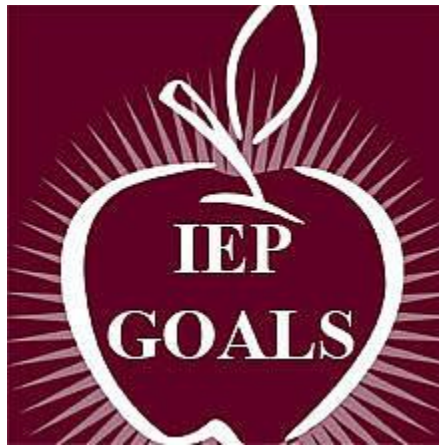




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NASET Application for iPad and iPhone



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Update from U.S. Department of Education

Former Secretary John B. King Jr.'s Cabinet Exit Memo: Giving Every Student a Fair Shot

Education's Promise

As the parent of two school-aged children and a former high school social studies teacher and middle school principal, I have seen the difference that a quality education makes in unlocking the vast potential of every child. And as U.S. Secretary of Education, I understand that education is critical to expanding opportunity, growing a thriving national economy, and ensuring American leadership in the 21st century and beyond. Education also is vital for preparing all our people for lives of engaged citizenship.

The mission of the U.S. Department of Education is to promote educational excellence and help all students—regardless of their race, religion, income level, sex, first language, ability status, or any other demographic factor—have equal access to educational opportunity.

I would like to share with you the great progress our nation has made in spurring systemic reform and promoting innovation across America's education system—from preschool through college—over the last eight years, and highlight critical areas where we must build on promising practices and success. But first, it's important to set this progress in context.

When President Barack Obama entered office in 2009, the nation was in the midst of a severe economic crisis. A set of key policies and investments, beginning with the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, helped to get Americans back to work and secure the nation's long-term prosperity.

The President understood that education must be one of those investments, and the Recovery Act helped jumpstart efforts to better serve all students, especially the most disadvantaged; make college more affordable; and save hundreds of thousands of teacher and education jobs. The Recovery Act helped lay the foundation for ambitious education reform, and over the last eight years, the Department of Education has supported states in their work to hold all students to high standards, build data systems that better track student growth, turn around struggling schools, lift up educators, and embrace innovation in teaching and learning. Today—due to these efforts and the commitment of educators, state and local leaders, communities, families, and students—the nation's education system is stronger and better able to support the success of every learner.

To read Secretary King's full exit memo, please see

<https://www2.ed.gov/documents/press-releases/cabinet-exit-memo.pdf>

Buzz from the Hub

To access everything below in this section from Buzz from the Hub, visit:

<http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/buzz-dec2016/>

New Brief from CPIR for Parent Centers.

We are very pleased to offer Parent Centers a brand-new brief on the use of sworn law-enforcement officers in public schools as part of building a safe learning environment for students. The brief is designed to accompany and elaborate upon OSEP's *Dear Colleague Letter* on the Use of School Resource Officers (SROs) in Schools, released September 8, 2016. Appropriate duties of SROs are discussed, as are current statistics on the use of SROs, the concerns expressed in OSEP's letter, and resources of more information.

Helping Justice-Involved Youth Transition Back to Traditional School Settings.

Check out this new suite of resources from the U.S. Department of Education. The resources include: (a) a guide written for incarcerated youth; (b) a newly updated transition toolkit and resource guide for practitioners in juvenile justice facilities; (c) a document detailing education programs in juvenile justice facilities from the most recent Civil Rights Data Collection; and (4) a website that provides technical assistance to support youth with disabilities with transitioning out of juvenile justice facilities.

Developing Financial Capability Among Youth: How Families Can Help.

Developing financial capability has been recognized as an important part of preparing youth for the transition to adulthood. This brief from NCWD/Youth provides families with suggestions and resources on how to talk with youth about money and assist them in learning and practicing financial management skills through their interactions at home.

Final Regulations on Disproportionality Released.

On December 12th, the U.S. Department of Education published the final regulations under Part B of IDEA aimed at promoting equity by targeting widespread disparities in the treatment of students of color with disabilities. The regulations address a number of issues related to significant disproportionality in the identification, placement, and discipline of students with disabilities based on race or ethnicity.

p.s. You'll hear more from CPIR on this in the near future, because we've been asked to develop resources for Parent Centers to use in partnering with their states, civil rights groups, and parent leaders to identify and address disproportionality in their states and communities.

Dear Colleague Letter Addressing Racial Discrimination.

The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has released a new Dear Colleague Letter to remind states, school districts, and public schools of their legal obligation to prevent discrimination on the basis of race in special education. The letter outlines how to avoid racial discrimination in the referral for disability evaluation, the evaluation process itself, and the provision of special education. It also provides ten illustrative examples that provide further guidance on those processes.

Toy Guide for Differently-Abled Kids.

Toys"R"Us has again collaborated with the National Lekotek Center to identify toys that help with the development of children with physical, cognitive or developmental disabilities.

The Family Gathering: A Survival Guide.

Parents can help their children with special needs be at their best and have fun, too! This guide from the Child Mind Institute offers parents practical, well-grounded suggestions.

15 Stress-Reducing Holiday Tips.

This list of 15 tips comes from Friendship Circle. Share it with the families and friends of children with disabilities.

Parent's Guide to OCD.

How to recognize obsessive-compulsive disorder in kids, and what you need to know to get effective treatment.

What is the Role of the School-Based Occupational Therapy Practitioner?

This tidy 2-page brochure is designed to answer parents' questions about what occupational therapists do in schools and how their services help children.

All About Young Children | *In 8 different languages.*

Check out the All About Young Children website, where you can find out about what skills help children learn, how they learn language, how they learn about feelings and relationships, how they learn about numbers, and how they become skillful at moving their bodies. Share the site with families who are learning about childhood development.

These resources can help Parent Centers address new political realities in 2017 and the importance of their participation at decision-making tables.

Free Guide to the New Congress.

CQ Roll Call is offering a free copy of its 71-page *Guide to the New Congress*. There are more than 60 new lawmakers to meet and several House committees with new leaders and a new chair, meaning how you approach advocacy will be different in the 115th Congress.

Tips For Telling Your Association's Advocacy Story.

Telling your story well is the essence of advocacy, something that Parent Centers know a great deal about! Come 2017, there will likely be many, many opportunities to deploy this skill...this guide is full of tips about what makes for effective advocacy.

Common Core State Standards and Students with Moderate to Severe Disabilities

Marta M. Gonzalez

Abstract

Ever since the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act, all children, including those with special needs, must have access to the general curriculum for their respecting grade level. In 2004, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reauthorized stating that an individualized education plan (IEP) must measure the child's progress within the general education curriculum (Key Provision on Transition: IDEA 1997 compared to H.R. 1350 (IDEA 2004)). However, educators are struggling with finding a balance between teaching functional skills and core content. IEP meetings are conducted to determine the most effective course of action educators, parents, and community members can take to ensure the child is prepared for employment, independent living, and further education. Finding a balance between two different types of curriculum requires that educators be trained in both areas. Even though it is imperative to include all children with the general population, there may be some instances in which exposing a child to grade level curriculum does not prove to be beneficial. At this point, educators and parents should be able to determine that the child should no longer be exposed to core content or that specific standard and focus solely on functional skills.

Introduction

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are “a joint project of the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to develop common K-12 reading and math standards designed to prepare students for college and their careers (ASCD).” Since the beginning of the program in 2009, forty-nine states, two territories, and the District of Columbia have all adopted the CCSS. By adopting the CCSS as the general curriculum, one can only infer that ALL students will be exposed to the CCSS. In order to determine each child's level of mastery, each child will partake in a standardized test or an alternate assessment. In other words, children with moderate to severe disabilities are being taught how to multiply and divide rather than focusing on communication skills or independent living. The purpose of the CCSS is to prepare children for the future, whatever that may be. By exposing children with moderate to severe disabilities to grade level curriculum are they truly being prepared for their future?

As with any program, there are advantages and disadvantages to implementing something new. Due to the type of program and the fact that it deals with our children's futures and education, one may say that the CCSS plays a significant role in all of our futures. It is also important to note that because the CCSS are relatively new, there are still kinks in the program that need to be worked out. Possible solutions, as to whether the program may work for students with moderate to severe disabilities or the effectiveness of the program, are being examined. As educators on the front line, it is imperative that everything is being done to find a solution to these questions. The CCSS are here to stay and it is important that they work to benefit all those involved.

Advantages of Common Core State Standards

Even though there are many challenges to working with students with moderate to severe disabilities and the Common Core State Standards, there is emerging research that suggests “students with moderate and severe disabilities can learn content aligned with grade-level standards while continuing to work on basic numeracy (Saunders, 2013).” The same can be said about English Language Arts. By exposing students with moderate to severe disabilities to grade-level content, some advantages may be higher self-esteem, challenging the student, as well as, being college and career ready.

One example of student success is in the journal article titled, *Solving the Common Core Equation: Teaching Mathematics CCSS to Students with Moderate and Severe Disabilities*. In this article, “Michael” is fourth grade student with a moderate intellectual disability. He is nonverbal and struggles with number recognition and counting. He communicates with the use of Vantage Point device. He acts out during Math class by kicking, slapping, or throwing his head back. Because Michael’s teacher exposed him to grade level content with the help of accommodations, Michael was able to grasp some new concepts and also master skills he had not been able to master previously, such as number recognition and counting. Michael is now able to sit through a 30 minute math lesson without acting out (Saunders, 2013). His ability to be able to sit through a math lesson and understand the content, improved Michael’s sense of self-worth. He no longer needs to act out during Math class because he is now aware that he is capable of completing the work. Another advantage of teaching the CCSS to children with moderate to severe disabilities is the challenge it provides the student. Students need to be challenged on a daily basis, in order for them to grow cognitively. The Science curriculum allows for many opportunities to challenge the students. Not only are students expected to understand different content and terminology, but they are also expected to be able to apply it. “Students with learning disabilities can benefit greatly from experiential learning in a variety of contexts, particularly when adapted appropriately (Scruggs, 2013).” Through the use of different teaching strategies such as: hands-on learning, small groups, labs, discussions, reports, and presentations, students are able to challenge themselves and demonstrate mastery of a standard. These strategies will, not only challenge the student, but they will also allow them to truly gain mastery of the content. The last advantage posed by the CCSS is the ability to prepare students for their future college and careers. “The CCSS provides teachers with a framework of the skills and knowledge that students are expected to possess at each grade as determine by the College and Career Readiness Standards (Konrad, 2014).” By exposing students with disabilities to the CCSS, they are being prepared for college and future careers. However, one question that must be asked is: What does the future have in store for each child?

Disadvantages of the Common Core State Standards

As with any new initiative, the Common Core State Standards has a fair share of disadvantages as well. One may feel that the disadvantages that are in conjunction with the CCSS do not outweigh the advantages proposed by it. Some may find that the CCSS are too challenging and that students with moderate to severe disabilities should be focusing on functional skills rather than trying to determine the perimeter of the box. Educators are also faced with the challenge of trying to find a balance between being able to teach functional skills and core content. “Although functional skills (e.g. communicating, establishing and following schedules, performing daily living tasks) may be prioritized by the team developing the individualized education program (IEP), teachers also need to balance these skills with core content that must be addressed (Collins, 2010).” One way teachers are implementing CCSS into lessons is by using real-life application. Educators are providing students with examples of how a specific standard will be applied in a real life situation. Another disadvantage of teaching CCSS to students with moderate to severe disabilities is the teacher retention rate. Special education teachers are leaving the field at an increasing rate due to stress and exhaustion that comes with working in such a demanding field. “Five years is the point at which teachers in special education are reported to begin expressing feelings of frustration or burnout (McLeskey, 2004).” Teachers are required to meet certain deadlines and goals but due to the lack of support, cost, and time constraints teachers are feeling over-worked and underpaid, thus leaving the field of special education. It seems that the CCSS will not be fading away any time soon; therefore, it is necessary to advocate for those students who may not be able to do so for themselves. This means that finding a solution to who must be exposed to the CCSS and how should it be taught is essential. All students should have access to the CCSS, but should all students receive it? Or is there a more crucial area for others to receive in place of the CCSS?

Solutions

The CCSS are designed to create a level of uniformity for all states, schools, and students involved. The CCSS create guidelines for the states to follow in order to ensure that the standards are being taught correctly, effectively, and consistently throughout. Below are six guidelines provided by the Common Core State Standards Initiative (2012):

“(1) Are aligned with college and work expectations;

- (2) Are clear, understandable and consistent;
- (3) Include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills;
- (4) Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards;
- (5) Are informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society; and
- (6) Are evidence-based (Scruggs, 2013)."

These guidelines show one how to implement the standard into the classroom, however they are aligned more with a general education setting. One possible solution to implementing the CCSS in an ESE setting is by creating a new set of guidelines that allow more flexibility within the classroom and provide the teacher with an opportunity to deem what is appropriate in that particular classroom setting. Even though special education teachers are providing students with the appropriate accommodations listed on the IEP that may not be enough for a student to gain mastery of a specific standard. If this is the case, the teacher should be able to decide that this particular student may not need to focus on mastery of that standard. It is not just to ask students with special needs to be able to master the same content as those who are in the general education classroom. Children with exceptionalities have the added challenge of trying to live a "normal" life and now they are provided with the challenge of trying to demonstrate mastery of content that may be unlikely for them to understand. Another possible solution is to provide educators with additional support. This may be in the form of a paraprofessional, additional time, larger budget, or minimizing paperwork load. Educators often feel overwhelmed because of the additional demands that are required outside of the classroom such as paperwork and meetings. If teachers were allowed to solely focus on the students, not only would the special education teacher more likely remain in their position, but it would also allow them to dedicate 100% of their attention on the student needs and not additional demands.

Further Study

The Common Core State Standards have only been around for seven years. There is not enough research or evidence to support how beneficial the CCSS will be to students in the future, especially students with special needs. Further research needs to be conducted, especially in the area of special education, to determine the effectiveness of the CCSS. The area of Special Education is a growing field. There is new research conducted regularly to determine the most efficient approach to teaching a student with a specific disability and, as educators know, not all cases are the same. What may work for one child; will not work for another. The CCSS must remain current, in regards to what is occurring in the area of special education. Nine years is a long time when it comes to medical changes and discoveries for children with disabilities. What may have worked then; may not work now. Not only should the CCSS be up to date in regards to the area of special education, but they should also work to find alternate solutions to different problems that may arise in an ESE setting. The focus of the CCSS is the general education classroom and not enough attention is attributed to the special education setting. Educators must make certain that all students have access to the CCSS, but those students who may not benefit from them should be being taught how to live a functional and independent life.

Conclusion

Since the reauthorization of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act in 2004, "special educators still struggle with how to develop standards-based IEPs and provide the required access to the general curriculum for their students. (Caruana, 2015)" The CCSS initiative must work closely with, not just politicians, but educators who are in the classroom, to determine the best course of action for students with moderate to severe disabilities. Some students may be able to grasp concepts that are aligned with the core standards, but what about those who may not be able to? What is the appropriate course of action for them? There is no clear cut path for educators to follow for each student. Each student is different and learns differently, hence why the decision to expose students to the CCSS should be determined by the IEP team. This will ensure that each student will be looked upon as an individual and the IEP team members and parents will be able to determine the best course of action for each child individually.

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Inclusion and its Importance to Contemporary Education

By Martha Nuñez

Abstract

The topic of my paper is Inclusion and its Importance to Contemporary Education. In it I explore five published articles related to the pros and cons of Inclusion in today's classrooms. Ware (2016) examines the reading gains of students with learning disabilities (LD) and General Education (GenEd) students after moving into an inclusion setting, as well as teacher opinions about inclusion. Ajuwon, Laman, and Earle (2014) look at the effectiveness of Inclusion teacher training and characteristics of the special needs student. Bosch (2016) studies high school teacher perceptions towards the inclusion of students with Autism. Nichols, Dowdy, Nichols (2010) analyze the value of staff training as well as the idea that co-teaching is just a solution to No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Lastly, Obiakor (2011) discusses the positive aspects of Inclusion.

Inclusion

The purpose of our modern-day educational system is to teach students so that they'll one day, grow into adults who are able to find a job and support themselves. However with students who have disabilities, this can be quite challenging. Children with disabilities are all different, but they have certain things in common – including the capacity to learn and the right to be educated in a classroom “with their non-disabled peers in the least restrictive environment” (IDEA, 2004). Thus, the concept of Inclusion was born: all students educated in a GenEd classroom with both a General Education and Special Education teacher co-teaching in the same setting. Inclusion works wondrously in some classrooms and can be unsuccessful in others. Yet with so many different types of disabilities, with so many different demographics in our 50 states, how can Inclusion be implemented effectively?

Literature Review

Ware (2016) conducted a study into the reading gains made by students with learning disabilities and general education students in an Inclusion Setting as compared to self-contained classroom models like the Resource room. The study consisted of two cohorts of 149, 5th and 6th graders in a middle Tennessee public school district. Data was collected on the students' academic gains over a two-year period. At first glance, the study seemed promising. However, results showed no significant improvement in reading gains for those students who were moved to an Inclusion class.

Researchers also surveyed teachers in the same area as to their opinions about the Inclusion model. Surprisingly, given the findings of the first portion of the study, results revealed that 100% of the teachers believed “all children can learn with the implementation of differentiated instruction” (Ware, 2016, p. 136). Since the study showed teachers in that area gave positive feedback about Inclusion, one potential solution would be to incorporate a mandatory teacher-training program for all Co-Teaching teams in schools across the US. This would help educate teachers as to the different classroom Inclusion models that can be implemented, how to put them into practice, how to determine what responsibilities each teacher gets, and other important issues that need to be decided when working as an Inclusion teacher.

Two years earlier, Ajuwon, Laman, and Earle (2014) looked at the potential benefits of having SPED and GenEd teachers trained before being assigned to teach in an Inclusion classroom.

Their study consisted of a survey of 224 elementary and secondary school teachers -- in various cities in Missouri, Oregon, Maryland, Georgia, Texas, Ohio, New York, and New Mexico -- both before and after a training program on Special Education. Results revealed that teachers significantly improved their

positive views towards inclusion -- and after the course, there was a significant decrease in teachers' concerns about meeting the needs of SPED students. This study essentially proved that training teachers to work with students who have disabilities, before co-teaching in an Inclusion setting, "appears to have markedly reduced the concerns of preservice teachers...before...and after...attending the course" (Ajuwon, Laman, and Earle, 2014, p. 10). This is good news for Inclusion – it proves that at least one of the keys to its success lies in educating all co-teachers working in Inclusion classrooms.

An increasing number of students with high-functioning Autism are being staffed into Inclusion settings. It's one thing when the student is in the nurturing atmosphere that's fostered during the elementary school years, but what happens when that child gets to middle or high school? Bosch (2016) studied the perceptions of secondary SPED and GenEd teachers towards the inclusion of students with Autism in General Education. Participants were 50 secondary GenEd and 32 SPED teachers in a large southern school district (the city and state were not disclosed).

Although the sample size was small (only 82 responses), the survey revealed that secondary teachers felt very optimistic and positive about teaching students with Autism in the Inclusion setting. According to researchers (Bosch, 2016), these results are in sharp contrast to earlier research where "general education teachers were most likely to have negative attitudes towards students whose disability is primarily characterized by inappropriate social and behavior responses" (p. 10). This positive shift in the perspective of GenEd teachers towards teaching students with Autism was presumed to be a result of increased exposure to students in Special Education (Bosch, 2016).

It seems that the more General Education teachers get to work with students with disabilities -- and the more training they and their SPED counterparts get -- the more successful the Inclusion setting will be for all parties, both teachers and students. In their study of 24 school districts, Nichols, Dowdy, and Nichols (2010) examined various issues that could affect this relationship, including: which teacher is responsible for the students, who gives grades and how, which teacher is in charge of classroom rules, and where in the classroom is each teacher's work area.

In addition, the authors discussed various pros and cons of the Co-Teaching model. They stated that the responsibility for all students is in the hands of both the GenEd and SPED teachers. The authors asserted that the key to success of the Co-teaching model is to have pre-planned and discussed individual responsibilities before the start of the school year. Because all students get taught by both the GenEd and SPED teacher, another positive outcome of inclusion is that students with disabilities "lost the label and stigma of being learning disabled" (Nichols, 2010, p. 649). The downside is that many teachers were worried about having larger classes – which limits the time SPED teachers have to work with students who need the extra help. Unfortunately, researchers found that that schools surveyed did not offer training for Co-teachers working together in Inclusion settings. As a result, they believe that many schools may offer Inclusion, not as a way to assimilate students with disabilities into the general education setting, but as a way to comply with the NCLB mandates.

So what can be done to comply with IDEA and make Inclusion work? Some solutions are to make it more consistently available, make the setting fair for all students, and make it comprehensive (Obiakor, 2011). Although Inclusion does not work for all students, the author asserts that having all parties collaborating and consulting with each other for the benefit of the SPED student, who can thrive in the Inclusion setting, is one key to its success.

The Comprehensive Support Model (CSM) is the strategy discussed in this study, and it involves the student, their family, school, community and government, all working together to foster student success. As explained by the author, the CSM involves building the student's self-esteem; getting parents to be proactive with their child's education; having the schools find ways to better motivate SPED students; getting students with disabilities access to the plethora of resources that are available in their communities; and having local, state, and federal governments implement policies and/or laws to protect our SPED students -- and reward those entities that promote positive changes for their benefit.

Conclusions

After evaluating the different studies pertaining to Inclusion, I discovered that this classroom setting can be successful – but first, certain criteria have to be established to make it effective. Some of the studies pointed to the benefits of training co-teachers before the start of the school year. However, this is not enough; more guidelines for Inclusion Settings are needed. Generating a "Best Practices for Inclusion Manual" -- developed in conjunction with experienced teachers and administrators -- is one possible solution.

Including a guide for school-wide and classroom practices pertaining to Inclusion Classrooms, and specifying what responsibilities school personnel are responsible for, would remove any possible uncertainties regarding accountability. This would ultimately help make Inclusion truly successful in our schools -- and more than just a pipe dream.

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Fostering Best Practices in Inclusive Education

Jodie Ray

Abstract

This article traces the origins of inclusive education to Public Law 94-142, and provides an overview of the various policies that have transformed inclusion practices. PL-94-142 laid the foundation for inclusion by subtly suggesting integration as a means to push the envelope for students with disabilities to receive access to general education curriculum thus enabling them to achieve more. The preponderance of research conveys the effectiveness of inclusive education outlining the benefits and identifying critical components imperative to maximizing access and ensuring equity. A school wide approach incorporating principles of multi-tiered system of support recognizes collaboration as an integral ingredient of inclusion. Members of the learning community each have their own roles, but maintain a shared responsibility uniting the individual efforts. The article urges educators and policymakers to reconsider the language of the law by changing the least restrictive environment (LRE) to a concept of non-restrictive environment to better encompass the wide range of special education needs.

Keywords :inclusion, educational policy, least restrictive environment, universal design of learning, multi-tiered system of support, non-restrictive environment

Over the course of time educational pedagogy changes depending upon needs determined by society. Children who were at one time institutionalized earned the right to a free and appropriate public education in 1975 with Public Law 94-142. The intent to educate all children regardless of their disability was noble, but it created a separate educational system for children with disabilities. The special education self-contained classroom used different curriculum and had different expectations than the educational system for typically developing students. "Special education became a place instead of educational supports" (Sailor & McCart, 2014, p.58). These special education programs had little to zero accountability and failed to adequately prepare students with disabilities for life, often resulting in students with a lack of basic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics. Once children were placed in special education they rarely moved to general education settings. It took decades of analyzing educational practices to make changes and revamp the system.

However, the language of the law was written "to assure that to the maximum extent appropriate, handicapped children, including children in public or private institutions, [were] educated with children who are not handicapped" (Sailor & McCart, 2014, p. 56). Although the Congressional debates prior to the passage of the law overwhelming supported providing special education services in segregated schools rather than integrated settings the law addressed the least restrictive environment (LRE), establishing the foundation for inclusion several years later. The least restrictive environment "led to the concept of a continuum of services ranging from segregated special education schools to placement in grade-level general education classrooms" in order to meet the learning needs of the individual with disabilities (Sailor & McCart, 2014, p. 56).

The notion of equitable education was furthered with the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997. IDEA mandated that "all students have the opportunity to learn grade-level content based on grade-level standards, participate in state assessment of those standards, and have individualized education programs (IEPs) to specifically address the extent to which the student will participate and progress in the general education curriculum" (Olson, Leko & Roberts, 2016, p. 143) . The No Child Left Behind Act that was signed into Congress in 2002 was an educational reform aimed at increasing accountability and established "to ensure that students [were] meeting state academic and grade level expectations" (Maleyko & Gawlik, 2011, p. 600). It required schools to be accountable for the total school populations adequate yearly progress, including students with special learning needs with IEPs.

This brought upon a shift in the paradigm since students with disabilities were now required to participate in state standardized testing on grade level. Once schools' grades were affected by this policy change they began to promote inclusion as a means of ensuring that all students received grade level instruction.

Inclusion goes beyond simply providing students with disabilities grade-level curriculum, at the heart of inclusive education is "the principle that all students should be valued for their exceptional abilities and included as important members of the school community" (Obiakor, 2011, p. 10). Inclusion promotes the equality of students with disabilities by educating them alongside typically developing peers, ending the segregation and allowing students with disabilities to take their rightful place alongside their peers without having to prove their capability as seen during the brief stint with mainstreaming, where they had to earn their right. "Social justice is a central ingredient of inclusion because it is in opposition to exclusion" (Obiakor, 2011, p. 10). This enables students with disabilities to learn not only academics but gain valuable social interpersonal skills from their non-disabled peers that are needed for the 21st century. "With inclusion, students with disabilities are able to achieve academic success and emotional stability while learning with typical peers" (Obiakor, 2011, p. 10). Students educated in an inclusive setting also reap the benefit from the teachers and the schools increased expectations of what students will learn.

Although inclusion is discussed as having positive outcomes and benefiting children with disabilities by enabling them to have access to the grade-level curriculum, educators also have to acknowledge that "simply having a child in an inclusive setting without access to effective teaching and curriculum along with necessary supports is not likely to be beneficial"; instead it is "what occurs in the general education setting that will determine positive outcomes" (Marks & Kurth, 2013, p. 275). Marks and Kurth recognize that educational initiatives involve a high level of complexity since they cannot be identified by a single variable but are rather a confluence of factors such as the families socioeconomic status, family and community resources, and educational levels that determine students' outcomes. Therefore, "to achieve equitable and inclusive placements, collaboration and consultation of all stakeholders must be at the forefront" (Obiakor, 2011, p. 11). Stakeholders involved in inclusive education have begun to recognize that all members of the learning community have a different role in fostering access, equity, and inclusion. The learning community encompasses the student, the family, the school, the community, and the government.

Since the core of the learning community is the student, or the "self" it is vital to "empower students to be resilient and believe in themselves" (Obiakor, 2011, p. 11). This entails teaching students to develop self-knowledge, strengthen their self-esteem, and preserve their self-ideal even during adverse times. Family plays a crucial role in academic and social development of a student. In order to maximize the potential of their children parents need to be proactive and fulfill a supportive and involved role in the school community. Educators that proactively promote parental involvement and emotional engagement recognize an increase in student achievement (Obiakor, 2011, p. 13). In addition to providing a nurturing environment the school is responsible for providing well-prepared teachers and service providers that "engage all students in realistic expectations" and conscientiously "avoid the myth of socioeconomic dissonance" by reframing their perspectives to not perpetuate the achievement gap of students with disabilities and/or from a low socio-economic status. The age old adage "it takes a village to raise a child" is based on the fact that "the community traditionally houses a wealth of resources" that aid in students academic and social development, such as libraries, museums, educational programs and schools (Obiakor, 2011, p. 14). Availability and access to community resources provide learning opportunities that greatly improve equity and work to close the achievement gap. "Collaboration and cooperation" are key to "tackling the perennial education problems confronting students" (Obiakor, 2011, p. 14). Affects in the learning community also trickle down from systemic government initiatives and laws that have been instrumental in buttressing some levels of accountability in schools and communities" (Obiakor, 2011, p. 14). The government has an influential role in creating innovative educational programs since it is the source of funding. The United States Department of Education seeks to discover new ways of teaching, learning, and intervention and serves as a uniting force between professionals and agencies to promote professional development and strengthen professional learning communities (PLC) (Obiakor, 2011, p. 14). As previously stated inclusion is a "complex phenomenon" since it involves several factors and efficient and meaningful collaboration among all members of the learning community (Marks & Kurth, 2013, p. 275).

In an effort to analyze and dissect decades of educational research regarding inclusion Marks and Kurth decided to chunk the research into "three overlapping periods". Initial research into inclusive education which began in the 1970s "focused on access" since during this time "the country was moving from deinstitutionalization and students with more severe disabilities were first being provided a public education" (Marks & Kurth, 2013, p. 275). A major result from the descriptive research and policy analyzed throughout this period was the notion that "students with disabilities could and should be included in general education, from both a policy and civil rights perspective" (Marks & Kurth, 2013, p. 275). The second phase of research about inclusion emphasized "the outcomes of inclusion". This epoch notably documented inclusion as consistently positive outcomes and highlighted "critical implementation variables" (Marks & Kurth, 2013, p. 276). Currently, the focus is identifying "the features, at both the classroom level and systems level necessary to make inclusion effective and systemic" in order to generalize the research to support a "broader implementation" (Marks & Kurth, 2013, p. 275). The next step will be publicizing the shared knowledge of inclusion to other professional communities in the medical, social and political fields in a collaborative effort to make the necessary changes.

Sailor and McCart reviewed the literature regarding inclusion and noting that the overwhelming majority of research supports inclusive education claiming that it "improve[s] academic and social outcomes" for students, thus determining that it was the question which needed to be reframed in order to provide a relevant and applicable search (Sailor & McCart, 2014, p.57). In their review of the literature they even found proof attesting to the "direct benefit to general education students when exposed to practices supporting students with more extensive needs" (Sailor & McCart, 2014, p.58). Therefore rather than determine whether integrated education should occur" Sailor and McCart focused their energy on identifying "how it can occur more often and more effectively for all students", focusing largely on "those students with extensive needs for support and services" (Sailor & McCart, 2014, p.58).

Their quest was fruitful resulting in several research-based best practices used in providing effective instruction to all students in an inclusive setting. One of the initial findings was of their research was that inclusion models are primarily driven by special education professionals with very little contributions from their general education counterparts. This led to the realization that a different approach is necessary to provide meaningful inclusive education. Sailor and McCart advocate for "a school wide approach to inclusive education, driven by multi-tiered system of support (MTSS), guided by design teams of both general and special educators, utilizing universal design of learning (UDL) principles, and implemented in a manner resulting in demonstrable gains for all students" (Sailor & McCart, 2014, p.59). Utilizing these systematic changes based on best practices ensures that students with a variety and range of disabilities can be accommodated in a general education setting. "MTSS provides screening and progress monitoring at all three levels of intervention intensity for both behavior and academics offering purposeful, timed interventions for each student based on their individual needs" (Sailor & McCart, 2014, p.59). Employing a MTSS framework enables that ALL students' needs are met, benefiting struggling general education students as well as the intended target, the special education students, thus debunking the argument that students in inclusion lack the support and services they would receive in a more restrictive special education placement. The same benefit is noted in utilizing UDL in that "all resources are offered to all students based on their learning need rather than an eligibility label and a community of practice emerges where all school personnel are directly involved in the teaching-learning process" (Sailor & McCart, 2014, p.59). This solution acknowledges that in unity there is strength and operates based on the premise that what benefits may benefit others as well. UDL differentiates instruction in terms of content, process and product by providing "multiple means of teaching, multiple means of expression, and multiple means of student engagement" (Sailor & McCart, 2014, p.59). Universal design of learning is quite simply just effective teaching strategies that can be implemented for all.

Olson, Leko and Roberts conducted a case study to "explore how multiple educational personnel in a middle school identified as exemplars of inclusive education defined and provided students with severe disabilities access to the general education curriculum" (Olson, Leko & Roberts, 2016, p. 143). Their findings suggest that "shared responsibility, collaboration, peer supports, and multi-faceted learning structures" play a critical role in providing access to the general education curriculum through an inclusive setting (Olson, Leko & Roberts, 2016, p. 143). The twelve participants that were the basis for the study were administrators, general education teachers, special education teachers, or paraprofessionals. The participants involved in the study were asked to respond to an open ended question which asked them to define access to the general education for students with severe disabilities. Researchers asked follow up questions to clarify their definitions in terms of "who provided access, and how and where access was provided" (Olson, Leko & Roberts, 2016, p. 146).

One major finding was that providing access was not just the responsibility of learning strategists; rather it was shared across all educational personnel, including general education teachers" (Olson, Leko & Roberts, 2016, p. 149). The idea of opportunity reoccurred in several participants definitions in which "opportunities included the chance to learn and make progress in academics, socialize with peers, and build relationships" (Olson, Leko & Roberts, 2016, p. 149). Participants recognized that by engaging in inclusion not only promoted academic growth but simultaneously stimulated students social growth. Another theme that was recorded was the notion of being "fully included" in the school culture as "active member of the school community", who is "viewed positively by their peers without disabilities" (Olson, Leko & Roberts, 2016, p. 149).

As far as in terms of curriculum, participants' definitions consistently defined access as "providing an opportunity for students with significant disabilities to study, experiment, and learn the material that their same age peers are while in the general ed[education] setting" with a heightened focus on how access was provided. Several definitions highlighted utilizing "authentic learning, making gains, and progress toward goals" as examples of how the curriculum was modified to meet the individual learning needs the participants also attended to "students' learning levels, learning styles, needs and demands of the content" in order to address the diverse needs of the population of students (Olson, Leko & Roberts, 2016, p. 150). The participants reported using a multiplicity of teaching methods such as one-on-one support, cooperative peer groups, large whole group instruction, independent work, and team teaching based on the needs of the individual student, demands of the curriculum, peer participation, and individual styles of instruction. Collaboration was a critical component of ensuring equitable access to the general education curriculum and consistently appeared throughout participants' definitions. Several themes emerged that were imperative to the successful collaboration of the learning community, such as communication within and shared among the various teams, collaborated planning for instruction, and a collaborative problem solving approach to identify effective strategies for each individual student (Olson, Leko & Roberts, 2016, p. 151). Overall, "the most compelling finding was the notion of shared responsibility", a multidimensional educational practice "implemented by multiple individuals working together across several educational levels and roles (Olson, Leko & Roberts, 2016, p. 152).

Even though legislation and the research are in sync as far as advocating for the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education setting with access to the general education curriculum "the majority of students with significant learning disabilities continue to receive their educational services in separate, self-contained special education settings" (Ryndak et al., 2014, p. 68). The persistent issue perpetuating the exclusion of this population of students is the notion that the standards-based curriculum and functional curriculum approaches being viewed as mutually exclusive" (Ryndak et al., 2014, p. 68). Another source of apprehension among teachers is that "the skills needed for independence are incompatible with the content and difficulty of the general curriculum taught in the general education contexts" (Ryndak et al., 2014, p. 68). Another concern is the of teachers is "the appropriateness of general education context for instruction" (Ryndak et al., 2014, p. 68). The systems-wide educational reform put into place with the enactment of IDEA has been thwarted by the "perpetuation of a continuum of services that sanction segregated settings for students with significant disabilities" (Ryndak et al., 2014, p. 71). The fact remains that "by propagating the continuum of service delivery, LRE policies work in conflict with extant research related to the provision of effective instruction in the general curriculum within general education contexts, and with current federal policies that encourage systems wide educational reform" (Ryndak et al., 2014, p. 71). The only way to truly desegregate the education of students with severe disabilities and allow them to reap the benefits of inclusive education is to "eliminate LRE and replace it with the notion of nonrestrictive environments" (Ryndak et al., 2014, p. 71). The preponderance of evidence suggests that "inclusive general education settings lead to substantially greater levels of access to content" (Ryndak et al., 2014, p. 71). In retrospect the educational community has made great strides in its endeavor to promote the equality of special education students, however it is also quite evident that rectification needs to be made before that ideal is achieved.

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VAM Scores in Special Education

Khalilah Samuel

Abstract

This paper reviews the application of the Value Added Model efficacy evaluation model to educators in Special Education. This model has been incorporated across the nation in many districts to determine the effectiveness of educators in the classroom. In public school general education classes teachers are faced with the challenge of presenting state mandated curriculum without the additional federally mandated documentation and accommodations required for a special education student. These other factors are vital in the calculation of the VAM scores, and this research paper reviews these factors.

Value Added Model in Special Education

In education, key terms become hot button issues or topics of discussion from time to time. Currently, the word accountability or more specifically teacher accountability has become one of those words. The term teacher accountability has significantly impacted education on all levels in public education. With the passage of legislation such as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law, school, and teacher accountability for student learning many changes have occurred in the field of education that have affected the very classroom of the students of this nation. NCLB mandated states to assess their students to ensure the schools were meeting the required adequate yearly progress (AYP) based on the student's test scores. After the passage of this legislation changes began occurring in the curriculum and classroom in public schools across the nation. In pursuit of the required AYP, through the years teacher accountability became the focus of ensuring student learning gains or growth. The focus shifted to the effectiveness of the educator delivering the content to the students, who then would reflect the 'effect' of a qualified teacher through the mandated state assessments. The cyclical thought of measuring student growth and teacher effectiveness led many districts to adopt a method of teacher evaluations that factored in student growth through the scores of the state assessments.

The Value Added Model (VAM) an evaluation system used within the field of education to rate the effectiveness of educators in the classroom in that year by comparing student test scores in the previous year. Developed as a teacher evaluation tool in the 1990's the VAM for educators in the Tennessee area its popularity significant in leaps and bounds with the passage of the No Child Left Behind legislation in 2002. The basic idea of isolating the effect of the teacher in the classroom on the learning of the students has quickly become the new 'go to' model in Education around the nation. The VAM score model according to a statistician, William Sanders, is a useful tool to isolate the effect of the teacher in the classroom while separating influences outside of the classroom. The purpose of the Value Added Model being "to determine the efficacy of the use of the data from student test scores, to evaluate and to make critical personnel decisions about classroom teachers" ("Value-Added," n.d.) Many state department of educations has adopted the VAM system as the primary method of evaluating it educators in the public school system. In some states, the score received from the VAM system can account for up to 50% of the teacher's evaluation with the other half falling on the administrator of the school.

The score generated by the VAM model utilizes a predicted growth and actual score to determine the 'value added' by the teacher of the classroom. In essence, if there is no increase the teacher did not add 'value' to that child's learning value. In many states, no growth or regression in student learning can not only have an adverse economic effect on the teacher it can actually cost that teacher their job. Around the nation, many educators and their unions are continuously protesting and challenging the accuracy and use of the VAM scores in teacher evaluations and ultimate determination of their classroom effectiveness.

This model is used for the standard or average student's populations that do not face disabilities on a daily basis in and out of the classroom. Educators in the public school system face numerous challenges when teaching their students, in particular with the newly added pressure preparing their students for the state assessments and being successful at reaching them. Many special educators are faced with the additional challenges of students with Individualized Educational Plans (IEP), the laws and rule that govern the document, and yet they are expected to meet the same expectations of general education educators, regardless of those challenges. Challenges are especially present for those special education teachers that are located in self-contained classes with the students as their least definition of a self-contained classroom is an environment in which students with disabilities receive their academic instruction away from general education students. (Dalien, 2015) The class sizes are typically smaller and more intimate than most general education classes with the co-teacher model or teacher and paraeducator model. Typically the class is consistent with the same type of disability or learning need. When all is said and done, should the special education teacher be held to the same standard as that of an educator of students without disabilities?

The use of the value-added model for teacher evaluation has been adopted by many school districts around the nation as a tool to determine the effectiveness of educators in the classroom, however, can the VAM score generate for the instructor accurately ascertain the effectiveness of an educator? Every evaluation tool faces a certain amount of error discrepancy within the calculation model, especially one as mathematically complicated as the calculations used to determine the VAM scores. Over the past few years, there has been a push to review the weight of VAM scores to in teacher evaluations when making personnel decisions. Many have found the process demoralizing, which can act as a deterrent for educators to teach in the public school systems. The fact that testing has been mandated by NCLB for accountability for student learning is not necessarily the issue. It is the lack of consideration and understanding that factors are affecting the student test results that cannot be accounted for, including the mandated inclusion of special education students. The use of the VAM scores as a method to determine program strength, school progress, and validity of evaluation has provided analyses better than the assessment methods in the past, it is not the best tool to determine teacher effectiveness.

While the need for accountability in the classroom is vital, the utilization of student test scores as a major part to determine the efficiency of teachers can prove to be an unreliable method. Studies conducted by education professionals have identified specific areas of concern with the calculation of the VAM scores for teachers of general education and special education. In one report created by Economic Policy Institute, the issues of utilizing the student test scores are discussed and explained. Of the issues addressed the brief identifies factors that could affect student test scores many are out of the control of the teacher; these factors include school conditions, quality of curriculum materials, specialist and training supports, class size, and school scheduling (Baker et al., 2010, p. 3). These factors are out of the control of the student and the teacher in the classroom. Other influencing factors include family resources, student health (especially in special education classes), family mobility, and student home life. NCLB's intention to close the achievement gap of minority students through its accountability methods have not proven fruitful enough to turn and use the test scores gained through these measures to evaluate teachers. The law and its administration thereof tried but, failed to take into account the social issues that are prevalent in many of the urban school general education populations. These social issues are significant factors in the achievement of students. The usage of the one test score for the school year to determine student gains and teacher effectiveness, because "growth measures implicitly assume, without justification that students who begin at different achievement levels should be expected to gain at the same rate, and that all the gains are solely due to the teacher. (Baker et al., 2010, p. 9)", that happened to be attached to the students in that school year.

Additionally the attribution of gains on the test to the teacher assigned to the student presents another area where the use of the VAM score to evaluate teachers may fall short. In many school districts and many special education classes multiple parties influence the learning of students. Some school models utilize the co-teacher model, others block scheduling, and still others provide additional tutorial sessions at the school. It would be tough to pinpoint the exact measure student achievement to one teacher during a particular school year, regardless of the sophistication of the calculations used for the VAM score. In the same respect, the formulaic calculations of the score are usually based upon the random assignment of students to a teacher. Unfortunately, random student assignment to teachers is not the case in many schools as the students are often assigned to particular students based on the same test scores being used to calculate the VAM score. The lack of random assignment creates an anomaly when reviewing student gains based upon the current calculation of the VAM score.

One teacher may have been assigned lower achieving students and another extremely high achieving students, in both cases, the students may have learned the content presented, but it may not be reflected in subsequent test scores. In the scenario of the students on the lower end of the spectrum, gains may have been made, but the student did not reach proficiency, and the gains are too small to be measured by the test. The formula used for VAM the student gain will be reported as no growth on the NCLB-mandated tests; similarly, students on the higher end have tested at high proficiency near expert struggle to move higher. In both cases, it is very likely the VAM score will reflect the teacher 'added no value to the students attached to the roster during that school year. Educators in general education classrooms struggle to "add value" to their student's education under the usual constraints of teaching in a public school with added pressure due to the accountability measures under the NCLB law. Special educators are expected to perform the same for students' with identified disabilities, including those in self-contained settings.

Many issues arise when statistical information is used to evaluate and determine efficacy in situations where influencing factor are uncontrollable. The human factor in the testing and evaluating may have been left out by policy makers and administrators but must be factored in when making personnel decisions based on the numbers or scores. Other mitigating factors that affect the number or scores include curricula- intended and enacted, limited collaborating amongst educators, and the narrowing of the curriculum. Accountability in education is a vital facet of the learning environment for both students and teachers, however when the focus shifts to making the grade for the mandated test scores, then the system needs to review the purpose for which it was set in place.

The NCLB law created with the intent to ensure students in lower socioeconomic areas received the same quality of education as those students that reside in more affluent neighborhoods. The law with the accountability measures built in has been used to determine the effectiveness of schools across the nation by the method of student achievement scores. In one study by Selig et al., it is noted the current policy under the NCLB law states that "all states receiving waivers are required to implement teacher evaluation methods that use student achievement growth as a "significant factor" in that evaluation, and special education personnel must be included (Steinbrecher, Selig, Cosbey, & Thorstensen, p. 323)." The study designed to examine several relevant issues about the practice of utilizing a score derived from student achievement scores in the Value Added Model, a quantitative measure to determine a qualitative measure of teacher effectiveness. Many of the issues relevant to the efficacy of special educators are also relevant to general education teachers, but more so the special educator in the role in which they operate. The issues examined in the article include the current state-level assessment practices for students receiving special education services, the mismatch of the assessments used and the abilities and or limitations of the students that take them, and diverse roles of special educators which complicate the interpretation of value-added effects.

Students that receive special education services must be assessed by an assessment developed, as an alternative to the standard assessment, and it must also be aligned with the standards and meet the certain requirements in accordance to NCLB. Additionally, the alternate assessments must have the rigor that is in alignment with the state's standards and that, which is appropriate for the significantly cognitive delayed or disabled. The student achievement scores that are derived from these assessments are included in the VAM scores for teacher effectiveness. The aggregate scores for the testing of the students in the program further complicate the use of achievement scores rather rate teacher effectiveness. Usually, the sampling of the alternative assessments is too small to determine student gains on the assessments effectively. Another factor that hinders the use of the students' scores is the requirement under NCLB and/or Title I that requires "no more than 3% of all students in any given district to be assessed with alternate or modified assessments (Steinbrecher et al., 2014, p. 326)." This particular determination accounted for "eighty percent of students with disabilities participated in standard assessments based on grade-level achievement standards, with or without accommodations" (Steinbrecher et al., 2014, p. 327), in the year 2009-10 school year. The number of students with disabilities participating in the regular assessments can be alarming, especially because usually students that have been identified as having a disability perform below grade level on a regular basis. Factoring in student achievement scores based on the assessments above in the VAM score model could prove to be detrimental to the special educator's career.

Furthermore, the revelation of the number of students that partake in the states regular assessments with or without accommodations is noted as one of the major issues with the use of student scores in teacher evaluations.

A deeper look at the administration of standard assessments to special education students reveals yet another ripple in the complexity of the use of the VAM model. In addition to partaking of the test as mandated by the NCLB law, it is stipulated that the test administered created for the state's school districts must be aligned to the standards of the state. Unfortunately, the students in special education are often faced with an assessment that is administered at the current grade level of the student and the student's instructional level. Although many students in special education classes do not suffer a cognitive delay or disorder, due to the effects of their diagnoses many students below at least one to two grade levels below their actual grade level. This disparity can create 'floor effects' on the assessment the students are required to take. The floor effects phenomenon occurs when the test items are uniformly too difficult for a student. This fact provides little variation in the performance from one item to the next resulting in little to no useful information in the determination of strengths and weakness for the student (Steinbrecher et al., 2014, p. 329), or in essence extremely low achievement scores. The resulting performance scores if factored into the VAM score for the special education teacher can create the possibility of a highly effective teacher receiving a very low VAM score. Special educators in the classroom are required to teach the assigned content while complying with the needs of each student according to their IEP, which includes complying with the rules and regulations that guide the administration of that legal document.

In this role of special educator, the teacher is assigned the students with disabilities; or in the role of resource teacher provides pull out/push in services for identified students, or finally as a co-teacher provide additional support to their more that likely general education teaching partner in the classroom. If the special education teacher is assigned a class that teacher can face a negative impact of having a class of students with disabilities, because of the disparities above with the use of student achievement scores for teacher effectiveness. In two of the three scenarios the special educator is not the teacher of record for the students, by this, the student achievement scores may or may not be attributed to them for the VAM score. It is also noted, that in some special education programs students receive the services of multiple specialists and teachers as stipulated in the students' IEP. These additional supports contribute to the success or student gains of the student, should these gains appear on the assessment how will the gains be attributed and to which teacher. In the role of special educators face the challenge of educating students many other teachers refuse, especially due to the VAM model of evaluating teachers. The process of rating a teacher by the achievement scores of their student poses challenges for general education teachers, and even more so for the special education teacher. The state and district education offices and administrators though aware of the many disparities still rely heavily on the test scores to determine the effectiveness of the teacher on their students.

A large number of students with disabilities take them some form of their state's standardized assessment. According to recent studies "nationally, 79 percent take their state's regular assessment with or without accommodations." (McCaffrey & Buzick, 2014, p. 3) Students with disabilities account for approximately 14 percent of the student population in the United States. These students are diagnosed with a wide variety of disabilities of the thirteen acknowledged under the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), all of which are unique in their manifestations each student. Many of the students in this population are serviced in general education classrooms or inclusion settings in which the students may or may not require special services or the support of additional staff in their studies. Additionally, there are students that take the state assessment that are service in special education centers but are part of the sub-group required for accountability by the NCLB, these students are included in the 79 percent national average. With the high percentage of the students partaking in the state assessments, many students receive accommodations upwards of 60 percent. VAM scores for teachers are not formulated to include student disability or to track the use of accommodations for students with disabilities; this information is vital to the accurate accounting for student scores. Accommodations on the student's IEP for assessment may or may not be made accessible for the students, and that can account for the variation of gains over the years for students with disabilities. There is also a lack of uniformity in the accommodations allowed for students across the nation; each state education department determines what it acceptable for the state assessment.

With this unbalanced factor in the administration of accommodations for student testing, in conjunction with many other factors that affect student test score for students with disabilities; clearly, demonstrates the problematic use of the VAM scores for teacher evaluation. The lack of inclusion of this information is challenging for special education teachers because it does not record the fluctuations of the student's achievements over the life span of their studies. In addition to the issues with the VAM, the introduction of the Common Core curriculum and assessment to many states across the nation does not bode well for special educators. Based on the new curriculum model the student with disabilities, that are considered

behind would either fall further behind or get left out in the progression of education. The common core model is proposed to add rigor and close gaps by leveling the education field, but students with disabilities were already at a disadvantage would fair worse with the new focus on education. The teachers of students with disabilities face an uphill battle to be heard in regards to the effect of the VAM scores on their employment. If the states', districts and departments of education do not reconsider the inclusion of special education teachers in the application of the VAM score rating evaluation to consider factors beyond the teachers control the method will negatively impact many effective teachers. The method of including without adaptation special education teachers will in the long term negatively affect the students being serviced by those teachers.

Other areas of concern for students with disabilities and their teachers are the alignment of the assessment with the standards of that state. As per the NCLB students with disabilities are to be assessed based upon the stated state standards and in which they must have access to the general curriculum for instructional purposes (Kurz, Elliott, Wehby, & Smithson, 2010, p. 131). It then begs the question how is it determined the students with disabilities are receiving the same quality of education as the students without. The accountability portion written into the NCLB law intended to answer the question but may have created more questions than answers. In many classrooms across the nation there are three types of curricula designed, enacted, and assessed each type plays a vital role in the education of students (Kurz et al., 2010, p. 135). The rationale of the changes that occurred to the accountability of teachers in education under the law could most probably to be based on the knowledge that "a well-aligned system is necessary to allow its stakeholders to translate the goals of the federal policy into meaningful changes for instructional decision making and practice" (Kurz et al., 2010, p. 131). In essence based on the knowledge of a standard aligned curriculum, the assessment thereof should show where teachers and students taught and learned with fidelity. The rationalization of the concept is valid on, in theory, in the classroom, the teacher has presented a curriculum that is set forth as the intended content structure for the class by the state. The teacher then creates lesson plans according to that structure to impart the content to the students throughout the school year this is the proposed and enacted curriculum. At a designated time of the year, it is mandated that the students be assessed on the curriculum or instruction received thus far in the school year, as part of the assessed curriculum. These factors working together would produce the gains sought after by the administrative bodies of the district, state, and federal governing bodies across the nation. The hiccup with the model is that the stakeholders, the students, and teachers in the design are human and have various challenges that may alter the cycle of education in a perfect scenario. One example of a challenge to the ideal situation would be that of the students with disabilities in special education programs. Additionally another challenge to the position are the other laws and mandates that are not being taken into consideration in the current assessment model for education; these laws govern the educational programs for these students, such as the IDEA. The model assumes all students learn the same, grow the same, and retain the same which leaves the differences in the levels of general education students unaccounted for much less those with disabilities.

Accountability is a factor in education today and is necessary; however, the method of basing student gains on assessment singularly is one that may need to be revisited. The same is applied to teachers. Many times in Education differing factions are screaming for conflicting demands for teachers, students, and administrators that cause confusion and indifference. Measuring teacher effectiveness by the use of VAM scores opens the Pandora box on the measurement and analysis of the many factors in education, many of which are the human element and cannot be accurately measured. The human element in a classroom is vital because one strategy that may apply to one group may not work for another, the effective teacher will take note and change. These factors are a significant portion of the errors found with the Value Added Model in currently in effect in education. While it is essential to measure the quality of the education received by the nation's children test scores are not the best and the only measure to do so, for students or teachers. The educational directors need to reconsider the human factor that makes education so rewarding and unique to determine the best method for the evaluation teachers, students, administrators, and programs.

Educators, especially those in public schools are given all students from differing socio-economic backgrounds, cultures, family structures, and religious beliefs with the expectation under NCLB to teach them, so they grow and learn at a proficient rate. This expectation does not consider the human factor of teaching students and touching lives. It is understandable the need to hold school, principals, and teacher accountable to the education of the nation's students, but not in the current manner. Many teachers are in the profession for the students; to make a difference and impact life, breathe hope and a love for learning into the next generation.

How can any governing body expect teachers to battle the life's struggles many students face daily, pushing only content and standards. A school is a place of hope because it has been proven that education can make a difference. How can a school continue to be a place of hope if the students become test scores and not individuals learning the content? This is the question that plagues many educators include the author daily. It is the hope of the author that the pendulum will swing back in the 'right' direction where it can incorporate both accountability and individuality in education. At that place, education will become what it once was innovative, creative, fun, and engaging to the teacher and the student and not the shell of over assessment and test scores that it is now.

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About the Author

Khalilah Samuel is a graduate of Miami Dade College, of the School of Education Exceptional Student Education program with a Bachelors of Science degree. She recently completed her Masters of Science in Reading Education from St. Thomas University and is currently pursuing her second Master's degree in Special Education with a concentration on academic and behavioral interventions at Florida International University in Miami, FL. Khalilah is a second-year teacher and currently works as an elementary teacher in the Miami-Dade County Public School System at a Special Education Center school for children diagnosed with Emotional Behavioral Disorder (EBD).

SPECIAL EDUCATION LEGAL ALERT

Perry A. Zirkel

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This monthly legal alert provides, in the usual format of a two-column table, highlights (on the left) and practical implications (on the right) of major new legal developments.

1. Court decisions specific to response to intervention (RTI) continue to be limited in number, legal weight, and implementation guidance. A recent decision from Connecticut is a partial exception.

Overall, most of the infrequent case law to date has been at the hearing officer level, with several reflecting confusion rather than providing clarification. For example, some of them focus on disputes regarding child find or eligibility for other classifications, whereas the scope of the IDEA's provision for RTI is limited to identification of specific learning disability (SLD). Moreover, these decisions often do not address the prevailing practical questions, such as what are the defensible decision points from moving from tier to tier and from tiers to an IDEA evaluation.	Although having negligible, if any, weight as legal precedents, hearing officer decisions are practically significant for school districts because (a) they reflect the state-specific system and culture for administrative adjudication under the IDEA, and (b) if their decisions are appealed, the courts tend more often to affirm rather than reverse them. However, parents have been more successful in RTI-related challenges via the state education agency's complaint procedures mechanism under the IDEA and OCR's corresponding complaint resolution process under § 504.
The partial exception <i>Greenwich Board of Education v. G.M.</i> (2016), in which the federal district court in Connecticut ruled that (a) the district had reason to suspect SLD in reading based on the first grader's lack of "sufficient progress" after approximately seven months of RTI, and (b) this same lack of sufficient progress in RTI reading activities preponderantly proved that the student qualified under the two prongs for eligibility—classification (SLD) and need for special education. In this case, the district's IEP team met at the end of the year and denied the parents' request for a special education evaluation, concluding instead that the child "has responded to the current level of [interventions]." Because the parent unilaterally placed the child, with timely notice to the district, in a private school clearly designed to address the special needs of students specifically in the child's circumstance, the remedy that the court granted was tuition reimbursement.	The significance of this decision for RTI is that it illustrates the problems of denying an evaluation and defending a determination of SLD ineligibility after a child has participated in RTI and has made progress that may not appear to an impartial adjudicator to be "sufficient." The particular facts (here including but not limited to an IEE that yielded a SLD-related diagnosis and specific testing results and denial of an IDEA evaluation) and the particular adjudicators (here consisting of the hearing officer in addition to the affirming federal judge) warn against over-generalization. Moreover, the decision is not officially published and limited to one jurisdiction. Finally, it does not address common implementation issues, such as the appropriate length, benchmarks, and interventions for the tiers. However, it does illustrate the trade-offs for delaying or denying an evaluation prior to completion of RTI and the blurry line between tier 2 or 3 and child find or eligibility.
A growing minority of states, now numbering close to 20, have enacted laws or adopted regulations requiring RTI for SLD identification. The most recent additions include Connecticut, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Tennessee. In some states, the mandate has an alternative or addition of "pattern of strengths and weaknesses" (PSW).	The specific language of the state law, as partly illustrated in the abovementioned Connecticut case, comes to the fore, thus warranting careful attention at the local level. Moreover, a common source of confusion is the specific meaning of PSW, which OSEP has interpreted to refer to the permissible methods other than RTI, i.e., severe discrepancy or the third, research-based alternative.

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2. My recent legal update specific to gifted students, published in the current issue of the *Journal for Education of the Gifted* (v. 39, pp. 315–337), partly overlaps with the law specific to students with disabilities.

The majority of the case law continues to concern twice-exceptional students, i.e., those who are not only gifted but also are covered by the IDEA or Section 504. They focus on eligibility and FAPE, with the outcomes reflecting the same pro-district pattern that generally applies under these federal disability laws.	Thus far, hearing officer and court decisions have not been sensitive to the nuanced masking effects of giftedness in eligibility cases and its complicating effects in FAPE cases. The reasons may include the lack of specialization among the attorneys and the adjudicators, the corresponding insufficient expertise of witnesses, and the societal value system in terms of gifted education.
For the gifted-alone students, the case law is much less frequent and even more district-favorable, likely due to the lack of strong state laws.	Even in the limited cluster of states with IDEA-type laws for gifted students, led by Pennsylvania, the un-customized importation of the same floor-based substantive standard for FAPE and the lack of attorneys' fees for prevailing parents contribute to low frequency and district-favorable outcomes.
The state laws specific to gifted students have had only a moderate net change in strength, with the majority having a group-oriented rather than the individual protections of the IDEA-type model.	A few states, including Colorado and Ohio, have notably strengthened their state laws for gifted students, but others, including California and Mississippi, moved in the opposite direction.

Latest Employment Opportunities Posted on NASET

Special Services Manager

Renton, WA

Job Category: Pre-Employment Transition Services

Description:

Puget Sound ESD is seeking a Special Services Manager to support the provision of pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities across the region. This is an exciting opportunity to support school district staff as they increase the post-secondary successes of students with disabilities through job exploration, work-based learning, post-secondary education exploration, workplace readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy.

Requirements:

- BA/BS degree in Education, Special Education, or related field
- Professional experience working with high school special education students and post-secondary transition planning
- Experience with special education law and requirements

Salary:

\$69,333 - \$80,405/year. Salary offers consider candidate qualifications, experience, and internal equity. Excellent benefit package, including participation in Washington State Department of Retirement Systems, and the opportunity to work with a family-friendly, skilled and dedicated workforce committed to the communities we serve.

Contact:

Job Openings: www.psesd.org/careers

Apply Here: <https://www.psesd.org/job-openings/manager-special-services-2/>

Children's Quality Reviewer

Madison, WI

Job Category: Conducting external quality review activities

Key responsibilities:

- Conduct external quality review activities for Children's Long Term Support Waiver, FC/PACE/FCP, Badger Care Plus, SSI, IRIS and programs as directed by DHS.
- Access multiple electronic health record systems and read member/participant records to evaluate compliance with certain federal and state requirements as well as industry standards. Priorities are placed on confirming that member/participant health and safety is assured. Effectively communicate results orally and in writing.
- Compliance with Federal and State standards for Medicaid managed care programs*
- Understand and apply federal and state requirements. Read and analyze documentation submitted by an MCO. Facilitate discussions with a wide variety of staff to determine and evaluate the effectiveness of implementation of expectations throughout an MCO. Determine level of compliance and effectively communicate results orally and in writing.
- Validation of Performance Improvement Projects (PIPs)*
- Read and analyze written reports regarding improvement of clinical and non-clinical processes or outcomes of care, associated documentation, and data from MCOs. Facilitate discussions to confirm understanding. Determine if the project was designed, conducted, and reported in a methodologically sound manner. Effectively communicate results orally and in writing.
- Read written proposals from MCOs designed to achieve improvements of clinical or non-clinical processes or outcomes of care. Provide technical assistance orally and in writing and make recommendations about approval status.
- Validation of Performance Measures*
- Conduct reviews according to review protocols to abstract and verify performance measurement data from a variety of sources, but not limited to medical records, encounter data, MCO and DHS systems data.
- Collaborate with MCO and agency representatives to obtain missing and clarify existing data.
- Summarize and compile findings using standardized forms and templates for reports.
- Review and mediation activities associated with FC, FCP, PACE, IRIS and Children's Long Term Care waiver program member appeals and grievances.
- Triage and talk with members, participants, and/or legal representatives to identify and understand concerns. Access multiple electronic health record systems and read member/participant records. Communicate with all parties via telephone and work to mediate a resolution. Document all activities in a database and communicate outcomes in writing.
- Develops and implements review activities independently and in collaboration with others in MHLTC and including DHS staff. Review activities must align with CMS protocols, as needed.

- Creates review activity and aggregate reports according to timelines and formats developed in collaboration with DHS.
- Participate in inter-rater reliability testing in order to achieve standards of accuracy and consistency in applying review guidelines for specific review activities.
- Review the work of others and work collaboratively with team members through ongoing feedback to ensure that work meets internal and external quality standards.
- Collaborates with MHLTC team members to improve existing systems/processes/standard operating procedures (SOPs) and to develop new ones.
- Some day and overnight travel is required; travel dates are scheduled in advance. All other duties as assigned.

Requirements:

- Bachelor's Degree in Special Education, Nursing or health or human services-related field will be considered.
- Five years' experience (3 considered) direct practice in working with specific target populations, including, but not limited to; developmentally and/or physically disabled, disabled children; children with severe emotional, behavioral, mental health and substance use disorders. Experience coordinating acute and primary and/or long-term care services, consumer education related to disease management, education and coordination of services for children and families of children with developmental and/or physical disabilities and severe emotional disturbances.
- Long term experience, including knowledge of managed care delivery systems, organizations and financing.
- Knowledge of continuous quality improvement, process improvement and Lean principles.
- Knowledge and proficiency in using electronic medical and health records systems.
- Ability to work well independently and within a team structure.
- Self-motivated, critical thinker.
- Excellent communication (oral and written) and small and large group facilitation skills.
- Valid Wisconsin Driver's License

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Contact:

For a complete job description see www.metastar.com

Interested parties should either send resume & cover to jobs@metastar.com; or, mail to: MetaStar, c/o HR, 2909 Landmark Place, Madison, WI 53713

Certified Special Education Teacher

Rochester, NY

Job Category: Permanent - Full Time

DESCRIPTION

Since 1949, our client has been serving children with multiple and complex disabilities that public and private schools aren't able to accommodate. By providing a safe and nurturing environment and expert staff, children are learning and growing everyday.

We are currently sourcing for professional, compassionate and motivated Certified Teachers to join this growing education team.

Ideal candidates will have certification from the State Education Department to teach children with special needs.

Direct Hire- \$38,474 (10 months) - \$44,598 (12 months)
242 working days per year, enjoy holidays and school breaks off.
Hours: Monday-Friday 8:45a-4:00p

QUALIFICATIONS

Bachelor's degree (B. A. or B. S.) from a four-year college or university required. Six (6) months to one (1) year related experience and/or training; or equivalent combination of education and experience.
Must be certified by the State Education Department to teach children with special needs.
Must be able to pass a Drug Test and Criminal Background check

BENEFITS

Standard Medical/Dental and vacation

CONTACT

Brian Harding 585-698-1016
info@tesstaffing.com

Project Program Specialist

Jonesboro, AR

Job Category: Staff

Description:

The Project Program Specialist will focus primarily on two projects: (1) the Center for Community Engagement's (CCE) implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in schools across Arkansas in collaboration with the AR Dept. of Education's State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) that provides behavioral Response to Intervention training and technical assistance at the state, regional, district, and school levels; and (2) Project LAUNCH, a program designed to help prevention efforts in mental health among children 0 to 8 and their families. Smaller roles will be played in other CCE and Office of Behavioral Research & Evaluation (OBRE) projects as needed.

The duties of this position involve the performance of work involving the management or general business operations of projects for CCE and OBRE. The individual in this position will be asked to exercise discretion and independent judgement in project implementation. Duties and responsibilities for this position include the following:

- Providing professional development in PBIS for schools, districts, and Educational Cooperatives
- Working with SPDG staff and partners to help support the implementation and resource development of RTI and PBIS
- Providing professional development and technical assistance to educators in multiple settings (small group, large group, one-on-one, and web-based) on RTI and behavior-related assessments, interventions, and instruction
- Coaching educators to deepen knowledge and develop capacity to implement PBIS
- Supporting a tiered system of behavior services and supports at the district level
- Supporting additional ongoing and future projects for CCE and OBRE, including training and evaluation activities for Project LAUNCH (a program to provide prevention services for children's mental health)
- This position is grant and contract funded, and is contingent upon continued funding.
- This person will work closely with all OBRE and CCE staff, as well as with partners from other organizations, and thus needs strong professional and personal skills.
- This person must be able to travel in-state on a regular basis (including overnight), and periodically travel to other states, usually by air (including overnight stays).
- This position is subject to a 3-month probationary period.

In your Cover Letter, please tell us how you meet each of the minimum requirements for this position.

The required applicant documents are as follows: (1) Vita/Resume, (2) Cover Letter, (3) List of 3 References with Contact Information, and (4) At least 2 Letters of Recommendation.

Applications received ON or BEFORE February 10, 2017, will receive full consideration.

Requirements:

Bachelor's degree or above in education, or a related field, with experience in elementary, secondary, or special education.

Arkansas State University does not discriminate on the basis of color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, age, national origin, religion, marital status, veteran status, genetic information or disability in any of its practices, policies or procedures. This includes, but is not limited to, employment, admissions, educational services, programs or activities which it operates or financial aid.

Contact:

To apply visit: <http://www.astate.edu/jobs/>

Special Education Teacher

Chicago/Rogers Park, IL

Job Category: Teacher

Description

Jewish Child & Family Services provides vital, individualized, results-driven, therapeutic and supportive services for thousands of children, adults and families of all backgrounds each year, facing challenges with life transitions, mental health, developmental/intellectual disability and basic human need.

JCFS is looking for a Special Education Teacher for our Therapeutic Day School located in West Rogers Park. The Teacher creates and delivers student centered, individualized and small group academic instruction within a therapeutic, highly structured classroom.

Job Responsibilities

- Implements therapeutic educational programs for specific groups of students in accordance with goals specified in each student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
- Collaborates with team members to create a multidisciplinary drive IEP for each student; attends all student IEP meetings.
- Provides classroom management that recognizes and includes consideration of the characteristics of the student population.
- Prepares and maintains a safe, organized, healthy, academically and behaviorally effective classroom environment appropriate to ongoing and changing classroom activities and in accordance with all accrediting, regulatory, and governing organizations.
- Completes all necessary paperwork in a timely manner including weekly lesson plans, weekly and quarterly student progress report cards and assessments, and annual student IEP's.
- Successfully completes training in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI); successfully complete all requirements to maintain certification in TCI.
- Willing and able to perform a variety of tasks to ensure the safety of students.
- Effectively intervenes in student's disruptive behavior, both verbal and physical; including using TCI prescribed

Requirements

- Bachelor's Degree in Special Education from an accredited college or university.
- Must be certified by ISBE as a Special Education Teacher; LBS1/Type 10 certification
- Must be proficient in Microsoft Office programs.
- Experience with the Chicago Public School electronic IEP systems is strongly desired.
- Ability to successfully complete Therapeutic Crisis Intervention training (Agency provided).

- Experience working with students with special educational needs is preferred.

Jewish Child and Family Services (JCFS) is committed to serving the needs of the diverse Chicago metropolitan area.

Accredited by COA. Charter member of CWLA. Licensed by DCFS.

Contact

Please apply on our web-site at:

<https://recruiting2.ultipro.com/JEW1002/JobBoard/do2ef047-eef4-417a-8aea-ocba56e6f472/OpportunityDetail?opportunityId=506e31a8-7e31-42b9-a7ea-92e74691890b>

Project Program Manager

Jonesboro, Arkansas 72404

Job Category: Executive/Management

Arkansas State University

Arkansas State University does not discriminate on the basis of color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, age, national origin, religion, marital status, veteran status, genetic information or disability in any of its practices, policies or procedures. This includes, but is not limited to, employment, admissions, educational services, programs or activities which it operates or financial aid.

PROJECT PROGRAM MANAGER

Type of Employment: Staff

Department: Dean of Education-Behavioral Science

Division: Academic Affairs and Research

Location: ASU-Jonesboro

Proposed Salary Range: Commensurate with Experience

Closing: 2/11/17

Position Summary:

This position will focus primarily on two projects: (1) the Center for Community Engagement's (CCE) implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in schools across Arkansas in collaboration with the AR Dept. of Education's State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) that provides behavioral Response to Intervention training and technical assistance at the state, regional, district, and school levels; and (2) Project LAUNCH, a program designed to help prevention efforts in mental health among children 0 to 8 and their families. Smaller roles will be played in other CCE and Office of Behavioral Research & Evaluation (OBRE) projects as needed.

Description

The duties of this position involve the performance of work involving the management or general business operations of projects for CCE and OBRE . The individual in this position will be asked to exercise discretion and independent judgement in project implementation. Duties and responsibilities for this position include the following:

1. Participating in State and Regional RTI Implementation Teams; developing and providing professional development in schools, districts, and Educational Cooperatives; providing resource development for RTI and PBIS;
2. Developing and providing professional development, technical assistance, and coaching to educators in multiple settings (small group, large group, one-on-one, and web-based) on assessments, interventions, and instruction;
3. Helping implement a tiered system of behavior services and supports at the school and district level;
4. Supporting additional ongoing and future projects for CCE and OBRE, including training and evaluation activities for Project LAUNCH (a program to provide prevention services for children's mental health) and providing supervision to other CCE and OBRE staff members.

General Days/Hours: Generally Monday-Friday. This is expected to be mostly an 8 a.m.-5 p.m., 40 hours per week position. However, this is a professional position and may require additional hours and off-time effort including some nights and weekends. This position may also include some travel.

Other:

1. This position is grant and contract funded, and is contingent upon continued funding.
2. This person will work closely with all OBRE and CCE staff, as well as with partners from other organizations, and thus needs strong professional and personal skills.
3. This person must be able to travel in-state on a regular basis (including overnight), and periodically travel to other states, usually by air (including overnight stays).
4. This position is subject to a 3-month probationary period.
5. In your Cover Letter, please tell us how you meet each of the minimum requirements for this position.
6. The required applicant documents are as follows: (a) Vita/Resume, (b) Cover Letter, (c) List of 3 References with Contact Information, and (d) At least 2 Letters of Recommendation. Letters can be sent to cpinkard@astate.edu.

APPLICATIONS RECEIVED BY 2/10/17 WILL RECEIVE FULL CONSIDERATION.

Knowledge/Skills/Ability:

This is a leadership position that requires academic or experiential advanced, specialized knowledge in behavioral programs in schools. That knowledge is described in the Minimum Qualifications section.

Minimum Qualifications:

Master's degree, Ed.S., or Doctorate degree in education, special education, a counseling field, or school psychology or a related field, or extensive experience with and knowledge of behavior programs in elementary, secondary, or special education, experience working with schools. Knowledge of or experience in implementing comprehensive school-wide behavior program/system. The professional and personal skills needed to provide professional development, in-service training, and technical assistance services to regional and district level teams in urban and rural settings.

Apply Here: <http://www.Click2Apply.net/znbf34j6v>

Arizona: Special Education Teacher

Phoenix metropolitan area, Arizona

Job Category: Special Education Teacher

Description:

\$46,000/school year (180 days). Summers off with year round pay. Special Education Teachers needed in Arizona (Phoenix and surrounding cities). Needs are in the self-contained and resource settings serving students with emotional disabilities (ED), Autism (A), Severe/Profound (S/P), and Intellectual Disabilities (ID). STARS is the largest school contract agency in AZ. STARS is owned and operated by Occupational Therapists. You will be an employee and receive full benefits (see below). With a proven track record, STARS is able to offer you an unbeatable support system and resources. STARS is hiring for the 2017-2018 school year. STARS places Special Education Teachers throughout the Phoenix, Tucson and the surrounding area public schools.

Requirements:

Certification through the AZDOE, in Special Education. Arizona Fingerprint Card through AZDPS. We will help you get the credentials needed and reimburse you for the cost.

Salary:

\$46,000/school year, based on 180 days. STARS also offers a fantastic benefit package including: 16 weeks off, 100% Company paid Health, Dental, Vision, and Life Insurance, \$1,000/year Continuing Ed Money, Paid DOE Certification Fees, Paid NASET Dues, Spanish Immersion trip, Hawaii Trip for two, 401K, 125 Plan, Direct Deposit, Evaluation tools and treatment supplies, Two company sponsored parties with professional entertainment, Company newsletter, STARS sponsored dinner meetings with national/local speakers, Yearly raises, Referral bonuses, Moving \$, Birthday gifts and other appreciation throughout the year, Genuine Appreciation. YOU WILL FEEL LIKE A STAR!!!

Contact:

Brian Paulsen, COO #480.221.2573; Please email your resume to Jobs@StudentTherapy.com; Apply Online at StudentTherapy.com, we would love to hear from you!

ESS / SPED: Coord. / Cross-Cat. Resource Teacher

Phoenix, AZ & Irving, TX

Job Category: SPED Admin and Teaching

Description:

ESS COORDINATOR / SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

Great Hearts Academies is committed to serving the students within our special education population in a manner that reflects and affirms their dignity and rightful participation within the larger student body. Through the use of consultation, resource, inclusion, and co-teaching models in a variety of academic environments, the Special Education team aims to provide support for students while working to ensure as much time as appropriate is spent within the regular classroom.

Primary Duties and Responsibilities Include:

- Providing direct and consultative services to students with IEPs in the school environment
- Collaborating with related service providers, assisting general education staff in the implementation of accommodations and modifications
- Writing and maintaining all IEPs, Prior Written Notices, and MET paperwork while ensuring compliance with state and federal guidelines
- Planning and facilitating meetings throughout the IEP Team/ARD committee process, as well as ongoing communication and collaboration with parents, staff, and administrative staff regarding student planning and progress.
- Managing the transition of new enrollees eligible for special education and related services for the 2016 - 2017 school year.

Requirements:

Candidates must hold at least a Bachelor's degree besides a valid state certification in Special Education for K-12 or a valid Cross-Categorical K-12, Mild-Moderate Disabilities. Candidates with ESL certification are preferred

Benefits:

- Manageable caseload
- Resource model with flexibility for small instructional groups
- Strong general and special education administrative support
- Professional development, career advancement, and leadership opportunities
- Competitive salaries, with very competitive benefits package
- Signing and performance bonuses

Contact:

Candidates must apply using our online application, which allows applicants to submit materials (resume, reference letters, etc.) for review by Great Hearts Administrators.

• For positions in

Arizona: <http://chp.tbe.taleo.net/chp04/ats/careers/requisition.jsp?org=GREATHEARTS&cws=39&rid=551>

• **For positions in**

Texas: <http://chp.tbe.taleo.net/chp04/ats/careers/requisition.jsp?org=GREATHEARTS&cws=39&rid=552>

Special Education Teacher

Kotzebue, Alaska

Job Category: Special Ed. EBD, CI, VI, ECE, El, Sec.

Description:

Provide special education services in small community/ies in northwest Alaska. Work with team, complete required paperwork, follow IEPs, assist with assessments.

Requirements:

- Masters in Special Education preferred.
- EBD/Autism or VI endorsement preferred.
- Child and Special Education focused
- Supportive of District and Team Staff
- Lifting 50+ pounds
- Walking in Extreme Weather.

Benefits:

- Salary DOE
- Housing Allowance
- Travel Assistance to Site
- PD Specific to IEPs District/State Requirements
- Mentors
- IEP assistance and support

Contact:

Terry Martin,
Director, Human Resources

Cheryl Schweigert,
Director, Special Programs

Email: cschweigert@nwarctic.org

Telephone: 907-442-1815

Head of School for Dallas Academy

Dallas, Texas

Job Category: Administration

Description:

Dallas Academy is seeking an enthusiastic and committed Head of School who is knowledgeable in the full spectrum of special education and who possesses a heart for working with families and their children who have these learning differences. The School has a current enrollment of 194 students from 69 zip codes in the DFW Metroplex. With 50 years of service, Dallas Academy reached a milestone in 2015-2016 by gaining the distinction of being the oldest school in the State of Texas to serve students with learning differences. The next Head of School for Dallas Academy will be asked to embrace the School's mission and direct a vision that takes the School to new heights. Interested candidates should provide a résumé, cover letter highlighting your interest and fit for the position, a statement of educational philosophy, and a list of five (5) references with all contact information, as attachments to karen@educationgroup.com

Requirements:

- A Master's degree with a degree or certification in special education
- Knowledge in the full spectrum of special education and experience in working with families whose children have these learning differences
- Demonstrated success as an inspirational and confident leader who possesses excellent interpersonal skills
- Sound business acumen with a track record of successful and innovative fundraising
- A proven track record of attracting and retaining talented faculty and staff
- Current knowledge in the latest research findings and innovations on advancing students with learning differences
- Educational administrative experience

THE NEXT HEAD OF SCHOOL WILL FIND:

- A dedicated and supportive Board
- Bright children who are eager to learn
- A trained and caring faculty and staff
- Involved and supportive parents
- Specialized programs and a wide array of extracurricular activities
- Competitive salary
- Health insurance
- Retirement benefits

Contact:

Karen A. Drawz, Consultant
karen@educationgroup.com
www.educationgroup.com
 214-535-7093

Special Education Teacher

Littlestown, Pennsylvania

Job Category: Full Time

Description:

The Hoffman Academy is a special education, private, academic school for students identified with social and emotional disorders. The school is aligned with, and located on the grounds of, Hoffman Homes for Youth- a psychiatric residential treatment facility outside Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The Hoffman Academy educates approximately 100 students. The mission is to offer a learning environment combined with a therapeutic component. Teachers, therapists and direct-care staff work together to assist the children-in-care with achieving their treatment goals.

The Hoffman Academy is accepting applicants for Special Education Teacher positions. The Special Education Teacher is a full-time position with benefits.

The Hoffman Academy is looking for teachers to work in a creative and versatile environment geared toward educating and treating at-risk youth. The goal is to allow teachers the flexibility to deliver curriculum in the most effective manner. Teachers, at the Hoffman Academy, must be able to work as part of a treatment team (i.e. the student, therapist, direct-care staff, parents, etc.) and assist the student in defining and achieving successful outcomes. Teachers are encouraged to use the support of the therapists and direct-care staff. The principles of Sanctuary® and Trauma Informed Care are expected to be applied within the daily routines, interactions and interventions of the school day. Overall, teachers for the Hoffman Academy must exhibit an enthusiasm for educating distressed young people while coaching them toward a safe and productive lifestyle.

Salary: Starting at \$45,000

Duties of the position include, but are not limited to:

- Develop and implement IEPs and NOREPs as well as facilitate meetings with regard to these plans and the student's overall treatment program
- Plan and teach appropriate and engaging lessons according to the students' ability and need
- Collect and analyze student data
- Participate as an active member of each student's treatment team; Assist the team in developing and implementing successful approaches for the student.
- Maintain records and make reports as required by State Law, the State Board of Education, the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and the School.

Requirements:

Applicants must have Pennsylvania Certification in Special Education (7-12; N-12; and PK-8). Proper clearances, as defined by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, are required.

Equal Opportunity Employer

Benefits:

- Comprehensive Major Medical Plan with Prescription Plan
- Dental
- Vision
- 403(b)
- Paid Time Off

Contact:

Interested applicants may forward a resume to Walter Smith, Director of Education, via Email: wsmith@hoffmanhomes.com, Fax: 717-359-2600, or Mail: 815 Orphanage Rd., Littlestown, PA 17340. <http://www.hoffmanhomes.com/menu/About/careers>

Special Education Specialist

Multiple Locations

Job Category:

Description:

The primary responsibility of the Special Education Specialist is to provide instruction and other related services to Special Education students. The Special Education Specialist will also facilitate diagnostic assessment including administration, scoring and interpretation. Will review and revise IEP's as needed. Will support instruction in reading, math, and written language for students, tutor individual and small groups of students, administer and score academic testing, write individualized education plans and support other academic programs as needed. The Special Education Specialist will work under the leadership of the Program Specialist and the Director of Special Education. This position will be available to provide direct instruction to students 6 hours a day.

Essential Functions include, but are not limited to the following:*

- Provide instruction to students with special needs and identified learning disabilities in a special education program.
- Tutor individual and small groups of students, reinforcing language and reading concepts.
- Administer and score individual and group tests.
- Schedule IEP meetings, coordinating schedules with parents, general education teacher(s), administrator, and all appropriate special education staff.
- Conduct IEP meetings.
- Communicate and coordinate special needs evaluation and testing with speech teacher, psychologist, and other service providers.
- Communicate with parents regarding individual student progress and conduct.
- Maintain progress records and record progress toward IEP goals.
- Record progress within the independent study program.
- Perform other duties in support of the Special Education Specialist program.
- Support other academic programs offered within the independent study program.

Various openings in Burbank region, San Gabriel region, Victor Valley region, Inland Empire region, San Bernardino region, and San Juan region.

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities Required:

- Special Education Specialist Certificate or ability to obtain Mild/Moderate Certificate.
- Ability to teach students of grades K-12.
- Ability to work with children of all ages.

- Ability to understand, adopt, and support the independent study program, concepts and their philosophies.
- Ability to organize and present ideas effectively in oral and written form.
- Ability to make skillful decisions.
- Ability to work under pressure and meet deadlines.
- Ability to operate a PC computer, word processor, copier, FAX, and other office machines.

Education and Experience:

- BA/BS Degree
- Valid California Teaching Credential in Special Education (Mild/Moderate)

Contact:

Nehia Hearn
Human Resources Assistant
Direct: 626) 204-2552 Fax: 626) 685-9316
nhearn@ofy.org

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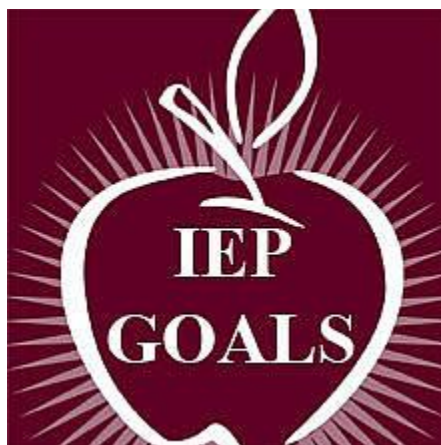
Acknowledgements

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- Center for Parent Information and Resources
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- National Institute of Health
- National Organization on Disability
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
- U.S. Department of Education
- U.S. Department of Education-The Achiever
- U.S. Department of Education-The Education Innovator
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- U.S. Department of Labor
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration
- U.S. Office of Special Education

The **National Association of Special Education Teachers** (NASET) thanks all of the above for the information provided for this edition of the Special Educator e-Journal

NASET Application for iPad and iPhone



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