History, Rhetoric, and Reality
Analysis of the Inclusion Debate
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ABSTRACT
Issues surrounding the integration of students with disabilities into general education classrooms are explored in this article. The history of this debate is examined first by tracing the movement from mainstreaming and the least restrictive environment in 1975, to the call for a more integrated system during the 1980s under the Regular Education Initiative, and to full inclusion of all students in age-appropriate general education classrooms, with no separate special education. Next, the research investigating perceptions and attitudes about inclusion, the tenor of the general education classroom, and the preparation and ability of general education teachers to deal effectively with special education students is summarized. Finally, the dissonance between rhetoric and reality is explored. By ignoring research evidence, the inclusion debate has elevated discussion to the ideological level, where competing conflicts of vision are difficult to resolve. It is concluded that a rational solution requires the consideration of all forms of evidence if the best possible education for all students with disabilities is to be achieved.

IN THE REALM OF SPECIAL EDUCATION, THE WORD INCLUSION is likely to engender fervent debate. Inclusion is a movement seeking to create schools that meet the needs of all students by establishing learning communities for students with and without disabilities, educated together in age-appropriate general education classrooms in neighborhood schools (Ferguson, 1996). Although questions about the integration of students with disabilities should no longer be controversial, passionate discussion about inclusion continues to escalate because its philosophy not only focuses on students with disabilities of any type and severity level, but also seeks to alter the education for all students and hence general education. For some 25 years, integration has been the norm, according to the U.S. Department of Education (1997), which reported that about 95% of students with disabilities are served in general education settings. The movement toward greater integration has thus resulted in a significant change in the structure of special education, but questions remain about the success of special education. Empirical evidence about the efficacy of special education continues to be equivocal, and this has resulted in discussion being increasingly fueled by political and ideological concerns. These differences have often resulted in contentious discussion about how and for whom the inclusion of students with disabilities should be accomplished (see O'Neil, 1994–1995).

A CONFLICT OF VISIONS
Inclusion appears to have created an ideological divide in special education. In analyzing social policy, Sowell (1995) discussed such a divide as a conflict of visions by reference to the “vision of the anointed” versus the “vision of the benighted.” The vision of the anointed involves the perceptions, beliefs, and assumptions of an elite intelligentsia whose revelations prevail over others in determining policy. On the other side there is the vision of the benighted, whose perceptions, beliefs, and assumptions “are depicted as being at best ‘perceptions,’ more often ‘stereotypes,’ and more bluntly ‘false consciousness’” (p. 187). In special education, those who advocate most forcefully for full inclusion appear to hold the vision of the anointed. Such a vision, however, possesses a fundamental difficulty: “Empirical evidence is neither sought beforehand nor consulted after a policy has been instituted. . . . Momentous questions are dealt with essentially as conflicts of vision” (p. 2). Consequently, the anointed do not
require clear definitions, logical arguments, or empirical verifications because their vision substitutes for all these things. Consequently, calls for more research to resolve fundamental problems are viewed solely as part of the vision of the benighted. Research evidence does not appear to be a major factor in the vision of the anointed.

What does appear to be a major factor in the vision of the anointed is assumptions about compassion and caring. Although these elements are seen as the special province of those with an anointed vision, in reality, they are also integral to the vision of the benighted. The reason for the emphasis on compassion and caring among the anointed is based on the assumption that their vision possesses a special state of grace for those who believe it. Those who accept this vision are deemed to be not merely factually correct but morally on a higher plane. Put differently, those who disagree with the prevailing vision are seen as being not merely in error, but in sin. For those who have this vision of the world, the anointed and the benighted do not argue on the same moral plane or play by the same cold rules of logic and evidence. The benighted are to be made “aware,” to have their “consciousness raised,” and the wishful hope is held out that they will “grow.” Should the benighted prove recalcitrant, however, then their “mean-mindedness” must be fought and the “real reasons” behind their arguments and actions exposed. (Sowell, 1995, pp. 2–3)

For the anointed, both a higher moral plane and significant ego preserve and insulate their vision. As Sowell (1995) said:

Despite Hamlet’s warning against self-flattery, the vision of the anointed is not simply a vision of the world and its functioning in a causal sense, but is also a vision of themselves and of their moral role in the world. It is a vision of differential rectitude. It is not a vision of the tragedy of the human condition: Problems exist because others are not as wise or as virtuous as the anointed. (p. 5)

When applied to the case of inclusion, the anointed believe special education possesses problems, not as a result of limits on knowledge or resources, but because others lack their wisdom and virtue. Additionally, the anointed believe that special education is primarily a social construction and not a reflection of an underlying reality. Consequently, problems can be solved only by applying the articulated visions of the anointed. Any opposition to their vision is the result of an intellectual or a moral bankruptcy (or both), and not of a different reading of complex and often inconclusive research evidence. Because the vision of the anointed is independent of empirical evidence, Sowell (1995) said:

[This] is what makes it dangerous, not because a particular set of policies may be flawed or counterproductive, but because insulation from evidence virtually guarantees a never-ending supply of policies and practices fatally independent of reality. This self-contained and self-justifying vision has become a badge of honor and a proclamation of identity: To affirm it is to be one of us and to oppose it is to be one of them. (p. 241)

Special education appears to have drawn such a line between “us” and “them” over the question of inclusion. As Shanker (1994) pointed out, “Some full inclusionists talk as though they are in a battle pitting the forces of morality against the forces of immorality” (p. E7). In a later analysis, Sowell (1999) discussed the requirement to truly grasp basic ideas and concepts. In analyzing issues of justice, Sowell argued about the need to untangle the confusions surrounding many problems by returning to square one. It is the purpose of this article to return to square one by analyzing the inclusion issue and to demonstrate that the truth is far simpler than the many elaborate attempts to evade the truth.

Special Education: History and Perspective

Mainstreaming

Historically, special education within the public school system developed as a specialized program separate from general education and was embodied in the categorical “special class” (e.g., MacMillan & Hendrick, 1993; Safford & Safford, 1998). The special class was seen as the best means for avoiding conflicts while providing universal education (Gerber, 1996). The special class was viewed as possessing the following advantages: low teacher-pupil ratios, specially trained teachers, greater individualization of instruction in a homogeneous classroom, and an increased curricular emphasis on social and vocational goals (Johnson, 1962). Although some discussion about alternative placement could be found prior to the 1960s (Shattuck, 1946), it was Dunn’s (1968) famous article questioning whether separate special classes were justifiable that brought the legitimacy of special class placement to the forefront.

In analyzing the Dunn (1968) article, MacMillan (1971) noted that it lacked scholarly rigor. Dunn argued in favor of a position (i.e., less restrictive placement) based on the lack of support for the efficacy of a contrasting condition (i.e., separate special class). Nevertheless, the Dunn article was the impetus for a number of pieces calling for the abandonment of the special class (e.g., Christopolos & Renz, 1969; Lilly, 1970), even though summaries of empirical evidence offered no unequivocal conclusion about its efficacy (Goldstein, 1967; Guskin & Spicker, 1968; Kirk, 1964).

Within the social context of the time, the Dunn article initiated an attitude in special education that eschewed empirical evidence in favor of ideology to produce change.
This attitude was manifested in an emphasis on students in special education gaining access to general education. Advocacy thus shifted from the child to the program, but questions remained about what works in optimally serving students with disabilities in any setting (MacMillan & Semmel, 1977). The Dunn article must also be placed in the context of the strong antisegregation sentiments of the 1960s. The segregated (i.e., separate) nature of special education itself, rather than the particular practices used to teach students with disabilities, was targeted for change (Semmel, Gerber, & MacMillan, 1994).

The debate about integration culminated in the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975; now the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA], 1990, 1992, 1997), which mandated that students with disabilities be provided an appropriate education designed to meet their unique needs in the least restrictive environment (LRE; K. Heller, Holtzman, & Messick, 1982; Weintraub, Abeson, Ballard, & LaVor, 1976). The act also required that students with disabilities be educated to the maximum extent appropriate with peers without disabilities (i.e., mainstreamed). Mainstreaming, however, was difficult to define operationally (Kaufman, Agard, & Semmel, 1986). The legal definition focused more on what mainstreaming was theoretically, rather than stipulating that students should be removed and placed in separate classes or schools only when the nature or severity of their disabilities were such that they could not receive an appropriate education in a general education classroom with supplementary aids and services (Bate- man & Chard, 1995; Osborne & DiMattia, 1994). To ensure compliance with the act, school districts were required to make a complete continuum of alternative placement options available, as described by Reynolds (1962) and exemplified in Deno’s (1970) “Cascade model.” The continuum meant that the LRE was not a particular setting (i.e., general education classroom). Furthermore, although the LRE for some students with disabilities might be the general education classroom, it was neither required nor desirable in all cases (Abeson, Burgdorf, Casey, Kunz, & McNeil, 1975). This conclusion has been supported in a number of court cases in which the LRE concept was clarified by developing evidential tests for determining how compliance might be achieved (Thomas & Rapport, 1998; Yell, 1995). In no instance did the tests imply that the general education classroom was anything more than an option in the framework of the LRE (Zirkel, 1996).

**The Regular Education Initiative**

The LRE mandate brought structural change to special education by making the resource model the primary placement option. This option was defined by the resource room and special education teachers, who provided academic instruction for specified time periods to a special education student whose primary placement was the general education classroom (Hammill & Wiederholt, 1972). By spending at least half the school day in the general education setting, the student was considered to be in the mainstream. Nevertheless, answers to questions about the efficacy of special education remained equivocal (Madden & Slavin, 1983; Wang & Baker, 1985–1986; Wiederholt & Chamberlain, 1989).

Mainstreaming was primarily concerned with access, but questions about how students should be best taught still remained unanswered (Gottlieb, 1981; Kaufman, 1995). Despite increased calls for school reform during the 1980s, the needs of special education—especially how advocating for higher standards and enhanced excellence might affect students with high-incidence mild disabilities—were often not considered (Pugach & Sapon-Shevin, 1987; Shepard, 1987; Yell, 1992). In an effort to contribute to school reform, special education attempted to introduce more powerful instructional methodologies and professional practice (Biklen, 1985; Lipsky & Gartner, 1989; Wang, Reynolds, & Walberg, 1986). Along with a continued call for more inclusive placements, these efforts were termed the Regular Education Initiative (REI; Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1987). Essentially, the goal was to merge general and special education to create a more unified system of education (Gartner & Lipsky, 1987; Will, 1986). The REI was based on the following assumptions: Students are more alike than different, so truly “special” instruction is not required; good teachers can teach all students; all students can be provided with a quality education without reference to traditional special education categories; general education classrooms can manage all students without any segregation; and physically separate education was inherently discriminatory and inequitable.

The REI did not receive uniformly positive responses (W. H. Heller & Schilt, 1987; Lieberman, 1985). For example, Kaufman, Gerber, and Semmel (1988) argued against the REI by indicating that students were not overidentified for special education, student failure should not be attributed solely to perceived shortcomings of teachers, more competent teachers did not necessarily possess more positive attitudes about students with disabilities, variability in student performance will increase rather than decrease when effective instruction is provided to all students, and teachers will be faced with the dilemma of maximizing mean performance versus minimizing group variance. Reynolds (1988) countered with the suggestion that perceived problems resulted primarily from traditional special education: “Present practices have themselves become problematic—causing disengagedness, proceduralism, and inefficiencies in school operations” (p. 355). The rhetoric continued and can be summarized in the question posed by Jenkins, Pious, and Jewell (1990): “How ready for the REI is this country’s educational system?” (p. 489).

**Research Evidence and the REI**

In marshaling empirical evidence for the REI, supporters used the earlier “efficacy studies,” the body of research that compared students with disabilities in special classes with those in general education placements. Dunn (1968) used this same
research evidence, but the validity of these findings have long been open to serious question. For example, most efficacy studies did not use random selection and assignment of students, and thus they failed to meet standards associated with true experimental designs. In fact, the few studies that did use randomization provided some support for the efficacy of special classes (Goldstein, Moss, & Jordan, 1965). Thus, it was imprudent to cite the efficacy studies as having provided evidence that special classes were not effective (see Gartner & Lipsky, 1989; Lilly, 1988; Wang &Walberg, 1988).

Carlberg and Kavale (1980) conducted a meta-analysis that synthesized the findings from 50 of the best efficacy studies. The mean effect size was -.12, which indicated that the relative standing of the average special class student was reduced by about 5 percentile ranks after an average 2-year stay in a special class. Thus, a small negative effect was associated with special class placement. Larger effect sizes, however, were found for students with mild mental retardation (MMR), a mean effect size of -.14 was found, but an effect size of -.29 was found for students with learning (LD) or emotional and behavioral (EBD) disabilities. Special class placement was thus found to be disadvantageous for students with below-average IQ, causing them to lose 7 percentile ranks. In contrast, it was found to be advantageous for students with LD or EBD, who improved by an average of 11 percentile ranks and were better off than 61% of their counterparts placed in general education classrooms. These findings raise questions about whether all students with disabilities benefited from integration. Given the magnitude of associated effects, it was evident that placement per se had only a modest influence on outcomes. The place where students with disabilities resided was not a critical factor, suggesting that an examination of what goes on, instructionally and socially, in those placements was needed (Leinhardt & Pallay, 1982).

Empirical evaluations of models for educating students with disabilities in a general education setting have also been used to support the REI. A prime example is the Adaptive Learning Environments Model (ALEM), which was designed to deliver effective instruction to students with disabilities without removing them from the general education classroom (Wang, Gennari, & Waxman, 1985). Evaluations of ALEM (Wang & Birch, 1984a, 1984b; Wang, Peverly, & Randolph, 1984) have been analyzed critically, and ALEM was found to be deficient and inconsistent with respect to design, analysis, and interpretation, suggesting that ALEM cannot be endorsed as a prototypical model for integrating general and special education (Bryan & Bryan, 1988; D. Fuchs & L. S. Fuchs, 1988; Hallahan, Keller, McKinney, Lloyd, & Bryan, 1988).

Given its limited empirical support, the REI was buttressed primarily with ideological arguments. Rhetoric cast opponents of the REI as segregationists (Wang & Walberg, 1988) and the current system of special education as slavery (S. Stainback & W. Stainback, 1987) and apartheid (Lipsky & Gartner, 1987). Conversely, proponents of the REI were viewed as naïve liberals (Kauffman, 1989). The essential issue was framed as a debate about the future of special education between “abolitionists and conservationists” (D. Fuchs & L. S. Fuchs, 1991). The REI proponents came to be divided over the question of who should be integrated, however. On one side, some proponents suggested that the REI was aimed primarily at students with high-incidence mild disabilities such as MMR, LD, and EBD. The option of alternative separate settings remained appropriate for students with severe and profound disabilities (Pugach & Lilly, 1984; Reynolds & Wang, 1983), with the possibility of a more progressive inclusion that was “describable in terms of a gradual shift, within a cascade model, from distal to proximal administrative arrangements and from segregated to integrated arrangements” (Reynolds, 1991, p. 14). On the other side, there was the suggestion that all students with disabilities be integrated, regardless of disability type or severity level (Gartner & Lipsky, 1987; S. Stainback & W. Stainback, 1984b). If all students were not integrated, then two separate systems of education would be maintained that represented merely “blending of the margins” (Gartner & Lipsky, 1989, p. 271) and did not “address the need to include in regular classrooms and regular education those students labeled severely and profoundly handicapped” (S. Stainback & W. Stainback, 1989, p. 43).

Inclusion: Part Time to Full Time

Special education was thus experiencing great tensions (Meredith & Underwood, 1995). Some called for radical change that would alter the fundamental nature of special education, and others called for a more cautious approach to change based on empirical analyses and historical considerations (Dorn, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 1996). Kauffman (1993) suggested that change in special education should be predicated on three assumptions:

1. The necessity of keeping place in perspective, because setting per se has limited impact on outcomes for students with disabilities.
2. Choosing ideas over image; for example, equating special education with segregation and apartheid was a gross oversimplification that distorted debate because image may become the measure of truth.
3. Avoiding fanaticism, a passion that has become dangerous because it can result in moral certainty with predetermined answers.

Finally, Kauffman called for the strengthening of special education’s empirical base through experimentation with new programs, strategies, and policies.

D. Fuchs and L. S. Fuchs (1994) traced the origins of the inclusive schools movement and contrasted inclusion with the REI. A major distinction between movements was focused on the distinction between high- versus low-incidence special
education populations. Many advocates for the low-incidence group (i.e., those students with severe intellectual deficits) continued to view the REI as policy directed primarily at students with high-incidence disabilities (i.e., MMR, LD, EBD) but nonetheless retained the goal of moving all students into the mainstream. Consequently, these disagreements resulted in special education not being successful in convincing general education about the merits of the REI (Pugach & Sapon-Shevin, 1987). In reality, the REI was primarily a special education initiative for high-incidence disabilities that had modest success in changing special, but not general, education.

The inclusive schools movement, however, possessed the larger goal of reducing special education, as defined in the continuum of placements (Gartner & Lipsky, 1989). Later, Lipsky and Gartner (1991) said, “The concept[s] of Least Restrictive Environment—a continuum of placements, and a cascade of services—were progressive when developed but do not today promote the full inclusion of all persons with disabilities in all aspects of societal life” (p. 52). The inclusive school was thus viewed as a setting essentially devoid of special education: “No students, including those with disabilities, are relegated to the fringes of the school by placement in disabilities in

social and general education (Skrtic, 1991). In the course of advocacy for inclusion, many proponents of the REI became disillusioned because of their limited influence on general education. But soon, a group associated with The Association of Persons with Severe Handicaps (TASH) “took the field by storm; they rushed into a vacuum created by others’ inaction, no doubt intimidating by their vigor alone many who disagreed with their radical message” (D. Fuchs & L. S. Fuchs, 1994, p. 299). TASH had a significant effect on policy because of rhetoric calling for the elimination of special education in the form of a continuum of placements (W. Stainback & S. Stainback, 1991) and a curricular focus emphasizing socialization in order to foster social competence over academic achievement (Snell, 1991).

The proponents of full inclusion predicated their position on the assumption that special education was the basic cause of many of the problems experienced by general education (Skrtic, Sailor, & Gee, 1996). Consequently, there was no need for a continuum of placements because the LRE was, in fact, the general education classroom (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997; S. Taylor, 1988). This view of the LRE as a single place ignored important interactions between student needs and instructional processes (Korinek, McLaughlin, & Walther-Thomas, 1995; Morsink & Lenk, 1992). With all students in the same classroom (and no special education), TASH hoped that general education would be forced to deal with students previously avoided and thus transform itself into a more responsive and resourceful system. The essence of the message by TASH thus differed markedly from that of other advocacy and professional groups in special education (see Kauffman & Hallahan, 1995, pp. 307–348). For example, how could TASH speak for all students while supporting a diminished academic emphasis that represented the primary educational focus for almost all students with high-incidence mild disabilities? By rejecting alternative views, the TASH full inclusion position really reflected an exclusionary, not inclusionary, mind-set that radicalized reform in special education because the “full inclusionists’ romanticism, insularity, and a willingness to speak for all is markedly different from REI supporters’ pragmatism, big-tent philosophy and reluctance to speak for all” (D. Fuchs & L. S. Fuchs, 1994, p. 304).

The radical proposal offered by full inclusion proponents was questioned by REI supporters who focused on repairing the disjointedness experienced by students and programs of the “second system” at the “school margins” (Reynolds, 1989, 1992; Wang, Reynolds, & Walberg, 1988). Additionally, special education renewed interest in demonstrating its real benefits (D. Fuchs & L. S. Fuchs, 1995a, 1995b; Kavale & Forness, 1999). Special education appeared, however, to reach a status quo, with limited consensus about the merits of the many approaches to integration (Putnam, Spiegel, & Bruininks, 1995). Martin (1995) indicated that “as a matter of public policy, a federal or state government, even a local school system, cannot responsibly adopt ‘inclusion’ without defining its proposed program” (p. 193).

**Special Education Practice and Evidence**

The emphasis on special education as a place (i.e., a setting where students with disabilities are educated) deflected attention away from the fact that special education was a more comprehensive process whose actual dynamics were major contributors to its success or failure (Kavale & Glass, 1984). A significant part of the special education process was represented in the beliefs and actions of general education. In an integrated system, special education cannot act independently as a separate system, but must formulate policy in response to the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of general education (Gallagher, 1994).

**Attitudes and Beliefs**

It has long been recognized (Sarason, 1982) that a major factor in the success or failure of a policy such as mainstreaming is the attitudes of the general education teacher (Hannah & Pliner, 1983; Horne, 1985). Early on, general education teachers expressed some negative attitudes, especially feelings of inadequacy in dealing with students with disabilities, although they remained generally positive about the concept of integration (Ringlaben & Price, 1981; Stephens & Braun, 1980). Although positive attitudes about students with disabilities could also be found (Alexander & Strain, 1978; Yuker, 1988), these positive attitudes were often accompanied by concern about the integration of students with severe disabilities, particularly those with significant intellectual
deficits (Hirshoren & Burton, 1979; Shotel, Iano, & McGettigan, 1972). Teachers were also found to be more willing to integrate students whose disabilities did not require additional responsibilities on their part (Gans, 1987; Houck & Rogers, 1994). Otherwise, they revealed a resistance to greater integration (Margolis & McGettigan, 1988). Although attempts to foster more positive attitudes about integration have been made (Naor & Milgram, 1980), any positive attitude changes achieved were found to be short-lived (Donaldson, 1980; S. Stainback, W. Stainback, Strathe, & Dedrick, 1983).

The attitudes of peers toward students with disabilities have also been investigated. Although they have not been uniformly positive, findings generally revealed a tendency toward more tolerance with increased contact (Esposito & Reed, 1986; Towfighy-Hooshyar & Zingle, 1984; Voeltz, 1980). Generally, though, general education peers paid no particular attention to students with disabilities (Lovitt, Plavins, & Cushing, 1999). Any positive reactions about inclusion among students without disabilities also tended to be accompanied by feelings of discomfort, especially about students with moderate and severe disabilities who may possess significant communication difficulties and often lack positive social skills (Helmstetter, Peck, & Giangreco, 1994; Hendrickson, Shokoohi-Yeka, Hamre-Nietupski, & Gable, 1996). Although some found that students with severe disabilities were accepted by nondisabled peers (Evans, Salisbury, Palombaro, Berryman, & Hollowood, 1992; Hall, 1994; Janney, Snell, Beers, & Raynes, 1995), Cook and Semmel (1999) found that this was not the case, particularly when atypical behavior occurred. Cook and Semmel also found that students with mild disabilities “do not typically appear to engender peer acceptance” (p. 57).

For parents, generally positive attitudes about inclusion appeared to be the norm, although anxiety about the actual mechanics was also seen (Bennett, DeLuca, & Bruns, 1997; Gibb et al., 1997; Green & Shinn, 1994). The anxiety was most evident among parents who supported inclusion but had reservations about it for their children (Lovitt & Cushing, 1999). As a result, it was possible to find diverse opinion about inclusion among parents (Borthwick-Duffy, Palmer, & Lane, 1996). For example, Carr (1993) doubted whether inclusion would be appropriate for her child with LD because of the loss of special education services. The question and answer posed: “What has changed in education since the time my son was in elementary school that would ensure successful inclusion? The answer is, unfortunately, nothing really” (p. 591). B. R. Taylor (1994) disagreed and, in response, suggested that “regular education is not only where the responsibility lies, but also where those with learning disabilities deserve to be educated” (p. 579). In discussing her sons with special needs, Brucker (1994) stressed the need for change: “We have been generally unsuccessful in our current mode of service delivery, although we have had some individual successes. The operation may have been a success, but the patient died! Inclusion’s time has come!” (p. 582). Grove and Fisher (1999) discussed these reactions as a tension between the culture of educational reform (opportunities offered by inclusive education) and the culture of the school site (day-to-day demands of schooling). The general public has also been found to possess positive attitudes about integration, but less positive if the students in question were likely to encounter difficulty in the general education classroom (Berryman, 1989; Gottlieb & Corman, 1975).

Administrators, because of their leadership positions, were viewed as playing a significant role in the success or failure of mainstreaming (Lazar, Stodden, & Sullivan, 1976; Payne & Murray, 1974). Principals, however, demonstrated a lack of their knowledge about students with disabilities (Cline, 1981), and often perceived little chance of success in general education, particularly students with the label “mentally retarded” (Bain & Dolbel, 1991; W. E. Davis, 1980). Additionally, principals indicated that pull-out programs were the most effective placements, that full-time general class placements offered more social than academic benefits, and that support services were not likely to be provided in general education classrooms (Barnett & Monde-Amaya, 1998; Center, Ward, Parmenter, & Nash, 1985). When the attitudes about mainstreaming of teachers and administrators were compared, the most positive attitudes were held by administrators, the individuals most removed from the reality of the classroom (J. C. Davis & Maheady, 1991; Glicking & Theobald, 1975). Garva-Pinhas and Schmelkin (1989) said that “principals appear to respond in a more socially appropriate manner than may actually be the case in reality” (p. 42). Additionally, Cook, Semmel, and Gerber (1999) found critical differences between principals’ and teachers’ opinions about inclusion, including differing perceptions concerning the possibilities for enhanced academic achievement, what really works best, and the level of resources being committed for inclusive arrangements. The optimistic views of principals were in sharp contrast to the more pessimistic views of teachers, and were assumed to be “at least in part, based on negative experiences regarding the outcomes of inclusion or the conviction that inclusion will not produce appropriate outcomes” (p. 205).

**Summarizing Attitudes and Beliefs**

Attitudes about integration have historically been multidimensional and reflective of a variety of underlying factors. Larrivee and Cook (1979) identified these factors, which included academic concerns—the possible negative effects of integration on general academic progress; socioemotional concerns—the negative aspects of segregating students with disabilities; administrative concerns; and teacher concerns—issues about support, experience, and training necessary to work with students with disabilities. These concerns appeared to be long-maintained, even after 20 years of inclusion experience (Cornoldi, Terreni, Scruggs, & Mastropieri, 1998).

The research evidence about attitudes surrounding integration tended to be inconclusive because of the widely disparate opinions held. Studies have shown general education
teachers to hold negative views about integration (Coates, 1989; Gersten, Walker, & Darch, 1988; Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, & Lesar, 1991), and others have revealed more positive attitudes (Villa, Thousand, Meyers, & Nevin, 1996; York, Vandercock, MacDonald, Heise-Neff, & Caughey, 1992). These differences may be related to findings that suggest more experience with inclusion being associated with more positive attitudes (Minke, Bear, Deemer, & Griffin, 1996). The experiences with inclusion may also create sampling differences, however, that bias findings in one direction and make any generalizations suspect.

Sooodak, Podell, and Lehman (1998) examined the relationships among teacher, student, and school factors in predicting teachers' response to inclusion. Two responses were found: a hostility/receptivity dimension reflecting teachers' willingness to include students with disabilities in their classrooms and their expectations about the success of such an arrangement; and an anxiety/calmness dimension reflecting teachers' emotional tension when actually faced with serving students with disabilities. Both responses were found to be related to teacher attributes and school conditions. Teachers who possessed low efficacy (i.e., beliefs about the impact of their teaching), who had limited teaching experience, or who demonstrated limited use of differentiated teaching practices were generally less receptive to inclusion. Another major influence on both dimensions was type of disability: Teachers held more positive attitudes toward the inclusion of students with physical disabilities than toward inclusion of those with solely academic or behavior disorders (Mandell & Strain, 1978). The greatest hostility and anxiety were found for students with MMR, with these same perceptions found for students with LD as teachers gained more experience in special education (Wilczenski, 1993).

In an effort to harness the complexity surrounding attitudes about integration, Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) conducted a quantitative research synthesis of 28 investigations that surveyed the perceptions of almost 10,000 general education teachers regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities. Although two thirds of general education teachers supported the concept of integration, only a small majority expressed a willingness to include students with disabilities in their own classrooms. Although there was support for the concept of integration, fewer than one third of general education teachers expressed the belief that the general education classroom was the optimal placement or would produce greater benefits than other placements. The two factors that seem to influence these perceptions appeared to be the severity level of student disability and the amount of additional teacher responsibility required. Among about one third of the sample, these two factors appeared to be associated with the belief that including students with disabilities would have a negative impact on the general education classroom. Finally, only about one quarter of the teachers believed that they had sufficient classroom time for inclusion efforts, that they were currently prepared to teach students with disabilities, or that they would receive sufficient training for inclusion efforts.

These findings were interpreted as support for the assumption that teachers viewed students with disabilities in the context of the reality of the general education classroom rather than as support for the prevailing attitudes about integration. General education teachers thus demonstrated a certain reluctance about inclusion that must be addressed if a policy change is to be successful (Welch, 1989).

THE REALITY OF GENERAL EDUCATION

What Happens in the General Education Class?

Besides attitudes toward integration, there are also contextual realities associated with the general education classroom that might affect the success or failure of integration (Shanker, 1995). Baker and Zigmond (1990) asked, Are regular education classes equipped to accommodate students with learning disabilities? Their analysis indicated that the general education classroom was a place where undifferentiated, large-group instruction dominated and teachers were more concerned with maintaining routine than with meeting individual differences: "Teachers cared about children and were conscientious about their jobs—but their mind-set was conformity, not accommodation. In these regular education classes, any student who could not conform would likely be unsuccessful" (p. 519).

McIntosh, Vaughn, Schumm, Haager, and Lee (1993) found a similar scenario for students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Although they were treated much like other students, students with disabilities did not receive differentiated instruction or adaptations. Even effective teachers were found to make few adaptations because of the belief that many adaptations were not feasible (Schumm & Vaughn, 1991; Whinnery, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 1991; Ysseldyke, Thurlow, Wotruba, & Nania, 1990) or because students themselves did not view many adaptations favorably (Vaughn, Schumm, & Kouzekanani, 1993; Vaughn, Schumm, Ninharos, & Daugherty, 1993). In fact, many students with disabilities preferred special education pull-out programs (i.e., resource rooms) over programs delivered exclusively in the general education setting (Guterman, 1995; Jenkins & Heinen, 1989; Klingner, Vaughn, Schumm, Cohen, & Forgan, 1998). Even though many students with disabilities experienced feelings of anger, embarrassment, and frustration in a special education setting and generally viewed it as undesirable (Albinger, 1995; Lovitt et al., 1999; Reid & Button, 1995), Padeladu and Zigmond (1996) found that most students with disabilities also felt the special education setting to be a supportive and quiet environment where they could receive extra academic assistance. In a synthesis of eight studies examining students' perceptions about their educational placements, Vaughn and Klingner (1998) concluded that, "whether at the elementary or secondary level, many students with LD prefer to receive specialized instruction outside of the general education classroom for part of the school day" (p. 85).

In a later analysis of full-time mainstreaming with Project MELD (Mainstream Experiences for Learning Disabled),
Zigmond and Baker (1994) investigated whether “the regular education class can provide an environment in which students with LDs have more opportunities to learn, to make greater educational progress in academic skills, and to avoid the stigma associated with being less capable in academic achievement” (p. 108). After examining outcomes, they concluded that special education students “did not get a special education” (p. 116). Lieberman (1996) attributed the situation to the increased demands on the general education teacher, and R. Roberts and Mather (1995) said that “regular educators are not trained to provide diversified instructional methods or to cope with the needs of diverse learners” (p. 50). In fact, general education teachers were most comfortable when using generic and nonspecific teaching strategies that were not likely to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities (Ellet, 1993; Johnson & Pugach, 1990).

In a more comprehensive evaluation of inclusive settings, Baker and Zigmond (1995) concluded,

We saw very little “specially designed instruction” delivered uniquely to a student with learning disabilities. We saw almost no specific, directed, individualized, intensive, remedial instruction for students who were clearly deficient academically and struggling with the schoolwork they were being given. (p. 178)

Thus, a basic tenet of special education—individualization—was not being achieved (Deno, Foegen, Robinson, & Espin, 1996). Further confirmation of this was found in analyses of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Generally, findings suggested that the less restrictive the setting, the less individualized the IEP (Espin, Deno, & Albayrak-Kaymak, 1998; Smith, 1990): “The 'specialness' of special education, with its emphasis on individualized programming, seems to decrease in inclusive settings” (Espin et al., 1998, p. 173).

After analyzing three large-scale projects designed to restructure schools to better accommodate students with disabilities in general education classrooms, Zigmond et al. (1995) concluded that “general education settings produce achievement outcomes for students with LD that are neither desirable nor acceptable” (p. 538). In a review assessing the academic outcomes associated with eight different models for educating students with mild disabilities in general education classrooms, Manset and Semmel (1997) concluded, “The evidence clearly indicates that a model of wholesale inclusive programming that is superior to more traditional special education service delivery models does not exist at present” (p. 178). Although findings assessing academic outcomes associated with inclusion were mixed, they generally were not encouraging given the significant investment of resources necessary to provide these enhanced educational opportunities (Marston, 1996; Waldron & McLeskey, 1998). A similar scenario was found for the academic performance of students with disabilities who had been reintegrated into general education classrooms (Carlson & Parshall, 1996; D. Fuchs, L. S. Fuchs, & Fernstrom, 1993; Shinn, Powell-Smith, Good, & Baker, 1997).

The Social Situation in General Education

In addition to academic effects, social outcomes associated with general education placement have also been investigated. Although some positive social outcomes have been found, primarily in the form of increased tolerance and more social support from students without disabilities (Banerji & Dailey, 1995; Fryxell & Kennedy, 1995), there also appear to be continuing negative consequences, including limited self-confidence, poor self-perceptions, and inadequate social skills among students with disabilities (Tapasak & Walther-Thomas, 1999). Mixed findings also surrounded teacher–child interactions in inclusive settings. Although students with disabilities have been shown to engage in a greater number of positive interactions with teachers (Evans et al., 1992; Thompson, Vitale, & Jewett, 1984), studies have also shown far fewer such positive interactions (Alves & Gottlieb, 1986; Richey & McKinney, 1978). In a study of teacher–child interactions in inclusive classrooms over the course of a school year, Chow and Kasari (1999)—unlike Jordan, Lindsay, and Stanovich (1997), who found more interaction at the beginning of the school year—found that the number of teacher–student interactions did not differ over the course of the school year. Students with disabilities may, however, require continuing higher levels of interaction (Wigle & Wilcox, 1996), and “by receiving the same amount of interactions at the end of the year, the needs of children with disabilities and at-risk children may not have been sufficiently met” (Chow & Kasari, 1999, p. 231).

In a large-scale study, Vaughn, Elbaum, and Schumm (1996) assessed the effects of inclusive placements on social functioning and found that students with disabilities were less accepted by peers, and the degree to which they were accepted and liked declined over time. In sum, students with disabilities were less often accepted and more often rejected (C. Roberts & Zubrick, 1992; Sale & Carey, 1995).

With respect to self-perceptions among students with disabilities in integrated settings, Bear, Clever, and Proctor (1991) found low levels of global self-worth, academic competence, and behavioral conduct. One problem noted by MacMillan, Gresham, and Forrester (1996) was that for students without disabilities, simple contact with students with disabilities in itself does not result in more favorable attitudes and improved acceptance. Rather, the nature and quality of interactions were significant influences on the way attitudes developed, and any objectionable behavior on the part of students with disabilities quickly resulted in less favorable perceptions among their peers in general education. Additionally, if there was a strong academic focus in the classroom, then perceptions about students with disabilities not keeping up may result in less teacher tolerance and less peer acceptance (Cook, Gerber, & Semmel, 1997).
Teacher Skill and Ability

At a fundamental skill level, general education teachers were not well prepared for the inclusion of students with disabilities (Kearny & Durand, 1992; Myles & Simpson, 1989; Rojewski & Pollard, 1993), and consequently expressed a variety of concerns about the implementation of inclusion activities (Fox & Ysseldyke, 1997; Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, & Schattman, 1993). For example, although Downing, Eichinger, and Williams (1997) found generally positive views about inclusion, they also found that teachers expressed concern about the time and effort required to meet the needs of students with disabilities that might limit their ability to provide an optimal education for students without disabilities. Special education teachers were most concerned about their perceived loss of control over the classroom, their modified job functions, and the possibility that needed resources and supports exceeded their availability (de Bettencourt, 1999; Werts, Wolery, Snyder, Caldwell, & Salisbury, 1996).

As a result of these perceived barriers and expressed concerns, the requisite individual planning for students with disabilities may not occur in general education contexts (Schumm & Vaughn, 1992; Schumm, Vaughn, Haager, McDowell, Rothlein, & Saumell, 1995; Vaughn & Schumm, 1994). Although instructional adaptations for students with disabilities were viewed as desirable (Bender, Vail, & Scott, 1995; Blanton, Blanton, & Cross, 1994; Schumm, Vaughn, Gordon, & Rothlein, 1994), they may not be used unless perceived as easy to implement as well as requiring little extra time, little change in routine, or little additional assistance (Bacon & Schulz, 1991; L. S. Fuchs, D. Fuchs, Hamlett, Phillips, & Karns, 1995; Munson, 1986–1987). The experiences of general and special education teachers working collaboratively in inclusive settings revealed some success, but also revealed concerns stemming from differences in perceived roles, teaching styles, and philosophical orientation (Salend et al., 1997). Walther-Thomas (1997) noted pragmatic problems in collaborative arrangements related to scheduling planning time, coordinating teacher and student schedules, and obtaining administrative support. The failure of collaborative teaching teams was found to result primarily from an inability to communicate, a failure to resolve teaching-style differences, and an inability to adequately integrate special education students and teachers into the classroom (Phillips, Sapon, & Lubic, 1995).

Schumm and Vaughn (1995) summarized findings from a 5-year research project designed to determine whether general education was prepared for inclusion education and to gain insight into the success a student with a high-incidence mild disability might experience (see also Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, Slusher, & Saumell, 1996). The findings affirmed many earlier conclusions suggesting that general education teachers believed they did not possess the necessary preparation to teach students with disabilities, lacked opportunities to collaborate with special education teachers, and made infrequent and unsystematic use of adaptations, even though students with disabilities preferred teachers who did make such instructional adaptations. In answering the question about whether the educational stage was set for inclusion, Schumm and Vaughn provided a generally negative response. The importance of having the stage properly set was demonstrated by Mamlin (1999) in an analysis of an inclusion effort that failed. The failure was attributed to a continuing culture of segregation in the school and a leadership style that demanded too much control. In conclusion, Mamlin said, “not all schools are ready to make decisions on restructuring for inclusion” (p. 47).

Discussion

Special education is in a state of flux. Integration has been a prominent theme for some 25 years, but its final form remains unclear (Danielson & Bellamy, 1989; Katsiyannis, Conderman, & Franks, 1995). The lack of agreement is evidenced in the differing position statements offered by organizations promoting full inclusion (Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 1992; Council of Chief State School Officers, 1992; National Association of State Boards of Education, 1992) and those advocating inclusion being only one among a number of possible placement options (Council for Exceptional Children, 1993; Learning Disabilities Association, 1993; National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 1993). Although the trend has been for greater integration for a greater number of students with disabilities, whether or not this means all students all the time has been subject to passionate debate (see Roberts & Mather, 1995, and response by McLesky & Pugach, 1995). A more cautious policy is thus warranted. Inclusion appears to be not something that simply happens, but rather something that requires careful thought and preparation. The focus must not simply be on access to general education, but rather the assurance that when inclusion is deemed appropriate, it is implemented with proper attitudes, accommodations, and adaptations in place (Deno, 1994; King-Sears, 1997; Scott, Vitale, & Masten, 1998).

The research evidence investigating inclusion clearly suggests caution (MacMillan et al., 1996; Salend & Gerrick Duhaney, 1999). Much is still not known, but what is known about the beliefs and operations of general education has not been uniformly supportive and suggests the need for careful and reasoned implementation (Downing et al., 1997; Idol, 1997). Analysis of the evidence also suggests that the effectiveness of practices associated with inclusion are mixed at best (Fisher, Schumaker, & Deshler, 1995; Hunt & Goetz, 1997). Generalizations about inclusion thus remain tentative, and it appears unwise to advocate for inclusion without ensuring that it is carried out effectively. Too much time has been spent talking about inclusion, and not enough time evaluating it in relation to alternative service delivery arrangements and practices (King-Sears & Cummings, 1996). Consequently, outcomes for special education have not been predictable, and students with disabilities may be at risk for adverse consequences with the indiscriminate implementation of a full inclusion policy.
Postmodernism and Inclusion

The realities of the general and special education nexus suggest that general education is neither ready nor willing to endorse a radical policy such as full inclusion. A segment of special education, however, appears to ignore this reality. The influence of postmodern thought among this segment is significant. Postmodernism rejects the modern view of science as a system that focuses on problem solving by constructing, evaluating, and testing different conjectures about optimal solutions (Gross & Levitt, 1994). The postmodern model questions the superiority of the modern over the premodern, eschews rigid disciplinary boundaries, and challenges the possibility of creating global, all-encompassing worldviews (Bauman, 1987; Griffin, 1988; Turner, 1990).

The postmodern perspective has been challenged, however (Koertge, 1998; Sokal & Bricmont, 1998). The differences between modern and postmodern were described by Rosenau (1992):

Those of a modern conviction seek to isolate elements, specify relationships, and formulate a synthesis; post-modernists do the opposite. They offer indeterminacy rather than determinism, diversity rather than unity, difference rather than synthesis, complexity rather than simplification. They look to the unique rather than to the general, to intertextual relations rather than causality, and to the unrepeatable rather than the re-occurring, the habitual, or the routine. With a post-modern perspective, social science becomes a more subjective and humble enterprise as truth gives way to tentativeness. (p. 8)

Within the postmodern perspective, the most questionable assumption is the rejection of all science because it is believed to be untrustworthy. Consequently, alternative ways of knowing (e.g., special education), especially those based on an individual's own experience that is believed to be the only one really knowable, possess equal merit (Danforth, 1997; Sailor & Skrtic, 1996; Skrtic et al., 1996). Instead of discussion about the possibilities of inclusion in a real-world context buttressed by empirical evidence, some special educators have chosen to construct arguments within a postmodern framework. This approach becomes even more unreal and extreme when also based on the view that special education is a fundamentally evil enterprise (Danforth & Rhodes, 1997; Lipsky & Gartner, 1996). For example, Brantlinger (1997) suggested that the current special education system is harming students because it is driven by a privileged ideology that has made it impossible to achieve equity. Consequently, the situation can be ameliorated only by placing all students in the general education setting. In reality, such a postmodern solution is neither practical nor reliable. Although postmodernism views radical transformation as the sole remedy, a more incremental approach to positive change, based on a substantive real-world empirical research foundation, offers the possibility for more rational and credible solutions (Carnine, 1997; Kauffman, 1993; Zigmund, 1997).

The role and validity of research, however, has become a contentious issue, particularly with respect to preferred research methodology, as evidenced in the quantitative-qualitative research debate (Simpson & Eaves, 1985; S. Stainback & W. Stainback, 1984a). Opposing sides in the inclusion debate tend to sort themselves into quantitative or qualitative camps, with much of the support for inclusion being based on qualitative research findings (Kozlesk & Jackson, 1993; Salisbury, Palombaro, & Hollowood, 1993). Such findings are often presented in discourse form that emulates styles associated with literary criticism or cultural studies: "Post-modern delivery is more literary in character while modern discourse aims to be exact, precise, pragmatic, and rigorous in style" (Rosenau, 1992, p. 7). Although postmodernists may prefer "audacious and provocative forms of delivery" (p. 7), it must be emphasized that such characteristics offer no insight into the worth of the arguments presented. Contas (1998) also questioned the motivation behind the postmodern form of delivery: "Is this disciplinary shift part of a rhetorical strategy being used to give the impression of erudition?" (p. 29). Contas went on to say that definitive conclusions are often lacking because of "the spurious belief that ordered thinking and rational inquiry stifle the human spirit and oppress the political rights of the people we study" (p. 28). The consequences are seen in what has been termed the "cult of ambiguity and indeterminacy" (Eagleton, 1996).

The proper role of research may also be at issue. For example, in discussing the famous Brown v. Board of Education (1954) Supreme Court decision, Gerard (1983) argued that the supporting Social Science Statement was based on well-meaning rhetoric rather than solid research evidence:

All that it said, in effect, was that because the minority child was now in a classroom with whites, he or she would no longer have the status of an outcast or a pariah. This knowledge would somehow impart to the child self-image necessary to do well in school and later enter the mainstream of American society. (p. 869)

Substitute child with disabilities for minority child, and parallels to the present inclusion debate are apparent.

Ideology, Politics, and Beliefs

With an emphasis on ideology without reference to accompanying research evidence in making policy decisions, an objective rendering of the real-world situation may not be achieved (Kauffman, 1999). Ideology can cause arguments to be perceived in a selective manner (Cohen, 1993). A prime example is found in the contentious nature–nurture debate surrounding the role of heredity and environment in producing intelli-
gence. In an early review, Pastore (1949) indicated that those taking the nature (heredity) side tended to be politically right of center, whereas those taking the nurture (environment) side tended to be left of center. Later, Harwood (1976, 1977) found a similar political dichotomy among those who either supported or objected to the position proposed by Jensen (1969), which suggested that the 15 IQ-point advantage for Whites over Blacks was about 80% due to heredity and only about 20% a result of environment. Consequently, theoretical positions may be partially formed by political beliefs.

The nature–nurture debate has not made significant progress in achieving closure. The primary reason is that not many new research data have been brought to bear on the question (Cartwright & Burtis, 1968). Consequently, the different sides tend to form conclusions using the same finite body of information, where differences are primarily the result of ideology, not scientific interpretation. With ideological differences paramount, the nature–nurture debate soon became testy. The nature side was accused of distortion, misrepresentation, and faulty logic (Deutsch, 1969; Hirsch, 1975; Lewontin, 1970), but the same charges were also leveled against those on the nurture side (Eysenck, 1971; Hersenstein, 1973; Loehlin, Lindzey, & Spuhler, 1975). Thus, ideology was a significant factor in the positions taken.

Ideology, by itself, however, does not promote scientific advancement. In discussing Kuhn’s (1970) ideas about paradigms and scientific development, Lakatos (1978) stressed the “research program” and its description as either progressive or degenerative. When there is a lack of evidence validating empirical research, theories experience experimental failure and must be modified to accommodate the earlier successes as well as the anomalies that brought the earlier theory into question. When this process is achieved successfully, the research program is termed progressive. If not progressive, the research program is termed degenerative. With no empirical successes, anomalies are met with ad hoc explanations that become increasingly inadequate and must be remedied through a new research program. The earlier-cited nature–nurture debate about IQ represents a case of competing research programs: Are the rival programs progressing or degenerating? Using Lakatos’s (1978) critical methodology, Urbach (1974a, 1974b) concluded that the hereditarian (i.e., nature) position was stronger:

Environmentalists have revised their theories in an ad hoc fashion. This patching-up process has left the environmentalist programme as little more than a collection of untestable theories which provide a “passe partout” which explains everything because it explains nothing. (Urbach, 1974b, p. 253)

Empirical evidence is thus necessary to strengthen the research program so that it is progressive. Special education initially possessed a research program emphasizing the special class. The earlier-cited efficacy studies created an anomaly that was remedied by the continuum of placements embodied in the Cascade model. By 1980 the special education research program was manifested in the LRE concept, but anomalies were still present (e.g., students in special education not making the progress expected). Research dealing with resource models, collaborative models, adaptive education, peer tutoring, individualized education strategies, and innovative teaching strategies demonstrated the response of a progressive special education research program.

In contrast, advocates for full inclusion have failed to provide a progressive research program. In fact, a research program providing any empirical evidence is difficult to identify. In examining the same anomalies, the full inclusion research program simply upped the ante by calling for all students with disabilities to be fully integrated (Biklen, 1985; Lipsky & Gartner, 1997; S. Stainback, W. Stainback, & Forrest, 1989; Villa, Thousand, Stainback, & Stainback, 1992). The supportive arguments were primarily based on ideology buttressed by anecdotal case studies and testimonials, but not on quantitative research evidence. Thus, a solution that simply calls for full inclusion without accompanying empirical support is neither logical nor rational and results in a degenerative research program with too many ad hoc explanations. More empirical research on inclusion is thus necessary, as suggested by MacMillan et al. (1996): “We need more research on inclusion, not less... Simplification will only mislead us into adopting untied treatments with the possibility of disserving children” (p. 156).

Ideology may be useful in discussions attempting to establish goals and objectives, but actual practice is best derived from scientific inquiry. Special education had a previous example where ideology played a primary role in determining policy. The issue was deinstitutionalization, and Landesman and Butterfield (1987) pointed out that “as goals, normalization and deinstitutionalization are not terribly controversial, as means to achieving these goals many of the current practices related to deinstitutionalization and normalization are” (p. 809). They suggested that more data relevant to the care and treatment of individuals with mental retardation was required. In the absence of such information, there was no basis for judging the merits of deinstitutionalization policy. Shadish (1984), in discussing deinstitutionalization policy, pointed out the tendency to view negative consequences (e.g., increase in homelessness) as merely unfortunate happenstance not connected to the ideology that initiated the policy. More positive outcomes were then sought, not by using new research evidence to guide practice, but rather by using the same ideological foundation reshaped with more noble intentions and ending again with the same pragmatic difficulties. The parallels with the inclusion debate are again clear, and efforts should be directed at avoiding a similar scenario.
CONCLUSION

Questions about the integration of students with disabilities are not new. There has been, over the past 25 years, a steady press toward greater integration of students with disabilities. The law demands education in the LRE, but difficulties have resulted from this provision coming to be interpreted as solely the general education classroom, particularly for all students regardless of type and level of disability. Although there is ideological and political support for inclusion, the empirical evidence is less convincing. The reality of general education suggests that the requisite attitudes, accommodations, and adaptations for students with disabilities are not yet in place. Consequently, a more tempered approach that formulates and implements policy on the basis of research and evaluation findings as well as ideological and political considerations is necessary. In this way, real solutions may be forthcoming that do not reflect Sowell's (1995) visions of the anointed and benighted, but, rather, reflect a vision of the rational. It is possible to draw parallels to the inclusion debate from previous contentious issues in special education, and it would be prudent to learn from these past experiences. With a rational solution, special education may then be in a better position to pursue its real mission: providing the best possible education for all students with disabilities.

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