

District-to-District Information Sharing Community

Meeting Summary and Resources

February 23–25, 2005
Washington, D.C.



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District-to-District Information Sharing Community: Meeting Summary and Resources

Introduction

The Access Center: Improving Outcomes for All Students K–8 is charged with improving educational outcomes for elementary and middle school students with disabilities. The Center is dedicated to building the capacity of Technical Assistance (TA) systems, states, districts, and schools to help students with disabilities learn from the general education curriculum.

To that end, The Access Center has established a mechanism through which states and districts may exchange information and learn about best practices for providing access to the general education curriculum. Through The Access Center’s District-to-District Information Sharing Community (DISC), participating district representatives and district teams share experiences, identify successes and challenges, find topical resources, and problem-solve in a variety of content areas.

The DISC representatives met for the first time February 23–25, 2005 to begin the sharing process. Participants heard presentations from nationally recognized content specialists and researchers on progress monitoring, reading, professional development, and mathematics and then discussed the most effective ways to implement research-based programs, practices, and tools in these areas. Meeting participants and Access Center staff also shared applicable tools and resources available to assist districts in their efforts to improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities.

To support and maintain the DISC’s collaborative efforts that were initiated at the face-to-face meeting, the Access Center will use distance technology activities to sustain ongoing contact and connection among the community, such as:

- maintaining a listserv and Web-based tools for sharing effective practices;
- coordinating conference calls among district teams for information sharing, problem solving, and providing mutual support; and
- developing written articles, conference proceedings documents, and case studies of effective efforts to improve access to the general education curriculum for students with disabilities.

Following is a review of each presentation given during the February meeting, the tools and strategies that districts are using to improve access for students with disabilities, and a list of additional resources that districts can use to establish and refine their effective practices.¹

For more information about the February meeting, or about the DISC in general, contact: Susan Skipper at 202-403-5193 or sskipper@air.org; or Jacki Bootel at 202-403-5512 or jbootel@air.org.

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For additional information on this or other topics, please contact The Access Center at accesscenter@air.org.

The Access Center: Improving Outcomes for All Students K-8

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¹The Access Center for Improving Outcomes for All Students K-8 is a national technical assistance center funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Drawing from national legislation such as the NCLB Act and IDEA '97 and '04, the Center is designed to connect states and districts with research-based practices, tools, and materials that can help students with disabilities access the general education curriculum. The Center specializes in helping decision-makers use data to improve instruction and services for students with disabilities through a variety of technical assistance strategies, including direct assistance, Web-based services, and an information sharing community program.

Information Sharing Session February 23, 2005 Pre-meeting session

Presentation by Beth Foley Implications of IDEA Reauthorization 2004

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reauthorized in 2004. The new law, now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) '04, or P.L. 108–446, has several themes that members of Congress wanted to emphasize. Under some of these themes, several significant changes were made to the existing IDEA law.

During a pre-meeting session for the DISC, Beth Foley, Policy Specialist for Governmental Relations at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), provided an overview of those themes and corresponding changes.

Highly Qualified Teachers

- The new law links its definition of “highly qualified” to the definition found in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, but modifies it to apply to special education teachers.
- The definition applies only to those teachers who teach core subjects.
- To be highly qualified, ALL special education teachers must hold at least a bachelor’s degree, and must obtain full state special education certification or equivalent licensure. Special education teachers who have emergency, temporary, or provisional certification DO NOT meet the IDEA definition.
- Special education teachers who teach core academic subjects exclusively to children who are assessed against alternate achievement standards (those children with the most significant cognitive disabilities) may demonstrate subject knowledge and teaching skills in the areas of the basic elementary school curriculum by passing a rigorous state test, or demonstrate competence in those core academic subject areas he or she teaches based on a high objective uniform state standard of evaluation (HOUSSE) as defined in NCLB.
- Special education teachers who teach multiple core academic subjects Under IDEA, veteran teachers may demonstrate their competence in all of the core academic subjects they teach through the state-developed HOUSSE option. Also, new special education

teachers who are highly qualified in mathematics, language arts, **or** science may demonstrate competence in the other core academic subjects they teach by also completing the HOUSSE option for those subjects within two years of their initial date of employment.

- Special education teachers who do not teach core academic subjects can meet the “highly qualified” requirement by obtaining special education certification as defined by the state and holding at least a bachelor’s degree.

Paperwork Reduction

- The new IDEA created a 15-state pilot paperwork reduction program, to determine what paperwork can be reduced.
- By the time final IDEA regulations are issued, the Education Department will publish a model IEP form.

Risk Pool

- States and local education authorities (LEAs) can use up to 15% of their funds to help pay for the education of high-need students and the unexpected enrollment of students with disabilities.

Private School

- LEAs are responsible to provide special education services for students whose parents have enrolled them in a private school. These services must be equitable to what is provided to the LEA’s public school children.

Specific Learning Disability (SLD)

- The identification process has changed for SLD. You no longer have to use the discrepancy formula, which compares a student’s achievement with his/her intellectual abilities. LEAs may now choose to use a process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention as part of the evaluation and identification process.

IEP

- The new IDEA deletes the requirement for establishing benchmarks and short-term objectives in students' IEPs; however, the IEP team will include a statement of the child's current performance, establish annual goals, describe how those goals will be measured, and establish a reporting cycle similar to all other students.
- For those children who take alternate assessments that are aligned to alternate achievement standards, their IEPs must continue to include benchmarks and short-term objectives.
- Although the U.S. Department of Education is charged with creating a model IEP form, the National Education Association (www.nea.org) has a great sample of a model IEP form.
- IEPs can be amended without reconvening the whole IEP team, as long as the amendment or modification has been clearly laid out in writing.
- A member of the IEP team may be excused as long as the parent and the LEA agent agree, and if that member's area of curriculum or related services is not being addressed.

Due Process

- In order to avoid costly and lengthy due process hearings, and to provide immediate benefit to a student, IDEA '04 added a new resolution session provision to the due process requirements. Under the law, the LEA must convene a resolution session between the parents and relevant members of the IEP team within **15 days** of receiving a due process complaint notice from a student's parents. This session allows parents and LEAs to resolve any issues identified in the complaint before going to a formal due process hearing. If the parties reach an agreement through this process, a legally binding document is drawn up and signed. If the complaint is not resolved, the parties may then proceed to a due process hearing.
- The parents must file a clear and concise complaint within two years after the alleged violation has occurred.

Attorneys' Fees

- If a parent's attorney is determined to have filed a frivolous or unreasonable lawsuit, a prevailing LEA or Special Education Association (SEA) can recoup reasonable attorneys' fees that were expended on the process.

Discipline

- Language has been added that would give school personnel authority, on a case-by-case basis, to consider unique circumstances when determining whether to order a change in placement for a child with a disability who violates a code of student conduct. It is not automatic. The school must continue to determine whether a behavior was a manifestation of a student's disability.
- The amount of time that school personnel may remove a student to an interim alternative setting has been changed from 45 days to 45 *school* days.

Monitoring for Student Outcomes

- The law places a greater emphasis on results (whether students are progressing), rather than process (whether IEP signatures are in the right spot).

Full Funding for IDEA Part B

- Instead of providing mandatory full funding, the law continues to put federal spending on a “glide path” to full funding in FY 2011.

Transition

- The law changes the age at which transition services must begin from 14 to 16 years old. The Job Training Employment Act of 2005 addresses the transition issue under its vocational rehabilitation requirements. In essence, vocational rehabilitation agencies will have new transition-related responsibilities without the money provided through IDEA.

State Performance Plan

- States must identify how they will monitor student progress over a 6-year period by establishing a variety of performance indicators that examine such areas as the provision of a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment, and the disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education—all of the key components of IDEA that are designed to improve educational results and functional outcomes for students with disabilities.
- States must report on their progress on an annual basis.

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is planning to issue proposed regulations on IDEA by May, 2005. Following a period of public input, OSEP expects the regulations to be completed by December 5, 2005.

No Child Left Behind and the IDEA

- NCLB dictates what needs to be taught in each grade and how it will be assessed. IDEA is very different because in the plan, each student receives what he or she needs through individualized education.
- Special education and NCLB conflict in that special education recommends that children learn at their own pace, while NCLB determines the pace at which children will learn.
- On February 23, 2005, the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) released the results of a 10-month study that identified specific areas of the NCLB Act that need to be changed if states are to guarantee that young people will learn at their full potential. The report lists 43 specific recommendations as to how the law can be revised to improve the quality of education for all students and close the gaps in achievement that exist in schools today. For more information, go to <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/press/2005/pr050223.htm>.

Resources

- Beth Foley, from The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), can be reached via e-mail at beth.foley@nasdse.org. Beth presented information about the 2004 reauthorization of the IDEIA.
- NASDSE has several downloadable documents that examine the intersection between the NCLB Act and the IDEIA. The first, a paper entitled *The Intersection of the No Child Left Behind Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or Can You Fit a Round Peg into A Square Hole?*, can be downloaded for free from the NASDSE Web site at <http://www.nasdse.org>. The second document, a book entitled *IDEA and NCLB: The Intersection of Access and Outcomes (2nd Edition)*, can be ordered for \$2.50 or downloaded for free from the Web site.
- NASDSE's side-by-side document shared with the group shows the changes made from IDEA '97 to the new IDEIA '04. *The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: A Comparison of P.L. 105-17 (IDEA '97) to H.R. 1350 as passed by Congress on November 19, 2004* can be downloaded from NASDSE's Web site, or it can be ordered for \$15.
- CRS published a document on IDEA (Order number RL32716). The document can be found at <http://www.nasponline.org/advocacy/IDEACRSAnalysis.pdf>.
- On February 23, 2005, the NCSL held a press conference on ways to improve the NCLB Act. The document can be found at <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/press/2005/pr050223.htm>.

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- More information is available for IDEA '04 on the U.S. Department of Education's Web site at www.ed.gov/OSERS/OSEP.



District Information Sharing Community Meeting February 24, 2005 Session 1

**Presentation by John W. Lloyd, Ph.D.
University of Virginia**

Characteristics of Effective Reading Instruction: Effective and Not-so-effective Methods

In the special education field, there is substantial evidence of effective practices; what is missing, however, is a way to get these practices systematically in place. This is commonly known as the research-to-practice gap.

We are familiar with the components of effective beginning reading programs. These were identified by the National Reading Panel, and they include phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension. However, children with disabilities or potential disabilities are different than early readers, because they have already been exposed to reading instruction in the above components. The mistakes that students with disabilities or potential disabilities make are different than those of early readers, because children with disabilities do have some skills, but not all of the skills necessary to become fluent readers. Therefore, they need targeted and effective instruction to address their core weaknesses. We know a lot of information about this type of instruction from research, and need to depend on those findings to help identify the methods that we use with students.

Dr. Lloyd pointed out that there are many different ways to know something—we can base decisions on personal opinion, on a case study, on an experiment, by aggregating multiple studies, or by consulting an oracle. There are many types of research (e.g., case studies, correlations, randomized clinical trials, developmental studies, pretest/posttest, split-plot factorial design, etc.). All of these offer something, but no one type is enough to be solely relied on. Lloyd pointed out that the best way to determine what works is to aggregate multiple studies.

To understand what is effective, one must first understand what types of evidence count towards validating research. Lloyd noted that evidence is based upon objective data methods that logically eliminate alternative explanations. The best evidence comes from experimental studies or studies replicated repeatedly. A strong study contains the following elements:

- falsifiable questions (control group);
- strong dependent variables;

- large, representative sample; and
- randomly assigned sample.

Lloyd pointed out that it is very difficult to meet all of these conditions, and that while experiments are useful in terms of determining what works, multiple experiments are needed to truly give strong evidence. For example, one study may have results that are due to some unique characteristic of the teachers or the students, thus not allowing the results to be generalized to other settings.

Why not...	Because...
Personal opinion?	Our samples are limited, we're fallible as observers, and we rarely have scientific control.
Expert advice?	Experts may or may not depend on evidence, experts may place greater or lesser emphasis on various evidence, and expertise in one area doesn't always mean expertise in another area.
Case studies?	Case studies come in many forms, only some of which might assess outcomes; some have trustworthy measures, but measures are often soft; and some show change, but without control or comparison groups.
An experiment?	Any one study may not represent the range of studies, or may have other biases.

Example: Project Follow-through:

This was a large-scale study that compared the following programs: Direct Instruction, Parent Education, Southwest Education Labs, Behavior Analysis, Responsive Education, Bank Street, TEEM, Cognitive Curriculum (High/Scope), and Open Education. Treatment and control groups were used in the study design, and the study was one of the largest ever performed. The results indicated that Direct Instruction produced the best results of basic skills measures, affective measures, and higher order thinking skills. However, despite this evidence, this is still just one study. More research is needed to truly determine what is effective.

Lloyd then posed the question, “[I]f one or two studies aren’t sufficient, how many studies do we need in order to know what works?” The answer is we need many studies, and not just a chosen few. There also needs to be a consistent way to compare them, and to examine moderators and mediators objectively. Meta-analysis provides a way to do these things. Meta-analyses aggregate data across many studies, assign a score called an effect size to each study using a common metric, and examine average effect sizes for groups of similar studies.

He then explained how effective size (ES) is determined (the mean for experimental condition minus the mean for the control condition divided by the standard deviation) and how to interpret it. He also pointed out that one can use a pooled standard deviation when calculating ES instead of just using the control standard deviation. Lloyd explained what ES means as follows:

- .00 effect size = treatment is not better than the control;
- .20 effect size = not much happening;
- .30 effect size = theoretical importance;
- .50 effect size = something's happening; and
- .70 effect size = powerful effects.

For example, an ES of 0.75 means that the average child in group 1 had a score of three-fourths of a standard deviation higher than the average child in group 2. If the measure was IQ, an ES of .75 would translate into a difference of more than 11 points. Lloyd encouraged the participants to imagine what schools could be like if we could use methods with a .75 ES, and how much those methods would improve student results.

Type of instruction	Number of studies	Overall effect size	What does it mean?
Perceptual training	180	.08	This method is not recommended for reading.
Class size reduction	77	.31	Researchers should care about the effect size and explore method further.
Learning styles	39	.144	This method is not recommended for reading.
Mnemonics	24	1.62	This method should be used with students for reading instruction.
Social skills training for students with LD	53	.21	Small effect size could be because this curricula typically occurs once a week and not as explicitly as may be needed.
Social skills training for students with BD	35	.199	Effect size is small—not recommended.
Peer tutoring	19	.48	Good effect size—structured, systematic forms of peer tutoring are successful.
Phonics in beginning reading	38	.41	Pretty good effect size.

Type of instruction	Number of studies	Overall effect size	What does it mean?
Reading comprehension	48	1.13	Huge effect size—when students receive explicit comprehension instruction, they excel.
Formative evaluation	21	.70	Strong effect size—this is recommended for reading instruction.
Direct Instruction	25	.82	Strong effect size in both teacher-made and norm-referenced tests.

Lloyd summarized his presentation by stating that regardless of the status of students, they need the best instruction we can give them. By using student outcomes, we can compare the effectiveness of different types of instruction—students’ outcomes are the measure of our success. Student outcomes should also be the basis on which instructional decisions are made. Some methods of instruction produce better outcomes than others, and those are the methods that we should be using.

Questions and Answers

After completing the formal presentation, Lloyd opened up the time to the participants so they could ask particular questions they may have had. The following is a summarization of Lloyd’s responses to those questions.

What questions should be asked of vendors?

- Have vendors show their data for their product. Ask for experimental comparisons conducted by independent researchers.
 - Each vendor has a philosophical view; a district needs to look at the research and put together a professional development to share it with their teachers. Coaching and implementation support is needed for teachers.
 - New curricula will claim to have research to support their product; a district should determine the type of research to ensure validity.

How do we decide which cluster of studies we trust the most?

- 25 is a good number of studies to have with representative samples and good outcome measures.

Were the studies shared primarily focused on special education?

- Yes, but there are a series of studies with general education students that show generally the same results for students in general education.

If teachers don't like Direct Instruction what should we do?

- Maybe those teachers should not be working with students if they don't want to use effective instruction.

Facilitated Discussion

District Sharing on Reading Practices and Programs

Kansas City

Kansas City thinks that the beliefs of teachers and their ability to be flexible are what will make the difference. Teachers need to be able to see that they are effective. As such, Kansas City has supported the idea of “accentuating the positive” in both teachers and students. To that end, the district has developed a handbook supporting inclusion, which will be given to all teachers in the district.

Baltimore

Baltimore is currently producing electronic documents that have strategies for addressing differentiated instruction. The initiative needs to begin with the structure of the school system, the quality of the teachers, and the standards. All students need to meet the standards regardless of any label they may have been given. Teachers need to be supported at all stages through mentoring and coaching, for if an excellent program is not implemented appropriately, it will not create results.

Los Angeles

Teacher training becomes very complicated when working with over 45,000 teachers. Education as a whole needs to be reformed, which means training both special education and general education together. Special education is believed to have the magic to “fix” students, but all teachers need to work together to improve student outcomes. The district has trained every teacher on their grade level strategies for the Open Court reading program. When teachers change grade levels, they are required to take additional training. It was difficult for teachers to embrace the training and the programs because they were being told how to teach. During the first four years of implementation, scores went up. Los Angeles has now reached a plateau, and is planning for the next step. Focus groups identified and devised training for special education teachers. There’s collaboration occurring at the administration level and at the teacher level. There are state approved unit assessments every six weeks published by the Reading Lions Center in the Sacramento County Office of Education that test students on what they have learned over the past six weeks in Open Court. Teachers put the data in their laptops and see immediately how students are doing through color coding of student level. This helps teachers decide what supplementary instruction is needed. Los Angeles hopes that this will help prevent students from being identified for special education.

Kansas City

Teachers need to present material in a way that encourages children to want to learn more. Teachers need to self-evaluate so that they can know what students did and did not learn, and what material needs to be reviewed. At the teacher level, strong support is needed in implementing new curricula.

Baltimore

Staff development needs to be built into the school day, so that planning time is being used effectively. More administrators need to be willing to allow their teachers the time they need to plan, and they also need to support teachers as they are implementing and developing new ways of delivering instruction.

Wichita

In terms of reading instruction, Wichita had special education doing Direct Instruction while general education was doing whole language, so the challenge is working toward getting them on the same page. The district developed a framework for schools to follow in hopes of preventing each school from doing something different. This framework looks at meta-analyses to determine strategies that will be used, not materials. The district knew they had to create a philosophy first.

Los Angeles

Los Angeles has done a lot of training on coteaching and coplanning, and it has been difficult getting general education and special education together. The district has really had to work on getting teachers to buy into this practice.

Detroit

Detroit has a lot of history to get past. It has always had a pull-out program of services for special education. The district has tried to prepare these students to go back into general education, but it has been hard. The district is working on general and special education having a shared vision. They too have adopted Open Court, and students' scores have risen over the past 3 years. The district has begun bringing together psychologists, special educators, and general educators to let them know that response to intervention is coming. Knowing the pedagogy of Open Court has been beneficial to teachers. Paying attention to leadership has also been very important—without good leadership many things fall apart because there is not appropriate support present. The district has adopted a laser-like focus on what they want to do well and created literacy and mathematics coaches, trained a data specialist at every school, and have trained general education and special education together. The greatest challenge has been moving teachers to proficiency for special education students. Professional development is essential. The district looked at what key strategies teachers could learn right away. Teachers had an opportunity to share strategies with each other and return to their classrooms and use them. Resource teachers who are trained in Open Court and are highly skilled in pedagogy work to train other teachers. Teachers need to feel success to believe that they can support

students well. Emphasis with professional development is focused on giving teachers strategies they can learn and bring back to practice.

Baltimore

Through grants, Baltimore has developed intervention teams consisting of a literacy specialist, math specialist, data analyst, and special educator. They work together to help students make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). These teams will work with general and special educators to help them collaborate more effectively.

Los Angeles

Finding time to do professional development remains an issue of importance, and one that is not resolved easily. How is it possible to train the thousands of teachers in this district? A rule will be passed that says teachers cannot be taken out of the schools during the school week for professional development. For this district, professional development will have to be on the weekends in order to protect the school day. How does the district get teachers and administrators on board with that?

District of Columbia Charter School

This school is in a unique situation in that students live at the school. That allows for adding a period to the day for our struggling readers. These struggling readers then participate in a reading academy twice a week.



District Information Sharing Community Meeting February 24, 2005 Session 2

**Presentation by Dr. Sheila Bailey, Director of Student
Services
Hopewell School District**

Case Study: Hopewell School District

Dr. Sheila Bailey came to the Hopewell School District in 1999 as the Director of Student Services. Hopewell School District has an enrollment of approximately 4,000 students, from preschool through 12th grade. Within the district, there are three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. 64% of the students qualify for free and reduced lunch, and 58% of students are from various minorities groups. The student population is highly transient, since a large number of students reside in public housing. So, Hopewell School District has many of the same challenges as larger urban districts.

One of the first changes Dr. Bailey made in Hopewell was to move the Special Education Department out of the Business and Finance Department, and into the Instructional Department. The superintendent and assistant superintendent are supportive of special education; as a result, the department has become part of system-wide decisions.

Dr. Bailey then made several changes within the special education department as well:

- implemented the lead teacher concept for special education; both the special and regular education lead teachers received the same stipend;
- had special education teachers participate in regular education teacher professional development, and eliminated separate professional development activities between special and regular education teachers in the district; and
- stressed to teachers that all children with disabilities can learn, including students with severe disabilities.

Dr. Bailey knew that getting special and regular education teachers to work together would be a challenge. So, she sent a survey to teachers to find out what teachers knew and thought about inclusion. The survey was also a means for Dr. Bailey to build a stakeholder group who would buy into inclusion. The survey revealed that many teachers did not understand inclusion and had many

concerns about it. To help Hopewell School District make the change towards inclusion, Dr. Bailey applied for a technical assistance grant with the area VCU, which has assisted with professional development activities.

Each school received support from the district to develop its own school-level plan for inclusion, thereby promoting a feeling of ownership for the plan. District-wide advisory committees were formed to address common concerns that emerged across schools. The school plans were presented to the school board, which gave its approval to move forward. These plans were implemented the next school year.

The inclusion process began with volunteer coteaching teams, who attended an inclusion conference at William and Mary College. Throughout this process, Dr. Bailey and her special education coordinators worked closely with the teams to provide support and to ensure that the process was going well. In subsequent years, the coteaching teams were expanded and were no longer volunteer-based.

Presently, all students who have learning disabilities, students with emotional disturbances, and higher functioning cognitively disabled students are included in regular education classes. In general, however, students with more severe disabilities have not been included; those who are served in the regular education classroom often receive assistance from a dedicated aide. Hopewell realizes the importance of including students with severe cognitive disabilities in the regular education classroom, and is currently working on achieving that goal.

Hopewell used other strategies that have contributed to the school district's success. Because the district has a very high percentage of students in special education and has an overrepresentation of African American boys, the staff put together a consultative Instructional Support Team (IST) to help teachers strategize about how to reduce the number of students that are referred to special education. The district also:

- developed an inclusive early childhood program;
- required special education teachers to attend all content and grade-level meetings at the school;
- placed students with disabilities in their home school;
- analyzed the test scores from the state-wide assessment;
- closely monitored each alternate assessment to make sure the portfolio is an accurate reflection of each child;
- provided teachers with an item analysis of state-wide assessments and enabled them to view previous years' results to examine each student's progress;
- held monthly meetings to keep special education teachers informed;
- focused on using appropriate testing accommodations and modifications for state-wide assessments; and

-
- established a database with a list of the testing accommodations and any modifications that were used for each child during state-wide assessments.

As a result of these changes and initiatives, the district's state-wide assessment scores for students with disabilities are consistently higher than the statewide averages for students with disabilities. In addition, Hopewell has met AYP for two consecutive years for each subgroup in the district, including students with disabilities.

Dr. Bailey's plans for next year for Hopewell School District include:

- analyzing the results from this year's state-wide assessment;
- expanding inclusion to additional classrooms, including a classroom with students with severe cognitive disabilities;
- increasing the IST Model to other elementary schools and the middle school;
- providing teachers with professional development regarding IDEIA;
- assisting special education teachers in meeting the highly qualified requirements under NCLB;
- increasing the number of special education seminars offered to special education teachers; and
- reviewing new textbooks for reading, language arts, and math.

Questions for Dr. Bailey

Q: What reading and math programs does Hopewell use?

A: Hopewell School District does not utilize a specific program. It uses the Scott Foresman series. However, Hopewell emphasizes teacher training in effective strategies and methodology. For example, our teachers are well-versed in teaching higher order skills, guided reading, and the 4-block method of writing.

Q: What is Hopewell using as a preventative model or tiered approach to minimize referrals and placement in special education, since there are a high percentage of students with disabilities in the district?

A: In the past, there was only the child study team, which required modification because it wasn't sufficient to prevent unnecessary referrals to special education. Hopewell has now implemented the Instructional Support Team, which is a more intensive way of getting teachers to work on pre-referral strategies. Because of the demographics in the district, students often have problems associated with language. Students are not coming out of language-rich environments. So, teachers have to create the language-rich environment in the classroom. The Instructional Support Team is the first step in the process. If a student goes to a child study team, we can be more comfortable knowing there may be a disability.

Q: How is your coteaching model set up, since it is so labor-intensive?

A: If you go into the classrooms you will see different variations of collaborative teaching. Some teachers separate the students into groups. However, they are not permitted to have the general education teacher to do all the instruction and the special education teachers doing all the support.

Facilitated Discussion

What Strategies Districts are Using to Meet AYP

Detroit

Detroit has found that when the data on AYP was analyzed by subgroup and given to schools, the Central Office got calls from principals saying that they didn't make AYP because of students with disabilities and asked what they should do. NCLB has assisted with moving schools to more inclusion, because schools can't meet AYP, unless students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum. Another strategy that Detroit has used is to include special education teachers in all regular education professional development and grade-level meetings, since they are responsible for aligning the curriculum and outcomes for students. Detroit also does additional professional development specifically for special education teachers, since there are skills that special education teachers need to know, and the district has approximately 400 special education teachers with provisional approvals.

Kansas City

Kansas City commissioned a few reports to look at district-wide student achievement data of special education students. The school board approved funding to conduct interviews and audit records in 70 schools. Every principal was interviewed and a sample of records was audited. Each school received a profile that gave them a picture of what their schools looked like in terms of a variety of indicators. From this report, one sees that it is possible for a school to make AYP, even though there may be a subgroup or two that are not making AYP. Another finding of the report was that there are more Hispanic students dropping out than graduating. The report made school officials realize this problem and the need to pay additional attention to Hispanic students in the district. Other strategies that Kansas City has utilized to improve test scores in the district include:

- having a MAP Bowl (like Jeopardy) for all content areas; students compete class-wide, school-wide, and district-wide;
- giving each 3rd grader in the district a book titled "I Know I Can." The district holds a college-blitz week so that the children learn about college. The teachers get involved and wear the clothing that represents the college they attended. On Friday, a guest speaker comes to the school and reads the book with the 3rd graders and students sign a commitment statement. The activities during the week are designed to plant a seed for college matriculation in the minds of young students;
- kicking off the state-wide testing in some schools in the district with a MAP rally and having a pizza party for those students who attend the whole week of testing, which has helped to increase test scores; and
- teaching students test-taking strategies and emphasizing to students that it is important to show detailed work in the test booklet, which has also helped increase test scores.

St. Louis

St. Louis has implemented several strategies designed to improve its students' test scores under NCLB, including:

- student participation in “Academic Olympics;” and
- analyzation of test results by data specialists, who then go over each of the schools' results from the previous year to identify areas of strengths and areas which need greater attention.

Baltimore

Students at one of the city's middle schools receive test-taking strategies and take practice tests twice a week throughout the year by “dropping everything and practicing.” As the assessment date approaches, the school implements the “drop everything and practice” strategy every day. The school encourages attendance during the testing time by having a competition amongst houses in the school. The house with the highest attendance rate during the testing week receives a day without uniforms and a house party. In addition, this school has testing only in the morning, and offers mini-courses (dancing, pottery, etc.) in the afternoon. The mini-courses are taught by the teachers, based upon their interest and skills, and students get a choice of which mini-courses to take. Baltimore also shared its district-wide strategy called the learning walk, which occurs when principals and department heads go to classrooms in schools to observe teachers to see what instructional skills teachers are utilizing and what assistance the teacher may need. The teacher is given immediate written feedback following the walk.

Wichita

Wichita is providing intensive support to its students by bringing a support team and teaching specialists to schools that have not met AYP. The support teams meet every other week to discuss needed strategies and to do a “walk-through” of classrooms and buildings. The “walk-through” pinpoints which teachers need more intensive support, and checks to see if teachers are using research-based strategies. The principals then conduct reflective questioning sessions with each teacher. The school provides instructional specialists for those teachers that need additional assistance. In addition, Wichita has adopted the three-tier intervention model and gives staff development in this so that teachers will have both academic and behavioral strategies to work with students.



District Information Sharing Community Meeting February 25, 2005 Session 3

**Presentation by Dr. Mary Little
University of Central Florida**

Effective Professional Development Strategies To Enhance Content Area Knowledge

In this session, Dr. Little discussed how professional development is an important means to bring about change in a district, school, or classroom. The ultimate purpose of professional development, she said, is to improve student learning.

Dr. Little presented the following seven guidelines for effective professional development:

- involve all stakeholders;
- focus on leadership development;
- make explicit the theory of change;
- emphasize the school and team level;
- review and reflect on the research;
- monitor progress; and
- be an advocate for quality professional development (NSDC, 1995).

In addition, a system-wide approach to professional development must be taken in order to create coordinated changes.

Dr. Little described how content-focused professional development could be utilized to meet the diverse reading needs for all students in secondary schools. To do so, professional development must be aligned with research-based instructional practices. It is important to consider:

- what we know about the reading needs of all of our students, related to the curricular goals;

-
- how each teacher will instruct all of the students to improve their reading skills and scores; and
 - how each teacher will continue to monitor and adjust instruction to assure continuous improvement for all students.

Improving outcomes for struggling adolescent learners is based upon the instructional core and infrastructure support. The instructional core is composed of formative and summative assessments, a continuum of literacy instruction, explicit/intense instruction, engaging/diverse materials, and motivation/behavioral support. The infrastructure support is composed of professional development, teacher resources, instructional coherence, and extended time. Dr. Little discussed the following continuum of literacy instruction (Deshler & Lenz, 2004):

- enhance content instruction (mastery of critical content);
- embedded strategy instruction (routinely weave strategies within and across classes using large group instructional methods);
- intensive strategy instruction (mastery of specific strategies using 8-stage instructional sequence; individual strategic tutoring);
- intensive basic skill instruction (mastery of entry-level literacy skills at the 4th grade level);
- therapeutic intervention (mastery of language underpinnings of curriculum content and learning strategies); and
- strategic tutoring (extending the instructional time through before or after school tutoring).

School improvement process should be driven by disaggregated student data. Therefore, student data must be shared, understood, and used as a basis for program development, implementation, and continuous monitoring through applied/action research by teachers, literacy coaches, and administrators. Professional development should be used to build a common vocabulary and understanding of measurement concepts, so that teachers know how to interpret assessment results, and thus are able to reflect back on successful and unsuccessful instructional practices.

Dr. Little described the findings from Project CENTRAL from the University of Central Florida regarding its work with school improvement. Project CENTRAL has found that to build a comprehensive system of sustained school reform, it is necessary to do the following:

- create a cohesive framework for reform;
- align data sources, program/course competencies, accountability measures, reporting requirements, and fiscal and evaluation measures;
- develop and continuously support the action/implementation plan;
- locate, learn, and use student disaggregated data from multiple sources

-
- develop a continuum of research-based reading instruction;
 - Allocate resources (time, fiscal, personnel, professional development, research-based instruction, etc.);
 - provide continuous professional development, aligned with student/teacher needs;
 - use multiple methods for initial and follow-up professional development; and
 - continuously monitor and adjust.

Resources

Project CENTRAL <http://reach.ucf.edu/~CENTRAL>

Florida Center for Reading Research www.fcrr.org



District Information Sharing Community Meeting February 25, 2005 Session 4

Presentation by Dr. Shanon Hardy
George Mason University

Research-Based Math Interventions For Middle School Students with Disabilities

Math helps to enable students to be problem-solvers and to learn to reason. According to Dr. Hardy, some students have difficulty with computation, while also being strong problem-solvers. For example, some LD students may use a variety of strategies to solve a problem; however, it may not be the most direct computational way of deriving the correct answer.

Dr. Hardy presented **Six General Principles** of effective math instruction:

- equity of instruction to all students;
- curriculum as an integrated whole;
- effective teaching methods;
- the promotion of problem-solving skills;
- continual assessment of student performance; and
- the importance of technology to enhance learning.

Dr. Hardy explained that the problem-solving principle is the most troublesome for students with disabilities. Difficulties associated with teaching students with disabilities to be problem-solvers can be attributed in part to a shortage of both math and special education teachers. One way to bridge this gap is to establish a method of coteaching in these subjects.

Dr. Hardy noted that some students with disabilities fall into a cycle of math failure due to their difficulties in building skills associated with memory, language and communication disorders, processing difficulties, poor self-esteem, passive learning, attention, organizational skills and math anxiety.

Dr. Hardy then presented a demonstration of error analysis—this activity is critical to determine which skill is incorrect within a computational process. Students should be asked to explain their answers, using manipulatives rather than paper and pencil. Many students do not have the automaticity of facts needed to be fluent in computation. The objective of an assignment should be clearly stated prior to student practice, and then guided practice should be offered on one skill at a time. Systematic corrective feedback the day of the lesson is critical. Instruction needs to be representational when proceeding from the concrete to the abstract—this is a step often ignored.

Dr. Hardy discussed a meta-analysis of **Effective Interventions**. The interventions she highlighted were: reinforcement and corrective feedback for fluency, concrete-representational-abstract instruction (e.g. Mercer & Miller’s Strategies Math Series), direct/explicit instruction (e.g. Stein, Silber, and Carnine’s Designing Effective Mathematics instruction), demonstration plus permanent model (e.g. math journals, verbalizing procedures), verbalization while problem solving, big ideas, metacognitive strategies (e.g. self-monitoring, self-instruction), computer-assisted instruction, monitoring student progress, and teaching skills to mastery.

Middle school math students participated in a survey that asked which model they preferred for a math teacher: Clown, Sage the Stage, Counselor, Task Master, and Facilitator. The students’ first choice was Sage the Stage. Students want the answers; they want to know how to become proficient. Students with disabilities want to be on equal ground with their nondisabled peers.

As Dr. Hardy began to focus on teaching Algebra to students with disabilities, she stated that students without fluency and automaticity of math facts are expected to understand the abstracts of algebra, which is problematic. These students demonstrate an inability to:

- translate word problems into math symbols;
- formulate a conceptual understanding of algebra;
- distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information; and
- paraphrase a problem situation.

Weak reading skills often hinder students’ abilities to learn algebra. Students must have a reading ability of 3.5 to be able to solve word problems, which is often not the case for students with disabilities. The math skills of students with disabilities often improve only one grade level from the 9th through the 12th grades.

Several strategies were offered for teachers teaching algebra to students with disabilities, including:

- Algebra Lab Gear, Del Semour;
- mnemonics;

LIP—variables which promote higher achievement

— **Link** to prior knowledge or prior learning

-
- Identify the goals and objective of the lesson
 - Provide students with meaning or rationale for the lesson

PEMDAS—a strategy for remembering the order of operations;

- Please
- Excuse
- My
- Dear
- Aunt
- Sally

- Computer Assisted Instruction—A graphing calculator should be used in the classroom. Studies show that students feel better about themselves if they use calculators, and they can generalize these skills. It helps them see the connection between Algebra and Geometry. They need the conceptual understanding first—if they don't have it, then the teacher needs to back up to the concrete level of instruction. Assistive technology can also be used for some of the basics, such as learning math facts;
- Strategy Instruction—needs to be explicit as a means of teaching students to read the problem, paraphrase, and visualize, for example:

- **DRAW**

Discover the sign

Read the problem

Answer or DRAW a conceptual representation of the problem using lines and tallies, and check

Write the answer and check

- manipulatives need to be used in secondary school. Preservice teacher training must include manipulative instruction; and
- representational strategies are effective in algebra (e.g. DRAW).

Research findings support the success of students with disabilities in learning Algebra, *as long as they have appropriate instruction*. Educators need to be careful not to change a program based on data from a small number of studies. Math minds and Special Education minds need to collaborate.

Dr. Hardy concluded that math instruction needs to continue with secondary students. Strategies such as think-alouds, allowing enough time to learn a particular strategy, guided practice, relating math to real life events, and “practice, practice, practice” will enable students with disabilities to experience success in mathematics.

District/Team Reflections and Planning

Irvington

Irvington is working on issues of improving access for their students with disabilities to the general education curriculum. A need exists to analyze the programs currently operating within different schools across the district. The district is working on improving the uniformity of programs district-wide, as well as staff development. Irvington expressed an interest in the continuation of information sharing opportunities to help them “get up and running.”

Los Angeles

Los Angeles felt validated by the discussions, specifically regarding transfer, accountability, and engagement. They are hoping to develop more rigor in classroom instruction than they currently see, despite staff development that has been given. They believe that “rigorous thinking” needs to be modeled from the top down. For example, the Los Angeles Unified School District “rolled out” Open Court to principals and left them to implement without understanding why this is an appropriate program in their schools. Administrators never learned how to teach the program, which is critical to understanding what a program means, and why it works. If teachers are to be held accountable, Central Office needs to be held accountable in regards to teaching the teachers. If administrators are going to “talk the talk,” they need to be able to “walk the walk.” Learning the theory is the easy part—now the district feels that it needs to learn the “now what” part—showing teachers what the theory looks like. Their teachers need to be taught how to be good analysts of research-based instructional practices.

Wichita

Wichita district feels that it is on the right track regarding the use of research-based practices. They believe that there needs to be more collaboration between general and special education teachers, as well as an effort to transition students with learning disabilities into the regular classroom. They plan to create a framework for these next steps, including discussion with the director of curriculum to “laser focus” their needs, and an increase in the direct training with teachers who do not have any special education training.

St. Louis

The St. Louis district feels it is “far behind” the rest of the country in terms of self-contained classes and over-identification of students with disabilities. The psychology/culture of the district needs to change from that of “just getting kids to school” to that of students with disabilities’ academic progress. They believe it is important for the district to move toward an inclusion model, which will be a big change in terms of personnel and the “major foundation of the system.” At this DISC meeting they have learned about the possibility of taking research-based models and applying them in the classroom, but they still have concerns regarding the implementation of these practices. They

are interested in analyzing the essential elements in any one study, and the implications in a particular setting within the district. St. Louis has identified specific timeline targets, including:

- newly tested children identified with a disability will be placed in their geographic base school;
- cluster schools are not designed geographically, so there is a need to change the system of cluster schools;
- year 2 option—dissolve self-contained service delivery model, and include students with disabilities more evenly throughout the regular education classrooms; and
- develop measures of implementation of the inclusion process so that student and teacher change can be documented.

Kansas City

Kansas City is dividing the district into five regions to study IEP quality. Their teachers have reported that they have not been shown how to write an IEP. Kansas City identified the need for professional staff development as a priority, incorporating both general and special education teachers in training.

Baltimore

Baltimore feels that dramatic systemic changes need to be made regarding the services provided to their students with disabilities. They would like to see an emphasis on student outcome resulting from research-based practices. They will initiate professional development in strategy instruction in their district, and the DISC participants would like to bring teachers from the district to future DISC meetings for professional growth opportunities.

Detroit

The Detroit district believes that it has the best people, practices, and strategies. The next three steps for their district include:

1. providing the system access to electronic IEP management;
2. investigating the California data system regarding the electronic tracking of students' reading progress; and
3. involving leadership at the school level to enable the change process. There needs to be a systematic process for supporting initiatives, and documenting the effectiveness of these initiatives in terms of student progress. Administrative support structures need to be formalized. Detroit is interested in ideas from the DISC for this step.

Detroit would like their special educators to have opportunities to dialogue about their common fears and concerns.

Roanoke

The special education service delivery has been in the change process for four years, and the teachers from this district have felt support from the top down.

District of Columbia Charter School

They are planning staff development activities to bring general educators and special educators into a common focus. Two of the Charter Schools' priorities include the use of manipulatives in the classroom, and addressing the issue of highly qualified teachers.



The
Access Center
Improving Outcomes for All Students K-8

Appendix

District-to-District Information Sharing Community Pre-meeting Agenda

Implications of IDEA Reauthorization Reception

February 23, 2005

4:00–4:15—Registration

4:15–4:30—Introduction of Access Center and Access Center Staff by Judy Shanley

4:30–5:30—Implications of Reauthorization: Access to the General Education Curriculum by Beth Foley, Policy Specialist for Governmental Relations at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)

5:30–6:00—Reception and T-shirt Exchange

District-to-District Information Sharing Community Meeting Agenda

February 24, 2005

At the American Institutes for Research

1000 Thomas Jefferson St. NW, Washington DC

8:00–8:30—Registration and Breakfast

8:30–8:45—Welcome and Introduction by Jane Hauser of OSEP and Judy Shanley of the Access Center

8:45–9:15—What Does Access to the General Education Curriculum Mean? By James Hamilton of the Access Center

9:15–10:15—Promising and Not-so-Promising Practices in Reading by John Lloyd of the University of Virginia

10:15–10:30—Break

10:30–12:00—District Team Introductions and Facilitated Sharing of Reading Initiatives in Districts

12:00–1:00—Lunch and Presentation by Elizabeth Kozleski of the National Institute for Urban School Improvement

1:00–2:00—Case Study: Strategies of the Hopewell School District by Sheila Bailey, Director of Student Services

2:00–3:00—Facilitated Discussion and District Sharing

3:00–3:15—Break

3:15–3:45—Team Reflections and Planning

3:45–4:00—Wrap-up

District-to-District Information Sharing Community Meeting Agenda

February 25, 2005

8:00–8:30—Breakfast

8:30–9:00—Welcome and Overview of Day One by Judy Shanley of the Access Center

9:00–10:00—Effective Professional Development Strategies to Enhance Content Area Knowledge by Mary Little of the University of Central Florida

10:00–10:15—Break

10:15–11:15—Facilitated Discussion and Sharing of Professional Development Initiatives in Districts

11:15–12:15—Effective Math Strategies for Students with Disabilities by Shannon Hardy of George Mason University

12:15–1:00—Lunch

1:00–2:00—Facilitated Discussion and District Sharing of Math Initiatives in Districts

2:00–2:15—Break

2:15–2:45—Team Planning for Next Steps in Districts

2:45–3:15—Sharing of Districts' Plans

3:15–3:30—Wrap-up



DISTRICT INFORMATION SHARING COMMUNITIES MEETING PARTICIPANT LIST

February 23–25, 2005

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