As Congress reauthorizes the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, much of the discussion continues to focus on students with disabilities. In order to contribute meaningful data and policy recommendations to the discussion, the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) has released two new studies related to NCLB and its impact on special education students.

The first study, Rewards and Roadblocks: How Special Education Students Are Faring Under No Child Left Behind, takes a serious look at the available evidence on just how NCLB has affected the nation's 6.6 million special education students, a significant number of whom also receive other school services such as Title I and English Language services. (See figure.)

The study found that, overall, special education students are benefiting from several of NCLB’s key provisions. Probably the most important NCLB provision is its requirement for at least 95 percent of all students—in assessed grades and within key student subgroups—to be included in the assessments required by the Act. Despite requirements in both the 1994 version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, known as the Improving America’s Schools Act, and the 1997 version of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)—that special education students participate in all state assessments and that the results of their participation be publicly reported—massive exclusion of these students prevailed. However, since the enactment of NCLB, participation data collected over several years by the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) shows a clear pattern of substantial improvement in the inclusion of special education students.

For example, in the 2000–2001 school year, participation data on five states (selected because of clear reporting data) showed only one state (Kansas) meeting the NCLB requirement of 95 percent participation for special education students.
Background

It was clear almost 10 years ago that the existing shortage of qualified teachers for students with disabilities would continue to be a major challenge in the decade ahead (Cook & Boe, 1998). An estimated 135,000 more special education teachers than there were in 1998 would be needed by 2008 (McLeskey, Smith, Tyler, & Saunders, 2002). In response to the rather alarming supply and demand forecasts, the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative (the Collaborative) conducted a survey of its member districts to find out how and how well its members were coping with special education staffing challenges and needs. The August 2006 survey focused on three key areas: Special Education Staff Recruitment and Retention, Training for General Education Teachers, and Meeting NCLB’s (No Child Left Behind Act) “Highly Qualified” Requirement.

The Collaborative invited all member districts to complete the survey online. Nearly 50% of the membership (50 of 104 school districts) responded: 21 respondents represented large member districts (i.e., total student enrollments of more than 50,000), 16 represented medium-sized member districts (15,000–50,000 students), and 13 worked in smaller districts with fewer than 15,000 students. Enrollments of students with disabilities varied: 15 districts had 10,000–55,000 students with disabilities, 14 districts had 5,000–9,999 such students, and 21 districts had fewer than 5,000.

“Building a strong, positive relationship between families and schools is essential in combating the stigma and discrimination associated with youth mental illness,” says EDC’s Eileen Mackin. “Some families believe that keeping their child’s illness hidden protects the privacy of their loved one, but by doing so they further perpetuate the stigma. At the same time, many educators lack knowledge of the indicators of youth mental illness and interpret its manifestations simply as bad behavior—as opposed to a serious, treatable medical condition—which compounds the problem. Schools need assistance in creating a supportive school culture that encourages families to disclose their child’s mental health problems and provides teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to take the appropriate action.”

The pamphlet can be downloaded from the Collaborative’s Web site at www.urbancollaborative.org/pdfs/mental_health.pdf.

To learn more about the initiative, contact Eileen Mackin at emackin@edc.org.

Battling the Stigma of Youth Mental Illness

EDC develops resources for parents and schools

With funding from the Weyerhaeuser Family Foundation, the Project to Reduce the Stigma and Discrimination of Youth Mental Illness at Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), has created a pamphlet for parents that provides key information on how they can work with their child’s school on mental health issues. It is designed to help families and educators cope with serious mental health disorders that often first arise during adolescence: mood and anxiety disorders, schizoaffective disorder, and schizophrenia. The pamphlet, “Finding Help and Working with Schools,” covers such topics as symptoms of mental illness in children, the impact of mental illness on children’s performance at home and in school, how to talk with school professionals, and where to seek medical and other resources and services in the community.
Ronald Felton Named Collaborative Associate Director

Ron Felton, retired Associate Superintendent of Schools from Miami-Dade County, has been appointed Associate Director of the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative. “Ron’s duties will be focused primarily on expanding the Collaborative’s technical assistance, program and service delivery evaluations, and organizational-management consulting services,” said the Collaborative’s Executive Director David Riley. “We are very excited to have him on our team. We are receiving an increased number of requests for technical assistance and Ron’s extensive background will add a great deal to the integrity of our work in school districts and states.”

Mr. Felton has been involved in the field of special education for over 32 years. He has been a teacher of students with autism, severe emotional disturbances, severe multiple handicaps and developmental delays. He also held several administrative positions in the Exceptional Student Education Department in Miami-Dade for over 10 years, including Executive Director and Assistant Superintendent. After 30 years in the school system, he became the Chief Executive Officer of a children’s mental health agency in Miami that provides services to students with emotional disabilities in the school system. For nearly 20 years, he has taught courses in special education and educational administration at Florida International University, Barry University, University of Miami, and Miami-Dade College.

He served as the Project Manager for All Children Together (ACT), a project designed to increase the participation of children with disabilities and their families in all aspects of community life. He currently serves as the Chair of the ACT Board.

For more information about the Collaborative’s technical assistance offerings, please email Ron at rfelton@edc.org

NEW COLLABORATIVE MEMBERS

The Collaborative currently links 114 school districts from 29 states plus the District of Columbia, and Calgary, Canada. Nine school districts have joined since May 2007. Please join us in welcoming:

Arkadelphia Public Schools, AR
Corpus Christi Independent School District, TX
Fort Worth Independent School District, TX
Metropolitan School District of Pike Township, IN
Poughkeepsie City School District, NY
Recovery School District, LA
Rochester Public Schools, MN
School Board of Polk County, FL
Sioux Falls Public Schools, SD

For a complete list of Collaborative members and enrollment information, please visit our Web site at www.urbancollaborative.org.
The ICARE Schools Study

Cynthia Mata-Aguilar
Anna McTigue
Nancy Brigham
Education Development Center, Inc.

What does a school look like that involves ALL of its families, including those who are often marginalized in the education system by reason of economic circumstances, educational attainment, cultural/linguistic differences, and/or minority status? The ICARE Schools: A Research Study of Meaningful Parent Involvement in the IEP Process was designed to understand and document the practices of such schools. ICARE staff sought middle schools that had an ethnically and economically diverse population, strong academic and social outcomes, and evidence of robust practices that engaged all parents, specifically parents of students with disabilities. These schools involve families beyond the IEP meeting and create dynamic ongoing family school partnerships from which the schools, parents, and children all benefit. In these ICARE Schools, families have found their voice and school staff has learned to listen. The study is funded by the Office of Special Education Projects (OSEP) and housed at Education Development Center in Newton, MA.

ICARE SCHOOL Study: Overview of Activities
The ICARE study began in 2005 with a rigorous, national nomination and selection process that was guided by an advisory board that consisted of national experts, including Dr. Beth Harry, Elizabeth Bauer, and Dr. Rich Robison, as well as principals and practitioners. With over 20 applications, ICARE researchers reviewed the applications carefully, conducted follow-up calls, and used the selection criteria to choose the finalist schools: Roosevelt Middle School in West Orange, New Jersey, and Moore Middle School in Arvada, Colorado. A third school in the Mississippi Delta region was also selected, but due to Hurricane Katrina’s impact on the region, it could not participate.

For the past two years, ICARE researchers have worked closely with school principals, staff, students, and parents in order to explore, understand, and document the attitudes and activities of educators and parents that foster meaningful involvement. Numerous site visits were conducted in order to gain an understanding of the school culture and establish a “big picture” of the school in the context of its community and district. Research activities included interviews with key district and school personnel, focus group discussions with parents, students, and teachers, and a School Walk-Through that involved classroom observations and brief interviews with teachers.

A second phase of the ICARE study was the parent involvement sub-study. ICARE staff spent hours with the 10 selected families to talk about their life histories and involvement with their children’s schooling. Staff “shadowed” and interviewed the focus students about what was important to them about school and met with teachers and staff to talk about the types of support that students were receiving. Student voices were also captured through a “Kids with Cameras” activity where they took pictures of things and people that were important to them. A final key activity was parent focus groups on transition to the high school. This was a concern that was identified in the first year and common to many families whose children had disabilities.

Preliminary Findings
Data analysis is not complete, but preliminary findings suggest the importance of three defining practices in the ICARE schools: empowerment, communication, and connection.

These closely related practices reflect a dedication to the equality of stakeholders in the education system. In ICARE
schools, families and students are not simply passive partakers of the system, but active architects of it. Advocacy for students is seen not as adversarial (the rights of parents vs. the needs of the education system) but as a cooperative venture of families and schools to support the children. The specific practices are briefly described below.

Empowerment is reflected in the school’s willingness to listen to and negotiate with families around the most important issues in the education of their children. In an ICARE school, both the academic program for a student with a disability and the setting in which it is offered, reflect a choice negotiated between school and family. A mother whose son was struggling in the general education science and social studies classrooms gives this example: ...they wanted to pull him out (of science and social studies) mid-year...And I said, “My son can’t live his life being in small classrooms. He cannot” ...

Towards the end, the reading teacher, who he loves and adores...She was also the in-class support for him...She thought he was struggling, too. And she kind of told me, “No, it wasn’t the teacher.” She said, “Yeah, you know, I hear what you’re saying ... I hear it, but that’s not it. Because I’m the reading teacher and this is what I see.” And so, of course, that pulled me back a little bit to say, “Okay.”

So when I came for the IEP, the year-end meeting with the social workers and the classroom, in-class support people,... I checked with Kevin. I thought it would be too much to pull him out of science and social studies. ...So I said to him, I said, “Kevin if you had to make a decision on science or social studies to do a small group, which would you prefer?” He said, “Science, mommy.” And I said, “Okay.”

So, this year will be his first year going into a small group with science. And he'll have social studies in general.

Communication between families and the ICARE schools is characterized by respectful dialogue. Communication occurs on an ongoing basis, not just when there is a problem. All school personnel are responsible for communicating with families, not just special educators and guidance personnel. The communication is responsive to family concerns and communication takes place in a variety of ways to meet the needs of different family configurations. A father talks about his experience with the school. My son goes to school here, he’s our second child and he is a handful. So what I really like about the staff and the people who work here is that they have really wrapped their arms around this kid and really helped him out a lot. My wife spends a lot of time e-mailing teachers so we can find out what he does and doesn’t do, you know, because he's always telling us stories. Everybody realizes what he is like, what he can do, what he can’t do, and the best way to get him to where we need to get him to. So it's made a great difference.

Connection exists when students with disabilities are engaged in school life as individuals, socially as well as academically. For many families, having their child accepted as part of the school community was the first step in feeling connected to the school. These schools were cognizant of the developmental tasks of adolescence and created an environment where students could feel respected, safe, and nurtured. Further, the schools recognize and assist parents to deal with the impending changes in their children that result from adolescence. One mother who was new to the district spoke about how the school allowed her son to adjust to the school environment, which was quite different from his previous school. I'm new to Roosevelt and we're new to the West Orange school district, so my son ... brings some of his own flavor to the environment at school. But they allowed him some time to express himself, and he actually kind of found his place. I mean there was no judgment, there were no preconceived ideas about, they allowed him to find himself, and I think now he's a great kid here and a good contributing...

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The ICARE Schools Study

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student to the student body here, so they allowed him time.

At this point in the research, we understand much about how an ICARE school works in terms of specific practices and activities. We are still developing an overall conceptual framework that will help explain the contribution of the ICARE relationship to the students’ success in middle school and their transition to high school. What to expect in the future from the ICARE Schools Project?

A main goal of the ICARE Schools study this year is to complete the analysis of the study data and disseminate the practices found in the ICARE Schools. We will be looking to publish our results in the literature and also present at conferences in the next year. In addition, educators and families participating in the ICARE study identified the activities below as helpful or informative. These resources and tools will soon be available for use on our website http://www2.edc.org/icareschools/.

Transition parent focus group protocols: Transition to high school is a scary change for many families of students with disabilities. This protocol takes a school or parent group step-by-step through a process that can help families make the transition from middle school to high school. It is designed as an opportunity for parents to not only obtain information about the high school and its personnel, but also share their concerns and fears about the impending transition for their children and the family. Parents found this to be a valuable activity to participate in before their children left the middle school.

Kids with Cameras photo activity: This activity can be used by students to document what is important to them about their school. It is an excellent way for a school to better understand what is important to a child who is shy or may not be able to articulate with ease what is important to him or her.

School climate surveys: These surveys can be used to obtain information about school climate, the sense of belonging and respect, and the expectations of the key stakeholders in the educational process.

Parent, teacher, and student focus groups: The protocols can be used to obtain a greater understanding of a school’s culture from the perspective of each important stakeholder.

For more information about the ICARE Schools project, contact Anna McTigue at Education Development Center (amctigue@edc.org).
New Studies: Students...
continued from page 1

Five States
Connecticut: 59 percent
Idaho: 68 percent
Kansas: 97 percent
Texas: 47 percent
West Virginia: 30 percent

Three years later, 21 states had clear data on participation, and 16 of the 21 met or exceeded the 95 percent participation requirement. Of those that did not meet the requirement, participation ranged from 78 percent to 91 percent.

The study found that the quality of student participation, however, had been compromised by the widespread use of Out-of-Level Testing (OOLT)—the practice of assessing a student with a test designed for students at a lower grade level. NCLB regulations requiring scores from such tests to be considered as an alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards—and thus subject to a limited use in Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) determinations—has resulted in almost virtual elimination of OOLT.

Performance has also shown clear evidence of improvement. In fact, the Title I Interim Report to Congress showed the special education student subgroup improving performance in 14 of 20 states in 4th grade reading and 16 of 20 states in 4th grade math. This performance outpaced improvements experienced for all other student groups and was the most significant improvement among all student subgroups.

An NCEO analysis showed an improvement in performance on elementary reading assessments in 25 states, with the average proficiency rate going from 34 percent to 43 percent. Five states showed an improvement of more than 20 percent.

While both participation and performance have clearly been positively impacted by NCLB, the study takes a hard look at the use of subgroup “N-size” and how many states appear to use N-sizes so large as to virtually eliminate subgroup accountability for a substantial number of schools. The case of California is examined in detail, showing that the state’s current N-size results in 89 percent of schools escape AYP obligation for special education students. Changing the N-size to a more realistic number of 20, which is the recommendation of the NCLD as well as the Commission on No Child Left Behind, would result in 70 percent of California schools being held responsible for making AYP for the special education subgroup, a six-fold increase.

The study also offers three first-hand accounts of NCLB’s impact at the school and school district levels—and the improvement activities that have come about because of the AYP requirements. Each points to data-based decision-making, including students with disabilities in regular classrooms to the maximum extent possible, and professional development as critical to improving the performance of these students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Description of Student Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>Only students with disabilities or English language learners. All students have access to “variations” (minor changes in test administration or the way a student responds).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>All students. Students in general population must have formally documented need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>Only students with disabilities and English language learners except for students in the general population with a rapid onset of a medical disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>Only students with disabilities and English language learners except for students in general population with a rapid onset of a medical disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>All students. Students with disabilities and English language learners are allowed a more comprehensive set of test accommodations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>Only students with disabilities or English language learners.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study found that, overall, special education students are benefiting from several of NCLB’s key provisions.
The study’s report includes 15 recommendations put forward by the NCLD to inform the reauthorization of NCLB. These recommendations seek to maintain accountability for students with disabilities, improve implementation, and strengthen opportunities for students to meet their academic potential. The report was written by Candace Cortiella, director of The Advocacy Institute.

The second study, State Testing Accommodations: A Look at Their Value and Validity, offers an examination of the variance among testing accommodations policies and guidelines across states—with regard to both what accommodations are available and which students may use them. These are increasingly important issues since NCLB’s assessment requirements have driven up the use of accommodations among students with disabilities—approximately 65 percent are using accommodations on large-scale assessments.

The study’s report finds that the vast differences across states in accommodations policies compromise the validity of what the test results tell us. For example, in Colorado general education students can have access to test accommodations with formally documented need, while in California only students with disabilities and English Language learners are permitted test accommodations. (See table.) Accommodation policies also seem to change frequently within states, adding to the confusion and complexities of making good decisions. And, many policies do not appear to have evidence to support the specific accommodations allowed for each assessment. While accommodations policies get a cursory look during the peer review process required by NCLB, a more robust evaluation would seem to be in order.

Test results are further compromised by research showing a lack of knowledge by those who make important accommodations decisions and a lack of consistent implementation of accommodations on test day. For example, one study found that 45 percent of teachers did not know which accommodations were allowable on state tests, while another study found that only 29 percent of special education teachers across four states indicated that state policies were important to IEP teams when making test accommodation decisions. And, while several resources on accommodations have been developed, there appears to be little evidence that they are being used broadly to improve decision-making practices.

Also included in the study’s report is a discussion of the newly released NCLB regulation permitting states to develop alternate assessments based on modified academic achievement standards. The variation of accommodations policies across states may directly impact which students might be selected to participate in such an alternate assessment—resulting in lowering the learning expectations for a fairly large group of special education students. In fact, some examples provided by the U.S. Department of Education of how to create modified achievement standards are similar to test accommodations that may already be allowed in some states.

At the conclusion of the study’s report, NCLD offers a set of recommendations about test accommodations policies that should be considered during the NCLB reauthorization. The recommendations seek to improve the validity of accommodation policies, expand data collection, and broaden research. The report was written by Lindy Crawford, Ph.D., assistant professor and department chair in the Department of Special Education at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs.

Both reports are available at www.LD.org/NCLBReportCard. An archive of a June 15 Webinar with the experts is also available.

Questions or comments about the reports should be directed to Laura Kaloi, NCLD’s public policy director, at LKaloi@NCLD.org.
Special Education Staffing...
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Highlights from the Special Education Staff Recruitment and Retention section of the survey are presented below.

Special Education Staff Recruitment and Hiring Challenges

Hard-to-Staff Positions

The positions hardest to staff and to keep filled in responding school districts were speech/language therapists and teachers of students with emotional/behavioral disabilities, followed by occupational therapists, school psychologists, and teachers of students with severe/profound disabilities. These findings are generally consistent with the results of an annual study of educator supply and demand (AAEE, 2006) indicating that 8 of the top 10 fields experiencing staff shortages nationwide were in special education.

Qualifications for Teaching

Uncertified and under-prepared applicants were by far the toughest special education staff recruitment and hiring challenge for more than half the responding school districts. At the same time, nearly two-thirds of respondents reported that between 76 and 100% of their new hires in special education were, in fact, highly qualified. In addition, more than half the respondents reported that 81–100% of their entire special education staff was highly qualified. When special educators were not highly qualified, it was usually because they had not yet demonstrated adequate content knowledge in the subjects they were teaching.

As a corollary, the use of waivers or temporary credentials appeared to be on the wane in three-quarters of the school districts responding to the survey. This turnover may be a correction to the persistent credentialing deficit seen across the country in 2001, whereby 10% of students ages 3–21 receiving special education services had uncertified teachers (NCPSE, 2007). It may also be in response to NCLB’s teacher quality requirements, which mandate that all teachers of core academic subjects, including special educators teaching those subjects, be “highly qualified” by the end of the 2006–07 school year. NCLB also required states to develop plans to reduce disparities in teacher quality between high-poverty and low-poverty schools and districts, so that qualified teachers were equitably distributed both within and across school districts.

Classroom Teaching Experience

While professional credentials are a useful indicator of teacher quality, other characteristics of new special education hires, particularly previous teaching experience, may be as important as (or possibly more important than) “paper credentials,” per se. The Collaborative was interested in finding out whether or not member districts’ new hires in special education had previous full-time teaching experience. The survey asked what percentage of new hires had three or more years of experience, and what percentage had less than three years of experience. There was no clear pattern to the responses. This reflects the school districts’ widely varying ability to recruit and retain teachers, which in turn is based on a myriad of factors, including district location, reputation, hiring practices (e.g., timing, responsiveness to inquiries), salaries, workload, and support for beginning teachers.

Hiring Practices

Although NCLB and related policies in many states are currently aimed at correcting the chronic lack of highly qualified teachers, these efforts can often be trumped by inefficient hiring practices. Indeed, the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future lays much of the blame for the hiring of under-qualified teachers not on shortages but on communities’ “cumbersome hiring procedures that chase away good candidates and prevent efficient and timely hiring” (Darling-Hammond, 2000, p. 7). It comes as no surprise, then, that a number of respondents identified late hiring as a major challenge, often causing schools to lose promising teacher candidates to other school districts. As has been the case for many years, most teachers are recruited from within a state and local area; thus, the so-called “recruitment wars” can be intense.

Bilingual and Minority New Hires

Another difficulty for respondents was recruitment of bilingual staff. Bilingual special educators were in very short supply in 92% of responding school districts. New special education hires from racial/ethnic minority groups were only somewhat more prevalent than bilingual new hires. Fifty-five percent of the respondents reported that only 0–15% of their new special educator hires were members of racial/ethnic minority groups.

Strategies for Addressing Recruitment Challenges

Offering Incentives to Potential New Hires

More than half the responding school districts (57%) offered incentives to potential new hires. The most popular incentive, available in 11 Collaborative member school districts, was an induction program with mentoring. Two other frequently mentioned incentives were offering a higher step on the salary schedule, and providing tuition assistance for professional development.

Special Education Retention Challenges

The fact that induction programs now rival more traditional incentives, such as higher salary, is a sign that they have truly “arrived” in U.S. schools. Indeed, national data show that 80% or more of beginning teachers participate in some type of induction program, making what was a fairly common practice a truly widespread one (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). School districts offer induction and mentoring to their new hires because, among other benefits, these practices have been shown to increase retention (Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999). Still, special education teachers nationally are 2.5 times more likely than other teachers to move (e.g., to another school or to a general education position)

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Special Education Staffing...

or to leave teaching altogether (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Special Education Staff Turnover

There are many reasons for special education staff turnover—some personal, some financial, and some arising from working conditions. In this context, it was interesting to find that, according to respondents, a burdensome special education work/caseload was the greatest cause of special education staff turnover in more than two-thirds (67%) of the member school districts. Other challenges relating to staff attrition included special education teachers moving to general education positions (55%), uncompetitive salaries (38%), and teachers moving to suburban districts (36%).

The average annual special education staff turnover rate in responding districts varied widely, from a low of 1–10% to a high of 21–30% each year. These rates can be compared to the average annual attrition rate for special educators nationally, which is estimated at 13.5% (McLeskey et al., 2002). In fully three-fourths of responding districts, the average annual attrition rate has not changed significantly in the past few years.

Strategies for Addressing Retention Challenges

As mentioned above, 80% or more of beginning teachers nationwide participate in some type of induction program that is intended to give new teachers a good start and increase the chances that they will want to remain in the job. Many school districts offer orientation, mentoring, and ongoing professional development as part of an induction program; however, the quality, frequency, and duration of these practices can vary widely, depending on state and district policies and funding/resource levels. For example, in some school districts, mentoring may be informal and occasional; at others, the mentor may receive training, support, and a stipend for meeting weekly to coach one or more new teachers in good classroom management, instructional, and assessment practices.

In addition to induction and mentoring, respondents cited a number of other strategies for retaining qualified special education personnel, including competitive salaries and benefits; reasonable caseloads; availability of technology, materials, and other resources; professional development; administrative support; and a favorable work environment. One large urban school district, for example, made a training video on collaborative teaching featuring local staff. The same district reported an instructional coach model for K–12 in which special education and general education coaches train together and work collaboratively to help teachers improve their instructional skills. Another large urban school district reported introducing a program in which general education and special education teachers work in teams to learn how to implement various co-teaching models.

Summary

Special educator recruitment and retention challenges in Collaborative member school districts are serious and unlikely to ease very soon. While some member school districts are beginning to make headway, too many are merely treading water or even losing ground in the face of expanding pre-K to grade 12 enrollment of students with disabilities—which currently comprises more than 6.6 million students between the ages of 3 and 21 (NCES, 2005) and is expected to increase at a rate three times faster than the general student population (McLeskey et al., 2002). However, it won’t be enough to simply address the quantitative dimensions of recruitment and retention; the qualitative dimensions must be included as well.

Further Information

For more information about the Collaborative’s special education staffing survey, write collaborative@edc.org. Collaborative Members may download the entire report by visiting the Members Only section of the Collaborative’s Web site www.urbancollaborative.org.

References


Post-School Outcome Data Collection Strategies

The National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD) is pleased to announce the availability of “Collecting Post-School Outcome Data: Strategies for Increasing Response Rates”. The document, prepared by NDPC-SD leaders Drs. Sandra Covington Smith and Loujeania Williams Bost in partnership with the National Post-School Outcomes Center (NPSO) at the University of Oregon, provides an overview of the IDEA requirements to collect post-school outcome data, challenges faced by states in collecting these data, and recommended strategies from survey literature and state and local practice to secure sufficient response rates, especially from youth who have dropped out of school. The document may be downloaded at www.ndpc-sd.org/docs/FINAL_PSO_doc.pdf

Other publications related to post-school outcomes may also be found at www.psocenter.org.

Affiliate Membership Program Announced

Encouraged by former Members who have retired or moved to non-school district leadership positions, the Collaborative has launched an Affiliate Membership Program. The program allows former Collaborative members who are not associated with a school district to join the organization as individuals.

“The Collaborative was founded on the premise that mutual support, sharing of information and resources, and planning/problem-solving partnerships will strengthen member school districts’ ability to meet the challenges they face on a daily basis,” Executive Director David Riley explained. “Our new Affiliate Membership program allows our current members to benefit from the experiences and the “lessons learned” of those who have moved on from an urban schools’ leadership position. Reciprocally, the Affiliate Member program provides opportunities for former members to remain connected with the field…and colleagues from across the country.”

Affiliate Membership includes:
• Access to the “Members Only” section of the Collaborative’s Website
• The opportunity to attend its semi-annual national meetings
• Subscriptions to Collaborative publications: Urban Perspectives and CollabNews, Research Briefs, and occasional topical mailings
• Linkages to nationally-recognized education researchers and policy advisors from across the country
• Discounted registration fees to the annual Institute on Critical Issues in Urban Special Education at Harvard University

The Collaborative is pleased to welcome its first Affiliate Members:
• Cathy Rikhye, formerly of District 75 in New York City, and currently in the Department of Curriculum and Teaching at the Teachers College of Columbia University.
• Paula Woods, formerly of Cleveland Public Schools in Ohio, and currently a consultant for the Cuyahoga Special Education Service Center.
• David Wood, formerly of Aurora Public Schools in Colorado, and currently at Florida Southern College.
• Ken Swanson, formerly of Providence Public Schools in Rhode Island, and currently the Director of Special Populations at Rhode Island Department of Education.

For more information about the Affiliate Membership Program, contact David Riley at driley@edc.org
PROMOTE INCLUSIVE PRACTICES ALL YEAR!

Whether you are planning ahead for 2007 Inclusive Schools Week, or trying to spread the word that inclusive schools benefit all students all year, the Celebration Kits, posters, bumper stickers, and pencils are excellent promotional tools. Resell them as a fundraiser, use them at professional development meetings, or give them to students and parents. To order materials, please visit www.inclusiveschools.org.

Inclusive Schools Posters (30”x20”)

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Inclusive Schools Pencils

Inclusive Schools Bracelets

Inclusive Schools Bumper Stickers

Please visit our Web site for more information: www.inclusiveschools.org

Save the date: December 3-7 is the 7th Annual Inclusive Schools Week!