

Robert B. Rutherford, Jr. (1943 – 2007) by Vanessa Shrontz

Robert B. Rutherford, Jr. was well known for his many contributions to the field of special education. He specialized in emotional and behavioral disorders and youth with disabilities in the juvenile justice system. He is best known for his work at [Arizona State University](#). Dr. Rutherford is credited with over 150 journal articles, monographs, book chapters, and edited books (Nelson, 2007). He received many awards for his research and service to his field.

Background Information

The following comes from P. Rutherford (personal communication, November 9, 2009), unless otherwise stated. Robert Bruce Rutherford was born in Falls Church, Virginia in 1943. His father, Robert Bruce Rutherford, was a medical doctor and a captain in the Army, his mother, Aileen Harris Rutherford, was a housewife. When his father was discharged from the military, the family moved to Peoria, Illinois where his father practiced internal medicine and his mother owned and operated a bookstore. He attended the [University of Virginia](#) where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in secondary education in 1965. Dr. Rutherford's began his career teaching emotionally disturbed children and youth at the [Virginia Treatment Center for Children](#) in Richmond, Virginia in 1966. Dr. John Messinger recruited him into a MEd program in

the emerging field of Emotional Disturbance, and he earned his Masters degree at the University of Virginia in 1966. He taught one more year before taking a position as an education specialist with the Kentucky Department of Mental Health, then as educational director of the Diagnostic and Evaluation Center at Clover Bottom State Hospital and School in Donelson, Tennessee. Through his work there, he became associated with the special education program at [George Peabody College](#) of Vanderbilt University, working with the Regional Intervention Project for Preschoolers and Parents. He completed two graduate degrees at [George Peabody College](#); an EdS in special education administration, in 1968, and a PhD in special education (behavior disorders) in 1971. Dr. Rutherford joined the faculty of the Department of Special Education at the [University of Southern California, Los Angeles](#), where he worked from 1970 to 1976. He served in several roles at USC, including Director of the Master's Program from 1971-1972, and Chair of the Department of Special Education 1974-1975. Dr. Rutherford's interest in foreign service led him to accept a position as Assistant Professor of Education with the USC Office of Overseas Programs. He taught in the school of Education at Kaiserslautern, Germany during the summer of 1976. That fall, he joined the Department of Special Education at [Arizona State University](#) in Tempe, Arizona as an Associate Professor. His career at ASU was marked by many achievements. At the time of his death in 2007 he was a Professor of Special Education

and Associate Director for Research and Graduate Programs in the Division of Curriculum and Instruction. He is survived by his wife, Patricia, and 4 sons.

Teacher Educators for Children with Behavioral Disorders

In 1970, Dr. Rutherford met with a group of professionals who rallied around the idea of special education for students with emotional disturbances (Nelson, 2007). They named themselves the [Teacher Educators for Children with Behavioral Disorders](#) (TECBD). Dr. Rutherford started an annual conference in 1977. Since then, TECBD has grown tremendously; 2009 marks the 32nd conference. Its mission continues to be the dissemination of best practices for educating students with emotional and behavioral disorders (Nelson, 2007). Dr. Rutherford edited or co-edited books, monographs, and special journal issues that published the proceedings of this annual conference.

Early Work

In 1985, as part of the Correctional/Special Education Training (C/SET) Project, Dr. Rutherford co-authored "Special Education in the Most Restrictive Environment: Correctional/Special Education" with C.M. Nelson and B. Wolford. The article examined the necessary components of correctional education and the challenges of improving special education. Programs must include functional assessment, functional curriculum, vocational training, transition training, comprehensive systems, and special

education training for correctional educators. Quality education for juvenile offenders can teach critical social and life skills that provide alternatives to criminal actions. That same year, he co-edited the text with C.M. Nelson and B. Wolford, "Special Education in the Criminal Justice System" (P. Rutherford, personal communication, November 9, 2009).

Legislative Influences

Dr. Rutherford authored many journal articles following the [1997 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#) (IDEA). In 1999, he co-authored an article with M. Magee Quinn entitled "Special Education Alternative Education Programs". The IDEA amendments allowed students with disabilities to be placed in alternative programs that previously served youth who had dropped out of school. The article highlighted six components that are essential to alternative programs that now served disabled youth, functional assessment, functional curriculum, effective and efficient instruction, comprehensive systems, and appropriate staff resources, and procedural protections (Rutherford & Quinn, 1999).

Later work

In 2004, Dr. Rutherford co-edited *Handbook of Research in Emotional and Behavioral Disorders* (Rutherford, Quinn, Mathur, 2004). He also co-authored a chapter, "Youth

Delinquency: Prevention and Intervention.” The *Handbook* is a collaboration of the leading researchers in the field of emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) who identified the best practices when dealing with this exceptional population. The book covers the importance of utilizing evidence-based practice, discusses evaluating youth with EBD and their specific needs, and highlights the characteristics of EBD. It also focuses on specific approaches to help youth thrive. The book addresses research methodologies and how to best utilize them when developing programs and evaluations (Rutherford et al., 2004).

In 2008, *ENGAGE: A Blueprint for Incorporating Social Skills Training into Daily Academic Instruction* was published, co-authored by Dr. Rutherford. Social skills for students, typical or disabled, have a major impact on student’s success and satisfaction in school, however, they are rarely taught. The article set up a plan for teachers to integrate social skills into daily teaching curriculum. First, teachers must select the target student or small group of students who display a deficit in social skills then determine which social skills needed improved. Social skills fall into several categories, school expectation, accepting negatives, interpersonal skills, and self-awareness or control. Next, teachers must determine whether students cannot perform skills due to developmental delays or simply have not been taught the skills. Teachers then must teach students these skills. Instruction should include, alternative prosocial behavior, models of prosocial behavior, occasions to practice, reinforcement of behaviors

provided through feedback, and teaching self-control concepts, monitoring, evaluation, and feedback (Schoenfeld, Rutherford, Gable, & Rock (2008).

Other Work

Dr. Rutherford advised numerous students and chaired several dissertations at Arizona State University. He helped form Teacher Educators for [Children with Behavioral Disorders](#) (TECBD), as well as organized and hosted the conference for 31 years (Nelson, 2007). He also served as the secretary, president, and governor of the Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders and the director of the C/SET Program (Nelson, 2007). Dr. Rutherford served as the Delegation Leader of the Behavioral and Emotional Disorders Medical Exchange with the People's Republic of China in 1986 (P. Rutherford, personal communication, November 9, 2009). He also served as a consultant for the U.S. Department of Education and the Office of Overseas Schools in Brazil, Mexico, and Costa Rica (Rutherford, Quinn, & Mathur, 2004).

Honors

In 2008, the [Robert B. Rutherford, Jr. Memorial Fellowship in Special Education](#) was founded in his honor. The *Fellowship* is intended for students who are pursuing degrees in special education and intend to become professors of emotion and behavioral disorders (Marsh, 2008).

Awards

Dr. Rutherford received several awards. In 1983 and 1992 he was named a Fulbright Senior Scholar in Portugal. He was awarded the [Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders](#) Outstanding Leadership Award in 2006 in honor of his lifelong dedication to CCBD, along with his research in emotional and behavioral disorders and advocacy for youth in the juvenile justice system (CCBD, 2007). Dr. Rutherford was named in *Who's Who Biographical Records- Child Development Specialists* and *Who's Who in the West* (Rutherford, 2006).

Editorships

Dr. Rutherford served as the editor of *Behavioral Disorders* from 1981-1987. He was an associate editor and reviewer on numerous other editorial boards, including *Exceptional Children*, the *Journal of the Association for the Severely Handicapped*, [Education and Treatment of Children](#), [Journal of Abnormal Psychology](#), [Journal of Educational Psychology](#), and [Preventing School Failure](#). He edited or co-edited 31 volumes of monographs presenting the proceedings of the annual TECBD conference.

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