

Urban Perspectives

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**2005 Harvard Institute
on Critical Issues in
Urban Special Education**

***Achieving Adequate
Yearly Progress (AYP)
for Students with
Disabilities***

July 11-15, 2005

For more information,
visit www.gse.harvard.edu/ppe/k12/index.html.

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July 12, 2005**



Closing the Achievement Gap for Students with Disabilities

Thomas Hehir, Senior Policy Advisor

In the era of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), there is no more critical issue for special education leadership than closing the achievement gap for students with disabilities. This issue is also increasingly on the agenda of general educators as school districts must make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for students with disabilities. There are numerous articles in prominent newspapers, sometimes on the front or editorial pages, on how school districts are struggling with improving the performance of students with disabilities. Although many of us may applaud the attention this issue is receiving, the real work of improving the academic levels of these students is challenging.

Virtually every school district is confronted with determining a course of action that will improve results for students with disabilities and other struggling students. Although we need to do much more research in this area, there are some clear directions that emerge from the existing research that can serve as a basis for action.

1) Start early.

The research strongly indicates that appropriate early intervention for students experiencing reading and/or behavioral

difficulties in the primary grades increases the likelihood that they will perform better in school and decreases the likelihood that they will need special education services. Even for those who may ultimately need special education services due to a disability, the earlier students have attention to these problems the better.

Many students, both with and without disabilities, also need high-quality preschool services. Research on children who are at higher risk of reading difficulties, those from low-income or non-English speaking environments, and those with disabilities, has demonstrated that well-designed preschool programs can increase the likelihood of school success. Snow et al. (1998) conducted a research synthesis for the National Research Council that identified characteristics of successful programs. These programs included close parent-program coordination; high language and literacy content, including rich opportunities to learn and practice these skills in motivating settings; and attention to phonemic awareness.

Although high-quality pre-school programs have been shown to be effective for children with and without disabilities, and for students with disabilities they are an

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LASER to Release Research to Practice Brief Series



Project Linking Academic Scholars to Educational Resources

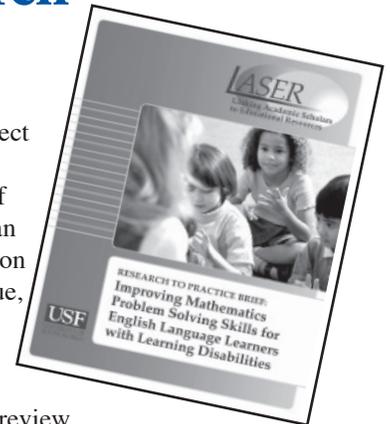
(LASER), a federally funded technical assistance and dissemination grant, has created a set of Research to Practice briefs that examines current and relevant research in the areas of literacy, assessment, classroom management, and math and science instruction. Titles include:

- *Creating Culturally Responsive Classroom Environments*
- *A Unified Model of Language-to-Literacy Intervention*
- *Improving Mathematics Problem Solving Skills for English Language Learners with Learning Disabilities*
- *Stand and Deliver: Beyond Conventional Testing to Ensure Academic Success for Students and Improve Accountability for Educators*

The series, which will be available for free on Project LASER's Web site (www.coedu.usf.edu/laser/) this spring, will serve as a tool for urban educators in addressing critical areas of concern in teaching and learning. The authors of the briefs are LASER Scholars who have conducted research in the aforementioned areas with support

from Project LASER.

Each brief contains an introduction of the issue, which includes a brief literature review, lesson planning and instructional tips for educators, and a list of text and Web site references. ■



To download the briefs or learn more about Project LASER, please visit www.coedu.usf.edu/laser/, or contact Anh-Kay Pizano at apizano@tempest.coedu.usf.edu.

Save the Date

5th Annual LASER Urban Education Research Conference

September 22-24, 2005
Pre-conference: September 21, 2005
Tampa, Florida

Conference Highlights:

- Culturally Responsive Teaching Workshop
- Dynamic Presenters
- Cultural Night Dinner and Dance
- Community Town Hall Meeting
- Parent Empowerment Luncheon

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).

Free Registration

EPRRI Examines the Impact of NCLB Requirements



Education
Policy Reform
Research
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 on special education. On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which represents the most significant federal education policy initiative in a generation. EPRRI's newest Policy Update (Issue Three, Fall 2004) highlights a few of EPRRI's recent research activities on the impact of key NCLB requirements on students with disabilities, including:

- *Topical Review Four: Emerging State-level Themes: Strengths and Stressors in Educational Accountability Reform.* This Topical Review provides valuable insight into state-level perspectives on the evolving nature of accountability reform as it relates to students with disabilities. The qualitative data, collected from October 2001 to May 2002, reflect the perspectives of knowledgeable state-level personnel concerning the creation and implementation of their state accountability systems and the impending reauthorization of NCLB.
- *Topical Review Five: Highly Qualified Teachers for Students with Disabilities: Identifying the Knowledge and Skills Needed by Special Educators.* As a result of NCLB requirements concerning highly qualified teachers, there has been a call for higher quality teacher preparation and training programs that also align their programs with the content and achievement standards set forth by states and school districts.



This Topical Review provides insight into how state and national policy and standards-based practices are supporting the introduction of highly qualified teacher preparation programs.

- *Field-Based Research: How Did They Do? A Review of 2002-2003 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Results in EPRRI's Participating Study Sites.* In October 2003, EPRRI staff examined the data on AYP in the four core study states of California, Maryland, New York, and Texas. EPRRI's study sites successfully met many of the 2002-2003 AYP targets, although Texas did not meet the NCLB participation requirements. In terms of performance, the students with disabilities subgroup met AYP targets in most study sites, although performance was generally well below that of all students. ■

Free,
downloadable
copies of
these publications
are available on
EPRRI's Web site:
www.eprri.org.



Office of Special
Education Programs

Upcoming Events

Telephone Seminar

Dropouts from Special Education: What Do We Know and What Can We Do?

**May 24, 2005
12:00 - 1:30 p.m.**

Presenter:

Jose Blackorby
SRI International

17th Annual National Dropout Prevention Conference

Ready to LEARN: Helping Students Survive and Thrive

**October 15-19, 2005
Santa Clara, CA**

*For more information, visit
www.dropoutprevention.org.*

NDPC-SD's Forum on Model Dropout Prevention Programs



The National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities held its First National Forum on

Dropout Prevention in Special Education, November 3-4, 2004, in Orlando, Florida. The forum focused on the theme "Creating Model Dropout Prevention Programs: Beginning with Effective Instructional Strategies," providing information on effective dropout prevention strategies and programs to increase school completion rates for students with disabilities. Participants learned about research-based interventions, discussed state-specific and national issues in dropout prevention, and networked with hundreds of other colleagues, researchers, parents, and practitioners.

PowerPoint presentations from this conference are now available on the NDPC-SD's Web site: www.dropoutprevention.org/NDPC-SD/index.htm. Key presentations included:

- *Pathways to Success: Improving Academic Success by Focusing on*

Effective Instruction by Dr. Jim Knight, University of Kansas, Center for Research on Learning, Lawrence, KS

- *Self-Determination as a Strategy for Dropout Prevention* by Dr. Dalun Zhang, Clemson University, Clemson, SC
- *Increasing Rates of School Completion: Moving From Policy and Research to Practice* by Dr. Camilla A. Lehr, National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, Minneapolis, MN
- *The Leadership Challenge in Dropout Prevention: It's Everybody's Business* by Dr. Joy Eichelberger, Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network, Harrisburg, PA

NDPC-SD also recently launched "Big Ideas," a free, quarterly electronic newsletter, which highlights the work of this project and examples of dropout prevention strategies. Sign up for the newsletter by visiting the NDPC-SD's Web site: www.dropoutprevention.org/NDPC-SD/index.htm. ■

NCCRESt to Publish ELL Conference Papers and Book



The National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (NCCRESt) held its first national research conference, "English Language Learners Struggling to

Learn: Emergent Research on Linguistic Differences and Learning Disabilities," on November 18-19, 2004, in Scottsdale, Arizona. NCCRESt Co-Principal Investigators Alfredo Artiles (Arizona State University) and Janette Klingner (University of Colorado, Boulder) planned and facilitated the conference. Co-sponsors of the conference included the Council for Exceptional Children and the National Association for Bilingual Education.

The purpose of the conference was to create a forum in which emergent scholarship on the differences between second language acquisition and learning disabilities could be presented by experts in related fields and discussed by a diverse audience that included researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. The impetus for the conference was the unprecedented growth of the English language learner (ELL) population, emergence of empirical evidence about seemingly inappropriate referrals of ELLs to special education, challenges associated with distinguishing between the characteristics of "normal" second language acquisition and learning disabilities, and an alarming dearth of information on these and related issues.

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Collaborative Member Districts Celebrate *National Inclusive Schools Week!*



Teachers, school administrators, students, and families across the country participated in the *4th Annual National Inclusive Schools Week*,

December 6-10, 2004. They celebrated their efforts to make their communities more inclusive and discussed what else needs to be done to continue improving their ability to serve the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. The *2004 Week* focused on the need for families, teachers, paraprofessionals, other school personnel, state and local administrators, and community members to “work together” to improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities and create inclusive communities for all children and youth. For the second consecutive year, President George W. Bush recognized the *Week* with a Presidential Message that stated his support of those who are working to make the nation’s schools more inclusive.

The Collaborative co-sponsored the *Week* with the National Institute for Urban School Improvement (NIUSI), and Collaborative member districts participated in this year’s celebration. Examples of district events included:

- **Clark County School District (CCSD) in Las Vegas (NV)**, NIUSI, the Mandalay Resort Group, and the Nevada Partnership for Inclusive Education presented “Inclusive Education: From Benevolence to Belonging,” a panel discussion that was held on December 9, 2004. The panel highlighted the need to ensure that all students are actively involved in learning. The program also included an extensive interview with Dr. Howard Gardner, Professor, Harvard University, on his “Multiple Intelligences” theory. The Collaborative’s Executive Director, Dr. David Riley, conducted the interview, which was broadcast from Boston via satellite.

In addition to Dr. Gardner, panelists included Dr. Asa Hilliard, Professor, Georgia State University, and Mr. Norman Kunc, Owner, Axis Consultation & Training. Ms. Rhonda Glyman, Founder of the Nevada Partnership for Inclusive Education, organized the event with the assistance of Collaborative member Dr. Charlene Green, Associate Superintendent, Student Support Services Division, CCSD. Hundreds of teachers, administrators, community leaders, and families attended the program.

Both the panel and interview were videotaped and are available for viewing on NIUSI’s Web site: www.inclusiveschools.org.

- **Kyrene School District in Tempe (AZ)** kicked off the *Week* with a celebration for district personnel that included food, games, and literature about the diversity of its community. Many of this district’s staff, who also work and volunteer for various disability and community organizations, shared information about their organizations.
- **Cincinnati Public Schools (OH)** held a district-wide poster and essay contest on the theme “working together.” The essays and posters illustrated positive interactions and supports between diverse populations. First, second, and third place winners at both the elementary and high school levels were given trophies and United States savings bonds.
- **Miami-Dade County Public Schools (FL)** held its annual professional development “Share Fair” during which general education and special education teachers shared resources, ideas, and information on the benefits of inclusive practices.

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NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
**URBAN SCHOOL
IMPROVEMENT**

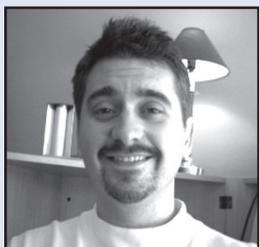


Office of Special
Education Programs

Creating an Inclusive Climate at the Secondary Level



Lisa A. Dieker



Chris O'Brien

Lisa A. Dieker, Ph.D. and Chris O'Brien, M.A., University of Central Florida

School climate is a key to successful learning, yet creating a positive inclusive climate can be a struggle at the secondary level (Bauer & Brown, 2001). The purpose of this article is to provide practical suggestions for establishing a strong climate in inclusive middle and high school classrooms.

Teacher preparation at the secondary level often leaves teachers unprepared to embrace a collaborative spirit. Often preparation programs provide limited interaction between secondary special and general education, leaving general educators prepared for content and special educators prepared to assist individual children who have difficulty learning content (Cole & McLeskey, 1997; Boudah, Schumacher, & Deshler, 1997). This gap creates a need to ensure that an interdisciplinary climate is created among all teachers that focuses on the student who needs to learn the content rather than just the content itself. When the focus is on student-specific needs, structures such as school-based teams and co-teaching are more easily embraced, which helps create a more collaborative environment among school staff.

Creating a Positive Environment

We have outlined four ideas that are effective in addressing the issue of climate at the middle and high school levels.

Using a collaborative curriculum approach to meet the needs of students with disabilities. In strong inclusive schools, students are expected to master two curricula: 1) the general education goals and objectives and 2) the goals outlined in their individualized education plans (IEPs). Prior to the start of the semester, general education teachers should outline the main ideas presented in their content areas and special educators should provide the goals and objectives on the students' IEPs. The planning among colleagues then evolves

into a discussion about how to make these expectations compatible. The general educator provides a thumbnail sketch of his or her weekly lesson plans, and the special educator plans and implements accommodations (preferably through co-teaching) specific to the plans. This type of curricular alignment ensures greater student success (Dieker & Murawski, 2003).

Aligning the role of special educator with his or her general education counterpart.

In strong inclusive schools, special educators are no longer isolated but are integrated into general education content teams. In many middle schools, special educators are aligned with interdisciplinary or cross-content families (e.g., math, science, language arts, and social studies) following a traditional middle school concept. If resources are limited, the special educator might work across two different grade level teams. At the high school level, the emerging collaborative trend is alignment of special educators with specific content area teams. This collaboration allows the special educators to gain expertise in a content area while providing consistent modifications for numerous students in that subject and in skill areas related to high-stakes testing. With the changes proposed in Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004 (IDEA 2004), these types of relationships may be needed for special educators to be considered highly qualified.

Understanding that students with disabilities in inclusive settings still need special education services. A misunderstanding about inclusive practices in secondary schools has been the idea that students with disabilities who are included in the general education classroom no longer need special education services (Bowe, 2005). On the contrary, while proponents of inclusion have fought for a change in placement for these students (i.e., out of segregated classrooms), they also maintain that these students must receive supports and services so that their education is individualized and intensive (Bauer &

Brown, 2001). Therefore, a third suggestion is that when students with disabilities are included in the general education classroom, the implementation of effective practice should be planned and oftentimes delivered by special educators.

Developing a structure where teachers observe and work with each other. This collaboration serves to create a professional environment that is conducive to sharing ideas and solving problems. In strong inclusive schools, teachers are expected to share rooms, ideas, and students. When a teacher is struggling, another faculty member whom he or she trusts and respects may observe, provide feedback, and share ideas. Administrative supports exist for these collaborative ventures. Teachers also see a need for the science teacher to teach English skills and the math teacher to teach science skills within their specific content area. Curricula, as well as faculty, no longer exist in isolation. They both need to be considered interdisciplinary in order to ensure a more successful climate for learning.

Preparing Students for Inclusive Environments

Once a collaborative climate is created among faculty and staff, the same climate is needed for students. Unlike elementary classrooms where knowledge levels (especially at the lower grades) are more alike than different, students have a wider range of skills as well as a stronger need to belong. Although we all know that secondary students can be cruel to those who appear “different,” in many cases we fail to prepare students for the transition to a more inclusive, heterogeneous, and challenging environment. Schools spend many hours preparing teachers for this new or different type of service delivery, but rarely does a school have a student-focused plan for the change of service delivery. Providing students with information about inclusive education structures and expectations at the secondary level can assist the entire school community in making a successful transition.

Promoting district-wide change. Change needs to occur district-wide so that students are not expected to magically be included at the secondary level. With an even stronger

emphasis in IDEA 2004 that students with disabilities **MUST** learn the same content as their peers without disabilities, students have to be included in general education from the beginning of their education. A disjointed approach from elementary to middle school and from middle to high school must be eliminated in order for students to be more successful in inclusive environments at the secondary level (Dieker, 2001). No matter how talented the staff in a secondary school, if students have not had the same academic and behavioral expectations with a heterogeneous group of peers throughout their education, inclusion at the secondary level can be a greater challenge.

Using evidence-based, research-based, and other promising practices. The reality of secondary classrooms today is that students are being included who are lagging behind their peers in major skill areas. Ten years ago, most high school sophomores with disabilities were not expected to learn the same information as students in general education. For students who are missing some level of academic, behavioral, or social skills, we must consider evidence-based techniques to assist them in the general education setting.

Educational practices that are validated include mnemonic strategy instruction, reading comprehension instruction, direct instruction, behavior modification, and computer-assisted instruction (Lloyd, Forness, & Kavale, 1998).

Another validated strategy is peer-mediated instruction, which is a general term for a group of inclusive practices to support students with disabilities in the general education classroom (Maheady, Harper, & Mallette, 2001). Included are practices such as class-wide peer tutoring, peer-assisted learning strategies (PALS), and reciprocal teaching.

Cooperative learning in inclusive classrooms also is supported by research if certain “active ingredients” are incorporated. Many teachers use grouping, but for true cooperative learning to exist, individual accountability and group rewards must be included (McMaster

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When the focus is on student-specific needs, structures such as school-based teams and co-teaching are more easily embraced, which helps create a more collaborative environment among school staff.

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Creating an Inclusive Climate

& Fuchs, 2002). An excellent model of cooperative learning that can be adapted for students with disabilities in the general education setting is literature circles (Daniels, 2002).

In addition to the practices highlighted as research-based, there are several inclusive approaches to teaching students in secondary education that could be described as “promising” practices. Researchers at the University of Kansas have long supported instruction in the use of learning strategies. The key to success in using these strategies is sufficient collaboration between strategy teachers and content teachers (Schumaker & Deshler, 1995).

Providing accommodations. Underlying the implementation of all of these practices is an acceptance and understanding of the needs of students with disabilities. Unfortunately, there are a large number of students in urban secondary schools identified as having mild learning or behavioral disabilities who have teachers who may not understand the implications of these disabilities. Some teachers need to actually see a disability before they believe it exists. They may say to these students “just try harder.” However, this response is somewhat like saying to a student in a wheelchair, “I know if you try harder you can walk.” Yet, students with learning or behavioral disabilities may need to have their books put on tape, be given more time to process test questions, or be provided with a unique behavioral plan. Teachers in strong inclusive classrooms willingly provide these types of accommodations for a wide range of learning and behavioral needs.

Listening to the students. The one voice that is often missing in the change process is that of the students. Consider conducting focus groups with current students, as well as students who have moved to the middle school or graduated from high school, to get additional and important ideas on how to further improve middle and high schools for students with disabilities and other diverse learners.

The bottom line in creating a more inclusive climate at the secondary level is in developing a true partnership between special and general education that centers on the needs of students. Students with disabilities who are included must have appropriate supports at this level to ensure that they are not expected to run through the maze of inclusion before they have a chance to learn to walk through new and challenging settings. ■

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Closing the Achievement Gap

entitlement of IDEA, many students who are identified as having a disability may not have benefited from these programs. First, most students with disabilities are not identified as needing special education services until after they start school. Further, many students who are identified before starting school do not have access to preschool programs or the ones they do have access to are of low quality (Snow, 1998). Therefore, improving access to high-quality preschool programs for all students who are at risk of school difficulty has great promise.

2) Curriculum modification should be a last resort.

It is increasingly apparent that too many children with disabilities are receiving modified curricula where accommodation would appear more appropriate. Children with disabilities often receive curriculum modifications in content areas like science because they read and write below grade level. As a result, they do not learn the same curriculum as their peers. The cumulative effect of this over years is likely to preclude them from ever passing the state science test.

3) Accommodations on tests should mirror instructional accommodations.

Educators and parents should be careful in choosing the accommodations that a child receives. In general, accommodations should have a direct relationship to the impact of the child's disability, and thus, provide the child with a differential bounce in performance (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1999). For example, a child with dyslexia may need increased time to read material due to a slow reading rate. Without this accommodation the child would not be able to finish an assignment or a test, and his performance would be an underestimation of his ability to comprehend the content of a given text. On the other hand, the wrong accommodation can harm the performance of students with disabilities. Extended time might be the wrong accommodation for a

student with attention issues if that student responds best to limits.

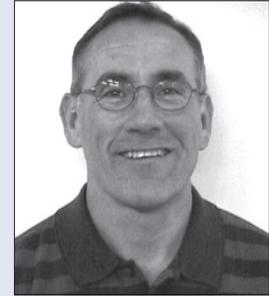
Ultimately, most decisions related to accommodations should be educational ones and incorporated into the child's instructional program. Dyslexic students with laborious reading rates need their entire educational program accommodated for this aspect of their disability. They may need both extra time on reading assignments and some content provided on audio tape. Their course selection should take into consideration the cumulative reading load of the courses. As Shaywitz writes, "For the dyslexic reader, accommodations represent the bridge that connects him to his strengths and, in the process, allows him to reach his potential. By themselves accommodations do not produce success; they are the catalyst for success. Accommodations grow in importance as a dyslexic progresses through schooling" (2003, p. 314). (For more information on the issue of accommodations, see my column in the Winter/Spring 2003 *Urban Perspectives*.)

The issue is not just the accommodations the students should receive during high-stakes tests but also the importance of well thought out accommodations in the entire educational process. The decision regarding test accommodations should flow from the instructional accommodations and be relatively straightforward. Waiting until test time to determine accommodations based on a standard list of accommodations is indicative of a far greater problem with the child's total educational program.

4) Time devoted to learning may need to be lengthened.

Time is an important accommodation for many students with disabilities. Beyond giving students extra time to perform in certain instructional or testing situations, some students with disabilities may need extra time to learn important academic subjects. For example, deaf students and

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Thomas Hehir

Virtually every school district is confronted with determining a course of action that will improve results for students with disabilities and other struggling students.

Closing the Achievement Gap

students with an across-the-board, language-based learning disability may take longer to learn mathematical concepts because they may not have learned the language needed to understand these concepts.

A response that some districts use to deal with students who have not learned grade-level curricula is to retain them at their current grade level for an additional year. There is little evidence that retention works as a general policy, and there is considerable evidence that it is associated with dropping out of school (Heubert & Hauser, 1999). Retention should be avoided as a strategy to improve academic outcomes for students with disabilities, particularly in urban, poor environments.

The need for increasing instructional time to learn important subject matter must be addressed if we are going to improve academic performance and increase the number of students that pass high-stakes tests. For many students, this may mean participating in extended school-year programs. IDEA requires that, in certain situations, school districts must provide extended school year programs in order to prevent regression and shorten the time needed to recoup skills lost during summer vacations. In general, most school districts have provided these services to their students with severe disabilities. However, the demands brought about by standards-based reform should cause a re-examination of how and to whom extended year services are provided. For many students who simply require more time to learn important subject matter, extended year options may make all the difference. After-school programs may also be an effective option.

Another option that schools may consider is lengthening the time

within the school day that is spent on certain subjects. However, this approach means that other subjects receive less attention. Such tradeoffs may make this option undesirable for many students. Extending the school day may thus be a preferred option for many students who need extra time to learn important concepts.

5) Restructure high school options through effective transition planning.

High school is the time high-stakes tests are apt to have their most profound effect, i.e., the failure to graduate with a diploma. The historically high rates of dropping out of school for students with disabilities must be addressed if we are going to reduce drop-out rates overall as required by NCLB. The use of instructional time spent in high school is central to ensuring student success. We should not wait until the administration of high-stakes tests to begin planning for high school students.

A more effective approach for these students would be to informally assess them relative to their acquisition of curriculum standards at the beginning of their high school career and develop their IEPs to ensure opportunities to learn. This process must take a long view and help provide a road map that will span the high school years. This was the concept behind moving transition planning requirements from age 16 to age 14 in IDEA. We need to make sure that students with disabilities have had the opportunity to learn the subjects being tested before the test is administered. Waiting to provide this instruction until after the students fail, wastes precious instructional time and may increase the likelihood that they will drop out (Katzman, 2001).

It may be necessary for some students to spend more than four years in high school or to participate in summer,

Saturday, or after-school programs in order to meet the standards. It is important that students be directly involved in these decisions because they need to be aware of, and take responsibility for, the difficult work that may be required for them to meet the standards.

The recommendations discussed here are not intended to be comprehensive. Undoubtedly more must be done. It should be clear that many of these actions require significant resources that will not be easily attainable. Therefore, it is important for special education leaders to have frank discussions with their superintendents and school boards regarding efforts that will be required to improve the performance of students with disabilities. On a hopeful note, most of these practices can also be beneficial for students without disabilities who are struggling to meet curriculum standards. Framing the discussion this way may increase the likelihood of success for all students. ■

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National Inclusive Schools Week Celebrations

NIUSI would like to hear about your school district's celebrations. Email descriptions to niusi@edc.org. Send pictures and press clippings for posting on www.inclusiveschools.org to: Jennifer Quinlan, NIUSI, Education Development Center, Inc., 55 Chapel Street, Newton, MA 02458-1060.

In the spirit of this year's "working together" theme, more than 60 organizational co-sponsors and school district partners helped NIUSI promote the *Week*. Organizational co-sponsors included the American Federation of Teachers, Council for Exceptional Children, National Education Association, National Association of School Psychologists,

National Association of State Directors of Special Education, TASH, and many others. Sixteen Collaborative member school districts served as partner districts, including Cincinnati Public Schools (OH), Chicago Public Schools (IL), Clark County School District (NV), Denver Public Schools (CO), Fall River Public Schools (MA), Houston Independent School District (TX), Hacienda La Puente Unified School District (CA), Humble Unified School District (TX), Miami-Dade County Public Schools (FL), New York City District 75 (NY), Omaha Public Schools (NE), Orange County Public Schools (FL), Racine Unified School District (WI), School District of

Philadelphia (PA), Springfield Public Schools (MA), and Villa Park School District 45 (IL).

National Inclusive Schools Week continues to be a wonderful opportunity to highlight ways to develop schools and communities that are more welcoming of children and youth with and without disabilities. Save the dates for the 2005 celebration: December 5-9 is the *5th Annual National Inclusive Schools Week*. ■

For more information about the *NIUSI* and National Inclusive Schools Week, please visit www.inclusiveschools.org.

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ELL Conference Papers and Book

Presenters included Jamal Abedi (UCLA), Alfredo J. Artiles (Arizona State University), Manuel Barrera (Metropolitan State University), Judith Bernhard (Ryerson University), Paul Cirino (University of Houston), Jim Cummins (University of Toronto), Kathy Escamilla (University of Colorado, Boulder), Richard Figueroa (University of California, Davis), Margaret Gallego (San Diego State University), Eugene Garcia (Arizona State University), Michael Gerber (University of California, Santa Barbara), Diane Haager, (California State University, Los Angeles), Beth Harry (University of Miami), Janette Klingner (University of Colorado, Boulder), Sylvia Linan-Thompson (University of Texas, Austin), Jeff MacSwan (Arizona State University), Laura Méndez Barletta (University of Colorado, Boulder), Alba Ortiz (University of Texas, Austin), Kathryn Prater (University of Texas, Austin), Elba I. Reyes (Casa Grande Union High School District, AZ), Robert Rueda (USC),

Guillermo Solano-Flores (American Institutes for Research), Sharon Vaughn (University of Texas, Austin), Michelle Windmueller (University of South Carolina), and Grace Zamora Durán (U.S. Department of Education).

The work presented at the NCCRESt research conference will be published in both academic and practitioner formats. Approximately half of the conference papers will be published in the *Journal of Learning Disabilities* and the remaining papers will appear in *Teachers College Record*. A book for practitioners will be published as well. Downloadable copies of the PowerPoint presentations are available on NCCRESt's Web site: www.nccrest.org. Information about purchasing CD-ROM versions of the presentations also can be found on the Web site. ■

For more information about NCCRESt, please contact Project Coordinator Shelley Zion at shelley.zion@cudenver.edu.

Special Thanks to our 2004 Corporate Partners!



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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.

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

Collaborative Staff Transitions

Longtime staff member **Bonnie Johnson Barry** is leaving the Collaborative to pursue a career in middle school guidance counseling. As Project Coordinator, she organized numerous Collaborative meetings and was instrumental in launching and coordinating *National Inclusive Schools Week*. We thank Bonnie for eight years of dedication to the Collaborative. While we will miss her very much, we know that this is the right step for her and that students will be well served under her direction. She and her husband and infant daughter recently settled in Manchester, New Hampshire.

Deb Hall joined the Collaborative staff this past fall as Member Services and Outreach Assistant. Deb will be providing customer service support to Collaborative members and assisting with the coordination of our semiannual conferences. She will also serve an important role in the marketing of events and activities for the Collaborative and its partner projects. Deb brings to this position experience as an after school teacher, a research assistant for a socially responsible investment firm, and a marketing coordinator for a consulting firm.

Tom Hehir, the Collaborative's Senior Policy Advisor, has been recently promoted to the prestigious position of Professor of Practice at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Congratulations Tom!

Membership Breaks 100!

The Collaborative currently links 100 school districts from 28 states plus the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Alberta, Canada. Thirteen school districts have joined the Collaborative since July 2004. Please join us in welcoming:

- **Arlington Public Schools, Arlington, VA**
- **Calgary Board of Education, Alberta, Canada**
- **Cleveland Municipal School District, Cleveland, OH**
- **Corpus Christi Independent School District, Corpus Christi, TX**
- **Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District, Houston, TX**
- **Kyrene School District, Tempe, AZ**
- **Nashua School District, Nashua, NH**
- **Oak Park Public Schools, Oak Park, IL**
- **Poughkeepsie City School District, Poughkeepsie, NY**
- **Richmond Community Schools, Richmond, IN**
- **Spring Branch Independent School District, Houston, TX**
- **Stafford Municipal School District, Missouri City, TX**
- **Verona Area School District, Verona, WI**

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

Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative

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