ACRES

American Council on Rural Special Education

ACRES 2006 Conference Proceedings

Rural Roots: 1980 – 2006

26th Annual National Conference

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Introduction

This collection of papers marks the 26th year that the *American Council on Rural Special Education* (ACRES) has met for its annual national conference. The ACRES Conference is the only national conference devoted entirely to rural special education issues. Our ongoing goal has been to gather and share the most current knowledge, research, experiences, and skills related to rural special education. The *Proceedings* contains an excellent compilation of papers that will be valuable for educators, preservice educators, administrators, service providers, parents, and policy makers.

The *Proceedings* includes paper and poster presentations that were delivered in Lexington, Kentucky on March 23-29, 2005. The theme for the conference was **Rural Roots 1980-2006**. The conference was planned to include theoretical discussions, current research findings, and promising practices based on sound evidence. The papers are organized into eight topical strands and represent a wide variety of approaches that address many of the critical issues that affect the delivery of services for individuals with special needs living in rural areas. The strands are: At-Risk, Early Childhood, Impacting Governmental Policy, Inservice, Multicultural, Preservice, Technology, and Other. The authors represent professionals from public and private schools; community, state and national agencies; colleges and universities; and private consulting agencies. We thank each for his or her contribution to rural special education.

We also wish to acknowledge the many individuals who reviewed the abstract proposals for this conference. A review panel of over 50 special education professionals with expertise in specific areas diligently reviewed the proposals and provided valuable feedback to assist presenters in improving the quality of their paper. Each abstract was reviewed by at least three professionals who contributed greatly in helping to maintain the high professional standards of the conference. We are pleased with the overall quality and diversity of the papers that have been submitted, and hope that you will find them informative and useful.

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At-Risk

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TRANSITIONING ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN RURAL SETTINGS

Literature Review

Alternative schools have been in existence since the 1960's and have served a variety of purposes (Franklin, 1992). This includes programs which provide alternatives for students who are not successful in the traditional curriculum—or "fix-the-school" approaches—and those programs with more of a disciplinary context which attempt to fix the student (Greg, 1999). Recently, the later programs have gained new popularity as school administrators search for new methods for dealing with disruptive students (Glass, 1995; King, Silvery, Holiday, & Johnston, 1998; Nichols & Utesch, 2001). This has led to the development of alternative programs that are used to discipline or isolate students who have violated codes of conduct or who repeatedly disrupt classroom instruction. While many school systems view these programs as a panacea for dealing with troublesome students, the evidence supporting the success of such programs is limited (Cox, 1999; Franklin, 1992; King, et al. 1998; Tobin & Sprague, 2000).

It has been reported that students who attend alternative schools often make progress in areas such as increases in grade point average and standardized test scores, decreases in number of discipline referrals, and improvement with interpersonal skills (Cox, 1999; Katisyanis & Williams, 1998; McCall, 2003). Variables attributed to the success of these students include the idea that alternative educational environments are more supportive and individualized (Cox, 1999), teachers and staff have a high level of involvement with students, class sizes are smaller, and there are more positive interactions between faculty and students (Saunders & Saunders, 2002). Unfortunately, these gains tend to be lost when the students return to their traditional schools (Cox, 1999; Greg, 1999). Various reasons have been cited for this loss of progress, including a lack of preparation to help students as they transition back to traditional schools (Cox, 1999). Although there is a lack of research about alternative programs, transition programs are frequently cited in the literature as an important program component.

Program Description

The established transitional program was designed to specifically address the needs of students who were being educated in an alternative educational environment and then returning

to their traditional school placement. The program was established due to the rate of recidivism for students who were being removed from their school environment and placed in alternative educational environments. In order to combat this never ending cycle, Cabell County Schools in conjunction with Marshall University established a specially designed transition program for students with special needs and students who are considered at risk.

Prior to being reintegrated into their home school, students would meet with alternative school faculty (i.e., school counselor, teachers, and administration) and the transition specialist that would be assigned to monitor the student during the subsequent semester. Within the initial meeting information about the program, the process for participating in the program, along with necessary student information (i.e., reason for exclusion from school and feelings about returning) was shared with those participating in the project. Letters of program explanation were sent to administrators for schools to which students would be returning.

Within the initial concept of the project, the transition specialists would meet regularly with the reintegrated students, approximately two to four times a month, for the initial semester upon return. The original roles for the specialist were to monitor student academic progress, student attendance, and debrief students after episodes of discipline referrals. However, this role became secondary to the roles described in the next section. Students appeared to value the impartiality of the transition specialists who were not associated with the school district. Transition specialists worked to gain the trust of the students and served as impartial counselors for issues involving the school. However, during the second semester after returning to their home school, the original role was reinstituted and the amount of contact was reduced. This reduced contact was required due to a new group of returning students who would require a large portion of the specialists' attention in order to be successful during the reintegration process. At the conclusion of the second semester, students would no longer be monitored by the transition specialists.

Roles of Program Members

The roles for the transition specialists were as varied as the students who participated within the program. These roles included counseling, advocating, educating, mentoring, monitoring, and researching on behalf of those with which the specialist would interact (i.e., target student, parents, guardians, administrators, and support agency representatives). The roles of the specialists evolved due to the specific needs of the students, parents, and school personnel involved in the process of integrating the student within the traditional school environment.

Counselor. In the role of counselor, the transition specialists would assist the students returning to their local school by helping the students to monitor their emotions. When counseling a student, the specialist would have to recognize the frustration level in the student and facilitate a positive attitude. Students may suffer from depression and withdrawal which could potentially be overlooked in larger schools with large teacher – pupil ratios. Students at this level also may encounter problems outside of the school environment (i.e., relationships, family, legal) for which counseling service would be beneficial. An example may include a session that discusses the student's frustration over a failed relationship. The student may be totally focused on the aforementioned problem and care about little else, therefore causing

problems in other areas. The transition specialist would guide the student to pursue other relationships or participate in the other activities that would refocus the student in a different direction. Counseling was not originally the primary purpose of the transitional specialist when interacting with a given student, however, in the end a majority of the time was spent in this role.

Advocate. Advocating for a student would go beyond the typical school setting. At times, the specialist would represent the child in meetings with the administration of a given educational setting. The specialist would also assist in meetings that would occur on the student's behalf or that required the student's parent or legal guardian to be present. These meetings included Student Assistance Teams, which assisted students who are at risk of school failure, and Individualized Education Program Teams, which developed programs for students with exceptionalities. At this time, the specialist would advocate on behalf of the parents. Advocacy opportunities allowed programs such as social work and legal representatives to be given information about the program goals so that better representation could be provided.

Educator. As with other areas, education professionals (including teachers, administrators, and counselors) in addition to the returning students were educated about various skills that would be needed in order to facilitate a smooth return to the school setting. Teachers were also educated during the transitional semester in which the student had returned. Students were taught positive behaviors and social skills that would hopefully eliminate the possible referral to the school discipline administrator. Students would also receive training in a variety of study skills techniques for learning and maintaining content information during assessment opportunities. At times, students were also taught (and re-taught) content materials using different instructional techniques that better matched the students' specific needs. When working with school personnel, the transition specialists may have provided alternative classroom and behavior management techniques that may better fit the needs of the student and educator. The use of the management techniques was specifically designed to de-escalate situations that could result in physical harm to those involved and of decrease the amount of mental or emotional harm that could be encountered by the students. When necessary, the specialists could also make suggestions for differentiating the instructional practices used by teachers in order to better reach the students in transition as well as others who may have had similar difficulties. By helping the teachers to create a better class atmosphere and learning environment, students may be less likely to exhibit behaviors that would call for their repeated exclusion.

Monitor. Originally, the primary intent of the transitional program was to monitor the progress of the students as they returned to their home schools from the alternative school placement. During the monitoring process, the specialists would track student academic progress, behavioral difficulty and attendance rates. Students who returned to the traditional school in years prior to the program implementation exhibited problems win the aforementioned areas. However, this duty was diminished greatly during the initial semester that the targeted students were at the home school. Instead, the specialists found that their monitoring skills were used more often during the second semester that the student was in attendance in the home school.

Researcher. Initially, the transition specialists interpreted research to be understood as data process of data collection about a given program and its impact on those who participate within the given educational opportunity. However, it became apparent that the role of researcher

also included locating information for the students' specific needs. For example, when one of the identified students wanted to enroll in the military upon graduation their specialist located the information so that the student could pursue that opportunity. Another example included a student who had an interest in a leisure activity. The opportunities to participate in the activity were extremely limited in the given geographic area; therefore, the transition specialist located an agency that was involved in the student's identified leisure activity. This permitted the student to participate in activities that were rewarding to him and allowed him to make connections with others who had similar interests.

Relationships

The establishment and maintenance of relationships were integral components in the transition process. Five primary relationships that required an investment of many hours of the specialists' time will be addressed in subsequent sections. The relationship areas included relationships between transition specialists, relationships with students, relationships with alternative school personnel, relationships with home school personnel, and relationships with parents or guardians. Relationships with service agencies were established and maintained but not at the level of the aforementioned groups.

Relationships between Transition Specialists. The relationship between transition specialists was extremely important in the process. The specialists would share ideas and contact information regarding related service agencies. These individuals would also problem solve very difficult situations involving social skills, academic remediation, and student advocacy. Finally, the relationship allowed for support when interacting with difficult traditional school settings.

Relationships with Students. The relationships between transition specialists and students were ever-evolving beginning with some hesitant interaction and concluding with possible intimate revelations. Students who were being reintegrated needed a non-judgmental individual with which to discuss personal difficulties.. Also, it was reassuring to the students that the transition specialists were not members of their school faculty, in that they felt ideas being discussed were truly confidential with little repercussion from school faculty. Students also understood that there was a prescribed list of topics that could not have been kept confidential. During periods of inappropriate behaviors, students would be given the initial debriefing opportunity with the transition specialist before any other individual (i.e., school administration, community service agencies, parents). This process allows for further reinforcement of the relationship.

Relationship with Alternative Education Personnel. The relationship between the transition specialists and the alternative education personnel was supportive. The school personnel encouraged and provided the transition specialists with necessary information for working with each student and focused information on each student's primary needs. The transition specialists were able to provide feedback as to the effectiveness of components within the alternative school preparation program for transition. The interactions were supportive in that each group was trying to provide as much support as possible to the students involved in the transition process. In addition to the positive relationship established between the transition

specialists and the alternative school personnel, the alternative school team established a strong rapport with students who attended the facility's educational program.

Relationship with Traditional Placement Education Personnel. Relationships with the traditional school personnel varied by school. Some schools were receptive of the services being provided and supplied information along with resources to insure success of the endeavor. Other schools were not as invested in the process, therefore the relationship was not as reinforcing as the one with schools who found the transitional program to be beneficial. It was often difficult to gauge the acceptance of information provided to the school system or to determine if they found the benefits of the program.

Relationship with Parents. Establishing a meaningful relationship was encouraging and challenging. For some students, their parents and guardians were thankful that that their child was able to receive additional support during this very difficult time. For other students, their home life situation was more difficult than their experiences at school, in that some students were living in residential settings, had been assigned to foster care, or just had extreme problems at home. Therefore, it was extremely difficult to establish and to maintain relationships with some parents or guardians.

Student Characteristics

For various reasons, limited data for evaluation were collected. The data that were collected mainly provide descriptive information about students who participated in this program.

Discipline Referrals. Rates of discipline referrals reduced significantly when students moved from their home school to the alternative school. However, rates increased when the students returned to their traditional schools. There was not a statistically significant difference in rate of referrals when data between pre- and post-alternative settings are compared until the scores are analyzed individually. When the school data are analyzed separately, they show that this pattern did not occur for one high school. At this school, the rate of discipline referrals continued to decrease even after students returned from the alternative school. It is of interest to note that this is also the only school in which all transitioning students were referred to the school's Student Assistance Team for support and monitoring immediately upon return.

Academic Performance. While many, if not most of the students in this program had academic problems, only 15% actually received services for special education (behavior disorders, learning disabilities, mild mental retardation, and hearing impaired). Information about GPA's was only available for 27 of the students and it was not possible to track changes in GPA over time. None of the 27 students had a GPA over 2.11 (on a 4-point scale). Two students had C averages, 15 had D averages, and 10 had F averages (including one with a GPA of 0.0). These students rarely saw low academic performance as a problem and did not take advantage of assistance offered to them.

Commitment to School. One characteristic of students who are at-risk for school failure is a lack of commitment to school which can be expressed by concern about grades, having

academic goals, or participating in extra-curricular activities. Out of 40 students interviewed, only 6 had goals that included academic success, and while12 students reported an interest in extra-curricular activities only 3 actually participated.

Interpersonal Skills. Many of the students in this program had similar interpersonal skill deficits that might have contributed to their difficulties in the traditional schools. They were not "people pleasers" and viewed any pleasantries toward people they did not like as "sucking up." They also tended to have an external locus of control, therefore their problems they had with teachers and peers were the fault of those people, never the fault of the student in question. At least partially as a result of the negativity associated with these students, some teachers did not like having these students in class and responded to negative behavior with more negative behavior.

Conclusion

Although this program provided needed support for students as they transitioned from alternative educational settings to home schools, it was not without challenges for the transition specialists as well as for the alternative school staff and the students themselves. Because the project was unfunded, the transition specialists had to fit time for the project into current university workload. Once students returned to the traditional schools, it could sometimes be difficult to gain access to those students and to data regarding discipline, grades, and attendance.

The staff at the alternative school viewed their program as an opportunity to help troubled students; however the board of education saw the program as punishment for disruptive students. The school board did not allow the educational staff to have any input as to what students attended the school or when the students returned to traditional schools. The educational staff did not have any control over the curriculum and were usually not allowed to make innovative programmatic changes.

Some of the students leaving the alternative school had a very difficult time returning to their home schools. They not only lost the structure of the alternative school, but often lost the reinforcement that they had been receiving for improving their behavior and grades. While the students lost support for appropriate behavior, they often regained the support for inappropriate behavior that caused problems in the traditional schools. An added problem for some of the students was that they were not just transitioning out of the alternative school, but were going to traditional schools that were completely new to them. This was the case when a student's family moved from one school district to another, when students came from another state and went straight to the alternative school, and when students were sent to the alternative setting while in middle school and left when in high school. To some students this was a welcome fresh start, to others it was an anxiety-provoking unknown.

Students who are returning to traditional schools after spending time in an alternative setting will probably need support of some kind if they are to be successful when they return. Some students may simply need monitoring while others will need much more support from persons who can serve various roles such as counselor or educator. Transition planning should be

an integral part of any disciplinary alternative program if these students are to be expected to be successful upon return to their traditional programs.

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RURAL SPECIAL EDUCATORS: KNOWLEDGE OF AT-RISK BEHAVIORS ASSOCIATED WITH SUICIDE

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to assess 36 rural and urban special educators' knowledge of at-risk behaviors, and their experiences with student suicide or suicidal potential. Findings suggested that participants had varied responses regarding both overt and covert signs of suicide potential as well as many participants having limited knowledge of interventions or their school policy on suicide

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among school-aged students between the ages of 15 and 19 years of age. The number of suicides in the United States now exceeds the number of homicides reported each year. During the year 2000, 16,765 homicides were reported as compared to 29,350 suicides (as cited in Price, Thompson, & Drake (2004). Suicide had increased nearly 300% in the past 30 years (Rich, Kirkpatrick-Smith, Bonner & Jans, 1992). It is estimated that 12 people each day between the ages of 15-24 successfully commit suicide (American Association of Suicidology, 2004). Although research can approximate the number of suicides and attempted suicides documented each year, it is impossible to know with certainty how many actual suicides and attempted suicides there are among school-aged youth. Many suicides are often reported as accidental car crashes or drug over-doses. The numbers reported are conservative.

Suicidal potential and suicide may be more prevalent in students who are enrolled in special education programs. Students with emotional/behavioral disabilities as well as learning disabilities may be at risk of suicide due to the behaviors often associated with these students: anxiety, depression, conduct disorders, impulsiveness, low self-esteem, increased familial difficulties, limited problems solving abilities, etc. A 24-question survey was administered to 36 special education teachers enrolled in graduate classes in special education. All teachers served in both rural and urban districts in the southwestern part of the United States. Teaching experience ranged from 1-year to 16-years, with all special education teachers serving in K-12 settings. Approximately 2/3 of the participants self-identified as White and 1/3 as Hispanic (primarily Mexican American). Two participants self-identified as "other." Nearly all special education teachers served high numbers of students identified as Mexican American.

The purpose of this study was to assess special educators' knowledge of (a) suicide and suicide potential among students enrolled in classes primarily for learning and emotional difficulties, (b) indicators associated with suicide potential among students who have

been or are enrolled in their classrooms, (c) actual suicide or suicide attempts among their student populations, and, (d) interventions and policies utilized by their school and school districts to address student suicide. Findings suggested that a significant number of special education teachers often encounter students who talked about suicide, have suicidal ideation, or have attempted suicide. These special education teachers are often aware of overt signs of suicidal potential (e.g, extreme sadness, withdrawal, listlessness), but tend to have only limited knowledge of more covert behaviors (e.g, alcohol abuse, loss of appetite, cognitive confusion). This may be due to suicidal behaviors mimicking behavioral characteristics associated with students' exceptionalities. Of the 36 respondents, approximately 1/3 indicated that they did not or did not know if a school policy was in place to address suicide.

Findings from this study suggest that all teachers are in need of training in the area suicide. Teachers need to be prepared to identify suicidal characteristics and behaviors among their school-aged students. Teachers spend approximately 6 hours a day with the students they teach. This is often more time than students spend with their guardians each day. Given this, teachers are in an advantageous position to assist students who demonstrate suicidal potential. If this study is an indicator of what special education teachers know and don't know about suicide, it is imperative that school districts provide all teachers with the opportunity to gain knowledge and strategies to intervene when a student is possibly at-risk for suicide. With out this knowledge, teachers may over-react, fail to believe the child who is demonstrating suicidal behaviors, panic and exacerbate an already lethal situation, or not know how to address the immediate situation. Teachers need to be informed of school policies regarding suicide and obtain knowledge of intervention strategies. Special educators are in a unique situation to incorporate a pro-active curriculum given that they tend to spend more educational time with the same students than general education teachers. A pro-active curriculum may include helping students attain stronger problem solving skills, cognitive reframing techniques, and the needed knowledge of who to contact or where to go if they are thinking of suicide or associated self-destructive behaviors (e.g., substance abuse, self injurious behaviors).

All schools benefit from having systematic procedures in place in case students were to demonstrate suicidal potential. Most often, schools do have specific procedures in place for assisting students in crisis, but the teachers and other school personnel (e.g. instructional assistance, maintenance personnel) are often not made aware of these procedures. Schools personnel no longer have the luxury of believing suicides do not happen at their schools. Examples, such as Columbine, speak to all educators. All schools are vulnerable to student suicide regardless of student diversity, ethnicity, economic status, or geographic area.

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SNAFU, SEARCHING FOR THE EBD STUDENT

The challenges of meeting the behavioral demands of some students pose unique problems for the rural school. Resources and expertise are at times limited in rural schools but the students' needs are as varied as any. The first step to tailoring supports to fit students' needs is to identify the students that need such services. The current procedure of identification of students and their needs is viewed as deficient by many service providers and agencies (Executive Committee: Council of Children with Behavior Disorders, 1987; Kauffman, 1987, 2005: Walker & Fabre, 1987).

Several researchers have recognized the limitation of the current model of assessment, identification, and intervention and have proposed more proactive approaches (Gresham, Lane, & Lambros, 2000; Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995) that include:

- screenings that include all students,
- regularly scheduled assessments rather than reacting to problems,
- systematic focus of resources based upon increasingly robust assessment standards, and
- use of a variety of instruments and techniques that focus on identifying problems and generating solutions.

These suggestions for the improvement in the assessment process precipitated the development of a screening tool called Systematic Normed Assessment for Us (SNAFU). This process utilizes a multi-gated approach that initially includes all students as potential candidates. The process was designed to be completed at the end of the 1st and 3rd quarters of the school year, removing the reactive focus of most assessment procedures. SNAFU relies the Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders (SSBD) (Walker & Severson, 1992) as its foundations and consists of four stages: nomination, problems identification, intensive assessment, and referral *(see Figure 1 – Systematic Nomed Assessment for Us).*

Stage 1: Nomination

The SNAFU process begins with all classroom teachers being provided with a copy of their current class roster and the nomination materials from the Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders (SSBD) instrument. The teacher is asked to place all students in their class as a member of either an *Internalizer* or an *Externalizer* category (Achenbach, 1985). An *Internalizer* refers to behavior problems that are directed inwardly and that represent a problem with self. Examples include having a restricted activity level or withdrawing from social situations. An *Externalizer* involves outwardly directed behavior problems that involve behavioral excesses and are considered inappropriate by school personnel. Typical behaviors of a student categorized as an *Externalizer* might include aggression towards people or property or

not complying with teacher directives. After assigning each student to either the *Internalizer* or the *Externalizer* list, the teacher rank orders the names on each list from 1 (most like) to 10 (least like) the described behavior pattern. Students that are ranked in the top 3 positions of each list are selected for a more in-depth consideration while students ranked in the 4th or greater positions are no longer considered candidates in this screening procedure.

Stage 2: Multi-Informant Rating

Critical Events Index. The next stage in the process identifies specific behavioral incidents that have lead to the teacher's rating (*See Figure 1).* Students previously ranked in the top 3 positions relative to their classmates on either list are the focus of this stage, where the classroom teacher completes the *Critical Events Index* (CEI) from the SSBD on each qualifying student. The CEI is a checklist of 33 low frequency, high intensity behaviors. Examples include physical assaults an adult or vomits after eating. The CEI was standardized during the development of the SSBD (Walker & Severson, 1992) and provides another decision point in the screening procedure. Using the decision rule flow chart developed as part of the SSBD, students whose CEI ratings exceed the cutoff scores remain in the screening process *(See Figure 2).*

Cumulative Frequency Index. The classroom teacher completes the CFI on each student that remains in the screening process. This index consists for two subscales, adaptive and maladaptive, of low intensity, relative high frequency student behaviors. These subscales were developed as part of the SSBD procedure and are standardized on a national sample. Decision rules were also standardized during the SSBD development for both the adaptive and maladaptive subscales for both the *Internalizer* and the *Externalizer.* Again, those students failing to meet the cutoff scores are removed from the screening, while those students who meet or exceed each of the CFI cutoff scores are retained *(See Figure 2).*

Scale for Assessing Emotional Disturbance. The final teacher-centered aspect of this process involves the Scale for Assessing Emotional Disturbance, SAED, (Epstein, 1998). The SAED contains three parts: student competence characteristics, student emotional and behavioral problems, and effect on educational performance. The classroom teacher completes a SAED on each student remaining from the previous decision points. The second part of the SAED, *Student Emotional and Behavioral Problems,* is of particular interest. This section contains 45 items that are presented in statement form and requires the teacher to respond on a Likert scale from 0 (not a problem) to 3 (severe problem). These items are linked to the five characteristics in the federal definition of Emotional Disturbance. They are inability to learn, relationship problems, inappropriate behavior, unhappiness, and physical symptoms. Each subscale has been standardized to a standard score of 10 and a standard deviation of 3. Any subscale with a standard score of 17 indicates a highly significant area of concern during this screening process.

Parent Rating. Early inclusion of parents or guardians in the problem identification and refinement can be critical to the success of intervention planning. At this in the SNAFU process this inclusion is sought through the use of the Behavior Rating Profile – 2nd Edition (BRP-2) (Brown & Hammill, 1990) Parent Scale. The BRP-2 includes a rating of the student's behavior within the home environment through responses to 30 items. Reponses were standardized on a national sample during the development of the scale. Once again, the results of this instrument serve as another decision point in the screening. The BRP-2 Parent Scale has an average

standard score of 10 with a standard deviation of 3. Those students whose ratings on the BRP-2 result in a standard score of 6 or less continue in the screening process.

Stage 3: Intensive Assessment

The third stage of the screening procedure moves to more intensive procedures, including direct observation and sociometric assessments. This stage only involves those students who have met or exceeded each of the previous decision point cutoff score (*See Figure 1).*

Direct observations.

Observations are conducted within the classroom setting to collect data on academic engaged time (AET) and total disruptive behavior (TDB). The AET observation is conducted utilizing the coding method developed for use with the SSBD which utilizes the use of a stopwatch to record the amount of time the student's behavior met the operational definition of engaged. This definition included the following behaviors: "attending to the materials and task," "making appropriate motor responses," and "asking for assistance as needed." Data is collected on at least two different 15-minute independent work session. The AET percentage is computed by dividing the elapsed AET by the total time observed and multiplying by 100. A critical score of 50% was established during the SSBD development and was adopted for use in the SNAFU process.

A class of behaviors that interferes with the instruction or disrupts the ecology of the classroom is known as Total Disruptive Behavior (TDB). This type of behavior is an outward directed interaction and therefore is only collected on students who were initially identified as *Externalizers.* TDB observations are conducted in the same manner as described for AET. If disruptive behavior (e.g. noncompliance with a request, being out of seat, hitting, making audible noises, or criticizing other) is observed more than 10% or the time the student continues with the screening.

For those students whose classroom observation data reaches the critical level, structured observations are conducted during at least two different recess periods. This technique is adapted from the SSBD procedure and allows a standardized method of observing behavior in a naturalistic environment. The type of data that is collected during the recess observations differs dependent upon the student's earlier status as either an *Internalizer* or an *Externalizer.* Students categorized as an *Externalizer* are observed while they interact with peers and activities. Data are collected on behaviors coded as "negative," that include behaviors that actively reject other students or staff. If this type of behavior is observed 10% or more of the time, the student remains in the screening. For student categorized as an *Internalizer* the focus of the recess observations is on behaviors coded as "alone". If this is 15% or more of the time, the student remains in the procedure.

Sociometric assessment.

The next step in the SNAFU process seeks to collect information on the relative social status of each student who remains in the screening. This socio-metric technique involves asking the entire class to respond to a work-based stem, e.g. "List three classmates you'd like to work with in math" and "List three classmates you'd not like to work with in math." The entire class is also

asked a social stem. e.g. " List three classmates you'd like to invite to a party". The results of this assessment are standardized within the classroom by computing all positive and negative peer nominations to both stems using a technique developed to assess social preference (Gresham, Lane, & Lambros, 2000). Three scores are computed for each member of the class: Liked Least (LL), Liked Most (LM), and Social Preference (SP). The LL raw score is simply the number of times a peer mentions the student as not desired. The LM raw score is the number of peer nominations in the positive or inclusive question stem. The SP score is computed by subtracting the LM from the LL. Each of these raw scores is converted into a z score (mean = 0; standard deviation = 1). Once again the cutoff scores differ for the *Internalizer* and the *Externalizer* due to their typical behavior patterns and the impact upon the social acceptance of their respective peer groups. For students categorized as an *Internalizer* the cutoff scores are: Like Most (LM) score is less than -.5, Liked Least (LL) score is greater than -.5, and the Social Preference (SP) score is less than -1.0. The cutoff scores for students categorized as an *Externalizer* are somewhat different to reflect the distinct behavior patterns. The LM score is less than 0, the LL score is greater than 0, and the SP score is less than -1.0. Because peer ratings are important to judge the relative standing of children with behavioral difficulties, all three conditions to continue in the screening process.

Stage 4: Formal Referral

Referral to Student Assistance Team. The final phase of SNAFU is a formal referral to the building's Student Assistance Team. This team is charged with identifying students and situations that may require support and may also lead to possible identification of student that require special education services. The complete record for each student who has passed through the stages of the process is presented to the team where it becomes a resource for designing behavior improvement plans, conducting functional assessments, and focusing limited resources on proactive and timely interventions to improve the likelihood of successful outcomes.

Summary

Many of the shortcomings of the more traditional reactive model of identification of students with behavioral concerns are moderated by the SNAFU process. This approach results in a greater focus on problem solving and a more ecological approach that adds to the educational experience of all concerned. The additional of the SANFU process to a well run SAT process provides an avenue where school resources can be focused to meet the needs of the entire population of the school. SNAFU is a process rather than a product and provides ongoing insight into the options to assist students, staff, and parent to experience a rewarding educational experience.

(Figure 1)

Systematic Normed Assessment For Us (SNAFU)

Stage 1: Teacher Nominations

- Uses the SSBD teacher nomination form
- Teachers identify 10 students who most closely match the behavioral profile

The top three students pass through the first gate

Stage 2: Multi-Informant Rating

- Teacher ratings:
  - Critical Events Index (CEI) from the SSBD
  - Frequency Indicator (FI) from the SSBD
  - Scale for Assessing Emotional Disturbance (SAED)
- Parent rating:
  - Behavior Rating Profile (BRP-2)

Students whose scores exceed all cutoff scores pass through the second gate.

Stage 3: Intensive Assessment

- Direct observations utilizing the SSBD format
  - Classroom
    - Academic engaged time (AET) for both I & E
    - Total disruptive behavior (TDB) E only
  - Playground
    - Total negative (TN) E only
    - Alone (A) I only
- Sociometric assessment
  - Classroom group
    - Assessed on work and social questions
      - Rejected social status for both I & E
      - Isolated social status I only

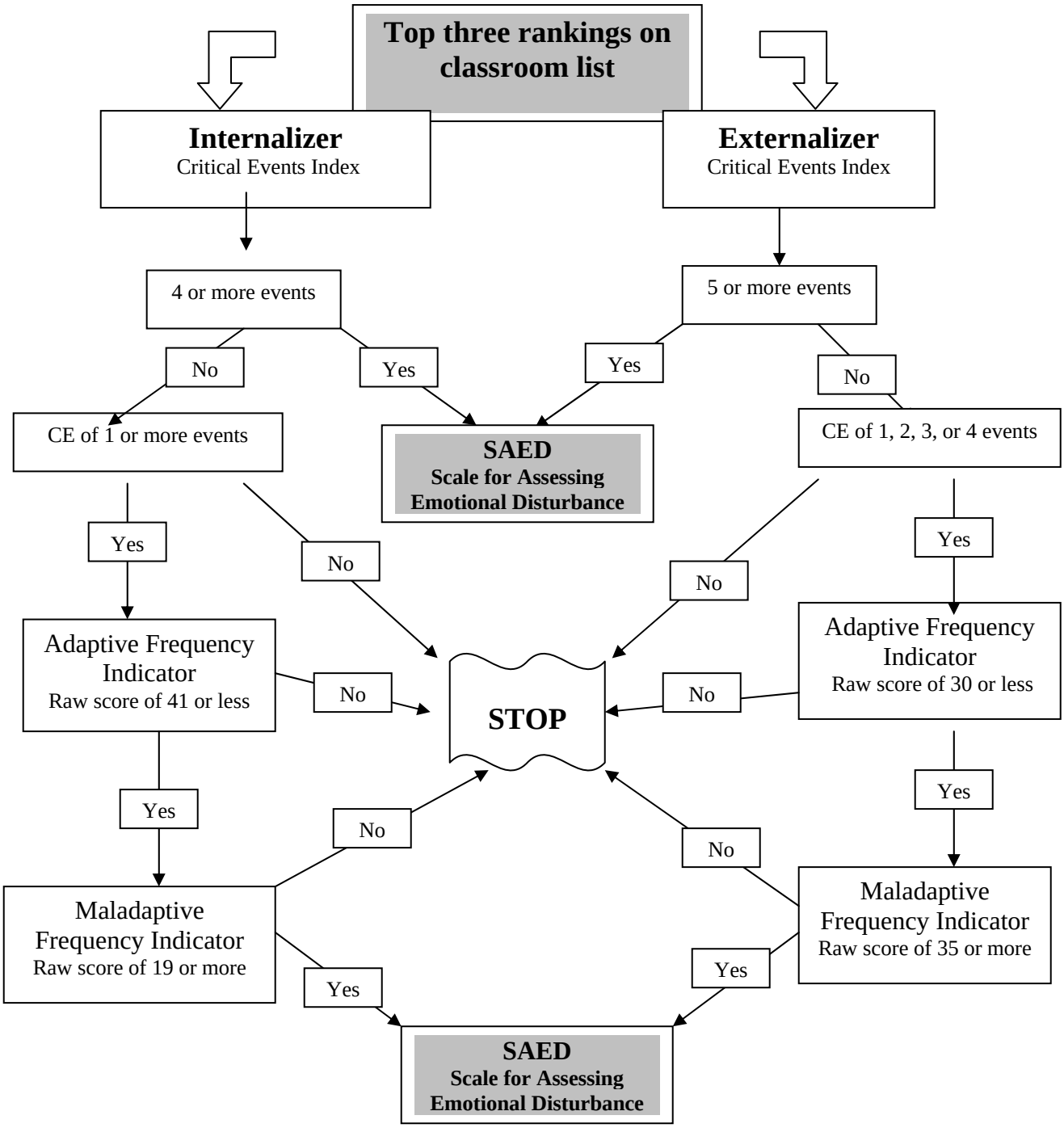
Students whose scores exceed the cut-off scores pass to stage 4.

Stage 4: Formal Referral to the Student Assistance Team

- Referral to Student Assistance Team
- Phases during referral
  - Primary interventions, within the classroom & class-wide in nature
  - Secondary interventions, within the classroom but subgroup by need
  - Tertiary intervention, outside the classroom & individualized

Figure 2

Stage Two Decision Rules



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INSIGHTFUL EXPERIENCES OF RURAL, LOW-INCOME FAMILIES RECEIVING EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES

Introduction

An effective family-centered approach is one that enhances the capacity of the family to meet the special needs of their child. Early intervention's ultimate purpose is to enable and empower these families (Dunst, Trivette, & Deal, 1998). Because every family is unique in resources, priorities, and concerns, the need for an individualized approach to early intervention is appropriate.

Early intervention exists not only to support young children with disabilities but to support their families as well (Bailey, 2001). Family-centeredness and empowerment have been cornerstones of the early intervention field. Furthermore, Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the policy of parent involvement and family support are deeply rooted (Bailey, 2001). This commitment to parent involvement and family support has heightened awareness of respecting the families' views concerning their early intervention experience. It may be argued that the recipients of services are the most important evaluators of them. Appreciation of the family's perspectives is an important variable when researching and evaluating early intervention programs.

In order for the family to fully participate in the early intervention process, efforts must be made by professionals to focus on the primary concerns of families. Asking families what they need, what they experience through the early intervention system, and what could be strengthened within the early intervention system can help ensure that research efforts are addressing external and social validity of early intervention services (Mahoney et al., 1999). Furthermore, this information can assist in developing programs that more effectively meet the needs of families (McNaughton, 1994). Bruder (2000) states, "To attempt to understand the complexities of family-centered early intervention without the integral involvement of families in all facets of research is not only ludicrous, it is unconscionable" (p.111).

Families raising a child with special needs can experience high levels of stress, which can impact the functions of the family (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001). Research has shown that other demographic variables (e.g., low socioeconomic status, living in a rural area) also may affect the needs, concerns, and stress level of the family and place them at a disadvantage in regard to the special education services they receive (Bailey, Scarborough, & Hebbeler, 2003; Capper, 1990; Fujiura & Yamaki, 2000; Macias, Clifford, Saylor, & Kreh, 2001; McLoyd, 1998).

Understanding the effects of these demographic variables on families is instrumental in ensuring early intervention services adequately support families.

The field of early intervention has spent little time gathering information specifically from rural, low-income families regarding their concerns and experiences with the early intervention system. This type of information is needed in order to determine if the service system is addressing this population's unique concerns and stresses. The purpose of this paper is to present the findings of two qualitative studies that gathered information from rural, low-income families for the purpose of understanding their concerns and experiences with the early intervention system. Possible strategies for improving services and supports for this population are provided.

Study 1

The purpose of this study was to examine how rural families, living in poverty and continuously receiving early intervention, experience early intervention service and supports, and how those experiences related to the early intervention intent of family-centeredness and family-empowerment. Three research questions were addressed:

a) How do rural, low-income families perceive and report their relationship with their service coordinator?
b) Do rural, low-income families identify specific early intervention practices that need improvement or that are particularly effective?Are there patterns in low socioeconomic families' living in rural area related to practices that need improvement or need to be highlighted as effective component when involved with early intervention?
c) How do rural, low-income families perceive and report their experience in early intervention?

Participants

A purposeful sampling technique was used to select the participants for this study. Eight families were chosen for the interviews. All of the families were either receiving early intervention services at the time or had previously received services. The families that had received services were families whose child had "aged out" meaning they had turned three years old. These families were chosen, along with the families currently receiving services in order to benefit from the expertise that these families had resulting from their extended experience.

The families had to meet certain criteria to participate in the interviews. A four step screening process was conducted prior to contact. Each family completed a questionnaire that gathered information about their financial situation (indicated an income of $29,999.00 or below), stress levels concerning their finances, satisfaction with their early intervention experiences, and their willingness to participate in the study.

Data Collection Procedures

All of the families were interviewed once. A two-hour time span was allotted for each interview so that rapport could be established between the family and the researcher. A semi-structured interview protocol was used for the interviews. The semi-structured form insured some standardization across interviews, while allowing the families to provide information in a manner not constrained by predetermined questions. Eighteen interview questions were divided into five categories such as family routines, relationship with the service coordinator,

Individualized Family Service Plan process and meeting, family routines, services, and closing. Audiotaping of the interviews was the predominate source of data collection. Some field notes were taken during the interviews.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was utilized as the source of data analysis. Data analysis simultaneously occurred during data collection since the interview tapes were replayed immediately following the interviews and prior to transcription to help develop tentative ideas about categories and relationships. A combination of frameworks (Johnson & La Montagne, 1993; Maxwell, 1996) was employed to guide the steps taken to analyze the data using content analysis. After each interview was transcribed verbatim, the entire transcription was read. Reading the interview transcription completely helped the researcher become familiar with the overall nature of the responses and added to the previous ideas developed during the initial replaying of the interviews. The next step was the identification of units of analysis. Any references made to objects, events, and people were bracketed. Any responses that were given and did not answer the question were marked non-answers, but were still analyzed later to see if external ideas developed.

Categorizing the data was one of the key steps toward analyzing the data. Each bracket, a unit of analysis, was coded and then separated into categories. Refining the categories again helped discard inappropriate categories, create new categories, and place lost information into an appropriate category. Thematic analysis was utilized to sort the data into broad themes and issues. Contextualizing strategies were also used to understand the data in context. Each strategy that was utilized worked together to help form categories, ideas, and themes that produced informative insights in developing theories concerning how families who are living in poverty experience early intervention services and supports specific to family-centeredness.

Validity

Threats can arise when addressing validity in qualitative research. Many procedures were implemented to try to eliminate any validity threats. Tape recording of the interviews and verbatim transcribing were key factors in eliminating validity threats. The verbatim transcriptions provided "rich" data (Maxwell, 1996). In addition, beta testing took place before the actual interviews took place. This helped lessen the account of bias from the interviewer during the process.

Results

Overall, the families were satisfied with their experiences with early intervention. The families reported affirming and supportive relationships with their service coordinators. They reported that they received information that helped them to become more knowledgeable about their child's disability and available services for their child and family. The process of sharing information between the family and service providers was noted as an open process. The families commented that they either directly shared their hopes and goals with the service providers or their service coordinator encouraged them to share.

Although the families stated that they had very supportive and positive relationships, their responses often implied the families were dependent on their service coordinators. The responses of these families suggested a lack of increased control over their child and families' early intervention experiences. The development of these relationships facilitated more of a

"bonding" process. The service coordinators took on the lead role and the families were being mentored throughout their early intervention experiences. The service coordinators implemented a family-centered approach, but unintentionally created dependent behaviors instead of empowerment actions. The families' statements supported the importance for professionals to evaluate their techniques when implementing a family-centered approach that incorporates an empowering philosophy.

A few practices needing improvement, especially relating to rural locations, were revealed during the interviews. The process of scheduling therapists was unorganized and the families' daily schedules were interrupted. The families had to travel the long distances to therapy sessions that were scheduled on the therapists' time. The families had to travel to centers for therapy because some therapists would not travel the long distances. Also, because of rural locations their child and family's services were limited and occasionally provided by professionals not adequately trained (e.g., therapists trained to work with adults). Traveling to and from therapy sessions was a major concern for some of the families concerning both time and cost.

Limitations

Two limitations (i.e., features of the study that prohibited some part of the research design) were present. First, the rigid schedule for the study limited the time required for more qualitative follow-up. The families were only interviewed one time, limiting the amount of information shared by the participants. The second limitation was the small sample size. Eight families participated and provided rich data, but the small sample size restricted the generalization of the study.

Study 2

The primary purpose of this study was to determine to what extent the early intervention system was addressing the concerns of rural, low-income families. The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

a) What concerns related to having a child with a disability are identified by rural, low-income families?
b) What is the relationship between the concerns identified and those addressed during regular, ongoing home visits?
c) What is the relationship between the concerns identified and those reflected in the IFSP?

Participants

Five families with toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities participated in the study. Criteria for families to participate included: (a) being low-income as defined as Medicaid eligible due to family income, (b) living in a rural area as defined by the Kentucky Division of Child Care (P. Woodworth, personal communication, May 27, 2003), (c) receiving at least two services in their home through the early intervention system, and (d) having been enrolled in the early intervention system for at least 6 months and have an IFSP written within the last month. All but one family included in the study had two parent households. Three of the families had two children, while two families had one child. The children who had disabilities within the families were eligible for early intervention services due to an established risk (n=3; prematurity, Down syndrome) or developmental delays (n=2).

The early intervention service providers included on the family's current IFSP and who worked with the family on an ongoing basis also participated in the study. The service providers included: developmental interventionists (DI) (n=3), teachers of children with visual impairments (VI) (n=2), speech/language pathologists (SLP) (n=4), occupational therapists (OT) (n=3), physical therapists (PT) (n=4), and physical therapist assistants (PTA) (n=1).

Data Collection Procedures

A qualitative research design was used to explore whether the early intervention system was addressing the concerns of rural, low-income families. A case study approach (Stake, 1995) was used to address the three research questions. Three types of data were collected. First, two semi-structured interviews (Mason, 1996) were conducted with each family in their homes to gather information related to the characteristics of the family, activities in which the family participated, and the concerns they had related to their child with a disability and other family factors. Each interview was audiotaped and field notes were written during the interview. All audiotapes were transcribed verbatim. Second, three to four naturalistic observations (Patton, 1990) were completed during the service providers' regular home visits. Observations were completed within two to eight weeks after completion of the last interview. During the observations, the researcher audiotaped the verbal interactions that occurred and wrote field notes to document all components of the visit. The audiotapes were transcribed verbatim. Finally, the IFSP of each family was reviewed in order to determine the content and concerns addressed. The following five sections of the IFSPs were reviewed: family concerns/priorities, outcome statements, activities/strategies, location of services, and transition plan.

Data Analysis

Each type of data for each family was analyzed independently of data from other families. A grounded theory approach (Glaser & Straus, 1967) was used to code categories and subcategories of themes related to the concerns of the family that were identified or addressed in the interview and observation transcripts, observation field notes, and IFSP. All transcripts were read, reread, and coded by the researcher and a second coder. After all codes and themes had been identified, the researcher and second coder compared their coding to confirm appropriate themes had been identified. A list of the themes of concerns identified by each family through the interviews was generated. In addition, lists of the themes related to the content and concerns addressed during the home visits and in the IFSP were generated. The following comparison of themes occurred: (a) interview with home visits, (b) interview with IFSP, and (c) home visits with IFSP.

Trustworthiness

Multiple strategies were utilized to establish trustworthiness of the data (Glesne, 1999; Patton, 1990). First, in order to ensure the data gathered through the interviews and observations were accurate, all contacts with the family were made by the same researcher. Prior to the initiating the interviews, the researcher made a home visit to discuss the project and spend time getting time getting to know the family. The multiple contacts by the same researcher aided in the development of rapport and trust with the family. Second, careful note taking during and after the interviews, transcribing the interviews verbatim, and multiple people coding the transcripts addressed researcher bias (Glesne, 1999). Furthermore, after the interviews and observations were coded and themes identified, the families were contacted to confirm that their thoughts, ideas, and/or interactions were accurately reflected. Third, triangulation of data was

used (Glesne, 1999; Patton, 1990). Multiple sources of data were collected (i.e., audiotapes, field notes, transcripts) enabling comparisons to be made and consistencies and inconsistencies of information to be identified.

Results

The families identified concerns related to parenting a child with a disability, health issues of the child, and family issues or characteristics. Concerns in each category were addressed during home visits and in the IFSP. Only one family had all of their identified concerns addressed during their home visits and in their IFSP. Family issues were the least likely to be addressed in either the home visits or the IFSPs. For four of the families, health issues were addressed during home visits only. See the Table for specific types of concerns within each category, the concerns identified by families, the concerns addressed during the home visits, and those addressed in the IFSPs.

Table

Concerns Identified by the Family, Content Addressed During Home Visits, and Content Included on the IFSP

Concern	Family 1	Family 2	Family 3	Family 4	Family 5
Parenting a child with a disability					
Accessing toys and materials	X	X		X	X
Connecting with other families		X		X	
Developmental needs of child					X
Flexibility in service delivery	X		X		
General info. about services			X		
Info. about services for the future		X			X
Coordination of services					
Respite care				X	
Health issues					
Addressing health needs of child	X	X	X	X	X
Family issues					
Emotional support		X			
Financial support		X	X	X	
Meeting needs of entire family				X	
Recog. of child's temperament				X	
Safety concerns			X		
Transportation	X		X		

Note. X = Concerns identified by family; Content of home visit; = Content of IFSP .

Limitations

There were several limitations of this study. First, although two interviews and 3-4 observations occurred in the homes of families, the amount of time spent with each family remained limited. If more time had been spent getting to know the families or if someone already familiar with the families had completed the interviews and observations, the data may have been more reflective of the families' current situations. Second, only one observation was completed with each service provider. The families and service providers were asked if the visits

observed were typical of their visit. However, if more observations had occurred, more of the concerns identified by families may have been addressed. Finally, the concerns of the families that were not addressed in the IFSP or home visits possibly were being addressed by the service coordinators. This lack of support was not considered since the service coordinators of the families were not interviewed or observed.

Implications

These two studies gave insight into the way low-income, rural families experience early intervention, concerns of the families, and strategies for improving services and supports. The results from these studies have several implications for practice in early intervention. First, practicing professionals should consider the methods used in the studies (i.e., interviews) as possible strategies for gathering information on an ongoing basis from families about their concerns related to their child or family (including issues surrounding economic and community resources) and their perceptions regarding the impact of early intervention. Allowing families to share their experiences could help professionals use a family-centered approach, support families more effectively, and evaluate areas within their practice that need improvement.

Second, the first study suggests service coordinators are the key to ensuring needs and concerns related to general family issues are addressed. However, the IFSPs reviewed in the second study indicate family issues are not commonly addressed during service provision of home visitors or in the formal document guiding intervention (i.e., IFSP). This finding suggests a disconnect may exist between how service coordinators support families and what is documented on the IFSP document. Similarly, the second study highlights the concerns of parents related to their children's health issues (i.e., meeting health needs, accessing care due to where they live). Although the service providers discussed the children's health issues with the family during home visits, the IFSP documents rarely included information about these issues. To ensure all concerns of the family are addressed and monitored, professionals must consider how they can incorporate these concerns into the IFSP document.

Third, some families in the second study indicated they had concerns related to accessing materials and toys and getting information about services. Related to this issue, the first study highlights how service coordinators are family friendly, but tend to promote dependent behaviors in families. As service providers support rural, low-income families in accessing materials and information, they must be cognizant of the strategies they use to assist them. Encouraging families to develop knowledge and skills so they can independently acquire the things they need should be a primary focus for service coordinators.

Fourth, both studies highlight the burden families experience with accessing services and supports outside of their communities. Low-income families have a difficult time meeting the financial responsibilities associated with accessing services in other communities. In addition, they may be forced to receive services from professionals unqualified to meet their needs due to limited number of providers in their area. The early intervention field needs to develop creative strategies for providing services within rural communities or develop ways to support families in accessing services (e.g., medical and early intervention related) outside of their communities.

Finally, when considering the concerns of families and their experiences with the early intervention system, these studies highlight the complexity of families who are affected by disability, living in a rural location, and having a low income. Families who have young children

with disabilities tend to identify many similar concerns, regardless of socioeconomic status and location of where they live. However, families may have unique concerns due to demographic factors. The information shared by the families in the first study supports the relationship among family-centeredness, effective helpgiving, and empowerment. As service providers attempt to create a system that effectively supports all families, they must consider how to empower families so they can address their concerns. In order to do this, they must use policies and practices that strengthen families (Dunst & Trivette, 1996), which includes addressing all of the concerns of families in the IFSP and during service provision.

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EVALUATING THE COST EFFECTIVENESS OF A UNIVERSITY BASED CONSULTATION MODEL OF IMPLEMENTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS IN RURAL SCHOOLS

Introduction

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA '97) emphasizes the use of positive behavioral interventions, supports, and services for students with disabilities who display challenging behavior (Vaughn, Hales, Bush, & Fox, 1998; Yell & Katsiyannis, 2000). Several studies have demonstrated the efficacy of using PBS to address challenging behavior (Braddock, 1999; Durand, 1990; Feeney & Ylvisaker, 2003; Horner, 2000; Safran & Oswald, 2003). Unfortunately, most teachers and schools lack systems for identification, adoption, and sustained use of these research validated practices (Muscott et al. 2004; Sugai et al. 1999). This problem appears to be prevalent in many schools throughout the country, thus the reliance on technical assistance remains a critical element.

Most schools, therefore, rely on behavioral consultation for technical assistance in designing appropriate interventions for children who exhibit challenging behavior (Oswald, Safran, & Johanson, 2005; Sugai et al., 1999; Wheeler & Hoover, 1997). Behavioral consultation can assist schools in designing more effective instructional and behavior supports for children at risk for challenging behavior (Putnam, Luiselli, & Jefferson, 2002).The efficacy of behavioral consultation in reducing challenging behavior is well documented (England, 2001; Sheridan, Welch, & Orme, 1996; Taylor, O'Reilly, & Lancioni, 1996; Wilkinson, 2003). A few university-based behavioral consultation programs exist nationwide that offer technical assistance to schools in order for them to

meet IDEA'97 requirements. Vaughn et al. (1998), for example, described the East Tennessee State University program which uses a team-based consultative model to conduct functional behavioral assessments for school systems of the upper east Tennessee area. The East Tennessee program offers school team training and consultation in functional behavioral assessment. The efficacy of such programs has been well documented (Ian, O'Reilly, & Lancioni, 1996; Sheridan, Welch, & Orme, 1996; Wilkinson, 2003).

However, because of the increase in technical assistance programs serving educational settings and the formalization of these services through federal law, there is growing concern about accountability. Hence, there is need to demonstrate beneficial outcomes of these programs for children (Martens, & Ardoin, 2002). The purpose of this study was to determine whether the use of a university-based technical assistance model is cost effective in reducing challenging behavior among rural schools.

Methodology

Participants

The participants were regular and special education teachers in schools within the 22 county areas of the upper Cumberland region of Tennessee. These participants were divided into two groups. The first group comprised teachers who were receiving technical assistance from university based consultants (n = 14) while the second group was made up of teachers who were served through school-based behavioral consultation (SBC) (n=15). Samples of convenience were selected, for both the latter and the former, based on the number of teachers who could be accessed. Another sample of convenience of school-based consultants (n = 9) was also drawn to fill an FBA checklist. The school-based consultants were all school psychologists serving schools within the same 22-county region of Tennessee.

Measuring Treatment Acceptability and Effectiveness

These researchers conducted a survey using an Intervention Acceptability Rating Form (IARF) (copies may be obtained from first author). Two similar versions of this instrument were sent to participants. Version A was sent out to participants who had been served by the consultative technical support project while version B was sent out to participants served by school-based behavioral consultants. The data were coded for subsequent statistical analysis using t-tests to compare the two groups by analyzing measures of central tendency such as mean, standard deviation, and variance.

Identifying Costs

A cost analysis was conducted by identifying and specifying the costs of each intervention. The total costs for each consultation model were divided by the number of students served by each consultant annually to establish the total amount spent per student. These figures were compared with the social validity data to determine the overall cost effective program.

Instrumentation

The survey of teachers served by the two programs was conducted using the IARF. The IARF is a modification of the Treatment Acceptability Rating Form (TARF) developed by Reimers and Wacker (1988) to measure the acceptability of recommended treatments. The IARF instrument was designed to measure three factors, i.e. social validity, acceptability of interventions and effectiveness of the interventions, as perceived by teachers. The IARF consisted of six items in a Likert-type format (1- to 5- point scale). Two similar versions of the IARF were used in this study (one for each consultation model).

Validity

The IARF was sent to an expert in program evaluation who determined the validity of the instrument in measuring the three factors identified above i.e. social validity, acceptability, and perceived effectiveness of the interventions. Similarly, an expert in applied behavior analysis validated the FBA checklist by determining whether the components on the checklist represented best and effective practices.

Reliability

The IARF was designed such that two items measured the same factor. Correlation (Pearson r) of each pair of these items was used to determine reliability. The first pair of items measuring perceived effectiveness had a correlation of 0.76 while the pair of items, which measured acceptability of the interventions, had a correlation of 0.74. The pair of items which measured social validity had a correlation of 0.24. This last pair of items did not have high correlation and therefore the instrument was not very reliable in measuring this factor and results must be interpreted with caution.

Results

Comparison of Mean Scores

The first analysis was conducted to compare the acceptability, perceived effectiveness, and social validity of school-based consultation and university based consultation. To examine the differences in responses for the two groups t-tests were conducted to compare the means. The analysis yielded significance differences in means for three of the six items. There was significant difference on how participants perceived the interventions to be reasonable with those served by university based consultants scoring a higher rating (M = 4.21, SD = .58) than teachers using SBC (M = 3.47, SD = .99), $t(23) = -2.50$, $p < .05$. Teachers served by university based consultants recorded a higher mean on whether they would use this model in the future (M = 4.57, SD = .65) compared to the SBC group on whether they would use SBC in the future (M = 3.93, SD = .96). This difference was significant, $t(25) = -2.11$, $p < .05$. There was also significant difference between the two groups' overall ratings of the two interventions. The UBC group gave it a higher overall rating score (M = 4.50, SD = .65) compared to the SBC group (M = 3.60, SD = 1.06), $t(24) = -2.78$, $p < .01$.

Comparison of the responses to question one for the teachers served by the UBC (M = 3.64, SD = .50) and teachers using SBC (M = 3.27, SD = 1.16) revealed no significant differences between the groups $t(19) = -1.15$, ns. Similarly, there was no significant difference in how the former (M = 3.50, SD = 1.16) and the latter (M = 3.47, SD = 1.06) responded to question two, $t(26) = -.08$, ns. Finally, teachers served by the UBC's perceptions on whether the interventions would have lasting effects on children (M = 3.93, SD = .48) did not differ significantly from the perceptions of those teachers served by SBC (M = 3.33, SD = 1.29), $t(18) = -1.67$, ns.

Responses from the UBC group were further analyzed to find out if there was any difference on how responses varied depending on the amount of time that had lapsed between when the intervention was implemented and when the surveys were conducted. Participants were subdivided into two groups with one group comprising those who had implemented the UBC intervention more than six months before the time of this evaluation (n=6) and those who had implemented the intervention within the six months prior to this evaluation (n=8). The results showed that there was no significant difference between these subgroups for all items. However, one item was close to significance i.e. the overall rating of the two programs. Participants who had implemented the intervention more than six months before this evaluation scored a higher rating (M = 4.83, SD = 4.08) compared to participants who had implemented the intervention within the six months before this evaluation (M = 4.25, SD = .707), $t(11) = -1.941$, ns.

Cost Analysis

A comparison of the costs of utilizing UBC and the cost of utilizing SBC showed that it costs it costs almost twice more to use SBC per child (1,014) than it costs to use UBC ($585).

Discussion

An evaluation of the perceived effectiveness of the two programs showed that UBC is perceived to be more effective than SBC in helping children who exhibit challenging behavior. UBC services are rated higher possibly because since the UBC is a university-based program it uses research-validated procedures whose utility has been demonstrated. The intensity of services and supports that the UBC team offers to teachers could be another reason for the favorable ratings. In addition to providing recommendations to teachers and schools, the UBC team offers technical assistance, when required, on how to implement the recommended interventions and provides intensive follow up during the implementation of the recommended strategies. Also, the UBC's team approach could be another factor contributing to the favorable ratings against SBC. The UBC operates as a team, which fosters inter-rater reliability during observations and can improve the quality of recommendations as the team brainstorm and discuss possible strategies before presenting teachers with recommendations.

The results or strategies discussed in this presentation can be adopted by other rural and underserved school systems to help improve the future of behavioral management in rural schools. Universities can promote these empirical strategies inherent in PBS by partnering with rural schools to foster the dissemination of information and expertise. Also, state policy makers can expand the use of these consultative models by providing more funding to universities that partner with school systems to address this important subject.

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THE NEW RESOLUTION SESSION -- IDEA'04

I. *The New Resolution Session*

A brand new mandatory resolution session is added to the special education dispute resolution process by reauthorization. Section 615 (f)(1)(B). Within 15 days of receipt of a request for a due process hearing, the school district (hereafter sometimes referred to as "LEA") must convene a meeting with the parents, a representative of the LEA with "decision making authority," and relevant member(s) of the IEP team who have "specific knowledge of the facts identified in the complaint." The purpose of the resolution session is to permit the parents to discuss their complaint and the underlying facts and to provide the LEA the opportunity to resolve the complaint. The LEA may not bring their lawyer unless the parent has a lawyer. The parties may avoid the resolution session only by waiving the meeting in writing or by participating in mediation. Section 615(f)(1)(B)(i). If the LEA has not resolved the complaint to the satisfaction of the parents within 30 days after receipt of the complaint, the hearing may occur and "all applicable timelines for a due process hearing" shall commence. Section 615(f)(1)(B)(ii). If the resolution session results in a written settlement agreement, the agreement is legally binding and enforceable in court, except that if either party suffers from "buyer's remorse," they may void the agreement within three business days after it is executed. Section 615(f)(1)(B)(iii) and (iv).

Attorneys who represent parents are barred from seeking attorney's fees and costs if they decide to participate in the resolution session. Section 615 (i)(3)(D)(ii)and(iii).

A portion of the conference committee report that discusses the resolution session states that these changes address "unscrupulous lawyers and an overly complex system" that has "led to an abundance of costly and unnecessary lawsuits." The conference report goes on to explain that the resolution sessions are needed because "...(t)oo often, schools are unaware of parental complaints and concerns until an official complaint is filed and the legal process is already underway." H.R. 1350 Conference Report, (November 17, 2004).

A major issue that is likely to arise involves the admissibility of discussions at the resolution session in a subsequent due process hearing. Unlike the mediation section of the Act, which contains a specific guarantee of confidentiality for any discussions during

a mediation session, Section 615 (e)(2)(G), there is no specified confidentiality protection for discussions that take place during a resolution session. I predict that many due process hearings will now involve objections to testimony concerning what was said at a resolution session. Attorneys wanting to offer the testimony will likely argue that we must assume that Congress knows what it is doing and that Congress specifically restricted the admissibility of discussions only in mediation discussions. Lawyers wanting to exclude the testimony will probably argue that this was an oversight by Congress and that settlement talks should be protected. State law may be critical. For example, many states restrict the admissibility of settlement discussions as a matter of law or court decision to promote the policy of encouraging settlement.

Interestingly the "buyer's remorse" provision that provides the parties with three days to void a settlement agreement that results from a resolution session has no counterpart in the section concerning mediation. A party who has voided, or attempted to void, a mediation agreement within three days after it is signed may try calling it a "resolution session agreement." Eventually, guidance from the courts will likely answer these questions.

The proposed federal regulations clarify that the 45 day deadline for the hearing officer's decision does not begin to run until after the 30 day resolution period. 34 C.F.R. Section 300.510 (b)(2).

The regulations also add a new wrinkle, however. They provide that if a parent fails to participate in the resolution session meeting, the timelines for the resolution process and for the due process hearing will be delayed until after the meeting is held. 34 C.F.R. Section 300.510 (b)(3). This provision could cause numerous headaches in the special education community. What level of participation is required? Are parents required just to show up, or are they required to bargain in good faith, or is the standard somewhere in between? Will it be necessary to convene preliminary mini-hearings to resolve factual disputes concerning issues of parent participation. Also in the rare cases where a parent wants stay put protection and could care less about the due process hearing, can the parent obtain perpetual stay put protection by requesting a hearing and then refusing to "participate" in the resolution session?

II. ***Judicial and Administrative Decisions***

A. Massey v. District of Columbia 105 LRP 54466 (D.D.C. 11/3/05). The parents were not required by the U. S. District Court to exhaust administrative remedies because the LEA's continuing noncompliance with procedural requirements and its blatant disregard of the IDEA statutory requirements rendered compliance with administrative options futile. The procedural violations included the failure to schedule resolution sessions within 15 days of the complaint, the failure of the LEA to file an "answer" to due process complaints, and the failure to place the student for several weeks. Concerning the failure to schedule **resolution sessions**, the Court rejected the LEA's assertion that they could not reach the parents by telephone.

B. Spencer v. District of Columbia 106 LRP 5297 (D.D.C. 1/11/06). The parent filed for due process on December 6, 2005. The LEA scheduled a resolution session for December 21st. The parent withdrew the due process complaint on December 14th. The LEA cancelled the resolution session. The parent then refilled the due process complaint on December 21st. The LEA scheduled a resolution session in January, 2006. The parent then filed in federal court for injunctive relief claiming that the LEA had not convened a **resolution session** within 15 days of the original filing and, therefore, exhaustion of administrative remedies was futile. The U. S. District Court rejected the argument and required the parent to first exhaust administrative remedies by pursuing the due process hearing.

C. Norwood Public Schools 44 IDELR 104 (SEA Mass. 8/19/05). A due process hearing officer concluded that she had authority to enforce a settlement that resulted from a **resolution session**. The hearing officer held that any settlement concerning issues of identification, evaluation, placement or FAPE was subject to the hearing officer's jurisdiction.

III. ***DEA'04 Statutory Provisions***

The following portions of the reauthorized statute pertain to mediation and resolution sessions:

`SEC. 615. PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS.

…

`(f) IMPARTIAL DUE PROCESS HEARING-

`(1) IN GENERAL-

…

`(B) RESOLUTION SESSION-

`(i) PRELIMINARY MEETING- Prior to the opportunity for an impartial due process hearing under subparagraph (A), the local educational agency shall convene a meeting with the parents and the relevant member or members of the IEP Team who have specific knowledge of the facts identified in the complaint--

`(I) within 15 days of receiving notice of the parents' complaint;

`(II) which shall include a representative of the agency who has decisionmaking authority on behalf of such agency;

`(III) which may not include an attorney of the local educational agency unless the parent is accompanied by an attorney; and

`(IV) where the parents of the child discuss their complaint, and the facts that form the basis of the complaint, and the local educational agency is provided the opportunity to resolve the complaint,

unless the parents and the local educational agency agree in writing to waive such meeting, or agree to use the mediation process described in subsection (e).

`(ii) HEARING- If the local educational agency has not resolved the complaint to the satisfaction of the parents within 30 days of the receipt of the complaint, the due process hearing may occur, and all of the applicable timelines for a due process hearing under this part shall commence.

`(iii) WRITTEN SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT- In the case that a resolution is reached to resolve the complaint at a meeting described in clause (i), the parties shall execute a legally binding agreement that is--

`(I) signed by both the parent and a representative of the agency who has the authority to bind such agency; and

`(II) enforceable in any State court of competent jurisdiction or in a district court of the United States.

`(iv) REVIEW PERIOD- If the parties execute an agreement pursuant to clause (iii), a party may void such agreement within 3 business days of the agreement's execution.

…

`(i) ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES-

…

`(3) JURISDICTION OF DISTRICT COURTS; ATTORNEYS' FEES-

…

`(D) PROHIBITION OF ATTORNEYS' FEES AND RELATED COSTS FOR CERTAIN SERVICES-

…

`(ii) IEP TEAM MEETINGS- Attorneys' fees may not be awarded relating to any meeting of the IEP Team unless such meeting is convened as a result of an administrative proceeding or judicial action, or, at the discretion of the State, for a mediation described in subsection (e).

`(iii) OPPORTUNITY TO RESOLVE COMPLAINTS- A meeting conducted pursuant to subsection (f)(1)(B)(i) shall not be considered--

`(I) a meeting convened as a result of an administrative hearing or judicial action; or

`(II) an administrative hearing or judicial action for purposes of this paragraph.

III. ***NPRM (Proposed Federal Regulations) Provisions***

The proposed regulations concerning mediation and resolution sessions are as follows:

Sec. 300.510 Resolution process.

(a) Resolution meeting. (1) Within 15 days of receiving notice of the parents' due process complaint, and prior to the initiation of a due process hearing under Sec. 300.511, the LEA must convene a meeting with the parents and the relevant member or members of the IEP Team who have specific knowledge of the facts identified in the due process complaint that--

(i) Includes a representative of the public agency who has decision-making authority on behalf of that agency; and

(ii) May not include an attorney of the LEA unless the parent is accompanied by an attorney.

(2) The purpose of the meeting is for the parents of the child to discuss their due process complaint, and the facts that form the basis of the due process complaint, so that the LEA has the opportunity to resolve the dispute that is the basis for the due process complaint.

(3) The meeting described in paragraph (a)(1) and (2) of this section need not be held if--

(i) The parents and the LEA agree in writing to waive the meeting; or

(ii) The parents and the LEA agree to use the mediation process described in Sec. 300.506.

(4) The parents and the LEA determine the relevant members of the IEP Team to attend the meeting.

(b) Resolution period. (1) If the LEA has not resolved the due process complaint to the satisfaction of the parents within 30 days of the receipt of the due process complaint, the due process hearing must occur.

(2) The timeline for issuing a final decision under Sec. 300.515 begins at the expiration of this 30-day period.

(3) Except where the parties have jointly agreed to waive the resolution process or to use mediation, notwithstanding paragraphs

(b)(1) and (2) of this section, the failure of a parent filing a due process complaint to participate in the resolution meeting will delay the timelines for the resolution process and due process hearing until the meeting is held.

(c) Written settlement agreement. If a resolution to the dispute is reached at the meeting described in paragraphs (a)(1) and (2) of this section, the parties must execute a legally binding agreement that is--

(1) Signed by both the parent and a representative of the agency who has the authority to bind the agency; and

(2) Enforceable in any State court of competent jurisdiction or in a district court of the United States.

(d) Agreement review period. If the parties execute an agreement pursuant to paragraph (c) of this section, a party may void the agreement within 3 business days of the agreement's execution.
(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1415(f)(1)(B))

Sec. 300.517 Attorneys' fees.
…
(c)(2)(ii) Attorneys' fees may not be awarded relating to any meeting of the IEP Team unless the meeting is convened as a result of an administrative proceeding or judicial action, or at the discretion of the State, for a mediation described in Sec. 300.506 that is conducted prior to the filing of a request for due process under Sec. Sec. 300.507 through 300.513 or Sec. Sec. 300.530 through 300.534.

(iii) A meeting conducted pursuant to Sec. 300.510 shall not be considered--

(A) A meeting convened as a result of an administrative hearing or judicial action; or

(B) An administrative hearing or judicial action for purposes of this section. …
(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1415(i)(3)(B)-(G))

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UPDATE ON SPECIAL EDUCATION LAW

I . *The United States Supreme Court*

A. ***The Supremes Speak***: ***Burden of Proof*** - Schaffer v. Weast 546 U.S. _____, 126 S.Ct. 528, 44 IDELR 150 (2005)

On November 14, 2005, the Supreme Court issued its decision in Weast. The Court held that the burden of proof in an IDEA due process hearing is upon the party challenging the IEP. The Court notes that the term "burden of proof" is "one of the slipperiest in the family of legal terms." The decision attributes the confusion to the failure to distinguish between two distinct legal concepts which are unfortunately both referred to loosely as "burden of proof." The "burden of persuasion" involves which party loses if the evidence is closely balanced. In any civil legal proceeding, if the evidence for both sides is equal, the party with the burden of persuasion loses. The "burden of production," on the other hand, concerns which party bears the responsibility of coming forward with evidence at various points in the legal proceeding. The burden of production concerns the times at which a party must present its evidence.

This Weast decision involves only the burden of persuasion. The IDEA is silent as to the burden of persuasion. Normally in administrative hearings, the party making the claim (the plaintiff) bears the burden of persuasion. Counsel for the parents argued that the "default" rule should not apply here citing the statutory language (e.g., "due process" hearing) and the history of the law. The parents also argued that an exception to the default rule was applicable; in some cases courts recognize an exception where the relevant facts are peculiarly within the knowledge of the adversary. The Court rejected these arguments and ruled that the party seeking relief in an IDEA due process hearing has the burden of persuasion.

The Court exempted from its decision, however, the burden of persuasion applicable in those states that have laws or regulations placing the burden upon the school district. The Court declared that because no such law existed in the state in question (Maryland) and because the parties did not argue or brief the issue in the lower courts, the Court declined to address that issue.

B. ***The Supremes Threaten to Speak Later*: *expert witness fees as costs***

The Supreme Court has granted certiorari in the matter of Arlington Cent. Sch. Dist Bd. of Educ v. Murphy, No. 15-18 (January 8, 2006). The issue to be decided is whether the attorney's fees and costs provision of the IDEA authorizes an award of expert witness fees as attorney's fees and costs to a prevailing parent. The solicitor General urged the Court to reverse the court below.

The decision which the Court will review is Murphy v. Arlington Cent, Sch Dist. Bd. of Educ. 402 F.3d 332, 43 IDELR 31 (2d Cir. 3/29/2005). In that decision, the Second Circuit Court of Appeals held that a prevailing parent in an IDEA case may recover expert witness fees as costs. The Court noted that expert witness testimony is often critical in the fact-intensive IDEA disputes concerning the nature of a student's disability and the services offered by a district. The Court examined the legislative history of the IDEA and the recent Congressional reaction to another Supreme Court decision involving a similar issue under a different statute, and concluded that Congress intended that expert witness fees be awarded as costs to prevailing parents. The Second Circuit joined the Third Circuit in reaching this conclusion. The Seventh, Eighth and D.C. Circuits have reached the opposite conclusion.

II . *Other Key 2005 Judicial and Administrative Decisions*

A. Due Process Hearing Issues

1.***IDEA'04 Issues***

a. Massey v. District of Columbia 105 LRP 54466 (D.D.C. 11/3/05). The parents were not required to exhaust administrative remedies because the LEA's continuing noncompliance with procedural requirements and its blatant disregard of the IDEA statutory requirements rendered compliance with administrative options futile. The procedural violations included the failure to schedule **resolution sessions** within 15 days of the complaint, the failure to file an "answer" to complaints, and the failure to place the student for weeks. Concerning the failure to schedule resolution sessions, the Court rejected the LEA's assertion that they could not reach the parents by telephone.

b. Spencer v. District of Columbia 106 LRP 5297 (D.D.C. 1/11/06). The parent filed for due process on December 6, 2005. The LEA scheduled a resolution session for December 21st. The parent withdrew the due process complaint on December 14th. The LEA cancelled the resolution session. The parent then refilled the due process complaint on December 21st. The LEA scheduled a resolution session in January, 2006. The parent then filed in federal court for injunctive relief claiming that the LEA had not convened a **resolution session** within 15 days of the original filing and, therefore, exhaustion of administrative remedies was futile. The U. S. District Court rejected the argument and required the parent to first exhaust administrative remedies by pursuing the due process hearing.

c. Escambia County Bd. of Educ. v. Benton 106 LRP 579 (S.D. Ala. 12/23/05). The Court applied a liberal standard for the new pleading requirements under IDEA'04. The due process hearing **complaint notice** requires a description of the nature of the

problem, including facts related thereto. The statute does not require that the party spell out all facts related to the claim or that every legal theory be set forth in excruciating detail. The court stated that "(s)uch a burdensome, unwieldy standard would far exceed that to which federal plaintiffs are held and seems antithetical to the more nimble, less rule intensive, character of administrative proceedings."

d. Kruvant v. District of Columbia 44 IDELR 242 (D.D.C. 8/10/05). The Court held that the IDEA'04 change to the requirements for evaluating specific learning disabilities will not be applied retroactively. Accordingly, the parents of a seventh grade student who did not show a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and achievement could not demonstrate that she had a disability as defined by the Act.

e.. Norwood Public Schools 44 IDELR 104 (SEA Mass. 8/19/05). The hearing officer concluded that she had authority to enforce a settlement that resulted from a **resolution session**.

f. Portland Public Sch. Dist. 44 IDELR 232 (SEA Ore. 7/20/05). The hearing officer found the parents due process hearing **complaint notice** insufficient under IDEA'04 because it did not contain adequate statements of issues, facts or a resolution.

2. ***Difficult Parties/Lawyers***

a. Moser v. Bret Harte Union H. S. Dist. 42 IDELR 203 (E.D.Calif. 1/12/05). The U. S. District Court imposed sanctions on the school district, its lawyer and her law firm for engaging in bad faith litigation tactics, including systematic and repeated misstatements of the record, frivolous objections and mischaracterizations of the law. The sanctions imposed were $5,000 each for the LEA, the lawyer and her firm.

b. Stancourt v. Worthington City Sch. Dist. Bd. of Educ. 44 IDELR 166 (Ohio App. Ct. 10/27/05). The appellate court ruled that the trial court erred in holding that a hearing officer lacked the authority to dismiss a hearing request because the parents failed to comply with an order to produce documents. Although the hearing officer has such authority, it should be used with great circumspection.

c. Prior Lake Pub. Sch. 105 LRP 661 (SEA Minn. 4/11/05). The parents asked the hearing officer to dismiss their due process complaint alleging hearing officer bias after the hearing officer reprimanded the parents' attorney for referring to LEA personnel as "acting in a Nazi, goose-stepping manner."

3. ***Hearing Officer Bias***

a. L.C. & K.C. on behalf of N.C. v. Utah State Board of Educ., et al 43 IDELR 29 (10th Cir. 3/21/2005). Noting that the hearing officer enjoys a presumption of honesty and integrity, the court noted that the parents did not overcome that presumption by offering a substantial countervailing reason to conclude that the hearing officer was actually biased with respect to the factual issues being adjudicated.

a. Thomas ex rel A.J. v. District of Columbia 44 IDELR 246 (D.D.C. 7/29/05). An IDEA hearing officer enjoys a presumption of honesty, integrity and freedom from bias. The presumption can only be rebutted by a showing of conflict of interest or some other specific reason indicating bias- the appearance of impropriety is insufficient. An incorrect ruling on a point of law and an ex parte communication concerning a typographical error were not sufficient to overcome the presumption.

4. ***Hearing Officer Authority***

a. Lillbask ex rel Mauclaire v. State of Connecticut Dept. of Educ. 397 F.3d 77, 42 IDELR 230 (2d Cir. 2/2/05). The Second Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that an IDEA hearing officer has the authority to review IEP safety concerns. The court provided an expansive interpretation of the jurisdiction of the hearing officer, ruling that Congress intended the hearing officer to have authority over any subject matter that could involve a denial of or interference with a student's right to receive FAPE.

b. Stancourt v. Worthington City Sch. Dist. Bd. of Educ. 44 IDELR 166 (Ohio App. Ct. 10/27/05). The Court held that an IDEA hearing officer has broad discretion in accepting and rejecting evidence and in conducting a hearing. Noting that a hearing officer has implied powers similar to those of a court, the court noted that the hearing officer has the implied power to impose "… silence, respect, and decorum… and submission to their lawful mandates."

5. ***Evidence***

a. D.F. & D.F. ex rel N.F. v. Ramapo Cent. Sch. Dist. 105 LRP 57524 (2d Cir. 11/23/05). The Court notes that the case raises an issue as to whether it is proper to utilize **prospective** or retrospective analysis of an IEP. Noting that three circuits (1st, 3rd, and 9th) have already ruled that appropriate inquiry into whether an IEP is valid necessarily involves only prospective analysis and that proof of whether an IEP meaningfully contributed to the child's education is not proper, the court stated that an IEP is a snapshot not a retrospective. In striving for appropriateness, an IEP must take into account what was, and was not, objectively reasonable when the snapshot was taken, i.e., at the time the IEP was formulated. Before ruling, the court remanded to determine whether the SRO and HO had considered retrospective evidence.

b. Benjamin G. v. Spec. Educ. Hearing Office 44 IDELR 7 (Calif. Ct. App. 8/1/05). The hearing officer and the trial court ruled that the parents have no right to have an expert witness observe a child in the classroom, except in conjunction with an IEE. The appellate court reversed holding that IDEA and the California education law require that an expert witness be allowed to observe the student in his classroom to enable the expert to present accurate and appropriate testimony. Contrast, In Re: Student with a Disability 43 IDELR 214 (SEA NV 6/21/05

6. ***Hearing Procedures***

a. Blackman v. District of Columbia 44 IDELR 156 (D.D.C. 8/10/05). In view of the LEA's repeated requests for continuances and the hearing officer's "inexplicable" lengthy extensions in violation of the 45-day rule (at least one extension beyond the

deadline without even consulting the parties), the court ruled that the LEA's unreasonably delaying of the due process hearing denied FAPE to the student, and the court awarded the parents reimbursement for a unilateral private placement. {On-going class action of persons with overdue due process hearings.}

b. Kingsmore v. District of Columbia 44 IDELR 154 (D.D.C. 10/14/05). The court held that the district denied FAPE to a student by failing to make a record of a due process hearing. The audiotape of the hearing did not record the testimony of at least one witness and some comments of the hearing officer. By failing to make a verbatim record, the parents were denied their right to contest the hearing officer's decision.

7. ***Stay Put***

a. Casey K. by Norman K. v. St. Anne Community H. S. Dist. No. 302 400 F.3d 508, 43 IDELR 1 (7th Cir. 3/8/05). A student with severe disabilities was enrolled in a public elementary school. His parents unilaterally withdrew him and placed him in private school. A settlement agreement obligated the LEA to pay the private school tuition, but his IEP expired. The high school, which was attended by all the students in the child's elementary school, is in a different school district. The parents filed for due process and asserted that the stay put placement requires the new district to pay the private school tuition. The court agreed, noting that a state could not avoid the IDEA's stay put requirement by breaking up its schools into separate districts.

b. Pardini v. Allegheny Intermediate Unit 430 F.3d 181, 44 IDELR 30 (3d Cir. 8/29/05). The Third Circuit ruled that the stay put placement for a student transitioning from an IFSP to an IEP was the services being provided under the IFSP. The court overruled the District Court that had distinguished between the "educational model" of an IEP and the "medical model" of an IFSP. The Court found that it was the intent of Congress for there to be significant overlap between Part C and Part B when a child is transitioning between the two. The court chose to read the phrase "then current placement" liberally. Contrast, D.P. & L.P. ex rel E.P. v. Sch. Bd. of Broward County 360 F.Supp.2d 1294, 43 IDELR 33 (S.D. Fla. 3/8/05) (opposite result).

8. ***Relief***

a. ***Compensatory education***

1) Reid ex rel Reid v. District of Columbia 401 F.3d 516, 43 IDELR 32 (D.C. Cir. 3/25/05). The D.C Circuit developed a qualitative standard for awards of compensatory education in order to place disabled students in the same position they would have occupied but for the school district's violation of IDEA. The court rejected the hearing officer's calculation awarding one hour of compensatory education for each day of denial of FAPE, and also rejected the parents' request of one hour of compensatory education for each hour of denial of FAPE. Instead, the court adopted a more flexible approach based upon the individual needs of the child who has been denied FAPE. For example some students might require only short intensive compensatory programs targeting specific deficiencies. Other students may require more extended programs, perhaps requiring even more hours than the number of hours of FAPE denied.

Accordingly, the court remanded this matter for the submission of evidence as to the student's deficiencies resulting from the denial of FAPE.

b. ***Reimbursement/ Unilateral Placement***

1). Gumm by Gumm v. Nevada State Department of Education 113 P.3d 853, 43 IDELR 198 (Nev. S.Ct. 6/23/05). The parents of an autistic child prevailed and the HO ordered the LEA to reimburse the parents for "all out of pocket expenses" related to their placement, including " mileage for one round trip each day…" of the program. The SRO affirmed. The LEA paid more than $60,000. The parents then filed a state complaint seeking an additional $26,000 for the mom's lost salary and benefits for the year that she transported the student. The state ruled in favor of the LEA, and the parents filed for mandamus. The Nevada Supreme Court upheld the state's determination and ruled that the mother was not entitled to reimbursement for her salary under the IDEA.

2). Baltimore City Bd. of Sch. Commssioners v. Taylorch 44 IDELR 158 (D.Md. 10/27/05). Where the student was never enrolled in and receiving special education in the public schools, the parents were not entitled to reimbursement for a unilateral placement pursuant to the statutory language. For similar results see also, Carmel Central Sch. Dist. v. V.P. by Mr. & Mrs. G.P. 373 F.Supp.2d 402, 43 IDELR 218 (S.D.N.Y. 6/9/05); Forrest Grove Sch. Dist. 43 IDELR 189(D. Ore. 5/11/05).

3).J.M. by A.S. v. Kingsway Regional Sch. Dist. 44 IDELR 43 (D.N.J. 8/18/05). The court excused the parents' failure to provide notice to the district in a unilateral placement case where the parents demonstrated that compliance with the notice requirements likely would result in injury to the child. Contrast, Forrest Grove Sch. Dist. 43 IDELR 189(D. Ore. 5/11/05) (reimbursement denied because of failure to provide notice); and West Shore Sch. Dist. 44 IDELR 20 (SEA PA 8/03/05)(reimbursement denied because of failure to provide notice).

c. Other Relief

1). Ortega by Ortega v. Bibb County Sch. Dist. 42 IDELR 200 (11th Cir. 1/26/05). The Eleventh Circuit held that tort-type damages are not available under the IDEA. In so doing, the 11th Circuit joins the 1st, 2d, 4th, 6th, 7th 8th and 9th circuits in holding that such damages are not awarded in these cases.

9. ***Appeal Issues***

a. ***Exhaustion of Administrative Remedies***

1). Blanchard v. Morton Sch. Dist. 420 F.3d 918, 44 IDELR 29 (9th Cir. 8/19/05). The Ninth Circuit held that exhaustion of administrative remedies was not required for a parent of a student with autism suing for emotional distress. Because emotional distress damages are not available under IDEA, exhaustion would be futile and not appropriate.

2). Cummings v. District of Columbia 44 IDELR 91 (D.D.C. 9/7/05) Where the parents' attorney filed a due process hearing request and a federal court complaint on the same day, but the parents failed to appeal an adverse hearing officer

ruling on the due process request, the court held that the parents failed to exhaust their administrative remedies and dismissed the suit.

b. ***Deference to Hearing Officer's Decision***

1). County Sch. Bd. of Henrico County v. Z.P. by R.P. 42 IDELR 229 (4th Cir 2/11/05). By a 2 to 1 vote, the Fourth Circuit panel held that the District Court erred by not giving due deference to the hearing officer's decision. The court found the hearing officer's decision to be careful, thorough and supported by the record. Although hearing officers are required to give appropriate deference to professional educators regarding issues of educational methodology, this does not mean that a decision in favor of the parents evidences failure to give such deference. The hearing officer observes witness testimony and is in the best position to weigh the testimony. See also, L.C. & K.C. on behalf of N.C. v. Utah State Board of Educ., et al 43 IDELR 29 (10th Cir. 3/21/2005).

2). M. H. and J. H. ex rel A. H. v. Monroe-Woodburg Cent. Sch. Dist. 105 LRP 58728 (2d Cir. 12/5/05). The Second Circuit remanded a case back to the District Court because it overruled the SRO and HO without explaining why it did not credit the administrative determination. The District Court erred by failing to give due weight to the findings of the administrative hearing officers.

B. ***Selected Hot Button Special Education Issues***

1. ***Autism/ Applied Behavioral Analysis***

a. Brown by Brown v. Bartholomew Consolidated Sch. Corp. 43 IDELR 60 (S.D. Ind. 2/4/05). Where there was no **predetermination** {in the sense of Deal v. Hamilton County 392 F.3d 840, 42 IDELR 109 (6th Cir. 2004)}, and where the IEP conferred FAPE, the court refused to permit the parents to require the LEA to utilize ABA methodology. See also, Davis Joint United Sch. Dist 7 Yolo County Office of Educ. 105 LRP 19416 (SEA Calif. 3/24/05)(Where the IEP was not predetermined and the parents actively participated= FAPE.); and Bd. of Educ. of Mamaroneck Union Free Sch. Dist. 105 LRP 58622 (SEA NY 9/29/05)(SRO upheld HO decision; FAPE where LEA did not predetermine result despite its refusal to provide 1 to 1 services). Contrast, Las Virgenes Unified Sch Dist. 44 IDELR 201 (SEA Calif. 9/2/05)(Where LEA had a "closed mind" regarding placement and refused to consider alternatives, the LEA denied FAPE by predetermining placement prior to the IEP meeting.); and Bd. of Educ. of the Ramapo Cent. Sch. Dist. 43 IDELR 14 (SEA NY 2/22/05)(LEA predetermined the result of the IEP and infringed upon the right of the parents to participate by precluding them from discussing their desire for a for itinerant teacher services.)

2. ***Bullying/ Harassment***

a. {NOTE: subsequent to the decision last year in Shore Regional High Sch. Bd. of Educ. v. P.S. 381 F.3d 194, 41 IDELR 234 (3d Cir. 2004) holding that an LEA's failure to stop bullying may be a denial of FAPE, special education/bullying cases are beginning to appear.} Scruggs v. Meriden Bd. of Educ. 44 IDELR 59 (D.Conn. 8/22/05). The court refused to dismiss a claim by the mother of a student with learning disabilities

who committed suicide after allegedly wrongfully exiting special education and being subjected to a pattern of bullying and harassment.

b. In Re: Student with a Disability 44 IDELR 86 (SEA Wash. 6/3/05). The hearing officer concluded that the evidence did not support allegations that a sixth grader with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder was denied FAPE because the LEA permitted him to be bullied. The hearing officer noted especially that the LEA had provided anti-bullying training to students at the school.

3. ***Federal Court Issues: Immunity, Standing, Mootness, etc.***

a. ***State Immunity***

1). Pace v. Bogalusa City Bd. of Educ. 43 IDELR 242 (5th Cir., en banc 3/8/05). In an 8 to 6 decision, the Fifth Circuit held that by accepting IDEA funds, Louisiana waived its 11th Amendment sovereign immunity. The majority rejected the SEA's position that because it did not know it had immunity to waive, it could not have knowingly waived its immunity. The court ruled that knowingly accepting federal money constitutes knowing waiver.

b. ***Mootness***

1). L.M. v. Bd. of Educ. of the Union County Regional H.S. Dist. 128 Fed.Appx. 876, 43 IDELR 55 (3d Cir. 4/19/05). The fact that a student had graduated did not render his claim moot because there were still actions that a district could take which would affect his rights. See also, San Dieguito Union H. S. Dist. v. Guray-James 105 LRP 56315 (S.D. Calif. 10/27/05)(Claim not moot because of graduation)

2). Bd. of Educ. for Montgomery County v. Khan 44 IDELR 132 (D.Md. 9/15/05). An LEA's appeal of a hearing officer's award of compensatory education which the student had already received was dismissed as moot. The court noted that a student cannot "give back" compensatory education already received.

c. ***Standing***

1) Emery v. Roanoke City Sch. Bd. 105 LRP 59136 (4th Cir. 12/8/05). The Fourth Circuit held that a 24 year old former student could not show that the LEA's failure to develop an IEP caused him injury. His health insurance paid for the private placement, and the use of such benefits did not diminish his future insurance benefits. Accordingly, he had no injury in fact that the court could remedy, and his claim was dismissed for lack of standing.

2). Ortega by Ortega v. Bibb County Sch. Dist. 42 IDELR 200 (11th Cir. 1/26/05). The Eleventh Circuit held that because tort damages are not available under IDEA, there was no case or controversy and the federal court had no jurisdiction.

c. ***Private Right of Action***

1). Green v. Cape Henlopen Sch. Dist. 105 LRP 59976 (D.De. 12/13/05). A parent has no private right of action under the IDEA. FAPE is a substantive right of the

student. See also, Griffin v. Detroit Pub. Sch. 105 LRP 59710 (E.D. Mich. 12/9/05)(A parent does not have a substantive right to sue under the IDEA.)

2). Lawrence Township Bd. of Educ. v. State of New Jersey 417 F.3d 368, 43 IDELR 242 (3d Cir. 8/2/05). The Third Circuit held that the IDEA does not create a private right of action by which an LEA could sue an SEA. Accordingly, the court dismissed an action concerning responsibility to pay for a residential placement. With this decision, the 3d Circuit joins the 2d, 7th and 11th Circuits in so holding.

d. ***Representation by Legal Counsel***

1) Cavanaugh ex rel Cavanaugh v. Cardinal Local Sch. Dist. 409 F.3d 753, 43 IDELR 135 (6th Cir. 5/18/05). Parents who were not represented by a lawyer were not permitted to pursue their claim in federal court. The court noted that IDEA gives parents the right to present evidence and examine witnesses in due process hearings, but they are not permitted to appear in federal court without a lawyer. With this decision, the 6th Circuit joins the 2d, 3d, 7th and 11th Circuits on this issue. The parents, who were represented by counsel until this appeal, were given 30 days to obtain a lawyer. See also, Green v. Cape Henlopen Sch. Dist. 105 LRP 59976 (D.De. 12/13/05)(claim dismissed - not represented by counsel.)

2). L.L. v. Vineland Bd. of Educ. 128 Fed.Appx. 196, 43 IDELR 83 (3d Cir. 4/25/05). Reversing dismissal by a lower court of the parents' motion for fees and costs, the Third Circuit held that a parent should not be precluded from seeking allowable fees and costs because her lay advocate may have engaged in the unauthorized practice of law.

4. ***Extended School Year***

a. Pachl by Pachl v. Sch. Bd. of Indep. Sch. Dist. No. 11 42 IDELR 264 (D. Minn. 2/23/05). Failure to specify the details of extended school year services the student was to receive at the time the rest of the IEP was written is not a violation of the IDEA. Where the IEP team determined that the student would require ESY services but, because of her constantly changing medical condition, delayed decisions concerning the ESY plan, location, services, goals and objectives, the LEA did not violate the Act.

5. ***Methodology Issues***

a. J.K. by Kraft v. Metropolitan Sch. Dist. Southwest Allen County 44 IDELR 122 (N.D. Ind. 9/27/05). A request for ABA services was rejected by the court on grounds that the courts should defer to professional educators concerning questions of methodology.

b. Robert B. by Bruce B. and Jane B. v. West Chester Area Sch. Dist. 44 IDELR 123 (E.D. Pa. 9/27/05). The parents argued that the student was denied FAPE because no "research-based" reading program was included in his IEP. The Court rejected the argument holding that the IDEA (prior to the effective date of IDEA'04) does not require any particular methodology.

C. ***Other IDEA Issues***

1. ***Eligibility/Evaluation***

a. R.B. by F.B. v. Napa Valley Unified Sch. Dist. 43 IDELR 188 (N.D.Calif. 6/2/05). The Court held that a fifth grade student with ADHD, post traumatic stress disorder, intermittent explosive disorder and depression was not eligible for special education. The student's disabilities did not affect his academic performance; he consistently received above average grades. Accordingly, he did not by reason thereof "need special education and related services," and, therefore, he is not a child with a disability as defined by the IDEA.

b. M.H. v. Nassau County Sch. Bd. 44 IDELR 165 (Fla. Ct. App., 1st Dist. 10/18/05). A Florida appellate court reversed a hearing officer who had held that an LEA had "done all it could" for a 4th grade student with ADHD and Tourette's Syndrome. The court ordered a full evaluation of the student to determine whether her disabilities affect her educational performance.

2. ***Least Restrictive Environment***

a. T.W. by McCullough & Michael Wilson v. Unified Sch. Dist. No. 259, Wichita Kansas 136 Fed.Appx. 122, 43 IDELR 187 (10th Cir. 6/6/2005). In determining whether the LEA has complied with the LRE mandate, the Tenth Circuit declared that it will follow the test adopted by the Fifth Circuit. The test involves a two part analysis-first the court determines whether education of the student in a regular classroom with the use of supplementary aids and services can be achieved satisfactorily. If so, the regular education classroom is the LRE placement. If not, then the court determines if the LEA has mainstreamed the student to the maximum extent appropriate.

b. Gaskin v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania 44 IDELR 125 (E.D. Pa. 9/16/05). The Court approved a settlement agreement in a class action for a class of more than 255,000 students with disabilities. In the agreement, the SEA agreed to require LEAs to strictly adhere to the IDEA and guidelines were established for LRE consideration. In addition to additional monitoring, including LRE specific monitoring, the SEA agreed to create an "Advisory Panel on (LRE) Practices." The panel shall have 15 members, of which 12 are appointed by the organizational plaintiffs (9 of whom will be parents of students with disabilities) and 3 will be selected by the SEA.

3. ***IEP Issues***

a. Werner ex rel Werner v. Clarkstown Cent. Sch. Dist. 363 F.Supp.2d 656, 43 IDELR 59 (S.D.N.Y. 3/31/05). The court affirmed an SRO who ruled that an LEA denied FAPE to a 14 year old with emotional and psychological disabilities. The LEA erred by not having a representative of a therapeutic school that it had recommended attend the IEP meeting. This procedural violation seriously infringed upon the parents participation in the IEP process, and, therefore, constituted a denial of FAPE.

4. ***Free and Appropriate Public Education***

a. Fayette County Bd. of Educ. v. M.R.D. by K.D. and K.D. 43 IDELR 37 (Kentucky S.Ct. 3/17/05). The Kentucky Supreme Court ruled that because the LEA had

provided the student with the requisite basic floor of opportunity and his IEP was reasonably calculated to confer educational benefit, the student was offered FAPE.

b. Ringwood Bd. of Educ. v. K.H.J. ex rel K.F.J. 105 LRP 57532 (D.N.J. 11/22/05). The IDEA does not require that an IEP maximize the potential of a student with a disability. See also, Clear Creek Indep. Sch. Dist. v. J.K. ex rel Jose & Ann K. 44 IDELR 60 (S.D.Tex. 8/16/05)(FAPE does not require the best education an LEA might provide); and North Kitsap Sch. Dist. v. K.W. by C.W. & G.W. 44 IDELR 45 (Washington Ct. App. 8/29/05)(LEA programs need not be perfect.).

5. ***Procedural Violations***

a. A.I. by Iapalucci v. District of Columbia 105 LRP 63077 (D.D.C. 9/19/05). Procedural violations of the IDEA that do not substantially affect FAPE or parental participation do not compel a decision against the LEA.

b. Werner ex rel Werner v. Clarkstown Cent. Sch. Dist. 363 F.Supp.2d 656, 43 IDELR 59 (S.D.N.Y. 3/31/05). Although procedural violations do not automatically require a finding of denial of FAPE, where the procedural violation seriously infringes upon the parents right to participate in the IEP process, a court will find a denial of FAPE. An LEA's failure to have a representative of a therapeutic school that it had recommended for the student attend the IEP team meeting constituted a denial of FAPE.

6. ***Attorney Fees and Costs***

a. Smith v. Fitchburg Pub. Schs. 401 F.3d 16, 43 IDELR 28 (1st Cir. 3/22/05). Applying the Supreme Court's analysis in Buckhannon, the court denied attorney's fees because a hearing officer's order requiring the LEA to comply with concessions in a settlement agreement was not sufficient judicial imprimatur to make the parents "prevailing parties." See also, Sanford v. Slyvania City Sch. Bd. of Educ. 380 F.Supp.2d 903, 44 IDELR 2 (N.D.Ohio 8/5/05

b. Linda T. & Gene A. ex rel William A. v. Rice Lake Area Sch. Dist. 417 F.3d 704, 44 IDELR 1 (7th Cir. 8/2/05). Parents were not "prevailing parties" where their success was de minimis and they lost on the major issue. Under these circumstances, the parents had not materially altered the legal relationship of the parties.

c. Goldring ex rel Anderson v. District of Columbia 416 F.3d 70, 43 IDELR 241 (D.C.Cir. 7/26/05). The D. C. Circuit held that expert witness fees are not recoverable as attorney's fees and costs under the IDEA. The D.C. Circuit joined the 7th and 8th Circuits with this opinion. The 2d and 3d Circuits have reached the opposite conclusion. See also, the discussion of this issue in the Supreme Court section.

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IS THERE ACCOUNTABILITY OF SPED PROGRAMS UNDER NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND WITHIN SMALL RURAL SCHOOLS?

Introduction

The principal's role as instructional leader in today's public schools is very difficult. And, the challenges are especially significant in low academically achieving schools and schools that fail to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as defined in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). Most educators agree with the stated intent of NCLB; however, compliance with the intent is difficult and in some cases impossible. Perhaps the group that faces the most significant dilemma is education administrators; especially, those working in rural schools. Faircloth (2004) accurately described the problem facing rural education administrators when she stated, "Implication of the NCLB at the school level presents not only an administrative, but also an ethical dilemma; forcing school leaders to choose between two competing values, that of individual child and that of the school at large" (p. 32).

The purpose of this study is to investigate the extent to which small schools with small populations of students with Individual Education Plans (IEP) avoid NCLB accountability for AYP of these students. The study investigated extent to which students with IEPs in small rural schools fall through the designed "cracks" in the accountability systems.

Summary of the Problem

Many small rural schools fail to make AYP for a variety of reasons; however, most of these small rural schools avoid failure in the special education category because of small enrollments. One of the primary goals of NCLB is to require schools and districts to document AYP for subgroups of students as defined by ethnicity, social economic status, limited English proficiency, and students with disabilities. In some states, the group size of subgroups for which measurements must be reported exceed 40. The accountability component of NCLB requires that all groups of students meet established standards. Progressively, the required level of achievement must increase and the achievement gap between various groups must be reduced. The law states that all groups of students must demonstrate academic mastery by 2013-2014.

Under NCLB, if a school fails to make AYP, then the pressure to improve significantly increases and penalties are imposed if improvement is not continuous. Each state has established standards, assessments, and levels of proficiency. In addition, NCLB requires participation standards; however, the law allows each state to establish a minimum group size for reporting and accountability purposes. As expected, states have established a wide variety of subgroup

sizes; herein, is a fundamental problem with the law. For example, if the state threshold is 25 students (the group size in a category per grade), then a school that has less than 25 students in a specific group would not be required to report on the progress of students in that group.

Of specific concern in this study are the students with IEPs and what happens to these students when their numbers are insufficient to warrant AYP attention. Most educators acknowledge that students with IEPs face significant challenges to meet high state proficiency standards. Olson (2005) reported that if the minimum subgroup size was 60 students, almost 100 percent of schools in five states would able to meet requirements of AYP without reporting results for students with IEPs. Because the number of special education students by grade in these schools was less than 60 students, students with IEPs would not be considered in the accountability process. Olson further indicated that 25 states require subgroups of 40 or larger before accountability processes apply. Thus, in many small rural schools, the requirements of NCLB are non-applicable for many students with disabilities. In effect, a law with a basic purpose of accountability for all has been implemented in such a manner that a significant subgroup has been excluded from the accountability process. Given this condition the question remains; do small rural schools have any type of accountability for special education students?

Impact of NCLB on Rural Schools

Reeves (2003) defined rural schools as those with populations of approximately 400 or less. Small rural schools have many advantages—classes are small, teachers know the needs of each student, and often, parents and students have attended the same school. Nationally, Reeves estimated that 25%-30% of our students attend rural schools. It follows that 25%- 30% of students with IEPs are in those same rural schools and these students are not a part of the accountability process of NCLB.

Clearly, rural schools face the same basic issues as do larger schools with reference to NCLB; in addition, they have others somewhat unique to rural schools. Kossar, Mitchem, and Ludlow (2005) identified significant issues for rural schools as they try to implement NCLB. Rural schools have difficulty meeting the requirement of highly qualified teachers because in most rural high schools, teachers are required to teach multiple subjects and teachers may not be highly qualified in the second or third subject. Salaries and living conditions can make it difficult to attract highly qualified teachers in key areas—math, science, and special education. They found that a majority of rural educators surveyed believed that NCLB would negatively impact rural schools.

Furthermore, state policies and procedures have a significant impact on types of accommodations during assessment for students with IEPs, as well as 504 students. In a recent study, Thurlow, Lararus, Thompson, and Morse (2005) explored the implications of state policies on assessment participation and accommodations for special education students. They found that the most controversial accommodations during testing included reading aloud, calculators, and scribes. They found that states had made improvement in documentation of special accommodations and expanded policies to include more students; however, schools need high-quality alternative assessments and better systems for accommodations. As state polices

change, districts will need to adjust accordingly—such changes will create additional pressures on rural administrators.

Hager and Slocum (2005) considered the use of alternative assessments to document and improve education outcomes for students with IEPs. They concluded that rural districts have significant challenges to meet requirements of NCLB for students with IEPs and provided general recommendations that alternative assessment must—

- clearly reflect important outcomes,
- be designed to reflect outcomes which correspond to real improvements, and
- promote ongoing progress monitoring and effective classroom practices.

Their recommendations are parallel to recommendations of others who have discussed the use of assessments FOR learning instead of assessments OF leaning (Stiggins, 2002; Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & Wiliam, 2004).

School size drives the number of programs, number of teachers, and level of services that a school can provide. Thus, in small rural schools, the ability to provide quality special education services is a challenge. Principals and directors of special education services face constant problems of funding and staffing for special education programs. For example, a medically fragile student can create a budget crisis. In addition, rural schools can have difficulties with identification, assessment, program planning, and placement of low incident special need students; e.g. blind, medically fragile, or emotionally disturbed. Some rural districts contract with private therapists or share school psychologist among several districts.

The Study

The findings to be presented were designed to provide greater understanding of how and whether schools developed their school improvement plan to ensure that they meet the all requirements of NCLB, particularly related to students with IEPs in small, rural schools. The school districts in the state in which this study was conducted are co-terminus with the county. As such, there are 17 school districts, of which seven districts have fewer than 1,500 students enrolled. Collectively these smaller districts enrolled 5,881 students with 812 of those having an IEP. The number of schools in each district ranged from three to eight.

There were three primary sources of data for this study: (1) small, rural district data were analyzed to determine how they met AYP requirements with IEP students; (2) school improvement plans were analyzed for efforts to ensure compliance with NCLB; and (3) site visits conducted in a selection of 16 small rural and large urban schools that failed to make AYP. During these site visits, principals, counselors, and teachers were interviewed. In all, 56 school personnel participated in interviews. Of the 56, there were 16 principals, 9 vice principals, 27 teachers, 3 reading specialists, and 1 counselor. Questions focused on the process they used to develop their School Improvement Plan, the Plan itself, AYP and NCLB, efforts at remediation including use of Title I funds, instructional leadership, and the accountability process in general. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes for teachers and one hour for administrators. Each respondent was interviewed in his/her office or classroom by one of the investigators. Audiotapes were transcribed by staff not associated with the interview process. Questions were developed and approved by the university Social and Behavioral Institutional Review Board. .

Social constructivist theory provided the analytical means of conceptualizing how school personnel (administrators, teachers, and counselors) understand the role that instructional leadership plays in improving academic achievement among all students, and particularly those groups that did not meet AYP.

Results

Of the seven school districts with fewer than 1500 students, none reported AYP results for IEP students. In each instance the reason was that the school failed to meet the threshold of 25 students in any grade level—25 is the state established threshold. It should be noted here that in most districts the percentage of students with an IEP was similar to the statewide average.

In attempting to answer the central question of this study it became readily apparent that the answer of how IEP students are served could not be answered through quantitative data so we turned to the qualitative portion of the study and patterns of responses in the interviews. Although interviews were conducted in urban, suburban, and rural schools alike, the patterns found in the responses shed some light on how school personnel interpret the requirements of NCLB. When talking about AYP in general, respondents described the value of including all students in the accountability process. They further described a commitment to ensure that all students were successful academically.

However, when specific issues associated with AYP were discussed more specific and directed comments were made. Without exception, if a school had a "red cell"—a group that failed to make AYP—virtually all attention was focused on the subgroup(s) whose "box" was red, almost to the exclusion of the rest of the school population. One assistant principal stated, "… what we've asked the teachers to do is get hot-list kids together, meaning those students who are right on the cusp of making AYP. So they're not the kids who are the lowest … and what we want them to do is targeting those kids and give them the extra strategies…" Another principal stated "… we are looking at is, number one, is the students that fall into our cohort .. and making sure they are passing the test for AYP. … And basically any of our kids that are going to be part of the AYP considerations, so our sophomores, juniors, seniors – anybody who is going to 'count'".

Furthermore, "red cells" for many educators are seen almost like a moving target, "… part of the reason why we didn't make AYP, I believe the year before, was because of Language Arts. And the year before, it was math." Another stated, "… we made adequately yearly progress in every area that we were deficient in the year before, in second language students, and English and math and did all of that. But we picked up a new area, which was special ed students." For many of these respondents, their reaction to "red cells" was to fix that particular subgroup; they failed to consider the systems problems associated with the lack of student achievement.

Of importance to small, rural schools and larger schools with small subgroups is participation. Often, in theses cases, when one student does not show up for a test, the school pays a price and is labeled as "in need of improvement", which for everyone interviewed was demoralizing, "… we made all of our academic areas. All our needs improvement came from participation and it came down to four students." In another school, a principal indicated that, "… I went and got three students this year. I specifically went to their home and got them and brought them to

school so that they could be here for [the test]." These statements tried to balance frustration between the requirements of the law, the impact on the school, and the unique situation of the student; however, they tended to reveal extreme frustration with the student and his/her family.

Throughout the interviews, statements illustrated the lack of systems thinking as the principals attempted to solve the problems associated with NCLB. Many of the principals attempted to divide the problems associated with failure to make AYP into smaller component parts; e.g. attendance on test days, students who scored a few point low, a few students who transferred into the school after the beginning of school. Then, they attempted to address part by part the individual problems.

Implications for Practice

School leaders must meet the requirements of NCLB, which has significantly changed the focus of public education. The impact and the intent of NCLB are significantly different if the accountability for students with disabilities who receive special education services is considered. Given that many small rural schools avoid AYP requirements for students with IEPs because of small enrollments, there are implications for separate considerations for special education programs within School Improvement Plans and corresponding accountability.

Many researchers have established a link between the skills of principals and effective schools and have discussed the concept of instructional leadership (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). In addition, accountability has been linked to improved student achievement. As discussed above, a many as 30% of Individual Education Plan students are excluded from the accountability process. Therefore, schools should implement a value-added or growth model to evaluate the progress of students with IEPs. For example, Sanders & Horn (1995) and Pipho (1998) have discussed the use of alternative approaches to documentation of student growth over time. The value-added approach would use both alternative assessments and pre-post assessments to document that student had made both measurable and meaningful growth. If the school improvement plans had value-added measures for students with IEPs, these students would become a part of the accountability system within the school.

For all students, but especially for students with IEPs, schools should implement a systematic procedure to insure that assessments are aligned with curriculum (their IEPs) and instruction. Such alignment should be designed to insure that the assessment not only supports accountability for these students but is used to support learning.

The findings presented in the study suggest that the academic needs of subgroups with numbers below the state threshold are not being served well. It appears that in many schools, the leadership is focused on meeting the immediate requirements of NCLB, i.e. eliminating any "red cells" and not the intent of NCLB, i.e. that all students achieve academically. It also suggests a need to monitor achievement of small subgroups. If the intent of NCLB is to truly leave no child behind, there is little comfort in the data of this study to indicate that NCLB is meeting that intent.

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EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING: AUTHENTIC LEARNING FOR ALL STUDENTS

Two complementary collaborative initiatives, Expeditionary Learning, a schoolwide interdisciplinary pedagogical model, and inclusive teaching, a restructured delivery of special education services, were implemented simultaneously at a middle school serving students from a small city and four rural, coastal communities. By year two, several positive outcomes for students and staff were noted.

Positive outcomes for students in the first two years include less academic failures, and improvements in attendance, engagement and participation in general education classes and assignments by students with disabilities. Positive outcomes for staff include: increased collaboration about students with disabilities, curricular planning and rigor, ongoing evaluation of instructional approaches, use of common language within and across disciplines, emphasis on reading comprehension strategies across subject areas, and a revitalized culture of professional learning.

Background

In 2002-2003, a couple of staff members from Bath Middle School approached their colleagues about Expeditionary Learning, an interdisciplinary approach to learning that engages students in authentic, community-based investigations of subject matter. Expeditionary Learning evolved from an application of Outward Bound principles to academic learning environments. It incorporates five core practices "--learning expeditions, active pedagogy, school culture and character, leadership and school improvement, and structures—[that] work in concert and support one another to promote high achievement through active learning, character growth, and teamwork." (Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound, 2003) The initial staff presentation by the school's social worker and a teacher led to a year long process of site visits, presentations, and staff discussions about adopting the approach.

Site visits, participation in Outward Bound experiences for teachers, and attendance at Expeditionary Learning symposia piqued the interest of many teachers, but prompted a strong resistance by others. As more information was acquired the administration became very supportive of the idea, and when the staff was polled in mid-spring and only about 25% of the teachers were still skeptical, a decision was made to go forward. This generated animosity by a reluctant minority, who vocalized their objections and tagged it as a top down initiative with which faculty were forced to comply. Fortunately, most staff

who were undecided were willing to fully participate and with hold judgement until the results of the pilot were evident.

Simultaneously, administration initiated a district wide effort to deliver special education and Title I support services more inclusively. Pull-out services and special classes had been the norm in the district for many years, despite the increasing predominance of inclusive approaches in surrounding districts. Students enter the middle school from three different small rural schools and two city elementary schools at different grade levels, another factor which frequently prompted sending teams to over prescribe individual or pull-out supports. The implementation of integrated, multidisciplinary investigations, with an emphasis on engaging all students, was an ideal time to reassign special education teachers to grade level teaching teams and encourage more collaboration in delivery of specialized instruction.

Setting

It should be noted that Bath Middle School, which has 465 students in grades six, seven and eight, already had many structures and practices in place to promote collaboration. Bath is a small city of about 11,000 residents. Students in grade six come from two different gr. 1-5 city schools. A unique aspect of this school is that students from a rural sending district comprised of four rural coastal communities (each with their own small elementary school) join students who have attended one of the city's elementary schools for the first time in 6th or 7th grade. By 9th grade students from the rural communities make up almost 50% of the student population. Integrating *all* students personally and academically has been a challenge.

One way this has been addressed at Bath Middle School is through the organizational structure of houses, teams of teachers who all work with the same cohort of 80-90 students. The school is organized in a team structure consisting of one house in the sixth grade (Gold), two houses in the seventh grade (Red and Green) and two houses in the eighth grade (Black and Purple). The seventh and eighth grade faculty loop (stay with the same students for two years). All house faculty have a daily common planning period. Vertical teams, organized by content area, had also been in place for two years as part of a district wide effort to align curriculum with the state learning standards and design local assessments, required by statute. About 33% of students are identified low income and about 17% with disabilities. Support services in place for students experiencing academic difficulty included homework club, student assistance team, and special education services, which previously had been primarily specialized instruction.

Thus the context for collaborative planning was to take into account the diverse learning needs of individual students as well as to plan meaningful instruction within the context of the state learning standards, Bath's curriculum frameworks, and local assessments for each grade level. To facilitate this process, a local curriculum map template was drafted that could be completed for each grade level, specifying by month what topics were anticipated to be introduced in each content area, what common local assessments are to be administered in what month. As the external reviewers noted at the end of year one,

"in each case a feeling of overall success was accompanied by struggles with how to create genuinely complementary interdisciplinary projects leading to authentic products while also "covering" required content and adhering to the district's curriculum map and local assessment targets." Furthermore staff had to plan collaboratively for students who had not previously been expected to meet the general curriculum goals, or complete "common assessments."

Goals

Expeditionary learning was selected to address a number of identified student needs, including:

- to increase motivation and engagement of *all* students, to develop independent learning behaviors,
- to improve students' application of literacy strategies across content areas, and
- to increase interaction between the school and community,
- to strengthen the rigor and consistency of content area instruction across grade levels,

Related faculty needs were also identified, including:

- to accommodate the diverse learning levels of students entering from different rural schools, and
- to establish processes/protocols for constructive problem-solving among faculty.

Professional Development

Staff development intensified once the decision to adopt Expeditionary Learning had been made. Two staff development days were scheduled following the close of school, and again prior to the start of the school year to learn about the principles of Expeditionary Learning through experiences structured to mirror the learning experiences staff would be planning for students. Year One the workshops focused on the elements of an effective investigation (choosing a compelling topic, curriculum mapping, planning an investigation, and evaluating outcomes). This was followed by brainstorming sessions to generate topics for the first set of investigations for each grade level. During the months that followed, professional development continued through onsite visits monthly by a consulting school developer from EL, monthly meetings for literacy collaborative learning groups, and one or two Weds. morning professional learning hour sessions as requested by the school staff.

Strategies for inclusive teaching were addressed during staff development sessions. Individuals from each house were sent to an inclusive teaching workshop and then planned one hour sessions for the rest of the staff. Anchor texts for staff included: the Expeditionary Learning core practice benchmarks (Expeditionary Learning, 2003) resource books on inclusive teaching (Harriman & Schmidt, 1998 and DeBoer & Fister, 1996) and a text on reading comprehension strategies (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000). Sessions during the literacy collaborative learning groups and planning workshops included modeling of text coding and other comprehension strategies that teachers could,

in turn, try with their students. The second tool that was used extensively in the planning and coaching process was an improved expedition design template that the Expeditionary Learning organization was beta testing.

The investigations planned during year one included sixth graders studying recycling in Bath from several perspectives; seventh graders investigating the 2nd Continental Congress, the Declaration of Independence, and related concepts of dependence and taxation; and eighth grade organizing and displaying their research into Maine Industries: past, present, and future. The student products and presentations that resulted were exciting to the students and their audiences. However, the planning process, in many cases, was more or less an ongoing struggle. By year two when the teams met to initiate planning for 2005-2006's expeditions, the process was consistently smoother, across the board. Faculty teams worked more independently and the planning process was much more efficient. Teams were able to use the second June planning day to get out into the community and investigate local resources and contacts.

Results

In February of year two of implementation, there is mounting evidence that the programmatic changes at the middle school are reaping benefits for students. Academic failures have decreased significantly over the first two years; the number of students failing one or more classes in a quarter decreased from 26% (120) to 19% (90). A closer look at a small group of high risk Gr. 8 students reveals dramatic decreases in unexcused absences and failing grades. These students have all participated in researching a project for an authentic audience in their school or community. Three students out of six identified as being at highest risk of dropping out in 9th grade have responded well to higher expectations for performance coupled with more direct and indirect supports. In 2004-2005, for example, "Chad," failed 7 courses and earned a D- in the remaining two. However, thus far in 2005-2006 he has passed all classes for two succeeding quarters. Chad also improved his attendance from 108 unexcused absences to 2! His growth is typical of those who have participated and appear to have become more involved in their communities and studies.

Another indicator of positive engagement in learning is a decrease in disciplinary referrals, particularly chronic referrals resulting in suspensions. The total number of students suspended in 2005-2006 (the first year of expeditionary learning) was 35, a reduction from 46 in the previous year. This year to date, only 11 different students have been suspended. Thusfar, it also appears that there will be significantly fewer suspensions overall this year than the last two years. It is the teachers' and administrator's perceptions that attendance and engagement is particularly high during intensive work periods for the expeditions. This will be investigated at the conclusion of this year.

Faculty also take great pride in the revitalized culture of their school. In January a school wide exhibition of student work related to the fall expeditions done at each grade level was an overwhelming success. Students presented their "field work" (i.e. oral histories, scale drawings of local architecture, data from a tree census done for the city, children's

books, and brochures, captioned postcards, and tablemats featuring local historical figures). Interviews at that time indicated that faculty and building administrators perceived students to have made significant growth in independence and engagement with the active pedagogy approach. In particular, teachers on all teams point out examples of students who have disabilities or were not engaged in traditional instruction. For some, the difference is the opportunity to show what they know and are learning about architecture, for example, by using their talents and drawing, constructing, or writing a historical novel incorporating actual events or changes in a building in their own home town.

All teachers are teaching literacy applications across the curriculum. Teachers collaborate (included spec. ed.) in completing complex "unit" plans using a template which encourages generalization and guided literacy activities for every topic. Further, teachers are enthusiastic and express revitalized excitement about their teaching. "Through the use of group norms, clear protocols, and focused agendas, the goal was to create collaborative relationships that enabled teachers to overcome isolation and dis-integrated practice. The team meetings and Literacy Learning groups made great strides in this area." (Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound, 2005) Even many of the teachers who were initially skeptical demonstrate a renewed motivation to help all students succeed.

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Middle School Failing Grades, 2004-2006

2004-2005

Number of Students receiving 1 or more F's for a quarter: 120

Number of Students receiving 2 or more F's for a quarter: 89

2005-2006

Number of Students receiving 1 or more F's for a quarter: 90

Number of Students receiving 2 or more F's for a quarter: 50

Middle School Suspensions 2003-2006

Year	Grade	Total Suspensions	Different Students Suspended
2003-2004	6	13	7
	7	78	22
	8	31	17
2004-2005	6	36	9
	7	11	7
	8	79	19
2005-2006 (as of 2/27/06)	6	2	2
	7	12	3
	8	20	6

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INCLUSION IN RURAL SCHOOLS: STRATEGIES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

In today's standard based education system, all students are expected to be successful at high levels of achievement. Since 1997 and reinforced in 2004, The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) has emphasized the "Least Restrictive Environment" concept. A very important issue for schools to focus on in order to successfully include all students is the acceptance of diversity in our ever changing society (Smith, et. al., 2006).

Many schools have gone to the inclusion model to meet the requirements of IDEA and No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Rural schools often struggle to have the resources or personnel to support the regular classroom teacher in implementing the Individual Education Programs (IEP) for the special needs students in their classroom. In many cases, schools implement inclusion with little or no training or warning to the teachers. According to Burstein, et. al. both general and special education teachers are inadequately prepared to provide services to special need students in the regular classroom setting(2004). Often teachers are left to their own devices when trying to implement IEPs. In some cases, these IEPs are not fully implemented, due to lack of information and training.

As part of preparing teachers for inclusion, there must be a commitment to change with full understanding of why inclusion is needed using research and literature to show that student outcomes are enhanced (Burstein, et. al., 2004). Administrative support and training becomes the cornerstone of a successful inclusion model. Professional development is the key to successful inclusion programs. Administrators are responsible for setting a positive tone in their buildings so that professional development activities will be successful (Taylor & Harrington, 2003). Training as to how to implement inclusive practices is integral to teachers becoming confident in their ability to accommodate and modify for students in their classroom. As teachers are more convinced of how inclusion improves student success, there begins to be an ownership of the inclusion model and a deeper commitment to educating all students. A district commitment to the provision of the necessary supports and services becomes paramount.

Access to the general curriculum is a fundamental right of all students. The objective of inclusion is to avoid separate placements of students with diverse learning needs. Students who have difficulty functioning in the regular curriculum often are found in the back of the classroom with a paraprofessional working on alternate assignments not related to what is going on in the rest of the class (Sailor & Roger, 2005).

Administrators must understand the legal implications of the need to provide proper accommodations and modifications for special needs students. Their understanding of the law and a commitment to sharing that knowledge is essential. In 1997, the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) specifies that students are to be educated in the "least restrictive environment (U. S. Department of Education, 1999). From this law, schools must determine the least restrictive environment for special needs students. The first thing that must be considered is the regular classroom which is the least restrictive on the continuum of placements (U. S. Department of Education, 1999). Based on this law, administrators must prepare their campuses and teachers to provide the best education possible for all students. As stated before, professional development and support are the best ways to provide the training and understanding for regular education teachers to help students with special needs to be successful in their classroom.

IDEA and NCLB laws and regulations, focus on accountability and educating all students at high achievement levels. Much research has been done on the advantages of including students with special needs in the regular classroom. Many of these studies show that students achieve at a higher level in the inclusive classroom. According to Hughes and Carter (2006) legislation and research shows that inclusion for many students promotes higher expectations and higher success rates than in the resource model. In this day of accountability, learning for all students at a high level is emphasized in law and is being implemented by more and more schools to help raise the level of success for all students (Haager & Klinger, 2005).

The focus of this presentation is the secondary classroom in rural and small schools. Most often, secondary teaching preparation programs do not train secondary teachers to deal with special needs students. Many times secondary teachers coming out of university preparation programs or Alternative Certification programs are never taught that they are teaching students rather than their content area. Most teachers teach as they were taught and evaluate progress with pencil and paper tests. The concept of differentiating instruction for students is foreign to many teachers. This presentation offers some ideas and strategies to assist secondary teachers in altering their mind set and implementing IEPs for inclusion students in their classroom.

Following is a discussion of nine accommodations and modifications that can be used to help special needs students be successful in the regular classroom. This discussion emphasizes the fact that these instructional adaptations can be provided with the least amount of intrusion of the teacher's teaching process.

The first six adaptations discussed are accommodations that can be provided for any student who is struggling. Accommodations are instructional adaptations that do not change what a student is required to learn. They are changes in the way the instruction is delivered and how the student demonstrates mastery of an objective. The discussion emphasizes the fact that there are several things that can be done to help the identified special education student, as well as any struggling student, to be successful. These accommodations may be in a student's IEP or they can be used for any student having difficulty in the classroom.

Assignment size, time, input, output, level of support, and difficulty are six possible accommodations that teachers can use to help students succeed. By determining how to break assignments into smaller pieces and allowing more time to complete the pieces to make the whole, teachers can help some students become successful in mastering each task. Teachers can use different input concepts for students and be creative in how they receive output from the students. Good teaching strategies include many procedures other than pencil and paper. Suggested activities may include yes/no response cards, wipe off slates, games, math manipulatives and the creation of posters and dioramas. Positive self-esteem comes from a student being successful in a task given them. Quality is an acceptable level of work and quantity refers to work completion. Both are measured to evaluate student progress. However, to attain both quantity and quality may not be possible for some students. Therefore, quality of work should be the teacher's focus with a goal of increasing quantity as quality improves (Tilton, 1996).

Levels of support should be based on student needs rather than deficits. Level of support may begin fairly high, but as the students begin to have success, that level of support can decrease. The teacher is a resource, not the source of assistance for students in their classroom. The use of co-teachers, teaching assistants, tutors (peer or cross age), study buddies, cooperative learning, self checking materials are some strategies that will give the teacher some relief. The teacher must provide instruction in a manner that can become independently supported as necessary.

Difficulty refers to adapting the problem type, or the rules on how the students may approach the assignment. It is not watering down, but examining strengths and needs, then making the assignment fit both the student and the objective. The teacher may simplify directions, provide cues, and allow the use of calculators, computers, and cassette tapes. A copy of the teacher's notes may be provided as an alternative to student note taking. Vocabulary may be presented with note cards, familiar definitions, and paired with common terms. The actual mastery of the objective is the important thing, not the path the student takes to get to objective mastery.

The next three are modifications for the student. Modifications change what and how much a student must accomplish. These must be IEP Committee decisions. Degree of participation, alternate goals, and substitution of an alternate curriculum lower the expectations for the student. These usually result in a special designation with the student's grade. Many of these students are in self-contained situations. The students with modifications in the regular classroom require alternate teaching methods. Students requiring modifications who cannot be successful in a secondary level curriculum might be involved in community-based learning opportunities or class within a class arrangements. Students in an alternate curriculum are usually assessed at a lower grade level or with an alternate assessment.

Effective instruction is defined as focused, systematic, intensive, making learning easier for all students, and it includes a daily review. Effective instructional techniques such as cooperative learning, pair and share, study buddies, hands on activities, and note taking strategies, as well as classroom management techniques help to teachers to focus on how all students in the regular classroom can be included in the instructional process.

There are many strategies that are easy to implement in the rural setting where the school district has limited resources and personnel. As an example, co-teaching is a model that pairs a regular education classroom teacher, who is highly qualified under NCLB in the academic subject area, with a certified special education teacher to provide instruction in the regular classroom. Another model would be collaboration-consultation where general education and special education teachers share ideas to help struggling students. The use of paraprofessionals in the regular classrooms to provide support and supplemental instruction to students requiring individualized help is often a prudent use of limited resources. The use of these models is also a benefit to other students without special needs that may be struggling. The addition of a second instructional person in the classroom can be beneficial to continuous progress monitoring and classroom management. The ideas and strategies that will be offered are generic and can be used by any classroom teacher. Some examples of classrooms that have been successful will be used to emphasize the simplicity of these strategies.

This presentation will attempt to show that the inclusive classroom will benefit students with special needs. It will also show that IEPs can be implemented with a minimum of disruption to the classroom and will result in higher achievement levels for students with special needs. Teachers have always taught the way they were taught. In today's world, this is not always possible. We have become a very diverse nation and are expected to educate every child. Federal law has determined that we must include every student in the regular classroom to the maximum extent possible. These authors have presented these strategies to several small rural schools in West Texas and have seen successful implementation

Increased inclusion of students in the general education curriculum is implicit in NCLB. Authors contended that "for too many years, too many children in special needs classes have been left behind academically, without a chance to succeed in school and prepare for life" (House Education and Workforce Committee, 2002). Therefore the general education classroom is seen as the obvious placement for students with disabilities to have opportunity to be successful. NCLB also has as its primary intent to promote higher academic standards, educational excellence, and improved outcomes for *all* students. Accountability measures in NCLB require the assessment of students with disabilities and the reporting of these scores.

The IDEA 2004 law was reauthorized to align with the 2001 NCLB law. Throughout the law, it is obvious that IDEA fits with NCLB hand in hand. Many concerned educators and parents have feared that the "individual" in IDEA has been lost. The authors see that individual now refers to services under IDEA, not an individual, separate curriculum or placement. The strategies, accommodations, and modifications discussed in this paper give ideas as to how this can be accomplished in classrooms in rural schools without an increased burden in resources such as finances, time, and personnel.

Since 1975 and the passage of Public Law 94-142, educators in America have increasingly strived for excellence for all students. Research has shown that the methods of delivering must change from the resource, pull-out model to a model of inclusion. Developing strategies and models to assist students with special needs has in some cases been resisted by general education teachers and many administrators, especially when change in attitudes and

methods are required. What educators always want to remember is, when making any instructional decisions, stating any opinions, or forming attitudes about a student that may influence their future success; we must ask ourselves, "What if it were my child?"

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USING TUTORING SYSTEMS TO DIFFERENTIATE INSTRUCTION

Students do not come to school with the same level of skills and students do not acquire new skills at the same rate. Classrooms are becoming more and more diverse in terms of students' backgrounds and abilities (Simmons & Kameenui, 1998). This is particularly evident in rural school districts where it is common to have a diverse population, including multi-age grouping, students with disabilities, and gifted learners. Classrooms, such as this, require teachers to differentiate instruction. Differentiating instruction means that all students have optimal learning opportunities within the core academic curriculum (Haager & Klingner, 2005). Hence, rather than forms of instruction that "teaches to the middle" or a one-size-fits-all approach, the differential instructional approaches facilitate the involvement of all students.

Two ways for teachers to differentiate instruction is to provide multileveled instruction and accommodations. Multileveled instruction involves orchestrating the curriculum, instruction, and activities so that all students have high levels of participation and learn accordingly. Students of various abilities levels can participate and learn appropriate to their needs. Accommodations involve making adjustments to the instruction based on individual student needs.

Tutoring systems are an effective way for educators to meet the needs of diverse learners. Tutoring systems are a multileveled instructional approach and affords the ability to make accommodations. While tutoring has been used in the field of education in many forms, tutoring systems imply a formal arrangement for selecting the formats, conducting training, arranging student pairings, implementing best practice procedures, and systematic evaluation (Heron, Villareal, Yao, Christianson, & Heron, 2006). Tutoring systems are not incidental approaches. An important feature of tutoring systems is the ability to provide one-on-one instruction. With this, the elements of effective instruction can be implemented with each learner. For example, students are given increased opportunities to be engaged and to interact with the curriculum. Tutoring provides maximum benefit of good instructional feedback. In other words, reinforcement can readily be delivered when students make correct responses, and errors can be systematically corrected. Another feature of tutoring systems is that the teachers' role changes from teaching students directly to managing and supervision of student performance. Heron and Harris (2001) state, "tutoring systems are defined as any formal and comprehensive approach to teach students to prompt, praise, test, and chart the academic, social, or nontraditional skills of their partners on a daily basis" (p. 452).

Tutoring systems can be presented in a variety of formats (Heron, Welsch, & Goddard, 2003). First, classwide formats (also known as classwide peer tutoring or CWPT) has all the students in a class engaging in tutoring at the same time. Students

work in dyads and the tutoring is often reciprocal (Dalquadri, Greenwood, Whorton, Carta, & Hall, 1986). Secondly, cross-age tutoring features older students tutoring younger learners (Davenport, Arnold, & Lassmann, 2004). Next, small-group formats are exemplified when several children from a class are selected to participate in tutoring. Perhaps these students need remediation or enrichment experiences (Balenzano, Agte, McLaughlin, & Howard, 1993). Fourth, in one-to-one tutoring only select tutor-tutee pairs participate. Specifically, students who need directive and intensive instruction are candidates for this arrangement (Lancioni, 1982). Finally, the home-based format features parents or siblings serving as tutors (Barbetta & Heron, 1991).

There is a long line of research supporting tutoring systems. In fact, tutoring systems are endorsed as a scientifically-based effective method for instruction and encouraged through the No Child Left Behind Act (Gordon, Morgan, Ponticell, & O'Malley, 2004). The essence of the research validates that students can be trained as tutors, there are mutual benefits for both the tutor and the tutee, and the academic gains as a result of tutoring have been sustained across time. Additionally, tutoring systems have been successful across age levels and content areas. These include increasing spelling performance (Greenwood, Arreaga-Mayer, Utley, Gavin, & Terry, 2001), reading fluency and comprehension (Kamps, Barbetta, Leonard, & Delquadri, 1994), sight word acquisition, (Butler, 1999), social studies (Lo & Cartledge, 2004), and math skills (Arreaga-Mayer, 1998). Tutoring systems have also emerged as being effective in rural settings (Green, Alderman, & Liechty, 2004; Marchand-Martella, Martella, Orlob, & Ebey, 2000).

Tutoring System Exemplar

One way to implement a tutoring system is through a folder-driven program (Cooke, Heron & Heward, 1983). Materials used in this program during tutoring sessions include flashcards and tutoring folders. Each flashcard contains a question or stimulus prompt on one side (i.e., front) of a plain 3"x5" index card and the same question and its corresponding answer on the other side (i.e., back). On the back of each flashcard, a 1"-by-2" ten-square grid is printed right below the question and answer. This grid is used to record the tutee's response during the testing phase of the program. Each tutoring folder contains the student's name on the tab of a file-folder, an 8 1/2" x11" progress chart resembling a winding path with 100 boxes on the inside left of the folder, and three envelop pockets on the right side of the folder. One pocket is labeled with the word "GO," one with the word "STOP," and the other pocket is labeled with the words "STAR CARD." Five 3"x5" colored index cards, each printed with a 20-square grid, is placed inside the Star Card pocket and served as star cards. Throughout each tutoring session, the teacher marks on the students' star cards with self-inking stamps to reward students for correctly carrying out the procedures and staying on-task. In addition, a testing sheet (i.e., a large happy face and a large "X") is placed on the outside back of the folder to be used during the testing phase.

Training. Once the materials are organized, the tutor training can occur. Three training sessions conducted by the teacher, prior to the first day of tutoring is

recommended. Each session last about 30 minutes and follows a training script or checklist. The orientation session contains an overview of the tutoring system (e.g., meaning of peer tutoring, daily tutoring schedule) and students construct their tutoring folders. The following concentrated tutoring training session address each of the systems procedures (i.e., tutor huddle, prompting and praising, testing and charting). Each session consists of four components: a) show the skill by explaining and demonstrating how to present the flashcards; b) model the skill such as demonstrating how to prompt when the tutee makes an error; c) role playing by practicing the tutor skills in a large group; and d) practicing with the student pairs.

Steps and procedures. Folder-driven tutoring sessions begin with students assigned a packet of 5 – 10 flashcards (e.g., sight-words, math facts, science vocabulary, etc.) to practice until they were replaced with a new set. In the tutoring sessions, the tutor is expected to present the flashcard using the trained procedures. Each peer tutoring session consists of five parts: tutor huddle, practice, testing, charting, and rewarding.

The tutor huddle is used for reciprocal tutoring designs, has 3-4 students and last for 3-5 minutes. Here, students take turn reading aloud the questions and answers of their partner's flashcards to the rest of the huddle members. When the question and answer are read correctly, the group members respond with a "yes" and the student moves on to the next flashcard. If the student has difficulty with the flashcard, the huddle members provide prompts, which are followed by that student repeating the question and answer before moving on the next flashcard. The purpose of reading the question and answers during huddle is to ensure that the tutor has the skills to read the questions and provide the answers fluently to the tutees during the actual dyad tutoring. In essence, the tutor huddle maximizes the opportunity to respond to tutees.

During the practice phase, the students are engaged in dyad tutoring for six minutes. The students sit at their assigned seats, facing each other. The peer tutoring folder is opened between the tutor and the tutee. The tutor removes the tutee's flashcards from the "Go" pocket and presents them to the tutee one at a time. The emphasis here is to provide the student with as many opportunities as possible to interact with the content. If the tutee makes an error or hesitates longer than three seconds with no response, the tutor says, "Try again." If the response is then correct the tutor goes to the next word. If again, the response is incorrect or delayed, the tutor is taught to prompt the tutee by saying, "Say (the answer)." The student then repeats the answer, and the pair continues to the next flashcard. After all the cards are presented, the packet is shuffled and present until the time expires. Additionally, during the practice component, the tutors praise the students for correct responses. Through the training sessions, the tutors are taught examples and non-examples of praise statements. The tutors are trained to give reinforcing statements at an approximate fixed ratio of one per every three correct responses. This schedule of reinforcement allows for a maximum number of learning trials, while providing a high level of praise. For reciprocal application, the tutoring partners will then reverse roles and engage in a second 6-minute practice sessions.

After the completion of the practice component, the students begin the testing phase in which the tutor tests whether the tutee mastered the cards he or she was practicing during the practice phase. The tutor takes the set of flashcards that are in the "go" pocket at the beginning of the session. The tutoring folder is then turned over to display the happy face and the large "X". Each flashcard is presented once to the student. No feedback is given during the testing phase. If the student responds correctly, the card is placed on the happy face. If the student hesitates longer that three seconds or erred, the card is placed on the "X". After each flashcard is presented once, the tutor and the tutee, together, marks the back of each card. A happy face is drawn on the first empty grid square of each card placed on the large happy face symbol. Similarly, an "X" is placed on the back of the cards in the "X" pile.

When the student completes the testing and marking of the flashcards, the tutor determines if his or her partner reached mastery level on any of the cards. Mastery is a correct response in the testing phase on three consecutive days. Mastered words are removed form the "Go" pocket and moved to the "Stop" pocket. The student will then color one box on their chart (left panel of tutoring folder) for each word they mastered. A new set of flashcards are introduced to the student once he or she masters all cards in the original packet.

During the folder-driven tutoring, a reward system is employed in which the teacher circulates around the room and stamps the students' star cards while providing verbal praise (e.g., "Good job prompting that last error"). Hence, students are reinforced for demonstrating on-task behaviors and for performing the tutoring behaviors as trained. Students who accumulate a certain number of stamps are eligible to select an item form the reward menu. These can include items such as pencils, erasers, privileges, and candies.

Teacher's role. There are several key responsibilities the teacher performs a folder-driven tutoring system. To begin, the teacher will organize any pre-testing which need to occur. Either personally, or through enlisting the help of other data sources, the teacher need to collect information regarding the students' knowledge of the selected content. For example, if the tutoring system is to help learners with multiplication facts, the teacher should pre-test to see which facts the students already knows. Content which is not mastered, becomes materials for the flashcards. Next, the teacher need to design the tutoring system. Based on the learners and the classroom contingencies, a particular tutoring format (e.g., CWPT, small group, one-on-one) may be appropriate. After the format is selected, the teacher conducts the training of the tutors.

When the folder-driven tutoring is in operation, the role of the teacher includes, rewarding, monitoring, helping, and reviewing. Rewarding is provided as the teacher actively supervises and provides feedback and rewards (e.g., stamps) for tutors and tutee who display good tutoring behaviors. The teacher also can assist and "retrain" tutor who are not following trained procedures. This can be completed through additional modeling and corrective feedback. Finally, the teacher is responsible for checking the tutoring

folders to maintain information regarding student progress. The teacher will need to provide a new set of flashcards when previous sets are mastered.

Also, teachers may review and check for maintenance of learning. Each time a completed set of flashcards are removed from a student's "Stop" pocket, they are placed in a review box. On a two-week basis, the previously mastered flashcards can be reviewed following the procedure used during the testing phase of the tutoring program. If the student makes an error on a reviewed flashcard, that card then can be recycled through the folders at the next available time.

Adaptations. The format of a folder-driven tutoring system provides the opportunity to easily adapt the program to differentiate instruction. First, the content or the subject to be selected is variable. Essentially, any content which lends itself to a flashcard mode is appropriate. Second, the number of cards per set can be adapted. Fewer cards (e.g., 4-5) maybe appropriate for cognitive delayed students or instructionally naive students who need process new information at slower rate, while more cards (e.g., 8-10) maybe suitable for gifted or instructionally sophisticated learners. Next, the criteria to reach mastery (i.e., three consecutive correct responses during the testing phase) can be adapted. If it is noticed that a student has a low rate of maintaining the content during the bi-weekly reviews, raising the criteria for mastery to four or more consecutive correct responses will provide additional practice and interaction with the content, which in turn, could aid memory. Fourth, the cards can be designed to provide a cue to the tutee. For example, bold text of highlighting can be used to draw the attention of the student to a specific feature (e.g., a prefix, an addend, etc.) of the flashcard. Finally, folder-driven tutoring can incorporate generality practice by changing the stimulous (e.g., sight-words written in different fonts) or altering the response (e.g., write the response instead of saying it).

In conclusion, the effectiveness of tutoring systems is well established within the literature. Tutoring systems, including folder-driven programs, are an efficient way to differentiate instruction. As rural areas struggle with special education programs and services in terms of adequate personnel, opportunities for professional development, available resources, and information on proven practices (Rude et al., 2005), the promotion tutoring systems is one way to address the needs of students. Classroom make-up is diverse and tutoring systems facilitate the involvement of all students.

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SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION WHO SELF-IDENTIFY AS GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL OR TRANSGENDERED

There are almost 5.5 million children in the United States who have been identified with an exceptionality that differentiates students from their peers (Culatta, Tompkins, & Werts, 2003). Experts suggest that approximately 10 percent of the population and its various subgroups are comprised of individuals who do not self-identify as being heterosexual (Kosciw, 2004). Considering the aforementioned data, one might estimate that there are over one half million students with exceptionalities in the United States that are homosexual, bisexual, and transsexual. As a result, educational programs should be established that educate students and professionals about different sexual orientations that exist and facilitate understanding that not all individuals are not uniform in their sexuality.

Sexuality Information

When working with the general population of students in the area of sexual development, a majority of students state that they were able to obtain information from peers, parents, or educators. Even though they may discuss sexual development few indicate that they may discuss the topic of sexuality. Adolescents who discuss feelings of being different from the typical student or demonstrate differences in peer group situations or to parental figures are often ostracized by the aforementioned groups.

Peers. Student that perform at the typical level indicate that a majority of the information obtained about sexual development and sexuality are a result of peer group discussion and exploration. After, these students learn information as to the appropriateness (and inappropriateness) of various sexual behaviors on the part of both genders. However, students with exceptionalities lack appropriate peers groups that are able to communicate the idea of sexual development and do a much poorer job of discussing the concepts of varying sexual orientations. The information provided to the child with special needs is extremely limited in the amount of detail or due to the sensitive nature of the topic is not addressed in conversations between peers.

Students with exceptionalities are included with non-disabled peers predominately during instructional sessions. As a result, students with special needs have little time to socialize and

establish friendships with students from the general population. If friendships were to be established, very few interactions within the setting would include the discussion of sexual development, much less sexuality. There have been occurrences when students from the general population take advantage of their exceptional peers, by having them perform inappropriate acts for their amusement and for the ridicule of the exceptional student. Students with special needs are extremely susceptible to abuse, many are without the ability to report such cases of mistreatment (Hagen, Powell, & Adams, 1983).

Parents. It is well documented that parents have difficulty when discussing sexual development issues with their children. The same problems exist for parents of students with special needs. Aunos and Feldman (2002) indicate that many parents of children with special needs avoid discussions about sexual development and sexuality. The primary reason for this lack of communication between parent and child is the restrictive attitude of the individual in the parental role within the relationship. According to the participants in the Aunos and Feldman study, the discussion is extremely difficult to conduct with a typically developing child, much less a child with intellectual or emotional challenges.

Many parents are unprepared to deal with the sexual and sexuality development in the typically developing child. The development in a child with special needs becomes even more problematic because of a lack of information. Without specialized training programs, parents may provide confusing information to the child, which may later result in unwanted circumstances. For example, a parent who provides inaccurate or misleading information to their child may spend many hours trying to re-educate the child. Also, a lack of support may cause extreme frustration on the part of the parents if the child self-identifies as non-heterosexual, with little research based education programs in development.

Educators. Special educators have expressed concern over the teaching of sexual development issues with children who have exceptional needs. The primary reason given for this concern involves the lack of training provided to the educators prior to completing the actual task of teaching a lesson on the topic. Their concern is well founded given that few teacher preparation programs address the topic of sexual develop education for students with special needs, much less sexuality education. Due to the impact of current legislation on public schools instruction and teacher preparation, instruction in this area is being sacrificed for time allocated to academic instruction.

Special educators, especially those who live in conservative areas, may fear community reaction to the topic. In a recent episode in eastern Kentucky, community members became outraged at the formation of a Gay-Straight Alliance for students, much less an actual discussion about the topic with students who are cognitively impaired. In addition, the topic and curriculum may not be part of the district's educational program of study for any student regardless of intellectual or emotional level. Thus, most educators feel that they may not have the support of the school administration should they instruct lessons about varying sexuality issues.

According to Brantlinger (1992), male special educators expressed more of a concern over instructing about the topic when compared with female special educators. The male educators expressed concerns that they may be perceived as having ulterior motives when

discussing the topic with students. The male educators indicated that education in that area was more suited for female special educators. Interestingly, the study results suggest that special educators had a more positive attitude about sexual development and sexuality education programs when compared with general educators and parental counterparts.

Perceptions of Sexuality

In a recent study at Marshall University, students enrolled in the teacher preparation program in special education indicated a need for sex education for students with disabilities. Of the 70 future special educators, only three suggested that providing students with exceptionalities with education in this area was inappropriate. Seven of those surveyed stated that training should be provided to exceptional populations so that they could comprehend their own development. The remaining special educators felt that students of all ability levels should be educated about sexual development and the physiological changes that accompany them. In comparison, when surveyed about the topic of sexuality, none of those in the study group indicated that students with exceptionality should receive any information about the varying sexual orientation possibilities.

In regards to students with exceptionalities, they are generally thought of as sexual deviants or as asexual beings. The primary reason that students with disabilities are though of as deviants when they express or demonstrate sexual behaviors is due to their limited exposure to appropriate behaviors that are subsequently related to their sexuality. For example, a homosexual adolescent male (with disabilities) who becomes aroused in the locker room when changing clothes for physical education class, may be labeled as being perverted due to the overwhelming amount of stimulus to the student. The non-exceptional student may not understand the difficulties faced by their aforementioned peer. This child will then face the stigma that is often attached to those who are perceived to be different (Hagen, Powell & Adams, 1983).

There are many individuals who feel that students with exceptionalities are asexual and have no desire to be intimate with those from the same or opposite genders, which is not the case in most instances. Rarely does one find an individual, regardless of sexual orientation, that is asexual in nature. Many students fail to demonstrate sexual attraction towards other due to the lack of skill development in the area. Students should be allowed to explore sexual orientations within a safe environment in order to determine their own identification.

Supporting GLBT Students

There are often three predominate areas where educators (special and general) may have difficulty, but are necessary for the successful development of GLBT students with exceptionalities. The targeted areas include personal biases, safe space creation and educator training.

Personal Biases. When working with GLBT students with exceptionalities, it is not an acceptable practice to simply ignore the differences between the various populations in regards to the biases perceived by the workers. Educators should focus on the development of the individual in academic, social, and sexuality pursuits. Some educators are conflicted due to

religious views in regards to sexuality development in students. In extremely rural locations, the biases may be reinforced by the culture of the given area. If educators cannot overcome biases, they may need to become more tolerant of the individuals differing sexual orientation.

Safe Space. Educators must provide safe havens for students with differing sexual orientation. Students of all orientations should be treated with respect and provided with an environment in which all students can successfully develop skills that are necessary for life as an adult. The educational environment should be free from harassment from both peers and adults for all populations. As stated earlier providing a haven may contradict cultural norms for the given area and may require a strong educator in order to ensure program success (McIntyre & Von Ornsteiner, 2001).

Educator Training. Teacher preparation programs should reflect on children with exceptionalities as holistic beings. These programs which predominately focus on the academic needs of the child with special needs may need to refocus their educational training programs. Course work in the areas of behavior management, sexual development including sexuality, physical development and other areas is necessary for the success of the child. If unavailable during teacher training opportunities, educators may attempt to locate materials in which to self-educate about the topic. When attempting this endeavor, educators attempt to locate programs and materials that are based on researched practices.

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A CROSS-CULUTRE STUDY OF QUALITY PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

Characteristics of Preschool Education in China

In China, preschool education is education for children from three through six years old. In a broad sense, it is equal to kindergarten education (China Education and Research Network). In urban areas, pre-school education is kindergartens that last for one to three years and could be full-time, part-time, boarding, or hourly. In rural areas, pre-school education is mainly nursery classes and seasonal kindergartens. In the aging, minority, remote, and poor areas, in addition to the normal preschool education, there are additional forms of education such as children activity centers, game groups, mobile aid centers, and mobile services called "caravan". Like school education, China's preschool education is influenced by many factors such as the traditional Confucian philosophy, the Entrance Examination to College as well as China's One-Child-Policy. As early as the 1980s, Tobin, Wu, and Davidson (1989) have discussed the Confucian's influences on China's preschool education in their *Preschool Education in Three Cultures* and various research on China's education has supported this point. Chen and Uttal (1988) suggest that Confucianism has positively influenced the Chinese society in that the people are still highly motivated towards the acquisition of good education, including degrees and diplomas. According to Confucianism education is a much more important quality for a leader than technical competence or professional expertise, and in that education itself is an essential component of virtues. Thus, parents in China typically are enthusiastic in support of their children with their studies and they have high expectation for their children's academic success. Vaughan (1993), as a participant-observer studying preschools in Xi'an City of China, concludes that Chinese parents often want their children to begin academic work early, believing it will give them a head start in the competitive struggle for scholastic success.

In addition to the influences from Confucianism, the Chinese education system promotes an academic-oriented teaching methodology. Vaughan states that the competitive and selective entry procedures to "key" and many better neighborhood schools heighten this perceived need for an early start as key schools are highly selective schools designed for academically superior students. And only those in "key" schools have more opportunities to be enrolled in higher education, so all parents want their children to achieve privileged positions through academic excellence because they believe that only if you excel in your studies will you have good fortune.

China's One-Child Policy (Vaughan, 1993) is another reason that parents can have more involvement and investment in their children's education. The One-Child Policy makes it possible for parents as well as grandparents to put more money, time and energy into this only child's education. Teachers report that not only are parents very interested in their child's school success, but they are also very quick to criticize teachers if they feel their child has been treated unfairly or too harshly. Li (2001) notes that the one-child policy leads to parents' substituting children in every chores and even helping them dress up, clean up, and feeding them until they

are as old as five or six years. Children in China have been described little emperors or little princesses in the family (Li, 2001).

Academic-Oriented and Teacher-Centered

With more and more privately owned preschools and kindergartens in China, they tend to cater to parents' requirement in order to attract more children to their preschools and thus make more profits (Chan & Mellor, 2002). Still, kindergartens are under pressure to improve the entrance rate of children into elementary schools. It is therefore, a trend in China that preschool and kindergarten classrooms emphasize the teaching lessons to their children and tend to neglect children's emotional, social development as well as creativity, individualism, and independence development (Vaughan, 1993), which often characterize preschools in the US. Vaughan demonstrated that although much of the curriculum content in China is similar to a typical American program, the teaching methods are quite different from the "developmentally-appropriate practices' advocated by early childhood educators in the United States (NAEYC, 1986). Children seldom work independently or in small groups on self-selected tasks. The emphasis is upon teacher-directed, total group instruction. All children are expected to do the same thing at the same time. For example, in a typical art lesson the teacher demonstrates how to fold and twist tissue paper into butterflies. She then gives guidance to those children doing it incorrectly before proceeding to the next step of pasting the butterfly onto paper and drawing antennae. Drawing lessons often consist of children copying an object drawn by the teacher. So is the playtime. Actually children are offered very short period of time to free play. That's partly from the kindergartens'/preschools' high child:teacher ratio, and partly from teachers' ignorance of training children's imagination, developing interests, and stimulating initiatives. Children are seldom asked to make choices themselves, even very simple ones like those related to play. Since there are so many children tended by one teacher, and resources are very limited, it is easier to take care of all the children if the class is teacher-centered and highly structured.

Creativity, Individualism, and Independence Development

As mentioned above, preschoolers in China are offered little time for free play, few opportunities for choice-making, and most activities are guided by teachers, which otherwise should be good for children to build up independence and individualism. Vaughan (1993) indicates that in China's preschool ample materials necessary for open-ended, unstructured exploration are seldom available. Sand and water play, blocks and woodworking equipment are rare. Art supplies are typically used for teacher-directed, rather than child-initiated activities. The teaching method and the available materials limit opportunities for creative expression or pursuit of individual interests. Li (2001) argues that teachers' lack of understanding of children's these abilities is from Chinese teachers' belief that it is good for children to behave themselves in school and listen to teachers, and that teacher-centered education is beneficial in order that children master as much knowledge as possible within limited class time.

Preschool education in China is also influenced by Confucian philosophical doctrines and China's socialist ideology. According to Confucians, respect for elders, teachers is highly honored. Children from very young age are taught to obey teachers, the authority in the classroom, so that students are always taught to follow teachers' instruction and are deprived of free choice. Children are thus afraid to question teachers' instructions and express their own opinions, especially those that oppose to teachers' although sometimes children are conscious

that teachers are wrong. Vaughan mentioned that in preschools he observed respect for teachers and prompt, unquestioning obedience are expected. The preschoolers generally appear to be orderly, attentive, hard working and eager to please the teacher. Like Chinese children, parents frequently interact submissively with teachers. They do not look themselves as equal partners when talk with teachers about children's personality, the family happenings, or the children's performance at home. Parents always feel secondary to teachers, need to learn from teachers, they respect teachers' opinions, and are afraid to express suggestions or comments like how to improve teaching (Xu, 2004). Vaughan (1993) discusses the influence from the socialist ideology in China's preschool. More lessons tend to encourage co-operative interactions and teamwork in young children in order to emphasize group rather than individual achievement. The encouragement of group rather than individual goals was evident, however, in the emphasis on teaching children altruistic and nurturing behaviors. Children helped one another with dressing and often gave up a prized toy to a playmate with no prodding by the teacher. What's more, all children are expected to proceed at the same pace. The child is responsible for keeping up and poor performance is usually attributed to not working hard enough. The solution may be to admonish the child to work more diligently.

Future Directions for Preschool Education in China

Yet, in the late 1990s, with the impact of the western teaching methodology which advocates to place children at the heart of the early childhood education and the release of the *Guiding Framework of Kindergarten Education* (on trial basis) (State Education Commission, 1989), there appears a milestone in china's preschool and early education (Chan & Mellor, 2002). It stated that early childhood education should be the foundation of children's immediate and lifelong education and that preschool should promote children's development and enable them to have a happy and meaningful childhood. There was also a clearly defined role for the preschool teacher as collaborator, supporter, and guide to the child so as to create a sense of security, happiness, and success in the learning process. Children were to be given the freedom to choose materials, ways to play, and opportunities to interact with peers and teachers. Besides, the importance of integrated learning is also put into prime position. Preschool learning may be categorized into five domains while teachers can flexibly and integratively organize the learning content across domains, providing children with holistic learning experiences. They are reminded to respect and follow the developmental characteristics and learning pattern of every child. In curriculum organization, they need to keep a balance between teacher-directed and nonteacher-directed activities, to ensure that children have enough time for self-initiated learning. The privately owned preschools are better in practicing these doctrines as they are better equipped and staffed by teachers with higher educational attainment and richer experiences. However, these preschools charge very high sponsor fees, which limit access for children from average families.

Characteristics of Preschool Education in United States

Unlike the kindergarten education in china, the US is more concerned with children's individualism, independence, creativity, liberty, etc., which are also influenced by western ideology (Church, 2004). Individuals with a strong influence from Euro-American cultural heritages look at, interpret, explore social phenomena on an individual basis. Especially when a person is raised by a Euro-American nuclear family, individualism is more apparent than when an extended or multigenerational family raises a person. The Euro-American ethnic perspective

usually perceives that a family is composed of a few individuals. In this context, individual independence, self-reliance, and autonomy are respected and encouraged (McAdoo, 1993).

From my own experiences of working in preschools of different qualities for two summers, children's self-expression and creativity are highly initiated in America's preschool. Children are offered more free play time, a variety of toys to choose from, and can play according to their own interests. Children are encouraged to clean up, dress up, feed themselves, in other words, and do what they can themselves. Tobin et al. (1989) also states that American preschools consciously offered children opportunities to make simple choices, which help them to experience responsibility and build up a sense of confidence and safety. And classes are more child-centered. So, children are more respected, nurtured, and challenged. In this way, they also enjoy closer, warmer relationships with the adults and other children in their classroom compared to Chinese preschoolers. Also, children have ongoing opportunities to learn important skills, knowledge, and disposition, and are able to make meaningful decisions throughout the day. Unlike the unequal relationship between parents and caregivers in China, family members in the US are included as partners in all aspects of the educational program. E.g., families are routinely consulted about the interests, abilities, and preferences of their children. Family members are welcomed into the program and allowed to observe and participate in the activities. And information about each child's progress is routinely shared with parents. Parents have opportunities to contribute to the policies and program of the preschool. They also actively contribute to the educational goals of their children. All of the above results from the U.S. doctrine that parents are respected as equal partners as teachers, each and every family is unique, and all families are viewed as having strengths.

Developing Social Skills

Although U.S. preschools strive to promote self-reliance, independence, free choice, and individuality in children, this does not preclude a concern for helping children develop skills in interpersonal relations and the ability to function as members of a group (Tobin et al., 1989). Parents may also be concerned with children's social skills development: whether they can play well and share toys with peers, whether they respect others' choice, and be polite to others. Given the author's observation in a university-based child development laboratory (personal communication, June, 2004) in the U.S. during the morning drop off time, parents usually stay until their children calm down to play with peers and are nice to others. Parents are more likely to express their love and concern for children, like "love you, honey/sweetie" or "Have Fun", "Have a Good Day", or "Enjoy Your time with your friends" (personal communication, June, 2004). In this sense, in the U.S., Children are more treated as an individual, no different from adults. Their feelings are concerned. These exchanges facilitate children's transfer from home to classroom environment, make children feel safer and comforted, and help children interact actively with peers, and thus promote their social skills development. Xu (2004) also highlighted this point at the 21st CEC International Conference in her presentation.

Caregivers and Parent Equity

In Xu's study, it is mentioned that, unlike parents in China, American parents may be more equal in communication and viewed as a partner with preschool teachers. They feel comfortable to share their stories with teachers, tell teachers what happened last night, or for what reason that their children do not feel good. In this way, teachers can better understand each

child and care for each one individually. Teachers are more likely to understand what is happening in each family and thus better understand some children's strange behaviors or emotional changes, which are very important in helping children build up a sense of safety, trust, and comfort in children, which are neglected in China's preschool/kindergarten education.

Learning from Real Experiences

Lacking in China but stressed in the United States is "hands on" (Hall & Robinson, 2003), active involvement in learning through real experiences. For example, in the aforementioned child development laboratory the author worked with Miss Shawn (the leading teacher). In one class, she taught children the volcanic eruption by showing them a "real" one: she piled up a sand hill, put some soap powder on the top of it, then poured a bucket of water onto the soap powder, which results in the foam like "volcanic eruption". This kind of visually stimulating activity may serve to foster logical thinking, observation, and concentration in young children. The U.S.'s play—oriented and child-centered class is very different from China's academic—oriented and teacher—centered class. Hall and Robinson's study showed that the US preschool encourages children to learn through games and activities. Children are more open, creative, lively, sociable, healthy, ambitious, and self-confidence with stronger coping skills. Children more enjoy the process of the learning experiences. Mooney (2000) also concluded that this kind of preschool experiences will lead to the accumulation of "perceptions", which in their turn come to constitute the children's behaviors, postures, gestures, mannerisms, attitudes and appreciations to serve as key building blocks of their character development. These abilities are more far reaching than academic skills procured by teacher-centered instruction preschool classrooms, which will have some short-term benefits but will disappear as children grow up.

What China Might Learn from the United States: A Comparing Perspective

Comparing preschool ability development in both China's and American's environment, we find out that both cultures have their own characteristics, weaknesses and strengths. If both can learn from each other's virtues strengths while avoiding their own weaknesses, preschool education will be more ideal to children's early development. Similarly, Li (2001) highlighted that both western and eastern cultural and educational systems have their own problems. That's why there is a tendency to combine two cultures. The weakness, which as mentioned in the influences on preschool education in China results from China's educational system, of eastern education is that students do not get hands-on experiences because it focuses on classroom teaching and exam writing, while western culture emphasizes how to express oneself. This point is also mentioned in *Preschool in Three Cultures, Japan, China, and the United States*: "The preschool in china is characteristic of rigidity, severity, and overregimentation." "Teachers directed children's play too much," "teachers set limits and controlled children's behavior too much," "the overall mood was too controlled," "children played individually too little," and "children's activity level was too passive, subdued, docile" (Tobin et al., 1989, p. 92). Although this research is almost sixteen years old, this is also true in the mainstream early childhood education from my own observation. Tobin's findings disclose the teacher-centered approach as well as the regimentation-dominated approach in China's early education. Although this research was made years ago, most of what is described in China's preschools/kindergartens is still true under the influence of its own philosophical doctrines and political conceptions. This kind of education "overemphasizes on order and on behaving properly at the cost of stamping out the children's creativity". "And for many of our Chinese informants regimentation, order, and

control are essential elements of preschool pedagogy and child socialization. Many of our Chinese informants were proud of the order and regimentation that came across in the tape recording of the Chinese preschool classroom. When they host foreign visitors, Chinese administrators and teachers therefore take pains to have their school appear even more regimented and controlled than usual" (p. 93). This is good in some sense that children from a young age to learn to put things in order, to arrange everything in advance, to have a sense of discipline from a young age. This, on the other hand, keeps children from developing their creativity. They are offered so short free playtime but with too much teacher-controlled time that they lose confidence, and are thus trained to be subdued and docile.

Prepare Children to Be Independent

China's kindergartens/preschools also need to learn to prepare children to be independent. From my personal opinion, although children in Chinese culture are encouraged to work as a team with peers, be very close with their families such as making decisions together with family members even in adulthood, independence is also necessary and important for children's overall development. As more and more children in China are the sole child in a family. Parents and grandparents together with other family members overly care for children, which is called by experts as the "4-2-1" syndrome: four grandparents and two parents lavishing attention on one child. Adults believe the more money and more love they put on children, the happier the children are. It is true in a short term. Children are of course happier if all of their needs are met, if they are given any toys they prefer, and do whatever they like. But, if some of their requirements cannot be reached, they usually will have a temper. It is a common phenomenon to see some children lie on the ground just because parents will not follow their "instructions". In this kind of situation, children are deprived of any independence. They are helped and cared so much that they think they can obtain anything only if they demand it. If children can be encouraged as what American preschools do: let children be conscious of being loved but this love does not mean that they can get everything, or they can be helped or be excused in any situations, they will get to know how to respect others, to take responsibility of their own things, to be conscious of what they are supposed to obtain and what are not, and to know of their own obligations. In this way, they would not be so dependent on parents as the first generation born after 1978 with the implementation of China's One Child Policy (Vaughan, 1993).

Give Children More Free Time for Self-Direction and More Choices

China's kindergartens/preschools might benefit from the United States in providing more free time, a greater variety of classroom activities, richer creativity and initiative stimulating teaching style, and a mutual understanding relationship between parents and teachers. Studies from Freeman (1988) also showed this point. She mentioned, "Whereas Eastern cultures emphasize community, cooperation and interrelatedness, Western ones are apt to foster individualism, competition, and the importance of personal possessions. These differences are highlighted by the ways we interact with children and how we make decisions about classroom environments. The sparsely equipped toy shelves we saw in China indicated teachers' expectations that children would share toys and materials. Instead of providing duplicates of the most popular materials, as American preschool teachers are likely to do, these teachers intentionally limited children's choices. Youngsters have to share, wait their turn, and negotiate with their peers during play. What's more, instead of adding additional materials as the school

year progressed, we were told that teachers periodically removed toys so that there was even more pressure to share and cooperate. This approach to equipping classrooms presents a striking contrast when compared with American teachers' efforts to provide children with a frequently-modified selection of developmentally appropriate materials" (p. 4). Children are fostered to obey teachers, group leaders; to control their desire; to cooperate and get along well with peers. She also said in this paper about Chinese children's lack of choices in kindergartens/preschools. For example, "in addition to classrooms with intentionally—limited resources, we also saw a number of classrooms where everyone was doing the same thing at the same time. Each child was expected to work on the same paper folding, clay modeling, or drawing project. Closer to home we would expect to see a classroom that invites children to choose whatever they want to do, and to work individually in centers, using materials in individualistic and creative ways" (p. 5).

What the United States Might Learn from China

Vaughan (1993) notes from his experiences as a participant-observer that, because of teachers' guidance and discipline, Chinese children obey teachers, follow teachers' instruction, and work well with peers. Seldom are there any incidents of peer inflict or inattentive or disruptive behavior during group activities, and no cases of disrespect or lack of prompt obedience to the teachers' requests. Although there are some negative techniques used to discipline children like public correction and criticism, currently, more and more positive reinforcement for good behavior has been used extensively. Teachers praise and recognize children, who are doing well, often pointing out "the best ones" in class. Children receive rewards, such as red stars, for helping another child, answering questions in class or doing well on written work. U.S. teachers may learn from China about this point. The following are several strengths of Chinese preschools but lack in U.S. preschools, and these may be beneficial for the preschools in the U.S.

Encouraging Children's Academic Success

Although overemphasizing academic success may not be healthy for young children's development, the importance of academic skills can be stressed in a way that children can be motivated from a young age so that they can be self-promoted in the future school education in the author's opinion. For example, give children a model who takes academic skills as an important ability, and then gradually children probably put it in a very important position and can be self-motivated in future school life. Actually, children need to learn skills necessary for future academic success. Language and literacy activities include frequent interactive book reading, expanded conversations with adults, opportunities to read and write throughout the day and a positive, joyful climate for learning. They have opportunities to learn the language of school—how to listen, follow directions, respond to teacher questions and initiate problem solving (Spodek, 1988). Like preschoolers in China, children in the US could be offered opportunities to learn basis school readiness skills. They learn expanded vocabulary, alphabetic, principles, phonological awareness; concepts of numbers, shapes, measurement and spatial relations; task persistence; early scientific thinking; and information about the world and how it works. So, it is critical for caregivers in the US to teach preschoolers important concepts such as mathematics and early literacy through projects, everyday experiences, collaborative activities, and active curriculum. Teachers are encouraged to use a curriculum with specified goals, approach toward

learning, expected outcomes and assessment procedures. Teachers should be able to describe their curriculum, why it was chosen and what they are accomplishing with it (Spodek, 1989).
Besides individual, small group activities, children in the US should also have opportunities to participate in large-group activities, like the preschoolers in China. They can learn important social and self-regulation skills through adult guidance and appropriate discipline. In the big group activities, preschoolers can better develop language skills, a sense of cooperation, and cooperation with peers (Vaughan, 1993).

Respecting Elders

Also, US preschool education might take from China in respect for elders, love, and care for elders. Although children are equal individual as adult and are encouraged to fully develop themselves, they need to know love, respect, politeness, and care. In the author's personal opinion, it is important for children from a young age to consider of caring for elders in such a way that when they grow up, they take it as a responsibility to care for them spiritually although it is not honored in western culture. Chinese culture, on the contrary, educates children to care for parents or grandparents when they grow up. There are some model stories in preschool storybooks to encourage children to be filial to parents. Parents and teachers also tell stories to young children to build up their sense of caring for elders. Typically, grown-up children visit parents regularly when parents retire and get older. Old people are easy to feel lonely esp. when all children grow up and leave families, when they retire, or when their spouses passed away. Therefore, children's greetings, caring, and visits can really help elders relieve from the loneliness. Although in China the traditional families with three or even four generations live together do not exist, China still prefers to educate children to respect elders from a very young age.

Conclusion

Preschool education in China has grown so rapidly and has aroused unprecedented concern (Chan & Mellor, 2002). Research on preschool education, child development and learning should guide preschool caregivers and other practitioners in understanding and delivering early childhood education doctrines and approaches. However, the Chinese traditional philosophical doctrines still play a dominant role in early childhood education, resulting in a teacher-centered and academic-oriented approach, the parents' submission to teachers, and regimentation in preschools, etc. Children brought up in this atmosphere maybe more apt at academic preparation and obeying teachers and authorities, but may lack creativity and individualism development. Parents are submissive to teachers and schools rather than being partners with teachers in self-direction in guiding young children. Although there are some milestones in the current development of China's preschool and early childhood education with the impact of western teaching methodology and China's reform in education, the preschools that honor age-and individual-appropriate teaching doctrines require so high sponsor fees that children from medium and lower income families are hard to access.

The preschools in the United States is much better in training children to be creative and independent, giving children more freedom and choices, and developing equal and comfortable relationship between caregivers and parents. The neglect of academic preparation, however, is a critical issue worthy of sincere concern. Also, the US preschool administrators can learn from China's regimentation and train young children to keep everything in order and to be self-

disciplined. Moreover, besides training children's independence, the US preschools need to take a responsibility to help children cooperate well with peers, work well in a group, and respect group leaders and teachers. If preschools in different cultures can adopt virtues from each other, our children will be more healthily nurtured, motivated, and developed.

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SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES: INVOLVING ALL LEARNERS IN OUR DIVERSE RURAL SETTINGS

Multiage education has long-established roots in the history of American pedagogy. Laws passed as early as 1642 requiring towns to establish and support schools resulted in the one-room schoolhouses, which were based on multiage groupings out of necessity. Because they met the economic and organizational needs of small, rural communities and supported children's learning in all areas of development, the one-room schoolhouse became a fixture on the American landscape. (Stone,1996).

The multiage classroom continues to be a model of education inclusive of all children. Graded schools often focus on the model of teaching whereby information is transmitted to the learner, whereas multiage settings encourage an interactive model between teacher and student. Simply defined, a multiage classroom is a mixed-age group of children that stay with the same teacher for several years. Children are randomly selected and balanced by age, ability and gender. This grouping is deliberately made for *the benefit of children*. (Stone, 1996). Multiage education, is based in the belief that all children can learn, and that each individual child brings to the classroom his/her own unique gifts and strengths.

The multiage model has been implemented in rural America out of necessity rather than a specific paradigm shift, or educational philosophy. However, the key to improving education for all children is not simply mixing ages, nor is it length of time spent with the same teacher. "You have to change your methods of instruction. It's what we do with the groups of children that makes a difference" (Gaustad,1994).

Successful multiage classrooms involve teachers with in-depth knowledge and understanding of child development and learning, in order to meet the diverse needs of each learner. They must also possess a large repertoire of instructional strategies and be proficient in their ability to assess, evaluate and record student progress utilizing numerous assessment tools aligned with state and national standards. "Inclusive education is most easily introduced in school communities that have already restructured to meet the needs of their increasingly diverse student populations in regular education" (Villa & Thousand, 2003).

Developmentally appropriate instructional procedures provide the foundation of successful multiage programs as well. When planning and implementing developmentally appropriate practices (DAP), the multiage teacher strives to develop the mental abilities of the child, provide creative activity in the learning process, and provide opportunities for the personal construction of knowledge (Stone,1996).

One of the advantages of multiage education is the opportunity for cross-age learning, which refers to the rich interaction between the ages and developmental stages of learners. Included in the benefits of cross age learning are the purposeful choices of children to interact in/with mixed ages, the creation of a more cooperative social context, the encouragement of pro-social behaviors, the stimulation of cognitive conflict, and a context for the development of leadership skills.

The wide range of student achievement in multiage classrooms is viewed as the norm, as all children are encouraged to be contributors to the classroom community. Therefore, assessing children individually and nudging them along their personal developmental continuum ensures each individual's success in the learning process.

The multiage philosophy' rejects a 'deficit' model that focuses on what a child doesn't know, rather than what a child does know. This focus on success keeps the child engaged in the learning processes. (Stone,1996). The successful implementation of multiage classrooms include cooperative learning, cross-age learning, flexible, heterogeneous groupings, no labeling, and respect for the individual. In 1995, the National Center on Education Restructuring and Inclusion reported that the majority of the districts implementing inclusive education stated that cooperative learning was the most important instructional strategy supporting inclusive education. Other practices supporting effective inclusion were: teaching practices that make subject matter more meaningful and relevant to the students, authentic assessments (such as portfolios and anecdotal records) and current theories of learning (such as constructivism and multiple intelligences). Since strategies for exceptional and diverse learners are based upon similar educational techniques, inclusion in a multiage classroom becomes an additional caveat for the entire community of learners.

There are many strategies utilized in multiage classrooms that effectively parallel and support inclusion models of education:

- developmentally appropriate curriculum
- heterogeneous and flexible groupings
- hands-on activities
- interactive/active student involvement
- cross-age learning/coaching
- emphasis on cooperative learning

In the multiage classroom, the focus is on teaching the children, not on teaching the curriculum, which is consistent with the intent of Special Education. Curriculum is utilized as it relates to teaching children in meaningful ways. The intent is to meet the children on their continuum of learning development rather than rush them through a prescribed curriculum.

Students in multiage classrooms stay with the same teacher for more than one year, which adds to the knowledge and understanding of each student. The teacher has more time to assist each child, and in the case of Individualized Education Plans (IEP's), the teacher will have additional assessments and knowledge due to the additional time in the classroom.

The goals and objectives in a multiage classroom incorporate the understanding that a child's learning is individual and that learning is a process. Teachers in multiage classrooms provide meaningful and relevant learning opportunities for their students and understand that children learn through social interaction, through cooperative learning experiences and by imitation. All diversity is celebrated and perceived as positive in a multiage setting. "The belief that certain children can not be included in the regular classroom is based on a false assumption of lockstep

instruction…but by using strategies such as 'multi-level' instruction, learning centers, and cooperative learning, teachers can accommodate all students" (Willis, 1994, p.5).

The welfare of students with disabilities continues to be a concern to many educators, and as such, the multiage setting seems to address many of the issues facing students and teachers in that the strengths of each student are emphasized, while labeling is de-emphasized, and the educational practices utilized make accommodations for all learners in the "learning community."

There are many strategies utilized in multiage classrooms which complement an inclusion model of education, not the least of which involve a commitment to building a supportive community for all learners. Children's strengths are used as the basis for instruction. Curriculum is implemented to support each child. Open-ended centers provide choice to the learner and capitalize on collaborative learning situations. Diversity in the classroom is central to the building of the community of learners.

Particularly effective strategies for building the community of learners include:

• Ball of respect

Students stand in a circle.
Using a ball of yarn, they gently toss the ball across the circle while calling out a name and a positive attribute. This continues until each student is holding a bit of the yarn.

• Classmate Hunt

This is a scavenger hunt which can be contextualized to meet your students' experiences. Sample questions might include: Who has read the latest Harry Potter? Who enjoys art? Who's favorite color is green?

• Choices

Students are asked to stand on one side of the room. Yes or no questions are asked as students non-verbally respond by walking to the appropriate side of the room. This is particularly effective as it involves "group" movement. Example: "I am an only child." The students either walk to the 'yes' side or the 'no' side of the room.

• Peer interviews

Using the book entitled, <u>The Important Book</u>, by Margaret Wise Brown (1949), a pattern emerges within the text that is then used to interview, write and introduce a partner. This can then be posted on a bulletin board, made into a class book, or given as a gift to the partner interviewed.

Learning strategies which incorporate cooperative learning include:

- "All About…" Books

  A booklet of four or five pages is put together. Each page may have a word, phrase, sentence and/or illustrations. Teachers and students read the book together.

- Anticipation Guides

  In an anticipation guide, teachers or students prepare a list of statements about a topic for students to discuss before reading. Some of the statements may be true and others inaccurate. Students decide prior to reading whether the statements are accurate or not, and then check to see if their predictions were accurate.

- Making Words

  Students can arrange letter cards to spell words together, or arrange numbers to incorporate mathematical operations. These can be related to many content areas.

- Organizational Format for Group Summarizing

  This is a work page with four quadrants stating the topic and main ideas. This can be used across the curriculum for students to work together to agree upon the main ideas of a chapter in a textbook, a topic in a unit, or elements of literature in a trade book.

The strong belief practiced in multiage classrooms is that children develop at different times in different ways physically, emotionally, socially, and academically. As educators, our greatest challenge is to provide meaningful and relevant learning experiences to each of our students, facilitating their growth in each of these domains.

Miller (1989,p.33) addresses the essence of the relationship between multiage classrooms and inclusion when he states: "Within this secure and predictable structure (of a multiage program), children can enjoy having the freedom to explore individual interests. *And with their individual differences accepted, they can find a true sense of community in their classroom."*

In a multiage classroom, each student brings their gifts and strengths to enhance the community of learners. Each student is encouraged and challenged to achieve their 'personal best.' All students are celebrated, all students are supported by the community, and ultimately, all students are honored.

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WHEN THE IVORY TOWER MEETS THE FISHING HOLE
REFLECTIONS ON A SHARED PRACTICUM EXPERIENCE

Abstract

University students and professors participated in a shared practicum experience with individuals with moderate to severe disabilities through a weekend long fishing tournament sponsored by an Easter Seal's Camp. Results from open ended questionnaires were inductively analyzed. Results indicate that students felt the experience was beneficial, provided them with the opportunity to work collaboratively with peers and professors, and impacted their perceptions of their professors.

Rationale

Beginning teachers frequently report that the real work of learning to teach happens in schools, and they rate their field experience as the most valuable aspect of their initial preparation coursework (Campbell-Evans, G., Maloney, C, 1997). In order to bridge the gap between the K-12 and higher education classrooms, teacher educators have implemented a variety of models. Among these models, the development of relationships between universities and public schools and the formation of professional development schools. Professional development schools blend the resources and expertise of universities and schools to study and develop teachers' instructional practices (McBee, R.H., & Moss, J, 2002). In professional development schools students have the opportunity to spend an extended amount of time in classrooms with what are considered to be master teachers. Aside from spending time with master teachers, students often times, have the opportunity to observe their professors demonstrate instructional practices with K-12 learners as opposed to listening to theoretical discussions regarding best practice, instructional strategies and teaching styles.

There are numerous benefits reported for students who participate in professional development schools during their certification experiences among which are the development of skills and increased competency levels among preparing teachers (Zeichner, 1993; Beazley; 1993; Ducharme & Ducharme, 1993; Gilroy, 1993; Northfield, 1993; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). Aside from specific skills and competencies, participants in professional development schools have also reported benefits of collaboration, empowerment, relationships and mentoring (Campbell-Evans, G., & Maloney, C, 1997). These benefits are attributed not only to the preparing students and master teachers, but also to university personnel.

The professional development model provides many benefits to all stakeholders, but does not provide the opportunity for students to see their professors as equals, more specifically performing the same activities with a group of learners over a few day period. Each spring during participation in Camp ASCCA's Fun Fish Weekend, university students and professors volunteer as camp counselors to facilitate individuals with disabilities participation in a weekend long fishing tournament. While at the facility, students and professors perform the same skills,

participate in the same events, and are treated as equals. It is from these intensive interactions that students learn about their professors as individuals and human beings. As students' perceptions of their professors change, they begin to develop an awareness and understanding of the importance of getting to know their future learners and developing relationships with them.

Description of the Study

Setting

The camp is located in a southeastern state and is an Easter Seals facility. The camp is the largest Easter Seals facility to serve individuals with disabilities in the southeastern region. During one mid spring weekend, from Friday – Sunday, the camp holds a fishing tournament for individuals with disabilities titled *Fun Fish*. To facilitate maximum participation by campers, the camp utilizes several volunteers along with paid workers.

Participants

This study took place over two camping experiences and involves 2 professors and 23 university students. The students are training to become special educators, seeking initial certification in early childhood special education, K-6, or 6-12. The professors both teach in the special education teacher education program. Of the 23 student participants, there were 15 females and 8 males. 19 of the students were Caucasian and 4 were African American.

The campers have a variety of disabilities including mental retardation, physical disabilities, and blindness. The campers range in age from 8 to mid 50's. Over 50 campers participate in the tournament along with 10 – 15 volunteer boaters, and numerous paid staff.

Matching Volunteers with Campers

At the beginning of the weekend, professors and students are assigned a camper by the camp director. Volunteers care for their campers throughout the course of the weekend and are responsible to meet the individual's needs, 24 hours a day. Volunteers ensure the campers safety and facilitate participation in planned activities including boat fishing, dock and pond fishing. Aside from fishing, volunteers assist campers in meeting their daily needs including bathing and feeding. Volunteers share sleeping quarters with the campers and ensure that campers arrive at activities on time and ready to participate.

Data Collection and Analysis

Following the weekend long experience, students anonymously completed a questionnaire utilizing open-ended questions to ascertain attitudes toward and perceptions of the university faculty and how the students' attitudes and perceptions changed as a result of the shared camp experience.

23 students returned completed questionnaires to the investigator. Categorical-type qualitative analysis was conducted (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Responses were coded and grouped according to patterns and from these patterns themes were constructed.

Findings

The major theme that emerged from the data was the ability to relate to professors as people. Further analysis revealed that responses could be further categorized into 1. as students interacted with their professors; and 2. as professors interacted with individuals with disabilities.

As students interacted with their professors. Results reveal descriptions of the professors as caring, human, real, and committed. When asked how the experience changed perceptions of their professors, students reported the experience made the professor have more credibility and student's felt more respect for their professors. As one participant describes "The experience provided time for me to get to know them outside of the classroom and to see a real different side of them than I do during class. I have the utmost respect for them; they actually spend the weekend doing what other professors just talk about."

As professors interact with individuals with disabilities. Results reveal descriptions of the professors as appropriate role models, demonstrating appropriate techniques with individuals with disabilities that are otherwise talked about, and providing the opportunity to see their professors as caring, compassionate individuals. As a participant reveals "I have a lot of respect for all my professors, but these guys actually go above the call of duty. They really walk the walk and talk the talk. I learned so much from them as I watched them interact with the campers they were assigned to."

Discussion

Results of the study indicate that hands-on, time intensive experiences challenge students' beliefs and help build confidence in their ability to provide services to individuals with moderate to severe disabilities. As beginning teachers have reported, they feel that many of their teaching skills are developed and refined while in classrooms and other settings with the students they will potentially teach (Campbell-Evans & Maloney, 1997). This experience provided students with the opportunity to interact with individuals with disabilities for an extended period of time outside of a classroom setting. In addition professors provided immediate feedback to students as they interacted with the campers. Students also had the opportunity to see professors interact with individuals with moderate to severe disabilities and model teaching practices with this population.

Results from the study also indicated that shared practicum experiences between students and professors positively impacts relationships between students and professors. Students reported benefits from participation in the experience as collaboration, empowerment, mentoring, and deepening of relationships with peers and professors (Beazley, 1993; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995).

The shared practicum experience described in this study had a positive impact on the students, campers and university professors. As our university classrooms and specifically teacher preparatory programs become more concerned with service learning and civic engagement, it appears that shared practicum experiences may provide an appropriate venue in achieving these goals.

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LEARN FROM THE PAST-A NEW VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Graduation Day! A day of celebration as students finally reach a goal in life and anticipate with eagerness going out to conquer the world. This might be the feeling of some students on graduation day; however, there are other students feeling hopeless, helpless and lost as to what will await them. They are ill-prepared to meet the challenges and demands they will encounter in our global society. These are the special education students, more specifically, those with specific learning disabilities, in rural areas. They do not receive transition support or employment skills training. Improper transitioning of rural special education students can be compared to elephants. As elephants hurry through the jungle, they trample everything in their path to reach their objective. Students with learning disabilities in rural areas are trampled by the fast pace and high technical demands of our global society. They are trodden underfoot and left behind.

According to "Why Rural Matters 2005," more than one-fourth of the public school students in the United States attend rural schools. Approximately 8.8 million, nearly one-fifth, attend schools in communities with less than 2,500 residents. Rural schools face many obstacles in educating and preparing students with a learning disability to transition into the adult world. Some obstacles are declining enrollment, poverty, underfunding of special education programs, transportation issues, geographic isolation, recruitment and retention of qualified teachers and related service personnel, teacher expectations and access to technology and community resources. Typically, rural schools do not have the materials, technology and specialized skills and training of teachers available that is necessary for effective teaching and transitioning of learning disabled students. "Children in rural schools deserve a great education just like all the other children in America" (Appalachian Technology in Education Consortium [ATEC]).

In 1981, Secretary of Education, Terrence Bell, created a National Commission on Excellence in Education to conduct a study on the quality of education in the United States. The result of this study was the publication, A Nation at Risk, which focused attention on the continuing pattern of inadequate performance by those considered 'at risk.' The commission (1983) reported:

> All, regardless of race or class or economic status, are entitled to a fair chance and to the tools for developing their individual powers of mind and spirit to the utmost. This promise means that all children by virtue of their own efforts, competently guided, can hope to attain the mature and informed judgment needed to secure gainful employment, and to manage their own lives, thereby serving not only their own interests but also the progress of society itself.

Since 1983, considerable time and effort have been spent by parents, educators and legislators to correct the deficits. Despite this effort, the overall achievement of learning disabled students has not changed significantly.

Early focus on special education during the twentieth century was to simply acquire basic skills which was sufficient at that time to enable students with learning disabilities to find jobs in many areas and live a comfortable life. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, this is not the case, as students are expected to go beyond the basic skills, to think critically and creatively, to express themselves clearly and master complex skills in order to rise above a poverty level. A national research study states, "…different kinds of learning goals require different approaches to instruction; new goals for education require changes in opportunities to learn" (Bransford, et. al. as quoted in Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory). This is especially evident in rural special education.

The dynamics of the classroom have changed considerably since 1980. There have been changes in special education laws and classifications. Two categories, autism and traumatic brain injury, have been added. There are an increasing number of special education students with more varied problems. As the population increases and medical technology saves more high-risk babies, a larger percentage of individuals with special needs will be thrown into the main stream of society. In another twenty to thirty years, there will be a significant increase in adults who, if not properly educated and transitioned into society and the workforce, are going to be a tremendous drain on society.

Educators understand that self-esteem, self-concept, language and literacy development are shaped early in a child's life and positive classroom environments should be created to meet these needs. Young children typically use an assortment of materials to make sense of their world. They may play with old clothes for make-believe, bang on pots and pans for music or use other materials to simulate the grown-up world. There are new opportunities now to shape the learning of students in what is referred to as technology. Technology can be a positive force in the student's education, if used appropriately. From the preschool setting through high school, various forms of technology can be used to enhance and supplement learning activities for the student with learning disabilities. Some of the technology which has been used effectively are computers, software, portable keyboards, TV/VCRs, digital cameras, CB radios and tape recorders. New technology is constantly being developed and upgraded with the onset of interactive television, instructional television, ipods, MP3, and other technological advances. Adding technology to the classroom does not automatically ensure the learning disabled student will be sufficiently taught. Many components are necessary for adding technology to the curriculum. As with all aspects of special education, the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals and needs should be considered. Some considerations are what the specific technology chosen will be used for, how it can help to reach the IEP goals and will the student's needs be met. The availability of skilled staff, staff development, maintenance and technical support need to be considered. Letgers and McDill (as quoted in North Central Educational Laboratory) state:

> Maintaining access to technology throughout the student's school career, integrating technology so that it is available for all kinds of learning, and deploying uses of

technology that move away from traditional teaching and learning methods are necessary components of a successful technology strategy for educating students at risk.

Technology in the classroom does not automatically ensure that appropriate learning will take place. Even though technology can be a great tool, it must be planned and managed in order to be effective. Technology should be used in real-world applications to promote meaningful learning for students with learning disabilities.

> Teachers can draw on technology applications to simulate real-world environments and create actual environments for experimentation, so that students can carry out authentic tasks as real workers would, explore new terrains, meet people of different cultures, and use a variety of tools to gather information and solve problems. (Means, 1997)

Students can use the internet to access links for subjects that correspond to IEP goals. The additional practice will be beneficial in strengthening targeted deficits in an enjoyable activity. Programs such as WordQ, Write Out Loud, IntelliTalk II and SmartHelp assist those with learning disabilities to succeed (Ability Hub). Games such as SimCity can help rural students to view the larger world and dynamics of a city (Friedman, 1999). Human tutors need to give support along with the software for the student to gain the most success. Students can use Interactive TV, video conferencing and access libraries online. Bell (1997) stated:

> Technology deployed in education can help remove inequities between the schools of the inner city and the suburbs, between cities and rural districts….Technology can become the force that equalizes the educational opportunities of all children regardless of location and social and economic circumstance.

The presence of technology in rural schools is not a guarantee that the students are gaining academic benefit. Teachers often use computers only for drill work or as a filler and do not take advantage of the opportunity to open the world to the student. Students can use technology to design and access information for projects. Teachers can use the wealth of resources that are available through distance learning, CD-ROMs, video and the Internet. Teachers need to be creative and find programs that are equalizers. Properly planned technology can maximize student learning in rural schools.

Proper transitioning of rural special education students remains a critical problem due to the limitation of services and opportunities for transitioning experiences in the student's home community. The challenge for rural special education is to find ways to address the need for proper transition services. Not all students will be able to stay in the rural environment, as their experience base and opportunity for employment are limited. Are they prepared to move and function successfully in a real world situation? How can schools prepare them to overcome that obstacle? For example, how do you teach students to maneuver in a city, to take a subway, a bus, a train, an airplane, if they have never had the experience? How do schools teach these basic functional skills? Varied technologies and programs to open the world to the learning disabled student are available. As we learn from past experience that transitioning special education students in rural areas has not worked as it should, the new vision for the future is that the continuing advancement in technology be used as a tool, along with proper teacher support,

which would enable students to be successfully transitioned into our global society. Where there is no vision, there is no progress.

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Effective Program Development: Redesigning the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Teacher Education Masters Program at Minot State University, Minot North Dakota

The purpose of this paper is to describe the steps which should be taken when designing and successfully implementing a new educational program, in this case a masters degree program. In August, 2005, I was hired to create a new deaf and hard of hearing teacher education graduate program at Minot State University. I was given the authority to design the program according to my professional judgment and had final say regarding its philosophy, structure, and requirements. While initially I was pleased that MSU administration had put such trust and faith in my abilities, I soon realized what an awesome responsibility I had and chose to take a different path. This paper describes the model I ultimately followed during the creation of a graduate program at MSU.

When revising a current program or developing a new one, it is crucial to seriously consider the following steps: 1) Define a philosophy to serve as a guide during the development process. 2) Use a team approach from the beginning. 3) Evaluate the empirical literature to ensure a sound and valid program 4) Take a look at other programs. 5) Evaluate the needs of important constituents and stakeholders 6) Become intimately familiar with the administrative review and approval process 7) Study and include pertinent state and federal requirements and accreditation standards.

The first step in the program design process is development of a philosophy. This is one of the most critical phases, as the philosophy serves as a guide and a framework for the new program. The redesigning of a graduate program has the potential to be somewhat arbitrary, particularly if a single person is charged with the task. It is my contention that this first and crucial phase of program development should not be the work of one person, such as the program coordinator. Indeed, the entire design process of any major program should be guided by a team of knowledgeable professionals and stakeholders. Everyone intimately involved with the program and its development should be invited and encouraged to participate in the conceptualization of the philosophy. If a consensus on philosophy cannot be achieved, then success of the program cannot be guaranteed. In fact, without a strong philosophical foundation and full support of key members of the program, the development process itself is doomed or badly crippled.

The program design team at MSU adopted a comprehensive philosophy to more appropriately meet the needs of all students. Following this philosophy, the MSU program prepares teachers to work with students from a diversity of backgrounds. Our students are exposed to a range of accepted and effective interventions. They learn methods for teaching speech, working with children with cochlear implants, and develop

skill in communicating through ASL and English. They receive exposure to Total Communication, Bilingual-Bicultural education, and oral-aural education. The objective is to teach students that one instructional approach is not appropriate for all deaf and hard of hearing children and each of the common educational approaches can be effective depending on the specific needs of individual students. Our goal is to prepare teachers who are open-minded and tolerant of the diversity of philosophies and pedagogies they will encounter in the field following graduation from MSU.

Not only does a comprehensive program prepare our students to be accepting and tolerant, it is also competitive and practical, as it does not limit them. It provides them with the knowledge to work in a wide range of educational programs and teach deaf and hard of hearing students from a diversity of backgrounds and perspectives. The reality is that most students graduating from teacher education programs will ultimately be teaching students who have a variety of needs and experiences. One size does not fit all.

As mentioned above, a team approach was employed during the program development process. Critical decisions cannot be arbitrarily based on the personal whim or preference of one person. It is essential that from the beginning, individuals from varying backgrounds participate in the creation of the new program. At MSU, team members included professors in special education, speech-language, and deaf and hard of hearing education. Also included were teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing with extensive experience working with early childhood through high school aged students. The goal was to avoid overlooking areas of need and build a truly effective program responsive to the needs of children in North Dakota, the surrounding region and nationally. To achieve this end, a variety of experts were consulted.

During the creation of a new graduate program, familiarization with the university review and approval process is mandatory. Neglecting one administrative step or procedure, no matter how seemingly minor, can unnecessarily complicate and lengthen the approval process. It is essential to become intimately familiar with timetables, procedural steps, and paperwork. However frustrating it may be, the introduction of new programs at colleges and universities is a highly bureaucratic process and willingness to play by the rules will expedite the process considerably. Leaving a seemingly insignificant box unchecked can create unnecessary delays and frustrations. Attention to detail is essential and making copies of all documentation is advised.

It is tremendously helpful to seek the guidance of a colleague knowledgeable about the process. This individual can provide suggestions for anticipating and addressing any questions faculty committee members and administration might ask. Having satisfactory answers ready in advance of committee meetings goes a long way towards ensuring a smooth and controversy-free review. Your mentor can inform you of oft repeated faculty and administration questions or concerns, which can be either incorporated directly into the proposal itself or adequate preparation can be made to address the questions in committee meetings if they arise. Learning from the mistakes, oversights, and prior experiences of program development leaders is highly beneficial and makes the approval process much smoother.

Another important step is an investigation of the philosophies, requirements and courses at other colleges and universities in the U.S. What do other competing programs offer and require? The goal is to create a program that is reasonable and logical, while also ensuring requirements are rigorous. It is desirable to develop a cutting edge program, but it is also important to remain consistent with academic requirements and standards in the field. While the goal is to be competitive, there was no attempt at MSU to entice prospective students by being trendy or offering gimmicks, but rather there was a focus on designing a program of study which is solid, unique, innovative, and state-of-the-art. Additionally, emphasis was placed on offering courses which teach interventions known to be effective in educating students with special needs. The hope is to attract students by offering a high quality program that addresses critical needs, rather than lure them with faddish enticements. The objective is develop a program which draws serious and high quality students by standing on its own merits.

Another critical step was to examine state teacher education requirements. The course of study in the teacher education program must align perfectly with state certification criteria. Obviously, it would be problematic if a state requirement were inadvertently omitted from the program, preventing students from receiving their licenses following graduation. In the same vein, accreditation criteria must also be addressed. Courses must be in perfect alignment with accreditation standards. In the case of MSU, we aligned course outcomes with CEC-CED standards (Council for Exceptional Children and Council of Educators for the Deaf).

Throughout the development process, the team considered findings in the empirical literature to provide a solid foundation for the new program. The creation of new courses was highly dependent on empirical research. Two areas of research were considered: 1) effective instruction and interventions and 2) inadequately addressed needs in the area of deaf and hard of hearing education. Regarding the latter research area, the team identified several needs which were pressing: inclusion, collaboration, itinerant teaching, early intervention, cochlear implants, hard of hearing children, and children with multiple disabilities. Also included in the new masters program were traditional areas of study: research methods, statistics, assessment, pedagogy, oral-aural rehabilitation, and foundations of deaf education.

Not surprisingly, attention was given to the recent federal mandate, No Child Left Behind. Consideration is given to the needs of teachers who must demonstrate that they are “highly qualified.” Built into the program is the option for teachers to demonstrate competency in a content area. Of course, this adds time to their program, but they will begin their studies with knowledge of this requirement.

The program itself was designed to provide a certain degree of flexibility and meet the needs of individual students. After all, we are trained as special educators, and it is appropriate for us to individualize programming for our students with disabilities. Individualizing for graduate students should not be neglected, as well. There are

opportunities for students to receive credit for some classes they have already taken and to take other courses which meet their own unique learning needs and professional goals.

In conclusion, the team approved five entirely new courses for the teacher education program at MSU. They include: Early Intervention for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Infants and Toddlers, Deaf Studies, Teaching Hard of Hearing Students, Inclusion Strategies with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students, and Students with Cochlear Implants. Rationale for inclusion of these courses was based on a careful and deliberate review of the empirical literature and the needs of deaf and hard of hearing children in North Dakota.

In summary, when revising a current program or developing a new one, it is crucial to conceptualize a philosophy to serve as a framework for the program and guide the development process. It is highly recommended that a team approach be used when defining the philosophy and ensure that the team members espouse the philosophy. It is also critical to build the program upon a solid theoretical and empirical foundation, examine and evaluate what other similar programs are doing (this does not require copying their structures and philosophies), consider the needs of constituents and stakeholders served and affected by the program, develop knowledge of and adhere to the formal program review and approval process of the institution, review and incorporate all state and federal requirements and accreditation standards, and consider the advantages of a program which is flexible and responsive to the individual needs of students.

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RURAL ROOTS AND SCHOOL REFORM: PERSONEL PREPARATION TO SUPPORT INCLUSIVE RURAL SCHOOLS

Declining enrollments in teacher preparation programs in special education and other high need content areas suggest that shortages of qualified teachers will reach crisis proportions in the near future. This crisis is especially likely to be problematic for urban and rural schools where shortages of special educators are already well-documented. Schools experiencing few problems finding and keeping special educators are most often located in suburban areas possessing ample resources and stable populations. Increasingly rural school report the use of long-term substitute teachers, out-of-subject certification waivers and emergency licenses in special education (Boe et.al., 1998).

Like their urban counterparts, rural schools often face serious fiscal difficulties which challenge their efforts to recruit and retain well-qualified teachers. Geographic isolation, inadequate facilities and low salaries contribute to poor working conditions in rural schools. Yet rural schools also present special educators with certain advantages. Many rural special educators are deeply connected to the community in which they teach. They know their students and their families well and under these circumstances, partnerships with parents are more easily established. Schools in rural communities may also be well-connected to the community, easing the effort to establish collaboration between schools and other social and educational organizations. Rural schools may be small compared to urban or suburban schools and this may also serve to facilitate collaboration between teachers and other specialists (Theobald, 2005).

Federal, state and local policies have underlined the importance of providing students with access to the least restrictive environment (LRE) since the original passage of P.L.94-142. These stipulations and the increasing number of judicial decisions supporting LRE have resulted in an increasing number of students with disabilities spending a greater percentage of their school day in the general education settings (United States Department of Education, 2002). During the past decade, schools have

adopted inclusive models of special education in which children with disabilities: 1.) attend the neighborhood school they would attend if they were not disabled; 2.) the percentage of students with disabilities does not exceed the proportion of children with disabilities in the general population; and 3.) all supportive special education services required to address the special needs of students with disabilities are available in the general education classroom (Janney & Meyer, 1990). Despite the fact that the special education community is divided over whether or not inclusive classrooms can meet the needs of all students with disabilities, it is clear that preparing all teachers to teach all students well has become critical (Pugach, 2005)

Given the unique challenges and special circumstances of special educators in rural settings, personnel preparation expressly designed to support special educators in rural schools may be crucial. Theobald (2002) and others point out that rural teacher education is seldom accompanied by the accolades provided to those who prepare teachers for work in urban schools. Yet the circumstances of teaching in rural schools may make preparing special educators just as challenging and important as teacher preparation for urban schools. Teacher beliefs about self- efficacy may contribute to the retention of special educators in rural communities and are, therefore, important to address. Personnel preparation strategies that provide opportunities for individual choice in learning support teacher self-efficacy. Socializing teachers to network and provide one another with support in communities with limited resources outside of the school implies that skills in technology may be important. The diversity of school and teacher characteristics in rural schools suggests that teaching a variety of instructional and behavioral management strategies is essential in personnel preparation.

In this manuscript we present data gathered as part of an evaluation study of a personnel preparation project designed specifically to meet the needs of general educators interested in acquiring teaching competencies in emotional/behavioral disorders (EBD) for rural inclusive schools . Findings from focus group research conducted during the project describes the perspectives of the twenty-six general education participants about the project and about various aspects of teaching in rural schools. Data gathered from interviews conducted one year after project completion details the perspective of project graduates about the inclusive teaching of students with EBD in rural schools, school reform and the effects of the personnel preparation project .

The personnel preparation project focused on improving an existing personnel preparation program designed to enhance the supply of well-qualified, certified special education teachers to serve in rural areas and to improve the quality of preservice teacher preparation focused on inclusive schooling practice. The initiative was an attempt to respond to the documented need to expand opportunities for students with emotional/behavioral disorders to become active participants in inclusive classrooms by enhancing the skills of practicing educators. Rural general educators who were employed full-time were recruited to participate in the project. The project provided graduate level training and financial support for 30 students, enabling them to become fully-qualified as special educators (emotional/behavioral disorders). The project redesigned coursework and training activities in order to address the particular circumstances of teaching

students with emotional/ behavioral disorders in inclusive classrooms in rural schools. In addition, project innovations included revision of practicum procedures to allow students to demonstrate competencies in their home schools and the inclusion of parents of students with emotional/behavioral disorders in training activities.

In order to understand the effects of the project on student participants, focus groups were conducted with small groups of each cohort of students following their completion of the project. Each focus group session was audiotaped and transcribed. These data were analyzed in order to identify themes related to the project. Using methods of analysis described in the literature on qualitative research (McMillan & Schumacher 2001; Patton, 1990), four broad themes describing their perceptions of the benefits of participating in the project emerged:

The importance of relationships- Students emphasized the importance of establishing and maintaining positive relationships with students, parents of their students, other teachers and administrators. They viewed these relationships as a resource that helped them teach. They appreciated the opportunity the project provided them with to establish and maintain relationships with other students.

The need for a variety of strategies- "Getting lots of ideas" was a valued part of the project. Students described using a variety of strategies to teach and manage students' behaviors. Some of these ideas were described as coming directly from project activities but students also credited one another for sharing good ideas. They favored the idea of personal teaching style- "It works for me."

Managing teaching stress- Students described teaching as an increasingly stressful job. They often felt that they worked in a system that did not care for them or their students very much. They felt that schools emphasized test performance and achievement at the expense of student well-being. They sometimes described feeling isolated. They valued the project in part because it provided an opportunity for them to "vent" about their frustrations and problem solve as a group.

Advocacy and action- Students reported that the project made them more aware of the rights of individuals with disabilities, especially students with EBD. They believed that their participation in the project gave them a responsibility to advocate for students in their school in an active way. They were anxious to put more of their ideas in action.

The project also conducted interviews of 18 project graduates a year after they completed their studies in the project. Twelve of interviewees reported that since completing the project, they had remained in the same teaching position; six were now employed as special educators. All eighteen students reported that they had been involved in change initiatives that at their school related to inclusive schooling. When asked about the impact of the project on their teaching, all interviewees reported considerable change, often related to using specific behavior management or instructional strategies.

But, students also emphasized the impact of the project on their teaching confidence. They believed they were better teachers because they knew what to do. As one student put it:

> The project gave me confidence! Having confidence allowed me to go into the field of special education. It got my job! I am now getting a lot of experience with special needs students. I think experience is the best teacher, but the project gave me the tools and confidence to be a better special educator!

The student interviews also demonstrated that project students continued to be aware of the need to bring about change in how schools become more inclusive especially of students with EBD and their families. One student told us:

> The project did a fine job. But teacher training in general must provide instruction on how to successfully work with students who have behavior disorders for all teachers. Every year we see the need. We seem to have more and more students with these problems. Teachers fear them and react negatively to the unknown. We need reliable, reality-based information to help us deal with children.

The interviews also demonstrated that the project continued to impact students' use of technology to enhance their teaching. All interviewees described using it "more every year" and credited the project with having helped them do so. As one student told us in response to a question about whether she still used technology, "Tremendously! I'm no longer hesitant to assign computer time relevant to instructional goals and objectives (IGOs)! I use computers for parent and student communication, for grade and homework assignments and to present powerpoint lessons."

Finally, in order to evaluate whether the project had had an impact on the isolation teachers in rural school may experience, we asked each interviewee if they maintained contact with their cohort. All but 2 responded in the affirmative. As a project graduate told us:

> Many are now considered lifelong friends. We keep in contact through email, phone conversations and visits. It is nice to know you are part of a strong support group, not alone. You always have someone to turn to for advice and encouragement.

Data from the study has important implications for special education personnel preparation. The "lessons learned" include the following:

1. Contribution of teacher cohorts to professional development- Project students repeatedly demonstrated the value of structuring training activities so that students have the opportunity to know one another and engage in collaborative problem solving. They relished learning from each other and they used the relationships they established in the project as an ongoing source of support. Socializing professionals in this way may be especially important if teachers are to be successful in collaborating in inclusive schools where success depends on partnerships between educators. This may be especially important for rural training projects. Teaching in rural settings often necessitates partnership because accessing alternative resources at a distance may be too costly.

2. Need for a variety of instructional and behavioral management strategies- Project students emphasized the importance of understanding the theoretical basis (or rationale) for various approaches to teaching students with EBD and they valued the fact that the project provided them with a variety of theoretical perspectives. Yet, they did not necessarily become advocates for any one approach, preferring to try out strategies to see if "they work for me." They emphasized the fact that "it works for me" became the test that helped them decide whether a particular approach was effective. These findings raise questions related to the research to practice gap. It appears that many teachers of EBD struggle to resolve the contradictions between behavioral and therapeutic approaches to intervention and education of EBD students. This is an important area for additional research.

3. The necessity for ongoing, guided, yet personalized field experiences- Students reported placing a high value on direct personal experience as the best teacher. However, experience by itself did not necessarily lead to teacher change unless it was accompanied by reflection. It also appeared important that supervision include observation that could be directed to some extent by the student. The value of university supervisor as coach cannot be overstated, especially in personnel projects intended for experienced educators. These findings have important implications for reform in personnel preparation. As the field struggles to prepare "highly-qualified" special educators to meet the increasing demands, it will be important to maintain standards of practice in practicum supervision that enable experienced professionals to direct their own professional growth and make the experience meaningful to them.

4. Choice in professional development- Throughout the project, students reported valuing opportunities to make choices in how they participated in activities or completed requirements. Most often, they made choices based on their immediate concerns about teaching students or managing classroom behavior. This appears to underline the importance of teacher self-efficacy in the change process. Teachers want to be effective in their teaching and seek opportunities to improve. However, they are loathe to participate in top-down initiatives that they view as failing to account for their experience, beliefs and attitudes about the profession. The policy implications of these findings predict the failure of top-down efforts to bring about change in education and suggest that successful efforts must include "grass-roots" activities.

5. Importance of strategies for classroom and behavior management- Project students repeatedly described the difficulties their schools were experiencing managing students with increasingly problematic behaviors. In many instances, students believed that general education teachers lack sufficient strategies for managing classrooms and the multiple demands that have become part of the reality of daily classroom teaching. All teachers need professional development that addresses both classroom management (i.e., arranging the environment, establishing classroom procedures) and individual behavior problems (i.e., positive behavior support, functional behavior assessment), according to the findings of our project. They also need to have knowledge and skills related to school-wide climate and discipline.

6. Developing teacher confidence- Experienced educators in our project often lacked confidence in their abilities despite evidence that they were very good teachers. In several cases, it appeared that the project brought about change for these professionals by validating their beliefs and practices. An emphasis on the technical aspects of teaching should not preclude activities that address the affective, especially for teachers of EBD students. The importance of accounting for this in the design of personnel preparation programs is critical.

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A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CAPSTONE CLINICAL EXPERIENCE THROUGH THE REFLECTIONS OF TEACHER CANDIDATES USING THE TEACHER WORK SAMPLE (TWS)

Background

Today's teacher education programs are required to meet more rigorous state and National standards. The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) requires teacher education programs to meet NCATE standards. Two of these standards focus on the assessment of candidate content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and skills, and dispositions at exit level. These standards have been highly correlated with P-12 students' academic success. It is further indicated in the literature that teacher behaviors, their dispositions, and their beliefs in reflection on students' abilities to learn are critical factors for students who have special needs, and for those with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Keating and Oaks, 1988; Kozol, 1991; and Witherspoon & Thomas, 1997).

To minimize misidentification, alienation and exclusion, teachers must be prepared, trained and skilled to use a variety of strategies and approaches when assessing and teaching children with diverse backgrounds, learning abilities, and learning styles in their classrooms (Lerner, 2003). Thus, it is essential that during the teacher education process, teacher candidates' progress be carefully monitored and assessed in content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and skills, and dispositions. Early field experiences and benchmarks are established at various points throughout the teacher education program, however, the première benchmark used at exit level for several NCATE accredited institutions across the country is the Teacher Work Sample (TWS).

Program Description

The TWS is an innovative, systematic approach for helping teacher candidates capture and reflect upon the entire process of what it means to learn and to teach. Its function is to organize the capstone student teaching experience in such a way as to allow teacher candidates to monitor and reflect on their own progress, and to make data-based decisions throughout student teaching. The use of work samples to evaluate student performance is not a new idea in American education (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 2004). Educators have showcased or published samples of students' work in classrooms, halls, and school libraries. The teacher candidates' "work samples" have been used to demonstrate developing competence in their factual, conceptual, and interpretive knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Positive impact on P-12 student learning has been previously documented by clearly illustrating positive differences in P-12 performance based on percentages of students achieving their instructional unit goals (Mussington & Friedland, 2004)

However, breakthroughs in technology and computer applications in conjunction with the Internet have greatly expanded information processing, sharing, storage, and retrieval. These factors are expanding and enhancing instructional horizons. Now, TWS are being electronically archived as electronic documents and/or stored on CDs to use for portfolios, employment, and for other professional development purposes.

The Teacher Work Sample (TWS) (adapted from the Renaissance Group, 2001) requires teacher candidates to reflect on their performance during the clinical teaching experiences of planning, assessing student learning, instruction, and accommodating individual needs. The TWS is organized and evaluated on the basis of seven major components, each with its own cluster of performance indicators, and with its own evaluative criteria. The final component is the task of reflection.

Having reflected on how well they planned and implemented varied instructional approaches to learning goals that are aligned with content standards, assessed student learning, and accommodated diverse individual student needs, candidates must then relate these experiences to their own professional growth. They are required to discuss their teaching behavior, then to identify at least two professional development goals for themselves in their new career. To accomplish this task, candidates are asked to address the following practical areas in their written reflections:

1.) Which learning goals were most successful, and why?
2.) Which goals were least successful ,and why?
3.) to describe their performance as a teacher, and then,
4.) to identify at least two professional development goals for themselves, as new teachers, that emerged from their experience using the TWS.

In addition to the necessary feedback for teacher candidates and their cooperating teachers, this reflective format provides valuable qualitative data for teacher education program improvement, which in-turn, is needed for NCATE accreditation and National CEC Program Recognition.

TWS Methodology

TWS is set up in a systematic data collection format that facilitates triangulation among raters and facilitates mentoring for each person involved with the teacher candidate throughout the process regarding their strengths and needs for improvement. Each of the seven components involves pedagogically based teaching processes. The following component descriptors are adopted from the Renaissance Group (TWS, 2001). Each of the following components and their associated performance indicators are aligned with the university professional educational unit standards, NCATE, and SPA standards (for special education, CEC standards):

1. Contextual Factors – Teacher uses information about the learning-teaching context and student individual differences to set learning goals and plan instruction and assessment.
2. Learning Goals – Teacher sets significant, challenging, varied and appropriate learning goals.
3. Assessment Plan – Teacher uses multiple assessment modes and approaches aligned with learning goals to assess student learning before, during, and after instruction.

4. Design for Instruction – Teacher designs instruction for specific learning goals, student characteristics and needs, and learning contexts.
5. Instructional Decision Making – Teacher uses on-going analysis of student learning to make data-based instructional decisions.
6. Analysis of Student Learning – Teacher uses assessment data to profile student learning and communicate information about student progress and achievement.
7. Reflection and Self-evaluation – Teacher reflects on her or his instruction and student learning in order to improve teaching practice.

The TWS requires that teacher candidates devise an assessment plan that coincides with students' goals and objectives (or benchmarks). This is in-turn related to professional education unit, state teaching, and SPA or CEC standards. Quantifiable, performance-based measures are employed in the assessment of each objective or benchmark. The candidate then develops both formative and summative pre-post evaluations, with appropriate accommodations, adaptations, or allowable modifications to meet identified needs of diverse learners, which is a critical part of the assessment plan. Another essential component of the TWS is to describe student learning gains in measurable terms. In this component, Analysis of Student Learning, the candidate charts or graphs P-12 students' results, both for whole class and for small groups or individuals. For special education majors, these individuals or small groups must be children with disabilities. For all other candidates, they may have any particular learning difficulty or diverse learning need, for example, candidates may wish to compare the performance of boys to girls, or children with English as a second language to whole class performance. However, all candidates must compare both group and individual (or sub-group) scores to whole class scores from at least two of the lessons they have taught.

Finally, the TWS requires teacher candidates to reflect on their instructional unit, or integrated lessons taught, and identify areas for their own further professional development. In reflection, candidates describe what went well (and not so well) in their lessons, and make some positive suggestions for improvement in future teaching of that same content. This procedure requires candid description of their own professional strengths and needs. Moreover, this crucial component is receiving high emphasis from various accrediting bodies that value the development of reflective practitioners.

Analysis of Reflection Data

A rubric for the TWS was collaboratively developed by the Renaissance Group (2001) that has been field tested across 17+ teacher education programs nationally, and inter-rater agreement has been established to be adequate. Each of the performance indicators on the rubric identifies key teacher candidate behaviors and dispositions that must be demonstrated either at the target, or acceptable, or levels. Our Professional Education Unit has conducted inter-rater agreement sessions for TWS evaluators, achieving a Kaplan inter-rater agreement at 82%, which is currently acceptable.

The method employed in this study for analyzing candidates' reflections is Qualitative Comparative Analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1993; Ragin, 1995). This qualitative analysis model was extended to answer questions relevant to program improvement, so the process required the

following seven steps: 1.) Initially, data that had been collected from evaluators on the TWS rubric were sorted by reflection sub-components for responses to required tasks, and all responses were read to gain an overall sense of candidate perspectives; (2.) The second sort was by major emergent themes; (3.) Data was then coded and reviewed to establish linkages among themes. (4.) Next, candidates' reflective responses were compared to evaluator's comments regarding the four sub-components; (5.) Ratings were then compared with those of the previous semester's cohort responses to the four reflection sub-components; (6.) The TWS Committee identified programmatic changes implemented during the semester that may have influenced differential reflective responding; (7.) Finally, qualitative findings were compared for noteworthy differences between urban and rural placements.

Findings

Analysis of candidate reflections by sub-components of required tasks, revealed the following results: 1.) candidates hold a strong belief that successful P-12 learning is related to on-going assessment and detailed instruction; (2.) pre-testing of prerequisite skills and concepts is important, although it may not be given enough emphasis in classrooms today; (3.) and further, that many candidates were surprised at the results of their data collection and analysis of P-12 progress. Several candidates described how pre-testing showed them exactly where students were making their mistakes, which in-turn allowed them to differentiate instruction. They felt that challenging goals, interesting activities, and multi-cultural approaches engaged student learning. Many relied on peer-assisted learning to help individualize and build communication skills in the classroom. Candidates talked about the importance of focusing on process as well as operations. However, 4 out of fifteen, or 26 percent of candidates were unable to discuss any goal-related successes.

Reflecting on least successful learning goals, candidates indicated that more learning aides should be used in classroom activities, unfamiliar terms and words should be used within the context of classroom routines, and moreover that there is not enough time to go over essential concepts to mastery. Candidates indicated that existing pacing guides associated with curricula are not allowing students the necessary time to learn concepts, establish linkages with new vocabulary words, or practice operations. P-12 students need more time to practice operations and learn vocabulary. Interpretation requires time for building mature schema. Many candidates felt pressured for time to get everything done, saying, students need to understand what has been presented before moving on to new material. One candidate said, "My expectations were too high." Another student struggled with the inadequate level of technological support available. Still another was trying to reach a student who was suspended twice during the progress of her instructional unit. One student responded to the effect that students need to read directions.

Regarding professional development needs, many candidates were impressed with the level of knowledge and skills of their cooperating teachers as models, and with the TWS as a way of organizing their experiences, as a planning device, and as documentation of accountability. Candidates are asking for more information and practice in the development of inquiry skills, how and when to ask questions, and how to facilitate learning. Several candidates have expressed a need for additional workshops on how to differentiate instruction to better meet individual needs. They want to be more accommodating, and to await the students' best responses. One

candidate realized the need for more information on analyzing student progress. Most candidates were able to appreciate the notion that learning to be a successful teacher is a process that takes time and effort. However, 6 out of fifteen, or 40 percent of candidates were not able to identify their own professional development needs.

Major emergent themes identified by the 2005 candidates are as follows:

Aspects of Effective Teaching
Aspects of Ineffective Teaching
Professional Development Needs
Importance of Reflection
Engaged Learning
Systematic Assessment
Time Management
Environment, Equipment, Materials, and Resources
Cooperation
Motivation to Learn

Linkages are as follows:

Differentiated instruction positively affects classroom management.
Process is as important and product.
Data-based decision-making is essential.
Students need time to learn.

When comparing responses of candidates serving in urban and rural placements, no appreciable differences were noted, other than the integration of technology into teaching, which could reflect statewide differences in the distribution of resources. However, when comparing the responses of Spring 2005 to Fall 2005 candidates, significant improvement was noted from Spring to Fall in Design for Instruction. F test conducted at .05 for two factor variance revealed a $p = .0114375$. Significant difference was also noted in ability to reflect on practice and professional needs. F test conducted at .05 level for two factor variance revealed a $p= .011596$. This difference does not indicate improvement, but rather reflects the candidates difficulty in projecting professional development needs.

Discussion

The TWS project verifies and extends the idea promulgated by Burstein and colleagues (1995) in their report to the National Science Foundation, that educators cannot measure the effects of instruction without observing teacher interaction and exploring instructional decision making. Excellence in teaching necessitates rigorous and engaged learning activities, thoughtfully designed to meet learning goals that are aligned with state and national standards. Over seven semesters, from Fall 2002 through Fall 2005, data produced from TWS have consistently indicated improvements in P-12 learning, including students with diverse backgrounds and with special needs. This information is verified through candidates' reflections on the TWS.

These data-based snap shots have been quite informative, not only as an assessment tool for quantifying teacher candidate knowledge and skills, but as a way of informing our professors in

their respective professional education classes on areas they need to strengthen in their instruction. Moreover, TWS serves to close the recursive loop between how and what teacher candidates are taught in professional education and content area classes and their ability to use this information effectively in schools.

Implications

As a result of these findings, the TWS Committee of the Professional Education Unit has worked in collaboration with the Clinical and Field Experiences Director to implement the TWS in small, incremental steps with preparatory discussion and sharing built into Senior Seminars across the semester. Faculty has also been more diligent in introducing the TWS earlier in the Teacher Education Program, in assessment, curriculum, methods, and classroom management courses. Some students have been involved in helping faculty code the TWS rubric for CEC/NCATE standards. We are actively focusing candidates on the linkage between contextual factors, assessment, and instructional design. Finally, we are assisting them in developing a model for reflection that they can carry into their own practice as beginning teachers. Future research should zero in on candidates identification of their own needs for professional development.

Documentation through reflection of competence in teaching has a direct influence on the level of teacher affect, enthusiasm, and pedagogical tools they will bring into the Nation's schools when they become teachers. Moreover, teacher candidates working with students who are identified as having special needs, low English proficiency (LEP), underachievers, or students who learn differently need the highly structured, process and product oriented TWS methodology to develop their professional knowledge and skills before they graduate and embark on their careers. Learning to teach more responsively to individual learner needs is critical to the success of all the children they will encounter in our schools.

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The Good, the Bad, and the Really Ugly of Online Teaching

What's **good** about online courses?

As higher education goes into a new era of delivering courses to a variety of students, new pedagogy has to be explored. Given the extreme shortage of teachers in various content areas alternate and innovative means of recruiting and retaining people in the training programs are imperative. Part of the recruitment and retention strategy is online training. There are many positive features of online training. Online training allows non-traditional students to study at home. Many non-traditional students appreciate the feature of working at home because they must work, they have families, and at home training allows them to use their time for study and reading instead of traveling. It is cost effective. Online students not only save on automobile expenses, but also they may not need a baby sitter. They no longer have the added stress of traveling alone on disserted highways trying to pick up a child from a sitter late at night. They no longer have to be out in all kinds of weather. They can discuss, chat with classmates, visit the library, read the online lessons, and access relevant websites—all from their homes. If the instructor is sensitive to their time, they can chat at night after their children and families are fed and settled in for the night.

Online education allows for mobility from a job that is no longer appealing to one that meets their current employment needs and allows them to move into a new field. It is estimated that people change jobs an average of five times in their lifetime. It is also estimated that in our modern society people will make at least one major career change in a lifetime. Online education allows mobility for non-traditional students in pursuits of new career opportunities. Such independent learners can work on the acquisition of new knowledge and skills and make a more smooth transition from one work place to another, from one certification area to another, and from one degree to another.

The use of chats, discussion boards, and emails keeps the learning interactive among the students. Most students as individuals interact more in an online course than they would if they were sitting in a traditional classroom. Students learn just as much in an online course as traditional courses. Performances on exit examinations often demonstrate as good scores or better than those after traditional courses. If students miss a chat through some emergency situation, they can go to the chat history and print every

exchange. Class discussions in a traditional course have no such instant replay available for absent students. Chats are very useful for review of key concepts and clarification of misconceptions and misunderstandings.

The online lessons, library resources, electronic reserves, syllabus, calendar, tests and assignments are all packaged and ready for delivery when the course starts. It works best and is most supportive of the students to work through a calendar, which outlines the weekly activities and readings. A good quality textbook is a necessary support to the course. Online lessons may include printed text, websites, power points, narration, video clips, and a variety of means to get the ideas to the students.

Even the tests and quizzes are taken online. It is possible to use a variety of test formats such as multiple choice, true/false, essay, short answer, or combinations of these. The tests are already created, and the instructor can release them for access as the instructor desires. Also some instructors like to time the tests. Some instructors believe that this adds to the timeliness in completion and avoids allowing students to look up the answers. Tests can be taken one time or they can be set so that the students can have more than one attempt. The instructor decides how many attempts the students are allowed. Again exit tests seem to support that students are doing their own tests, readings and projects just as they would in a traditional course. Very few students reported feeling alone or isolated in their course work. Most felt supported by the instructor. To assist the students and support them instructors should probably answer emails everyday or at least within 24 to 48 hours.

For students, who are new to online education, there are student-training courses to help the students navigate the courses and familiarize themselves with the required technology. Also some instructors provide an "Orientation to the Course," which describes the general expectations regarding emails, email addresses, and paper preparation requirements.

Finally, the professor is very much more likely to hear from every student in the course at least once a week and be able to examine their thinking, analysis and synthesis of content than is likely in a traditional course especially if the above course features are used.

Through the team feature the instructor can provide private and/or small group feedback. Students can practice collaboration on projects. The instructor is able set up a variety of teams and numbers of teams for various learning purposes. Projects provide for authentic assessment opportunities.

The **really good thing** about online courses is that such courses allow for more people to be certified as teachers in areas of great need without disrupting lives, families, and jobs in the process. Regardless of where they are in the state, region, nation or world, people who are interested in furthering their education can do so.

What is **bad** about online courses?

The instructor may get the same procedural question from several students. However, instructors as do students learn from their mistakes. There is always the possibility of sending everyone an email clarifying the point especially after two or more students ask the same question.

Some students get overly anxious and email the instructor continuously. Sometimes redirecting them to a source of the answer is more useful for calming the situation than just answering the question. Such an approach makes students responsible for reading and comprehending and ultimately being independent learners. Again the instructor should use judgment in matters of redirecting rather than just telling. Sometimes directly telling the student is appropriate. An instructor would not want to add to the stress and frustration of a frantic student.

There are a few common examples of sources of problems. First, a minority of students has problems pacing themselves. A very rare few actually fall behind enough to just drop out of the program. Leaving the program is more frequently due to personal family problems. Even personal problems can be dealt with if the instructor knows about the problem before too much time passes. In the *Course Orientation* and/or the syllabus such procedures can be described for the students. The weekly day-by-day enumeration of activities helps the students keep the pace. Second, some students head straight for the tests right at the beginning. If the instructor or technicians have left the tests
Open/accessible, then the student may have to request that it re-opened, if only one attempt has been designated. It is best to close the link until time for the test. There is almost always at least one such student in every course. Just as some students skip straight to the test, some skip *Student Training*, skip the *Course Orientation*, some read only part of the syllabus or remember only part of the syllabus, and some delay taking the test. It is usually important to remind students that they have the test the first time and if they don't take it while it is available they may lose the chance to take it. It is usually advisable to attempt to find out from the student why he/she didn't take the exam, finish the paper, and so forth at the time each is due. Instructors should determine who has completed tasks even if they don't have time to evaluate the work right then. If the instructor suspects manipulation to gain extra time, the instructor can put in the syllabus that the instructor at his/her own discretion can deduct a certain amount for late work or tests taken late. Most people only get so many grandmas and grandmas can only die so many times. Instructors can always cite fairness to other students as a valid reason to get requirements finished on time, and such negative consequences may encourage a more timely response.

Regarding chats, it is possible for someone to login but not participate. The instructor needs to be clear that to be present on the login list is not enough. It is usually useful to give points for participation and spell that out in the syllabus. Remind the students you will base the points on the printed history of the chat participation.

In summary, **the really bad thing** about online courses is that clarity in written instructions and student comprehension of those instructions may need more clarification than the instructor had planned. Unless the instructor stays in contact with students and monitors their progress almost daily, time can get away and students be very astray before the instructor knows it. Online instruction could be as challenging regarding time management for the instructor as for the students.

The Really **Ugly** of Online Courses

The pre-packaging of the courses requires the instructor to do every aspect of planning and course components weeks or months before the course goes online. If the instructor teaches more than one course then the workload is that times the number of courses taught. The advance work also coincides with the current workload of the instructor. Because the interactivity with the students can be so great in volume, the amount of time it takes just to answer emails is often staggering. As courses are finishing and grades are due, instructor-advisors are registering students for the next courses. Again the labor and time demands are very extensive and intensive. As students register they become anxious to start and begin to double-check the start date. More emails are there for the instructor to answer. However, the pre-packaging becomes easier with repetition and a reliable course rotation schedule. Courses can be adjusted once certain weaknesses are noted either while in the current course or in the future when the course comes around again.

In summary, the **really ugly** part of online courses is the demands on instructor time, time management, and how labor intensive the online courses can be.

In conclusion, no matter how good, bad, or really ugly online instruction can be. Online learning and course availability is here, it is here to stay, and students generally prefer it once they try it. It is a part of the pedagogy. It is convenient for students. It is up the in instructors and the students to work together to make it a worthwhile and pleasant learning experience. The traits that would ensure success for both student and instructor are patience, organization, encouraging spirit, good work ethic, and definitely a good sense of humor.

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THE CONCERNS OF RURAL EDUCATORS TOWARD INCLUSION

There is no doubt that education has come a long way in serving children through inclusion as a method. In 1975, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act was passed. This legislation was enacted in because of an increased awareness that students with disabilities were being excluded from public schools and/or taught in highly segregated facilities. This act opened the doors to public education systems for millions of children (National Association of State Boards of Education, 1992). Additionally, the Americans with Disabilities Act was signed into law in 1990, as part of federal legislation. This civil rights law prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability by entities providing public and private education (Harkin, 1993). In an attempt to respond to legislation like The Education for All Handicapped Childrens Act of 1975, educators developed the practice of mainstreaming students. The implementation of this practice, as innovations often do, raised some staggering concerns.

Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, and Hall (1987), identified seven stages of concern that users, or potential users, of an innovation may have. These include: (a) Stage 0-awareness concerns, (b) stage 1-informational concerns, (c) stage 2-personal concerns, (d) stage 3-management concerns, (e) stage 4-consequence concerns, (f) stage 5-collaboration concerns, and (g) stage 6-refocusing concerns. Inclusion is an innovation that continues to confront school personnel. The nature of their concerns regarding this innovation will likely have an impact on the success of a district's efforts in implementing this practice as well as the general success of students.

Today educators are faced with the ever increasing implications of responding to federal laws and civil rights court cases that have been initiated by state and federal governments (Hill, 1993). School personnel realize that the policy of placing students with special needs in the regular classroom will be met with resistance. The concerns of teachers, administrators, parents, and students will need to be considered.

Methodology

The problem under investigation was the concerns toward serving children with special needs in the school district's inclusive classrooms to minimize problems in implementing recent changes in the way school districts serve special needs children there was a need to conduct an investigation to gain insight into school personnel concerns toward serving children with special needs in inclusive classrooms. The population for this study consisted of school personnel in Texas. The *Stages of Concern Questionnaire* (Hall, Newlove, George, Rutherford, & Hord, 1991) was used to gather the information. A survey packet was mailed to over 700 school personnel across the state of Texas. The total return rate included (68%) usable surveys.

Conclusions

When demographic data and concerns data were considered together, the following conclusions appeared:

1. School district size appeared to make no significant difference regarding the school personnel's concerns about inclusion.
2. The proportion of special needs children in the total student population did not appear to make a significant difference regarding the school personnel's concerns about inclusion.
3. The status of implementing inclusion appeared to generate significantly different kinds and intensities of concerns among school personnel.
4. Those reporting their districts to be in the planning stage were more interested than their peers at other stages in learning about inclusion, its management requirements, and its potential impact on students and teachers.
5. Those reporting their districts as fully implemented were significantly less concerned than their peers at other stages regarding considering alternatives to or replacements for it.

An analysis and interpretation of the *Stages of Concern Profile* for all personnel and the disaggregated data would seem to support the following.

1. School personnel see themselves playing a significant role when the district is planning for the implementation of inclusion.
2. Administrative personnel appear to be meeting their leadership responsibilities regarding the implementation of inclusion. They are significantly involved during the discussion and planning stage and less so when implementation occurs. They maintain their oversight responsibility regarding the management function and keep their options open by considering alternatives to or replacements for inclusion.
3. School personnel were uncertain whether inclusion is the preferred or most effective method for serving special needs children.

A review of the data reported by school personnel regarding their concerns about inclusion indicated the following:

1. Their most intense concerns were at Stage 0 – Awareness Concerns.
2. Moderate intense concerns at Stage 1 – Informational Concerns, Stage 3 – Management Concerns, and Stage 6 – Refocusing Concerns.
3. Less intense concerns at Stage 2 – Personal Concerns.
4. Few concerns at Stages 4 – Consequence Concerns and Stage 5 – Collaboration Concerns.
5. Therefore, it is probable that school personnel give little attention to inclusion but wanted to know more about the "how to do its" of implementation, were not concerned about working with others to

facilitate its implementation, and were thinking about possible alternatives for it.

Based on the data collected form the study, the following recommendations for further study are proposed.

1. Implementation can be thought to move through several phases, i.e. planning, initiation, on-site implementation, and institutionalization. The school personnel's role may change. If so, more needs to be known about the change role.
2. There is some indication that school personnel have a concern in the effectiveness of inclusion as a method for serving special needs children. Therefore, a study should be conducted to determine whether or not inclusion is achieving its objectives and doing it more effectively than methods utilized prior to its implementation.
3. All school personnel indicated that they were thinking about alternatives to or replacements for inclusion. A study should be conducted to determine exactly what they had in mind. Improved programs for serving special needs children could result.

Summary

A review of the data reported by 484 school personnel across the state regarding their concerns about inclusion indicated the following:

1. Nearly ½ of the school personnel surveyed were serving 500 or fewer students.
2. Eighteen percent of the respondents were in rural school districts in which the special needs population comprised 16-20%.
3. Two hundred ninety-three reported that inclusion was partially implemented.

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PREPARING CARING AND COMPETENT EDUCATORS VIA ONLINE PROGRAMS

Abstract: *Innovative online preservice programs can be effective delivery methods to train rural candidates in special education. Midway College and Georgetown College are two programs that offer online undergraduate and alternative certification programs for locally-based special education candidates in eastern and other rural parts of Kentucky.*

Background

With the shortage of teachers in special education, distance education has been an attractive and growing option for reaching candidates in rural areas. A number of these distance education programs have used satellite, interactive video, and live, interactive television. However, a growing area is the development of web-based, online and blended programs in special education. Some of these online programs have been designed for additional certification and professional development for persons who are already part of the profession, e.g. graduate level courses, individuals with some teaching experience.

However, an even newer area of development is initial teacher preparation through online technologies. Initial preservice preparation is a much broader task than providing a set of online courses to teach specific content and skills. Initiating new teachers into the profession involves

- articulating and developing dispositions needed to work in a people-oriented field;
- forging mentor relationships with qualified, practicing professionals; and
- supporting other social and emotional aspects that are critical to effectiveness and the commitment to remain in special education over time (so that the program is not a revolving door).

These become particularly problematic when candidates are not located in geographic proximity to the faculty or each other and may live in rural locations where current local services and qualified personnel are limited or staffed by emergency certified personnel.

Initial preparation also involves meeting a variety of National Council for Accreditation in Teacher Education (NCATE) standards relative to such processes as

- field experiences and practicum,
- advising and mentoring, and
- regular progress reviews or checkpoints (e.g., interviews, evaluation of portfolios) as part of continuous assessment.

However, these and other processes all take place while candidates are widely dispersed and in settings that are not traditional training sites and may have been lacking in special educators.

Finally, while a particular area of distance education to date has been in low incidence disabilities, online programs to initially prepare teachers to serve individuals with mild to moderate disabilities are a new innovation. These programs raise unique issues due to the necessary knowledge of the general public school curriculum and methodology, as well as the relationship to general teacher preparation, not just the special education component.

Consequently, an essential question and the target for this presentation is,

> ***How can an initial teacher certification program in mild disabilities be designed for online delivery to serve geographically-bound candidates?***

Preservice Models

The two institutions, Georgetown College and Midway College, are both small, private institutions within 20 miles of each other and of a major metropolitan area (Lexington, Kentucky), where a large state university is located (University of Kentucky). Since 2003, both colleges have developed initial special education programs - only in mild disabilities and only in an online format for off-campus, rural delivery to address the number of emergency certified special education teachers in Kentucky. Both use the same vendor for the course management system (LearningHouse).

Despite these similarities, the initial certification programs are designed for different target groups and consequently offer different models for discussion.

Midway College is an undergraduate institution, established in 1847 to prepare financially disadvantaged young women for teaching careers. Approximately 450 elementary education undergraduates are enrolled in face-to-face programs at the day/campus program and in cohort groups at nine extended campus sites located at different community college sites, primarily in rural Kentucky. These sites are part of Kentucky's "Two-Plus-Two" Program, a community college and four-year institution partnership to provide teacher preparation. Almost all Midway enrollees are women age 25-50 who are employed (e.g., as instructional assistants), have families, are coming back to college and often travel an hour or more to get to the rural community college sites for the Friday night-Saturday Midway education classes. All Midway enrollees across locations and cohort groups have the option of completing a dual certificate program (Bachelor of Arts in Education) by additionally taking the special education coursework online, with student teaching in their local community. Consequently, it is a blended program with online special education coursework enhancing the face-to-face instruction in elementary education; extended campus services (e.g. coordination of field placements, advising, etc.) are conducted on location, along with student teaching. Most off-site candidates, both elementary and dual program majors, physically come to the Midway campus only for graduation.

Georgetown College was founded in 1797 as a liberal arts college and has both undergraduate and graduate programs. Special education is only offered at the graduate level, as

an online Masters of Arts in Special Education, offered as a single certificate program. This program is designed to accept graduate candidates who hold a bachelor's degree with little or no teacher preparation coursework or have a teaching degree with no certification in special education. In keeping with standards set by the Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board for alternate route certification programs, the "alt cert" candidate must already hold a bachelor degree but may complete the preparation program while being concurrently employed as a special education teacher in a school district. Consequently, most of the Georgetown candidates are completing an initial preparation program while teaching in a special education classroom. The program utilizes a blended approach with on-line learning, once-a-semester training on campus, distance learning seminars, and mentorship support at the school where the candidate is teaching.

Initial Certification Program Features

Like any teacher preparation program, online programs for initial certification must address accreditation standards in the field. The following chart summarizes some of the general program issues and solutions used or in development at Georgetown and Midway.

Issue	Expectation	Solutions for Online
Admission to Teacher Education and Continuous Assessment of Performance on Teacher Standards	• Portfolio of artifacts organized by the Kentucky New Teacher Standards • Observation of performance in the classroom using the Kentucky Teacher Internship Program tools • Data collection and analysis of student performance variables	• Use of electronic portfolios and assessments to assure reliability across sites and to minimize logistics of portfolio submission and review offsite • Use of web-based data collection tools (e.g., observation evaluation forms) • Electronic data system for performance analysis, progress reporting, and aggregation of data by teacher standards
Demonstration of Content Knowledge	• Pass PRAXIS II for relevant certification	• Face-to-face preparation seminars on weekends on campus or at community colleges • Online seminars, study guides, chat room and discussion boards
Dispositions	• Development of attitudes, beliefs and professional values • Interviews and other assessments of dispositions • Affiliation with the institution as well as the special education profession	• Online emphasis on interaction and critical thinking • Face-to-face options outside of coursework • Training and use of local practitioners in interviews • Linkage with local special education directors and special education cooperatives • Frequent telephone and/or onsite contact

Field Experiences and Practicum	• Variety of sites, levels and multicultural settings • Qualified supervision	• Multimedia interviews with guest teachers • Connections with local directors of special education • Selection and hiring of college student teaching supervisors • Onsite mentors and college supervisors of practicum
Faculty Qualifications and Collegial Work	• Faculty committee work and consensus on programs • Sufficient full-time and doctoral level faculty	• Use of technology (email, etc.) to build virtual teams where faculty are not co-located • Careful selection and use of experienced online adjunct faculty
Support Services	• Library resources and materials • Registration and advising • Financial aid	• Use of online library resources • Cooperative extended campus library services and materials • Online applications with email, telephone, onsite and semester onsite "Town Meetings"

Program Delivery

Prerequisite Skills for Online Learning

In preparing for a program of service delivered online, it is critical that students possess a certain level of skill in navigating technology. To address this issue, several solutions were presented:

- At Midway, special education candidates have already completed both an introductory course in computers (general education requirement) and an education technology course (elementary education requirement) prior to beginning the online program.
- At Georgetown, a prerequisite survey of technology skills is required of all students entering the program. From this survey, students are either fully admitted with some online orientation, or are required to take a computer class to ensure some level of competence with equipment. SAMTOM software is required of all students. This software program walks students through how to navigate all aspects of Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Access, and PageMakerPro.
- Skills assessed include the use of Word documents, file and file folders, use of email, use of Excel and PowerPoint, use of web folders, use of web pages, use of postings and video clips, etc.
- A student demonstration video PowerPoint was developed to walk students through the specifics of navigating the course management system. An accompanying written handbook is available in adobe format for the students.
- Orientation to the course management system is required of all students. At Georgetown, face-to-face sessions are held in a computer lab where students actually experience

navigation of the course and demonstrate skills. The computer technicians assist with this orientation. At Midway, students complete an online tutorial.

- 24/7 HelpDesk assistance is provided for students and professors through the course vendor. Paid technicians with an 800-number provide immediate online or phone assistance for students to ask for help with computer issues, whether browser issues, etc.

Advising

There are numerous issues associated with advising candidates within the program. Whether students are undergraduate or graduate, they need guidance prior to electing to start the program, information on course selection and sequence within the program, and other issues such as job prospects and continued education. Several alternatives can be provided to address this concern, including:

- Telephone and/or face-to-face onsite or on campus personal contact and initial advising prior to program entry.
- At Midway, ongoing advising every semester via telephone with an electronic guide sheet record of courses taken and the schedule for the baccalaureate degree.
- At Georgetown, using an online session with chat opportunity for students to log on and discuss with their advisor issues they have. Appointments can be scheduled for the online time.
- Using a discussion board posting opportunity for student issues and colleague responses.
- At Georgetown, using a web page created by the advisor for advising with students.
- Providing email services for students so that ease of communication is not an issue and compatibility of servers is not an obstacle.
- Scheduling voluntary on-site seminars for week nights, Saturday, or Sunday afternoon sessions for topics such as PRAXIS practice, job interviews, creating IEPs, behavior and classroom management techniques, etc. At Midway, these are scheduled around the Friday-Saturday face-to-face elementary education courses.
- At Midway, student teaching seminars are conducted jointly with elementary candidates, with special education topics in an online course complementary to student teaching.

Instructional Resources and Materials for Students

Support services utilized by the colleges include:

- Using the Kentucky Virtual Library system.
- Access to online library resources from the home institution.
- Posting additional resources within the home institution virtual library system.
- At Midway, using the extended campus resources of the community college library, combined with Midway resources placed onsite.
- Using the KET (Kentucky Educational Television) United Streaming videos in courses.
- Using the video and audio capacities of the course platform and creating audio PowerPoints and other multimedia content.
- Using a specific web page for posting articles, instructional resources and internet links. It is possible to include a time limit function on the use of these materials for copyright protection.
- Working with collaborative partners such as school districts, cooperatives, and other universities to share resources.

- At Georgetown, contracting with a web master to keep current web pages for student materials and access to services.
- Contracting with the course vendor for 24/7 assistance.
- At Georgetown, mentors are provided to the candidates within the districts where they reside. A minimal fee is paid to mentors who meet criteria to provide assistance with questions and class homework assistance, and to provide models and secure experiences for the candidates.
- At Midway, candidates are partnered with a local special education teacher for field placement and support each semester, then are placed with a master-level experienced teacher for student teaching.

Initial Development of Online Coursework

The initial design of the online courses is a critical component. Given the context where students must pass state testing requirements for certification, aligning the content to these standards as well as the state performance standards (Kentucky New Teacher Standards) is necessary. Students in Kentucky must prepare professional portfolios and pass an internship year centered around these standards during initial employment as a teacher. Consequently, coursework is centered around "portfolio tasks" and the performances expected in the classroom, e.g., lesson plans, assessment of children, behavior intervention plans, etc. Some approaches in the development include:

- Developing the framework for all online courses in the program, assigning portfolio tasks and required content. Since both programs were new, without an in-seat special education program to build on, this was a major component.
- Designing each course into modules or "lessons", with specific objectives and products required for each weekly lesson. In the online format, it is critical that students keep up and have regular/weekly contact with the instructor. Both colleges use synchronous chat sessions with the class cohort each week as well as asynchronous discussion board activities.
- Selecting appropriate textbooks, preferably ones in electronic format or those with supporting websites. Texts now come with video clips, supporting media, case studies, study guides, online practice tests, etc. These can be used as assignments outside the online course platform to complement the content provided within the web lesson.
- Both colleges developed initial online courses. The amount of time needed to organize and lay out basic assignments and assessments is longer than for in-seat courses, and all materials should be completed before the course begins, preferably 4-6 weeks in advance. This expectation is greater than standard expectations for in-seat course development and needs to be paid as a development cost or as faculty load. Creating and adding multimedia can be a major issue for faculty time.

Ongoing Development of Online Coursework

Each semester as the course is taught, it is recommended that a "notebook" of materials, links, questions, projects, etc., be kept weekly by lesson. Courses are evaluated at the end of each course by students and the professors for reflection. Questions asked include:

- Workload of the course
- Usefulness of the course for teaching in classroom
- Amount of readings

- Material included within tests
- Availability of professor
- User friendliness of the technology

Faculty members review these evaluations each semester. Likewise, research and changes in the field are reviewed. Changes have to be made 2-3 months ahead of the next implementation schedule. As the course is taught, it is recommended that a notebook of changes and desired projects be kept. It is important to note that while the course is taught, the professor is spending quantities of time in emailing and communicating with students, as well as preparation, in-class time, and other preparations aspects. In order to have time to revise the course, it is important that updating online courses be incorporated into the load calculation.

Budgets should include course revisions, particularly content revisions and updating of tests, internet links, and additional resources. It is recommended that two months lead time for revisions be provided [minimum of one month]. Syllabi updates, text updates, additional readings, projects, assignments, internet links, updated videos or audio clips, etc., must be kept current. Most online companies require 4-6 weeks notice of change prior to the course starting.

Faculty Issues with Online Development and Delivery

One of the critical components in an online program includes the need to address the skills of faculty to design and deliver the courses, which is very different from the classroom delivery system. Faculty training must be provided in several areas including

- course management system capabilities;
- instructional methodology for online;
- review and update of online content;
- continuous improvement and update of technology.

In order to address this area, several suggestions were offered:

- If using an outside vendor, secure contractual assistance from the vendor for training and updating faculty utilizing the technology. Additionally, it is important to name the amount of initial training, update training, and on-request training time. A written training manual is also a necessity. Further, it is important to have 24/7 assistance available to the faculty as they design and move into the delivery of the courses. Faculty members become disenfranchised when they have to trouble shoot the technology in addition to being prepared for the content delivery.
- Budgeting for faculty to experience an online class themselves in some course work to expand their professional area of expertise is invaluable to help internalize how to conduct an online class.
- Having annual debriefing sessions with online faculty provides an opportunity for faculty to share experiences, share information about the students and issues within the program, and to network with each other.
- Using a faculty chat room assists the faculty in sharing common issues and experiences as well as providing immediate assistance on issues.

- Providing faculty web pages for use with their students encourages faculty to continually update information related to their courses and themselves. It provides for a different availability to students and may require some faculty philosophical discussion.

Institutional Instructional Technology Services and Expertise

In any institution, the instructional technology department becomes the department to network in order to utilize online services. However, it is also critical to recognize that online course delivery may be only one of multiple objectives of that division; in reality, online instruction may not be their area of expertise. Therefore, when preparing to establish online delivery, it is important to recognize any limitations in the institution's IT department. Many times, the equipment and software may be provided, but the technical support for content development is not available. Likewise, 24/7 assistance is not always available. The amount of assistance for individual faculty is also dependent upon the individual's skills with course delivery. Staff in the IT department may have expertise in hardware configurations, etc., but in smaller institutions, seldom have expertise in content development and instructional methodology. Consideration of these issues must be figured into faculty support as well as budgetary issues.

There are numerous issues within the technology supports that also must be addressed such as:

- staff provision of equipment—at office and home
- virus protection
- student access to updated software and compatibility issues for downloading and viewing course material
- email communication system
- storage system for maintenance of course records, student files, and documents necessary for evaluation, etc.

Course Delivery Demonstration

The presentation demonstrated the following course delivery features as examples of the discussion points:

- lesson structure
- lesson assignment information
- lesson discussion board
- lesson exam features, including use as an informal weekly communication between student and instructor
- team functions, including separate chats, discussion board and files.

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ESTABLISHING SOCIAL PRESENCE IN ONLINE CLASSES

Distance education (DE), especially online instruction, is gaining in popularity as an effective strategy for expanding access to instruction, particularly for individuals living in rural communities significant distances from institutions of higher education. An indication of the rapid growth is observed when comparing the 1997-1998 trend of only 1/3 of the nation's post-secondary institutions reporting offering any distance education courses compared with 2000-2001 data showing over 1/2 of these institutions reporting such course offerings. This growth was accompanied by increased enrollments and expansion in the number of separate or different course offerings (Allen & Seaman, 2005; Lewis, Snow, Farris, & Levin, 1999; Waits & Lewis, 2003). Since that time, growth in DE and totally online classes has continued to soar with as many as 2.35 million students taking online classes in 2004 (Allen & Seaman, 2005; Carnevale, June, 2005).

East Carolina University has seen a dramatic increase in the number of students enrolled in online courses. Between 2000 and 2005, our numbers increased from 500 to 5,000 online students. In the Department of Curriculum and Instruction in the College of Education alone, DE student credit hours increased from 3,808 in 2000-2001 to 12,856 DE student credit hours during 2004-2005. The Special Education Program (within the Department of Curriculum and Instruction) saw growth from 26 DE sections in 2001-2002 to 71 DE sections in 2004-2005.This dramatic increase in DE special education classes has been in response to the need to prepare more special education teachers nationally and statewide. The number also reflects growth resulting from our totally online MAED program in special education and a blended DE (i.e., online and face-to-face) undergraduate program in partnership with community colleges. Both of these programs were developed for DE delivery to meet the unique needs of residents of rural communities who may live up to 3 hours from the closest institution of higher education with a teacher training program.

Literature Overview

Student – Faculty Concerns

Although many students have welcomed the expansion of DE classes, others have felt they learn best through face-to-face interaction with an instructor and other students, resulting in the perception that online instruction puts them at a disadvantage by being too impersonal or isolated (Beard & Harper, 2002; Robertson & Klotz, 2002; Rovai, 2002). Some have also

expressed perceived limitations regarding the quality of interactions with and feedback from the course instructor (Jennings & McCuller, 2004). These two issues, interactions and feedback, are among the factors believed to contribute significantly to effective DE instruction (Swan, 2001).

Providing Feedback

In a learning environment where students and instructors are separated from one another by physical distance, and in which written communication is the key to all interactions (Gray 2002), feedback becomes an important issue in helping students to maintain interest and to be successful with course content (Klinger, 1992). Attention must be given to timeliness and quality of feedback, both of which have been concerns with online instruction. As noted above, some students have reported receiving limited feedback in online classes, while others have indicated that feedback becomes mechanical and impersonal (Jennings & McCuller, 2004).

While students prefer for feedback to be personal, feedback should also be specific and helpful to students (Mason & Brunning, n.d.). However, faculty members have found that providing feedback in online classes can be much more time consuming than providing feedback for face-to-face classes (Jennings & McCuller, 2004; Hermann & Popycock, 2003).

Social Presence

Establishing social presence in online classes has been suggested as a way to increase interaction in online classes and dispel the feelings of isolation. Social presence is "the degree to which a person is perceived as a 'real person' in mediated communication" (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997, p. 9). Establishing social presence helps students to feel more comfortable in their interaction with instructors and research indicates that establishing social presence in online classes increases the level of student satisfaction (Gunawardena & Zittle). Aragon (2003) reports a growing body of research supporting the positive effect of social presence on learning. Finding ways to establish social presence within online classes may prove helpful in reducing attrition and increasing learning.

Strategies for Establishing Social Presence

The following discussion will use a conceptual framework of social/situational orientation to learning from Smith (1999) in presenting strategies to establish social presence in online classes. These include developing relationships among participants, communicating to develop communities of learning, and applying knowledge through engagement.

Developing Relationships

Some simple strategies used at the beginning of a new online class can foster the development of relationships. One strategy, frequently common in face-to-face classes, is having students introduce themselves in the class. This can easily be done in online classes using a discussion board or chat feature, by which students may tell about themselves, post a photograph, or create a personal poster. In rural settings where high speed Internet access may not be available, using asynchronous sharing of information on the discussion board may work well. When technology resources are greater, using the synchronous chat and video use may be possible. Creating an electronic classroom photo album further allows students to showcase their passions.

The instructor of an online class may assist in establishing relationships with students by personalizing emails or feedback to students and by using a conversational style in written course materials. Additionally, keeping brief records of information that online students share about work or family allows the instructor to make reference to these things during course correspondence. Writing course materials using the same student-friendly language that would be used in face-to-face interactions rather than the language that would be used in writing for a professional journal further helps to convey human interaction.

Communicating to Establish Communities of Learning

Designing online classes to establish communities of learning through increased communication requires giving attention to the types of interactions that might be important within a course. One way to do this might be using a question forum on the discussion board allowing students to post questions about the class, where everyone in the class has the benefit of "hearing" the question. Likewise students can be encouraged to respond to the questions of their colleagues. This increases the supportive communication between students rather than limiting the communication to student-instructor interactions.

The unique features of some technologies can be used for increasing communication. Some technologies convey clearly that a human has read the assignment and provided precise feedback. For example, this may be done with a tablet PC, which allows the instructor to write on the document with digital ink in ways similar to handwritten comments are provided on paper copies. This can also be done through video and audio files using multimedia tools such as Visual Communicator® software, Mp3 players, and voice comments within Microsoft Word®. Short video clips of the instructor provide a glimpse of the instructor's personality while sharing information on assignments and content. Audio files provide a quick portable way to disseminate course information and an avenue for encouraging reflection and higher order thinking. Microsoft Word ® (same) voice comment feature allows students to hear the inflection of the instructor's voice providing a dimension of emphasis and clarity to feedback.

Applying Information and Building Knowledge

The activities and assignments within online classes should be designed so students engage in and apply newly acquired information. Having students work in online groups enables them to discuss and complete assignments that involve application of the course information and the development of knowledge. Just because students are within groups online does not assure that there will be interaction and development of knowledge. Palloff and Pratt (2005) suggest that instructors can design an environment to enable group empowerment by including strategies such as the development of a group contract, time for assignment completion, and group roles. Furthermore, instructors can require students to use the communication features within their group page inside the class, or at a minimum document communication outside of this environment on the group page so that everyone in the class has access to the information and the instructor can view participation. Allowing students to respond to questionnaires about collaboration and to write a reflection about the group process enables students to self-assess. Moreover, projects focused on real-world application allow students to take the course information and apply it to their work settings.

Finding tools to deliver necessary content and provide a means of clarity and motivation is essential to online teaching and learning. One such tool is the use of MS Microsoft Agent® a free tool that is a component of the Microsoft operating system. Using the agent to introduce a topic and provide a step by step tutorial not only delivers necessary content but also provides a human touch or personality to the instruction. The agent allows communication to become established using familiar human mechanisms such as facial gestures, body language, lip movement, eye contact, and verbalizations such as sighs and joyous excitement. The agent can take on many roles such as the serious professor or the class clown that demands the class attention. In these roles the agent provides an "unexpected" element that focuses the attention to the task at hand with a storyteller/narrator that coaches the learner. As with any learning tool caution is needed to avoid overuse so that it does not become mechanical or blasé.

Placing the tools in the hands of the learner to practice essential skills is another way to ensure that learners have obtained skills and can apply new information from the class to build an essential knowledge base. One example of this from our program is the mailing of assistive technology toolkits. Students in the class are sent a box of 12 software and hardware devices that provide a connection to assistive technologies they have researched on the Internet for previous assignments or have seen in classrooms or clinics. Such a tool kit provides the opportunity for students to complete skill competencies and to explore uses for each item in their own work environment. Having students work at their own pace and use their preferred learning styles demystifies the technology and enhances the relevance of these tools. Access to a common set of tools creates an interface of commonality and familiarity to enhance interaction among students.

Summary

Online coursework appears to be an effective delivery mode to prepare special educators who live a distance from institutions of higher education. While this medium has great potential for providing instruction in rural areas, instructors need to give careful consideration to strategies for developing communities of learning. This paper has provided several ideas instructors may consider as they engage in online and DE instruction. Establishing a repertoire of strategies and technologies provides online instructors with multiple avenues for retaining their own teaching styles while enabling students to explore the social and engaging opportunities in online courses.

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LEARNING ACTION RESEARCH ONLINE: A PRELIMINARY EVALUATION

Online instructional programs provide access for prospective and experiences special education teachers who live in rural, remote areas. Many of these individuals are also interested in completing Master's degrees as part of their professional and career development. Many graduate programs have thesis or capstone courses that require distance education strategies associated with online education. However, online graduate course design strategies are not always geared to the realities of adult learners who are also fulltime special educators. Therefore, strategies supporting these special education teachers are vital if they are to successfully complete the last stage of their graduate programs' research.

Action research is becoming a popular capstone course for graduate programs in education. Understanding the successes and failures of online, graduate action research course(s) is necessary if our students are to become successful graduate students and classroom special education teachers. An evaluation study was conducted to understand the effectiveness of an online, graduate action research course design as well as the meaningfulness of the action research process on the course's P12 classroom teachers. This paper will: a) briefly outline the educational literature perspective on action research, b) provide relevant university and program background information, c) describe the programmatic context and needs that drove the development of an online, graduate action research course that also served as a capstone experience for a masters' degree program, d) outline the study's design to evaluate the effectiveness of course's design and impact on students' perceptions of action research, e) identify the evaluation findings and f) discuss the implications for course design.

Action Research

Action research is an inquiry model that guides educators in a systematic study of their own practices for the purposes of improving student learning, encouraging empowerment, and promoting healthy school environments (Stenhouse, 1975). Calhoun (1993) furthered focused action reason as a disciplined inquiry for the purposes of improving teaching practices, the schools and the teachers. Specifically, action research provides the teacher with information needed to make instructional decisions about students' learning outcomes (Keith, 2001).

Initially, the model was used by experienced teachers and K12 staff development directors for the purposes of investigating their own curricular issues and promoting their professional growth. In the mid-1990s, action research courses began to be found in graduate programs as well as teacher credentialing programs. Specifically, action research projects have become embedded

into student teaching field experiences, as well as graduate and professional degree programs at the M.Ed. and Ed. D. levels. Recently, a few action research courses have been instructionally delivered as online courses for professional development of P12 educators (Crow, Bachman, Spencer, and Adams, 2003) and teacher education programs (Lara & Malveaux, 2002). While it is encouraging to see online action research courses increase availability to rural special educators, there is little, if any, investigative studies that examine the effectiveness of these online action research courses, in terms of design and impact on students' perceptions of action research on their teaching practices, students' learning as well as a sense of self as teacher.

National University

National University was established over thirty years ago and represents a unique format called the 'distributive' model of higher education focused on adult learners and non-traditional students. The student body and faculty work in Learning Centers located in rural, suburban, and rural areas throughout California, including; Redding, Sacramento, San Jose, Stockton, Fresno, Bakersfield, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Costa Mesa, and San Diego. San Diego is houses all of the administrative offices. The University offers all of its courses in a one or two month format; in evening hours (5:30 -10:00 pm); and using on-ground, distance education and online delivery strategies to for every course taught. . The faculty at National University is composed of full-time faculty and adjunct faculty members, with a ratio of about 1 to 3, respectively.

From the inception of NU, professional teacher credentialing and graduate education programs were a key and vital component university structure. Beginning in the early 1990s, teacher education began to the central place in the NU landscape, including credentialing of special education teachers along with their master programs. By the late 1990s, special education's enrollment began to steadily increate; thus, requiring more faculty in the state-wide system. Around the beginning of 2000, NU initiated a distance education system designed to deliver all of its courses in an online format. As a result, students could take their special education course on-ground, online or a combination of delivery formats. By 2001, only the first half of the special education credential program was available online. The full online program was available by the end of the 2002-2003 academic years. Currently, National University's College of Education represents about 63% of the student body and the Department of Special Education certifies an estimated 600 students per year as well as having over 1900 students working in the programs.

The Special Education Program

The Master of Science in Special Education is a School of Education graduate level program that requires core courses followed by advanced specialization courses. Courses are offered both onsite and online. This program of study is designed for educators and other professionals who want to become knowledgeable about educational learning problems and teaching strategies to enhance student performance (Sebastian, Schwartz & Duckett, 2006). All courses, except the assessment course, field experiences, and student teaching are delivered in an online environment. During the past four years of operation the online program has grown rapidly. Currently over 25% or 369 special education students complete at least one course online. Additionally over 400 current students will have completed more than half of their program online.

By Fall 2002, all masters' students were required to complete a thesis level courses, including Instructional Leadership Development (ILD) 680: *Research in Education* and Special

Education (EXC) 694: *Thesis in Special Education* courses. However, by autumn of 2003, many students were failing to complete the thesis level class due to the extent of the requirements as well as the very busy nature of the program's adult learners. Furthermore, "Faculty report(ed) that students are struggling with the rigorous requirements of a thesis. Specifically they are not well prepared to complete the extensive literature review, develop appropriate research methodology and gain Institutional Review Board approval for the study" (Sebastian et al, 2006, p. 11). While very few students had completed the thesis; many more were struggling at various stages of completion. As a result, overall enrollment began significantly shrinking in National University's masters' degree special education program; an even more meaningful statistic for private higher education institutions.

Therefore, in April 2004, an action research course, EXC 637 was designed as the capstone course for the masters' students who didn't wish to go on to complete a terminal degree in special education. It was decided by special education program leaders that students would continue to complete ILD 680: *Research in Education* course prior to beginning EXC 637. In doing so, the ILD 680 students would continue to be prepared on issues in research and guide students in the development of the first three chapters of their final capstone class. Therefore, once finished with ILD 680 and their first three chapters, the students would then enter the thesis or the action research course for completion of their respective capstone experiences and chapters 4 and 5.

Like ILD 680, the new action research course would also be designed as a two-month course. Additionally, like the thesis course (EXC 694), the action research students would also have an extended time past the two-month mark to collect and analyze data as well as prepare and present a written and verbal presentation of their projects. However, as EXC 637 was being designed, it became clear that students completing ILD 680 did not understand the nature of action research nor were prepared at all to move into 'the implementation phase' of collecting and analyzing their data. As a result, it was recognized by the EXC 637 course designers that students were going to enter the course a) not understanding the action research process and b) having completed the so called 'first three chapters' with a wide spectrum of possible inquiry projects that were not at all suited to the action research format nor approach. Therefore, the action research course would need to be developed to teach students who had a wide array of instructional needs. Course developers believed that some ILD 680 students would have three completed chapters aligned to a masters' thesis, while other students may have a proposal close to an appropriate action research—and everything in between these two ends of the continuum. Additionally, the course would be designed to be taught online; furthering defining the course design needs.

As a result, EXC 637, Action Research was developed to be taught as an individualized class, structured around the five action research chapters that included: Unit/Chapter 1—introduction to the problem, Unit/Chapter 2—review of the educational literature, Unit/Chapter 3—action research project design, Unit/Chapter 4---analysis of findings, and Unit/Chapter 5 conclusions. Additionally, the course also included units on: a) Introduction to Action Research, b) Implementation and c) Sharing the Project (written and verbal presentation formats).

Therefore, the action research course had eight units. Each unit was introduced with a PowerPoint presentation describing the unit's rational, linkage to previous and upcoming units, learning outcomes, assignments, and instructional strategies. Each unit was designed with 'learning activities' that students could choose to use to guide their thinking, planning, and activities for that particular unit. Additionally, the online course was designed with detailed and

fully described project information called Project and Paper Guidelines. These guidelines provided students with exact specifications for each chapter's activities and requirements. The guidelines were posted in a variety of areas of the online course. Moreover, the course was designed so that students had at least 12 months to be complete the course, and to do so according to their own needs and circumstances. Finally, the course was structured so that during the first week of the course, students sent the instructor their ILD 680 papers for the purpose of evaluation in relationship to the action research project requirements of EXC 637. By the end of the first week of class, the instructor had read each paper consisting of three chapters, determined an assessment, and assigned appropriate activities referenced in the various course units.

After students started the first online course in May/June 2005, it became very clear to the course instructor and designer that during the first week of the course, the students would be better served if they analyzed and assessed their ILD 680 chapters against EXC 637 chapter requirements as well as recommended the adjustments needed and which course units they needed to complete. Therefore, an 'Assessment Analysis' assignment was tied to the students' first week's activities. The result of implementing the assessment assignment was clear; students were much more highly engaged in the course, its requirements, unit structure and organization, and their next steps.

Evaluation Design

In an effort to evaluate EXC 637's course design and effectiveness, the course developers decided to create an online survey for those students who had taken the course during one of the first three registration periods, beginning May/June 2005. These three courses were selected for very specific reasons. Firstly, the courses represented many of the first EXC 637 courses taught online. Secondly, it was decided that as part of routine professional teaching practices, the course evaluation efforts would be limited to these three courses---taught by one professor; who was, also, one of the course developers. Therefore, because all collected data would be from volunteer sources, anonymous and confidential, IRB procedures were not necessary. Moreover, because the course professor was still working with many of the potential student respondents during the evaluation time period, all student names and specific data was collected by one of two course designers and not shared with the other course designer and respective EXC 637 teaching professor.

The three EXC 637 courses were selected that corresponded to three different registration time periods: May/June 2005, August/September 2005 and December/January 2006. These course enrollments were: 13, 6, and 9 students, respectively. The evaluation instrument was an electronic survey with 17 primary questions covering the two stated purposes. In a 'welcome' email message, participants were asked to download the attached instrument, read the attached instructions, complete the survey on their computers and return the completed surveys as an email attachment. It was estimated that participants would spend approximately 20-25 minutes answering the questions. All survey informants would be assigned an identification number from a third party not involved in anyway with EXC 637.

Unfortunately, only three electronic surveys were returned within the requested time period. Therefore, it was decided that the course designer would conduct a telephone survey. However, in order to reduce the telephone participation time down to a reasonable 10 minutes, it was decided to eliminate about half of the written survey that included very specific information requested about particular course activities and elements such as the syllabus, unit expectations,

paper and verbal presentation guidelines, and the rubrics. Therefore, the telephone survey instrument was composed of 12 questions from the original electronic survey, including: 6 questions on course design and components, 4 questions on the action research process, and 2 open-ended questions about course effectiveness and needed suggestions. Ten of the 12 questions were forced choice that included 5 standard option cores on a very positive (option 1), positive (option 2), negative (option 3) and very negative (option 4) continuum with the fifth option, 'I have not completed the course yet'.

Findings

The results section is divided into three major sub-sections. The first section outlines the basic demographic information about the students as well as the response rates among various sub-sections of students. The second and third sections align to the evaluation study's two major purposes: course design and perceptions of action research.

Demographics

Twenty-five EXC 637 students (excluding the three students who had submitted electronic surveys) from the designated three courses were called an average of three times each over a three-day period. Overall, out of 28 students, three students completed the electronic surveys and 15 students (60%) completed the telephone survey. As a result, there was a total response rate of 64.28%. Organized by course registration time periods: May/June 2005--13 students registered, 9 students responded (9/13) 69% response rate. August/September 2005--6 students registered, 1 completed the electronic survey, 2 students responded to the telephone survey (3/6) 50% response rate and December/January 2006--9 students registered, 2 students completed the electronic survey, 4 students responded, (6/9) 67% response rate.

Course Design and Components

Six specific questions on the telephone survey focused on course design issues, including overall course structure, course navigation, and ease of finding information, instructor qualities, design in relationship to ILD 680, and the grading system. Of the 18 respondents, 15 people completed the telephone survey and three people completed/returned the electronic survey that represented questions detailing the specific course elements.

Overall, a vast majority of informants viewed the course design as 'very positive' or 'positive'. Three question topics (structure/navigation, finding information and course instructor) were rated 'very positive' or 'positive' by 17 of 18 respondents (94.5%). All but two informants rated the grading system as 'very positive' or 'positive'; while, the remaining two informants answered that they were had not completed the course and could not provide a final answer on the grading system. When the students were asked, 'given your ILD 680 progress when you began EXC 637 (Action Research), the course was:' viewed 'very positive (55%) and 'positive' (33%). The other 11% stated that they had 'not yet finished the course' and therefore they could not yet provide an answer. Finally, the sixth question asked students to think about the 'usefulness of EXC 637 in learning the action research process. Ninety-four percent of the respondents reported that the course was either 'very useful' (61.5%) or 'useful' (33%).

A further analysis of these six questions revealed one interesting issue and several non-issues about the course design of EXC 637, Action Research. On the interesting side, all of the students who took the class during the second (August/September 2005) and third (December/January 2006) sessions believed that EXC 637 was 'very well designed to help (them) be successful' in light of their ILD 680 progress. Other than that anomaly, there were 'no' differences found in respondents answers when: gender, session date taken, and level of project completion was analyzed.

However, the respondents' comments did provide further understanding into their 'very positive' and 'positive' ratings concerning course design issues. Although the students commented that ILD 680 and EXC 637 were clearly 'not aligned', they strongly believed that the ILD 680 course and instructors were to blame for the discrepancies. In spite of these beliefs and feelings, there were many reasons that the students did not stay angry at the special education program, university, or instructors. The clearest and most consistent comments focused on EXC 637 instructor qualities that strongly mitigated the students' frustrations over the ILD 680 alignment issues. In deed, 94% of informants viewed the action research professor as 'very useful' in their online course experiences. The respondents quickly and easily reported the instructor was the key factor in their course satisfaction. Specifically, the students noted that the instructor qualities needed were: a) very available to the students through email and telephone contacts, b) instructor initiated contacts, c) had a very positive attitude as well as comments, d) flexible, and e) very knowledgeable. The EXC 637 students were willing to 'totally re-do (our) projects' because of these instructor qualities. Also, the informants believed that the online, graduate action research course was designed in very flexible, individualized, and 'understanding' ways so that the students could take the time needed to modify their projects, complete the course, adapt to a busy lifestyle, and gain more information about their topics. Additionally, there were many comments that described the course design elements as 'concrete', 'specific', 'clear', and 'detailed' in terms of the type of information provided on; a) course expectations, b) project expectations, and c) action research. If the students self-reported their course progress as 'done', 'almost done', or 'more than ½ done', then their course design comments reflected a wider view of the course and course design. However, if students considered themselves less than '1/2 way done', their comments reflected a narrower course design perspective by referring to only on one or two specific course element aspects, such as; the action research examples, textbook, and/or the project guidelines. At the end of the telephone and electronic surveys, the EXC 637 respondents were asked to comment on the 'effectiveness' of the course. In this open-ended question format, the majority (90%) of informants stated that the course '… was very well designed' and the course was the major factor in learning the action research process as well as guiding them in designing and implementing the project. Furthermore, the students were asked to provide 'suggestions that would improve the course'. When given this chance to provide specific comments geared to course improvement, the vast majority (85%) of the respondents stated that they 'thought the course was very well designed and they didn't have any suggestions'. The most common suggestion concerned the 'align ILD 680 so that it focuses on action research and supports EXC 637'.

Action Research

As with the course design questions, the vast majority of EXC 637 survey respondents were 'very positive' or 'positive' about the action research process as well as the influence of action research on their professional practices and perspectives. Asked if action research was meaningful to them as a teacher, 88% of the respondents answered "very meaningful to me as a

teacher' (78%) or 'meaningful to me as a teacher' (11%); one student answered 'not meaningful to me as a teacher' and another student said she had not yet finished the program. Additionally, when asked if '… the action research process used in this class' had an influence on their teaching practices, 33% said that it had "very positively influenced my teaching practices' and 50% noted that it had 'positively influenced my teaching practices'. However, only 55% of student respondents reported that the class had a 'very positive' or 'positive' influence on their student learning. Further explanations indicated that 22% of the students did not find an influence because their projects did not apply to their students and another 22% had not completed the course and couldn't determine the influence, yet. As a result of using action research, 89% of the informants stated they were more confident as a teacher and 11% (2 people) reported that they were already confident as a teacher. Finally, EXC 637 students were asked if they would continue using action research: a) 39% (7/8) stated 'always', b) 61% stated 'sometimes', c) 5.5% stated 'maybe' and d) no one stated that they would 'never' use action research. The respondents' comments clearly identified the reasons for their 'very positive' and 'positive' beliefs about action research. The overwhelming reason focused on the belief that the action research significantly and positively effected 'my classroom', 'my knowledge', 'directly related to my teaching' and 'directly related to what I am doing in my classroom'. Students reported that they greatly increased their knowledge about their identified topics, increased their skill base, and increased their knowledge about their students.

Implications

While student frustrations were potentially high upon entering EXC 637, several factors helped to alleviate these feelings; understanding these factors are important to designing most online, graduate courses for special educators. Firstly, action research directs the inquiry participants' hearts and minds to their own lives in the classroom, applying and developing relevant teaching knowledge as well as skills. In doing so, this depth of applied knowledge, and self-selected, passionately driven investigations increases students' dedication to course and program. Secondly, it is vital to design all courses, especially online courses with clear expectations and guidelines. Even more so, the respondents liked the course design because it allowed them to be flexible in their time management abilities and options. This is particularly important to National University's adult learners who are working full-time in the special education classroom, raising families, and involved in life's activities. Thirdly, having an online instructor who is flexible, very available through telephone and emails, initiates student contact, positive about the content as well as the students' potential, and is knowledgeable are 'must have' qualities; if students, programs and universities are to be regarded as successful and meaningful. The implication is crystal clear; the course instructor is the difference between success and failure of the student and course content. When providing a capstone course that exemplifies the best of one's program, it is essential that the instructor and course reflect the best that program, department and university have to offer their students.

Why these findings are very encouraging, there is still much to be done concerning the alignment of ILD 680 and EXC 637 classes as the capstone course series in the masters' program in special education at National University. At this point in time, the Special Education Department faculty members are working together to create a new, initial course that would align and support the action research project and experiences along with provide a strong foundation on research and introduction to action research. It is anticipated that EXC 637 will be changed to reflect the alignment results. However, the results of this primarily evaluation study provides clear

guidelines about the course design elements that are required to teach a successful group of special education teachers—also working on their masters' degrees.

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TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED CASE-BASED LEARNING IN MULTIPLE CONTEXTS: MATERIALS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

In the United States, institutes of higher education face significant challenges to produce sufficient numbers of fully qualified special educators to meet the needs of school districts (Billingsley, 1993; Boe, Cook, Bobbitt, & Terhanian, 1998). The Bright Futures Report (Council for Exceptional Children, 1998) indicated that while seasoned special education teachers are leaving the field at twice the rate of general educators, inexperienced and unqualified special educators with lower levels of commitment to the field are even more likely to leave. In rural communities, these challenges are exacerbated by limited resources, lack of access to high quality professional development or teacher education programs, the pervasive shortage of special education and related services personnel, and geographical and topographical barriers to a wide range of field placement options (Ludlow, 1998).

Recruiting and retaining teachers of students with emotional and behavior disorders (EBD) can be even more challenging. A study by Singh and Billingsley (1996) indicated that the highest burnout area in special education may be working with students with behavioral disorders. The difference in willingness to stay in the field was attributed to higher stress in EBD classes. This seems to be confirmed by Cegelka and Doorlag's (1995) report on attrition of special education teachers. They found that dealing with severe behavior disorders and managing challenging behavior was one of four skill areas that teachers rated themselves as least well prepared. Although teachers burn out or leave teaching for complex and varied reasons, the training that teachers receive is believed to be a primary contributor to their success or failure (Farber, 1991; Wrobel, 1993). Thus, the need to identify effective and alternative methods of preparing preservice and inservice special educators to work with students with EBD is critical.

One challenge facing teacher educators across the nation is how to effectively prepare these teachers-in-training to expand their knowledge and skill repertoires and enable them to "think like a teacher" about problems of teaching (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Wilson & Berne, 1999). Case-based instructional approaches engage students in a more authentic environment to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Elskind, 2001; Shulman, 1992). Multimedia cases allow interactive linking of multiple media such as images, videos, and sound within a case environment to create a totally realistic practice field for teachers to solve problems of teaching (Ayersman, 1996). Enhanced through technologies such as multimedia, electronic performance support tools, and online discussion groups, case-based instruction offers teacher educators and students opportunities for teaching and learning in new ways. Largely unstudied, however, is how teacher educators should most effectively implement multimedia, interactive cases to ensure that students learn and transfer these skills in the field. The purpose of this paper is to describe activities, materials, and implementation guidelines related to using one program from the Teacher Problem Solving Skills series of cases in a variety of formats.

First, we provide a brief overview of a three year Steppingstones research project studying the implementation of case-based instruction in multiple teacher preparation contexts to document the process, outcomes, and transfer of knowledge and skills to teaching children with emotional and behavioral disorders in applied settings. Then, we describe the materials that are provided in the dissemination modules prepared through the project for each of the programs in the series. These modules include content outline, relationship to CEC Content Standards, embedded activities, discussion questions, supporting tools, guidelines for implementation, and evaluation tools. A URL to a website is provided where readers can obtain more information on the cases as well as a link to the dissemination modules. Finally, a description of future research reports will be described that identify effective implementation practices for case use across levels and courses.

The Virtual Resource Center in Behavioral Disorders-Research Consortium

VRCBD-RC is a three-year research project in the United States focusing on case-based instruction in higher education. The instruction incorporates the use of knowledge and skills to real settings, and integration of online discussions and chats to support collaborative learning with the materials. The research project is a collaborative project involving five universities; it is funded as a Steppingstones Innovations in Technology grant from the U. S. Department of Education. The project is ongoing during the 2004-2006 time period (Fitzgerald, Hollingsead, Koury, Miller, & Mitchem, 2004-2006). The goal of the project is to study the implementation of case-based instruction in multiple teacher preparation contexts to document the process, outcomes, and transfer of knowledge and skills to teaching children with emotional and behavioral disorders in applied settings. The technologies of focus include the use of 1) interactive, multimedia cases designed as practice fields, 2) electronic performance support tools that facilitate skill application in applied settings, and 3) online discussion formats for social construction of knowledge and shared problem-solving. Implementation methods vary

naturalistically across the multiple sites for both in-service and pre-service offerings. To date, 20 different implementations have been studied across a range of courses.

Multiple methods of quantitative and qualitative inquiry and analysis are being conducted within and across the implementation groups to examine how the use of practice field cases, electronic performance support systems for educators and children, and online discussion groups and chats improve learning outcomes and transfer of knowledge and skills to professional practice in applied settings. A grounded theory model is being built to identify a set of themes that characterize effectiveness and transfer across multiple sites. On these bases, findings that support effective implementation are drawn and replicated, leading to recommendations and resources to support widespread dissemination and adoption of the technology-enhanced instructional approaches.

Dissemination Modules

As part of the dissemination efforts, the research consortium is currently developing dissemination modules available at the web site (http://coe.missouri.edu/~VRCBD) to guide and support effective use of these hypermedia cases as identified through the project. Parts of the dissemination module for Program I, *Perspectives in Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, is described as an example in this paper. Each module contains six components: program information, instructional activities, application bridges, supporting tools, evaluation rubrics, and indexing to CEC Standards.

Program Information

A content outline is provided for each program that describes the opening challenge to the user, brief bios and background information for each of the students portrayed in the cases, declarative information provided within the program (e.g., glossary of terms), interactive activities embedded in the software, computerized support tools available to the user, and additional instructional resources for instructors. Program I, for example, with its emphasis on the use of theoretical perspectives for understanding and treating emotional and behavioral disorders contains descriptions and audio explanations of the biophysical, psychoeducational, behavioral, ecological, developmental (only in the early childhood case), and integrative perspectives by respective experts, as well as a series of behavioral disorders fact sheets that provide the characteristics, DSM-IV criteria, etiology, treatment, education and resources for each disorder.

In addition to the content outline and case bios, each dissemination module contains an expert concept map illustrating both the concepts covered in the case as well as the organization of the case. Figure 1 displays the expert map for Program I. More detail could be included in the map, but it is intended to portray the “big picture” of the concept. In this example, the main components of the concept “Programming for EBD” are: views and approaches, types of disorders, steps in planning, team, and placement. The action steps that are supported through embedded activities in the case are displayed as an interaction of: identify concerns, hold meeting, make a plan, and build a team that are unified through a defined perspective.

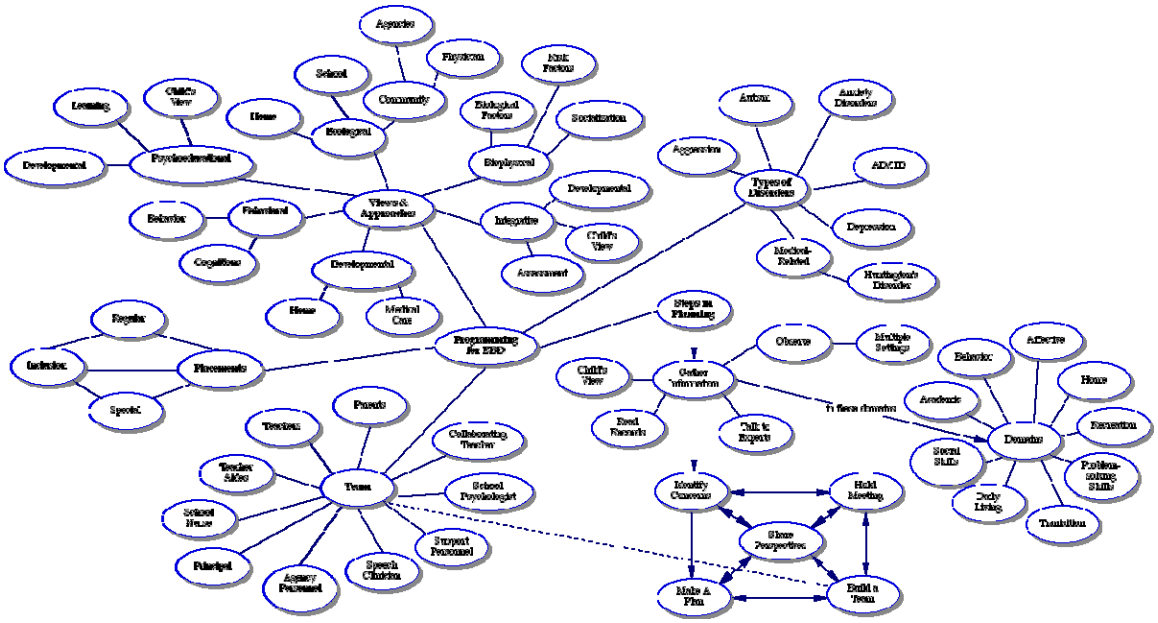

Figure 1. Expert Concept Map for Multimedia Cases in Program 1

Teaching ideas and strategies for implementing case-based instruction for each of the programs are organized into dissemination guides. Figure 2 (see following page) is the guide for Program 1. The guide provides ideas for teaching with the cases in each program that have been implemented by instructors in the research consortium. Teaching materials for the instructional and evaluation rubrics, and user software guides for using the cases and computerized tools, are provided and indexed to the dissemination guide. Following is a brief description of the components of the dissemination guide.

Instructional Activities Indexed to CEC Content Standards

Suggestions for instructional activities are provided for each of the programs. To assist instructors in selecting cases and activities for their students, each activity is indexed to the CEC Content Standards. This allows instructors to use the cases to anchor instructional activities as a supplement to other course materials as well as to use the cases as the source of content. For example, one instructional activity supplementing other instruction involves a simulated staffing in which students take on the role of the parent, teacher, administrator, special educator in a meeting in which they discuss their perspective of the student and determine the student's needs and the team's shared beliefs.

Another instructional activity uses a jigsaw cooperative learning structure in which students use the audiotapes/transcripts of experts discussing theoretical perspectives to gain information. Students first meet with a group of peers to become "experts" on their assigned perspectives and then return to their base group, comprising one "expert" for each perspective, to teach the other members of their group about one their perspective.

Dissemination Module for Program 1: Perspectives in Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

Instruction	*	Supporting Tools	Application Bridges	*	Evaluation
Activities within Software 1. Quiz to check understanding of case information 2. Write questions to take to the meeting 3. Write report on perspectives about case student and needed teamwork **In-Class Activities** 1. Create a present levels-of-performance statement based on case information. 2. Develop a full IEP for a case student including how the disability affects performance in general education curriculum. 3. Participate in a case conference taking a role of a service provider or parent; develop a programming and placement guide. 4. Complete a perspectives matrix in a group where each student serves as an expert on one of the theoretical perspectives. 5. Based on the information and needs presented in the case, plan interventions for the student. 6. Compare & contrast definitions and eligibility requirements across various state regulations and apply to case students. 7. Summarize the information on the planning guides in a report suitable for use with parents and/or other service providers.	#1 #10 #3 #2 #7 #10 #1 #4 #9 #10	**Planning Guides** Use these guides with the cases or applied to real work: 1. Identifying Concerns 2. Gathering Information 3. Meeting Needs 4. Building a Team	1. Do an individual or class behavior change plan from one perspective; gather baseline and change data, write results, and reflect. Provide information if the perspective changed over time and why. This activity requires information beyond what is provided within the case. 2. Apply perspectives learned in the cases to paper cases with follow-up to real students in field or classroom settings addressing behavior or academic concerns. This could include observation/volunteer work in special education classrooms.	#5 #1	**Rubrics** Use these rubrics to evaluate students work on the activities within the software: 1. Prepare for Meeting 2. Write Report 3. Planning Guides
		Online Discussion Questions 1. A) Observe the video clips from each case and choose one to describe. Discuss appropriate and inappropriate teacher behaviors seen in the clip and the student responses elicited by those behaviors. 1. B) Select two perspectives and provide appropriate teacher responses to the behavior you observed above grounded in the perspectives that you have selected. 2. Do you believe that there is a medical intervention occurring in any of the Program 1 cases? If so, what do you believe is the result of the medical intervention and what do you think would happen if medication were withdrawn? What behaviors might be manifested? How might they then be accommodated/replaced in the context of the school? 3. There are extensive records and data included in each of the cases. What do you think is missing from the cases? What other information do you need to participate in an eligibility meeting and the subsequent IEP meeting? 4. How does the amount of information presented in these cases compare to the amount of information in your actual experience? What are the implications of this for your practice?		#4 #4 #2 #8 #9	**Evaluation Activities** After doing an IEP in a class group, have students do an individual IEP on another case student and use this for evaluation.

Application Bridges Indexed to CEC Content Standards

Investigating the transfer of learning outcomes to other contexts and situations is a primary goal of the research project and so instructors in the research consortium are studying the extent to which activities promote these desired outcomes. One preliminary finding indicates that the use of application bridges, or activities that link the concepts from the cases to other real-life or contrived issues, may be necessary to support the transfer of learning outcomes. These application bridges, like the instructional activities, are indexed to CEC Content Standards to assist instructors in selecting cases and activities specific to course or content needs. By using the Content Standards as a reference, the activities become more applicable across numerous special education categorical labels (high incidence disability areas). It should be noted that by doing these activities, not all of the requirements of a Content Standard would be fulfilled just as any assignment you would give in class. The assignments are a building process of competency to fulfill the large Content Standard.

Computerized Support Tools

Preliminary findings suggest that the computerized support tools facilitate and encourage the transfer of learning to real-life problems. The tools available for students are highlighted and described to provide instructors information on how to use them both within the case and in other real-life situations. Tools available in Program I include the Planning Guides that provide a scaffold for students to identify concerns, gather information, meet needs, and build an integrated team.

Evaluation Rubrics

Researchers in the consortium developed rubrics for each program to assist in evaluating student assignments related to the cases. These rubrics provide instructors with examples to use with case-embedded activities and with the supplemental instructional activities or to adapt to their own particular needs.

Research Report on Effective Implementation Practices

The dissemination modules will be accompanied by a report on research findings that support implementation in general and special education; undergraduate and graduate level; face-to-face, web-enhanced, and online; and preservice and inservice courses. Current research is focusing on how the knowledge and skills gained from the instruction are sustained and transferred to classroom usage. Findings will include the effectiveness of computerized support tools and implementation of ongoing online mentoring/support groups following students' technology-enhanced case-based instruction.

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SPREADING ROOTS TO RURAL AREAS VIA ONLINE TEACHER PREP: PEDAGOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

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Are teacher preparation courses via hybrid or online delivery as good as those done in person? Can I be confident that my online candidates know what they need in order to be effective teachers? Am I short changing the students who will be taught by candidates prepared via online delivery? How does hybrid and online delivery change the teacher preparation department? University teacher educators, our panel, have individually grappled with these issues as they prepare teacher education candidates in special education. Here are our current thoughts based on reading and experience.

The cost of traveling to campus or relocating in order to attend courses on-campus may be prohibitive for some would-be special educators. Various institutions have experimented with alternate delivery approaches including interactive broadcasting. Utah State University has progressed from interactive broadcasting and now employs WebCT, while MSU Moorhead is utilizing Desire2Learn. The bottom line is, online instructional

delivery fits the needs for rural individuals who want to obtain a teaching license or credential in special education.

Each of this panel's members has grappled with their concerns about teaching, especially methods courses, solely online. One panelist notes that what he knows and believes is making a contribution to the teacher preparation of special education teachers. At MSU Moorhead, courses have been re-designed for online delivery supported by grant funds. As a condition of the grant the courses are to be online only, at least 3 years. No intermediary stage has been available to experiment such as with hybrid delivery.

To some extent we each have had to reconceptualize our pedagogy, that is re-think our individual theories of teaching and learning in order to factor in the technology (Bucci, Copenhaver, Johnson, Lehman, & O'Brien, 2003). One panelist mentions discovering and rediscovering that the science, art and craft of the special education profession teaches us new knowledge we may wish we had even just the previous week! In this process of reconceptualization we have considered depth of instruction, responsibility of the course designer, course structure, and course content. We generally agree that depth of instruction is important. The Designer has responsibility to include rigor and content that requires candidates to think in addition to completing activities. Peer interaction facilitates both academic and social support (Johnson and Johnson, 1989) but how do we encourage meaningful peer interaction through online instruction? Online may be more conducive to interaction for some. Shy individuals, for example, or those who typically do not speak up in an in-person class may be more comfortable sharing their thoughts via discussion boards or chat rooms. Synchronous chat rooms, utilizing an interaction protocol, is promising.

Becoming familiar with the possibilities of the technology provides some answers to the questions and some means of meeting the challenges. Having a pre-planned structure or template ensures that necessary components of a course are included, including reflection and peer interaction. Inclusion of time lines and deadlines keeps the class moving. Rhonda Ficek, (2005), Director of Instructional Technology at MSU Moorhead emphasizes that staying involved with candidates ensures not only student-student interaction but also teacher-student interaction. A hybrid format may be especially desirable in practica and student teaching wherein candidates must not only show knowledge acquisition but also demonstrate they can apply the knowledge with students. They show that they are developing and using important skills.

Web Based Conferencing, such as is available through Macromedia Breeze provides opportunities for candidates in practica or student teaching to interact with off-site supervisors or mentors, and reciprocally permits some viewing of the student teacher from a distance. One-way (and possibly two-way) viewing and conversations among the university supervisor, on-site cooperating teacher and student teacher is one possibility. Augmented by one or two on-site visits the opportunity to provide meaningful support and do accurate evaluation is possible even at a distance.

Perhaps use of technology to enhance pedagogy should be influenced by whether it will make a difference, initially for our candidates, and ultimately for the students they will teach and the family of these students. Ensuring high quality offerings can be further facilitated through two important practices, peer review and accreditation of online programs. Through peer review course designers may have peers sample a section of an online course and then provide feedback, feedback which is used to refine the course. Reciprocally, peer reviewers have the opportunity to not only *hear* about, but also *experience* new or different approaches to online instruction which they may elect to implement. Both parties benefit. Accreditation of online programs helps ensure integrity of content and rigor, as well as meaningful use of the technology. Accrediting bodies identify important components and standards, and require demonstration that programs have achieved minimal requirements before offering their seal of approval.

In summary, although licensure programs via online instruction may raise some important questions, experts in the field are experimenting and moving forward, developing effective responses to the concerns and providing more and better opportunities in teacher preparation.

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USING THE TABLET PC IN TEACHER EDUCATION AND K-12 CLASSROOMS

Delivering pre-service training and continuing education to individuals in rural settings has long been problematic for universities and teacher education programs. However, the growing shortage of teachers in special education has contributed to the critical need to deliver quality training to diverse settings using multiple formats (McLeskey, Tyler, and Flippin, 2004; Rosenkoetter, Irwin, & Saceda, 2004). The Special Education Teacher Education Program at East Carolina University (ECU) is addressing this need in a variety of ways, including offering undergraduate coursework at a distance in partnership with community colleges and delivering a master's program completely online.

Although faculty members at ECU embrace the notion and the charge to creatively meet the needs of students "at a distance", there has been much effort to ensure all courses delivered through different mediums are held to the same quality standards as are face-to-face classes. Therefore, faculty members are reviewing and conducting research that evaluates various aspects of online instruction, including potentially useful tools. Interestingly, some faculty members have found they actually use the new tools and strategies effective in online instruction to strengthen their face-to-face instructional practices. Tablet PC laptops are one example of a tool used first for online teaching that has since proved useful in a wide variety of instructional settings. This manuscript describes some of the ways ECU professors use tablet PCs in online instruction as well as in face-to-face settings.

Overview of the Technology

Tablet PCs are emerging as a tool that can be used by instructors for both content delivery and grading. While using technology to support the delivery of content and to grade is not a new strategy, the unique features of the tablet PC allow instructors to approach both in a different way. The screen of the tablet PC can generally be swiveled 180 degrees (making it easier to share work with a colleague or student) or laid flat by swiveling 180 degrees and closing the laptop with screen still viewable (making it easier to mark with the digital pen). Once flat, the user can use a stylus, shaped like pen, to

mark comments directly in the text of a document with *digital ink*, much like a digital signature for credit card purchases. Many of the tablet PCs also are equipped with voice recognition capabilities, or the ability to transfer handwritten text to a word processed format. Furthermore, many tablet PC computers retain the capabilities of a traditional laptop computer, aiding in content delivery through traditional software programs like Power Point, Excel, and Word. This versatility has influenced experimentation and action research with these tools by the authors in a variety of settings.

Tablet PC Use in Online Environments

While many people welcome the growing number of online classes and programs, some have expressed concerns regarding the effectiveness of these courses and the potential for student disconnect. Some students have indicated the perception that the impersonal nature of distance education makes high quality communication difficult (Beard & Harper, 2002; Robertson & Klotz, 2002). College distance education students have also reported the perception that online classes can be somewhat mechanical, resulting in feelings of isolation (Jennings & McCuller, 2004). Many instructors enhance communication in online classes by incorporating assignments that require group discussions or email interaction between the students. Increased interaction with classmates helps to eliminate part of the problem of isolation, leaving the need for effective student-instructor interaction. Two ways instructors can support effective web-based instruction are by giving clear feedback and increasing their interaction with students (Swan, 2001). Although many agree that frequent and detailed feedback is important in online learning situations, there is limited research on the best ways to personalize online classes and provide this feedback.

While there are many effective strategies for creating a sense of personal interaction between the student and instructor in online classes, one that ECU instructors have found very effective is using the digital inking feature of tablet PCs to provide feedback. Tablet PCs enable the instructor to provide precise, detailed feedback by handwriting digital comments directly on student's assignments in digital files. This handwritten feedback closely approximates the type of handwritten feedback students receive in traditional face-to-face classes. This enhanced technology seems to benefit both student and instructor. Students studying at a distance have indicated the perception that comments handwritten with digital ink are more precise and more personal, thus promoting a more human interaction and reducing feelings of isolation (Steinweg, Williams, Warren, and Allen, in press). These tools benefit faculty members by allowing them to provide feedback that is not only specific, but also that can be returned more quickly than with the use of email summaries, individual emails, phone calls, or other feedback devices. Foster (2005) notes that, "reading with a pen in hand, making marks and comments as you go, also makes it less likely that you will only skim and scan instead of reading carefully and thinking about the meaning of what you read" (p. 1). The instructor can simply open the file, comment on it, save the file with the comments, and return the file to the student. Before tablet PCs, instructors wishing to provide detailed feedback would read through the assignment, make handwritten or typed notes about the assignment, then type a summary of the notes into an email to the student. The time

involved in providing students with feedback often forced instructors to limit their comments to the bare minimum required. With a tablet PC, the instructor can provide detailed and personal feedback bringing in a human touch without sacrificing efficiency (Gray, 2002).

Tablet PC Use in Face-to-Face Environments

University Classrooms

Faculty members may find the grading capabilities, mentioned above, just as beneficial in face-to-face settings as in online settings. Typically in face-to-face classrooms, papers are collected in one class, graded, and then distributed with feedback during the next class. This process often works well, but there may be times when instructors wish to provide feedback more quickly. If students submit work electronically, the instructor is then able to use the tablet PC to provide efficient and direct feedback in a way similar to the online environment. Providing students feedback through digital inking is particularly beneficial when students can then use the feedback to prepare for learning activities in the next scheduled class. Often teachers of face-to-face classes will put the assignments with feedback outside of their offices for the students to pick up at their convenience. Digital feedback is especially helpful for students living in rural areas who travel long distances to come to class once a week. It allows them to receive their feedback without having to make a special trip onto campus.

The tablet PC offers presentation capabilities that combine the benefits of an overhead projector and a laptop. Current tablet PCs permit digital inking on most Microsoft Office© programs, which allows an instructor to project and "write on" Word files, PowerPoint presentations, and/or Excel spreadsheets. The digital inking feature encourages interactive activities such as, expanding PowerPoint notes based on class discussions, making revision and editing marks on papers with a group, calculating math problems and equations after a series of notes have been discussed, brainstorming as a group on a graphic organizer, or using the highlighting feature to pinpoint key entries on spreadsheets. Furthermore, the notes made during class, in addition to the original "clean copy", can be saved on the computer as digital files and emailed to students who require help with notetaking, students who missed class that day, or to all students as a reminder of important content learned in class that day. Additionally, these digital files can be more easily updated before each use and more efficiently stored than overhead transparencies.

University students may also find advantages in using tablet PCs in their university courses. For example, if faculty members are willing to provide digital copies of PowerPoint presentations and handouts, students can write directly on these pages and all of the notes for class can easily be stored together in a class file. The ability to take and save class notes and handouts in files on the computer rather than in multiple notebooks may reduce organizational challenges and the heavy load of books and notebooks required when taking a full load of college classes. This increased efficiency may lead to increased student outcomes.

Internship Settings

The portability and versatility of tablet PCs can potentially be useful for internship supervision. Most versions fit easily into a briefcase, bag, or bookbag, and can be used by an internship supervisor in a number of ways. A university intern progress report can be downloaded into the tablet PC prior to the observation, and can be completed (either via keyboard or digital inking) during the observation. As with any laptop, multiple files can be opened at once, thus allowing the observer to complete the intern progress report, script notes to use in intern feedback in a Word document, and sketch diagrams representing the classroom and teacher/student movement and interaction simultaneously. Simply switching from file to file and writing using digital inking for this process may be less distracting than tapping keys and/or shuffling paperwork in the back of the room. When using digital inking, the ability for the tablet screen to "lay flat" makes this process even less conspicuous as the internship supervisor can hold the tablet PC and write on it like a piece of paper. A frequent barrier to using laptops in completing intern observation forms is the need to give immediate printed responses to interns and clinical teachers. The use of technology does not necessitate giving up a quick response to interns. Inexpensive and portable printers are available for internship supervisors to use to print materials to share with the intern and clinical teacher before leaving the clinical setting. These printers have diminished in size to the point that they fit into the bag with the tablet PC.

K-12 Classrooms

Many of the advantages of using tablet PCs in university settings are also applicable in the pubic school K-12 setting. Classroom teachers can use tablet PCs to display the same information they would with a transparency and overhead projector. They can then add to that information with digital inking, and provide information in a transformative medium with which today's students are familiar. Teaching in the information age involves training our students for a world where all jobs and higher education will require the use of some form of technology, so it is important to effectively increase the use of technology in the delivery of instruction. While there is an expense in providing each teacher with a tablet PC and access to an LCD projector, the pay off comes in enhanced learning opportunities for students and the reduction in purchase of overhead projectors, boxes of transparencies, chart paper, overhead markers, and dry erase equipment. An additional benefit is the versatility of the tablet PC, which allows teachers to use the laptop capabilities of tablets for lesson planning, student grade management, communication, data management, and class webpages. In situations where students can submit work digitally, grading and feedback can be provided similarly to what has been described above. If students with computer and Internet access have lengthy absences, they can access and submit their work digitally and receive feedback and grading as described above. With an increased amount of class information stored on the tablet PC, the biggest impact teachers may feel might be the reduction in the plan books, loose pages, transparencies, notes, and papers to grade they must drag home and back to school on a daily basis. .

Although limited research exists regarding the use of tablet PCs for K-12 students, tablets have the potential to offer benefits to these students that extends beyond motivation factors that may result from their novelty. Research has shown the giving students laptop computers to support learning has increased student achievement (International Data Company, 2004). If the use of common laptop features can increase student achievement, then adding the tablet capability should enhance those outcomes by providing more ways to interact with content. Students can use the tablets as both a laptop and as a notebook. For example, while students are unable to solve complex math problems on a laptop, they are able to complete them using the digital inking, erasing errors, saving the final work, and then submitting electronically for grading. In the past computers have been used to encourage students in the writing process. While traditional computers work well for producing written products, they do not help the student go through the writing process. When using a tablet PC, students can map their thoughts, write their draft, engage in peer editing, revise their work, and publish a final version. Each step can be documented by saving to a digital file where teachers can evaluate progress. Saving student work in digital files throughout the year can help teachers document student progress without the extensive paper files required to do so for each student in each subject area. These digital files can be organized into an electronic portfolio documenting student achievement throughout the year. Backup files allow both students and teachers immediate access to student work without having to look through book bags, cubbies, desks and other places.

Tablet PCs also help teachers meet the diverse learning needs of students by providing the opportunity to use sticky-note files to post notes to student computers to remind them of key ideas, due dates, formulas, writing prompts, and activity directions. Many tablet PCs come with the feature to record sound in sticky-note files. Using this feature, students can dictate audio for a presentation, notes to themselves when prewriting for an assignment, or notes about homework. Teachers can use this feature to remind students of important dates or activities as well as for providing information for students with reading disabilities.

Tablet PC – Opportunities and Challenges

As computer use becomes more and more common in classrooms, both as a teacher and student tool, tablet PCs offer the unique opportunity to bring in the option of handwriting to computing situations. Handwriting and word processing can be incorporated in a meaningful way, for the provision of feedback, instructional presentation, or student use. As they become more common, tablet PCs may offer the opportunity to capitalize on different teaching and learning styles, and be a useful part of the instructional environment.

Despite the potential advantages, challenges can accompany any new technology, so patience and troubleshooting are critical. Even during the past two years, tablet PC technology has improved dramatically. For example, in earlier tablets, digital inking could only be used after converting the files to a specific format. In order to read a file that contained digital inking without a tablet PC, others then had to download a reader

software, or the files had to be saved in PDF format. This inconvenience of several extra steps for both the tablet PC user and the person receiving this information at times caused more difficulty than was worthwhile. However, the new versions of the tablet PC make it significantly easier to use digital inking with Microsoft® programs and then share files. While tablet PCs are still generally more expensive than laptops, making them out of reach for some schools and university programs, the price of technology continues to drop. Having the tablet feature on all laptops may soon be a reality.

This new era of learning brings about new challenges and opportunities. From online instruction to the increasing availability of technology tools in face-to-face classrooms, it continues to be important to evaluate the effectiveness of emerging instructional tools. As we add tablet PCs as well as computers to our instructional toolkits, more research needs to be done evaluating their effectiveness in increasing student-teacher interactions and improving student outcomes. In the mean time, we will continue to take advantage of the tablet PCs potential to keep the “human touch” while incorporating new technologies.

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