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MAINSTREAMING OF CHILDREN WITH A HEARING LOSS

Verna V. Yater

Springfield, Ill., Charles C. Thomas, 1977. (\$21.50 clothbound; \$14.75 paperbound)

Subtitled "Practical Guidelines and Implications," this book actually recites only the author's experiences with hearing-impaired students in St. Louis County (Missouri). The bibliography contains 26 references, 9 on law and but 4 on the practices and results of mainstreaming. Hardly an adequate sample of the substantial literature on this topic.

As a description of the St. Louis County program, the book is heavy on detail and light on generalizations. One third of the text (82 of 228 pages) is devoted to case histories. An additional 50 pages of administrative materials — job descriptions and reporting forms — are appended. Yet nowhere in the book do customary evaluative materials appear. How well did the students perform before and after integration? Such information is not presented. Even the case histories cannot be analyzed in response to that question, since they are summarized after different periods (ranging from 2 months to several years) and are inconsistent in the kinds of data which are reported. The description of the students who have been mainstreamed does not include relevant summaries; no breakdowns by age, sex, hearing level, intelligence, etc.

Surely this topic and the St. Louis County Special School District's attempts to deal with it deserve better treatment.

The author should consider publishing the missing information in journals which are readily accessible. The field needs the facts on what is happening to hearing-impaired students in the newly established programs. Which are succeeding? Which are not? What factors are associated with improved academic and social success? How does the pre-mainstreamed progress compare to post-mainstreamed progress, and to the progress of comparable students not mainstreamed? Educators need answers to these questions — answers based on systematic, objective research. With such information, they can improve their designs of educational services and wisely direct parents in the selection of the programs most likely to benefit their hearing-impaired children. As we approach the twenty-first century, we can no longer tolerate a regression to nineteenth century reliance on authority for the vital decisions affecting students in our schools. Research methods are readily available; scientific standards for reporting data are well-known. Our professional ethics demand that we accept nothing less in the education of hearing-impaired children and youth.

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