

BOOK REVIEW

Lois Sachs Johnson,¹ M.S.

A Review of Educating Handicapped Children

REFERENCE: Martin, Reed, *Educating Handicapped Children*, Research Press, Champaign, Ill., 1979, 181 pages, \$6.95.

This is a book about advocacy of the law, and it gives direct answers for all situations where implementation is blocked by the educational bureaucracy and professionals. In a concise, incisive approach Mr. Martin discusses first the challenge of change and the many laws that finally led up to Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. Schools were charged to include all handicapped school-age children in appropriate programs of public education. Schools were given two full years to get ready for the act's requirements, from the fall of 1975 to October 1977. The regulations require full compliance with a "free appropriate public education," with the deadline of 1 Sept. 1978.

The above is the law of the land. Taking this and financial reporter's Sylvia Porter's statement that it costs \$25 000 to rehabilitate a young quadriplegic (1976) but \$750 000 to institutionalize that same person with an average life expectancy, it would seem that the rational approach of the school system and various funding agencies would be "mainstreaming."

As Mr. Martin shows, the law and its rational application are met with resistance, postponements, subterfuge, and other delaying tactics by the professional sector in education whose duty it is to carry out the law. The resulting frustration is felt by parents and children who are affected (or should be) by the change.

Frustration is also felt by teachers and others directly involved with teaching and educating our children whether it be in specialized segregated systems or within the regular school systems.

The author addresses each of the above segments of the population. In nine information-packed chapters that can be clearly understood by both lay and professional people, he discusses "the challenge of change," "the sources of law," "eligible children—an affirmative responsibility," "a free public education," "an 'appropriate' public education," "individualized education program," "the least restrictive alternative," "procedural safeguards," and "record keeping and confidentiality."

It is important to note that in each chapter Martin speaks to the professional educator but advocates for and explains *in detail* the many options available to parents of handicapped children. He goes one step further and includes the handicapped population in the decision-making process, and the inclusion is backed up by existing laws.

¹President, Redesign for Ability, 328 Cumnor Ave., Glen Ellyn, Ill. 60137.

A final section of this book, the Appendix, lists all the laws referred to in the book. It is a most important part because Martin devotes almost a third of the book to legal explanations and how they should and can be used.

The rights of the handicapped child are now legislated. The implementation is a different story. One of the biggest stumbling blocks occurs in personnel. Teachers say they have not been prepared for the developmentally disabled, the blind, and the deaf. Teachers state that the school system does not provide for their learning to understand the various disabilities that may confront them. Martin states in no uncertain terms that Section 504 says:

Handicapped students' teachers must be trained in the instruction of persons with the handicap in question and appropriate materials and equipment must be available. The Department is aware that the supply of adequately trained teachers may, at least at the outset of the imposition of this requirement, be insufficient to meet the demand of all recipients. This factor will be considered in determining the appropriateness of the remedy for noncompliance with this section. The requirement is that personnel must be trained in dealing with the handicap in question (4 May 1977).

This small book should be required reading for staff, administrative personnel, parents, and therapists who are a consistent part of the lives of the disabled. School boards, private rehabilitation agencies, the medical profession, and attorneys should use it and have it in their reference libraries. Reed Martin has taken a complicated, emotional subject and unravelled its complexities to a degree never done heretofore.