

Archived Information

Modules

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SECTION III

SCHOOL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Special Education Teachers: National Trends in Demand and Shortage¹

PURPOSE: To describe the trends in demand for teachers, the extent of teacher shortages in both quantity and qualifications, and the teacher shortage as it pertains to specific age groups.

There is a serious shortage of special education teachers (Boe, Cook, Bobbitt, & Terhanian, 1998; Smith-Davis & Billingsley, 1993). For example, in 1994, more than 50 percent of schools with vacancies in special education and selected other areas had difficulty filling the positions (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Congress noted in the IDEA Amendments of 1997 that “supporting high-quality, intensive professional development for all personnel who work with” children with disabilities is a critical element for ensuring the effective education of these children (§601(c)(5)(E)).

The demand for teachers in public education is commonly defined as the number of teaching positions that have been established and funded (Barro, 1992).² Because all States require that teaching positions be filled with fully certified teachers (Andrews, Andrews, & Pape, 1996),³ the demand for teachers should ideally match the demand for teachers who are fully certified.

However, teaching positions are not always filled by fully certified teachers. Therefore, it is possible to distinguish between two types of teacher shortages, as follows:

¹ This module reports in part on work conducted by Erling Boe, Ph.D., at the Center for Research and Evaluation in Social Policy, University of Pennsylvania, and George Terhanian, at the Gordon S. Black Corporation.

² Demand thus defined is also referred to as the “total demand” for teachers to distinguish it from the “annual demand” for individuals to be hired as newly employed teachers each year to fill open positions. This distinction will be used later in this module.

³ Teacher certification is the most basic qualification established for teachers. While there are other important dimensions of teacher quality (Kennedy, 1992), the most readily available national information on the quality of special education teachers is their certification status for the positions to which they are assigned. For these reasons, only the certification dimension of teacher quality is considered in this module.

- a *quantity shortage* of teachers, which is a shortage in the number of individuals who are available to fill *all* established and funded teaching positions, thereby leaving some positions vacant, and/or
- a *quality shortage* of teachers, which is a shortage in the number of teachers who are fully certified for their positions *and* available to fill vacant teaching positions.

Until recently, national data have not been available on the *quantity* shortage of special education teachers because the number of vacant teaching positions has been combined with the number of employed teachers who were not fully certified (i.e., *quality shortage*). However, since OSEP's publication of the *Eighteenth Annual Report to Congress*, information about the number and percentage of unfilled teaching positions in special education has been reported (OSEP, 1996).

With respect to the *quality* shortage of special education teachers, national data have been reported annually to Congress on the number of teaching positions in special education that have *not* been filled with teachers who were fully certified in their positions (e.g., OSEP, 1990). These data, as well as data from other sources, have demonstrated a substantial national shortage of fully certified special education teachers (Boe, Cook, et al., 1998).

One of the fundamental responsibilities of education policy makers and administrators is to ensure that all the teaching positions in our nation's public schools are filled by teachers who are fully certified for their positions. In continuing efforts to fulfill this responsibility, policy makers and administrators could benefit from basic information about the extent to which past initiatives have failed, as quantified by sound statistics about continuing teacher shortages. Information about special education

teachers that should be useful to policy makers and administrators includes:⁴

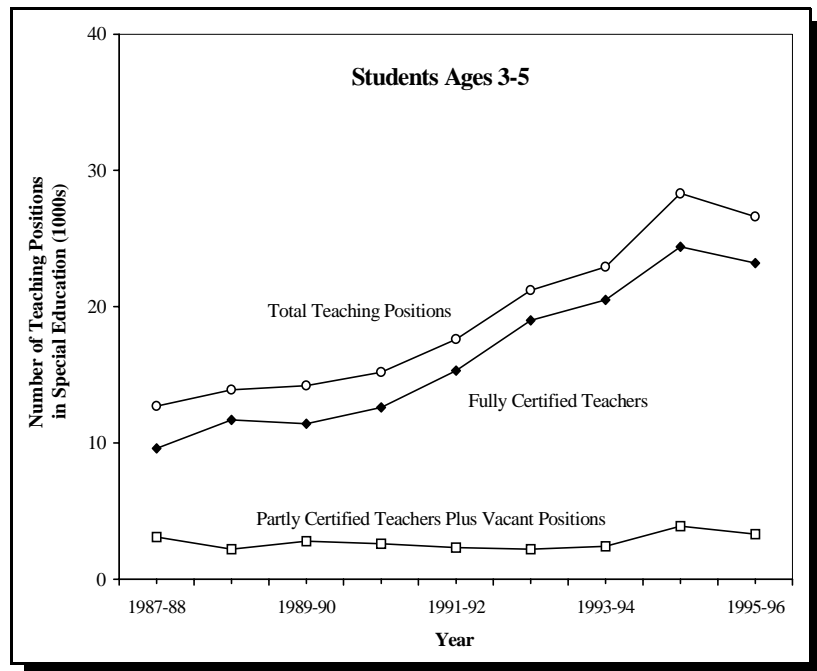
- trends over time in the growth of demand for teachers;
- trends over time in shortages of teachers;
- the extent of teacher shortages in both quantity and quality;
- the extent of teacher shortages in relation to the age level of students served (i.e., ages 3-5 or ages 6-21); and
- the patterns and trends in retention of special education teachers.

This module discusses aspects of the national teaching force in special education for 9 school years, from 1987-88 through 1995-96, to provide a basis for better understanding the problem of teacher shortages in this field.⁵ All data reported are for the U.S. and Outlying Areas. Statistics from OSEP's Data Analysis System (DANS) for school years 1987-88 through 1995-96 were abstracted and analyzed and the results presented in a series of figures showing trends over time in several aspects of teacher shortage. DANS contains population data on special education students and teachers (counted in full-time equivalent units (FTEs)) that have been reported by all States. More detailed information about the data in DANS is available from Westat (1997).

⁴ In addition to the information about the demand and shortage of special education teachers identified, other detailed information about the supply of special education teachers should also be useful. Though beyond the scope of this module, national data about the supply of special education teachers can be found in Boe, Cook, Kaufman, & Danielson, 1996, and Boe, Cook, et al., 1998.

⁵ School year 1987-88 was chosen as the base year because it was the first year for which data were reported separately for teachers serving students with disabilities ages 3-5 years and ages 6-21 years. School year 1995-96 is the last year for which data are currently available.

Figure III-1
Number of Teaching Positions, Fully Certified Teachers, and Partially Certified Teachers Plus Vacant Positions^{a/} in Special Education for Students Ages 3-5 with Disabilities by School Year



^{a/} Numbers of positions and teachers are reported as FTEs.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Data Analysis System (DANS).

How Large Is the Shortage of Teachers in Special Education?

Teachers for Students Ages 3-5 with Disabilities

Dramatic growth in the number of total teaching positions nationally for students ages 3-5 with disabilities is shown in figure III-1. From 1987-88 to 1995-96, demand increased by more than 100 percent from about 13,000 to about 27,000 teachers. Figure III-1 also shows that the

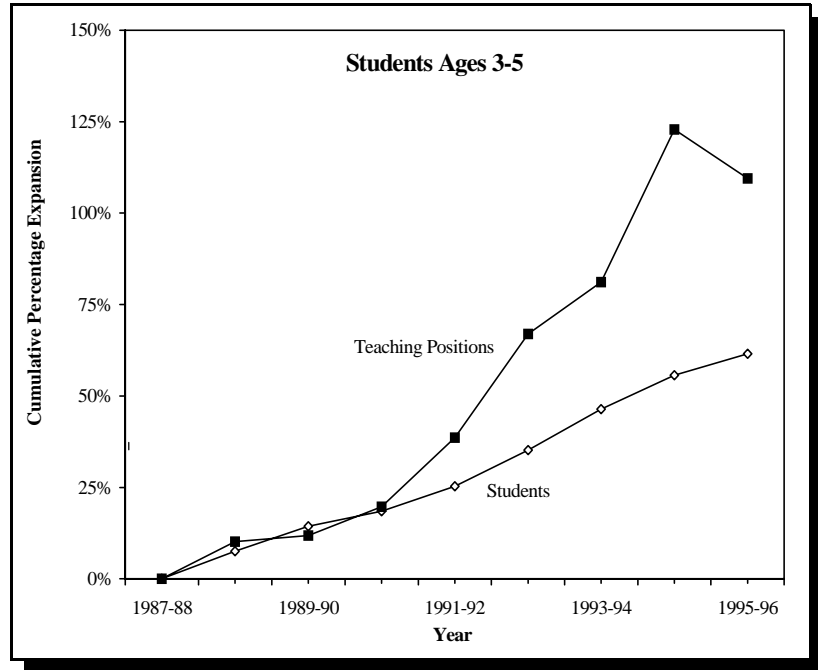
shortage of fully certified teachers during the same period fluctuated between 2,000 and 4,000. Thus, despite rapid growth in demand for teachers for students ages 3-5, the shortage did not increase correspondingly but actually decreased. This trend demonstrates that special education was reasonably successful in meeting the increasing demand for teachers for students ages 3-5.

After 8 years of rapid growth in teacher demand for students with disabilities ages 3-5, figure III-1 shows a sudden and sharp decline in demand (1,700 teaching positions) in 1995-96. This decline was not paralleled by a decline in the number of students ages 3-5; the number of these students continued to increase steadily throughout the 9-year period as shown in figure III-2. One possible explanation for the observed decline in teacher demand from 1994-95 to 1995-96 is the increasing inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms. Although few data are available to support this hypothesis, future studies should address this possibility because of its significance to policies regarding teacher preparation and supply. Despite the 1-year decline in teacher demand for the 1995-96 year, it should be noted that the demand for teachers in this year was still substantially higher than it was 2 years earlier, with the peak demand observed in 1994-95. Therefore, data for years beyond 1995-96 are needed to see if the observed downturn in demand is a temporary event or a sustained trend.

Teachers for Students Ages 6-21 with Disabilities

In contrast with the rapid growth in teacher demand for students ages 3-5, the growth in the number of total teaching positions nationally for students ages 6-21 with disabilities has been gradual (figure III-3). From 1987-88 to 1995-96, demand increased by 15 percent from about 284,000 to about 328,000 teachers. Figure III-3 also shows a reasonably stable level of shortage, averaging about 27,000 fully certified teachers during this 9-year period.

Figure III-2
Cumulative Percentage of Annual Growth in the Number of Students Ages 3-5 with Disabilities Compared with the Cumulative Percentage of Annual Expansion of Teaching Positions^{a/} in Special Education for These Students by School Year

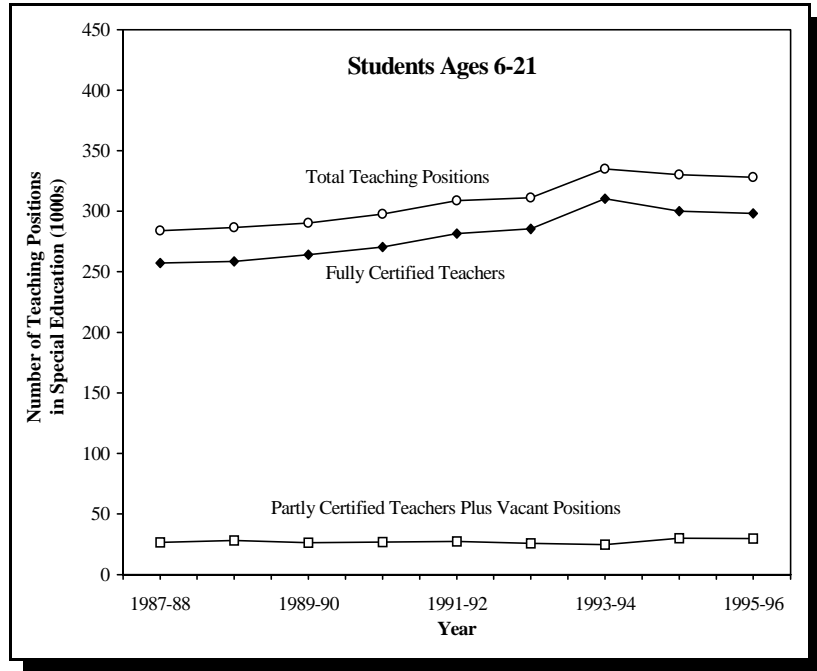


^{a/} Teaching positions reported as FTEs.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Data Analysis System (DANS).

Despite the gradual growth in demand for teachers for students ages 6-21, the shortage did not increase correspondingly; rather it remained relatively constant at approximately 9 percent. This finding demonstrates a long-term shortage of teachers for students ages 6-21 with disabilities and demonstrates that special education has not been successful in reducing this shortage during the 9-year period studied.

Figure III-3
Number of Teaching Positions, Fully Certified Teachers, and Partially Certified Teachers Plus Vacant Positions^{a/} in Special Education for Students Ages 6-21 with Disabilities by School Year

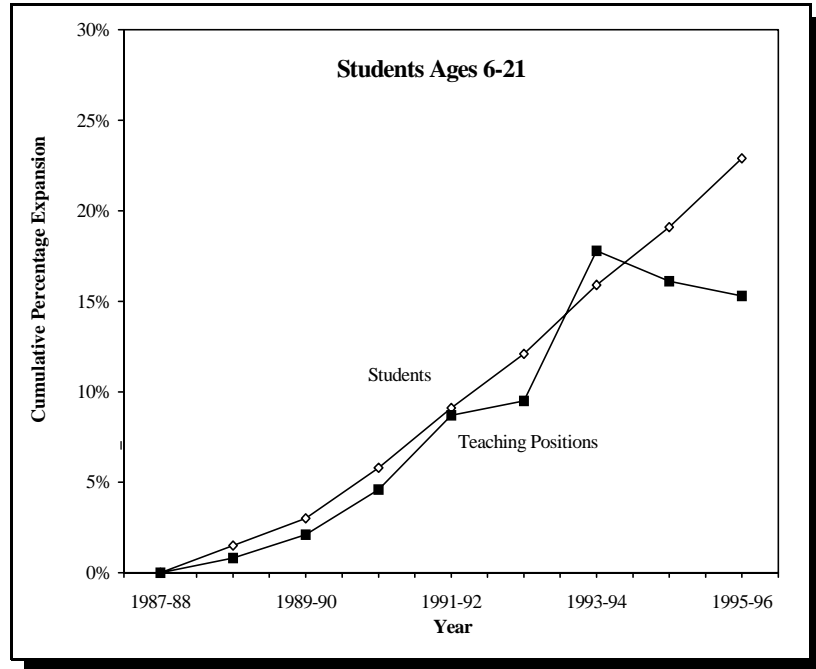


a/ Numbers of positions and teachers are reported as FTEs.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Data Analysis System (DANS).

After 7 years of steady growth in the need for teachers for students ages 6-21 from 1987-88 through 1993-94, a gradual decline in demand began in 1994-95 and continued in 1995-96, as seen in figure III-3. Specifically, the decline in demand was from about 335,000 teachers in 1993-94 to about 328,000 teachers in 1995-96 (i.e., a decline in demand for 7,000 teachers, or 2.1 percent, during the 2 most recent years studied). This decline in teacher demand was not paralleled by a decline in the number of students ages 6-21. Figure III-4 shows that the number of such students continued to increase steadily throughout the 9-year period.

**Figure III-4
Cumulative Percentage of Annual Growth in the Number of Students Ages 6-21 with Disabilities Compared with the Cumulative Percentage of Annual Expansion of Teaching Positions^{a/} in Special Education for These Students by School Year**



^{a/} Teaching positions reported as FTEs.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Data Analysis System (DANS).

As is the case for teacher demand for students ages 3-5, the recent decline in teacher demand for students ages 6-21 could be explained by increasing inclusion of students with disabilities into general education classrooms. Although few data are available to support this hypothesis, States have reported to OSEP anecdotally that some or all of the decline is attributable to increasing inclusion. A chronic shortage remains of about 27,000 fully certified special education teachers as well as an annual national

demand for about 28,000 entering teacher hires in special education for students ages 6-21 (Boe, 1997).⁶

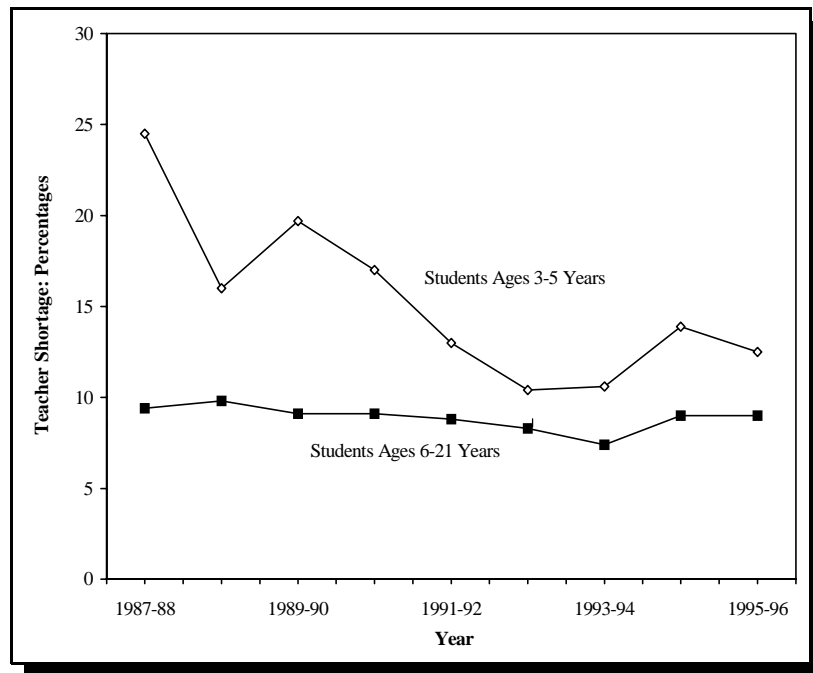
The significance of the chronic shortage of fully certified teachers for students with disabilities ages 6-21 can be viewed from at least two perspectives. The first perspective is to contrast the shortage of special education teachers with the shortage of general education teachers. Evidence suggests that, for students in grades K-12, the shortage of general education teachers averaged about 3.5 percent less than that of special education teachers (Boe, 1997).⁷

The second perspective is to relate the chronic shortage of fully certified special education teachers to the production of teacher preparation programs in special education. Such programs produced about 18,000 degree graduates (bachelor's plus master's levels) in 1993 (Snyder & Hoffman, 1995), about 6,000 of whom were already employed as teachers at the time of graduation (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, & Paulsen, 1998). Thus, only about 12,000 graduates were available to serve as newly hired teachers. In addition, there is a demand for about 28,000 entering teacher hires each year in special education--a demand that will be filled in part by about 7,000 partly certified entering teachers. These partly certified entering teachers, along with about 20,000 partly certified continuing teachers, comprise the chronic shortage of about 27,000 fully certified teachers (1993-94 data from Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Barkanic, & Maislin, 1998, and from Boe, 1997). It is apparent that the shortage of about 20,000 fully certified continuing teachers, as well as the need to hire another 23,000 entering teachers each year, represents a difficult

⁶ The annual demand for "entering teacher hires" refers to open teaching positions that are not filled by fully certified, employed teachers who continue from 1 year to the next, even though many switch positions between school years. For example, thousands of general education teachers switch to special education each year to fill open positions. The remaining open positions in special education need to be filled by individuals entering the employed teaching force each year, thereby filling the annual demand for "entering teacher hires."

⁷ The shortage percentage for general education teachers (7 percent) is based on data from the *Schools and Staffing Surveys of the National Center for Education Statistics*, U.S. Department of Education, for students in grades K-12 in public schools during the school years 1987-88, 1990-91, and 1993-94. Comparable data from these surveys indicate that the shortage of special education teachers averaged about 10.5 percent.

**Figure III-5
Teacher Shortage Percentages for Students Ages 3-5
and 6-21 with Disabilities by School Year**



Note: Shortage is defined as the percentages of FTE teaching positions in special education that were (1) filled by teachers who were not fully certified for the position to which they were assigned and (2) were vacant.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Data Analysis System (DANS).

hurdle for the field to overcome--a hurdle that has proven to be insurmountable thus far since the chronic shortage of teachers has persisted for so many years.

Comparison of Teacher Shortage Trends

In contrast with figures III-1 and III-3, which presented trends in the *number* of teachers who were not fully certified combined with vacant positions (i.e., the quality teacher shortage) for students ages 3-5 and 6-21 with disabilities, respectively, figure III-5 presents these shortages as percentages of total teacher demand. The shortage

of fully certified teachers for students ages 6-21 with disabilities held fairly constant at about 9 percent, while the percentage shortage of teachers for students ages 3-5 has been much higher. The shortage of teachers for the 3-5 age group has varied considerably over the 9-year period studied. It has been as high as 25 percent in 1987-88 and has never been below 10 percent (or 2,000 teachers). When the shortage of fully certified teachers for students ages 3-5 in 1995-96 is added to that for students ages 6-21, the total shortage was about 33,000 special education teachers.

Until the 1993-94 school year, data had not been available in special education to disaggregate the *quantity* shortage of teachers (i.e., the number of vacancies) from the *quality* shortage of fully certified teachers. Since 1993-94, OSEP's data collection format has been refined to quantify separately the number and percentage of vacant teaching positions for students ages 3-21. Thus, in 1993-94, 1.1 percent (or about 3,600) of teaching positions for the 6-21 age group were vacant, and this percentage remained constant in 1994-95 and 1995-96. Therefore, for the most recent school year for which statistics are available (1995-96), total teacher shortage (9 percent) comprised 1.1 percent vacant positions and 7.9 percent teaching positions that were filled by teachers who were not fully certified. While 1.1 percent vacant positions in special education may seem small, it is at least four times as large as the percentage of vacant positions in all of elementary and secondary education nationally (about 0.25 percent during the 1993-94 school year, according to Henke, Choy, Geis, & Broughman, 1996).⁸

⁸ Differences in month of recording vacancies preclude exact comparisons between the number of vacant teaching positions in special education in 1993-94 from OSEP's DANS and the number of vacant teaching positions in all elementary and secondary education as indicated by the *1993-94 Schools and Staffing Survey of the National Center for Education Statistics*, U.S. Department of Education.

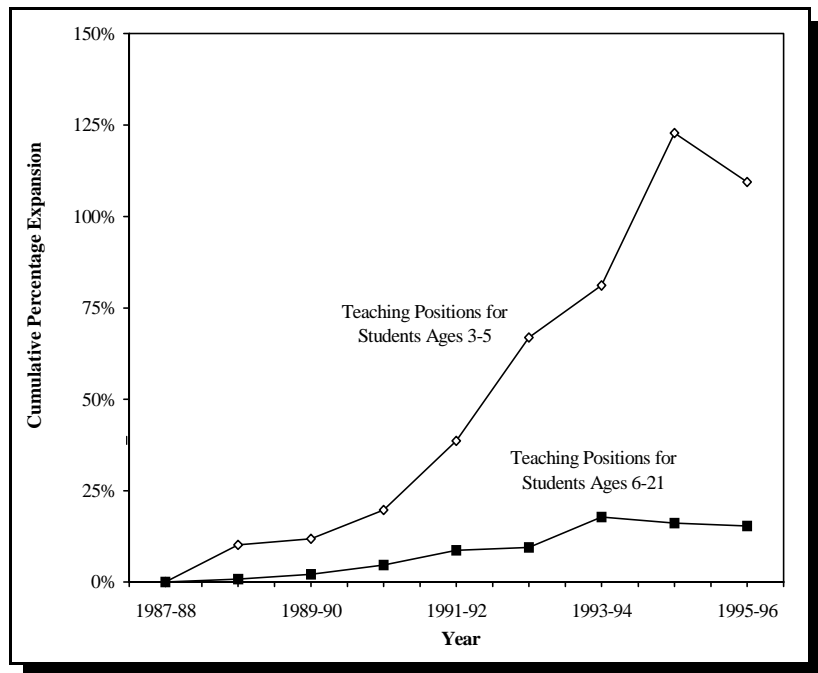
What Factors Are Associated with the Shortages of Teachers in Special Education?

Teacher Shortages and Student:Teacher Ratios

Teacher shortages might be explained, at least in part, by policies designed to reduce the student-teacher ratio. For example, as shown in figure III-2, the increase in the number of teaching positions for students with disabilities ages 3-5 was much greater over the 4-year period following 1991-92 than was the increase in the number of students. Such was not the case for teachers for students with disabilities ages 6-21, as seen in figure III-4. These findings suggest two phenomena. The first is that the rate of increase in teaching positions for students ages 3-5 was much greater than the comparable rate for students ages 6-21, as demonstrated by the trends shown in figure III-6. The second is that the ratio of students per teaching position declined for students ages 3-5, but not for students ages 6-21, as demonstrated by the trends shown in figure III-7. Specifically, the number of students per teaching position for the 3-5 age group declined from a ratio of 27:1 in 1989-90 to a ratio of 19:1 in 1994-95. In contrast, the comparable ratio for the 6-21 age group held steady at close to 15:1 throughout the 9-year period studied.

The trends in figures III-6 and III-7 clearly suggest a long-term policy to accelerate the growth of teaching positions for students ages 3-5 in order to bring the student-teacher ratio for this age group in line with that for students ages 6-21. The rapid growth of teaching positions for students ages 3-5 has contributed to the extraordinarily high shortage in percentages of fully certified teachers to fill these positions.

Figure III-6
Cumulative Percentage of Annual Expansion of Teaching Positions^{a/} in Special Education for Students Ages 3-5 and 6-21 with Disabilities by School Year



a/ Teaching positions reported as FTEs.

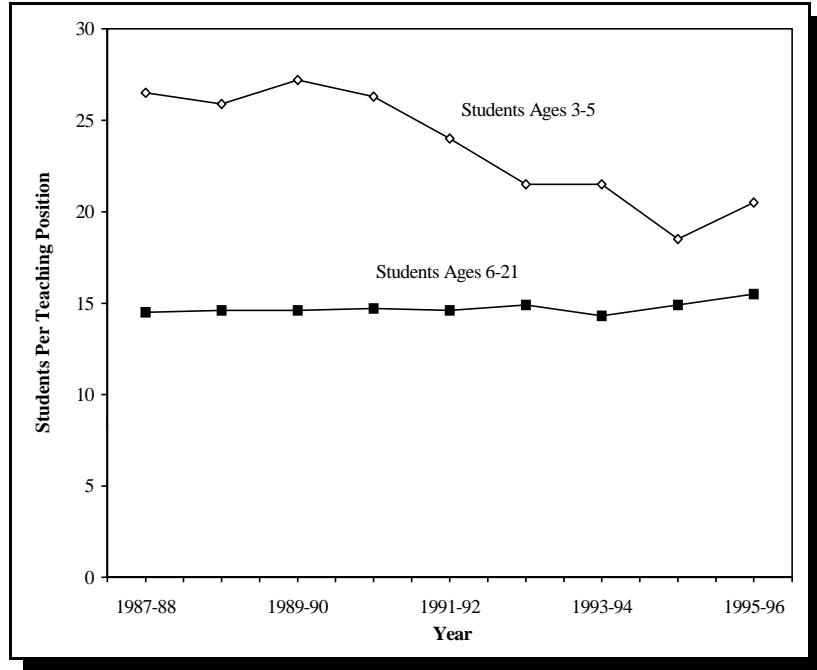
Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Data Analysis System (DANS)

Teacher Shortages and Expansion of Demand in Special and General Education

Evidence of the differential expansion of teaching positions in special education (for students ages 6-21) versus general education (for students in grades K-12) is presented in figure III-8 for the 9-year period of this study.⁹ It appears

⁹ To obtain the number of FTE teaching positions in general education, the number of FTE teaching positions in special education (as obtained from OSEP's Data Analysis System) was subtracted from the number of FTE teaching positions in all teaching fields in grades K-12 as recorded by the Common Core of Data of the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education (Snyder, Hoffman, & Geddes, 1996).

Figure III-7
Students Per Teaching Position by Student Age Group and School Year^{a/}



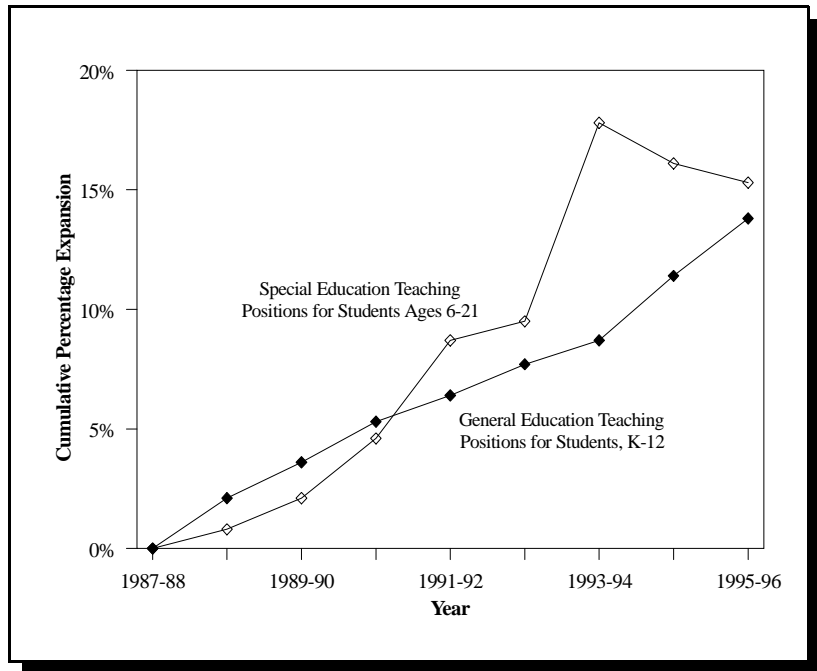
^{a/} Number of students with disabilities served under IDEA, Part B, and Chapter 1 Handicapped Program, divided by the number of full-time equivalent teaching positions in special education.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Data Analysis System (DANS).

that teaching positions in both special and general education expanded by similar percentages during this period (13.8 percent for general education, 15.3 percent for special education). However, the expansion in special education showed a period of rapid growth from 1991-92 to 1993-94 followed by more limited growth during the following 2 years.

Because the teaching positions in special and general education expanded by comparable percentages, the serious chronic shortage of teachers in special education cannot be attributed to extraordinarily rapid expansion of

Figure III-8
Cumulative Percentage of Annual Expansion of Teaching Positions^{a/} in Special Education (for Students Ages 6-21 with Disabilities) and General Education (for Grades K through 12 in Public Schools) by School Year



^{a/} Teaching positions reported as FTEs.

Sources: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Data Analysis System (DANS) and the Common Core of Data of the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.

teaching positions in contrast with general education. Instead, other evidence suggests that the number of graduates in special education teacher preparation programs is much too low to satisfy the need for fully certified special education teachers (Boe, Cook, et al., 1998).

Conclusions

Statistics from OSEP's DANS provide convincing evidence of a substantial chronic shortage of fully certified special

education teachers nationally. This conclusion pertains to both the modest number of teachers for students ages 3-5 with disabilities and to the much larger number of teachers for students ages 6-21 during the school years from 1987-88 through 1995-96.

The shortage of teachers for students with disabilities ages 3-5 has remained fairly stable (ranging between 2,000 to 4,000 teachers) despite the rapid growth in teacher demand for students at this age level. This growth in demand has been due to two major trends over time: (1) growth in the numbers of students to be served and (2) substantial reductions in the ratio of students to teaching positions (a trend that may have reversed as of school year 1995-96). Given the dual factors producing the rapid growth in teacher demand, the significant reduction in teacher shortage *percentages* for this age group of students indicates that progress has been made in producing a relatively steady supply of fully certified teachers to serve students ages 3-5.

The same conclusion cannot be drawn with respect to the substantial chronic shortage of teachers for the much larger group of students ages 6-21 with disabilities. Although the total demand for teachers for this age group has not experienced extraordinary rapid expansion (i.e., the rate of expansion has been comparable to that in general education) and the ratio of students per teaching position has remained stable, no progress has been observed in reducing the chronic shortage of fully certified teachers, which has averaged 27,000 teachers a year.

There are two reasons for the chronic shortage of teachers for students ages 6-21 with disabilities. The first reason is that the annual demand for entering teacher hires in special education (about 10 percent of total demand) is greater than in general education (about 8 percent of total demand) (Boe, 1997).¹⁰ This demand for new hires places extraordinary pressure on the supply of teachers available

¹⁰ The high annual demand for newly hired teachers in special education, in comparison with general education, is mainly due to (a) a larger number of teachers switching from special to general education than vice versa, (b) a higher percentage of vacant teaching positions than in general education, and, until school year 1994-95, (c) a somewhat higher rate of expansion of teaching positions.

to fill open positions. Therefore, the supply of teachers to fill open positions annually is not available to replace many employed teachers who lack full certification for their positions.

The second reason for the chronic shortage of special education teachers is that the annual supply of degree graduates of teacher preparation programs in special education has been exceptionally low in comparison with general education with respect to three important factors: the much greater shortage of fully certified teachers, the annual demand for entering teacher hires, and the total demand for teachers. As shown in table III-1, the number of degree graduates produced by teacher preparation programs was (1) 50 percent of the demand to replace teachers in special education who were not fully certified in their positions, as compared to 88 percent in general education; (2) 66 percent of the demand for entering teacher hires each year in special education, as compared to 81 percent in general education; and (3) 5 percent of total teacher demand in special education, as compared to 6 percent in general education. To further compound this imbalance, a much higher percentage of such graduates were already employed as teachers in special education upon graduation than in general education (37 percent versus 18 percent, respectively), thereby further reducing the potential number of entering teacher hires from among degree graduates produced annually by teacher preparation programs in special education (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, & Weber, 1996).

There are two other main sources of supply of special education teachers, namely (1) the reserve pool composed in major part by former experienced teachers and (2) presently employed general education teachers. Although former experienced teachers accounted for 66 percent of all new hires into special education in 1987-88, this percentage declined to 50 percent in 1990-91 (Boe, Cook, Kaufman, & Danielson, 1996) and further declined to 33 percent by 1993-94 (Boe, unpublished data). Apparently, this source of supply is rapidly becoming depleted. In addition, available evidence shows that considerably more

**Table III-1
Production of Degree Graduates by Teacher Preparation Programs in 1993-94 as a Percentage of Three Indicators of Teacher Demand in Public Schools**

| Indicators of Teacher Demand | Statistic | Main Teaching Field | |
|---|---------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| | | Special Education | General Education |
| 1. Demand to Replace Not Fully Certified Teachers ^{a/} | FTE Teachers | 36,180 | 154,000 |
| Degree Graduates: ^{b/} (Teacher Prep.) | Number | 18,250 | 135,667 |
| | % of Demand | 50.4% | 88.1% |
| 2. Annual Demand for New Hires ^{c/} | FTE Teachers | 27,700 | 168,300 |
| Degree Graduates: ^{b/} (Teacher Prep.) | Number | 18,250 | 135,667 |
| | % of Demand | 65.9% | 80.6% |
| 3. Total Teacher Demand ^{d/} | FTE Positions | 335,000 | 2,169,000 |
| Degree Graduates: ^{b/} (Teacher Prep.) | Number | 18,250 | 135,667 |
| | % of Demand | 5.4% | 6.3% |

^{a/} Sources: Percentages of not fully certified teachers in special education and general education from NCES' SASS for 1993-94 (from figure 5 of Boe, 1997) times the number of FTE teaching positions in the respective field from Row 1 of this table.

^{b/} Source: NCES' Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) for 1993-94 graduates (Snyder & Hoffman, 1995).

^{c/} Source: Table 2 (revised) of Boe, 1997.

^{d/} Sources: OSEP's Data Analysis System for Special Education for 1993-94; NCES' Common Core of Data (CCD) for General Education for 1993-94; from figure III-8 of this report.

special education teachers switch to general education annually than general education teachers switch to special education (a net loss to special education of 5,000 teachers in 1990-91; Boe, Cook, Bobbitt, & Weber, 1996). Research findings suggest that it would be difficult to reverse this trend (Billingsley & Cross, 1991a, 1991b).

Given all these facts about the supply of teachers to fill open positions annually in special education and to replace employed special education teachers who are not fully certified in their positions, it appears that graduates from teacher preparation programs must serve as the major source of supply in the future. Yet the current level of production of such teachers nationally is far from adequate (Boe, Cook, et al., 1998).

The evidence presented in figure III-3 suggests that steps have been taken during recent years to reduce the demand for teachers for students ages 6-21 with disabilities, although the number of such students has continued to rise, and the ratio of students to teaching positions has remained stable. One possible explanation for the recent decrease in demand is that more students with disabilities have been placed in general education classrooms than heretofore, thereby resulting in a reduction in demand for special education teachers. Nonetheless, the shortage of fully certified special education teachers did not decrease accordingly, nor has the annual demand for entering teacher hires in special education yet decreased. Thus, while reduction in demand might become an effective means for reducing the chronic shortage of special education teachers, there is little reason to expect that the need for a much larger supply of fully certified special education teachers will disappear in the near future.

To the extent that inclusion of students with disabilities into general education classrooms is achieved, responsibility for instructing them will fall largely upon general education teachers. While inclusion can be expected to decrease the demand for special education teachers to some extent, it will simultaneously increase the demand for general education teachers who are qualified to instruct students with disabilities. This could well result in a major

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shift in the shortage of fully qualified teachers from special to general education. Whether this occurs, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) observed that 2 million teachers will be hired in the decade from 1997 through 2006 and, as a group, they should be more highly qualified for their assignments than heretofore.

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Using IFSPs with Preschoolers

There are many ways to achieve family-centered policies for families with young children with disabilities. In many State and local jurisdictions, preschool programs for children with disabilities have developed flexible, family-friendly services through the use of individualized education programs (IEPs), while in other States, individualized family service plans (IFSPs) are being used with children ages 3-5 with disabilities and their families. In fact, 30 States have developed and 9 States are in the process of developing specific preschool policies and strategies to ensure the involvement of parents in their child's IEP or IFSP (deFosset & Carlin, 1997).

PURPOSE: To describe how IFSPs are being used with preschoolers and factors that may impede development of IFSPs for children ages 3-5 with disabilities.

IFSPs were developed for use in the Part C Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities program to encourage a family-centered approach for the provision of services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. Twenty-five States either have a statewide policy for using IFSPs with preschoolers or allow IFSPs as a local option with children ages 3-5 who are eligible for special education services. The IFSP policies and procedures that have been developed at the State and local levels can be viewed as "a promise to children and families--a promise that their strengths will be recognized and built on, that their needs will be met in a way that is respectful of their beliefs and values, and that their hopes and aspirations will be encouraged and enabled" (Johnson, McGonigel, & Kaufmann, 1989, p. 1).

However, there are also potential challenges to the use of IFSPs with preschoolers. Analyzing data from six States, the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) found that using IFSPs with preschoolers may be more expensive and require a greater time commitment for agency personnel because of the need for additional meetings and paperwork. Also, a focus group of individuals implementing IFSPs with preschoolers in Minnesota concluded that conflicts may arise based on the differences in the rules and requirements of the various agencies that may serve these children (Jensen, 1996).

Regulations and Policies

With the enactment of P.L. 102-119, the IDEA Amendments of 1990, local educational agencies (LEAs) and intermediate educational units (IEUs), with the concurrence of the parents and consistent with State policy, were permitted to use an IFSP instead of an IEP to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to children with disabilities ages 3-5. The amendments specifically referenced the *contents* of the IFSP as the vehicle for FAPE, and all other Part B requirements regarding development of the IEP applied. (See OSEP memorandum #14, April 1993, and Senate Report 102-84, June 18, 1991, p. 15.)

OSEP also clarified which services may be included in IFSPs for eligible children. "Depending on State standards, many of the early intervention services under Part C could be appropriately defined as 'special education' under Part B for eligible children 3-5. For example, a physical therapy activity, such as designing a 'positioning' program for a child who is enrolled in a day care facility, could be considered 'specially designed instruction' if the State defines it as such; and, therefore could be considered to be special education. In summary, a State could include early intervention services in its definition of 'special education'" (Schrag, 1990, p. 141). Parent counseling and training is defined as a related service (34 CFR §300.16(b)(6)) and may be included in an IEP if it is determined necessary to assist a child to benefit from special education.

States Using IFSPs with Preschoolers

According to the 1997 *Section 619 Profile*, 25 States used or allowed local discretion for the use of IFSPs for preschool services. Three of those States (Maine, Oregon, and Guam) have a statewide policy that requires IFSPs for all eligible preschoolers, and in 22 States, the use of IFSPs with preschoolers is a local option (deFosset & Carlin, 1997). Seven of the latter States (Arkansas, Florida, Guam, Maine, Minnesota, Oregon, and Washington) have

developed or are in the process of developing a standard IFSP form for preschool services.

Of the 25 States that require or allow IFSPs to be used for preschool services, 16 States have adopted guidelines, standards, or regulations for IFSP development or transition from an IFSP to an IEP. Four States have clarified and five States are developing procedures for transitioning from an IFSP to an IEP for eligible children and their families. Ten States have guidelines, standards, or regulations in place that address IFSP development and implementation, and two States are in the process of developing these guidelines. For example, some States have developed an explanation of pertinent regulations, how to guarantee FAPE while providing service coordination, and how to provide family-centered services.

A Closer Look at Six States

NASDSE surveyed five States that use IFSPs with eligible preschoolers (Pierce, 1997). The information was gathered from interviews and documents submitted by Preschool Grants Program coordinators in Delaware, Florida, Maine, Oregon, and Washington. In addition, a report from Minnesota's State Early Intervention Project provided information for this section.

Lead Agency and Location of the Policy

Among the States in the study, there was no relationship between the State agency that administers the Part C program and the likelihood of allowing or using IFSPs with preschoolers. In Maine, Oregon, and Minnesota, the lead agency for Part C was the Department of Education. In Florida, Washington, and Delaware, the lead agency was either the Department of Health or the Department of Social and Health Services.

Policies for using IFSPs have their basis in a variety of documents. In Maine and Oregon, the policies were based in State education statutes, regulations, and instructional

documents for teams. In Maine, the IFSP is also described in Medicaid documents. The regulations for the Florida Healthy Start program contain the policy for both infants and toddlers and children ages 3-5 and their families. Washington has prepared a resource booklet showing local teams how to create IFSPs that include IEP components for preschool-aged children, and Delaware's policies appear in the first part of a request for proposals for services to 3- and 4-year-olds.

Perceived Benefits and Ease of Implementation

Two main factors that promote the successful use of IFSPs with preschoolers emerged from the NASDSE study. These factors are family preference for using an IFSP and State and local support for this method.

The model is well-liked by families. The process is family-focused and family-driven and supports an interagency emphasis for children. In addition, service coordination for children and their families continues beyond age 3. As required, the services provided in the States that use IFSPs with preschool-aged children are based on the family's and child's needs and strengths. Examples of such services include respite care, parent training, family counseling, health exams, and referrals to other agencies. The IFSP is also perceived as a way to ease transition to preschool because it provides continuity for children and families. Transition from Part C to Part B appeared to go fairly smoothly in Maine and Oregon where there is one lead agency and statewide use of IFSPs with preschoolers. None of the six States reported problems with transition from preschool to elementary school, and none reported using the IFSP beyond age 5.

Successful use of IFSPs is also promoted through local support. For example, a focus group of Minnesota's Interagency Early Intervention Committee (IEIC) members described the following advantages of their system.¹ One advantage was State policymakers' commitment to and

¹ Minnesota's IEIC includes directors, coordinators, supervisors of the Department of Education, Health, and Human Services, and other interagency collaborative members.

provision of leadership on the use of IFSPs. The focus group members also perceived a high degree of administrative support for a single plan and interest in and support for a variety of collaborative efforts; one such support is funding for specific initiatives. In addition, they believed the Minnesota IEIC provided the necessary administrative structure for supporting the IFSP process (Jensen, 1996).

Perceived Barriers

The individuals interviewed by NASDSE and the members of the focus group in Minnesota also described barriers to the implementation of IFSPs with preschoolers. One reported barrier was differences in eligibility rules and requirements of the involved agencies and their services. For example, agencies may have different eligibility requirements. There were also reports of “turf” issues that arose in dealing with multiple agencies. In part, some of these issues may be a result of a lack of interagency agreements that would formalize the nature of agency involvement.

A second barrier, one that is commonly described when systematic reform takes place, is resistance to change. Some of the participants noted that they or their colleagues were unhappy about “learning yet a new way of doing things” (Jensen, 1996). However, the participants expressed satisfaction with the training that they received.

A third possible barrier is the cost associated with using IFSPs with preschoolers. State representatives interviewed agreed that the use of the IFSP increased special education costs through additional meetings and the required paperwork. Maine accessed other State and Federal funds to support family services provided through the preschool IFSP. A few States expressed concern about the cost of family services and offered referrals to other agencies instead of trying to provide the service within their agency. Some State representatives said that Medicaid was mentioned as sharing preschool IFSP costs.

Summary

States and local jurisdictions are trying to provide family-focused services for preschool children with special needs. Some are providing services through IEPs, and others are using IFSPs. A variety of mechanisms have been established to offer services through use of the IFSP. The IFSP is well-liked by families and works best at the preschool level when there are administrative supports in place at multiple levels. However, there are also barriers to the implementation of IFSPs with preschoolers. Lack of interagency cooperation and agreement, resistance to change, and the increased costs associated with IFSP use were cited as primary barriers.

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Educational Environments for Students with Disabilities

PURPOSE: To report the number of students served in different educational environments and the factors affecting those assignments.

Over the past 10 years, the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes and schools has been of preeminent concern to special educators, administrators, parents, advocates, and policy makers.¹ The impetus to serve students with disabilities in more inclusive programs comes from a number of sources, the primary source being the least restrictive environment (LRE) clause of IDEA. However, the emphasis on inclusion also reflects (1) growing recognition that many students with disabilities do not complete high school with the knowledge and skills necessary for adult independence, (2) concern about the rapid, steady rise in the number and percentage of students identified as eligible for special education, and (3) concern about the increasing costs of special education services in a time of budget austerity (Affleck, Edgar, Levine, & Kottering, 1990; deBettencourt, Zigmond, & Thornton, 1989; Edgar, 1987; Hasazi, Johnson, Hasazi, Gordon, & Hull, 1989; Mithaug, Horiuchi, & Fanning, 1985; U.S. Department of Education, 1997).

First, many youth with disabilities do not leave school with the knowledge and skills necessary to fulfill adult roles. This is supported by data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS). Three to five years after leaving high school, fewer than 25 percent of youth with disabilities had been enrolled in postsecondary education, many were engaged in low-wage jobs with few opportunities for advancement, and more than half continued to live in their family homes (Wagner, D'Amico, Marder, Newman, & Blackorby, 1992).

Second, the increase in the percentage of students served in special education programs encourages more inclusive environments by taxing the capacity of special education

¹ For a more detailed discussion on inclusion, the reader is encouraged to review the *19th* and *18th Annual Reports to Congress*. The *19th Report* included a module titled "The Continuum of Placements: From Regular Classes to Residential Facilities." The *18th Report* included a chapter titled "Progress in Achieving the Full Participation of Students with Disabilities in Their Schools and Communities: Federal Initiatives."

environments by taxing the capacity of special education settings. The percentage of students ages 6 through 17 receiving special education services increased from 9.6 percent in 1987-88 to 10.6 percent in 1995-96 (U.S. Department of Education, 1997). As this percentage rises, the feasibility of maintaining a parallel educational structure to meet students' unique needs diminishes.

A third reason for more inclusive programs for students with disabilities is the perception that special education costs are increasing rapidly. Data suggest that per pupil special education expenditures have grown at about twice the rate of general education expenditures, an average of 4.1 percent versus 2.1 percent annually (Rossmiller, Hale, & Frohreich, 1970; Kakalik, Furry, Thomas, & Carney, 1981; Moore, Strang, Schwartz, & Braddock, 1988). The popular media tend to attribute blame for growing costs on expensive residential programs for students with severe disabilities. However, research suggests that more inclusive programs may not necessarily lead to cost savings (Vermont Department of Education, 1995).

Trends in Data on Educational Environments

The IDEA Amendments of 1997 state “[T]o the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities . . . are educated with children who are not disabled; and . . . removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplemental aides and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily” (§612(a)(5)(A)). In 1995-96, more than 95 percent of students with disabilities ages 6 through 21 attended schools with their nondisabled peers. A total of 45.4 percent were classified as being educated in regular classes, meaning they were removed from their regular classes to receive special education and related services for less than 21 percent of the school day. An additional 28.7 percent were in the resource room category, meaning they received special education and related services outside the regular class for

21 to 60 percent of the school day. About 22 percent of students with disabilities were in the separate class category, meaning they were served outside the regular class for more than 60 percent of the school day.

A total of 4.4 percent of students with disabilities ages 6-21 did not attend schools with their nondisabled peers. Of these students, 3.1 percent attended separate day schools for students with disabilities, 0.7 percent received services in residential facilities, and 0.6 percent received services in homebound/hospital settings (see table AB2).

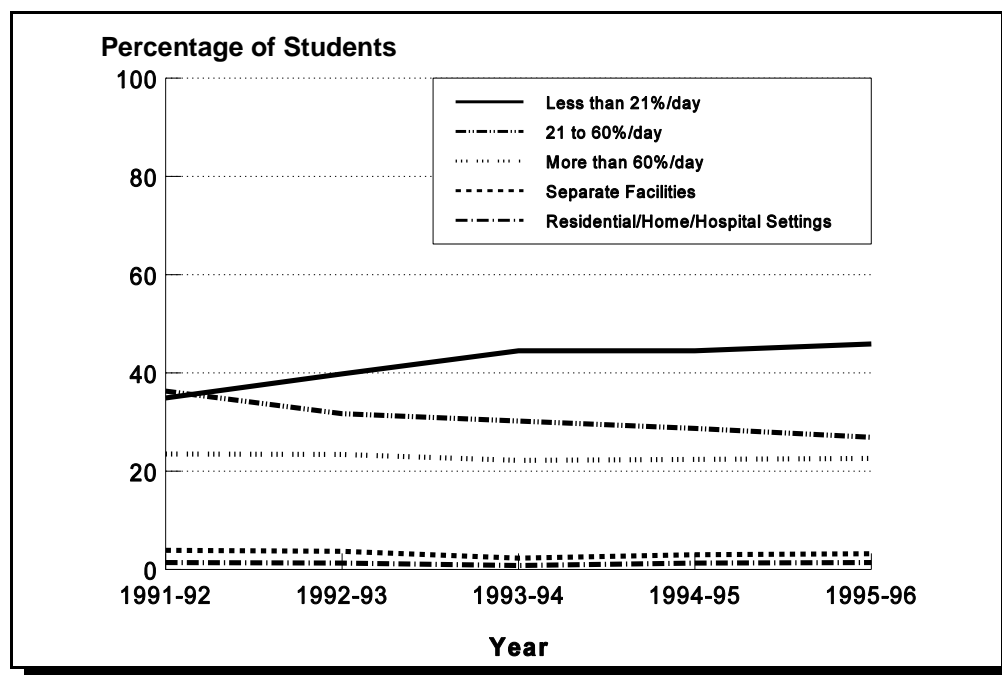
Over the past 5 years, the percentage of students with disabilities served outside the regular class less than 21 percent of the school day has gradually increased. Over that same time period, there has been a decline in the percentage of students served outside the regular class 21 to 60 percent of the day. The percentage of students receiving special education outside the regular class for more than 60 percent of the day and the percentage in separate schools remained relatively stable (see figure III-9 and table AB7).

In recent years, the number of students in special education has increased as has the number of students served outside the regular class less than 21 percent of the day, and concomitantly, the demand for teachers' aides has grown. In fact, in the past 5 years, the number of aides required to work with students with disabilities has closely paralleled the number of students with disabilities served outside the regular class for less than 21 percent of the day at a ratio of approximately 1 aide to every 10 students. This likely reflects changes in the way special education services are provided, with aides providing much of the assistance needed for students with disabilities to function in regular classes.

Factors Associated with Educational Environments

The environments in which students received services varied by disability and age. Although 89 percent of

**Figure III-9
Percentage of Students Served in Different Environments**



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Data Analysis System (DANS).

students with speech and language impairments were served outside the regular class for less than 21 percent of the day, only 10 percent of those with mental retardation were served in these environments. Students ages 6-11 were more likely to receive services outside the regular class for less than 21 percent of the day than students ages 12-17 or 18-21 (see table AB7).

Progress in serving students with disabilities in more inclusive environments has varied from State to State. A few rural States serve more than 90 percent of their special education students in regular classes for over 40 percent of the day (Idaho, North Dakota, Oregon, Vermont). Other States serve fewer than 60 percent of students in these environments (District of Columbia, Louisiana, New York). Oswald and Coutinho (1997) used education-related variables, State demographic variables, and State economic

variables to predict the percentage of each State's students with disabilities receiving special education and related services outside the regular class for less than 21 percent of the day and the percentage served in separate facilities.² They identified several factors affecting the extent to which students are served with nondisabled peers, including statewide student achievement, population density, per capita income, human services expenditures per capita, and expenditures per pupil. States with higher fourth and eighth grade achievement scores tended to serve more students with disabilities in classes with nondisabled peers. The authors concluded that contextual and programmatic features, as well as individual student characteristics, influenced the extent to which students with disabilities received services with their nondisabled peers. States with relatively high population densities, per capita incomes, human service expenditures, and educational expenditures placed more students with disabilities in separate facilities (Oswald & Coutinho, 1997).

Summary

There has been gradual progress in serving larger percentages of students with disabilities in regular class environments and regular schools. Closely paralleling the increase in the percentage of students receiving special education and related services outside the regular class for less than 21 percent of the day is the increase in aides, at a ratio of 1 aide for every 10 students with disabilities in these environments. The percentage of students in inclusive settings is inconsistent across disability groups, age groups, and States. Elementary-aged students with disabilities, particularly those with speech and language impairments, are served primarily in classes with nondisabled peers. The percentage of students receiving special education outside the regular class for less than 21 percent of the day has increased, and the percentage receiving services outside the regular class for 21 to 60 percent of the day has decreased. Contextual and pro-

² For this analysis, the percentages of students in regular class placements and separate facilities were based on resident population.

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grammatic features, as well as individual student characteristics, appear to influence the extent to which students with disabilities are served with their nondisabled peers. Statewide student achievement, population density, per capita income, human services expenditures per capita, and expenditures per pupil account for some of the pattern variation from State to State.

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Funding for IDEA

During the most recent reauthorization of IDEA in June 1997, Congress revised the formulas for the distribution of funds for the IDEA, Part B programs. A new formula for allocating Part B funds under Section 611 of IDEA will go into effect when the Section 611 appropriation reaches approximately \$4.9 billion. A new formula for allocating preschool education funds under Section 619 of IDEA is effective for funds appropriated under that section beginning with Federal fiscal year (FY) 1998.

PURPOSE: To describe the new formulas for the Part B Grants to States Program (§611) and the Preschool Grants Program (§619). The module also highlights data collected by the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) on State use of set-aside funds.

Appropriation of Funds for Part B of IDEA

Under the Section 611 Grants to States Program, grants are determined by a December 1 child count, or at a State's discretion, a count taken as of the last Friday in October, that is submitted by States to OSEP. The grants are based on the total number of students ages 3-21 with disabilities reported by the States as receiving special education and related services. This count is used to determine the State's IDEA, Part B, Section 611 grant for funds that become available the following July 1. Under the IDEA Amendments of 1997, grants will continue to be based on counts of children served until the year for which Federal appropriation for Part B, Section 611 reaches approximately \$4.9 billion. At that time, State allocations for the year prior to that year become the base allocations for distributing funds in that year and all subsequent years. Eighty-five percent of additional funds above the base will be allocated based on population in the age ranges for which States mandate services, and 15 percent will be based on the number of children in the State living in poverty in those age ranges.

The legislation amended the Preschool Grants Program funding formula in similar ways. Under the new formula, each State's base allocation would be the amount it received in FY 1997. Eighty-five percent of additional funds beyond the base are allocated based on the popula-

tion of children ages 3 through 5, and 15 percent are based on the number of 3- through 5-year-old children in the State living in poverty. However, unlike the Grants to States Program, the new funding formula for the Preschool Grants Program takes effect for funds appropriated for Federal FY 1998.

Table III-2 summarizes the amount of IDEA, Part B Section 611 Grants to States Program funding appropriated to States for FY 1977 through FY 1997. The funds appropriated have increased from \$251,770,000 in 1977 to \$3,109,395,000 in 1997. During the same period, the per-child allocation rose from \$71 to \$535. The increase from 1996 to 1997 was \$785,558,000 or 34 percent. This is the largest 1-year increase in the history of the program.

The State Set-Aside Funds

In this section, information from a recent NASDSE survey of States on their use of set-aside funds is discussed. Because this survey was conducted before the 1997 reauthorization of IDEA, the grants provided to States were based on the following formula for Part B, Section 611 Grants to States.

Within the amount allocated to each State:

- A maximum of 25 percent, less amounts used for administration below, could be retained by the State educational agencies (SEAs) for discretionary/set-aside for providing direct and support services for children and youth with disabilities or for paying the administrative costs for monitoring and complaint investigations, to the extent that such administrative costs exceeded the costs of administration incurred during FY 1985.
- A maximum of 5 percent of the State's allocation (or \$450,000, whichever is greater) could be retained by the SEA for administrative costs in carrying out Part B, Section 611 of the Act.

Table III-2
IDEA, Part B Section 611 Grants to States Program:
Funds Appropriated, 1977-97

| Appropriation Year | IDEA, Part B Section 611 Grants to States ^{a/} | Per Child Allocation ^{b/} |
|--------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| 1977 | \$ 251,770,000 | \$ 71 |
| 1978 | 566,030,000 | 156 |
| 1979 | 804,000,000 | 215 |
| 1980 | 874,500,000 | 227 |
| 1981 | 874,500,000 | 219 |
| 1982 | 931,008,000 | 230 |
| 1983 | 1,017,900,000 | 248 |
| 1984 | 1,068,875,000 | 258 |
| 1985 | 1,135,145,000 | 272 |
| 1986 | 1,163,282,000 | 279 |
| 1987 | 1,338,000,000 | 316 |
| 1988 | 1,431,737,000 | 332 |
| 1989 | 1,475,449,000 | 336 |
| 1990 | 1,542,610,000 | 343 |
| 1991 | 1,854,186,000 | 400 |
| 1992 | 1,976,095,000 | 410 |
| 1993 | 2,052,728,000 | 411 |
| 1994 | 2,149,686,000 | 413 |
| 1995 | 2,322,915,000 ^{c/} | 418 |
| 1996 | 2,323,837,000 | 413 ^{d/} |
| 1997 | 3,109,395,000 | 535 |

^{a/} The figures from 1977 through 1994 include amounts appropriated to the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Since 1995, those entities have not received appropriations.

^{b/} The per-child allocation excludes children and funds for the Outlying Areas and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).

^{c/} This amount includes \$82,878,000 added to the Grants to States appropriation because of the elimination of the Chapter 1 Handicapped Program.

^{d/} Starting in 1996, this allocation was derived by dividing the total appropriations for the 50 States, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Outlying Areas, and BIA by the total number of children served in all of those areas.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Data Analysis System (DANS) and the Office of the Under Secretary, U.S. Department of Education.

- A minimum of 75 percent was required to be flowed through to local educational agencies (LEAs) based on local child counts.

Allocations for Part B, Section 619 Preschool Grants were distributed in a similar fashion.

In January 1997, NASDSE mailed a survey to all States and jurisdictions to gather information about the use of their set-aside funds from the Part B grant awards issued on July 1, 1994. States were allowed to use these funds from July 1, 1994, through September 30, 1996. With 48 of 50 States responding, the following results were found.

Nine States used less than the allowable amount for administration. Approximately \$257.2 million was used for direct and support services across all reporting States. Of this amount, approximately 56 percent was used to support statewide resource centers and support staff development, offset local education expenditures for student placements, and provide services to students with low-incidence disabilities. Because of flexibility allowed under the law, States also were able to use the remaining amount for other important activities. The following six activities were cited in the survey: school reform and restructuring, training mediators and hearing officers, extended school-year programs, model program development, infant and preschool services, and student transportation to offset LEA expenditures.

The greatest proportion of the direct and support monies was used to support resource centers (25.7 percent) followed by Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) activities (11.6 percent). In all, 32 States used their set-aside monies to support resource centers. Table III-3 shows, in descending order, the functions carried out at these centers. States reported that without State set-aside money it would be extremely difficult to replicate these activities.

Personnel development is a critical component of State support to LEAs. As required by IDEA, each State must develop a CSPD plan. Although in FY 1994 more than \$7.6

Table III-3
Rank Order of Most Frequently Cited Functions of the Resource Centers

1. Personnel development for special and general educators and related service personnel.
2. Support services to low-incidence populations.
3. Material development and distribution (e.g., braille and large print text, library resources).
4. Parent training.
5. Assistive technology devices and services.
6. Student evaluation and assessment.

Source: NASDSE, 1997.

Table III-4
Most Frequently Cited CSPD Activities

1. Inservice for special and general educators and related service personnel.
2. Material development and distribution (i.e., professional development, recruitment, retention, and dissemination).
3. Training for paraprofessionals.
4. Collection, evaluation, and dissemination of promising practices.
5. Needs assessments pertaining to professional development.

Source: NASDSE, 1997.

million was distributed nationally to SEAs through OSEP-sponsored competitive grants for personnel preparation, 43 States used \$29.7 million of their set-aside for CSPD activities. In fact, 11 States used between 26 and 45 percent of their set-aside funds for this purpose. Combining the amount from the competitive grants with the set-aside grants, eight States devoted more than \$1 million to personnel development. The most frequently cited CSPD activities funded through set-aside monies in FY 1994 are shown in table III-4, in descending order.

Finally, States reported flowing through more than \$1.6 billion to local school districts. Although IDEA requires that a minimum of 75 percent of the grant award be flowed through to the local level, 32 of the States that responded to the survey reported a flowthrough of 76 to 95 percent. Eight States have developed policies through legislative, State-board, or State-plan-based mandates to flow more than the minimum amount to local districts (NASDSE, 1997).

The IDEA Amendments of 1997

Starting in Federal FY 1998, the IDEA Amendments of 1997 authorize States to set aside funds under Part B Section 611 at fiscal year 1997 authorized levels, plus either adjustments for inflation or the percentage increases in the State IDEA allocation, whichever is lower.

Up to 20 percent of the amount available for States to set aside or \$500,000 (adjusted by the cumulative rate for inflation), whichever is greater, may be used for State administration activities (20 U.S.C. 1411(f)(2)(A)(i)). These funds may also be used for the administration of Part C if the SEA is also the lead agency for that part of the Act. Currently 18 States have SEAs as their Part C lead agency. In two of the 18 States, the SEA is a co-lead agency.

Each State may use any of the retained funds that it does not use for administrative purposes for other State-level activities, including:

- To provide support and direct services, including technical assistance and personnel development and training;
- To offset administrative costs of monitoring and complaint investigation, but only to the extent that those costs exceed the costs incurred for those activities during FY 1985;
- To establish and implement the mediation process, including providing the costs of mediators and support personnel;
- To assist LEAs in meeting personnel shortages;
- To develop a State Improvement Plan;
- To support activities at the State and local levels to meet the performance goals established by the State and to support implementation of the State Improvement Plan;
- To supplement other amounts used to develop and implement a statewide coordinated services system designed to improve results for children and families, including children with disabilities and their families, but not to exceed 1 percent of the amount received by the State under this section. This system shall be coordinated with and, to the extent appropriate, build upon the system of coordinated services developed by the State under Part C of this Act; and
- To supplement subgrants to LEAs for capacity building and improvement.

The IDEA Amendments of 1997 also require that SEAs award subgrants to LEAs for capacity building and improvement. In any fiscal year in which the percentage increase in a State's allocation exceeds the rate of inflation, the State must make subgrants to LEAs unless that amount is less than \$100,000, to assist them in providing direct services and in making systematic change to improve the results for children with disabilities (20 U.S.C.

1411(f)(4)(A)). The amount of these subgrants must be at least an amount equal to the difference between the State's maximum set aside from the prior year inflated and the State's maximum set aside from the prior year multiplied by the percentage increase in the State's total allocation.

Summary

Since the inception of IDEA in 1977, Congress has increased the annual appropriations for Part B. Funds for the Part B Section 611 Grants to States Program are distributed based on a count of all children ages 3 through 21 receiving special education services. However, the new legislation will change the funding formula from a child count-based formula to one that is based on a combination of prior funding, census data, and poverty data. A similar funding formula takes effect for funds appropriated for the Preschool Grants Program, beginning in FY 1998.

To learn how States were using their Part B Grants to States set-aside funds, NASDSE conducted a national survey. The study found that nine States used less than the total amount allowed for administration. The monies allocated for direct and support services were used for a variety of purposes. However, the greatest proportion of funds was used to support resource centers and CSPD activities. States flowed through more than the minimum amounts to LEAs.

Under the IDEA Amendments of 1997 for the Part B State Grants Program and the Preschool Grants Program, the percentages allowed for administration and other State-level activities are based on the maximum amounts that a State could set aside for Federal FY 1997 increased annually by the lesser of the rate of inflation or the rate by which a State's total allocation increases. The list of allowed State-level activities has been expanded, providing more flexibility for States to meet their individual needs.

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State Progress in Use of Interagency Agreements

Over the past 20 years, States have been working toward interagency collaboration to provide more comprehensive, cost-effective, and streamlined services to children with disabilities. Recent reauthorizations of IDEA have increasingly required that interagency collaboration be used to strengthen special education services. Although States have encountered some barriers in this process, emerging evidence suggests that many States are making significant progress in establishing interagency cooperation.

PURPOSE: To review the components of IDEA that guide coordination of services for children with disabilities and explore States' progress in the use of service coordination to align service provision.

Overview of Interagency Cooperation

In addition to meeting students' educational needs, schools have been assuming more responsibility for addressing the mental, physical, and emotional health of children. More recent reforms have followed the philosophy that one agency alone cannot provide all necessary services (Zetlin & Boyd, 1995). The early 1980s marked an increase in the use of interagency collaboration in providing children with disabilities with appropriate educational services, as financial and other resources began to decrease. To pool limited resources, fill service gaps, and avoid duplication of services, State agencies and service providers made efforts to work together. Changes in IDEA reflected this shift toward interagency collaboration. For example, early collaborative projects between State educational agencies (SEAs) and vocational rehabilitation and vocational education agencies influenced IDEA's coordination of transition services for youth with disabilities entering postschool activities.

"Increasingly, legislation links governmental agencies together with their logical interagency partners through required cooperation, coordination, and collaboration (Cashman, 1995, p. 105)." IDEA sets forth interagency agreements and coordinating councils as the primary tools

for designing cohesive service systems. States are creating interagency agreements between SEAs and other State and local organizations that pay for services for children with disabilities--from infants and toddlers to adult life. These agreements coordinate services, delegate financial responsibilities, and arbitrate disputes between the various public, nonprofit, and private entities. Part C of IDEA provides guidance on creating and implementing interagency agreements for services for infants and toddlers. Part B also addresses methods of ensuring needed services for school-aged children, particularly transition services.

Interagency Coordination for Infants and Toddlers

Interagency collaboration and cooperation efforts have been intensified by early childhood educators and advocates. Much of the available literature regarding interagency efforts focuses on the birth through 2 age groups; however, many of the principles are generalizable to other age groups.

In 1986, Congress endorsed a multiagency commitment to administering programs for young children with disabilities and their families through the introduction of Part C of IDEA. This program requires States to implement a statewide system of comprehensive, multidisciplinary, interagency coordinated programs to make available early intervention services to all infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. The belief underlying Part C is that services provided at an earlier age will promote greater educational and intellectual benefits for the child and possibly mean greater economic savings in the long run (Florian, 1995). A unique feature of this legislation is that a primary purpose of funding for lead agencies is to develop policies that support integrated, coordinated services at the State and local levels. States may also use funds for direct services, but only for services that are not otherwise provided by other public or private sources or to expand and improve services that are otherwise available. The interagency coordination design for infants and

toddlers revolves around State Interagency Coordinating Councils (SICC) and interagency agreements.

Interagency Coordinating Councils. The SICC is a cornerstone of the Part C legislation. This is a representative group comprising representatives from State agencies, the State legislature, parents, program directors, and personnel training programs. They have the responsibility for advising and assisting the lead agency in:

- identification of sources of fiscal and other support for services for early intervention programs, assignment of financial responsibility to the appropriate agency, and promotion of interagency agreements;
- preparation of applications regarding early intervention;
- transition of toddlers with disabilities to preschool and other appropriate services; and
- preparing and submitting an annual report to the Governor and Secretary on the status of early intervention programs. (20 U.S.C. 1441(e)(1))

The IDEA Amendments of 1997 make minor changes to SICC's, including the composition of councils and the authorized activity. Specifically, the composition of the SICC (1) no longer requires that parent representatives include minority parents and (2) adds a representative from a Head Start agency or program in the State and a representative from a State agency responsible for child care (20 U.S.C. 1441(b)(1)). The IDEA Amendments of 1997 also allow the council to advise appropriate agencies in the State with respect to the integration of services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and at-risk infants and toddlers and their families, regardless of whether at-risk infants and toddlers are eligible for early intervention services in the State (20 U.S.C. 1441(e)(2)).

The intent of the original legislation was to form an advisory group that had the freedom and power to make recommendations and promote coordination. The multi-constituency and multidisciplinary composition of the

group also enables it to approach the issues from different perspectives with a breadth of knowledge and experience (Harbin & Van Horn, 1990). Building upon this model, many States require or encourage communities to create local interagency councils to facilitate smoother and more tailored services.

Interagency Agreements. The need for interagency agreements is reemphasized and further defined within Part C. The lead agency is responsible for entering into formal interagency agreements with other State-level agencies involved in the State's early intervention program. These agreements must outline financial responsibility, procedures for resolving disputes, and additional components necessary to ensure effective cooperation and coordination.

The strength and clarity of interagency agreements within Part C are augmented by further specifications regarding policies related to payment for services, resolution of disputes, delivery of service in a timely manner, policy for contracting or otherwise arranging for service, and payor of last resort. Historically, assignment of financial responsibilities has been the impetus behind interagency efforts, and language regarding financial responsibilities is woven throughout the interagency sections of IDEA. The proposed regulations further clarify the appropriate method for payment of services.

State Implementation Efforts in Coordinating Services for Infants and Toddlers

Policy makers have communicated a vision of a comprehensive, user-friendly service delivery system for young children with disabilities. However, over the past decade, States have encountered numerous roadblocks in implementing this vision.

Barriers

Agencies serving children with and without disabilities often have different requirements for providing services. Interagency coordination requires these entities to join to create new ways of providing services to infants and toddlers with disabilities. This shift to developing comprehensive services has revealed numerous barriers for State agencies, including agency rigidity and “turfism,” competition for financial resources, lack of specificity in assigning fiscal responsibilities, individual participants’ lack of understanding of the process, and conflicting State and Federal policies and eligibility requirements.

Harbin (1996) examined the issues of turfism and lack of coordinated communication and found that State agencies are qualitatively and fundamentally different from each other. Agency differences include diverse missions, roles, target populations, administrative structures, approaches to decision making, levels of authority over providers, degree of formality (e.g., verbal agreements versus documented agreements), specificity of policies, geographic jurisdictions, professional backgrounds, terminology, philosophy of agencies, resources, priorities, and experience with innovation. These differences made integration of State policies around interagency coordination difficult.

Many States have struggled to achieve a balance between planning a cohesive system while continuing to provide services. For example, New York noted that certain local communities were providing extensive services to families with infants and toddlers with disabilities, while other communities had not yet formed these natural coalitions, and collaborative services were virtually nonexistent. Responding to pressure to create a comprehensive, equitable State system, the regional planning teams were dismantled, and county coordinators were hired to bridge services across the State. This action had the unfortunate effect of squelching local leadership and silencing parent involvement (Apter, 1994). If political pressure had been lifted, more time allotted for planning, or other State models of implementation available at the time, a stronger

system that capitalized on local efforts might have been created.

Interagency coordination was considered highly desirable by educators and administrators nationwide, but they did not think it likely to occur (Hales & Carlson, 1992). They perceived a lack of resources to help guide interagency groups through conflict resolution (Wischnowski & McCollum, 1995), lack of follow-through, limited understanding that interagency responsibilities are a new way of working rather than add-on responsibilities, and misunderstanding of laws and regulations that each agency is required to follow (Fields & Pierce, 1997).

Breakthroughs

Recently, some States have shown that interagency agreement and coordination are attainable. Interagency efforts promote resource sharing, which is needed under growing budget constraints. Since the early years of the Part C program, a wide variety of funding sources have been used to provide services, with health-related sources (e.g., Medicaid, private health insurance, State health funds) the most common payors. By 1991, two-thirds of States indicated some level of financial coordination; this usually meant coordination of an average of five sources (Clifford, 1991). By 1993, States reported improvements in efficiency and effectiveness in accessing Medicaid and Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) funds (Clifford, Bernier, & Harbin, 1993). Responsibility for coordination of financing services has mostly been assumed at the State level rather than at the local level, and this coordination has been made possible primarily through formally written interagency agreements (Clifford et al., 1993).

Today, a majority of SEAs report having an average of one or two agreements with other State agencies and one agreement with private entities (Fields & Pierce, 1997). SEAs are writing interagency agreements with a wide range of public and private entities. SEAs' most common partners include departments of health or health and the

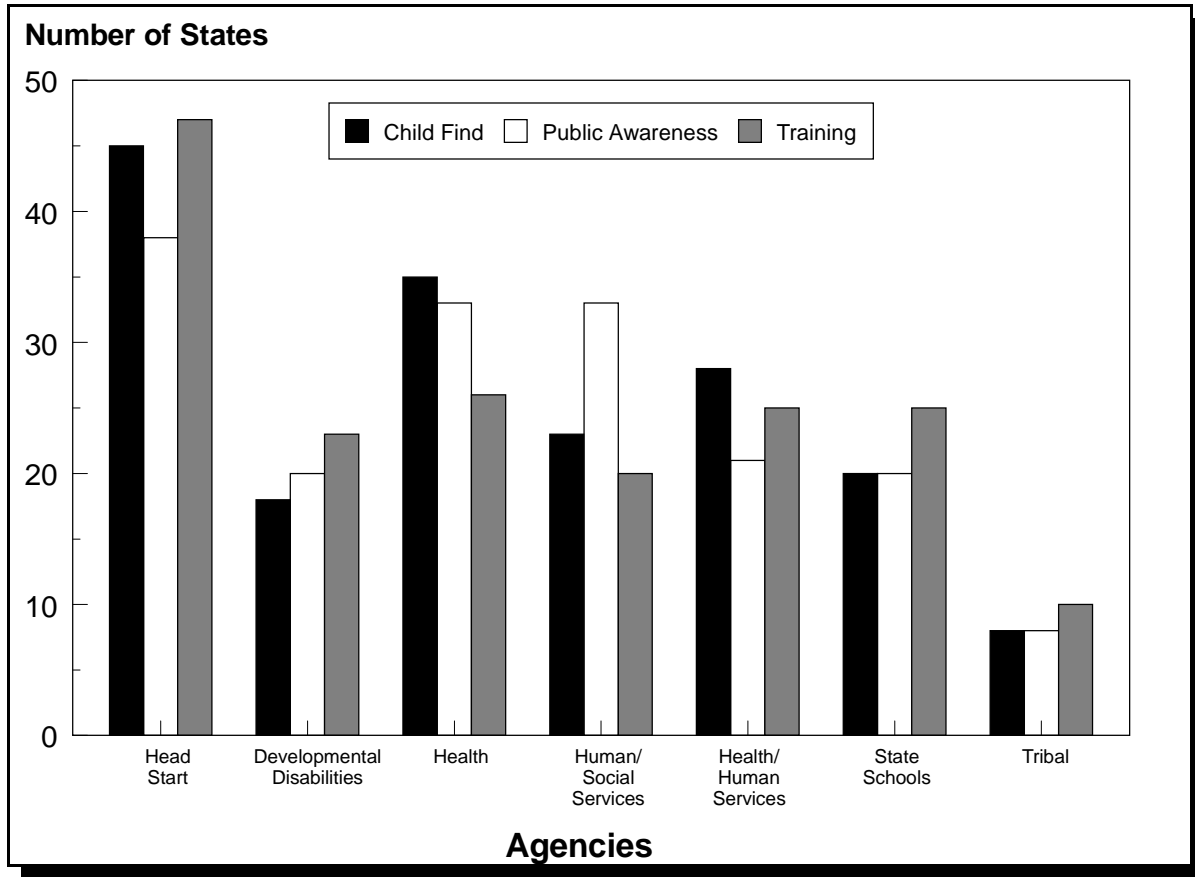
**Table III-5
Number of SEA Interagency Agreements**

| Agencies That Had One or More Agreements with SEAs | Number of SEAs (Out of 30 States) |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Developmental Disabilities Services | 5 |
| Departments of Health or Health and the Environment | 19 |
| Departments of Human Services or Social Services | 11 |
| Head Start | 12 |
| Departments of Corrections | 10 |
| State Vocational Rehabilitation Services | 4 |
| State Mental Health and Mental Retardation Services | 11 |
| Other partners mentioned: Juvenile Justice, Departments of Labor, Departments of Transportation, the Family Independence Agency, Offices of Children and Families, and Consumer and Industry Services. | |

Source: Fields & Pierce, 1997.

environment, departments of human services or social services, and Head Start (Fields & Pierce, 1997; deFosset, Hardison, & Ward-Newton, 1996). (See table III-5 for a listing of partners and number of agreements; see figure III-10 for a listing of partners and collaboration topics.) DeFosset and colleagues (1996) report that most SEAs are collaborating with other agencies on child find, public awareness, and training activities (see figure III-10). These agreements have cemented relationships between agencies and provided structure where little has existed before.

Figure III-10
Number of Interagency Collaborative Efforts Between SEAs and Other Agencies



Source: deFosset, Hardison, & Ward-Newton, 1996.

Interagency agreements have also clarified agency roles and actions. Establishing agreements helps to create mechanisms for dispute resolution, identify the payor of last resort, align systems to offer shared eligibility requirements for clients, share resources, and share case-level information (Fields & Pierce, 1997). It also creates stronger, more effective child find systems (Bernstein, 1993).

Despite qualitative and fundamental differences among agencies, some States have been able to achieve cohesion with a common interagency mission and a shared vision of a coordinated service system. States approach this in different ways, through development of a separate interagency entity with State-sanctioned powers or use of a variety of structures that facilitate coordination of preexisting agencies. There are, however, common threads: (1) the inclusion of all key individuals and constituencies in the SICC and various task forces, (2) skillful leadership in creating or taking advantage of a positive climate, (3) skillful use of political process, and (4) effective management of the inevitable critical events and systems changes (Harbin, 1996). These common threads are general building blocks for providing services for other age groups under IDEA.

Interagency Coordination Among Agencies Serving School-Age Children

Once a child with an identified need enters school, special education services are made available through the school or are contracted to other public, community, or private entities. In calling for a coordinated service delivery system, Part B language focuses on methods of ensuring services, interagency agreements, and transition periods in the student's life. Each State must develop and implement interagency agreements or other mechanisms between the SEA and each noneducational public agency to ensure that a free appropriate public education (FAPE) is provided. These agreements must include:

- **Agency financial responsibility.** An identification of, or a method for defining, the financial responsibility of each agency for providing services to ensure FAPE to children with disabilities;
- **Conditions and terms of reimbursement.** The conditions, terms, and procedures under which a local educational agency (LEA) must be reimbursed by other agencies;

- **Interagency disputes.** Procedures for resolving interagency disputes under the agreement or other mechanism to secure reimbursement from other agencies or otherwise implement the provisions of the agreement or mechanism; and
- **Coordination of services procedures.** Policies and procedures for agencies to determine and identify the interagency coordination responsibilities of each agency to promote the coordination and timely and appropriate delivery of services. (20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(12))

The language of interagency agreements is strengthened in the IDEA Amendments of 1997, particularly on issues regarding payment of services. The State's Chief Executive Officer must now ensure that an interagency agreement or other mechanisms for interagency coordination is in effect between each noneducational public agency and the SEA. In specifying the financial responsibility for each agency, the State Medicaid agency and other public insurers of children with disabilities must be included. The LEA is the payor of last resort.

State Implementation Efforts in Coordinating Services for School-Age Children

While Part B providers have experienced the same barriers as those encountered in the planning and implementation of Part C, progress is being made in offering school-aged children more coordinated services. Today, interagency agreements cover a spectrum of services to school-aged students with disabilities, including school-to-work transition activities and data sharing, improving services to children in juvenile treatment centers, creating coordination between early intervention and preschool services, expanding health services access for Medicaid eligible children, and collaborating on multi-agency personnel development (Fields & Pierce, 1997). A State representative in Kentucky lauds interagency agreements as providing “. . . better use of dollars, broader range of services available to children, better employment outcomes, improved transition planning, better implementation of LRE (least

restrictive environment) and FAPE . . .” (Fields & Pierce, 1997, p. 5).

Of special note is the increased focus on interagency collaboration in serving students with emotional disturbance. Historically, services from schools and community mental health and child welfare agencies have been fragmented and uncoordinated for these children (Nelson & Pearson, 1991; Cumblad, Epstein, Keeney, Marty, & Soderlund, 1996). Often, adequate services were only provided through out-of-State residential treatment facilities (Peterson, 1995). In response to academic, social, vocational, and behavioral trends among youth with emotional disturbance (Cumblad et al., 1996), and in an attempt to provide appropriate services in-State (Peterson, 1995), a number of recent initiatives, including grants, cooperative agreements, and legislation, have been aimed at coordinating services among education, health, and social service agencies to address the needs of this population.

Another area that has received significant attention in coordinating services among State agencies and other service providers is the major transition periods of a student’s life. Under IDEA, States are directed to ensure that a smooth transition takes place while the student is served through Part B or ready to exit any or all Part B services (20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(9) and 20 U.S.C. 1401(30)). The next section highlights issues related to transition.

Collaboration on Transition Services for Students with Disabilities

Transition to Preschool

When a child with a disability reaches age 3, the State must ensure a smooth transition of services from Part C to Part B (20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(9)). These requirements promote increased collaboration between early intervention providers and public schools as decisions are made on when to (1) transition a child from the IFSP (individualized family

services plan) to an IEP (individualized education program) and (2) transfer payment of services from Part C to Part B.

In applying for funds under Part C, States must describe their policies and procedures to be used to:

- ensure a smooth transition for toddlers receiving early intervention services to preschool or other appropriate services;¹
- review the child's program options for the child's third birthday through the remainder of the school year; and
- establish a transition plan. (20 U.S.C. 1437(a)(8))

States have varied in their implementation of transition services. By 1994, evidence suggested that Part C coordinators, Part B Section 619 coordinators, and SICC chairpersons still viewed transition as an internal plan for their agency or program, rather than a collaborative endeavor (Shotts, Rosenkoetter, Streufert, & Rosenkoetter, 1994). However, interagency agreements were found to be instrumental in creating smoother transitions (Shotts et al., 1994; DeStefano & Wermuth, 1992). Parent representatives, service providers, and State coordinators were less concerned and confused about transition issues when more State or local planning had occurred. By 1994, 30 States indicated that written State transition plans were in place or in draft form (Shotts et al., 1994). Eleven States have extended eligibility to FAPE to below age 3. By 1997, 23 States had developed or were developing policies allowing preschool funds to be used for children before their third birthday; 26 States had policies that allowed the use of Part C funds for children past their third birthday. Thirty-eight States had transition agreements that provided for collaborative activities at the local level (deFosset & Carlin, 1997).

¹ States may provide special education and related services to 2-year-old children with disabilities who will turn 3 during the school year. (§619(a)(2)).

Transition From Preschool to Primary School

Less information is available regarding children with disabilities transitioning from preschool to primary school. This may be because the education agency is responsible for both preschool and primary services, and therefore the transition relies more heavily on intra-agency efforts. By 1997, however, 17 States had developed or were developing agreements for transitions from preschool to kindergarten/first grade (deFosset & Carlin, 1997).

Transition Into Adult Life

One of the primary purposes of IDEA is to ensure that all children with disabilities have an education that prepares them for employment and independent living (20 U.S.C. 1400(d)(1)(A)). This is particularly important because only 57 percent of all youth with disabilities are employed, compared with 69 percent of the general population (SRI International, 1993). Without interagency cooperation, students with disabilities have often encountered an abrupt end to support services when they leave school, and these young adults are not always equipped to independently coordinate the transition (Groves & Thomas, 1995).

The IDEA Amendments of 1997 expand transition services so that they are designed within an outcome-oriented process that promotes movement from school to postschool activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation (20 U.S.C. 1401(30)). Beginning at age 14, each student's IEP must include a statement of his or her transition service needs. The plan is to be updated annually (20 U.S.C. 1414(d)(1)(A)(vii)(I)). By the age of 16, younger if determined appropriate by the IEP team, each student's IEP must include a statement of needed transition services, including, if appropriate, a statement of the interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages (20 U.S.C. 1414(d)(1)(A)(vii)(II)).

Notably, other Federal legislation underpins IDEA's focus on this transition, including the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education and Applied Technology Education Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-392), the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 (P.L. 102-569), and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-239). These ". . . pieces of Federal legislation stress the need for coordinated interagency transition policy development, implementation and service provision" (Wermuth & Grayson, 1995, p. 2). It should be noted that each piece of legislation and its corresponding rules and regulations are administered through different Federal agencies or different offices within the U.S. Department of Education (Szymanski, Hanley-Maxwell, & Asselin, 1992). Integrating the legislation has been difficult for some States.

Building on a history of collaboration in education, vocational education, and vocational rehabilitation, some States are taking advantage of the national focus on career preparation to renew and extend their services to youth with disabilities. In reviewing recent career development programs for youths with disabilities, 60 percent of the exemplary transition programs used interagency and interdisciplinary collaboration (Kohler, DeStefano, Wermuth, Grayson, & McGinty, 1994). Concerned about the fragmented service delivery to students with disabilities exiting the school system, California launched a comprehensive project to redesign the State postschool preparation system. Nine different State-level agencies have come together; after 4 years of planning, they initiated State legislative and policy changes. As a result, the State has recently expanded its definition for transition to include follow-up services that provide ". . . specific outcomes for meaningful employment and quality of adult life" (Hegenauer, 1995, p.120). Essentially, the State has taken responsibility for following and supporting students with disabilities beyond the exit from public education. This is a prime example of a collaborative interagency effort that is beginning to map out a new way of providing needed services to students with disabilities.

Summary

In the past 20 years, there has been general agreement that interagency efforts promote coordinated services for children with disabilities. IDEA has helped to guide and support these efforts. Early efforts met with numerous barriers because State agencies were designed for distinct purposes. States encountered resistance to change because of agency rigidity, individuals' misperceptions, and cloudy specifications for payment of services. State agencies serving infants and toddlers have taken significant steps in breaking down many of those barriers and provided numerous models of interagency collaboration. Presently, most SEAs have created interagency agreements with a variety of other entities that cover a range of services. In particular, serving youth with emotional disturbance through coordinating school, mental health, and social services has become a recent focus. The transition of young children into schools has been improved through interagency efforts. Finally, building on a history of interagency cooperation, SEAs, vocational education agencies, and vocational rehabilitation programs are in the process of renewing their service system to provide youth with disabilities a smoother transition into postschool activities.

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