

Making Special

BY JANET GILLESPIE MALLERY

Between 5 and 20 percent of students in the United States need some type of specialized instruction to succeed academically.

According to current research, between 5 and 20 percent of students in the United States need some type of specialized instruction to succeed academically. In 1981, the North American Division Task Force showed that within the Seventh-day Adventist school system, about 10 percent of the total school population is classified as exceptional, and could therefore benefit from specialized instruction.

In response to this need, the Basic Education Support Team (BEST) program was begun at La Sierra SDA Elementary School in Riverside, California, in the fall of 1985, after the school board, faculty, and administration realized that these children needed more than the regular classroom could provide.

To serve as many students as possible, the schools designed a two-track plan. One part of the program serves students who qualify for learning handicapped services (according to state eligibility requirements). These students go to the BEST classroom for reading/written language and/or

mathematics instruction for an hour each day. The second part of the program serves a much broader segment of the school population. All students on the primary level (grades prefirst through two) receive supplemental help in reading through the Reading Problem Prevention Program. For 30 minutes each day the resource teacher, two part-time aides, and classroom teachers work individually with the pupils.

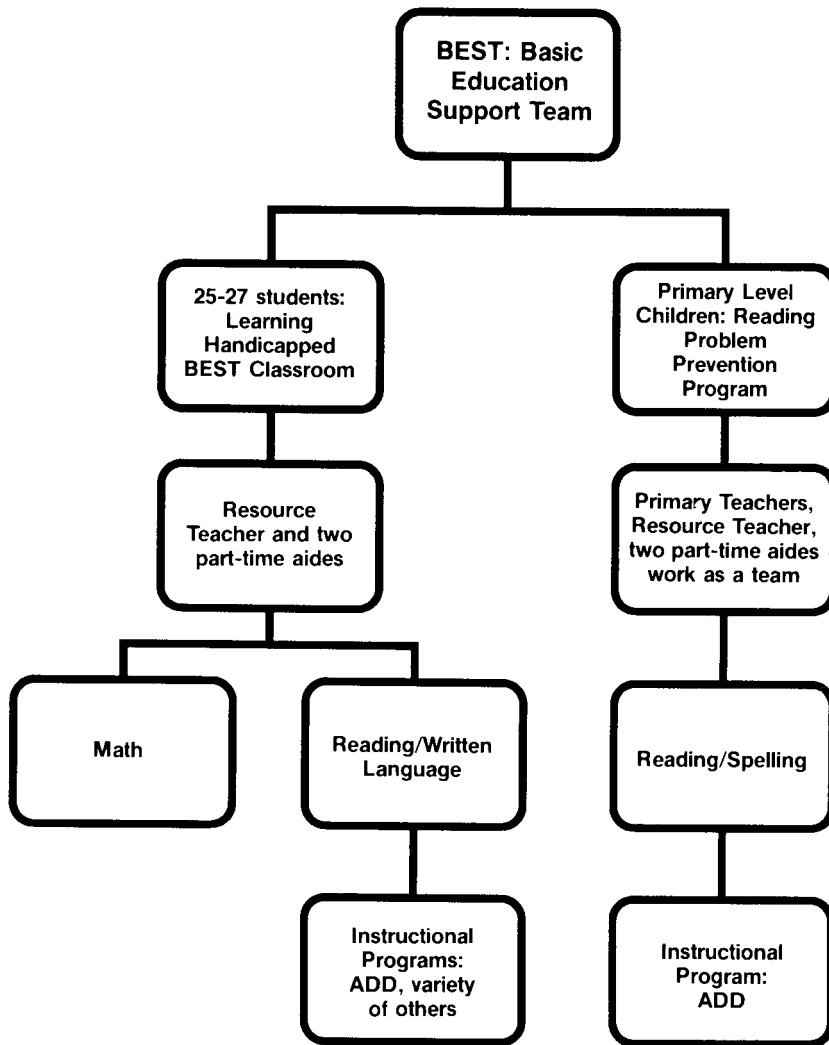
Reasons for BEST's Success

Several commitments have made the BEST program successful. First, all primary teachers took 60 clock hours of instruction in the Auditory Discrimination in Depth (ADD) program. This program developed by the Linda-mood-Bell Learning Center in San Luis Obispo, California, helps children learn to *think* about how to read, spell, and speak. The united efforts of the teachers have provided continuity and strength to the Reading Problem Prevention Program. This instruction adds to the already strong SDA Life Reading Series.

Another reason for the success of

Education a Reality

Organizational Chart for Basic Education Support Team (BEST)



the BEST program is the contributions of the director of special services for the Southeastern California Conference. A school psychologist, the director provides psychoeducational testing and help with the Individual Education Plans (IEP's) for each student in the BEST classroom.

Time and money from both the school board and the administration have also helped make BEST successful. The school board voted partial funding for the program. Students enrolled in the BEST classroom pay a \$50 fee each month, which covers part of the expenses. No student who needs the program is ever denied admission because his family cannot pay for the services. To assist needy students,

Special education requires time, money, and work, but its advantages and rewards are... immeasurable.

some fees are waived or partially subsidized by the school.

The school administration coordinates the program, provides for inservicing of teachers, prepares and

participates in Individual Education Plan meetings, counsels with the parents, and reports program evaluations of the school board.

Is It Worth the Effort?

Special education requires time, money, and work, but its advantages and rewards are numerous. In fact, some are immeasurable:

- During the 1987-1988 school year, five new students were able to attend an SDA school who otherwise would have been referred to public schools. Each year has brought La Sierra Elementary new students because of the BEST program.

- Ten third graders were placed in the BEST classroom for specialized instruction in the 1987-1988 school year. Eight of the 10 had not attended the school the previous year, so they had not received any Reading Problems Prevention Program help. This is one of the positive results of strengthening the beginning reading program.

- A comparison was done between the results of the WRAT-R* test given to primary children at the close of the 1985-1986 school year and the 1986-1987 school year. This confirmed an average gain of 8 to 10 points per child. This gain appears to be related to the Reading Problem Prevention Program.

- Curriculum specialists, teachers, and superintendents have visited La Sierra Elementary on several occasions to see the Auditory Discrimination in Depth program. Specialized manipulative materials designed and piloted at the school are being considered for publication by a well-known education materials company. Public sector personnel have come to the La Sierra Elementary campus for training in the Auditory Discrimination in Depth program.

- Classroom teachers are now able to spend time with each of their students instead of most of their time with only a few students.

- Immeasurable rewards are realized when children are able to read a grade level for the first time, and feel good about themselves.

*WRAT-R: *Wide-Range Achievement Test-Revised: an achievement test that covers reading, spelling, and arithmetic, administered to ages five through adult.*

What About the Small School?

Obviously, it would be unrealistic to think that small schools could operate a program as complex as the BEST program. But they can take positive steps to help students with learning problems. If the school board chooses to accept a learning-handicapped child, parents should be made aware, in writing, of what the school can offer that child. The board may want to offer a conditional acceptance, with ongoing review of the child's scholastic progress.

Some approaches that multigrade teachers can use to help the learning-disabled child achieve success include the following:

1. Use peer tutors, cross-age tutoring, and volunteer adult tutors (especially retired teachers from your church).

2. Enroll in summer or evening classes on mainstreaming the learning-disabled child.

3. Become familiar with tests that identify learning problems, such as The Classroom Reading Inventory by Silvaroli or Burk's Behavior Rating Scale.

4. Find out what services are provided through the local public school district. With proper referrals most will administer tests. In some instances public school authorities will also provide the needed assistance for the child, either by sending a therapist or teaching specialist to the church school, or by having the child come to the public school campus.

5. Use varied teaching techniques. Incorporating auditory, visual, and kinesthetic approaches into class presentations will help meet children's individual needs.

6. Investigate available software. While computer-assisted instruction does not replace individual attention, the computer does offer success experiences for many students. (See bibliography for suggestions.)

7. Borrow books from a local public or college library, or purchase reading material on the topic of special education. (See RESOURCES at the end of the article for suggestions.)

8. Hire an itinerant teacher to come to the school one or two days a week to assist children with learning handicaps. Four or five small schools could share the expenses to make this financially feasible.

Seventh-day Adventist schools can provide special educational services for their students. But programs like BEST in large schools, or extra support for learning-disabled students in small schools do not occur by accident. Everyone involved must cooper-

Seventh-day Adventist schools can provide special educational services for their students.

ate to help these special students achieve their potential. □

For further information on the BEST program, contact Donna Cline, resource teacher at La Sierra Elementary School, 11375 Pierce St., Riverside, CA 92505, telephone (714) 351-1472; or Dr. Janet Mallery, Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Curriculum and Instruction, Southeastern California Conference of SDA, P.O. Box 8050, Riverside, CA 92515, telephone (714) 359-5800.

RESOURCES

ADD (Auditory Discrimination in Depth), 416 Higuera St., San Luis Obispo, CA 93401; (805) 541-3836.

"At Risk Students May Benefit From Focusing on Styles," *Education U.S.A.* (January 2, 1989), p. 124.

Burks, Harold F. *Behavior Rating Scale* (1977). Western Psychological Service, 12031 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90025.

Cartwright, G. Phillip; Carol A. Cartwright; and Marjorie E. Ward, *Educating Special learners*. 3rd ed. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1977.

Clay, Marie M. *The Early Detection of Reading Difficulties*. 3rd ed. Auckland, New Zealand: Heinemann Education, 1985.

"Dealing With Diversity: At Risk Students," *Education Leadership*. 46:5 (February 1989).

Ekwall, Eldone E., and James L. Shanker, *Diagnosis and Remediation of the Disabled Reader*. 3rd ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1988.

Glas, Raymond M.; Jeanne Christiansen, and James L. Christiansen. *Teaching Exceptional Students in the Regular Classroom*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1982.

Pinnell, Gay Su; Diane E. DeFord; and Carol A. Lyons. "Reading Recovery: Early Intervention for At-risk First Graders." Educational Research Service, 1988. (Order from ERS, 2000 Clarendon Blvd., Arlington, VA 22201. \$36.)

Silvaroli, Nicholas J. *The Classroom Reading Inventory*. Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown, Pub., 1986.

"Ways to Teach Students With Learning Disabilities." *Journal of the National Education Association*. 66:4 (1977), p. 48.

COMPUTER PROGRAMS

Letter and Word Recognition: Cloze-Plus and Comprehension Power (Milliken), Syllasearch (DLM).

Basic Math Skills: Math With Student Management Program (Radio Shack). Academic Skill Builders in Math (DLM). Basic Skills in Math (Love Publishing Co.) Math Sequences (Milliken).

At the time this article was written, Dr. Janet Gillespie Mallery was Principal of La Sierra Elementary School in Riverside, California. She currently is Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Curriculum and Instruction at the Southeastern California Conference of SDA, also located in Riverside.