

Urban Perspectives

Summer/Fall 2005 • Volume Ten • Number 2

A PUBLICATION OF THE URBAN SPECIAL EDUCATION LEADERSHIP COLLABORATIVE

In this Issue:

Inappropriate Placement of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students in Special Education2
Thomas Hehir

Using Research to Inform Practice and Policy: The Case for Inclusion.....6
Allison Gruner Gandhi

Updates:
NISW3
Fall Meeting3
NDPC-SD4
EPRRI4
LASER5

5th Annual National Inclusive Schools Week
See p. 3



December 5-9, 2005
www.inclusiveschools.org



Anticipating IDEA Reauthorization: Application of a Three-Tiered Intervention Model



Markay L. Winston, Ph.D.,
Director of Student Services,
Cincinnati Public Schools

Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS), a mid-sized urban school district

located in Southwestern Ohio, is the third-largest district in the state. CPS educates approximately 38,000 pre-K through grade 12 students in 82 buildings. This very diverse school district is comprised of approximately 17% students with disabilities, a growing English as a second language population, and approximately 70% free or reduced-price lunch program participants. Additionally, CPS offers a variety of curricular focuses (e.g., Montessori and Paideia). Several years ago, CPS instituted a “Schools of Choice” initiative designed to provide a larger continuum of options that could meet the unique learning needs of students throughout the district. These offerings, available at the elementary and secondary levels, are for students with and without disabilities alike.

Conceptual Framework

CPS incorporated an intervention-based service delivery model through collaboration with the Southwestern Ohio Special Education Regional Resource Center. The core components of this service delivery model centered around the following:

- data-based decision making
- collaborative problem solving
- culturally responsive practices
- intervention design
- systemic progress monitoring

Through the years, approximately 15 to 20 CPS building teams participated in year-long modules and trainings on the conceptual, theoretical, and practical underpinnings of this type of service delivery for addressing academic and behavioral issues. During the 2003-2004 school year, stakeholder groups representative of the district, engaged in district-wide strategic planning efforts and began to examine service delivery needs and opportunities for improving programs, supports, and services on behalf of all CPS students. Following the completion of this strategic planning endeavor, a decision was made to begin implementing an integrated model of support based on a three-tiered “Pyramids of Intervention” approach responsive to the academic and behavioral needs of CPS learners.

continued on page 8

Inappropriate Placement of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students in Special Education

The Current Policy Environment, Opportunities, and Challenges

Thomas Hehir, Senior Policy Advisor



Thomas Hehir

The inappropriate identification and over-representation of minority students, particularly African American students, has been a vexing issue for special educators for decades and predates the passage of PL 94-142 (Kirp, 1972). Indeed, some of the provisions of PL 94-142, particularly the application of constitutional due process protections to the special education evaluation and placement procedures, were designed to help address this issue (Hehir & Gamm, 1999). However, nearly 30 years after the law's enactment, the problem persists (NRC, 2002). Since the law's implementation, a number of concerns have been raised about the over-placement of language minority students (Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, & Higareda, 2002; Garcia & Ortiz, 1988).

Scholars and educators have invested a good deal of effort into developing non-biased psychometric tests and pre-referral strategies to ensure that children who come from minority and non-English-speaking backgrounds are appropriately identified. Though some of this work has been promising and has provided a much clearer picture of the problem, it has yet to have a major impact on over-identification and placement.

The need to address the persistent racial equity issues in special education took on further urgency when Congress included specific provisions in the reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA '04) to address issues of disproportionate placement of minority students. In addition, changes in policy brought on by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and IDEA '04 around eligibility determina-

tion promise to bring this issue even more to the forefront—creating both challenges and opportunities for general and special education leaders. Recent research has provided the impetus for these policy changes, and, at the same time, is providing caution about their implementation.

As I see it, there are several opportunities within the current federal policy context:

- 1) The movement toward “treatment resistant” models of disability determination can provide opportunities to address the issue of over-placement of minority students in special education in new and powerful ways that have the potential to improve education for other students as well.
- 2) The continued research in identifying practices that can improve the accuracy of high-incidence disability determination through effective early intervention for students experiencing early difficulties with reading and behavior, as well as effective practices for English-language acquisition for English Language Learners (ELLs), is promising.
- 3) NCLB is generating unprecedented attention to the performance of students with disabilities, which provides an opportunity to improve educational practices.
- 4) IDEA '04 contains significant provisions concerning state- and district-level accountability for addressing the issue of over-placement of minority students in special education.

Two regular education innovations have been found to be successful in addressing the issue of over-placement: (1) effective early intervention for students experiencing early reading difficulty (Lyon, Fletcher, Shaywitz, Shaywitz, Torgenson, Wood, Shulte, & Olson, 2001) and (2) early intervention for those experiencing behavior difficulties (Sugai, Sprague, Horner, & Walker, 2000). These innovations can

continued on page 9

National Inclusive Schools Week '05 to Focus on Closing the Achievement Gap

The 5th Annual National Inclusive Schools Week will be celebrated December 5–9, 2005, in classrooms, schools, and communities throughout the country. The Week highlights and celebrates the progress our nation's schools have made in providing a supportive and quality education to all students, particularly those who have disabilities and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. It also provides an important opportunity for educators, students, and families to discuss what else needs to be done in order to ensure that their schools continue to improve their ability to successfully educate all children and youth.

This year's theme "Bridging the Gap: Achievement for All" focuses on how schools and districts are narrowing the disparity in academic performance between individual groups of students—otherwise known as the "achievement gap." The success of students

with disabilities and those who are racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse has been regarded as among the most significant issues faced by schools and communities in the past 30 years.

Federal mandates for accountability have become more rigorous over the past decade, pushing schools, many with limited resources, to demonstrate that they can achieve adequate yearly progress for all students, including those with disabilities. What can we learn from communities who have made progress in meeting these ambitious goals? Most significantly, they have made a clear choice to provide a promising educational experience for all students. *National Inclusive Schools Week 2005* provides an opportunity to highlight the successful approaches for improving results that many schools have utilized to improve learning outcomes for all students.

continued on page 11



White and Skiba to Keynote Fall Meeting

The Collaborative's fall meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana, October 26–29, 2005, will focus on strategies for reducing both the disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education and the suspension rates of students with and without disabilities in urban schools. To help Collaborative members reflect on current research, evidenced-based practices, and results, Dr. Eugene White, Superintendent of the Indianapolis Public Schools, and Dr. Russell Skiba, Professor of Learning, Development, and Psychological Sciences at Indiana University, will serve as keynote speakers.

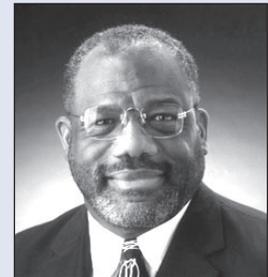
Dr. White assumed his duties as Superintendent of the Indianapolis Public Schools, a long-time Collaborative member district, on July 1, 2005. For the past 11 years, he served as Superintendent of another Collaborative member district in Indiana, Metropolitan School District of Washington Township. Dr. White is President-Elect of the American Association for School Ad-

ministrators and the author of *Leadership Beyond Excuses: The Courage to Hold the Rope* for school administrators and others who are interested in effective leadership.

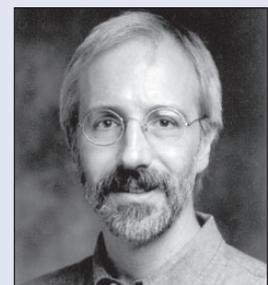
Dr. Skiba is Project Director of the Indiana Disproportionality Project, a collaborative effort of the Indiana University Center on Evaluation and Education Policy and the Indiana Department of Education that monitors and addresses minority disproportionality in special education. Among other honors, he was awarded the PUSH for Excellence Award by the Rainbow Coalition/Operation PUSH for his work on addressing the disproportionate number of African American students who experience suspension from school.

The Collaborative's fall meeting will also feature a variety of concurrent sessions that will highlight member school districts' efforts to reduce disproportionality and school suspension rates. ■

To learn more about the Collaborative, please visit www.urbandcollaborative.org.



Eugene White



Russell Skiba



What a National Study Tells Us About Dropout Prevention



The National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD) is dedicated to raising

awareness and building the capacity of states and school districts to reduce the number of students with disabilities who drop out of school. The following report summary highlights the current efforts being made to solve this critical issue. For more information about NDPC-SD, please visit www.dropout-prevention.org.

SLIIDEA (the State and Local Implementation and Impact of IDEA project) is a six-year, multi-method longitudinal study of states', school districts' and schools' implementation of major components of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997. The results reported here are based upon surveys sent to states, school districts, and schools. Case studies of selected districts nested in states are also included. This brief article highlights some major findings related to state and district efforts towards reducing dropout rates among students with disabilities.

State Education Agencies

State accountability and support systems for dropout prevention are just emerging.

- During the 2003–2004 school year, only 10% of all states reported having written guidelines for school districts and schools on dropout prevention for students with disabilities.
- Of 41 states responding to the survey, 77% (30 states) publicly reported aggregated and disaggregated dropout rates of students with disabilities. Twenty-eight states reported attendance rates for students with disabilities. Only 13 states reported both aggregated and disaggregated rates.
- Twenty-three states reported providing one or more resources to support dropout prevention programs for students with disabilities. Five states provided competitive grants; 17 provided statewide training; 17 provided state supported personnel.
- Of the 50 states, only one state reported having reached or almost reached the designated target for reducing dropout rates; 25 states reported that they were just beginning to make progress in decreasing dropout rates among students with disabilities; 23 states

continued on page 10



EPRRI Releases State-Level Study on Educational Accountability Reform



Education Policy Research Reform Institute (EPRRI), with funding from

the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, investigates the impact of educational accountability reforms on students with disabilities and the programs that serve them. EPRRI's latest topical review, *Emerging State-Level Themes: Strengths and Stressors in Educational Accountability Reform*, provides valuable insights into state-level perspectives on the challenges associated with including children with disabilities in performance-

based accountability systems as required by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). During 2001-2002, EPRRI conducted in-depth interviews with 35 individuals from state education agencies in its four core study states: California, Maryland, New York, and Texas. The data presented reflect the perspectives of state-level personnel who were involved with the creation and implementation of their state accountability systems at the time that NCLB was written and signed into law. The state special education directors in the four core study states participated in the identification, initial contact, and interview arrangements with key personnel

continued on page 11

Raising the Roof: Higher Visions for Research in Urban Schools and Communities



Much has been written about the failure of urban schools and the need for further

research supporting a paradigm shift in the way urban students are educated in these settings. Project Linking Academic Scholars to Educational Resources (LASER) has responded to this call for change by supporting minority serving institutions in building capacity for research, that examines the intersection between urban and special education. LASER activities include:

- quarterly think tanks, which provide professional development and networking opportunities for faculty
- practitioner briefs, which offer best practices for educators in urban and inclusive settings
- an annual urban research conference aimed at highlighting the research of renowned scholars and LASER faculty

The 5th Annual University of South Florida LASER Urban Education Research Conference will take place in Tampa, Florida, on September 22-24, 2005. "Raising the Roof: Higher Visions for Research in Urban Schools and Communities" will provide a forum for the discussion of urban special education issues and offer meaningful and collaborative experiences for participants. College faculty, special and general educators and administrators, parents, and others who are concerned about the education of children and youth from minority and/or low-income backgrounds are encouraged to attend this free conference.

The program will feature dynamic presenters who have expertise in urban and special education. LASER faculty will share findings from their LASER-funded projects. A community town hall meeting will provide families, community members, and uni-

versity faculty an opportunity to discuss critical issues in urban schools and explore solutions and next steps.

This year's conference will serve as a culminating activity for the project as it concludes its final year of funding. The legacy of LASER lies in its ability to provide a framework for the development of an active urban special education research agenda. The direct benefactors of our efforts are urban children, and "they are waiting." ■

For more information about LASER, or to register for the 5th Annual Urban Research Education Conference, please visit www.coedu.usf.edu/LASER.



5th Annual
LASER Urban Education Research Conference
Raising the Roof:
Higher Visions for Research in
Urban Schools and Communities
Linking Academic Scholars to Educational Resources (Project LASER)

Save the Date! **September 22-24, 2005**
Tampa, Florida
Pre-conference: September 21, 2005

Conference Highlights:

- Culturally Responsive Teaching Workshop
- Dynamic Presenters
 - Dr. Na'im Akbar • Florida State University
 - Dr. Kathryn Au • University of Hawaii-Manoa
 - Dr. Marilyn Cochran-Smith • Boston College
 - Dr. Ruben Donato • University of Colorado-Boulder
 - Dr. Donna Ford • Vanderbilt University
 - Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings • University of Wisconsin-Madison
 - Dr. Russell Skiba • Indiana University-Bloomington
- Cultural Night Dinner and Dance
- Community Town Hall Meeting
- Parent Empowerment Luncheon

Free Registration!

Dr. Brenda L. Townsend, Project Director

For more information, please visit:
<http://www.coedu.usf.edu/LASER> or contact LASER Assistant Director Dr. Monika W. Shealey (shealey@tempest.coedu.usf.edu or 813-974-9560) or LASER Project Coordinator Anh-Kay Pizano (apizano@tempest.coedu.usf.edu or 813-974-9890).





Using Research to Inform Practice and Policy: The Case for Inclusion



Allison Gruner Gandhi

The role of good educational research ...should be to help practitioners disentangle and understand the process through which interventions can have an impact.

Allison Gruner Gandhi

If my experience as an education researcher has taught me anything, it is that education is not a “black box.” There is no one-size-fits-all intervention, and the effectiveness of any intervention or program is heavily dependent on the context within which it is implemented. The role of good educational research, therefore, should be to help practitioners disentangle and understand the process through which interventions can have an impact. Knowing the “how” and the “why” can help leaders leverage resources and support environments that ensure that their programs and policies will lead to positive and desired outcomes for all students.

Learning how to understand and use research effectively is especially important in a policy environment that prioritizes the use of research-based interventions. Such interventions are rarely implemented under conditions that mimic the ones under which they were evaluated, so one cannot always expect the same outcomes. Although the effectiveness of an intervention may have already been demonstrated through rigorous research, the research process is far from done. It is important for leaders and practitioners to also engage in research to ensure that their chosen interventions continue to be effective in their local contexts.

The policy and practice of inclusion provides a perfect example for considering the role of research. Inclusion has been a widely studied topic in the research literature for at least the past 25 years—yet, there remains considerable debate about its effects. The literature on inclusion varies tremendously in regard to the populations studied, the outcomes measured, and the ways in which “inclusion” is defined. Consequently, the literature also varies in its results, making it difficult to draw any meaningful conclusions from this body of work about how inclusion impacts student outcomes. As a result, practitioners may find it frustrating and at times even futile to look to research

for guidance. Yet, despite the lack of consistency within this body of research, it is far from useless. On the contrary, research on inclusion can help identify key questions that leaders should be considering, such as:

- Which populations of students are benefiting the most from inclusion, how are they benefiting from it, and why?
- How do the different roles that staff play in inclusive classrooms make a difference in the way that inclusion impacts student outcomes?
- What kind of and how much training is necessary in order for an inclusion program to realize its intended impact?
- What role do attitudes play in the successful implementation of inclusion?

As the research can attest, the answers to these questions vary according to the context. It is therefore incumbent on special education leaders to be cognizant of these questions and to engage in ongoing investigations of how inclusion works in their own communities.

In my research, I have focused specifically on one aspect of inclusion—its impact on the academic achievement of non-disabled children. In other words, I wanted to know: How do non-disabled children who are educated in classes that include students with disabilities perform in reading compared to their peers in classrooms that include no students with disabilities? For educators and parents who worry that including students with disabilities in general education classrooms may harm the academic progress of the students without disabilities in the class, this is a critically important question. It is especially important given the pressures that school and district leaders face to raise academic achievement for all of their students.

Despite its importance, this topic is vastly understudied. The great majority of research on inclusion looks at its impact on the students with disabilities, in other words, those who are included in a general education setting. Furthermore, within the very small body of research that does look at how

inclusion impacts non-disabled students, the outcomes are more likely to focus on social skills or attitudes towards people with disabilities (e.g., Fisher, Pumpian, & Sax, 1998; Peltier, 1997; Sharpe, York, & Knight, 1994; Tapasak & Walther-Thomas, 1999), rather than empirical literature that examines the effect that inclusion has on the academic achievement of this population. I have found that when I present at conferences or talk about my research, my topic generates a lot of interest. People seem eager to learn about what I have found, and they often say “Give me the bottom line.”

Unfortunately, the answer to my research question isn't so simple. The best answer I can give is, “It depends.” The impact that inclusion has on non-disabled students depends on the multiple ways in which inclusion may be defined. In particular, I have found that the relationship between inclusion and achievement for a non-disabled child depends on, first, the types of disabilities that are represented in the classroom, and, second, on the ways in which the classroom teacher relies on staff with specialized expertise. In classes in which the needs of the students with disabilities are behavioral in nature, non-disabled students perform better if there is an aide in the class. On the other hand, in classes in which the needs of the students with disabilities have to do with learning and language, non-disabled students perform better when the classroom teacher meets and collaborates frequently with a special education teacher (Gruner, 2005).

In order to draw meaning and implications from my research, it is important to consider some of the particulars. For example, my sample consisted of 3rd-grade students, and I examined only their reading achievement. The results may have been quite different had I looked at another age group or outcome. It is also important to consider the research design. This was a quantitative study that used a large-scale, nationally representative dataset.¹ The strengths of such an approach lie in the large sample size (4,200 students), and the complex sampling design, features that allowed me to be confident in making generalizations from the results. However, there are limitations to such an approach as well. Most significantly, the

survey instruments cannot possibly capture all of the important contextual classroom characteristics that go into making up an inclusive environment. For example, while this research identified the use of aides and collaboration with a special education teacher as key variables moderating the relationship between inclusion and achievement, the research did not offer any details as to why these variables were important. This is partly due to limitations in the items on the survey questionnaires, but also because the methods I used were not designed to investigate at that level of detail.

All research has its limitations, and as such one study will never have all the answers. Nonetheless, research is an important tool for educational leaders who want to create “buy in” for programs and policies that are costly or whose merits are debatable. Research can provide evidence to support a particular program, and, more importantly, it can demonstrate that the effectiveness of a program depends heavily on the context in which it is implemented. The only way to ensure success is to engage in ongoing research to identify the conditions under which an inclusion program realizes its maximum potential. With greater knowledge and understanding of what these critical conditions are, education leaders will be in a better position to support contexts that ensure benefits for all students. ■

References

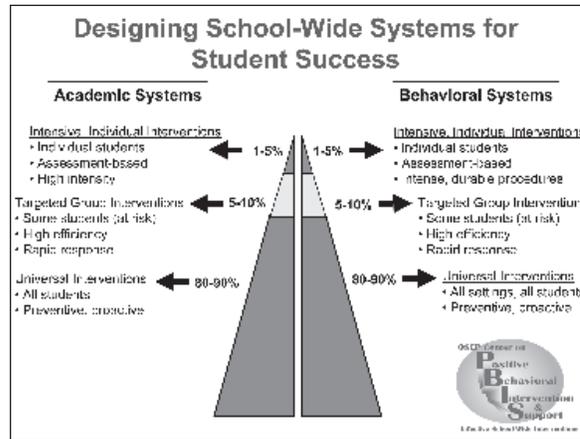
- Fisher, D., Pumpian, I., & Sax, C. (1998). High school students' attitudes about and recommendations for their peers with significant disabilities. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 23(3), 272-282.
- Gruner, A. (2005). *Inclusion and the “other” students: Examining the relationship between inclusive classrooms, their contextual characteristics, and achievement for nondisabled students*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Harvard University Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA.
- Peltier, G. L. (1997). The effect of inclusion on non-disabled children: A review of the research. *Contemporary Education*, 68(4), 234-238.
- Sharpe, M. N., York, J. L., & Knight, J. (1994). Effects of inclusion on the academic performance of classmates without disabilities. *Remedial and Special Education*, 15(5), 281-287.
- Tapasak, R. C., & Walther-Thomas, C. S. (1999). Evaluation of a first-year inclusion program: Student perceptions and classroom performance. *Remedial and Special Education*, 20(4), 216-225.

¹ The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 (ECLS-K) is a nationally representative dataset sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education. The ECLS-K follows approximately 22,000 students from kindergarten through the 5th grade. Data include information gleaned from cognitive assessments, classroom teacher questionnaires, special education teacher questionnaires, (where applicable), parent questionnaires, and school administrator questionnaires, all linked to an individual child.

Continued from page 1

Three-Tiered Intervention Model

Pyramids of Intervention Model



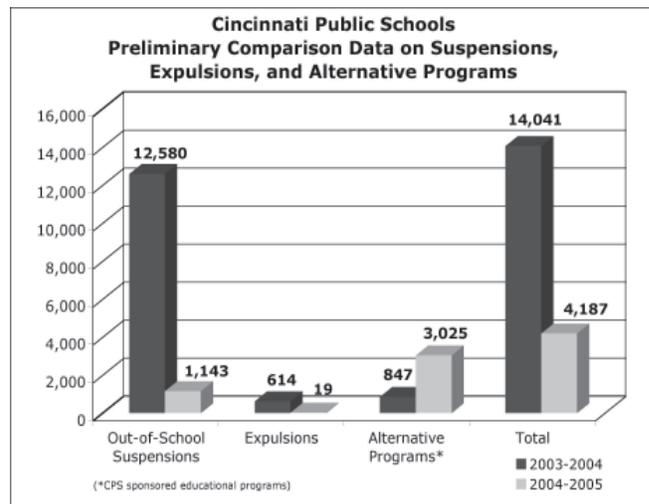
Academically, similarly composed school teams have been charged with the responsibility of creating school plans that target academic interventions for all children, based on school-wide screening and performance data. The development of enhanced district and building level academic supports resulted in increased teacher collaboration, creation of diverse professional learning communities, high quality intervention design, and positive academic gains for many learners. In combination, these academic and behavioral “Pyramids of Intervention” have allowed CPS to improve the quality, type, and breadth of service options available to our students.

Source: Drs. Carol Sadler & George Sugai, National Technical Assistance, Center on Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, 2004 (www.pbis.org).

The school district began to design district-wide professional development offerings that used school district and building-level data to focus on the universal, targeted, and intensive academic and behavioral support needs of our diverse student body (Tiers I-III). District-wide committees, comprised of community members, administrative teams, educators, parents, curriculum experts, and special education leaders, developed goals, vision statements, guidelines, and implementation plans on how to institute systems-level change of this magnitude.

In addressing behavioral issues, the development of a positive school culture guide served to overhaul the school district’s longstanding code-of-conduct discipline plan—a plan that had historically relied on punitive consequences. Instead, each and every school was expected to develop a building-level plan grounded in the principles of positive behavior intervention and supports (PBIS). The plan was to be developed by creating a school planning team designed to guide school-wide strategies and services across all three tiers.

Preliminary data indicate that CPS students are beginning to demonstrate both academic and behavioral improvements in meaningful ways. As a result of the district’s laser-like, focused approach to developing district-wide, building-level, and individual student interventions, academic improvements were noted across all state report card indicators during the 2003-2004 school year—a significant improvement from the previous year. In addition, noticeable increases have been seen in school teams’ efforts in using academic and behavioral data in referral and special education eligibility decision-making. The continuation of this systemic approach to academic intervention design and implementation is



continued on page 11

Continued from page 2

Inappropriate Placements in Special Education

greatly reduce inappropriate referrals to special education. In addition, the provision of high-quality services to students who are ELLs can have the same effect (Figueroa, 2002).

Although these are important innovations, and the current policy environment creates new opportunities, it is important for implementers to keep in mind that the history of attempts to foster large-scale change in education do not support the notion that education can change quickly. The experience of PL 94-142 implementation provides an interesting example. For instance, 30 years after its enactment, we still see widely varying implementation patterns. Even though the law has always sought integration of students with disabilities with its least restrictive environment requirements, states and individual school districts within states vary enormously in the degree to which children are educated with their non-disabled peers (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). This is not to say that the law has not promoted greater integration, as it has, over time (Hehir, 1997). However, the change has been quite slow and variable. There is no instance where a major federal initiative has changed educational practice quickly.

A recent evaluation I conducted of a small, diverse school district's sincere attempts to address the issue of over-placement of African American students demonstrated for me how difficult change is in American education. I found that the district had very inconsistent approaches to early reading instruction and to discipline and behavior, two areas that are necessary to address this issue. Although most leaders within the district identified these inconsistencies as contributing to the problem of over-placement and agreed that this should change, they also expressed the belief that change would be difficult due to "teacher autonomy." One described how previous attempts to provide some consistency in the math curriculum required a lengthy process of "consensus building."

In addition to the difficulty inherent in changing educational practice, the implementation of more effective early intervention approaches for students experiencing reading and behavior difficulties and for those learning English will require significant resources. This is particularly problematic for many of the districts that have the highest numbers of minority students, as they also may have fewer resources to implement these innovations. Therefore, these districts will be faced with realigning how they are currently using resources or seeking additional sources of support for these efforts. For many urban districts, this may mean seeking resources from state education agencies (SEAs). It is important to note that IDEA '04 significantly increases accountability at the state level in terms of both special education and over-placement. Further, states are allowed under IDEA to funnel discretionary resources to districts experiencing compliance problems. Therefore, this may be the ideal time to develop strong partnerships with SEAs to address this issue.

It is not sufficient to simply have general education early intervention services to prevent inappropriate referrals to special education. The special education evaluation process must be comprehensive enough to ensure that students who have not benefited from these approaches and are referred to special education in fact have disabilities and that their IEPs reflect best special education practices. The two must go hand in hand. In addition, in order for school districts to carry out evaluations that are culturally sensitive, districts must be able to provide competent bilingual evaluators (Figueroa, 2002). School districts also need to pay close attention to the cultural relevance of their referral processes (Harry, Klingner, Sturgess, & Moore, 2002).

In my view, the problem of over-identification and placement of minority students reflects a well-worn path we have been

continued on page 10

The movement toward 'treatment resistant' models of disability identification is a hopeful development that begins to put the onus of inappropriate placement in special education more in the court of general education.

Inappropriate Placements in Special Education

seeking to move away from. Although the challenges facing implementers are daunting, this may be the optimal time to address this issue. The movement toward “treatment resistant” models of disability identification is a hopeful development that begins to put the onus of inappropriate placement in special education more in the court of general education. NCLB and IDEA '04 provide significant policy impetus to power this effort. Now more than ever, we must join with our general education colleagues to implement the types of programs that all children need to succeed. Effective partnerships with SEAs can greatly enhance this effort. ■

References

Artiles, A., Rueda, R., Salazar, J. J., & Higgareda, I. (2002). English-language learner representation in special education in California urban school districts (pp. 39-70). In D. J. Losen and G. Orfield (Eds.), *Racial inequity in*

special education. Cambridge, MA: The Civil Rights Project and Harvard Education Press.

Figuroa, R. (2002). Toward a new model of assessment. In A. Artiles and A. Ortiz (Eds.), *English language learners with special needs: Identification, assessment, and instruction*. McHenry, IL: Delta Systems Company Inc.

Garcia, S. B., & Ortiz, A. A. (1988, June). Preventing inappropriate referral of the early school years. *Exceptional Children*, 68(1), 65-83.

Harry, B., Klingner, J. K., Sturgess, K. M., & Moore, R. (2002). Of rocks and soft places: Using qualitative methods to investigate the processes that result in disproportionality. In D. J. Losen and G. Orfield (Eds.), *Racial inequity in special education* (pp. 71-92). Cambridge, MA: The Civil Rights Project and Harvard Education Press.

Hehir, T. (1997). IDEA has led to improved results for students with disabilities: A response to Lipsky and Gartner. *Harvard Educational Review*, 67(3), 596-602.

Hehir, T., & Gamm, S. (1999). Special education: From legalism to collaboration. In J. Heubert (Ed.), *Law and school reform* (pp. 205-227). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Kirp, D. L. (1974). The great sorting machine: Special education trends and issues. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 55, 521-525.

Lyon, G. R., Fletcher, J. M., Shaywitz, S. E., Shaywitz, B. A., Torgenson, J. K., Wood, F. B., Shulte, A., & Olson, R. (2001). Rethinking learning disabilities. In C. E. Finn, A. J. Rotherman, and C. R. Hokanson (Eds.), *Rethinking special education for a new century* (pp. 259-287). Washington, DC: Thomas B. Fordham Foundation and the Progressive Policy Institute.

National Research Council (NRC). (2002). *Minority students in special and gifted education*. Washington, DC: Author.

Sugai, G., Sprague, J. R., Horner, R. H., & Walker, H. M. (2000). Preventing school violence: The use of office discipline referrals to assess and monitor school-wide discipline interventions. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 8, 94-101.

U.S. Department of Education. (2003). *To assure the free and appropriate public education of all children with disabilities. Twenty-fourth annual report to Congress on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*. Washington, DC: Author.

National Study on Dropout Prevention

reported that they were making satisfactory progress; two states reported that decreasing dropout rates among students with disabilities was not a priority at this time.

Local School Districts

During the 2002-2003 school year, 85% of the responding school districts reported some dropouts among students with IEPs ages 14-21. On average, districts reported that about 16% of their students with IEPs dropped out of school between the ages of 14 and 21. School level practices and district and state actions to address dropout for students with IEPs are quite limited. Actions include developing formal dropout prevention programs, tracking risk factors, and assigning a designated staff person to monitor dropout among students with disabilities.

- Sixty-nine percent of responding school districts reported having a formal dropout prevention program or a dropout recovery program. However, dropout recovery programs were predominately found only in urban schools.
- Half of all high schools reported that they had a staff person with responsibility for dropout prevention and recovery for students with IEPs.
- About three-quarters of schools tracked at least one dropout risk factor for students with IEPs. About 15% of schools tracked all eight factors.
- Schools with a formal dropout prevention or recovery program and schools with a staff person responsible for dropouts were the most likely to track at least one risk factor.
- About a third of schools used all three

practices: a formal program, designated staff, and tracking risk factors. Few schools used none of these practices.

- The use of a designated staff person and the tracking of risk factors were generally not related to a school's demographic features.

The following risk factors were tracked by school districts:

- excessive absences (72%)
- consistent discipline problems (68%)
- suspended once or more (61%)
- juvenile justice involvement (47%)
- previously retained in grade (45%)
- older than norm for grade (40%)
- limited English proficiency (38%)
- family or economic problems (29%) ■

To view the full report, visit www.abt.sliidea.org.

Continued from page 8

Three-Tiered Intervention Model

expected to result in continued academic gains in years to come.

Baseline data collected during the 2003-2004 school year revealed that approximately 12,580 incidents occurred where CPS students were suspended from school for violating the code of conduct; 614 students were expelled from school; and 847 students received instruction within alternative programs. At the conclusion of the 2004-2005 school year, dramatic decreases in out-of-school suspensions were realized (approximately 1,143), representing a reduction of approximately 90%. Similarly, an approximately 70% reduction in expulsions was realized. Overall, the number of suspension, expulsions, and alternative program referral incidents decreased from 14,041 to 4,187 as a result of district-wide implementation of the positive school culture plan predicated on PBIS principles and methodology.

CPS personnel are extremely pleased

with these preliminary outcomes—more students remaining in school where they receive the instructional and behavioral/mental health support services they need instead of being suspended or expelled to the streets. An initiative of this magnitude requires the commitment and support of CPS leadership, and we have had that from Superintendent Rosa Blackwell and her team. We believe the continued implementation of an integrated systems model that closely examines the academic and behavioral performance of all students is in direct alignment with the basic tenets of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. Our ability to truly implement a response-to-intervention model will result in more children receiving appropriate supports earlier in their educational careers. The requirement to provide early intervention encourages CPS to increase current efforts to intervene on behalf of students in need much earlier rather than waiting for them to fail. In so doing, we

believe that this integrated model will ultimately assist CPS in reducing inappropriate referrals and identifications, while also providing more data-based interventions and supports to children and youth in need. ■

For more information, please contact Markay Winston at Winston@cpsboe.k12.oh.us.

Continued from page 3

NISW 2005

Since its inception in December 2001, *National Inclusive Schools Week* has been celebrated in thousands of schools and communities around the country and world. The Collaborative originated the *Week* as a way of acknowledging the hard work and commitment of students, families, and educators in making their schools and communities more inclusive, and, thereby, significantly contributing to the development of a more inclusive society.

An updated version of the popular Celebration Kit will provide educators, students, and families with everything they need to participate in the *Week*, including new celebration ideas and activities for bridging the gap in educational performance; publications that focus on the benefits of inclusive schools; suggested readings for children and adults; and materials to use in promoting the *Week* in their schools and communities. The kit will be available for downloading from www.inclusiveschools.org early this fall. In addition, the Collaborative will sponsor events during the *Week* focusing on this year's theme and how to translate research related to the achievement gap into practice. Check the *Week's* Web site for additional details as they develop. ■

To learn more about the 5th Annual National Inclusive Schools Week, visit www.inclusiveschools.org or contact nisw@edc.org or 877-332-2870.

Continued from page 4

EPRRI Study on Accountability Reform

in special education, accountability, testing, special education monitoring, Title I monitoring, curriculum, teacher certification, and professional development.

This new topical review presents a variety of voices and attempts to reveal the strengths and stresses of including students with disabilities in educational accountability reform. While most participants supported the overall goal of including students with disabilities in accountability reform, numerous questions arose from these interviews regarding how state educational systems will meet the law's new requirements. Topics ranged from the need to build educator and administrator capacity to technical concerns regarding the development of assessments and the impact of testing accommodations on the

validity of individual student test scores. Solutions for many of these issues are currently being explored, and participants shared several new initiatives designed to address the challenges of including students with disabilities in accountability reform. However, tension clearly remains between the requirements of NCLB and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), such as the extent to which the IEP team is in control of the educational decision-making process for students with disabilities, the requirement for highly qualified teachers and how it relates to special educators, and the impact of accommodations on the validity of scores on state assessments. ■

For more information about EPRRI or to download a free copy of this topical review, please visit www.eprri.org.



Urban Perspectives is a publication of the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative. The Collaborative is a leadership development and networking organization for urban special education leaders.

Collaborative Staff:

- David Riley**
Executive Director
- Kristen Layton**
Associate Director
- Liz Fidler**
Senior Research Associate
- Thomas Hehir**
Senior Policy Advisor
- Kacie Beck**
Project Coordinator
- Charlene Bemis**
Conference Coordinator
- Deb Hall**
Member Services and Outreach Assistant
- Jennifer Quinlan**
Research Associate

For additional copies or for more information about the Collaborative, contact:
Deb Hall
Education Development Center, Inc.
55 Chapel Street
Newton, MA 02458
Tel: (617) 969-7100 x2168
Fax: (617) 969-3440
Email: collaborative@edc.org

Visit the Collaborative's Web site at www.urbancollaborative.org.

Developing Inclusive, High Performing Middle and High Schools: A Leadership Institute

Special and general education leaders involved with inclusive education in grades 6-12 are invited to participate in "Developing Inclusive, High Performing Middle and High Schools: A Leadership Institute." The program will be held in Newton, Massachusetts, on September 21-22, 2005, with two days of follow-up training on January 26 and March 30, 2006.

Dr. Lisa Dieker, Associate Professor of Exceptional Education in the Department of Children, Family, and Community Sciences at the University of Central Florida, will serve as the lead faculty. An experienced general and special educator, researcher, and teacher educator, Dr. Dieker brings a unique perspective. She will share:

- strategies to increase student achievement and motivation
- techniques for building stronger partnerships between general and special educators
- the foundations of building an inclusive climate across the school environment
- how to effectively use common planning time
- strategies for achieving adequate yearly progress and closing the achievement gap

Districts are encouraged to send school-based teams consisting of a general educator, special educator, school administrator, and others who will serve as leaders and facilitators of inclusive educational practices within a specific school and/or across the school district.

The Collaborative launched the institute last year with great success. Participants valued the practical nature of the program and found Dr. Dieker to be a dynamic presenter, who provided helpful suggestions for improving classroom, school, and district practices. Leadership teams from urban secondary schools completed action plans that outlined critical next steps for improving student outcomes through research-based practice. ■

For additional information or to register, please visit www.urbancollaborative.org, or contact Kristen Layton at 617-618-2728 or klayton@edc.org.

New Members!

The Collaborative currently links 103 school districts from 27 states plus the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Calgary, Canada. Four school districts have joined the Collaborative since March 2005. Please join us in welcoming:

- **Buffalo Board of Education, Buffalo, NY**
- **Katy Independent School District, Katy, TX**
- **Coventry Public Schools, Coventry, RI**
- **Dekalb County Public Schools, Stone Mountain, GA**

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

Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative
Education Development Center, Inc.
55 Chapel Street
Newton, MA 02458-1060

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

<p>Non-profit Org. U.S. Postage PAID Boston, MA Permit # 58241</p>

Address Change? Address corrections can be made by faxing this page with your changes to (617) 969-3440.