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AN ACTION PLAN FOR IMPROVING THE CONTINUUM OF SERVICES THAT  
ARE OFFERED THE CLASSIFIED STUDENT AT THE LOWER  
CAPE MAY REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

by  
Gene Sole

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
Master of Arts Degree in The Graduate School of  
Rowan University  
May 2000

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_  
Professor

Date Approved May 2000

## Abstract

Gene Sole

An Action Plan for Improving the  
Continuum of Services that are  
Offered the Classified Student at  
the Lower Cape May Regional High  
School  
2000  
Dr. Ronald L. Capasso  
Educational Leadership

Though there are many success stories in the Lower Cape May Regional High School, for a myriad of reasons many of the classified students are not achieving their potential. In this thesis, the intern will evaluate the continuum of services offered to the classified student, with the overall intent of advancing the learning of those in special education. In his role as the acting Assistant Principal, the intern was able to get staff members to work towards the goal of improving the services that we offer our students. In addition, the intern's role as a member of the special education task force enabled him to establish an open, ongoing dialogue with the special education department at the High School. This paper also looks at the relationship between the involvement of the classified student in after-school activities and school success. The intern's research included data received from interviews with students, special education student surveys, teacher observations, a state assessment instrument, and general supervision. The two important advantages to the intern's research has been the opportunity to work with a staff that is passionate about their role as educators, and in the direct contact that the inter has had with students.

## Mini-Abstract

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the Lower Cape May Regional Board of Education for the funding provided for the intern's projects. Additionally, the intern would like to thank his editor, Mrs. Robin Kearns, for the superb assistance that she provided.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### Focus of the Study

The special education population at the Lower Cape May Regional High School in the Lower Cape May Regional School District school has hovered around 20% of the population for the last few years. It is a significant population. The school prides itself on its inclusive atmosphere and on the various services that are offered the special education student. The school is on the cutting edge of inclusion and truly offered every classified student the opportunity for placement in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

In June, 1999 a program review of the continuum of special education services offered in the Lower Cape May Regional School District was conducted by the Cape May County Office of Education. The reviewer gave the district a grade of compliant in most areas: ensuring the educational placement of students with an educational disability based on his Individual Education Plan (IEP), and ensuring the student's placement in an appropriate educational setting as close to home as possible. However, in the area of inclusion, the school received a grade of "not fully compliant." The reviewer concluded, "though the district provided evidence that both schools provide opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in the regular classroom, interviews indicated that there is a need to expand program options to include in-class support at the 8th grade level and college bound math and English classes at the appropriate grade levels at the high school." Additionally, the report stated that the middle school received a grade of

not fully compliant because it placed classified students on only four, and not all six, of the "teams" (there are three teams per grade) at the Teitelman school.

Though there are many success stories in the Lower Cape May Regional School District, many of the classified students are not achieving their potential for a myriad of reasons. Using action research, the intern will evaluate the continuum of services with the overall intent of advancing the learning of special education students. This project will evaluate and create an action plan for improving the support services offered to special education students in order to improve each student's ability to achieve his potential.

The study of services offered will include an evaluation of the placement of students in inclusive (mainstreamed and in-class support) classes, resource center, and self-contained classrooms. Additionally, supplemental services historically offered and primarily utilized by classified students will be evaluated. Finally, the intern will look at the involvement of classified students in extra-curricular activities and what can be done to improve upon their participation in these activities.

#### Purpose of the Study

The intern wants to learn how to improve the continuum of special education services that are offered so that classified students can better achieve their potential. Moreover, the intern will conduct a formal literature review on the subject of improving the continuum of services offered to the classified high school student. Improving the existing services and getting special education students more involved in their education will elevate the learning process and have a positive impact on the entire school.

The intern wants to advance the academic, social, and emotional learning of the special education student by conducting an evaluation of the services that are offered to the classified student and looking for ways to improve these services. The intern has actively participated in the special education program in the Lower Cape May Regional School District for the past four years. Due to personnel issues that were occurring within the department, the intern volunteered last year to serve as the special education departmental liaison at the Richard M. Teitelman Middle School, and in June of 1999, the intern was formally assigned to the newly created departmental liaison position at the middle school. However, on September 7, 1999, the intern was subsequently placed in the position of Coordinator of Special Projects at the Lower Cape May Regional High School; consequently, the intern will be carrying out duties similar to that of an assistant principal without the responsibility of supervising staff. The intern will get others to work towards the goal of improving the services that we offer our students. In his role as the Coordinator of Special Projects, the intern intends to become a member of the Special Education Task Force and will establish an open, on-going dialogue with the special education department head at the high school. The intern intends for this relationship to benefit the special education department and the students. The intern will have the advantage of leading a staff that is truly passionate about teaching and their students. Although the intern has received the assignment of Coordinator of Special Projects, he realizes that there are others within the department who have more knowledge and experience concerning special education issues. He is determined to tap this expertise and use it to the advantage of the individual student, the special education department, and the school.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the continuum of special education services that are offered by the Lower Cape May Regional High School by using an action research method of inquiry. At this stage in the research the continuum of services in which the intern will focus is the appropriate placement of students (mainstream, in-class support, resource center, and self-contained) and the extra-curricular activity participation of these students. The intern will attempt to discover strategies and techniques that will affect an organizational change in order to improve the educational services that are offered to all classified students at the high school. Using an action research design, the intern will conduct an evaluation and make a formal report/action plan with recommendations for improvements, to both the Director of Special Services and building principal. At the conclusion of the research, the intern will enact the recommended improvements. Consequently, the individual classified student will directly benefit academically, socially, and emotionally from the improvements made in the special education services. The intern wants to provide the individual student an improved opportunity to achieve his or her potential.

### Definitions

The following terms are used in this research:

*Assistive technology device-* Any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of children with disabilities.

*At-risk students-* Students who, for socioeconomic, health, physiological, or genetic reasons, face an increased chance for school failure.

*Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)*- Diagnostic category of the American Psychiatric Association for a condition in which a child exhibits developmentally inappropriate inattention and impulsivity.

*Behavior disorders*- Behavior characteristics that (1) deviate from educators' standards of normality and (2) impair the functioning of that student and/or others. They are manifested as environmental conflicts and/or personal disturbances and typically accompanied by learning disorders.

*Behavior modification*- Systematic arrangement of environmental events to produce specific changes in observable behavior: may include positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, time-out, response cost, modeling, and so on.

*Case management*- Process of planning, implementing, and monitoring an individual's program from assessment through intervention; used in social and educational programs.

*Cognitive disability*- Disorder in the formation or use of symbols and concepts during thinking, reasoning, planning and problem solving.

*Continuum of services*- Range of placement and instructional options that a school district can use to serve children with disabilities.

*Disabled*- Having reduced functioning as a result of a physical deficit or a significant problem in learning or social adjustment.

*Eligibility*- Determination as to whether a child qualifies for special educational and related services.

*Handicapped*- Describing reduced functioning as a result of difficulty in responding or adjusting to the environment because of intellectual, physical, or emotional

problems.

*Inclusion-* Placement option in which students who are disabled or at risk receive instruction in a regular classroom setting in their home or neighborhood school and in which support services come to the students.

*Individualized education program (IEP)-* Written plan developed at a meeting which sets forth present levels of performance, measurable annual goals and short-term objectives. This plan establishes the rationale for the student's educational placement.

Educational plan

*IEP team-* The group of individuals who are responsible for the development, review and revision of the student's individualized educational program.

*Learning disability-* Term referring to a group of disorders that are most evident as problems with the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities.

*Least restrictive environment-* Educational setting that is closest to full participation in the regular classroom but that still meets the exceptional student's special needs.

*Mainstreaming-* System for integrating students with disabilities into regular classes, providing for their special needs through individualized instruction, or their spending a portion of their day with a resource or special education teacher.

*Public law (P.L.) 94-142-* Education for All Handicapped Children Act, originally passed in 1975, requiring that all children with disabilities receive "a free, appropriate public education which emphasizes special education and related services

designed to meet their unique needs." Its name was later changed to the Education of the Handicapped Act.

*Public Law (P.L.) 101-476- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a reauthorization in 1990 of the Education of the Handicapped Act. It added new eligibility categories and services to P.L. 94-142.*

*Referral-* The written request for an initial evaluation to determine whether a student is eligible for services under Chapter 14 Special Education of the New Jersey Administrative Code Title 6A Education.

*Resource room-* A place where a teacher is available to work with individuals or small groups of students who have specific learning disabilities.

*Self-contained class-* Class composed entirely of exceptional children, usually all categorized under the same label, who do not participated in regular academic programs with their other peers.

*Time-out-* Behavior management technique that involves removing the opportunity for reinforcement for a specific period of time following an inappropriate behavior. Its goal is a reduction of the inappropriate behavior.

### Limitations of the Study

#### Delimitations and Limitations

There are several delimitations for this project. First of all, the action research for the project will only be conducted in the Lower Cape May Regional High School and, as a result, will not go outside of the Lower Cape May Regional School District.

Additionally, the focus for the study will remain on how to improve the services offered to classified students. Since the project is reviewing inclusion practices, it will likely

involve both special and regular education teachers. Furthermore, the study will involve both academic and non-academic areas of school.

The sample size for interactive research is confined to the special education students and staff at the Lower Cape May Regional High School. The small sample size will be a limitation since the number of staff and students involved will remain low. The intern has not determined the sample size for the survey. The intern will use survey, interview and observation for data collection. Additionally, obtaining full participation from special education staff may be confined to "Zero" period. Zero period occurs every Tuesday, prior to school beginning. The intern knows that some staff will willingly participate in the project after school, but some will be unable or unwilling.

#### Setting of the Study

The Lower Cape May Regional School District is comprised of the Lower Cape May Regional High School (9-12) and the Richard M. Teitelman Middle School (7-8). The schools share a common 67-acre site surrounded by woods, fields and rural housing, located in the southern-most tip of Cape May County and the State of New Jersey. The district serves a population of approximately 1850 students (96% white, 3% African-American and 1% other).

The Lower Cape May Regional High School offers courses at the advanced placement, college bound, general, remedial and special education levels. Advanced placement (AP) courses at the high school are: AP 11th grade English, AP 12th grade English, AP United States History, and AP Physics. The high school requires students to obtain 120 credits in order to graduate. For the past three years, the high school has experimented with the idea of going to block scheduling. Last year the school

implemented a modified block schedule on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. This summer, due primarily to backlash from parents, the Board of Education reversed its decision to begin block scheduling for the year 2000.

The Richard M. Teitelman Middle School organizes its students into teams. There are three teams each for both 7th and 8th grade with approximately 120 students on each team. The teachers from each team meet on a daily basis and discuss curriculum, student issues, and multidisciplinary themes. The eight period schedule provides teams with the flexibility to bring all of their students together for special events. There are no advanced placement classes; however students are provided with the option to take Spanish or Algebra I. Special education students are placed on all three teams in 8th grade, and on two of the three teams in 7th grade. If special education students were placed on all three teams in 7th grade, this schedule would cause these students to become part of more than one team (cross teaming).

Every Tuesday, the Lower Cape May Regional School District has a “Zero period.” During this Zero period, teachers at both schools come in at their regular time (7:45 high school, 8:15 middle school) and students arrive approximately 90 minutes later than normal. During Zero period, both schools emphasize staff training and committees which emphasize the advancement of learning for the individual student. If it is managed properly, the intern believes that Zero period can be an invaluable tool for the entire district.

Each school in the district offers a variety of after-school activities. The Teitelman school offers: athletics (baseball, basketball (girls and boys), field hockey, softball, soccer track and wrestling), clubs (baseball card club, drama, youth advisory

council, reptile/amphibian club, builders club, ecology club, surf club, and art club), and extra-curricular activities (band front, cheerleaders, yearbook, literary magazine, newspaper, and student government). Additionally, the Teitelman School provides the following support services for students: attention deficit disorder educational training, children of alcoholics, death and grieving, separation and divorce, self-concept, gifted and talented support, and peer mediation. All of these groups involve voluntary group counseling.

The high school offers the following sports and extracurricular activities: football, boy's soccer, girl's soccer, girl's tennis, cross country, girl's basketball, girl's track, cheerleading, softball, wrestling, boy's tennis, field hockey, boy's basketball, boy's track, golf, baseball, swimming/diving, school play, stage crew, mock trial, future problem solving, national honor society, literary magazine, school newspaper, intramurals, concert band & ensemble groups, concert choir & ensemble groups, academic/knowledge bowl, Key Club, school musical, student council, foreign language clubs, yearbook, and math & science leagues. In addition, it offers the "Renaissance Program" which is an academic success program. Finally, the high school works in cooperation with the school based youth services (SBYS) which provide: counseling services, drug and alcohol counseling, employment assistance, wellness programs, and recreation.

Three elementary districts, Cape May, West Cape May and Lower Township feed Lower Cape May Regional School District. The District draws from a combined population of about 30,000 people from the communities of Cape May, West Cape May, Cape May Point, and Lower Township. For the past five years, the district has operated on the "zero-based" budgeting premise. The superintendent and board of education's

ability to maintain zero-based budgeting has led to increased support among the public. The school's budget has easily passed in each of the past five years.

The current professional staff of Lower Cape May Regional School District includes 130 teachers, six guidance counselors, six child study team members, two nurses, two librarians, five building administrators and four central office administrators. Support personnel including secretaries, maintenance, food service and bus employees make up approximately 30 percent of the total staff.

The economy is based upon tourism, the fishing industry, and farming. Lower Cape May Regional is a factor group "B" district, according to the State's standards for socio-economics. This ranking places it in the second lowest socio-economic district profile in the state. Due to the nature of the major industries, parents who work, often work long hours resulting in unsupervised children. In addition to the low socioeconomic status of a large segment of the school's population, the following conditions also exist: high unemployment rate (20.6%, January 1999); high mobility rate 22.7%; numerous dysfunctional families; and 20% special needs students. The district's low socioeconomic status, 20% special education population, and a large number of dysfunctional families have produced a large, at-risk population.

Professional development opportunities for teaching staff are limited. At this time, 25% percent of the staff hold Master's degrees. Access to graduate study is difficult. Geographically, Lower Cape May Regional is approximately 65 miles south of Rowan University and 50 miles south of Stockton State College. Compensation for graduate study is provided for two courses per year to the staff only after the second year of employment.

### Significance of the Study

The intern was directly involved in the Teitelman School's placement of classified students for the 1999/2000 school year. Every realistic effort was made to place students in the least restrictive environment. Students were placed according to their IEP's, using the "team" concept. This process allowed placement of classified students on all three teams in the 8th grade and two of the three teams in the 7th grade. Because special education students were not appropriately placed in college bound math and English classes at the appropriate grade levels at the high school, the intern must work to discover what can be done to ensure the school is doing everything it can to include classified students.

The greatest room for improvement is in the area of getting classified students involved in extra-curricular activities. Many classified students are not taking advantage of this aspect of their education. The intern will evaluate the present manner in which special education students get involved and will conduct research in order to discover what can be done to increase the number of involved students and improve the quality of this involvement in extracurricular activities.

### Organization of the Study

Chapter two will follow the introductory paragraph. In Chapter Two, the intern will examine the review of the special education literature which focuses on the techniques used to improve the continuum of services offered to the classified student. Chapter Three will discuss the design of the study. Chapter Four is a presentation of the

research findings. Finally, Chapter Five will discuss the conclusions, implications, and further study for the topic.

## Chapter 2

### Review of the Literature

How does a school obtain a reputation as an inclusionary school? The Lower Cape May Regional High School has made great strides over the past several years to ensure that its provided special education services are comprehensive. This literature review will assist in the evaluation and improvement of the continuum of special education services that are offered to the classified student at Lower Cape May Regional. The literature will determine how other schools conduct inclusionary placement decisions. The research on the topic of involving classified students in extra-curricular activities and what can be done to improve upon their involvement will be evaluated and synthesized.

Purposeful leadership is required to make a school inclusionary (Morgan, Horton, Cruzeiro, 1998). This is especially true at Lower Cape May Regional High School, since the school's special education population consistently hovers around 20% of the overall population. Because of the sizable special education population, the prudent administrator would work towards inclusion in the regular classroom at Lower Cape May. This intern will look at the literature in order to determine the impact that an inclusive atmosphere has on a school, and will determine what other schools are doing to get their special education and at-risk populations more involved in extracurricular activities.

#### Literature Review of Special Education Services

##### Inclusion

The status of inclusive education in the Lower Cape May Regional School District is uncertain. The Cape May County Office of Education found this district to be non-compliant in several areas of inclusion. Specifically, the report stated, “although the district does provide opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in the regular classroom and consistently documents the provision of these services in the IEP’s, the interviews indicated the need to expand its program options to include in-class support in grade 8 for English, math, social studies and science and college bound math and English classes at the appropriate grade levels at the high school.” In order for the schools to achieve a more inclusive environment there must be more collaboration between the regular and special educators and more leadership from administrators.

In their article, “Using Stakeholder Interviews to Evaluate Inclusive Education,” (Wilczemski, Barry-Schneider, Reddington, Blais, Carreira, and Daniello, 1997) the authors stress that, “listening to stakeholders can assist in identifying key components of successful inclusion programs.” These authors also emphasized that in order to be truly inclusive, relationships among various school personnel would have to change. At Lower Cape May Regional High School, the desire to establish strong special to regular education teacher relationships is there, but the schedule does not allow for this to occur. So the question remains, where does this leave the disabled student? Wilczemski et al. focused on, how can inclusion be carried out, and how can practices be refined in order to achieve the goals of inclusion? The authors interviewed twenty individuals involved in inclusive education (six regular education teachers, four special education teachers, two teacher aides, two parents, one student, two school psychologists, two principals, and one pediatrician. The researchers discovered that teacher’s attitudes were seen as a key factor

in successful inclusion. The intern believes that attitude is the most important aspect of a successful collaboration between regular and special education teachers. The teachers are cognizant of the perfect instructional strategies in an inclusive setting, but they won't be effective if they're not willing to teach in an inclusive setting. During this past summer, the Teitelman Middle School's schedule was thrown into disarray because of one or two teachers who were unwilling to teach in an inclusive environment. Because of this situation, teachers who have been teaming together for several years were denied the opportunity to continue in their teamed situation. Instead, the special education teachers were teamed with other teachers on another team who were willing to teach in an inclusive setting.

In "An Analysis of Inclusive Education in Eastern Kentucky," (Knoll, Obi, 1997) the authors stated that true collaboration between regular education and special education is rare. Furthermore, Knoll and Obi reported that these two groups of teachers have different perspectives on each other and lack a coherent vision of their common mission. Because, there is limited training to help teachers develop collaborative skills, administrative direction is unclear. Within the Lower Cape May Regional School District there are two differing degrees of collaboration. At the Teitelman Middle School, regular and special educators are placed on a team. In addition, they are given a common planning time to prepare for lessons and work on instructional strategies. At Lower Cape May Regional High School, there is no "team" concept and special and regular educators are not given common planning time to prepare for classes. In their research on improving inclusive education in Eastern Kentucky, Knoll and Obi conducted a mail survey of administrators and educators of the school district in the Morehead State

University service region. Six-hundred-fifty-one of the 3400 surveys sent out were returned. Seventy-three percent of the regular education respondents stated that the special educators were either a valued colleague or a useful resource, while 27 percent of regular educators responded that special education teachers were either neutral, an occasional interference, or an intrusion in the classroom. As is typical in the Lower Cape May Regional High School, 76% of the respondents said that they spend less than 30 minutes a week consulting with a special education teacher. Overall, the intern believes that the survey accurately reflects the attitude of many of the teachers within the Lower Cape May Regional School District.

In order for special education to become an integral part of public schooling, there must be collaboration. For collaboration to occur, many of the barriers to inclusion must be removed. According to the study by Knoll and Obi (1997), both special and regular educators ranked learning and behavioral problems of students with disabilities as the number one barrier to inclusion; if there were no disabled students then there would be no reason for inclusion. The second choice tells a different story. Special educators held that lack of training /preparation of school staff was the next most influential barrier. In the intern's district, regular educators are routinely tasked with dealing with students who are behaviorally disabled. Many regular educators in the intern's district are not familiar with the proper strategies to handle these students. According to the study, the second most important barrier for regular educators was insufficient resources (funds, staff, etc.). The intern assumes that most other schools deal with the same tight budget constraints as Lower Cape May. As an illustration, from June through August, the intern was actively involved (as the special education departmental liaison) with the scheduling process at

the Teitelman Middle School. When it became apparent that there was going to be a legal requirement for an additional special education staff member, the district's main office was adamant that it would not pay for another teacher. Although the facts and the law finally lead to the hiring of an additional special education staff member, it was not without a struggle.

In the research paper "Changing Tactics: Research on Embedding Inclusion Reforms within General Education Restructuring Efforts," (Ferguson, 1997) the author states that it is important to rethink our approach to inclusion as but one dimension of a broader, general education restructuring. Education must have, as one of its goals, to increase the common ground of knowledge and skills between general and special educators. In her research conducted out of the University of Oregon, Ferguson stated that some schools within the study operated in "workgroups" (a team consisting of both special and regular educators). Since special educators are part of the discussion from the beginning, they can help "tailor the development of the various learning objectives, activities, and assessment tools to better incorporate the unique learning of labeled students" (Ferguson, 1997). This team concept provides opportunities for special educators to teach more aspects of the plan to all the students instead of just being thought of as a helper within the classroom. Although the high school's schedule is drastically different from the middle school's, teachers must be given the opportunity to collaborate. The need for regular and special educators to discuss curriculum, students' needs, projects and other topics is vital. The intern believes that a more concerted effort must be made to give these teachers an opportunity to collaborate.

Inclusive schools are organizations that have come to the realization that special education and regular education both have something to gain by breaking down the artificial barriers of the past (Knoll, Obi, 1997). The intern's district must make an effort to break down its barriers and improve the opportunity for special and regular educators to meet and plan at the high school level. Additionally, there must be more training provided to regular education teachers within the district in order to prepare them for the inclusionary classroom. The intern will work towards achieving a more inclusionary environment through his work with the high school's special education department head and by his participation on the special education task force.

#### Getting the Special Education Student Involved in After-School Activities

School success for the special education student should mean more than just doing well in the classroom. To truly get the whole educational experience, the classified student should be given every opportunity to participate in after-school activities. However, to increase involvement of high school special education students, it takes a combined effort of staff and administrators. In her research paper entitled "The Relationship between Social Activities and School Performance for Secondary Students with Learning Disabilities" (Newman, 1991) the author focused on the relationship between academics and the social side of school. In her paper, Newman addressed the question of whether social activities have an impact on the academic performance of youth with learning disabilities that attended regular secondary schools. Her research from the National Longitudinal Transitional Study of Special Education students was a five year study that included a nationally representative sample of more than 8,000 students, ages 13-21, in all disability categories. Her research showed that disabled

students who spent their post-school time with friends, as opposed to an after-school activity, had higher absenteeism and were more likely to have received a failing grade. Those disabled students who were engaged in school or community groups had much lower absenteeism and better grades. Students who had disciplinary problems, such as being suspended or expelled from school, were more likely to see friends and were less likely to participate in groups than those who had not had such problems. The study also found that the greater the percentage of the day the students spent in regular education classrooms, the more likely they were to become active in school activities and less likely they were to be socially isolated.

Involvement in after-school activities can lead to many positive outcomes for the special education student. In her paper, Newman states that, “having a group affiliation can increase a student’s commitment to school as a place that had social as well as academic value.” In other words, those students who get involved in a group activity are going to have a better feeling about school as a whole and are going to be more willing and eager to go to school and succeed. In addition, group activities also teach social values and norms. Many special education students may not have been properly taught these skills at home. These skills will not only make them a better student, but a better citizen as well. According to Newman’s research, students who established a bond with school and whose friendships did not overly compete with school responsibilities were better students.

Many special education students are also identified as being “at-risk.” In their research paper “Student Activities for Students at Risk,” (Kleese, D’Onofrio, 1994), the at-risk student is defined as one whose potential is not nurtured by his educational

experience. Indicators may be a low socioeconomic status, a low level of educational attainment for either parent, a single parent household, a minority status, or a predisposition such as a handicap.” The authors go on to say that problematic behaviors exhibited in school such as low grades, truancy, non-participation in co-curricular activities, and disruptive behaviors are also identifiers. The intern has observed all of these at-risk identifiers in many of his students during the past four years of teaching special education. The intern argues that the programs that are offered by the authors to get the at-risk student more involved in school will also work for the special education student.

In their research, authors Kleese and D’Onofrio developed elements of effective programs that help the at-risk population work towards school success. First of all, they recommended an early identification of at-risk students. Secondly, there must be active involvement of staff and district level planing to consider why students are rejecting school. The next element of an effective program must be the emphasis placed on a linkage between schools, parents, and community. Schools should make every effort to make themselves a more caring, supportive and nurturing place. Having staff members who are prepared to deal with the at-risk population is vital. Staff development in this area must be a priority. Lower Cape May Regional High School has a special education population of approximately 250 students. According to the building principal, the at-risk population is approximately 12-13% of the total school. With such a large population, it would be negligent of staff and administrators to ignore the at-risk student and their plight.

Kleese and D'Onofrio state that there is a "definite link between co-curricular participation and high school success." Low level participation in student activities is a characteristic of the at-risk student. They go on to report that students who don't feel that they belong are less likely to participate in activities associated with school. The authors provided suggestions for making student activities more accessible to the at-risk student. First, they stated there must be an effort to get student leaders to bridge the gap between at-risk students and successful students. This can only be accomplished when personal leadership from the administration, namely the intern, is evident. The intern would have to sell the successful students on the importance of involving them in such a project. Also included in a study from Kleese and D'Onofrio, it was found that students received higher grades when participating in sports. Too often over the past four years, the intern has observed parents of special education students not allowing their child to play sports because they believed it would somehow have a negative effect on grades. In addition, the authors recommended placing the at-risk in role modeling positions. This could be done through lower grade reading programs or, as the authors stated, by involving the students as big brothers or big sisters.

In "Beyond the Classroom: Involving Students with Disabilities in Extracurricular Activities," (Walker, 1988) the author studied six students in a special education classroom at Levy Middle School in Syracuse, New York. This research project examined the role of the special education teacher and other staff in getting students involved in extracurricular activities. The authors noted over ten years ago that extracurricular activities have been given low priority to students with disabilities. The intern would argue that this is still the case. In this study, the classroom teacher was the

driving force behind getting the six students involved in extracurricular activities. The students were able to gain access to the various clubs, activities and sports because the teacher paved the way by coordinating with the various supervisors and coaches. The intern believes this type of action is required for many of our special education students. The intern has observed countless special education students over the years talk about a desire to join a club or a sport; however, too often the disabled student doesn't take the most important step, actually showing up for the sport or activity. Participation by the classified students may only require the strong support of a teacher or other staff member. Walker also noted that the benefits of integration were for all students, not just those with disabilities. Regular and special education students will surely benefit from a positive, inclusionary, extracurricular experience.

In their research paper "Middle Level Activities to Involve the Invisible Student," (Rimmer, Arico, 1997) the authors state that involving the student in activities has many advantages. They go on to say that, "student involvement can promote achievement, citizenship, and service to the community while developing self-esteem, self-confidence, and social cooperation." The authors further observe that if the "uninvolved" student can feel a "connectiveness" to the school, then this will cause him to feel good about school and that he is important to others. The authors also argue that involving the uninvolved child will provide the student with a feeling of power, or a belief that they are in charge of their life. The intern strongly believes that if the special education student gets involved, it will have a snowball effect on his or her overall performance in school.

### Summary

In general, the literature supports the fact that there is still much work to be done in order to ensure that schools are providing an inclusive environment. The Lower Cape May Regional High School's grade of "not fully compliant" with inclusion during the 1999 Special Education Program Review Report sent a message that there are areas of concern in our own district. The literature continually stressed that in order for a school to be considered inclusionary, there must be administrative leadership. School administrators must ensure that more than just lip service is being given to inclusion. Merely following the special education administrative code is not enough to ensure a proper inclusionary environment. Administrators must properly supervise their special education programs. Not only must they get out and ensure that special and regular educators are collaborating, they must provide them the time necessary to do it. Moreover, regular education teachers must be given the training necessary to meet the needs of their special education students. The intern believes that this training will lead to a better classroom environment, hence, an overall improvement in the willingness of regular education teachers to include special education students.

The literature provides a multitude of ideas and recommendations for getting special education students involved in after-school activities. Special education students need to understand that school is not just about showing up for school and going to class. The intern is confident that once the special education student is involved and interested in an after-school activity, academic success will follow. However, in order to get the disabled student involved, schools must understand that it will take leadership. Administrators must stress the importance that staff members play in the role of the students and the positive impact that they can have. If administrators and teachers can

work together to stress the importance of participating in extracurricular activities more classified students will get involved. Involvement by special education students will not only benefit the individual, but will have a positive impact on the entire school environment. Through extracurricular activities, students will be taught positive behaviors that they may not normally learn in the classroom. Unfortunately, the adage “they aren’t being taught proper morals and behavior at home” holds true for many of our classified students. It is beneficial to teach these students about integrity, morals and character. This is more easily accomplished in an after-school activity, than it is in the classroom.

## Chapter 3

### Design of the Study

#### Research Design

In this chapter, the intern discussed the research design used for the study. The design of the research focused on how to improve the continuum of special education services that are offered to the classified student. In addition, the intern's focus for research was centered on how to get the special education student more involved in after-school activities. The objective of the research was to attempt to determine if special education students who are involved in after-school activities have a higher level of school success. Improving the services that they are offered and getting these students more involved will not only benefit the special education student, but will have a positive impact on the entire school.

The intern utilized an action research model since it allowed the intern to focus on evaluating the situation at the High School (local level). The intern had no intent to generalize his research to other schools. The results of the research will only be utilized at Lower Cape May Regional High School. Since the intern utilized action research, he studied intact groups (classrooms) when observing groups of students. Additionally, the intern used a qualitative research design in his evaluation of the continuum of services offered to the special education student. The research was qualitative since the study was described in words and not numbers or measures.

The subjects of the study were classified students that attended the Lower Cape May Regional High School. The intern studied these special education students in their high school classroom. During his research, the intern observed what was happening in

classroom setting and in an in-class support classroom. The classrooms used by the intern for observation and data gathering were randomly selected.

The intern also utilized survey research in his study of the continuum of services offered to the classified student. The survey focused on the opinions offered by the classified students in reference to the overall climate of the school. The intern analyzed responses given by students and applied that to improving the continuum of services offered to the classified student. In addition, the survey discovered what type of extracurricular activities the special education students are involved. The intern determined if those students who were actively involved in extracurricular activities are experiencing an increased level of school success.

The intern also intended to conduct interviews with special education students in order to gain further insight in to their satisfaction with the services offered and to determine the extent of their involvement in extracurricular activities. The students were randomly selected for the interview. The intern utilized a structured interview with a set number of questions. The questions were posed to each respondent in the same manner. However, due to learning or emotional disabilities encountered, the intern had to provide explanations for some respondents. The intern provided for both structured responses and free responses by the students.

The intern ensured that the research design maintained its focus on the two primary objectives of the thesis. Every research method utilized had the purpose of either evaluating the continuum of special education services provided to the classified student or assisting the intern with answering the question, do students who are involved in extracurricular activities have more school success than those who do not?

### Development and Design of Research Instruments

On October 6, 1999, the intern attended the weekly administrative council meeting. Administrative council is a meeting of all administrators within the Lower Cape May Regional School District. During the meeting, the intern discussed conducting a school climate survey; at a subsequent meeting, the intern met with his field mentor (building principal) and further discussed the climate survey. The intern proposed a school climate survey that would be taken by all students. The intern's survey would be designed to benefit the entire school, while still providing him with the information required for his research. The intern created a draft climate survey and during the next administrative council presented his proposals to the district's administrators. Each building principal then met with his departmental liaisons. Each building principal requested that the liaisons provide a critique of the survey and return the survey with their remarks. This process took approximately two weeks. Once the building principals received the feedback from the liaisons, the intern met with each building principal. Each of these meetings took approximately one hour. The building principals discussed with the intern the comments that were made by the various departmental liaisons. As a result of the feedback provided by the various building principals and departmental liaisons, the survey was significantly changed from the original draft. The intern consolidated the information provided and wrote another "draft" school climate survey. This survey was then presented to the university mentor who provided the intern with additional feedback on the survey. As a result of the meeting with the university mentor, the intern made a number of changes to the survey instrument. The intern then presented his survey during the Board of Education's "curriculum committee" meeting. The curriculum committee

approved the school climate survey. During the November 23, 1999, Board of Education meeting, the survey was formally approved to be distributed to the students on November 24, 1999. The intern spent approximately ten hours directly involved in the creation of this survey. The intern now begins the analysis of the survey.

The intern's interview instrument was created to allow him to study and evaluate the classified student's satisfaction with the services that he receives and to determine the extracurricular involvement of these students. The intern proposed a structured interview with ten, set questions. The questions proposed were both structured response questions and free response questions. The intern created his draft interview questions and then met with the Special Education Departmental Liaison. The Special Education Liaison provided the intern with cogent and invaluable feedback on his proposed interview questions. The liaison was extremely supportive of the intern's intent for the interview. Following this meeting, the intern discussed the proposed interview with the Director of Special Services in the district. The Director also provided the intern with constructive criticism for conducting the interview. Once again, the instrument was quite different from the intern's original draft. The intern will begin conducting interviews during December 1999. Students will be selected randomly for the interviews. The intern intends to interview ten students from the special education population at the High School.

The intern conducted an evaluation of the continuum of special education services offered at Lower Cape May Regional High School. The goal of the evaluation was to improve the services that are presently offered. In the process of conducting the evaluation the intern worked closely with both the special education department liaison at

the High School and with the Director of Special Services. The evaluation focused on four separate areas: 1) whether or not students are placed in the least restrictive environment, 2) the transition from school to post-school for special education students, 3) student discipline, 4) an evaluation of the in-class support and pull-out resource programs. The intern has worked with the Director of Special Services to create an evaluation plan. The Director has provided the intern with an evaluation instrument from the New Jersey Department of Special Education. The instrument, "*The Special Education Self-Assessment Document*," provided the intern with guidance when he conducted his evaluation of the four focus areas of special education programs and services.

#### Sample and Sampling Technique

The intern's climate survey study was submitted to the entire special education population at Lower Cape May Regional High School. The decision was made in conjunction with the building principal/field mentor that the survey would be conducted on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. Apparently, many of the students on this "Turkey Trot" day don't feel as strongly as they normally do about attending class. As a result of this decision, the intern only received approximately half of the surveys back. This caused a "sample" of only 50% of the special education population. If anything, this further resulted in a simple random sampling of the population.

The second instrument utilized for the research study was an interview of special education students. The special education population at Lower Cape May Regional is 183 students. The intern decided to interview 10 students from the special education population. This led to a sampling fraction of 10/183 or approximately 5% of the

population. The intern wanted to ensure that every student would have a nonzero probability of being selected for the sample. The intern used an alphabetic list of special education students in the High School. From there he randomly chose a number between 1 and 18. The number chosen was three. Starting with the third student from the list the intern then chose every 18<sup>th</sup> person. This sampling technique is known as systematic sampling. Hence, the entire sample is based upon the selection of the first student.

The intern went in to the classroom in order to evaluate Lower Cape May Regional High School's pull-out resource program and its in-class support program. The intern conducted two observations in each setting. The intern evaluated the programs by observing the interaction taking place between students and teachers. The intern utilized the school's observation instrument when conducting his evaluations. This instrument assisted him with his evaluation of the four special education focus areas. The intern observed four different special education classrooms (two different resource and two different in-class support classrooms). The classrooms observed were selected randomly. The classrooms observed were selected from the total population of special education classrooms. The sampling technique utilized during this phase of the research is known as cluster sampling.

### Data Collection

The intern's position as the High School's Coordinator of Special Projects (AKA Assistant Principal) has given him certain advantages in relation to data collection. The intern has received a great deal of cooperation; therefore he has had very little difficulty obtaining access to data in order to do his research. For the climate survey that was conducted, the intern worked closely with the administrative council in order to achieve

his research objective. The intern was able to gain access to the administrative council since it is part of his job description to participate in these weekly meetings as an administrator. The data collection approach for the survey was non-interactive. Once completed by the students, the surveys were used by the intern for his research and by the school district. The intern focused on the opinions offered by the special education students and how they feel about the school's overall climate. In addition, the intern used the surveys to determine to what extent special education students are involved in after-school activities. Following the collection of this data, the research compared how special education students that are involved in school activities are doing when compared to those who are not involved. The survey was also used by the building principal to obtain a view of how regular education students feel about the overall school climate. This information was unrelated to the intern's research, but should help administrators and staff in their efforts to improve the school climate.

The intern has coordinated to conduct interviews with the ten randomly selected special education students. All interviews were conducted in the month of December and January. The intern was a participant-observer in the conduct of his interviews. During the collection of data the intern was able to keep the students on task. The interviews were conducted to emphasize and encourage free responses. In order to obtain accurate and open responses, the intern made every effort to establish a rapport with the students. This was difficult with some of the students because the intern has had to deal with several of the selected students in a disciplinary manner. Confidentiality of the interview was paramount. The intern assured the respondents that their answers will not go beyond the intended research and their identity will not be shared with anyone in the High

School. Without offering specific names the data from the interviews will be shared with both the Director of Special Services and the Special Education Department Liaison.

The intern arranged to observe four separate classrooms in order to evaluate the pull-out resource program and the in-class support program. In this scenario, data collection was noninteractive. The intern merely observed the classrooms. The data collection instrument was the school's classroom observation form. This information was used to evaluate three of the focus areas for special education that the intern is studying: 1) least restrictive environment 2) discipline 3) the pull-out resource and in-class support programs.

In January 2000, the intern will evaluate and collect data on the Career Fair. In his role as a member of the Special Education Task Force Committee, the intern will focus on the involvement of special education students in this Career Fair. The intern will collect this data as a participant-observer. The intern will be part of the effort to get special education students involved in the career fair. The intern will also work with local businesses to gain their involvement in the fair. During the actual Career Fair Day on January 20, the intern will collect data on the involvement of the special education students. This data will be used to evaluate how school is successful in helping special education students with their transition from school to post-school.

### Data Analysis

Data collection and analysis have been ongoing since the beginning of the evaluation of the continuum of special education services began. Upon the completion of the data collection, the intern will have a large amount of information to decipher and analyze. At this stage, the intern must review approximately 90 school-climate surveys,

ten interviews, four classroom observations, career fair data, and analyze data collected from the self-assessment forms.

Each of the responses to the sixty-two questions in the school climate survey were analyzed. The intern used a three question Likert scale for fifty-three of the questions on the survey. The response stubs for these questions were mutually exclusive (i.e. 1. I agree with this statement had response stubs, 2. I neither agree nor disagree with this statement, 3. I disagree with this statement. The intern provided the percentages of respondents that selected the options for a given question. Eight of the questions were structured response questions, and the Likert scale was not utilized. For these questions, only percentages of the respondent answers were provided. For these questions the data analysis will be more narrative in nature. Once the survey has been analyzed, the intern will report his findings to the administrative council and the special education task force.

Analysis of the results of the interviews commenced during the beginning of the first interview. Upon the completion of the tenth interview the intern will describe the responses of the students in a narrative form. Since most of the questions in the interview are free response, the intern will organized his data before he analyzed it. This organization of data occurred after all interviews were completed. Subsequently, the intern organized the responses for each question into specific categories in order to make sense of the data. This organization and reduction of data is known as coding. Without coding his data, the intern would have extreme difficulty in conducting a proper analysis of the data collected from the interviews.

The intern analyzed the data from classroom observations in a similar manner. Data will be collected through observation and then described in narrative form. To

effectively analyze the data from the classroom observations in the pull-out resource and in-class support programs, the data was organized and compiled. The intern then took the information gained from the observations and analyzed it by utilizing the self-assessment instrument. The intern worked with the Special Education Department Liaison in analyzing the other focus areas for evaluation. Using the self-assessment instrument, the intern and Department Liaison completed the self-assessment form for the least-restrictive environment, the transition from school to post-school and discipline. This analyzed data from the self-assessment was shared with the Director of Special Services.

The intern made every effort to ensure that all data collected, analyzed and matched up with his objective to evaluate the continuum of special education services and to improve the overall involvement of the special education student in after-school activities. Furthermore, the intern shared all of the information that has been collected and then analyzed with the appropriate personnel. The intern conducted this research in order to have a positive impact on the special education student. If the intern helped improve the learning process for approximately 20% of the school population, then the hope was that it will also improve the overall school environment.

## Chapter 4

### Presentations of the Research Findings

Research has been conducted and data has been collected on the Special Education Department at Lower Cape May Regional High School. The focus of the research was on how to improve the continuum of special education services that are offered to the classified student. Data has also been collected in order to determine if those special education students who are involved in after-school activities are having more success than those who are not involved. The intern's data came from a variety of sources. The intern created and conducted a school-wide climate survey. This inclusive survey received input from both special and regular education students. This data therefore became useful to both special and regular educators. The intern also interviewed ten special education students to obtain their opinions on the services that are provided to them and to gauge their involvement in school. Additionally, data was obtained to determine the Grade Point Average for those special education students that are and those that are not involved in some form of after-school activity. The intern also worked with the High School's Department Liaison to complete the New Jersey Department of Education Continuous Improvement Self-Assessment. Questions that were related to the intern's focus were: 1) least restrictive environment, 2) the transition from school to post-school for special education students, 3) student discipline, and 4) evaluation of the in-class support and pull-out resource programs. Additionally, the four formal observations of special education classrooms were conducted. Two resource and two in-class support teachers were evaluated. These observations were shared with the

### Analysis of the School Climate Survey

The School Climate Survey was scheduled to be taken by all students in the Lower Cape May Regional High School. Unfortunately, there were several flaws in the supervision and distribution of the survey. The survey was administered on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving vacation. The operation of the school on this day is much different than most days. Due to the nature of this “Turkey Trot Day” there were far too many students in the hall and many students were generally not where they were supposed to be. As a result, approximately 50% of the students completed the survey. The intern randomly selected fifty surveys that were completed by special education students. There are approximately 205 special education students, but only 82 of the surveys were completed by special education students.

The school climate survey was broken down into several sections. The survey consisted of: six questions in reference to administrators; eleven questions that dealt with security, transportation, cafeteria and maintenance; twelve questions on student-teacher relationships; four questions on student academic orientation; four questions on student behavioral values; four questions on guidance; three questions on student-peer relationships; five questions on instructional management; one question on mediation/peer mediation; and eight questions on student activities (see enclosure).

Special education students generally held the school’s administrators in an unfavorable light. Only 26% of the classified students felt that administrators listened to student ideas, while only 28% of students believed that administrators in the school were willing to hear student complaints and opinions. Similarly, only 28% of the students felt that teachers and students helped to decide what happens in this school. This information

is useful to the intern, because it allows him to make a concerted effort in the future to ensure that student's complaints are heard. Also, in the future, the intern will solicit the ideas of special education students in order to discover what improvements they would like to see occur in their school. As a result of the survey, the intern queried special education students about what changes they would like to see made in the high school.

When responding to the security questions, a majority of the classified students felt safe in the high school; 60% of the students felt safe on the bus. However, only 32% of the students believed that the school was kept clean, and only 22% believed that the school's grounds were kept neat and attractive. Also, 60% of students feel safe on the bus. The cafeteria food fared the worst in this section as only 20% of the students stated that they enjoyed the food. The primary concern of the intern in his position as the acting assistant principal is that the students continue to feel safe. Even though 52% of the students feel safe, 20% don't know and 28% do not feel safe, sends a mixed message. The intern believes that the peer mediation training that the school is conducting will lead to an improved school environment. There are at least four special education students who have volunteered for this training. To improve the cleanliness of the school, the intern has instituted a weekly walk-through of the school building with the Supervisor of Building and Grounds.

The scores were rather low in the teacher-student relationship section. Only 22% of the special education students responded that they liked their teachers. This low number could be a result of those students who suffer from emotional disabilities; likewise, only 28% of the classified students believe that their teachers are fair to students. It is even more disheartening to find that only 18% of the students believed that

teachers support students. The intern will stress for more special education teachers to attend workshops that offer strategies for dealing with students that have discipline problems. In the summer of 1998, the intern attended a workshop that focused on the teachings of Lee Canter and has recommended that this workshop be repeated at the Special Education Task Force Meeting.

In the section on student academic orientation, one-third of the respondents stated that they understood the importance of an education. In order to improve this number, the intern has made an effort, whenever possible, to discuss with classified students about setting educational goals and including post-secondary education when appropriate. In the section on student behavioral values, only 28% of the students stated that students treat each other with respect. In the section on student-peer relationships, only 24% of students stated that students cared about each other. This was the lowest scoring section on the survey. The intern believes that students will gain more respect towards each other if they can improve their trust of each other. This will occur when the school can get special education students more involved in after-school activities and peer mediation succeeds.

In the student activities section, only 18% of special education students stated that they were involved in an after-school activity. In addition, only 18% of students believed that they could be in sports, music, or the school play. This obviously shows a lack of desire combined with a lack of self-confidence to participate. The intern requested for the teachers to once again discuss the importance of getting involved.

The survey results provided very few surprises. In general, the survey showed an apathetic attitude towards the school, and education. The survey allowed the intern to

focus on certain areas for improvement. The brightest result obtained was that most special education students feel safe in the high school. The two areas that need the greatest improvements are how students treat each other and the dire need to get more special education students involved in after-school activities.

#### Interviews with Special Education Students

The intern conducted ten interviews with special education students. Six male and four female students were interviewed. Five of the students interviewed were in a resource room pull-out program, while the other five participated in an inclusive environment through in-class support. The interview consisted of nine, open-ended questions. However, some respondents gave only one-word answers to some of the questions and either refused to elaborate or just decided not to. The intern decided to conduct all of the interviews, in the library, located far from his office. This decision was made in order to attempt to set the students at ease and get them at least away from the Assistant Principal's office.

The first question asked students if the High School had prepared them for life beyond high school. Half of the students responded positively. Only three of the students even elaborated on the subject. Those that answered in the negative had less than pleasant things to say about the school. The intern felt that this was a bad question because it seemed to confuse some of the students. The second question asked students what their plans were beyond high school. The intern was pleasantly surprised that only one of the ten students did not have an idea of what he or she wanted to do. Albeit, some of the students had to be prodded to give an answer, it was still encouraging to see that these students had a general plan. The intern believes this occurs because they are asked

every year at their IEP conference or by their case manager. The intern believes that the credit is due to our special educators and the transition plan in the students' IEP. The third question asked students if they were involved in any after-school activities. Only two students were involved directly with the school in some form of after-school activity. The intern attempted to discern why these students were so uninvolved. Most of the students stated that they were simply uninterested in participating. In each case, during the interview, the intern attempted to discuss with students the importance of getting involved. The fourth question asked students if you were the Principal of the school, what would you change? The answers here were fairly informative. Three students mentioned the overcrowding problem in the building. Two students complained about detentions and how the school was unfair in assigning detentions. One student wanted a safer building, with a reduction in fighting. Another student stated that he thought students should be allowed to wear whatever type of T-shirt they wanted. He even mentioned that the school was preventing them from exercising their right to freedom of speech. One student said she wouldn't want the job, and she was generally happy with the school. Another said that she would stop students from smoking. The fifth question asked students if they had any role models in school. Four of the students said that they did not have any role models. One stated that she had a role model, but it was her mom and not some one from school. Four students listed a teacher, and one listed a School Based Youth Services Counselor. The sixth question asked students if their parent(s) or guardian(s) were involved with their education. Half of the respondents stated their parent(s) or guardian(s) were involved, while the other five stated they weren't involved or showed little support. The seventh question asked students what they felt were the

qualities of a good teacher. Students, in general, wanted someone who was nice, knew how to teach, fun in class, and who listened. Only one student said he wanted a teacher who doesn't give much work. Students were asked, in the eighth question, if they were happy with their academic program of classes. Only one student stated that he was unhappy. He stated that he wanted out of the resource classes and wanted to receive more of a challenge. The intern encouraged him to speak with his guidance counselor and told him that he would help him set up an appointment. Once again, the student's apparent satisfaction with their classes is a tribute to the IEP process. The final question asked students if they believed they were being treated fairly. Two students stated that they were being treated fairly in school; one stated I don't know, and seven students responded that they were treated fairly. Only one student elaborated on his answer by saying that he's not treated fairly because teachers always have the last word.

This interview process demonstrated to the intern that most of the students interviewed were generally happy with the school and their program. What was even more encouraging was that the students who were interviewed had a good idea of what they wanted to do beyond high school. This response was a surprise to the intern. The interviews have, once again, shown the intern that the school needs to drastically improve the involvement of special education students with after-school activities. The intern needs to continue to work with the Department Liaison, the Director of Special Services, and special education teachers in order to implement different strategies for getting the special education student population involved. The intern proposed to the Departmental Liaison that every special education student is provided with a mentor. The intern was also encouraged from the interviews that the IEP process is effective at this school.

## Classroom Observations

The intern conducted four classroom observations of special education teachers. Two of the observations were in a resource pull-out classroom, and two were in an in-class support classroom. Two of the observations are enclosed. The intern shared the results of the observations with the teachers. Although the intern is currently in the position of acting assistant principal, he is not allowed to conduct formal observations of the school staff. Each teacher was assured that the results of the observations would only be shared between the intern and the teacher and would also be used for the intern's research. There were several reasons for conducting the observations. First, the intern wanted to determine if students were properly placed in the least restrictive environment. Secondly, the intern wanted to look at the involvement of the special education teacher in the regular education classroom. Finally, the intern wanted an excuse to gain some experience conducting classroom observations before he is formally tasked to begin observations next year.

The first resource room classroom that the intern observed was a General Math 2 class. During this lesson, the special education teacher conducted 90% of the instruction. In conversation with the building principal, this was not an anomaly. Apparently the special education teacher does a majority of the teaching when the two teachers are paired together. This special education teacher has a natural flair for teaching. His rapport with the students was superb. What was most impressive was his ability to engage students of all skill levels with the lesson. In addition, the students were on-task throughout the lesson, primarily due to his ability to infuse real-life math skills in the lesson. The second in-class support observation was of an in-class support biology

class. The special education teacher spent the majority of the lesson preparing the students for a test the following day. The regular education teacher assisted students and kept them on task while the special education teacher reviewed the material. The special education teacher was going over the following day's test on Darwinism, yet many students were not paying attention. The special and regular education teacher made an effort to emphasize the importance of the material; however the majority of students did not adhere to their advice. It was apparent that the students were properly placed in the least restricted environment in the general math class. It was more difficult to gauge proper placement in the science class. While it was evident that both teachers were having a positive impact in the classroom, the special education math teacher was able to influence the students by making the class practical and by making the instruction relevant to the special education student.

The first resource room class that the intern observed was an English class. The eight students in this class were placed in this environment due to their low reading skills. The teacher, who is a certified reading specialist, was using the Wilson Reading Program for this lesson. She was able to take this group of students that ranged from 9th to 12th grade, with varying behavioral problems, and keep this group on task for nearly the entire class as she taught them about syllables. The teacher's rapport with the students and her genuine concern for them led to a situation where the students wanted to do the work. The second resource classroom observed was of an environmental science classroom. The class was taken out to the high school's green house. This teacher has turned the environmental science classroom into a successful business venture that directly involves the students. The students were tasked with planting, maintaining, and selling the plants

that they personally grew. This lesson was an ideal, hands-on science class. Five of the eight students have demonstrated behavior problems in the classroom. The teacher was able to keep the students on task and working. During a three-minute period when she had to discuss something with her plant supplier, the students were disruptive and off-task. However, she was able to quickly get them re-focused. Both of these resource teachers have students that are properly placed in the least-restrictive environment. Moreover, both teachers used strategies that ensured that the students were learning the material. Considering the students that were in both classes, it is abundantly clear that these teachers have superb classroom management skills. The students perform well in the classroom because they like and respect their teachers.

#### New Jersey Department of Education Self-Assessment Instrument

The intern met with both the Special Education Departmental Liaison and the Director of Special Services to conduct an evaluation of the High School's special education program using the New Jersey Department of Education Self-Assessment instrument. The meeting with the Special Education Departmental Liaison was general in nature. She provided the intern with guidance on how to utilize the instrument, but did not have the necessary information to complete the evaluation. As a result, the intern conducted the assessment with the Director of Special Services.

In the first section on Free and Public Education (FAPE) the objective stated, "do students with disabilities receive FAPE which promotes high standards and prepares them for employment and independent living after they exit school?" The first question asked if there was an increase in high school graduation rates and a decrease in dropout rates for children with disabilities. She stated that there was a decrease in graduation

rates and an increase in dropout rates. The next question asked if there is evidence that appropriate implementation of functional behavioral assessments and behavioral plans are provided to children with disabilities. The district has become very proactive this year with providing behavioral intervention plans for students. The intern has been actively involved this year in the implementation of several behavioral intervention plans. Next, suspension and expulsion rates are higher for students with disabilities even though statewide standard states that they are supposed to be the same. The following statewide indicator asked if Extended School Year services were available. The Director explained that she organized the entire program for the summer, lined up instructors and facilities, but none of the targeted students showed up for the program. On the subject of students with disabilities that are enrolled in post-secondary education, she stated that there is no follow-up data for those students. She stated that the Departmental Liaison gets students with disabilities to participate in community activities as a component of their educational program. Furthermore, the IEP process ensures that students and appropriate staff participate in transition planning as required by the statewide indicator.

The second section evaluated was the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). The objective for this section asked, “Do students with disabilities receive FAPE in the Least Restrictive Environment which promote high standards?” The first question asked if there was an increase in the percentage of students with disabilities. The Director stated that the district has seen a steady increase over the past few years with the number of students placed in an in-class support classroom. The next question dealt with the percentage of children with disabilities compared to national data. The High School has a large special education population, which is currently approximately 20% of the

school's population. The director stated that this is above the national average. The next indicator discussed was if there was evidence of a full continuum of placements that is available for children with disabilities. The Director stated that the district provides the entire spectrum of necessary placement options. There were additional questions, but they were not pertinent to the intern's research.

This assessment turned out to be a valuable tool for both the intern and the Director. The Director stated that environmental conditions are not a result of students being classified needlessly. Predominantly, this is caused by the large special education population. The evaluation made it evident that the district is properly placing students in the least restrictive environment due to an organized and properly implemented IEP process. The District needs to work on a strategy for properly implementing the Extended School Service program. It can be shown that the Director did everything within her power to organize the program. What needs to be improved is convincing parents and students of the program's importance. The intern also needs to look at the cause behind the higher suspension and expulsion rates for classified students. The intern has discussed this problem with guidance counselors, case managers, and the school psychologist. At this point, no formal plan has been implemented. Students who are having behavioral problems in the classroom are assigned a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). The special education staff has been requesting the implementation of the BIP for applicable students for the previous two years. This year the Director has ensured that the BIP's would be implemented. Child Study Team members are actively involved in implementing BIPs. These provide the teacher and the student with strategies for

behavioral success in the classroom. For those students that are assigned a BIP, there has been a reduction in discipline referrals.

### Special Education Students Involvement in After-School Activities

According to the school climate survey, 18% of classified students are involved in some form of an after-school activity. These classified students participate in a wide variety of after-school activities that include: all of the school's sports programs, school play, key club, renaissance committee, student council, and other organizations. Classified students are given every opportunity to join all organizations. No organization has denied a special education student membership due to his or her disability.

The intern wanted to determine if involvement in an after-school activity leads to academic success. Twenty special education students that participate in some form of after-school activity were randomly selected; accordingly, twenty special education students that do not participate in any form of after-school activity were also selected randomly. The cumulative grade point average (GPA) of the twenty students was obtained. The GPA is based on a 4-point scale. The GPA for the students who participated in an after-school activity was 3.07. The GPA for the students who did not participate in an after-school activity was 2.25.

The intern would argue that school involvement would lead to school success. First of all, once students are in an after-school activity, they are required to maintain a minimum GPA. In order to participate, students must pass six subjects. Students not passing six subjects become ineligible. Coaches and directors of other programs stress academics to their students. When special education students are involved with regular education students, success becomes "cool." Too often, in today's environment school

success doesn't equal student acceptance. Moreover, and possibly most importantly, when students are in a sport or an organization they enjoy, their overall view of school improves. School itself becomes, as Glasser stated, "part of their quality world." In other words, if students are participating in an after-school activity that they enjoy then that activity becomes a "hook," or a reason to come to school.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusions, Implications and Further Study

Since September 1999, the intern has been evaluating the continuum of services offered to all of the special education students enrolled in the Lower Cape May Regional High School. The intent of the research has been to determine what can be done to improve the special education student's ability to achieve his potential. Through his action research, the intern has collected and analyzed a myriad of data. This information was then used to create recommended strategies for improvement. Furthermore, the intern's direct involvement with the improvement of the special education program has provided him with invaluable experience in the techniques of school leadership. By working on this project with the Building Principal, the Director of Special Services, the High School's Special Education Department Liaison, special education teachers, the Special Education Task Force, and students, the experience has led to encounters that have benefited the intern in his role as the acting assistant principal. In his work on this project, the intern has strived to make positive change in the Special Education Department. The Director of Special Services and the Department Liaison have both provided assistance and "reality checks" to the intern whenever he wanted to work towards making a change. The intern is cognizant of the fact that there is still much room for improvement in the services provided to the special education student at Lower Cape May Regional High School. The intern will continue to work with the Special Education Task Force to design strategies which will advance the learning of our classified students.

#### Study's Major Conclusions and Their Implications

The climate survey provided a great deal of insight into the convictions of the special education student. The responses provided by the students have directly resulted in strategies for improvement. These strategies were created by working with both the Director of Special Services and the Special Education Department Liaison.

In the section about administrators, a strategy for improved listening was recommended. This strategy was useful to the other assistant principal, but was especially useful to the intern. One of the direct complaints from students about the intern was that he didn't listen enough to "their side of the story." In addition, special education students need to believe that they are an integral part of the school. As an administrator, listening to their ideas and their problems, and treating them with the respect they deserve, is imperative.

The survey pointed out that a majority of the High School's special education students felt safe in school. The intern believes that this is possibly one of the most positive aspects of the survey. Since our special education population is receiving proportionally more consequences than their regular education counterparts, it was heartening to hear that most of them felt safe. Though the school does have its share of fights, the building is a fairly safe place to attend school. Several special education students are involved in the peer mediation training that has taken place. The expanded role that these students have assumed has helped to create a safer school environment.

The low teacher-student relationship scores were somewhat surprising. When conducting the interviews, nearly all of the students had something positive to say about some of their teachers. The intern believes that some of the scores may reflect how a special education student feels about one or two of his teachers, but not all. Many of the

special education students are assigned mentors and receive more individual attention than their regular education counterparts. The intern would also argue that due to a student's disability, the lower scores would reflect an ongoing negative feeling for not only teachers, but also school in general.

The area which still requires the most improvement is the lack of involvement of special education students with after-school activities. Throughout the year, the intern has been stressing to classified students the importance of school involvement, and yet those that are actually involved remain low. As demonstrated by the research, those students who are involved in an after-school activity are much more likely to succeed in school. Many classified students merely need to be persuaded to participate

The interviews that the intern conducted with the special education students were the most informational and rewarding part of his research. For reasons unexplained, nearly all of the students were willing to openly discuss their ideas, their goals and what they would do to fix some of the problems that they believe the High School has. Though the students were participatory in the interview sessions, the same can not be said for their overall participation in school activities. The general impression given was one of apathy towards participating. The primary conclusion to be drawn from the interviews is, once again, a need to get students involved. The school's IEP process is an effective tool to achieve this.

The classroom observation portion of the research demonstrated to the intern that students are being properly placed in the least restrictive environment. Moreover, it showed that special education teachers are an integral part of the in-class support team. The intern has observed several other classrooms informally, and he has observed the

active involvement of special education teachers. In addition, being able to observe teachers was an invaluable experience. Next year, the intern will be required to conduct classroom observations. Working through the process from the pre-observation to the post-observation conference will benefit the intern immensely.

### Conclusions and Implications of Study on Intern's Leadership Development

Prior to the beginning of this research project, the intern worked as the Department Liaison for the Teitelman Middle School. In this position the intern was able to work with staff, students and administrators. However, in his position as the acting assistant principal, he has had an even greater opportunity to develop his leadership skills. During the work on this project, the intern has experienced easy access to staff, students, and other administrators as a result of his position. Due to the luck of his circumstances, the intern has not had to legitimize his requests to conduct any of his research. The opportunity to be in this position and work on this project has led to an excellent learning environment for the intern.

Early on in the project, the intern was tasked by the Building Principal to create a School Climate Survey that would, as it turns out, be utilized by the entire District. Implementation of this Climate Survey required the intern to work with administrators from the entire district, staff, and the administrative council. Upon completion of the survey the intern was then required to present his climate survey to the curriculum committee for approval. The survey was then approved, taken by students, and analyzed by the intern for both the special and regular education populations. Both the intern and the building principal, at different forums, presented the findings of the survey. This

leadership experience in coordinating the survey will surely benefit the intern in his long term endeavors.

To conduct the interviews of the classified students, the intern had to work with the Director of Special Services, the Special Education Department Liaison, special education staff members, and students. The intern met with the special education staff and an administrator in order to inform them of the reasons for the research. Due to the ongoing coordination with the staff members the interview portion of the research went smoothly.

The Self-Assessment Instrument portion of the research conducted with the Special Education Department Liaison and the Director of Special Services took little effort. This section did not really advance the intern's leadership since it was merely an assessment discussed with the Director and the Department Liaison.

Working with the staff members in order to conduct classroom observations provided the opportunity for the intern to exercise his observation and staff mentoring skills. In his position as the "acting" assistant principal, the intern has not been permitted to conduct formal observations of staff members. The intern feels that he has established a rapport with the staff has found it enriching to work with the staff members when conducting the observation process. The most important aspect of the process to improving the staff member's leadership was the post-observation conference. In these meetings the intern was given the opportunity to counsel the staff member on his or her teaching techniques and classroom management. Having this leadership experience will greatly assist the intern when he is required to conduct observations next year on an ongoing basis.

The intern is passionate about getting special education students involved with school. However, the intern had very little success in this area. The intern was not able to improve the number of classified students who are involved in after-school activities. Due to many factors, the intern does not feel that he dedicated enough time towards achieving this goal. Since the intern does feel passionately about the importance of improving their involvement, he will continue to work with staff, administrators and students to improve involvement in the school. The intern is at an advantage in the sense that this is not a one-year project. Barring some unforeseen circumstance, he will continue in his present position, and will, therefore, continue to work at improving the involvement of classified students.

#### How the Organization Changed as a Result of the Study

The School Climate Survey created by the intern, in conjunction with staff and administration, provided feedback on many levels. The intern and other administrators were able to utilize the information to improve the manner in which they deal with and treat students. Teachers were given direct feedback on a number of issues. The building principal provided this feedback at a staff meeting. Conscientious and professional staff members undoubtedly utilized this information to improve the manner in which they deal with and teach students. The intern provided parents with an analysis and feedback of the climate surveys during a parent advisory council. The parents in attendance asked cogent questions and once again, the intern was able to use their feedback to work towards improving the overall school climate. Primarily, the presentation focused on how the school is using the information gained to implement improvements.

Following the interviews, the intern had a better understanding of what is important to special education students, where the school is succeeding with these students, and where it needs improvement. The interviews didn't necessarily change the organization, but they did provide to the intern several areas that do need to be changed. Once again, the intern needs to work towards improving the involvement of special education students. This has to change.

Behavioral Intervention Plans (BIPs) are being implemented this year. This was an organizational change that was discovered during the Self-Assessment Instrument. This organizational change was not made as a result of any individual work that the intern did this year. This change was made due to legal requirements and due to the efforts of the Director of Special Services and other special education staff members. The BIP has had an impact on those students who are having difficulty adhering to the school's discipline code. BIPs are primarily implemented when a special education student is identified with a behavior disorder, or when he is suspended in excess of ten days.

#### Need for further Study

The intern will recommend to the Building Principal that the school should conduct an annual School Climate Survey. In this way, the intern and other administrators can analyze where the school is improving and in what areas the school has shortfalls. Prior to implementing such a survey, the intern would work with other staff and administrators to improve the questions asked. This survey committee could create a survey that will focus on continued improvement in school climate and the advancement of the learning for all students.

The area that still requires continued study is student involvement. The intern needs to continue to research what methods are successful for getting students involved. The intern is convinced that he can get more students involved, if he does a better selling job to students. The intern is convinced that students want to get involved, but for a variety of reasons choose not to. If opportunities are created and special education students are appropriately convinced of the importance of school involvement, there will be marked growth in this area. In the Lower Cape May Regional High School, it is paramount that the staff and administration continue to work towards improving the educational opportunity for 20% of the student population. Special education students can offer a great deal to the school community, but there is much work to be done to help these students achieve their potential.

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**Appendix A**  
**School Climate Survey**



### SECURITY, TRANSPORTATION, CAFETERIA AND MAINTENANCE

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| 10. Students usually feel safe in the school building.                            | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 11. Teachers and other workers feel safe in the building before and after school. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 12. Classrooms are usually clean and neat   | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 13. The school building is kept clean and neat                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 14. The school building is kept in good repair                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 15. The school grounds are neat and attractive                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 16. Custodial staff are pleasant, helpful and courteous to students               | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 17. I feel safe when I am on the bus  | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 18. The bus drivers are pleasant, helpful and courteous to students               | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 19. I enjoy the food in the cafeteria   | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 20. The cafeteria staff are pleasant, helpful and courteous to students           | 1 | 2 | 3 |

### TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

- |  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| 21. Teachers in this school like their students.                                       | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 22. Most teachers in this school support students.                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 23. Teachers give students the grades they deserve.                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 24. Teachers help students to be friendly and kind to each other                       | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 25. When I have a problem I feel I can go to someone on the staff to help me solve it. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 26. Teachers are patient when a student has trouble learning                           | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 27. Teachers make extra efforts to help students.                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 28. Teachers understand and meet the needs of each student.                            | 1 | 2 | 3 |

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| 29. Teachers praise students more often than they scold them.             | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 30. Teachers are fair to students.  | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 31. Teachers explain carefully so that students can understand their work | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 32. Students are challenged academically by their teachers                | 1 | 2 | 3 |

STUDENT ACADEMIC ORIENTATION

- |  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| 33. Students here understand the importance of an education              | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 34. In this school, students are interested in learning new things       | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 35. Students in this school have fun but also work hard on their studies | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 36. Students work hard to complete their school assignments              | 1 | 2 | 3 |

STUDENT BEHAVIORAL VALUES

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| 37. If one student makes fun of someone, other students do not join in                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 38. Students in this school are well-behaved even when the teachers are not watching them                 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 39. Students in this school are likely to pick up trash if they see it in the hallway or in the cafeteria | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 40. Students at this school treat each other with respect.  | 1 | 2 | 3 |

GUIDANCE

- |  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| 41. Counselors encourage students to think about their future            | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 42. Counselors help students plan for future classes and for future jobs | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 43. Counselors help students with personal problems                      | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 44. Counselors are available when students need them                     | 1 | 2 | 3 |

STUDENT-PEER RELATIONSHIPS

- |                                    |   |   |   |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| 45. Students care about each other | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---|

46. The closest friends I have are here at school 1 2 3
47. Students have a sense of belonging in this school 1 2 3

INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT

48. There is a clear set of rules for students to follow in this school 1 2 3
49. Taking attendance and other tasks do not interfere with classroom teaching 1 2 3
50. Most classroom time is spent talking about classwork or assignments 1 2 3
51. Teachers use class time to help students learn assigned work 1 2 3
52. Outside interruptions of the classroom are few 1 2 3

MEDIATION/PEER MEDIATION

53. If I were in a conflict with another student I would want my

conflict resolved by a(n):

- a. Administrator (Principal, Assistant Principal)
- b. Guidance Counselor
- c. Peer Mediator (a student who is trained to resolve conflicts)
- d. School Based Youth Services Counselor (Counselors who work out of the trailer)

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

54. Students are able to take part in school activities in which they are interested 1 2 3
55. Students can be in sports, music, and plays even if they are not very talented 1 2 3
56. Students are comfortable staying after school for activities such as sports, and music 1 2 3
57. Students can take part in sports and other school activities even if their families cannot afford it 1 2 3
58. What academic program(s) do you participate in? (Circle all appropriate answers)
- a. Regular Education
  - b. College Bound
  - c. Resource Center

- d. In-Class Support
- e. Advanced Placement

59. Do you participate in any school activities? Y    N

60. Which school activities do you participate in (or plan on participating in ) this year?

Circle all appropriate answers

Sports            List sport(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Band

Mock Trial

School Play

Cheerleading

Stage Crew

Future Problem Solving

National Honor Society

Literary Magazine (Pegasus)

School Newspaper (Seahorse)

Intramurals

Concert Band & Ensemble

Concert Choir & Ensemble

Academic/Knowledge Bowl

Key Club

School Musical

Student Council

Foreign Language Club

Yearbook (Ebb Tides)

Math & Science Leagues

61. Whom would you go to if you needed help?

- Another Student
- Teacher
- Counselor
- Administrator

62. Additional comments that I would like to make involve the following:

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**APPENDIX B**  
**RESPONDENT DATA TO SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEY**

LCMR HIGH SCHOOL SPECIAL ED CLIMATE SURVEY

Questions	1	2	3	A	B	C	D	E
	ANS#1	ANS#2	ANS#3	% #1	% #2	% #3		
Question#4	13	8	29	26	16	58		
Question # 5	25	13	12	50	26	24		
Question # 6	18	26	6	36	52	12		
Question # 7	14	10	26	28	20	52		
Question # 8	14	10	26	28	20	52		
Question # 9	16	8	26	32	16	52		
Question # 10	26	10	14	52	20	28		
Question # 11	31	11	8	62	22	16		
Question # 12	16	10	24	32	20	48		
Question # 13	19	15	16	38	30	32		
Question # 14	11	16	23	22	32	46		
Question # 15	16	18	16	32	36	32		
Question # 16	19	18	13	38	36	26		
Question # 17	30	18	4	60	32	8		
Question # 18	20	20	10	40	40	20		
Question # 19	10	17	23	20	34	46		
Question # 20	14	22	14	28	44	28		
Question # 21	11	18	21	22	36	42		
Question # 22	9	22	19	18	44	38		
Question # 23	10	16	24	20	32	48		
Question #24	16	19	15	32	38	30		
Question # 25	11	19	20	22	38	40		
Question # 26	12	17	21	24	34	42		
Question # 27	13	16	21	26	32	42		
Question # 28	15	13	22	30	26	44		
Question # 29	10	18	22	20	36	44		
Question # 30	14	21	15	28	42	30		
Question # 31	10	19	21	20	38	42		
Question # 32	14	17	19	28	34	38		
Question # 33	17	17	16	34	34	32		
Question # 34	16	20	14	32	40	28		
Question # 35	14	19	17	28	38	34		
Question # 36	25	16	9	50	32	18		
Question # 37	17	12	21	34	24	42		
Question #38	11	17	22	22	34	44		
Question # 39	8	13	29	16	26	58		
Question #40	14	25	11	28	50	22		
Question # 41	20	14	18	40	28	32		
Question # 42	25	9	16	50	18	32		
Question # 43	11	27	12	22	54	24		
Question # 44	17	22	11	34	44	22		
Question # 45	12	24	14	24	48	28		
Question # 46	11	23	16	22	46	32		
Question # 47	10	18	18	20	36	44		
Question # 48	14	18	18	28	36	36		
Question #49	10	21	19	20	42	38		
Question # 50	14	24	12	28	48	24		
Question # 51	10	30	10	20	60	20		
Question # 52	18	25	7	36	50	14		
Question # 54	10	10	21	20	32	48		
Question # 55	9	25	16	18	50	32		
Question # 56	14	21	15	28	42	30		
Question # 57	15	25	10	30	50	20		

Question#3	14	22	0	2	12	28	44	0	4	24
Question # 53	0	0	0	0	ERR	ERR	ERR	ERR		
Question # 58	0	0	17	33	0	0	34	66		
Question # 59	9	39			18.75	81.25				
Question #61	0	0	0	0	ERR	ERR	ERR	ERR		

APPENDIX C  
CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

**Lower Cape May Regional High School  
PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Staff Member: Pat Holden  
Subject/Service/Program Area: ICS General Math 2  
Evaluator: Gene Sole  
Date of Pre-observation conference: 1/31/00  
Date of Observation: 2/3/00  
Time: 3<sup>rd</sup> Period

**Purpose/Use of Report:**       Self Evaluation                       Peer Coaching  
    Formative Evaluation by Certified & Authorized District Administrator  
    Summative Evaluation by Certified & Authorized District Administrator

**Summary of Pre Conference**

Mr. Holden indicated in the pre-conference that the objective of the lesson would be to infuse real life math skills into his general math 2 lesson.

**Narrative Describing the Observation**

Mr. Holden begins the in-class support general math class by having his students get out their practice #103 assignment. Mr. DiVito, the regular education teacher, held up a paper with no name on it for some student to claim. Students were again told to get out their practice #103 assignments. Mr. Holden announced to the class that they would review the problems from practice #103. Mr. Holden proceeded to call on students for the answers to question #1. Mr. Holden then proceeded to review questions #1 and put different answers from students on the board. He called on different students and was able to engage at least one-half of the class with the first question. With each question, he would ask the students to look for what the question was asking in order to determine which math function to utilize. After question #3, Mr. Holden referred back to a problem from the previous day. He then related how today's problem was similar to yesterday's problem.

Mr. Holden then asked students "How do you find the area of a square?" He made this question relevant by referring to a job of laying carpet. He went on to discuss the financial return available to those in this business. "There is definitely money to be made in this business." He then came up with an example for the students to solve that was not on the worksheet. Mr. Holden then began a discussion on discounts and labor costs involved with laying carpet. Mr. Holden asked students "Who is going to pay more per yard, the individual consumer or a someone who buys large orders of carpet?" He went on to explain that the large order purchase will pay less per square yard.

Mr. DiVito would assist with student questions making this a true teamed class. Mr. Holden then put a question on the board to help students with their understanding of the topic. "The best way to solve these types of problems is to draw a picture." Mr. Holden then asked students to raise their hands if they were not completed with practice #104. Eight students had not finished #104. Mr. DiVito announced that they would be passing out #105 at this time. Mr. Holden stated that "If you have completed practice #104, then make sure you

check your answers.” “If you get a question wrong, we’ll be around to help you with your work.” Mr. Holden then reminded students that there will be a quiz on Monday on this information.

Mr. Holden then turned students to seat work for the last 15 minutes of class. Both teachers went around and individually helped students with individual problems from the two practice sheets that the students were working on. On a couple of occasions, Mr. Holden had to ask students to keep it down. Students were focused on their assignments with little or no disruption. Both teachers continued to encourage students to ensure they stayed on task. Mr. Holden then announced that the first ten answers for practice #105 were on the board. “You can look on the board to see if you are doing the problems correctly.” This provided the students with immediate feedback on their work. Mr. Holden closed the lesson by informing them that they must be done with practice #104 and you need to turn to practice #105. He also stated, “Remember we have a quiz on this material on Monday.”

**Listing of Commendations (related to the pre-conference)** By performance areas outlined in the Professional Evaluation Manual, the following commendations are noted:

**Implementation**

1. This was an excellent lesson because you made your instruction relevant to your students by relating real-life math skills throughout your lesson.
2. You provided appropriate feedback to help students meet the objectives.
3. Effective planning was evident through the performance of your students.
4. You successfully engaged the entire class with your Socratic method of teaching.
5. You reinforced your material by relating today’s material with previous instruction.
6. Students who have demonstrated to be discipline problems in other classrooms and in other areas of the school were on-task and involved throughout your lesson.
7. Your students respect you and enjoy being in your class. Your sense of humor combined with your proficient teaching skills has lead to a superb rapport with your students.

**Listing of Recommendations** By performance areas outlined in the Professional Evaluation Manual, the following recommendations are noted:

**Implementation**

1. Continue to infuse real-life math skills in your lessons.
2. Continue to work closely with Mr. DiVito in order to maintain your “inclusive environment.”

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Staff Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Administrator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**APPENDIX D**  
**CLASSROOM OBSERVATION**

**Lower Cape May Regional High School  
PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Staff Member: Eileen Iaconangelo  
Subject/Service/Program Area: Resource English  
Evaluator: Gene Sole  
Date of Pre-observation conference:  
Date of Observation: 2/17/00  
Time: Period 3

**Purpose/Use of Report:**      Self Evaluation                    Peer Coaching  
                                   Formative Evaluation by Certified & Authorized District Administrator  
                                   Summative Evaluation by Certified & Authorized District Administrator

**Summary of Pre Conference**

Mrs. Iaconangelo indicated in the pre-conference that she would be conducting several exercises utilizing the Wilson Reading Program.

**Narrative Describing the Observation**

This resource room class had eight students; seven males and one female. One student was on the computer doing the Wilson Reading Program and did not participate in any of the other classroom activities. Prior to the beginning of the class, Mrs. Iaconangelo went over the Wilson Reading Program with me once again. She briefly informed me what she planned to do during the class and asked me if I had any questions.

Mrs. Iaconangelo began the class by stating, "Tell me what a syllable is." After several students gave their answers, she reinforced the correct answer was "one push of breath." She then asked the class "What is an open syllable?" She proceeded to reinforce the idea of an open syllable. She stated that every syllable must have a vowel. Mrs. Iaconangelo then went on to discuss open versus closed syllables. While explaining this concept, she used visual board aids to help the students' comprehension of the material. She displayed her chart, which included examples of open, closed, and vowel consonant "e" syllables. After giving several examples on the board with student participation, Mrs. Iaconangelo then placed students in groups. One of the students had his head down and appeared tired and Mrs. Iaconangelo asked him "Are you tired because you had wrestling last night?" The student responded that he did.

Once the students were placed in groups, each was given a packet of cards. Mrs. Iaconangelo told the groups "Organize each group into open, closed, and vowel consonant e syllables." Two of the three groups began working immediately. Once all the groups were started, she then went to help out the student who was working individually on the computer. Once she finished with this student, she then began to check on the progress of the groups. Group one finished and then asked Mrs. Iaconangelo to look at their syllable. She told this group that they got 100% of the answers correct. Group two had some difficulties, and Mrs. Iaconangelo worked with the group to assist them with coming up with the right answers. Group three also required some assistance from Mrs. Iaconangelo.

Mrs. Iaconangelo then announced to the class that she was going to read out a word. The students were then required to use the syllable cards within their groups in order to form the word that Mrs. Iaconangelo called out. As she called the words out, she would then provide immediate feedback to the students on their success for forming the words with their syllable cards. She reminded the students of what she had stated in a previous lesson that the purpose of the exercise is "When you hear a sound, you then turn the sound into a letter in order to form a word." She then explained to me that she likes going from reading to spelling because it helps her analyze what students are doing well and where they need to improve. She then began her spelling practice exercise by reading a word and then having the students individually spell the word. She also announced, "When I grade these I look at your attempt at the letters, not just if you spelled it correctly or not." She provided the students immediate feedback on their spelling words. She called on different students to spell the words. Mrs. Iaconangelo did not call on those students who she knew would be unprepared to correctly spell the word, but she did ensure that those lower level students received immediate feedback on the correct spelling. She announced, "Make sure you check your answers and correct mistakes." She went around to each student to check his or her answers.

She then transitioned to the final activity by announcing, "How about a game of bingo?" The bingo game was two-syllable word bingo. The students were told that they were playing for chocolate, which piqued their interest. One student walked in and proceeded to get the class off task, but Mrs. Iaconangelo quickly refocused the class. Mrs. Iaconangelo would call out the words and when appropriate would sound out the words in order to reflect the meaning of the word (e.g. eee – RUPT). She would also use the words in sentences. This was illustrated for the word respect when she said, "I get no respect." Two of the lower level students were unable to play the game as effectively as the other students. Mrs. Iaconangelo would individually assist these students and quietly offer them hints. Once the game was over and several pieces of chocolate passed out, she had the students organize their game pieces. She ended the class by telling the students, "Have a nice, relaxing and enjoyable weekend."

**Listing of Commendations (related to the pre-conference)** By performance areas outlined in the Professional Evaluation Manual, the following commendations are noted:

### Implementation

1. It is apparent that you have an excellent rapport with your students. Your genuine concern for your students has led to a situation where they want to do the work and do so because they like and respect you.
2. Students who have demonstrated to be discipline problems in other classrooms and in other areas of the school were on-task and involved throughout your lesson.
3. Students were engaged in the lesson and were provided with immediate feedback throughout the lesson.
4. Cooperative learning groups were appropriately paired for the lesson. Your extra assistance to the students who needed it greatly helped them understand the lesson and helped them achieve to their ability.
5. Effective planning was evident through the performance of your students.
6. You reinforced your material by relating today's material with previous instruction.
7. Your mastery of the Wilson Reading Program has directly benefited your students.

**Listing of Recommendations** By performance areas outlined in the Professional Evaluation Manual, the following recommendations are noted:

**Implementation**

1. Continue to emphasize the Wilson Reading Program in your classroom.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Staff Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Administrator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX E  
INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT

Biographical Data

Name	Gene Sole
High School	Robinson High School Fairfax, VA
Undergraduate	Bachelor of Science Business Administration University of Florida Gainesville, FL
	Post-Baccalaureate Study Special Education Rowan University Glassboro, NJ
Graduate	Master of Arts Educational Leadership Rowan University Glassboro, NJ
Present Occupation	Acting Assistant Principal Lower Cape May Regional High School Cape May, NJ

## INTERVIEW OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

STUDENT # \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE \_\_\_\_\_

AGE \_\_\_\_\_

SEX \_\_\_\_\_

1. Has this High School prepared you for life beyond high school?
2. What are your plans/goals for life beyond high school?
3. Do you participate in any after-school activities?
4. If you were Principal of this school what would you change?
5. Do you have any role models here in school?
6. Are your parent(s)/guardian(s) involved with your education?
7. What are some of the qualities of a good teacher?
8. Are you satisfied with your present school schedule? Why or why not?
9. Are you treated fairly at this school? Please explain.

Biographical Data

Name	Gene Sole
High School	Robinson High School Fairfax, VA
Undergraduate	Bachelor of Science Business Administration University of Florida Gainesville, FL
	Post-Baccalaureate Study Special Education Rowan University Glassboro, NJ
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Present Occupation	Acting Assistant Principal Lower Cape May Regional High School Cape May, NJ