

**EDUCATIONAL CONCERNS OF THE HANDICAPPER**

**An Analysis of Issues and Implications**

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A "handicapped person," as defined in section R 340.1702 of the Michigan Administrative Code, is

a person determined by an individualized educational planning committee or a hearing officer to have a characteristic or set of characteristics pursuant to R 340.1703 to R 340.1714 that necessitates special education and related services.

Determination of an impairment cannot be based solely on behaviors relating to environmental, cultural, or economic differences. The rights of handicapped persons are specifically singled out in the Constitution of the State of Michigan (Article 8, Section 8) which states that "institutions, programs and services for the care, treatment, education, or rehabilitation of those inhabitants who are physically, mentally, or otherwise seriously handicapped, shall always be fostered and supported."

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## INTRODUCTION

Based on data from the National Center for Health Statistics, an estimated 900,000 Michigan residents are physically and/or mentally handicapped, one-tenth of the state's total population. Of these 900,000, approximately 140,000 are in the K-12 school age group (5-17 years) while 50,000 are in the postsecondary age group, 18-22 years. Highest rates are in the 65+ age group due to disabilities related to chronic conditions such as diabetes and stroke.

TABLE 1

Estimated Number of Noninstitutionalized Michigan  
Residents Aged 16-64 with Specified Disabilities

July 1, 1981

TOTAL STATE POPULATION	9,258,344	
NONINSTITUTIONAL POPULATION AGED 16-64	5,916,060	100.0%
NONINSTITUTIONAL DISABLED AGED 16-64	548,782	9.3%
Visual	10,866	0.2
Hearing	4,335	0.1
Orthopedic and Functional Absence or Amputation of Limb	138,293	2.5
Mental Illness	7,354	0.1
Behavioral Disorders & Addictions	64,976	1.1
Mental Retardation	54,165	0.9
Other Physical Disorders:	52,957	0.9
Epilepsy and Nervous	8,616	0.1
Cardiac and Circulatory	95,598	1.6
Respiratory	25,463	0.4
Digestive	32,433	0.5
Speech	6,091	0.1
Other	47,635	0.8

SOURCE: Unpublished data, Michigan Rehabilitation Services, Michigan State Board of Education, August 1983.

Special education programs serve 8,265 children aged 0-4, 139,552 aged 5-17, and 12,822 aged 18-25 years. Handicapped students have a wide range of disabilities. One-third of the 5-17 year old handicappers have learning disabilities, closely followed by those with speech and language impairments. Nearly 15 percent in this age group are mentally impaired and 5 percent (7,000) have a variety of physical disabilities, including 800 who are blind or visually impaired and 2,500 who are deaf or hearing impaired. Some handicappers are enrolled in special education programs while others attend regular K-12 classes. In recent years there has been a decrease in the number of students in this age group with identified hearing or visual impairments, but the number who are emotionally impaired or learning disabled has increased. This rise may reflect the release of some emotionally impaired or learning disabled individuals from mental health facilities into the community.

TABLE 2

Number of Students in Special Education Programs by Type of Disability and Age -- Michigan, 1982-1983

PRIMARY TYPE OF DISABILITY	TOTAL	A G E			
		0-4	5-12	13-17	18-25
Educable-Mentally Impaired	17,738	347	7,402	7,710	2,279
Trainable-Mentally Impaired	7,672	322	1,853	1,946	3,551
Severe-Mentally Impaired	3,116	217	716	651	1,532
Emotionally Impaired	20,319	188	9,147	9,849	1,135
Learning Disabled	54,427	287	27,275	24,171	2,694
Hearing Impaired	2,056	218	939	718	181
Deaf	1,120	79	440	464	137
Visually Impaired	785	92	333	276	84
Blind	232	25	114	65	28
Physical & Other Health Impairments	5,180	1,249	2,233	1,303	395
Severe-Multiple Impaired	1,962	209	737	408	608
Speech & Language Impairments	44,359	3,944	38,409	1,873	133
Pre-Primary Impaired	1,369	1,078	290	1	-----
Autistic	304	10	156	73	65
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>160,639</b>	<b>8,265</b>	<b>90,044</b>	<b>49,508</b>	<b>12,822</b>
Percent of Population in Specified Age Group	3.8	1.2	7.5	6.6	0.9

SOURCE: Unpublished data, Special Education Service Area, Michigan State Board of Education, August 1983.

Comparable statistics for Michigan's 15 public colleges and universities are not centrally available. Data from Michigan State University suggest that the number of handicapped in these four-year colleges and universities, while increasing, is still much smaller (900-1,200) than in the primary and secondary schools. While a majority have mobility impairments, others have visual, hearing, and learning disabilities. Less than 5 percent of all 18-22 year olds with handicaps are known to be attending a public college or university in this state compared with approximately 30 percent for all residents aged 18-22.

TABLE 3

Distribution of Program Users by Characteristics and Year  
Michigan State University

SCHOOL YEAR	PRIMARY TYPE OF DISABILITY					TOTAL
	MOBILITY	VISUAL	HEARING	LEARNING	OTHER	
1979- 1980	57	33	13	9	24	136
1980- 1981	59	37	9	8	38	151
1981- 1982	76	35	13	14	31	169
1982- 1983	107	29	18	15	18	187

SOURCE: Office of Programs for Handicapper Students, Michigan State University, September 1983.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND -- PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The state's responsibility for assuring the educational rights of its handicapped residents is stated in the Michigan Constitution (Article 8, Section 8). This subsequently was reinforced and detailed by Public Act 198 of 1971 which mandated the availability of special education programs and services in all K-12 school districts. This act served as a model for other states and as a guide for federal legislation (Public Law 94-142) enacted in 1975 which matched national requirements with funding support for programming.

Education of the handicapped has assumed growing importance in recent years. While Michigan's total public school enrollment declined 22.5 percent (from 2.2 million to 1.7 million) in the last eight years, the number of students in special education classes increased 38.2 percent (from 116,261 to 160,639). Much of this increase occurred in 1975, following the implementation of Public Act 198 of 1971. As a result of this trend, the proportion

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of all public school students aged 5-17 enrolled in special programs for the handicapped nearly doubled, from 4.6 percent to 8.2 percent.

TABLE 4

Number of Students and Personnel In Special Education Programs  
1974-1975 to 1982-1983

<u>SCHOOL YEAR</u>	<u>STUDENTS</u>	<u>PERSONNEL</u>	<u>NUMBER OF STUDENTS PER PERSONNEL</u>
1974-1975	116,261	7,621	15.3
1975-1976	147,441	8,916	16.5
1976-1977	151,580	10,217	14.8
1977-1978	155,270	10,819	14.4
1978-1979	160,522	11,597	13.8
1979-1980	159,398	12,507	12.7
1980-1981	160,187	12,980	12.3
1981-1982	158,479	11,576 <sup>a</sup>	13.7
1982-1983	160,639	N.A.	N.A.

SOURCE: Staffing Patterns in Special Education 1974-1982, Special Education Service Area, Michigan State Board of Education, December 1982.

<sup>a</sup>Reported state-funded personnel only.

TABLE 5

Number of Students in Special Education Programs for the  
Handicapped and Expenditures for Education,  
1974-1975 to 1982-1983

<u>SCHOOL YEAR</u>	<u>NUMBER OF STUDENTS</u>	<u>EXPENDITURE (MILLIONS)</u>	<u>EXPENDITURE PER STUDENT</u>
1974-1975	116,261	N.A.	N.A.
1975-1976	147,441	\$259.0	\$1,756
1976-1977	151,580	295.0	1,946
1977-1978	155,270	328.4	2,115
1978-1979	160,522	379.0	2,361
1979-1980	159,398	431.3	2,706
1980-1981	160,187	480.2	2,998
1981-1982	158,479	480.3	3,031
1982-1983	160,639	518.6	3,228 <sup>a</sup>

SOURCE: Unpublished data, Michigan State Board of Education, August 1983.

<sup>a</sup>See Table B in Appendix for breakdown.

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Based on national data, the cost of special education is estimated to be twice as great as the regular cost of education per pupil. For some categories of special students, such as the blind, it is as much as five times as large. Total expenditures for the education of the handicapped in Michigan's public schools have doubled since the implementation of the Michigan Mandatory Special Education Act (Public Act 198 of 1971) and exceeded \$500 million for the first time in 1982. Approximately half of this amount was provided by the state. Special programs account for nearly one-quarter of the \$1.2 billion general school aid funds appropriated for 1983.

TABLE 6

Ratio of Total Cost of Special Education to Total Cost  
of Regular Education per Child by Age  
Level and Type of Handicap

Handicapping Condition	Ratio			
	Preschool	Elementary	Secondary	All Ages Combined
Learning Disability	2.06	2.72	2.78	2.74
Educable Mental Retardation	2.10	2.40	2.23	2.30
Trainable Mental Retardation	2.86	3.08	3.64	3.34
Severe Mental Retardation	3.24	3.64	3.60	3.59
Serious Emotional Disturbance	1.98	3.56	4.15	3.81
Profound Deafness	4.65	5.17	3.15	4.43
Partial Hearing	3.55	2.95	3.15	3.09
Functional Blindness	4.00	7.11	5.40	5.86
Partial Sightedness	1.97	2.46	3.18	2.74
Orthopedic Impairment	3.09	2.03	2.15	2.15
Other Health Impairment	1.41	1.30	1.67	1.52
Speech Impairment	1.51	1.34	1.56	1.37
Multiple Impairment	5.69	4.34	4.71	4.63
ALL	2.14	1.98	2.48	2.17

SOURCE: J. S. Kakalik, W. S. Furry, M.A. Thomas, and M. F. Carney,  
The Cost of Special Education. U. S. Department of Education,  
November 1981.

Total public school enrollment is projected to decrease further in 1983 and in subsequent years before leveling off in the late 1980s. However, with improved testing and other case-finding methods and efforts, the number of students enrolled in special education classes is likely to remain at or above current levels during the remainder of this decade. Speech- and language-impaired children are concentrated in the 5-12 age group and their numbers decrease rapidly thereafter. Emotionally impaired children are

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detected proportionally twice as frequently at ages 13 through 17 as they are between 5 and 12 years. The percentage of all students with known handicapping conditions requiring special education, therefore, can be expected to continue to rise.

Schools have a responsibility to train the handicapped in "the most appropriate setting." Wherever possible, therefore, they should be educated in regular classes with nonhandicapped children. Implementation may require sensitivity training of classroom teachers to eliminate attitudinal barriers which hamper or retard effective integration of handicapped and nonhandicapped students.

The expenditure per student in special classes increased an annual average of 6.2 percent in the last three years. If this increase should continue at or near this level, accompanied by some rise in enrollment, the cost of Michigan's special education programs would range between 850 million dollars and one billion dollars by 1990. The state's share of this cost would then amount to about one-third of total general school aid funds.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND -- PUBLIC COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Michigan has no legislation related to education of the handicapped at its public colleges and universities comparable to its K-12 legislation and provides no direct state funding for this purpose. Equal access is assured through the state's Handicappers Civil Rights Act (Public Act 220 of 1976); however, implementation is left up to each school. A number of complaints have been filed which have been resolved internally or through mediation by the state Department of Civil Rights.

Until recent years most of Michigan's public colleges and universities had no programs and services specifically for the handicapped and attracted few students with disabilities. The first program was at Ferris State College (Big Rapids). One of the earliest continuous programs staffed by handicappers was Michigan State University's Office of Programs for Handicapped Students; it was established in the early 1970s. This was followed by similar programs at Wayne State University, University of Michigan, and other major colleges and universities. In each instance the activity was developed and fostered internally without state support or coordination. In some cases this action may have been hastened by Section 504 of the U.S. Rehabilitation Act (Public Law 95-602 of 1978) with its potential loss of federal funds by public institutions which do not provide equal access to the handicapped. A primary concern of college/university programs for the handicapped is financial since ongoing federal and state funding support is not assured.

### CURRENT SOURCES OF OPERATING FUNDS

In recent years, approximately half of the cost of special education for the handicapped at the K-12 level has come from a variety of state sources. This includes Section 52 of the School Aid Act which provides for reimbursement by the state of a portion of the added costs of operating all special education programs and services; Section 53 which requires the state to reimburse the total added cost incurred by intermediate and local districts

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providing educational programs for handicapped pupils residing in Department of Mental Health institutions, or in nursing and foster homes under contract with the Department; Section 54 which provides state aid to intermediate districts paying part of the cost for residents attending the School for the Blind and/or Deaf; and Section 56 which provides state aid to assure that each intermediate school district receives at least \$46 per pupil for every mill levied for special education. The state also provides funding for (1) residential costs at the School for the Blind (Lansing) and the School for the Deaf (Flint), (2) special education transportation, (3) retirement and Social Security costs for special education personnel, and (4) "circuit breaker" income tax refunds on property taxes levied to provide intermediate and local special education revenue.

State funding for the handicapped at the public colleges and universities is much more limited, probably less than \$1 million per year. Financial assistance is not a categorical budget line item but is provided directly or indirectly through a number of sources. The state, through Michigan Rehabilitation Services, has also provided matching funds for federal financial support of handicapped students at community colleges and at public four-year colleges and universities under the U.S. Vocational Rehabilitation Act. This state match in 1981-82 amounted to \$156,902 for students in four-year colleges and universities and \$121,044 for those attending community colleges.

Federal financial aid for special education at the primary and secondary level is based largely on Public Law 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act, enacted in 1975. The amount of assistance provided to Michigan increased fourfold between 1975 and 1980, from \$9.2 million to \$39.2 million, and it has remained relatively constant in the last three years. Federal funds accounted for 8.0 percent of the total expenditure for special education of the handicapped in 1982, a decrease from the 8.7 percent provided in 1980.

Federal funding support for handicapped services and programs at the college and university level is based on special grants and contracts (primarily from the U.S. Department of Education) and therefore varies from year to year and between schools. Section 504 of the 1973 U.S. Rehabilitation Act (as amended), while mandating equal access by the handicapped to public institutions such as colleges and universities, does not provide funding for this specific purpose. Federal funds for vocational rehabilitation of the handicapped are available under Title I of the Act on an 80%-20% match with state funds. This money has been used for tuition assistance and related support (i.e., transportation, books, room and board) by students for whom a college education is deemed to be part of the vocational rehabilitation process. In 1981-82, 1,263 students in community colleges and 1,025 in public four-year colleges and universities were assisted through this program. Total funding amounted to \$868,000 for tuition and \$522,000 for related needs. The amount available was restricted by the state appropriation of matching funds.

TABLE 7

Costs of Special Education For The Handicapped In Michigan  
by Source of Funds<sup>a</sup> -- 1975-1976 to 1982-1983<sup>b</sup>

SOURCE OF FUNDS	SCHOOL YEAR							
	1975- 1976	1976- 1977	1977- 1978	1978- 1979	1979- 1980	1980- 1981	1981- 1982	1982- 1983 <sup>b</sup>
Federal	\$ 9.2	\$ 15.5	\$ 15.9	\$ 27.1	\$ 38.5	\$ 42.0	\$ 41.2	\$ 41.5
State	130.3	142.6	154.7	162.3	180.9	228.0	235.0	255.2
Intermediate	63.3	70.7	78.6	89.0	99.6	210.2	204.1	221.9
Local	56.2	66.2	79.2	100.6	112.3			
TOTAL	\$259.0	\$295.0	\$328.4	\$379.0	\$431.3	\$480.2	\$480.3	\$518.6

SOURCE: Unpublished data, Michigan State Board of Education, August 1983.

<sup>a</sup>Millions of dollars.

<sup>b</sup>Estimated.

Currently, funds available under vocational rehabilitation can be used for special nontuition requirements related to education in colleges and universities. They are, in general, precluded from being used for tuition and other standard needs because of the belief that handicappers should seek necessary funding support from the same sources as all other students. This maximizes available assistance for handicappers. Vocational rehabilitation funds are only to be provided for these needs for which student aid funds are unavailable or inadequate.

In addition, private individuals and organizations provide a limited amount of financial and other support. This includes, for example, persons who read for the blind and groups, such as the Lions, which provide ongoing support for leader dogs and other programs for the blind. At Michigan State University, each of the 70 members of the Tower Guard (an honor group) provides a minimum of four hours per week reading for the blind.

#### SPECIAL CONCERNS OF THE HANDICAPPER

The much smaller number of students with identified handicaps in the four-year public colleges and universities than at the high-school level should be a matter of primary concern. The reasons for this drop-off are

open to varying interpretation and probably reflect several factors. It is likely that many handicappers in the high schools are directed toward vocational careers and are not encouraged to pursue their academic interests or realize their capabilities. Handicappers and their families may not have the financial resources and determination required for a college/university education. Some handicappers may go out of state, to private colleges, or to community colleges which are more accessible and have specialized programs and services for their needs. Also, some individuals identified as handicapped in high school may not be so categorized in college or university, although their condition may still prevail.

The high cost of a college education for handicappers is a major issue and impacts on their ability to achieve academic objectives. One possible response, federal tuition income-tax credits, has been proposed and is under consideration. This would ease the financial burden on the handicapped and their families and increase the number who could seek admission to colleges and universities. A growing number of handicapped applicants would, in turn, encourage college administrators to develop and expand special programs and services for these students. The number who would benefit materially from such a program cannot be estimated and would depend in part on the amount of money saved. However, tax credits will have little or no financial impact in cases in which the handicapped and their families have limited taxable income. Other responses, such as ongoing categorical funding support from public sources, will also be necessary in order to aid the handicapped in attaining educational objectives. Some states, such as California, have provided their public colleges and universities with categorical funding on a per capita basis for the education of handicapped students. Such support may, however, lead to some abuses in the absence of uniform and concise definitions of handicappers.

Perhaps the group faced with the greatest difficulty in obtaining a college education in Michigan is the deaf and hearing impaired. For instance, while there are 1,182 students aged 13-17 with this handicap, the number in the public four-year colleges and universities is estimated to be less than 100; almost all of these have impairments with some residual hearing ability. One reason for the small college and university enrollment figure is that 181 hearing-impaired and 137 deaf students aged 18-25 are enrolled in special education programs in primary and secondary schools. None of the public colleges and universities has developed programs specifically for the deaf and hearing impaired. Deaf students seeking an education in one of these facilities, therefore, would find the process difficult and complex. In general, state funds would not be available to meet the relatively high cost. Given the limited number of potential applicants, it would be unrealistic to expect the development of special programs for the deaf and hearing impaired in all or even most public colleges and universities. However, it should be possible to initiate and maintain at least one or two such programs. They currently are offered at Madonna College, a private institution in Livonia, and at C.S. Mott Community College in Flint. While students who are blind or visually impaired have comparable concerns, their needs may at times be met more readily through available resources such as braille textbooks and volunteer readers.

A major concern of the handicapped, particularly those with impaired mobility, is ready access to facilities. Special needs which have been identified include appropriate transportation available at required intervals between buildings, ground-level entrances, protection from snow and other conditions which could limit the use of outside ramps, provision of guard rails as part of suitably designed bathroom facilities, availability of suitable elevators in multistoried buildings, and accessibility of switches and door knobs.

Michigan's public colleges and universities have responded readily to the requirement for renovating existing buildings and designing future structures to meet these needs. Renovation of remaining buildings to assure handicapper access will be more costly and may in some cases require state and/or federal funding. Where the architecture and/or age of a building precludes its renovation, classes and support facilities may have to be relocated so as not to hamper access for the handicapped. Despite this extensive effort, the wide dispersion of campus facilities as, for instance, at the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor) will limit access for some handicappers, particularly the mobility impaired.

As in K-12 education, a major concern for handicappers in public colleges and universities relates to the instructional staff. The objective of mainstreaming, integration into the educational process available for all students, requires faculty sensitivity and the elimination of attitudinal barriers which hamper its effective implementation.

## CONCLUSION

Michigan's handicappers have diverse disabilities and diverse needs and, therefore, require diverse responses. While the right to equal access of educational facilities and resources is guaranteed by state and federal statutes, effective implementation of this commitment is complex, difficult, and, in some cases, open to varying interpretation. A variety of possible actions needs to be considered and advanced in order to assure the broad range of handicappers full and equal access to educational facilities and resources.

APPENDICES

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TABLE A

Timelines for Provision of Free Appropriate Public  
Education for the Handicapped in Michigan

<u>Outcome</u>	<u>Date</u>
Passage of Public Act 198, The Michigan Mandatory Special Education Act	December 22, 1971
Implementation of rules on Public Act 198	October 10, 1973
Inclusion of Mandatory Act in School Code of 1976	January 13, 1977
Amendment of rules on special education	January 14, 1977
Initiation of comprehensive child-find efforts	July 1, 1977
Placement of all handicapped children in special/education programs and services	September 1978
Establishment of Intermediate School District (ISD) plan criteria (Section 216) by State Board of Education for ISD use in monitoring appropriateness of student placements	1978
Monitoring by ISDs of all programs and services to determine compliance with state and federal regulations as defined in the Annual Program Plan(APP)	1979
Revision of rules on special education to conform with Public Law 94-142 more fully	August 13, 1980
Provision of free appropriate public education to all handicapped children	September 1980

TABLE B  
 Estimated Cost of Components of Special Education  
 per Handicapped Student in 1982-1983

<u>COMPONENT</u>	<u>Cost (\$)</u>
Instructional services of regular education teachers	671
Instructional costs of special education teachers	497
Facility operations and maintenance	341
Debt service	221
School administration	189
General district administration	180
Related services	172
Technical assistance to staff members	122
Special transportation	100
Special education aides	96
Admission, placement, Individual Education Plan (IEP) development	93
Assessment	90
Food services for handicapped children	79
Special education administration and secretarial staff	69
Instructional supplies and texts	60
Regular transportation	43
Facility modification and improvement for general education	40
Staff inservice training	36
Miscellaneous costs	<u>129</u>
TOTAL	3,228

SOURCE: J. S. Kakalik, W. S. Furry, M.A. Thomas, and M. J. Carney, The Cost of Special Education. U. S. Department of Education, November 1981.