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ABSTRACT

This report describes the process followed by the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) in developing a comprehensive model of educational outcomes and indicators for all students, including students with disabilities, who are completing school. Stage One involved identifying five alternative models of educational outcomes--an educational model, a sociological model, a political/pragmatic model, a psychological model, and a developmental model--and proposing to develop outcomes and indicators as a function of disability severity and age level of the student. In Stage Two, the terms "outcomes" and "indicators" were defined, a set of assumptions to identify "outcomes indicators" was generated, and the work was reviewed and revised. Stage Three brought about more formal and broad-based review of the proposed model. Stage Four's focus was presentation of a new model which distinguished between "enabling outcomes" and "educational outcomes." In Stage Five, additional review and consensus-building took place, resulting in agreement on and publication of a final list of indicators of school completion outcomes. NCEO's plans for the future are outlined. (JDD)

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# Outcomes & Indicators

Number 1

NCEO Report - October 1993

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## Developing a Model of Educational Outcomes

Describing the process and stages leading to the development of a comprehensive model of educational outcomes and indicators for students completing school.

by James Ysseldyke and Martha Thurlow

The need for education to be accountable for its effects on students with disabilities was a central factor in forming the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO).

NCEO works with state and federal education agencies to create and promote the use of educational outcomes and indicators for students with disabilities. Educators believe that the use of outcomes and indicators will improve educational results for all students.

NCEO has developed a comprehensive conceptual model of educational outcomes and produced documents that identify these outcomes and their indicators. For each of six developmental levels (ages 3 and 6, grades 4, 8, and 12, and post-school), NCEO has been

publishing the model with a set of outcomes and indicators.

This comprehensive model and these documents evolved slowly. It took NCEO months of working with state departments of education personnel, federal agencies, professional associations, parents, and advocacy groups to achieve consensus on the kinds of data that ought to be collected on students.

The following stages describe the process that NCEO experienced while developing its comprehensive model of educational outcomes and indicators.

### Stage One

In the 1990 funding proposal submitted to the Office of Special Education Programs for NCEO,

five University of Minnesota education experts identified alternative models of educational outcomes (Robert Bruininks, Stanley Deno, Kevin McGrew, Martha Thurlow, and James Ysseldyke). They proposed an educational model, a sociological model, a political/pragmatic model, a psychological model, and a developmental model. For each model, they proposed to develop outcomes and indicators as a function of severity of disability, and as a function of the age level of the student.



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## Stage Two

After funding was awarded to the University in October, 1990, NCEO staff started the process of developing the basic model.

To begin, the staff defined the terms "outcomes" and "indicators" by reviewing numerous definitions proposed in the professional literature by researchers and policymakers. They agreed that "outcomes" were the results of interactions among individuals and schooling experiences. To

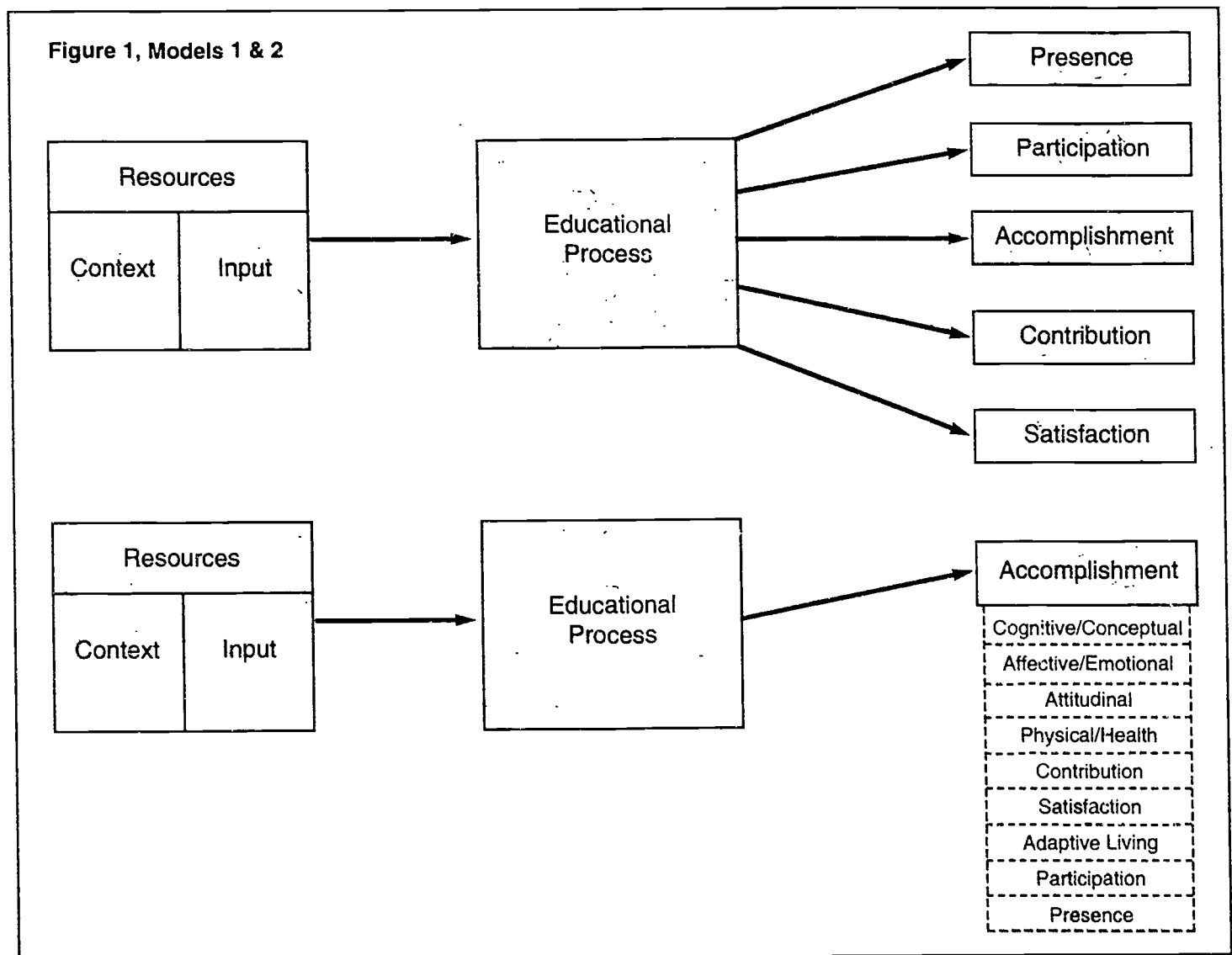
complete the definition, they defined what was meant by "interactions," "schooling experiences," "individuals," and "results."

An "indicator" was defined as a symbolic representation of one or more educational outcomes for infants, children, and youth that enables comparisons to be made.

Next, NCEO staff expanded on the meaning of the key terms "symbolic representations," "outcomes," and "comparisons," and generated a set of assumptions to

help identify "outcomes indicators." These were:

1. Indicators of outcomes in special education should be related, conceptually and statistically, to those that are useful in education.
2. Educational outcomes indicators must provide necessary data to make policy decisions primarily at school, state, and national levels, but possess implications for evaluating educational programs at other levels.
3. Outcomes indicators are most useful when they are functionally related to educational inputs,



contextual characteristics, and processes.

In February, 1991, NCEO staff met with six state directors of special education. NCEO gave the directors a preliminary draft of *Working Paper 1* to review, which included definitions, assumptions, and new preliminary models (Figure 1).

Attending that meeting were: Patrick Campbell (CA), Wayne Erickson (MN), Mary-Beth Fafard (MA), Tom Gillung (CT), Linda Hargan (KY), and Dean Meyers (SD). These directors offered several suggestions to clarify definitions and reorganize the paper.

Following that meeting, NCEO staff presented the revised definitions, assumptions, and pro-

posed model at several conferences. One of these was the annual Leadership Conference for state directors of special education. Another was a conference sponsored by the Connecticut Department of Education where participants examined the future of education for students with disabilities.

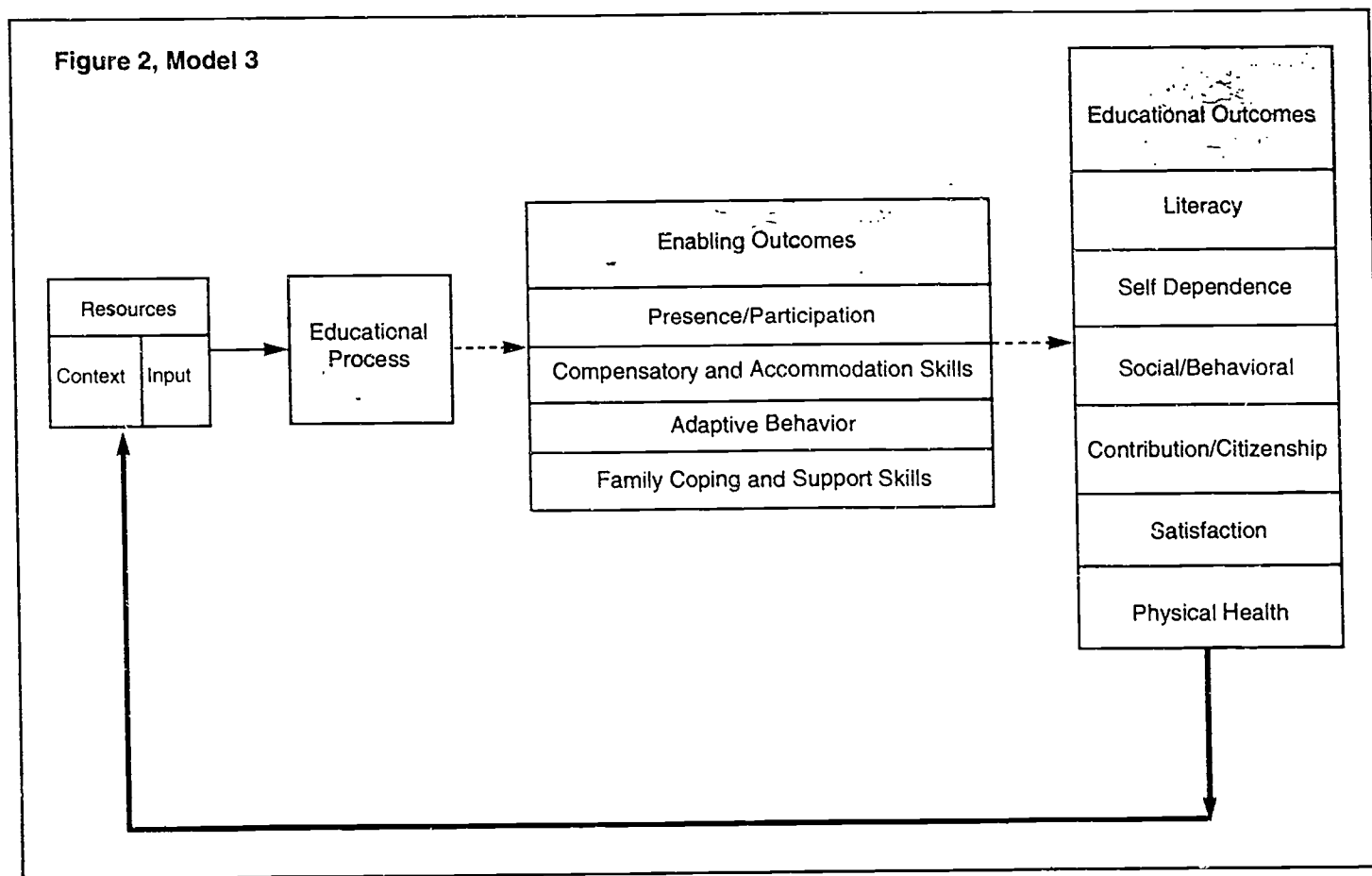
At the Connecticut meeting, NCEO staff received feedback on the model and indicators from Jerry Spears, Jim Wade, Frank Rusch, personnel in the Connecticut Department of Education, and others attending the conference. The resulting paper, *Expected Educational Outcomes for Students with Disabilities*, was published in 1992

by James Ysseldyke, Martha Thurlow, and Robert Bruininks.

### Stage Three

NCEO personnel revised *Working Paper 1\** and sent it to selected representatives of professional associations and to all state directors of special education. It was formally reviewed at meetings in Montana, Michigan, and Nebraska. Responses to the paper and its models were gathered during a six-month period and synthesized in a document entitled *Synthesis of Responses to Working Paper 1.\**

The resulting model (Figure 2) was reviewed by the NCEO National Advisory Committee. This model



introduced the notion of "enabling outcomes" in response to the need to recognize intermediate outcomes such as learning Braille or reading sign language.

In December, 1991, NCEO convened a meeting of individuals who had participated in a number of activities that were relevant to the development of outcomes and indicators. Attending that meeting were Bob Algozzine (University of North Carolina at Charlotte), Peter Behuniak (Connecticut Department of Education), Louis Danielson (U.S. Office of Special Education Programs), Ruth Flynn (Missouri Department of Education), William Frey (Disability Research Systems in Michigan), Harvey Harkness (New Hampshire Department of Education), Robin Kimbrough (American Public Welfare Association), Kenneth Olsen (Mid-South RRC), Patricia Sitlington (Iowa Department of Education), and Jennifer York (University of Minnesota).

At this December meeting, NCEO used a multi-attribute consensus-building process to help those attending generate, edit, and reach agreement on outcomes and indicators in each of the domains in the outcomes model.

The following April, 1992, NCEO staff members met with a group of Minnesota parents and school personnel. They conducted a multi-attribute consensus-building process with the group in an effort to have those individuals generate outcomes and indicators, and point out their importance. In attendance at that meeting were

Jane Cromie, Rick Green, Marie Knowlton, Nancy Larson, Kathleen Steffens, and Kyla Wahlstrom.

Also that April, NCEO personnel presented the revised model at the annual Leadership Conference held by the Office of Special Education Programs. In the presentation, NCEO included the definitions of the terms "outcomes" and "indicators," stated assumptions, and described unresolved issues. NCEO received reactions from quite a few participants, including state directors of special education.

In May, 1992, NCEO met in Minneapolis with the following five state directors of special education: Stevan Kukic (UT), Wayne Erickson (MN), Nancy Thabet (WV), Bob Kennedy (NH), and Mary-Beth Fafard (MA). NCEO again used a multi-attribute consensus-building process to help participants reach agreement on indicators for one of the domains in the model (literacy) at grade 12. The meeting generated plans for developing indicators in the future, with a recommendation to eliminate repeating the consensus-building process with many groups.

Instead, participants recommended that a group with comprehensive and national representation be brought together for a consensus-building session to produce a final list of outcomes and indicators at one developmental level. NCEO selected the school completion level (grade 12) for the first outcomes and indicators document.

## Stage Four

In August, 1992, NCEO published *Working Paper 2*.<sup>\*</sup> In that paper, a new model of educational outcomes appeared (Figure 3). This model redefined the "enabling outcomes" and "educational outcomes."

"Educational outcomes" were defined as the result of interactions between individuals and schooling experiences. "Enabling outcomes" were the result of interactions between individuals and life experiences that provide the individual with the opportunity to reach educational outcomes.

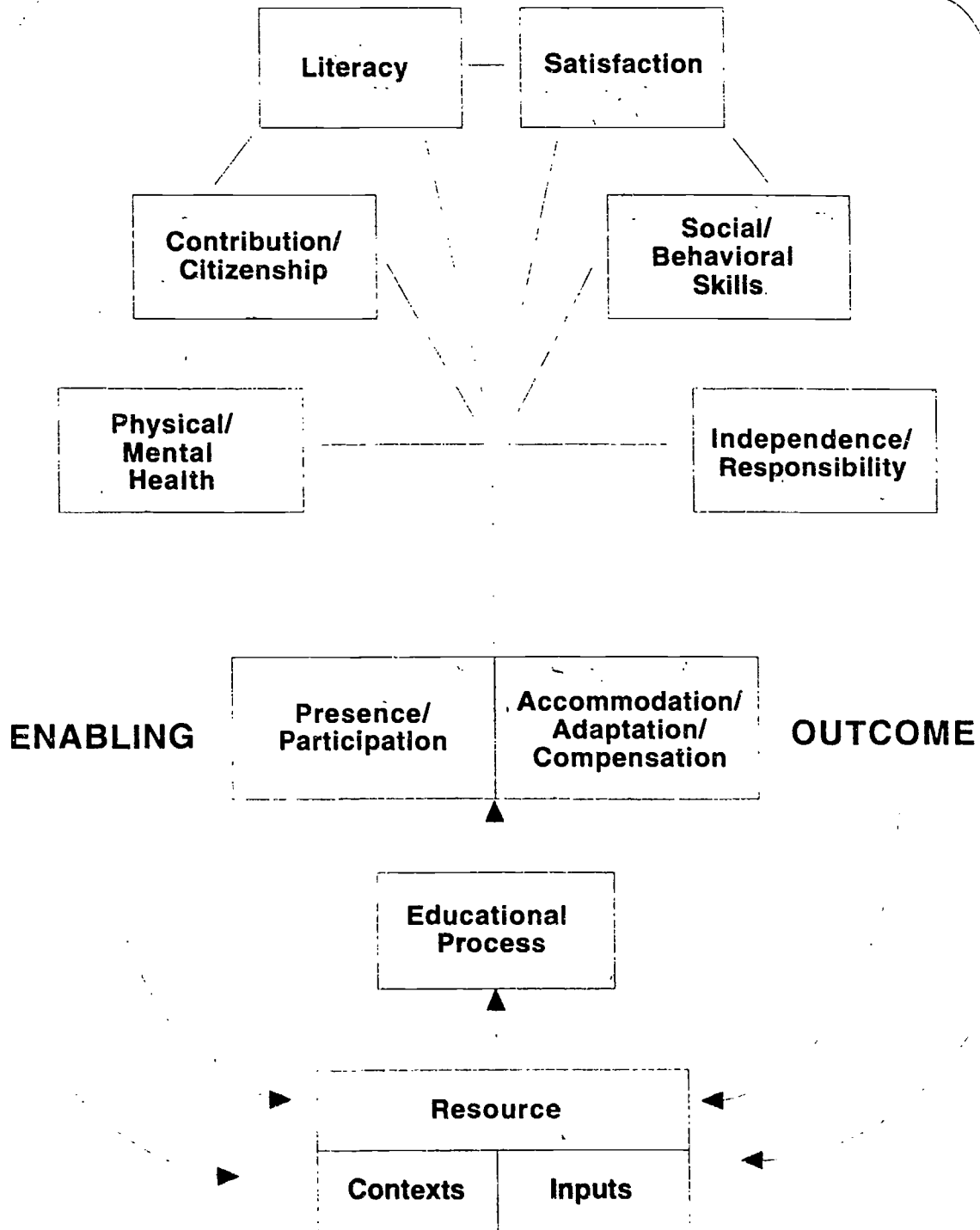
In *Working Paper 2*, the four enabling outcomes originally identified in the model (presence and participation, compensatory and accommodation skills, adaptive behavior, family coping and support skills) were reduced to two (presence/participation and accommodation/adaptation/compensation). In addition, the names of the six educational outcomes shifted slightly.

## Stage Five

In September, 1992, NCEO staff members published a paper based on the model in *Teaching Exceptional Children*. They also convened a meeting in Washington, DC, that was attended by representatives of more than 20 agencies or groups. The meeting once again used the multi-attribute consensus-building process. Its purpose was to reach agreement on a final list of indicators of school completion outcomes.

Figure 3, Model 4

# EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES



Those in attendance reviewed the outcomes and indicators and as a result, the model shifted again (Figure 4). The new changes were compiled into a document draft entitled *Educational Outcomes and Indicators for Students Completing School*.<sup>\*</sup> After several selected directors of special education reviewed the document, modifications were made and it was published in January, 1993.

### Moving Ahead

NCEO staff are identifying sources of data for indicators, distributing a self-study guide for use by states

and districts, and working with state education agencies to develop alternative uses of the model.

During the summer of 1993, one state used the model to aggregate progress data on Individualized Education Program (IEP) objectives. Two states proposed aggregating progress data on IEP objectives. Two other states proposed aggregating data on the performance of students with disabilities, and another state used the model to develop transition IEPs.

NCEO developed outcomes and indicators for the post-school

level, and for ages three and six, changing the model slightly at each level. In 1994, NCEO will develop outcomes and indicators for grades four and eight. ♦

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Figure 4  
Conceptual Model of Outcomes

