

THE SHEEP AND WOLVES, THE SHAKERS AND MOVERS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

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Sheep and Wolves

What's good for the goose is not always good for the gander. Or as Lincoln once observed, the sheep and the wolf have very different views of the concept of liberty. So does the one man on that endless line to receive his welfare check and the other on that all too infrequent receiving line to meet the President of the United States. So too would there be outrageously different conceptions of our business if we were to query clients, their parents, the professionals who serve them, those who run the programs, the man in the street, or the people who claim to be paying the bill--the more vocal "tax payers". The truth is the truth. But it has also been said that everything is in the eyes of the beholder. Getting back to Lincoln, when the client must go to court to seek permission to live freely in the community--i.e. free of professional protection--it's very much like the sheep needing to make a case to be protected from the wolf. The burden is on the sheep, yet all of the serious consequences of any decision revert to the sheep.

Shakers and Movers

Anybody can get into trouble, but there always seem to be more sheep than wolves who do. Enter the shakers and movers--some of whom bind the wounds, others of whom inflict them, most of whom do neither directly but cause things to happen. These are the people who get things started, or who run things, and even those who run those who run things. These are the administrators, the professors, the lawyers, the judges, the politicians, the policy leaders--the people who initiate, influence, shape and order decisions. These are the people who remind us how much easier it is to get into rather than out of trouble. Even when we don't need them, they are there to remind us that no one is ever too far from needing them. Not even the wolves of the business are immune from danger. Indeed, the shakers and movers are their own most necessary and important clients. They are always at the center of things--good or bad, of their creation or others.

The shakers and movers in special education are the ones who get virtually all of the praise (and most of the blame). But, while they make the system move, they may not always do "real" things. This is always an important question for each of us to ask: Who actually gets the "real" things done? In a fundamental way, it usually isn't the shakers and the movers, but those on the line or close to it--the first level supervisors--those whom "everyone" has forgotten. Some anonymous

person once said, "Every man is my superior, in that I may learn from him." Every person is valuable, can be a teacher as well as learner, is necessary as well as dependent. Of course, the "big shots" get important things done, but not the "real" things. You know what I mean.

And Angels

Every person gets something done, but a few people get a great deal of credit for accomplishing the "wonders of the world". While in special education, there aren't a great many wonders, there are people who would make such claims; and for sure, there are many people who should share credit if wonders have been accomplished. The shakers and the movers--those who administer the institutions and schools, the high officials, the physicians and professors, those who dose and claim to give succor to the needy, are eventually judged by society. There may even be a judgment day. How many different "faces" can you observe among the shakers and the movers? There are the angels, of course. We may not be able to define the bird, but know one when we see him or her--and we are grateful. The angel is always sought out to relieve suffering--to nourish, to nurture, to hold a hand. We find the angels in places least expected. But of course those should be the places where we should expect to find angels--in the Black Holes, in the prisons, in the ghettos, in the asylums, in Bedlam, in the human warehouses. And then there are

some who help, and they appear to be like or near God. Some of us think our own doctor is God. (Some doctors may think they are God.) But what do we have to say about people who merely seem to heal, seem to help a wounded body or mind, a wounded spirit or soul? And what about still others who we know make the sick sicker, who take those who could be well and make them infirm. While we also can't easily define those people, we know they exist because we have seen them--and we sometimes think we know where they should spend their eternal unrest.

The days of our life are for the healers, while the nights are for the others. But all are shakers and movers, all get things done. And all are sheep as well as wolves. All are mortal. All are judged.