ACRES

American Council on Rural Special Education

ACRES 2008
Conference Proceedings
28th Annual National Conference

"Piecing Together Tradition, Legislation, and Innovation":
The New Patchwork Quilt for Rural Special Education

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INTRODUCTION

This collection of papers marks the 28th 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 deleivered in Charleston, West Virginia on March 12 -15, 2008. The theam for the converence was **"Piecing Together Tradition, Legislation, and Innovation": The New Patchwork Quilt for Rural Special Education.**

The authors of these *Proceedings* 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 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 multiple 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.

Britt Ferguson, Chair
ACRES Program Committee

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ACRES Conference Proceedings

Building A Social Skills Club

Peggy Hovatter
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BUILDING A SOCIAL SKILLS CLUB

Why start a Social Skills Club?

Human social behavior is nothing short of incredible. We are capable of transmitting an amazing amount of information with relatively subtle signals. By assessing just how often and how complexly we use social skills to navigate through our world, we bring to light behaviors that have become second nature to us. During your next visit to the grocery store, church, or local restaurant objectively observe yourself and others in the constant give and take of social behavior, and take note of the subtle cues, gestures, expressions, vocal patterns, and indicators used in those exchanges. Taking these skills for granted is easy to do.

The importance of social exchange for our well being is immeasurable. We crave sharing our space and ideas with our friends or others we encounter in life. Social interaction leads to some of the most meaningful human experiences: friendship, courtship, marriage, laughter, politics, philosophy, parties, etc. Because the value of human exchange is so great, we are forced to assess what adverse effects may occur if socialization is compromised. Children and adults with autism spectrum disorders often struggle to form social bonds or to socialize at all. . Individuals with these disorders can benefit from increased access to social events. The social skills club format can be the beginning of and the bridge to establishing quality social experiences.

Who to Include

Once you have decided to start a social skills club, it may be necessary to create parameters for your group. Different students have different needs and you may need to do some grouping, perhaps based on age or skill. It is important to recognize that the club you develop may not meet the needs of everyone who is interested. For those students who do not fit this model and parameters but still need socialization, other socialization opportunities that better serve their needs should be pursued.

Guidelines

The West Virginia Autism Training Center at Marshall University decided to replicate the social skills club in other parts of the state due to the response to the pilot project. Two years of experience with the club pilot project provided the foundation for this expansion. Part of the preparation was to create guidelines for club participation to help set clear expectations. Our guideline sheet for participants interested in joining a new social skills club is included below as an example.

Guidelines for Participation in the
West Virginia Autism Training Center
Social Skills Club Program

The WV-ATC social skills club pilot program has been up and running for nearly two years and several children and young adults with autism have participated in club activities to date. Positive outcomes such as friendship building, social and emotional development, inter-personal trust, and completion of group projects are only a handful of the abundant hallmarks of this pilot project.

Because the pilot has been such a success, WV-ATC will provide assistance in replicating the model in additional regions of the state. In order to maximize benefit for the participants, some guidelines have been developed to successfully support new social skills club initiatives. These guidelines come directly from the knowledge gained through trial and error with the original pilot project.

The guidelines are not designed to exclude certain participants but are instead designed to include participants who are a best fit for this social skills club format. Alternative social skills opportunities may be suggested for some participants seeking involvement and the WV-ATC will offer as much assistance as possible when alternative opportunities are recommended.

Guidelines

Participants must be registered with the West Virginia Autism Training Center (www.marshall.edu/coe/atc)

Participants must wish to participate in the program

Participants must have communication skills and be able to exchange with others in the group.

Participants between the ages of 5 and 18 will be enrolled in the program, and may be organized in groups according to age. Each club will be limited to a maximum of 10 participants.

Participants must have a diagnosis of Aspergers Syndrome or PDD-NOS.

Participants must be able to appropriately attend to and engage in program activities such as group discussions, group games, role-playing, and group instruction with minimal behavioral concerns.

Each participant and their caregiver will meet with a WV-ATC facilitator to discuss the details of the program before beginning

A follow-up meeting may be scheduled to review progress in or the expectations of the

program

The WV-ATC Social Skills Club Program will be free to all participants assuming a parent, community or family member, or other committed adult agrees to be trained by WV-ATC staff to take over the responsibilities of the program. Periodic visits from the WV-ATC staff will be made to answer questions or provide follow-up training.

When starting a new social skills club, facilitators should establish their own guidelines. Our guidelines had to be rather specific because we were introducing the club to an entire region of the state of West Virginia. The WV Autism Training Center's goal was to empower natural supports in regions by helping with the development of the club and then training others so that it would become self-sustaining. A strategy for fading support was developed so that our limited staff could begin a club, gradually train others to assume the facilitation responsibilities, and then move to other areas of the state to create new clubs.

Finding a Location and Setting a Date

At first glance, this aspect of club building may seem inconsequential. However, a safe and consistent location will best support ongoing social skills training. The following considerations are important in selecting a location:
safety
centralized location
ample space for movement and activity
an understanding location owner or supervisor
privacy
minimal costs to the participants
wall space for visuals
one open area versus several small areas

Facilitators attempting to start a club at a school will likely find ideal environments within the school itself. Schools are usually centralized for the participants and after school meetings may make scheduling easier. Facilitators who do not have access to school facilities or who serve kids from a broad geographical area may need to find community-based facilities for their club. Churches, community buildings, large corporate offices, or convention centers may be appropriate sites for a social skills club. The WV-ATC clubs have utilized local churches and have been scheduled in the early evening hours. In developing a new social skills club, the location and meeting time should be chosen to accommodate the needs of the students in your club.

Materials Needed for the First Meeting

As you begin your social skills club you will likely have activities, either from this book or ones you have created or learned that you would like to

include in your club meeting. To assure that visual supports are in place, you will need to plan ahead and bring some materials with you to the first meeting. The following materials are recommended:

large white paper that can be taped or placed on the wall
tape
markers
note cards in case social scripts or cues need to be written for students
visual supports that help illustrate potentially confusing activities
scissors
books or notes to help you present activity procedures
snacks (optional)

Our club meetings typically conclude with 15 or 20 minutes of snack time where the club members are encouraged to interact and play in reduced structure. This is usually when evidence of social bonding and enjoyment emerges as the club members create their own games, tell stories from their personal lives, or engage in fun physical activities generated on the spot.

Visual Strategies

Making the environment and your teaching as visual as possible is critical when guiding students with Aspergers or other pervasive developmental disorders. Research has shown that many students with Aspergers are intensely visual and learn best when pictures or other graphics are used to structure learning. In the club setting, we use large white paper posted on the walls of our club space to write or draw examples of activities or schedules for the evening.

Visual Strategy: sharing personal information

Club members write about news from their lives, summer plans, or special accomplishments from school, home, or community participation and then share that information verbally with their peers.

Visual Strategies: schedule of events for the club meeting

A visual schedule of events helps organize the meeting and allows the club members to anticipate what activities are coming up as the meeting progresses. Writing a simple schedule on the wall also creates a central "meeting area" where you and the club members can repeatedly gather

throughout the meeting to refocus, reorganize, and discuss activities that happened in other areas of the meeting location. We have found that this simple schedule is one of the most important visual supports we use in our club meeting format.

Visual Strategies: modeling and demonstrating

Facilitators can help jumpstart an activity by joining in and modeling some ideas for club members to get the ball rolling. Our experience has taught us that club members generally enjoy it when the facilitator is less a "teacher" and more "just one of the gang". Most club meetings involve an abundance of laughter and joy and participating in the visual process is one way to be a companion, not an authority.

The Meeting Set Up

The information shared in this section is meant only to help the beginning facilitator "get their feet wet" and is by no means a static approach to be followed to the letter. Listed below is a structure we have found to be extremely simple yet effective when setting up a meeting. Not only has it worked with one particular group week after week, it has also been effective in several replicated social skills clubs throughout our state. The length of your meeting will help determine how much time to dedicate to each aspect of social skills development and experimentation is really the best way to create a system that works for your club.

News and Accomplishments

Start by hanging a large sheet of paper on the wall labeled "News and Accomplishments". Then give markers to club members one at a time and ask them to write something that they have done since the last meeting, something they accomplished, or just any important information they want to share. Many times club members will write things about school, vacation plans, video game achievements, and even love interests! Once a club member has written on the sheet it is critical that they expand on the concept by telling the group more details about what they have written. As a facilitator you may need to prompt further verbal description by asking the club member questions about their news or event.

Everyday Expressions

Idioms and everyday expressions can be confusing for some of our club members, who often take a literal approach to language. For example, phrases like "it's raining cats and dogs" or "paying an arm and a leg" taken literally make

little or no sense. We practice these phrases by writing them on a large sheet of paper and having the club members guess the meaning of each phrase or a context in which they would use it. Then we write the actual definition next to the phrase and discuss. Sometimes it has been helpful to act out an expression to give it even further clarity. Several resources exist that compile hundreds of idioms or everyday expressions from which you may draw your examples. (Aspergers Dictionary, Book of Idioms, etc.)

Social Skills Games

In order to get club members on their feet we often play two or three quick and easy skill games. These games may include charades, eye contact games, phone calling skills, or other social games. Games that target social skills have been developed and a handful of games for social skills building can be found in published books. For further information, please refer to the list of books in our complete manual.

Theatre Activities

After the club members have played one to three quick social skills games, we usually facilitate one or two theatre activities. These activities can teach specific skills through theatre or can teach social skills through broad, abstract fun and socialization. Theatre games allow for repeated practice of a given skill or skills in a safe environment and are typically enjoyed by club members.

Group Project

The final activity before heading to our group snack time and goodbyes has typically been working on some sort of group collective project. Past group projects have included a Wizard of Oz skit, video or multimedia projects, art collaboration, high-interest skits about preferred topics, and group planning. Sometimes these group projects are prepared or rehearsed and then shared with the public either through video or live performance. The group project is a great way to build teamwork and trust while simultaneously allowing club members to share topics of interest with one another in constructive ways.

Snack and Goodbyes

Snack time is a wonderful moment during the club meeting for members to relax, be themselves, joke around, tell stories, and spend quality semi-structured time together. Also, parents usually take this opportunity to solidify plans for the next meeting, ask questions, or share stories with one another. As the club members wind down and relax the meeting ends and we encourage everyone to say goodbye to one another before leaving for the evening.

Getting Group Members Connected Beyond Club Meetings

Eventually, as time passes and club members change, club members may want to develop other opportunities to meet and interact with each other. Setting the club members up with the skills needed to meet outside of the club setting is one way to help friendships continue. Parents then become the facilitator and lasting friendships can and do develop. We have attempted to help club members become comfortable with meeting one another outside of the club setting by asking them to plan outings together. Typical things like going to movies, swimming, and meeting at parks or large community areas are suggested. One club member had his first birthday party with friends from the club and club members did an excellent job interacting outside of the club setting. It is important to set the stage for continued positive socialization beyond the social skills club.

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Deal or No Deal: An Update on Special Education Law

Deal or No Deal:
An Update on Special Education Law

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I . *The United States Supreme Court*

A.   The Supremes Speak:

In <u>Winkelman by Winkelman v. Parma City Sch. Dist</u> 550 U.S.____, 127 S.Ct 1994, 47 IDELR 281 (5/21/2007) the Supreme Court ruled by a 7 to 2 margin that the IDEA grants independent enforceable rights to parents as well as students. Accordingly, the court concluded that parents may pursue IDEA appeals in federal court without being represented by an attorney. The holding that parents have their own rights under IDEA has potentially significant implications. Watch for the caselaw to follow. NOTE: This decision applies only to federal court appeals of due process decisions. All parties agreed that a parent may appear at a due process hearing without counsel.

Six justices played an active role in the oral argument. Chief Roberts and Scalia focused upon the IDEA language that "any party aggrieved …," may appeal{Section 615(i)(2)(A)} and questioned what remedies the parents could obtain.. Their questions emphasized the parent's right to reimbursement and to procedural safeguards. Ginsburg wondered whether permitting pro se representation only for parents who could afford private school tuition would permit only wealthy parents to proceed.   Breyer and Souter took a more holistic approach reasoning that a parent has an interest in his child's education and that one could not distinguish between a parent's remedies and a child's remedies.   Reading the entire statute, they contended that educational rights belong to the family unit and not to individual members. Souter noted that Congress would not provide procedural safeguards to parents if they had no substantive rights to protect. Alito wondered whether the right to appear without counsel was of much benefit to parents.

Oddly, the biggest boost to the parents' case may have come from the lawyer for the school district. At least two justices were searching for statutory text showing that the parents had specific rights under the IDEA if they were to prevail.   The school districts' lawyer brought up the transfer of rights provision {Section 615(m)}which provides that all "...rights accorded to parents..." under the act transfer to

the student when she reaches the age of majority under state law. Scalia bluntly told the district lawyer that this provision hurts his argument.

B.   The Supremes Threaten to Speak but Choose to Remain Silent

Tom F.
In *Board of Education of the City of New York v. Tom F.,* 552 U.S. ___, 48 IDELR 239 (2007), the U. S. Supreme Court affirmed the decision on the Second Circuit Court of Appeals upholding the ruling that a parent of a student with a disability may seek reimbursement for a unilateral placement in a private school even though the student never received special education services from the public schools. The per curiam decision of the court was based upon the Court being equally divided, 4 to 4, with Justice Kennedy having recused himself. The tie vote limits the effect of the decision to the Second Circuit.

When the oral argument began, the most active questioners were Justices Alito, Scalia and Chief Justice Roberts. Souter and Ginsburg asked a few questions, and Bryer, Stevens only asked about one area each. Thomas said nothing. The thrust of the questions from Alito, Scalia and Roberts to the school district attorney concerned what purpose could be served by reading the statute to mean that Congress meant to require that a student with a disability be kept in an inappropriate placement for just a short period of time. The questions that Alito, Scalia and Roberts asked of the parents' attorney and the Solicitor General (who argued in favor of the parents' position) centered on whether the language used by Congress was really ambiguous and whether the intent of Congress was to keep "well-healed" parents who have no real intention of putting their children in public school from obtaining reimbursement. I was shocked by one argument made by the attorney for the school district. He showed a high level of disrespect for his state's due process hearing system. He stated that at a reimbursement hearing, the parents present a pile of evidence showing all the progress that the student has made at the private school. He said that there is a "dynamic at these hearings" where the hearing officer finds denial of FAPE because the private school provides a better program. If the state hearing officers are not applying the law correctly, the state should provide better training to its hearing officers and better oversight of its hearing system. The strongest argument by the school district was that the new language must mean something, even if only one more temporary hurdle before reimbursement may be claimed.

I was surprised that the parents' attorney and solicitor general did not argue more strongly that denial of FAPE for a short time was very bad- sort of a civil rights based argument. They touched on this but only en route to more elaborate arguments concerning the use of language, most specifically "only if," elsewhere in IDEA. Statutory construction arguments can be fairly tedious.

There seems to be a lot of misunderstanding about the meaning of the *Tom F.* decision. I have talked to a lot of people who feel that the Second Circuit decision, which was affirmed by default, for the Second Circuit only, by the tie vote by the Supremes, requires public school districts to reimburse tuition for many or all private school students. These folks are overlooking one important factor; before tuition may be reimbursed, the parent/student must prove a denial of FAPE. In other words, the school district must either prevent the parents from meaningful participation in the process or else write an IEP that is reasonably calculated to confer no more than trivial educational benefit to the child. Where a child is denied FAPE, the parents must choose between keeping the child in the public school and seeking remedies such as compensatory education and withdrawing the student and placing him in a private school while seeking reimbursement as the primary remedy. *Tom F*, was a rare case in which the student was never actually enrolled in public school. However, the parents had requested that the district prepare an IEP and the hearing officer and state review officer found a denial of FAPE. This is an important precondition to reimbursement. I believe that the reaction to *Tom F* is at least partly colored by the attitude of the federal government lately which seems to many people to be that the public schools are the problem and that private schools are the solution. Given that attitude of Congress, as evidenced by both NCLB and the 2004 reauthorization, and that attitude of OSEP, as reflected in the 2006 regulations, it is easy to understand why public school officials view the decision by the high court as somewhat sinister.

Frank G.
The U. S. Supreme Court denied certiorari in the case of *Bd Of Educ., Hyde Park V. Frank* __U.S.__, 48 IDELR 239 (2007). The Second Circuit decision involved the same issue as the Tom F. case,

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which recently resulted in an anticlimactic 4 to 4 tie, whether the parents of a child with a disability who has never received special education from a public school district may receive reimbursement for a unilateral placement of the child in a private school after denial of FAPE by the public school district. Interestingly, Justice Kennedy again recused himself and the vote was 4 to 4 once again.

II   Other Key Judicial and Administrative Decisions
A.   Due Process Hearing Issues
1.   IDEA'04 Issues
a. Resolution Session

1. Homer Central Sch Dist 106 LRP 65707 (SEA NY 10/27/6). SRO affirms HO decision to admit discussions from a resolution meeting at a subsequent due process hearing. SRO concluded that discussions at a resolution meeting are not **confidential** as a matter of law. See also Marinette Sch Dist 107 LRP 8221 (SEA Wisc. 2/14/7) HO dismissed a due process complaint where the parent refused to participate in a resolution meeting unless the district signed a confidentiality agreement.

2. LS & CS ex rel KS v. Abington Sch Dist 48 IDELR 244 (ED Pa 9/30/7). Court misread IDEA. Despite the fact that neither party raised the issue, the Court determined that a resolution meeting was required whenever parents complain about a district evaluation, thereby extending by thirty days the time within which a district may respond to an IEE

3. Mr & Mrs S ex rel BS v. Rochester Community Schs 106 LRP 58719 (W.D. Mich. 10/2/6). The parents requested an IEE at public expense. The district filed a due process complaint. A resolution meeting was scheduled and the district's **attorney** trained school personnel before the meeting. The parties reached an initial agreement. The district lawyer retyped it adding legal language. The parents faxed the agreement to their lawyer. Upon learning what the agreement meant, the parents voided the agreement immediately. The parents filed a state complaint, and the SEA found a violation of the IDEA. The court reversed holding that there is a distinction between the resolution meeting and the agreement creation period. The court held that the ban on lawyers, and the restriction on fees, applies only to the resolution meeting itself and not to the agreement drafting period. The court noted that the LEA attorney may not be present or listen in over the telephone or confer with participants during the resolution meeting.

b. Sufficiency of Complaint
Anello v. Indian River Sch Dist 107 LRP 7179 (Del. Family Ct. 1/19/7) Citing Weast, the court held that the IDEA requires only **minimal** specificity. The court reversed the HO panel.

c. Response to Intervention/ SLD
Letter to Zirkel 48 IDELR 192 (OSEP 8/15/7). An SEA can permit LEAs to use RtI, severe discrepancy and/or a third research based alternative for SLD determinations. Although a state cannot require LEAs to use the severe discrepancy method for SLD determinations, states can offer options.

d. Peer-reviewed Research to the Extent Practicable
1. Rocklin Unified Sch Dist 48 IDELR 234 (SEA Calif 5/25/7) HO found school district's program offered FAPE and rejected parent claim for an ABA. Rejecting the argument that a student must receive the program with the most peer-reviewed research, the HO found that IEP components must be based upon peer-reviewed research but only to the extent practicable. Here some components of district program were supported by peer reviewed research. See, Freemont Unified Sch Dist 49 IDELR 114 (SEA Calif 11/9/7) (same.)

2.   Difficult Parties/Lawyers
a. Petties, et al v. District of Columbia 108 LRP 2835 (D. DC 10/3/7). The court chastised the attorney for the school district for sloppy brief writing, and unfamiliarity with ongoing litigation. The court was particularly offended by counsel referring to court orders in a lawsuit to which the district is a party as "outside dictates."

e. Tricia C. v. Tri-County Special Educ Assn 46 IDELR 131 (C.D. Ill 8/24/6) Parent alleged that during the course of a 35 day due process hearing, the district lawyer made a threatening comment (I'll get

$50,000; you'll get sh**) designed to intimidate the parent from appealing the due process decision. Court held that the alleged statement does not provide a basis for an equal protection suit against the Special Ed Director.

3. Hearing Officer Authority

Bd of Educ of Fayette County, KY v LM ex rel TD 107 LRP 10801 (6th Cir. 3/2/7) Sixth Circuit held that a HO may not **delegate** the terms of a compensatory ed award to the IEP team. IDEA requires that a HO not be an employee of the LEA, and some members of the IEP team are employees. Contrast New York City Dept of Educ 48 IDELR 116 (SEA NY 5/30/7) (remand to IEPT).

4. Hearing Procedures

a. DB by CB v. Houston Independent Sch Dist 48 IDELR 246 (D.Tex. 9/28/7). Court rejected a claim by the parent that the dp HO denied them a fair hearing by sleeping through the hearing. The court did not credit the allegations where the transcript revealed that the HO appeared to be awake, asking questions of witnesses and ruling on objections and where the parents failed to object on the record.

b.. Kingsmore v. District of Columbia 466 F.3d 118, 46 IDELR 152 (D.C. Cir. 9/29/6). The D. C. Circuit reversed the District Court holding that failure to make a **record** of the due process hearing is a procedural violation not affecting the education of the student. Accordingly, it did not justify an award of reimbursement for a unilateral placement. Reversing 44 IDELR 154.

5.. Stay Put –Student's Placement During Due Process or Litigation

a. John M. by Christine M & Michael M v. Bd of Educ of the Evanston Township HS Dist No. 202 502 F.3d 708, 48 IDELR 177 (7th Cir. 9/17/7) The Seventh Circuit noted that determining "then current educational placement' is an inexact science requiring a fact driven approach. The purpose of the stay put provision requires focus upon the child's educational needs so the educational status quo for a "growing, learning, young person" often makes rigid adherence to a particular educational methodology an impossibility. Stay put, therefore, requires flexibility in interpreting the educational placement per the **last agreed upon** IEP and flexibility concerning the child's needs. (reversing 46 IDELR 218 (N.D. Ill 9/26/6);

b. DP ex rel EP, DP and KP v. Sch Bd of Broward County 47 IDELR 181 (11th Cir. 4/3/7) When transitioning from ISFP to public school at age 3, the stay put placement is now a public school program;

6. Hearing Officer Decision

a. Allen by Bailey v. Altheimer Unified Sch Dist 48 IDELR 95 (E.D. Ark. 7/6/7). The SEA is required to implement and enforce the school district's compliance with a HO decision.

b. Helsling v. Avon Grove Sch Dist 47 IDELR 256 (E.D. PA 3/30/7) Court found that a due process HO has the authority to grant **declaratory relief** in his decision.

7. 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). Court developed a **qualitative** standard for awards of compensatory education to place disabled students in the same position they would have occupied but for the school district's violation of IDEA. The court adopted a flexible approach based upon the needs of the child who has been denied FAPE. 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. See also, Seattle Sch Dist 48 IDELR 86 (SEA Wash 6/12/7); (similar qualitative approach).

2). Cumberland Valley Sch. Dist. 106 LRP 20056 (SEA Pa. 2/18/6). The SRO panel adopted a **quantitative** formula for compensatory education: the period of time equal to the deprivation of FAPE excluding the time reasonably required for the school district to have corrected it.

b. Reimbursement/ Unilateral Placement

1). Bettinger ex rel Bettinger v. New York City Bd of Educ 49 IDELR 39 (S.D. NY 11/20/7). Court denied reimbursement for parents where the parents were non-cooperative by interfering with the

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IEP process. Equitable factors prevented reimbursement. Contrast, <u>JL v. Mercer Island Sch Dist</u> 48 IDELR 120 (W.D. Wash 8/2/7) (Court reversed HO who had deducted 7 months of reimbursement finding that the school district and not the parents had caused delays by inaccurate and misleading correspondence.

        2).   <u>FD & SD ex rel KD v. Holland Township Bd of Educ</u> 48 IDELR 101 (D.NJ 7/9/7) (Court found that informal comments by parents to school officials followed by formal written notice six months later was sufficient; full reimbursement awarded.); Contrast, <u>Bd of Educ of New York City</u> 107 LRP 53239 (SEA NY 7/2/7) (Reimbursement denied where parents failed to give notice or otherwise express dissatisfaction with IEP before unilateral placement.)

c. Other Relief
      <u>A.W. v. Jersey City Public Schs</u> 486 F.3d 791, 47 IDELR 282 (3d Cir. 5/24/7) The Third Circuit reversed itself and ruled that section 1983 actions for damages are not available under IDEA. <u>Blanchard v. Morton Sch Dist</u> 504 F.3d 771, 48 IDELR 207 (9th Cir. 9/20/7) The Ninth Circuit joined four other circuits (1st, 3d, 4th, 10th) in holding that parents cannot use section 1983 to seek relief for IDEA violations.   <u>Diaz-Fonseca ex rel Cardoza-Diaz v. Commonwealth of Puerto Rico</u> 451 F.3d 13, 45 IDELR 268 (1st cir. 6/16/6).   The First Circuit held that where the underlying claim is related to FAPE issues, only IDEA remedies are available. See also, <u>Moseley ex rel Moseley v. Bd of Educ of Albuquerque Public Schs</u> 47 IDELR 211 (10th Cir. 4/16/7) Dicta - no reason to find that such damages are available. <u>Preschooler II v. Clark County Sch Bd of Trustees</u> (Ninth Cir. 3/21/7) Parents can proceed under Section 1983 for damages against a teacher who grabbed, slapped, hit and shoved student and supervisors knew

8. Appeal Issues/ Exhaustion of Administrative Remedies
      <u>JP by Pope v. Cherokee County Bd of Educ</u> 107 LRP 10432 (11th Cir. 2/27/7) Required the parents to exhaust by first bringing a due process hearing on the issues of FAPE and alleged breach of settlement agreement.; <u>McQueen by McQueen v. Colorado Springs Sch Dist No. 11</u> 488 F.3d 868, 47 IDELR 283 (10th Cir. 5/25/7) Required exhaustion where parent had a due process hearing but on system-wide legal issue not deciding whether the individual student received FAPE.   <u>Coleman v. Newburgh Enlarged City Sch Dist</u> 48 IDELR 208 (2d Cir. 9/25/7) Held that the pending graduation of the student was not an "emergency situation" that justified failure to exhaust.   <u>Kutasi ex rel Kutasi v. Las Virgenes Unified Sch Dist</u> 494 F.3d 1162, 48 IDELR 59 (Ninth Cir 7/19/7) Held that despite disguising their FAPE claims as 504 and Section 1983 claims, parents of an 11 year old with autism would be required to exhaust.

B. Selected Hot Button Special Education Issues
1. IEP Implementation
      a. <u>Van Duyn ex rel Van Duyn v. Baker Sch Dist 5J</u> 481 F.3d 770, 47 IDELR 182 (9th Cir. 4/3/7) The Ninth Circuit followed the lead of the 5th and 8th circuits holding that a school district's failure to implement an IEP must be **material** to constitute a violation of IDEA. Minor discrepancies between services and the IEP do not constitute a violation. A material failure occurs when the services provided by a school fall significantly short of the IEP services. See also, <u>LC and KC ex rel NC v. Utah State Bd. of Educ.</u> 43 IDELR 29 (10th Cir. 3/21/5). Implementation of IEP need not be perfect; <u>Melissa S by Karen S v. Sch. Dist. of Pittsburgh, et al</u> 106 LRP 34297 (3d Cir. 6/8/6). To prevail, a parent must show that the school district failed to implement substantial or significant provisions of the IEP, as opposed to a mere de minimis failure, such that the child was denied meaningful educational benefit;

      b. Contrast, <u>DD by VD v. New York City Bd of Educ</u> 465 F.3d 503, 46 IDELR 181 (2d Cir. 10/12/6) The Second Circuit rejected argument that partial implementation of IEPs constituted the necessary "substantial compliance." The Court held that substantial compliance in IDEA refers only to a district's right to receive funding. The FAPE obligation, on the other hand, requires "compliance

2. Predetermination
      a. <u>Deal v. Hamilton County</u> 392 F.3d 840, 42 IDELR 109 (6th Cir. 1//16/04). Where the school district had already **predetermined** the student's program and services **before** the IEP Team meeting, the parents were denied the opportunity to meaningfully participate in the IEP process. Accordingly, the district denied FAPE for the student.

      b. <u>JD by Davis v. Kanawha County Bd of Educ</u> 48 IDELR 159 (S.D.WV 8/3/7) The fact that the district had prepared a **draft** IEP for discussion was not predetermination where the parents offered suggestions and changes, many of which were adopted in the IEP.   <u>TW by McCullough and Wilson v.</u>

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<u>Unified Sch. Dist. No. 259, Wichita, Kansas</u> 136 Fed. Appx. 122, 43 IDELR 187 (10th Cir. 6/6/5)(draft IEP did not mean predetermination where Team members discussed and debated placement issues.).

     c. <u>LE and ES ex rel MS v. Ramsey Bd. of Educ.</u> 44 IDELR 269 (3d Cir. 1/23/6) The Third Circuit held that the IEP Team had not predetermined placement. At the IEP Team meeting, the team members discussed and considered placement options suggested by the parents. <u>Hjortness by Hjortness v. Neenah Joint Sch Dist</u> 498 F.3d 655, 48 IDELR 119 (7th Cir. 8/20/7) The Seventh Circuit majority found no predetermination where LRE considerations favored a public placement and school district found an appropriate public placement. ;

3. Bullying/ Harassment/Safety
     a. <u>Shore Regional High Sch. Bd. of Educ. v. P.S.</u> 381 F.3d 194, 41 IDELR 234 (3d Cir. 8/30/04) A school district's failure to stop **bullying** may constitute a denial of FAPE.

     b. <u>Stringer v. St. James R-1 Sch. Dist.</u> 45 IDELR 179 (8th Cir. 5/3/6). Given the developing body of law concerning harassment and IEPs, the hearing officer panel should not have flatly dismissed the harassment complaint. Because the parents' failed to allege impact on educational benefit, however, the Eighth Circuit upheld dismissal. <u>Gagliardo v. Arlington Central Sch Dist</u> 489 F.3d 105, 48 IDELR 1 (2d Cir. 5/30/7) School district denied FAPE by permitting bullying and harassment of the student, but denied reimbursement where the parent not appropriate. <u>Preschooler II v. Clark County Sch Bd of Trustees</u> 107 LRP 15146 (9th Cir. 3/21/7) Permitted a Section 1983 suit against a special education teacher to proceed. The allegations included that he slapped, hit and shoved a nonverbal preschooler with autism

4. Methodology
     <u>A.S. and W.S. ex rel W.S. v. Trumbull Bd. of Educ.</u> 414 F. Supp.2d 152, 45 IDELR 40 (D. Conn. 2/9/6) Courts should defer to professional educators concerning questions of **methodology.** See also. <u>MM & BM ex rel CM v. Sch. Bd. of Miami-Dade County, Florida</u> 437 F.3d 1085, 45 IDELR 1 (11th Cir. 1/25/6). The parents wanted auditory-verbal therapy because it was the "best" methodology. Holding that the standard requires only an appropriate methodology, the Eleventh Circuit rejected the parents' argument;

5. Parent's Right to Participate in the IEP Process
     <u>JD by Davis v. Kanawha County Bd of Educ</u> 48 IDELR 159 (SD WVa 8/3/7) Although parents have a right to meaningful participation, they do not have a right to **dominate.** The court found that the parent hijacked and derailed the IEP team process.

6. Least Restrictive Environment
     a. <u>Bd of Educ of New York City</u> 47 IDELR 30 (SEA NY 11/9/6) District offered a placement in the LRE where it first tried a regular ed class with related services and special ed consultative services. As the inappropriate behaviors of a child with ED increased, he was moved to a more structured classroom. As the behaviors continued, he was moved to a separate school with highly trained personnel. Contrast, <u>Derry Cooperative Sch Dist</u> 106 LRP 49111 (SEA NH 8/7/6). Contrast, <u>Colbert County Bd of Educ Special Dist</u> 107 LRP 51337 (SEA Ala. 5/30/7) HO ruled that the placement of a 6 year old with visual and hearing impairments in a self-contained classroom for children with cognitive disabilities violated the LRE requirement. Although the student became disruptive in the general ed classroom, the school district failed to first attempt supplemental aids, services and supports before removing him from that placement.

     b. ADDITIONAL RESOURCE: Mark C Weber, "A Nuanced Approach to the Disability Integration Presumption," 156 U. Pa. L. Rev. PENNumbra 174 (2007)

8. Discipline/ Manifestation Determination
     a. <u>MaST Community Charter Sch</u> 47 IDELR 23 (SEA PA 12/26/6) Under IDEA'04, conduct is a manifestation of a disability only if 1) the disability caused or is substantially related to the conduct, or 2) the conduct is the direct result of the failure to implement the IEP. Carrying a knife was not caused by ADHD impulsivity. <u>Philadelphia Sch Dist</u> 47 IDELR 56(SEA PA 1/10/7) IDEA'04 changes require a closer fit as to causality, but where there is a casual connection, school may not make disciplinary change in placement. Break-ins and damage to property were a manifestation of the student's ED and ODD; <u>Scituate Public Schs</u> 107 LRP 6680 (SEA Mass 1/29/7) Pulling a teacher's necktie not a manifestation.

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b. <u>Mongelli v. Red Clay Consolidated Sch Dist Bd of Educ</u> 491 F.Supp.2d 457, 107 LRP 31041 (D. Del. 6/4/7) Court dismissed a Title VII complaint by a teacher against a school district for failing to discipline a special education student who allegedly sexually harassed the teacher where the alleged conduct was not sufficiently severe or pervasive to amount to sexual harassment.

C. Other IDEA Issues

1. Eligibility
<u>Alvin Indep Sch Dist v. AD by Patricia F</u> 503 F.3d 378, 48 IDELR 240 (5th Cir. 10/4/7) Despite a fifth grader's ADHD, he was not eligible for special education. The student consistently received passing grades, succeeded on statewide tests and was achieving in social situations. Accordingly, he did not by reason thereof "need special education and related services," and, therefore, he was not a child with a disability. Contrast, <u>Mr I & Mrs I ex rel LI v. Maine Sch Admin Dist No. 55</u> 107 LRP 11344 (1st Cir. 3/5/7) Where state defined educational performance broadly and student had good grades but difficulty in communicating, she was by reason of her Aspergers in need of special education, and therefore, eligible.

2. Other IEP Issues
a. Rowley Standard
<u>JL & ML ex rel KL v. Mercer Island Sch Dist</u> 46 IDELR 273 (W.D.Wash 12/8/6) Held that Rowley standard has been superseded by the 1997 IDEA amendments, quoting declaration of policy, "… equality of opportunity… and self-sufficiency." Rowley was decided under the predecessor EHA, which focused primarily upon access, so by using Rowley, the HO set the bar too low and finding that FAPE had not been provided. Contrast, <u>Nancy Fisher, on behalf of TC v. Stafford Township Bd of Educ</u> 107 LRP 11171 (D.NJ 2/27/7). Rowley has not been overturned by NCLB. The parents' cited the NCLB language requiring that all children have an opportunity for a high quality education.

b. IEPs and FAPE
<u>AK by JK & ES v. Alexandria City Sch Bd</u> 484 F.3d 672, 47 IDELR 245 (4th Cir 4/26/7), rehearing en banc den. 107 LRP 42702 (4th Cir. 7/27/7) Held that a student was denied FAPE where his IEP failed to identify a particular school. IEP specified only "private day school," parents were not able to fairly evaluate whether the proposed placement was appropriate. District had not determined whether such a school existed, and two of five schools applied to had rejected this student, FAPE denied. The Court noted that a district need not always specify a particular school, but on these facts it was necessary.

c. IEP Team
<u>RB by FB v. Napa Valley Unified Sch Dist</u> 48 IDELR 60 (9th Cir. 7/16/7) The school district committed a procedural error by naming its SpEd Director, who had never taught the student, as the SpEd teacher on his IEPT, but error was harmless where the student was not in fact eligible for SpEd.

d. Related Services
1. <u>AU by NU & BU v. Roane County Bd of Educ</u> 48 IDELR 3 (E.D. Tenn 5/23/7) As of the effective date of IDEA'04, a school district is no longer required to provide mapping of a student's **cochlear implant** as a related service. Although IDEA does not change, OSEP interpretation does change the requirement. Giving due deference to the agency, court concludes that mapping is no longer required.

5. Other Procedural Safeguards Issues
a. Access to Records/ Confidentiality
1. <u>Disability Rights Wisconsin, Inc v. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction</u> 463 F.3d 719, 46 IDELR 122 (7th Cir. 9/13/6) Held that where there is probable cause that abuse or neglect has occurred, consent of legal guardians is not required before release of records to an advocacy and protection agency, reversing 44 IDELR 35. See also, <u>State of Connecticut Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities v. Hartford Bd. of Educ.</u> 464 F.3d 229, 46 IDELR 121 (2d Cir. 9/15/6) (similar order), affirming 44 IDELR 64. Contrast, <u>Disability Law center of Alaska v. Anchorage Sch Dist</u> 48 IDELR 281 (D. Alaska 9/26/7) Denied the request to disclose parent contact information where the group had several complaints against two employees. Court found that parent contact information was protected by FERPA.

2. <u>Gaumond v. Trinity Repertory Co.</u> 46 IDELR 254 (Rhode Island S. Ct. 11/14/6). Where a student with a disability was injured while descending theater stairs, the parents, who sued the theater, attempted to resist certain discovery requests on the basis of a "disabled student – school <u>privilege.</u>" The

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court declined to recognize the privilege. The parents argued that based upon IDEA confidentiality and FERPA provisions, this privilege cloaks all confidential education records with protection from discovery. See also, Catrone ex rel Catrone v. Miles, et al 107 LRP 36034 (Ariz. Ct App 6/26/7) Court declined to create and enforce a "special education records" privilege. In a medical malpractice suit, parents sought to block discovery of the special education records of the patient's brother citing FERPA and IDEA privacy provisions. The court affirmed the lower court's order requiring production under a protective order.

6. Procedural Violations

Hjortness by Hjortness v. Neenah Joint Sch Dist 498 F.3d 655, 48 IDELR 119 (7th Cir. 8/20/7) The Seventh Circuit majority held that the adding of additional goals after the IEP had been developed was a procedural violation but was harmless where there was no showing that the student had lost educational opportunity;

7. Attorneys' Fees

a. In Arlington Cent. Sch. Dist Bd. of Educ v. Murphy 548 U.S.____, 126 S.Ct. 2455, 45 IDELR 267 (6/16/06) the Supreme Court ruled that a parent who prevails in an IDEA case is not entitled to recover expert witness fees under the Act's provision allowing recovery of reasonable attorney's fees and costs. See, AW ex rel SW v. East Orange Bd of Educ 48 IDELR 209 (3d Cir 9/14/7) Even where there had been a judicially approved settlement, the IDEA fee shifting position applies only to attorneys fees and costs and not to consulting fees for an educational consultant; PN ex rel TN v. Seattle Sch Dist No. 1 107 LRP 5909 (9th Cir. 1/29/7); Contrast, VS ex rel AO v. Los Gatos-Saratoga Joint Union HS Dist 47 IDELR 244 (9th Cir. 5/9/7)(a finding that a student was eligible, the lynchpin of all rights under IDEA, sufficiently altered the parties legal relationship to render the parent a prevailing party.);

b. Taylor P by Chris P & Carrie P v. Missouri Dept of Elementary and Secondary Educ 48 IDELR 242 (W.D. Missouri 10/3/7) Where the parents and their attorney had shown a **good faith** basis for their dp complaint, the court denied a claim for award of attorney fees against parents or their lawyer. Just because they failed to prove a denial of FAPE does not mean that they lacked good faith; to hold otherwise would…"only discourage parents from advocating for their children." See, Gredon v. Taconic Hills Central Sch Dist 47 IDELR 10 (N.D.NY 12/20/6) Refused to award attorney's fees against a parent where there was no evidence of bad faith. Contrast, RW by MW & MW v. Georgia Department of Education 48 IDELR 279 (N.D. Ga. 10/4/7) Where the parent's lawyer had previously unsuccessfully litigated the same claim twice before and the HO dismissed the claim each time, the Court awarded attorney's fees against the lawyer. See, Taylor P by Chris P & Carrie P v. Missouri Dept of Elementary and Secondary Educ 48 IDELR 154 (W.D. Missouri 8/14/7) Declined to apply retroactively, but denied dismissal against parent lawyer where he allegedly continued to litigate a frivolous claim after the effective date of IDEA'04.

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Emotional Curriculum and Brain Plasticity

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Emotional Curriculum and Brain Plasticity

Abstract

For many people the learning process is one that has its share of highs and lows. Some classes are a wonderful experience while others can be an exercise in frustration. For individuals who have suffered from a brain injury, the return to the classroom can often mean that even the areas that were once easily understood and quickly learned can now be as difficult to comprehend and retain as the subject material they had difficulty with post injury. This paper will look at some of the basic areas that need to be considered for teachers to help these students rebuild their educational strategies and their lives.

Perhaps the single most important facet of working with brain injured students is the realization of just how badly memory is affected by an injury to the brain. Memory is what defines us as individuals and that raises the understanding of who you are. The complexity of how memory works has perplexed philosophers for centuries and modern science for decades. "The nature of memory is not rightly understood if it is regarded as merely a general talent or capacity." (Gadamer, 2000). It is memory that, due to damage of the brain, needs to find alternative or new pathways for

learning. It is the teacher who is the facilitator in this process. Having a student

memorize does not mean memory, as a process, is functioning. The complexity of the

personality and the unique experiences of the individual are woven into one's memory,

and the ability to learn allows the person to grow.

The following narratives are good examples of what occurs after a brain injury.

"In many ways, I feel like that ancient mariner: there is an

albatross around my neck too. When I began recovering from my

accident, it would hang in front of my legs, tripping me up when I tried

to more forward. I would fall, both metaphorically and literally. I often

stumbled and hurt myself. To this day, I still bear some emotional and

physical scars. The early stages of my recovery were the most difficult:

sometimes the pain was overwhelming. I had not asked for this

punishment, nor did I deserve it. I could not understand. I might have

broken down completely - but I had forgotten how to cry. I did not

know what to do or where to go. Could this be life?" (Blanche, 1998,

pg.70).

"After the accident my major deficit physically was not being

able to walk, due to the loss of the use of my left side as well as

weakness in my right side. Talking was a real chore for me, and my

short-term memory was far below normal.

As time went on I left the rehabilitation centre, I still had a lot of frustrations and a low-tolerance level, even though I could not see this or admit to it. But, this has greatly improved as I have had to learn how to handle certain situations differently and to adjust and cope with them. The key words are 'trying to accept my new life'. This so-called "new me." (Ottewell, 1998, p.23).

These two stories are all too typical of what occurs to individuals' sense of identity after a brain injury. Teachers working with brain injured students will face problems facing these individuals are not just academic by nature. Teaching these students requires that you constantly take into account the physical, psychological and social problems they face every day.

Four major categories are used to show the levels of impairment. (Acorn, 2000).

A. <u>Cognitive Symptoms</u>

- attention, concentration difficulties

- memory loss

- problems following instructions

- impaired decision making

- processing information problems

- language problems, expressing thoughts or understanding others.

B. <u>Perceptual Symptoms</u>

- loss of sense of self, "Who am I?"

- balance problems

- loss of sense of time

- vision, hearing difficulties

C. Physical Symptoms

- persistent headache

- fatigue

- paralysis, muscle spasms, weakness

- epileptic seizures

- impaired fine motor control (holding a pen or pencil)

- sleep disorders

- speech articulator disorders - weird pronunciation

D. Behavioral/Emotional Symptoms

- irritability

- impatience

- problems with stress management

- apathy, lack of initiative

- dependence on others

- denial of problems

There are some support services for teachers working in this field as of this writing, yet few principals or teachers with special training to assist in dealing with the problems facing these students or the teacher. The teachers that are working in this new field work in predominately medical facilities with nurses, aids, and physical therapists. Even the internet generally only offers the medical perspective on brain injury. Perhaps an even more striking example is the fact that the young men and women returning from the war in Iraq are receiving treatment for TBI on a physiological approach, but not on a cognitive level. (Hoge, 2008).

These students have changed, and it is the teacher they often look to for help. Except to help, teachers need to understand these student's new lives. The obstacles that affect learning and rebuilding their lives are self-image and memory.

Many times the general practitioners working with students prescribe tranquilizers and sleeping pills because they often seem more anxious than depressed. The result of such medications has an effect on their ability to concentrate and remember what the teacher is doing in the classroom.

The depression the students often face has an affect on memory in a number of ways. Firstly, they may often have hyper-distractibility, a term often used by psychologists. So much had happened to them so quickly, their injury, job loss, family problems, etc. that they just have too much on their minds. As a result, they have great difficulty focusing and concentrating on the classroom activities. What appears to happen is that new information is less likely to be processed into memory engrams

because of a decreased ability to focus on environmental stimuli. (McEwen and Sapolsky, 1995). This is called a shallow memory trace by neuro-psychologists, and because the information is not as permanently encoded because of distraction, in this case brought about by depression, the person is more likely to forget. Secondly, a person's ability to retrieve a memory is affected. To retrieve and reconstitute a memory can be difficult at the best of times; damage to the brain compiled with depression makes it even more difficult. The person is trying to concentrate on what is being taught, for example, but the other problems on his or her mind are interfering with the task at hand.

It is important for the teacher to be aware of either a biological memory problem or a memory problem that was manifesting itself as a result of depression. A depressed person may simply not be paying attention to events or care enough to be bothered to remember what was being taught. The only way to establish what is occurring is by studying their medical file on the injury site, know what that type of injury can do to memory, and consult with the psychologist to see what may be happening in their personal life. This is called dual-diagnosis, and it can be extremely frustrating to deal with for a front line teacher, yet it can also allow the teacher to better understand what approach may work best. Once this has been understood, the teacher can now approach the student's needs more effectively.

Memories and experiences in youth seem so powerful and alive and perhaps that is why the arts, paintings, music, film, have such an affect on us throughout our lives. These art forms allow us to turn back the hands of time and we are young again, like when the world was new. In terms of the brain physiology involved, it is critical to keep in mind that the Limbic system is critical in linking information to memory. "Information must pass through the reticular activating system (RAS) and the limbic system to be acknowledged, recognized, and connected with relational memories, patterned, and ultimately stored into long- term memory. (Willis, 2007). Educators can use perhaps the greatest tool for repairing an injured brain, and helping to restore memory, that tool, is the use of emotional laden curriculum.

A famous modern day writer (who was once a High School English teacher; by the way), Stephen King was being interviewed once and said something quite interesting about youth and memory. He was asked where he got his imagination for his stories from. He said that when we're young we have a marvelous third eye, imagination, and as children imagination sees with twenty/twenty clarity. As we grow older, it dims and the boundaries of imagination begin to close and become tunnel visioned. We lose our ability to think around corners and the world becomes only what we focus on and pursue, career, family, etc. and we lose that ability to imagine.

Artists break open that tunnel and allow you to look at the world in a different way, if only for an instant, yet often that instant remains in our memory for life.

This view of why some memories last also connects with something else he went on to say. He had also mentioned that many artists, authors, and filmmakers have the dreamy eyes of a child. Orson Welles once said about filmmaking, "It's the best set of electric trains a boy ever had." These students in the classroom are, in a sense, like small children again. They have lost the trappings of a complex world and are now enthusiastic about rebuilding their lives, they want to be back in the world of friends and family, but they can never really be the same person again. The opportunity for a whole 'new' person is there, and the teacher may have the key to awakening the child in them again. That childlike wonder and awe can be rekindled and used to help with memory, learning, overcoming depression and discovering their own new path. That key is emotion.

Art is that in which the hand, the head, and the heart

of man go together.

- John Ruskin (Social Philosopher)

"To be sure, knowledge of the brain's structure and functioning might well hold interesting implications for learning and pedagogy. But the only way to know for sure whether something is possible is to try it. And should one succeed despite the

predictions of neuroscience, that success becomes the determining fact. Success will cause us to change the ways in which we think about the brain, rather than revising the ways in which we think about pedagogy." (Gardner, 2001).

How to get students focused and interested in any subject content, arise time and time again in the classroom, in both regular and special needs programs. Films can often be the perfect source of stimulation to get the ball rolling and have the students confront difficult questions and look at the world and themselves differently, and for many of them, perhaps for the first time. Posing these questions is essential to open pathways to learning, and film is a beautiful way to create the questions. As Gardner states, "The questions are natural ones for young persons to pose. However, they are rarely articulated in explicit philosophical terms. Rather, they are posed in the language of fairy tales, myths, "pretend" play, and, in a cinematic age, films and video." (Gardner, 2001). If the teacher uses well written, visually striking films, then the questions are presented and the philosophical discussions arise as a result, or at the very least the student is fixed and concentrating , and this combined with that downshifting biological rush in the brain, leads to the inevitable link gate to memory and the start of the learning process.

One can see how the use of the subjective (in this case, film imagery) can have an effect on the objective (the biology of the brain). The result is the individual is better able to learn because of the stimulation that the art of film provides. Films are

very dramatic in nature and that is why they can be so are effective. Howard Gardner also talks about the input and use of art as an educational "pathway for understanding." There can be real life issues that arise from imaginative films, as they do for many of when viewing them and Gardner explains why many issues should arise. "Education in this pathway ought to be inspired by a set of essential questions: Who are we? Where do we come from? What do we consider to be true or false, beautiful or ugly, good or evil? What is the fate of the earth? How do we fit in? What is the earth made of? What are we made of? Why do we live, and why do we die? Are our destinies under the control of God or some other 'higher power'? What is love? What is hatred? Why do we make war? Must we? What is justice and how can we achieve it?" (Gardner, 2001).

Many great and interesting discussions can occur, and invariably, the questions that the films bring up go full circle and can be intertwined with their own lives. Who am I? Is there a God, do people still love me and why?

The problems that arise in the classroom with these students are often a result of memory problems. These result in a person's inability to plan activities, carry them out and to problem solve. Also the brain injury can affect the person's ability to understand consequences for certain actions, and to consider other options. These deficits cause the individual to fail at things many times and often depression and lack of self-confidence results.

Film can have a tremendous impact on the student's memory process. They are often able to recall what they had viewed and this, in turn, had a positive impact on their self-esteem. The depression they faced after their injuries was often linked to their poor memories and mental processing abilities. The dramatic visual images appear to stick with the person, and as a result, the memory processing patterns in the brain functioned more efficiently. The students felt better about their situation, and they put more effort into other classroom activities.

Emotions have not been seriously studied by cognitive scientists until fairly recently. (Lazaraus, 1999). What has been learned is that emotions are often associated with motivation. Motivations is action in pursuit of a goal, emotions can hinder or help goal achievement. (Lazaraus, 1999). It would appear that dramatic visual films help with motivation, in that new pathways of thinking are created. If a person is subjected to a new and visually exciting representation on film, the person reacts to it. This causes attention to be focused, memory to be stimulated, and foundation for new learning to take place.

Most of the work done in the field of brain injury has been medically and behaviorally based. The medical information is valuable to the teaching field in brain injury, because injury sites in the brain do cause mental processing difficulties. The behavior modification approach has been used by some special education teachers working in the field. This approach often fails because the brain injured individuals have an acquired injury, not a congenital one. Attempting to use behaviorism

techniques, a stimuli to achieve response with no mental activity taken into account, is a serious mistake. As a teacher in this field, the response you want, memory, can be triggered with a biological reaction in conjunction with conscious awareness. The student watches the film, understands its premise, and reacts to it physiologically. The memory connections are made at a basic cellular level, neurons, as well as understood and retained at a higher cerebral level. Emotion becomes the catalyst between brain and mind. Daniel Goleman, in his book, "Emotional Intelligence", believes that a high emotional quotient is more important than intellectual knowledge in succeeding in life. (Goleman, 2006). He states that emotions have a tremendous impact on how we process information and make decisions. It would appear they also have a great deal to do with memory retention. The dramatic film image can focus attention and help students improve in short and long-term memory retention.

If there is one thing we probably all remember about school, it was whether or not the teachers made learning interesting. The teacher's primary goal is to get and keep the students interested and focused. "Arousal is important in all mental functions. It contributes significantly to attention, perception, memory, emotion, and problem solving. Without arousal, we fail to notice what is going on - we don't attend to the details." (LeDoux, 2003). The use of dramatic visual films allows important aspects of brain function to be stimulated. This in turn helps the brain injured individual focus and maintain attention, which intern results in improved memory. Perhaps most importantly, this classroom activity becomes a more enjoyable way to

relearn or learn new information, and to discover the hidden potential in a still viable

brain.

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EMOTIONAL MATURITY:

The Foundation For Success in Rural Special Education

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EMOTIONAL MATURITY: THE FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESS IN RURAL SPECIAL EDUCATION

Life is a network of interpersonal relationships which fit together in a complex pattern, much like a patchwork quilt. As we consider rural special education over the years, we find that rural tradition, legislation and ongoing innovation interact and interrelate either in a positive or negative fashion. In order to ensure that these ongoing interactive relationships have positive outcomes for our rural special education students, it is necessary that those involved, i.e., parents, teachers, related service providers, para-educators, legislators and school administrators, have a foundation of Emotional Maturity (EM). Emotional Maturity is the underlying character trait from which our behaviors, i.e., feelings, actions, thoughts, emerge. It is also responsible for determining the quality of those behaviors.

Emotional Maturity is the essential foundation and perhaps the most important characteristic an individual can possess to ensure positive outcomes in life's pursuits. The higher the level of EM of those involved in the patchwork society which makes up rural special education, the more successful the outcomes will be. When it is understood that EM is not consistent, that a person may be emotionally mature in one area yet emotionally immature in another area, it becomes evident that most individuals have areas of weakness in their personal EM. These weaknesses become obstacles which interfere and often preclude the smooth intricate interwoven beauty of the patchwork quilt of positive interpersonal relationships.   In assessing individual levels of EM, it becomes apparent that almost all individuals are lacking in some areas. Most people view themselves as being emotionally mature, yet an honest introspection will reveal many areas of weakness. These areas of weakness can be identified and strengthened with the understanding and implementation of proper EM development strategies.

EM impacts all aspects of life - employment, personal, social. The consequence of a high level of EM results in a positive impact in a person's life; conversely, low levels of EM result in a negative impact. EM is perhaps the most important characteristic an individual can possess to ensure success. This is particularly critical for our rural special education students as the rapid changes in the dynamics of rural society occur. Individuals are no longer isolated in the closed environment of rural life as existed in the past. Most rural special education students transition into their adult life in a fast moving, highly competitive global environment. In order to compete and be successful, they must have a

high level of EM to enable them to accommodate changes, interact appropriately and collaborate with people from varied backgrounds and cultures. Students who develop a high level of EM will be better prepared to meet the challenges of our modern society.

Researchers have concluded that people who manage their own feelings well and deal effectively with others are more likely to live content lives. These studies also reveal that these individuals are more likely to be successful in their employment, regardless of their position within an organization. They had good interpersonal skills, i.e., communication and collaboration skills, ability to teach others new skills and work well with those from diverse backgrounds. The studies were conducted in three different countries with similar results in all three cultures. (Cherniss 1998) (Institute for Health and Human Potential 2006)

The behavioral response to any situation is a product of our mental script. Our mental script, whether at a conscious or subconscious level is the way we view ourselves, others, our relationship to others and our environment. This script has been developed over our life as life experiences have played out from birth. Just as a blank tape accepts the information that is available and records that information, our mind accepts and records information from our environment, according to our perception, and over the years this develops into our mental script which becomes responsible for our behavior. The goal of developing EM is to re-write the mental script in a way which will produce positive, productive behaviors.

The obstacles, according to Hyatt, Hyatt, and Hyatt (2008), which interfere with rewriting the mental script and heightening our degree of EM have been identified as: trashcans, bricks, negative self-validation behaviors, emotional voids and negative habit patterns. Trashcans and bricks refer to the baggage we carry with us from past experiences and the emotions associated with them, whether conscious or subconscious, that interfere with the ability to acquire and utilize new information, make nonbiased and unemotional interpretations of that information, and apply it appropriately in our present life. Trashcans refer more specifically to our response to things that have occurred in our life which, at the time it occurred, the response was appropriate, but is no longer necessary. Bricks, on the other hand, refer to ongoing issues in our lives which we do not deal with appropriately and, therefore, they continue to affect our present behavior responses.

Negative self-validation behaviors refer to feeling justified in the way we behave. We feel justified, that we have a right to feel, act, or think in the way we do. Therefore, because we have a right, we perpetuate the behavior by continually finding ways to justify it. This continues to be entrenched in the mental script, impeding our self-objectivity in self-evaluation.

Emotional voids are emotional needs, i.e., love, acceptance, importance, self-worth, security, etc., which are not intrinsically met. This results in individuals continually

attempting to manipulate people in their lives and their environment in general to fill the void and satisfy their emotional need. When this occurs, individuals are not free to be themselves, to be honest, forthright and free in their relationships, for fear of alienating those around them, consequently losing the reinforcing emotional flow.

Everyone has patterns of behavior which are nothing more or less than habits which have been developed and continued over a process of time. Although some of these patterns may be positive, other patterns are negative and lead to inappropriate behavioral responses. These habits are developed in many ways as we progress through life. Through observation, we see others behaving in a certain way in a given circumstance and we begin to parrot their behavior. Some habits are picked up by accident; we simply start behaving in a certain way. Without logical reason or emotional basis, we simply pick up certain behaviors which become habitual. Over time, these habits become more deeply embedded in our behavioral responses and inhibit our ability to respond in an appropriate manner.

It is important that students be taught EM and assisted in developing the characteristics of EM. However, it is equally, if not more important, that the adults who work with those students develop the characteristics of EM within themselves in order to model it and effectively teach its principles. Adults need to gain an understanding of EM, identify obstacles that prevent its development and implementation, assess their own level of EM and determine areas of weakness. They then need to develop and implement a plan for the enhancement of EM in a specific area using the appropriate Emotional Maturity Strategies. Students need to be taught the principles of EM, the personal value of becoming emotionally mature, then, using the Emotional Maturity Strategies for Students, they need to be taught, directed and encouraged as they develop and implement these principles into their personal lives. In teaching EM to students, it is necessary to keep in mind the cognitive development and level of understanding of the students, as well as the socio-economic, cultural and family dynamics.

It is necessary that teachers, service providers, para-educators, administrators, parents and others who work with students understand and implement Emotional Maturity Strategies This will ensure the smooth intricate interwoven beauty of the patchwork quilt of positive interpersonal relationships which must be enhanced and maintained in order to ensure education, transition and success in life for our rural special education students.

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Implementation of Response to Intervention in a Rural School District

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IMPLEMENTATION OF RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION
IN A RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Abstract

While the intent of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is to ensure the success of every child, increasing special education and Limited English populations are creating significant challenges to meeting this goal. As part of the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), early intervention services were granted significant credence allowing for a focus on preventing academic failure as opposed to maintaining the traditional "wait to fail" model. This paper provides a review of the Response to Intervention (RTI) model and provides current data, as part of an ongoing study, of the impact in a rural school district in Northern Nevada.

Introduction

In 2004, the IDEIA was signed into law providing significant revisions to the earlier Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). A key component to this reauthorization gives districts the ability to utilize funds and resources for early intervention programs such as active tracking and academic interventions designed to avoid the need for a special education placement. Even so, the introduction of IDEIA has not come without challenges. A debate has ensued with regard to the appropriate methodology for accurate diagnosis of learning disabilities. This debate is focused on the standard "wait to fail" model which typically has established student eligibility for services during the third and fourth grades.

Educators continue to focus on the difficulties which arise from the use of standard intellectual assessment and academic assessment models to establish eligibility. Lewit and Baker (1996) estimated that more than 50 percent of all students served through special education carry the identification label of Learning Disability (LD), and that the average cost to provide special education services is 2.3 times the cost of regular education services. In addition, Roush (1995) found that of those students identified in the category of LD, 80 percent qualify within the area of reading.

A central issue in identifying reading learning disabilities is the ability to discriminate between students with a true learning disability and those who simply demonstrate low academic functioning (Algozzine, Ysseldyke, & McGue, 1995; Kavale, 1995). For students to demonstrate low academic performance, achievement must be variant from anticipated performance according to the student's cognitive ability.

With the increased focus on early reading under NCLB, the number of students identified as having a learning disability has increased. The U.S. Department of Education (2000) noted that 1.2 million students were identified as LD in 1979-1980, with an increase to 2.8 million by 1998-1999. From 1981 to 1991, students between the ages of 6 and 21, as identified through the IDEIA, increased by 38 percent. Of this increase, the largest population (44 percent) occurred among students between the ages of 12 and 17 (Lyon et al., 2001).

The discrepancy model − IQ/Achievement disparity − is based on conceptual flaws (Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). IQ is commonly used to measure an individual's potential by assessing responses to questions associated with logical reasoning, problem solving, and critical thinking. IQ tests are designed to assess factual knowledge, definitions, and fine-motor coordination (Siegel, 1999). However, cognitive tests are more effective in assessing student knowledge than providing predictive evidence of future learning potential (Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). IQ tests are poor predictors of students likely to benefit from remedial services (Kershner, 1990).

Under the discrepancy model, learning disabilities are identified by comparing a student's I.Q. or cognitive abilities with his or her performance on academic measures. However, there are numerous conceptual and practical difficulties associated with the discrepancy model for LD identification, and some states and districts have chosen to implement a RTI model.

Response to Intervention

The RTI model identifies LD or reading learning disabled (RLD) students based upon their failure to respond to interventions. This model not only identifies students earlier but it also provides enhanced opportunities for intervention services. Students who receive intensive, high quality interventions early in their academic careers can make significant academic

gains quickly. The majority of students who respond favorably to intensive interventions continue to perform well post-intervention (Coyne, Kame'enui, Simmons, & Harn, 2004). The ultimate goal of the RTI model is to provide effective academic interventions which allow for student success, and reduce the number of students who are referred and placed in a special education setting (Fuchs, Fuchs, Harris, & Roberts, 2006; Pugach & Johnson, 1995).

RTI does not make assumptions about the underlying causes of a student's reading difficulty; instead it recognizes that the difficulty may lie within the child, the intervention, or both (Case, Speece, & Molloy, 2003). Seven characteristics have been associated with treatment unresponsiveness: phonemic awareness, phonological memory, rapid naming, intelligence, attention or behavior, orthographic processing or demographics (Al Otaiba & Fuchs, 2002), and interventions can be implemented to address one or more of these characteristics.

Investigators have reported favorable results using RTI approaches (Case, Speece & Molloy, 2003; Vellutino, Scanlon, & Lyon, 2000). Torgesen (2000) calculated that three-quarters of primary students who are at-risk for reading difficulties can catch up with their average-achieving peers through "effective, comprehensive" beginning reading interventions. Research suggests there is some evidence that a window of opportunity exists in early grades, where intensive interventions are more effective at preventing reading difficulties for many at-risk students (Coyne et al., 2004). Early intervention in reading correlates to the level of success that students have later in their academic careers (Lennon & Slesinski, 1999).

The Response to Intervention (RTI) model provides remedial interventions and addresses important theoretical issues. RTI has the following necessary conditions:
Data associated with direct instruction and identification,
Timely planned interventions,
Frequent measurement with technically accurate assessment, and
Implementation of well-designed general education interventions.
Children who fail to respond to well-implemented instruction may be candidates for special education or for more intensive early intervention efforts.

The Three-Tier RTI Model

Effective use of RTI features explicit and systematic instruction, ample practice opportunities, and immediate feedback. The success of a three-tier program model depends on the use of a sensitive early measurement tool, like DIBELS (Kamps et al., 2003; Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2003). The application of RTI involves a multi-tiered framework that outlines processes and programs interventions for students who

demonstrate academic difficulties. This framework most commonly involves a three-tiered model. They are identified as Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III with each level differentiated by its focus on the type of intervention.

Tier I implements high quality instructional and behavioral supports for all students in the general education curriculum. This level utilizes universal assessments of students' literacy skills, performance in academics and behaviors. Based upon data collected, teachers plan and implement a wide variety of research-based teaching strategies. The success of such strategies is continuously assessed through on-going criteria based measurements (CBM) which guides further instruction. During the Tier I process, students receive differentiated instruction based on the ongoing data collection and corresponding review.

Vaughn and Linan-Thompson (2003) indicate that high-quality Tier II interventions target struggling learners through assessment, which is then followed by additional targeted instruction in the essential reading components and progress monitoring that uses results to inform instruction. Tier II activities address students whose performance and academic growth are delayed as compared to other same age and same grade students. Students in Tier II receive additional intervention services beyond those offered in the general education classroom.

Tier II relies heavily on the data collected and analyzed during Tier I. Teacher referrals and CBM probes provide the basis for interventions, staff engagement in collaborative problem solving, and the design and implementation of instructional supports. Key personnel trained in the RTI process provide support for the process. The process involves a continuous improvement model; students' progress is carefully monitored, data collected, and new or improved interventions planned and implemented. The school continually addresses the question: "Has the student responded to the intervention?"

If a student fails to respond to Tier II interventions, then the student is moved into Tier III. Tier III interventions shift the focus from whole group and small group activities to more frequent small group and one-on-one interventions. Again, this tier utilizes data collected from multiple level sources; e.g. continuous CBM probes, systematic tracking of students' progress and classroom assessments. Data and collaborative planning provide a basis for Tier III interventions. If a student fails to meet the goals associated Tier III, then special education services are considered.

The reauthorization of IDEIA and the greater implementation of RTI will allow for the creation of new relationships between classroom teachers and special education teachers, between NCLB and IDEIA, and most importantly, improved learning for students with disabilities (United States Department of Education, 2004). The RTI model allows for earlier identification of students through a problem-solving approach, effectively screens out non LD students and provides appropriate remediation to non LD students. As a result,

the number of students who enter Tier III and subsequently a special education setting is reduced (Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). Finally, there is a corresponding reduction in the number of minority students who are placed in special education (Harris-Murri, King, & Rostenberg, 2006; Harry & Klinger, 2007). Results show that students and classroom teachers experience greater support as they address academic deficiencies (Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003).

The Study

Because the effectiveness of RTI within the identified district has not been evaluated beyond standard anecdotal evidence, it is the intent of this ongoing study to provide statistical analyses of data relative to the impacts of RTI, identification of special education students, and special education qualification rates. Data available at the time of publication are provided, with complete analysis to be conducted during early 2008.

The rural district in the study was the first in Nevada to implement RTI. The district, which is located in north-central Nevada along the I-80 corridor, served approximately 3,400 students during the 2006-2007 school year. During this same school year, 15 percent, or approximately 500 students, were identified as eligible for special education services. For the same year, the district's ethnicity ratios were as follows: White 65.8 percent, Hispanic 27.9 percent, Native American 5 percent, African America 0.4 percent, and Asian/Pacific Islander 0.9 percent. Free and reduced lunch status for the 2006-2007 school year was reported at 29.6 percent.

This implementation of RTI has occurred over a three-year period and encompasses all schools within the district. All elementary schools are utilizing CBM as a component of the RTI model. While the model has been implemented district wide, this study is an ongoing evaluation utilizing data from three elementary schools, identified as A, B, and C. Individual data are in the process of being collected and analyzed for students who are identified for specific intervention services through the RTI program. The completed study will primarily focus on students who were part of the program at the Tier II or Tier III levels of intervention and also will evaluate the effectiveness of the RTI program and the use of CBM.

The district provided staff development for the types and levels of interventions. Examples of Tier II small group interventions include Word Search, Repeated Reading, and Story Prediction. Examples of Tier III, One-on-One Interventions include Echo Reading, Drill Sandwich, and Incremental Rehearsal.

Results

Initial results show strong support for RTI. Utilizing a comparison of the 2004-2005 school year with the 2006-2007 school year, significant changes in both the percentage of students referred for special education and the qualification rates were noted. Table 1 provides baseline data collected prior to the implementation of the RTI model. Specifically,

the number of students referred, number tested for special education placement, and percentage found eligible are provided. As indicated, the pre RTI qualification rates ranged from 65% to a high of 85%.

Table 1
Pre Implementation of RTI Data (2004-2005) for Three Elementary School in the Study

Schools	Population	Referred for Testing	# Qualified for SPED	% of Referred found Eligible
A	400	26 (7%)	20	77%
B	290	14 (5%)	12	86%
C	520	20 (4%)	13	65%

The data summarized in Table 2 provides a summary of percentage of referrals and percentage of SPED eligible referrals after implementation of RTI. The results indicate that the number and corresponding percentages of students referred for special education decreased. Respectively the percentages by school changed from 7% to 5%, from 5% to 4%, and from 4% to 1%. These are relatively small changes; however, meaningful changes occurred in the accuracy of referrals for consideration for SPED services – students who failed to "respond to Tier III interventions." Schools A and B had 100% of referred students eligible for SPED services while School C moved from 77% eligible to 85% eligible. This finding suggests that the "correct" students were referred for assessment. Thus, after implementation of RTI, SPED assessment resources were used much more efficiently. For small rural districts, efficient use of resources is paramount.

Table 2
Post Implementation of RTI Data (2006-2007) for Three Elementary School in the Study

Schools	Population	Referred for Testing	# Qualified for SPED	% of Referred found Eligible
A	408	20 (5%)	17	85%
B	277	12 (4%)	12	100%
C	504	5 (1%)	5	100%

The data indicate that students who received Tier II services tended to "Respond to Interventions." That is to say, 150 students were involved in Tier II interventions; however, only 42 students were referred to SPED Assessment. Thus, when both years are considered, 72% of the students who were involved in Tier II services were making satisfactory progress and were not referred for Tier III services.

The levels of utilization of intervention services were monitored over the two year period for students who received Tier II and Tier III services. During the 2005-2006 school year, a total of 66 students received services at Tier II and 16 students received Tier III services. Of these students, only 20 were placed in special education. During the 2006-2007 school

year, a total of 84 students received services at Tier II, and just 34 students received Tier III services. As shown in Table 3, the discrepancy between the number of students receiving services at Tier III and those placed in special education is a result of roll-over referrals from the previous school year.

When the data from the three tables are consider jointly, the results indicate that the number of referrals for special education assessment has decreased and the percentage of placements from referrals has increased. The results suggest that implementation of RTI has provided better services to students and improved efficiency by referring students for SPED assessment more accurately.

Table 3.
Summary of Numbers of Students Referred for Services in Tier II and Tier III by Year

	Tier II	Tier III	Placed in SPED*
2005-2006	66	16 (24%)	20
2006-2007	84	26 (31%)	34
Total	150	42 (28%)	54

* Placement into SPED included carryover recommendations from the previous year.

Conclusion

Perhaps the greatest concern to arise from the discrepancy model of LD identification was the over reliance on a quantified discrepancy. Such focus on the discrepancy forced schools to fail to meet the intent of the law. The discrepancy model reduced the identification of LD students to a statistical difference between ability and achievement. For many students, the model failed to accurately identified disabilities. In addition, the model failed to provide timely identification and corresponding interventions.

With the implementation of IDEIA, districts have an opportunity to build upon previous experiences, focus on appropriate educational outcomes, and meet the needs of students. Early intervention services can avoid special education placement for some students, provide appropriate services for SPED students, and support effective teaching and learning for all.

The District has successfully implemented the RTI model, provided aligned professional development, and both teaching and learning have improved. As a consequence, there has been an increased collaboration between regular and special education teachers, provision of a continuous improvement model for enhancement of services, and implementation of ongoing data analysis. In addition, the district has served as a model for other rural districts throughout the state, which has brought increased self-efficacy to the entire staff.

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Intergrating Assistive Technology Into Regular Education Settings: One State's Success

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INTEGRATING ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY INTO REGULAR EDUCATION SETTINGS: ONE STATE'S SUCCESS

Abstract: Although information exists regarding integrating special education students into regular educational settings, many students are still being segregated in special education classrooms. Teachers, both special education and regular education, struggle with how to integrate students. West Virginia has created a model of how to incorporate a computer with specialized software into a variety of regular education settings and use the computer to allow special education students to participate in regular education settings. This presentation will discuss the who, what and how of this project and the current project findings.

INTRODUCTION:

Although information exists regarding integrating special education students into regular educational settings (Barbetta & Spears-Bunton 2007, Draffen & Blenkhorn 2007, LaCava,, Golan, el al. 2007), teachers, both special and regular education, struggle with how to integrate students. West Virginia has created a model of how to incorporate an adapted computer into regular education settings.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the project was to:
Introduce assistive technology into regular education settings
To monitor increase/decrease in students with disabilities opportunity to work in a regular education setting
To monitor if the students with disabilities spent less time in a special education setting

The West Virginia Assistive Technology System (WVATS) partnered with Cabell County Schools in West Virginia to integrate an accessible computer workstation into three inclusive regular education settings, one in an elementary school, one in a middle school and one in a high school.

Representatives from WVATS and Cabell County schools chose equipment to be integrated by researching student needs and providing a range of software to ensure a large variety of abilities could be met. WVATS purchased the start up equipment, installed the

The software and set up cost components of each of the locations. Once the computers were
installed and ready for use, they became property of Cabell County Schools. Cabell
County was encouraged to add more programs to the computers as future needs arise.

Programs purchased:
Co:Writer
Dragon Naturally Speaking
HyperSign
My Own Bookshelf
Speaking Dynamically Pro
Writing with Symbols
ZoomText

WVATS staff provided an introductory training to school staff on the equipment and
provided quick start user guides for teachers to use to ensure use after the training was
complete.

METHODS:
Outcomes measured included:
Student performance with equipment
Social ramifications with regular education teachers and students

Cabell County teachers filled out an outcome measures form created by WVATS to
monitor the success/failure of this project. Teachers filled out forms at the 3 month period
(January 2007) and the same form at the 6 month period (June 2007/end of school year).

OUTCOMES:
Findings at three months:
Teachers had numerous examples of the positive impact the computers/software had on the
students achievements, including in their IEP goals, regular education settings and social
interactions:

 "Allows students to participate with peers, boosts self-confidence and self-efficacy"

"Allowed others to see more potential in special education students than they thought
possible"

"Efficient use of time, easier planning, students are more interested, PC visuals increase
learning, improved decision-making skills"

"Enhances learning experience and enriches vocabulary"

Findings at six months:

"The interactive teaching methods of phonics, etc. has been a catalyst for speech among some of my non-verbal students!"

"Teachers of regular education get excited about the outcomes and potential for our students as a result of the exposure to computer assisted educational programs. Some teachers have inquired about (programs) for some of their at risk students."
"More accurate responses on the (state) alternate assessment."

"Greater attention in computer lab with regular education classes; confidence/accuracy in responses in the general education setting."

"Better communication opportunities with others. The eagerness of students to use the computer was a surprise. The only negative aspect for use was having to share for some of (the students) as they all wanted to be involved!"

CONCLUSION:
The West Virginia Assistive Technology System (WVATS) partnership with Cabell County Schools in West Virginia to integrate an accessible computer workstation into three inclusive regular education settings, one in an elementary school, middle school and high school has provided special education students with an avenue to be included in regular education settings.

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS:
WVATS is disseminating information on this project as a 'model program' so additional West Virginia counties (and national educational entities) can be educated on why inclusion of assistive technology in regular education settings works and how they can establish a similar project.

Educators can learn from this work by in the following ways:

How to coordinate an assistive technology endeavor with a state Tech Act program

How to define what technologies are needed in a particular area

How to share funds to create an assistive technology endeavor

How to integrate assistive technology into regular education settings

How to provide teachers with training and knowledge about assistive technologies

How to monitor success/failure of a project by creating a measurable outcome survey

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Project Participation is a virtual space designed especially for families, educators, administrators and therapists (HYPERLINK "http://www.projectparticipate.org" http://www.projectparticipate.org).

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Is There Accountability of SPED Programs Under No Child Left Behind Within Small Rural Schools – A Follow Up?

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IS THERE ACCOUNTABILITY OF SPED PROGRAMS UNDER NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND WITHIN SMALL RURAL SCHOOLS – A FOLLOW-UP?

Abstract

Hill, Thornton, & Usinger (2006) reported that school districts in Nevada with an attendance of less than 1,500 students were not reporting accountability data for Special Education Students (SPED). These small rural school districts avoided the requirements of No Child Left Behind for SPED students because of small NCLB group size which was directly related to enrollments of the districts. This presentation is based on data from a follow-up study conducted in 2007 to determine the extent to which the data reported in 2006 accurately reflected policy, practices, and possible implications for service for SPED students.

Summary of the Problem

Many small rural schools fail to make Adequate Yearly Progress (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 accountability tools of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is documentation of progress by subgroups—ethnicity, social economic status, limited English proficiency, and students with disabilities. The NCLB accountability process requires that all groups meet established standards, progressively increasing achievement standards, and reduce achievement gaps between various groups. The law requires that all groups of students must demonstrate academic mastery by 2013-2014. If a school fails to make AYP, then the pressure to improve significantly increases and penalties are imposed. 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 (N) for reporting and accountability purposes. As expected, states have established a wide variety of critical subgroup sizes; herein, is a fundamental problem with the law. For example, if the state threshold is 25 students (a number by 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. 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).

This study was concerned with programs for students with Individual Education Plans (IEP) when numbers are insufficient to warrant NCLB accountability. Most educators acknowledge that students with IEPs face a geometric set of increasing challenges as state proficiency standards are raised. Olson (2005) reported that if the minimum subgroup size was 60 students, almost 100 percent of schools in five states were 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 (2005) indicated that 25 states have established subgroup sizes 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; have small rural schools established a level 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—sizes 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 accommodations during assessment for students with IEPs, as well as 504 students. 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, numbers 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 needed to maintain 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.

Under No Child Left Behind, if the schools fail to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), then the pressure to improve significantly increases. The intent of NCLB legislation was that all students would make progress. However, in all states the accountability process sets a minimal population size before a classification of students is considered. For example, if the state (Nevada) threshold were 25 students per group, then a school that had fewer than 25 students in a specific group would not be required to report on the progress of students in that group. Of specific concern is the classification of students with Individual Educational Plans (IEP) and what happens to these students when their N is insufficient to warrant AYP attention. Most educators acknowledge that IEP students will face significant challenges to meet high state proficiency standards.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the extent to which small schools with small populations of IEP students continue to avoid state accountability for AYP of these students and to what extent do IEP students in rural schools fall through the designed "cracks" in the accountability systems and to determine how pervasive is the problem.

Theoretical Framework

Many researchers have established a link between the skills of principals and effective

schools and have discussed the concept of instructional leadership. In addition, accountability has been linked to improved student achievement. Given that many of the small rural schools avoid AYP problems within SPED because of small enrollments, the question is "are IEP students, as a group, receiving attention in the School Improvement Plans where the group size is below NCLB reporting levels?"

Most recently *The No Child Left Behind Act: A Progress Report* (2008) reported that schools are still focusing on compliance with NCLB. The report states that "schools are still engaged to a large extent in compliance with the requirements of NCLB, which is preventing them from focusing their efforts on instructional change and teacher development" (p. 31). The report continued that "though many improvements have been made since NCLB and IDEA began emphasizing accountability of all student, some staffs worry that some regulation could actually harm student with disabilities" (p. 20).   In addition, that documents reports that the percentage of students with disabilities who drop out of high schools has increased considerably in most large states (p.15).

The Commission on No Child Left Behind (2007) reported on the impact of students with disabilities on schools' AYP ratings. In Georgia, 38% of the schools that failed to make AYP based solely on their IEP subgroups. In Michigan, 12% of the schools failing to achieve AYP do so because of the IEP subgroup only and 19% of the schools in Pennsylvania reported the same results (p. 63).   While these are relatively low percentages, the Commission found that schools and their respective communities have significant concerns when "good" schools failed to make AYP in only this area. While precise figures are not available for Nevada, level of achievement for the IEP subgroup is the reason many schools fail to make AYP.

A second area of concern addressed by the Commission (2007) was the varying sizes of the N which states have established. "The large and varied N-sizes in these states mean that many African American and Hispanic students, as well as students with disabilities and English language learner, remain invisible, and schools are not held responsible for improving their performance" (p. 64). The lack of accountability is a significant issue; Bass, McDade, Medina, and Osgood (2006) reported that 1.9 million students or 1 in 14, were not counted in AYP calculation due to state established N-sizes.

The Study

The findings presented were derived from the Nevada State Report Card (NRC), a publically accessible document on the Internet (HYPERLINK "http://www.nevadareportcard.com" http://www.nevadareportcard.com) and the School Improvement Plans (SIP) of schools not reporting IEP students' achievement. Schools are required to develop a SIP, which defines goals, action steps, and intent to provide services to special/high-need populations. Specifically, if a school fails to make adequate progress within a specific NCLB group, then the group will be/should be identified in the SIP. The investigators reviewed the data from all schools and districts included in the 2006 study to

determine if IEP students are included in AYP designations. The above documents were reviewed for the School Year 2006-2007 to determine if SPED students were included in the AYP reports. In addition, the SIPs of schools were reviewed to determine if the IEP students were targeted for attention.

Methodology

This study was completed using public documents previously mentioned for small districts where the number of IEP students reported totaled more than 25, which is the minimum groups size required for reporting in Nevada, but did not report academic progress for those students. The investigators began with assumption that if schools were prepared to focus appropriate attention on IEP groups, even though those groups did not impact their AYP status, then school wide efforts could be identified within their School Improvement Plans. The school year 2007-2008 SIPs were reviewed carefully for any mention of IEP students.

The school districts are listed in Table 1 along with enrollment of Count Day (Nevada does not use an Average Daily Attendance figure but rather a Count Day (the actual enrollment on a specified day in late September).

Table 1: Summary of Total Student Enrollment by School District

White Pine	1422
Lander	1257
Lincoln	1074
Pershing	788
Mineral	667
Storey	453
Eureka	248*
Esmeralda	68*

*Enrollment was too small to report SPED students at the district level.

IEP students have historically constituted about 10-13% of all students enrolled in Nevada schools so the lowest two districts were not reviewed for this study because the expected number of students in the district would be far less than the specified number of 25. A review of the NRC indicated this to be an accurate assumption; therefore, the focus of the study was on the remaining six districts.

Findings

Close examination of the documents indicated that all elementary schools reported achievement data for IEP students, which is a change from two years earlier. This is the result of Nevada's assessment/reporting requirements, which increased over the two year

period. Thus, more students were included in the reported data.   For larger middle/junior high schools, the assessment requirements resulted in more students tested; therefore, group sizes increased and results for IEP students were reported. The high schools were another matter.   Enrollment data for the high schools in the six districts are summarized in Table 2 which indicated that all had IEP populations exceeding 25.

Table 2: Summary of Data from the High Schools in the Study

District	# Enrolled	H.S. Identity	H.S. Enrollment	# IEPs
White Pine	1422	WPHS	404	43
Lander	1257	BMHS	410	40
Lincoln	1074	**LC/PV	262	12
Pershing	788	PCHS	272	51
Mineral	667	HHS	191	32
Storey	453	SCHS	154	29
Eureka	248*	----	----	---
Esmeralda	68*	----	---	---

*Too small to report
** While the N is below 25 this school did mention IEP students in the SIP

Of the six schools, only three included any mention of the IEP subpopulation in their school improvement plans. Two contained very brief references to the subgroup, while the third provided a clear set of action steps for the IEP subgroup. The following language is taken verbatim from three school improvement plans.

In School SIP #1: "Parents are involved in educational decisions for their special education students through IEPs."

In School SIP #2: "Although exempted because it is not a large enough subgroup, PVHS's IEP students are not achieving at a level consistent with other students at the school. As mentioned above, it is the goal of PVHS's staff to improve learning for all students. We would like to increase the number of IEP students who graduate with a standard diploma."

The third school's SIP contains specific language and planned action steps. The language reported here is verbatim and representative but parts have been omitted because the language was extensive.

Under Goal 1: "Continue course offerings in remedial language arts to meet the needs of LEP and IEP students"

Action: "Continue course offerings in language arts to meet the needs of LEP and IEP students."

Root Causes: "Lack of vocabulary acquisition with general education content by LEP and IEP students."

Solution: "Aides to assist remediation efforts for at-risk students in core classes."

Under Goal 4: "Increase reading performance among targeted LEP, IEP, and at-risk of students across the curriculum."

Measurable Objective 4: 1. Successful completion of graduation requirements of sub-population groups will increase by 5% annually."

School # 3 specifically identified the IEP group and provided clearly stated action steps designed to address student needs. Thus, only one high schools had provided meaningful action steps for IEP students.

Summary and Implications

The findings presented are a follow-up of a study completed in 2006 were part of a statewide accountability report on the status of the educational system in the State. For this study, a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative analysis was employed. The school report cards for the eight rural school districts in the state were reviewed and measures of AYP were studied. Specifically, the reasons that schools failed to make AYP were analyzed. Particular attention was paid to the IEP subgroup. In all high schools, data for IEP subgroups were not reported. While two of the schools are very small and would not be expected to have a minimum of 25 students, the other high schools did not report IEP student achievement. The findings reveal that small rural high school students in Nevada do not report achievement data for IEP students. This result is, in part, because state assessments focus on 10th grade students—not all IEP students are assessed on the state assessments.

These finding are consistent with a review of related literature; Nevada is not unique. Serious questions remain. What is the relationship between lack of involvement of high school IEP students NCLB accountability and academic achievement? Should all students be included in accountability reports independent of group N? Should school improvement plans include all groups that fail to make AYP independent of group size?

The intent of NCLB was that "no child be left behind." However, our findings in 2006 and 2008 suggest that many rural special education students are not considered as a component of NCLB accountability due to their low N. This study adds to the important conversation in relationship to extent to which the law meets the needs of all students, especially those with the greatest need. The study will provide valuable information on the extent to which schools address the needs of SPED students within their SIPs. The study contributes to ongoing discussions of appropriate policies and procedures for accountability

under NCLB for small groups. The results of two studies in Nevada in 2005-2006 and 2007-2008 suggest rural special education students are not considered as a component of NCLB accountability.

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Native American Innovative Leadership Project: Analysis and Applications

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NATIVE AMERICAN INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP PROJECT: ANALYSIS AND APPLICATIONS

The University of Northern Colorado and Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado have worked in collaboration to develop and deliver an Interdisciplinary Master of Arts degree in Educational Leadership and Special Education Administration using distance learning technology and a variety of site-based activities designed to prepare participants for administrator certification as a special education director and school principal. The two-year program of study is supplemented with a one-year induction period following program completion that matches a practicing Native American administrator and a university faculty member with each participant to further develop expertise and professional growth through a mentoring relationship, as well as providing extended in-service professional development in a variety of formats. The curricula utilize materials that specifically address Native American student learning styles and culture to increase the instructional leadership capabilities of participants.

An advisory board comprised of local tribal representatives, current Native American teachers and administrators, and university faculty has been commissioned to ensure that student needs are appropriately addressed and to provide feedback on course and program development and delivery. Local accessibility through distance learning technologies and on-site delivery will increase program participation and a cohort learning community structure will increase program completion, as well as developing a local post-program support network for Native American administrators. Cohort members have been recruited to assist with subsequent cohorts, thus building site capacity for further program expansion. The model developed is intended to be disseminated and shared with other tribal colleges and universities for program expansion and replication.

Of the 39 Native American colleges and post-secondary schools in the United States, the majority are two-year institutions granting Associate degrees and certificates. In the area of education, Associate degrees in elementary education are the most common. Seven institutions offer Bachelor's degrees with only one institution offering a Bachelor's degree in education, specifically elementary education. Several of the schools offering baccalaureate programs do have matriculation agreements with neighboring universities to obtain Bachelor degrees in academic areas not addressed by the tribal school. None of the Native American schools list the completion of administrative licensure for school leadership as a principal or special education directorship as part of their current program or matriculation agreement. While much of the success of tribal colleges and universities can be attributed to their proximity to Native American communities and reservations and the

integration of Native American culture into the learning environment, completion of Master's and Doctoral degrees decrease as students are required to leave their community to complete academic programs. Post baccalaureate degrees awarded to Native Americans comprised .4% of all master's degrees awarded in 1994 and .3% of all doctoral degrees awarded. Given overall Native American population to be 1% of all American's, the degree completion rate for Native American's remain considerable below the expected levels (Pavel, et al., 1998).

The goal of this project is to achieve an increased number of Native American administrators and special education directors. This was measured by the number of participants completing the Interdisciplinary Master Degree program in School Leadership and Special Education Administration. In the first year of program implementation, a cohort of 20-25 participants was recruited through tribal colleges throughout the tribes found in the northern tribal colleges and departments of education, and another cohort of 20-25 participants through Ft. Lewis College. In the second year of program implementation, additional cohorts were recruited at each site. By the end of the funding period, this will result in at least 40 Native Americans obtaining their principal and special education director licenses.

The following narrative outlines the program to be delivered (including cohort development, culturally appropriate curricula, career counseling, induction mentoring and professional development, and the use of participant feedback to provide continuous feedback and improvement of program content and delivery), development of distance learning technologies and support for student learning, development of an Advisory Council with stakeholders to ensure effective program content and delivery, and the facilitation of cohort participants to build local program capacity and sustainability. A list of project objectives and outcomes are closely aligned wtih the program and descriptions of linkages to agencies and organizations serving educational services to Native American students.

The Nature of Native American Innovative Leadership Project Innovations
The program delivered through distance learning results in the awarding of an Interdisciplinary Masters degree in Administration that meets all standards for Special Education Director and Principal licensure. While the program specifically addresses the certification requirements for principals and special education directors in Arizona, Colorado, South Dakota, North Dakota, Kansas, New Mexico, Montana, Oklahoma, Utah, Nevada, Wyoming, and Idaho; students are advised of any additional requirements from the state in which they plan apply for licensure. For example, students applying for licensure in South Dakota will need to enroll in one additional hour of the ELPS 606 Principal Internship. Students applying for licensure in Utah will not need to enroll in additional course hours but will need to document 450 clock hours of internship. The above states serve the majority of Office of Indian Education Program/Bureau of Indian Education schools who are in need of Native American school leadership.

The following coursework comprises the Interdisciplinary Master of Arts degree program in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies and Special Education Administration:

Special Education Administration Concentration
EDSE 680 Administration and Supervision of Special Education   3 Credits
EDSA 681 Administrative Planning and Program Planning in
          Special Education   3 Credits
EDSA 718 Advanced Seminar in Education of Students with Hearing
          And/or Visual Impairments   3 Credits

Educational Leadership/Principalship Concentration
ELPS 603 Shaping Organizations: Management and Leadership in
          Education   3 Credits
ELPS 604 Understanding People: Professional Development and
          Educational Leadership   3 Credits
ELPS 670 The Principalship   3 Credits

Common Core
SRM 600 Introduction to Graduate Research   3 Credits
ELPS 601 Leadership Development through Inquiry   3 Credits
(The above two courses provide the institutionally required research tools for program completion.)
ELPS 654 Instructional Leadership and Supervision   3 Credits
ELPS 650 School Finance and Budgeting   3 Credits
ELPS 660 Law and the Administrator   3 Credits
ELPS 606 Internship in Educational Leadership   3 Credits
EDSA 730 Externship in Special Education Administration   3 Credits
Total Program   39 Credits

The above coursework meets the following criteria for principal and special education administration licensure for the states listed above:
Completion of a Master's Degree in School Administration with a Special Education Administration and Building Principal concentration;
Completion of a 39 semester hour program and recommendation for licensure through an accredited institution; and,
Completion of an internship with a minimum of 360 hours of site service.
This internship is divided between ELPS 606 and EDSE 730 course enrollment with participants engaging in a variety of activities at multiple sites, as well as grade levels. Students may complete more than 360 hours of service, if the state they will be applying for licensure in has a higher requirement. The culmination of the internship and externship experiences results in a student portfolio demonstrating principal and special education

director competencies of standards as outlined by the Colorado Department of Education, as well as the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards upon which the majority of school leadership state standards are based.

The remaining requirement for licensure in several states is the attainment of a passing score on required state examinations which program site coordinators will assist students in scheduling. Completion of 3-4 years of teaching experience is also required for licensure in most states. Given the two year program duration, participants are required to have at least one year of teaching experience prior to admittance to the program and are made aware of the requirements of the state to which they will be applying for licensure.

The program is delivered through distance learning technologies in summer sessions (9 credit hours for two summers), one 3 credit hour course during the fall and spring semesters, and a final 3 credit hours course in the summer of program completion. Distance learning technologies and structures used in course delivery include the Blackboard online learning platform, Centra technologies, Macromedia Coldfusion MX, and teleconferencing strategies as needed for group and individual advisement.

A majority of assignments will be problem-based and require quality interaction with Native American teachers, students, community members, and administrators in community and educational settings. Problem-based instruction tied to actual school settings has been shown to increase the relevance of graduate program content and internalization of knowledge, behaviors, and skills. Action research and service learning components will also be included in coursework. The application of knowledge by participants will increase leadership skills, increase awareness of practical challenges and resources within the Native American school environment, and enrich distance learning sharing by cohort members.

The problem-based instructional approach is based on the principles of learning outlined Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School.* Practical application of knowledge in the daily working environment that adults find themselves in is also essential for engagement in learning and long-term retention of knowledge and changes in behavior (Caffarella & Merriam, 2000). Options for achievement of assignment objectives will focus on the formative nature of the assignment and evaluation. The opportunity for self-directed learning and choice in educational experiences also increases adult learner engagement, as well as models the instruction most effective for Native American students (Caffarella & Merriam, 2000; Cummins, 1988). This includes work with experienced individuals and community members, collaborative small group work, and the opportunity to demonstrate learning in culturally comfortable ways (Hale, 2002).

Statement of the Problem

The lack of ethnic and cultural role models contributes to low student motivation

and achievement, as well as a lack of culturally sensitive school program design (Demert, 2002; McGee & Cody, 1995; Pewardy & Hammer, 2003; Solomon, 1997; Sorensen, 1992). Whereas traditional education program design has emphasized the assimilation of cultures, it is vital that Native American educators maintain an integrative perspective that embraces the tenets of a multicultural society in order to engage and motivate Native American students. Native American student achievement increased in the 1990's, but still fell far behind that of the general population. The high school graduation rate for Native American students falls 9% below the national average with 16% less Native American high school graduates completing a college preparatory curriculum (Pavel, et al., 1998). Furthermore, most Native American college-bound high school graduates "failed to meet all five criteria used to assess student competitiveness in the college admissions process" and 35% "faced four or more risk factors that threatened their ability to enroll in a postsecondary institution and ultimately complete a degree" (Pavel, et al., 1998, p. 2-2). In order to "encourage students to achieve economic independence, continuing education, and political involvement based on their cultural backgrounds," educators of Native American students must be aware of cultural learning styles and motivations in order to be effective instructional leaders (Hale, 2002, p. 83). "Though important to all schools, it is vital that schools serving a high percentage of Indian students increase the number of American Indian and Alaska Native administrators" (Pavel, 1999, p. 3).

Purpose of the Study

The school administration knowledge necessary for the effective design and delivery of instruction for Native American students is twofold. First, a multicultural perspective must actively acknowledge that Native American student cultural knowledge is worthwhile and then reinforce and expand that cultural knowledge (Hale, 2002). Central to this acknowledgement and expansion is the promotion of an appreciation and respect for one's own culture, as well as others' cultures (Hale, 2002). Second, Native American students process information in a distinct and unique manner that is not effectively engaged in the traditional sequential and analytical learning model set forth by most schools and curriculum providers (Cazden, 1982; Dumont, 1972; Erickson & Mohatt, 1982; Philips, 1983). A global and relational instructional style more effectively engages Native American students with a variety of choices in individual learning, examples from contemporary Native American life and real world applications of ideas and skills (Hall, 2002). Furthermore, Native American cultural norms regarding the value of cooperation over competition and the public display of one's own knowledge must inform the development of instructional environments to encourage Native American student learning without creating a schism between family and community behavioral expectations and successful interaction and school expectations and interactions (Hale, 2002; Sinte Gleska University, 2005). This knowledge directly impacts the guidance of instruction, as well as the evaluation of teaching, by administrators in Native American schools.

Method

A combination of hermeneutic and critical theory epistemologies grounded this

qualitative investigation of participants' roles, decision-making, and future aspirations for leadership effectiveness. The role of relation-development and situational decision-making based on cultural and community factors was analyzed, as well as the desire to "give voice" and validity to Native American students and communities in the educational process. Concepts of place and holistic human and nature relationships, as well as reciprocity in those relationships leading to feelings of civic responsibility, are also explored through interpretive frameworks advanced by Cajete (2000) and Grande (2004). The definition given by Smith (2006) regarding community as a process of respect, enablement of individuals, healing, and education is used throughout this study, as well.

Findings

Responses from 32 members currently enrolled in two cohorts in a nation-wide Native American educational leadership Master of Arts degree program leading to principal and special education director licensure were qualitatively analyzed in this study. Responses included educational leadership platform statements, epistemological belief statements, personal reflections, and online discussion responses in student-led discussions. After permission was obtained from students to conduct this study, responses were analyzed using NVIVO7 software (QSR International, 2006) to identify emerging themes relating to student motivation. After dominant themes were identified, the frequency of each theme by student and tribal affiliation, as well as the topic across the various response formats eliciting each theme, were analyzed. Themes were also classified by epistemology.

Analysis of the data showed a predominance of critical theory epistemology espoused by the aspiring Native American educational leaders, followed closely by a relational/situational hermeneutics perspective. A desire to change the opportunities for Native American student success, both within the tribal community and the non-Native dominant society, was the most frequently reported motivation of cohort members. Past experiences with non-Native educational administrators also elicited advocacy of leadership that was based on making meaning of each individual's cultural and community context in order to meet students' and communities' educational needs.

The Native American Innovative Leadership (NAIL) project develops critical leadership skills and knowledge that reflect a balance of Native and Western perspectives. The Native American teachers enrolled in this principal and special education administrator licensure program revealed the need to give back to and strengthen the tribal community as the major motivation to assume educational leadership roles in reservation and Bureau of Indian Education schools. In addition to the administrator preparation emphasis in the project, qualitative research regarding the participants' motivation for participation, reflections on role development, and aspirations for future contributions as a leader of schools enrolling high concentrations of Native American learners is explored. The methodology employed to determine these findings was grounded in hermeneutics and critical theory epistemologies, themes that emerged from cohorts' responses included integrated cultural role modeling for students, community and cultural awareness building

for non-Native educators, and rebuilding trust and relational networks between the school and community members and parents who experienced the "boarding school era" of forced assimilation.

Dominant motivation themes that emerged from the analysis of responses included the following:
(1) A desire to become role models for Native American students by demonstrating dominant society functioning and success and the retention of cultural identity and personal belonging;
(2) The further integration and valuing of cultural perspectives within the school setting that extends into the community, building a sense of personal self-worth, hope, and civic responsibility;
(3) The mentoring of non-Native American educators to raise cultural and community awareness, appreciation, and integration into the school setting; and,
(4) Greater community involvement in school curriculum development and instruction to increase the sense of ownership of parents and other tribal members of the school, thereby increasing home and community support for academic achievement.

Discussion
Given the forced assimilation that the parents and grandparents of current K-12 students experienced at Native American boarding schools in the twentieth century, parents and community members often view the school setting as nullifying or denigrating the cultural and linguistic heritage of Native American children. The responses of the Native American educators in this study overwhelmingly indicated the need to further reclaim the education of Native American children by the tribal community so that skills and beliefs of both the dominant non-Native society and traditional Native American cultures are respected and valued, eliminating the "either/or" perception that currently keeps many Native American adults from fully engaging in schools and their children's formal education. Cohort members also offered numerous suggestions to accomplish the above goals that are also summarized in this paper.

The educational importance of this study includes the recruitment, mentoring relationships, and retention of Native Americans administrators; the development of administrative training programs to provide Native American educators with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to successfully enact change within the school setting and the community; and to further the discussion among all educators regarding the challenges Native American communities face in promoting high standards of Native American student success within a cultural and academic context. The lack of continuity of leadership (and policies) and the "friction between American Indian and non-Indian staff" from a lack or awareness or valuing of the indigenous cultures cited throughout Cleary and Peacock's (1998) *Collected Wisdom: American Indian Education* can be addressed Native American educational leaders who are committed to their cultures, communities, and the balance of

Native and non-Native knowledge in Native American schools and communities.

Begaye (2006) relates the multiple understandings that contribute to the current view of Native American culture influenced by the disciplines of anthropology, linguistics, and psychology. Since the culture of American Indian people is constantly changing, the inter-related nature of Western and Native thought is an ongoing collection of cognitive codes, maps, and assumptions about Native American values (Duran & Duran, 1995; Spindler, 1997; Wilkins, 2002). The most tangible means of protecting and transmitting American Indian culture is through the preservation of indigenous language that is integrally linked to cultural identity. Dalby (2003) has studied the critical importance of language as the medium for communication, diversity, and longevity of culture. Dalby predicts that over half of the 5,000 languages that are spoken in the world today will disappear within the span of less than a century, and a large number of those lost are projected to be the languages spoken by American Indian tribes. This phenomenon provides a significant challenge to Native children who aspire to excel in their own culture while demonstrating characteristics typically associated with high levels of achievement in the prevailing Western society. The knowledge of language and culture is clearly an asset to be accentuated rather than a perceived liability to be discounted in promoting educational leaders who support the highest levels of learning and results for Native American students (Cummins, 2000; Macedo, 2000; Reyhner, Martin, Lockhard, & Sakiestewa, 2002).

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ACRES

American Council on Rural Special Education

Online Project Based Parental Involvement Practicum Experience for In-service Teachers

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ONLINE PROJECT BASED PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT PRACTICUM
EXPERIENCE FOR IN-SERVICE TEACHERS

Introduction

The recruitment and retention of teachers of special education teachers by rural educational agencies, always a concern, has reached a crisis proportions (Markow, D., Moessner, C., & Horowitz, H., 2006). Several factors identified in the 2006 MetLife Survey of the American Teacher include the declining population base in rural areas and the corresponding weakening economic base. This provides less resources for educational in these rural areas to formulate initiatives to address these trends. Additionally, a general decline in enrollments in teacher training institutions and a looming increase in the retirement of experienced teachers has caused an increase in competition from other educational agencies in urban and suburban settings (Teagarden, J., Kaff, M., & Frey, T., 2008).

At the same time the demands of the "highly qualified" limits imposed by recent federal legislation has decreased the flexibility of schools in meeting the staffing demands of the rural school. In an effort to address this issue many creative and innovative efforts have been implemented. One of the most promising is the advent of online practicum facilitation for inservice teachers (Frey, T., 2008). This presentation documents the creation of a new content, parental involvement, of this online project based practicum by inservice teachers. Parental involvement was selected due to its identification as the number one area of concern of special education professionals (Markow, D., Moessner, C., & Horowitz, H., 2006).

Process

Students seeking licensure in the area of adaptive special education are required to enroll in a practicum experience in which colleagues, cooperative teachers, and faculty members enhance competencies through a supported experience. In an effort to meet the challenges of the rural settings the faculty of Kansas State University has designed a method to provide this experience utilizing an on-line message board system. This allows each student to respond to the probe from the facilitator and to offer suggestions to members of their group. The general outline of the topic of parental involvement is providing to document the process of the project based practicum.

Practicum Project Description

Component	Description	Due Date **NOTE: All postings are to be posted prior to11:59 p.m. on the date indicated**
Part I	*Introduction: Description of the student, the family and the context*	

✓ **Week #1**
 	
Face-to-Face meeting
	• Welcome to Practicum
	    o Practicum candidates will each complete the questionnaire on their attitudes towards parental involvement
	    o Preview the format & the project
		Meet face-to-face in room #368 August 27th @ 7:05 p.m.

✓ **Week# 2** *Ice breaker*	• Introduce your self to your team. Include a general overview of your setting & any special challenges that you facing in your setting.	• **Posting due by Wednesday, September 3rd** • **Peer coach feedback due by Friday, September 5th**

✓ **Week #3**
 	
Context of the project
	• Explain the context in which you will design & carry out your intervention.
	   a. Describe your circumstances, e.g., school-district characteristics, type of community, population characteristics, school-community climate, etc.
	   b. Describe the student: e.g., age; gender; current academic, social and functional skills; program placement; types of supports and adaptations provided; current educational goals and services; living situation; and other relevant information. Make sure you include a clear explanation of the student's strengths, abilities, interests and talents. Include other pertinent information about the student, e.g., medication, family circumstances.
	   c. Describe the classroom(s) and other school settings in which the student is involved, e.g., type of class(es), schedule, curriculum, management/discipline, etc.
	   d. Give a general description of family of the student that you are focusing on. Remember to respect the families right to privacy by not using any descriptors that could be personally indefinable.
	   e. Describe the settings and circumstances in that have lead you to focus on this family for your project. These may include any special challenges or needs that are unique for this family.
	   f. Explain observations, insights, and impressions about the impact of the family on academic performance, social relations, and self-efficacy/esteem of your student.
	   g. Explain what you hope to accomplish in developing an involvement plan for supporting this family.
		• **Posting due by Wednesday, September 10th.**
		
		• **Peer coach feedback due by Friday, September 12th.**

Part II	*Planning for Involvement: Description of procedures and their implementation*

✓ **Week #4**

Securing family permission & overview tasks

- Select family
  a. Approach family that you have selected to focus your project on.
  b. Secure their permission to include in the project (written release).
  c. Conduct & video tape an interview using selected questions from the Conversation Guide to secure information about the family and their needs or methods in which support may be provided to the family.
     Use the following items:
     - Kansas State University permission to film form
     - Conversation guide

- Reflect on the interview
  a. Review the completed interview and explain what you saw as the major themes or areas in which support can be provided.
  b. Outline your initial ideas on how you may collaborate with your targeted family to help support their efforts.

- **Posting due by Wednesday, September 17th.**

- **Peer coach feedback due by Friday, September 19th.**

✓ **Week #5**

Face-to-Face meeting

- Review the interviews and discuss findings related to family involvement issues.
- Guest speaker for KPRIC to discuss services & materials available.
- Overview the remaining steps to the project
  i. Universal steps for all students
  ii. Targeted steps for the family of interest to this project.

Meet face-to-face in room #368 Wednesday, September 24th @ 7:05 p.m.

✓ **Week #6**	• Universal steps	• **Posting due by Wednesday, October 1st.**

✓ **Week #6**

Initial Steps and Goal Planning

- Universal steps
  a. Begin collecting a set of useful parental involvement activities and program ideas that could be implemented within your classroom.
  b. Share at least one new idea with the group in your posting
- Targeted steps
  a. Using the family that you interviewed, identify at least three methods or avenues that are goals to increased involvement with the educational process.
  b. Identify the prime goals and steps that you both mutually agree to complete during the project.
- ***Administer a standardized behavior assessment (PRQ)***

- **Posting due by Wednesday, October 1st.**

- **Peer coach feedback due by Friday, October 3rd.**

✓ **Week #7**

Begin parental involvement support plan

- Review the plan for increasing parental involvement
  a. Review the plan of support including specific activities that you have agreed to provide to enhance parental involvement.
  b. Discuss the initial phase of your plan and reflect on the parent's reaction.
  c. Reflect on the assessment you did. For example, how did the assessment contribute to your understanding of the challenges the family faces?
  d. Review the PRQ results and discuss the family's reaction to these results.
- Universal steps
  a. Continue collecting a set of useful parental involvement activities and program ideas that could be implemented within your classroom.

- **Posting due by Wednesday, October 8th**

- **Peer coach feedback due by Friday, October 10th**

b. Share at least one new idea with the group in your posting.

✓ **Week #8**
 	
Describe your ongoing intervention
	• Describe your ongoing family involvement project
	  a. Describe the activities you have planed in an attempt to engage your targeted family.
	  b. Describe accommodations you will be making for family. These may be specific resources or changes of a more general nature.
	  c. Explain the involvement of parents, peers, colleagues, paraprofessional and others in the intervention. What roles and responsibilities will each of these people have? How will you monitor what they are doing with regard to the intervention?
	  d. Indicate how you will be matching intervention procedures to the family's needs and strengths.
	  e. Explain how the student will be involved in the project, e.g., data collection, intervention planning, carrying out procedures. Pay particular attention to describing how you will be encouraging student ownership and responsibility in the entire intervention process.
	  f. Indicate how your proposed activities will address the needs you identified in your Week #5 posting.
	• Universal steps
	  α. Continue collecting a set of useful parental involvement activities and program ideas that could be implemented within your classroom.
	  β. Share at least one new idea with
		• **Posting due by Wednesday, October 15th**
		
		• **Peer coach feedback due by Friday, October 17th**

the group in your posting.

✓ **Week #9** **Face-to-Face meeting**	• Review the planning process & prepare to implement the intervention. • Share your collection of parental involvement activities; bring a copy of your "favorite" or most effective activity for each of us.	**Meet face-to-face in room #368 October 22nd @ 7:05 p.m.**
Part III	*Implement and Monitor the Supporting Families Project*	**Begin implementation after the Face–to-Face Meeting on Wednesday October 22nd**

✓ **Week #10**
 	
Initial report on the process of supporting family engagement
	• Initial review on activities
	  a. Discuss your efforts at increasing the parental engagement during the initial stages.
	  b. Reflect on the process of working with the family to support their efforts at increased engagement.
	  c. What adjustments or changes did you make in your planned?
	  d. What impact do you expect from the project on classmates, peers, other teachers, and parents?
		• **Posting due Wednesday, October 29th**
		
		• **Peer coach feedback Due Friday, October 31st**

✓ **Week #11**
 	
Continued reporting on the process of family engagement
	• Report on the intervention
	  a. Discuss and reflect on the continued efforts to provide support for family engagement.
	  b. What questions have arisen now that the plan is being implemented?
	  c. Were there any surprises or unexpected initial outcomes?
	  d. What impact have you noticed on the part of the student?
		• **Posting due Wednesday, November 5th**
		
		• **Peer coach feedback due by Friday, November 7th**

✓ **Week #12** *Face-to Face Meeting*	• Discuss project and changes to be made • Guest speaker on parent support groups as a source of engagement.	**Meet face-to-face in room #368 November 12th, @ 7:05 p.m.**

✓ **Week #13**
 	
Monitor, adjust, and modify the project
	• Report on & adjust the project
	  a. Give a detailed report evaluating the project. Indicate which aspects of your plan worked well and did not work well and explain why these results took place.
	  b. Provide updated report of family progress.
	  c. Explain any adjustments or modifications you are making your plan
	  d. . Provide a detailed rationale for the changes including how the changes are expected to positively impact family engagement.
		• **Posting due Wednesday, November 19th**
		
		• **Peer coach feedback due by Friday, November 20th**

✓ **Week #15**
 	
Evaluate the Intervention
	• Evaluate your project
	  a. Complete the PRQ assessment as a post-test. Give a summary of the results and compare the results to your initial scoring results.
	  b. Give a detailed report evaluating the intervention. Indicate which aspects of the project plan worked well and did not work well and explain why these results took place.
	  c. Explain successes and failures. You should continue to report increases/decreases in the target behavior and other related areas
	  d. Administer a standardized behavior assessment (PRQ)
		• **Posting due Wednesday, December 3rd**
		• **Peer coach feedback due by Friday December 5th**

Part IV	*Reflection: Assessing what you learned*

✓ **Week #15**
 	
Reflect on your own learning
	• Reflect on the process
	  a. Assess social validity of your intervention. For example, how did the parents, students, or other teachers accept the intervention? Do they see it as beneficial? What is the family's evaluation of the intervention?
	  b. Describe the current situation relative to initial description. Has anything changed the student's circumstances, self-perceptions or attitudes, etc.?
	  c. Describe your plan for carrying on with the plan. What will you do if the plan is going well, is not going well, or has failed to produce the changes you expected?
	  d. Give your thoughts on the entire parental engagement planning process. What could you have
		• **Posting due by Wednesday, December 10th face to face meeting.**

done differently in your planning? What aspects of the planning process would your short cut or streamline when you work with another family?

e. Has completing this practicum given you any ideas to use with future students? Has it changed the way you will approach assistive technology for students with disabilities?

f. What techniques or skills have you acquired or enhanced as a result of completing this process?

✓ **Week #15** *Face-to Face Meetin g*	• Sharing & presentation of practicum projects o Complete the questionnaire on attitudes towards parental engagement	**Meet face-to-face in room #368 December 10th, 7:05 p.m.**

Discussion

   The process of providing a structured practicum experience facilitated online that produces a level of professional growth that is equal to or superior to the more traditional methods of conducting practicum experiences. Students report the strength of this method is the professional community and the ongoing support structure of the message board system.

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Parent Familiarty of Special Education Right

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PARENT FAMILIARITY OF SPECIAL EDUCATION RIGHTS

Due process safeguards are provisions that specify parents'/ children's' rights throughout the process of determining if the child qualifies for special education. This process ensures that everyone in the process is held accountable for their responsibilities. It is required that parents give their consent for any action taken with the child and that they must be advised of their rights (Culatta et al., 2003). One way this is accomplished is the pamphlet given to parents that explains procedural safeguards.

Special education is a complex service; not even the most efficient special educator knows the law in its entirety. If educators are confused by components in the document and process, how then can parents be expected to completely understand their rights and responsibilities? How much do parents know about Special Education law, especially components found within the most current reauthorization of IDEA? Is it enough to simply hand procedural rights and safeguards to parents and just hope that they are prepared to participate fully in the education of their child? Can educators expect parents to read the material and understand it? Should there be additional information given to explain a parent and child's rights before any IEP meeting takes place?

Studies indicate that the readability of procedural safeguards is a problem for some parents (Fitzgerald & Watkins, 2006). Additionally, the lack or low degree of parental involvement poses another potential drawback. Research shows that parent involvement in the child's education leads to great academic benefits for the student (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Therefore it is imperative for parents of children with special needs to be involved. Special education is more complex than general education, and parents must be willing to go a step farther in ensuring the success of the child. Unfortunately for different reasons many parents of children with special needs are not involved in their child's education.

Literature Review

Under the provisions of IDEA, with its amendments, parents are given specific

rights and responsibilities. Before these provisions were made or acknowledged, parents had to rely heavily on school professionals while taking a largely passive role in their child's education (Garriott, Wandry, & Snyder, 2000; Murdick, Gartin, & Crabtree, 2002; Spann, Kohler, & Soenkson, 2005). Parents now have the information needed to provide the best possible education for their child. They can bring vital information from the family/home setting that is equally important into the partnership. They know their child better than anyone and can therefore offer this crucial element (Murdick et al., 2002).

According to IDEA, parents have the right to be equal partners with educators in their child's education. This is implemented by informing parents of the rights entitled to them and their child. This information as well as parent responsibilities, is made available to parents in the form of a document titled 'Procedural Safeguards'. Usually this document is given to parents at the beginning of the IEP process and again at least once a year afterward (Fitzgerald & Watkins, 2006).

Parents have the right to receive a written notice prior to any meeting regarding their child, especially the IEP meeting. Parents also have the right to receive regular progress reports as well as have the opportunity to access their child's records at any time. Informed consent from the parent on all matters pertaining to their child must be obtained before a process can be initiated. If any problem arises that cannot be resolved between parents and the school, parents can request mediation and a due process hearing. Parents can request evaluation and reevaluation. They can also request to have their child tested in their primary language. Finally, children have the right to receive a Free and Appropriate Education as well as the right to be educated in the Least Restrictive Environment (Fitzgerald & Watkins 2006; Garriott et al., 2000; IDEA, 2004; Knoblauch & McLane 1999; Turnbull & Turnbull 2000).

Although information is made available to parents regarding their rights and responsibilities pertaining to their child's education, there is still an alarming trend that suggests that a majority of parents are still uninformed and uninvolved in their child's education. While the law may have mandated an equal partnership between parents and schools through collaboration, it will not accomplish what it has set out to do without parent support (Murdick et al., 2002; Salend, 2006; Shore, 1986). No matter how good the intentions, the people involved must be committed to the task at hand and the goals ahead (Cheney & Osher, 1997; Ulrich & Bauer, 2003).

Study Methodology

Participants. The participants in this study are the parents of children that receive special education services in West Virginia and are located in various counties throughout the state. The counties are a part of what is called Regional Educational Services Agency (RESA). Those counties are Barbour, Berkeley, Braxton, Cabell, Clay, Fayette, Kanawha, Lincoln, Logan, Mason, Mercer, Mineral, Putnam, Raleigh, Summers, Taylor, Tucker,

Wayne, and Wyoming. These counties represent RESA 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8. People from these counties have an average annual family income ranging from $23,000 to $45,000. Between 63 and 80 percent of the population in these counties has graduated from high school. Those individuals who live in high poverty areas comprise between twelve to twenty-two percent of the population (McQuain, 2006; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

Instrument. A survey was created that attempted to cover the areas within the realm of parent and child rights in special education. The survey was posted to an online survey website. An invitation was then mailed to all the county PERC's asking each coordinator to encourage parents to take the survey that was made available. These surveys were then completed online by those parents who chose to participate. The preliminary data was compiled by the online survey organization. Additional analysis of the data was conducted by the study researchers.

The survey contains nineteen questions, of which six questions are Likert scale. The scale used in this survey contains items where individuals were asked to rate their impressions or feelings. There are also thirteen multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions. The first seven questions on the survey are demographic in nature. The questions concern the county in which the participant lives, household income, family structure, educational level, employment status, number of children, number of children with an exceptionality, and the nature of the exceptionality. Following each of these questions there are several choices and boxes for the participant to check that will indicate the answer chosen.

The next twelve questions are a mixture of multiple choice and Likert style questions. They address the participants' familiarity of special education rights as the level of communication between participants and school professionals. The final questions are open-ended and encourage participants to share their impressions and stories about teachers, administrators, and the central office personnel. They were encouraged to provide ideas or methods for educators to do in order to better explain parent/child rights to parents.

Data Analysis. The data analysis employed in this study is a combination of analysis of variance (ANOVA), measures of central tendency, and qualitative data to determine whether or not the data supported the idea that there are differences between the counties in the manner utilized to educate parents regarding special education and student rights. When testing the questions, a single factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used in comparing the means of the groups in order to determine variance between them. Gravetter and Wallnau (1996) state conclusions are typically made by ANOVAs about a general population that is based on data obtained from group samples.

Study Results

One of the questions asked participants to select from a list of choice regarding those rights that were guaranteed to a parent or child under the current federal special education law.   More than half of all participants who responded to the question were able to correctly identify at least one right as found in special education legislation. The least identified component by the participants was Non-discriminatory Evaluation. The most widely identified component was Free and Appropriate Public Education which was correctly identified by 88% of those who responded to the question. Least Restrictive Environment was the second most widely recognized feature of legislation under special education.

A second question enquired as to whether parents or guardians could recognize components found in special education legislation when distracters were added to the question. A small percentage of participants indicated that their rights had not been explained. In addition some respondents stated they simply did not know. The most common misidentification distracter was Free Annual Reevaluation. Over 40% of those who participated in the study misidentified Free Personal Aide as a required service for their child.

Parents were also asked to identify the various methods that educators and administrators use to provide parents with information regarding procedural safeguards. The most commonly used method of communication was traditional (face to face) meeting situations with 81% of those responding to the use of that technique. Notes written by parent or teacher and parent / teacher conferences were identified by sixty-seven percent of those who responded. Only one participant reported no information was provided to him/ her. Another participant reported that he received his information only during IEP meetings.

When survey participants were asked whether special education teachers explain parental and child rights, most participants felt similarly regardless of their particular location. They had a tendency to agree that the teacher did explain parental and child rights. When asked whether the administrator was knowledgeable and informed parents about their legal rights, approximately half of the parents agreed that the administrator was knowledgeable and did inform them of parental and child rights. The participants were then asked to rate the communication received from their local education agency (LEA). A majority of the participants tended to agree that at least one representative from the LEA was in fact knowledgeable and communicated information as needed to the parents.

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Passing the Rural Legacy in Teacher Education - A Mentoring Approach

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PASSING THE RURAL LEGACY IN TEACHER EDUCATION- A MENTORING APPROACH

Purpose

It has been proven that in the field of rural special education that there is an almost 100% attrition rate (Tyler, Cantou-Clarke, Easterling, & Klepper, 2003). An assumption can be made that nearly the same attrition is rate is rampant in Higher Education Institutions (IHEs) in rural states. One suggestion to affect both the IHEs and public school is that doctoral students should be mentored in what it means to be a "rural "special educator in order to meet the needs of the teachers in those states. This often proves to be a different experience than a traditional doctoral program in that a large responsibility lies on the teacher educator to meet the needs of that rural area. In other words, the relationship should not only encompass the traditional relationship between faculty member and doctoral student; but also include what is "rural", which could also be considered its own curriculum, in order to retain that student in IHEs that are rural.

The paper will accomplish four (4) objectives:
> describe the unique needs of special educators in rural areas;
> discuss the unique needs of rural special education teacher training programs as they relate to both students with special needs in schools and those entering doctoral programs in those areas;

describe the unique needs of mentors in rural special education teacher preparation programs in the effort to retain quality prospective teacher educators
> present the progression through a mentorship in a rural doctoral program

Theoretical Base

The professional literature suggests that attrition of rural special educators in public schools can be due to the cultural or social characteristics of an area and the educator's unfamiliarity with that unique culture (Bouck, Albaugh, & Bouck, 2005). It has been suggested that once a special educator begins his/her profession in a rural area, that there may be "differences in the values of new teachers with those of the rural communities in which they find themselves, and teachers' feelings of social and professional isolation and lack of professional opportunities" (p. 17). So, even if a prospective teacher wishes to move to a rural community post-graduation, the teacher preparation program may not have prepared him/her for the culture of communities and/or school systems in rural areas. That, coupled with the low pay, an average of 17% less than urban or suburban areas (Jimmerson, 2004), and increased job demands eventually leads to the out-migration or career change of special educators (Helge, 1981). Similarly, the prior statements could also apply to those teaching in rural IHEs. Teacher educators in rural areas face the same circumstances in regard to pay and lack of cultural knowledge. As such, a concerted effort must be made to retain both

teacher educators and consequently special educators in public schools.

Mentoring is a component that has been found to improve teacher retention; however, the mentors need to be in the same area as the new teacher to ensure understanding, and shared knowledge. According to Skrtic (2005), effective features of mentoring programs in special education to include: frequent contact between mentor and mentee, non-evaluative support, formal and informal support, good mentor match, and appropriate content support. Theoretically, it can be suggested that this mentoring relationship could also begin at the faculty-doctoral student level. The Council for Exceptional Children (2007) states that special education teachers need a different type of mentor. They need to require mentors that focus on their individual concerns and teaching context in a consistent, positive, non-evaluative mentorship. Further, doctoral students also need a mentor who incorporates rural experiences and discussions into programs of study.

Whitaker (2000) conducted a study with 156 randomly selected first year teachers in South Carolina. Each completed a questionnaire regarding support, effectiveness of mentoring, characteristics of an appropriate mentor, and how mentoring affects their plans to remain in special education over the long term. Eight areas of mentoring were investigated: emotional support, provision of system information on the school district, provision of system information on special education, interactions with others, provisions of adequate resources/materials, assistance with problems in curriculum/instruction, assistance with discipline, and assistance with management (Fore, Martin, & Bender, 2002). Results indicated that mentoring was an effective tool to retain teachers in the field. Likewise, a rural-focused mentoring relationship between a faculty member and doctoral student can also be an effective tool.

Description of Mentoring Approach
West Virginia University (WVU) has offered an array of programs for the field of education. Currently, there is not a direct approach to mentor a student to the doctoral level. This design was discovered through the process of mentoring a student to a future faculty member. The three foundations to this approach are;

Systemic
The identification of an exceptional student in an undergraduate class is a key component. In this identification process the criteria to meet an "exceptional" student are their intelligence, passion for the field, and the ability to critically consume and/or conduct research in the area of special education. After identification it is important to connect and build a relationship with the student.

The system that was designed to foster the mentor relationship was maintaining contact throughout the process of the students' academic life to her professional life. This was achieved through coursework, job experience, grading for a special education courses, and finally approaching the student about entering the doctoral program. The systemic approach not only built a relationship between the mentor and mentee but supported the foundations for teaching in a rural setting.

Collaboration
Collaboration was built throughout the process and went hand-in-hand with the communication component. Collaboration was fostered at different levels of the mentoring approach based on the role that the mentor played in the students' life. During the job experience component, the mentor was more of the leader in the process but gave the mentee experience working in the field with diverse students from rural backgrounds, and experience organizing a grant funded program. The two collaborated about the benefits of the program, how to improve the system, and how to maintain clear communication with

others that were directing the program. When the mentee was gaining field experience the collaboration was more of a discussion on ideas and how to improve the mentees' teaching skills. In the coursework where the mentee graded for the mentor, this was to ensure success and have the mentee gain experience working within a course at a large university. Here the mentor and mentee discussed student success, how to design college instruction, and how to evaluate student performance at the college level. Finally, collaboration still occurs because the mentee is in a doctoral level program in special education.

Communication
Throughout the process of academia, job placement, and higher education, constant contact between the mentor and mentee has occurred. This has been through meetings, phone conversations, and e-mails. Clear communication and guidelines are apparent throughout the process. Communication has also expanded as the development of the relationship has matured.

Mentoring is a key component in the success of students in rural areas. The mentoring should be systemic, collaborative, and have open communication. This is approach should continued to be researched with other participants and faculty members. Furthermore, the outcome of this approach will be a faculty member who is prepared to work in rural IHEs.

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ACRES

American Council on Rural Special Education

Preparing Rural Inclusive Special Educators (PRISE):

Grow Your Own Rural Culturally Responsive Speial Education Teachers

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PREPARING RURAL INCLUSIVE SPECIAL EDUCATORS (PRISE): GROW YOUR OWN RURAL CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

Introduction

How can rural school districts recruit bilingual special educators? The best solution is to train local paraprofessionals who already have roots in the rural communities. In response to the need for special education teachers in rural areas with high numbers of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional (CLDE) students, an innovative program, Preparing Rural Inclusive Special Educators (PRISE), funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition, and a Bilingual Multicultural Special Education Website were developed to serve rural areas of southwestern Arizona. Through technology combined with local Yuma, Arizona area resources, the PRISE program has overcome the barriers involved with pursuing university study for rural bachelors degree students. This is especially important for Native American students living in reservation areas and for Latino students who live on the border of Mexico. In addition, the Bilingual Multicultural Special Education website disseminates information about Culturally Diverse Special Education lesson plans and Powerpoint Training of Trainers (TOT) presentations. Teachers in far reaching diverse rural communities all over the world can access and download these culturally relevant lessons.

Rationale for PRISE Program

National Need for Special Education Teachers. Significant personnel shortages in special education have been noted in the 27th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of IDEA Act (USDE, 2005). With predictions of even more serious teacher shortages, there is an especially critical need for additional special education teachers for students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in rural areas (USDE, 2007). In addition, the current emphasis on providing nondiscriminatory assessment procedures and assessing the effectiveness of multicultural instructional programs is drawing attention to the efficacy of traditional special education and general education teacher training programs which typically do not offer systematically integrated coursework and practicum experiences specific to the multicultural characteristics of students with disabilities (Baca & Cervantes, 2004; Gallegos & McCarty, 2000; Gollnick & Chinn, 2006; Salend, 2008; Stuart & Parette, 2002.)

Arizona Need. In Arizona, the U.S. Dept. of Education reported that 3,324 fully certified special education teachers were available to meet a total demand of 3,753 positions, representing a teacher shortage of 11.4% of the funded Special Education positions (USDE, 2007). The shortfall in Arizona is significantly higher than the national shortage of 9%. In order to meet the shortfall of 429 fully certified special education teachers in Arizona, 358 teachers were hired who were not certified in Special Education and 71 positions remained vacant. Cross-categorical specialists were in greatest demand, representing over half of the shortage. With predictions of even more serious teacher shortages in the next several years, there is an especially critical need for additional special education teachers for CLDE students in rural areas (USDE, 2007).

Yuma County Demographics. The rural agricultural area of Yuma county is located in the extreme southwestern part of Arizona on the borders of California and Mexico. The elementary school districts and secondary school districts in the countywide area enroll approximately 32,000 students of whom 71% are Hispanic, and 4% are Native American belonging primarily to the Cocopah and Quechan Tribes. Over 50% of these students have been identified as English Language Learner (ELL) students.

Response to the Teacher Shortage: The PRISE Model

"Home Grown" Model. Teachers for culturally and linguistically diverse exceptional (CLDE) students are in high demand in all areas of the United States (Baca & Cervantes, 2004). Rural areas have a particular challenge in hiring qualified teachers to meet the needs of their districts (Peterson & Showalter, 1999; USDE, 2007).   Northern Arizona University (NAU) in Flagstaff, Arizona works collaboratively through its Yuma campus and the local Yuma area community college, Arizona Western College (AWC), to provide coursework for selected students who are employed as paraprofessionals in the local schools. These students come out of AWC's Associate of Arts in Education program that prepares them for a dual major B.S. degree in Elementary Education/Special Education which they will earn through NAU. These two institutions are bonded together through a "Two Plus Two" Degree Program (one of the first established in the nation) where undergraduate students take the first two years of college at the AWC and then the last two years at NAU in Yuma. The two institutions share their mutual students and facilities on the same campus. The interconnectedness of AWC and NAU makes it easy for students to accomplish a smooth transition from the first two years of degree program to the second two years.

The PRISE Program. Preparing Rural Inclusive Special Educators (PRISE) serves the needs of schools in rural areas with high populations of English Language Learners (ELL) by working with the school districts in the Yuma area of Arizona to train paraprofessionals to become elementary and

special education teachers of ELL students. Yuma is a very rural, agricultural area on the border of Mexico with many newly arrived ELL students in the schools. Some districts have over 90% ELL students.

The PRISE program is a federal grant funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA). The PRISE grant program is directed by Dr. Patricia Peterson on NAU's Flagstaff campus. Other key personnel are Nancy Blitz, Co-Director and faculty member at NAU in Yuma and Arizona Western Community College, Gae Johnson, faculty member in Flagstaff and Elementary Education Coordinator, Steve Showalter, Website Coordinator, and Maureen Hengl, Practicum Supervisor for PRISE, who is also based at NAU in Yuma.

PRISE provides all the coursework required for certification in Elementary Education, Special Education-Cross Categorical, and Arizona's English as a Second Language (ESL) Endorsement. Through the U.S. Department of Education OELA grant, PRISE provides funding for fifteen students in each of the three cohorts to go through all the coursework required for the dual major degree. Each cohort involves six semesters. During the first five semesters, participants are required to work in Yuma county schools as paraprofessionals. The PRISE students then do their student teaching during the sixth semester. While working as paraprofessionals, PRISE students take 15 - 18 credits per semester, including summer semester. Faculty for each of the courses are carefully selected for the PRISE program in order to involve faculty who are specifically committed to working in this type of non-traditional teacher education program.

The faculty at the Yuma campus and the PRISE Director, Dr. Peterson who is based in Flagstaff, work as a team and meet once a month to discuss student progress, to identify students who may need additional support, and to collaborate in the implementation of a seamless curriculum for all the coursework. Instructors who have taught the first course in a semester discuss the content of this course, the methods which were most effective, and areas which need to be reinforced in the next course with the instructors of additional courses in the semester. To enhance the writing of future teachers, the Practicum Supervisor has developed a writing camp which has proven very successful in improving the writing skills of students who need extra help in written expression. Some PRISE students started years before entering the PRISE program as English as a Second Language (ESL) students themselves. These students benefit greatly from this additional writing support provided by the program. Other students who are native English speakers also are able to improve their writing skills through individualized writing sessions. Funding is provided for PRISE students to attend and present at national conferences pertaining to Special Education, cultural diversity, and second language teaching. These national conferences help PRISE students to gain additional knowledge from experts in these fields which will enhance the PRISE students'

teaching when they go into their own classrooms.

Even though PRISE students take 15 – 18 credits per semester, the classes are not delivered simultaneously. This innovative consecutive course format allows PRISE students to put their entire focus on only one course at a time. Most courses are taught from 4:30 to 9:00 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays for three to five weeks. Students take a final exam on Thursday evening to finish one class and begin a new class the following Monday. There is a strong emphasis on both independent work and group projects. Students must demonstrate proficiency not only in writing but also in oral presentations. They become experts in time management and have generally found that their semester of student teaching leaves them with free time that they did not experience during their five semesters of coursework leading up to student teaching. Students who are graduates of the PRISE program are then hired by local Yuma area school districts to serve the needs of this rural area's CLDE student population. To date, 182 rural special education teachers have been trained with this type of program model in Yuma and La Paz counties and on the Navajo and Hopi reservations. There are currently 13 students in the first semester of the PRISE teacher training program in Yuma. Additionally, 18 rural special education teacher training students are in their student teaching semester. They will become highly qualified special education, elementary education, and ESL teachers upon graduation.

Impact of Technology and the PRISE Program
CLDE Website. As a component of the PRISE program, a website with resources to teach Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional (CLDE) students has been developed to disseminate information on successful teaching strategies. The URL for the website is: www4.nau.edu/clde

One website component is a database of student developed Native American and Mexican American culturally relevant special education lesson plans. The lesson plan database URL is: http://www4.nau.edu/clde/lessonplans/

Students in the PRISE program follow a Direct Instruction Lesson Plan Rubric which emphasizes direct linking of cultural context and language background of the CLDE students to the objectives, content, and learning mode of the lesson. The Lesson Plan Rubric URL is: http://www4.nau.edu/clde/lessonplans/

Modifications for students with disabilities in the general education classroom and integration of technology are clearly linked to the goals and objectives of the lesson. Examples of culturally relevant thematic lessons developed by students include: Native American Basketry (Art, Math, History, Science), Las Hormiguitas (Ants - Ant Multiplication, Ant Families, Life Cycle, ANTonyms), Sheep and Wool (Native American Families, traditions, economics,

math), and Celebrations (Pinata, Birthdays, Math, Families).Educators interested in obtaining these culturally relevant Special Education lesson plans can search the lesson plans database by Culture, Language (Spanish or Navajo), Grade (K - 12) or the Grant program with which the lesson plan is associated. From these four categories the lessons plans are divided by content area. Once a content area is chosen, the database user can view a brief description of the Special Education lesson plan and then choose to view, print, and/or save the entire lesson plan in Adobe Acrobat PDF format.

Training of Trainers Model. Training of Trainers (TOT) utilizing Microsoft Powerpoint is taught in the PRISE program. The methods courses involve culminating assignments requiring students to prepare and participate in delivery of a TOT module. Students receive training in Powerpoint which they use to develop their training workshops. The Culturally Diverse Powerpoint training presentations developed by the students are included in the Grant Website so that educators worldwide can benefit from this Professional Development CLDE Training. PRISE grant students then utilize the TOT model to deliver this Professional Development Training in which additional peer teachers from the consortium districts receive training in best practice strategies for working with ELL and CLDE students. PRISE students not only receive training, but they also become the future district trainers in the area of best practices for teaching ELL and CLDE students. This training is also available on the Bilingual Multicultural Special Education Website.

Use of Distance Education Technology

In the PRISE program, distance education technology (Grant Website, Web-based courses, Hybrid courses, Email feedback to and from instructors, and Instructional Interactive Television -IITV) maximizes the utilization of the resources of the university's main campus in Flagstaff while allowing the students in this rural area to remain in their local communities to complete their coursework.

There has been considerable interest in the potential advantages of the use of computer-based technology in education. Charp (2000) maintains that a number of observations can be safely made:
Students are becoming freed from the physical boundaries of classrooms and the time restrictions of schedules.
Students are working at their own pace using network-based materials and diagnostic tools.
Dynamic databases are emerging that permit students, faculty and administrators to have 24-hour access to financial records, student transcripts, class lectures, assignments, etc. over the Internet.

Web-based and Hybrid Courses. Through interaction in Web-based courses, university students learn teamwork, group decision-making, and problem identification and problem-solving (Synder, 2000). The goal according

to Snyder (2000) with Interactive Group Software is to get students involved in old-fashioned interactivity - human interaction - instead of just clicking buttons on a computer screen. This research influenced the design of the Web courses in PRISE. The Web-based Hybrid courses have been designed to include a high degree of group interaction, reflection, and feedback from one student to another as well as between instructor and students.

World Wide Web. A major focus of another study (Hill & Hannafin, 1997) was the World Wide Web (WWW). This study reported that some prior knowledge and experience in open learning applications, helping learners to construct a functional mental model of the system, and providing searching tips, should increase their chances of success in web-based courses. According to Hill and Hannafin (1997), preliminary interpretations indicate that teaching the strategies for finding information in open information systems like the WWW is prerequisite for success. In light of these findings, all of the PRISE students receive intensive training in the use of technology systems including word processing, email, Web Searches, and specific Web course access, utilization, and pedagogy.

Email. Additionally, Email provides communication between faculty and students in the PRISE program. For example, the PRISE program requires practicum supervision for the PRISE students who are completing certification in Special Education and Elementary Education via this program. Through utilization of technology, the PRISE student is in e-mail contact with the university Practicum Supervisor each week during the semester. The email serves as a medium for the PRISE student to ask questions, receive feedback on ideas for lessons (including management and problem solving), and generally maintain a high level of rapport between the university Practicum Supervisor and the PRISE practicum student. The email also serves as a way to help the PRISE program participants incorporate what they are learning in their content classes with the daily routine in their own practicum classrooms where they are employed as paraprofessionals. The university Practicum Supervisor is aware of what content classes the PRISE participant is taking and what the requirements of the content classes include. This knowledge of the content classes coupled with knowledge of the participant's own practicum classroom is invaluable and strengthens the quality of the individual feedback communicated via email.

Utilizing Web-based Courses and Instructional Interactive Television. Another technology approach used in the PRISE program is teaching the courses via the NAU Interactive Instructional Television System (IITV). Instructors deliver the course from one of the Flagstaff TV classroom sites, and the students receive the class at their local NAU Yuma rural site. Students in electronic classrooms in Yuma see the instructor at the home site electronic classroom and vice versa. Students and faculty converse and interact in discussion activities just as if they were in the same classroom. PRISE faculty

who are based on the Flagstaff campus generally teach PRISE program courses via interactive television since driving to Yuma from Flagstaff. In addition to the basic Interactive Television delivery, Flagstaff based faculty travel the 325 mile trip to Yuma to have five or more 'in person' classes within each course taught onsite on the Yuma campus. Other courses are taught as Hybrid courses involving components of web-based instruction through Blackboard VISTA, interactive television, and onsite instruction.

Inter-institutional Collaboration: A Critical Ingredient to Success

A key ingredient in the success of the PRISE program is the focus on inter-institutional collaboration among NAU, Arizona Western College (AWC) , and the local Yuma area school districts to 'home grow' teachers through the PRISE grant program. On the NAU side of the partnership, NAU in Yuma administrators have been very supportive of Northern Arizona University's efforts to secure grants for their campus. The NAU administration in Yuma as well as the AWC administration have made available access to recruiting, classrooms, advising, technology, and overall support for the PRISE Grant.

The final piece of collaboration in the success of the PRISE program is the school districts in Yuma County who employ the grant recipients as paraprofessionals. These school districts recognize the future long-term benefit to their school districts of these "Home-Grown" teachers in training. The Yuma county school districts turn around at the end of the PRISE Program and offer teaching positions to PRISE graduates. The PRISE graduates, in turn, put into practice in their new classrooms the skills, knowledge, and effective teaching strategies learned through their experience in the PRISE grant program.

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Project Peer:
Post Seondary Education for Individuals with Intellectural Disabilities on a Rural College Campus

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PROJECT PEER: POST SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH INTELLECTURAL DISABILITIES ON A RURAL COLLEGE CAMPUS

More students with disabilities are enrolled in higher education than ever before (Livingston & Wirt, 2005). Students with intellectual disabilities are part of this exciting trend. The Institute for Community Inclusion estimates that as many as 3,000 individuals, ages 18-21 with intellectual disabilities who participate in special education are eligible for postsecondary education (HYPERLINK "http://www.transitiontocollege.net/percpubs/ rp45.pdf" http://www.transitiontocollege.net/percpubs/rp45.pdf). ThinkCollege.net (hosted by the Institute of Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts, Boston and developed with partners including the Center on Disability Studies, University of Hawaii and the Federation for Children with Special Needs) lists and describes 120 postsecondary programs for students with intellectual disabilities. These programs employ various educational models ranging from full matriculation to specialized campus-based exposure that focuses on social inclusion, life skills, and vocational training.

Attending college must be a goal not only of students with intellectual disabilities, but also of the supportive adults in their lives. Parents, teachers, agency personnel and faculty and staff of institutions of higher education (IHEs) working together with youth to develop, implement, and evaluate programs can realize the dream. According to IDEIA 2004, this process should begin with transition planning as early as age 14 to better prepare for the transition from high school to post secondary programs. Steps in the process include both setting personal goals and working with personnel from various agencies.

These steps might involve:

Setting and achieving IEP goals that include postsecondary experience as preparation for independent living, employment, and other aspects of adult life,
Working with IHEs to define and implement postsecondary programs, and
Coordinating with adult agencies to maximize the benefits of postsecondary education in activities of adult life, including employment, independent living, and community involvement.

Each of these steps represents a complex array of activities, not the least of which is a firm commitment to and focus on coordinated transition planning. However, we will not discuss transition planning in this article except to say that unless (a) postsecondary alternatives exist in rural areas and (b) students and families are aware of these, postsecondary education—even participation in secondary school-based post high school programs— may be a missed opportunity for students with significant cognitive disabilities aged 18-21.

Case Study: Postsecondary Education, Employment and Research (PEER Project)

To illustrate ways for schools to work with IHEs to develop and implement postsecondary programs and to address the role of cross agency collaboration in maximizing the programmatic benefits, we will describe Project PEER, which involves the collaborative effort of a university and two neighboring school districts. The process through which PEER was developed is likely common to many postsecondary efforts, though the resulting programs may vary considerably. One factor that may facilitate collaborative efforts in rural areas is the relative size of the special education community of university faculty, students, local education agency personnel, and families of students enrolled in special education programs. In the case of PEER, the collaborating partners had extensive working relationships in activities such as teacher preparation, local professional organizations, and as members of state and local committees. This history facilitated the sharing of an idea—to develop a campus-based postsecondary program—and planning of the steps to translate it into action, such as: (a) identifying potentially interested parties, (b) meeting over a series of months to discuss what a model program would look like, (c) developing a plan of action, and then (d) carrying out the necessary arrangements to implement the program. We will describe these in further detail below.

PEER Project Overview. Project PEER (Postsecondary Education, Employment, and Research) is located on the campus of Utah State University, a land grant university in a rural area. PEER operates in collaboration with two local education agencies—the rural Cache County School District and the Logan City School District, which serves a small city of nearly 50,000 people. These two districts have historically combined their post high school programs and administered them jointly from one central location with shared faculty and staff. PEER students aged 18-21 engage in activities in various campus and community locations. The program emphasizes development of employment, functional, and social skills facilitated by (a) participating with peers in the campus student community, (b) establishing job samples and job training to promote employment upon post high school

graduation, and (c) education--all based on students' IEPs.

PEER began in January, 2007 with one teacher, 9 students, and several paraeducators who had spent the first part of the school year in the post high school program housed in a local high school. The program was so successful that the program partners decided to expand the program on the IHE campus as quickly as was feasible. By September of the same year, the PEER project doubled in size to 20 students, two teachers and five paraeducators who serve as job coaches and assist in academic instruction.

<u>Logistics—Planning the Program</u>. Discussion of the PEER program began with the formation of a leadership team composed of university and education agency personnel. These included the special education directors and high school special education program supervisors, university faculty from the Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation, two graduate students from that department, representatives of the university's Disability Resource Center, and university disability research center staff. In early meetings the team addressed issues such as:
enrollment (how to invite students and parents to participate and how to determine the enrollment capacity)
calendar (coordination between the school district and university calendars)
space on campus (for a "home" classroom)
parking for personnel (limited availability and costs)
transportation (district busing schedules and supporting options)
meals for students eligible for reduced price lunches
risk management
supervision of personnel
campus liaisons to develop employment opportunities and relationships with campus organizations
access to campus activities and facilities
coordination of academic teacher preparation and research activities with PEER students' IEP programs, and
approvals of district and university administrators.

It was agreed that when the program moved its physical location from the high school to the university campus, the districts could continue to employ and supervise personnel and to carry out the functions such as busing for which they were already responsible. Space for a home classroom was arranged at the Center for Persons with Disabilities, Utah's University Center for Excellence in Disabilities (i.e., disability research center), which is located on the Utah State University campus. The Disability Resource Center for USU students assisted in linking program personnel to student activity supervisors. One faculty member and a graduate student from the Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation led in conducting an assessment of potential employment training sites on campus (to supplement those already in place in the local community) and to secure agreements with campus supervisors who agreed to host PEER students.

Because the University and local school districts are part of the same state risk management pool, liability issues were well understood among the partners and were

considered minimal. In addition, when University administrators such as the Dean of the College of Education and Human Services, the University Provost, and President were apprised of the program, they eagerly supported the efforts to host the program on campus. Initial discussion began in late spring 2006. Earnest planning began during the fall 2006 university semester, and the first wave of PEER students hit the university campus in January 2007.

Program inclusion. The PEER teacher selected to initiate the campus program began the semester with group activities, many based in the home classroom, with supervision by paraeducator staff. This was a new experience for the teacher, her staff, and the students and great care was taken to ensure a successful transition experience for all involved. Considered among the most important skills, inclusion into the campus environment began with lunch meals and snacks eaten in an informal dining area with other university students. This was closely followed by participation in well-supervised employment. As students learned to navigate the campus, and their schedules became more complex, they became more independent. Several chose to participate regularly with other university students in on-campus faith-based activities that served as a means to develop social skills. Most navigated the campus on their own.

Preparation for employment. An initial focus of the program was on preparation for employment. This included identification of six potential on campus employment sites that offered a variety of work experiences. These sites included the university bookstore, library, outdoor recreation facility, a campus-based hotel, an educational outreach program and facilities maintenance. After extensive assessments of students' job preferences, eight students were placed in sites of their choice and supported by job coaches (paraeducators). At the end of the first semester, university faculty and graduate students surveyed the campus employers. From their perspective, the results of the semester experience were positive, as indicated in Figure 1, the Appendix to this paper.

Program expansion and benefits. After the first semester the program doubled in size, both in students and teaching staff. PEER staff spent the summer of 2007 preparing for a much larger campus-based program. At the beginning of the 2007-2008 school year, students addressed their IEP goals by broadening their activities to new locations on campus and became involved in experiences that ranged from working in an assistive technology fabrication laboratory to learning varied job skills at sites such as the motor pool where they learned to operate equipment to service university buses. The PEER students also began to publish a monthly newsletter.

In the course of their work experiences, PEER students made a tangible contribution to the university. Teachers calculated that during the fall semester, they contributed approximately 115 hours each week of supervised work to the university. Moreover, the program offered graduate and undergraduate students the unique opportunity to participate in an inclusive postsecondary education practicum site in the course of completing their academic program requirements. Finally, it served as a research site for university faculty and graduate students.

Continued challenges. Two arenas pose particular challenges to the program. The first is full inclusion in all campus activities and facilities. For university students, payment of tuition and fees opens the doors to services such as computer labs, libraries, and recreation facilities; to cultural and sports events; and to services such as a campus-wide shuttle bus. For PEER students, access to these has been primarily by special arrangement. While access to some facilities—such as an adaptive computer lab that is administered by the disability research center—has been easily arranged, and access to free city buses that intersect the university campus make campus buses less essential, the PEER students are not fully integrated into campus life. After a year of trying to negotiate an acceptable fee structure to enable PEER students to take advantage of campus services, we are still searching for a solution that is fair to the students and university, and economically feasible to the PEER program.

The second challenge is quite different. Campus-based employment sites have come to depend on PEER students as employees. While employment experiences have been quite positive, transition between employment sites must occur from time to time to enable the PEER students to achieve their IEP goals. The more integrated they have become into the activities of a given site, the more their campus employers have come to rely on their abilities. This is not unique to the PEER program, but is being dealt with carefully so as to not alienate good, reliable work site placements. Phasing PEER students out of a site must be carefully planned so as not to disrupt the work flow.

Coordination with other agencies

As it currently stands, the PEER program represents an opportunity for students only until they reach age 21 when they are no longer eligible for special education public school services. Thus, collaboration with other post school agencies is critical to plan for transition out of the program. This is certainly a legal requirement, but the reality of interagency transition planning is generally easier said than done. Agencies with whom the PEER program is forging stronger relationships include:
Vocational rehabilitation—to identify sources of support for continued training and employment
Social security—to identify income supports
Social service agencies—to identify supports for living arrangements and adult services.

Some students enrolled in the PEER program are already served by these and other agencies. For example, several live in group homes. Thus, coordination with adult service providers and social security is already occurring. Other students live at home while enrolled in the program yet desire to live and work more independently. Again, in part because of the rural nature of the community, but more importantly based upon their own experience and personal and professional networks, PEER teachers and staff are well informed about community resources and students' and families' priorities. They are prepared to engage with families and students in the transition process.

Resources

As successful as PEER has been, transition planning resources remains a critical and essential need. Neubert and Moon (2006) developed a tool to facilitate the transition process by identifying community resources. It addresses the transition requirements specified in IDEA 2004 and is available on line at HYPERLINK "http://www.education.umd.edu/oco/" http://www.education.umd.edu/oco/. The authors have granted permission to reproduce it. The tool may be useful to those seeking to identify community resources that may support students in a campus based postsecondary program; it is also useful for planning the transition of students who exit a postsecondary program. It addresses resources in the areas of (a) community recreation, religion, and consumer or adult necessities; (b) supports and services specifically for individuals with disabilities such as the potential collaborating agencies mentioned above; (c) employment—to identify openings, to identify potential employers located convenient to an individual's residence, to seek providers that may assist in maintaining employment; (d) independent living; and (e) transportation.

National Impetus for Inclusive Postsecondary Programs

Inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in postsecondary education is poised to move forward as part of the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (pending at the time of this submission). This Act, for example, offers opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities to participate in work study without being full time matriculated students, development of model programs, and funding for a technical assistance center to expand postsecondary opportunities.

The experience of the PEER project suggests that postsecondary programs located in institutions of higher education can work. To make them work, collaboration in planning, implementing and improving the program is essential. As advocacy for full inclusion in postsecondary education increases, educators at the K-12 and postsecondary levels must continue to work with students and families to identify their aspirations and also work together to develop programs in which they can be fulfilled.

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Appendix

Figure 1. Excerpts from Employer Survey

Questions	Likert Scale Ratings (4=extremely satisfied, 1= unsatisfied)	
	Mean	($\underline{n} = 8$)
1. Overall, how satisfied were you with the employee's performance?		3.4
2. How satisfied were you with the employee's skills before training?		2.9
3. How satisfied were you with the employee's skills after training?	3.6	
4. How satisfied were you with the social skills of the employee?		3.4
5. How satisfied were you with the ability of the employee to follow directions?	3.4	
6. How satisfied were you with the ability of the employee to adhere to the safety procedures of the organization?	3.6	
7. How satisfied were you with the employee's ability to implement changes and accept feedback from the supervisor?	3.1	
8. How satisfied were you with the employee's attendance?	3.5	
9. How satisfied were you with the employee's punctuality?	3.4	
10. How satisfied were you with the communication between the job coach, teacher, or employment liaison in resolving problems that arose?	2.8	
11. How satisfied were you with the job coach's supervision of the employee?	3.0	

Open-ended question: Are you willing to have individuals with disabilities work at your organization in the future? (6 respondents)

Yes. It gives them a chance to learn a new skill. They also bring a new outlook on life. The individual was an awesome employee and we hope he comes back in the fall.
Yes, when they can do the job.
YES!! Absolutely.

Absolutely YES.

Absolutely! It saved me many hours of tedious work—shredding. There was no cost to my organization. They are delightful people to meet and talk to.

Yes.

Putting Theory into Practice: A Professional Development School/University Co-Teaching Project

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Putting Theory into Practice:
A Professional Development School/University Co-Teaching Project

Abstract

This investigation measured the impact of co-teaching on pre-service teachers' sense of

efficacy in classroom management and student engagement. The study utilized a

Professional Development School partnership between a university and an elementary

school to make a theory-to-practice connection for pre-service teachers enrolled in an

applied behavior analysis course. Instruction was delivered by a university professor and

an elementary school teacher using collaborative consultation. Changes in pre-service

teachers' attitudes were measured by a pre/post administration of the Teachers Sense of

Efficacy Scale (TSES) (Tschannen-Moran and Wolfolk, 2001). Results suggested that the

pre-service teachers' sense of efficacy increased during the class.

Putting Theory into Practice: a Professional Development School/University Co-

Teaching Project

The participants were eight Individuals who were enrolled in a small (total student

enrollment: approximately 3800), Historically Black College or University (HCBU) in the Eastern United States, and enrolled in an applied behavior analysis undergraduate/graduate class. The class was required for certification in the University's Special Education program. Two of the students in the class were African-American, and the rest were Caucasian. Six were undergraduate students admitted to the Teacher Education Program (three juniors, and three seniors); five of these undergraduates were females and one was male. Two of the participants were graduate students, both female, and both Caucasian. The class required 15 hours of student observation in a public school setting in addition to class meetings. Most students in the class carried out their observations in the second author's elementary school.

Using a pretest/posttest design, The Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) (Tschannen-Moran & Wolfolk, 2001) was administered at the beginning and at the end of the course. Research evidence (Giallo & Little, 2003) suggests a correlation between a pre-service teacher's sense of efficacy in classroom management and successful implementation of these management techniques.

The TSES was chosen because it had been used in a similar investigation (Tschannen-Moran & Wolfolk, 2001). This scale measures three components of individuals' sense of efficacy towards three moderately correlated factors: Efficacy in Student Engagement, Efficacy in Instructional Practices, and Efficacy in Classroom Management (Tschannen-Moran & Wolfolk, 2001). In addition to administering the scale,

deriving scores for the entire test, and examining differences in pre- and posttests, the authors examined the results of the Efficacy in Classroom Management and Efficacy in Student Engagement subscales for differences between pre- and posttest scores.   Scores from The Efficacy in Instructional Practices subtest were not examined because the authors felt that the results from this subtest did not bear sufficiently on the purposes of the investigation.

Other materials used in the project included two textbooks the students were required to purchase, and miscellaneous teaching materials brought in by the second author. Students also used a logbook to record their observations in the second author's school, and their reflections.

The authors decided that the Collaborative Consultation model best fit requirements for collegiality between university and PreK-12 teachers. This model also seemed to be designed to help assure that the research resulting from the investigation would be relevant and accessible to PreK-12 teachers.

The Collaborative Consultation model is derived form Tharp & Wetzel (1969) and Tharp (1975) and includes three components – (C)consultant, counsultee/(M)mediator, and (T)target (Dettmer, Thurston & Dyck, 2005). Dettmer, Thurston & Dyck (2005) conceptualize the consultant and consultee/mediator as equal partners with diverse experience. Communication is not hierarchical or one-way. Rather, there is a sense of parity that blends the skills and knowledge of both consultant and consultee/mediator, with

disagreements viewed as opportunities for constructive extraction of the most useful information (Dettmer, Thurston & Dyck, 2005, p.57). In this investigation, the authors decided that both would hold and exchange roles as consultant and consultee/mediator, as situations warranted, and the students in the class would be the clients, or targets.

Dettmer, Thurston & Dyck (2005) quote Pryzwansky (1974) as suggesting that the basic structure of the collaborative approach emphasizes the need for mutual consent on the part of both consultant and consultee/mediator, mutual commitment to the objectives, and shared responsibility for implementation and evaluation of the plan. The consultant, consultee/mediator, and target have reciprocally reinforcing effects on one another. Each collaborator, as part of the team, contributes a clearly defined portion of the effort so that all comes together to create a complete plan or solution (Dettmer, Thurston & Dyck, 2005, p. 57).

The authors, as co-teachers, served as both the consultant and consultee/mediator. These roles were often exchanged, as described by Dettmer, Thurston,. & Dyck, (2005) in their definition of collaborative consultation. Both instructors agreed to, and attended, weekly planning meetings to outline instructional goals, review the current course syllabus in order to delineate tasks and define scope of teaching responsibilities, make any necessary changes in the class structure, and grade student projects/exams.

In addition, although a possibly confounding variable might be introduced, the authors agreed that the existing format for the required school observation was not

providing as adequate a theory-to-practice connection as might be hoped, and sought to change it. Given the dissatisfaction students seemed to experience with the school observation, the authors considered a possible redesign of the traditional role the cooperating teacher plays during pre-internship school observation.

Under this redesign, most of the pre-service teachers in the class were placed at the same school. At this school, they all had access to the same mentor teacher, who also was one of the co-teachers in the university class the students took. This meant that most students had access to the mentor teacher at the observing school as well as during the class at the university, and this teacher could provide immediate feedback and additional resources to students in both settings.

The university in which the class was conducted was a Professional Development School (PDS). Under Maryland law, a Professional Development School (PDS) is defined as

> … a collaboratively planned and implemented partnership for the academic and clinical preparation of interns and the continuous professional development of both school system and institution of higher education (IHE) faculty. (Maryland State Department of Education, 2003, p. 3).

The Professional Development School model is intended to improve student performance at both the IHE and the PreK-12 school. It is intended that students in schools of education benefit by a closer exposure to actual teaching experiences and that PreK-12

schools benefit by exposure to current educational research in teaching interventions (Maryland State Department of Education, 2003).

The class, which met once per week in 2-3/4 hour sessions, was divided into two segments per session. The first section was taught by the first author, and presented applied behavior analysis theory and classroom management models. The second section, taught by the second author, was a weekly reinforcement section designed to highlight concepts introduced the previous week by utilizing resources used in local school districts. In this section the second author facilitated a "Classroom Connection" discussion for the last thirty minutes of the class period so students could discuss field placement observations, ask additional questions, and role-play discipline situations. The instructors believed that having most of the students in the class observing at the same school, in similar situations, encouraged more depth in these class discussions, with more authentic learning experiences.

The pre-service teachers' attitudes, as measured by pre/post test administration of the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) (Tschannen-Moran & Wolfolk, 2001) suggested that students developed a greater confidence in their ability to handle classroom management situations over the course of the class. Total Scale score means increased from 153.6 ($SD = 15.9$) in the pretest to 174.5 ($SD = 22.3$), a difference of 20.8 points, an increase in scores suggesting an increase in feelings of efficacy, and therefore increases in confidence.

Pretest/posttest difference scores suggested that students' confidence also may have improved in the factors measured by the Efficacy in Classroom Management and Efficacy in Student Engagement subscales of the TSES. Aggregated student scores in the Efficacy in Classroom Management subscale went from a mean of 53.5 ($SD = 7.1$) in the pretest to a mean of 59.8 ($SD = 7.2$) in the posttest. The Efficacy in Student Engagement subscale aggregated pretest scores went from a mean of 50.2 ($SD = 4.9$) to a mean of 56.9 ($SD = 6.7$). Difference scores were not calculated for the Efficacy in Instructional Practices subscale because the authors felt that scores from this subscale did not bear directly or substantially on this investigation.

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Retention of Teachers in Rural Kentucky

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RETENTION OF TEACHERS IN RURAL KENTUCKY

ABSTRACT

Teacher retention has been of interest to educational researchers for over three decades. Various reasons for special education teacher attrition have been cited, including student discipline and motivation problems, working conditions, low salary, and a lack of administrator support. This descriptive survey research sought to determine the present status of completers of an alternative certification program in mild-moderate disabilities at a state-supported university. The study sought to determine if teachers completing the licensure endorsement program were still teaching in special education programs, why they may have left, and to obtain their perceptions of the preparation program's effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

The need for qualified teachers in America's elementary and secondary schools has been a subject of a significant number of studies in the past twenty years. In the mid-1980's two widely disseminated reports focused attention on the coming shortage of teachers (HYPERLINK "http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JCTE/v22n1/zirkle.html" \l "nas#nas" National Academy of Sciences, 1987; HYPERLINK "http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JCTE/v22n1/zirkle.html" \l "ncee#ncee" National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Due to increasing student enrollments and the aging of the present teaching workforce, these two reports predicted a commensurate increase in demand for new teachers. These predictions have been upheld by numerous other studies, including studies which delineated the shortages in specific teaching fields, such as math, science and special education (HYPERLINK "http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JCTE/v22n1/zirkle.html" \l "boe#boe" Boe, Bobbitt & Cook, 1997; HYPERLINK "http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JCTE/v22n1/zirkle.html" \l "grissmer#grissmer" Grissmer & Kirby, 1997; HYPERLINK "http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JCTE/v22n1/zirkle.html" \l "weisbaum#weisbaum" Weisbaum & Huang, 2001).

Concern over teacher shortages and the retention of current teachers has given rise to continued research on the topic. In the late 1980's the National Center for Education Statistics began the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) in an attempt to track the phenomenon. Each year SASS sends out surveys to over 50,000 teachers in a random sample to obtain data on teacher staffing, shortages, and retention. A companion study, the Teacher Follow-up Survey, was designed to focus specifically on the reasons why teachers leave the profession. These studies continue today.

Higher standards in the public schools have affected millions of disadvantaged students who are at-risk for not graduating from high school. Educational reform, with its increased emphasis on testing, has placed more strains on educational systems trying to accommodate increasing numbers of these at-risk students. To meet the needs of these students, approximately 40% of public school districts have alternative schools and programs, approximately 50% of which involve accommodations for students with special needs (HYPERLINK "http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JCTE/v22n1/zirkle.html" \l "nces#nces" National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005).

Many of these programs are focused on students with special needs who are at risk of dropping out of school for a number of reasons including poor grades, truancy, suspension, and pregnancy (HYPERLINK "http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JCTE/v22n1/zirkle.html" \l "paglin#paglin" Paglin & Fager, 1997). As a result, teachers may face special challenges and concerns when teaching this population of students. The need to recruit and retain quality special education teachers in programs and schools with large numbers of at-risk students was recently highlighted in a report by the HYPERLINK "http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JCTE/v22n1/zirkle.html" \l "nptars#nptars" National Partnership for Teaching in At-Risk Schools (2005). The report described the necessity for proper pedagogical preparation to work with at-risk students, improvement of school conditions, and a focus on retention of quality teachers through various incentives.

TEACHER ATTRITION AND RETENTION

With respect to teacher turnover, HYPERLINK "http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JCTE/v22n1/zirkle.html" \l "ingersoll2003#ingersoll2003" Ingersoll (2003) defined two types: teacher attrition, which refers to teachers who have left the profession entirely, and teacher migration, which denotes teachers who have transferred to teaching jobs in other districts. While teacher attrition results in a loss of an individual from the teaching profession, teacher migration also has implications for schools, as it still results in teachers that must be replaced.

Teaching is a large occupational category in the U.S., representing four percent of the entire nationwide civilian workforce (HYPERLINK "http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JCTE/v22n1/zirkle.html" \l "ingersoll2003#ingersoll2003" Ingersoll, 2003). However, when compared to other occupations, teachers exhibit higher rates of turnover than many other professions. Whereas the overall average across all occupations in the U.S. is about 11% per year, the rate for teachers has been as high as 15.7% in certain years (HYPERLINK "http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JCTE/v22n1/zirkle.html" \l "bureau#bureau" Bureau of National Affairs, 2005).

This turnover is costly to individual schools and school districts. One recent national estimate of the cost of replacing public school teachers who have left the profession of teaching cast the cost at $2.2 billion a year. Adding in the costs of teachers transferring to other positions and/or schools increased the cost to $4.9 billion every year (HYPERLINK "http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JCTE/v22n1/zirkle.html" \l "alliance#alliance" Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005).

Beginning teachers are more likely to leave the profession (HYPERLINK "http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JCTE/v22n1/zirkle.html" \l "harris#harris" Harris, Camp & Adkison, 2003). Twenty-five percent leave by the end of their first year (HYPERLINK "http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JCTE/v22n1/zirkle.html" \l "norton#norton" Norton, 1999), while almost 40% have left after five years (HYPERLINK "http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JCTE/v22n1/zirkle.html" \l "ingersoll2003#ingersoll2003" Ingersoll, 2003). As those who stay accumulate teaching experience, they are more likely to continue in the teaching profession. These continual departures put a strain on schools, as a "revolving door" can be created, especially in poor rural or inner-city schools. With respect to special education teachers, 60% have been shown to leave within six years (HYPERLINK "http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JCTE/v22n1/zirkle.html" \l "heath#heath" Heath-Camp & Camp, 1990).

Studies have delineated several reasons why teachers leave the profession. Dissatisfaction with the job, which can include such aspects as low pay and poor working conditions, has been shown to be a primary reason (HYPERLINK "http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JCTE/v22n1/zirkle.html" \l "anderson#anderson" Anderson & Sinha, 1999;

~~Weisbaum & Huang, 2001~~). Teachers leave to pursue careers in other occupations and industries, sometimes for better pay, and sometimes for personal and/or professional advancement. In addition, the U.S. has been experiencing a "graying" of the teaching workforce in the past two decades, as many teachers have retired. However, retirements only contribute to 12% of the total number of teachers who leave. The greatest percentage (28%) leaves due to school staffing cutbacks due to lay-offs, school closings, and reorganizations (HYPERLINK "http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JCTE/v22n1/zirkle.html" \l "ingersoll2002#ingersoll2002" ~~Ingersoll, 2002~~).

Many young teachers who choose to leave within five years of beginning their teaching careers often cite a lack of preparation to cope with the challenges of teaching, particularly in public schools. The ability to deal with challenging students (behavior problems, those with a lack of motivation, special populations), along with a lack of administrative support has been defined as a primary reason. New teachers also mention a lack of opportunity for professional development and professional advancement as two other reasons for their departure.

Western Kentucky University found the following changing patterns with the exceptional education teacher candidates compared to how it was even five years ago.
- More middle-aged and older students.
- More variation in previous knowledge and experiences.
- Combination of work and education, as more embrace the concept of life-long learning.
- Greater student movement between colleges and universities.
- Better knowledge of instructional technology.

Faculty have developed a new program model, the Master of Arts in Education Learning and Behavior Disorders, P-12 (MAE), that increases both the *capacity* and *quality* of teachers while helping students from underrepresented populations to overcome barriers to participation. This new model has improved the *capacity* of our program by implementing strategies to serve students for whom the program is currently inaccessible, including students who are employed and unable to enroll in a full-time program, students who are not able to commute to campus, students who can not afford tuition, and students who have difficulty negotiating barriers to participation due to disability. Structural improvements to increase their responsiveness to the needs of these diverse students include the use of on-campus programs, interactive distance education technology and course delivery, and on-line web delivered courses. Western Kentucky University (WKU) continues to develop a comprehensive program that allows for maximum accessibility for students.

The *quality* of the MAE program has also been improved in several ways. WKU has implemented a number of strategies and activities to make the program more field-based, multi-disciplinary and competency-based. In addition, this enhanced program emphasizes culturally sensitive practices for effective teaching in high-poverty, demographically diverse rural schools. While maintaining the high standards of academic rigor that are the hallmarks of the program, the specific revisions and enhancements include: (a) the use of cohort groups to facilitate the growth of peer support and collegiality; (b) more intense and extensive field-based activities and course assignments that focus on culturally competent teaching, including projects requiring multidisciplinary collaboration and practical projects with a direct impact on participants' schools and K-12 student achievement; (c) development and expansion of the Professional Development Networks, which included trainees' cooperating/ mentoring teachers in the trainees' field placements, members of Advisory Councils, Parents and Advocacy Groups, and Departmental faculty; and (d) restructured internships and classroom experiences to assure that competent teachers are trained, who will continue serving students and not leave the field in three years to five years.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The design of the ARTC/MAE is based on the following principles.
- Teacher education is a continuing professional process
- Expertise is required of all teachers
- Graduate training is enriched when viewed as a dynamic and   on-going interaction between faculty and students.
- The field experiences of M.A.E. students are a rich source of authentic application and coursework inquiry.

Student demonstration of the *benchmarks* for each of the Kentucky Teacher Internship Program (KTIP) Teacher Standards listed below determines program success.
- Design and Plan Instruction
- Create and Maintain a Learning Climate,
- Implement and Manage Instruction,
- Assess and Communicate Learning Results,
- Collaborate with Colleagues, Parents, and Others
- Articulate the goals of and engage in Professional Development
- Present Accurate and Pertinent Content
- Reflect/Evaluate Teaching/Learning
- Demonstrate Professional Leadership.
- Demonstrate Implementation of Technology

In helping graduate students maximize their professional development, the ARTC/ MAE in LBD welcomes a partnership with school districts in preparing future teachers who can clearly visualize their role, actively greet complexity with reflective and creative thinking, constructively confront challenge, securely meet the demands of innovation or change, and truly value learning as a life-long process. The Directors of Special Education from cooperating districts serve as the Advisory Board to the program. Field practitioners working with the cohorts are K-12 partners.
Instruction in this program is student centered with faculty and school district personnel assisting, guiding, and leading, rather than directing candidates. Graduate students in the programs are responsible and accountable for their own professional development. Faculty, administration, and school district personnel are responsible and accountable for providing sequential, viable, and supportive instructional opportunities for student learning.

The content knowledge and skills requisite for meeting the program's standards are provided through ten courses in the 30-hour program of the ARTC/MAE in LBD. Candidates are admitted in cohorts each summer and fall. Since the program began in June 2002, over 431 students have been admitted, 155 have graduated and are still teaching, 272 are currently completing programs. Cohorts are currently operating in Owensboro, Elizabethtown, Russell Springs, Glasgow, Bowling Green, and Cyberspace.

Faculty and school practitioners have struggled to design performances that will highlight the effect teacher candidates are having on K-12 student achievement. Innovations are beginning to develop the research base necessary to validate these processes. As this work continues, exciting possibilities are being identified.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this research was to describe the current occupational status of program completers of Western Kentucky University's Master of Arts in Education, EXED preparatory program. The study also sought to ascertain the perceptions of completers

regarding the quality of the preparation they received in Western Kentucky University's program.

With respect to the recent report by the HYPERLINK "http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ ejournals/JCTE/v22n1/zirkle.html" \l "nptars#nptars" ~~National Partnership for Teaching in At-Risk Schools (2005)~~, which described the importance of adequate preparation for teachers in order to work with special needs populations, it was deemed necessary to evaluate the extent to which program completers were choosing to remain in the teaching profession and how preparatory coursework may have contributed to their retention. The feedback provided by this questionnaire was intended to allow for analysis and improvement of required coursework in order to better serve current and future students.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research tracked the career choices of program completers and linked their evaluations of the preparatory program with retention in the teaching field. Specifically, the study addressed four research questions:

Are program completers currently employed in the field of education?

Are program completers currently employed as LBD teachers?

What are contributing factors related to the employment status of program completers?

What are program completers' perceptions of the preparation they received prior to assuming a classroom assignment?

PROCEDURE

Population

The population for this study was program completers of Western Kentucky University's Master of Arts in Education, LBD preparatory program between the academic years of 2002 and 2003. Emailing lists for this group were developed from departmental files with the assistance of graduate students in the department. The entire population was surveyed. As the population for this study was limited to western Kentucky University's program completers, results of this study are limited to this group. The initial population was comprised of 148 program completers with current LBD license endorsements. The license status of subjects was verified with the Kentucky Education and Professional Standards Board, which allows a user to access certificate details for individuals by last name and school district. Upon investigation, it was discovered that the licenses of two subjects were not accessible and another three could not be found, which indicated the licenses may have been suspended, revoked or never gotten. Removing these subjects from the population reduced the number of subjects to 143. One hundred and twenty three respondents returned the survey instrument for a response rate of 86.01%.

Data Collection

The population received a cover letter, survey link, and a thank you for their participation. The cover letter explained the purpose of the study, guaranteed participant confidentiality, explained the response tracking method, and provided contact information in the event of participant questions or concerns. Confidentiality was ensured. The respondents' answers were assumed to be an accurate reflection of their understanding of the questions.

The research instrument consisted of four sections:

Demographic information to ascertain education-related employment data, educational attainment, etc;

Short statements related to the anticipation of leaving the teaching field and/or attrition from the field utilizing a ranking system;

Rankings of the perception of preparatory course material in relationship to specific on-the-job teaching responsibilities; and

Space provided to elaborate on any questions answered or additional comments.

Approximately two weeks after the initial emailing, all non-responders received a second emailing of the same contents with an updated cover letter. Several surveys were returned due to incorrect email addresses. A third and final mailing was conducted approximately two weeks after the second using school addresses for the remaining non-respondents. No further attempts were made after these three rounds.

FINDINGS

Findings are reported for each research question under corresponding headings. Specific comments made by respondents are included where appropriate.

Question 1: Are program completers currently employed in the field of education?

Of the 123 respondents, 121, or 98.37% of respondents, indicated employment in the education field. The remaining two respondents, comprising the residual 1.62%, were not employed in an education related field.

Question 2: Are program completers currently employed as LBD teachers?

One hundred and eighteen respondents (95.93%) were still teaching in a LBD classroom. Five (4.06%) were employed as teacher consultants or assistant principals. Respondents presently in the education field, but not in the classroom, reported that their ability in the classroom had led to the other opportunity and assignment. The two who were not teaching were working for the juvenile justice system.

Question 3: What are contributing factors related to the employment status of program completers?

All respondents currently in the education field did not anticipate exiting the field of education in the next five years.

Only three respondents (2.47%) cited dissatisfaction with the job as justification for planning to leave the field. No respondents who had already left the field of education cited job dissatisfaction as their rationale.

Question 4: What are program completer's perceptions of the preparation they received prior to assuming a classroom assignment?

The majority of respondents deemed the preparatory courses at Western Kentucky University to be "adequate" in all of the teaching responsibilities surveyed. Of particular interest were perceptions regarding preparation to educate students with complex special needs, engage in collaboration with general education, provide differentiated instruction, and facilitate life planning. With respect to the education of students with complex needs, 43.8% of all respondents considered the preparation received to be "adequate" while 23.6% deemed

their preparation "inadequate."

Respondents who had little experience with students with complex needs perceived a definite need for information to work with these students. On this topic respondents included comments such as "I was a bank teller for 15 years prior to taking the LBD position. The type of student I am now dealing with is very different."; "Administrators feel the student creates discipline problems and lowers test scores."

Preparation for collaboration with general education teachers was deemed "adequate" by 44.9% of all respondents, while 22.5% thought it "inadequate."

With respect to providing differentiated instruction, 48.3% of all respondents deemed preparation to be "adequate" and 19.1% "inadequate."

Preparation to offer life planning was thought "adequate" by 47.2% of all respondents, and "inadequate" by 20.2%.

CONCLUSIONS

Nationally, statewide, and in South-central Kentucky where Western Kentucky University is located, there is a critical shortage of special education teachers. The states report a chronic shortage of over 27,000 fully certified special education teachers, along with an annual demand for approximately 28,000 new special education teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). In greatest demand are teachers of specific learning disabilities, emotional disorders, and mental retardation (42%, 17%, and 17%, respectively, of all additional teachers needed). When considered in geographic terms, the need is greatest in rural and inner city areas (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). The demand for special education teachers increases yearly, and is expected to increase at a faster rate than that of other occupations through at least the year 2015.

The national shortage of special education teachers is paralleled in Kentucky and in South-central Kentucky. The small, rural school districts characteristic of South-central Kentucky report extreme difficulties in attracting qualified special education teachers. South-central Kentucky, where Western Kentucky University is located, has more than its proportionate share of these personnel needs. In 2002, the two KDE superintendent regions in the area (regions two and six) had a total of 600 special education positions in high incidence disabilities that were either unfilled or filled by personnel who were not fully certified. This figure represents over 50% of all teacher shortages in the two regions.

There is a two pronged problem of recruitment (not enough enter the field) and retention (those who do leave in 3 to 5 years). This research project will provides evidence that the Western Kentucky University graduate is not leaving the field. This counters a national trend and data for the past decade. The findings are limited due to population size; they do provide hope if the trend continues.

With respect to the respondents' preparation to teach, it appears the biggest concern for these individuals is working with complex needs special populations. Some teachers may have received little training in working with this group as part of their initial teacher preparation, and may have little practical experience in this area prior to taking an LBD position. Since LBD programs have historically not targeted this group, the respondent's concern, and desire for perhaps more preparation in this area, is understandable. The same may be true for the area of collaboration with general education, they may have little in the way of orientation to the general education setting, and establishing relationships with the general education teacher may be a new responsibility for them. This same shortcoming may also be true for another noted area, life planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendation appears warranted:

Expansion of the study to the other institutions in Kentucky. It may be useful to see if these patterns are true in other parts of the state.

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Rural Faculty and Exceptional Collegiate Populations

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RURAL FACULTY AND EXCEPTIONAL COLLEGIATE POPULATIONS

In 1948, the University of Illinois began "offering comprehensive medical services, sports activities and physical plant accommodations to students with disabilities" (Beilke & Yssel, 1999, p. 363). That program was the first in the nation. Since that time educational opportunities have increased due to the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 (Hurtubis Sahlen & Lehmann, 2006). Because of the increase in services and accommodations for people with disabilities, an increasing number of students with disabilities are attending college. Individuals with disabilities who complete a two or four year degree programs are more likely to enter the workforce and experience financial independence (Tagayuna, Stodden, Chang, Zeleznik & Whelly, 2005).

Colleges are required to comply with the federal laws governing the rights of postsecondary students with disabilities. Colleges and universities have disability support offices available for students with disabilities. A distinct difference for college students when compared to secondary students is that they are responsible for seeking services and advocating for themselves. In order to receive accommodations in college, students must provide evidence of their disability (Hurtubis Sahlen & Lehmann, 2006). The definition of a person with a disability is defined by the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 as "a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has record of such impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment."

According to interviews conducted by Beilke and Yssel (1993), many students reported that they were aware of the process of reporting their disability and requesting accommodations. The respondents all had similar experiences with professors who encouraged them to drop classes, ignored them in class, or made them feel unwelcome in a course. Despite the negative experiences, each student described at least one professor that affected his / her college experience in a positive way. The students interviewed had either physical or learning disabilities. The students with learning disabilities reported having the most difficulty in the classroom because some professors did not believe they had a

disability. The authors suggested that some college faculty have little prior knowledge about disabilities and need to be assured that accommodations do not have a negative effect on academic integrity.

In an interview conducted by Forrest (2003), Catherine Fichten discussed her past research that has focused on students with disabilities. The faculty members Dr. Fitchen interviewed disclosed they had little or no experience instructing people with disabilities and one admitted feeling uneasy around a student with a physical disability. Her research has also revealed that some college professors feel that students with disabilities will never be able to achieve at the basic minimum level for the course. She stated professors might not be resisting the idea of accommodating students, but that they are unaware of how to accommodate due to little or no prior experience with people with disabilities.

In a study conducted at a private, four-year college, faculty were surveyed about their "knowledge, experience and attitudes" towards students with disabilities (Vasek, 2005, p. 307). The faculty was also given the opportunity to make comments. The findings revealed a majority of the faculty were willing to accommodate students with disabilities. Yet when questioned about providing specific accommodations, the number of faculty members that had used a specific accommodation dropped. The College of Education faculty was the most willing to accommodate while the faculty in the College of Business were the least likely. A majority of all faculty indicated they did not have a high degree of knowledge about the disabled and one-fourth of the faculty were not aware that the college had a Disabled Student Services office. The respondents commented about an interest in two areas, universal design and information about specific disabilities.

In an article by Vogel (1982), the author provided recommendations that are intended to increase the ability of faculty to provide students with disabilities accommodations and equal opportunity in higher education. The recommendations were similar to those discussed by the faculty and students surveyed in the literature review. The previous studies indicate that while accommodations and disability support service office are in existence, there are areas in need of improvement. Vogel also recommended college faculty members should be provided with information in order to increase their level of understanding and ability to provide accommodations. The students felt that the attitudes of the professors affected their school experience due to the lack of general knowledge about disabilities.

This study examined the attitudes of college faculty members about providing accommodations to students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are attending college in higher numbers then ever before due to changes in laws and the educational system. Universities are required to adhere to the laws regarding students with disabilities and this includes providing reasonable accommodation. The students are responsible for informing the university and professors about their disability and accommodation requests. Professors are required to provide the accommodations deemed reasonable by the

university.

Students with disabilities are protected from discrimination and have the right to reasonable accommodations in college. Two areas of difficulty college students with disabilities transitioning to college encounter are 1) the student is responsible for requesting accommodations and 2) college faculty may not have background knowledge about disabilities and accommodation. Previous research in the area of college students with disabilities has focused on the students and their college professors. Studies have dealt with availability of accommodations, student perceptions, and faculty willingness to provide accommodations.

Participants.

The participants were selected from Marshall University's College of Education and Human Services, Marshall University's Lewis College of Business, West Virginia University's College of Human Resources and Education, and West Virginia University's College of Business and Economics. The faculty members had to meet the following criteria to be selected for the study (1) they had to work on the main campus of the University and (2) were either a full, associate or assistant professor in rank. Based on the criteria, a total, 226 professors were invited to participate in the study. With 89% of the respondents reporting they had at some point a student with a disability in an instructional setting or class.

Instrument.

The survey was designed to gather demographic information about the faculty through opinion based questions and their attitudes about providing accommodations to students with disabilities. The content of the twenty opinion based survey questions focused on accommodations the professor provided or were willing to provide, knowledge about students with disabilities, and fairness to all students. The survey items were developed using similar questions and formats from previous studies conducted about attitudes and willingness to provide accommodations by Vogel (1999) and Burke Strehorn (2000). The survey was formatted using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree".

Findings.

There was no significant difference in the responses based on gender, age, degree level, rank, years of experience or experience with students with disabilities. But there were significant differences between the responses of faculty members of Marshall University and West Virginia University on some of the survey items. Faculty from both universities indicated that overall they agreed with the following statements.

I am willing to provide preferential seating in the classroom for students with

disabilities.

I am willing to work with students with disabilities in finding a note taker to assist the student with a disability during lecture.

I am willing to supply copies of lecture notes or an outline of the lecture to students with disabilities.

I am willing to make available copies of overhead slides or PowerPoint slides to students with disabilities.

I will permit students with disabilities extended time to complete assignments.

I feel that providing accommodations to students with disabilities helps them succeed in my course.

I feel that providing teaching and exam accommodations to students with disabilities provides them with an unfair advantage in my course.

The faculty at West Virginia University did agree with the following statements while their counterparts at Marshall University responded neutrally about the topic.

I am willing to allow students with disabilities to complete alternative formats of assignments.

I am willing to permit a scribe to assist students with disabilities during exams.

I am willing to allow students with disabilities to present exam answers in an alternative way.

The university's Disability Student Services Office has offered support and guidance to me.

The lone item that both faculties disagreed with addresses their feelings regarding having adequate background knowledge before providing accommodations to students with disabilities. The faculty at West Virginia disagreed with the statement that suggested course requirements, rules and procedures should be completed in the same manner by all students. They also disagreed with statement that inquires about arranging extended times for students with disabilities to complete exams. The faculty at Marshall University responded in a neutral fashion to the statements.

The remaining six statements received a neutral rating by both faculties. These survey items inquired about separate locations for completing exams; difficulty in providing alternative formats for exams; the necessity of accommodations in certain classes; hindrances to academic freedom on the part of the faculty member; additional knowledge regarding providing accommodations; and positive student communication about disability issues.

Recommendations.

Due to the increasing numbers of students with disabilities on college campuses, faculty members should be prepared to provide reasonable accommodations. Research studies about faculty attitudes regarding the provision of accommodations may be useful

for institutions of higher education. Because of the limiting factors of this research study; a study which includes more universities, colleges and professors could be conducted. In addition, the students with disabilities at those universities could also be surveyed regarding their perception of the faculty's willingness to provide reasonable accommodations.

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ACRES
American Council on Rural Special Education

Special Service Implementation as a Tool for Building an Effective Learning Enviroment.

John Picone

SPECIAL SERVICE IMPLMENTATION AS A TOOL FOR BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT.

Building and maintaining an effective school climate are among the greatest challenges that face the modern educational leader (Manning, 2003). The goal of establishing an effective school climate calls for the development of a learning environment in which all educational stakeholders interact in a positive manner, reflecting the mission statement of the educational organization (Bucher, 2005). Given the nature of present special education legislation, challenges have presented themselves in providing effective educational opportunities in the least restrictive environment, while preserving the integrity of the learning climate. The conundrum of maintaining an effective learning climate while still providing the least restrictive educational environment to students with disabilities that present direct challenges to the sanctity of such a delicate school climate continues to interfere with effective educational practice in many public school systems around the United States today.

Building an effective educational environment requires the development of a community of learning that emphasizes citizenry among its members (Hargreaves, 2003). Fostering support for learner achievement among all members of the educational community makes use of positive social pressure as a means of reinforcing student achievement. The practice of modeling is of great importance in the establishment of this environmental component.   Educators and student leaders who exemplify supportive attitudes regarding learner achievement supply the social pattern for other members of the educational community.

One of the major problems associated with intensifying behavioral problems of challenging students is the development of negative expectations and the building of patterns of ineffective discipline (Glasser, 1998). Many behavioral approaches are failing enterprises due to incorrect implementation and lack of dedication on the part of frustrated staff members (Johns, 2005). A traditional pull-out model of special education service implementation has allowed for special education students who exhibit poor conduct to be removed from the general education classroom setting. A clear designation existed between special education and general education entities with in the scholastic environment under this traditional model.

Inclusionary practice emphasizes education of special education students in the general education environment to the maximum extent possible. This practice of special service implementation directly contradicts the nature of the traditional pull-out service model (Rea, 2002). Unfortunately educator paradigms of traditional special service responsibilities have not adjusted as quickly as the trend of inclusion with in the public school system. Many general education teachers have minimal training in the provision of

special services with in the general education context. Many educators still view special education as a separate educational entity. In order for inclusion to achieve its maximum potential it is necessary for special education to be recognized as a component of the larger educational process. Special education is a component of education that has been implemented in order to insure equity among the learner population. Special service implementation is intended to level the playing field for students with disabilities as opposed to separating special needs students from the greater educational environment.

Once special education is understood to be an educational device used to improve student achievement it can be structured collaboratively to meet the needs of the special needs student as well as the needs of the greater learning environment. The needs of both parties serve the same educational goals making this collaboration possible. The goal of special education service is to provide special needs students with services necessary to allow students with special needs to achieve academic success to the greatest extent possible. The goal of creating an effective learning environment is to provide students with the greatest opportunity to achieve academically to the best of their abilities. In fact special education students represent a small portion of the greater body of the student population targeted by learning environment improvement. By this rationale special service implementation can and should be considered a tool for use by educators who seek to improve the learning environment for all students. Progress monitoring and intervention response recording when implemented with integrity and fidelity can aid special needs students in the pursuit of academic success.

Through cooperative planning and community based implementation of social standards that promote academic success the learning environment can be improved for all students. Supportive learning environments that make use of differentiated instruction allow students to think creatively and focus on academic improvement. Special needs students that experience the positive effects of a well established learning environment will make academic gains given appropriate accommodation strategies. Student with behavioral constraints that require individualized behavioral intervention plans can also benefit from the positive social climate of an effective learning environment. Social modeling and peer reinforcement of socially appropriate behavior can prove quite effective in the modification of maladjusted student behavior.

Students who exhibit disabilities that do not allow for full integration into the general education program planning should still include members of the general education staff. In this context team members should focus on the student as a member of the learning community and look for opportunities that allow for the student to participate in the greater social context of the learning community thereby allowing student exposure to positive social modeling and support. Often focus of this nature requires a paradigm shift on the part of staff members with in the educational community.

school system to set educational programming of learners outside

the general population. In order to make use of positive social focus as a means of improving the learning environment it is necessary for students to be viewed as contributors to the learning environment. Each student has preexisting educational factors to consider. Specific disabilities are simply measures of preexisting educational factors for certain students. This process of consideration serves to limit stigmatization of special needs students by other members of the learning community and establishes a positive social norm for the acceptance of individual learners as members of the learning community regardless of status or label.

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Abstract

Rural Special Educators Implement RtI: Early Responses to New Role

This study describes qualitative data from interviews and written responses of 15 rural special educators newly engaged in implementing assessment procedures related to the Response-to-Intervention Model (RtI). The educators explain how their role in the assessment of low performing students has switched in focus from an emphasis on eligibility to a problem-solving mode. Their own involvement in assessment has broadened and deepened as they have become more responsible for participating with general educators in the collection and interpretation of curriculum-based assessment data. In addition, they are experiencing more opportunities to involve students directly in the assessment process as a means of helping students to take responsibility for their learning by setting their own educational goals and self-monitoring their progress. In the past, special educators relied on the assessment expertise of itinerant school psychologists. In the new RtI assessment model, they are developing their own assessment expertise and becoming heavily immersed in school-wide assessment systems and intervention processes.

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TEACHER-DESIGNED, STUDENT-INVOLVED ASSESSMENTS IN RURAL SCHOOLS

This study collected qualitative data from online discussions and written responses of 15 rural special educators who were newly engaged in implementing assessment procedures related to the Response-to-Intervention Model (RtI), the new identification model incorporated in the most recent reauthorization of IDEA in 2004. RtI models typically involve identification for special education based in part on mass screening of all students and repeated probe assessments of the same core area, such as reading or math, in students who demonstrate risk factors. RtI models are dynamic and base identification on the assessment of performance of basic skills. By tying multiple assessments to specific attempts to intervene with a student, the construct of *unexpected underachievement* (a marker for learning disabilities) can be operationalized in part on the basis of an inadequate response to instruction that is effective with most individuals (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998; Gresham, 2002). Those who do not benefit adequately from increasingly intense instruction could be identified as having learning disabilities.

Each of the subjects in this study works in a school where curriculum-based measurement using DIBELS or AIMSweb is being used as a means of assessing students in basic skills. For all of these teachers, implementing CBM is a relatively new process and one which is used to make significant decisions about the educational futures of students. Unlike their colleagues in larger school districts, these rural teachers have limited access to a support system for gaining what Stiggins (2005) calls *assessment literacy*, yet they find themselves at the center of a complex system of dynamic assessment for all students. This paper provides details about how these rural teachers viewed their own skills as assessors and how their involvement in RtI processes began to change their self-assessment. Working in collaboration with general education colleagues, these special educators saw firsthand that frequent curriculum-based assessment provided meaningful data for decision-making and that well-planned and executed interventions could make a difference for struggling students. The teachers in the study experienced some changes in their roles within their schools as they became more heavily involved in training fellow teachers, implementing frequent progress monitoring assessments, and collecting and interpreting basic skills data on an almost constant basis.

Fuchs, & Deshler (2007) have suggested that currently the implementation of the Response-to-Intervention (RtI) Model is in a "de facto de-regulated environment." Because there are many unanswered questions about how to provide early intervention and disability identification and because of the lack of specificity in the most recent federal regulations on RtI, school districts and educators have greater flexibility and discretionary decision-making than has been the case with previous identification and intervention models (Fuchs, & Deshler, p. 135).

Given this flexibility, the rural teachers in this study are all actively engaged in finding new ways of monitoring student progress and providing intensive instruction for students identified as needing interventions. In other words, these teachers are serving on the frontlines of RtI implementation using their existing knowledge bases and skills to make RtI work in small school settings.

Subjects

The subjects in this study are all special educators teaching in small rural schools in Montana, Wyoming, and Alaska where they serve students with a wide variety of disabilities across several grade levels. Figure 1 summarizes basic information about the subjects, including the location where they are currently teaching, the areas in which they have teaching licenses, the number of years they have been teaching, whether they teach in a private or public school and the type of program in which they teach (e.g., general or special education). Six of the subjects are early career teachers (1-6 years), seven are in mid-career (9-15 years), and two are in late career (22 and 27 years). Twelve of the teachers work in public elementary schools, two in private residential schools, and one in a parochial school. One teaches in an Alaskan Native village and two on Indian reservations in Montana. All but one of the teachers is certified in both elementary (K-8) education and special education (K-12). One teaches at the high school level, one teaches general education fourth grade, three teach in self-contained classes, and one teaches general education in a school where students are placed based on their level of performance rather than grade level.

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

Methodology

Data for this study was collected from September to December 2008. Participants were graduate students taking a course in advanced assessment to fulfill a requirement for their Master's Degrees in special education. The subjects provided information for the study in four ways: (1) rating themselves according to characteristics of effective teachers; (2) engaging in three online discussions with their colleagues concerning the topics of their own personal experiences with assessment, their roles in the RtI implementation process, and the emergence of student involvement in assessment; (3) completing a self-assessment of their own assessment skills; and (4) writing short essays about how their assessment practices have been affected by participating in RtI. The data for the study is the compilation of the questionnaire responses, the scripts from the online discussions, and the self-assessment essays. These written materials were analyzed to determine if there were commonalities among the respondents' answers and themes that recurred in their discussions.

According to Cresswell (1994), a qualitative study is defined as an inquiry process for understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting. This study uses the words of practicing teachers to build a picture of their experiences with assessment in the new context of Response-to-Intervention. In their own words, teachers describe how they are viewing the assessment process differently and becoming more engaged in formative assessment for teaching rather than standardized testing for categorical identification in special education.

Results

At the outset of the study, the participants were given a questionnaire listing various aspects of effective teaching (Stronge, 2002) and were asked to rate their skills according to areas of strength and areas that were less developed or weak. Interestingly, the subjects rated themselves as *strong* or *effective* in most areas, including personal qualities, classroom organization and management, and instruction, but indicated that three of the five qualities in assessment were *weak* areas. The assessment areas considered to be weak included: assessing frequently, providing students with specific feedback on performance, and interpreting data for students and parents. Comments on this questionnaire showed that the respondents were not confident in their abilities to give and interpret standardized tests. They also expressed some skepticism concerning the value of standardized test results both for identification and teaching purposes. Figure 2 summarizes these responses.

INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE

Also in their essays and online discussions, teachers described themselves as "novices" or "less confident" in the area of assessment. Even though these special educators have given standardized achievement tests many times, they expressed concern about their abilities to interpret the data for parents. Three of the participants said that as special educators they rely heavily on school psychologists to choose appropriate assessments and interpret results. They describe themselves as nearly always "going to the school psych" for advice on assessment because they do not feel as competent in this area.

In addition to rating themselves as assessors, the teachers were asked in a threaded discussion to describe their own experiences as students being assessed in K-12 education and at college, the teachers expressed mostly negative feelings about being tested. One respondent even called "assessment" a "bad word." Many of the respondents reported "getting the chills" or "feeling sick" about testing, and a few even admitted to cheating just to get the test completed. Even though they described themselves as strong students, several teachers said they often worried during testing that they would not have enough time to finish. One teacher expressed her feelings this way:

> I am currently taking an online course that requires me to take a quiz
> with multiple choice. There are 10 questions and I am one who needs
> to see the big picture before I begin. SO I have anxiety about making
> sure I look at the whole quiz first and then I can start answering the
> questions. But the clock ticking closer towards 20 minutes drives me
> crazy! Not to mention that I am always worrying that I have too many
> A's and not enough C's marked.

In addition to having concerns about assessment from their own experiences, the respondents expressed frustration with how much standardized testing currently takes place in schools. They find it disheartening that the children do not know why they are taking the tests or what will happen to the results. One teacher located in a reservation school said her students sometimes cried when they were taking standardized tests at grade level because the tests were

so far beyond their capabilities to perform. This teacher longs for the "old days" before No Child Left Behind (2001) when it was acceptable to test special education students at their functional level rather than grade level.

Given this background of negative feelings about assessment in general and their concerns about their own abilities to give assessments and interpret the results, it is not surprising that the subjects in this study expressed some trepidation about their new assessment roles in the Response-to-Intervention Model being implemented in their schools. When asked what they are doing now that they did not do before RtI was implemented, the following seven themes emerged: (1) member of an intervention team (100%), (2) leader of an intervention team (27%), (3) trainer for assessments (53%), (4) data manager (27%), (5) progress monitoring (100%), (6) intervention trainer (73%), and (7) research-based intervention implementation (100%). All but one of the subjects works in a school where DIBELS benchmark testing is used to assess all students in basic reading and where DIBELS progress monitor probes are used in general and special education to monitor progress in intensive interventions. Some of the teachers also use AIMSweb probes for benchmark assessments and progress monitoring. Figure 3 shows the seven areas identified as new roles for special educators in the RtI process.

INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE

Besides their new roles in giving benchmark and progress monitoring probes, some of the respondents are also providing training to colleagues in how to give DIBELS and AIMSweb assessments and in some cases they serve as managers of the data collected through these assessment systems.

All 15 study participants serve on school wide committees (e.g., Intervention Committee, Teacher Assistance Team) and some are either officially or unofficially in charge of these committees. The intervention committees are described as groups including the principal, school psychologist, experienced teachers and support staff (e.g., reading intervention teachers, reading and math coaches) who review the referrals and the assessment data to determine which children may require interventions in the general education classroom and which children should receive more intensive interventions. According to the teachers in the study, leadership of this committee often falls to the special educator because he or she understands the data collection process and is available full-time in the school setting. Sometimes the special educator is the "obvious candidate for leadership" because he or she has so much experience leading CST and IEP meetings and presenting data.

Similar to their role in data collection and management, special educators also play key roles in identifying and implementing intensive interventions and in training general educators about how to implement interventions. Special educators report that that they tend to be more familiar with the scripted, research-based programs that are selected for intervention, including Reading Mastery and Corrective Reading, Read Well, Reading Naturally, and Edmark—all programs that are often used in special education. Because of their familiarity with these materials, special educators in small rural schools are asked to share their knowledge and assist their general education colleagues in learning about these programs.

Even though implementation of RtI has sometimes thrust the special educators in this study into new roles for which they were not prepared, the study participants have expressed unexpected level of satisfaction with their experiences with changes they are experiencing in assessment and identification of SPED students. Though the RtI process is still "young," respondents have found themselves to be favorably impressed by what is occurring with formative assessment in both general education and their own special education classrooms. Figure 4 summarizes the most common themes from the participant's personal reflections on their participation in RtI assessment and intervention.

INSERT FIGURE 4 HERE

Toward the end of the study, after participants had been engaged in RtI for at least one semester, they filled out an Assessment *For* Learning Questionnaire adapted from one originally designed by Stiggins, et al. (2001). The results showed a dramatic shift in the respndents' interest in assessment and in their own sense of competence in being assessors. Sixty-one percent of the participants said they had started or were well on their way to using the ten assessment skills in the questionnaire. One teacher said:

> I believe my willingness to ensure that I assess students in a variety of
> ways is definitely strength for me. In order for me to fully gauge what my
> students know and/or are learning, it is imperative that I assess in multiple formats.

This same teacher also concluded:
> If making sure to provide students with multiple formats of assessments
> is a strength, then the quality of the measurements is a weakness. I need to
> first continue learning about assessment. My knowledge in this area is weak. Secondly, I
> need to focus on the quality of informal assessments I create
> for my students.

Perhaps the most interesting finding in the teachers' questionnaires and written comments was their new found interest in involving students in their own assessments. Though five teachers said they had never included students in the assessment process, the other ten indicated that because of RtI and their progress monitoring responsibilities, they had started to involve students in knowing why they were being assessed and what the assessment data meant. The ways these teachers involved their students included: (1) having the students develop test questions, (2) having students set personal goals for improvement, (3) encouraging students to chart their own progress, (4) informing students about what is expected (e.g., rubrics, examples of quality work), and (5) having students share their assessment results with others (e.g., parents, the principal, other teachers). The ten participants who had started to involve student in their assessments all reported that they were amazed at how motivated students had become when they charted their own progress. One teacher put it this way:

> I want my students to know what step they a re working on, where
> The next step is and how close they are to making it. I know this
> information and I want them to know it, too.

Another unexpected benefit of new roles in RtI seems to be a heightened level of collaboration between general and special education teachers. In their reflections, study participants indicated that general educators have always worked with them to some degree, but with RtI the lines between special and general education are becoming "more blurred." They said "there are many instances of teachers sharing the responsibility for the progress monitoring of a student." Because everyone understands the goals and the data, communication "is easy— we are all using the same language." A teacher in a very small community said:

> Collaboration among special education teachers and general educators is very important to me. Without collaboration on what the achievement targets are for a particular student, how do we gauge if the plan we have for a student is working? The general education teachers and myself are working together to help not only write realistic goals, but monitor the progress towards these goals. I think this is a very critical element in the student's success. I can't do one thing in my room, while others have other goals and agendas; we all have to be on the same page.

Discussion

Feedback from special educators implementing RtI procedures in small rural schools shows that the role of special educators may be shifting more toward formative assessment (progress monitoring) and data collection both in the SPED program and to some degree in general education. Special educators may also be taking on a greater role in supporting and offering training to their colleagues in general education who are implementing classroom-based assessments and interventions. Also, at least for the 15 teachers in this study, the opportunity to focus on teacher-directed assessment for learning has increased their interest in assessment and their confidence in their ability to collect meaningful data. Probably most important in these preliminary findings is the interest that the study participants expressed in involving their students more thoroughly in the process of assessment. These teachers are recognizing the motivational value of having students set their own learning goals and hart their own data.

Research Questions

The small, close-knit environments of rural schools may prove to be particularly advantageous locations for studying the response-to-intervention process and its effectiveness. The preliminary data from this small study suggest that the RtI focus on treating and then testing may cause special educators to become more engage in intervention and formative assessment. In future studies with a wider group of participants and closer analysis, a number of important research questions could be addressed:

- What scientifically-based protocols are likely to accelerate growth in basic skills other than reading (e.g., math, spelling, and writing)?
- What are the valid indicators of whether a student is a responder or non-responder?
- What is the contribution to student progress of student involvement in the assessment process and process monitoring process?

Conclusion

Difficulties with the traditional approach to referral and assessment have led educators to look for more effective methods (Shinn, 2002). The goal of the contemporary RtI model is to resolve the academic or behavioral challenges experienced by students. This problem-solving model emphasizes finding a solution rather than determining eligibility or finding a special education placement (Marson, Muyskens, Lau, & Canter, 2003). Educators employ several methods of assessment before consideration of a referral and comprehensive evaluation. These methods include informal, formative assessment techniques used in the general education environment.

Classroom teachers implement interventions and gather additional data to determine if the intervention was successful (Greenwood, Tapia, Abbott, & Walton, 2003). When the interventions result in less improvement than had been expected, the team meets to discuss additional strategies or interventions. When a student is referred, it is only to assist in finding a solution or appropriate intervention. The intervention may or may not include special education support.

In rural schools implementation of this type of sophisticated curriculum-based measurement process requires the involvement of all the teachers in a small school, including general education teachers and the special educator. Classroom teachers, as well as special educators, must be knowledgeable of curriculum-based measurement techniques and must have a working understanding of what the results mean. The need for assessment literacy for all teachers has increased significantly (Stiggins, 2005) because of the requirements of No Child Left Behind and parallel requirements in IDEIA 2004. Curriculum-based measurement has become a relatively streamline way to collect useful data for purposes of intervening with children who truly nee more intensive instruction in order to master basic skills. This study shows that rural special educators are seeing the benefits of implementing of RtI and, even though, they may be taking on more and different roles, these educators are finding the new process to worthwhile for them as well as their students. Future studies of the response of rural special educators to the demands of the RtI model may help to generate a clearer picture of best practices in this emerging methodology.

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Appendix
Figure 1
Information about Subjects

Subject	Location	Reservation or Non-Reservation Location	Licenses	Years of Teaching	Public or Private School	Disability Type(s)	Program Type
A 101	Culbertson, MT	NR	Elem/SPED	9	Public	Cross-Categorical	SPED K-12
B 102	Helena, MT	NR	Reading/SPED	12	Private	ED	SPED/ED Institution
B103	Shishmaref, AK	Native Village	Elem/SPED	27	Public	Cross-Categorical	K-8 Gen Ed Reading, Writing & Math
B104	Bozeman, MT	NR	Elem/SPED	22	Public	Cross-Categorical	K-5 Resource Program
D105	Huntley Project, MT	NR	Elem/SPED	4	Public	Moderate to Severe	K-2 SPED Self-Contained
H106	Bozeman, MT	NR	Musc/SPED	2	Public	Cross-Categorical	Elem. Resource K-6
H107	Great Falls, MT	NR	Elem/SPED	4	Public	Moderate to Severe	Preschool Self-Contained
K108	Havre, MT	NR	Elem/SPED	2	Public	Cross-Categorical	Elem. Resource K-6
K 109	Birney, MT	R	Elem/SPED	9	Private	Cross-Categorical	General Education/4th Grade
M110	Lavina, MT	NR	Elem/SPED	15	Public	Cross-Categorical	K-8 Resource
R111	Lame Deer, MT	R	Elem/SPED	13	Public	ED	Elem Self-Contained ED Class
R112	Lewistown, MT	NR	Elem/SPED	15	Public	Cross-Categorical	Elem Resource K-6
S113	Bozeman, MT	NR	Elem/SPED	6	Public	Moderate to Severe	High School Self-Contained
P114	Miles City	NR	Elem/SPED	4	Public	Moderate to Severe	Self-Contained Resource K-6
W115	Jackson, WY	NR	Elem/SPED	10	Private	ED/LD	Residential School Resource K-12

Figure 2

Qualities of Effective Teachers Informal Rating Scale
Directions: Below is a rating scale that includes a list of qualities of effective teachers. Rate yourself in each area according to what you think is your current performance in the classroom.

QUALITY	STRONGLY EFFECTIVE 4	EFFECTIVE 3	DEVELOPING 2	WEAK 1	MEAN
Caring about students	60	0	0	0	4
Showing respect and fairness	60	0	0	0	4
Promoting enthusiasm and motivation for learning	24	27	0	0	3.4
Creating a positive and stimulating learning environment	24	18	6	0	3.2
Establishing clear rules and procedures	12	27	6	0	3
Being able to multi-task (e.g., "with-it-ness")	0	18	18	0	2.4
Focusing time on task	0	18	18	0	2.4
Monitoring student activity	0	18	18	0	2.4
Conveying the skill of time management	0	18	18	0	2.4
Setting high expectations	36	18	0	0	3.6
Taking into account differing rates of learning and learning styles	48	9	0	0	3.8
Having a large repertoire of teaching strategies	36	18	0	0	3.6
QUALITY	STRONGLY EFFECTIVE	EFFECTIVE	DEVELOPING	WEAK	MEAN
Building in critical thinking	0	18	18	0	2.4
Monitoring student	0	18	18	0	2.6

progress					
Assessing frequently	**0**	**0**	**0**	**15**	**1**
Using assessment data to inform instruction	**36**	**18**	**0**	**0**	**3.6**
Providing students specific feedback on performance	**0**	**0**	**0**	**15**	**1**
Interpreting data for students and parents	**0**	**0**	**0**	**15**	**1**

This rating scale is based on Stronge, J. H. (2002). *Qualities of effective teachers*. Alexandria, VA: Asssociaiton for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Figure 3
Special Educator Roles in RtI Implementation

Subject	Member of Intervention Team	Leader of Intervention Team	Trainer for Assessments	Data Manager	Progress Monitoring	Intervention Trainer	Research-Based Intervention Implementation
A 101	Yes	*De Facto*	Yes	De Facto	Yes	Yes	Yes
B 102	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
B103	Yes	De Facto	No	De Facto	Yes	No	Yes
B104	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
D105	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
H106	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
H107	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
K108	Yes	Yes	No	De Facto	Yes	Yes	Yes
K 109	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
M110	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R111	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
R112	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
S113	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
P114	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
W115	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
% Involved	100%	27%	53%	27%	100%	73%	100%

Figure 4
Reactions to Assessment in RtI Model

TOP TEN THEMES
POSITIVE REACTIONS
Like seeing data for the whole school; no child is overlooked
Data shows students who are excelling as well as those who struggle
Like doing frequent probes; shows small changes
Probes are simple to prepare and give
Probes are not time consuming to give or score

Record-keeping is relatively easy to do
The data are understood by everyone involved in decision-making (e.g., teachers, principal, support staff, parents and in some cases students)
Because everyone understands the data, it is easier to work as a team
Content of assessments relates to local curriculum
Local norms show how students are doing in relation to local expectations
Assessment data informs instruction; changes in instruction occur immediately when that is necessary
Students, even the youngest ones, are becoming engaged in setting their own goals and charting their own progress
CONCERNS
Everyone needs more training, especially for behavioral interventions
Sometimes interventions are not research-based; sometimes "glitzy stuff" is purchased instead of research-based materials
More interventions are needed for math, spelling, and writing
Assessment needs to be expanded to include upper elementary, middle school and high school—any student who may need help with basic skills
Even though there is an intervention committee, the principal and others bypass the committee and go directly to the SPED teacher for his/her help
Sometimes teachers are reluctant to stick with an intervention long enough for it to be effective
Need better assessments and interventions for reading comprehension
Need assessments for reading vocabulary
Having trained volunteers to help with probes would expand ability to serve children better
Portfolios of class work along with probes might provide a better picture of student performance, especially for students who do not do well with timed tests

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Teacher-Designed, Student-Involved Assesment in Rural Schools

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THE CHANGING FACE OF HIGHER ED: IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER PREPARATION

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Factors influencing higher education in the last decades include technology, proliferation of "for-profit" universities, teacher shortages, and alternative pathways to the classroom. What are the implications and impact on the preparation of special education teachers?

Teacher preparation programs in general are being influenced by multiple variables, but two important ones are (a) the encouragement to turn out more teachers due to teacher shortages, and (b) increasing awareness on the part of university administrators that potential candidates have more opportunities to select from when choosing a teacher preparation program.

There is a very real need for more teachers. The impending retirement of the so

called "baby boomers" will create such a serious …"void in the workforce that states are rafting policies and programs to keep older Americans working and volunteering" according to USA Today (2008.) Alternative pathways, internship programs and other expedited means of obtaining the necessary teacher preparation to obtain licensing or credentialing in our states is easily visible. Public universities are recognizing the need to provide opportunities to candidates who work during the day, live a considerable distance from campus, or who already have completed one or more degrees but now want to teach. Different delivery modes include online opportunities, compressed courses, and the provision of entire programs to cohorts of students in remote areas by a given university.

How do these different delivery modes affect the quality of our accredited programs? Perhaps we are not yet sure. However, we have some concern that if we change too quickly we might do so at the expense of quality and rigor.

Do private universities provide better, the same or less quality programs? The range is great. Harvard, National, Stanford and Walden are all private but vary differently. In Canada, private universities are not the norm as they are in the United States, and program offerings are perhaps better protected.

What role do the for-profit universities fill? For-profit universities, although often costly, are provide the convenience and comfort that potential candidates find supportive. As residential universities become more expensive, for-profits, although costly, can be seen as a viable alternative to our public universities. Ko and Rossen note, adults who need to upgrade skills, older citizens returning to school, corporations searching for employees with cutting-edge skills, young students desiring a decent education but not able to afford residential colleges, …"may increasingly turn to online learning…as … a viable…[and] more desirable" alternative (2001,p. 309.)

Are public universities the gatekeepers of quality? I have heard different opinions among my colleagues. Some argue that our job is to provide an education and quality will be monitored by employers. Others contend that candidates must demonstrate a quality level of learning before we confer a grade, perhaps more importantly a degree, or recommend for a teaching certificate.

What is the appropriate training for sped teachers -- should they have a gened background too? Is a stand-alone license or credential sufficient? How different should the two training programs really be? A teacher with credentials in both general education and special education is likely to have a broader understanding of the entire education process and may have more credibility with peers. However, stand alone special education preparation programs are highly desirable as teacher interns or those working on waivers are already on the job and need to finish their preparation program and obtain their state's required certification. They don't have time to prepare for both programs.

In order to ensure that our teacher candidates know both the content they need to teach and the data on how to teach we often mix methods courses (the how-to-teach) with core content courses (the what-to-teach.) But what is the impact of such practices? Are we teaching too much at one time? Are we teaching too little of each subject?

Have we lowered our standards to admit more people due to teacher shortages and / or competition with non-public universities for candidates? Is this an encouraging or discouraging step? Yes, perhaps we have lowered our standards, in order to attract more people to our programs. GPAs may be a little lower than 25 years ago, but more importantly what the GPA stands for may be less learning less well done. One consideration we in teacher preparation may need to reflect upon is the impact of this factor when recruiting candidates. Do bright students with high GPAs want to enter into a degree or certification program that may have low standards?

What are the implications of online based teacher preparation classes in higher education? The issue of reflection, reconceptualization, and discussion about theory must be addressed, especially in graduate programs. Do we have the technology to allow us to teach candidates and require the higher level thinking and discussion that should be part of a graduate program? IF we have the technology, are we using it well?

How do faculty create communities in special education teacher preparation courses? First is the presumption that communities are a good thing. Of course we would believe this as the idea of a community or team is central to American Special Education and the supporting Federal legislation. Work groups, buddies in class, students collaborating on class projects, student branches of professional organizations, such as Student Council for Exceptional Children, are all ways of creating communities among the candidates. What about communities that include candidates as well as faculty and community educators?

We are seeing more and different routes to teacher preparation. Ko and Rossen further note that "vaunted institutions" including Harvard and Columbia, …"have created online entities to market courses and degree programs to the public at large," (p. 309.)

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The Changing Face of Higher ED: Implications for Teacher Rreperation

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THE TAPESTRY OF ONLINE EDUCATION

Abstract
This action research presents data about the tapestry of online education in program design and implementation of a Master of Arts in Education (MAE) in Learning and Behavior Disorders (LBD), P-12 at Western Kentucky University.

Introduction

This action research presents data about an online Master of Arts in Education (MAE) in Learning and Behavior Disorders (LBD), P-12 at Western Kentucky University. During extensive program revisions, the program developed a collaborative assessment model while preparing more than 400 special education personnel for work in rural schools.

Exceptional Education (EXED) provides a strong field-based, multi-disciplinary, and competency-based program that integrates research-based curriculum and pedagogical knowledge with practical skills relevant to the targeted student population. The intent is to meet the demand for quality professional educators. A primary goal of this preparation program is to develop skills and enhance dispositions so that the candidate and their P-12 students can experience success in rural schools. The online MAE in EXED leads to P-12 LBD certification; the EXED program emphasizes culturally sensitive practices for effective teaching in high-poverty, demographically diverse rural schools. The MAE requires 30 semester hours, a comprehensive exam, a research tool, and a professional development portfolio. LBD certification requires a passing score on Praxis II administered by the Educational Testing Service (ETS).

The collaborative assessment model utilized by this program replaces outdated and inefficient structures and processes. This model focuses on preparing and sustaining quality professionals, while measuring and documenting both program and effectiveness of student learning through the use of technology, data driven decision making, collaborating with multiple partners, and coordinating these factors in alignment with Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), Association for Educational Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) teacher standards. The ultimate goal focuses on the student's ability to affect K-12 learning. Online graduate course content and projects in this program include technology integration and assessment of student learning in curriculum applications as well as to enhance productivity and professional practices.

Theoretical Context

The assessment movement in higher education has evolved into a resignation of dealing with political accountability and economic implications while most of us still embrace the primary focus and significance of improving student learning. We have shifted from teaching-centered to learning-centered where higher education is producing learning rather than just providing instruction. (Angelo, 1999).

If we acknowledge that assessment drives student learning, it will likely remain at the center of the curriculum design process, and will be central to the student learning experience. (Ramsden, 1992; Biggs, 1999). Higher education instructors need a principled basis for designing new forms of assessment, closely aligned with instructional goals and standards while employing the interactive features of online technology. (APA, 1993). A constructivist learning environment is based on social interaction, communication, exchange of views, collaboration and support for learners to take more responsibility for the learning process through learner-centered tasks (McLoughlin and Oliver, 1998). The features of the student-centered curriculum and assessment include performance-based tasks that require students to create a product, engage in teamwork, and self/peer assessment (Laurillard (1996).

Reeves (2000) suggests three main strategies to integrate alternative assessment into online learning environments: cognitive assessment, performance assessment, and portfolio assessment. Further, he proposes five critical aspects of performance assessment. These are focused on complex learning; engagement in higher-order thinking and problem solving skills; stimulation of a wide range of active responses; involvement with challenging tasks that require multiple steps; and significant commitment of student time and effort. Simonson et al. (2000) claims that proponents of alternative, performance based assessment suggest that the content validity of authentic tasks is ensured because there is a link between the expected behavior and the ultimate goal of skill/learning transfer.

Higher education faculty need to develop a learning community culture. Four preconditions are critical to this collective culture. First, we need to develop shared trust by highlighting individual successes and helping faculty members feel respected, valued, safe, and in the company of worthy peers. Second, a faculty can share vision and goals by collectively identifying learning-related goals worth working toward and problems worth solving while considering the costs and benefits to faculty members and students. For example, a simple approach may be to ask faculty to list two or three assessment questions they would like to see answered in the coming year or things they would like to ensure that students learn well before graduating. Then, common goals are identified across the lists. When common goals are determined, they must clear, specific, linked to a timeframe, feasible, linked to standards, and, most importantly, significant to the field. Third, a shared language or concepts must be built. Before a faculty can collaborate productively, they establish common definitions for terms such as learning, community, improvement,

productivity, and assessment. Fourth, shared guidelines must be developed. In other words, build a list of research-based guidelines for using assessment to promote student learning and program improvement. Examples of guidelines include engaging actively in students' academic work, setting and maintaining realistic high expectations and goals, providing regular and specific feedback, and providing connections of research findings to authentic real-world applications of assessment projects. (Angelo, 1999)

Research Methods

The purpose of this descriptive, developmental research was to investigate the current status of the graduate EXED program to describe "what exists" with respect to three variables—student assessment, graduation rates, and collaboration.. The scope of this research was not only concerned with the existing status and interrelationships of the three variables but the course and program revisions that took place over the last three years. One type of developmental research is "Model or System Development" which is the creative development of a model or system (paradigm) based on a thorough determination of the present situation or system and the goals sought. (Key, 1997) The development of a Collaborative Assessment Model is the primary outcome of this three-year research.

WKU faculty began their investigation, leading to program revisions that uniquely address how quality and capacity will be ensured through research-based pedagogy that incorporates the critical components of theory, demonstration, guided practice, and authentic application in school and community-based experiences. The research questions used by the program during this reform process are as follows:
1. How do we prepare and sustain quality professionals?
2. How do we measure and document effectiveness of programs?
3. How do we effectively prepare students in the use of data decision making?
4. How do we effectively prepare students in the use of technology in data management?

Exceptional Education

The EXED program faculty began their program review with alignment of courses with state and national standards—the KETS, NCATE, SACS, CEC, and ISTE. The next step involved the creation of a chart outlining all EXED course objectives, assignments, and field experiences. At times, faculty members were surprised at the results of this chart. Areas of duplication were discovered and negotiation for the appropriate placement of some assessments ensued. For example, case studies were required in several courses. Discussion revealed that one professor was only requiring this assessment because the instructor felt that students should know how to use a case study. Negotiation involved a discussion of the best placement of the assessment measure.

Critical performances are specific assessments which provide evidence about what teacher candidates must know and be able to do at different levels of growth and development toward one or more teaching standards. They are usually a culminating project

of multiple parts which encompasses most content and accomplishments in the course. Multiple sources of input were utilized to outline critical performances for the overall program and individual courses. The critical performances are the result of contributions from the EXED Advisory Council concerning necessary and practical skills for teachers, faculty expertise, students, graduates, current research and university practices (professional portfolios and Teacher Work Samples). Once the members of the faculty identified critical performances, they worked on the specific requirements of each critical performance and scoring rubric.

Another major program revision included the EXED Comprehensive Exam. The old style for this exam was a Praxis-like multiple choice exam that had been created by the faculty. An item analysis was conducted to determine which courses were represented and which questions were most answered incorrectly by students. Not only did this analysis reveal many inconsistencies in the exam, but many of the standards and critical performances were not represented. A new essay-type of exam was created with a question from each course that was correlated to critical performances and standards. Students answer three questions by selecting a question from a group of four. Additionally, a performance task was included.

The development of a graduate survey and database of graduates added an ongoing check and balance to the process of continual program assessment. Graduates provide input about their preparation to become a special education teacher and suggestions for improvement in the program. This graduate survey data, student performance on critical performances in courses, EXED Comprehensive Exam passing rate, and Praxis passing rates are analyzed each year and used to make adaptations to the program.

Faculty have developed a new program model, the MAE in LBD, P-12, that increases both the capacity and quality of teachers while helping graduate students from underrepresented populations to overcome barriers to participation in the LBD program. This new model has improved the capacity of the program by implementing strategies to serve students for whom the program is currently inaccessible, including students who are employed and unable to enroll in a full-time program, students who are not able to commute to campus, students who can not afford tuition, and students who have difficulty negotiating barriers to participation due to disability. Structural improvements to increase the responsiveness of the LBD faculty to the needs of these diverse students include the use of on-campus programs, interactive distance education technology and course delivery, and on-line web delivered courses. WKU continues to develop a comprehensive program that allows for maximum accessibility for students.

The quality of the MAE program has also been improved in several ways. The EXED faculty has implemented a number of strategies and activities to make the program more field-based, multi-disciplinary and competency-based. The specific revisions and enhancements include: (a) the use of cohort groups to facilitate the growth of peer support

and collegiality; (b) more intense and extensive field-based activities and critical performances that focus on culturally competent teaching, including projects requiring multidisciplinary collaboration and practical projects with a direct impact on participants' schools and K-12 student achievement; (c) development and expansion of the Professional Development Networks, which included trainees' cooperating/mentoring teachers in the trainees' field placements, members of advisory councils, parents and advocacy groups, and departmental faculty; and (d) restructured internships and classroom experiences to assure that competent teachers are trained, who will continue to serve students and not leave the field in three to five years.

Collaboration

There are many unique features of this program that enhance collaboration. EXED graduate programs produce more graduates than any other graduate programs in the university. The mode of delivery for is primarily online. Program faculty develop their own content and are using high tech systems to create this content (Tegrity, streaming servers, original CD's, DVDs, Blackboard, etc.).

Collaboration is the key to this descriptive, developmental research. The authors have been discussing online assessment strategies for three years. Performance based assessment consists of a student's active generation of a response that is observable either directly or indirectly via a permanent product. Performance based assessment must be clearly aligned with what has been taught; scoring criteria or rubrics must be shared prior to students working on the task; be clearly aligned with standards and objectives and give several models of acceptable performances; and encourage student self-assessment and reflection. (Elliott, 1995). An assessment is authentic when the nature of the task and context in which the assessment occurs is relevant and represents "real world" problems or issues. (Elliott, 1995).

Performance based, authentic assessment strategies utilized include critical performances, teacher work samples, professional portfolios, case studies, annotated bibliographies, discussion boards, guided research, web quests, group critiques, interviews, surveys, oral presentations via videotape, online tutorials, and online exams.

Collaboration and discussion between faculty have illuminated the changing roles of both faculty and students. The primary responsibility of learning has shifted from the teacher to the student. The role of instructor for online courses has become one of intense preparation prior to the beginning of class. The instructor provides content, online lectures, structure, assignments and assessments linked to standards, sample projects, and schedules. When class begins, students must take responsibility for their own learning and, in fact, tailor learning for themselves by engaging their individual temperament, circumstances, needs, tastes, and ambition. Students have the potential to utilize every aspect of their lives —work, leisure, personal relationships, community activities, and course work—to enhance performance on the open-ended, authentic projects in each course in the program.

The instructor provides support and guidance through constant communication (email, announcements, or phone), specific and timely feedback, and providing a social context for the class. Each course contains an open discussion board called the "Water Cooler" where students and the instructor can discuss any aspect of the course.

Faculty members have compiled several data collection and analysis tables. Alignment of courses with state and national standards was a major first step in program revision. Each course includes the standards alignment for that course in its syllabus. Tables representing alignment of the objectives, assessment strategies, field experiences, and critical performances for each course were constructed. These tables allowed the program faculty to review, compare, and contrast assessment strategies, data sources, and standards alignment more effectively.

All of the K-12 public schools participating with Western Kentucky University in this program spent time discussing the issues among their faculty and with public partners. Their continual input assists in program design, involvement, and program assessment. Numerous efforts are made to meet the needs of the students. Course and program sequences have been arranged so part time students can complete their programs in a timely manner. All courses are offered online. Tuition assistance is available through grant support, discounts for school district partners, and financial aid counseling. For students who have barriers to participation due to disability, accommodations are made through assistance from student support services and using multimedia experiences that are inclusionary.

Field experiences in the form of hands-on or field-based application projects are a part of most courses in the program. The primary clinical or practicum field experience is in EXED 590. For the EXED program this semester course follows the Kentucky Teacher Internship Program cycle guidelines and requires site visits by practitioners, development of a professional growth plan (PGP), videotapes of teaching accompanied by lesson plans and interventions that demonstrate mastery of identified concepts on the PGP, and a teacher work sample.

Several assessment strategies provide students with experience in using data in decision making. The teacher work sample requires creating and teaching a unit of instruction. Students use assessment data to profile and analyze student learning and communicate information about student progress and achievement. The reflection and self-evaluation section requires students to analyze the relationship between his or her instruction and student learning in order to improve their own teaching practice. Case studies furnish students the opportunity to analyze authentic situations and provide solutions incorporating theory and practice. The action research project requires students to conduct research in their own classroom, library, and/or technology center, analyze the data, and write a journal-type article. (Oberg & McCutcheon, 1987). Field experiences afford students the opportunity to make decisions about interviews, on-site visits, collaboration,

and field projects. The professional portfolio consists of student work that displays mastery of standards; a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student's efforts, and evidence of student reflection. (Bailey, 1998).

Use of technology to manage data is demonstrated by instructors and students. The authors use Tegrity or Camtasia to create demonstrations, teaching or lecture videos that are either available to students on a streaming server, on a CD or DVD distributed to students. The authors use Blackboard to hold online discussions, build a learning community, and post grades.

Students use technology in three ways. One way is the use of technology to actually take the course—use of Internet to participate in the course site in Blackboard, email, use course CDs, use software to create projects, etc. The second use of technology is learning to integrate technology in instruction and student learning. When technology integration is a focus, use of the technology and its integration is in the scoring rubric for the project. Third is the use of technology by students to manage data. Students learn how to create a spreadsheet to record pupil assessment data and create charts for the teacher work sample. Students learn how to create a database on instructional topics and create specific types of questions to stimulate higher order thinking skills.

Results & Conclusions

Since the EXED MAE began in June 2002, 455 students have been admitted and 155 have already graduated and are fully certified teachers. Four students dropped the program for various reasons. All students have passed the comprehensive exam and completed the Teacher Work Sample. The initial PRAXIS pass rate for the program is 94%. The remaining 6% pass when they retake the exam.

Multiple forms of performance-based, authentic assessment provide a more accurate picture of student achievement as well as significantly increase the quality of graduates in K-12 settings. Shared assessment strategies include professional development in schools, authentic assessments, action research projects, problem based learning, simulations, case studies, web enhances instruction, electronic, standards-based professional portfolios, etc. Faculty and school practitioners have engaged with the Renaissance Project to employ the teacher work sample to showcase the effect teacher candidates have on K-12 student achievement.

The changing faculty and student roles in these models are discussed and documented. The instructor's role is one of intense preparation prior to commencement of a course and switches to more of a role of support and guidance once the class begins. The student is an active learner responsible for his or her own learning. Objectives, content, and assessment are aligned vertically with course objectives, content and assessment and horizontally with state, national, learned societies, and accreditation standards. The authors model effective technology integration techniques by developing slideshows with course

content, teaching/demonstration videos, and creating course "text" CDs.

Critical benchmark measurements are presented in Table 1 documenting the performance and effectiveness of students in the program. Data is gathered at admission, during courses, during field experience, exit data, and follow-up. Programs meet NCATE, SACS, CEC, ISTE and KETS standards. Program delivery options in the EXED program include online, off campus, cohorts, and distance education.

Field experiences are necessary to provide the authentic context for the acquisition and demonstration of performance standards. Performance measurement includes instructor observation, videos of teaching, supervisor assessment, and student self-evaluation and reflection. Graduate surveys of new graduates and graduates after their first and third year of employment in the field are aligned with state teaching standards and dispositions. This provides valuable data about preparation for job success and suggestions for improvement. Program decisions are focused on increasing student achievement, not high stakes testing results.

Projects and assessments demonstrating the effective use of student data are shared for the program. Examples include action research projects, teacher work samples, case studies, and professional portfolios. Field experiences provide students the opportunity to make decisions about interviews, on-site visits, collaboration, and field projects. More importantly, students make everyday decisions in authentic teaching situations with real children. Online instruction is a valuable part of the program. Students must use technology to manage data in each course. Students must decide how to integrate technology in instruction. When technology integration is a focus in a course, the use of the technology and its integration are in the scoring rubric for the project. Students learn to use technology to manage data through spreadsheets, databases, and statistical applications.

The WKU Exceptional Education program is based on a common conceptual framework while the contextual experience of each student is slightly different. Emphasis on quality is a constant. Faculty have truly shifted from a teaching-centered to a learning-centered model as described by Angelo (1999). A learning community culture among faculty and students is developing as a result of this collaborative model. A shared trust is evidenced through the mutual respect and collective efforts in program revisions. Faculty have developed shared visions, goals, and language through a revised conceptual framework. The authors have developed shared guidelines for promoting performance-based, authentic assessment to strengthen student learning and program improvement.

Professional education is a continuing process beginning with, not ending with, initial preparation. Strong content expertise is required of all teachers. You cannot teach what you do not know. Attainment of program objectives requires a specific learning sequence—the acquisition of knowledge, the development of skills, and controlled functional use of skills.

Implications for Practice and Recommendations for Further Research

This research goes to the very heart of professional education preparation in higher education today. Colleges and universities face increasing demands and many of the systems and structures currently in place will not meet future needs. This research focuses on enhancing present preparation options, developing additional options, collaborating with multiple partners, and coordinating all these in alignment with state and national standards, while focusing on the student's ability to affect K-12 learning.

The authors plan to continue a longitudinal study of graduate performance, revise graduate surveys to reflect how practice relates to state and national standards in their jobs, how well their graduate program prepared them for their jobs, and suggestions for improvement in the programs. The authors plan to gather this data from graduates immediately after graduation, one year later, three years later, and five years later. Such hard data will be invaluable in fine tuning and reporting effectiveness of the program.

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American Council on Rural Special Education

The Tapestry of Online Education

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UTILIZING EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES IN RURAL SCHOOLS

Introduction

The No Child Left Behind law (NCLB) emphasizes the need for school teachers to utilize research validated instructional practices for children with disabilities. According to the law teachers are required to understand research-based practices and how to apply them in applied settings such as regular classrooms. Besides the NCLB, the 1997 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) also mandates teachers to use functional behavioral assessment in designing behavioral interventions for students with disabilities (Quinn, Gable, Rutherford, Nelson, & Howell, 1998). More so, the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) FBA extends the need for FBA even for students without disabilities (Umbreit et al., 2007). It is therefore, clear that school teachers are called to a higher standard in meeting the educational and behavioral needs of their students.

Unfortunately, despite notable advances in special education research evidenced by increasing innovations in the field many still lament the separateness of the research and practice communities (Jung & Bradley, 2006). This situation appears to be more serious in rural schools which face severe challenges in their efforts to educate students with disabilities (Mitchem & Richards, 2003). In other words, many school systems do not have the ability to identify, adopt and utilize research validated practices (Muscott et al., 2004; Sugai et al., 1999). Thus, this presentation seeks to describe elements of effective collaboration which rural special educators can utilize to meet the educational needs of their students with disabilities. A case study is presented demonstrating how rural schools can utilize evidence-based practices in order to improve their service delivery to students with disabilities.

Method

Participants

The participants were two teenagers attending high school in a rural school district. Brian was a 16 year old boy in grade 10 and Jane was a 17 year old girl in grade 11. Both students were referred to this team because they exhibited high rates of off-task behavior. Off task behavior was defined in this study as any behavior that was not compatible with on-task behavior during independent tasks and included behaviors such as taking eyes off one's work and looking around, and talking to other students.

All sessions were conducted in a resource classroom while students were doing independent work. The session involved independent tasks to be completed by each student during that session. While completing their independent tasks, students were required to maintain their attention on the task, to refrain from talking to and touching other students or leave their seats. Brian and Jane engaged in high levels of off task behavior during the

independent work session. According to the teacher, such behavior was distractive to other students and interfered with the students' ability to finish the assigned work.

Procedures
After receiving the request to work with the student, the author first interviewed the teacher for both of the students. Two interviews were thus conducted each lasting 30 minutes. After interviewing the teacher, the author interviewed the two students separately for 30 minutes each. The two sets of interviews were conducted using the Functional Assessment Checklist for Teachers and Staff (FACTS) (March et al., 2000). The FACTS was slightly modified to suit the student interview and the two sets of interviews yielded information about Brian and Jane's problem behaviors including a description of the problem behavior, variables that predicted the behavior, as well as variables that maintained the problem behavior.

The interviews were followed by three ten-minute observations for each student during the independent work sessions in the resource classroom using the A-B-C approach (Crone & Horner, 2003). Results of the interviews and observations pointed to teacher attention as the function of off task behavior for both participants. The author felt confident enough to implement a function based intervention following the assessment.

The intervention involved putting the behaviors on extinction using extinction by omission. Since off task behavior for both students was thought to be maintained by teacher attention, it was postulated that withholding teacher attention contingent on the target behavior would reduce off task behavior for both students. Thus, the teacher was instructed to systematically ignore the students each time they engaged in the target behavior.

Results and Discussion

There was marked reduction in problem behavior for both Brian and Jane after the behavior was put on extinction (see Figure 1). The frequency of off task behavior remained at zero levels during the entire course of this study. This study is important in that it demonstrates that rural school teachers can partner with university personnel to promote the use of evidence-based practices in their school systems.

It is important to highlight some of the features of the partnership to allow replication by others. First, the author conducted descriptive assessments with the teacher and the students. Following the functional behavioral assessment and direct observations, the author developed hypotheses statements together with the class teacher. This was followed by designing of the intervention which the classroom teacher implemented with the assistance of the researcher.

Evidently, university personnel can provide the research expertise that rural school teachers need. However, such partnerships should be designed to empower teachers in order to

ensure the sustainability of the evidence-based practices should the university personnel pull out. Unfortunately, this study did not examine the long-term impact of the intervention. In other words, the researcher did not make a follow-up to see if the teacher sustained the utilization of functional behavioral assessment strategies in the classroom. Future research should examine the longitudinal impact of such efforts.

Figure 1. Frequency of Problem Behavior across Baseline and Intervention

 SHAPE * MERGEFORMAT

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Frequency of Off-task Behavior

Jane

Brian

Intervention

Baseline

 EMBED Excel.Chart.8 \s

Utilizing Evidence-Based Practices in Rural Schools

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