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Does secondary educational programming as reflected in the IEP differ for students classified emotionally disturbed and those classified perceptually impaired?

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DOES SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING AS REFLECTED IN THE IEP DIFFER FOR STUDENTS CLASSIFIED EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED AND THOSE CLASSIFIED PERCEPTUALLY IMPAIRED?

by

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ABSTRACT

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1966

Dr. Margaret M. Shuff

Learning Disabilities, Track II

This descriptive study of three K-12 school districts was designed and conducted in order to determine how educational programming, as reflected in the IEPs (Individual Education Plan) of secondary students, differed for students classified as Emotionally Disturbed and Perceptually Impaired (Learning Disabled). In each of these three districts, six files of students classified ED and six files of students classified PI were pulled at random and examined as to content in particular areas.

Specifically, the congruency of the IEP, or how the annual goals were related to assessment data and vice versa, was examined, as were related services recommended, and instructional strategies described. The number and type of annual goals listed were examined, as were the number and type of exemptions from district or state requirements, and the amount of time spent in special education services per week. Data was collected and reviewed per classification

within and across districts, with tests of significance applied.

As expected, the study found few significant differences in the areas examined between the IEPs of secondary students classified ED or PI within or across districts. Questions for further consideration include whether this similarity in IEPs is appropriate, indicating categorical placement may be inappropriate, or whether the IEP format and/or time constraints involved result in programming that is apparently inappropriately similar for groups of students whose classifications differ in federal and state definitions.

MINI-ABSTRACT

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Does Secondary Educational Programming as Reflected in the IEP Differ for Students Classified Emotionally Disturbed and Those Classified Perceptually Impaired

1996

Dr. Margaret M. Shuff

Learning Disabilities, Track II

This descriptive study compared the IEPs (Individual Education Plans) of six Perceptually Impaired and 6 Emotionally Disturbed secondary students in each of three K-12 districts to determine how educational programming differed for these students.

Congruency of the documents (how the goals were tied to assessment data), recommended teaching strategies and related services, number and type of annual goals and policy exemptions, and time spent in special education services were reviewed for each student in each classification in each district.

As expected, few differences were found in these areas across or within districts when comparing the IEPs for the ED and PI students.

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destination first possible, then probable, and now, "just around the river's bend". Thank you all - **WE** made it!

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) has been called the "cornerstone of PL 94-142" (Lovitt, Cushing, & Stump, 1994, p. 34). The 1975 Congressional mandate regarding special education was most recently renamed The Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1990 (IDEA). Intended to be a basis for shared educational programming among school districts, parents, teachers, students, and related agencies (Bauwens & Korinek, 1993), the IEP by law must specify goals and objectives for the individual student, along with plans for implementing, and later, evaluating the achievement of these goals (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 1988). Various professionals, along with the child's parents, are supposed to be involved in the development of this document, designed to be the "catalyst for a more individualized and specific approach to education" (Turnbull, Strickland, & Hammer as cited in Mercer, 1987). If constructed correctly, the IEP can serve as an "integrative, functional element" of a child's total educational program, giving "direction, intent, and a frame of reference to the assessment process" (Haring & McCormick, 1990, p. 33-34).

Given that states differ in how they define students as eligible for special education services, some using a cross-categorical model and others using special categories; and given the differing criteria and definitions in both federal legislation and state education codes among categories of special services and needs, the task of individualizing programs for all handicapped students using one standard IEP format appears daunting. If the IEP is more than "empty paperwork, a symbol of compliance" (Haring & McCormick, 1990, p. 33), it may be reasonable to expect different emphases and approaches listed in the IEPs of students with differing disabilities. In fact, since the IEP's program goals dictate special education and related services, and include a delivery model, transition planning, and evaluation as to the program's effectiveness, the appropriate construction of the IEP is critical to provision of a program that meets a student's needs.

Two high frequency classifications of students, particularly at the secondary level, are emotionally or behaviorally disturbed and learning disabled. A question of interest related to these populations is whether IEPs make a "qualitative difference" (Dudley-Marling, 1985, p. 65) in educating these students. A concern of researchers is whether the IEP is more of a legal obligation than a guide for education (Lynch & Beare, 1990). Some ask whether the IEP is a "blueprint" for tailoring an education program to a

student's needs, or a "template" for programs based on convenience for a school district (Lovitt, et. al., 1994, p. 34). These concerns, as they relate to the two classifications mentioned above, will be the primary focus of this paper.

Definitions

The following definitions of terms relevant to this study are taken from the New Jersey Administrative Code, Title 6, Chapter 28: the rules and regulations for special education.

Emotionally Disturbed

> the exhibiting of seriously disordered behavior over an extended period of time which adversely affects educational performance and shall be characterized by an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships; or behaviors inappropriate to the circumstances, a general or pervasive mood of depression or the development of physical symptoms or irrational fears (NJAC 6:28-3(d)5).

Neurologically Impaired

> means a specific impairment or dysfunction of the nervous system or traumatic brain injury which adversely affects the education of a pupil. An evaluation by a physician trained in

neurodevelopmental assessment is required (NJAC 6:28-3(d)8i).

Perceptually Impaired

means a specific learning disability manifested by a severe discrepancy between the pupil's current achievement and intellectual ability in one or more of the following areas: basic reading skills; reading comprehension; oral expression; listening comprehension; mathematic computation; mathematic reasoning; and written expression (NJAC 6:28-3(d)8ii).

Individualized Education Program

means a written plan...which sets forth goals and measurable objectives and describes an integrated, sequential program of individually designed educational activities and/or related services necessary to achieve the stated goals and objectives. This plan shall establish the rationale for the pupil's educational placement (and) serve as the basis for program implementation (NJAC 6:28-3.6).

Related Services

means counseling for pupils, counseling and/or training for parents relative to the education of a pupil, speech-language services, ...rehabilitation counseling, school nursing

> services, social work services, transportation, as well as any other appropriate developmental, corrective, and supportive services required for a pupil to benefit from education as required by the pupil's individualized education program (NJAC 6:28-3.8).

Transition Services

> means a coordinated set of activities for a pupil with educational disabilities, designed within an outcome-oriented process, that promotes movement from school to post-school activities (NJAC 6:28-4.5).

The following definition is not included in the New Jersey Code, but is used nationally in lieu of New Jersey's "Neurologically Impaired" and/or "Perceptually Impaired" terminology.

Learning Disabled

> Specific Learning Disabilities: A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

> The term does not include children who have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, of mental retardation, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage (McLoughlin & Lewis, 1994, p. 11).

The terms below are also absent from the New Jersey Code; however, they are used throughout the literature synonymously with New Jersey's "Emotionally Disturbed" label.

Behaviorally Disordered

> students with behavioral disorders were those who exhibited socially unacceptable behavior (a) over an extended period of time in different environments...; (b) at a much higher or lower rate than is age-appropriate; and (c) that consistently interfered with their educational performance (Smith, 1990, p. 87).

Serious Emotional Disturbance

> a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time, and to a marked degree, which adversely affects educational performance: an inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory or health factors; an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal

> relationships with peers and teachers; inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems (Chandler & Jones, 1983, p. 432).

Research Question

In light of federal and state requirements that educational programming for students with handicapping conditions be developed individually according to the academic, social, emotional, and other related needs of the students; and that this programming be reflected through the construction of an Individualized Education Program for each student; and considering that two of the most common classifications among secondary special education students are learning disabled (in New Jersey; N.I. and/or P.I.) and emotionally disturbed, the following question will be investigated:

> How does educational programming for secondary education students classified emotionally disturbed or learning disabled differ, as reflected in the IEPs of the students so classified?

If, in fact, students defined so differently within the New Jersey Code require different types of services, then it

is assumed that these differences will be reflected in their respective IEPs. Since the IEPs are assumed to prescribe programming and services for these students, differences in IEP requirements should imply differences in educational programming.

Possible Limitations

One limitation of this study is the small sample size. Three secondary school districts will be investigated, covering an adequate demographic area, but not including large numbers in the sample. A second limitation is the lack of uniformity in IEP format across school districts, which makes cross-district comparisons difficult.

Hypotheses

In terms of related services, since students classified emotionally disturbed frequently have non-academic areas of weakness, as implied by the definition of the term itself, it is hypothesized that these students' IEPs will reflect counseling services more often than those students whose classification is learning disabled. Further, in terms of disciplinary requirements, it is hypothesized that more exemptions to a district's policy of behavior management will be found in the IEPs of students classified as emotionally disturbed, including policies regarding attendance. Finally, since the intensity of a secondary academic program is frequently a stressor in adolescents' lives, it is hypothesized that the IEPs of students

classified emotionally disturbed will include less time in regular education classes than students classified as learning disabled.

Overview

Chapter 2 will review current research-based literature on IEPs in general, as well as their usefulness to teachers, and the degree of congruency encountered by previous researchers. In addition, research involving the similarities and differences among IEPs of students with different classifications will be reviewed. Finally, the research question will be posed and the previously noted hypotheses will be expanded upon.

In Chapter 3, the design and details of the current study will be delineated. Methods, participants, materials, and format will be discussed. Areas to be investigated will be specified, as will the type of study to be conducted.

Chapter 4 will describe the results of the current study, including pertinent raw data and results of tests of statistical significance. Each hypothesis posed in earlier chapters will be revisited, and the relationship between each and the data will be discussed.

Finally, in Chapter 5, the results of the study will be discussed. Possible explanations for the findings will be explored, along with further questions which seem to need investigation as a result of this study's inquiries.

CHAPTER TWO

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The recently renamed Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1990 (IDEA), formerly known as PL 94-142, specifies that all handicapped students are entitled to a free and appropriate public education. This law mandates that schools develop an individual education program (IEP) for each student determined to be eligible for special education services. It is mandated that this document contain long and short-term goals of instructional programming, as well as plans to implement the objectives, all based on a "comprehensive assessment by a multidisciplinary team: (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 1988, p. 39). In addition, the IEP must denote the duration of the educational services to be provided and discuss both a specific date and criteria for evaluation of the instructional program.

Definition and Purpose of the IEP

Woodward and Peters (1983) call the IEP the "definition and description of appropriate programming as defined by the local education agency responsible for the child's education" (p. 72). Smith (1990, p. 6) says there is no more significant document in this field than the IEP, which

is intended as a "cornerstone" in the provision of individual instruction to the handicapped student. Bauwens and Korinek (1993) state that the IEP is the "most prominent, most problematic, and most significant document" available to guide the delivery of services to students requiring special education (p. 303).

Analyzing the purposes of the IEP, Lynch and Beare (1990) state that the direction and emphasis of instruction for each student should be revealed in the IEP and that the document should reflect curriculum placement and instruction. The focus of the IEP, according to Woodward and Peters (1983), is the child. The student should drive the program (Epstein, Patton, Polloway & Foley, 1992), with the focus on the individual student's needs. The "spirit" of the IEP, according to Keefe (1992), is that all students with disabilities will receive an appropriate education. Smith (1990) states that the IEP is designed to carry the law's intent of an appropriate education into action, while Epstein et al. (1992) considers the concept of the IEP as documentation that the disabled student is being provided with a free and appropriate public education.

Along with Smith (1990), Lovitt et al. (1994) see the IEP as a means of uniting those involved with a special needs student to achieve this goal. Smith (1990) further sees the IEP providing administrators with "proof of compliance", faculty with "formalized plans", parents of

students with a voice and the students themselves with an appropriate education (p. 6).

While imperfect for daily instruction (Lynch & Beare, 1990), the IEP is a potential "catalyst" for a more individualized and specific approach to the education of handicapped students (Turnbull et al. as cited in Mercer, 1987). If the document doesn't become "empty paperwork", the IEP can be an "integrative, functional element" of a student's entire educational program (Haring & McCormick, 1990, p. 33). Polloway, Patton, Payne & Payne (1989), see the IEP as giving instructional direction, being a base for evaluation of progress, and providing a vehicle for communication among members of the multi-disciplinary team. (as cited in Epstein, et al., 1992).

Theory vs. Reality: The IEP Close-UP

Whether the IEP is designed and used in the manner mandated by law and anticipated by researchers continues to be a subject for study. Reiher (1992) notes that most research on the IEP has been done to determine compliance. This statement comes over ten years after Schenck reported on a study of the same topic. In her research, each mandated component of the IEP was checked, and of seven areas investigated, six of them were out of compliance in over 60% of the 186 cases reviewed (Schenck, 1981). It appears that the passage of time has not resulted in

changing either the focus of IEP investigation nor the compliance of IEP designers with federal law.

Another area of study has been the congruence of the IEP. Smith and Simpson (1989) discuss congruence as the direct relationship between the stated levels of performance, gleaned from assessment data, and the goals and objectives listed for the individual student. In a later study, Smith (1990) states that congruency is the "most significant indicator of IEP integrity. He further comments that the link between assessed need (current level of performance) and annual goals and short-term objectives is "the essence of special education and specially designed instruction" (p. 7).

Again, it appears that the passage of time has not significantly altered the apparent congruency of the IEP. As far back as 1981, Schenck noted only limited foundation between long term goals and short-term objectives with assessment. Although Lynch and Beare (1990) found the IEPs they reviewed to be congruent (that is, the goals and objectives were based on assessed need), they questioned the usefulness of the objectives. It was their opinion that the objectives were too vague, especially regarding criteria for performance, which made evaluation difficult and the document's usefulness suspect. More common were the findings of Reiher (1992) and Smith and Simpson (1989), who, though surveying different ages and classifications of

students, came to the same general conclusion: namely that congruence in the subjects' IEPs surveyed was low. Specifically, Smith and Simpson (1989) found performance deficits in the IEPs of a population of elementary through high school behaviorally disordered students (BD), where annual goals were identified, but no assessment need had been noted. In addition, they found annual goal deficits, where a need was listed, but no annual goal was identified. Reiher (1992) found, in a statewide population surveyed in Iowa, that IEP goals were written in the absence of an identified deficit. Schenck (1981) found in a population of students with learning disabilities (LD), that the IEPs' annual goals could not be traced back to specific needs.

How Useful is the IEP?

That the usefulness of the IEP would be a third subject of question and research comes as no surprise, given the above information. The functionality, or usefulness, of the IEP to teachers is addressed in several studies. Dudley-Marling, in a 1985 survey of 250 special education teachers, found that more than half of the 150 respondents used the IEP less than half the time in their daily educational planning. Over 50% referred to the IEP less than monthly, and 86% said the IEPs of their students were kept in a filing cabinet. The educators surveyed in this study felt

without the IEPs as with them. These findings led the author to question whether the IEP had failed to become a working document, one that made a qualitative difference in the education of handicapped students.

In another review, Lynch and Beare (1990) found a low correlation between students' needs, IEP goals and objectives, and daily instruction. They found objectives that were not age-appropriate, and goals that, though functional on paper, had no carryover into the classroom. Dudley-Marling (1985) in their survey of 250 special education teachers, found many that considered themselves good teachers, yet felt that a good IEP and effective education were mutually exclusive. Smith asks in a 1990 study if there is a disparity between planned educational programming as stated in the IEP and classroom instruction.

A special illustration of this lack of usefulness is found in a 1981 study by Schenck, which found that although 52% of the IEPs of learning disabled students noted the amount of time they would spend in regular education, none of the IEPs had any goals or objectives listed for how these children would be taught or otherwise handled in the regular education classroom. This led the author to coin the term "30 minute learning disability," since these students received as little as half an hour a day in resource room instruction, for which the IEPs did contain goals and objectives (Schenck, 1981, p. 223). Baum, Duffelmeyer, and

Gellan (1988) examined social skills listed in the IEPs of students classified learning disabled and found that "no one" was the answer given by 25% of his 299 teacher/team respondents to the question of who was listed as responsible for monitoring the social skills interventions listed in the goals and objectives for these LD students.

Behaviorally Disordered and Learning Disabled Students

Since the IEP is intended to be the link between assessment and instruction, it seems important to move from the generalized research reviewed above, to a focus on more specific groups of students in order to determine whether this document is in reality enhancing their educational opportunities. Many students receiving special education services have been classified by their districts' multi-disciplinary teams as learning disabled (in New Jersey, perceptually impaired) or emotionally disturbed (ED, also referred to in this paper as behaviorally disordered-BD and emotionally handicapped-EH). Gerber and Levine-Donnerstein (1989) report that of 4.5 million people, ages birth to 21 years receiving special education services in 1989, over 43% were classified learning disabled. This represented a 140% increase since 1977. Between 1985 and 1986, while there was a 1.2% increase in the total special education population, there was a 2.9% increase in those students classified as learning disabled. Although students classified as emotionally disturbed only represented 9% of the total

number of students in special education, this represented an increase of 2.1% of the total number of students, again higher than the increase in special education as a whole.

Chandler and Jones (1983) note that both the emotionally handicapped and learning disabled classifications are equally difficult to pin down. They feel that many students with emotional problems are classified learning disabled because it is a more acceptable "label" to parents, and tends to require less expensive services than those associated with treatment of behavioral or emotional difficulties. The relatively high frequency with which these two classifications occur, combined with the apparent vagueness associated with these categories, would seem to increase the importance of appropriate IEPs and educational programming.

Before the IEP itself can be evaluated, the definitions of these categories of special education should be revisited. The New Jersey Administrative Code for special education and P.L. 94-142 present similar definitions for "serious emotional disturbance". In part, SED is defined by the latter as

> a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics, over a long period of time and to a marked degree, which adversely affects educational performance: an inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual,

> sensory, or health factors; an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems (as cited in Chandler & Jones, 1983, p. 432).

The federal definition, as Chandler and Jones point out, is one originally formulated in the later 1960's. They note that the terms "emotionally handicapped", "behavior disordered", "emotionally disturbed" and "seriously emotionally disturbed" are often used interchangeably. Given the above information, it is not surprising that they consider the diagnosis of a child as emotionally disturbed as a "highly subjective and relative process" (p. 561).

Defining learning disabilities, and determining whether a student is learning disabled, is no less controversial a task. Any number of definitions have been put forth over the years. McCloughlin and Lewis (1994, p. 11) cite P.L. 94-142, which defines specific learning disabilities as a

> disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think,

> speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include children who have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, of mental retardation, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

The New Jersey Administrative Code, uses the term perceptually impaired, and defines this as a

> specific learning disability manifested by a severe discrepancy between the pupil's current achievement and intellectual ability in one or more of the following areas: basic reading skills; reading comprehension, oral expression; listening comprehension; mathematical computation; mathematical reasoning; and written expression (NJAC 6:28-3(d) 8ii).

Looking at the IEPs of ED and PI Students

The above complexities and confusion make the questions of IEP congruency and functionality even more pertinent. Do the IEPs of emotionally disturbed and perceptually impaired students have congruency? That is, are they rooted in assessment data? If so, how do they contribute to the educational programming for these students?

Are there differences in the IEPs of behaviorally or emotionally disturbed students and those with learning disabilities? If there are, and if the IEPs are congruent, this would seem to verify the assumption of differences in the two categories, and necessitate different educational planning. What differences exist? How are classroom instruction and practice affected by these differences?

In a frequently cited study, Smith and Simpson (1989), investigated the IEPs of 214 students classified as behaviorally disordered. While parts of the study were concerned with compliance, much of it centered on questions of congruency and applicability of the IEP to behaviorally disordered students' instruction and education. These students ranged from elementary through senior high school, and were placed in self-contained categorical classrooms, resource rooms, cross-categorical classes, and residential settings. Annual goals and short term objectives were reviewed in each setting for behavioral, social/emotional, academic and "other" domains.

Students in self-contained classes had both the highest number of annual goals and the highest mean for accomplished short-term objectives, across grade and age levels (Smith & Simpson, 1989). While the authors note that there is no documented optimal number of annual goals, and therefore, no numerical criteria with which to interpret their data, they question the appropriateness of a specially designed

instructional program that averages less than one behavioral goal per student for the junior/senior high self-contained classes, and less than one social/emotional goal in junior/senior high cross-categorical and resource students. In addition, although the students' primary handicapping condition was not academic, the authors wonder how less than one academic goal per elementary student, and less than one "other" goal in all age and delivery models, can possibly provide the appropriate services for students whose needs are varied and complex.

A further lack of accomplished short-term objectives except in the academic domain in self-contained settings also troubled these researchers. They question whether the initial objectives were too hard or too unrelated to students' needs; whether classroom activities did not move students towards the accomplishment of these objectives; or whether teachers just did not record the objectives' accomplishment. Congruency data from this research found "substantial" performance deficits, where annual goals were identified without a documented need, and annual goal deficits, where a documented need was established, but no annual goal was written (Smith & Simpson, 1989).

This lack of congruency was also found in a 1992 study by Reiher, where 632 IEPs of behaviorally disordered students were examined. Students in that study were enrolled in resource rooms, self-contained settings with

integration, self-contained settings with little integration, and totally self-contained settings. In the behavioral domain, annual goals were tied to identified deficits 47.7% of the time; to identified social/emotional deficits 39.6% of the time, and to identified academic deficits 56.1% of the time. Looking at deficits first, 63.8% of the behavioral domain's identified deficits had annual goals written for them; 61.1% of the academic domain's identified deficits had corresponding annual goals; and 57.9% of the social/emotional domain's identified deficits were the basis for social/emotional annual goals.

Reiher grouped the students by the state standards of mild, moderate, and severely behaviorally disordered. In examining the types of annual goals, he found that the "mild" students' IEPs had more academic behavior deficits identified, and the "severe" students' IEPs had about the same number of deficits identified for academic behavior as for other more serious behavioral difficulties. Overall, this study found that with behaviorally disordered students, the vast majority of behavioral goals had to do with academic tasks, and that there were more academically related goals written than there were needs identified.

Similar findings occurred in another 1992 study by Epstein, et al. In a review of 107 junior high students' IEPs, the researchers found that these students had an average of 2.4 identified problems, and 3.8 annual goals

(Epstein et al., 1992). While 92.5% of these IEPs included goals for social behavior, only 25.2% had emotional goals listed.

A much older analysis of the IEPs of youngsters with learning disabilities noted comparable disparities in congruency. In a review of 168 IEPs of learning disabled children, Schenck (1981) used frequency distributions to compare the number of assessed needs in reading and mathematics with the number of instructional objectives in these two areas. She found that there were more objectives in both areas than the number of assessed needs.

In contrast to this overabundance of objectives, Schenck (1981) found a lack of objectives related to the learning disabled students' time in the regular education program. While 77% of the students in her survey were in resource rooms, indicating a significant proportion of their day was taking place in the "mainstream," only 52% of the IEPs listed even the amount of time spent in regular education. None listed an objective relative to the regular education environment.

Comparison of IEPs for ED and PI Students

While the above information documents congruency, goals, and other needs within categorical groupings, several authors have researched similar issues between classifications of students. Differences in types of goals and services would be expected if the categories of

behaviorally disordered (or emotionally disturbed) and learning disabled (or, in New Jersey, perceptually impaired) actually represent students with differing needs and conditions. In addition to the earlier referenced question as to whether emotionally disturbed children are "routinely diagnosed" as learning disabled (Chandler & Jones, 1983, p. 432), other comparisons and questions can be investigated via examination of the IEPs of these students.

McBride and Forgnone (1985) examined the emphasis of instruction given to 90 students classified learning disabled, emotionally handicapped, and educable mentally retarded in categorical and cross-categorical resource rooms. The students were sixth through eighth graders, evenly distributed by classification and delivery model, in a Florida school system. Instruction given was determined by short-term objectives in the IEP. The authors found that academic objectives were the type written most frequently across classification and delivery models. For learning disabled students, 99% of the objectives were academic in categorical settings, and 90% were academic in cross-categorical settings. For students classified as emotionally handicapped, 33% of the objectives were academic in categorical settings and 53% were academic in cross-categorical settings. In categorical resource settings, 66% of the objectives for EH students were in the social/behavioral area, while 48% of the objectives for

similarly classified students in cross-categorical settings spoke to these needs. In contrast, only 1% of the objectives for LD students in categorical resource rooms were related to the social/behavioral domain, with 6% of the objectives of cross-categorical resource room LD students addressing this area (McBride & Forgnone, 1985).

A "chicken-egg" question arises given this information. Were children's needs determined before class placement, and if so, how? Further, were LD students in categorical resource settings in need of only academic assistance, and therefore had IEPs where only 1% of their short-term objectives were in the social/behavioral area? Or was the assumption made that, since they were LD students, no social/behavioral goals were required? More importantly, what about the LD students in cross-categorical resource settings? How did they come to be placed in cross-categorical settings? Did their IEPs have more social/behavioral goals because they were in a class with students classified EH, or did their social/behavioral needs lead to their placement cross-categorically with students with emotional needs? Was this a programming decision based on instructional need, or a scheduling/financial decision based on available services within a school district?

Given that a 1988 study reviewing the educational programming of over 3,800 students conducted by Baum et al. found that teachers of LD students in various settings

perceived over 38% of their students as manifesting deficits in social functioning, it is surprising to see only 10% of the objectives for LD students in cross-categorical settings pertaining to social/behavioral needs. It may be that the label is driving the objectives, rather than the individual needs of the students determining what is written.

Additional questions arise regarding the objectives for the EH students in this study. Cross-categorically placed students in this group had 48% of their short-term objectives in the social/behavioral area, compared with 66% for EH students in categorical settings (McBride & Furgnone, 1985). Was this because students with the greatest emotional needs required a categorical setting so these needs could be addressed, or was it because, in a categorical setting, the teacher felt freer to address these areas, without as much concern for academic achievement as s/he might have felt had LD students been in the regular classroom too? Regarding their academic objectives, were there fewer for these students because they had fewer academic needs, or was this because their emotional needs were the overriding and more obvious condition interfering with their school success?

That students classified EH require fewer academic objectives may be supported by a 1985 study by Epstein and Cullinan (1983). In an admittedly small sample, they found that students classified behaviorally disordered scored

better academically than their age peers who were classified as learning disabled. Using several standardized measures and grade equivalents, these authors found significant differences in all academic areas, especially language. However, since the criteria for LD classification involved underachievement in academic areas, and for BD students included social/emotional functioning different from the "ordinary" student, this study leaves open the "which came first?" question raised earlier regarding placement, testing, and identification of students with various special needs. How do students receive the classifications, IEP objectives, class placements, and instructional practices delivered by the multidisciplinary teams responsible for them?

Lynch and Beare (1990) raise similar questions in their review of IEPs for behaviorally disordered and mentally retarded students. Although the LD category was not investigated, some pertinent findings did arise from this study. Overall, the authors found that the IEP objectives were based on identified needs, that is, the IEPs had congruency. As stated earlier, however, in following the students throughout their school day, they found little relationship between the IEP objectives and classroom activities.

Closer to the topic addressed in previous studies regarding types of goals and objectives, the authors found

that, overall for both categories of students, IEP goals were 55% academic and 31% behavior management. Specifically for behaviorally disordered students, 57% of the objectives were for management of behavior, while 9% were for reading, and 7% for math. Generally, the writers felt that the objectives reflected the categorical label (Lynch & Beare, 1990). However, why this was so was not addressed. In addition, the authors expressed concern that in both academic and behavioral areas, the IEPs were classroom specific, with little if any reference to social skills curricula materials, or proactive teaching of social skills. This led the authors to ask whether, even in 1990, special education as demonstrated on IEPs and by classroom observation, was simply remedial general education, with "no regard for next environment and real-life issues" (Lynch & Beare, 1990, p. 54). That this question was raised in the one study surveyed that found congruency between short-term objectives and identified needs appears to be significant.

Types and numbers of objectives were also studied by Smith (1990). The IEPs of 120 male special education students were divided into four categories, based on classification and service delivery model. Students determined by their teams to be eligible for services as behaviorally disordered or learning disabled were placed by these teams in categorical self-contained classes, and categorical resource rooms. Across placement options, BD

students' IEPs were found to have just over one academic goal, on average, and just under three behavioral goals, on average. The IEPs of LD students, on average, contained approximately two and one half academic goals, and less than one-half of one behavioral goal (Smith, 1990). Further, the BD students, on average, across placements, met one-fourth of one short-term objective, and just under one-half of one academic objective. On the other hand, LD students met one academic objective, on average, across placements, and just over one-half of one behavioral objective.

While IEPs of BD students contained approximately the same overall number of goals independent of delivery model, goals for LD students differed depending on placement. Students assigned to self-contained classes consistently had more academic, behavioral, and other goals in their IEPs than did students assigned to resource programs (Smith, 1990). This may indicate that LD students assigned to resource programs were perceived as having fewer needs, or it may be that because they had fewer needs they were assigned to a less restrictive setting. Another possible explanation involves scheduling: the teacher in a self-contained class usually gets to know the students better and therefore, may be able to write more goals and objectives. None of these explanations, however answer the question as to why BD students' number of goals did not significantly differ among placement options.

Smith's 1990 investigation demonstrated that the IEPs of students with behavioral disorders in self-contained settings were more congruent than those of BD students in resource models, and more congruent than those of LD students in self-contained settings. Overall, he found the IEPs of all students, regardless of placement and classification, to be congruent (tied to identified needs) only 62% of the time. The author entertains the possibility that data used to assess behavioral needs (checklists, survey, etc.) may be easier to translate into objectives and instruction than academic results gleaned from standardized tests not necessarily tied to curriculum.

Two of the most recent studies available in this area investigated differences and similarities in IEPs across three high-frequency classifications: learning disabled, behaviorally disordered and educable mentally retarded. Nickels, Cronis, Justen, and Smith (1992) surveyed IEPs of students in these categories from five different states in self-contained classes and resource rooms. Objectives from these IEPs were categorized into four areas: academic, social/behavioral, career/vocational, and self-help. As in earlier studies, academic objectives occurred most frequently overall, with 69% of the IEPs of LD students falling into this category across delivery models, and 54% of the IEPs of BD students appearing in this domain.

Within classification groups, 62% of the objectives for BD students in resource rooms were academic, compared with 46% of those in self-contained classes for the behaviorally disordered. Objectives for LD students in resource classes were 77% academic, as compared to 61% academic in self-contained classes. Since these placements were categorical, different explanations must be entertained than were considered for McBride and Furgnone's 1985 review. If the major needs of students classified LD are academic, why would students in a self-contained class have fewer academic objectives than those in the resource classes? Perhaps less academic learning was anticipated due to a slower rate of presentation. Perhaps teachers of the resource students felt pressed to prepare their students for return to the regular education classroom. Another possibility exists, however; namely, that the reason the self-contained students were placed as they were had to do with their behavior, which revisits the question of how labels are assigned and programming is designed.

Moving to social/behavioral goals, Nickels et al. found that 22% of the IEP objectives for BD students in resource rooms were in the targeted domain, with their peers' IEPs in self-contained classes showing 30% of the objectives in this area. The IEPs of LD students in resource settings contained 13% social/behavioral objectives, while those students in self-contained classes had 17% of their IEPs

objectives in this area. It appears quite astonishing that even in self-contained classes for the behaviorally disordered, less than half of the objectives written were related to behavior.

Pray, Hall, and Markley (1992) found a greater difference in the percentage of social skill objectives written in the IEPs of students of various classifications. After reviewing 258 students' IEPs for two consecutive years, Pray et al. found that 34% of the documents contained discernible social skill objectives. However, 82% of the IEPs of students classified behaviorally disordered had social skill objectives compared to only 15% of the IEPs of students determined to have learning disabilities. In all cases, the predominant social skills listed in the IEPs had to do with compliance behaviors and academically related social behaviors. Pray et al. (1992) point to survey research which suggests that teachers perceive interpersonal skills as much less important than those related to classroom compliance and academic productivity.

Consideration of Unique Secondary School Characteristics

Although several of these studies address the same basic question raised in this paper, namely how does programming (as reflected in the IEP) for secondary students classified emotionally disturbed differ from that of the same age students classified as learning disabled, none focus specifically on the secondary student, with the unique

characteristics of this age group and the requirements of secondary schools. At the secondary level, most students in regular education are in departmentalized programs, meeting with a large number of teachers every day. Secondary schools have attendance, graduation, and credit requirements that differ from other grade levels and are tied to state requirements. In New Jersey, the statewide High School Proficiency Test must be passed in order for a diploma to be awarded. States have specific types of course requirements, as do local districts.

Obviously, classified students and their case managers have many more people with which to deal, and potentially many more accommodations to make. These differences all arise at a time of life when most students, classified or not, experience the increased stress of adolescence. That these variations would affect a student's educational programming is not out of the question; however, it is a topic not specifically considered in the research reviewed.

This writer, therefore, will examine specifically how educational programming as reflected in the IEP differs between students classified behaviorally disordered (emotionally disturbed) and learning disabled (perceptually impaired.) Three K-12 school districts in three different socioeconomic areas will be surveyed, and the IEPs of an equal number of secondary ED and PI students will be examined.

Factors reviewed will include: relationship of goals and objectives to documented need for services (congruency), number and types of annual goals, types of specific teaching strategies to be employed, related services deemed necessary, amount of time spent in special and regular education classes, and any exemptions for either group from district or state requirements in: attendance, course credit, disciplinary standards, standardized testing, and grading.

Hypotheses

In light of the preceding review and definitions of terms, the following hypotheses will be addressed:

1. There will be little congruency in the IEPs examined, particularly in the social/behavioral domains;

2. The IEPs of students with behavioral disorders will contain more annual goals related to social/emotional areas than will students classified LD/PI;

3. The IEPs of students with learning disabilities will contain more annual goals related to academic than will those of students classified BD/ED;

4. Students classified as learning disabled will have a greater percentage of class time spent in regular education than will students classified emotionally disturbed;

5. Related services for students classified BD/ED will be counseling based; there will be few, if any, related services recommended for students classified LD/PI;

6. Exemptions to attendance and disciplinary codes will appear more frequently in the IEPs of students classified BD/ED than in those for LD/PI students;

7. Both classifications of students will contain course credit and standardized testing exemptions;

8. Even with the above hypothesized differences, the IEPs for these two groups of students will be more similar to one another than different from one another, regardless of the socioeconomic level of the district examined.

CHAPTER THREE

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

This descriptive study of between-subject comparisons is designed to glean more information about educational programming and IEP construction for secondary students classified (perceptually impaired) or emotionally disturbed. Specifically, the study will investigate how educational programming for these populations, as reflected in the students' IEPs, differs between these two groups. Congruency of the IEPs, as discussed in Chapter Two, will be investigated within and between these classification groups, to determine whether instructional objectives are tied to annual goals and assessment data. Numbers and types of annual goals will be examined, as will the types of related services and teaching strategies made available to these students. In addition, numbers and types of exemptions to various district and state requirements will be investigated, particularly to see how these areas differ for learning disabled and emotionally disturbed students. Distribution of time spent in regular and special education will also be reviewed.

Participants

Students whose records will be examined are classified either emotionally disturbed or perceptually impaired (learning disabled) by a multi-disciplinary team in their resident school district. The criteria for classification are found in the New Jersey Administrative Code, Title 6, Chapter 28: the rules and regulations for special education in New Jersey, as discussed in Chapter One, although each district may interpret the code in a way unique to their student population. Students reside in the district where the examiner is employed, and in two neighboring district within the county. These districts were recommended by school administrative personnel with an eye towards obtaining representative samples of socio-economic groups.

Students themselves are not involved in this study. Rather, only student files will be reviewed. Permission to examine records will be obtained from district directors of child study teams and/or district superintendents. Since a limited number of files fitting the criteria are available, randomness is limited.

All students included in the records review are considered 9th through 12th graders by their local districts and attend school in their townships' K-12th grade school districts, except where noted in the files. These "exceptions" attend 9th through 12th grade in an out-of-district placement, determined by the multi-disciplinary

team to be the least restrictive environment in which the student can receive a free and appropriate public education.

All three school districts include grades K-12. The percent of the 9th through 12th grade population currently classified is 17%, 24%, and 12%, respectively for Districts 1 through 3. Of these percentages, the portion of students classified as emotionally disturbed or learning disabled is as follows: District 1: ED - 27%, LD - 51%; District 2: ED - 15%, LD - 70% ; District 3: ED - 4%, LD - 78%. The predominant placement for all 36 students is in-district, with only 3 students receiving their educational services outside of their home school.

Setting and Materials

A desk audit of the most recent IEP written for each of the 36 secondary students will be conducted. An examiner-designed data collection form will be used both to assure confidentiality of student records, and to tally results of the examination of the files. (See Appendix) Each district and student will be coded, with pertinent age, gender and grade data included for each participant. Classification and placement will also be noted, along with the previously mentioned information.

The independent variables are the definition of learning disabled (perceptually impaired) and emotionally disturbed (behaviorally disordered) as noted in Chapter One. The dependent variables include the translation of these

definitions by each of the school districts and the subsequent classification of students into these categories. Other pertinent factors include programming options within each school district, districts' philosophies of programming for special education students, and each district's financial base.

The size and number of districts, along with the size of the sample investigated, place significant constraints of the study. Total independence cannot be assumed, due to these factors, nor can total randomness of selection. Files reviewed will be chosen at random from 9th through 12th grade files of ED and PI students, the limitation being there will be 6 student files in each classification group.

Procedure

Initially, data on each school district's overall population, high school population, percentage of high school population classified and percentage of classified students in each of the two categories being investigated will be collected. Then, six files of PI students, and six files of ED students will be reviewed in each district in order to examine the relevant areas. These areas include:

1. Gender, age and grade
2. Place/amount of time spent in regular and special education.
3. Number and type of annual goals

4. Number and types of teaching strategies recommended
5. Number and types of related services recommended
6. Number and types of exemptions to district and/or state requirements regarding high school students.

Individual sheets will be tallied overall, and within each classification category, for each item listed above. The mean number of academic and behavioral goals for each group of classified students will be compared both within and between groups, with any district differences notes. Similar computations and compilations will be made for related services, time spent in regular and special education classes, and exemptions to district and/or state requirements.

In addition to the tallies in these two areas, summaries of the types of related services and exemptions will be noted. Across districts, and within classifications, types of teaching strategies recommended will be listed as well.

Comparisons will be made between classifications in all the above areas both within and across districts. Congruency data will be computed within and between categories as well. Specifically, the correspondence of stated goals to areas of need will be investigated per

pupil, followed by a tallying by classification, and if pertinent, by district. Final results will center on the differences between classification groups in the relevant areas, as possible indication of the differences in educational programming planned for these student groups at the secondary level.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

A desk audit of the most recent IEP written for each of 36 secondary students classified as Emotionally Disturbed or Perceptually Impaired by three K-12 school districts of various socioeconomic groupings and population was conducted to determine the differences in educational programming for these groups. Except for two students in one of the districts, all students whose files were examined attended classes within the local school districts. The relationship between annual goals and assessment data (congruency) was investigated, as were the numbers and types of annual goals, related services, teaching strategies, exemptions from district or state requirements, and class periods spent in special education for each classification group across and within districts. It was hypothesized that, while differences would exist between classification groups, overall educational programming would appear to be very similar regardless of the differing definitions assigned to these two groups by both federal and state codes of special education.

How Congruent are IEPs for ED and PI High School Students?

Congruency, as defined in Chapter Two, is the relationship between annual goals and assessment data. IEPs are considered to be congruent if, for every annual goal there is a related need identified via assessment measures, and if for every identified need, there is an annual goal. Since this researcher was not given access to assessment data on all the students whose IEPs were reviewed, congruency questions remain unanswered.

How do Teaching Strategies Differ for These Populations?

Although teaching strategies were investigated and reviewed, data was not collected on specific approaches to instruction for several reasons. While numbers of academic and behavioral strategies varied by district, a common thread emerged during the review. Checklists and general lists of strategies were used by each district surveyed for all 36 students, regardless of classification or type of strategy addressed (academic or behavioral). Generic methods of achieving broad goals were listed on Pre-printed forms, with attempts at individualization limited to checks or circles near strategies evidently perceived to be most appropriate for the student involved. It appeared overall that the same list of strategies was attached in some way to each student's IEP regardless of the content areas involved, and without regard to the specific category of disability assigned to the student. This lack of specificity, along

with the inconsistent presentation of strategies among districts, prevented an accurate determination of the existence of differences in strategies between the classification groups.

What Related Services are Recommended for These Populations?

As in the prior two areas of investigation, little specific data was available. Of the 36 files reviewed (18 of which were for ED students, and 18 of which were for PI students), 10 recommended counseling, all of them being files for classified as Emotionally Disturbed.

Two IEPs provided for speech services, one for a PI student and the other for an ED student. The only other related service mentioned was physical therapy for one student classified PI. None of these services appeared directly related to the classifications of these students, but rather seemed to be a provision, that while necessary, was unrelated to the primary disability.

Therefore, there was only one overt difference in the related services recommended for PI and ED students; namely, that 10 of the 18 IEPs for ED young people recommended counseling of some type. None of the IEPs of the PI students recommended counseling or any other service directly related to the PI students' learning disabilities.

How did Types and Number of Annual Goals Differ for These Classification Groups of Students?

Annual goals were tabulated by district and student according to classification of the student (PI or ED) and were categorized as academic or behavioral based on the document's description of the goal. As in the case of teaching strategies mentioned previously, the annual goals were listed either in computerized printouts, checklists, or as the title of a page of curricular or behavioral proficiencies. If a student was assigned to a special education class for an academic subject, a page or checklist for that subject was a part of the IEP. If a student was mainstreamed for a class, no annual goals were listed for that class. The number of students whose IEPs contained a behavioral page or checklist varied, but when present, the format was similar to that of the academic goals.

Table 1 portrays the numbers of academic and behavioral annual goals by district and classification. Across districts, the students classified as PI had fewer academic and behavioral goals (39 and 7, respectively, with a mean of 1.4 and .9) than the students classified as ED 94 and 13, respectively, with a mean of 5 and .72). The difference between types of goals was significant: $\underline{t}(34) = 1.91$, $\underline{p}<.10$). Within two of the districts, the ED students also had significantly more academic goals than the PI students (District 2 : $\underline{t}(10) = 2.35$, $\underline{p}< .05$, while District 3: $\underline{t}(10) = 1.85$, $\underline{p}< .10$). Across and within districts, both ED and PI students had more academic (133) than behavioral (20)

goals. There was no significant difference found across or within districts regarding the number of behavioral goals for these two classification groups. In summary, the only significant differences between classification groups regarding academic and behavioral goals of the IEP were found in the academic area with ED students having significantly more academic goals than the PI students across districts, and within District 2 and District 3.

How does the Amount of Special Education Assistance per Week Vary for ED and PI Students?

Although one of the districts was on a four "block versus eight period schedule, the time spent in special education was computed on an 8 period day and a 5 day week. The "block" schedule was merely doubled for this tabulation, with each block counting as 2 periods. Again, data was tabulated across and within districts and classification groups. Students reviewed were placed in special education classes, regular education classes without support, and regular education classes with support (ICS). Although regular education classes with support is not technically a special education "class", because the students are receiving the services of a special education teacher, these classes were tallied as time spent in special education. The maximum number of periods per week per student was 40. Since the files of 6 students from each classification group were reviewed, the total number of class periods per week

per group was 240 within districts, and 720 across districts.

Table 2 represents the distribution of special education time per week within and across districts and classifications. Across districts, there was no significant difference between the classification groups in the number of periods spent receiving special education services. (PI mean = 114.5; ED mean = 13.4). In two of the three districts reviewed, the students classified PI spent more periods per week (District 1 = 150; District 2 = 75) in special education (including ICS) than students classified ED (District 1 = 85; District 2 = 52), with a significant difference found only in District 1, $t(10) = 2.89$, $p < .05$. In District 3, where the reverse was true (PI = 36; ED = 105), two of the ED students were in out of district, or homebound placement, the bulk of which was tallied as special education placement.

How did District/State Exemptions Differ for These Students?

By law, districts may exempt classified students from various academic and/or behavioral requirements of the state or local school district by writing these exemptions into the students' IEPs. Such exemptions must have a stated rationale and an alternate requirement or accommodation. Exemptions for this research were categorized as academic if they pertained to credits, testing, or grading, and as behavioral if they applied to discipline or attendance. The

numbers and types of exemptions were tabulated within and across classification groups and districts and are shown in Table 3.

As indicated across districts, both classification groups contained more academic than behavioral exemptions. (PI academic: 24, behavioral: 6; ED academic: 27, behavioral: 12). While the students classified as ED had more behavioral exemptions (mean = 6.7) than the PI students (mean = .33) overall, and although this difference was seen to varying degrees in all three districts, the difference was not statistically significant.

Further, there was no pattern noted regarding academic exemptions. District 1's PI students had more academic exemptions (mean = 1.33) than did its ED students (mean = 1.16); while District 3's PI students had fewer academic exemptions (mean = .17) than its ED students (mean = 2.3); District 2's PI and ED students had the same number of academic exemptions. (mean = 1.0 for both) Again, across and within districts, there was no significant difference between classification groups regarding the numbers of academic and behavioral exemptions to state or local district policy in the areas noted above.

In the three areas where data was collected (numbers of academic and behavioral goals, number of periods per week in special education, and number of academic and behavioral exemptions from state/local policies), there were relatively

few significant differences found between classification groups across or within individual districts. Across the three districts, ED students had significantly more academic goals than did PI students; this difference was significant within Districts 2 and 3. Within District 1, PI students spent significantly more time in special education (including ICS) than did ED students. No other comparisons within and across districts yielded statistically significant results.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Comparing the IEPs of 18 secondary PI (LD) and 18 secondary ED students across three different K-12 districts in 6 different areas yielded a variety of results. Due to lack of access, the congruency of the IEPs of these students could not be determined. Lack of specificity in teaching strategies, namely a check list format apparently independent of classification in all three districts, prevented a comparison between classification groups across or within districts. A comparison of related services recommended for both classification groups found that 10 of the 18 students classified ED were recommended for individual or group counseling, with no other related services directly associated with either classification group being recommended, bearing out the hypothesis regarding related services set forth in Chapter Two. The remaining three areas investigated yielded the results discussed in the next section.

Discussion

A comparison of the number of annual goals in behavioral and academic areas between the two groups within

and across districts resulted in some expected and some unexpected findings. Across districts, ED students had significantly more academic goals than PI students, as well as more behavioral goals than the PI students. Within two of the districts, this same pattern was seen. Across districts, the total number of academic goals was greater than the number of behavioral goals, and both classification groups had more academic than behavioral goals across and within districts.

It was hypothesized that PI students would have more academic annual goals than ED students, since their primary handicapping condition was more scholastically oriented. However, this was not borne out by the above results. A possible explanation lies in the format of the IEPs reviewed. Sheets with annual goals were included in a student's IEP only if s/he were in a special education class for that academic subject. Even if the student was mainstreamed with ICS, no academic goals were listed. It is possible, therefore, that the greater number of academic goals for ED students is a reflection of placement, rather than individual academic need or programming.

The only district where this explanation would not be sufficient, however, would be District 1. In this district, students classified PI spent significantly more time in special education classes than did the ED students; however, these PI students still had fewer academic goals than their

ED counterparts, although the difference within District 1 was not statistically significant. Since ICS was tallied as a special education service, but did not result in an academic sheet being included in a student's IEP, this may explain the difference in District 1's results: namely that the PI students had more time in special education than the ED students, yet had fewer academic goals. Again, this difference may be attributable to district formats rather than real programming differences. It is also important to note that in District 3, two of the Ed students were in out of district placement; therefore, almost their entire educational program was considered "time in special education".

Regarding behavioral goals, it was hypothesized that students classified ED would have more behavioral goals than PI students. Although this hypothesis was borne out numerically, no statistically significant differences were found across or within districts between the two classification groups in this area. While not significant, it is noteworthy that across and within districts, ED students had more academic goals than they did behavioral goals, even though their primary reason for being placed in special education revolved around emotional/social development. In two of the districts, the ED students did have more behavioral goals than their PI counterparts;

however, in one district, the PI students actually had more behavioral goals than the ED students.

A possible explanation for the large number of academic goals with ED students compared to the smaller number of behavioral goals may again concern the format used by districts when assembling a student's IEP, as well as the expectations of the special education program designed for the ED student. Since all academic subjects taught within a special education setting other than ICS entail a page of goals related to that subject, an ED student would have a large number of academic goals even if s/he were in special education for only one period a day. However, depending on the unique needs of the student, the number of behavioral goals, which are designed per student, rather than per subject, would remain constant, whether the student received special education classes one or ten periods per day.

It was hypothesized that PI students at the secondary level would spend less time in special education than their ED counterparts, due to the increased stresses brought on by the academic demands of the high school setting. Although this was true in one district, the opposite was the case in the other two districts reviewed. In fact, there was a statistically significant difference in District 1 between PI and ED students and the number of periods they spent in special education, with the PI students spending more time in special education than their ED counterparts. Several

possible explanations exist for this finding. With academic standards being more stringent at the secondary level, a relatively well-behaved student who is struggling academically may be referred for services more frequently than a student who achieves at grade level or better but is somewhat of a behavior problem in class. Another possibility is that a well-behaved PI student may be "mainstreamed" with ICS, which was tallied in this research as time spent in special education, while an ED student is not mainstreamed unless his or her behavior is appropriate. Assuming that this ED student was referred to special education initially due to behavioral problems rather than academics, his or her inclusion in regular education may not necessitate ICS, thereby lowering the number of periods in special education as tallied in this research.

The difference between District 1 and the other two districts may be that District 1 uses ICS with PI students more than the other districts, which could account for the greater number of special education periods if the other districts only mainstream when a student can function independently in the regular education classroom. Overall, however, the fact that there was little significant difference found in the amount of time spent in special education between these two classification groups raises questions regarding classification and placement which will be discussed later.

One of the final areas addressed was exemptions from state/district policy in behavioral and academic areas. It was hypothesized that PI students would have more academic exemptions and ED students would have more behavioral exemptions in their respective IEPs than their counterparts would in the same areas. No part off this hypothesis was borne out statistically by the data collected. Across districts, ED students had more behavioral exemptions than PI students, but the difference was not statistically significant. In addition, both classification groups had more academic than behavioral exemptions, and the ED students had more academic exemptions than the PI students, overall. The number of academic exemptions was the same for PI and ED students in District 2; the PI students had more in District 1, and the ED students had more in District 3. Again, the fact that 2 of the 6 ED students in District 3 were in out of district placement may have affected the outcome to some degree.

Another, perhaps more pertinent factor influencing these results may be the increased academic standards becoming a part of national and state education requirements. Specifically, the HSPT in New Jersey, which all graduating seniors must pass in order to get a diploma, may be generating more academic exemptions for all classified students for different reasons. The academic rigors of the test may be perceived to be beyond the

realistic reach of many or most PI students. For ED students, the stress of taking the test, along with a perhaps erratic exposure to the requisite skills due to behavioral difficulties throughout their high school careers, may lead to teams exempting these students from taking and/or passing the test: hence, an academic exemption is noted and tallied in this research. The same line of reasoning may hold for giving other standardized tests untimed and/or in special setting, along with altering the way assessment is done and passing grades are calculated.

Since for this research, behavioral exemptions were either for attendance or for the school's disciplinary code, there were perhaps fewer actual behavioral exemptions available to students. While this was dependent on each district's IEP construction, it is a possible explanation for the abundance of academic exemptions in both classifications compared to the behavioral exemptions noted. The role of the school program, whether for classified or non-classified students, may be another factor influencing the number and type of exemptions. While the unique needs of ED students must be considered under IDEA, since school has historically been a place where academic learning was emphasized, the behavioral aspect of education may - and perhaps, should - still take a "backseat" to academic preparation. Particularly in programs and placements

provided within local school districts, the overall aim of the special education program for ED students appears to be providing academic instruction in a setting tolerant of behaviors not acceptable in the "mainstream", rather than the "fixing" of the underlying emotional issues which may have resulted in the classification of ED. Social and emotional behaviors are addressed, but the preponderance of academic versus behavioral goals and exemptions suggested that academic learning is still the priority.

The final hypothesis stated that, with all differences considered, the IEPs for PI and ED secondary students would be more similar to one another than different from one another within and across all districts reviewed. Generally, this seemed to be the case. Checklists for academic and behavioral goals, as well as for teaching strategies, were used for both classifications in all three districts. These checklists were the same for both classifications, although some individualization took place per classification and per student via check marks or asterisks placed by the applicable statements. While numbers differed between classifications, both groups of students had more academic than behavioral goals, although there was a significant difference in the number of academic goals for ED versus PI students, with the ED students having more academic goals, perhaps a result of placement. This significant difference between academic goals for ED and PI

students was also found within two of the three districts reviewed.

There was no significant difference found between classifications across districts for time spent in special education, although within one district, the PI students spent significantly more time in special education than their ED counterparts. Although there were numerical differences, there were no statistically significant differences found between classifications across district for number of types of exemptions from state/local policy. Within districts comparisons of this area also found no significant difference between classification groups. Counseling was a recommended related service in 10 of the 18 IEPs for ED students reviewed; it was not recommended for any of the PI students.

Conclusions

Apparently, although the definitions of these two classifications differ both in federal and state codes, and although IEPs are purported to be individual education programs, the education received as prescribed in the IEP does not differ significantly at the secondary level for ED and PI students. Reasons attributable to the IEP itself have been mentioned earlier in this chapter. Another possible explanation is the apparent necessity to streamline the IEP process in order to both meet regulatory deadlines and leave time for actually servicing the students. Still

another possibility is the structure of the secondary school and how it affects the special education program of a district; for instance, whether three is staff enough for categorical resource settings.

A greater question concerns the whole idea of categorical versus non-categorical evaluation and placement. Perhaps, within an academic setting, the needs of the ED secondary student are not as different from the needs of the PI student as the definitions of these categories may suggest. If a student cannot function successfully within a "regular" secondary subject classroom, whether due to academic struggles or behavioral difficulties, his or her academic program may remain very similar. In addition, many PI students develop inappropriate social/emotional behaviors due to the frustration they meet in attempting to achieve academically; hence, their need for behavioral intervention may be the same as for a student whose underlying need appears to be emotional rather than academic.

Recommendations

Obviously, such a small sample size precludes any broad generalizations on these matters. However, the research does lead to several questions to be investigated further:

1. What differences exist between ED and PI students' IEPs in larger, regional school districts?

2. To what extent are IEPs used by the teachers of these students (in K-12, or regional high school districts) in daily instructional and behavioral programming?

3. In what type of setting (single or multi-category) are these students placed when assigned to special education classes?

4. What types of scores on standardized tests are obtained by students classified ED and PI at the secondary level?

5. Are the classifications assigned to the students tied to assessed need? How often?

Answers to these questions, along with the ones investigated in this research, obtained over a larger, more diverse sample of students may help determine if the IEPs of these two groups of students are appropriately similar with categories themselves being the questionable issue, or inappropriately similar, with the IEP structure and design being a cause for concern.

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TABLE 1

ACADEMIC AND BEHAVIORAL GOALS FOR SECONDARY LEVEL ED AND PI STUDENTS

	DISTRICT 1	DISTRICT 2	DISTRICT 3	TOTAL
ACADEMIC				
ED	31	44[1]	19[2]	94[3]
PI	22	8	9	39
BEHAVIORAL				
ED	4	4	5	13
PI	6	1	0	7

[1] Difference between ED and PI students' academic goals in District 2
Significant $t(10) = 2.35$, $p<.05$

[2] Difference between ED and PI students' academic goals in District 3
Significant $t(10) = 1.85$, $p<.10$.

[3] Difference between ED and PI students' academic goals across Districts
Significant $t(34) = 1.91$, $p<.10$.

TABLE 2

AMOUNT OF TIME SECONDARY LEVEL ED AND PI STUDENTS SPEND IN SPECIAL EDUCATION PER WEEK

	DISTRICT 1	DISTRICT 2	DISTRICT 3	TOTAL
ED	85[1]	52	105	242
PI	150	75	36	261

[1] PI students had significantly more time in special education than ED students, $t(10) = 2.89$, $p<.05$.

TABLE 3

ACADEMIC AND BEHAVIORAL EXEMPTIONS FOR SECONDARY LEVEL ED AND PI STUDENTS

DISTRICT	1	2	3	TOTAL
		ACADEMIC EXEMPTIONS		
ED	7	6	14	27
PI	8	6	10	24
		BEHAVIORAL EXEMPTION		
ED	5	5	2	12
PI	2	3	1	6

No areas of significant difference between ED and PI Secondary Level Students.

APPENDIX

DATA COLLECTION SHEET

DISTRICT: STUDENT: D.O.B: SEX:

CLASSIFICATION: GRADE: PLACEMENT:

	PRESENT	NUMBER	TIED TO ASSESSMENT?/LIST	COMMENTS
ANNUAL GOALS ACADEMIC				
BEHAVIORAL				
EXEMPTIONS ACADEMIC				
BEHAVIORAL				
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES ACADEMIC				
BEHAVIORAL				
RECOMMENDED RELATED SERVICES				
TIME SPENT IN SPECIAL EDUCATION (PERIOD PER 40 PERIOD WEEK)				
OTHER				