

Archived Information

SUMMARIES OF STATE AGENCY/FEDERAL EVALUATION STUDIES PROGRAM

Although the State Agency/Federal Evaluation Studies (SAFES) project has not been funded since 1995, OSEP continues to receive final reports from States. These reports are included in this section because individuals in the field may have interest in these findings.

DETERMINING THE EFFICACY OF PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: A FEASIBILITY STUDY

Arkansas Department of Education, FY 1994

In recent years, Arkansas has expanded special education services to children 3-5 years of age. More than 7,000 children now receive services. If Arkansas is to continue to provide appropriate services to children ages 3-5, it must be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of these programs. The Arkansas Department of Education, in collaboration with the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, conducted a study to determine the feasibility of evaluating the effectiveness of preschool programs for children with disabilities in the State.

Feasibility Study Questions

The feasibility questions addressed in this study are as follows.

- What data are available about children served in preschool programs for children with disabilities?
- Are available data consistent across the population of children in preschool programs for children with disabilities?
- Can available data be analyzed to determine efficacy?
- What statistical analysis would be most effective with available data?
- Are portfolio assessment data available?
- What are the ways in which portfolio assessment data can be used to determine efficacy of programs?
- What is the best method to use the Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) to help with determining the efficacy of programs?
- Given the state of services in Arkansas, availability of data, and availability of resources, what is an appropriate blueprint for determining efficacy of preschool services for children with disabilities?

Methodology

The study was conducted in two phases. Phase I covered the collection and analysis of data from record reviews and focus groups. During Phase I, each educational service cooperative (ESC) was asked to have each school district within its organizational structure submit the education folders of two children who had exited the preschool special education program at the end of the 1994-95 school year. The school districts were instructed to submit one folder for a child referred for special education services in kindergarten and the other folder for a child not referred for ongoing special education. A total of 363 folders were received. Sixty folders were randomly selected for data analysis. Half were for children who had been referred for special education programs in kindergarten, while half represented children not referred for special education in kindergarten. The folders were reviewed for information necessary for conducting an evaluation of the effectiveness of preschool programs for children with disabilities.

Two focus groups, one for professionals providing services to preschool children with disabilities and one for parents of children currently receiving special education services in preschool programs, were also conducted. The purpose of the focus groups was to assess the usefulness of focus groups for assessing the effectiveness of preschool programs for children with disabilities. The professional focus group consisted of five teachers who worked in preschool special education programs; the parent focus group consisted of seven adults representing five families.

Phase II covered analysis of the availability of data, identification of additional data needed, and assessment of the usefulness of focus groups for an evaluation of the effectiveness of preschool programs for students with disabilities in the State. This was accomplished with the feasibility advisory committee, which included national experts in the field of program evaluation.

Findings

The feasibility study resulted in several important findings, including:

- Substantial data (e.g., demographic, referral source, duration of services, age at intake, diagnosis of strengths and weaknesses, least restrictive environment (LRE) placement) are available to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of preschool special education programs;
- Available data are consistent across the State;

- The data are conducive to statistical analyses (i.e., descriptive, comparative, and causal) of the effectiveness of programs;
- Focus groups can provide information (e.g., program expectations, program perceptions, experiences with the program) that will be helpful in assessing the effectiveness of preschool programs for students with disabilities;
- Portfolio assessment data are not available. Children in Arkansas have not been extensively evaluated using portfolio data; and
- Involvement with the ICC, which primarily focuses on birth to 36 month programs, was determined to be unnecessary for the full evaluation.

A STUDY OF THE FEASIBILITY OF EVALUATING TRANSITION PLANNING AS A FUNCTION OF THE PASS SYSTEM

North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, FY 1994

The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (DPI), in collaboration with the American Institutes for Research (AIR), conducted a study to assess the feasibility of integrating the Performance Assessment for Self-Sufficiency (PASS) system into North Dakota's collaborative transition planning model (Project TransND). The study also investigated alternative approaches to implementation and investigated using PASS to plan for the individualized transition needs of high-functioning students with disabilities.

The purpose of TransND is to bring together special educators and adult service providers at regional and local levels to ensure that positive outcomes accrue to students in transition to various adult environments. The PASS system attempts to anticipate and report the service needs of exiting students with disabilities. It has been designed to provide information to local, State, and Federal agencies on the services required by students with disabilities as they make the transition from secondary school to adult service delivery systems. The PASS system consists of two components: (1) the PASS instrument, which provides information about the functional performance of students, and (2) the PASS expert system, which converts the assessments of functional performance into projections of anticipated service needs. Based on the study results, DPI endorses continuing efforts to integrate the PASS system into transition planning efforts at the local, regional, and State levels.

Study Objectives

This feasibility study was conducted with three primary objectives in mind:

- to investigate the feasibility of integrating PASS into transition planning procedures in North Dakota;
- to investigate alternative approaches to implementation with an eye toward identifying best practice; and
- to investigate the applicability of using PASS to plan for the individualized needs of high-functioning students with disabilities.

Study Methodology

To collect data relevant to each of these objectives, the project staff set into motion four complementary activities. The first activity was intended to answer questions regarding the overall feasibility of integrating the PASS system into transition planning activities at the local level. Volunteers who participated in this phase of the study were given the opportunity to rate one of their students using the PASS instrument, submit the completed instrument to AIR for processing, and then utilize output from the PASS expert system in their own individualized education plan (IEP) planning sessions. This activity was also designed to test alternative models of best practice by varying the manner in which teachers completed the PASS instrument. Teachers assigned themselves to one of the following three study conditions.

- Individual teacher completes the PASS instrument independently for each student and uses results for transition planning with IEP/individualized transition plan (ITP) team.
- Teacher and other members of the IEP/ITP team complete the PASS instrument collaboratively for each student and use results for transition planning.
- Individual teacher or team does not use PASS instrument but completes transition planning activities using other data sources.

The teachers then provided feedback to DPI on the feasibility and utility of using and not using the PASS instrument for transition planning.

For the second activity, the staff took advantage of the national voluntary data collection for anticipated service needs. Because North Dakota had already volunteered to participate in the national data collection effort, it was a simple matter to collect converging feedback on teachers' perceptions of the PASS system. The DPI staff prepared and administered a feedback form to participating teachers. The respondents were asked to evaluate the perceived utility of the PASS instrument based on their limited exposure to the instrument during the data collection exercise.

Activities three and four were designed to collect data at a more global level. To provide additional information related to key feasibility and utility issues, several stakeholder focus groups were conducted with special education teachers and resource specialists, vocational\school-to-work counselors, adult service providers, parents, and members of the State Transition Planning Committee (STPC). The purpose of the focus groups was to obtain information that could be

used to improve the feasibility of collecting, sharing, and using PASS data for transition planning for both high- and low-functioning students with disabilities and to model a focus group process that could be effective for future evaluation efforts.

For the fourth activity, staff contracted the services of Dr. William Frey to offer an expert review of the PASS system and the feasibility of using the system to meet the needs of high functioning students with disabilities. He examined the technical and conceptual adequacy of the PASS instrument and the expert system output for students with mild to moderate learning disabilities in different age groups. The purposes were to provide the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) with information to modify the instrument and/or rules at a later date and to provide DPI with information regarding the overall utility of PASS for higher functioning students with disabilities.

Findings

Results of the 1991-92 PASS field test, the 1994-95 voluntary PASS data collection, and this feasibility study all demonstrate that it is possible for teachers to complete the PASS instrument with a minimum amount of burden and with enough accuracy to trigger face-valid lists of service needs. A substantial majority (73 percent) of the teachers indicated they were interested in using the PASS instrument again. More important, findings from this study demonstrated that it was possible and advantageous to utilize a full implementation of the PASS system at the local and State levels.

The study also investigated “best practice” for how to integrate the PASS system into transition planning activities of North Dakota. By systematically varying the implementation of PASS within different contexts, the study produced a rich profile of the benefits and barriers involved in using the system throughout the State. The major benefits and barriers to implementation of PASS are described below.

Benefits of the PASS System

Among the most prominent benefits of PASS identified by participants and related to the key research questions and objectives of this study are the following:

- PASS provides information that is useful for IEP/ITP planning, and the process used to complete the PASS instrument and to consider information generated by the PASS expert system is a valuable tool for transition planning.
- Although initially developed for use with exiting students with disabilities in order to project their adult service needs, PASS has utility for portraying the functional performance of students with disabilities and identifying the service needs of students at an earlier age.
- PASS is a useful tool for improving interagency communication, coordination, and teamwork, as part of a cooperative transition planning process.

Barriers To Implementing PASS

Along with these demonstrated benefits come some challenges to implementing PASS successfully within the context of transition planning in North Dakota.

- Differences in the perceived utility of PASS and the investment of time it requires for the IEP team suggest that PASS should not be mandated for use in the IEPs of all students but rather be used selectively for students to provide additional information to enhance the transition planning process.
- PASS has some limitation in its ability to measure the functional performance levels of higher functioning students, and, consequently, in adequately anticipating their service needs.
- Feedback from participants was mixed regarding the appropriateness of the anticipated service needs generated by PASS for individual students.
- Participants indicated a need for further clarification and training in the use of the functional performance and anticipated service needs profiles generated by the PASS expert system.
- Implementing PASS will require a substantial investment in staff, technology, and training at the local, regional, and State levels.

**A STUDY OF FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE PERFORMANCE
OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN
REGULAR EDUCATION PLACEMENTS**

New Hampshire Department of Education, FY 1993

This study explored the influence of selected educational variables on the outcomes of students with disabilities in regular education placements in six New Hampshire high schools and compared outcomes for students with disabilities to outcomes for their non-disabled peers. Data for the study were extracted from a variety of local and State data bases, and from surveys of teachers and students. In all, data were analyzed for 717 students with disabilities and 5,622 non-disabled students. The study addressed the following questions:

- What are the characteristics of regular and special education study populations, and are there notable differences between the two groups?
- Are there differences between the absence, suspension, and dropout rates of students with disabilities in regular education placements and the rates of their peers?
- What factors correlate with high or low absence, discipline, and dropout rates for students with disabilities, including gender, economic status, family structure, type of disability, type of services, and time spent on homework, independent reading, and watching television?
- How different is the overall grade performance of high school students with disabilities in regular education placements and the grade performance of their peers?
- Which variables correlate most strongly with above or below average grade performance for students with disabilities in regular education placements, including gender, economic status, family structure, type of disability, type of services, and time spent on homework, independent reading, and watching television?
- Are high school students with learning or emotional disabilities absent more frequently, more likely to be suspended, more likely to achieve below satisfactory grades, and more likely to drop out than students who were not?

- Are high school students with disabilities who were retained in a previous grade absent more frequently, more likely to be suspended, more likely to achieve below satisfactory grades, and more likely to drop out than students who were not?
- Are high school students with disabilities who were participants in early education/early intervention programs absent less frequently, less likely to be suspended, more likely to achieve satisfactory grades, and less likely to drop out than students who were not?
- To what extent do high school students with disabilities in regular education placements experience success with specific types of instructional approaches?

The study confirmed findings from previous studies that students with disabilities were disproportionately male (62 percent), and were more likely than non-disabled students to be eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch (21 percent versus 10 percent). Students with disabilities were more likely than non-disabled students to have been retained in a previous grade (13 percent versus 6 percent), and many spent little or no time in extracurricular activities (51 percent), reading for pleasure (68 percent), or doing homework (41 percent).

In an analysis of absence, discipline, and dropout rates, the study found that students with disabilities were more likely than non-disabled students to be suspended; for both special education and general education students, poverty appeared to be correlated with the likelihood of suspension. Unlike earlier studies, the authors found lower annual dropout rates for students with disabilities (3.4 percent) than for those without disabilities, 6.1 percent.

Grades for students with disabilities showed signs of academic difficulty. Across all subject areas, 48 percent of students with disabilities received three or more Ds or Fs compared to 33 percent of non-disabled students. Special education students who received Chapter 1 instruction, those who had previously been retained, and those with an aide assigned to their general education classes were most likely to receive three or more Ds or Fs. Students with disabilities who spent more time on homework and those involved in extracurricular activities reportedly received better grades than special education students overall.

In an exploratory portion of the study, researchers collected data from classroom teachers who had at least four special education students in their classes on their most prevalent method of instruction. Researchers then correlated those data with students' outcomes. The data suggest that poor academic performance for students with disabilities occurred regardless of instructional method.

In addition to providing valuable data on educational outcomes for students with and without disabilities, this project also had a secondary purpose. It improved the capacity of local schools to make data-based decisions about the effectiveness of their educational programming, and, consequently, promoted accountability and program improvement. Furthermore, the study helped contribute to a shared understanding among the participating special and general education administrators of the factors that must be considered in planning and evaluating services for students with disabilities.

**KIDS IN THE MIDDLE: A STUDY OF CHILDREN, AGES 11-15,
DIAGNOSED AS SERIOUSLY EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED**

Maine Department of Education, FY 1992

Providing appropriate instructional and supportive services to students identified as having serious emotional disturbance (SED) or behavioral impairments (BI) poses substantial challenges to State and local educational agencies. The extent of the needs of these students and their families and the lack of a full range of mental health services and other social and human services in many communities are two of the most serious challenges. Other relevant issues include varying interpretations of the number and nature of students under the statutory definition of SED and concerns about the disproportionate representation of male students, minority students, and students from families in the lower socioeconomic levels. Finally, an analysis by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) of postschool results for SED students strongly suggests that existing programs may not be providing sufficient academic and vocational experiences to permit successful transition into adulthood for these students.

The percentage of students with SED or BI between the ages 11-15 receiving special education and supportive services consistently has been higher than for any other age group. The age period 11-15 years is referred to as the preadolescence or the early adolescence developmental period. There is strong evidence that many, if not most, youth experience this time as a difficult adjustment period. Children and youth with SED or BI may find these adjustment difficulties even more frequent and intensive.

The concept of middle school education evolved as a result of the perceived need to restructure traditional junior high school programs so that they would be more effective in accommodating the complex psychological, developmental, and instructional needs of preadolescents and early adolescents. However, there is little or no research assessing the effect of middle schools on students with SED or BI. The Maine Department of Education conducted this study to identify relationships among key variables related to the prevalence of students with behavioral impairments in Maine's middle schools.

Study Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the nature and experience of students with SED or BI in Maine's middle schools and to provide policy makers, administrators, practitioners, and other researchers with information that could

be used to improve the personal, educational, and vocational outcomes for preadolescent and early adolescent youth with SED or BI. In particular, this study attempts to determine the degree to which schools in Maine that have adopted a middle school philosophy have had an effect on these students. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

- What are the characteristics of students with SED in Maine?
- What are the factors associated with varying identification rates of students with SED in Maine?
- Among the factors associated with varying identification rates for students with SED, which are seen by local staff as the most critical and why?
- How do school units differentiate behaviors associated with emerging development from deviational behaviors associated with SED?

Methodology

The study was exploratory in nature. It attempted to identify relationships among key variables (i.e., middle school attributes, school enrollment, and socioeconomic status ratings) related to the prevalence of students with BI in middle schools.

The study population consisted of 1,989 students with BI who were 11-15 years of age at the time of the study; there were 383 13-year-olds in this category. A sample of this population of 13-year-olds was randomly selected, resulting in a sample of 116 students, which represented 33 percent of all 13-year-old students with BI in Maine schools. State wards in treatment centers were not included in the sample selection.

Data were collected using a variety of techniques, including rating scales, surveys, interviews and record reviews. The Middle School Attitudes Survey, constructed by project staff, was designed to collect data on the attributes of middle schools, including instructional and curriculum activities, organizational patterns, extracurricular and exploratory activities, parent and community involvement, and empowerment of teachers and students. The IEP rating scale, adapted by the project staff, was used to summarize the basic design and key elements of the students' special education programs, including the student's placement, the school hours in that placement, the time mainstreamed, the student's strengths and weaknesses, annual goals and short-term objectives, the date of initial placement, and the disability at the time of identification. The IEP Supplemental

Questionnaire, developed by the project staff, requested information from each school district's Director of Special Education about the history of the student's placements, prior assessment results, the use of non-special education services, and the evaluation of progress. A Structured Parent Interview protocol was designed by the project staff to gather parents' perceptions of their children's experiences in middle school and, specifically, with special education services. The socioeconomic rating of each school unit was established by using the midpoint of the socioeconomic range computed for the reading portion of the Maine Educational Assessment Tests, a statewide achievement test administered annually to fourth, eighth and eleventh grade students.

Data analysis included rating IEPs on IEP rating scales, summarizing supplementary questionnaires, tabulating information on the Middle School Attitudes Survey, and analyzing data from parent interviews. Selected data were analyzed using SPSS; analysis included Pearson correlations, tests for significance, tests for multicollinearity, and multiple regression procedures.

Findings

The major findings from the study include the following.

- Maine consistently identifies slightly more students with BI than are identified nationally. Eighty-one percent are male, and 10 percent are female. Nineteen percent are identified by the end of kindergarten and 63.5 percent by the end of the second grade. Over 75 percent remain identified as BI through at least age 13, and more than 64 percent are one or more grade levels below that expected for their age.
- Seventy-five percent of students with BI were initially identified as having BI by the time they were in grade three.
- Seven out of 10 students with BI in Maine are included in regular classrooms, and 3 out of 10 are in more restrictive settings away from the mainstream education program.
- Approximately 70 percent of 11-15 year old students with BI in Maine are involved in special education programs that include placement in regular classrooms on a full-time or part-time basis.

- Most students with BI in middle schools receive a substantial portion of their educational programs from regular education teachers. However, evidence of special educator consultation activities relative to student programming in regular education environments is lacking.
- Simple correlation analysis indicated a significant inverse relationship between prevalence of students with BI and middle school attributes. Schools that have many characteristics associated with the middle school philosophy have significantly fewer students with BI.
- A multiple regression analysis of key variables, including SES, middle school rating, and school enrollment, reveals that only SES is related to the prevalence of students with BI and this relationship is inverse. School units with higher SES ratings have fewer students with BI.

**OUTCOMES AND PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FOR STUDENTS
WITH SEVERE DISABILITIES**

Maryland Department of Education, FY 1992

In 1989, Maryland established its School Performance Program (MSPP) as a vehicle for improving education through enhanced student, school, district, and State accountability. The MSPP currently uses data on criterion-referenced assessments, student attainment, participation, postsecondary plans and decisions, as well as contextual information to judge each school's growth from year to year. Public reporting of results from the MSPP promote program accountability and improvement.

Maryland recognized that a modified system of performance assessment was needed for the approximately 8,500 students with severe disabilities who are exempted from MSPP testing. This project was designed to define educational outcomes and indicators appropriate for students with severe disabilities, and to explore options for assessing performance in light of those educational outcomes. The resulting assessment program is called IMAP, Independence Mastery Assessment Program.

Based on a review of literature and input from special educators across the State, project staff identified two outcome domains, content and skills. Within the content domain, outcomes are divided into four subject areas--personal management, community, career/vocational, and recreation/leisure. In the skill domain, outcomes are divided into those relating to communication, decision making, behavior, and academics. Project staff also identified numerous outcomes and indicators within each domain and subject area.

Outcomes were developed for ages 5, 8, 10, 13, and 17-21, and were based on the Maryland Life Skills Curricular Framework. Table B-1 includes a description of the eight content domains.

In order to assess progress toward the outcomes, project staff, along with educators, developed a series of performance tasks which are videotaped and rated according to a scoring rubric. These performance tasks are used in conjunction with portfolio evidence and parent surveys of student behavior to characterize student performance relative to the outcomes.

Project staff conducted a pilot test of the new performance assessment system in 19 schools in seven school districts. Teachers were trained for 1 day in test administration, and 47 students ages 17 to 21 completed 65 performance tasks.

Table B-1
Independence Mastery Assessment Program Outcome Domains

Domain	Description
Personal Management	Students will demonstrate their ability in the following areas: personal needs, appropriate health and safety practices, managing household routines, and participating in transition planning with adult service providers.
Community	Students will demonstrate their ability to access community resources and get about safely in the environment.
Career/Vocational	Students will demonstrate their ability to transition to employment and participate in various employment opportunities.
Recreation/Leisure	Students will demonstrate their ability to participate in recreation and leisure activities.
Communication	Students will demonstrate their ability to express and receive communication through a variety of methods, to interact socially, and to meet functional needs.
Decision Making	Students will demonstrate their ability to make decisions and choices, to resolve problems, to manage time, and to advocate for themselves.
Academic	Students will demonstrate the ability to apply correct and appropriate academic skills and knowledge at all times.
Behavior	Students will demonstrate their ability to behave in chronologically age-appropriate ways in various situations.

Students were videotaped performing the tasks from May 1 through May 29, 1995. Teachers worked in groups of four or five to view videotapes, review portfolios, and rate performance.

Over the course of the project, researchers developed a number of products, including:

- a trainer of trainer notebook,
- a local accountability coordinators' notebook and training guide,
- electronic portfolios,

- framework/outcome crosswalks,
- scoring procedures,
- student portfolio frameworks and evaluations,
- videotaping guidelines, and
- 30 performance tasks with accompanying scoring rubrics.

Project staff also made a series of recommendations based on the evaluation. They recommend: (1) making the assessment focus on school improvement rather than accountability until teachers are comfortable with the procedures and results, (2) modeling the project components on the existing State assessment system so language and format are familiar to users, (3) ensuring consensus on outcomes and indicators before attempting implementation, (4) including staff and parent input, and (5) making the assessment meaningful.

**PARTICIPATORY DECISION MAKING IN DETERMINING COMMON
OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS IN SPECIAL AND GENERAL EDUCATION
AS INDICATORS OF PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS**

Minnesota Department of Education, FY 1992

Since the mid-1980s, considerable impetus has been building to improve education in the United States. Efforts like Goals 2000: the Educate America Act and the National Educational Goals exemplify the types of reforms supported by politicians, parents, educators, and industry. Basic to these efforts are notions of school restructuring and improved accountability. Although general education has received most of the attention in this debate, special education has not been excluded. However, for special education, issues of restructuring and accountability are complicated by the move to integrate special education into general education. Integration of special and general education requires a dialogue among special educators, general educators, parents, and other interested groups to reach a common understanding about the mission of public education and its objectives, programs, services, and outcomes.

The Minnesota Department of Education, in collaboration with St. Cloud State University, evaluated a stakeholder-based planning and decision-making model currently used in management sciences for use in supporting dialogue about integration of special education into general education. The study utilized a multiattribute utility (MAU) evaluation model as a means of structuring group decision making and to evaluate program alternatives. The study found that a decision-making process could be utilized to identify and assess outcomes of importance for students with learning disabilities as well as all students in an integrated classroom.

Objectives

The study focused on five objectives described below.

- Determine five outcomes of significance to all students in general and students with learning disabilities in particular.
- Find or develop assessment tools which measure progress toward the five chosen outcomes.
- Use the assessment tools to measure progress toward chosen outcomes in integrated classrooms.

- Assess the study in terms of future usefulness to stakeholders and other educators.
- Write and disseminate study process and results.

Process and Products

Three different groups of individuals with diverse agendas and backgrounds worked collaboratively to answer the question, “Can a decision-making process be utilized to identify and assess outcomes of importance for students with learning disabilities as well as all students in an integrated setting?”

All three groups participated in the MAU evaluation model that involved 14 steps categorized in three domains. The domains are:

- Determine outcomes of importance;
- Find, develop, and implement student assessments; and
- Evaluate process and products.

Group #1 comprised 23 stakeholders from five representative school districts in the State. This group consisted of students with learning disabilities, parents of students with learning disabilities, classroom teachers, special education teachers, and District Coordinators. Using the third draft of the Minnesota Graduation Rule, they chose the following outcomes as the focus of the study:

- Understands technological systems and applications.
- Understands the effective management of resources in a household business, community, and government.
- Applies reading strategies appropriate to the material and purpose.
- Applies multiple methods of inquiry in order to plan and conduct research, draw conclusions, and communicate and apply findings.
- Applies number sense, number relationships, and a variety of computational procedures.
- Applies writing strategies appropriate to the audience and purpose.

In addition, this Stakeholder Group listed indicators and potential assessments relative to each of the outcomes.

Group #2 comprised three university faculty members from the Department of Special Education, the Project Director, the Principal Investigator, and the District Coordinators from the Stakeholder Group. This group expanded on the work already done, found or developed assessments for the outcomes, monitored and guided the work being done in each of the districts, and developed final evaluation forms for both process and products.

Group #3 comprised 21 teachers, 227 students, and the District Coordinators from the Stakeholder Group. Each District Coordinator, with the Principal Investigator, provided the connecting link between this and the other two groups. These district participants chose, helped develop, revised, implemented, and evaluated the assessments used in this study.

As a result of this stakeholder-based planning and decision-making process, for each outcome, the groups identified indicators, chose or developed (or began developing) assessments, and documented methods for obtaining and using results. Students and teachers then evaluated the assessments. In general, participants were satisfied with the assessments, and several of the schools involved in the project have plans to continue or expand the use of selected instruments.

Recommendations

Based on the products resulting from this study and the evaluation of the assessments by students and teachers, the project staff developed the following recommendations.

School districts who want to use assessment models should seek to expand the level of stakeholder involvement. Parents, students, teachers, administrators, and community members should be enlisted to examine outcomes and provide feedback.

Faculty at teacher-training institutions can use parts, or all, of the participatory decision-making process to develop strong and beneficial relationships with teachers, students, parents, and administrators. Faculty should work together with stakeholders to define outcomes and build valid and reliable assessments that measure progress toward those outcomes.

Larger education systems, such as State, regional, and Federal education agencies, can use the process to develop collaborative relationships with parents, students, teachers, administrators, community members, businesses, and advocacy organizations.

AN EVALUATION OF FAMILY-CENTERED COORDINATED PART H SERVICES IN NORTH CAROLINA

North Carolina Department of Human Resources, FY 1992

The Policy Context

Part H of P.L. 99-457 emphasizes the importance of using family-centered practices in delivering services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. The legislation states that families should be more involved in the actual interventions, services should be more responsive to the whole family's concerns, and families should be empowered to have control of decision making. Part H of P.L. 99-457 also encourages interagency coordination as a way of remedying the fragmentation and lack of coordination in the system of service delivery to infants and toddlers and their families. This research project, conducted jointly by the North Carolina Department of Human Resources and the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, consisted of two separate studies, each designed to address one of these two central aspects of the implementation of Part H in North Carolina.

The Family-Centered Service Study

The purpose of the family-centered study, composed of three related substudies, was to investigate family-centered practices in North Carolina. The first substudy measured families' and service providers' perceptions of the actual and ideal extent of family-centeredness of services. Two versions of the Family Orientation of Community and Agency Services (FOCAS) and Brass Tacks instruments were administered to 198 professionals (76 percent response rate) and 118 members of families receiving Part H services (43 percent response rate). Results showed that both professionals and families rated current Part H services as quite highly family-centered but not ideally so. The three best predictors of a high family-centered rating among professionals were: having no more than a bachelor's degree, working for a Mental Health/Development Disabilities/Substance Abuse Services program, and providing home-based (as opposed to center-based) services. For families, only experience with early intervention services predicted a high family-centeredness rating.

In the second substudy, telephone interviews were carried out with a subset of 20 families and 20 service providers from the first substudy (10 each with high and low family-centeredness ratings). These more open-ended interviews explored the respondents' views of family centeredness and experiences with the service

delivery system. Results suggest that families were sometimes “uninformed consumers” satisfied with services that could have been more family-centered. Families felt they had significant input in developing the Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs) and valued professionals’ personal characteristics but did not feel involved in the assessment of their child. Service providers believed in a family-centered approach, especially valued families that liked them, and felt interagency collaboration had enhanced their abilities to provide family-centered services. These professionals reported paperwork, lack of specialized services, the IFSP process, and families who appeared not to want services as barriers to effective service provision.

The third substudy developed and applied a family-centeredness rating scale to 100 IFSPs, 25 each from inclusive center-based programs, self-contained center-based programs, home-based early intervention programs, and health department home-based service coordination programs. Differences were found between center-based programs and the others on cohesion (a dimension including strategies matching outcomes, family’s role, and lack of judgmentalism), and between home-based health programs and the others on functionality (necessity, context appropriateness, and active voice). Across all program types, IFSPs contained overwhelmingly more child-related than family-related goals.

The Interagency Service Coordination Study

This study examined three aspects of interagency coordination in North Carolina: (1) facilitators and barriers to coordination, (2) the functioning level of the Local Interagency Coordinating Councils (LICCs), and (3) written interagency agreements developed at the local level. A three-part research strategy combined a mail survey of 231 respondents, focus groups with 36 interagency professionals in three regions of the State, and analysis of local interagency documents.

Mail survey responses indicated people as the strongest facilitators of interagency coordination and resources and policies as the biggest barriers. These findings were supported in the focus groups, which also found some of the same barriers across the three regions of the State but found others particular to specific regions. Attention was focused on the following policy areas: eligibility and assessment, the respective roles of the LICCs and local consortia, lack of local administrative support, lack of common focus across agencies, and cross-agency staff training. On the level of functioning of the LICCs, survey findings and focus group results indicated that many LICCs have managed to complete the first two stages in a 4-stage developmental model, but some are still in the first stage. Few agencies provided documents broad enough to be considered true interagency agreements. The overall mean ranking of interagency coordination across all

counties, on a scale of 1-10 (with 1 representing no coordination and 10 indicating total coordination), was 6.38.

Recommendations From Both Studies

Recommendations based on the family-centered study findings included: reducing paperwork, providing training in strategies for collaborative decision making with families, training early intervention personnel to write high-quality IFSPs, and educating families to be better informed consumers. The interagency coordination study generated recommendations for improved staff training and technical assistance; policy revisions; sponsoring additional special activities, forums, studies and task forces; and developing systematic procedures to guide the development of local interagency agreements.

**FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE OREGON
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR SUPPORTED EDUCATION AND
DESCRIPTIVE STUDY RESULTS**

Oregon Department of Education, FY 1991 and FY 1992

The Oregon Comprehensive Program Plan for Supported Education requires that local educational agencies (LEAs) support the full integration of students with disabilities in general education. Currently, 30 LEAs participate in the Oregon Department of Education's (ODE) Supported Education Project. Supported education is defined as the provision of special education support to students with individual education plans (IEPs) in the regular classroom. As part of the plan, the ODE is required to systematically evaluate the success of school integration efforts.

Feasibility Study

This study addressed the feasibility of conducting a statewide evaluation that would enable the ODE to assess the effectiveness of State and local education reform policies and practices and their impact on the outcomes of special education restructuring. The feasibility study was conducted with the following goals:

- Verify the conceptual framework, evaluation design, and measurement instruments.
- Conduct a pilot test of the evaluation study to:
 - describe and analyze the effects of the Comprehensive Plan on local educational agency (LEA) policy, service delivery systems, participant attitudes, and student outcomes;
 - identify barriers to supported education in each LEA and develop strategies to overcome these barriers; and
 - produce a report providing a complete description of the results of the pilot test.
- Determine the feasibility of a statewide study of the Plan for Supported Education in three areas:

- technical feasibility;
- usefulness of information; and
- financial and political feasibility.

Along with conducting a literature review and developing the conceptual framework, feasibility project activities included a series of meetings of the project's Advisory Group (which includes the ODE Project Director, ODE Supported Education Specialists, the Portland State University (PSU) Project Coordinator, and PSU Evaluation Specialists), to develop a set of specific evaluation questions for use in the pilot study.

The following questions for the pilot study were agreed to by the Advisory group:

- What are the differences between LEA and ODE written policies and procedures for special education, as they relate to supported education?
- Did ODE activities result in LEA-supported education action?
- What level of supported education is occurring in each LEA?
- What perceived benefits/negative outcomes for students with and without disabilities result from supported education?
- What are the perceived effects of integration/supported education on teachers' instructional style when working with students with and without IEPs?
- What are the barriers to supported education and what strategies can be used to overcome the barriers?

Methodology

Two sites were selected for the pilot study--a high school in a large, suburban district, and an elementary school in a small, rural district. Six respondent groups were surveyed: all parents of students with IEPs, a random sample of 25 parents of students without IEPs, a random sample of 25 regular education teachers, all special education teachers, all related services/support staff, and all building administrators, as well as administrators of an intermediate education

agency (Education Service District [ESD]) who were members of the LEA-supported education team.

In addition, 10 randomly selected regular education teachers, two special education teachers, two related services staff, and one administrator were interviewed at each school site. Seventeen students with various disabilities were randomly selected and observed for 1 hour in a variety of classrooms at the high school site; 13 similarly selected students with disabilities were observed at the elementary site.

The data were synthesized into descriptive reports on each site, and a summary analysis was developed for both sites that provided the ODE an opportunity to see the overall progress of the LEAs. Barriers to change as well as strategies to overcome these barriers were summarized for both sites. Due to the size of the sample and the fact that this was a feasibility study, no statistical tests were conducted on this data. Overall, the ODE Advisory Group decided that the pilot study was successfully accomplished and a larger, statewide evaluation was politically and financially feasible.

Recommendations

Major recommendations from the feasibility study for the statewide evaluation included the following:

- Maintain the current conceptual framework and evaluation questions.
- Evaluate changes in the impact of the ODE Plan for Supported Education over time.
- Add a survey of students with and without IEPs.
- Use statistical analysis to test for differences between respondent groups.

Descriptive Study

This study was conducted with 15 Oregon schools that had implemented supported education in order to aid decision making during the implementation of the Oregon Comprehensive Plan for Supported Education. The evaluation assessed State and local educational reform policies and practices related to supported education and in-service training activities for their impact on schools

implementing supported education. The study also provided information about barriers and successful examples of supported education throughout the State that can be shared with others at the State and national level.

Study Questions

The study collected survey, interview, and observation data needed to provide information about the following evaluation questions.

- What are the differences between the goals and policies for supported education set by the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and the special education placement policies and practices of the local educational agency (LEA)?
- Did the ODE activities (in-service training, district planning, etc.) result in LEA-supported education training activities?
- What are the perceptions of the level and type of support provided to students with IEPs in the regular classroom?
- What are the perceived effects of including students with IEPs in the regular class on the teachers' instructional style?
- What are the perceived benefits/negative outcomes for students with and without IEPs as a result of the supported education activities?

Sample and Methodology

Personnel at the schools selected to participate in the study had received training from the ODE in supported education. The schools had been implementing supported education practices for at least one year prior to the collection of the study data. The elementary schools were selected from a sample of 21 elementary schools that had participated in the supported education training. They were selected to represent various sizes and geographic locations of elementary schools across the State. All four high schools that participated in the supported education training were included in the study.

Written surveys were conducted at all 11 elementary schools and all four high schools. A total of 994 written surveys were completed. All professional staff at each elementary school were surveyed, and a random sample of 25 regular education staff at each high school were surveyed. A random sample of 50

parents of students without IEPs at each school were sent a survey. Schools distributed surveys to parents identified as having one or more students on an IEP (approximately 30 elementary parents and 40 high school parents completed surveys that were distributed at each school).

Interviews were conducted at six of the 11 elementary schools. These six elementary schools were selected by a stratified random sampling process including geographic region and school population. At the elementary schools, a total of 56 regular education teachers, 14 special education (SPED)/related services staff, and six administrators were interviewed. Interviews were also conducted at three high schools. The three high schools were selected to represent various geographic regions and school populations. At the high schools, a total of 28 regular education teachers, 17 special education teachers, and four administrators were interviewed. All of the interview respondents were selected by the principal to represent a cross-section of staff that in some way were involved with the implementation of supported education in their school.

Observations were conducted at six elementary schools. These were the same elementary schools selected for the interview process. Forty-seven students with IEPs were observed in regular classrooms. Of these students, 14 had minor adaptation needs, 24 had major adaptation needs, and nine had behavior adaptation needs. The observations were done in classrooms at the kindergarten through fifth grade level. The content of instruction varied among classrooms and included regular subjects. Observations were conducted at three high schools. These were the same high schools selected for the interview process. Twenty-eight students with IEPs were observed in regular classrooms. Of these students, 11 were students with minor adaptation needs, 12 had major adaptation needs, and five had behavior support needs. The observations were done in classrooms at the ninth through twelfth grade level. The content of instruction varied from classroom to classroom.

Findings

This study compares the perceptions of various respondents and does not reflect direct outcome measures of student progress. In addition, this study was conducted in schools in which personnel had received training from ODE on supported education and had voluntarily begun to implement supported education. A summary of the results for each of the five research questions follows.

In regard to the first question, the data suggest that supported education goals and policies of LEAs parallel the goals and policies established by the ODE.

Supported education was found to be more than just placement of students with disabilities in regular classrooms, but rather a network of support for students allowing them to participate in the regular education classroom. Surveys of the professionals indicated substantial agreement that students with disabilities are placed in regular education classrooms and that support is generally provided. The data show that regular and special education staff are continuously learning how to support students and that they need ongoing training at all levels and across topical content areas.

For the second question, the results indicate the administrators, regular education teachers, and special education teachers received training in supported education at the awareness and implementation levels. The LEA staff reported they received training in a variety of supported education topics provided by both ODE staff and their peers.

In response to the third question, this study found that students with IEPs placed in regular education classrooms receive services in a variety of ways. The special education staff provided support to students with IEPs in many regular education classrooms. Special education staff spent between 10 to 17 hours per week in the regular education classroom. Overall, they reported that the support students received was good, but they also expressed a need for more support.

The response to question four is that many respondents reported that supported education had a positive effect on the teachers' instructional styles, as those styles related to curriculum adaptations and modifications. There were numerous examples of how teachers modified and adapted their curriculum and lesson plans for students with IEPs reported throughout the study. Both elementary and high school teachers reported using more hands-on activities, integrated curriculum, cooperative learning, diverse learning styles, thematic/whole language approaches, and collaborative teaching approaches.

In response to question five, the majority of staff and parents in this study had positive perceptions regarding the placement of students with IEPs in the regular education classroom. Benefits to students with IEPs included: growth in social skills and gained friendships, higher self-esteem, more real-life experiences, and positive role models. Students without IEPs learned tolerance for their diverse strengths and needs and those of others; they learned to help and cooperate with others; and they demonstrated increased social skills. Students without IEPs also benefitted academically from changes in instruction.

THE OREGON NATIONAL TEACHER EXAMINATION (NTE) FEASIBILITY STUDY AND EVALUATION REPORT

Oregon Department of Education, FY 1992 and FY 1993

Oregon, like many States, is caught in a dilemma. On the one hand, it faces a potential teacher shortage because a projected 60 percent of its current teachers will retire by the year 2000. On the other hand, it must ensure that an adequate supply of qualified general and special education teachers will be available and that student performance will improve by the end of the decade. Currently, there are two endorsements for special education teachers in Oregon. The Severe Handicapped Learner Endorsement allows the teacher to teach only severely disabled students and the Handicapped Learner Endorsement (HLE) allows the teacher to teach disabled students not classified as severely disabled.

The Oregon Teachers Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC), which licenses teachers, is attempting to ensure the supply of special education teachers by offering a Handicapped Learner Endorsement to any general education teacher holding a valid Oregon teaching certificate who has passed the special education subtest of the National Teacher Exam (NTE). Teachers must then complete the necessary coursework within 6 years to obtain the Standard Handicapped Learner Endorsement. Because this is a nontraditional certification process, the State is interested in its effectiveness.

Feasibility Study

The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) in collaboration with the Teaching Research Division at Western Oregon State College (TR) and the TSPC conducted a study to determine the feasibility of evaluating the use of the NTE to award special education teaching endorsements.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

- identify and describe all existing data bases that contain information about the teachers in the study;
- gather additional data needed that are not available in the extant data bases; and

- design a study that will determine the “effectiveness” of teachers who gained their special education endorsement through achieving a passing score on the NTE.

Methodology

Data collection activities included record reviews, a teacher survey, and teacher interviews. Information was reviewed from the TSPC, the State licensing board; the Educational Testing Service, which produces and administers the NTE; the Oregon Department of Education schools and staffing data; and the higher education agencies in Oregon. The teacher survey collected information on employment experiences, education history, current positions, professional certification, and sense of competence and preparedness to teach special education from 416 teachers with a Handicapped Learner Endorsement. Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with six teachers who obtained their endorsements via the NTE. The interviews focused on their competence and preparedness to teach special education, obstacles to traditional certification, and how to attract and retain qualified personnel.

Findings

The highest quality information came from the TSPC data base in spite of the fact that it lacks 1) the flexibility of modern data bases; 2) complete information on teachers obtaining their special education endorsement via the NTE; and 3) in some cases, current teacher contact information. However, it is a permanent record of teacher licensing in Oregon.

Study findings from the survey and interviews include the following:

- A wide range of issues affect teacher supply and demand, many of which are not directly related to use of the NTE as a vehicle for certification.
- 71.9 percent of the surveyed teachers obtained their special education endorsement through an approved program. Only 8.2 percent of the respondents indicated they obtained their endorsement by successfully completing the NTE.
- Licensure and endorsement requirements may provide barriers that keep otherwise qualified personnel from entering the field of special education.

- Mid-life career shifts are bringing people to the field of special education.

Results from the pilot survey indicated that the survey instrument could be used for the full evaluation and the interviews are necessary to illustrate and expand the survey findings. The advisory design group agreed that it was feasible to conduct a full evaluation to explore the effectiveness of teachers who obtain endorsements through the NTE. This was viewed as the only way to address the issue of the effectiveness of alternative certification for special education teachers.

The feasibility study also produced information that indicated that the full evaluation study should examine the relationship between proficiency on the NTE and qualifications as a special education teacher and examine a number of other issues related to certification and licensure, such as recruitment and retention, ongoing professional development, and coaching and mentoring.

Full Evaluation

The evaluation included examination of the feasibility study issues, as well as evaluation of the effect of certification via the NTE on teacher effectiveness. Specifically, during the first year of the study, the differences were examined between teachers obtaining their HLE by passing the NTE in special education and those who earned their HLE through coursework. During the second year of the study, extensive data were collected on the teachers who earned their HLE by passing the NTE.

Study Questions

Five study questions were designed to guide this evaluation of special education teacher certification in Oregon. The study questions are:

- What are the characteristics of persons who enter special education through a nontraditional career path? How do these persons compare to peers who enter the field through a traditional path?
- How do the employment experiences of persons who enter special education from a nontraditional path compare to those of peers who enter from a traditional path over the 2 years of the project?

- What are the characteristics of “successful” teachers from nontraditional career paths? How do these characteristics relate to those of “successful” teachers from traditional career paths?
- What are the characteristics of “unsuccessful” teachers from nontraditional career paths? How do these characteristics relate to those of “unsuccessful” teachers from traditional career paths?
- How do the characteristics of “unsuccessful” teachers from nontraditional and traditional career paths compare to characteristics of “successful” teachers from nontraditional and traditional career paths?

Methodology

This study employed a multimodal approach, however, it leaned heavily on direct contact with teachers. Computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI), participant observations, and focus groups were employed to learn from teachers about their experiences and capabilities. Over 4,000 names of HLE teachers were provided from the TSPC database during the study. Through random sampling, 452 teachers participated in the first year interviews and 584 teachers were interviewed in the second year with 305 teachers meeting the screening criteria and completing in-depth interviews. Focus groups were formed to address issues related to special education teachers, such as professional development, teacher licensure, special education as a profession, educational plans, and professional goals.

Findings and Conclusions

The major findings and conclusions from the study include the following.

- Teachers entering teaching through alternative routes tend to be more mature and more likely to have a variety of work experiences prior to teaching. Teachers reentering the field after a period of child rearing may use the NTE as a means of returning to teaching. At times the greatest needs and the vacancies are in special education.
- The project staff were unable to conduct teacher evaluations, which are reserved for district administrative personnel as part of a formal review. Informal observations and interviews indicate that teachers who are committed to the field seek professional development opportunities,

complete the requirements for the standard endorsement, and often plan to teach in special education until retirement.

- No differences between successful traditionally trained and NTE certified teachers or between unsuccessful traditionally trained and NTE certified teachers were found, primarily because the project staff could not design an instrument that would distinguish between “successful” and “unsuccessful” teachers.
- The NTE should not be used as a sole measure to certify general education teachers in special education. The study found no group--higher education faculty, special education teachers, nor school administrators--who believe a paper and pencil test can predict teaching effectiveness. In fact, good teachers who are less than adequate test takers may fare poorly on the NTE.
- College course work is often inaccessible, especially in rural areas. A higher proportion of teachers in rural areas use the NTE route than do teachers living and working near a college or university. Rural teachers then find it difficult to obtain the standard HLE because needed courses are not available in their local community.
- The system of licenses and endorsements is perceived as complex and confusing. It is reportedly difficult and at times confusing for teachers trying to navigate their way through the process. Many teachers were unaware of the need to get the Standard HLE within 6 years. Still others, when asked, could not say which licenses and endorsements they held.
- The NTE in special education as a route to adding the HLE meets a recruitment need in Oregon for special education teachers. It is difficult for rural school districts to find special education teachers and even more difficult to retain them. Rural school districts report that they are able to fill vacancies because of the NTE option.

**MEASUREMENT OF STUDENT OUTCOMES FOR EVALUATION OF THE
OREGON SUPPORTED EDUCATION PLAN—FEASIBILITY STUDY AND
EVALUATION REPORT**

Oregon Department of Education, FY 1993 and FY 1994

The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) has implemented two major educational reforms that could greatly affect students with disabilities. One is the Oregon Comprehensive Program Plan for Supported Education, which calls for local educational agencies (LEAs) to support inclusion of students with individual education programs (IEPs) in regular school settings. This plan also requires ODE to conduct systematic evaluation activities to determine the effects of inclusion of students with IEPs on instruction and learning. The purpose of the Oregon Plan is to improve the quality of education for all students by refocusing the delivery of services from separate, segregated environments to integrated, regular classroom environments and to include support for underachieving students in the regular classroom.

The other educational reform is the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century, which became effective in 1991. The Act initiates reform at all levels of the educational process in response to problems identified by politicians and educators. These reforms include establishing a Certificate of Initial Mastery to be attained by age 16, developing a statewide portfolio assessment system, and developing a system of performance-based evaluations to monitor the impact of change on all students, including students in special education.

Feasibility Study

The ODE, in collaboration with Portland State University, examined the feasibility of developing a data collection system capable of collecting direct student outcome information on students with IEPs included in regular education classrooms. This study extends information collected for a previous full evaluation study conducted by the State of Oregon on teacher and parent attitudes about the Oregon Comprehensive Plan for Supported Education.

Study Questions

Four goals were identified to accomplish the purpose of this feasibility study. The completion of these goals would allow a data collection system to be developed. The four goals were to:

- identify and/or develop a process to measure direct student outcomes appropriate for students with mild disabilities, severe disabilities, and behavioral disorders;
- extend the evaluation design for the Oregon Supported Education Study within the existing conceptual framework;
- pilot test the data collection process to support the extension of the evaluation design; and
- produce a feasibility report for extending the Oregon Supported Education Study.

In order to achieve these goals, the two major feasibility questions below needed to be answered.

- Can the Oregon Portfolio Assessment System be used with students with IEPs to collect direct outcome measures?
- Can existing student assessments and school records be collected to measure direct student outcomes of students with IEPs in supported education sites?

Methodology

Two field tests were conducted to answer the feasibility questions about the proposed data collection system of direct student outcomes. Key components of the data collection system were designed and evaluated during stakeholder meetings and workshops.

Field test 1 evaluated the viability of the Oregon Portfolio Assessment System for students with IEPs. This system was developed as part of the general Oregon Education Reform Act to provide direct performance assessments for Oregon's students. Ten school teams of general and special education teachers implemented a variety of tasks and projects in grade levels ranging from kindergarten to high school. The tasks were developed as part of the instructional process leading to the new Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) described in the Oregon Education Reform Act. The teachers used a CIM Task Description Form to describe the planning of the CIM task, to document the classroom instruction, and to describe any teaching strategies and/or adaptations for students with IEPs.

Teachers also completed a CIM Task Field Test Evaluation Form. The form enabled the teachers to offer feedback regarding the practice of teaching through tasks as well as the evaluation of those tasks by rubrics, particularly concerning how well the tasks worked for students with IEPs.

Field test 2 conducted an Assessment Practices Survey with 25 local school district Special Education Directors to determine what school records and assessment data are currently (or could be) collected in common. Twenty-three local school district Special Education Directors, representing 24 school districts in which personnel had been trained in Supported Education, completed the mail survey.

Results

The major findings from the feasibility study are presented below.

- It is feasible to conduct a full evaluation study of the Oregon Supported Education Plan and its impact upon student outcomes using student records, student assessments, portfolio assessments, and school surveys.
- Important direct measures of student performance can be obtained across participating Supported Education schools for all groups of students, those with and without IEPs.
- The CIM tasks and adaptations were viewed as useful and appropriate by the teachers.
- The school districts participating in the field test were found to already collect information considered critical to the full evaluation study including grades and alternative grades, progress reports, portfolios of student work, daily attendance data, detention data, and suspension/expulsion data.

Full Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to provide descriptive information about the effects of supported education for students with and without disabilities by using performance tasks to assess skills required for the Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM).

Research Questions

The study addressed the following specific questions:

- What are the characteristics and performance assessment outcomes of students with and without disabilities in schools implementing supported education in Oregon?
- What factors in supported education are related to measures of student performance?
- What is the viability of using performance assessment to evaluate supported education on an on-going basis, and to help develop and monitor students' IEP goals and objectives?

Methodology

Eleven elementary schools and seven high schools participated in the study, including 103 general and special education teachers at the third, fifth, and tenth grade levels, 275 students with disabilities, and 295 students without disabilities. Each participating school submitted data from performance-based assessments, standardized assessments, school records, and surveys of teacher perceptions.

Participating classroom teachers developed and taught CIM performance tasks in the areas of science or social science. Examples of performance tasks include deciding which foreign languages should be taught, building a dream house, and deciding if dams should be built on the Columbia River. Students were scored on their performance on dimensions in five CIM content areas: 1) apply science or issue analysis, 2) write, 3) speak, 4) collaborate, and 5) self-directed learning. Each performance task required students to write at least one paper, make one oral presentation, spend some time working in a group, and direct or manage their own learning.

Findings

Students without disabilities scored higher than students with disabilities on both the performance assessment and standardized tests. However, the gap in scores between students with and without disabilities was much smaller on the performance assessment than on the standardized achievement tests. On average, students with disabilities received performance assessment scores of approximately three on a scale of one to six. In addition, on age-appropriate tasks

measuring the same skill, high school-aged students with disabilities scored higher than elementary-aged students with disabilities, while students without disabilities scored consistently across the grade levels. The study also found that performance tasks were an effective way to provide feedback for students with disabilities about their performance in general education, and to promote collaboration between general and special educators.

Designing, implementing, and scoring the CIM performance tasks took teachers 42 hours, on average. Almost half the teachers indicated that scoring students on the 13 dimensions of the tasks was too time consuming; they felt 9 was a more reasonable number of dimensions on which to score students.

Teachers felt the performance tasks worked fairly well in their classes, and that they fit the curriculum well. They indicated that the scoring guides were most usable for students without disabilities (7.9 to 8.7 on a 10-point scale), and least appropriate for students with severe disabilities. Teachers reported a fairly good correspondence between IEP goals and objectives for students with disabilities, and work on the performance tasks.

Conclusions

Based on the results of the study, the authors made several recommendations. First, educators should try harder to align IEP goals and objectives with performance tasks. Second, teams of special and general educators must develop the skills necessary to collaborate in implementing the performance tasks, and more teachers must be exposed to the concept of performance assessment through pre-service and in-service training. Third, test developers and administrators should collect more information on the effects of accommodations and adaptations on performance task scores.

INVOLVEMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN THE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A STATEWIDE MODERNIZATION PROJECT AND EFFECTS ON PROGRAMS, PERSONNEL AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES—FEASIBILITY STUDY AND EVALUATION REPORT

South Dakota Department of Education and Cultural Affairs,
FY 1993 and FY 1994

In 1991, South Dakota initiated a process of school restructuring in response to the National Education Goals. Restructuring will occur under the South Dakota School Modernization Program. The State intends that restructuring be achieved within the whole school and on behalf of all students, including those receiving special education services. The program addresses strategic planning for schools, expanded learning opportunities, commitment to outcome-based education and technical literacy, and use of authentic tasks and cooperative learning.

Feasibility Study

A feasibility study was undertaken before implementation of a full evaluation study to determine the extent to which special education programs and students are involved in the South Dakota Modernization Project efforts and to determine the effects of the reforms on special education programs, services, instruction, personnel, and students.

Study Questions

The feasibility study was designed to answer the following questions:

- To what extent do current State agency policy, rules, and funding mechanisms either support or inhibit the participation of special education in educational reform efforts?
- To what extent do current district level planning and implementation for educational reform efforts support or inhibit the principles and practices of inclusion with respect to the inclusion of students with disabilities?

- To what extent do current school building and classroom level planning and implementation for educational reform either support or inhibit the principles and practices of inclusion with respect to the inclusion of students with disabilities?
- To what extent are students with disabilities benefitting from the reform initiative as measured by the performance indicators: attendance, participation in discipline programs, grades earned?
- To what extent do individual education plan goals and objectives relate to the district's curricular planning goals resulting from the restructuring initiative?

Procedures

Procedures conducted during the feasibility study included study question formulation, instrument development, sampling, data collection, and data analysis.

The original study questions were not substantively modified by the advisory group; however, the language was changed to sharpen the focus of the questions, and a fifth study question was added.

Seven instruments were designed or adapted from existing instruments for this feasibility study. New instruments were developed using the study questions, information constructs and source documents as frameworks.

A random stratified sampling procedure was used. Stratification was conducted across actors in the study at the State educational agency level (i.e., planners, administrators, and direct service delivery persons); at the school district level (i.e., administrators, teachers and support staff); and at the community level (i.e., students with disabilities and their parents).

Data collection included surveys, interviews, and document reviews. Eleven districts were selected to participate in the feasibility study, and three districts were selected for in-depth data collection activities.

The data collected were evaluated against a single criteria: Did the data reveal information which would answer the study questions?

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the feasibility study findings, the evaluation design and procedures were modified for implementation of the full evaluation. Recommended modifications included the following:

- Instruct study investigators to diligently seek various forms of curriculum documentation and to be sensitive to and document the changing conditions of school reform within each school district and in the State.
- Modify direct examination instruments and procedures to permit a broader scope of activities to come under examination.
- Modify the interview protocol to include more open-ended questions.
- Modify data collection procedures directed at students with disabilities and their families in an effort to increase the return rate from these target groups.
- Select interviewers whose experiential and formal qualifications reflect classroom and administrative experience in public schools as well as more formal education in the field of public education.

Full Evaluation

The evaluation study addressed the participation by special educators, students with disabilities, and the families of these students in the planning and implementation of the Modernization Program; the presence of the practices of inclusion in the Modernization Program; and the impact the Modernization Program had on students with disabilities and their families.

Study Questions

The study questions were designed to be systemic in their approach. State policy and funding mechanisms, local school district policy and procedures, and the classroom performance of the students were addressed. The study questions are as follows:

- To what extent do current State agency policy, rules, and funding mechanisms either support or inhibit the participation of special education in educational reform efforts?
- To what extent do current district level planning and implementation for educational reform efforts support or inhibit the principles and practices of inclusion with respect to the inclusion of students with disabilities?
- To what extent do current school building and classroom level planning and implementation for educational reform either support or inhibit the principles and practices of inclusion with respect to the inclusion of students with disabilities?
- To what extent are students with disabilities benefiting from the reform initiative as measured by the performance indicators: attendance, participation in discipline programs, and grades earned?
- To what extent do individual education plan (IEP) goals and objectives relate to the districts's curricular planning goals resulting from the restructuring initiative?

Methodology

The design of this study specified evaluating both qualitative and quantitative data from primary and secondary data sources to be collected throughout the two-year study. Data were collected from a combination of key documents; interviews with State agency, collaborating service agency, and school district personnel; and surveys of teachers and administrators.

Twenty school districts, participating in the Modernization Program, were identified for this evaluation study. These school districts contained two-thirds of the students attending South Dakota K-12 public schools. Three of the school districts were selected to participate in-depth in the evaluation study. Survey information (i.e., The Portland Survey and About Your District Survey) was collected from the 20 school districts, as well as a review of district planning and implementation documents and IEPs. Interviews with State and school personnel and parents of children with disabilities were conducted in the in-depth collaborator school districts. Performance indicator information was also extracted from the existing student record systems within the three school districts.

Findings

The following findings on the Modernization Program resulted from the study.

- Policy, planning, and implementation was broadly based. While policy and procedures can generally be viewed as inclusive, the practices of inclusion directed towards students with disabilities by teachers and administrators were not directly addressed by this study.
- Policy statements, while written in inclusive language, do not appear to influence the participation of special education in reform efforts. Funding mechanisms tend to inhibit general education, special education cross-over.
- The program provided educators a unique opportunity to narrow the educational program differences through the utilization of teaching and learning practices which are student-centered and appeal to a variety of ways of learning and knowing.
- Many of the existing practices of inclusion were bolstered by the increased staff development opportunities available to regular and special education teachers.
- Although both the special education teacher and the regular education teacher generally agree with the ideals of inclusion, the special education teacher is not as positive as the regular education teacher that the regular classroom is the most appropriate classroom for the student with disabilities.
- The grades-earned data and the absence data show a mixed picture of the comparative performance of students with disabilities to those without disabilities.
- Students, in their interviews about the Modernization Program, had almost no knowledge of what was happening as a result of this program.
- All of the IEPs examined were generally aligned with curriculum statements or activities.