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ABSTRACT

This proceedings document includes 11 papers presented at a 1992 symposium on the impact of current educational reform initiatives on students with learning disabilities. Preceding the papers is a summary of the outcomes of the symposium, which are enumerated in terms of questions generated, commonalities, unresolved topics, and next steps. Papers have the following titles and authors: "Education Reform: The Future Is a Continuation of Times Past" (Judith Schrag); "Education Reform: A Step Forward or a Step Backward for Individuals with Learning Disabilities" (La Nelle S. Gallagher); "Learner-Centered Psychological Principles: Guidelines for School Redesign and Reform" (Roy Martin); "Education Reform, Communication, and Learning Disabilities" (Diane Paul-Brown); "Statement on the Implications of Educational Reform on Individuals with Learning Disabilities" (Jean Lokerson); "School Reform Must Be a Step Forward for Students with Learning Disabilities" (Steve Kukic); "Difference--A Focus of Reform in Education" (William Ellis); "The School as a Quality Organization for All Students" (Jeffrey Schneider); "The School Board's Role in Educating Children with Special Needs" (Delores G. McGhee); "The Role of Teacher Education in the Educational Reform Movement" (Rosemary F. Bowler); and "The Special/Regular Education Integration Initiative for Students with Specific Learning Disabilities: Preliminary Findings from a Current Investigation of Program Change" (Cherry K. Houck). Some papers include references. (DB)

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ED 366 151

Proceedings of  
A Symposium

# EDUCATION REFORM:

A STEP FORWARD OR A STEP BACKWARD  
FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES.

Sponsored by The  
LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA  
March 7 & 8, 1992

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## **The Six National Education Goals**

1. All children in America will start school ready to learn.
2. The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.
3. American students will leave grades four, eight and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter...; and every school will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so that they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.
4. U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.
5. Every adult American will be literate, will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and will exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
6. Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

PROCEEDINGS OF  
A SYMPOSIUM  
**EDUCATION REFORM: A STEP FORWARD OR A STEP  
BACKWARD FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES**

SPONSORED BY THE  
**LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA (LDA)**

MARCH 7 & 8, 1992  
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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Our warmest and most sincere appreciation is extended to—

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## THE SYMPOSIUM—ITS PURPOSE

The National Education Goals were developed in 1990 by the National Governors Association and supported by President George W. Bush in his *America 2000—Educational Strategies*, in April 1991. While ambitious goals have been established and strategies include such things as national tests, parental choice of schools, etc. there has been little discussion of students with exceptionalities.

In mid-1991 the LDA Board of Directors approved a meeting of key players in the education field (1) to consider the impact of "education reform" on students with learning disabilities; (2) to discuss ways to assure that students with learning disabilities are considered when plans for education reform are made; (3) to work collaboratively with other organizations with interests in learning disabilities; (4) to produce a paper or collection of papers which could be utilized in advocating on behalf of students with learning disabilities; (5) to broaden LDA's perspective regarding education reform.

Representatives from twelve organizations, members of the LDA Board of Directors and Professional Advisory Board, LDA local and state presidents, and special guests met for eight hours at the close of the LDA International Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, November 7 and 8, 1992. Presentations were given by the representative from each organization, a round table discussion was held, and Dr. Judy Schrag, Director, Office of Special Education Programs, U. S. Department of Education, reacted to information presented.

The program was monitored and **Outcomes of the Symposium** were developed.

## PUBLISHED PROCEEDINGS

Papers were made available by invited guests and are published in an effort to share important information on Education Reform. Papers may or may not represent the position of the respective organizations. There was no required format for papers presented. Some presenters spoke from lengthy research/position papers, while others prepared brief remarks specifically for this symposium.

# OUTCOMES OF THE SYMPOSIUM

## Questions Generated

1. LDA and others believe that the principles of special education—such as individualized education programs, team approaches, parent and student participation, and small class size—should provide the underpinnings of education reform for all schools and all students. Is this realistic within the context of the current education reform movement? Is it realistic to attempt to impose these principles on the current reform movement?
2. Without the intervention of the advocates of students with learning disabilities, how do we predict the outcomes of the current reform movement? Is a rigid inclusion strategy the likely end game? Will today's solution be tomorrow's problem?
3. We hardly spoke of funding. Is it central to the debate regarding education reform?
4. Is there conflict in the outcomes orientation of the current reform movement—with its emphasis on academic outcomes with respect to quality schools—and special education—with its emphasis on outcomes with respect to individual student progress toward IEP goals?
5. With or without reform, are changing demographics likely to alter the current structure of special and regular education?
6. Should schools become the focal point for multiple and integrated human community services? Should this be a part of school reform?
7. Do we possess the knowledge/data base to justify basic changes in our schools and should policy makers proceed more conservatively?

## Commonalities

1. America 2000 is an important effort, but ALL must mean ALL if it is to be legitimate.
2. Reformers must adopt the methods and strategies of special education. i.e., IEPs, modifying the curriculum to meet needs of individual students, team approaches, parent involvement, smaller ratios of students to teacher, etc.
3. Reform should promote quality and equity.
4. Expected outcomes must be the driving force behind curriculum. However, expected outcomes must be based on the needs and abilities of individual students.
5. Reform must avoid uniformity and rigidity and feature flexibility and variety.
6. A continuum of services must be available and services must be linked to the needs of the student. More than regular class placement is needed.
7. Education reform must be a collaborative effort. Advocates and all stakeholders must be involved in decision-making about reform.
8. Efforts to evaluate effectiveness must be continued and expanded. Knowledge, data and evaluation of outcomes should drive ongoing evolution.
9. Demographics are changing. The new students are not those with whom schools have had



success.

10. With inclusion we are asking regular teachers to undertake a very difficult task. Regular education teachers are unprepared to meet needs of students with disabilities in their classrooms.

11. Teacher education must be reformed and the quality improved. Time and resources must be provided for personnel training.

12. Collaboration across disciplines is needed.

### **Unresolved Topics**

1. Is the reform movement inappropriately top down?
2. Is the current reform movement interchangeable with inclusion strategies?
3. Can reform initiatives/philosophies embrace the need to provide a continuum of services, individualized instruction and placement of students based on students' needs?
4. How do we avoid rigidity among reformers and promote respect for differences?
5. Does the value of labels (LD) outweigh the stigma of labels?
6. What will the impact of our changing demographics have on education, education reform, and programs for students with learning disabilities?
7. Are costs rather than needs driving the reform movement?
8. Should schools become the focal point for multiple and integrated human community services? Should this be a part of school reform?
9. Do we possess the knowledge/data base to justify sweeping changes in our schools and/or should policy makers proceed more conservatively?

### **Next Steps**

1. Should/can advocates for individuals with learning disabilities (and other disabilities) develop a national agenda to achieve better outcomes for students with disabilities?
2. Should/can we speak with a more unified voice?



## **EDUCATION REFORM: THE FUTURE IS A CONTINUATION OF TIMES PAST**

*Judith Schrag, Ph.D.  
Director  
Office of Special Education Programs  
U.S. Department of Education  
Washington, D.C.*

Thank you. I want to begin my dinner remarks with a compliment to you, La Nelle, and the other leadership of LDA for planning this Education Reform Symposium. At least one of our speakers today quoted John Sculley who had said, "The best way to predict the future is to invent it." Programs and services for student with learning disabilities are evolving and changing—that is certain. Forums and symposia like this help to clarify the issues and formulate or invent the strategies and the solutions.

Let me comment about the title of your symposium—that is, a step forward or a step backward for students with learning disabilities. This symposium title and concept prompts my first observation about change—that is, that the future is a continuation of times past. There is no sharp division between the present and the future. The future is strongly linked to and derives much from the present and the past.

How many of you were born before 1945? If you were born before 1945, you have seen many changes that have been a part of this evolving society. You were born before penicillin, polio shots, frozen foods, xerox, contact lenses, frisbees, the pill and common use of television. You were born before radar, credit cards, split atoms, laser beams and ballpoint pens. You were born before pantyhose, clothes dryers, dishwashers, electric blankets, air conditioners, drip-dry clothes and before man walked on the moon.

Closets were for clothes, not "coming out of." Bunnies were small rabbits, and rabbits were not Volkswagens. Having a meaningful relationship meant getting along with your cousins. Fast food was what you ate during Lent, and outer space was the back of a movie theater. "Made in Japan" meant junk goods, and the term "making out" referred to what you did on an exam. Pizza, McDonald's and instant coffee were unheard of. A "chip" meant a piece of wood; hardware meant bolts, screws and hinges; and software wasn't even a word. Before 1945, you never heard of FM radio, tape decks, VCRs, electric blankets, artificial hearts, word processors, yogurt or low fat and guys wearing earrings. In your day, cigarette smoking was fashionable, grass was mowed, coke was a cold drink, pot was something you cooked in, rock music was grandma's lullaby and aids were helpers in the principal's office.

All of these changes came gradually with the future, linked closely to the present and the past. As we participate in education reform, I think it is very important that we think of special education as a support service not yet fully evolved. It can't or should not stand still.

A futurist that I heard some time ago said, "We either evolve or we dissolve—we either evolve or we dissolve." But, as we evolve, it is very important that we build on the tremendous gains made to date. All of you know what those have been—as of this year, all states have preschool mandates in place beginning with age three—with Oregon implementing their mandate next year. All states continue to move toward full implementation of the Infant and Toddler Program. Parental involvement is the underpinning and strength of special education. Approximately ten percent of the overall student population are receiving supplemental special education and related services based on an IEP.

There have been many significant and dramatic transformations made since the back wards of

the institutions, hidden closets, opportunity schools, boiler room classroom and a rare program for preschool children. Yet, despite these tremendous gains that we have made to date, special education is not yet fully evolved—that is it is not yet an integral part of a unified educational system that deals naturally and easily with complex student diversity. As America 2000 and other educational reform is implemented state by state, the entire educational system is being transformed. Special education must contribute to and be a part of this transformation with its rich contribution to restructuring and educational change.

Rather than casting aside the past, as often is done (for example, yesterday pullout programs were ok, today they are not in vogue), the future of special education and services for students with learning disabilities must be rooted in the past and the future—and it must evolve and carefully build on those links.

Oliver Wendell Holmes once said, "The greatest thing in the world is not so much where we are, but where we are going." Despite the tremendous improvements in our progress toward full services, we are challenged to continue evolving our systems and services forward and to bringing special education more in alignment with general education and other categorical or support programs.

On-going changes in special education could be seen as a needed paradigm shift; however, this suggests that one system has to be disposed for another. Our challenge, rather, is to look at special education as an evolving and developing system.

Let's look for a minute at the evolutions of programs for children with learning disabilities as well as other disabilities. The 1970s represented an era in which the emphasis was on access to education for children with disabilities. A separate body of knowledge emerged about working with specific handicaps and disabilities. The result was often a separate agenda of special education from that of general education. Separate, uncoordinated programs were often developed.

In the 1970s, the emphasis was on access to the same physical space as that given to students without handicaps or disabilities. Many children with disabilities were out of school and unserved. Programs which were developed were often separate and segregated. A separate agenda emerged in the form of separate curriculum for children and youth with disabilities (i.e., Frostig Developmental Programs, SRA Kits, Sullivan Programmed materials and Distar programs). Rather than content and curriculum, the emphasis in special education was on skill development and behavioral management. Mainstreaming efforts explored the parameters of common access to physical space within school buildings for students with disabilities.

The 1980s saw the emergence of curriculum access and a more holistic approach to the integration of programs. The body of knowledge expanded to explore adaptation of general education curricula for student with disabilities as well as intervention strategies that focused on peer tutoring, collaborative instruction and cooperative learning. The evolution of special education continues in the 1990s with exploration of program boundary issues among and between special education, Chapter 1, migrant education, bilingual education, other support programs and general education.

The 1990s, I think, are an era of program alignment—that is alignment and coordination between special education, Chapter 1, all of the other special programs and general education. During the 1990s we will need to focus on many efforts to coordinate these programs, as well as an overall integration of educational programs with health, mental health, developmental disabilities, vocational rehabilitation, and other social service programs. The focus on service integration to serve the "whole child" will continue to the year 2000 within the context of education reform, along with a continued emphasis on parental involvement.

One unintended outcome of the implementation of federal and state special education laws during the 1970s and 1980s is that special education has often been viewed as a separate system not effectively coordinated and aligned with general education. Special education has often been viewed as a "place" rather than curriculum and instructional support. We are challenged by the need to balance the emphasis of the 1970s and 1980s of access, compliance, and the procedural construct of special education and related services, with that of innovation, experimentation, and procedural and content fine-tuning in order to achieve an expanded emphasis on improved student outcomes.

Special education must be viewed not as a "place," but rather as a set of instructional and curriculum supports which are intended to provide a broad array of better student outcomes. A more coordinated and interfaced educational system which focuses on the "whole child" and the curricular and instructional improvements is needed to assure better outcomes for our students with disabilities and their families. As the balance between and emphasis on process and outcomes is explored, it will be necessary to maintain the rights of students with disabilities and their families.

The use of a "deficit" model in special education and the emphasis on skill development has also unintentionally communicated lower expectations for students with disabilities, compared to their peers without disabilities. Outcomes for students with disabilities must include a wide array of skills and other outcomes for all students, as well as those unique to the disability.

At least three reasons prompt the need for further evolution of our special education programs and related services. First, the changing population of students in our classrooms is resulting in the continued "blurring" of special and general education programs, as well as the social and health services needed to meet their complex needs.

Second, we have just released two studies from the national longitudinal study conducted by SRI in California. Outcome data from this study and other sources support the need for improved results for students with disabilities. Finally, there is a growing body of knowledge from both research and practice regarding organizational, instructional and curricular strategies that work.

The timing is right for change. Educational reform is occurring across the country. A number of states are implementing state-specific initiatives based on *America 2000* proposed by President Bush and Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander. *America 2000* is an effort to "wrap around" or complement educational reform initiatives that are occurring within each state. Some current restructuring efforts within the states are stimulated by a focus on student performance, based on the premise that all students can and must learn at higher levels. These restructuring efforts within the states are based on a long-term commitment to fundamental, systemic change. This systemic change must deal with all the components within the educational system, including special education, with the goal of an interfaced and coordinated system of restructured service delivery which deals more effectively with complex student diversity.

The first ingredient of reinventing the future certainly is a powerful vision; that is, a clear sense of where we are going and how to get there. Our vision in special education, I think, is both simple and complex. It is simple in that we want each person with disabilities to reach his or her fullest potential—a productive, contributing and self-realized citizen. And we want school and community environments that can be structured in such a way that facilitates and ensures this reality. This vision is complex in that special education cannot continue to be thought of in a vacuum but rather as an integral part of the restructuring that is occurring within the overall educational structure—as is reflective of the efforts occurring within each of your states. A part of the struggle that we are having and that I think we will continue to have is how to infuse a very procedural, detailed support system into the overall educational system

as it invents or restructures its future mold. Vision, or the how to do this, is the link between dreams and action.

Jay Forrester, an MIT professor, has said that "In technology, we expect bold experiments that test ideas, obtain new knowledge, and lead to major advances. But in matters of social organization, we usually propose only timid modifications of conventional practice and balk at daring experiments and innovation." To date, I think that many modifications of conventional practice have occurred across the country—but we have not yet made daring experiments and innovation within the total educational structure. And, unless this happens, special education will continue to be needed at least in its present form. It is a delicate balance that we have between maintaining our procedural focus and giving up on at least some of it to allow for experimentation and inclusion within overall school restructuring.

As one ponders how to invent the future, the answers must start with the right questions. Let me briefly pose what I think are at least four of these questions. These four questions, I think, are questions that underlie much of the restructuring and reform efforts across the country.

*1. First, what do we want students to know and be able to do?*

Although each school district and state may choose different words to describe desired student outcomes, the list overlaps considerably reflecting wide agreement among educators and the public. These outcomes include literacy; numeracy skills and their application; thinking and problem solving ability; personal responsibility; communication skills; the ability to demonstrate mastery beyond paper and pencil exercises; and the ability to locate, retrieve, and synthesize information.

One of the challenges in our vision of tomorrow's education for students with disabilities is to carefully define what we want our students to be able to do that is different from or in addition to those for other students without disabilities. The Office of Special Education Programs has funded a National Center on Educational Outcomes at the University of Minnesota which is attempting to develop a set of outcome domains and a defensible list of educational outcomes for students with disabilities. An example of a model which they have developed differentiates outcomes of schooling into those that reflect achievement, demonstrate participation, and reflect attitudes and aspirations.

As a part of our vision of special education in the future, we are collectively inventing at the local, state and federal level, it is important that we be much clearer in our communication about what these outcomes should be for persons with disabilities. This relates to a second important question within our vision of tomorrow's educational programs for students with disabilities.

*2. What kinds of learning experiences produce these outcomes?*

A second question deals with the kinds of learning experiences which produce better student outcomes. There seems to be substantial agreement among educators about the kinds of learning experiences that produce better outcomes for all students. "Teaching as telling" and "learning as recall" are now being replaced by individual and team learning opportunities that engage students, provide authentic and challenging tasks, offer choices and multiple answers, and offer flexible grouping and scheduling depending on the activity. Classrooms and instruction are facilitating students to be active learners and not simply receivers of knowledge, but engaged in project oriented activity that often results in products or exhibitions. Multimedia environments are providing students a sense of excitement about discovery. Future multimedia environments will be more like electronic "surrounds" through which students move in order to experience whole new worlds. Imagine an intelligent blackboard that makes text, diagrams and makes films appear when you talk to it. That same blackboard might be a telecommunication system, allowing the student to communicate.



Technology-rich environments are helping children learn in a variety of ways through guided discovery.

Restructuring schools are changing in a number of ways. Educators are rethinking the way teachers teach and students learn; they are reorganizing to share decision making and build community; and they are changing the way classrooms and schools look and operate.

It seems to me that a critical subquestion that we need to deal with is—what is special education which is value added—or that which is over and beyond general education that will achieve better outcomes which are similar to those for all students and those outcomes which are unique to students with disabilities.

Because special education is very procedural and system oriented, it has been often viewed as a place rather than a set of supplemental curriculum and instruction to deal with unique needs of the student's disability.

*3. A third question involved in inventing the future of special education within a restructured school environment is—What does it take to transform schools into places where this happens?*

### **Changing roles and responsibilities**

There are several dimensions to this question—the first deals with changing roles and responsibilities. Teaching students to think and make more informed judgments is much more difficult than teaching isolated facts. Providing guidance and assistance and empowering teachers to change is more difficult for school and central office administrators than generating and overseeing the implementation of school district policy. For administrators at the state and federal level, it is also more difficult to provide technical assistance than it is to carry out enforcement activities.

It is as if all of the boxes in the organization chart were thrown into the air and programmed to fall into a new set of patterns that best facilitate communication, networks, hubs, lattices, circles and wheels. Small work groups are being formed where communication is quicker and more effective. Structures are looking at networks, small teams, cross-disciplinary teams, partnerships and fellowship operations to promote better communication, innovation, and increased productivity.

There is a growing number of states that are realizing that as SEAs carry out these changing roles, they can't run the same kind of state departments of education. These departments are changing in nearly a dozen states. Layers of bureaucracy are being dispersed to broader educational configurations to encourage increased collaboration across general education, special education and other categorical programs as well as to provide coordinated services to the field. These administrative changes are also occurring at the local level in many of your states. It is not clear yet what the impact of these changes will be in the short and/or long run.

Likewise, roles at the federal level are changing. The U.S. Department of Education is actively engaging in *America 2000* leadership activities providing information and support to states as they begin the planning of New American Schools and communities. Activities are being implemented to coordinate with the New American School Corporation as it funds and supports design teams to assist states with ideas, networking and technical assistance. Within the Department of Education, new linkages and coordination are occurring across units, including special education, Chapter 1, migrant education, bilingual education and general education. The department is re-examining ways to streamline procedures and functions to increase its efficiency and service to the field.

In January, Mary Jean LeTendre, Director of Chapter 1, and I established a national work

group which will meet two to three times to identify and analyze effective program collaboration efforts across the country, as well as to identify federal policy barriers which are interfering with effective alignment of the Chapter 1 and special education programs at the state and/or local level. We hope to have three products as a result of this work group effort. First, we hope to produce a document which highlights Chapter 1/special education coordination within the states as well as a discussion of some of the practices that are working and their benefits. Second, we will finalize a time and effort administrative system for use by states and local districts wishing to split fund personnel who work with students who have like needs but who are eligible for both programs. This document will be "audit proof," if you will—that is, it will provide administrative guidance which, if followed, will not be questioned in future federal audits. Finally, we hope to identify any policy barriers and alternative solutions to these barriers.

### **Access to Knowledge**

A second consideration to this question of transformation of schools into places where change occurs deals with access to knowledge. Although continuing research is needed, the challenge is often not so much what we don't know, but, rather, how to implement what we do know from the growing body of knowledge and practices. Access to knowledge and practice is a challenge within school restructuring efforts across the country. In fact, lack of access to knowledge may be a greater barrier to change than are rules, regulations, traditions, myths and mindsets.

States are implementing long distance learning and other teleconference networking as a vehicle for teachers and administrators to increase their access to knowledge. Principal and teacher academies are proposed within *America 2000* and are already being implemented in several of your states. University and school faculties are also collaborating to create professional development or professional practice schools. School district development opportunities are changing with emphasis on peer assistance and coaching. Computer-based conferencing is one way that educators around the country are helping one another in the restructuring process. For example, IRIS, a national telecommunications network offers a variety of on-line forums for teachers and administrators including the "Technology and Restructuring Roundtable" conference which allows educators who are involved in restructuring efforts a vehicle for exchanging ideas, information, frustrations, and visions. Special Net is another electronic communication network for sharing knowledge and practice in special education. Live national satellite conferences, such as the nine-session teleconference on restructuring organized last year by the North Central Regional Educational Lab, are another way that teachers and administrators are sharing ideas, problems and solutions.

### **Time**

Time is also needed to change schools into productive learning environments; i.e., time to learn, to plan, to test new ideas, to maintain lines of communication. Change must match the values, preferences, and capability of each building, school district, community and state. Sufficient time at the local level is needed to involve those who will implement change (classroom teachers and other services providers) and those who will be impacted by change (parents, students and the community). Several states are providing support for an additional ten or whatever number of days in the school year for creating new curriculum, new assessment, new schedules, and new materials. In addition, several states are implementing teacher assistance teams or other building-based problem solving models in which time is allowed for teachers and other service providers to problem solve issues and to share expertise and solutions for enhanced student learning.

### **Technology**

Technology-rich environments can help children learn in a variety of ways through guided



discovery. Sensory enhancers, keyboard adaptation and emulators, and environmental controls and manipulators can increase the student's access to curriculum and instruction. Multi-media environments are offering cooperative learning and other integrated learning opportunities for many students with disabilities and other special needs.

### **Permission to Change**

Often the greatest barrier to change isn't rules, regulations, or administrative policy, but rather "mindsets" about what can and cannot occur. *America 2000* is communicating the need to "break the mold" with new ideas and innovations. *America 2000* and state reform measures are communicating the expectation and permission for change. To the extent that administrative and policy barriers exist, a number of states are creating flexibility from state rules to allow freedom to redesign the schools. Recipes, however, are not yet clear regarding the extent to which there will need to be relief from federal, state, district and union rules that dictate what happens inside schools.

The impact of such flexibility on programs for students with disabilities and other special needs is also not clear. Certainly, in any efforts to increase policy flexibility, the rights of these children and their families must be maintained.

Well, let's quickly look at one additional question that I think is important as we invent our future evolutions in special education.

*4. How will we know if we are successful or what kinds of accountability is needed to assure a positive relationship between our services and interventions and improved student outcomes and other desired results?*

Accountability has become a central aspect of education reform. The essence of accountability is to provide assurances to those inside and outside the system that the schools are moving in the right direction and providing quality outcomes. There are several aspects of accountability within the context of reform.

Changes in how authority is distributed, which decisions are decentralized, how accountability systems operate, the extent of any flexibility to be provided in return for more accountability, and the type of incentives built in are all aspects of program accountability that connect the structural features of the system to each other, to the content of the program, and to student outcomes.

### **Assessment**

Traditionally, standardized testing has been used by states or school districts to determine the linkage between curriculum and instructional content and student outcomes. Within various reform efforts, states are implementing new methods of assessment such as portfolio assessment, curriculum based assessment, and cluster assessment. Assessment tools are being designed that are not limited only to measuring the specific content that students know, but what they can do with what they know—to go beyond measuring knowledge to measuring performance and providing feedback for improving teaching and learning. *America 2000* includes voluntary national assessment to challenge students to strive to meet world class standards. The National Council on Educational Standards and Testing is proposing that portfolio and cluster testing be utilized rather than one standardized test. These modified testing approaches will directly benefit many students with disabilities who have typically failed on standardized tests. Standardized testing and a focus on high achievement within school reform accountability models can contradict the value of discovery learning, individualized instruction based on individual student learning needs, and the importance of curricular choices.

The work of the National Outcomes Center discussed earlier will be of value in looking at additional ways to measure outcomes for students with disabilities. A dilemma for special education is that we have been focusing on student accountability through the IEP construct. State testing and other accountability programs are system rather than student oriented. In fact, students with disabilities have often been omitted within state testing/accountability programs. Even though the majority of students with disabilities are in special education for part of the day and the week, special education is often viewed as accountable for the student's entire day. As we invent the future and special education's participation within overall restructuring efforts, we will need accountability measures/systems for the portion that the child is in special education as well as for the entire day and program in general and special education.

It will be important to continue to look at our accountability systems to determine the changes needed which focus on overall student outcomes and perhaps less on the process or range of special education program inputs.

There is a question inherent within education reform—that is the need for more flexibility in return for more accountability so that things can be done differently in order to get greater student outcomes. I believe we will continue to struggle with this—to determine the extent to which the special education system can and should be altered in order to contribute to overall education reform and restructuring. A counterforce, of course, is the fact that over 30 states are experiencing serious financial dilemmas. If we make our system more flexible, we need to be certain it is not made flexible for financial reasons alone, that is, to cut costs, but rather to do things differently which will enhance student outcomes. We will, I think, experience tensions based on opposing forces—with not a clear recipe to follow. It is important that we change and evolve for the right reasons—not just to save money and cut costs.

### **Teacher Assessment**

Efforts to improve teacher assessment is another accountability variable. In addition to teacher assessment involving passing minimal competencies, meeting increased certification standards, or taking additional coursework, some states are exploring modified teacher assessment procedures which provide incentives for teachers to pursue professional knowledge, to experiment with new approaches, to seek collaboration with peers, and to raise the quality of instruction. Some states are also providing statewide incentives for improved achievement which reward schools and districts for progress. These strategies include providing extra discretionary funds, sharing and other networking opportunities, teacher and administrator academies, and "showcasing" good practices.

### **Flexibility From Rules**

A number of states are also experimenting with waivers or procedures which schools and districts can be exempted from particular rules or regulations with the assumption that providing flexibility may communicate "permission" to innovate and increased trust at the building or school district. Even though the majority of waiver or deregulation strategies occurring within states are within general education, this increased flexibility can benefit many students with disabilities who spend the majority of their day in general education if the result of such increased flexibility is program and curriculum change which values and effectively deals with student diversity.

As any of these state or federal waivers are proposed, it is important that the rights of students with disabilities and their families be preserved. Although we are not currently proposing any significant changes in federal rules, we will shortly publish a notice of proposed rule making, which will propose to delete the single cost nonsupplanting test which we believe can prevent you from combining effectively your Section 619 preschool and Part B funds or other Chapter 1 and special education funds, etc., as you evolve your special education programs and services.

## **Decentralization**

Decentralization (often in the form of site-based management) has emerged as the cornerstone of school restructuring. Decentralization deals with what kinds of decisions are best made at which level of the educational system. Decentralization works best when school faculties have additional time and training to carry out their new responsibilities. Therefore, some states are adding additional days for new management and decision making tasks. In others, stipends and release time is provided for increased responsibilities.

To be effective, however, site-based management policies and practices developed to support reform must address the full diversity of student needs including those with disabilities. Local special education administrators are being challenged to transfer the ownership of special education programs back to building principals and to move more fully in the role of support to building leadership.

## **Incentives**

States are utilizing various incentives for restructuring school improvement grants, differential pay, bonuses for individuals, salary increments, and regulatory relief itself. The benefits of incentives must be balanced with the "unintended outcomes" for students with special needs. For example, there may be pressures to exclude students with disabilities from group testing because of concern for lower scores. In addition, differential pay for teachers of students performing at high achievement levels could serve as a disincentive to "mainstream" students with disabilities.

## **Report Cards**

As another accountability variable, a number of states have begun to report the overall results and benefits of restructuring through the publication of state, district or school report cards. The National Education Goals Panel has published the first Report Card of School Reform in September. Several states are producing or planning annual reports on the quality and effects of special education programs and services.

Well, it has been a long and productive afternoon, let me close. I have suggested that it is important that our special education programs continue to evolve and that we have a rich contribution to bring to school reform. School restructuring efforts must include all children.

Let me close by going to *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll. Perhaps you remember the scene in which Alice was trying to find her way and came to a fork in the road. The cheshire cat stopped and asked if he could be of help. Alice replied, "I think so, but I don't know where I am going." The cheshire cat, with his cheshire grin, replied, "Well, if you don't know where you are going, almost any road will take you there." Well, we are evolving, we do know where we are going—at least some of the path is clear, while other parts of our journey to provide better student results are yet unknown with the recipes a little unclear.

Tomorrow, your presentations continue with a round table to discuss a number of issues. It is critical that continued evolution of our programs must be a step forward, not a step backwards for our students with learning disabilities. I look forward to participating tomorrow morning to make some additional comments and observations about change and where we are going from a federal perspective as well as from the perspective of one of your colleagues who has been in the field of special and general education for over 20 years, working in three states as well as states across the country in my current role at OSEP. Thank you.



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## **EDUCATION REFORM: A STEP FORWARD OR A STEP BACKWARD FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES**

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We are here to discuss education reform. What is it? What might it become? What might we make it? Will it be a step forward or a step backward—or a “missed step”—for individuals with learning disabilities?

We are here to learn from each other, and, hopefully, to reinforce our individual and mutual efforts on behalf of individuals with learning disabilities.

LDA believes that those of us here and around the country who have been involved in special education these past two decades have been about the business of education reform during all of that time. We believe that all of us involved in special education—students, parents, teachers, administrators and other professionals—have learned a great deal about curricula, learning and teaching strategies, learning and teaching environments, parent and student participation, individualized programs, and many other important ingredients that might contribute to the recipe for education reform. We also have all come to understand a great deal about what doesn't work and what barriers to effective teaching and learning exist in our schools.

Why then has the education reform movement seemingly ignored students with disabilities and special educators? Are we perceived as part of the problem and not part of the solution? Are they simply not paying attention to the education needs of students with learning disabilities?

The answer to the question we have posed of whether the present day education reform movement is or will be a step forward or backward for individuals with learning disabilities cannot be answered at this time. It is our belief that we can help determine the answer to this question. This is the basic reason for our coming together this weekend. It is our effort to become involved in the reform movement—expressing our ideas and concerns, sharing information which we have learned about students with learning disabilities which may ultimately prove to be helpful to all learners in our schools.

The leaders in our country—President Bush, Secretary Alexander, and governors from across the country—have set the national agenda—which is to overhaul our educational system. While there are many different views about how this should be done, we must “seize the moment” — and share not only our concerns, but our best recommendations, which have often come from “trials by fire,” to help shape a new system for providing for all children and adults the educational opportunities which will produce world leaders and productive citizens for tomorrow.

Generally, LDA believes that the principles of special education should provide the underpinnings for education reform measures as follows:

(1) LDA supports the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. We support the spirit of IDEA that requires a team effort on behalf of students with disabilities—involving parents, professionals and the person with the disability, when appropriate. Overhauling schools must also be a collaborative effort—including children, parents, educators, government, clinicians, and business.



(2) LDA supports the placement of students with disabilities in the "least restrictive environment" but does not agree that the least restrictive environment is always the regular education classroom. The placement decision must be made based on the findings in the Individual Education Program. A continuum of placement options must be available.

(3) The Individuals with Disabilities Act calls for the individualized planning and monitoring of all students with special needs. It is our belief that this policy should continue to be supported and refined and extended to all students. This will address the needs of many at-risk students and should support National Education Goal #2—that by the year 2000 the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90%.

Additionally, LDA comes to the debate regarding education reforms with certain thoughts, concerns and reservations regarding various reform proposals:

(1) LDA is concerned that there be a balance between excellence and equity as new reform initiatives are developed. Major goals of the reform movement are higher academic standards and more demanding and uniform expectations for student performance—as indicated by the call for increased graduation requirements, national testing, additional course work/homework, strict adherence to grade retention and the use of differential diplomas.

If these goals do not coincide with a commitment to individualized goals and individualized education strategies, there are likely to be negative outcomes from the implementation of such goals. Anticipated negative outcomes might include (a) an increase in students identified with specific learning disabilities; (b) an increased dropout rate due to poor self-esteem, substance abuse, or other behavioral problems; (c) decreased eligibility for post secondary programs, and (d) increased difficulty for teachers to individualize programs which will accommodate different learning styles and needs.

(2) While parental "choice" can be attractive, especially for those parents who are knowledgeable about local education agencies and are able to monitor the child's progress, pitfalls may include the placement of students with learning disabilities in weakened, underfunded public schools, the possibility that non-public schools will not be obligated to provide appropriate individualized educational services; lack of monitoring and barriers to the exercise of choices such as costs of transportation and administration.

(3) Education reform must be coupled with a careful evaluation of educational funding. Whatever financial system is used must provide for the equitable education of students with learning disabilities. Concerns include: If equal amounts of money are allocated per student, are all students served equitably? How will block grants influence the availability of funds for students with special needs? How will services to students with special needs be affected if regular/special education funds are co-mingled? Is the placement of students in regular education merely a device to reduce spending for special education and, therefore, not in the best interest of the child?

(4) There must be adequate personnel preparation—including administrators, teachers, and related service personnel. This is fundamental to school improvement. Required competencies include sufficient depth of knowledge in the content areas; ability to meet the diverse needs of a wide range of students; an understanding of teaching and classroom management strategies. It is essential that reform initiatives provide for preservice and inservice preparation programs for school personnel; methods to prepare professionals to understand the nature of learning disabilities; and the maintenance of an interdisciplinary, collaborative perspective in the design and implementation of service programs.

(5) Consumer involvement with education reform is a critical factor for its success. Consumer advocates must be part of reform steering committees and equally involved in the planning and decision making. Methods for training other parents, as well as self advocacy training are

essential to assure a cadre of responsible consumers in the future to assume some of the responsibility for the success and/or failures in the educational systems.

(6) LDA has long supported early intervention for children at risk for learning problems. Reform initiatives, to achieve National Education Goal #1 which states that all students will start school ready to learn, must continue and increase this commitment through funded national research. Such research should include developmental disabilities due to genetics, unknown causes, substance abuse, exposure to environmental toxins, poor nutrition and prenatal care. Additional funding must also be provided to Head Start, IDEA Part H, parent training programs and other innovative programs which will increase substantially the number of children starting school ready to learn.

(7) National Education Goal #3 calls for American students to leave grades 4, 8 and 12 having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter, including English, math, science, history and geography; and for every school in America to ensure that ALL students learn to use their mind well so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern society.

LDA heartily and enthusiastically applauds this goal. We recognize that many people with learning disabilities leave school unprepared for life, employment, and further education. We believe some of the concerns expressed previously regarding research, well trained professionals, appropriate programs tailored to each individual's needs, and training of parents and individuals with learning disabilities will contribute significantly to the realization of this goal.

Already, however, we are aware of inappropriate testing at these different grade levels, without accommodations for special needs. We are aware of significant amounts of instructional time spent in preparation for such tests. It is understandable that teachers feel this pressure since they and their schools are judged by the scores of their students.

We are also aware that often times students with learning disabilities are exempt from the testing programs. This, too, is unacceptable. We must develop tests and ways of administering tests that will be equitable to all students and an honest evaluation of each student's academic progress and status. Knowing whether progress has or has not been made will then steer the IEP.

(8) National Education Goal #4 states that "By the Year 2000 US students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement." Instructional techniques must be improved so that all students, including those with learning disabilities, can learn at the level commensurate with their abilities. Students with learning disabilities who are gifted in science and mathematics must be recognized and provided reasonable accommodations, including computers and calculators, to equip them to succeed.

(9) National Education Goal #5 states "By the year 2000 every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship." This is a worthy but daunting goal. It will require substantial resource commitment by all sectors of our society to move toward this goal. It is critical that we all work together on behalf of illiterate adults in our country. This will require the inclusion of the American business community. Quality post secondary education and training opportunities must be developed and made available. We must also attend to the social and emotional growth and development of our citizens, not merely academic outcomes, to achieve this goal.

(10) National Education Goal #6 states "By the year 2000 every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning." This, too, is a lofty goal and one in which LDA again has a vested interest. It is not uncommon for

individuals with learning disabilities to become victims of substance abuse—whether because of environmental influence, poor self-image, feelings of inadequacy and aloneness, genetic addictions, etc. We must reach this population of students with effective education and treatment programs.

Thank you for being willing to come to an educational symposium to discuss, explore, design, and dream about our future and the part education will play. LDA wants to share a message, a message that didn't come Federal Express or over the fax, a message signed, not by Secretary Alexander, but by all the children, of all ages, present and future.

Graduates and secondary students say: *"We offer you the opportunity to truly evaluate the current status of education by collecting data on our successes and frustrations as we meet the daily challenges of life. Transition plans could have helped us make the shift between school learning and real life. We want programs that make learning a life-time occupation so that the vision of our future will not be small."*

Middle school students say: *"We ask you to create educational environments where we don't get lost, become invisible or 'stand out like a sore thumb'. Please design instructional arrangements where we can become responsible for our own learning and behavior, where we can become our own best advocates. Our lifetime goals will be richer, because you didn't make the vision for our future too small. Help us say yes to high expectations, to developing problem-solving, decision-making, collaborative skills, and a positive self-image."*

The graduating class of the year 2000, alias fourth graders, wanted us to know that although they haven't yet learned long division, they must be prepared to compete in a world where technology goes beyond the microchip to solve macro world problems. They say, *"Give us the willingness and support to risk—to try new things, develop creative solutions, overcome roadblocks and limitations of past thinking. Don't make the vision of our future too small. Help us say yes to exploring more than one solution to a challenge."*

Our young friends in kindergarten want us to know that although they are only five years old, their lifespan will be 125 years. How can today's education prepare them to succeed in the year 2117? They ask that we redefine the place called school to reflect the best the world has to offer in promising practices known and not yet discovered. If our vision is broad enough, the earliest best starts for learning may eliminate some of today's many problems. They ask us to look at them as unique individuals rather than statistics with labels and categories.

Perhaps what these messages are really telling us is that effective education reform will require an Individual Education Program for every student in every school with long-term goals, short-term objectives, and real-life evaluation.

By participating in this symposium we are all demonstrating our willingness to be responsive to these messages from children, students and lifelong learners. LDA hopes that we can go forward from here keeping their needs foremost in our minds. LDA believes we can go forward from here as their messenger, carrying their message to the education reformers.

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The Learning Disabilities Association of America is a national, non-profit, volunteer organization including individuals with learning disabilities, their families and professionals. LDA is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for all individuals with learning disabilities and their families, to alleviating the restricting effects of learning disabilities, and to supporting endeavors to determine the causes of learning disabilities. LDA seeks to accomplish this through advocacy, education, research, and service, and through collaborative efforts. Membership is available through state and local affiliates and provides timely information through the organizational bi-monthly newsletter, and annual international conferences, brochures and bulletins.



# LEARNER-CENTERED PSYCHOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES: GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL REDESIGN AND REFORM\*

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**Preamble:** American education is broadly viewed as a system in crisis. To overcome this crisis, the nation's President has set forth ambitious goals for education and many efforts are underway to redesign and reform our educational system. The American Psychological Association is committed to contributing to these efforts in a unique and critically important way. We want to focus attention on learner-centered principles that can provide the foundation for improving the quality of teaching and learning in American schools.

The principles contained in this document, many of them already implemented in exemplary learning environments, represent both an ideal vision and an accumulation of practice that will continue to evolve with on-going research. Our objective with this document is to provide significant information consistent with research generated by psychologists and educators in the areas of learning, motivation, and human development. Implementation of this information can contribute to reform efforts and, thereby, facilitate shared goals for educational excellence with information focusing on the individual learner.

If educational reforms proceed by setting standards for children and for schools that do not take these principles into account, the reform efforts will surely fail.

**Background:** Throughout its history, psychology has provided information vitally important for the design of schooling based on theory and research on human nature, needs, and learning. Research in psychology relevant to education and its complex applied teaching and learning issues has never been more productive than during the past ten years. Our understanding of thinking, memory, and cognitive and motivational processes has been tied together in new ways that can directly contribute to improvements in teaching, learning, and the whole enterprise of schooling. At the same time, educators concerned with growing trends for school dropout, low levels of academic achievement, and other indicators of school failure have begun to argue for more learner-centered models of schooling. Such models attend to diverse learner characteristics and perspectives in order to accomplish desired learning outcomes within the context of current school reform efforts.

The following principles, which are consistent with more than a century of research on teaching and learning, are widely shared and implicitly recognized in many excellent programs found in today's schools. They also integrate research and practice in a variety of areas within and outside of psychology, including clinical, developmental, experimental, social, organizational, community, educational and school psychology, as well as education, sociology, anthropology, and philosophy. In addition, these principles reflect an integration of both conventional and scientific wisdom. They represent not only those systematically researched and evolving learner-centered principles that can lead to effective schooling, but also principles that can lead to positive mental health and more effective functioning of our nation's children, their teachers, and the organizational systems that serve them.

Both learner-centered psychological principles and a systems perspective for incorporating these principles are necessary components of a new design for schooling. A systems perspective particularly appropriate to this task is one that focuses on human functions at multiple levels of the educational system (learning, teaching, evaluating, managing). From this perspective, significant improvements in educational practice will occur only when the educational system is redesigned with the primary focus on the learner and learning level of

the system. Psychologists, in collaboration with the educational community, can contribute to decisions on how best to apply sound psychological principles in the redesign of America's schools. A new and exciting vision of schooling, and psychology's role in this vision, can then emerge.

Our immediate goal in offering these learner-centered psychological principles is to provide guidelines that can contribute to current educational reform and school redesign efforts and thus help meet the nation's educational goals. Through collaborative dialogue with and dissemination to concerned groups of educators, researchers, and policymakers, these principles can be further evolved to contribute not only to a new design for American schools, but also to a society committed to lifelong learning, healthy human development, and productivity. In developing these principles, psychology—together with other disciplines—can offer a unique contribution to the betterment of America's schools and the enhancement of the nation's vital human resources.

### LEARNER-CENTERED PSYCHOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

The following twelve psychological principles pertain to the learner and the learning process. They focus on psychological factors that are primarily internal to the learner, while recognizing external environment or contextual factors that interact with these internal factors. These principles also attempt to deal holistically with learners in the context of real-world learning situations. Thus, they must be understood as a whole and not treated in isolation. The first ten principles subdivide into those referring to *metacognitive* and *cognitive, affective, developmental, and social* factors and issues. Two final principles cut across the prior principles and focus on what we know about *individual differences*. Finally, the principles are intended to apply to *all learners*, pre school-aged and beyond.

#### Metacognitive and Cognitive Factors

**Principle 1: Learning is a natural process that is active, volitional, and internally mediated; it is a goal-directed process of constructing meaning from information and experience, filtered through each individual's unique perceptions, thoughts, and feelings.**

Students have a natural inclination to learn and pursue personally relevant learning goals. They are capable of assuming personal responsibility for learning—monitoring, checking for understanding, and becoming active, self-directed learners—in an environment that takes past learning into account, ties new learning to personal needs, and actively engages students in their own learning process. In meaningful life situations, even very young children naturally engage in self-directed learning activities in pursuit of personal goals. During the learning process, individuals create and construct their own meanings and unique interpretations based on previously existing understandings and belief systems or “perceptual-cognitive filters.”

**Principle 2: The learner seeks to create internally consistent, meaningful, and sensible representations of knowledge regardless of the quantity and quality of data available.**

Learners generate integrated, “common sense” representations and explanations for even poorly understood or communicated facts, concepts, principles, or theories. The operation of learning processes is holistic in the sense that internally consistent understandings emerge—understandings that may or may not be valid from an objective, externally-oriented perspective. With increased exposure to “facts” within a knowledge domain, however, learners can increasingly refine their conceptions as they see the inconsistencies and the need to revise prior conceptions.

**Principle 3: The learner organizes information in ways that associate and link new information with existing knowledge in memory in uniquely meaningful ways.**

Given that backgrounds and experiences of individual learners can differ dramatically, and given that the mind works to link information meaningfully and holistically, learners will organize and link information in ways that are uniquely meaningful to them. In formal educational contexts it is desirable for all learners to create shared understandings and conceptions regarding fundamental knowledge and skills that define and lead to valued learning outcomes. In these situations, learning can be facilitated by assisting learners in acquiring and integrating knowledge, e.g., by teaching them strategies for constructing meaning, organizing content, accessing prior knowledge, relating new knowledge to general themes or principles, and storing or practicing what they have learned.

**Principle 4: Higher order strategies for “thinking about thinking”—for overseeing and monitoring mental operations—facilitate creative and critical thinking and the development of expertise.**

During early to middle childhood, learners become capable of a metacognitive or executive control level of thinking about their own thinking that includes self-awareness, self-monitoring, and self-regulation of the processes and contents of thoughts, knowledge structures, and memories. Learners' awareness of their personal agency or control over thinking and learning processes promotes higher levels of commitment, persistence, and involvement in learning. The facilitative aspects of self-awareness of agency are best realized in settings where learners' intentions and goals are respected and accommodated.

#### **Affective Factors**

**Principle 5: The depth and breadth of information processed, and what and how much is learned and remembered, is influenced by (a) self-awareness and beliefs about one's learning ability (personal control, competence, and ability); (b) clarity and saliency of personal goals; (c) personal expectations for success or failure; (d) affect, emotion, and general states of mind; and (e) the resulting motivation to learn.**

The rich internal context of beliefs, goals, expectations, feelings, and motivations can enhance or interfere with learners' quality of thinking and information processing. The relationship between thoughts, mood, and behavior underlies individuals' psychological health and functioning as well as their learning efficacy. Learners' interpretations or cognitive constructions of reality can create barriers to positive motivation, affect, learning, and performance. Although negative thoughts and feelings can adversely affect motivation and learning, positive learning experiences can help reverse negative thoughts and feelings and contribute to positive motivation to learn.

**Principle 6: Individuals are naturally curious and enjoy learning in the absence of intense negative cognitions and emotions (e.g., insecurity, worrying about failure, being self-conscious or shy, fearing corporal punishment or verbal ridiculing or stigmatizing labels).**

Positive motivation for learning is largely dependent on helping to bring out and develop students' natural curiosity or intrinsic motivation to learn, rather than “fixing them,” giving them something they lack, or driving them by fear of corporal punishment or excessive punishments of any kind. At the same time both positive interpersonal support and instruction in personal self-control strategies can offset factors that interfere with optimal learning (such as low reflective self-awareness; negative personal beliefs; lack of personal learning goals; negative expectations for success; and anxiety, insecurity, or pressure that makes learning aversive).

**Principle 7: Curiosity, creativity, and higher order thinking processes are stimulated by learning tasks of optimal difficulty, relevancy, authenticity, challenge, and novelty for each student.**

Positive affect, creativity, and flexible and insightful thinking is promoted in contexts which learners perceive as personally relevant and meaningful, and in which they have opportunities for choices in line with their interests. Higher order thinking skills and creativity are elicited when students have opportunities to work on projects that are at a level of complexity and duration that is comparable to real-world issues and problems. In addition, curiosity is enhanced when students have opportunities to work on learning tasks of optimal difficulty, challenge, personal relevancy, and novelty for them individually.

### **Developmental Factors**

**Principle 8: Individuals proceed through orderly, identifiable progressions of physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development that are a function of unique genetic and environmental factors.**

Children learn best when material is appropriate to their developmental level, presented in an enjoyable and interesting way, while at the same time challenging their intellectual, emotional, physical, and social development. Unique environmental factors (e.g., the quality of language interactions between adult and child and parental involvement in the child's schooling) can influence development in each area. An overemphasis on developmental readiness, however, may preclude learners from demonstrating that they are more capable intellectually than schools, teachers, or parents allow them to show. Awareness and understanding of unique developmental differences of children with special emotional, physical or intellectual disabilities as well as special abilities leads to an increased ability to create maximally facilitative learning contexts.

### **Social Factors**

**Principle 9: Learning is facilitated by social interactions and communication with others in a variety of flexible, diverse (cross-age, culture, family background, etc.), and adaptive instructional settings.**

Learning is facilitated by including diverse settings that allow the learner to interact with a variety of students from different cultural and family backgrounds, interests, and values. Divergent and flexible thinking as well as social competence and moral development are encouraged in learning settings that allow for and respect diversity.

**Principle 10: Learning and self-esteem are heightened when individuals are in respectful and caring relationships with others who see their potential, genuinely appreciate their unique talents, and accept them as individuals.**

Individual's access to higher-order, healthier levels of thinking, feeling, and behaving is facilitated by quality personal relationships. Teachers' or other significant adults' states of mind, stability, trust, and caring are preconditions for establishing a sense of belonging and positive climate for learning. Healthier levels of thinking are those that are less self-conscious, insecure, irrational, and/or self-deprecating. Self-esteem and learning are mutually reinforcing.

### **Individual Differences**

**Principle 11: Although basic principles of learning, motivation, and effective instruction apply to all learners (regardless of ethnicity, race, gender, presence or absence of physical handicaps, religion, or socioeconomic status), learners differ in their preferences for learning mode and strategies, the pace at which they learn, and unique capabilities in particular areas. These differences are a function of both environment (what is learned and communicated in different cultures or other social groups) and heredity (what occurs naturally as a function of genes and resulting differential capacities).**



The same basic principles of learning, motivation, and effective instruction apply to all learners. At the same time, however, learners are born with unique capabilities and talents, and have acquired through learning and social acculturation different preferences for how they like to learn and the pace at which they learn. In addition, it must be recognized that learning outcomes are an interactional and interdependent function of student differences, as well as curricular and environmental conditions. Understanding and accommodating cultural differences and the cultural contexts from which learners emerge enhances the design and implementation of environments that most facilitate the learning of all students.

**Principle 12: Beliefs and thoughts, resulting from prior learning and based on unique interpretations of external experiences and messages, become each individual's basis for constructing reality or interpreting life experiences.**

Unique cognitive constructions form a basis for beliefs about and attitudes toward others. Individuals then operate out of these "separate realities" as if they were true for everyone, often leading to misunderstandings and conflict. Awareness and understanding of these phenomena allows greater choice in what one believes, more control over the degree to which one's beliefs influence one's actions, and an ability to see and take into account others' points of view. The cognitive and social development of a child and the way that child interprets life experiences is a product of prior schooling, home, culture, and community factors.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL REDESIGN AND REFORM**

The foregoing principles have implications for educational practice in the areas of instruction, curriculum, assessment, instructional management, teacher education, parent and community roles, and policy. The following sections provide a listing of some of these implications. The purpose of this listing is to provide representative examples that are consistent with the learner-centered principles. They are intended to stimulate further thinking, discussion, and elaboration that eventually result in new designs for education.

#### **INSTRUCTIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

- \* Effective instruction focuses on the active involvement of students in their own learning, with opportunities for teacher and peer interactions that engage students' natural curiosity.
- \* Effective instruction encourages students to make meaningful links between prior knowledge and new information by providing multiple ways of presenting and representing information (e.g., auditory, visual, kinesthetic).
- \* Effective instruction attends both to the content of curriculum domains and to generalized and domain-specific process strategies for acquiring and integrating knowledge in these domains.
- \* Effective instruction includes a concern with constructive and informative feedback regarding the learner's instructional approach and products, as well as sufficient opportunities to practice and apply new knowledge and skills to developmentally appropriate levels of mastery.
- \* Effective instructional practices are those that include a focus on opportunities for acquiring and practicing a variety of learning strategies in different content domains—strategies that help students develop and effectively use their minds while learning.
- \* Effective instructional practices encourage problem solving, debates, group discussions, and other strategies that enhance the development of higher order thinking and use of metacognitive strategies.

- \* Effective instructional practices help students understand how a lack of awareness of the principles of thinking and psychological functioning can result in negative ways of seeing others.
- \* Effective instructional practices maintain fair, consistent, and caring policies that respect individual students and maintain a safe atmosphere for learning, one that focuses on individual mastery versus competitive performance goals.
- \* Effective instructional practices ensure that all students have experience with (a) teachers interested in their area of instruction, (b) teachers who respect and value them as individuals, (c) positive role modeling and mentoring, (d) constructive and regular student evaluations, (e) high teacher expectations, and (f) use of questioning skills to actively involve them in the learning process.

### **CURRICULUM IMPLICATIONS**

- \* Effective instructional tasks and materials attend to engaging the "whole learner" and to incorporating assessments used by students and teachers to check for student understanding of the subject matter.
- \* Effective learning materials, activities, and experiences have an "affective and cognitive richness" in order to help students generate positive thoughts and feelings of excitement, interest, and stimulation.
- \* Effective instructional materials and curricula provide explicit opportunities for students to engage higher order thinking or metacognitive capacities and practice metacognitive strategies, including reflective self-awareness and goal setting.
- \* Effective instructional materials and practices help students to be more aware of their own psychological functioning and how it relates to their own learning.
- \* Effective curricula attend to affect and mood as well as cognition and thinking in all learning activities and experiences.
- \* Effective curricula include "authentic" tasks and assessments that help students integrate information and performance across subject matter disciplines while at the same time, allowing students to choose developmentally appropriate levels of difficulty, challenge, or novelty.
- \* Effective instructional materials and curricula are developmentally appropriate to the unique intellectual, emotional, physical, and social characteristics of students.
- \* Effective curriculum materials and activities help students increase awareness and understanding of how thought processes operate to produce separate, self-confirming realities so that they can better understand different individuals, as well as different social and religious groups.
- \* Effective learning materials and activities encourage students to see positive qualities in all groups of learners, regardless of race, sex, culture, physical handicap, or other individual differences.
- \* Effective curricula also include activities that promote empathy and understanding, respect for individual differences, and valuing of different perspectives, including materials from a multi-cultural perspective.

## **ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- \* Effective testing and assessment of learning outcomes are integrated with instruction, provides for formative assessments of learning progress, and is "authentic" in content and performance requirements.
- \* Effective practices for assessing student learning and fostering learning goals are formed around notions of personal achievement, rather than comparisons with the performance of others.
- \* Effective assessment provides measures of student growth and allows for the highest levels of performance on developmentally appropriate standards; every student has an opportunity to excel at something.
- \* Effective assessments provide opportunities for student choice in a variety of areas, including choice of the types of products for demonstrating achievement of educational standards.
- \* Effective assessment systems redefine what we mean by "success;" standards are not based on competition, but on self-selected learning goals that provide for and promote self-generated solutions.
- \* Effective assessment systems promote students' self-reflection on their growth as a learner by providing opportunities for self-assessment and thought feedback on learning progress.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- \* Effective schools and classrooms accommodate mentoring, time in the schedule, and physical space and facilities for students to pursue individual learning goals and activities.
- \* Effective practices encourage student choice in areas such as topics of learning, types of projects to work on, or whether to learn independently or in groups.
- \* Effective learning environments are those that are conducive to quiet, reflective thought and that support students in developing unique ideas via student-centered projects and activities that provide for student choice and responsibility.
- \* Effective instructional practices are flexible in matching individual student needs with variations in instructional format and processes, including content, structure, strategies, and social settings.
- \* Effective instructional practices for developmental diversity emphasize respect and acceptance of differences and discourage stigmatizing (e.g., grade level retention).
- \* Effective schools are prepared to present materials at different developmental levels to same-aged children.
- \* Effective strategies for grouping students for learning activities provide for an appropriate diversity of abilities, ages, cultures, and other individual differences.
- \* Effective schools and classrooms facilitate and encourage cooperation and standards that respect diversity and individual differences, and discourage practices such as labeling and ability tracking that disrespect these differences.
- \* Effective instructional settings attend to meaningful performance contexts (e.g., apprenticeship settings) wherein knowledge can be contextualized and anchored to meaningful



and relevant prior knowledge and experience.

- \* Effective practices include cross-age and peer tutoring models. Effective curricula avoid "grade level" materials that are too easy for fast-learning students and too difficult for slow-learning students.
- \* Effective learning environments are warm, comfortable, supportive; they provide a climate that minimizes students' insecurities and promote a sense of belonging.
- \* Effective instructional practices that foster quality adult/student relationships are based on understanding and mutual respect, and reciprocally reduce levels of stress and insecurity in teachers and students.
- \* Effective learning environments provide high standards and expectations for all students, while also showing respect for cultural diversity, developmental and other individual differences.
- \* Effective schools accommodate differences in intelligence and other special talents in the musical, spatial, and social domains.
- \* Effective schools provide alternative technologies or paths to learning for students with special needs (e.g., total communication systems for hearing impairments, Braille systems for visual impairments, augmentative communication for multiple impairments) and teachers qualified to use them.
- \* Effective schools provide supports for students to constructively deal with expectations for both students and teachers to master challenging curricula and exhibit quality performance.

#### **TEACHER EDUCATION IMPLICATIONS**

- \* Effective practices and standards for teacher and staff selection include attention to attitudinal and belief system variables that reflect the teacher's orientation to different student groups.
- \* Effective teacher education includes strategies for establishing positive climates for learning and methods teachers can use to handle and reverse negative thoughts and moods, in themselves and their students, that interfere with the teaching/learning process.
- \* Effective teacher education programs help teachers see how their own attitudes and motivations for teaching and learning affect student motivation and learning in the classroom.
- \* Effective teacher education programs provide the knowledge base about the cognitive, emotive, and motivational processes which impact learning so that teachers can better facilitate higher-order thinking and learning processes.
- \* Effective teacher education programs include information about general and domain-specific metacognitive strategies and how they can most effectively be taught to students of differing abilities and backgrounds.
- \* Effective teacher education strategies also include opportunities to practice "talking out loud during explanations" as a strategy for making problem solving explicit and transparent, thus modeling metacognitive thinking and teaching strategies for their students.
- \* Effective teacher education programs also provide information about well-grounded intellectual, emotional, physical, and social characteristics of students at various

development levels as well as methods for assessing and accommodating developmental and intellectual differences in learning ability.

- \* Effective teacher education strategies emphasize ways to actively involve students in the learning process and how to elicit the material or solutions from the students themselves, in a way that is non-threatening and that will trigger students' creative thinking.
- \* Effective teacher education for the promotion of active involvement of students in their own learning focuses on strategies for facilitating, diagnosing, and encouraging student use of self-directed motivational and learning processes.
- \* Effective teacher education programs help teachers understand how each student learns best and to relate subject matter being taught to each student's interests in a manner that triggers the student's curiosity and innate interest in learning.
- \* Effective teacher education strategies include how to elicit or stimulate students' intrinsic motivation to learn and how to avoid a reliance on external rewards that undermine natural learning interest.
- \* Effective teacher education strategies include how to engage students' excitement and intrinsic interest in learning in a way that bypasses students' self-consciousness, concern about self-image, or need to prove themselves.
- \* Effective teacher education programs help teachers understand how to continually demonstrate respect and caring for students in the classroom, while at the same time being able to maintain an organized classroom in an authoritative (as opposed to authoritarian) and effective manner.
- \* Effective teacher education programs include stress management training that emphasizes principles of mind-emotion-behavior relationships and how to provide climates of socioemotional support.
- \* Effective teacher education includes strategies for selecting curricula that provide appropriate levels of cognitive complexity and authenticity for students at different developmental and ability levels.
- \* Effective teacher education programs help teachers become more aware of the need to relate instructional content and processes to the cultural contexts from which students have emerged or still live within; and the differences that cultures impose on public displays of volunteering information, asking questions, asking for help, discussing personal concerns in public, and a host of other cultural values and constraints that can enrich the classroom when recognized, or lead to chaos and misattributions when ignored.

#### **PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- \* New educational systems designs need to be generated collaboratively by all involved—students, teachers, parents, community members. Once a new vision is generated, staff development is the place to start.
- \* Schooling is one of many forces influencing the learning of individuals. Other dimensions of proven influence are the family, the peer groups, and the values of the subculture with which individuals identify. Thus schools need to make a major effort to work with families and subcultures in aiding student learning.
- \* Effective school management provides students, teachers, and parents with input into and responsibility for curriculum, discipline rules, and other policies and practices that provide a

secure and supportive climate for students and teachers.

### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR LEARNER-CENTERED SCHOOL REDESIGN**

The learner-centered principles cannot be treated in isolation when deriving policy implications. Taken together, these principles describe a new view of the learner, the learning process, and implications for instruction. It is this broader view of the whole learner and implications for instruction—including teaching, learning, and assessment—that allows for a learner-centered, systems perspective in deriving policy implications. Taken together, the learner-centered principles and the following policy implications are essential components for school design.

Policies should be encouraged that:

- \* recognize that the learning experience can only be as enriching as the teacher's ability to foster it and the system's commitment to meeting learner needs. It cannot be automatically assumed that teachers are capable of facilitating learning and growth without ongoing administrative efforts to support teachers' self-development in intellectual, emotional, social, and behavioral areas. Thus policy must address ways to ensure the reciprocal empowerment of both teachers and students such that teachers feel sufficiently supported and valued and can, in turn, empower their students.
- \* allow for the construction of a learning environment that adapts to individual learner needs, avoiding overly rigid and reductionistic definitions of the curriculum, specification of objectives, and schedules for when and where learning occurs. Definitions and regulations of what, when, and for how long topics are to be studied, and what resources are used should be drawn in a way that maximize the flexibility and choice students and teachers have to organize learning to meet the needs of individual children.
- \* reflect the need for learners to integrate and organize knowledge in personally meaningful ways. Curriculum and assessment processes should encourage learners to see the connections between what they are asked to learn with what they already know, how information being learned relates to other subjects and disciplines, and how the knowledge is used and connects with "real world" situations, i.e., situations that are not academically abstracted from natural phenomena and experiences. Policies should facilitate the organization of learning tasks around problem situations that integrate low- and high-literacy skills such as thinking about thinking and creative and critical thinking.
- \* encourage the organization of sequences or hierarchies of learning tasks so that assessment of progress reflects the incremental growth of the learner's skills and knowledge, not the matching of content rigidly tied to age or grade.
- \* acknowledge the role that personal beliefs about self, personal expectations about learning, and other cognitive constructions can play in learning and self-development; and further, acknowledge the importance of affective as well as cognitive development, and provide opportunities for increasing students' understandings of their psychological functioning (e.g., using psychological personnel to assist students in self-development).
- \* encourage the creation of instructional settings that cross the full range of social mediation contexts needed for learning (e.g., working alone, competing with others, working cooperatively with others, and competing with other groups as a member of a team). Regulations and resources should display flexibility and encourage this variety of settings, avoiding policies that promote only one perspective such as individual isolation or competition among students.
- \* acknowledge the diversity of individual student differences in interests, cultural

backgrounds, motivations, and abilities found in the United States. The American school program needs to be diverse in character, structure, and intent to adequately meet the needs of the full range of these learners. Single programs, standards, and learning goals for learners ignore the value of diversity.

- \* facilitate the interaction of psychology with other disciplines such that the breadth and depth of concerns relative to the psychological health and functioning of learners are considered. Interactions between disciplines and their embodiment in funding and service provider agencies can mutually enhance the knowledge base and attention to whole child issues.
- \* enhance the ability of schools to provide services for the whole child and all children, allowing schools to be the locus of services with connections to other service providers. Mechanisms for facilitating school-community linkages should be considered and promoted, along with those of enhancing school-family and school-business linkages.
- \* are flexible and reciprocally empower students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community partners such that basic needs for personal control and opportunities for personal creativity are encouraged.

#### **APPLYING THE LEARNER-CENTERED PRINCIPLES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS TO ISSUES IN THE ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

Within the current national debate on what methods should be used to assess student progress toward national education goals, one important area in which to apply the learner-centered principles is student assessment. A central assumption is that to improve educational outcomes for all learners in the schools, one has to create a learner-centered assessment system that requires high standards for each student for each goal, individually negotiated by the student and the teacher, and then a classroom instructional program that assists students to achieve learner-centered standards. Assessments can be based on a variety of evidence about student achievement, and this evidence might includefolios, projects, and performance. The critical difference between a learner-centered assessment system based on goals and standards established by the local community and implemented by teachers—involving learners in the process—is that only this type of system promises consideration of the diversity of the nation's communities and school children in the redesign of schools. In this context, assessments are products—ways students have chosen to demonstrate their developing competencies and achievement of learning standards.

Assessing student performance on a task he or she is not interested in or cannot see the purpose of amounts to assessing boring curriculum and what it elicits from a student; it does not assess learning. The starting point needs to be good pedagogy and sound educational theories. The learner-centered perspective considers the learner's thoughts and feelings about learning and schooling. It emphasizes that students learn because something is meaningful to them, not to perform on some task. Learning and performance are not the same thing and need to be distinguished in the design of new assessment systems. The bottom line is that **students need to be consulted and involved in the design of assessment systems that serve them better**. They will learn and perform better if schools are seen as relevant places to spend time in and if students have choice in pursuing their goals and selecting the types of products they produce to demonstrate their development and achievement.

#### **Emerging Learner-Centered Principles of Assessment**

The following principles of assessment can be derived from the foregoing learner-centered principles.

1. The fundamental purpose of any educational assessment of students should be to promote

meaningful learning.

2. The design of standards of excellence and assessment systems should be negotiated by the participants—including parents, teachers, administrators, and students—in districts and states in order to insure commitment and ownership among primary **stakeholders**.
3. Assessment should elicit students' genuine effort, motivation, and commitment to the goals of assessment and foster self-appraisal and self-regulated learning.
4. The strategies, skills, and knowledge required to excel on academic assessments should be the same as those required to master the curriculum on a daily basis.
5. Assessments should be based on authentic and meaningful tasks that are aligned with the regular curriculum and instruction provided in the classroom
6. Assessment should provide credibility and legitimacy to a broad range of talents and accomplishments of students across the curriculum.
7. A single national test of academic achievement should be avoided because it cannot do justice to the diversity of students' accomplishments in our heterogeneous and multicultural society.
8. Assessments should be fair and equitable to all students regardless of prior achievement, gender, race, language, or cultural background.
9. All assessments should provide for periodic review and revision among the participants and consumers of assessment information.
10. Assessment should occur continuously in classrooms in order to provide longitudinal evidence of individual growth and progress.
11. Assessments should measure students' motivation, attitudes, and affective reactions about the curriculum as well as their cognitive skills, strategies, and knowledge.
12. Assessments should include exhibits, portfolios, and performances to demonstrate achievement in addition to traditional paper-and-pencils tests.
13. The results of assessment should provide clear, comprehensible, and immediate feedback to the participants.
14. Assessments need to include provisions for multiple plausible responses and growth in understanding through "errors."
15. Assessment needs to allow for creative and self-determining constructions and expressions of knowledge, rather than focus on predetermined problem and answer sets.

\*Second revision, dated February 15, 1992, of a proposal of the American Psychological Association Task Force on Psychology in Education. Revisions are based on input from a wide circulation of the initial draft among psychologists and educators. Revisions were made by B. L. McCombs based on substantive and editorial comments received on the initial draft from L. Alferink, H. P. Bahrack, F. C. Blumberg, B. L. Bonnar, B.J. Brunkhorst, E. Dlugokinski, F. Farley, R. E. Fathman, J. P. Gallagher, L. Heshusius, W. Holtzman, N. M. Lambert, M. R. LaWarre, A. Maurer, D. McGuinness, M. E. McGuire, S. G. Paris, D. N. Perkins, D. Sparks, C. D. Spielberger, C. E. Walker, and P. G. Zimbardo. The initial draft was prepared in March of 1991 by B. L. Mc Combs in collaboration with D. Berliner, C. L. Hutchins, B. F. Jones, H. O'Neil, R. Mills, S. Rosenfield, C. E. Weinstein, J. S. Whisler, and M. Wittrock. Revisions to the initial draft were made per

comments from C. Baum, H. Ellis, F. Farley, W. Hotzman, J. Gallagher, H. Knoff, N. Lambert, L. Lipsitt, H. O'Neal, S. Ridley, S. Rosenfield, T. Shuell, and C. D. Spielberger. The initial draft was released as a proposal on June 5, 1991.





## **EDUCATION REFORM, COMMUNICATION, AND LEARNING DISABILITIES**

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The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific and credentialing association that represents over 73,500 speech-language pathologists and audiologists. ASHA's mission is to ensure that all people with speech, language, and hearing disabilities have access to quality services to help them communicate more effectively. ASHA is also a member of the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD), and joins with those who call for school reform and for the development of strategies to improve education. We believe it is essential to consider the needs of students with learning disabilities—especially when setting new educational goals, policies, and practices.

The *America 2000* education strategy is ambitious. However, it overlooks the needs of students with disabilities or special needs. And it does not mention the important role of special education in helping these students achieve their education goals. Communication skills are paramount in order to achieve those goals.

According to a special report on school reform by the NJCLD, adopted by ASHA, "School Reform: Opportunities for Excellence and Equity for Individuals with Learning Disabilities" (1992), eight components must be considered when developing strategies to improve education:

- (a) academic standards and student achievement,
- (b) curriculum and instruction,
- (c) accountability and evaluation,
- (d) school and classroom organization,
- (e) focus of decision making,
- (f) choice,
- (g) school finance, and
- (h) personnel preparation.

Questions to guide administrators, teachers, other professionals, and families were suggested in this report for each of the eight components. The purpose of this paper is to respond to some of these questions as they relate to the role of speech-language pathologists and audiologists. Service delivery models that seem to work best in regular education classrooms with students with learning disabilities will also be discussed.

### **Academic Standards and Student Achievement**

Higher academic standards and more demanding and uniform expectations for student performance are major goals of the reform movement. But this poses several problems for

students with learning disabilities. One question to consider is:

- \* To what extent are teachers prepared and permitted to modify learning goals and design individual instructional approaches that will meet the needs of students with learning disabilities? (NJCLD, 1992, p.50)

Language comprehension and production problems are often the basis of academic difficulties. Speech-language pathologists and audiologists assess those with communication problems in schools. They also plan intervention strategies. Traditional service delivery models pull students out of the classroom and place them in a separate clinic room a few times a week. This may not be the most effective treatment approach for students with learning disabilities. It also may not be consistent with the educational reform movement. Alternative treatment models—classroom-based, curriculum-based, consultation, and collaboration—respond to various communication needs and attend to the need for adequate teacher preparation and the development of individualized goals.

With alternative service models, a need to integrate communication skills and academic content can be addressed directly. Classroom and curriculum-based service delivery models use the vocabulary and concepts from the academic curriculum for the content of treatment. Working directly in the classroom, where the problems occur, speech-language pathologists and audiologists can help students better understand academic material and classroom instructions.

These communication professionals recognize the need to involve others as partners in treatment. With collaboration-consultation service models, speech-language pathologists and audiologists work with teachers, other professionals, and parents to help them facilitate student communication skills. As an example, the way teachers talk can affect student understanding. Speech-language pathologists can suggest ways teachers can modify the complexity, rate, volume, and clarity of their speech. Speech-language pathologists and audiologists working in the regular education classroom can sensitize teachers to the specific needs of students with communication problems.

Because of personnel shortages and the many demands placed on skilled service providers, communication professionals also need to find ways to extend services. Support personnel offer some services that would otherwise be unavailable. Limited resources do not justify using nonqualified personnel. ASHA is opposed to alternative certification for specialists if they do not meet the highest standards of the state.

### Personnel Preparation

Effective school reform must include ways to help teachers and other personnel to renew and refine their professional skills. Teachers now are responsible for so many children from so many different cultures with so many different needs. Individualized instruction for these students works best. But it takes preparation, time, and collaborative work with other professionals. There is no doubt that inservice training can help teachers recognize how important it is to academic success to have good communication skills.

Two questions to consider related to inservice training are:

- \* How do reform initiatives address preservice and inservice preparation programs for school personnel?
- \* Are needs assessment data used to develop inservice programs? (NJCLD, 1992, p. 51)

ASHA endorsed a position paper by the NJCLD on inservice programs in learning disabilities (NJCLD, 1983). This paper provides recommendations related to needs assessment, trainer



qualifications, content areas, and participants. It emphasizes the need for multidisciplinary training programs. ASHA has developed an in-service program with video dramatization and meeting planning materials for teachers, administrators, and parents, which addresses these recommendations and provides information about the role of communication professionals in schools (Cole & Crowley, 1989).

### Curriculum and Instruction

The school reform movement focuses on establishing uniformity of curriculum and instruction. However, students with learning disabilities need a variety of curricular options. A question to consider is:

- \* Are different curricular options and instructional strategies available to serve individuals with different types of learning disabilities and degrees of severity? (NJCLD, 1992, p.50)

Speech-language pathologists and audiologists can:

- \* Inform teachers and others about the connection among speech, language, hearing, and learning abilities.
- \* Suggest instructional strategies that foster communication—e.g., categorization, listening, problem-solving, vocabulary development.
- \* Suggest particular curricular modifications that will increase understanding by students with learning disabilities.
- \* Give more practice time for students to supplement the curricular content.
- \* Demonstrate how to modify curriculum, instructional strategies, and teacher language use according to the type and severity of learning disabilities. For example, students with severe auditory comprehension difficulties may benefit when teachers use visual cues, written instructions, verbal repetition, comprehension checks, and reduced language complexity.
- \* Inform others about technological advances that can be used in the classroom. As an example, ASHA's *Technology in the Classroom* grant, funded in part by the Department of Education, provides self-instructional written materials and a videotape to help teachers, special educators and care providers integrate assistive technologies into the educational program of children ages 2-7 years with severe disabilities.

### School and Classroom Organization

Of course, there should also be a full continuum of educational placement options. Questions to consider include:

- \* Do the design and implementation of service delivery options reflect an understanding of what learning disabilities are and what implications they have for appropriate services?
- \* Is time provided for collaborative planning? (NJCLD, 1992, p. 50)

Usually, alternative service delivery models are more cohesive, integrative, and less fragmented than more traditional "pull-out" models. However, there are always those students with learning disabilities who benefit more from individual or small group intervention efforts because distractions are reduced and key concepts can be highlighted. If collaborative models are used, there must be time allotted during the school day for planning.

## Conclusion

ASHA believes that students with learning disabilities can be successful in school if they receive instruction that is geared to their needs. Therefore, ASHA is committed to an educational reform movement that can devise strategies that will take advantage of these students' learning potential. But first, all those involved with these students must recognize how important communication is to academic success. And since speech-language pathologists and audiologists have the expertise in this area, they must be involved in working with the schools to

- design alternative service delivery models;
- provide inservice training; and
- participate in multidisciplinary planning teams.

Alternative service models can be used to integrate communication with academic content and involve others as partners in the intervention process.

A collaborative approach, which may include individual treatment, will help teachers meet the diverse needs of students with different types and severity levels of learning disabilities. ASHA stands firmly in favor of collaborative relationships, research-based inservice training, individualization and evaluation of instructional programs, and effective use of support services (see NJCLD, 1991) to provide appropriate education for students with learning disabilities.

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# STATEMENT ON THE IMPLICATIONS OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM ON INDIVIDUALS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

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## OVERVIEW

The Division for Learning Disabilities (DLD) of the Council for Exceptional Children, with approximately 14,000 members nationwide, is the largest professional organization devoted to the education and welfare of individuals with learning disabilities and the largest division within the Council for Exceptional Children. Because effective education of students with learning disabilities is a vital foundation for an independent, successful adulthood, DLD feels a special responsibility to ensure appropriate educational experiences for these students.

Following several years of discussion focusing on "school reform" and "school restructuring," the *America 2000* proposals delineated by President Bush and Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander some eleven months ago have served to increase both attention and activity toward such efforts. As the Executive Board of the Division for Learning Disabilities noted last October, "Although school reform and school restructuring proposals rarely recognize or address the needs of exceptional children or individuals with learning disabilities, partial or full implementation should be expected to have an impact on programs for students with learning disabilities. The Board clearly recognizes school reform as a national priority and calls for support of these efforts. However, any reform or restructuring of the current educational system must insure instructional excellence and equity for individuals with learning disabilities."

As the education reform efforts begin to take shape through governmental, legislative, budgetary, business, and public policy avenues, there is real concern among those of us who strive to provide the best in education for individuals with learning disabilities. Although not all inclusive, these areas of concern seem to coalesce around the five themes of 1) appropriate services, 2) proper assessment, 3) relevant curriculum, 4) protection of rights and access, and 5) professional preparation. Each of these areas present very real possibilities for enhancing and refining the educational experiences of individuals with learning disabilities, but concomitantly, each area also has the potential for denying such students the opportunity to reach their potential. It is important that all who work toward true educational reform **understand how** various proposals may impinge upon such students and, as a result, **make informed decisions** that will have a positive impact on individuals with learning disabilities—as well as other students in America's schools.

In this brief presentation, I would like to focus on three of these areas.

## I. APPROPRIATE SERVICES

The practical application of educational reform must recognize the diversity of needs presented by students with learning disabilities. Schools must continue to provide services across a number of continua including:

1) Students from infancy to age twenty-one. The needs of students across this age range must be met through a range of varying services, including center and home-based guidance for parents of toddlers, integrated assistance for at-risk students who, without help may become

dysfunctional learners, clearly focused teaching for students having difficulty learning in specific academic areas, and parent support for frustrated adolescents.

2) Students with learning disabilities ranging from severe, through moderate and mild. These include students demonstrating the severe learning disabilities of dyslexia and head injury; those showing moderate disabilities in cognitive, linguistic, and organizational skills that reduce learning efficiency; and those with mild learning disabilities that interfere with progress in specific academic and social areas.

3) Students who require services varying from intensive direct services to consultation with a regular classroom teacher. Some students with learning disabilities cannot survive and prosper educationally without very intensive teaching, while others can readily demonstrate their high ability when the minor modification of tape recording lessons presented in the regular classroom is permitted.

These highly individual differences among students with learning disabilities were recognized in PL 94-142 and IDEA, which dictate that a range of service delivery systems remain available in order to provide a setting that is least restrictive for that student's learning. Thus, a child with severe attentional problems will almost surely be restricted in his learning, if placed in a large room of 30 students who present constant visual and auditory distractions. Conversely, a child with a memory deficit will surely be restricted in his learning if not provided with the stimulation and richness of curriculum content in a regular classroom—even though he needs a set of specialized note cards to remember the details of that content.

Therefore, educational reforms MUST continue to recognize this diversity by providing a full continuum of services for students with learning disabilities. Neither the regular education initiative nor full inclusion, in and of themselves, provide such a continuum. An educational system that stresses narrowly focused, singular goals for ALL children, however well-intended, seems to leave no room for the diversity of services vital to individuals with learning disabilities.

## 2. PROPER ASSESSMENT

Assessment is a highly complex task that incorporates a wide variety of concepts, techniques, and purposes.

1) Students exhibiting school difficulties are identified as learning disabled through assessment (often of discrepancy);

2) Choices of program model, placement, and educational programming (through the IFP, IEP, and ITP);

3) Instructional strategies are determined through diagnostic assessment; and

4) The degree of success that students, teachers, schools, and school districts foster are measured through assessment of competencies, achievement, and outcomes.

New approaches to assessment, such as portfolios, journals, observation, and performance assessments offer real promise as ways to broaden the basis for assessment, as well as link assessment more closely to instruction. As "stop motion" glimpses taken longitudinally over an extended period of time, these techniques can provide valuable indicators of both progress and current status. They can provide a needed alternative to help successfully fill the gap between the objectivity of standardized instruments and the subjectivity of informal techniques. At the same time they require time, expertise, and experience to be truly helpful. Neither their value over time, nor their role in *America 2000* assessment is yet clear.

More importantly, *America 2000* includes a goal related to "American Achievement Tests" which would incorporate a voluntary and nationwide assessment of student progress in five core academic subjects that provides "Report Cards" of clear, comparable information on schools, LEAs and SEAs. Such tests, while providing some useful vision, in broad strokes, create real difficulties when related to students with learning disabilities. On the one hand, such data, if excluded, may not provide genuinely useful data for comparisons. On the other hand, when used as a criteria for demonstrating competence, such assessment techniques may make it impossible for students with learning disabilities to demonstrate the expected (or actual) level of competence. For example, a student with severe reading problems, such as those of a dyslexic, will be unable to show expected competence levels by reading the assessment materials.

Assessment of success in the educational system at large and of *America 2000* MUST NOT be used as a basis for comparison among all students. In the case of students with learning disabilities, it will often lead to inaccuracies, selective testing, and/or frustrated impossibility for these students. None of these alternatives seem compatible with a truly world class educational system. Not only should other ways of documenting progress be explored, but the public must be honestly informed of the limitations in the assessment goals proposed.

### 3. RELEVANT CURRICULUM

The selection of curriculum is dependent upon a myriad of variables that must especially be carefully considered in the case of students with learning disabilities. "Competence in core subjects" can be readily seen to be overly simplistic when the individual needs of students with learning disabilities are understood. While some of these students may readily master basic academic competencies and beyond with minor assistance, others require carefully developed sequences of skills in order to acquire minimal competencies in such areas as self-advocacy, independent living, job interviewing, accepting supervision, consumer checking, and career selection.

A single curriculum, no matter how carefully crafted or logically developed, simply will not meet the varying needs of students with learning disabilities and therefore, it is difficult to imagine how such a national educational goal that holds the needed promise for equity and excellence in an educational system includes students with learning disabilities.

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In these and other ways, the educational reform's goals and their implementation suggest that real problems exist in adjusting to the uneven skills characteristic of students with learning disabilities.

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The Division for Learning Disabilities (DLD) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is the largest professional organization devoted to the education and welfare of individuals with learning disabilities and the largest division within the CEC. With a current membership of over 14,000 in the United States and Canada, DLD reflects the views and concerns of teachers, teacher educators, policy makers, researchers, administrators, and related service professionals. Subdivisions in states and provinces enable members to focus on specific needs and issues in local areas. DLD serves as the voice of LD professionals through publications, position papers, a political action network, liaison with other organizations, awards for excellence, organization of conventions or topical symposia, and participation in CEC governance. In addition to the *DLD Times* newsletter, which provides members with current highlights three times each year, DLD publishes *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*, a quarterly journal reporting current research and disseminating information important to practitioners in the field. Other publications include monographs presenting state-of-the-art research, perspectives on intervention strategies, and *The DLD Competencies for Teachers of Students with Learning Disabilities*. Through these and other activities, DLD not only reflects the concerns of its membership, but also translates those concerns into activities which both furthers the knowledge base in and improves services to individuals with learning disabilities.





# SCHOOL REFORM MUST BE A STEP FORWARD FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

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The purpose of this paper is to describe the position of the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) related to the impact of school reform on the lives of students with learning disabilities. The core premise is that school reform initiatives must be a step forward for students with learning disabilities. What follows is a treatment of this issue which can be summarized in three words—**All Means All**.

The word reform denotes analysis and change of the present system. The word reform could be interpreted as meaning a “shuffling of the same deck of cards.” A better word for what is needed in education, in the United States, is reformation or even transformation. Consistent with this concept, transformers would start with outcomes to be achieved by all students. Given agreement related to these outcomes, a system would be constructed to maximize the chances that they would be achieved by all students.

Two things are critical in the above statement. The first is that outcomes would direct the development of a transformed system. The second is the notion that stakeholders interested in the transformation of education would identify outcomes to be achieved by **all** students.

The American experiment in education is to achieve excellence with equity. In other words, movements toward excellence must impact the lives of all students positively. In fact, it seems that in America, excellence without equity is elitism. How do interested stakeholders achieve movement toward this kind of excellence, this kind of transformation? In Peter Senge's book, *The Fifth Discipline* (1991), he postulates eleven laws which must be considered when attempting any major systems change. These laws are:

1. Today's problems come from yesterday's "solutions."
2. The harder you push, the harder the system pushes back.
3. Behavior grows better before it grows worse.
4. The easy way out usually leads back in.
5. The cure can be worse than the disease.
6. Faster is slower.
7. Cause and effect are not closely related in time and space.
8. Small changes can produce big results—but the areas of highest leverage are often the least obvious.
9. You can have your cake and eat it too—but not at once.
10. Dividing an elephant in half does not produce two small elephants.
11. There is no blame.

To be prepared to truly transform the public education system, all of these laws must be internalized. Two of them seem especially relevant. Law number one is the first. All of us must be willing to admit that "Today's problems come from yesterday's solutions." We must be willing to shed our biases about certain service patterns and be willing to open our minds to new possibilities. The second relevant law is law number eleven—"There is no blame." From Senge's perspective, we are all part of the same system—there is no inside and there is no outside. Actions taken by parents, teachers, administrators, advocates, and legislators all have an impact on the position we find ourselves in today.

Today, the federal government is pushing *America 2000*, with its six goals and four strategies. This initiative can be the impetus for transformation or it can be the impetus for a retrenchment by those interested in the lives of students with disabilities who fear that this initiative will have no positive impact on the lives of the students we care so much about. From the NASDSE perspective, we must care about the lives of all students to insure that **all** does mean **all**.

The question is this: Is *America 2000* a good faith attempt to unify reform efforts, or is *America 2000* a politically expedient mechanism to draw attention to standards and high hopes and away from student needs? It is the obligation of the community of people most interested in the lives of students with disabilities that we insure that *America 2000* is a unifying force for all students.

The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) is a nonprofit corporation founded and operating for the purpose of providing services to state agencies to facilitate their efforts to maximize educational outcomes for individuals with disabilities. NASDSE has as its mission "To provide services to facilitate the efforts of state agencies to maximize educational outcomes for individuals with disabilities (NASDSE Strategic Plan, 1992)." Consistent with this mission statement, NASDSE has, is, and will provide whatever services are necessary to facilitate efforts to reform or even transform the educational system. Recently (March 2, 1992) the NASDSE Board adopted the following commitment statement related to *America 2000*:

#### **NASDSE'S COMMITMENT TO AMERICA 2000 EDUCATIONAL GOALS**

The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) believes that the President's AMERICA 2000, AN EDUCATIONAL STRATEGY, applies to ALL students. To that end NASDSE's commitment is to ensure:

- \* That the needs of ALL children are identified and met without reference to assigned labels or categories of severity of disability;
  - \* That schools become community learning and resource centers that provide educational support services for ALL citizens;
  - \* That federal, state, and local governments provide adequate funding to meet the needs of ALL students.
1. By the Year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn:  
Schools will provide family-focused, one-stop support that includes multi-agency responsibility for:
    - \* Information, referral, and follow-up systems,
    - \* Comprehensive health-care, child care, and intervention services,
    - \* Effective preschool learning opportunities,

to support ALL infants, toddlers, young children, and their families.

2. The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90%:

Schools will provide comprehensive preparation for adult life, which includes:

- \* Internships and mentorship programs,
- \* Multi-levels of school-exit points that are outcomes-based,
- \* Educational attendance options, e.g. unlimited educational leave.

to prepare ALL students for existing and potential post-secondary options.

3. American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter...and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.

and....

4. U.S. students will be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement:

Schools will treat diversity as a strength by including:

- \* Parents as full partners in the education of their children,
- \* Mastery learning in outcome-based curricula,
- \* Full range of technology support,

so that instruction is adapted to the natural variability of ALL learners.

5. Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Schools will provide learning that is never ending, including:

- \* Community volunteer programs,
- \* Life-long learning options,
- \* Cross-generational learning environments, that make education a life-long experience for ALL learners.

6. Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning:

Schools will provide multi-agency community-based services, including:

- \* Counseling,
- \* Recreation,
- \* Rehabilitation,

so that the learning environment will be a safe place for ALL learners.

NASDSE is committed to working with other organizations in making these opportunities the reality in America's schools.

In short, the NASDSE Commitment Statement says clearly that ALL MUST MEAN ALL in every reform initiative. If this value can be actualized into practice, then, *America 2000* and

all other reform initiatives will, in fact, be a step forward for students with learning disabilities.

#### **A FINAL WORD—**

How can the community of people interested in the lives of students with disabilities increase the probability that reform will be a step forward? First of all we can take to heart the quote from John Sculley's book, *Odyssey* (1986): **The best way to predict the future is to invent it.** Working together we have the power to invent a future that will result in better outcomes for students with disabilities including those with learning disabilities. We have the obligation to make certain that ALL does mean ALL in every reform initiative.

We must remain optimistic that we will be successful. We must persevere until we are successful. We will know we were successful when ALL, in fact, means ALL.

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The National Association of State Directors of Special Education—NASDSE—is a not-for-profit corporation founded in 1938 for the purpose of promoting and supporting education programs for students with disabilities in the United States and outlying areas. NASDSE operates for the purpose of providing services to state agencies to facilitate their efforts to maximize educational outcomes for individuals with disabilities. All NASDSE activities relate to the following objectives: 1. To expand the capabilities of State Education Agencies to assure successful adult outcomes for individuals with disabilities. 2. To provide effective leadership in the development of national policy related to services which produce those successful outcomes. 3. To be the best national source of information regarding education for individuals with disabilities. 4. To create and maintain a productive and supportive work environment for NASDSE staff through an organizational plan designed to meet NASDSE priorities. 5. To become financially stable and develop resources sufficient to provide essential services to the membership and to achieve our mission and goals.

## **DIFFERENCE — A FOCUS OF REFORM IN EDUCATION**

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Let me first extend, on behalf of the National Center for Learning Disabilities, our appreciation to LDA for inviting us to participate in this important symposium. Also, I am particularly delighted to renew the friendship of LaNelle Gallagher, your Immediate Past President and joint Chair of this symposium. Her smiling face, gracious demeanor, and common good sense were always a pleasure at meetings of the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) where we have both served.

The National Center for Learning Disabilities wholeheartedly supports the effort to bring reform to education. We share the general disquiet being expressed about the overall decline in the quality of our public school system. While we acknowledge that there are examples of excellence to be found in the system, we, nonetheless, believe that the future of our nation demands a stronger, more effective and creative system of education.

Support for creative thinking has been a hallmark of NCLD's activities over the years. As a founding member of our Professional Advisory Board, your own Jean Peterson has been a strong participant in those activities. NCLD is one of the few organizations to put its money where its mouth is—supporting interesting, inventive, and worthwhile projects which, collectively, have had a significant impact on the services provided to the learning disabled, and the general understanding of the issues involved in learning disabilities. Many worthwhile ideas go unfunded and we have tried to make a difference. Education desperately needs to maintain its creative edge. It is our hope that the reform movement will continue to foster and implement creative ideas.

The effort, however, must not become so concerned with the generalizations of education that it forgets those whose learning needs differ from the mainstream. We cannot take on the whole of educational reform but, as organizations concerned with the special needs student, we do have one major contribution to make. We understand difference. We cannot reform the reformers but we can help them to understand that what is applicable to individual needs is important to include in all reform thinking.

In another life I had the opportunity to participate in evaluating teams for one of the regional evaluating and accrediting associations. Every school I visited claimed, as did every school I ever worked in, somewhere in its philosophy or mission statement, to be concerned about the individual. As one set about examining the school one was often hard pressed to find the evidence of that. It wasn't that the school personnel didn't care about students, they did. However, it was as though every child was cut in the same mold and that learning and social behaviors were anticipated to be the same.

Our understanding of the brain, our knowledge of the learning process, our appreciation of individual development has increased enormously in recent years. This is not always reflected in our schools, and must be seen as an important aspect of why our schools do not always seem to be doing an adequate job. The gap between what is known and what is practiced is often considerable.

The contribution which we can make is to see that this concern for difference or variation is not lost. We truly have a choice between tinkering with the system as it is or comprehensively changing it. In the current climate of regular education initiative (REI), mainstreaming,



inclusion, or whatever the concept is now being called, it is critical for us to make certain that strategies for improving or raising our educational sights, as defined and distilled in *America 2000: An Education Strategy* allow for the variations among our learners.

Insisting that "difference" be high on the reform agenda will help to stifle rigidity of thought among the implementors of reform. Legislative gains for our special youngsters gave official sanction to the notion of difference. It is discomfoting to note that the various national panels on the education goals are not exactly overwhelmed by participants who have track records of support for difference. We must be vigilant in this arena. It is pleasing, however, that, perhaps as a result of our prodding, thought is now being given to find a way to include our issues in the general thinking, by associating some of us, in some form, with the work of the panels.

In the past, difference has been seen as a characteristic of the few. Researchers are now convincing many of us about what we instinctively knew, that we all have individual learning patterns, styles, and development. Centering reform on what we thought was a majority in order to fulfill a notion of equity ignores the differences of the real majority. When the movement finally acknowledges that each of us is unique, then the needs of our young people will not be ignored. Rigidity must not be allowed to be the rule of the day any more.

Concerns about rigidity manifest themselves generally when issues such as "standards" are being considered. Several of the national goals will demand an adherence to particular levels of competency. The student's success or failure will be judged by those stated levels of competency. NCLD supports the need for realistic standards, and we believe that our youngsters must be asked to reach as high as others. However, there must be reality about the means whereby these children reach the goals.

As you can see, I must move around with the help of crutches. Without them, right now, I would be essentially incapacitated. The other evening I was at the "Underground," an extraordinary shopping and eating area in Atlanta. It is built on several levels. When I came to leave I needed to get out to the street which I could see was a level beyond where I was located. To get there I had three choices. The first and most difficult for me involved climbing what appeared to be a Mount Everest of steps to the street. The next was the use of an escalator. Easier than steps, an escalator, however, is not the most joyous thing when one has to use crutches. Getting on and off can be treacherous. The third and easiest way was to use the elevator provided for the "handicapped," I chose the escalator.

The point is not which choice I made, but that it existed at all. Whichever route I took ended at the same place. A major concern for the reformers must be to understand that though we all might be at the same or similar finishing line, we must be able to get there in ways and under conditions which suit our needs. If this is an acceptable idea we must make sure that those who carry out the educational mandate are armed with the ways and technologies to do it. Teacher training, as one example, must be broader and deeper.

It is not enough to leave to chance the idea that if we are to have a superior educational product we must concomitantly produce a superior teacher work force. When considering the LD student it is imperative that teachers know what they are doing, as it is critical for all students. The teacher's ability to match the needs of the student with the available technologies is a key factor in the success of the *America 2000* strategy. Since many of the students will have deficits in language, it makes no sense to have teachers who do not understand language or use it well.

It is through language that most of us find the path to success and satisfaction with life. If literacy for all adult Americans by the year 2000 is a major goal, then teachers must be equipped to see that illiteracy is not a continuing problem beyond that deadline. All children must be brought into the fullness of life, and teachers, through their own understanding, knowledge, and ability became the critical element in making this possible and realizable. We



can only hope that the various panels will look closely at the issue of teacher preparation with regard to each element of the reform effort.

The National center for Learning Disabilities has stated that the following principles should apply when thinking about teaching:

- Teachers should have sensitivity to and understanding of the uniqueness of each learner.
- Teachers should be able to differentiate between behaviors which are environmentally or culturally caused and those caused by learning disabilities, and
- Teachers must have a mastery of the skills and content to be taught, and of the nature of learning and the learner.

These principles, applied to all teachers, are worthy, but applied to those who will work with LD children, in the mainstream or outside of it, are critical.

Implicit in the goals, also, is the need to find acceptable and realistic assessment tools to determine the degree to which the goals are being accomplished. Especially in relation to goal one that "by the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn," there will be concern about the nature of these assessments, how data will be gathered, and how it will be used. In order to understand the full capacity of students and to provide adequate programs for them, a whole new breed of assessment tools will be essential. The ability to look at all students in a differential way will serve the LD student well, particularly when recognition of strengths such as described by Howard Gardner (*Frames of Mind: A Theory of Multiple Intelligences*) and others are given due acknowledgement. The general disquiet about tests, discrepancy formulae, and related privacy issues are worth thorough examination as this reform process goes forward. Determining what we want the outcomes of educational effort to be will depend in large part on our ability to find appropriate measures and possible formats which are different from those we have known.

From our perspective as members of organizations which concern themselves with special needs, it is important that we watchdog activities related to educational reform. The global concerns can so easily override the issues of individual needs. This has been the pattern of the past. We can see already, in an era of tight budgets, that the services for our youngsters are gradually declining. Restructuring of the system without our constant input and vigilance may result in the further erosion of all that has been gained.

We must keep the focus on the needs of our children. A recent survey by the National PTA and Chrysler Corporation reported by *Teacher Magazine*, January 1992, showed that only 24% of the 792 parents surveyed were aware of the national goals and only 7% could recall correctly and without prompting, even one of them. If this is so, then we must double our effort to raise public awareness. A public which does not understand the changes being contemplated in education is not a public which will care about or understand individual needs.

What I hope will come from this meeting is a concerted and collaborative effort to put the notion of difference before the reformers. I hope also that we will support each other's endeavors to maintain high public awareness of what is happening in the reform movement and what impact it will have on LD students now and in the future. We have come too far and have worked too hard to obtain the gains we have achieved. Again, I thank the LDA for providing this opportunity and will await further developments with interest.

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The National Center for Learning Disabilities was founded fifteen years ago by Carrie Rozelle and is currently led by Anne Ford. This organization focuses its efforts in three major program areas: National Information and Referral; Public awareness/Legislative advocacy, and Educational/Outreach. Its I&R data are computerized and this service responds to hundreds of requests for information every month. NCLD publications including the annual magazine *Their World* reach thousands of parents, teachers and other professionals. In recent years, NCLD has concentrated attention on the national replication and distribution of selected successful programs. Throughout its history, innumerable creative ideas and programs of benefit and assistance to learning disabled individuals have been nurtured. Training and outreach has been provided to parents, teachers, youth workers, librarians, physicians, employers, the juvenile justice system, and other professionals and volunteers.



# THE SCHOOL AS A QUALITY ORGANIZATION FOR ALL STUDENTS

## Workable Solutions to Profound Problems

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Virtually every state and most school districts are examining the quality of education provided for students with "special needs." The aim is to increase the academic outcomes of these students by using new policies and practices. While tremendous controversy has surrounded attempts to integrate students with special needs into regular classrooms, real progress can only be made when one establishes the conditions of teaching and learning that enable all students, including those with learning disabilities, to achieve high quality outcomes in integrated settings.

Simplistic solutions will not resolve the profound educational and organizational problems facing students with learning difficulties. The problems of special education are located inside the problems that are being faced by "regular" education. If American education cannot solve the poor academic outcomes of regular students in regular schools, how can one expect to resolve the problems of students with special needs?

Lately, representatives of government, business, research, and education have begun to reach consensus about how best to enhance student learning for all types of students within a "dynamic, constantly changing society" (NEA, 1988). This effort involves defining the meaning of quality outcomes, describing a school-based organizational methodology for achieving these outcomes, and articulating policies and pedagogical practices that will foster successful outcomes.

### Can We Measure Quality?

A restructured organization that does not produce quality outcomes is of little value. It is of little consequence who makes decisions, or how much thought is given to the decisionmaking process, if there is no agreement on the meaning of "quality outcomes." Furthermore, decisions have little value unless the administration and staff have the skills needed to assess outcomes and program direction. The meaning and measurement of quality and productivity are issues currently being hotly debated in both education and industry. While it has no definitive meaning, it is becoming quite clear that "quality" in schools is a multi-dimensional concept. A high-quality school is one that exhibits:

1. **Performance**—Students can demonstrate knowledge acquisition and application.
2. **Transferability**—Students can translate what they have been taught and apply it to solving other problems.
3. **Reliability**—Students can use what they have learned from one instance to the next.
4. **Equity**—Every student can demonstrate high-quality work.
5. **Durability**—Students gain lasting skills and competencies that enable them to flourish after the formal schooling experience.
6. **Serviceability**—What students need to know and how students learn are constantly assessed and updated for a future in which change is the only constant.
7. **Aesthetics**—All participants (e.g., students, parents, and all school staff) are pleased with the school life and the educational experiences provided by the school.
8. **Perceived Quality**—The school has a reputation for quality within and beyond its walls.

Quality schools possess a long range vision, and there is continual assessment of the school's

program as it relates to that vision. In such a school, all participants must be able to collect and use data in the assessment process. Furthermore they must be willing, able, and equipped to make decisions based upon those data. In addition, all participants should have a sense that they have a meaningful and responsible role in accomplishing the school's objectives. The quality of their activities and their decisions must also be clear to persons outside the school.

Research has documented that many of these conditions (and others — e.g., shared high expectations, high efficacy, broad cooperation, a clear sense of purpose) are related to student achievement (Brookover and Schneider, 1978). However, few individuals will expend the energy needed to achieve such goals and objectives unless they believe that there is meaning in what they are being asked to do.

### **What is the Basis of the Quality School Movement?**

In the early 1980s, the education world discovered "effective schools." That discovery was a significant departure from some earlier theories that hypothesized that the problems of American education could be solved simply by spending money, by creating curriculums that could be made to work under any conditions (and would, thus, be both "student and teacher proof"), or by changing the socioeconomic status ratio of students (e.g., integration, busing). Instead, the effective schools research found that all learning took place within an organizational social-psychological context (Brookover, et. al. 1978; Edmonds, 1982; Lezotte, 1990), and defined that context as having:

1. A climate conducive to learning.
2. Strong leadership from the principal.
3. A focus on students' learning basics with clear goals and objectives.
4. The elimination of rigid academic tracking.
5. A school day oriented to learning.
6. A learning environment that is both pleasant and monitored.
7. An orderly, disciplined learning environment.
8. A positive, strong relationship between the community and school.

While these descriptions characterize effective schools, they fail to address two very important questions: how one gains and sustains commitment from school participants, and how one monitors the system.

Understanding how organizations create and sustain quality is aided by the new productivity/accountability models that are an outgrowth of the Statistical Process Control (SPC) techniques developed in the 1920s by Walter Shewhart at Bell Labs. These techniques were used in the defense industries to maximize product quality during World War II. Decreases in demand after the war led to a decrease in the use of SPC techniques in U.S. industry, and W. Edwards Deming took SPC to Japan where it was used to turn around the Japanese economy. Today the Deming Prize is one, if not the most, coveted industrial prize in Japan. The U.S. has rediscovered Deming and SPC within the past 5 - 6 years.

To obtain full benefits from the SPC or effective schools techniques, major proponents of quality improvement have identified management practices that enhance their use. These management practices, coupled with SPC techniques, are expected to lead to a sustained, organization-wide total quality control effort. The involvement of staff in functions such as program/product design, planning, and budget/purchasing is perceived as critical to achieving maximum benefits in quality and productivity.

Regardless of the type of activity or adopted approach, research has found that productive organizations share certain traits. If these traits may be summarized in a few words, they are: "making good decisions, greater worker involvement in decision making, and a focus on the system rather than on individuals."

## **What Conditions of Teaching and Learning are in Quality Schools?**

Using previous studies on the working conditions of teachers, the effective schools literature, and the literature on SPC, the National Education Association (NEA) has produced eleven principles describing quality educational organizations. These principles serve as the basis for a major survey of how a school's conditions of teaching and learning relate to quality student outcomes. A questionnaire based on the eleven points was developed and administered to a national random sample of teachers who are members of the NEA. To supplement data gathered from the national sample we also studied 55 schools that are located in six districts that are typical of their region of the country. Our major focus has been the relationship between the principles, student achievement, and the organizational decisionmaking in schools. The eleven principles are as follows:

1. There is a shared understanding about achievable education outcomes.
2. There is the shared belief that all students can achieve under the right conditions and that these conditions are achievable.
3. There is ongoing use and deep understanding of student assessment as a basis for organizational change.
4. There is a very high level of teacher involvement in the process of choosing teaching materials and resources.
5. Barriers to high achievement are constantly sought, identified, and remedied.
6. There is frequent, ongoing training provided to employees that helps them in performing their jobs.
7. Programs are evaluated rather than individuals.
8. There is frequent, ongoing, two-way, non-threatening communication.
9. Teamwork is used for solving problems.
10. Numbers are used constructively to make needed changes, while mandates and goals are eliminated.
11. All groups in the school and the community are involved in improving education.

Preliminary findings show that the organizational behaviors associated with SPC and the eleven principles are extremely strong predictors of quality outcomes for students. These results have also made it clear that to achieve quality teaching and learning requires the ability of individual school employees to assume new roles and responsibilities. To accomplish this will demand meaningful changes in each employee's and administrator's behavior, and in the way the educational system itself functions. Responsibility for making that possible falls to a number of other organizations or systems (e.g., higher education, school boards, state/local legislatures) that influence, serve, or supply the school system itself.

The starting point for change must be in the area of staff development. Teachers report that traditional staff development activities are extracurricular, have little topical value, and are scheduled infrequently during a school year. To make staff development meaningful and effective, it must share cutting edge knowledge and be seen as part of the normal working day of all education employees. Such programs must provide all employees with the resources to develop and maintain knowledge and skills in such areas as leadership, cooperative decisionmaking, measurement, self-evaluation, and analysis. It is clear also that unless we achieve staff development that exemplifies the essence of high quality in content and in construct for all education employees, there is little hope of achieving the high quality schools capable of meeting the global economic, social, and political challenges of the twenty-first century.

## **What are Quality Schools for Students With Special Needs?**

Successful policy must address the unique needs and long term goals for all individuals, including those with learning disabilities, by offering a full continuum of services. Every regular and special education student should be entitled to a comprehensive, integrated,



individualized program that has been developed with the active involvement of education and other professionals. These professionals should have knowledge about the needs of the student and the best possible educational environment into which the student may be placed. Systemic behavior must be dictated by the quality of student outcomes and not administrative convenience or past district policy.

Any successful policy must start with a firm vision of intended outcomes and a firm understanding of all existing rules, regulations, funding patterns, and interagency agreements. Successful policies must also include significant and meaningful input from everyone who is to be affected on a day-to-day basis by the programs. Without the input and commitment of implementers (teachers and administrators) and consumers (parents and students), the notion of a "least restrictive environment" has little hope of successful implementation and quality student outcomes.

We must look at many of the outcomes of regular and special education programs including: academic achievement, academic self-concept, desire, and the willingness to persist on difficult tasks. These assessments must monitor the impact upon long term goals of all programs and services. It must include types of related services and collaborations that are needed to deliver the education programs and services, the future personnel needs of all affected programs, the financial costs of all decisions, and models for alternative cost funding. This systematic and ongoing program monitoring must be done by all participants and be based upon the educational, social, and emotional needs of the individual and his or her disability. Changes in the program and individual student activities must be based upon data.

Any hope for achieving quality, integrated education for students with special needs and regular students also requires a comprehensive system of personnel development that provides all staff with the skills, knowledge, and resources needed to teach students with all types of learning problems. This system should include procedures for acquiring and disseminating significant knowledge that has been derived from education research and practice, and for adopting promising practices, materials, and technologies. They also include activities to help participants learn strategies for promoting collaboration and for analyzing local needs. In addition, the training must be provided throughout the school year so that all personnel may participate. Teacher certification requirements must be changed to ensure that regular education teachers are adequately trained in techniques for teaching students with learning disabilities and in the types of modifications that are necessary if these students are to succeed in any classroom.

Even the best thought out policies about integrating students with special needs into regular schools and classrooms carry no guarantee of success. Thoughtful policies create opportunity, but classroom practices establish relationships and outcomes. Some of the most promising practices in enhancing student academic achievement, self-esteem, interpersonal skills, and the student's ability to use knowledge and resources in his or her career, family, community, and societal settings fall under the general heading of cooperative learning.

Any lesson and curriculum materials can be modified to include cooperative learning, but it is a complex educational process. Few teachers have been trained in its use, and it is often improperly implemented. To be successful, cooperative education must:

1. link students so that they cannot succeed unless other group members also succeed;
2. provide face-to-face opportunity for students to promote, help, assist, support, encourage, and praise each others' efforts to learn;
3. provide assessment to the group and the individual;
4. develop leadership, decisionmaking, trust-building, communication, and conflict-management skills; and,
5. allow time for group processing.



## Conclusions:

Quality education for students with special needs, including their placement in regular classrooms, can be successful. It must begin with the underlying principle that all students can succeed and learn. It must also have a full array of service options available for all students, with placement based on individual educational needs as determined by a diagnostic team (that includes regular educators, special educators, parents, administrators, and when appropriate, the student). If all students are to reach their potential, both in academics and in life, the educational program must feature early identification and remediation of any learning difficulties, an individual educational program appropriate to the student's needs, classroom modifications, coping strategies, and positive reinforcement. Also, it must feature professional collaboration between all participants. And the individuals delivering the program, those who are responsible for its success, must design the program.

All professional staff must be fully prepared and properly credentialed to meet the diverse needs of all students. There must be a comprehensive preservice and inservice strategy with regular and special educators trained together. Effective preservice education includes preparing all teachers in all preparation programs to understand and work with students with learning disabilities. Effective inservice training, a responsibility of the district, must facilitate the identification of outcome-based programmatic needs and provide programs during the school day that are part of normal organizational activity.

The successful education of integrated populations of students who have varied learning styles, strengths, and abilities must also include strategic planning at both the building and district levels, timely access to pre-referral help, a broad view of student outcomes that includes the education of the whole child, and assessment by everyone involved in the programs using appropriate assessment procedures (e.g., portfolios, classroom observations, etc.). In addition, a successful program needs to have administrative support for staff, parents, and programs; ongoing support for strategies, materials and discipline; and accessible facilities.

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## **THE SCHOOL BOARD'S ROLE IN EDUCATING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

*Delores G. McGhee, Member  
National School Boards Association  
Atlanta, Georgia*

On behalf of President Arlene Penfield and other members of the NSBA Board of Directors, let me begin by expressing appreciation for your generous invitation to be with you today. I am delighted to represent our President and our Association in these discussions because they are indeed very important to us. Two examples will illustrate this point.

First, the institutional position—NSBA supports the federal programs to assist local school districts in educating children with special needs. This includes:

- urging Congress to provide funding for special education sufficient to pay all costs of federally mandated services to children where such costs exceed the average per pupil expenditure in the district;
- increase federal funding for special education to achieve the statutory goals of P.L. 94-142; and
- support for an appropriate public education for all handicapped children.

Also included is:

- opposition to cutbacks and savings that are made at the expense of handicapped children; and
- opposition to any requirement under P.L. 94-142 that results in student discipline policies for handicapped students that are different from non-handicapped students, except where the behavior is caused by the student's handicapping condition.

Secondly, let's review President Penfield's personal activities in this area.

- She has been a member of the New York State Education Commissioner's Advisory Panel for Education of Children with Handicapping Conditions since 1984.
- She has been a consultant to and participant in a New York State program called "Helping Teachers Teaching the Learning Disabled Child."
- She serves on the Advisory Board for "Itinerant Teachers for the Neurologically Impaired."
- She was the founding chairman of the National Association of State Advisory Councils for Vocational Education and has a special interest in the impact of vocational education programs for handicapped students.

I hope that these examples illustrate the full commitment of NSBA and its leadership to the goals that your association seeks to achieve on behalf of learning disabled students.

Your invitational letter to Arlene listed fourteen specific issues or areas that you invited her to speak to. As I reviewed them, it became quickly apparent to me that these were areas of specialization—areas which I certainly am not equipped to tackle. My collegiate training was in the fields of Spanish and history; and my experience, professionally, was as a teacher and

counselor. So I won't pretend to speak to your areas of specializations.

I do wish to emphasize, however, that the school board's role and responsibility in this arena are threefold:

First, the board must establish policies that provide for equity and excellence in educational opportunity for all students—including those that are learning disabled;

Second, the board must work with funding agencies and sources to ensure that to the extent possible, a maximum of resources are provided to support the educational program; and

Third, the board must monitor the progress of the implementation of its policies and evaluate their effectiveness in a systematic way.

Before assuming their duties, all school board members in Georgia take an oath of office, which is administered by the judge of the probate court. In part, that oath states: "I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully discharge all duties required of me by law as a member of the Board of Education of (this) county, to the best of my ability..." There are some other things that must be sworn to and the oath ends with these words..."I will support the Constitution of the United States and of this state, so help me God."

As we think about these words, nowhere is it stated or implied that these promises are made only on behalf of average students, gifted and talented students, or students who are well, healthy, happy and divorced from any handicapping condition.

No, the obligation and responsibilities, which are profound, are directed to all who attend and all who serve the public schools of our nation. Arlene believes this. So do I. And, so do the 97,000 other men and women who serve on the school boards of this nation.

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The National School Boards Association is the nationwide advocacy organization for public school governance. NSBA's mission is to foster excellence and equity in public elementary and secondary education in the United States through local school board leadership. NSBA achieves its mission by amplifying the influence of school boards across the country in all public forums relevant to federal and national education issues, by representing the school board perspective before federal government agencies and with national organizations that affect education, and by providing vital information and services to federation members and school boards throughout the nation.

## THE ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE EDUCATIONAL REFORM MOVEMENT

Rosemary F. Bowler, Ph.D.  
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The Orton Dyslexia Society  
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The Orton Dyslexia Society congratulates LDA for sponsoring this symposium and inviting the participation of representatives of a broad spectrum of organizations, agencies, and institutions concerned with education generally and with the education of the learning disabled specifically. All of us who care about children, about the future of our nation, and about the direction of American education must give thoughtful consideration to the ambitious goals proposed by *America 2000*. It is, of course, easy to dismiss this document, along with much that has come out of the largely top-down reform movement in education, as mere rhetoric or political posturing.

To do so, however, may blind us to the real question—why, at this particular time in our history, are our schools the object of such intense and sustained analysis? To what extent must we accept a share of the responsibility for the threats which the reform movement may hold for those students for whom we have special concern?

Human nature being what it is, attacking those who propose changes we fear is more popular than examining such proposals in the broad context of current social, economic, and philosophical conditions.

Drawing the line between responsible advocacy and that which guarantees turning those who are potential allies—or at least potential neutrals—into enemies is a skill we have not yet perfected. It's far less taxing to place and announce blame than it is to undertake the laborious task of compromise and consensus building.

Keeping these ideas in mind, I'd like to concentrate my remarks on the issue of teacher education as it relates both to the instruction of language learning disabled students and to the reform movement in education. LDA has already taken a position regarding the education of regular education teachers in its position paper entitled "Teacher Education Related to Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities." This document includes recommendations concerning course requirements and certification standards.

It recommends that "State Legislatures should require that all educators must successfully complete a standardized special education methods course prior to granting certification" and then goes on to delineate the content of such a standardized course.

This document is an excellent starting point for addressing the most critical missing link in the education of all children—learning disabled or not. We would take this document and expand it to confront the larger issue of the quality of teacher preservice and inservice training at all levels, in all disciplines, in regular education and in special education. One million new teachers will come into our schools between now and the year 2000. The more than one million already teaching need the opportunity to upgrade their skills and the level of their mastery of the content of instruction.

If we accept the data that indicate that the largest percent of students who are learning disabled are those who display deficiencies in reading, writing, and spelling, then we need to look at the content and quality of instruction in reading and language methods the teachers of these students receive.

Typically an elementary teacher-in-training is required to take a one-semester course in reading methodology. Such courses generally provide an overview of the field of reading, make brief if any reference to reading/language problems, and emphasize the currently favored instructional philosophy. Even that method seldom is presented in sufficient depth to insure that the neophyte teacher will not have to learn on the job, by the seat of his pants. It is the exception, rather than the rule, to find classroom teachers who do not rely—often throughout their careers—on the generic lessons provided by teachers' manuals, rather than, with confidence, calling on their own deep knowledge to help them tailor instruction to the needs and learning styles of their students.

Even more disturbing is the fact that few special educators come into the schools with mastery of a variety of instructional methodologies. They tend to be very well equipped in areas such as the nature of learning differences, the social and emotional impact of learning disabilities and other special education needs, and the requirements of federal and state legislation. Their lack of general classroom experience contributes to the unfortunate "we-they" standoff which too often characterizes the relationship between regular and special educators. It also contributes to the increased narrowing of our perception of the range of normal behavior and achievement.

When a particular reading philosophy corners the market, as has been the case for most of the life of our public schools, teachers are sent into the classroom with a very limited ability to fit the curriculum to the child. Whether it is the heyday of phonics, of look-say, or of whole language matters little. That theorists, writers, and publishers control the education of teachers as they do is a reality we have failed to relate to the form, content, and quality of education which is available to students across the learning continuum.

While we must never lose sight of the importance of providing special services for those who truly need them, we have a moral responsibility to insure that no student is labelled learning disabled when, in fact, he is the victim of inadequately prepared teachers. We would not—do not—tolerate physicians who had but one treatment for all patients. Yet we routinely send teachers out to instruct an increasingly divergent student population with meager background in effective teaching methods.

The Orton Dyslexia Society has placed the issue of teacher education as its number one programmatic goal for the 90s. While we do, of course, have strong feelings about the failure of schools of education to provide teachers with instructional methods we have seen work well for language learning disabled students, we have no interest in fanning the eternal flame of controversy over the relative merits of whole language and structured language. We are, however, determined to make available to all teachers those methods we know can save countless thousands of students from years of failure and frustration.

We have faith that most teachers, given the tools, will do the job. That with the ability to choose the best approach for each student—and ability that only comes with mastery of a number of approaches—more students will be successful in regular education. When regular education expands the range of normalcy, then those students who truly need the expertise of special educators will indeed receive it. They no longer will be subject to placement in resource rooms which encompass many different learning styles and levels.

We advocate extending the provisions LDA has outlined in its recommendations for teacher education and certification. We urge the adoption of a preservice program for all teachers which includes a one-semester course in the history and structure of the English language and for all elementary teachers, reading teachers, and special education teachers a full-year course in reading methods which requires that students demonstrate their knowledge of at least three distinct reading approaches: whole language, basal reader, and code emphasis.

We are, as all of you are, cognizant of the enormous difficulty of influencing policy makers who control teacher education and certification. In over forty years of effort, as one of the smaller



national organizations in the field, The Orton Dyslexia Society has had very limited impact in this arena. The frustration is great, the temptation to throw in the towel and put our energies into preaching to the choir is ever-present.

But we truly believe that unless and until teachers are given options so that they can provide options for their students we will never approach the goal of eradicating illiteracy and maximizing human potential. We know that a case for alternative methodologies can be made, but that it will only be made when we can demonstrate the effectiveness of such methodologies. We also know that no one organization, working in isolation, has much chance of effecting change in the entrenched bureaucracy of schools of education and state boards of education.

Therefore, The Orton Dyslexia Society will, within the next several weeks, issue an invitation to all of the member organizations of NJCLD, as well as the various associations of professionals concerned with teacher education and with the learning disabled to join with us in establishing a Task Force on Effective Teaching for the Language Learning Disabled. The purpose of this Task Force will be to plan and seek funding for a major national meeting in 1993 or 1994 to examine existing research and to develop designs for future research on effective teaching methodologies.

We believe that working together can make a difference. That by joining forces we have a chance to effect change that alone none of us can achieve. Let's stop blaming the victim—whether student or teacher. Let's insist that teachers be empowered to do the finest job possible for all students. Let's fight as vigorously now for quality teacher education which demands content variety and mastery as we have fought for student and parent rights in the past.

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The Orton Dyslexia Society, founded in 1949, is the only international, nonprofit, scientific and educational organization exclusively dedicated to the study and treatment of dyslexia. The Society promotes effective teaching approaches and related clinical educational intervention; supports and encourages interdisciplinary study and research; facilitates the exploration of the causes and early identification of dyslexia; and is committed to the responsible and wide dissemination of research-based knowledge. The society is a membership organization with 44 branches managed by volunteers throughout the United States, Canada and Israel. Members include educators, physicians, psychologists, speech-language psychologists, dyslexics and parents. The national office, located in Baltimore, Maryland, serves as a clearinghouse of information for resources throughout the country, and has numerous publications for purchase. Its quarterly newsletter and yearly scholarly journal keeps members and friends abreast of current information in the field.

**THE SPECIAL/ REGULAR EDUCATION INTEGRATION INITIATIVE  
FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES:  
Preliminary Findings from  
A Current Investigation of Program Change**

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The research reported in this paper was supported by funds from the U.S. Department of Education, Educational Research Grant Program: Field-Initiated Studies (#R117E10145) for a project entitled *Special Education Integration-Unification Initiative for Students with Specific Learning Disabilities: An Investigation of Program Status and Impact*. I gratefully wish to acknowledge the contributions of individuals who participated in the study: Sandra Dill, *project research assistant*, and Gretchen Troutman, who assisted with content analysis of the *open-ended* survey items. Views expressed herein should not be considered as those held by the funding agency or any other individual or professional group.

Declarations that this country and the world are in the midst of unprecedented changes are undisputed truisms that now seem trite. Politicians, industrial and business leaders, members of the scientific community, representatives of state and governmental agencies, American workers, and families all bear witness to these changes and their growing and often negative impact on every facet of our daily endeavors. Instant communications offer constant inspection of local and world events, global change and forecasts of pervasive impact. Collectively, traditional indicators engender widespread concern and a search for explanations of how to better manage resources and avoid what already appear to be significant negatives that are eroding the overall quality of life or standard of living in this country.

Clearly, America's education system is not insulated from these influences. For some time now, this system has been targeted as a significant part of the problem through numerous task force reports, statistics depicting declining performance in national and global academic competitions, and employers' accounts of ill-prepared workers. Some of the most striking indictments of our current educational system are found within the recent national educational reform treatise, *American 2000: An Educational Strategy* (1991). Therein we read:

"(a)s a nation we now invest more in education than in defense. But the results have not improved, we're not coming close to our potential or what is needed... Almost all our educational trend lines are flat... American students are at or near the back of the pack in international comparisons. If we don't make radical changes, that is where we are going to stay" (p.1).

Despite these harsh criticisms, schools also have been targeted as critical partners if we are to succeed in our efforts to address this country's skills-and-knowledge gap and, in turn, our broader societal problems. However, during a period of economic turn-down and shrinking resources, two resounding questions have been "What changes are needed in our educational institutions to produce a work force capable of effectively managing changes within this country and the global community?" and "How can we achieve better returns on our educational efforts and expenditures?"

Those who have examined these intertwined and complex issues point to the need for educational strategies that foster ongoing development of quality programs and services for all students, including those with special needs. As with any enterprise, pursuit of quality programs demands a critical review of current status and practices, clarity of goals, *stakeholders'* commitment to the

achievement of shared goals, a well-articulated philosophy to direct pursuit of stated goals, and a valid and systematic means for assessing efficacy of goal-directed efforts and for fine-tuning these efforts. Clearly, the issues we discuss in this symposium cannot be viewed apart from the overall context of reform efforts underway both within and outside the field of education (e.g. Deming, 1986; Dobyns & Crawford-Mason, 1991).

Quite logically, in a period where meeting the burden of educational programming for all students is becoming increasingly difficult, resources allocated to any special group and subsequent related outcomes will no doubt be examined more closely. This phenomenon is quite evident to those providing services to students with special learning needs. These professionals are confronted by many legitimate questions such as:

1. "What are the documented benefits and disadvantages of these programs?"
2. "Could the desired outcomes be accomplished via more efficient program delivery options?"
3. "What are the critical attributes of effective instruction and to what extent are these applicable to all students?"
4. "Faced with limited school budgets, can we justify spending resources on segments of the population at the expense of other students who have significant learning problems but who do not qualify for special education services?"
5. "Are we structured or regulated in a way that prevents the development and implementation of promising solutions to current educational problems?"
6. "Could we make better use of the school personnel and other resources we have?"

Close scrutiny of this phenomenon points to a number of factors that have heightened inspection of programs serving students with various disabilities. For learning disabilities, foremost among these have been: a lack of clarity regarding parameters for the construct, specific learning disabilities; sharp criticisms regarding the validity, efficacy, and efficiency of the identification process; explosive increases in the number of individuals qualifying for learning disability services; insufficient differentiation of presenting disabilities; limited evidence of distinct disability - intervention linkages, and insufficient longitudinal research to validate program outcomes as indicators of program quality.

In response to many questions and concerns, a number of professionals (e.g., Doyle & LaGrasta, 1988; Hauptman, 1982; Gartner, 1986; Gartner & Lipsky, 1989; Jenkins, Pious, & Peterson, 1988; Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1988; Wang & Reynolds, 1985; Wang & Walberg, 1988; Stainback & Stainback, 1984; 1987; Will, 1986) suggest that students with learning disabilities and other handicapping conditions would be better (and more efficiently) served in general education class-

rooms where, with the support of special education personnel, all students with learning difficulties (not necessarily disabilities) could benefit without the stigma of segregated programming. This controversial concept promoted under the terms, *Regular Education Initiative (REI)* and *integrated or unified* programming, is being adopted and implemented in school systems on the basis of proponents' optimism for: (1) successful outcomes without the stigma associated with segregated programs, (2) widespread benefits to all students, and (3) greater cost efficiency through a merger of all school resources in one unified effort. Key to this perspective is the belief that ownership for learning difficulties should be taken from the shoulders of the students and recast as an educational mismatch requiring a well-coordinated, unified intervention effort (Gartner & Lipsky, 1989). In some settings this has been interpreted as a mandate for *full-inclusion* and abandonment of the continuum of services as a means for ensuring education within the least restrictive environment.

The optimism of proponents has been tempered by calls for careful attention to many unanswered questions related to this initiative. Position statements related to this initiative have been prepared by organizations including the *National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities* (1987; 1991); the *Division of Learning Disabilities* (1986), and the *Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities -- now LDA* (1986; Gallagher, 1991). Along with position statements, a number of professionals have expressed specific concerns related to:

1. the absence of sufficient empirical evidence to support such changes (Anderegg & Vergason, 1987; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1988; Kauffman, Gerber, & Semmel, 1988; Keogh, 1990; Martin, 1987; McKinney & Hocutt, 1988; Wagner, 1990; Wiederholt, 1989; Zigmond & Baker, 1990);
2. fear that the movement toward integrated services (through increased "general" education placements) will cause students with specific learning disabilities (and other handicapping conditions) to be unserved or inadequately served (Lerner, 1987); and,
3. doubts of the extent that general education teachers can and will accommodate the special needs of students with learning disabilities with increased integration (Bryan, Bay, & Donahue, 1988; Byrnes, 1990; Kauffman, Gerber, & Semmel, 1988; Lieberman, 1985; McKinney & Hocutt, 1988; Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, & Lesar, 1991).

It is fair to say that the *REI* has created much debate along with a call for closer scrutiny of this dramatic policy shift including the extent and characteristics of system-level implementation efforts and actual and perceived outcomes. Regarding the need for scrutiny, Martin noted that "(a)n appropriate public policy for the present should be a very conservative one, seeking to gather scientifically valid information, well replicated in a number of studies by different researchers and quite consistent. This is preferable to making wholesale attempts to change educational practices affecting millions of

children on the basis of scant research information, even though there is an interesting philosophy taken at face value behind these charges" (1987, p 14). Gartner and Lipsky, proponents of *REI*, advise that "...the focus of the scrutiny must be on outcomes for students. . . The scarce resources of public funds and trust and, most importantly, student needs, demand no less" (1989, p. 29). Conceding that it is a fantasy to believe that policy change is derived from empirical findings rather than social-political forces, Keogh (1990) writes that "...when focused on educational reform, it is clear that one major responsibility of the research community is to study systematically and comprehensively the implementation of change" (page 186).

Consistent with Keogh's recommendation, a multi-faceted research project is now underway to develop a state-wide snapshot of current changes in services for students with specific learning disabilities resulting from the *REI* (Houck, *in progress*, funded by USDE R117E10145). Although the study is incomplete, preliminary findings from *Phase I* involving an initial survey of Special Education Supervisors throughout Virginia provide a window to what appears to be considerable efforts to achieve increased integration of students with specific learning disabilities. These results relate to some of the focal issues being considered in this symposium and are, therefore, shared as a stimulus to discussion.

### Methodology

As the initial step to the overall investigation, the population of district-level Supervisors of Special Education were queried via a mail survey. The survey instrument contained 57 *Likert-type* and three *open-response* items designed to obtain information regarding:

1. the extent of *active* efforts to increase the amount of time students with specific learning disabilities spend in the regular classroom beyond recent practice.
2. the adoption of any guidelines, written philosophies, or policies within the school division specifically designed to achieve increased integration of students with specific learning disabilities.
3. respondents' personal opinions regarding seventeen statements related to the *REI* for students with specific learning disabilities.
4. respondents' opinions regarding the extent that these same seventeen factors have served as the basis for any current policy or programmatic changes within their system to increase use of the integration model for students with specific learning disabilities. (Answered only by respondents in systems actively attempting to increase integration of these students.)
5. the extent that specific factors are or have been present within the respondents' school divisions during efforts to increase the use of the integration model for students with specific learning disabilities.



6. data being systematically collected and summarized on a school or system basis related to educational outcomes for students with specific learning disabilities.
7. respondents' opinions regarding the primary or basic reason for integration efforts within systems actively seeking implementation of this model.
8. respondents' opinions regarding the primary or basic reason why integration efforts are not occurring within systems not actively seeking implementation of this model.
9. respondents' views concerning major obstacles related to implementation of the integration model for serving students with specific learning disabilities

The last three queries were addressed using an *open-response* format.

Prototype survey materials were reviewed by professionals in an adjacent state and revised based on comments and suggestions elicited via a structured follow-up interview with pilot-phase participants. The refined survey materials were then sent to all individuals identified by the Virginia Department of Education as the designated supervisor or administrator for special education services within each school division. Adjusting for the three systems sharing one supervisor, 100 (76%) of the 132 surveys were returned and used in the generation of descriptive statistics for the preliminary findings reported herein.

### Results

Respondents reported *extensively active* (21.3%) or *somewhat active* (64%) attempts to increase the amount of time students with specific learning disabilities spend in the regular classroom beyond current practices at all instructional levels. Of the 95 supervisors responding to the policy-related item, 80 (82.5%) reported an absence of any adopted school division guidelines, written philosophies, or policies which were specifically designed to *increase* the time students with specific learning disabilities spend in the regular classroom while 15.5% reported the existence of such policies.

*Personal Views.* Supervisors were asked to share their personal views related to the special education/regular education integration initiative by indicating whether they *agreed*, *tended to agree*, *tended to disagree* or *disagreed* with 17 topic-related statements. (A *no opinion* response option also was available.) Table 1 presents results in descending order of the supervisors' overall agreement.

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See Appendix 1

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Looking at extremes, supervisors expressed strongest personal agreement with the following statements.

The special education/regular education integration model:

1. reduces the stigma associated with specific learning disabilities.
2. results in genuine sharing of instructional responsibilities among professionals.
3. provides equal or superior learning opportunities, and
4. improves post-school adjustment for students with specific learning disabilities

These positive perceptions are strikingly different from the pessimistic views regarding whether regular classroom educators have or are willing to make needed instructional adaptations for students with specific learning disabilities. Fifty percent of the supervisors *tended to disagree* or *disagreed* that regular teachers have the necessary skills to make needed instructional adaptations for these students and 66% *tended to disagree* or *disagreed* that regular educators were willing to make needed instructional adaptations.

These findings, taken together with the overwhelming rejection of the view that students with learning disabilities learn no differently from their non-disabled peers (i.e., 82% *tended to disagree* or *disagreed*), point to what would appear to be rather serious problems for those systems seeking to increase the amount of time students with specific learning disabilities spend in the general education classrooms. If these views reflect reality, substantial efforts will be needed to achieve a *goodness of fit* for these students who are reportedly spending an increasing amount of time in regular classroom settings.

On the matter of total integration for all students, 58% of the supervisors *tended to disagree* or *disagreed* that this is a realistic goal for students with specific learning disabilities; a goal espoused by some of the integration initiative's most ardent supporters. Moreover, a substantial number of respondents (44.4%) *tended to disagree* or *disagreed* that "pull-out" programs do students with specific learning disabilities more harm than good. With regard to integration proponents' forecasts for greater cost efficiency, roughly half (51%) of the supervisors *tend to disagree* or *disagreed* that special education costs are reduced through use of the integration model.

*Driving Forces.* In an attempt to determine what factors may be driving efforts to increase the amount of time students with specific learning disabilities spend within the regular classroom beyond recent practices, supervisors were asked to indicate to what extent they believed the same 17 statements serve as the basis for programmatic changes designed to increase use of the integration model for these students within their school divisions. Respondents were asked to indicate whether each

factor contributed *to a great extent, to some extent, to a limited extent, or to no extent.* (Again, a *no opinion* option also was available.) Table 2 presents the 17 statements in descending order of their perceived influence.

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See Appendix 2

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Once again expectations for decreased *stigma* appears to be a significant influence. Over 91% of the supervisors viewed anticipated benefits in terms of reduced stigma associated with specific learning disabilities served as a basis for programmatic change toward increased use of the integration model *to some extent or to a great extent.* A high proportion of respondents also felt that the anticipated benefits of improved post-school adjustment (82.9%), and opportunities for equal or superior learning opportunities when an integration model is used (80.9%) were factors in programming shifts *to some or to a great extent.* Encouragement from administrators/supervisors (74.6%), better staff utilization ((74.2%), the belief that regular educators are able to make needed instructional adaptations for students with learning disabilities (70.3%), the view that the integration model results in a genuine sharing of instructional responsibilities (69.8%), and the belief that research findings document equal or superior outcomes for students with specific learning disabilities who are served in the integration model (61.3%) also were judged to be influences contributing to program change *to some or to a great extent.* Interestingly, reductions in special education costs was viewed as the factor having least influence.

*Supports for Change.* School systems reporting active efforts to increase the amount of time students with specific learning disabilities spend in the regular classroom beyond recent practice were asked to indicate to what extent six characteristics often associated with an effective change process were present to support increased integration efforts. Response choices were *clearly present, present to some extent, not present, or can't judge* (See Table 3).

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See Appendix 3

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None of the six characteristics were reported as being *clearly present* by 50% or more of the respondents, although flexibility in planning and implementation to coincide with the unique character-

istics of individual schools was a characteristic which 46.2% of the supervisors considered to be *clearly present*. Four characteristics were rated as being *present to some extent* by 50% or more of the respondents. Characteristics included involvement of key stakeholders, establishment of realistic goals for integration, clear articulation of goals for integration, and access to necessary resources and support for integration. The least present characteristic appears to be a systematic process for evaluating the process and outcomes of integration. Almost half (41.5%) of the supervisors indicated that this component was lacking in their integration efforts.

*Data Collected and Summarized.* Related to impact evaluation, supervisors also were asked to indicate whether specific outcomes data were being systematically collected and summarized on an individual school or school system basis for students with learning disabilities. Findings presented in Table 4 suggest that limited data are available specifically for students with learning disabilities and several important indicators are, for the most part, unavailable as part of overall special education accountability measure.

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See Appendix 4

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This limited availability of outcomes data by disability presents a significant barrier to any internal and external efforts to evaluate outcomes related to any specific program changes such as increased integration efforts.

*Comments on Basis for Local Integration Efforts.* Seventy-one supervisors provided an opinion regarding what they considered to be the primary or basic reason(s) for increased integration efforts within their school divisions. A content analysis was completed to identify response trends. Of the 122 reasons offered, 51 (41.8%) related to instructional benefits (e.g., regular classroom integration provides the least restrictive environment for students, *pull-out* programs have been ineffective, students need to be exposed to more accurate content, integration better meets the academic needs of special education students). Administrative and resource issues (e.g., more effective use of personnel, funding, and space), were the focus of 21 (17.2%) of the comments. Outside influences (e.g., research on integration, best practice or mandates in special education, middle school restructuring), long-range benefits (e.g., increases in students' self-esteem, better preparation for post-school adjustment, decreases in dropout rate), and communication reasons (e.g., increases understanding

about students with disabilities) were mentioned with relatively equal frequency. Reasons related to attitude (e.g., "integration is the right thing to do," and interest of special education staff) were among the least cited influences (see Table 5).

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See Appendix 5

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*Obstacles Encountered.* Supervisors involved with efforts to increase use of the integration model for students with learning disabilities were asked to identify what they considered to be major obstacles to implementation. Ninety respondents provided 208 reasons which are reported in Table 6.

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See Appendix 6

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The most often cited barriers related to attitudes (e.g., negative attitudes of regular educators, administrators, and special education teachers, fears or feelings of inadequacy, unwillingness to make instructional accommodations). Eighty-three (39.9%) of the 208 responses could be categorized as attitude barriers. Administrative or resource issues (e.g., lack of funds, needed personnel, and time and scheduling constraints) represented the next most frequently accounting for 59 (28.4%) of the cited obstacles followed by comments relating to a need for more information, knowledge, and personnel preparation (13.9%), lack of support (11.5%), and greater support and improved communication among the key *stakeholders* (7.2%). Insufficient flexibility of regulations and certification standards as well as the desire for more research on integration were other obstacles mentioned.

*Reasons for No Active Integration Efforts.* Supervisors employed in school divisions that were not actively seeking to increase the amount of time students with learning disabilities spend in the regular classroom were asked to indicate primary reasons for their lack of movement toward increased integration. Forty-four individuals responded giving 60 reasons. Of these, administrative issues (e.g., the need for additional knowledge and inservice, other issues seen as more important, lack of money, lack of leadership to such change, preparation time constraints) were mentioned most often (43%) with attitude barriers (e.g., poor teacher attitude, lack of interest and support from regular

teachers) and instructional concerns (e.g., current IEP process is effective, better services for all students) being the next most mentioned reasons (see Table 7)

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See Appendix 7

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### Discussion

Taken together, these preliminary findings clearly indicate active efforts to increase the amount of time students with specific learning disabilities spend within regular classrooms throughout Virginia. In most systems, these changes appear to be occurring in the absence of any explicit guidelines, written philosophies, or policies adopted by school divisions designed specifically to increase the time students with specific learning disabilities spend in the regular classroom. Although this lack may reflect the speed of changes or perhaps a reluctance to articulate statements that might be challenged as a departure from a full continuum of instructional options, it is somewhat difficult to envision how such program changes can be well understood by the various *stakeholders* without such guiding statements.

Based on the personal opinions of special education supervisors tabulated from the structured survey items, along with their assessments regarding factors influencing increased integration efforts, one major *driving force* in program change appears to be the proposition that students with specific learning disabilities will experience less stigma if educated in general education classrooms. Coupled with this are the beliefs that equal or superior learning opportunities are associated with the integration model and that post-school adjustment will improve through use of this model. However, based on supervisors reports, a ready means for verifying these anticipated benefits may prove difficult given what appears to be limited availability of evaluation plans to accompany systems' integration efforts (see Table 3, item 6) and current practices in the collection of student outcomes data (see Table 4).

Unlike integration proponents (Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1987; Wang & Reynolds, 1985; Wang & Walberg, 1988; Stainback & Stainback, 1984; 1987; Will, 1986), supervisors are not persuaded that costs will be reduced nor do they view costs as a major influence of change. These forecasts for greater cost efficiency must also be tested



Supervisors clearly reject the belief that students with specific learning disabilities learn no differently from their non-disabled peers. Further, the majority personally disagree that regular educators are willing to make needed instructional changes for students with learning disabilities: a requirement seemingly fundamental to a successful program change effort. This, of course, has been a fear expressed by many professionals and professional organizations.

Such inconsistencies are difficult to reconcile. Perhaps some insight comes from survey responses related to the statement, "*Research findings document equal or superior outcomes for students with specific learning disabilities who are served in the integration model.*" Here the majority of supervisors clearly indicate personal agreement (i.e., 67%) yet 26% of the respondents expressed no opinion on the matter. Systematic searches of the literature reveal a plethora of conceptual or opinion articles on *REI* but only recently are data-based studies being reported that relate specifically to outcomes for students with specific learning disabilities (e.g., Cooper & Speece, 1990; Nowecek, McKinney, & Hallahan, 1990; Schulte, Osborne, & McKinney, 1990; Zigmond & Baker, 1990). Perhaps professional views have been swayed by the many opinion articles and presentations and/or the overall emphasis on educational reform. However, desiring or forecasting certain program outcomes and actually being able to document such outcomes represent two very different circumstances that should not be confused. In this regard, the lack of a systematic process for evaluating the process and outcomes of integration efforts is somewhat troubling, especially given the speed and scope of recent integration efforts. Through our overall study, we hope to document the views of other key *stakeholders* (i.e., general supervisors, building principals, regular classroom teachers, learning disability teachers, students with specific learning disabilities, and their parents) in order to record and better understand the status of what appear to be unprecedented changes. Although the focus of this investigation is limited to one state, it is quite possible that similar studies may be helpful as a baseline for change in other settings.

Meanwhile, the admonitions of Martin (1987), Gartner & Lipsky (1989), and Keogh (1990) calling for conservative actions, systematic evaluation of change efforts, and scrutiny of students' outcomes demand our attention as we undertake "mold-breaking" program changes. Clearly the train called *reform* has already left the station. Its *payload* represents a generation of learners. Those serving as engineers need to make certain that a well-designed evaluation plan and critical outcomes data are available to guide this uncharted journey.

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TABLE 1

Special Education Supervisors' Personal Opinions Regarding the Integration Model for Students with Specific Learning Disabilities

Questions: To what extent do you personally agree with the following statements regarding the special education/regular education integration initiative?

	Agree	Tend to Agree	Tend to Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Missing Responses
	%	%	%	%	%	n
1. The integration model reduces the stigma associated with specific learning disabilities.	56.0	35.0	5.0	0	4.0	0
2. The integration model results in a genuine sharing of instructional responsibilities among special and regular education personnel.	45.0	45.0	4.0	2.0	4.0	0
3. Post-school adjustment of students with specific learning disabilities will improve through use of the integration model.	26.0	57.0	4.0	2.0	11.0	0
4. Students with specific learning disabilities have equal or superior learning opportunities when the interaction model is used.	43.4	44.4	9.1	2.0	1.0	1
5. The utilization of learning disability personnel is improved (e.g., number of students served, more time for direct instruction and collaborative consultation) through use of the integration model.	36.4	40.4	12.1	5.1	6.1	1
6. External consultants and/or experts have recommended use of the integration model for students with specific learning disabilities.	29.0	39.0	5.0	3.0	24.0	0
7. Research findings document equal or superior outcomes for students with specific learning disabilities who are served in the integration model.	25.0	42.0	3.0	4.0	26.0	0
8. School administrators/supervisors have encouraged implementation of the integration model for students with specific learning disabilities.	28.0	37.0	20.0	11.0	4.0	0
9. Local parents have encouraged use of the integration model for students with specific learning disabilities.	14.0	41.0	20.0	5.0	20.0	0
10. Pull-out programs do students with learning disabilities more harm than good.	9.1	41.4	31.3	13.1	5.1	0
11. Regular/general educators are able to make needed instructional adaptations for students with specific learning disabilities.	18.0	32.0	33.0	17.0	0	0
12. Dropout rates will decrease for students with specific learning disabilities through use of the integration model.	10.0	37.0	20.0	8.0	25.0	0
13. Educational costs are reduced through use of the integration model.	15.0	27.0	30.0	21.0	7.0	0
14. Total integration is a realistic goal for all students with specific learning disabilities.	16.0	25.0	42.0	16.0	1.0	0
15. Referrals and time-consuming assessments are reduced through use of the integration model.	7.0	26.0	36.0	21.0	10.0	0
16. Students with learning disabilities learn no differently from their non-handicapped peers.	3.0	13.0	36.0	46.0	2.0	0
17. Regular/general educators are willing to make needed instructional adaptations for students with specific learning disabilities.	0	34.0	49.0	17.0	0	0

Notes. <sup>1</sup>Percentages based on the responses of 100 (75%) of Virginia's Special Education Supervisors.

<sup>2</sup>Statements listed in descending order based on strength of agreement.

Table 2

Special Education Supervisors' Opinions Regarding Basic Reasons for Increased Use of the Integration Model for Students with Specific Learning Disabilities

Questions: To what extent do you believe the following statements serve as the basis for any current policy or programmatic changes within your school division to increase use of the integration model for students with specific learning disabilities?

	To A Great Extent	To Some Extent	To A Limited Extent	No Extent	No Opinion	Responses
	%	%	%	%	%	n
1. The integration model reduces the stigma associated with specific learning disabilities.	43.5	47.8	5.8	1.4	1.4	0
2. Post-school adjustment of students with specific learning disabilities will improve through use of the integration model.	31.3	51.6	6.3	1.6	9.4	1
3. Students with specific learning disabilities have equal or superior learning opportunities when the interaction model is used.	33.8	47.1	11.8	5.9	1.5	1
4. School administrators/supervisors have encouraged implementation of the integration model for students with specific learning disabilities.	30.2	44.4	23.8	0	1.6	6
5. The utilization of learning disability personnel is improved (e.g., number of students served, more time for direct instruction and collaborative consultation) through use of the integration model.	33.3	40.9	9.1	10.6	6.1	3
6. Regular/general educators are able to make needed instructional adaptations for students with specific learning disabilities.	21.9	48.4	25.0	3.1	1.6	5
7. The integration model results in a genuine sharing of instructional responsibilities among special and regular education personnel.	38.1	31.7	25.4	1.6	3.2	6
8. Research findings document equal or superior outcomes for students with specific learning disabilities who are served in the integration model.	24.2	37.1	11.3	1.6	25.8	7
9. Total integration is a realistic goal for all students with specific learning disabilities.	15.4	41.5	24.6	15.4	3.1	4
10. External consultants and/or experts have recommended use of the integration model for students with specific learning disabilities.	22.6	33.9	17.7	11.3	14.5	7
11. Pull-out programs do students with learning disabilities more harm than good.	20.3	31.3	34.4	10.9	3.1	5
12. Regular/general educators are willing to make needed instructional adaptations for students with specific learning disabilities.	12.5	39.1	40.6	6.3	1.6	5
13. Dropout rates will decrease for students with specific learning disabilities through use of the integration model.	15.6	31.3	20.3	4.7	28.1	5
14. Local parents have encouraged use of the integration model for students with specific learning disabilities.	9.5	30.2	31.7	20.6	7.9	6
15. Referrals and time-consuming assessments are reduced through use of the integration model.	6.1	33.3	15.2	39.4	6.1	3
16. Students with learning disabilities learn no differently from their non-handicapped peers.	9.1	21.2	33.3	31.8	4.5	3
17. Educational costs are reduced through use of the integration model.	15.2	12.1	27.3	39.4	6.1	3

Notes: <sup>1</sup>Percentages based on the responses of 69 Special Education Supervisors working within school systems which are actively attempting to increase the integration of students with specific learning disabilities.  
<sup>2</sup>Statements listed in descending order based on perceived strength of impact.

Table 3

Special Education Supervisors' Views Regarding the Presence of Selected Factors Within School Divisions that are Actively Attempting to Increase the Amount of Time Students with Specific Learning Disabilities Spend in the Regular Classroom

Question: To what extent do you think the following factors **are/have been present** within your school division during efforts to increase the use of the integration model for students with specific learning disabilities?

	Clearly Present	Present to Some Extent	Not Present	Can't Judge	Missing Responses
	n %	n %	n %	n %	n
1. Involvement of key stockholders (i.e., central administrators, supervisors, principals, teachers, parents, students).	21 32.8	39 60.9	4 6.3	-	3
2. Flexibility in planning and implementing integrative efforts in individual schools due to the presence of unique school characteristics.	30 46.2	29 44.6	6 9.2	-	2
3. Establishment of realistic goals for integration.	18 27.7	37 56.9	7 10.8	3 4.6	2
4. Access to necessary resources and support for integration.	14 21.5	41 63.1	9 13.8	1 1.5	2
5. Clear articulation of goals for integration.	15 22.4	37 55.2	13 19.4	2 3.0	0
6. A systematic process for evaluating the process and outcomes of the integration efforts.	5 7.7	28 43.1	27 41.5	5 7.7	2

Note: Based on responses from 67 Special Education Supervisors.

Houck, C. (1992). The REI Initiative...



**Table 4**

**Special Education Supervisors' Report of the Extent that Specific Data Are Being Systematically Collected and Summarized on a School or System Basis for Students with Specific Learning Disabilities**

**Question:** Based on your knowledge, please indicate which, if any, of the following data on students with specific learning disabilities are being **systematically collected and summarized** on a school or system-wide basis.

	n	%	Data Available for LD*	n	%	Data Available (not by category)	n	%	Data Unavailable	n	%	Can't Judge	n	%	Missing Responses
Q33 Number of students with specific learning disabilities within each delivery option each school year	58	58.6	22	22.2	13	13.1	6	6.1	1						
Q34 Educational costs in the delivery of special education services for students with specific learning disabilities	36	36.4	34	34.3	22	22.2	7	7.1	1						
Q32 Number of referrals for Special Education services	34	34.3	53	53.5	8	8.1	4	4.0	1						
Q22 Standardized measures of academic achievement	27	27.0	53	53.0	16	16.0	4	4.0	0						
Q26 Rate of diplomas granted	22	22.0	57	57.0	13	13.0	8	8.0	0						
Q25 Dropout rates	16	16.0	69	69.0	9	9.0	6	6.0	0						
Q31 Parental satisfaction with educational program for their LD students	15	15.2	13	13.1	63	63.6	8	8.1	1						
Q28 Grades for each grading period	14	14.1	53	53.5	27	27.3	5	5.1	1						
Q23 Absenteeism	11	11.0	70	70.0	15	15.0	4	4.0	0						
Q24 Grade retention	9	9.0	64	64.0	22	22.0	5	5.0	0						
Q29 Students' satisfaction in school placement	6	6.3	7	7.3	70	72.9	13	13.5	4						
Q30 Social acceptance within regular education setting	5	5.0	4	4.0	83	83.0	8	8.0	0						
Q27 Students' attitudes toward learning and school	4	4.0	14	14.1	68	68.7	13	13.1	1						

**Note:** Presentation of Supervisors' reports of outcomes data being systematically collected and synthesized is in descending order based on the reported availability for students with specific learning disabilities (n = 100).

Table 5

**Reasons for Local Efforts to Increase Use of the Integration Model for Students with Specific Learning Disabilities**

**Instructional Reasons (n=51)**

- Provides *least restrictive environment* for students (n = 11)
- Pull-out* programs have not been effective (n = 8)
- Enhances social skills of students with disabilities (n = 6)
- Exposes students to more accurate content (n = 6)
- Better meets academic needs of students (n = 4)
- Increases academic outcomes and knowledge (n = 4)
- Improves regular teachers' ability to meet the needs of all students (n = 4)
- Benefits more students (n = 3)
- Enhances full continuum of service options (n = 2)
- Enhances more effective ways for dealing with learning styles (n = 2)
- Serves students in age appropriate classes (n = 1)

**Administrative/Resource Reasons (n=21)**

- More effective use of special education personnel (n = 5)
- Funding constraints (transportation costs, budget) (n = 5)
- Addresses space limitations (n = 4)
- Decreases referrals and results in more appropriate referrals (n = 4)
- Low pupil/teacher ratio (n = 2)
- Stimulated by support from administration (n = 1)

**Outside Influences (n = 17)**

- Research finding support integration (n = 6)
- Consistent with best practices or mandates in special education (n = 4)
- Consistent with Middle School restructuring process (n = 2)
- Systems Change Project (n = 2)
- Stimulated by visits to school systems using this approach (n = 2)
- Pressure from parents (n = 1)

**Long Range Outcomes (n=15)**

- Increases students' self-esteem (n = 7)
- Better prepares students for life after school (n = 3)
- Decreases dropout rates (n = 3)
- Facilitates normalization of students (n = 2)

**Communication Reasons (n = 14)**

- Increases understanding about students with disabilities (n = 9)
- Enables teachers to help each other (n = 3)
- Increases active involvement of general educators with special educators and disabled students (n = 2)

**Attitudes (n = 4)**

- Interest of special education staff (n = 2)
- Sincere willingness of teachers (n = 1)
- Integration is the "right thing to do" (n = 1)

Note: Summary based on content analysis of 122 responses provided by 71 Special Education supervisors working in systems that are actively seeking to increase the amount of time students with specific learning disabilities spend in the regular classroom.

Table 6

**Obstacles to Increased Use of the Integration  
Model for Students with Specific Learning Disabilities**

**Attitudes (n = 83)**

- Non-supportive attitudes of regular teachers (n = 24)
- Non-supportive attitudes of administrators (n = 14)
- Non-supportive attitudes of special education teachers (n = 9)
- Fear (e.g. insecurity, inadequacy) related to integration (n = 11)
- Poor attitudes - unspecified nature and origin (n = 8)
- Unwillingness to make instructional adaptations (n = 8)
- Resistance to change (n = 5)
- Negative attitudes about persons with disabilities (n = 4)

**Administrative/Resource Obstacles (n = 52)**

- Inadequate funds (n = 15)
- Time constraints (n = 12)
- Insufficient personnel (n = 11)
- Scheduling difficulties (n = 8)
- Large case loads (n = 3)
- Insufficient classroom size/space (n = 3)

**Insufficient Personnel Preparation (n = 29)**

- Inadequate training and staff inservice for model implementation (n = 25)
- Insufficient knowledge and necessary information (n = 4)

**Lack of Other Needed Support (n = 24)**

- Inadequate support of regular educators (n = 11)
- Inadequate support of parents (n = 6)
- Inadequate support of principals (n = 5)
- Inadequate support of special education staff (n = 1)
- Inadequate student cooperation (n = 1)

**Communication Obstacles (n = 15)**

- Inadequate communication/cooperation between regular and special education personnel (n = 7)
- Issues of turf and control (n = 7)
- Lack of clearly stated goals (n = 1)

**Other Influences (n = 5)**

- Insufficient flexibility of State Department of Education regarding regulations and certification requirements (n = 3)
- Insufficient data/research (n = 2)

Note: Summary based on content analysis of 208 responses provided by 90 Special Education supervisors.

Table 7

Reasons for No Active Efforts to Increase Use of the  
Integration Model for Students with Specific Learning Disabilities

**Administration Reasons (n = 26)**

- Requires additional knowledge & inservice training (n = 11)
- Other issues seen as more important (n = 4)
- Lack of time for preparation (n = 3)
- Inadequate leadership to initiate the integration model (n = 2)
- Inadequate funds (n = 2)
- Requires support and involvement of *stakeholders* (n = 2)
- Need for additional staff (n = 1)
- High number of LD students (n = 1)

**Attitudes (n = 10)**

- Poor teacher attitudes - unspecified (n = 3)
- Lack of interest/support of regular educators (n = 3)
- Regular education teachers' reluctance to work with special education teachers (n = 1)
- Non-supportive attitudes of administrators at building level (n = 1)
- Resistance of LD teachers (n = 1)
- Lack of empathy - unspecified focus (n = 1)

**Instructional Reasons (n = 7)**

- Current IEP process is effective (n = 3)
- Better service to all students (n = 2)
- Need to provide instruction in LRE based of students' needs not program model (n = 1)
- Teachers & administrators feel identified students need special programs (n = 1)

**Communication (n = 2)**

- Turf and control issues (n = 1)
- Lack of communication (n = 1)

**Other Needs (n = 4)**

- Currently investigating the approach; need research data on efficacy of model (n = 3)
- Lack of direction from State Department of Education (n = 1)

**Other Responses (n = 11)**

- Planned initiation scheduled for 1992-93 (n = 4)
- Involved in integration at some levels (n = 6)
- Makes sense to empower regular education personnel (n = 1)

Note: Summary based on content analysis of 60 responses provided by 44 Special Education supervisors.

The Council for Learning Disabilities is an international organization of and for professionals who represent diverse disciplines and who are committed to the education and life span development of individuals with learning disabilities. The organization works to facilitate the exchange of up-to-date information among members and with other professional organizations. CLD seeks to provide standards of excellence and to promote innovative strategies for research and practice through interdisciplinary collegiality, collaboration and advocacy.

As publisher of two quarterly publications (the Learning Disability Quarterly and LD Forum) and sponsor of annual international and regional conferences, CLD provides an ongoing forum for the examination of important field-related issues. Together, these mechanisms serve as a means for stimulating communication and collaboration among members and outside the Council structure. CLD is a member of the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities and works closely with other professional organizations to address pertinent issues.

In keeping with its mission to foster professional excellence, each year the Council for Learning Disabilities seeks to identify and recognize outstanding professional achievements in the field of learning disabilities through an awards program. For additional information about CLD, contact: Kirsten McBride, Executive Secretary, Council for Learning Disabilities, P.O. Box 40303, Overland Park, KS 66204, 913/492-8755.