabled peer who "hangs out" with a student who has severe intellectual disabilities during free times at school. The purpose of the relationship is social and it may occur at many points throughout the day. After lunch and before the bell for class rang, Molly and Phyllis went to the canteen for a soda.
Friend	A reciprocal, mutual, nurturing, and sharing relationship between a student with severe intellectual disabilities and a nondisabled peer.
Extracurricular companion	A nondisabled peer who guides, assists, monitors, and attempts to ensure that everything goes well for a student with a severe intellectual disability during school-sponsored activities that occur after school hours. Participating in or attending athletic events, club activities, and preparing the school newspaper together are a few examples.
After school project companion	A nondisabled student who interacts with a peer who has severe intellectual disabilities in the process of completing a project that began at school. The sophomore class decided to build a float for the homecoming parade. Joan worked on it with Mary, a nondisabled companion, and others after school and on weekends in Joan's garage.
After school companion	A nondisabled peer who "hangs out," plays with, or attends an activity with a student who has severe intellectual disabilities during nonschool hours, including weekends and vacations. On Saturday afternoon, Mike, who is not disabled, and Bill went to the shopping mall to browse.
Travel companion	A nondisabled student who agrees to help, guide, monitor, or just be with a peer who has severe intellectual disabilities as he or she walks, wheels, or otherwise travels to and from school and related environments.
Neighbor	A nondisabled person who interacts with a student with severe intellectual disabilities as he or she travels to and from school, plays after school, and receives direct instruction in nonschool environments during school days. Parents of nondisabled students in the neighborhood regularly exchange greetings with Mary when both are at school, in the neighborhood grocery store, and at the park.

established and it is then more difficult to engender social, educational, and other kinds of integrative relationships. Home schools almost always contain only a natural proportion (1%) of students who are severely intellectually disabled. Thus, proclivities toward establishing separate bathrooms; wings; and music, art, and adapted physical education classes are attenuated. Second, many relationships that begin in school are practiced, enjoyed, and enhanced during after school hours and nonschool days. Students who attend home schools live near and have better access to one another. Third, a home school offers opportunities to develop, maintain, and enhance relationships while in transit. If a student attends a clustered school, it is more likely that he or she will use transportation modes, times, and routes that are different from those used by nondisabled neighborhood peers. Fourth, when students with disabilities attend clustered schools, involvement in extracurricular activities is possible but extremely unlikely

because of prohibitive transportation costs and time. Specifically, parents and guardians must travel long distances to the clustered school to pick up their sons and daughters after an activity. When a student attends a home school, he or she can walk, wheel, or ride a bus home with nondisabled coparticipants or be picked up by another parent in the neighborhood.

Figure 1 is presented as an additional way of communicating the superiority of home schools and the relative restrictiveness and planned aimlessness of clustered schools. In Track I a student lives in Attendance Area 1-B and attends the same home elementary (Lowell), middle (Marquette), and high school (East) as the nondisabled children in his attendance area. This is the track of clear preference because it allows opportunities to develop, maintain, and enhance important social relationships over extended periods of time.

In Track II a student lives in Attendance Area 2-A, attends a clustered elementary school (Van Hise) with

Table 2
The Feasibility and Likelihood of Developing, Maintaining, and Enhancing 11 Social Relationships over Long Periods of Time in Home and Clustered Schools

Social relationship	Home school				Clustered school			
	Development		Longitudinal		Development		Longitudinal	
	Feasible	Likely	Feasible	Likely	Feasible	Likely	Feasible	Likely
Peer tutor	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Eating companion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Art, home economics, industrial arts, music, or physical education companion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Regular class companion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
During school companion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Friend	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Extracurricular companion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
After school project companion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
After school companion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Travel companion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Neighbor	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No

Note. *Social relationship* refers to a positive personal interaction between a student with severe intellectual disabilities and a peer or other person who is not disabled. *Longitudinal* refers to positive personal interactions between a student with severe intellectual disabilities and a peer or others who are not disabled that are developed, maintained, and enhanced across elementary, middle, and high school years. *Home school* is the school a student with intellectual disabilities would attend if he or she were not disabled. *Clustered school* is a regular school attended by an unnaturally large proportion of students with intellectual disabilities, but it is not the one any or most would attend if they were not disabled. *Feasible* refers to a situation in which all the structural resources necessary for a particular kind of social relationship to develop are present. *Likely* refers to the probability of a particular kind of social relationship occurring, given the reasonable efforts of parents, guardians, professionals, and others. *Companion* is a nondisabled person who accompanies, associates with, or assists a student who is severely intellectually disabled.

students from Attendance Area 2-D, attends a clustered middle school (Cherokee) with students from Attendance Areas 2-A and B, and then goes to a clustered high school (Memorial) in Attendance Area 3 with students he has never met before in a different part of the city. This track is unacceptable because it systematically denies opportunities to develop important long-term social relationships with peers and others who live in his attendance area.

In Track III, a student lives in Attendance Area 3-A, attends her home elementary school (Falk), a clustered middle school (Jefferson), and her home high school (Memorial). Thus, during the important ages from 11 to 14, she is unnecessarily deprived of opportunities to go to school with the nondisabled young adolescents in her attendance area.

Although there are many other possible tracks, the point is that when students with severe intellectual disabilities attend home schools, they have opportunities to develop, maintain, and enhance a wide range of long-term social relationships. When they do not, they are systematically and categorically denied these important opportunities.

Summary and Conclusions

In order for home school options to work, students with a wide range of intellectual abilities must function

in the same space, and a small percentage of the adults who function with them must be reasonably competent and responsible.

In order for home school options to work well, to contribute joyously to the celebration of differences, and to prepare all children for integrated lives, several additional factors would be helpful. It would be nice if the parents and guardians of all children who attend a school participated in its general functioning. It would be facilitative if all of the professionals in the school were creative, compassionate, ingenious, flexible, and committed to generating environments in which individual differences are respected and honored. It would be wonderful if the human, financial, and other resources so critical for growth and achievement in a complex and heterogeneous society could be made available. It would be marvelous if local, state, and national officials would interpret laws and regulations in creative, supportive, and integrative, rather than in categorical, restrictive, and segregative, ways. It would be great if all people used the dignity and worth of an individual to obliterate attitudinal barriers so that each of us can be the best we can be. It would be fabulous if all of the laws, regulations, and constitutional protections used to free others were made available to citizens with severe intellectual disabilities. It would be heartening if

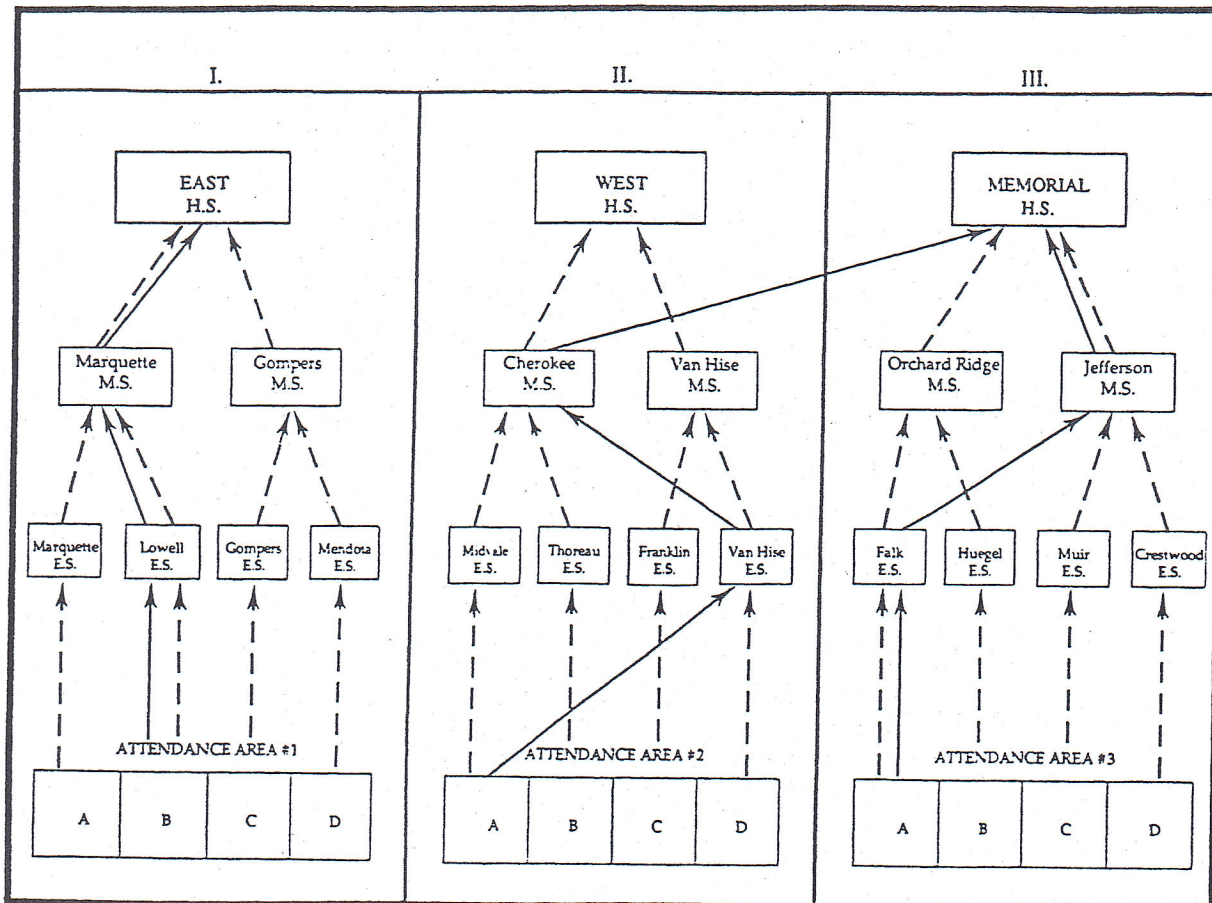


Figure 1. Three school career tracks: —, a student with severe intellectual disability; - - -, a student who is not disabled; ES, elementary school; MS, middle school; HS, high school; and AZ, attendance zone.

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