

# **The Exceptional Student in the Regular Classroom**

## **Aims**

The general aims of this research and presentation are to:

1. Inform and educate student professionals who work with children about pertinent issues relating to exceptional students
2. Articulate core issues and concerns in relation to Exceptional Student Education (ESE)
3. Gather secondary and primary data about the situation of exceptional education in Jamaica
4. Provide critical information about children's rights and the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders
5. Increase awareness of and respect for the rights of all children, including exceptional children within the regular classroom

## **Objectives**

At the end of the presentation participants should be able to demonstrate knowledge and skills in:

1. The various types of exceptionalities that are characteristic of Jamaican classrooms
2. Defining key concepts that relate to exceptional education including: exceptional students, disabled students, gifted/ talented students, exceptional education/ Exceptional Student Education (ESE)/ special education, mainstreaming, inclusion, regular classroom
3. Identifying different types of exceptionality within the regular classroom
4. Describing the referral process for exceptional children identified within the regular classroom
5. Describing effective strategies for assisting exceptional children in the regular classroom
6. The roles and responsibilities of a regular classroom teacher
7. The rights of the child and issues of discrimination
8. Recognising and understanding cases of the violation of children rights

## **Issues**

1. Key terminologies
2. Types of exceptionalities
3. Common exceptionalities characteristic of the regular classroom
4. Referral process for exceptional children
5. Effective strategies for assisting exceptional students
6. Roles of the classroom teacher
7. Rights of the child

8. Violation of children's rights
9. Protection of children's rights
10. Government services for exceptional students
11. Experiences with exceptional students

## **Main Research Questions**

1. What are the definitions of some of the key terms relating to Special Education?
2. What are the various types of exceptionalities?
3. What types of exceptionalities/ disabilities have you or your colleagues encountered in your classroom over the course of your teaching career? Who did you report them to?
4. What are the various exceptionalities that Jamaican education system routinely provides for?
5. Where should children, identified as exceptional, be referred to for diagnosis, and assessment?
6. What kinds of strategies can be used to assist exceptional children in the classroom?
7. What are the roles and responsibilities of regular classroom teachers and special education teachers?
8. What are the duties of regular classroom teachers to exceptional children?
9. What are the rights of the child generally and exceptional children specifically?
10. Are there cases of children whose rights were violated?
11. What is the role of the CDA as it relates to the protection of children's rights within Jamaican classrooms?
12. Where and how should violation of children's rights, within classrooms, be reported?
13. What is the history of Special Education in Jamaica?
14. What is the function of the Special Education Unit, MOE?
15. Are there national instruments that recognise or enforce (e.g. policy, legislation, programming) the rights of exceptional children to education in Jamaica?
16. What are the names and locations of the various special education institutions in Jamaica?
17. What are the experiences of regular classroom teachers with exceptional children?

## Research Findings

### Definition of key terms

- **Exceptional students-** Exceptionality is a condition of difference. Exceptional students include those who have disabilities and those who have extraordinary gifts and talents.<sup>1</sup>
- **Disabled students-** The US Public Law 94-142 defines children with disabilities as those with *mental retardation, hearing impairments including deafness, speech or language impairments, visual impairments including blindness, serious emotional disturbance, orthopaedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, specific learning disabilities, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities, and who because of those impairments need special education related services.*<sup>2</sup>
- **Gifted/ talented students-** is used in respect to students, children, or youth means students, children, or youth who give evidence of high performance capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop such capabilities" (P.L. 103–382, Title XIV, p. 388)<sup>3</sup>
- **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)-** is the principle of PL94-142 is often cited as the reason for mainstreaming students with disabilities. The principle states that:  
  
*"... A student who has a disability should have the opportunity to be educated with non-disabled peers, to the greatest extent possible. They should have access to the general education curriculum, extracurricular activities, or any other program that non-disabled peers would be able to access. The student should be provided with supplementary aids and services necessary to achieve educational goals if placed in a setting with non-disabled peers. Should the nature or severity of his or her disability prevent the student from achieving these goals in a regular education setting, then the student would be placed in a more restrictive environment, such as a special classroom or a hospital program. Generally, the less opportunity a student has to interact and learn with non-disabled peers, the more that the setting is considered to be restricted"*<sup>4</sup>
- **Exceptional education/ Exceptional Student Education (ESE)-** usually refers to the education of gifted (also "talented") children, as well as children with physical or mental disabilities. These programs are funded and supported outside the normal class framework: elementary schools dedicating separate classes, wings, and schools (such as magnet schools); secondary schools substituting classes with honours or special-needs classes<sup>5</sup>
- **Special education-** is the educational provision for children whose levels of functioning deviate from the norm such that special programmes are necessary to facilitate or foster optimum learning<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Schultz, Jane B., et tal, Mainstreaming Exceptional Students..., Pg. 11-12, Allyn and Bacon, 1995

<sup>2</sup> See Ibid, Pg. 12

<sup>3</sup> See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gifted\\_children](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gifted_children)

<sup>4</sup> See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Least\\_Restrictive\\_Environment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Least_Restrictive_Environment)

<sup>5</sup> See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exceptional\\_education](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exceptional_education)

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.moeyc.gov.jm/divisions/ed/specialeducation/index.htm>

- **Mainstreaming-** is the practice of putting students who were once segregated into the regular curriculum with students who were not segregated. It is the social and instructional integration of exceptional students in a regular education class for at least a portion of the school day. Mainstreaming requires that two criteria be met: physical inclusion in a regular class and functional inclusion as evidenced by social and instructional integration with students who are not exceptional<sup>7</sup>
- **Inclusion-** full inclusion assumes no mandated segregation for any purpose based on status. Students are educated in regular classrooms all the time. They maybe grouped at different times during the day for different purposes but groups would likely include students with and without disabilities. Full inclusion is only one component as various degrees of inclusion are practiced in schools<sup>8</sup>

### Types of exceptionalities<sup>9</sup>

- **Orthopaedic & Health impairment-** Cerebral Palsy, Poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis, amputations, fractures, burns causing contractures
- **Sensory impairment & Communication disorders-** visual impairments, hearing impairments, communication disorders
- **Learning & behaviour disorders-** leaning disabilities, mental disabilities, behavioural disorders, Autism
- **Giftedness & talented students**

### Common exceptionalities characteristic of the regular classroom

- **Sensory impairment & Communication disorders-** visual impairment (blindness), communication disorder (stuttering)
- **Orthopaedic & Health impairment-** Cerebral Palsy, Poliomyelitis, Rickets, heart complications, HIV/AIDS
- **Learning & behaviour disorders-** mental disabilities (Down Syndrome), learning disabilities (slow learners), behavioural disorder (temper tantrums)

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<sup>7</sup> See Schultz, Jane B., et tal, Mainstreaming Exceptional Students..., Pg. 12, Allyn and Bacon, 1995

<sup>8</sup> See Ibid, Pg 12-13

<sup>9</sup> See See Schultz, Jane B., et tal, Mainstreaming Exceptional Students..., Pg. v-vi, Allyn and Bacon, 1995

## **Services for Exceptional Children in Jamaica<sup>10</sup>**

The programme of the Special Education Unit encompasses education for students three to 20 years with all types of difficulties including:

- Hearing Impairment (H.I.)
- Visual Impairment (V.I.)
- Learning Disabilities (L.D.)
- Physical Impairment (P.I.)
- Mental Retardation (M.R.)
- Giftedness

## **Referral process for exceptional children<sup>11</sup>**

Government formed the Mico C.A.R.E. Centre in Kingston in 1981 to evaluate and assess the needs of those requiring special education. The thrust behind the establishment of the centre was to fill a void which existed in the community for an organisation which catered to the multiple disabled. With the establishment of the centre, government is mandated to provide support services for the five to 12 year age group within the public and private school system. Children not within a school system are referred to an educational institution.

A child can be referred to the Centre by a school, a parent, a community worker or a doctor. If the child is accepted for evaluation, an in-depth assessment is done by a group of clinicians. Depending on the outcome of the assessment, a case conference is held involving both parent/guardian and teacher. The findings are discussed and recommendations are made. A scheduled number of assessments are made every week, and the Centre opens straight throughout the year, except on holidays.

## **Effective strategies for assisting exceptional students<sup>12</sup>**

### **Students with Limited Vision**

A student with a visual impairment could be low vision or blind, depending on the degree of impairment. It's important that teachers understand the nature and degree of the disability. Most students with visual impairments have had extensive involvement with other professionals, such as ophthalmologists and therapists. These professionals can suggest appropriate accommodation for individual students. All plans for these students should involve parents and these professionals, whenever possible. Most students with visual impairments are capable of attending their local school and can participate in the majority of school activities.

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<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.moeyc.gov.jm/divisions/ed/specialeducation/index.htm>

<sup>11</sup> See <http://www.moeyc.gov.jm/divisions/ed/specialeducation/specialisation.htm>

<sup>12</sup> See <http://snow.utoronto.ca/>

## **Classroom Strategies for Students with Limited Vision**

- Use familiar concrete materials as much as possible until the student is ready for a change
- Use concrete materials that are being used by other students in the class (good for socializing, sharing experiences, comparing achievement, maintaining integrity of curriculum)
- Use modelling of correct responses to visual environment so student can compare his/her responses to an accurate model
- Encourage student to measure his/her own progress through the use of charts, graphs, checklists and timed activities
- Change the environment (incrementally) so the student can practice transferring and generalizing skills in a safe situation, such as the classroom, hall or school yard
- Use a variety of age appropriate materials, including games
- Accompany all visual presentations with verbal narration
- Increase and vary the distances the student is expected to explore

## **Students with Hearing Impairments**

Students with hearing loss are as individual as members of any other group. They may tune out or attend. They may wish to communicate by signing or using oral approaches. A student's individual education plan will include specific recommendations, such as oral approaches (speech reading, auditory training, amplification) and manual approaches sign language, cued speech and finger spelling.

### **Classroom strategies for Students with Hearing Impairments**

#### **Seating:**

- Seat the student toward the front of the room and to one side with the better ear toward the teacher and class. The best set-up is the semicircle, which allows the student to see the faces of the teacher and the other students. Permit the student to move his/her seat if instruction is being given in another part of the room. Don't seat this student too close to audio-visual equipment, such as film projectors. The noise of the motor will drown out the sound of voices in the film, class, etc.

#### **Focus:**

- Ensure that the student is paying attention before giving instructions. Make sure that the student has an uninterrupted view of the teacher's face. During discussions, ask questions to make sure the student with the hearing loss understands.

#### **Support:**

- Set up a buddy system. The buddy can repeat your directions, give the hearing impaired student a photocopy of notes taken during films, repeat information coming over the PA system; making sure the hearing impaired student knows about important dates and cancellations.

#### **Belonging:**

- Encourage participation in extracurricular activities.

#### **Visual Aids**

- Speak first and then show visual clues, such as maps and charts.
- List page numbers, questions numbers, assignments, key points, and new vocabulary on the chalkboard.
- Use an overhead projector. This will allow you to face the class and give students a chance to speech read during the lesson.

### **Speech Reading:**

- Don't stand too close to the student because this distorts his/her view of your face.
- Keep your hands, papers, and books away from your face when you are speaking.
- Don't stand in front of a window or light source, as it will cast a shadow on your face.
- Don't turn your back while talking. It's difficult to speech read a moving target, so keep teacher movement to a minimum. Avoid speaking with your side or back to the class.
- Don't write on the chalkboard while you're talking.
- Speak naturally. Don't use a loud voice or exaggerated mouth movements.
- In a darkened room, a student can't speech read, so keep comments - or lights off - to a minimum.
- Instruction: Remember that discussion type lessons are very difficult for students with hearing impairments. You can make them more successful if you:
  - Pre-teach new vocabulary to the hearing impaired students
  - Question the students at regular intervals to ensure comprehension
  - Write an outline of the key points on the chalkboard before the lesson

### **Vocabulary Development:**

Vocabulary and complex sentence structures are often misunderstood by hard of hearing/deaf students. When they appear not to understand, try:

- Repeating the same words
- Rephrasing
- Simplifying the language
- Pre-teaching new vocabulary before a new unit, particularly in the content areas
- Using full length sentences. Single words or incomplete phrases may not convey full meaning to someone who is having difficulty hearing what is being said.

### **Gifted students**

#### **Noticeable Characteristics of Gifted Students:**

- Advanced cognitive ability and intellectual curiosity
- Sensitivity and creativity
- Capacity for intense motivation
- Occasional resistance to direction or interruption
- A critical attitude toward others
- Dislike for routine and drill
- Preference for individualized work, along with a need for Freedom of movement and action
- Inability to handle criticism and a vulnerability to peer group rejection
- Inconsistency between intellectual maturity and social, emotional, and physical development
- Stress caused by excessive pressure to perform
- Poor test performance and achievement in basic skill areas
- Daily work frequently incomplete or poorly done
- Gap between qualitative level of oral and written work
- Persistent dissatisfaction with work accomplished, low self-esteem
- Unrealistic self-expectation with goals too high or too low
- Inability to focus attention and concentrate efforts on tasks
- Advanced affective capacity; or difficulty in making and keeping friends

#### **Guidelines for Program Development for Gifted Students:**

- Teachers can differentiate the program for gifted students by changing the content, teaching and learning process, type of product that the student develops, and evaluation strategies
- Involve students in planning, implementing and evaluating learning experiences
- Emphasize process, rather than content. Allow flexibility in scope and sequence of the curriculum

- Relate content to broad-based issues, problems or themes. Integrate multiple disciplines into areas of study
- Provide students with opportunities to explore a self-selected topic, in depth
- Recognize and value different learning styles; value intuitive thinking
- Support the development of independent or self-directed problem-solving strategies
- Provide opportunities for open-ended inquiry and the development of higher level questioning skills
- Facilitate students in developing products which are new for them and/or which challenge existing ideas and which use new techniques, materials and forms
- Help students develop awareness, understanding and acceptance of oneself and others
- Evaluate student outcomes with techniques which include input by self, peer and teacher
- Provide opportunities to share ideas and products with others of similar abilities and/or interests
- Encourage risk-taking, spontaneity, experimentation without evaluation
- Encourage the development of effective communication skills
- Provide opportunities for the development of personal and group value systems
- Make use of community resources - human, material and technological.

### **Speaking:**

Students can -

- Make speeches, commercials, radio programs, improvisation
- Lead assemblies, conduct interviews and surveys
- Participate in debates and story-telling exercises using tapes and videos
- Learn a second language

### **Reading:**

Students can -

- Read novels in an area of interest, e.g., if interest is space, introduce science fiction
- Read a variety of types of material: biography, mystery, humour, plays, mythology, science fiction, poetry
- Tape stories for others in the school and community
- Provide book reviews for school and/or community newspapers
- Move through the curriculum more quickly

### **Writing:**

Students can -

- Learn word processing and other keyboarding skills
- Learn the mechanics of writing quickly and go on to advanced editing skills
- Write for a variety of purposes: class play, school newspaper, school pamphlets, advertising, script for video-taping, commercial publication
- Spend more time on writing projects by compacting another area of the curriculum
- Use advanced writing skills: similes, alliteration, flashback, foreshadowing, metaphors
- Move through the curriculum more quickly

### **Math:**

Students can -

- Learn independently in a related area, e.g. computer programming, electronics
- Solve difficult problems and create problems for the class
- Work on horizontal enrichment - topics of interest, math games
- Create many ways of solving the same problem
- Move through the curriculum more quickly

## **Environmental Studies:**

Students can -

- Get involved with independent studies or projects, e.g., study in the community
- Study the curriculum unit in depth or breadth
- Create games related to the content area: computer games, board games, etc.
- Develop a unit of study based on a topic of interest
- Move through the curriculum more quickly

## **Leadership:**

Students can -

- Lead and moderate small group situations, discussions and debates
- Plan class parties and trips, introduce and thank guests
- Organize games or develop different rules to form new game
- Develop decision-making and mediation skills
- Lead other students, e.g, team leader in a school play day, director of school play
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## **Interests:**

Students can -

- Learn skills by working on a reading program based on interests e.g. historical novels
- Move quickly through an area of strength to provide time for independent study in an area of interest
- Interact with a mentor
- Pursue areas of interest (perhaps instead of what the class is doing)
- Facilitate cross-grading or grouping according to interests

## **Types of Acceleration:**

- Compacting - covering the regular classroom curriculum in a faster and/or different manner to allow time for enrichment and or advanced subject matter
- Subject acceleration - taking one or more subject(s) in a higher grade
- Extended acceleration - completing three grades in two years
- Split grade acceleration - placing a gifted student in lower grade of split class. The student is then promoted two grades the following September or moved into extended acceleration
- Whole grade acceleration - completing two years' skills in one year. The student is then promoted two grades the following September
- Whole grade elimination - a gifted student is promoted following gap analysis and counselling
- Early admission to secondary school - allowing Grade 7/ 8 students to take secondary course(s) while still in attendance in elementary school.

## **Roles of the Regular & Special Education Teachers**

### **Perceived roles of regular classroom teachers**

#### **1. Content Preparation & Delivery**

- Plan lessons
- Deliver lessons

## **2. Networking, Administration & M&E**

- Mark register
- Monitor students to ensure that classes are attended liaise with parents/ guardians
- Counsel students
- Identify students needs and recommend them for available assistance (food, uniforms, and fees)
- Assess students
- Encourage students using a system of merits

## **3. Facilitate Learning**

- Engage students into a suitable learning environment
- Facilitate students' learning rather than merely delivering information
- Engage students into a suitable learning environment, and to facilitate their learning rather than merely delivering information

### **Additional Roles of Classroom Teachers<sup>13</sup>**

- Teachers act as facilitators or coaches, using interactive discussions and "hands-on" approaches to help students learn and apply concepts in subjects
- Teachers utilize "props" or "manipulatives" to help children understand abstract concepts, solve problems, and develop critical thought processes.
- Teachers provide the tools and the environment for their students to develop problem-solving and collaborative skills
- Responsibilities of secondary school teachers may include career guidance and job placement, as well as follow-ups with students after graduation
- Teachers design classroom presentations to meet students' needs and abilities. They also work with students individually
- Teachers plan, evaluate, and assign lessons; prepare, administer, and grade tests; listen to oral presentations; and maintain classroom discipline.
- Teachers observe and evaluate a student's performance and potential and increasingly are asked to use new assessment methods
- Teachers also grade papers, prepare report cards, and meet with parents and school staff to discuss a student's academic progress or personal problems.
- Teachers oversee study halls and homerooms, supervise extracurricular activities, and accompany students on field trips
- Teachers may identify students with physical or mental problems and refer the students to the proper authorities.

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<sup>13</sup> See <http://www.bls.gov/home.htm>

- Secondary school teachers occasionally assist students in choosing courses, colleges, and careers
- Teachers also participate in education conferences and workshops
- Teachers are increasingly involved in making decisions regarding the budget, personnel, textbooks, curriculum design, and teaching methods

### **Perceived role of the regular classroom teacher to exceptional students**

1. Identify exceptional students and refer them for diagnosis and placement in a suitable educational institution

### **Roles of Special Education Teachers<sup>14</sup>**

- Special education teachers work with children and youths who have a variety of disabilities. A small number of special education teachers work with students with mental retardation or autism, primarily teaching them life skills and basic literacy. However, the majority of special education teachers work with children with mild to moderate disabilities, using the general education curriculum, or modifying it, to meet the child's individual needs. Most special education teachers instruct students at the elementary, middle, and secondary school level, although some teachers work with infants and toddlers
- Special education teachers use various techniques to promote learning. Depending on the disability, teaching methods can include individualized instruction, problem-solving assignments, and small-group work. When students need special accommodations in order to take a test, special education teachers see that appropriate ones are provided, such as having the questions read orally or lengthening the time allowed to take the test
- Special education teachers help to develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for each special education student. The IEP sets personalized goals for each student and is tailored to the student's individual needs and ability. When appropriate, the program includes a transition plan outlining specific steps to prepare students with disabilities for middle school or high school or, in the case of older students, a job or postsecondary study. Teachers review the IEP with the student's parents, school administrators, and the student's general education teacher. Teachers work closely with parents to inform them of their child's progress and suggest techniques to promote learning at home
- Special education teachers design and teach appropriate curricula, assign work geared toward each student's needs and abilities, and grade papers and homework assignments
- Teachers are involved in the students' behavioural, social, and academic development, helping the students develop emotionally, feel comfortable in social situations, and be aware of socially acceptable behaviour.
- Teachers prepare special education students for daily life after graduation also is an important aspect of the job
- Teachers provide students with career counselling or help them learn routine skills, such as balancing a check book

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<sup>14</sup> See <http://www.bls.gov/home.htm>

- Special education teachers help general educators adapt curriculum materials and teaching techniques to meet the needs of students with disabilities They coordinate the work of teachers, teacher assistants, and related personnel, such as therapists and social workers, to meet the individualized needs of the student within inclusive special education programs
- Special education teachers communicate frequently with parents, social workers, school psychologists, occupational and physical therapists, school administrators, and other teachers. A large part of a special education teacher's job involves interacting with others.
- Special education teachers who work with infants usually travel to the child's home to work with the child and his or her parents. Many of these infants have medical problems that slow or preclude normal development
- Special education teachers show parents techniques and activities designed to stimulate the infant and encourage the growth and development of the child's skills. Toddlers usually receive their services at a preschool where special education teachers help them develop social, self-help, motor, language, and cognitive skills, often through the use of play
- Teachers use specialized equipment such as computers with synthesized speech, interactive educational software programs, and audiotapes to assist children

## Rights of the exceptional child<sup>15</sup>

- **UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child 1959 Principle 5:** The child who is physically, mentally or socially handicapped shall be given the special treatment, education and care required by his particular condition
- **UN DRC Principle 7:** The child is entitled to receive education, which shall be free and compulsory, at least in the elementary stages. He shall be given an education which will promote his general culture and enable him, on a basis of equal opportunity, to develop his abilities, his individual judgement, and his sense of moral and social responsibility, and to become a useful member of society. The best interests of the child shall be the guiding principle of those responsible for his education and guidance; that responsibility lies in the first place with his parents. The child shall have full opportunity for play and recreation, which should be directed to the same purposes as education; society and the public authorities shall endeavour to promote the enjoyment of this right
- **DRC Principle 10:** The child shall be protected from practices which may foster racial, religious and any other form of discrimination. He shall be brought up in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among peoples, peace and universal brotherhood, and in full consciousness that his energy and talents should be devoted to the service of his fellow men
- **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 Article 2.1:** States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

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<sup>15</sup> See <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm>

- **UN CRC Article 6.2:** States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child

- **CRC Article 23.1:** States Parties recognize that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community.

23.2. States Parties recognize the right of the disabled child to special care and shall encourage and ensure the extension, subject to available resources, to the eligible child and those responsible for his or her care, of assistance for which application is made and which is appropriate to the child's condition and to the circumstances of the parents or others caring for the child. 23.3. Recognizing the special needs of a disabled child, assistance extended in accordance with paragraph 2 of the present article shall be provided free of charge, whenever possible, taking into account the financial resources of the parents or others caring for the child, and shall be designed to ensure that the disabled child has effective access to and receives education, training, health care services, rehabilitation services, preparation for employment and recreation opportunities in a manner conducive to the child's achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development, including his or her cultural and spiritual development

23.4. States Parties shall promote, in the spirit of international cooperation, the exchange of appropriate information in the field of preventive health care and of medical, psychological and functional treatment of disabled children, including dissemination of and access to information concerning methods of rehabilitation, education and vocational services, with the aim of enabling States Parties to improve their capabilities and skills and to widen their experience in these areas. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

## **Violation of exceptional children's rights<sup>16</sup>**

Each of the minor plaintiffs in this case (MILLS V. BOARD OF EDUCATION, August 1, 1972) qualifies as an "exceptional" child. Plaintiffs allege in their complaint and defendants admit as follows:

- **PETER MILLS** is twelve years old, black, and a committed dependent ward of the District of Columbia resident at Junior Village. He was excluded from the Brent Elementary School on March 23, 1971, at which time he was in the fourth grade. Peter allegedly was a 'behaviour problem' and was recommended and approved for exclusion by the principal. Defendants have not provided him with a full hearing or with a timely and adequate review of his status. Furthermore, Defendants have failed to provide for his re-enrolment in the District of Columbia Public Schools or enrolment in private school. On information and belief, numerous other dependent children of school attendance age at Junior Village are denied a publicly-supported education. Peter remains excluded from any publicly-supported education

- **GEORGE LIDDELL, JR.**, is eight years old, black, resident with his mother, Daisy Liddell, at 601 Morton Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., and an AFDC recipient. George has never attended public school because of the denial of his application to the Maury Elementary School on the ground that he required a special class. George allegedly was retarded. Defendants have not provided him with a full hearing or with a timely and adequate review of his status. George remains excluded from all publicly-supported education, despite a medical opinion that he is capable of profiting from schooling, and despite his mother's efforts to secure a tuition grant from Defendants

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<sup>16</sup> See <http://toulaw.edu/Patch/Mills/>

- **STEVEN GASTON** is eight years old, black, resident with his mother, Ina Gaston, at 714 9th Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. and unable to afford private instruction. He has been excluded from the Taylor Elementary School since September, 1969, at which time he was in the first grade. Steven allegedly was slightly brain-damaged and hyperactive, and was excluded because he wandered around the classroom. Defendants have not provided him with a full hearing or with a timely and adequate review of his status. Steven was accepted in the Contemporary School, a private school, provided that tuition was paid in full in advance. Despite the efforts of his parents, Steven has remained on a waiting list for the requisite tuition grant from Defendant school system and excluded from all publicly-supported education
- **MICHAEL WILLIAMS** is sixteen years old, black, resident at Saint Elizabeth's Hospital, Washington, D.C., and unable to afford private instruction. Michael is epileptic and allegedly slightly retarded. He has been excluded from the Sharpe Health School since October, 1969, at which time he was temporarily hospitalized. Thereafter Michael was excluded from school because of health problems and school absences. Defendants have not provided him with a full hearing or with a timely and adequate review of his status. Despite his mother's efforts, and his attending physician's medical opinion that he could attend school, Michael has remained on a waiting list for a tuition grant and excluded from all publicly-supported education
- **JANICE KING** is thirteen years old, black, resident with her father, Andrew King, at 233 Anacostia Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C., and unable to afford private instruction. She has been denied access to public schools since reaching compulsory school attendance age, as a result of the rejection of her application, based on the lack of an appropriate educational program. Janice is brain-damaged and retarded, with right hemiplegia, resulting from a childhood illness. Defendants have not provided her with a full hearing or with a timely and adequate review of her status. Despite repeated efforts by her parents, Janice has been excluded from all publicly-supported education
- **JEROME JAMES** is twelve years old, black, resident with his mother, Mary James, at 2512 Ontario Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C., and an AFDC recipient. Jerome is a retarded child and has been totally excluded from public school. Defendants have not given him a full hearing or a timely and adequate review of his status. Despite his mother's efforts to secure either public school placement or a tuition grant, Jerome has remained on a waiting list for a tuition grant and excluded from all publicly supported education

## Protection of children's rights

The CDA is responsible for protecting, responding to, and following up on all issues concerning the violation of children's (ages 0-18 years) rights. The CDA maintains a Children's Registry at its head office located at 2-4 King Street, Kingston, Telephone 967-1100-1. Violations of all children's rights should first be reported to this Registry. Subsequent to the report an investigation will be carried out by Social Workers and other necessary professionals, and upon completion of investigations the reporting party will be contacted by CDA officers.

## **Government services for exceptional students<sup>17</sup>**

### **History of Special Education Programming in Jamaica:**

Education for children with disabilities was introduced by parents out of their concern for the educational needs of their children. This initiative later attracted interest groups, which resulted in the formation of non-government organizations (NGOs). They later became advocates for the cause and provided funding for the schools that were established.

In 1973, the Government of Jamaica introduced free education for all, which had implications for the education of children with exceptionalities. In light of this new direction, the NGOs were empowered to increase their advocacy for the inclusion of children with special needs.

In 1974, the government agreed to assume responsibility for the recurrent cost of the schools including the payment of teachers' salaries, while the organisations would continue to own and operate the schools. The government also pledged its support in providing for those children who could benefit from education in the mainstream.

Through a development co-operation agreement entered into by the Government of Jamaica and the Dutch Government in 1975, assistance was received from the latter for the establishment of a formal Special Education Programme in Jamaica.

The following were implemented as part of that agreement:

- Training of teachers in Special Education at the Mico Teachers' College;
- The establishment of the Mico Child Assessment and Research in Education (Mico C.A.R.E.) to provide diagnostic and therapeutic services;
- Extension of the physical facilities of the St. Christopher's School for the Deaf;
- The establishment of a Bachelor's Degree in Special Education at the Mico Teachers' College in collaboration with the University of the West Indies (U.W.I.);
- The building of six Special Education Units attached to regular Primary and All-Age schools. These units were built to facilitate the concept of mainstreaming, which provides for the placement of students with special educational needs in the least restrictive environment. The units were to accommodate students with varying disabilities within the mild to moderate levels of disability.

In 1989, the Special Education Administrative Unit was established with a mandate to secure appropriate opportunities for students with special needs in the mainstream as well as in special schools. The main function is the supervision of special education programmes island wide.

In 1998, a Module on Special Education was introduced in all Teachers' Colleges in order to provide teachers in training with a basic understanding of the special needs of children and to equip them with some basic strategies for working with them. Currently there are three institutions offering training in Special Education – Mico Teachers' College in conjunction with the U.W.I. and Sam Sharpe Teachers' College.

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<sup>17</sup> See <http://www.moeyc.gov.jm/divisions/ed/specialeducation/schools.htm>

Individuals with exceptionalities, irrespective of the level and severity, are marginalised in terms of access and equity to educational provisions at all levels of the education system.

The lack of awareness, knowledge and training on the part of administrators, educators, advocates, parents and service providers including medical personnel, impact negatively on the overall growth and development of persons with exceptionalities. In addition, resources to appropriately address the needs of students are often very limited, frustrating workers and impeding positive outcomes. Inadequate assessment facilities, particularly in rural areas, personnel to work with children and youth with specific difficulties often undermine the ability of teachers and students to optimise performance levels.

The lack of opportunities and the capacity for self-determination do not afford the respect for individuals with exceptionalities in securing valued positions in the society that is consistent with their individual needs, interest and abilities.

### **History of the Special Education Unit:**

This Unit was established in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture in January 1989 and is located at Caenwood Centre, 37 Arnold Road, Kingston 5. Prior to that, the registered Special Education schools were monitored by the Early Childhood Unit. Presently, there is a staff of seven officers, a secretary and a technician.

The Unit consists of a Braille and Large Print Programme that reproduces all national examinations and primary curriculum support materials for blind and visually impaired students and their teachers.

### **Objectives of the Special Education Unit:**

- To secure teaching/learning opportunities for students with special needs throughout the education system.
- To plan, implement, monitor Special Education programmes.
- To secure access, equity and quality education for students with special needs.

### **Roles and functions of the Special Education Unit:**

- Supervision of Special Education schools, units and programmes island-wide. The schools are categorised as Government-owned and Government-aided. There are also private community-based facilities some of which are partially funded by the government. There is at least one Special Education facility in each parish. Over 3,400 students are enrolled in these schools with 300 teachers. The teacher pupil ratio varies from 1:5 to 1:16 depending on the type and severity of learning problems.
- Provides support, curriculum supervision, monitoring services and facilitates training, networking, assessment and programme planning. It is a resource base for expertise, advice and hands-on information across all levels of the education system. This necessitates collaboration with all the other units within the Ministry, agencies offering services to persons with special needs and other stakeholders.

### **Activities of the Special Education Unit:**

- Supervision and training of resource teachers in regular schools
- In service training for teachers in special and regular schools
- The development of partnerships with schools for mainstreaming and resource help for children with special needs
- Educational assessment of under-achievers

- Sensitisation for parent groups, Administrators, Education Officers, Principals and Board Members
- Promotion of Special Education Intervention across the curriculum
- Staff development exercises in schools upon requests
- Assistance in establishing Resource Room in regular schools – Primary and High

**Schools for the Mentally Disabled:**

- i. The Randolph Lopez School of Hope  
7 Golding Avenue  
Kingston 7  
Tel: 977-1118, 927-2054  
Satellites: Shortwood, Liguanea, Best Care, St. Judes, Our Lady of the Angels, Balcombe Drive, Yallahs, Maxfield, Elletson, Harbour View, St. Peter Claver, Franklyn Town, Stony Hill, Port Antonio
- ii. The Woodlawn School of Special Education  
19 Woodlawn Road  
Mandeville  
Manchester  
Tel: 962-6679  
Satellite: Santa Cruz
- iii. The Edgehill School of Special Education  
Edgehill Road  
St Ann's Bay  
St Ann  
Tel: 972-9761  
Satellites: Port Maria, Ocho Rios
- iv. The Windsor School of Special Education  
Windsor Road  
Spanish Town  
St Catherine  
Tel: 984-7115  
Satellites: Greater Portmore Learning Centre, May Pen Learning Centre, Linstead
- v. The Llandilo School of Special Education  
Llandillo  
Savanna-la-Mar  
Westmoreland  
Tel: 955-4849  
Satellites: Lucea, Montego Bay
- vi. Carberry Court Special School  
Hope Gardens  
Kingston 6  
Tel: 977-3176

vii. Government Special Education Units:

- Ocho Rios Primary  
Milford  
Ocho Rios  
St. Ann  
Tel: 974-2432
- Catherine Hall Primary  
Westgreen  
Montego Bay  
St. James  
Tel: 952-5488
- Duncans All-Age  
Duncans  
Trelawny  
Tel: 954-2064
- Mico Practising Primary and Junior High  
1A Marescaux Road  
Kingston 5  
Tel: 968-7831
- Hope Valley Experimental  
2 University Road  
Kingston 7  
Tel: 927-2473/977-7081
- Hazard Primary  
May Pen  
Clarendon  
Tel: 902-0115/986-9736
- Lyssons Primary  
Lyssons  
St. Thomas  
Tel: 982-2536

**Schools for the Deaf:**

- i. Lister Mair Gilby High School for the Deaf  
Hope Estates  
Kingston 7  
Tel: 927-1261  
Satellites: Woodside Unit, Port Antonio Unit
- ii. Danny Williams School for the Deaf & JAD Pre-School Centre  
Hope Estates  
Kingston 7  
Tel: 927-1293  
Satellite: Excelsior Unit
- iii. St Christopher's School for the Deaf  
Browns Town  
St. Ann  
Tel: 975-2226

**Private Institutions:**

- iv. Caribbean Christian Centre for the Deaf  
Knockpatrick  
Manchester  
Tel: 904-9042
- v. Caribbean Christian Centre for the Deaf  
Granville  
St James  
Tel: 601-1803
- vi. Caribbean Christian Centre for the Deaf  
Cassia Park Road  
St Andrew  
Tel: 923-6103
- vii. Maranatha School for the Deaf  
Top Hill  
St Elizabeth  
Tel: 965-1738

**Schools for the Blind:**

- i. The Salvation Army School for the Blind  
57 Mannings Hill Road  
Kingston 8  
Tel: 925-1362

**Non-government Organisations (NGOs)/ other facilities:**

- ii. McCam Child Development Centre  
231 Old Hope Road  
Kingston 6  
Tel: 977-0189
- iii. Clarendon Group for the Disabled  
2A Palm Avenue  
May Pen  
Clarendon  
Tel: 986-4202
- iv. 3D Projects  
Enos Barrett Centre  
14 Monk Street  
Spanish Town  
St. Catherine  
Tel: 984-2840
- v. Rural Services for Children with Disabilities  
191 Constant Spring Road  
Kingston 8  
Tel: 931-4584
- vi. Jamaica Association for Children with Learning Disabilities  
7 Leinster Road  
Kingston 5

- Tel: 929-4341
- vii. The S.T.E.P. Centre  
167 Old Hope Road  
Kingston 6  
Tel: 977-3720
- viii. Mico CARE Centre  
5 Manhattan Road  
Kingston 5  
Tel: 929-7720
- ix. Alpha Boys' Home (School)  
26 South Camp Road  
Kingston CSO  
Tel: 928-1345
- x. St. John Bosco Boys' Home (School)  
Hatfield  
Mandeville  
Manchester  
Tel: 963-0611
- xi. The Jamaican Institute for Excellence in Education  
5 Lyncourt  
Kingston 8  
Tel: 925-2092
- xii. Jamaica Association for the Deaf  
Hope Estates  
Kingston 6  
Tel: 927-1098
- xiii. Jamaica Association on Mental Retardation  
7 Golding Avenue  
Kingston 7  
Tel: 927-2054
- xiv. **Resource rooms:** Alpha Primary, Ascot Primary, Catherine Hall Primary, Chapleton Primary, Duncans Primary, Eltham High, Ewarton Primary, Friendship Primary, George Headley Primary, Hope Valley Experimental, Horizon Park Primary, Innswood Primary, Jessie Ripoll Primary, Maxfield Park Primary, McAuley Primary, McIntosh Memorial, Mona Primary, Moneague Primary & Junior High, New Day Primary, New Providence Primary, Ocho Rios Primary, Oracabessa High, Port Antonio Primary, Porus Primary, St Catherine Primary, St John's Road Primary, St. Richards Primary, Villa Road Primary & Junior High, Waterford Primary

## Experiences with exceptional students

### Case 1: Primary School Teacher, St. Catherine, Jamaica

Trisha is a regular classroom teacher in a local primary school in the parish of St. Catherine, Jamaica. She is a graduate of the Mico Teacher's College, where she specialised in Primary Education. She has been teaching for the past 5 years, and has had experiences teaching exceptional students. In addition, she has had opportunities to dialogue with other teachers in her school about their experiences with exceptional students. Over the course of her career, Trisha has taught students with Cerebral Palsy, temper tantrums and other behaviour disorders. In assisting these exceptional students Trisha noted that,

*"...In the case of the student with Cerebral Palsy, I had a meeting with the parents, informing them that I could not manage to provide the necessary assistance needed (the child used a wheel chair and required assistance to be lifted from the chair onto the toilet and back to the chair). In addition, I informed the Reading Specialist about the situation. In the case of the child with temper tantrums, I would provide additional and more challenging activities, so as to engage him fully. In the case of some of those with behaviour disorders, I just can't manage, and I just leave them alone."*

Trisha noted that she did not have the requisite skills for assisting exceptional students. Despite her ability to identify the Mico Care Centre as a Special Education institution in Jamaica, she argued that she had no knowledge about where to refer exceptional students identified within her classroom. Trisha informed me that when she was a student-teacher at Mico Teacher's College, Special Education was available as a separate specialisation, and that no Special Education course or module was integrated in her area of specialisation.

### Case 2: Secondary School Teacher, St. James, Jamaica

Carmen is a Business Studies teacher, for grades 10 and 11 in a local high school in the parish of St. James, Jamaica. She is a graduate of the Northern Caribbean University, with specialisation in Business Management, and the Vocational Training and Development Institute (VTDI), where she pursued a post-graduate diploma in Education & Training. She has been teaching for the past 18 years, and has had experiences teaching exceptional students. In addition, she has had opportunities to dialogue with other teachers in her school about their experiences with exceptional students. Over the course of her career, Carmen has taught students with Poliomyelitis, heart complications, stuttering, and learning & behaviour disorders. In assisting these exceptional students Carmen noted that,

*"...I teach those with physical exceptionalities like those who do not have such disorders. They mainly have special needs in classes, which require physical involvement, from which they are exempted if necessary. I have slow learners, but I don't know if it is as a result of a learning disability or the result of other socio-economic difficulties within their homes."*

Carmen noted that she had little or no knowledge about how to assist exceptional students. She could not name a specific Special Education institution in Jamaica, but informed me that *"there are some in my parish, but I don't know where they are and what exceptionality they specialise in."* In her past experience, Carmen referred suspected exceptional students to the school's Guidance Counsellor, who referred relevant cases to counsellors at the regional hospital. Carmen informed me that when she was a trainee teacher at the VTDI, Special Education was not integrated in the programme of study.