

There is strong evidence to support the contention that programs for meeting the needs of all behaviorally disordered and socially maladjusted school age children simply do not exist.

## a survey: services for maladjusted school children

by Richard L. Simpson, Linda L. Edwards, and Linda Ross



Richard L. Simpson is assistant professor of special education at the University of Kansas Medical Center. He has worked as a school psychologist in Olathe, Kansas; a teacher of emotionally disturbed children in a state hospital in Missouri; and a staff psychologist at the University of Kansas Medical Center. He is also serving as director of a Bureau of Education for the Handicapped demonstration project for severely, emotionally disturbed children in Wyandotte County, Kansas. Simpson has an Ed.D. in special education from the University of Kansas. He received his master's from Fort Hays Kansas State College and his bachelor's from Baker University.

Linda L. Edwards is a teaching assistant at the University of Kansas Medical Center while she completes an Ed.D. degree from the University of Kansas in special education. She has been a secondary teacher for the Shawnee Mission School district and has taught emotionally disturbed children in a residential facility. Edwards has a master's from the University of Kansas and a bachelor's from the University of Missouri in Kansas City.

Dr. Linda Ross is director of research at the Kansas State School for the Deaf, Olathe, Kansas. Her educational experience is in administration of special education programs. She was the director of special education, Plano, Texas; director of the Topeka Training Center for Retarded Children, Topeka, Kansas; and director of special services at the Kansas State School for the visually Handicapped. She served as technical advisor to the Texas State Board of Education and the Vision Task Force for the Kansas State Board of Education.

It has long been said that regular classroom teachers, not special education teachers, bear the brunt of the responsibility for educating children with learning and behavior problems (Dupont, 1969; Kirk, 1972). In spite of federal and state mandate rulings, litigation proceedings and the concern for accountability in the schools, there is strong evidence to support the contention that programs for meeting the needs of all behaviorally disordered and socially maladjusted school age children simply do not exist (Long, Morse & Newman, 1965).

Although conservative estimates suggest that there are well over a million behaviorally disordered and socially maladjusted school age children in this country, only a fraction of this number are currently receiving services (Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, U.S. Office of Education). In addition, many practitioners suggest that the prevalence figure of two percent employed by the U.S. Office of Education grossly underestimates the number of children actually needing services.

Since an estimate of the prevalence of behavior disorders and social maladjustment is a silent variable in determining the allocation of educational resources in any school district, the need for more consistent and accurate data is easily recognized. It is also apparent, from the large degree of variability in the school age populations, that school districts and entire geographic regions may differ in their estimation of the need for required services.

The present study was an investigation of the prevalence of school age children presenting social or behavioral problems in the State of Kansas, the extent of existing services for such children and the perception by school administrators of the need for future services. Specifically, it dealt with the following issues: (a) a determination of the number of school age children in the State of Kansas being served by programs for the behaviorally disordered and socially maladjusted; (b) a determination of the type of services being rendered, e.g., residential, self-contained, resource room, etc.; (c) a determination of those geographic regions in the State of Kansas serving behaviorally disordered and socially maladjusted children; (d) a determination of the number of these children not being served by school districts offering programs; and (e) a determination of the number of estimated behaviorally disordered and socially maladjusted children in school districts not offering services.

## Method

Each certified program for the behaviorally disordered and socially maladjusted in the State of Kansas was asked to provide an updated list of all teachers of such children in their respective programs and to state the number of students being served by each teacher. Further, each program was asked to indicate the administrative model under which each teacher was functioning, i.e., self-contained, itinerant/consultant, resource room, etc. This procedure was followed for both the academic years 1973-1974 and 1974-1975. In addition, for the academic year 1973-1974, each school district in the State of Kansas was asked to agree or disagree with the estimated number of children in their school populations who would need special programs for the behaviorally disordered and socially maladjusted. The estimated number of children to which the districts were asked to respond was derived by applying the conservative two percent incidence figure for behavior disorders and social maladjustment by the U.S. Office of Education to the total school enrollment of each district.

## Results

Based on enrollment figures supplied by the Kansas School Directory, it was estimated that for the academic year 1973-1974, there would be approximately 9760 children in the State of Kansas in need of special services because of behavioral disturbances or social maladjustment. While this estimate was considered conservative, it did reflect the current incidence figures employed both by the State of Kansas and the U.S. Office of Education. Survey data indicated that approximately 1702 school age children were being served through programs for the behaviorally disordered or socially maladjusted during the academic year 1973-1974. This figure suggests that only about 17.44 percent of that population expected to be emotionally disturbed was receiving services based on their special needs. The number of students being served by this type of special service consisted of approximately .35 percent of all children enrolled in state schools.

A total of 219 school age children were being educated in State residential programs for the behaviorally disordered and socially maladjusted. This number accounted for 13 percent of all services and converted to .04 percent of the entire Kansas school population.

Self-contained classrooms, private residential programs, and day school programs in the State of Kansas were educating approximately 438 children. This number accounted for about 26 percent of all services for behaviorally disordered and socially maladjusted school age children.

Resource room and consultant/itinerant programs were serving the largest number of behaviorally disordered and socially maladjusted children during the academic year 1973-1974. These administrative models accounted for 61 percent of all services. However, one school district was providing most of these kinds of programs. Specifically, one school district with less than 10 percent of the total State's enrollment accounted for approximately 86 percent of all resource room and consultant/itinerant services.

A geographic analysis of the 1973-1974 approved programs for the behaviorally disordered and socially maladjusted indicated that most programs were in the eastern half of the State. The one state residential setting in the western part of

the state was serving 93 school age children. Aside from this one residential program, there was only one approved self-contained classroom and one resource room in the western half of the State. The single self-contained program was serving 7 children while the resource room was serving 36 students at the time of the survey.

Based on 1974-1975 Kansas school enrollment figures, it was estimated that there would be approximately 9344 students requiring special provisions because of social and behavioral variance. Again, survey data indicated a significant discrepancy between the estimated number of students requiring special provisions and those actually receiving special educational services. Approximately 1490 students were found to be enrolled in certified programs for the emotionally disturbed at the time of the 1974-1975 survey. This figure represents only about 16 percent of that population expected to need provisions for social and behavioral deviance.

Approximately 430 school age children were receiving educational treatment in State residential programs for the emotionally disturbed at the time of the survey. This figure represents approximately 29 percent of all services for behaviorally disordered and socially maladjusted children in the State of Kansas at the time of the 1974-1975 survey. There was a significant increase in the number of children being served through State residential programs when compared with 1973-1974 data.

Approximately 270 Kansas school age children were being educated in self-contained classrooms, private residential programs and day schools for the emotionally disturbed. These models were providing approximately 18 percent of all services for the emotionally disturbed at the time of the 1974-1975 survey. There was a significant decrease in the number of children being educated under this model.

As in the 1973-1974 academic year survey, resource room and consultant/itinerant programs were again serving the greatest number of children in 1974-1975. These models accounted for approximately 53 percent of all services. However, rather than one school district offering the majority of these services, as was the case in 1973-1974, these programs were more widely distributed. Apparently, this alternative to the special self-contained class was receiving increased acceptance throughout the State.

An analysis of the location of programs for the behaviorally disordered and socially maladjusted for the 1974-1975 school year again indicated that the majority of services were being rendered in the eastern half of Kansas. Although there was only one additional program added to what existed in 1973-1974, there was a significant increase in the number of children being served.

In addition, districts were also surveyed concerning the incidence of emotional disturbance in their systems. This 1973-1974 survey indicated that 59 percent agreed with the estimated number of behaviorally disordered and socially maladjusted children that were predicted to reside in each district. Thirty-eight percent of those participating in the survey disagreed with the two percent incidence figure. The majority of those disagreeing indicated that the U.S. Office of Education prevalence figures were an overestimation of those actually needing service. An additional three percent of those participating in the survey did not agree with the estimate

suggested by the survey, but were unable to provide an estimate of the number of children actually needing services. According to overall estimates supplied by school districts, a more reasonable estimate of the incidence of behavior disorders and social maladjustment in school age populations for the 1973-1974 year would have been 1.6 percent rather than 2.0 percent. This estimate was based on a sampling of 87 percent of the school districts in the State of Kansas.

### Discussion

In essence, the results of this two-year survey concerning the services and estimated future needs for behaviorally disordered and socially maladjusted children in the State of Kansas reflected anew the fact that regular classroom teachers were providing a majority of the educational services for such children. Specifically the results of this survey suggested that only about 7 percent of the estimated behaviorally disordered and socially maladjusted children in the State of Kansas during 1973-1974 were being served through residential and self-contained programs. Although another 10 percent of these children in Kansas during 1973-1974 were being served through resource rooms and itinerant/consultant services, the majority of those receiving services through these administrative models were from a single school district in the eastern part of the State. During the 1974-1975 academic year, the situation remained basically the same. Approximately 7.5 percent of that population of children in the State estimated to be behaviorally disordered and socially maladjusted were being served through residential and self-contained programs. Another 8.5 percent of this estimated population of emotionally handicapped children were being served through resource rooms and itinerant/consultant services during 1974-1975. However, rather than one school district offering the majority of these services as was the case in 1973-1974, the use of this administrative model was more widely distributed.

Surprisingly, there was an overall decrease in the total number of students being served by programs for the emotionally disturbed in 1974-1975 when compared with 1973-1974. Although there was a decrease in the total State enrollment, this decrease is far outweighed by the difference in the number of children served through programs for the behaviorally disordered and socially maladjusted between 1973-1974 and 1974-1975. This decrease can be at least partially explained as being a function of the decrease in itinerant/resource services by one school district in eastern Kansas. Although this district claimed to be rendering a majority of the State's services for its disturbed children through this model in 1973-1974, its estimate of these services in 1974-1975 was much more conservative.

Also somewhat surprising was the increased number of children who were being served through State residential programs in 1974-1975 as compared with 1973-1974. There was approximately a 50 percent increase in the number of children served in 1974-1975 when compared to the preceding year. Since this increase came at a time when institutionalization is being de-emphasized, the present survey was unable to explain these results.

Although there appears to be some dispute between national prevalence figures and school district perceptions regarding the extent of behavioral and social deviance, as

reflected in the 1973-1974 survey data, the problem was nonetheless recognized. Obviously this discrepancy is understandable in view of the equivocal incidence data being generated by practitioners in the field. Since special educators suggest that the incidence of the behaviorally disordered and socially maladjusted is somewhere between .5 and 42 percent of the school population (Pate, 1963; Wickman, 1928), it is understandable that school administrators would differ in their perceptions of the problem. It is believed, though, that if these administrators had training in the area of the behaviorally disordered and socially maladjusted and had an operation definition by which to estimate the number of these children in their respective districts, the estimates would more closely approximate those of the U.S. Office of Education.

The prevalence of behaviorally disordered and socially maladjusted children in the public schools in the State, as reflected by this investigation, has serious implications for all educational programs in Kansas, regular as well as special. The large number of these children identified by school districts as needing services raises serious questions about the most efficient way of accommodating those needing programs. In view of strained budgets, the lack of properly trained and certified teachers and sparsely populated geographic areas, it is somewhat unrealistic to expect that all communities in the State can and will initiate self-contained programs for behaviorally disordered and socially maladjusted children. Since the majority of these children will probably need supportive services rather than intensive special education, models other than the self-contained special classroom will need to be explored. Possibly the forming of cooperative programs to meet the needs of those children requiring self-contained special classrooms and the development of a well-organized itinerant / consultant program could best meet the needs of those districts currently unable to provide service. This obviously is a model that must be considered for those sparsely populated counties in the western half of the State. In addition, the national movement away from "special classrooms" to "mainstreaming" strategies would complement the conservative development of self-contained special education classes.

An additional implication of this strategy is the need for training regular classroom teachers in techniques for both tentatively identifying and educating behaviorally disordered and socially maladjusted children. Since regular classroom teachers will in all probability continue to be a major force in educating such children, it is essential that this group be able to screen and refer students for additional services. In addition, regular classroom teachers are obviously in need of specific methods necessary for meeting the needs of behaviorally disordered children in the regular classroom. Specifically, minimal training in behavior management, diagnosing learning problems, prescriptive teaching, and individual programming appears essential.

### REFERENCES

- Dupont, H. *Educating emotionally disturbed children*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969.
- Kirk, S.A. *Educating exceptional children*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1972.
- (Continued next page)

Long, N.J., Morse, W.C., & Newman, R.G. *Conflict in the classroom*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing, 1965.

Pate, J.E. Emotionally disturbed and socially maladjusted children. In Dunn, L.M. (Ed.), *Exceptional children in the schools*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1963.

Rosen, B.M., Kramer, N., Redick, R.W., & Willner, S.G. Utilization of psychiatric facilities by children: Current status, trends, and implications. Washington, D.C.: U.S.G.P.O., 1968.

Wickman, E.K. *Children's behavior and teacher's attitudes*. New York: Commonwealth Fund, 1928.

## **an educational machine to create conformity**

Social critics and radical reformers have not had to look far to be able to focus on American education's specific flaws and failures. Many historians, and virtually all history textbooks, have ignored the pervasive influence of education on the shaping of American thought and the ordering of American society. Thus, the field was wide open for revisionist critics to evolve a succession of devil theories—tales of conspiracies enlisting the schools in evil purposes. In this distorted view, education becomes a tool to enslave; schools are an instrument of oppression; the colleges, an assembly line that produces a standard-model ruling class; universities, blind servants of the military-industrial complex. The entire educational enterprise thus emerges as a giant, efficient machine created to assume conformity to an approved political scenario and servility to capitalist technocracy.

**Growing Up In America** by Fred M. and Grace Hechinger. McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1975, page 407.