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ABSTRACT

This report presents information from a study of recent state efforts to improve the education system and the implications of these efforts for children with disabilities. The study evaluated educational reform and state policy in 18 states. A major finding of the study was the limited involvement of the special education community in the standards movement, a finding which raises questions concerning whether the reforms have any real chance of benefiting all students. Chapter 1 reviews the new standards-based education reform movement, systemic reform for implementing new standards, national standards, and the Goals 2000 program. Chapter 2 analyzes the ways that states have actually implemented their new standards in the areas of curriculum, assessment, accountability, teacher preparation and professional development, finance, and governance. Chapter 3 examines how the special education community has and has not been involved in the new education reform movement, detailing its involvement in each of the areas listed above. Finally, Chapter 4 considers the implications of new education standards for the variety of children in the nation's schools. (Contains 17 references.) (DB)

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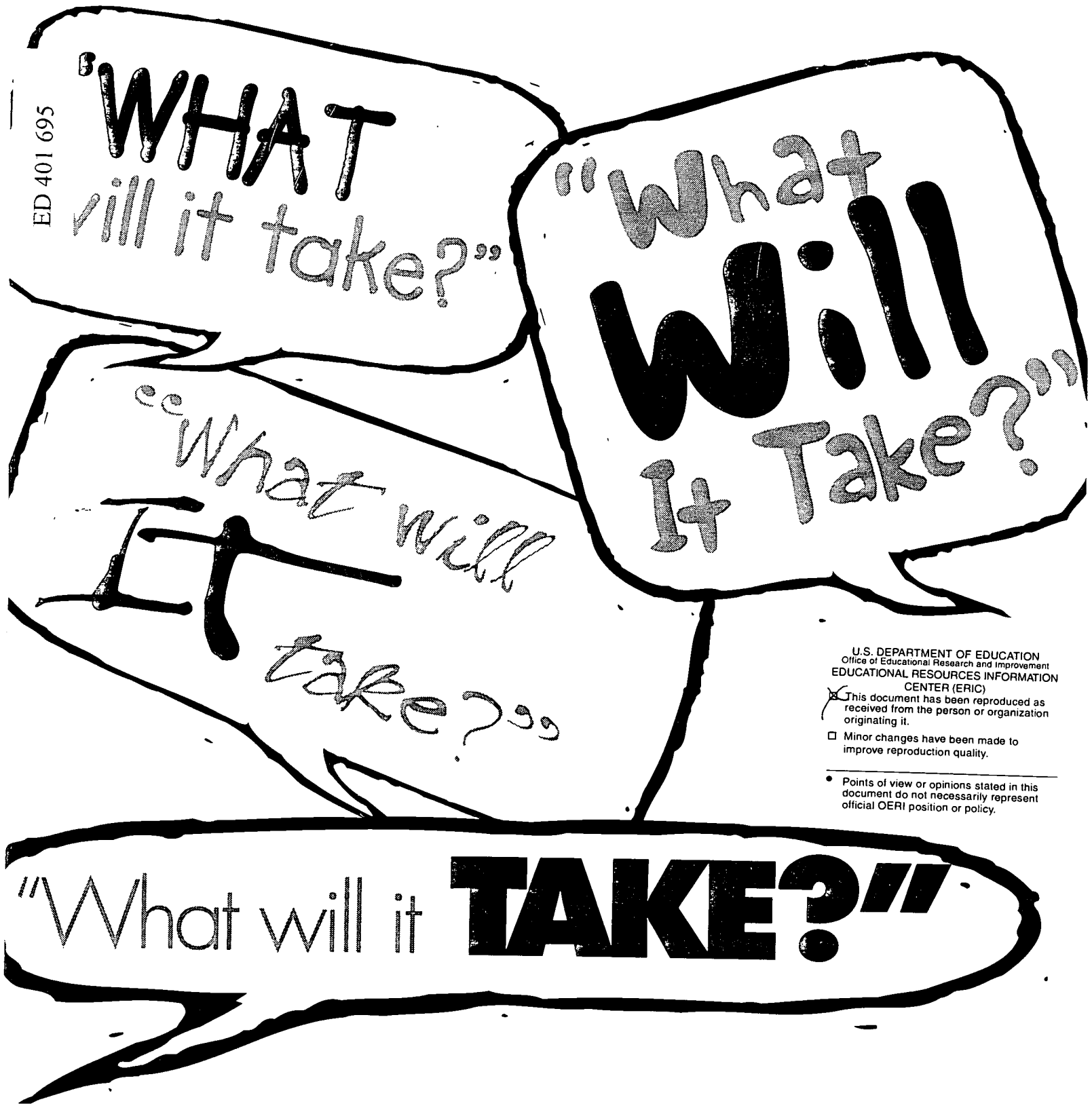

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Standards-Based Education Reform for ALL Students

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What Will It Take?

Standards-Based Education Reform for *ALL* Students

Katherine Fraser, Editor

September 1996

The Center for Policy Research on the Impact of
General and Special Education Reform

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- **Standards-Based School Reform and Students with Disabilities** provides the historical context for the use of academic standards; looks at how states are developing and using standards; and examines the extent to which special educators and students with disabilities are being included in the standards movement. (1996, 12 pp., $6.00)

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Preface: The Center for Policy Research on the Impact of General and Special Education Reform

This report and the study upon which it is based are products of the Center for Policy Research on the Impact of General and Special Education Reform. This Center was established in 1994 by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, and it is a joint endeavor of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), the Institute for the Study of Exceptional Children and Youth at the University of Maryland (UM), and the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) at the University of Pennsylvania. The Center's mission is to investigate and analyze critical issues in current general and special education policies, their interactions, and their impact on students with disabilities, with a focus on discerning policy options for stakeholders at the federal, state and local levels.

The American education system is currently undergoing reform at all levels. Changes are steadily being made in funding, governance structures, curriculum standards, staff development, assessment, and student support services. As part of these reform efforts, policymakers are looking anew at special education and its role in the overall education system. Education policymakers are searching for and demanding guidance on these issues in terms they can understand. The research base necessary for enlightened decision making is sparse, and examples of successful policies are not widely known. Policy analysts from both general and special education need to work together to learn more about the impact of reform on all students.

To address this need, the Center is conducting interrelated 3-year research studies that examine reforms in general and special education policies, their interactions, and their implications for students with disabilities. Specifically, NASBE is conducting in-depth case studies in 4 states (California, Missouri, New Mexico and Pennsylvania) to look at how general and special education reforms interact and impact local districts, and the implications for students with disabilities. UM is conducting 5 in-depth case studies in Maryland, Nebraska, Colorado, Washington and Kentucky of local school districts that are engaging in general and special education reforms, including their interactions with state-level policies. CPRE is engaged in a descriptive analysis of educational reforms and the resulting programs in a number of states (California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Vermont, and Washington).

This report is based on the 1996 Center study entitled "State Education Reform and Students with Disabilities: A Preliminary Analysis" by Margaret Goertz and Diane Friedman. That study used state-based data collected on state policy in the 18 states covered by the three interrelated studies of the Center.

Acknowledgments

The Center would like to acknowledge the cooperation of the departments of education in the 18 project states, especially each state director of special education.

We would also like to thank the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) for its support of project activities. However, the views expressed in this report do not necessarily express the views of the U.S. Department of Education.

Introduction

The information in this report comes from a study of recent state efforts to improve the education system and the implications of this work for children with disabilities. But as will become clear, our findings raise interesting and important issues for any student who is struggling to succeed at school.

An enormous amount of energy is being expended nationwide towards a single goal: substantially strengthening the skills and knowledge that students in the United States gain as a result of their schooling. This long-term, ambitious push to improve education is dominated by terms such as "setting new, higher standards" for students and schools, and by looking at the "products" of education instead of at its "inputs." A number of states have made, and are still making, profound changes to their education systems — changes that are aimed, at least on paper, at helping all students achieve at higher levels. Certain far-reaching questions surface often as a part of this process, questions such as:

- *What do we want out of the education system, and how will we know if we have achieved what we wanted?*
- *What knowledge and skills will young people need to lead successful lives in the twenty-first century?*
- *How can the United States be certain that its future high school and college graduates will be prepared to compete on an equal footing with their counterparts worldwide?*

This deep concern about the state of the United States' education system is more than 10 years old, having been awakened by the alarm sounded by the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983. But from the beginning of this new movement, a number of serious questions have been raised about the effect of these changes on the diversity of children who are found in our classrooms. States are wrestling with such questions as these:

- *What will it take to ensure that all children will flourish under the new systems of education?*
- *What about the children who are already failing badly at school because of problems in their homes or communities?*
- *How will changes in the education system affect students with disabilities or those who cannot speak English well?*
- *What do new, higher standards for education mean for schools where children's families cannot afford to buy them pencils or paper or notebooks?*

States have strongly asserted that their reforms are aimed at helping ***all*** students achieve at higher levels. In fact, a central purpose is to promote higher achievement for students who are now trailing behind because they are participating in simplified, watered-down educational programs. Still, some people have worried that already-troubled schools, and children who are failing to thrive, will not improve under the present wave of education reform. The concern has been that adopting new, higher standards for education will not, in and of itself, answer fundamental and difficult questions about barriers to success for a range of children who are struggling and at risk of failing at school. Will standards-based reform do whatever it takes to help these students achieve at higher levels?

A parallel concern regards the nature of the new standards for education. Do they address themselves solely to higher academic achievement in core subjects such as math and science? Or do they also address the development of other characteristics such as personal responsibility and independence, technological and other job skills, and the ability to be a constructive, self-supporting member of society? These questions are important because they concern the very purposes of education for diverse groups of students, not all of

whom have the same abilities or goals. *What should we be teaching, and should we be teaching it to all of the students in our schools?* Are representatives of these diverse groups of students helping to shape new state education goals, in order to ensure that these goals are relevant to the future success of all students?

It is important, then, that the findings from our study of special education and general education reform begin to document the gravity of these concerns. It is clear that special education's involvement in standards-based reform has been limited in many cases and that the consequences for students with disabilities has not been deeply explored nationwide. But the question of how to make education reform work for the diverse populations of students with disabilities raises bigger questions about how it will work for the full range of students in schools, especially those who are already at a disadvantage for one reason or another. These questions need careful thought by education policymakers as they proceed with future efforts to improve education.

In order to put these findings in context, it is helpful to review the rationale for and nature of the changes that have been made in education systems over the years since 1983. Hence, this report will start, in Chapter 1, by briefly reviewing the new standards-based education reform movement and the original reasons for setting new standards for the education system. Chapter 2 will analyze the ways that states have actually put their new standards in place. In Chapter 3, we will look at how one community, the community that represents students with disabilities, has and has not been involved in the new education reform movement in the states. Finally, Chapter 4 will consider the implications of new education standards for the variety of children who attend our schools.

Chapter I. New Standards for Education

New, higher standards and levels of performance for students and schools: This is the focus of a lot of work going on in states to improve education. There are two basic ideas to understand at the beginning. First, education is adopting *completely different kinds of standards* for education. Second, these new standards are meant to be *more rigorous than the old standards*, stimulating students to achieve at higher levels than ever before.

The idea of "new standards for education" reflects a completely different way of assessing the education system. The words "inputs" and "outputs" are often used in discussions about ways that the education system should be changed. Traditionally, schools have been rated according to what are often called "inputs," meaning what kind of investments have been made in childrens' education. "Inputs" for schools include factors such as how much money is spent for the education of each student, how many students are in each classroom, teachers' salaries, and how modern the school building is. A school's improvement might be measured by the hiring of more science teachers, the purchase of computers or new equipment for the chemistry lab, or adding more reference books to the school library.

Similarly, a high school diploma has traditionally been awarded to students who have acquired the right number of "inputs;" that is, who have successfully completed the number and kind of courses that were required for high school graduation. The required course work is called an "input" because it doesn't look at the "outputs" — the knowledge and skills that students attain as a result of their schooling. A high school graduate might boast that she's had four years of French and four years of mathematics, but if she can't speak much French or solve simple equations, then the course work alone doesn't mean very much. What matters is the "output," the student's performance — that is, what the student knows and can do.

The concept of standards and measures of performance are familiar ones in business, and it is no coincidence that business leaders have been involved in the process of trying to improve the education system. Businesses prosper or fail based on the quality of their products or services, their "performance." A safe, attractive car sells better than its unsafe and unattractive counterpart, no matter how much money was invested or "input" into either car's design. The performance of a friendly, knowledgeable salesperson helps him to outsell his unhelpful, surly rival, no matter what preparation or training each has had for the profession of selling. And schools that can consistently graduate students with a high level of knowledge and skills — this is the kind of performance that people want their taxes to support.

Setting high performance standards is an important step towards obtaining a level of achievement in a school or a business. High standards set goals and provide people with concrete direction by showing them exactly what to aim for. Businesses have also learned that employees work best when they understand exactly what will be expected of them — and when they also are given the flexibility to figure out for themselves the best way to get the job done. Similarly, many states are setting higher standards for schools, but letting the schools themselves figure out how to help students to meet those high standards.

This movement towards creating new and higher performance standards for education is commonly known as "standards-based reform."

Standards-based Reform: The Nature of the New Standards for Education

Although adopting new, higher standards for education is a common theme among states, each state has a different idea about what these standards should be. In its simplest sense, a standard might be visualized as a barrier to jump over. According to the new education standards, how much higher must you be able to jump in order to graduate from high school? But the reality is much more complicated. If the standards are barriers to be jumped, then each state defines its barriers differently — reflecting very different views about the skills and knowledge that students should gain as a result of their schooling.

Two general kinds of standards for students are commonly discussed: "content" standards and "performance" standards. Many states have both content standards and performance standards. A content standard generally describes what students should know. By contrast, a performance standard is often more specific in describing what a student should be able to do in order to demonstrate that she has gained the necessary knowledge. Thus, a content standard may describe an advanced ability to use computers. But a performance standard might spell out in some detail what the student must be able to do on the computer to show that she has acquired an advanced level of skills. It is important to be aware, however, that people define the terms "content standard" and "performance standard" differently in the various states.

States' standards vary in a number of ways. One way they differ is in how broad or specific they are. Vermont has adopted a very broad set of goals for education. Schools are to help students learn how to listen "actively, for a variety of purposes, to read "with understanding...to interpret a variety of materials," and to be "conversant with computers and current systems for telecommunication."

On the other hand, some states have very specific, detailed content standards for separate academic fields. These are the only kind of content standards that Michigan and New Jersey have. For example, New Jersey expects "all students to develop their number sense through experiences which enable them to investigate the characteristics and relations of numbers, represent numbers in a variety of forms and use numbers in diverse situations."

One Example of a Performance Standard

"The student independently and habitually uses the appropriate conventions of the English language, including spelling, sentence construction, paragraph structure, punctuation, grammar, and usage."

Examples of using appropriate conventions include:

- Demonstrating in a piece of writing the ability to manage the conventions, grammar, and usage of English so that they aid rather than interfere with reading;
- Proofreading independently and accurately the student's own writing or the writing of others, using dictionaries, thesauruses, and other resources as appropriate;
- Observing the conventions of language during formal oral presentations;
- Demonstrating use of a variety of sentence patterns for stylistic effect.

Source: New Standards Project

Still other states have standards for separate academic fields, but they have found ways to link the various subject areas. Connecticut is a state that has standards for separate subject areas, but its 10th grade test expects students to use the knowledge and skills from many subject areas to analyze a problem. Vermont's goals support teaching about more than one field or discipline in one lesson ("interdisciplinary" work) and in fact, its more detailed content standards were written by three multi-disciplinary teams: arts and humanities, history and social sciences, and mathematics and technology.

Another important way that standards differ is whether they look mostly at academic subject matter (math and science, for example) — or whether they pay attention to other factors such as readiness to work, wellness and fitness, and other personal characteristics (for example, the ability to communicate and work cooperatively in groups). Maryland's high school standards look for skills such as learning, thinking, communication, technology, and interpersonal skills.

As may be expected, standards differ in their overall quality. All states feel that their new standards are academically challenging — and some say they have "world class" standards. Whether all states have "world class" standards isn't known at this time, but many states are using high-level national and sometimes international standards as the basis of their work.

Setting new education standards in states can take a number of years, and it is a process that is affected by politics and the availability of funding. Many states have taken several years to slowly build public understanding of and support for the new standards. Colorado spent two years getting opinions from various constituent groups before its new content standards were given to the State Board of Education for adoption.

In some states, setting standards has been quite controversial. Pennsylvania developed an outcomes-based education system (based on 53 learner outcomes) that the public did not understand and that was, therefore, widely mistrusted; in fact, a whole organized movement sprang up against it. People particularly objected to standards that focused on personal characteristics of children (instead of sticking strictly to academics). As a result, the state removed some of the student outcomes that the public had objected to.

Systemic Reform: Strategies for Putting New Standards in Place Statewide

The strategy states are using to promote the changes in education they want to see is often called "systemic" reform. The word "systemic" is important to understand, since it is commonly used by people who are involved with new changes in education. It simply means that significant changes in education need to be carefully promoted in a number of coordinated ways throughout the education system, as will be explained below.

States are putting their new education standards in place in three ways. First, they are adopting vision and goal statements so that the public understands what kind of new "higher standards" are being set. These vision and goal statements provide a direction for changes in the education system, and they may begin to lay out a strategy for future work. The goal statements explain that the new standards demand more than higher achievement, but also focus on students' depth of understanding and the ability to reason. Often, these vision statements also explain that the new standards are meant to apply to ***all*** students, not just the highest achievers.

Secondly, states are promoting their standards by making sure that all education policies are supportive of those goals. This is the idea that making fundamental changes in education should be "systemic." Setting new, higher standards for students and schools is an important step and should be reflected in everything that a state does regarding education — including the states' curriculum material and guidance; preparation and licensing of new teachers; any evaluations of students, schools, or teachers; and fair and adequate financing. All of the older education policies need to be carefully reviewed and changed, if necessary, so that they support the new standards. This kind of careful review and revising of old policies wasn't always done, so that old and new state education policies sometimes contradicted each other, which caused confusion and even resentment at the local level.

In business, a parallel situation might be found in the policies of the new president of a company that specializes in finding engineers for large construction projects. Too many of the company's records are not computerized, he has decided, and this slows work down, putting the company at a disadvantage among its competitors. The president sets new, high standards for employees, and among these new standards is the requirement that from now on, new databases must be created and maintained for all information received by the company. But the employees don't know how to create all of these new databases, and they haven't been trained how to do it. Plus, new employees still go

through the same old training program, which does not teach them the computer skills they will need, meaning that the trainers themselves have not been taught the new system. And when employees are evaluated by the personnel department, they are rated according to the old way of doing things, not according to the president's new policies. In the end, the president is frustrated, the employees can't fix what is wrong, and so everybody is confused and unhappy. This example simplifies the issues, but it gets at the truth.

A third new approach states are taking to promote their standards combines "top down" policies with support for "bottom up" reform. This means that as states adopt new standards for education, they are also attempting to give local schools and teachers the responsibility, the flexibility, and the tools to be able to change for the better. This can be done in a number of ways, which will be discussed later on in this report. The central point is that states recognized that the most important changes must happen at the local level in schools, and that local educators know their schools and their children and communities better than anyone else does. Given this, how can states best help schools to attain higher levels of achievement?

As a part of this process, states are changing their roles to more clearly define who is responsible for what. States are to be responsible for setting goals for students and the education system, for coordinating the state's policies to support these goals, and for holding the schools accountable for meeting the goals. Schools are responsible for developing the programs needed to achieve the state goals. School districts are responsible for supporting the schools' efforts. And states, school districts, and schools must make sure that all students are treated fairly.

National Standards for Education

As states have been developing standards, there has also been a focus on national support for these efforts. To address this need, then-President Bush called a national education summit in Charlottesville, Virginia in 1989. At the summit, President Bush and the nation's governors outlined six broad, national goals for education to be reached by the Year 2000. These goals looked not only at academics, but at related factors such as school safety and the readiness (or not) of a young child to enter school. They were meant to express what kinds of expectations the nation holds for its schools.

In 1994, Congress codified the six National Education Goals, added two new goals, and put all of them into a federal program commonly called Goals 2000 (or more specifically, Public Law 103-227, the "Goals 2000: Educate America Act"). Under this program, states could apply for federal funds to create programs that would help them meet the national education goals.

In addition, a number of national groups were funded by the U.S. Department of Education to develop standards in various disciplines. Since 1989, national standards have been issued in either draft or final form for the subjects of science, civics, history, health, social studies, foreign language, geography, music, and the arts. Some new standards, particularly those for history and language arts, have been highly controversial. Others, such as those in mathematics, civics, and science, are widely accepted and are being used as models by many states.

The purpose of this national-level activity was to provide states with ideas, examples, and resources as they developed their new education standards. States could learn from each other and from experts, so that each state didn't have to start from scratch in the development process. The effort was meant to help states to develop high-level standards. But the main responsibility for shaping and meeting standards always lies at the state and local levels.

At the same time, a number of concerns developed about the whole "standards" movement. Some people worried that the national standards, though strictly voluntary, would interfere with state and local authority to develop education goals and programs. Others have been concerned about the content of new standards in various states — are they solely concerned with academic subject matter and not concerned enough about other important qualities, such as responsibility and discipline and citizenship, that students should develop — or are they not academic enough? Another worry is whether the new, higher standards are really aimed at helping all children achieve at high levels, despite the rhetoric to the contrary. What new resources

Eight National Goals for Education

Goal 1: By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn.

Goal 2: By the year 2000, the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.

Goal 3: By the year 2000, all students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history and geography, 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 Nation's modern economy.

Goal 4: By the year 2000, the Nation's teaching force will have access to programs for the continued improvement of their professional skills and the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare all American students for the next century.

Goal 5: By the year 2000, United States students will be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement.

Goal 6: 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.

Goal 7: By the year 2000, every school in the United States will be free of drugs, violence, and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

Goal 8: By the year 2000, every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children.

These voluntary goals were adopted by Congress in 1994.

will be spent and what programs invented to make sure that all children — including children with disabilities, those who speak English poorly, and those who live in troubled homes and communities and are already failing at school — have an equal chance to meet the new standards? Are state policymakers thinking about all of these children as they create their new, higher standards for education? Are they fully convinced that all children can meet the new standards? If so, can states do what it takes to have all children achieving at higher levels?

These concerns aside, there are compelling reasons that drive the movement toward the development of higher standards for education, and the systematic ways that states are putting standards in place. The argument for raising student achievement by measuring and holding schools accountable for the "outputs" of education, rather than at its "inputs," is a persuasive one and is not likely to go away any time soon. Therefore, it is important to look more closely at the ways states are putting their new standards in place (Chapter 2). When we have done this, we can examine how this standards-setting process has (and has not) engaged the special education community (Chapter 3). Finally, it will be time to ponder the implications of the standards-setting movement for a wide range of children, including those with disabilities (Chapter 4).

Chapter II. The "Systemic" Approach: State Policy Tools to Promote New Standards for Education

Policymakers in many states are firmly convinced that new, higher standards for education are not only a good idea, but an essential next step in improving schooling. But then comes the hard part: What tools can states use to transfer their lofty ideas into realities in classrooms? Standards can provide a direction and goals for an education system — but they are not an end in themselves.

In this section we will look at six broad categories of policy that states can use to really change the education system. They are:

- curriculum,
- assessment,
- accountability,
- teacher preparation and professional development,
- finance, and
- governance.

Not all states are making changes in all of these areas, but these are the policy tools most readily at hand. Also, although these policy areas are discussed separately, they are actually closely connected to one another. This point should become clearer as we move through these policy areas one by one.

Standards can be expressed in different kinds of state policy, which can be confusing, especially since states often express them in more than one way. A few common ways to express standards are in:

- ***Broad goals for education.*** Vermont's *Common Core of Learning* describes 21 basic skills that all students should have. Students are expected, for example, to "listen actively, for a variety of purposes;... ask meaningful questions;...develop a sense of unique worth and personal competence;... [and] learn by serving others."

- ***Curriculum Frameworks or Guides.*** California expresses its new standards for schools primarily in its curriculum frameworks, which are broad outlines of what the curriculum should be in various subject areas. Schools are free to choose whether or not to use the state curriculum frameworks, but the state has used other policies, such as textbook adoption and teacher professional development, to support its new standards.

- ***Assessment systems.*** Some states require that students meet state standards as a condition of graduating from high school. This could mean passing a state-wide test (as in Maryland and New Jersey). On the other hand, local districts are sometimes responsible for finding out whether students have met state standards (as in Minnesota and Pennsylvania).

Standards can be expressed in a number of other ways, as will become clearer as we review other policy areas.

Curriculum

One policy tool that states can use to raise education standards are the creation of documents to help local districts develop their curricula. These documents are sometimes called curriculum frameworks or guides, and their basic purpose is to help districts, schools, and teachers to develop short- and long-term teaching strategies in different subject areas. These curriculum guides can help districts to select appropriate textbooks and materials, as well as to understand and begin to use new ways of teaching and learning as a way to meet

higher state education standards. Because they can influence what actually happens in the classroom, curriculum frameworks and guides are an important way to change education practice statewide.

For example, California has curriculum frameworks that set out the expectations that teachers, business people, and professionals have for what all students should learn. The frameworks describe not only what students should know, but the deeper problem-solving and analytic skills they should develop. California's frameworks are not detailed teaching plans, but instead they lay out the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students should have at various points in their school careers.

In some states, local schools are required to use state-developed curriculum frameworks or guides. Georgia's Quality Core Curriculum is required to be used, but it can be enriched or expanded at the discretion of local districts. However, schools in many states regard a required curriculum guide as an intrusion by the state into their traditional local responsibility to develop local programs. Michigan does not require that schools use the state-developed curriculum framework, but statewide student tests measure the knowledge and skills that are described in the curriculum framework — providing schools with an incentive to use the state material.

Assessment

A second way for states to put their standards in place is through student assessments. Most states do some kind of statewide testing of student achievement, but this wasn't always the case. This kind of testing became more prevalent in the mid-1970's, when concern about Johnny's (and Jane's) ability to read and reason pushed many states to measure basic levels of student performance and report this information back to the public. These early assessments were measures of what (and how much) students knew.

More recent assessments look at both what a student knows, as well as what he can do. There are many ways to assess student performance, and states vary quite a bit in their methods. In different states, different grade levels and subject areas are tested. In some states, all of the students in a particular grade are tested. In others, only a sample of the students in any grade are tested. There are also a number of ways to assess students, including giving multiple choice tests, asking a student to perform a task, or looking at a portfolio of student work or at writing samples. Depending on the state, very basic skills or more sophisticated skills may be measured.

States also differ in how much their new standards for education are reflected in their assessments of student performance. Ideally, assessments would be specifically designed to see whether students were meeting the new education standards. But many standards are new, and states are in different stages of making changes in their assessments. Some states (South Carolina, Connecticut, Florida, Michigan, and New Jersey) are slowly moving towards assessing higher levels of skills (as versus basic skills) by adding open-ended questions and performance tasks to their tests. A performance task asks to student to do something — give

A Student Portfolio

A student portfolio might contain items such as these:

- A student's assessment of her own strengths and weaknesses, education goals for the year, and plans for meeting those goals
- A completed science project, including a journal documenting day-to-day progress towards completing the project, and a description of problems encountered and how they were solved.
- An essay, a short story, or a poem.
- Reviews of books read during the year.
- Photographs or a videotape documenting a history project completed over a 6-month period with 6 other students
- Assessments of the student's work by teachers, other school personnel, and others, such as an employer.

a speech, solve a problem, or demonstrate computer skills, for example — while being observed and assessed by the tester.

A few states, such as Vermont and Kentucky, look at student portfolios statewide, giving them a richer sense of what students know and can do. Other states have a mixed system. For example, Maryland high school students must still pass a basic skills test for high school graduation, although the state also measures student performance on its more demanding learning outcomes.

State assessments are used for different purposes in various states. Some of these purposes include:

- *To award high school diplomas.* A number of states require students to pass a state test in order to graduate from high school. In a few other states, students who pass tests in specific subject areas can get endorsements on their high school diplomas.

- *To identify students or schools that need special help.* Kentucky, for example, proposed in its Kentucky Educational Reform Act to send "distinguished educators" to help schools whose students don't do well on the state assessment.

- *To understand, in general, the level of student achievement.* Sometimes this information is reported to the public by issuing "report cards" for schools or school districts. Also, this information is often used to hold schools accountable for what they are (or are not) accomplishing.

Accountability

Accountability policies are a third tool that states use to put their standards in place. Whereas assessment looks at student or school achievement, accountability relates to consequences — good or bad — for students or schools. Traditionally, school districts have been held accountable for carrying out state regulations and policies, for "following the rules" in other words, as well as for other kinds of "input" measures such as how many books are in a school library. School accreditation (or not) was the consequence. States figured out whether or not districts were following the rules by reading district reports and by periodically visiting the schools themselves.

As might be expected, the idea of looking at the "outputs" instead of the "inputs" of schooling would tend to change the accountability system — that is, evaluations would look at whether students and schools were meeting the state's new standards for education. And, in fact, accountability systems are changing, although differently in the various states. As states have created "performance standards" for schools, they are looking for ways to cut down on the number of "input" items they review, and instead to spend more time looking at program quality and student achievement.

Accountability programs vary in a number of ways among the states. First, who does the state hold accountable — the student or the school or school district? Second, what is the student or school being held accountable for? Third, how serious are the consequences for poor performance?

Listed below are descriptions of accountability systems in three states. Two things to notice: First, schools in some states are held accountable for meeting *state* education goals, while in other states, districts must create and meet their own goals. Second, the consequences of not meeting state or local goals vary quite a bit among states. These are the examples:

- Much of **Nebraska's** accountability system is determined at the local level. The state is developing curriculum frameworks to promote educational excellence in local schools, but schools are free to use them or not. There is also no statewide assessment of students, but local school systems must assess students in mathematics, reading, and writing, and report the results to their communities. The state will, however, review these local results when they are accrediting schools.

- **New Jersey** school district accreditation is based on both "input" measures and student performance on a state-wide assessment. Local school districts must report the results of their assessments to the

public. Districts that perform poorly can be taken over by the state, which has happened three times. And students must pass the state's high school proficiency test to graduate.

- **Pennsylvania** requires each district to develop a plan for delivering education that includes how teachers will be trained, what will be taught, and how students will be tested. Districts are reviewed by the state to see if they have met the goals of their own local plan. If a district is not able to show progress, the state will assist them to do so.

Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

A very important way for states to establish their new standards is through changing the training of teachers. For students to perform at higher levels, there will have to be changes in what happens in classrooms, and teachers will be on the front lines of any changes that are made. But are teachers prepared for their new roles?

There are two broad ways in which states influence the development of teacher's skills. The first is teacher certification and licensure, which is the process states set up to determine who is qualified to be a teacher. The second is support for professional development for teachers, which is the chance for practicing teachers to increase their skills, mainly through attending workshops or courses. Teachers, like other professionals, need to spend time throughout their careers studying the latest research in their field and expanding their knowledge and abilities. This would include, of course, learning how to help students to meet any new state standards.

To take the area of teacher certification and licensure first, states typically figure out who is qualified to be a teacher in several ways:

1) They describe the college courses needed and any other requirements for obtaining a teaching license. States lay out traditional routes for becoming a teacher, but also, most states will allow anyone with a college degree to seek certification as a teacher through an alternative route.

2) They often evaluate beginning teachers to assess the level of their skills.

3) They outline the requirements for a teacher to be recertified. For example, a teacher typically has to complete a certain amount of professional development within a certain time period to renew his or her license to teach.

At the same time as states have adopted new standards for education, they have been reforming their systems of teacher certification and licensure. But while these two sets of changes are based on similar ideas, they have not always been closely coordinated. As with students, a trend in licensing teachers is to pay less attention to "inputs" (such as college courses completed) and more attention to "outputs" (what a prospective teacher knows and can do). Eventually, the aim is to license teachers based on their abilities to help students reach the new state standards. Yet there is little progress to date in matching up what teachers can do with what students should know.

In assessing teachers, there is a movement away from "basic skills" tests; instead, for example, teachers in some states may submit a portfolio of work that demonstrates their knowledge and skills. More sophisticated methods are also being developed to evaluate a teacher's work in the classroom. These changes are happening at the national level, as well. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has spent years of work in establishing demanding standards for what experienced teachers should know and be able to do. Eventually, teachers nationwide will be able to volunteer to be certified under this system. Criteria for certification will include a minimum of three years of teaching experience, as well as successfully completing state-of-the-art assessments.

There are other related trends in teacher policy, as well. For example, there is a movement away from the usual requirement that a prospective teacher obtain a college major in education. New Jersey, for example, requires those who want to be teachers to take an academic major (in science, technology, or the arts, for example), as well as 30 credit hours in courses related to teaching. This reflects a desire for stronger academic

A Teacher's Portfolio

The following example, containing excerpts from a Maine document, illustrates what a beginning (not certified) teacher's portfolio might look like:

1. Statement of your philosophy of education and examples of how it has influenced your practice during student teaching.
2. Sample of a unit that you taught during student teaching and reflections on the following:
   - How child/adolescent development issues were considered in the development and implementation of the unit.
   - Descriptions of teaching and facilitation strategies used, reflections on their effectiveness, how they were adapted to different learning styles, and a discussion of what other strategies might have been used.
   - Examples of assessment strategies and how you knew students had learned what you taught.
3. A description and analysis of how a difficult problem was handled during your student teaching assignment.
4. A self-evaluation indicating your strengths, areas for growth, and plans for future development.
5. Evaluations by others, including cooperating teachers, students, and supervisors.
6. If possible, a videotape of a teaching segment (parental permission needed).

credentials for teachers, as well as the idea that teachers really learn to teach by teaching — not by learning about teaching in a college classroom.

A final trend in teacher licensure policy is expanding the range of teaching licenses, from a temporary license to a permanent license, following the growth of the teacher as a professional. For example, many states have programs for the beginning teacher that include having a mentor and undergoing an assessment of on-the-job skills. After completing this program, a teacher usually receives a professional certificate that is renewed on a regular basis if the teacher completes additional course work or other professional development. In a few states, a teacher can try to be certified as a "master" teacher by demonstrating advanced skills.

We have looked at teacher licensure, but there is a second facet of teacher policy to consider as well: teacher professional development. Most professional development for teachers is set up and funded at the local level. States have a limited role in supporting this, in part because devoting state dollars to the professional development of teachers is not always popular politically, especially when money is tight. The public is more likely to support additional funding for projects that are seen to more directly benefit students — such as the building of new schools. Local districts, then, must rely on local funds or specific federal programs, such as the Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Education Program, to support professional development for teachers.

Yet, especially as new standards and assessments for students are approved, states are increasingly setting up statewide networks to assist the professional development of teachers. This helps teachers to understand and carry out the states' new standards for education. For example, Missouri's recent education reform legislation sets aside funds for the state depart-

ment of education to use on teacher professional development activities. The department has used this money to establish regional Professional Development Centers across the state.

National efforts are underway, also. The nationwide New Standards project is developing "performance standards" that describe in some detail how students can actively demonstrate their mastery of high-level knowledge and skills. But teachers need to learn how to assess a student's performance of a task — to see whether or not that student has "reached the standard." Groups of teachers are learning to do this by developing actual test items for the New Standards Project.

Finance

Adequate funding is needed to bring about any real changes in the education system, including obtaining higher student achievement. But providing the funding for public education is always a challenge. The cost of education is rising, in part because there are more children in the schools who need additional help. But nationally, funding per pupil did not change between 1991 and 1995, after years of steady growth prior to 1991. In fact, the state share of education funding decreased during this time, as overall state funding for Medicaid and prisons increased. This means, of course, that local districts have had to pay more to educate children, placing pressure on the local property taxes that support education and therefore causing taxpayers to question education spending.

At the same time, school districts in 23 states have gone to court to challenge the fairness of the way their states fund education. Reliance on local property taxes for funding education means thatwealthy areas have lots of money for their schools, and poorer areas less, even if property taxes are proportionately higher in poorer areas. As a result of these court cases, some states have changed the way they fund education, reducing the reliance on local property taxes and seeing that operating funds for all schools are more equal.

An adequately funded system is essential to providing a learning environment in which all children can thrive. However, very few states have considered student performance when discussing how to distribute state funds for education. Policymakers have also been reluctant to put a price on providing an adequate education for all children in a state.

Declaring a State's Education System Unconstitutional

School districts in 23 states have gone to court to challenge the fairness of an education system that relies on local property taxes — meaning that wealthier regions have more money for their schools, even if property taxes in poorer areas are proportionately higher.

In response to this kind of a lawsuit, Kentucky's Supreme Court declared that state's entire school system unconstitutional in 1989. The Court based its opinion on the constitutional obligation to make sure all children are "given the same opportunity and access to an adequate education. This obligation cannot be shifted to local counties and local school districts."

In declaring the whole Kentucky school system unconstitutional, which meant the system had to be essentially recreated from scratch, the Kentucky court went beyond any court decision before or since. But there were other ground-breaking aspects to the decision. Not only must education funding be distributed fairly, but students' education performance or achievements should be equal across the state — demonstrating that all students have received an "adequate" education. The court also defined in seven brief statements the specific capacities that every child in Kentucky should attain if the state education system is to be considered "efficient." Finally the court charged the legislature with providing "funding which is sufficient to provide each child in Kentucky an adequate education."

Governance

Two issues have pushed states to question how they run (or govern) education. The first has been the topic of most of this report: The focus on new, higher standards for education and on student achievement. The second is a growing call from the American public for the deregulation of government and a shift in decisionmaking from the federal or state level to the local level.

In response, states have taken a range of actions, such as reducing the number of regulations that schools must follow. For example, Minnesota repealed many regulations in order to free schools to organize themselves in ways that they thought would improve student performance. The Texas legislature recently scaled back the authority of the state education department and now allows districts to apply for charters that would free them from most state regulations.

States have focused on giving more authority and support to local schools as a way of improving education statewide. For example, Kentucky's education reform is built on local efforts. All Kentucky schools must establish school-site councils that are then responsible for curriculum, instructional materials, personnel, and other policies — many of which were previously the responsibility of the local school board. New Mexico requires local school districts to develop long-range school improvement plans to guide their activities, and these must include the state's new standards for all students.

But most of the state changes in school governance have related to charter schools. As of August 1996, 25 states had adopted charter school legislation. Charter schools are schools that apply for special waivers and do not have to follow many state regulations — if they show great promise for improving the academic achievement of students who attend. The range of regulations that may be waived, however, vary widely by state. For example, Minnesota granted super-waivers to charter schools, a freedom limited only by state regulations in the areas of health, safety, and civil rights. By contrast, charter schools in Colorado must tell the state which state and local rules they want waived. (In any instance, certain federal regulations may not be waived.) In some states there are many charter schools, while other states have only a handful.

Chapter III. Standards-Based Reform and the Special Education Community

It is instructive to examine the ways that special education has been involved in state efforts to set new, higher standards for students and promote broad systemic reform of the education system. In some cases, the involvement has been slight; in others, there have been rich and creative interactions between the general and special education communities. Reviewing these interactions stimulates ideas about how better partnerships could be formed between not just general and special educators, but among a range of players who represent different kinds of children in the school population. This is especially important in creating programs for the many kinds of children who may need particular help in reaching states' new standards for student achievement.

It is important to remember that states have set their new standards for ***all*** students, not just for the students who are already high achievers. Many states say this clearly in their standards documents. In fact, education reformers assert that schools should ***start*** with the idea that all students can achieve at high levels, rather than that they can't. New standards and expectations should challenge each child fully, and recognize progress and achievement throughout a student's school career. As a result, the critical issue in special education has changed from "How do students with disabilities get appropriate access to educational programs?" to "How do these students get appropriate access to the curriculum required to reach these new state standards?"

Despite this fact, the special education community has not played a major role in developing standards in most states. Rather, special educators' roles (if any) have usually been limited to reviewing documents that have been prepared by others. There are states, however, where special education has played an important role in setting new education standards. Following are a few examples:

Who's in Special Education?

According to the 1995 *Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Act*, 10% of all students are enrolled in special education. The approximate breakdown, by category, of students placed in special education is as follows:

Specific Learning Disabilities	51%
Speech or Language Impairments	21%
Mental Retardation	11%
Serious Emotional Disturbance	9%
Hearing, Visual, Orthopedic, or other Health Impairments	8%

Where Do Special Education Students Spend Their School Days?

In a regular classroom:	40%
In a resource room:	32%
In a separate classroom in a regular school building:	23%
In a separate facility:	5%

- In a few states, such as Kentucky, Nebraska, and Vermont, special educators participated in committees that developed content standards and/or curriculum frameworks.
- In Missouri, special educators at the state level developed teaching tools to show how performance standards could be applied to students who have cognitive disabilities.
- In Colorado, general and special educators are looking together at ways to assist students with diverse needs to meet new state and district standards.

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Curriculum

Revising curriculum frameworks is a powerful policy tool for improving the achievement of all children, including those with disabilities. Although all children cannot be expected to achieve the same level of performance at school, teachers need the material, skills, and support to provide a high-quality curriculum of common goals and themes to all students. Thus, state curriculum guidelines should be sufficiently comprehensive to support the learning of all students. And special education specialists at the state level could help make sure that these state guidelines fit a variety of learners.

Special education has not, however, played a major role in developing specific curriculum frameworks in most states. Rather, special education's role has generally been limited to reviewing curriculum documents prepared by other educators — if they have been involved in this process at all.

But there have been interactions between the two communities. For example, in Missouri, the state's curriculum division made a special point of inviting the special education division to review and provide comments about Missouri's new draft curriculum frameworks. The special education division has also developed sample activities to help teachers use these new frameworks in working with students with disabilities. In fact, it is anticipated that each curriculum framework will begin with a section that discusses the different learning styles and special needs of students.

Assessment

In the second policy area of the assessment of students and schools, special education's role has also generally been limited, as was true above. Again, however, there are exceptions. In a few states (Kentucky and Vermont, for example), special educators have helped to develop state assessments of student performance. In New Jersey, special educators will help develop a new fourth grade test in subjects such as reading and mathematics to make sure that students with disabilities are taken into consideration while the test is created.

As has been said before, the standards-based education reform movement holds all students to the same higher standards. However, states cannot determine if this is actually happening unless they have data on the performance of diverse groups of students — including students with disabilities.

In many states, it is hard to tell how many special education students are included in statewide student achievement tests (but there are exceptions; see the box on page 21). Most states have a policy about excluding students with disabilities (or those with limited English skills) from the assessment program, but the real decisions are made at the local level. Often, the committee that creates an Individual Education Program (IEP) for a student with disabilities decides if a student is to be excluded. Sometimes students are excluded from a test if they don't receive at least half of the relevant instruction in a general education classroom. And, special education students may be included in one test but not in another. Most states do not require districts to report the number of students excluded from their assessments, or to give alternative assessments to children who do not take statewide tests, although some states are moving in those directions. Alternatively, many states are unable to determine which of the scores reported are from special education students.

What Is an IEP?

In 1974, Congress passed The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142), which guaranteed that children with disabilities must have available to them a free appropriate public education. As a part of this law, each student receiving services under P.L. 94-142 must have an individualized education program (better known as an IEP) that sets goals for the student and describes what the special education services that student will receive. The IEP must be developed by a team composed of at least the child's teacher, the parent, a representative of the local school district, and, when appropriate, the student.

Including More Students with Disabilities in Assessment Programs

The following states are working to assure that all students are part of statewide assessments of student achievement:

- **Kentucky** includes all students in its state "portfolio" assessments, and it provides examples of how assessments can be adapted to match the way a child is taught. Students with severe disabilities might, if necessary, participate in an "alternative portfolio" assessment. but this does not prevent their scores from being considered when the success of the school as a whole is being evaluated.
- **Vermont** includes all students in its assessments. Any accommodations in assessment are expected to match up with adaptations in the child's instruction.
- **Colorado** aims to include 97 to 98 percent of the state's students in its new state assessment program — 92 percent in the regular assessment, 3 percent with reasonable accommodation, and 2 to 3 percent with modification. Reasonable accommodation means that a school might assist a student with a disability such as deafness or blindness to take a test differently than other students (using braille or sign language, for example). Modification means that the content of an assessment might need to be altered for a student with severe mental retardation.
- **Maryland** is developing an alternative performance assessment system for students whose educational programs and performance are not aligned with state standards.

Accountability

A third policy area to examine is accountability. Here, there is evidence that as states begin to hold schools accountable for student performance, they are looking more closely at the quality of special education programs. This is particularly significant since state monitoring of special education has often been limited to assuring that schools are following federal regulations — for example, assuring that students with disabilities' due process rights were not violated while their education programs were shaped. The "outputs" of special education, the performance of its students, are often overlooked by state monitoring teams.

But this is beginning to change. More frequently, state-level general and special education staff are making visits to monitor local schools together, which helps each community understand the others' programs better. In Missouri, California, and New Mexico, state special and general education staff make visits together to monitor local schools. Together, the teams look at whether schools are following federal regulations *and* at the quality of general and special education programs.

Missouri is a state that has worked hard on the issue of monitoring the quality of special education programs. The state accredits schools based on quality and performance standards such as student achievement, percentage of students graduating, and percentage of students pursuing post-secondary education. But the monitoring process for special education programs has, until recently, only looked at "inputs" — that is, whether school special education programs were following federal regulations. "Outputs" — such as the achievement of special education students — were not considered.

Dissatisfied with this mismatch, the state wanted to know how its general education performance standards could or should apply to students with disabilities. How could the state examine quality indicators —

such as student performance — for special education? A state task force of general and special educators examined this question. They recommended that terms be better defined, so that when schools are being reviewed, "all" students means students with disabilities — and any other special populations — as well as the "typical" student. They also found that some state standards should be changed to better meet the needs of *diverse learners* (and not just students with disabilities, which the task force thought was too narrow a definition).

Even though the trend in monitoring schools is for states to look more and more closely at indications of the quality of programs, they are still required by federal law to ensure that certain special education processes and procedures are followed. In California, state teams must look at 74 procedural items for special education when they visit local schools. Some state department of education staff feel that these state requirements get in the way of integrating the state monitoring of general and special education.

Part of the problem is that state accountability is such a complicated undertaking. It involves what is being assessed (for example, "outputs" vs. "inputs," or state goals vs. local goals) and a range of consequences for schools that are rated highly or poorly. When federal regulations for special education become interwoven with all of this, the situation becomes even more complicated. Some state officials perceive that if they focus on student results they do so at the peril of maintain-ing federal due process procedures. Alternatively, they perceive that if they focus on maintaining due process procedures they cannot focus on student achievement.

Although not necessarily the case, some state officials see the balance between procedure and student results in special education as a zero sum game – more of one means less of the other. What should they focus their attention on? Will they lose federal funds if they focus too closely on special education students' achievement at school and pay less attention to whether schools are following federal regulations? How can parents of children with disabilities be assured that any changes are in the best interest of their children? Will the families of students with disabilities sue the district if they perceive that federal regulations that guarantee services for their child are being ignored? These are not easy issues for state and local officials to deal with.

Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

A fifth important area for consideration is teacher policy. In most states, prospective teachers of general and special education have different college course requirements and their practice teaching will often occur in different settings. For example, general education teachers may major in a subject area (such as math) and/or an age (middle school), whereas special education teachers often specialize in working with special populations, such as blind or deaf students. As a result, there is often little interaction between these teachers-to-be at a time when they could learn how to work together in their future job sites. Better interaction would certainly help in instances where schools are including more students with disabilities in the regular classroom, which requires special and general education teachers to work more closely together.

There are some linkages, however, between the preparation of special and general education teachers. General education teachers must take a course in special education in many states. And, some states are reviewing the ability of general education teachers to be able to work well with a variety of students in the gen-

Training Special and General Education Teachers Together

With a minigrant from a neighboring state, Missouri has awarded five $2000 grants to universities throughout the state. These small grants fund the development of partnerships between general and special education teacher training faculties. The purpose is to explore the possibility of joint course work for general and special education students, allowing them to learn together how to meet the needs of diverse learners.

eral classroom. For example, one standard for beginning teachers in Connecticut is: "Effectively meets the needs of exceptional children." Similarly, one of Maryland's ten "essential dimensions" of teaching is: "Demonstrate a knowledge of strategies for integrating students with special needs into the regular classroom." There are also isolated instances of innovative programs to train special and general education teachers together.

Some special educators have expressed an interest in helping to set state standards for obtaining a general education teaching license. However, as with other areas, the special education community's role has typically been to review, but not to create, new standards.

In regard to special education teaching licenses, there is a trend toward having fewer and broader licenses in categories such as "mild/moderately impaired" and "severely impaired." This change appears to be motivated by a change in philosophy in the special education community, and not by a similar trend in the general education system, which also favors fewer licenses.

As might be expected, interaction between general and special education teachers in professional development runs a range — from a special education teacher who decides to participate in a general education training — to one who helps design a statewide training network with his or her general education counterparts. Interestingly, much of the interaction between the two fields has been initiated by special education:

- **Missouri**, for example, uses federal special education funds to conduct trainings about the needs of exceptional students. Local districts are encouraged to send teams of general and special educators to participate in these trainings.

- **Pennsylvania** uses funds from the same federal program to provide information and training to general and special education teachers in targeted districts.

- **Vermont's** special education reform legislation sets aside one percent of state special education aid for professional development. This money has been used to train general education teachers to work with students with special needs, as well as to support the professional development of special educators.

Finance

The policy area of finance is the next area for consideration. In most states, the funds for general and special education are separate. Today's tight education budgets, however, mean that the two programs must compete for an increasingly limited amount of money. New Jersey, for example, has essentially frozen special education funds for three years. Other states, such as Nebraska and Missouri, have capped the growth of state special education spending.

We have seen in the preceding chapter that as state financial support for education has declined in recent years, local districts have had to make up the difference through increases in local property taxes. Declining state aid for special education puts even more fiscal and political pressure on local districts, because they are required by state and federal law to provide special education services to children in need, even when support from the state declines. This leads to resentment, as well as claims that special education is raiding the general education budget.

As was discussed previously, some states have changed the way they finance education in response to local lawsuits challenging the equity of older systems. These changes in basic student aid formulas have sometimes increased special education funds, but they usually have not changed the way that these funds are given to schools — that is, by category of disability, or number of special education teachers, or the excess cost of special education. These kinds of funding formulas often require that students be identified as "special education students" in order for districts to receive special education dollars. As a result, students receive "handicapping labels" that often remain with them throughout their education careers.

Nor have these changes allowed special education funding to be used more flexibly at the school site. State and federal reporting requirements often compel

Special Education Funding Formulas

Most states use one of five basic special education funding formulas. Each formula has advantages and disadvantages. The formulas are:

- **Flat grants per Teacher or Classroom Unit** provide districts with a fixed amount of money for each special education teacher or for each classroom unit needed.

- **Percentage or Excess Cost Formulas** reimburse districts for a percentage of the cost of educating students with disabilities. The reimbursements may provide a percentage of full costs or may cover costs that are above the average per pupil costs for general education students.

- **Percentage of Teacher/Personnel Salaries** provides districts with a percentage of the salaries of special education teachers and/or other personnel. The percentage reimbursed may vary, depending on the type of professional involved (for example, 70% of the salary of a certified teacher may be reimbursed, while 30% of a classroom aide's salary may be reimbursed).

- **Weighted Pupil Formulas** pay districts a multiple of the average per pupil costs or other base rate, depending of the pupil's disability or program.

- **Weighted Teacher/Classroom Formulas** pay districts an amount based on a multiple of allowable teachers or classroom units. Weights may vary by disability category and/or program, and units may be constrained by pupil-staff ratios.

Source: National Association of State Directors of Special Education

local districts to account for every minute of a special education teacher's time, in order to ensure that he is *only* working with special education students. Similarly, districts must often document that any special education funds were spent *only* on providing programs and services to students with disabilities. Although federal regulations have been interpreted to allow special education funding to "incidentally benefit" non-special education students, districts are wary of providing this "incidental benefit" for fear they may be found in violation of the rules that govern how special education money should be spent. *(This "incidental benefit" rule is currently under reconsideration as part of the reauthorization of the IDEA.)*

Allowing districts to use special education funding more flexibly would clarify their ability to be more flexible in meeting students' needs. For example, a school may need a half-time special education teacher (paid for with federal special education funds) and a half-time teacher for remedial reading (paid for with federal Title I funds, which are intended to boost the achievement of disadvantaged students). Without flexibility in the use of funds, a school might *feel* compelled to hire two half-time teachers, each with her own set of classroom materials (many of which may be the same), so that the two programs — special education and Title I — are shown to be completely separate. With flexibility in the use of funding, that same school may *feel more comfortable* hiring one teacher who fits the requirements of both the special education and the Title I program, with one set of materials to be used for any student that she serves.

Governance

The final policy area to be looked at in this chapter is governance. Little is known about how changes in governance — reducing regulations, giving increased authority and responsibility to local districts and schools, and supporting "charter schools" — has affected special or general education students. If states continue to look more closely at the quality of special education programs and the performance of specialeducation students on state assessments, we may eventually learn more about the effect of changes in governance on the education of all students.

School Reform: How Does it Affect Children with Disabilities?

The most extensive evaluation to date of the impact of a state-wide education reform on students with disabilities was conducted in Vermont. In 1990, Vermont reformed its special and general education systems by passing Act 230. This legislation calls for changes in the way all children, including those with special needs, are educated.

Act 230 is based on the premise that schools must strive to provide comprehensive services so that all children can, to the maximum extent possible, succeed in the general classroom. General education teachers now call upon "instructional support teams" when a student has trouble learning — whether or not the student is perceived as having a disability. The idea is to give teachers the responsibility, skills, and support to deal effectively with the diversity of students in their classrooms. The state funding of this new system is flexible and allows schools to design their own programs to meet the needs of their students. Instructional support teams can be supported by special education funds, and one percent of the total special education budget goes towards supporting the training of all teachers and administrators.

A 1995 evaluation of Vermont's initiative found that it has built the capacity of many schools to successfully include students with disabilities in the regular classroom. It has reduced the number of students who are in the special education program by 18.4 percent without hindering their achievement at school. About a third of all Vermont students are receiving support from the staff funded by the new special education funding. Despite this fact, the cost per pupil has decreased 38 percent in four years. This state reform is threatened, however, by reductions in state and federal aid, inadequate resources for staff training, and an increase in the number of students with serious emotional and behavioral problems.

Chapter IV. What Will It Take for ALL Students to Meet the New Standards?

Now that we have looked at standards-based reform, as well as the involvement of the special education community in this movement, it is time to consider a final difficult, but most important question: What are the implications of this reform movement for the entire diversity of children who attend school? Consider that the schools include not only children with disabilities, but other special classes of students including those who are homeless, migrant, poor, or speak English as a second language. These groups of students have special federal and state programs and regulations have been created especially for them.

Schools also serve students who are living in families or communities that are extremely troubled, so much so that their odds of succeeding at school are exceedingly slim. And among all students of every kind, there are many different styles and ways of learning, so that a child who thrives in one kind of educational environment might very well fail in another.

The schools, in other words, have a daunting challenge in providing an adequate education for this diversity of students. And yet state policymakers assert that schools can and must see that ***all*** of these students are achieving at substantially higher levels, reaching world-class standards, ready to match their knowledge and skills to their counterparts in Japan or France or anywhere else in the world. And state policymakers are right. Students in this country must achieve at higher levels than they presently do if they are to successfully negotiate the 21st century. But beyond the rhetoric and the various theories, does anyone really know what kind of an effort it will take to really get there?

There are many reasons why students are not achieving to their full potential at school, and these reasons must be addressed — slowly, one by one, for each and every child if necessary — if students are to reach the higher standards that states are setting for their educational achievement. To more fully understand what a challenge this is, consider that some schools don't have up-to-date materials (such as current maps of the world), or enough textbooks for students, or are housed in buildings that are old and unsafe. In some school systems, families cannot afford to buy basic school supplies for their children, so that students arrive in classrooms without paper, pencils, or notebooks. Many schools lack computers and other modern technological equipment that students will need to know how to use in their future jobs. Teachers themselves often lack the basic office equipment that professionals take for granted — a work space that contains an up-to-date computer and software and a telephone, as well as ready access to photocopy and fax machines.

Getting all students ready to meet the new education standards will require an examination of why different kinds of children are not now performing at high levels, changing what happens in the classroom, as appropriate, as well as addressing other needs that prevent students from doing well. Sometimes it will certainly mean that state education funding needs to be increased.

But helping students to meet new, higher standards will also take a lot more than money. Family and community support will need to be rallied, and partnerships formed with businesses to provide students with real-world opportunities to help them learn about the world of work as a part of their schooling. States need to look at their standards and their policy tools, one by one, as we have just done, and ask, for example: What are the implications of what we have done for the diverse range of children in our schools? What do these reforms mean for the 40% of children who are living in poverty? What do they mean for an 8th grader who has no learning disabilities, but is reading at a 3rd grade level? What

do they mean for the children of migrant workers? What do they mean for children with learning disabilities? And what do they mean for students who are severely mentally retarded?

General and special education have much to offer one another in learning how to help all students meet the new state standards. Special education is a very personal process in which every student has an Individual Education Program, a committee to ensure that the plan is appropriate and carried out, and federal, state, and local funds to support all of this activity. General education, by contrast, tends to deal with students in groups, providing whole classrooms with the same kind of instructional techniques and materials, as if there was only one best way that everyone learns. Special education has been criticized for being too isolated and individualized, whereas general education is criticized for using "cookie cutter" or "one size fits all" approaches that ignore individual needs. Perhaps a better and more practical solution lies somewhere between the two approaches, so that special education is better tied to rigorous state education standards for all students, and general education learns how to take more individual approaches to helping a diversity of students meet state standards.

And yet our study has found that, with a few exceptions, the special education community's involvement in this standards movement has been limited. Performance standards and curriculum frameworks are being written, student assessments designed, accountability systems revised, teacher policies changed, governance and financial reforms enacted with little input from representatives of students with disabilities. One has to wonder, then, what real chance these new reforms have to really benefit ***all*** students — as is their avowed purpose — unless people who can speak to the particular situations and needs of ***all*** students are involved in this education reform process from the beginning and in a substantive way. "In a substantive way" means more than having a representative of one or another population of students provide comments about draft documents. It means that they are at the table helping to shape the ideas that drive state policy documents, that they are helping to write the documents themselves, and that they are helping to create plans to change the education system.

In this way, the findings of our study push beyond the special education community and its relationship to education reform. It is not only special educators who need to help shape education reform. *To be successful with all students, the standards-based education reform movement needs the involvement of people who represent the full range of diversity of the children in our schools.*

In regard to standards-based reform and its ability to serve the diversity of students in school, some thought is also needed about the nature of state standards and the purposes of schooling. Students graduate from high school with different goals. For example, some will go straight to a job, and some will go to college or some sort of post-secondary training. The job-bound high school graduates need specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will help them to find a good job and hold on to it and be successful in the world of work. State education standards that are strictly focused on academic subject matter may miss some of the skills and knowledge that the student who is not bound for college will need. And virtually every student will eventually work for a living, entering jobs where they will need non-academic skills such as the ability to take responsibility for tasks, to work independently on projects, and to work cooperatively with colleagues on joint projects.

These questions about the nature of education standards are really questions about the purpose of education. *Are the purposes of education strictly academic, as it would seem from state standards that only discuss academic achievement? Or are job skills and the ability to be an independent, responsible, self-supporting, constructive member of society also desirable end results of schooling? Are strictly academic goals the only appropriate goals for all students?* These questions are not simply rhetorical, and not everyone will answer them the same way. But they strike at the heart of education reform. The new standards for education are meant to transform teaching and learning in every classroom. But towards what end?

Further, no matter what kind of standards a state has adopted, will all students really be expected to meet them? Or will some students have their own set of goals? The National Center on Educational Outcomes

(NCEO) has identified multiple outcomes for students with disabilities, including academic and functional literacy, responsibility and independence, contribution and citizenship, physical health, personal and social adjustment, and satisfaction. It may be useful to ask, aren't the NCEO goals worthy goals for **all** students? For examples of specific state education goals that apply to a wide range of students, see the box opposite.

Regarding standards and student achievement, there is a set of related questions that need to be asked of the special education community. A student with disability's Individual Education Program (IEP) contains goals and objectives that are usually reviewed once a year. These goals are, in essence, standards set for individual students. Too often these goals are isolated, short-term, year-to-year objectives. They often lack a larger vision for what the student is building towards, or what he should know and be able to do at the end of his schooling. Questions such as these need to be asked of IEPs: *Are IEPs based on long-term goals for students? Are these goals closely tied to the general education curriculum and state standards for education? Are IEPs promoting a rigorous, sequential program of study that is building towards independence and self-sufficiency? If not, why not?*

There are other questions that are relevant for people who represent any of the diverse populations of students in the schools. How can diverse groups become involved with setting standards for education, to ensure that the standards are appropriate for all kinds of children? What kind of preparation would noneducators need to become part of a process that can become subject-specific and technical? What is the appropriate kind of involvement? How can these people help states to understand what kind of support different kinds of children will need to meet new state standards?

Finally, there is a question about how broad or specific state standards are. Very high, specific standards may be difficult for all but the highest achievers to meet. Less specific standards may allow flexibility for different children to demonstrate mastery of that standard in different ways. Thus, a child with mild mental retardation may demonstrate his or her ability to use numbers in a way that meets the state standard — a standard that challenges that particular child to perform at his or her highest level. But there is a caution: If standards are too broad, then achieving them means very little, and every student's performance could be interpreted as "meeting the standard." This could give an excuse for just accepting the performance of students who are not achieving to their fullest potential, instead of finding out how to help them to do more.

In the policy area of student assessment, there are some issues that are relevant to diverse populations of students, particularly those who are served by federal programs (for example, special education, migrant, or students with limited English). Will they be included in statewide assessments of student achievement? Will they have had a chance to learn the content by using the general education curriculum? Is that content relevant for all these students? Will teachers "drill" students to memorize facts and skills so that they will score highly on state tests? Or will these students be assessed differently, if needed?

A higher percentage of children of color or of limited-English proficiency are placed in some special education classrooms. Could new methods of assessment change this by allowing children to show their mastery of knowledge and skills in different ways? There is evidence to believe that this is true, and that "performance tests," in which students actively demonstrate what they know and can do, can result in higher scores for African-American students than standardized, multiple-choice tests. This is true for other groups of students, as well.

On the other hand, if state standards are very academic and specific, will more students be placed into special education or other programs because they can't meet the state standards?

In the policy area of accountability, there are a number of questions to consider. Holding a school accountable for its performance requires specific information. For example, if schools are to be accountable for the achievement of any specific population of students — homeless or with limited English skills or low income or migrant or students with disabilities — then information about the achievement for any one of these groups needs to be collected and analyzed. One way of doing this is to require local schools to separate out the

State Board of Education Goals for All Students

Maine's Common Core of Learning

Students with a common core of knowledge...

...accept responsibility for personal decisions and actions.
...know when, where, and how to gain access to good health care.
...can use technology-based and traditional ways of acquiring information.

Arkansas Learner Outcomes

...Students will apply various thinking/problem-solving strategies to issues related to all subject matter fields, to all school-related activities, and to real life situations.

...Students will demonstrate good citizenship and function as positive members of the local, national, and world communities.

Goals of the Iowa State Board of Education

Goals for Students...

...To achieve a mastery of the fundamental learning skills and establish personal standards of educational excellence

...To understand and believe in oneself; to accept personal responsibility for one's education and personal development; and to build a system of moral standards and spiritual values which contribute to a democratic society.

assessment scores of different groups and report them to the state. This would be quite a change in practice for special education because, as we have seen, it is now a local decision in most states whether or not a special education student is even included in state assessments of student performance. And many states do not even have the ability in their current data systems to report different group scores.

Another way to track achievement among diverse groups of students is for the state to sample schools across the state to get a "snapshot" of how well different kinds of students are doing in meeting state standards. The latter method has the advantage of not burdening local schools with additional reporting and paperwork, but it may not uncover instances in which specific groups of students in a given school district aren't performing well. And as has been said before, an individual school cannot be held accountable by the state for the performance of its students with disabilities, for example, unless we know how well that school's students with disabilities do on state assessments.

Another area that states need to scrutinize closely is teacher policy. As has been said previously, there is a movement in states to change teacher preparation programs so that new teachers know how to help students meet new state standards. This period of change provides a chance to more closely link the training and skills of general and special education teachers. An in-

creased ability for these teachers to work together could be promoted at the same time.

A possible result could be new roles for special education teachers — for example, as a consultant to, or a team teacher in, a general education classroom — a specialist who helps general education classrooms to meet the needs of the different kinds of children found there, including (but not limited to) the children who are in a special education program. This might mean that prospective special education teachers will need to take more academic course work. At the same time, and on a parallel track, prospective general education teachers could receive additional training on ways of working with students who learn differently — which is already a trend in some states.

Several trends in professional development show promise for greater coordination between special and general educators. First, some states are requiring teachers, as part of their on-going professional development, to strengthen their skills in working with the diversity of children in their classrooms. Second, some states are combining training funds (or requiring districts to create coordinated trainings with money from different sources) to help all teachers work more effectively with one another to better meet the needs of all children.

In the policy area of finance, we have already noted that some states have capped special education funding at a time when special education costs are rising. This means that local districts must come up with additional money for special education, creating tension between special and general education locally. Special education costs are rising because there are more children in school who need increased support and assistance — and these are the very same children who, we are concerned, will not be able to meet the new state standards for education. The need for additional dollars cannot be ignored, but at the same time, states need to look at the policy options listed throughout this section as ways to help schools meet the needs of the diverse children who come through their doors.

A second issue concerning finance follows directly from the first. What does it cost to support students who are included in the general classroom, instead of separated into a special education class? Which options are more or less expensive, and what are the benefits to the students in each option? These issues must be clearly spelled out for the public. Are the costs of "inclusive" schooling, and the costs of serving students who are no longer classified as special education students, adequately covered under new state funding formulas?

In looking at changes in the area of state governance, several issues emerge, particularly concerning "charter" schools. People who are particularly interested in the well being of any of the diverse populations of children in the schools may wish to examine how these children are faring under charter school legislation. Which children are in charter schools? Are the students in charter schools representative of the children in the state as a whole? If not, why not? Who in the state is responsible for looking at these issues?

Further, who is responsible for seeing that charter schools follow state regulations regarding special populations of students? One barrier to special classes of students enrolling in charter schools has to do with state funding formulas. As legislation regarding charter schools has been written, some states have forgotten to include provisions that would allow special resources to follow a student from her old school to her charter school. This impedes the ability of students with disabilities to participate in charter schools and poses serious legal problems for states and local districts.

None of the questions raised in this chapter have easy answers. Some of them have no answers at all, as yet, and are posed as challenges to the reader. But these questions need to be discussed as fundamental and important changes are made in the education system. They need to be raised at state forums and at local school board meetings and at other times and places where education change is being discussed. The best answers to these questions will help make sure that all students in the United States' education system are supported in achieving at higher levels — and will have a better shot at obtaining the kind of future that they want and deserve.

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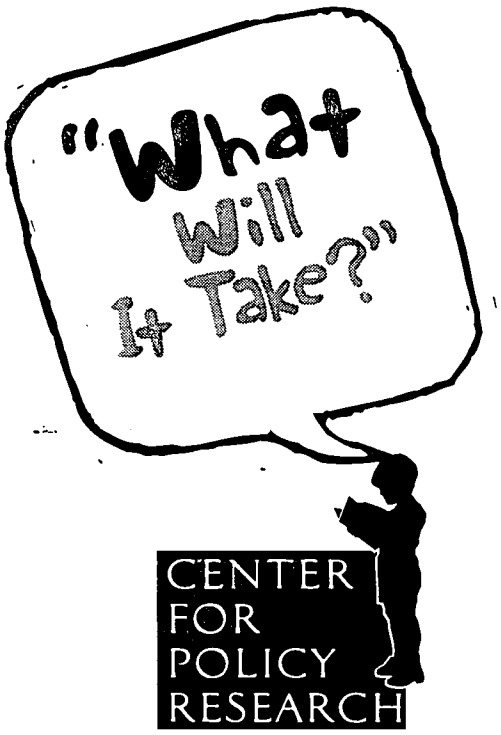
The Center for Policy Research on the Impact of General and Special Education Reform

In October 1994, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) established a Center for Policy Research on the Impact of General and Special Education Reform (the Center) to study the interaction between current general and special education policies and their impact on students with disabilities. The Center is a joint endeavor of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), the Institute for the Study of Exceptional Children and Youth at the University of Maryland (UM), and the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) at the University of Pennsylvania, and is housed at NASBE.

Each Center partner is conducting interrelated three-year research studies that examine reforms in general and special education policies, their interactions, and their implications for students with disabilities. Areas being researched include standards and curriculum, assessment, accountability, teacher policy, finance, and governance, as well as state responses to federal programs such as Goals 2000 and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act. This issue brief uses data collected by the Center during its first year of research (1995) to 1) describe major trends in general education reform from a standards-based perspective across the 18 states in our study; 2) provide a preliminary assessment of the nature and involvement of special education in these reforms at the state level; and 3) discuss implications of these reforms for students with disabilities and related emerging issues.



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The Center for Policy Research on the Impact of General and Special Education Reform (Center) is a national, three-year project initiated in October 1994 by the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), the Institute for the Study of Exceptional Children and Youth at the University of Maryland (UM), and the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) at the University of Pennsylvania. The Center's mission is to examine general and special education reforms, their interaction and their implications for students with disabilities, and ultimately to determine options for policymakers at federal, state and local levels.

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