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Executive Summary—Twenty-Fourth Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Section I-Context/Environment

The context/environment section includes four modules. The first module presents information from the Study of Personnel Needs in Special Education (SPeNSE). The second provides information from the Special Education Expenditure Project (SEEP). The third module analyzes data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 (ECLS-K) to discuss children with disabilities in low-income families. Developmental delay is the focus of the fourth module.

Special Education Teacher Quality

- SPeNSE was designed to describe the quality of personnel serving students with disabilities and the factors associated with workforce quality.
- SPeNSE data show that the nation's special education teachers, as a group, are highly experienced, averaging 14.3 years of teaching in 1999-2000; 12.3 of those years were spent teaching special education.
- SPeNSE data show that 59% of special education teachers had a master's degree, compared to 49% of regular education teachers.
- SPeNSE data tested five teacher-quality factors: experience, credentials, self-efficacy, professionalism, and selected classroom practices. Experience proved to be the strongest of the factors in this first analysis.

What Are We Spending on Special Education Services in the United States, 1999-2000?

- This module is based on descriptive information derived from SEEP.
- Data from SEEP indicate that the total spending to educate the average student with a disability amounts to $12,639. Total special education spending alone accounts for 13.9% of the $360.6 billion total spent on elementary and secondary education in the United States.
- In constant dollars, total spending on special education (excluding Other Special Needs Program Services) has increased from an average of $9,858 per pupil in 1985-86 to $12,474 in 1999-2000, an annualized growth rate of 0.7%.
- During the 1999-2000 school year, over 80% of total special education expenditures were allocated to direct instruction and related services.

Children With Disabilities in Low-Income Families: An Analysis of Data From the ECLS-K

- Child poverty has implications for the field of special education because it can affect children's health and behavior, as well as their cognitive development and academic achievement.
- A third of mothers of poor children with individualized education programs (IEPs) did not finish high school, compared with 7% of mothers of nonpoor children with IEPs.
- While single parenthood and lower parental educational attainment are by no means found exclusively among poor families, these demographic characteristics are strongly associated with poverty.
- Poverty alone had a negative effect on teacher ratings of approaches to learning.

Use of the Developmental Delay Classification for Children Ages 3 Through 9

- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1997 expanded the age range to which developmental delay may apply to cover ages 3 through 9. By 2000-01, 20 states had expanded their age range above age 5, although not necessarily for the entire 6-through-9 age range.
- States report that using developmental delay through age 9 allows for continuity of services throughout the developmental years without a stigmatizing label that may be associated with a specific disability category.
- State-reported data suggest that there has been no surge in the number of children reported to be receiving services under IDEA and that use of the developmental delay option steadily decreases as chronological age increases.

Section II-Student Characteristics

This section contains information about the characteristics of children and students receiving services under IDEA. The populations reported are children and families entering early intervention, preschoolers, and students ages 6 through 21. Data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study 2 (NLTS2) make up the final module.

Infants and Toddlers Served Under IDEA

- In 1999-2000, 95.9% of students with disabilities were served in regular school buildings; of those students, 47.3% were served outside of the regular classroom for less than 21% of the school day.
- Students with low-incidence disabilities are less likely to spend the majority of their school day in the regular classroom, while the majority of students with learning disabilities and speech language impairments are served in the regular classroom.
- It is possible that the differences in placement by race/ethnicity may reflect the disproportional representation of some minority groups in disability categories that are predominantly served in more restrictive settings.

Study of State and Local Implementation and Impact of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act: A View From the Field of District Implementation

- SLIIDEA's charge is to understand both the implementation and impact of policy changes made in the IDEA Amendments of 1997 at the state, district, and school levels.
- The SLIIDEA study is collecting data over a 5-year period by means of mail surveys at the state, district, and school levels and through focus studies of the implementation of IDEA in selected school districts.
- Districts that showed evidence of use of a comprehensive range of implementation tools, a consistent relationship between stated policies and activities, consistency across stakeholders on the knowledge base and skills required for implementation, and stakeholder satisfaction were more likely to have fewer students living in poverty, be smaller, and be suburban.

Section IV-Results

This section of the annual report contains three modules. The modules describe high school graduation among students with disabilities, data from the National Early Intervention Longitudinal Study on the results experienced by children and families 1 year after beginning early intervention, and state improvement and monitoring activities.

High School Graduation Among Students With Disabilities

- In 1999-2000, the standard diploma graduation rate for students with disabilities age 14 and older was 56.2%.
- The graduation rate was highest, and the dropout rate lowest, for White and Asian/Pacific Islander students.
- Improvements in the dropout rate took place in almost every disability category, most notably among students with speech/language impairments, specific learning disabilities, orthopedic impairments, hearing impairments, and emotional disturbance.

Results Experienced by Children and Families 1 Year After Beginning Early Intervention

- Children in all age groups are advancing developmentally, with significantly higher percentages of children in each group showing mastery of selected milestones 1 year after entering early intervention.
- Notably, for all four age groups, after 1 year, significantly more families felt confident about their ability to help their child learn and develop.
- Families report that their child's communication and motor skills have improved, and over two thirds of families report that early intervention has had a lot of impact on the child's development.
- Families of nearly all children in early intervention reported that their children had a place to go for regular medical care; there has been no change in this variable since the first year in early intervention.

State Improvement and Monitoring

- OSEP has redesigned its accountability system into a Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process (CIMP) that incorporates strategies designed to foster greater state accountability, increase parental involvement, establish a data-driven process to inform improvement planning, and ensure public awareness and dissemination.
- OSEP is assisting states in completing self-assessments, designing and implementing effective improvement plans, and obtaining data to support program accountability.
- OSEP is working with states to develop procedures leading to effective transition, including the development of shared data systems to track children as they move through transition activities.
- Implementation of the CIMP has increased accountability of states, ensured public involvement and input, focused on processes with the strongest relationship to positive results, created mechanisms for making data-driven decisions, and increased emphasis on improving results for children with disabilities and their families.

. According to the 2000 child count data, 63% of the children served under Part C were classified as White (non-Hispanic); 17% were Hispanic; 16% were Black (non-Hispanic); 4% were Asian/Pacific Islander; and 1% were American Indian/Alaska Native.
• During the 1999-2000 reporting period, states reported that 68% of all early intervention services took place in the home, compared with 63% served in 1998-99 and 53% in 1995-96, before enactment of the IDEA Amendments of 1997.
• During this second year of collecting exit data, states continued to report eligibility for Part B as the most common reason for exit.

Preschoolers Served Under IDEA

. For the 2000-01 school year, states reported serving 599,678 children ages 3 through 5 with disabilities under IDEA, up from 589,134 in 1999-2000.   \~   J
. Speech or language impairment was the most prevalent disability category, accounting for 55.2% of all preschoolers served in 2OO0-01.
• White (non-Hispanic) preschoolers were overrepresented in the Part B population. Asian/Pacific Islander and, especially, Hispanic children were underrepresented among the preschoolers served under IDEA.

Students Ages_6 through 21 Served Under IDEA • The 5,775,722 students ages 6 through 21 served under Part B represented 8.8% of the U.S. resident pop

• Specific learning disabilities, speech or language impairments, mental retardation, and emotional disturbance continued to account for the majority of students served under IDEA.
. White students made up 62.3% of the students served; 19.8% were Black; 14.5% were Hispanic; 1.9% were Asian/Pacific Islander; and 1.5% were American Indian/Alaska Native.
• In 2000-01, the rank ordering of the top five disability categories was nearly identical for all racial/ethnic groups; however, students from some racial/ethnic groups were overrepresented or underrepresented in specific disability categories when compared with the IDEA student population as a whole.

A Changing Population: Individual and Household Characteristics of High School Students With Disabilities

• This study, which is modeled on NLTS, will follow secondary-school-age students through their mid-20s, collecting data on their secondary school experiences and achievements and how those influenced their postschool outcomes.
. The population of high school students receiving special education in 2001 more closely mirrored the racial/ethnic distribution of the general population than had been true in 1987.
. High-school-age students with disabilities in 2001 were first identified as having a disability or delay significantly earlier than were their peers in 1987.
. The decline in the average age at first identification of a disability that was noted for students with disabilities as a whole resulted from statistically significant reductions in age for students in four disability categories-learning disabilities, emotional disturbance, and orthopedic and other health impairments-ranging from almost 10 to 18 months.

Section III-Programs and Services

The four modules in the section examine some of the programs and services available within schools for children and youth with disabilities and their families. The first module uses data from SPeNSE to discuss the quantity and quality of school-based speech-language pathologists. The module on social adaptation and problem behaviors of elementary and middle school students receiving special education reports data from the Special Education Elementary Longitudinal Study (SEELS). The next module, educational environments, contains state-reported data on the settings in which children and youth receive services. The last module in this section describes SLIIDEA (State and Local Implementation and Impact of IDEA) and presents preliminary findings.

Ensuring an Adequate Supply of High-Quality, School-Based Speech-Language Pathologists

• Because so many students with disabilities require speech-language services, ensuring an adequate supply of high-quality speech-language pathologists is crucial to the success of the students served under IDEA.
  Having an adequate supply of school-based speech-language pathologists is as important as the quality of those available because shortages typically force administrators to hire less qualified individuals.
• Speech-language pathologists devoted an average of 7.1 hours per week to completing paperwork, 4.6 hours per week to preparing services, 1.8 to sharing expertise with colleagues, 1.7 to reading background material, and 0.9 hours per week to communicating with parents.
• School-based speech-language pathologists rated their skills in a few areas as relatively low, suggesting a need for professional development in using technology in instruction, accommodating diverse students' needs, supervising paraprofessionals, using literature to address problems, and managing student behavior.

Social Adaptation and Problem Behaviors of Elementary and Middle School Students Receiving Special Education

• The importance of behavior itself as an outcome, as well as its role as a mediating factor in many other important outcome domains, made it a priority area to address in OSEP's national assessment, including SEELS.
• SEELS data showed that students with learning, speech, hearing, vision, and orthopedic impairments received positive marks from parents and teachers in assertion, self-control, and cooperation.
• Social development is a key outcome for many students with disabilities, and concerns about school safety and discipline generally have been increasing in recent years.
. According to parents, 14% of students with disabilities in elementary and middle school had been expelled or suspended at some point in their school careers.

Educational Environments for Students With Disabilities