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Special Insert

The four-page insert to this issue is the second of two public reports from California's Advisory Commission on Special Education. This report focuses on the commission's legislative concerns.

No Child Left Behind

And Its Implications for Students with Disabilities

By Dr. Judy A. Schrag, Co-Principal, Education and Human Services Group;
Former Director of the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), U.S. Department of Education

On January 8, 2002, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was signed into law, reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary

Education Act of 1965, which established the federal framework for how we provide public education throughout the country. NCLB was built upon that framework, but adds four philosophic pillars of its own to ensure that every child—particularly the neediest—receives a quality education. These four foundational convictions express a belief in the importance of the following: accountability for results in education; flexibility in the way states and communities are allowed to use educational funding; research-proven effectiveness in the chosen instructional methods and materials in the classroom; and influence, information, and choice for parents.

The overall aim of NCLB is to have all students performing at proficient levels in the two educational cornerstones, reading and mathematics, by the year 2014, while at the same time closing the achievement gaps of students of different genders or minority groups; students who are English language learners or who are economically disadvantaged; and students who have a disability. This article will explore the philosophical and programmatic changes envisioned by the four NCLB pillars and their particular implications for children with disabilities and their parents, teachers, and administrators.

Accountability for Results for All

Even before NCLB became law, states have been responsible for establishing and maintaining

high academic standards for what every child learns in reading, language arts, and mathematics at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. This effort is being completed in phases, with states currently in the process of establishing standards for science that will be in place by 2007-08. These standards provide guideposts for achievement and tell students and parents what is expected.

Under NCLB, all states will implement statewide systems of testing and accountability for all public schools and all students in order to provide a picture of how successfully each school is teaching its established standards. To create an accurate picture of their success, schools must “break out,” or disaggregate, assessment results and state progress objectives by a number of important categories: poverty, race, ethnicity, disability, and English language proficiency. NCLB assumes that the data gathered from these tests will then be used to identify strengths and weaknesses in the schools and educational systems. These results will not only reflect how much progress students have made in meeting state academic standards, but also guide important decisions about professional training, curriculum, and instruction.

NCLB also requires schools to submit state and district report cards for review by administrators, teachers, parents, and policymakers, as well as state and local leaders. These annual report cards will include the following information:

- Student academic achievement disaggregated by subgroup
- Comparisons of students at basic, proficient, and advanced levels of academic achievement

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Informing and supporting parents, educators, and other service providers on special education topics, with a focus on research-based practices, legislation, technical support, and current resources

LETTER

FROM THE STATE DIRECTOR



Dr. Alice Parker, Director of the Special Education Division of the California Department of Education

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has historically fostered an emphasis on the procedures for developing and delivering special education and services to students with disabilities. During the past six years, California has focused on a more balanced approach to education for her 664,000 children and youth with disabilities. With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act and with proposed legislation for the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, it is clear that California's focus on educational outcomes has also become a national focus. We see states, counties, districts, and schools working to align general and special education systems to allow flexibility to meet the requirements in both of these legislative efforts. While the work is challenging and difficult, it is most critical.

On March 20, the first draft of the House Republicans' version of IDEA was released: the Improving Education Results for Children with Disabilities Act of 2003. With the unveiling of language for reauthorization of IDEA, it is important for each of us to participate in dialogue around this legislation. And, while we do so, it is most important to remember our history and, at the same time, **imagine what is possible**. Three points are worth noting about the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, a federal civil rights law governing public education programs for children with disabilities and their families:

- It was passed initially in 1974 with the focus on educating children with disabilities (CWD) in public schools and included a promise of 40 percent federal funding.
- It was reauthorized in 1997 to include more focus on access to the general curricula for CWD, to include additional requirements for establishing performance goals and indicators, to evaluate CWD using district and statewide assessments, and then to establish an alternate assessment for the most significantly disabled.
- The statute has a history of major and costly litigation, inconsistency in the way it has applied regulations, problems of alignment with state laws, and a requirement of "maintenance of effort" at both SEA and LEA (state and local educational agency) levels.

The California Department of Education is supporting clarity in IDEA reauthorization on six major issues:

- Accountability for results
- Unified system of education for all children
- Discipline with a focus on prevention and clear disciplinary processes
- Full federal funding for IDEA with flexibility of use
- Administrator and teacher professional development
- Clarification and alignment of language with other major federal statutes

As you review proposals for IDEA, it is critical that you provide thoughtful input. We can ill afford to react after the fact. Children and families are depending on us to help lead the way in improving this legislation and improving outcomes for children with disabilities. It seems to me that a document developed by the National Association of State Directors of Special Education many years ago held a vision that we must seek to ensure. According to this document, "An accountable education system is one which ensures that all children, including those with disabilities, benefit from their educational experience through equal access, high standards and high expectations" (*NASDSE's Vision for Balanced Accountability*, 1995).

We have accomplished so much, but we still have much to do. Our children are counting on you, on me, on us. We must not fail them. Those who say it can't be done are generally interrupted by someone doing it! Let us, you and me, be the ones doing important work for our children with disabilities and their families.

Giving Literacy a Boost

For over a decade, literacy has been a central focus of educators throughout California, realized in projects as diverse as the California Reading and Literature Project, the Reading Recovery Council, and the Read California project, among others. In 1997, the state adopted its English-Language Arts content standards to wide acclaim, and just last year it selected a comprehensive Reading/Language Arts instructional program for kindergarten through eighth grades. These accomplishments were encouraged by the California Reading Initiative and reflective of a decade-old determination to improve the reading abilities of students in the state.

The California Reading and Literature Project (CRLP), one of the University of California's Subject Matter Projects, is just one example of the many research and standards-based professional development efforts that for years have provided high quality staff development geared toward promoting the academic success of every child. CRLP was among the first to integrate through its Reading Results Program four essential components of effective education: California's content standards, curricular frameworks, standards-based assessment, and instructional materials.

So it is fair to say that the "Reading First" initiative of the No Child Left Behind Act offers California nothing new in substance or direction in light of the state's ongoing efforts to teach all of its children how to read. What the act does offer is a great deal of money for schools and districts—money that will make it possible for them to widely apply research-proven approaches to improve reading.

For this 2002–2003 school year, California received \$133 million for Reading First grants (the total appropriation throughout the country was \$900 million); next year the amount for the state increases to \$147 million. Unfortunately, not all schools in the state are eligible to receive that money; fortunately, the most needy schools are. The funds are earmarked exclusively for districts with schools that meet specific criteria:

- Have already purchased and are in the

process of adopting one of two approved instructional programs—Houghton Mifflin's A Legacy of Literacy 2003 and McGraw-Hill's Open Court Reading

- Have 40 percent or more of their second and third graders scoring in categories "below basic or far below basic" in reading on the California standards test
 - Have in their enrollment a certain percentage of students from impoverished backgrounds
 - Teach kindergarten through third grades
- As the entire educational system in the state braces for the effects of budget cuts, the money represents a windfall that keeps the picture from looking entirely bleak.

Any NCLB Reading First money, of course, comes with strings attached. But they seem to be fairly reasonable strings. Districts that apply for and accept these grants agree to make a number of significant changes in three areas of their programs:

- In grades K–3 they agree to use state-selected, research-proven reading materials and instructional approaches and systematically coordinate all efforts to improve reading.
- They agree to assess their students in those grades regularly and report on their progress.
- They agree to train both principals and teachers in the methods necessary to most effectively help kids learn to read; and include systematic, in-class coaching for their teachers in these instructional methods. The grant also requires all special education teachers to be involved in this professional development.
- They agree to spread the use of the research-based* instructional practices, assessment methods, and professional development training to all of the schools within their district, not just to



those that qualified to directly receive the money. This ensures the program of a reach and scope well beyond the initial influence of the grant.

Recent studies (from the *Journal of Learning Disabilities* and *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*) now chart a clear correlation between phonological awareness and reading success, particularly in the early grades, and particularly when teachers have been specifically trained in the critical aspects of early literacy instruction. (Phonological awareness refers generally to the recognition of individual speech sounds, syllables, and words.)

Reading First's professional development requirements also serve to support recent California legislation. Early in 2001, California introduced and eventually passed Assembly Bills 466 and 75, the first of which establishes the Mathematics and Reading Professional Development Program; the second articulates and requires professional development for principals.

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* The International Reading Association provides a definition of "research-based reading instruction" (also described as "evidence-based and scientifically based"): A "particular program or collection of instructional practices that have a record of success." That is, "there is reliable, trustworthy, and valid evidence to suggest that when the program or the practices are used with a particular group of children, the children can be expected to make adequate gains in reading." The Association points out that any evidence of success should be:

- Objective: data that any evaluator would identify and interpret similarly
- Valid: data that adequately represent the tasks that children need to accomplish to be successful readers
- Reliable: data that will remain essentially unchanged if collected on a different day or by a different person
- Systematic: data that were collected according to rigorous design of either experimentation or observation
- Refereed: data that has been approved for publication by a panel of independent reviewers

One of the biggest challenges all states faced when the act first passed was the rapidity with which districts needed to apply for the grant. Signed into law early in 2002, NCLB required districts to have their applications for Reading First in place for the fall of the same year. Only 25 of California's 1,000 districts were able to apply in time for this current school year. Thirteen were awarded. The current deadline of March 7 for the 2003-2004 school year holds out hope that more districts will be able to take advantage of the resources and incentives that the federal legislation offers.

The districts that ended up receiving the grant for the 2002-2003 school year seem to be particularly pleased with the direction it sets—in great part because it's a direction in which they were already headed. According to Cindy Zettel, the Director of Educational Services and Categorical Programs from the Robla School District in Sacramento, the Reading First Grant simply makes it easier for her school to "continue and sustain" its efforts to make every child a better reader. Two schools that have received NCLB funding in the Robla district had "already made a commitment to standards-based instruction, research-proven materials, and staff development" even before No Child Left Behind became legislation. The one component of the grant, however, that Zettel insists is central to the success of any effort to change is its requirement for coaching. "Implementing a new program is hard," she said, "but keeping it going is even harder." It is almost impossible, she intimated, without ongoing, in-class guidance to ensure that teachers are using the new program as it was intended to be used.

An additional advantage in the Robla district was that it already had a coaching system in place. K-3 teachers had been working with coaches for three years before NCLB, making this condition simply an incentive to support more of the same effective professional development.

The Gonzales Unified School District in Monterey County faced a serious, last minute scramble in order to make it under the grant wire. Members of the staff only learned about the grant on October 8, 2002, through the resourceful web-surfing of one of their staff members. The deadline

California Establishes PENT: *Positive Environments, Network of Trainers*

Providing positive behavior supports in schools and classrooms across the state has been a primary focus of California's State Improvement Grant (SIG). Between 1997 and 2002, the California Department of Education's Diagnostic Center-South, under the leadership of Director Deborah Holt, has sponsored a four-part sequence of statewide trainings to over 19,000 educators. These trainings were conducted by Diana Browning Wright, Director of the Positive Environments, Network of Trainers. These trainings addressed school-wide behavior supports, discipline, behavior support plans, and classroom strategies. The trainings successfully disseminated core messages aligned with the SIG and provided an opportunity for over 1,500 of the trained educators to also join the Positive Environments, Network of Trainers (PENT), a statewide email technical assistance initiative that culminated in two summits held earlier this year.

The goal of both two-day summits was to provide participants with tools to improve behavior plans and to strengthen the consulting and training efforts across California. The entire five-year, SIG-funded effort has received prestigious support from nationally recognized behavior experts, including: Dr. G. Roy Mayer, Dr. George Sugai, and Dr. Jeffrey Sprague, all of whom also contribute to the positive behavior supports efforts in California. Dr. Sugai, of the University of Oregon's OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Supports (PBS) was the Summit's keynote speaker and praised California's PENT initiative in particular as a unique and exemplary capacity-building effort.

SELPA (Special Education Local Plan Area) directors across California collaborated for over a year with Holt and Wright in the Summit design and carefully selected the 200 individuals who were invited to join this PENT cadre. The primary criterion for selection was proven expertise with students who have problem behaviors. These representatives will now carry the PBS initiative beyond the length of the SIG by continuing to offer consultations and trainings in their various regions.

In addition to providing regional trainings and support, cadre members will also play a leadership role in PENT by assisting with the development of the Behavior Support Plan Quality Evaluation, reviewing PENT research on teacher support and effective development of behavior plans, assisting local educators with students whose behaviors interfere with learning, and sharing a wealth of materials within their region. They will continue to build capacity by staying in touch with each other in accordance with the PENT cadre motto: "None of us is as skilled as all of us." Go to www.dcs-cde.ca.gov for information on your local PENT cadre members. Also see <http://www.calstat.org/bplans.html> for information on behavior plans; <http://www.calstat.org/behaviormessages.html> for the SIG core messages on behavior; <http://www.pbis.org/english/powerpoints.htm> for a copy of Dr. Sugai's address to the PENT Summits; <http://www.calstat.org/bestpractices.html> for information on Dr. Sprague's efforts; and <http://www.cde.ca.gov/spbranch/safety/resourceguides/classroommgmt.pdf> for more about Dr. Mayer's efforts. ☺

for submitting an "intent to file" for the grant was due on October 9. Reading Specialist Debbie Tjerrild instantly saw the grant as a perfect fit for her district. She subsequently spent several long nights in early October puzzling through the conditions and terms of the grant and getting the district staff to roundly support an application. (The speed with which Tjerrild responded to the grant is

apparently standard operating procedure for her. With NCLB grant money she has already hosted Dr. David Chard—researcher and teacher from the University of Oregon specializing in the instruction of early literacy—as a speaker for Gonzales USD's teachers. Tjerrild sees this event as having provided a perfect dose of inspiration for the district's efforts.)

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Ensuring Safe Schools

Public schools have always been judged by how their students perform academically. And while student behavior has also always been an important area of educational concern in and of itself and as a direct influence on academic success, systematic approaches to ranking schools on the basis of behavioral success or failure are not nearly as well developed. However, our schools are currently experiencing a push toward accountability on just that front. Of the two endeavors (ranking academics and ranking behavior), establishing behavioral measures offers the greater challenge, not only because it represents a relatively new effort, but also because responses to behavior are just so much more subject to wide-ranging variables, personal and environmental.

But parents, schools, and governments still need to make judgments about what is acceptable behavior and what is not. In Chapter IV of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, the federal government asks public schools to focus on just that: the importance of behavior and of providing a school environment that is safe and conducive to learning.

That legislation essentially accomplishes eight things:

- Consolidates and simplifies funding, allowing schools to use federal money for after-school learning and for drug and violence prevention activities.
- Requires each state that applies for NCLB funding to establish a definition for a “persistently dangerous” school, make public those designations, and give students in such a school (or who have been the victims of serious, school-based crimes) the option of transferring to another, safer school.
- Requires of teachers a zero-tolerance approach to violent or persistently disruptive behavior in their classrooms.
- Requires that any program supported by Title IV money be proven by research to be effective in reducing violent and problem behavior in schools.
- Allows community- and faith-based organizations to receive money for before- and after-school programs.

- Amends the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act to make it easier for school personnel and police to share information about student misconduct.
- Establishes (also as an integral part of Project Safe Neighborhoods) Project Sentry, a new federal-state partnership that creates community task forces to help prevent juvenile gun crime and focuses on school gun violence and juvenile gun offenses.
- Increases funds for character education in states and school districts in an effort to train teachers in methods of incorporating character-building lessons and activities in their classrooms.

Financing Good Behavior

Schools and districts in California that are interested in adopting a school-wide approach to positive behavior supports may be eligible to receive assistance from the State Improvement Grant. Go to <http://www.calstat.org/bestpractices.html> to learn about the programs that are available; or call Allison Smith at 707/206-0533, extension 124.

In order to receive funds under Title IV, Part A, local districts must adhere to the NCLB Principles of Effectiveness:

- Assess and identify the specific needs of the educational entity (school, district, state).
 - Establish measurable goals and objectives for improvement that are based on those identified needs.
 - Base projected changes on appropriate measurements.
 - Use research-based materials in the process of improvement.
- Districts then submit an application that includes plans to accomplish the following:
- Assess and target what is required for the schools to become safer.
 - Describe the activities or programs to be funded that will address those targets; these activities/programs must be proven by research to be effective in improving school safety.
 - Include performance measures/principles to gauge effectiveness.

- Involve parents.
- Coordinate with other programs for violence and drug prevention.
- Assess the effort’s progress and report it to the public.

In addition, each district will be asked to have a comprehensive plan for school safety that includes policies, security procedures, prevention activities, crisis response procedures, and a code of conduct for students; and to implement programs that incorporate a “wrong and harmful” message about illegal drug use and violence. The plan needs to be made available to the public for review.

In addition, because of the importance of gathering and maintaining consistent data that provide a picture of how a school is progressing, the new law requires funded districts to keep track of the following:

- Truancy rates
- Suspensions and expulsions related to drugs and violence
- The incidence, prevalence, age of onset, perceptions of health risks, and perceptions of social disapproval of alcohol use, drug use, and violence by youths
- Incidents of criminal activity on school property

Certainly classroom teachers will tell you that disruptive (even if not downright violent) behavior is one of the chief reasons their colleagues leave the profession. So there are many parts of NCLB’s Title IV that few can criticize: the legislation calls attention to the importance of providing a safe environment in our schools; it offers and consolidates resources to those schools that need to be made safer; it asks schools to use only research-proven methods in their efforts to improve and to use data to document that improvement.

However, the challenges within this particular law are many, and educators all over California are puzzling over how certain aspects will be interpreted. For example, there lurks a potential, unintended consequence in labeling a school as “persistently dangerous.” That label may prove to be so loathsome that states make their definition of what constitutes “persistently dangerous” extreme to the

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point where few if any schools qualify, weakening any intended, general benefit from the label. For those schools that do receive that label, there is a condition in the law that if students find themselves in a “persistently dangerous” school, their parents have the right to transfer them to another, safer school. If a family lives in a small district, that may mean transferring out of their district; it may mean no school within reasonable commuting range has empty seats, limiting that transfer option or contributing to overcrowded schools and overburdened teachers; and, with no funds available through the act for transportation costs, parents will be left to pick up that tab for commuting to an out-of-neighborhood school, threatening to deprive the poor of this option.

Then there are the teachers. If their school gets labeled “persistently dangerous,” there is no provision in the act for them to transfer to a safer school. While one assumes that the framers of the legislation hoped that teachers would be supported and challenged sufficiently by the law to find satisfaction in making their school a better place, the situation NCLB creates may also just make some teachers feel stuck.

For special educators, the way NCLB addresses behavior could also appear at odds with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). On the one hand, NCLB empowers teachers to remove violent or persistently disruptive students from the classroom; and in order to receive funding, states must adopt a zero-tolerance policy towards these students. At the same time, many students who demonstrate violent or persistently disruptive behavior have an emotional or other disability, are already identified as needing special services and, according to IDEA, are entitled to a functional behavioral assessment* (to determine the message behind the behavior) or manifestation determination** (to determine whether the behavior is a result of a child’s disability). NCLB’s zero-tolerance language may be misread as a justification for not being as persistent or patient with a child with a disability as his condition and his assessment may require or recommend.

There certainly is a legitimate concern that teachers and administrators may get mixed messages between the two pieces of legislation, NCLB and IDEA.

On the other hand, if a state uses rates of suspension and expulsion in its “persistently dangerous” definition, teachers and administrators may be inappropriately reluctant to suspend or expel anyone, no matter how deserving or appropriate. The other possible scenarios could involve reluctance on the part of school staff to report much problem behavior at all, for fear that it will lead to them receiving the “persistently dangerous” label; or an inclination to misreport actual suspensions and expulsions, stemming from the same fear.



While it is challenging for schools to easily change a child’s general predisposition to violent behavior, or to make up for any lack of appropriate guidance at home, Jeff Sprague, Director of the University of Oregon Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior, insists that many school practices can, in and of themselves, actually contribute to the development of antisocial and potentially violent behavior (things like ineffective instruction that results in academic failure; inconsistent and punitive school and classroom behavior management practices; unclear or unexpressed rules or expectations). But the good news is that these and many other factors that contribute to school violence, according to Sprague’s research and experience, are “all amenable to change.”

So, improvement in school-wide behavior is not only possible, but it is already happening as a result of successful, research-proven programs that are in use throughout the country. Those programs and approaches that have proven to be most successful in improving school

climate and overall student behavior all include four things:

- Systematic instruction in social skills, including character education
- Academic and curricular restructuring and adaptation
- Early identification and treatment of children with antisocial behavior patterns
- Positive whole school discipline systems

There are many parts of Title IV of NCLB, that still need to be interpreted and clearly defined. While that deciphering takes place, California continues its systematic effort to make its public schools safe and academically successful. Last summer the state applied for and received a significant enhancement to its State Improvement

Grant, which now provides money earmarked exclusively for helping schools develop and sustain positive, healthy behavior among students. The particular approach that SIG money is making available across the state (BEST: Building Effective Schools Together) has been discussed several times in this publication (see page five in this issue). Neatly dovetailing with many of the requirements of NCLB, BEST is research-based with a proven (and every year more impressive) track record for effectiveness; it has a

built-in system of data collection and reporting; and it incorporates several important aspects of character education. For those of us with children in California’s public schools, it is comforting to know that good things are happening, even while knotty legislation is being untied.

For more information about NCLB and safe and healthy schools, go to <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/esea/nclb/part9.html>; also see <http://www.hkresources.org> for a list of the NCLB-approved behavior programs for school improvement. ☺

* A problem-solving process for addressing student problem behavior. It relies on a variety of techniques and strategies to identify the purposes of specific behavior and to help IEP teams select interventions to directly address the problem behavior. Functional behavioral assessment should be integrated, as appropriate, throughout the process of developing, reviewing, and, if necessary, revising a student’s IEP.

** A meeting of the IEP team that must take place before an expulsion is initiated to determine whether the behavior exhibited by the student that resulted in expulsion was a manifestation of the disability.

Promoting Teacher Quality

No matter how well devised a system of education might be, it will not succeed without effective teachers. These individuals constitute the backbone of any effort to instruct; and they can “make or break” any effort to learn. In an effort to make all states accountable for ensuring that all children are taught by effective teachers, and for developing a plan to ensure this goal will be met, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has required that all teachers in the public school system in the state must meet the definition of “highly qualified” by the end of the 2005–2006 school year. Each state, through its board of education and teacher credentialing commission, will propose what “highly qualified” will mean for the teachers it employs in public schools. The federal government then will need to approve that standard.

One over-arching intent of NCLB is to provide the most educational support to the students who are most disadvantaged and who perform furthest from the achievement target. The connecting tissue between teacher competency and economic and educational disadvantage is the fact that schools with significant numbers of students in poverty typically have the most poorly trained teachers. In order to directly address this discrepancy, NCLB has initiated Title II, which will be offering grants for principal and teacher training to the sum of \$33 million a year to California for the next six years in a concerted effort to improve the quality of teachers in schools with the children who are our poorest and least academically successful.

This money will be distributed according to a formula similar to what is used under Title I: those schools that receive the Title I money (given in direct ratio to the number of children from impoverished backgrounds that the school enrolls) will receive the Title II money in similar proportions. States and local districts will then be permitted flexibility to use this money to meet their particular needs and to strengthen the skills and improve the knowledge of their public school teachers, and principals. In return, states and districts would be required to do the following:

- Ensure that the federal funds promote the use of scientific, research-based and effective practice in the classroom.
- Support innovative professional development; reform teacher certification or licensure requirements; offer alternative certification, tenure reform, and merit-based teacher performance systems; offer differential and bonus pay for teachers in high-need subject areas such as reading, math, and science, and in high poverty schools and districts; and create and implement mentoring programs for teachers.

In order to receive this money, school districts will be required to create and implement an integrated plan to help those least proficient and most disadvantaged students gain mastery of the content standards. In California, this plan (called LEAP: Local Educational Agency Plan) commits a school district to a series of steps towards improvement:

1. Conducting an assessment of what its students need in order to be successful in school, particularly in the area of staff improvement
2. Devising a plan to address those needs
3. Showing evidence that, over time, it is implementing that plan and that the academic performance of its students is, in fact, improving

This integrated plan, due in June of this year, calls for the participation of all pertinent voices at the very beginning assessment and planning stages and throughout the implementation: special education teachers, general education teachers, parents, principals, superintendents, school psychologists, and all other interested professionals who work directly with the most disadvantaged students in that district. The goal is to pool their knowledge about the specific, instructional needs of their most disenfranchised populations—and then to build a teacher training and recruitment plan that directly responds to those needs. Ideally, this LEAP will offer a structure and direction for



analyzing student performance data and teacher quality at the district level, and then provide a vehicle for integrating all funding to improve both.

The act has both broad and specific significance for teachers of special education, particularly for those who develop Individualized Education Plans and subsequently implement them. The act encourages the goals of the IEP to be linked to the content standards of the general curriculum.

The act also requires professional development training for teachers of special education in four areas:

- The state’s content standards (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/standards/>)
- California’s curricular frameworks (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/cfir/>)
- State-adopted instructional materials (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/cfir/>)
- Research-based instructional strategies

This last requirement reflects a trend among states across the country to pay close attention to the results of various scientific studies devoted to classroom teaching strategies. The hope is to ensure that the efforts of teachers in the classroom, and the tax monies that support those efforts, are in fact proven to be effective in teaching children. This push only supports current efforts in the state to establish high standards for all students.

Parents and educators interested in learning more about a possible NCLB integrated plan for their school should contact their building principal or the Title I coordinator for their district. Also go to www.cde.ca.gov/pr/leap/ for more information. ∞

Helping Students Improve

W

By Sandra L. Schnack, Ed.D., Riverside County Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Division of Student Programs and Services; and Diana Walsh-Reuss, Ed.D., Director of Special Education, Division of Student Programs and Services, Riverside County Office of Education

When school districts in Riverside County ask for help to improve student achievement, the Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE), Division of Educational Services, responds with a team: the Riverside County Achievement Team (RCAT). Now in its fifth year, this strategy has demonstrated remarkable success: low-performing schools that have worked with these achievement teams have produced data that show their students making significantly greater academic gains over students in other demographically similar schools.



As the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requires more of schools—to be more accountable and receptive to local control, to increase their use of proven instructional measures, to provide increased options for parents, and to make more rigorous their annual assessments for students and their reporting standards for yearly progress (AYP)—local districts all over the country are looking for more effective ways to help students improve their academic achievement. For the county of Riverside, its achievement teams are proving to be a very effective way.

One of the major strategies used by RCAT involves helping districts and schools

gather and analyze data. Several information-gathering tools—a classroom observation form; a self-evaluative, school effectiveness rubric; a school data profile of assessment and demographic information; interviews with certificated and classified staff, parents, and students; meetings with the district leadership team; and, a self-administered, principal-effectiveness survey—produce information that is then gathered into a report. From this comprehensive report, recommended actions emerge.

However, the RCOE achievement teams have found that true change must take place at the classroom level and must begin with practical, action-oriented steps. This has generated a second strategy—the targeted improvement plan, which takes the team into individual schools to work with the site principal and provide very specific guidance for teachers and school programs. Since this sort of work with school staff is most effective when done in an accordion-like fashion—from small group to whole group work and back and forth—the achievement teams collaborate both with the entire staff of a school and, at the same time, with that school's leadership teams, grade level teachers, or departments. The team goes back and forth, between large and small, in an effort to implement and support research-based improvement strategies for short and long-term goals.

The Special Education Unit of the Riverside County Office of Education plans to expand the RCAT process to include a greater emphasis on including students with disabilities. Low-performing schools often have problems with IEP (Individualized Education Program) compliance in particular and the performance of students who receive special services in general. These elements will become part of the RCAT data profile, analysis, and report of findings. With the focus also becoming part of RCAT's emphasis on implementing research-based strategies, RCOE believes that the use of RCAT will prove to be an effective way to

close the achievement gap between students in special education and their general education classmates.

Strong leadership is essential to implementing and maintaining positive change and enhancing educational outcomes. The RCOE has found that while the RCAT can provide a “voice from the outside” and can greatly assist in implementing improved instruction at the site level, real change is an on-going process that must be supported from the inside. The RCOE is hoping to be able to provide school administrators and teachers with opportunities to develop successful leadership strategies and learn creative problem-solving skills in an intensive leadership training program. Still in the planning stages, this leadership training is being designed to help educators develop clear, specific goals for improved student achievement, goals that then serve as the road map for district leaders to understand and use their data profiles. The training would have three, four-day modules, with teleconferencing sessions between trainings, where school leaders would help each other solve day-to-day problems at their respective sites.

A summer leadership institute—open to all interested teachers and administrators—is currently scheduled by Sopris West. The event will focus on instructional strategies for reading and mathematics, behavioral management, and leadership. To be held at the Laguna Cliffs in Dana Point, California, on July 13–16, 2003, this institute also offers limited scholarships. Contact the Riverside County Office of Education, 909/826-6476 or visit http://www.bettereducator.com/conf_SI.asp for more information.

The ultimate goal of all RCAT/special education efforts is to build internal capacity to maintain school improvement at all levels. When joined to the leadership training program, the RCAT model will significantly help districts accomplish this, and at the same time meet the rigorous demands of No Child Left Behind in achieving adequate yearly progress for all students. ☺

Focusing on Technology

W

hile the world of computer technology is relatively new, even in its newness it

represents a huge and intimidating challenge to schools. In recent years, schools and districts all over the country have struggled to select technology that will benefit the most students and teachers.

In an effort to encourage schools to use technology to further academic progress, not as an end in itself, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) includes Grants for Education Technology, with the hope of accomplishing five things:

- Ensuring that more funds for technology reach the classroom, especially those in rural schools and in schools that serve high percentages of low-income students
- Eliminating burdensome paperwork by sending funds for technology to schools using a standard formula, instead of the current application process
- Allowing funds to be used for a variety of purposes: purchasing and developing software, improving a school's technological infrastructure, and training teachers in the use of technology—all with the intent of increasing the flexibility of (NCLB) resources
- Protecting children from adult material on the Internet by allowing funds to be used for filters
- Encouraging states to use research-proven ways of improving education through technology and set goals to measure how effectively technology that is purchased with federal money improves student achievement
- Establishing Community Technology Centers in high poverty areas by providing matching federal grants

Two factors make the careful selection of technology a particularly important issue in schools today: the movement toward standards-based education for all students and the need to provide access to the general curriculum for students with disabilities. These are both consistent with the 1997 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

To realize the goal of improving outcomes for children with disabilities, IDEA calls upon schools to provide the greatest

possible access to the general curriculum within the general education classroom. Many teachers work very hard to do this by adapting classroom materials to fit the unique needs of students. They personally develop a variety of supports to accommodate as many students as possible. One organization that was originally founded out of the need to do this very thing is the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST). It figures now as an invaluable resource for educators who attempt to fulfill the terms of both NCLB and IDEA by improving student success, supporting as many children as possible in the general curriculum, and sifting through the world of technology to determine worthy investments.

While CAST began out of the need for individuals with disabilities to have access to such basics as classrooms and textbooks, its work in adapting materials in particular, has reached well beyond the purview of just students in special education. CAST researchers have discovered that the same kinds of adaptations that can make a curriculum accessible to students with disabilities can have a far-reaching and positive effect on all students: those in Gifted and Talented Programs, in special education programs, and in general classroom settings. This notion has received its most tangible and practical application in CAST's Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

According to David Rose, one of the original founders of CAST, "A universally designed curriculum, with built-in flexibility permitting customized learning experiences . . . sets high standards for all students." He sees UDL as providing a flexible gateway to deliver information, express ideas, and engage students—all in an effort to meet a wide variety of learning needs and styles.

Although it is now being used by a variety of organizations and educators, UDL was originally coined by CAST. Drawing on new discoveries of how the brain works and on new technologies available for teaching and learning, UDL offers a way for teachers to set goals for each student, choose or create flexible materials and media, and

assess students accurately. Essentially, it constitutes a framework that can "help turn the challenges posed by high standards and the increasing diversity" into "broadened opportunities for every student." According to Rose, UDL is a "movement, an idea." He sees CAST, in its position as a not-for-profit research organization, as a kind of organizational missionary, spreading the word so that better and more effective expressions of UDL can evolve. CAST has made presentations in places as far flung as India, China, and England and with UDL has piqued the interest of entities as diverse as colleges



and universities, private corporations, and the military. However, CAST's current and primary focus is on K–12 education.

In the K–12 system, using UDL with materials and curriculum shows the most immediate promise. With UDL principles, CAST supports the development of instructional resources alongside the adaptations that provide various accommodations and supports. What is particularly new and effective about this approach is that the adaptations are not "add-ons" completed after the fact. They are developed organically and systematically with the primary materials.

Technology continued, page 12

- Graduation rates
- Professional qualifications of teachers
- Percentages of students not tested
- Measures taken to address school achievement by schools identified as needing improvement

Each state will determine the degree of progress that its schools and districts need to make toward student achievement and teacher quality. Any school or district that fails to meet that requirement will lose some of its autonomy and be subjected to corrective action and restructuring measures to help it meet state standards. For example, a failing school will be required to offer supplemental services and transportation to other schools; it may also face restructuring—particularly if the school does not meet adequate yearly progress after one year of corrective actions.

Because it is important to celebrate schools that make real progress, schools that meet or exceed their goals or close achievement gaps between groups of students will be eligible for State Academic Achievement Awards. Also, states will be able to financially reward teachers in schools that receive these kinds of awards; and they may designate schools that make the greatest achievement gains as “Distinguished Schools.”

Implications for Special Education

It is essential for all students, including those with disabilities, to be held to appropriate state standards and to make regular progress in their learning. It is also critical for states and school districts to have single, integrated accountability systems for all students. These requirements of NCLB, however, do present several challenges for schools.

- If students with disabilities are to meet the goal of achieving at proficient levels by the year 2014, they will need to have access to the general education curriculum. Clearly, students with disabilities cannot demonstrate knowledge about content that they have not been taught. Our current challenge is to ensure this access to these students.
- Some students with severe cognitive disabilities may not be able to meet proficient assessment levels and state standards within the NCLB time frame. But if students with disabilities do not do well on statewide assessments, states

may be tempted to lower standards and their criteria for what constitutes appropriate yearly progress. Schools may also feel compelled to place more students in more restrictive environments, perhaps in an effort to give them more one-on-one instruction, but nonetheless keeping them out of the general education classrooms and then often distanced from the general curriculum. Finally, the principals of struggling schools—and perhaps schools in general—may be less welcoming of students with significant disabilities, who often do not score well on standardized tests and would thus threaten to negatively affect the results of school assessments, putting the school at risk of being identified as failing. To obviate this potential problem, schools should not be punished because of not doing well on standard tests.

- Limited federal, state, and local funding may make it difficult, if not downright impossible, to provide the appropriate remediation or special education services that many students with disabilities may need if they are going to reach the levels of proficiency on statewide assessments that NCLB requires.
- According to NCLB, a student must earn a diploma in the standard four years of high school in order to count as “graduated.” This requirement is inconsistent with IDEA, which entitles students with disabilities to a free, appropriate public education until age 22, if necessary, to meet graduation requirements.

Increased Flexibility for States and Communities

Resources are used most effectively in schools that take into account the unique diversity of its community and its particular students’ needs. Under NCLB, states, districts, and schools will have more flexibility to direct federal education resources toward the programs that will best serve their students. Essentially, NCLB eliminates some red tape for schools and offers more discretionary leeway on how to apply for and use federal funding. Schools can transfer 50 percent of their funding from the following four federal programs to pursue strategies for improving student achievement: Teacher Quality, Education Technology, Safe and Drug Free Schools, and Innovative Education.

Experimenting with greater flexibility, NCLB also provides for “local flexibility demonstration projects” in not more than 80 competitively selected school districts. These selected districts can be relieved of certain federal requirements while they consolidate virtually all of their federal funding in exchange for entering into a performance agreement with the Secretary of Education. Within this performance agreement, the districts could use their federal funds for any educational purpose authorized under NCLB. The only caveat is that they must continue to comply with all state accountability requirements and report their performance annually to the Secretary of Education.

Another provision of NCLB allows the U.S. Secretary of Education to competitively select up to seven states that can consolidate all of their state administration and activity funds and use these resources flexibly to help improve student achievement and close achievement gaps. Participating states must have no fewer than four, but no more than ten local flexibility demonstration districts.

The increased local control and flexibility within NCLB will help school districts and states meet the specific requirement of the law that requires a highly qualified teacher in every classroom by the end of the 2005–06 school year. Additional federal funding (Title II, Part A: Improving Teacher Quality State Grants) for states encourages flexibility and creativity in recruiting, hiring, certifying, and licensing new teachers; and for mentoring and assessing the quality of established ones. To receive these additional funds, states must develop a local improvement plan that includes research-based professional development activities and measurable, annual objectives. Schools can then create innovative ways to improve teacher quality, which research demonstrates as a critical variable leading to improved student results.

One important requirement in this process is that teachers themselves must be involved in developing both the state’s needs assessment for teacher quality and the local improvement plans. The legislation further encourages teachers to attend conferences and meetings for individual professional development that is based on the needs assessment of their school. The schools themselves are also encouraged to be innovative in their efforts to improve

teacher quality by offering alternative certification, merit pay, and bonuses for those who teach in high-need subject areas, such as mathematics. Any school district that fails for two consecutive years to meet its annual goals for teacher quality will be required to develop an improvement plan and receive state technical assistance. If the school district fails to meet its teacher-quality goals for three years, the state must enter into an agreement with the district about how to use the NCLB Title II funds.

Implications for Special Education

In order to assist students with disabilities in reaching the goal of achieving at proficient levels by the year 2014, increased flexibility in the use of federal funds can support remediation and other intervention programs for these students. The framers of the legislations are hoping that this attitude of flexibility will have two additional effects:

- Voluminous paperwork and overwhelming meeting requirements represent two of the most daunting challenges that special educators face. Educators in the field are hoping that the pending reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) will note the flexibility of NCLB provisions and allow similar flexibility in reconfiguring their Individualized Education Program (IEP) and other procedural requirements so that more efficient and effective approaches can be identified and used to ensure effective services. NCLB framers are also hoping that IDEA echoes additional flexibility in what become the permissible uses of IDEA funds.
- NCLB requires that special education programs be provided by qualified special education teachers, therapists, and other school personnel. NCLB provisions also require special education teachers, particularly those at the secondary level, to be certified or to demonstrate knowledge in subject areas. While these requirements reflect worthy goals that should result in better programs, they will, no doubt, exacerbate already existing personnel shortages in special education.

Concentrating Resources on Proven Educational Methods

Ineffective teaching practices and unproven education theories often cause children to fall behind in their learning and teachers to get frustrated. A significant philosophical

shift within NCLB requires schools to meet state standards through the use of research-based practices (e.g., proven curricula, the best materials, and textbooks aligned to state standards).

Research evidence strongly suggests that students who fail to read at grade level by the fourth grade have a greater likelihood of dropping out of school and facing a lifetime of diminished success. Given this, NCLB focuses on assisting states and school districts in their reading instruction in the early grades (kindergarten through third), NCLB's Reading First (<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/readingfirst/>) and Early Reading First (<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/earlyreading/>) programs are supporting the use of scientifically-based materials and instructional strategies, in an effort to ensure that every child in America



will read well by the end of the third grade.

In addition, several components of NCLB allow schools to purchase technology to support reading and other program goals in both curriculum and assessment. Research suggests that well designed software can deliver content and engage students who might not do well in a traditional classroom setting. Online testing is also capable of reporting on the progress of students instantaneously, rather than requiring teachers, students, and parents to wait for weeks, if not months, for results. This would provide schools with immediate feedback on the effects of their instructional efforts.

Implications for Special Education

- NCLB requires schools to implement effective, research-based teaching and curricula that challenge all children—including those with disabilities—and interests them in learning. The implica-

tions for this effort extend beyond academic success. Research shows that schools with engaged learners have little problem with school violence or problem behavior. The NCLB provisions support specifically those programs that protect students and teachers, encourage discipline and personal responsibility, and combat illegal drugs. However, in this area there is a possible difference in philosophy between NCLB and IDEA in that IDEA has emphasized building classroom and school-wide positive behavior support systems and strategies, rather than on structured discipline programs. The emphasis on control or discipline in NCLB could lead to more suspensions and expulsions, particularly for students with disabilities.

- For many years, many special educators have focused on remediating student deficits and/or using unproven fads and instructional fashions. As a result, not all special education teachers have been prepared to teach in skill-specific areas such as reading, or content areas like science. The NCLB's absolute emphasis on reading represents an important philosophic shift for both general and special education, since reading is the gateway skill to all content areas. Educators again hope that the pending IDEA reauthorization will communicate a similar, fundamental philosophical shift away from a deficit/remediation model to one that views students with disabilities as general education students who can learn the general education curriculum—with special education services available to support this effort across the curriculum.
- The NCLB's emphasis on the use of assessment and curriculum technology is consistent with IDEA in helping students with disabilities increase their skills and achieve proficient levels on statewide assessments. The continued and expanded use of assistive and instructional technology can support the implementation of scientifically based instruction in reading and other school subjects for students with disabilities.

Expanded Choices for Parents

While NCLB offers new approaches to help students, schools, and teachers, it also offers options to parents whose children are in low-performing schools Starting in this

NCLB continued, page 12

A literature textbook, for example, would include graphic organizers, background information, and questions that address and encourage various levels of understanding. Using this approach, the textbook creators provide the struggling reader a gateway into the text, while the advanced reader would be challenged to read at increasingly sophisticated levels of understanding. Many good teachers create these sorts of adaptations in the course of their work. UDL has the potential of relieving them of the enormous burden of adapting and devising materials to meet the level and need of every student in their classes, thus freeing them to devote more time and energy to individual students. And whether students are struggling to learn or struggling to stay interested, they see their needs and interests addressed with UDL materials.

With the push at both the state and national levels toward high standards and curricular access for all students, UDL could not have appeared at a better time. CAST and the U.S. Department of Education have currently struck an agreement to research and synthesize existing knowledge, evaluate policies that affect access to the general education curriculum, and plan and implement national leadership and dissemination activities. CAST is also currently working with educational publishers, states, and school districts to develop a common national file format so that curriculum and instructional materials that are digitally developed are consistently formatted, thus saving teachers and students added hours of trying to learn how to access the technology before they ever reach the content.

Through its Universal Design for Learning, CAST has given the world of education a research-based model for both selecting and developing technology—certainly an important resource for current NCLB funding recipients. But it promises even more as it provides a glimpse into classrooms in the future where students are involved and enthusiastic to a degree that dedicated teachers often only dream about. CAST is helping that particular dream become a reality.

To find out more about CAST and UDL, go to <http://www.cast.org>; and for more about effective classroom practices (e.g.,

explicit and differentiated instruction, curriculum-based evaluation) curriculum enhancements (e.g., graphic organizers and manipulatives), effective teaching practices, and educational policy and school reform, go to <http://www.cast.org/nca/NCACPublications3117.cfm> for resources from CAST's National Center on Accessing the General Curriculum. Go to <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/esea/nclb/partx.html> for specific information about the Grants for Education Technology through NCLB. ☺

Literacy, continued from page 4

Gonzales USD had had Open Court in place for a number of years before No Child Left Behind, had already been monitoring assessment at the end of each unit (one of the requirements of the grant), and also had a fairly ambitious coaching and professional development training program in place for teachers. Through NCLB money they, too, will simply be able to do more of the same, with the emphasis on “more:” the district will guarantee all teachers are sufficiently trained in the reading program by June 30 and will encourage others to receive advanced training during the summer. Teachers meet weekly to collaborate and analyze student data to determine instructional needs.

Tjerrild couldn't say enough good things about the work that has been done in California to promote literacy. In particular she lauds the Department of Education's publication in 1995 of *Every Child a Reader* and the *California Reading Language Arts Framework*. In Tjerrild's opinion, these and other great resources for teachers and parents over the years have “just kept on coming.” According to her, the groundwork for Reading First had been well laid. Now she and teachers and students in districts across the state get to reap the benefits.

Go to <http://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/readfirst/> for more information about California's Reading First Plan; to <http://csmp.ucop.edu/crlp/> to learn more about the California Reading and Literature Project; to <http://www.R2C2.org/about.html> for more about the Reading Recovery Council; and to <http://readcalifornia.org/about.html> for the Read California project. ☺

current school year, parents will be able to transfer their child from a school that has been identified as needing improvement to a better performing public school served by the district; they can choose another program or method of instruction; or they can select from various programs and methods of instruction if more than one are offered by the school district. Parents with children in a low-performing school will also be able to receive supplemental education services for their child, including tutoring, after-school services, and summer school programs.

Implications for Special Education

- Under NCLB, parents will receive reports on their school and school district each fall (this is in direct support of IDEA, which emphasizes the importance of involvement of parents in their child's educational process). This NCLB provision may stimulate increased parent involvement, which in turn results in better achievement for students with disabilities.
- NCLB's allowance for parents to unilaterally choose their child's placement may be inconsistent with the expressed decision-making duties of the IEP team as they are defined by IDEA. The IDEA requires the entire IEP team to make decisions on appropriate services and educational placements for students with disabilities within the IEP process.

Although NCLB represents a significant shift to more federal control, it recognizes that school improvement must happen locally. Through this new legislation, states, school districts, and schools are given extra leverage, flexibility, and accountability for local change and improved student achievement. This unprecedented flexibility allows for creative strategies for providing quality teachers in every classroom. NCLB concentrates resources on proven reading and other scientifically-based educational curricula, instructional strategies, and practices. More choices and options are provided for parents. At the heart of the No Child Left Behind Act is the promise to raise standards for all children. It offers both challenges and opportunities to all schools, with the goal of improving achievement for all students, and closing the achievement gaps among the neediest, including those with disabilities. ☺

WEB RESOURCES

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/spbranch/sed/intracdb.htm>

The recently updated database containing “California Special Education Programs: A Composite of Laws (Twenty-Fifth Edition 2003)” from the California Department of Education (CDE), Special Education Division is now available online, listing all laws and regulations that were added, amended, or repealed effective January 1, 2003.

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/spbranch/sed/ieptskfrc/>

This website offers meeting agendas, presentations, handouts, and progress reports of the IEP Task Force, which is working to develop an IEP that addresses both procedural safeguards and educational benefit.



<http://www.nifl.gov/partnership/forreading/publications/recommended.html>

This site of resources for parents and educators from **The Partnership for Reading**—a collaborative effort by the National Institute for Literacy, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, and the U.S. Department of Education—features the findings of evidence-based reading research for anyone interested in helping all people learn to read. First established in 2000, the partnership is now authorized by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002. Includes *A Child Becomes a Reader* (for early childhood and K–3), as well as materials on adolescent and adult literacy.

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/pr/nclb/>

This official **No Child Left Behind** site from the California Department of Education provides current news on the legislation as it affects California.

<http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/PFRbrochure1.pdf>

The National Reading Panel’s Publication *Put Reading First: Helping Your Child Learn to Read (A Parent Guide)* is designed to help parents engender in their young children

(preschool through third grade) early literacy skills and an interest in reading.

<http://www.gettingready.org/gettingready/>

This website of the **School Readiness Indicators Initiative** works with 17 states to develop a comprehensive set of school readiness indicators to inform public policy for young children and their families. The site provides links to publications and websites that cover a wide range of school readiness topics; meeting agendas, presentations, proceedings, and resources from the organization; and information about the various states involved.

<http://www.dssc.org/frc/pubs/hardman.pdf>

Special Education in an Era of School Reform: Preparing Special Education Teachers

This free, online publication examines three principles that are driving change in the practices of teacher preparation: collaboration and cross-disciplinary training; general and special education interface; and field-based training for partnerships between higher education and public schools.

<http://www.wested.org/tales/index.html>

Tales from the Electronic Frontier

This print publication is offered at the above website in electronic format, featuring ten teachers who share their classroom experiences using the Internet for studies in K–12 science and mathematics. They demonstrate how the Internet can enhance teaching and learning. *Tales* also includes over 50 annotated resources.

<http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/nrp/smallbook.pdf>

The National Reading Panel’s publication *Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction*. This final report of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) assesses the effectiveness of various approaches to teaching children to read.

<http://www.cast.org/teacheverystudent/>

The **Teaching Every Student** section of the CAST (Center for Applied Special Technology) website supports educators in learning about and practicing the Universal Design for Learning (UDL). The site includes “Ideas & Information” (printable publications, presentations, and other online resources related to UDL); “Tools & Activities” (web-based and downloadable tutorials, templates, and activities to put the ideas of UDL into practice); and

“Community & Support” (opportunities to communicate and obtain support from other educators exploring and teaching with UDL).

<http://www.aft.org/edissues/downloads/rocketsci.pdf>

Teaching Reading IS Rocket Science: What Expert Teachers of Reading Should Know and Be Able to Do

This report from the National Federation of Teachers discusses teacher preparation in reading; reviews the reading research; and describes the essential knowledge base for teacher candidates.

ASSISTANCE FOR SCHOOLS

Help is available to schools, education agencies, and parent organizations that are interested in receiving training, facilitation, or coaching to help them improve academic achievement or develop programs in the following areas:

- Literacy
- Behavior
- Collaboration between general and special education
- Transition: school to adult life
- Family-school partnerships
- Least restrictive environment (LRE)
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1997 (IDEA)

This support is funded by the State Improvement Grant (SIG); Priority is given to requests that include any of the following in their intents:

- Research-based practices
- The potential for regional impact
- Combined efforts of general education, special education, and families to improve education for all students
- A distribution of SIG resources across California
- A leveraging of other resources

If your school, district, or organization is in need of any of these kinds of supports, and you think you meet the criteria, contact Tonia Sassi at CalSTAT (California Services for Technical Assistance and Training): email tonia.sassi@calstat.org or phone 707/849-2273.

R

RESOURCES: LIBRARY

The RISE (Resources in Special Education) Library lends materials to California's general public free of charge; its resources are available for viewing online at <http://www.php.com>; for requests by phone, call 408/727-5775, ext.110.

LITERACY

Off Track: When Poor Readers Become "Learning Disabled"

By Louise Spear-Swerling and Robert Sternberg. Westview Press: Boulder, CO; 1998; 336 pages; order numbers 22633 and 22634. Discusses the discrepancies between scientific evidence about poor reading and the views advocated by large parts of the learning disability industry.

Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children

National Academy Press: Washington, DC; 1998; 432 pages. Order numbers 22623 and 22624. Draws upon the expertise of psychologists, neurobiologists, and educators to establish clear recommendations for teaching literacy. Recommendations identify the groups of children at risk, outline effective instruction for preschool and early grades, and examine approaches to dialects and bilingualism.

Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read

By the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA). Partnership for Reading: Jessup, MD; 2001; 58 pages. Order number 23216. Summarizes what researchers have discovered about how to successfully teach children to read; describes the findings of the National Reading Panel Report and provides analysis and discussion in five areas of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. (Also available online at http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/reading_first1.html)

Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction

By the National Reading Panel. Partnerships for Reading: Jessup, MD; 2000; 459 pages. Order number 23217. In 1997, Congress asked the "Director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), in consultation with the Secretary of Education, to convene a national panel to assess the status of research-based knowledge, including the effectiveness of various approaches to teaching

children to read. This is the final report of those findings. (Also available online at <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/nrp/smallbook.pdf>)

Teaching Reading IS Rocket Science: What Expert Teachers of Reading Should Know and Be Able to Do

By the American Federation of Teachers; NICHD: Washington, DC; 1999; 33 pages. Order number 23131. Reviews and describes the knowledge base and essential skills that teacher candidates and practicing teachers must master if they are to be successful in teaching all children to read well. (Also available online at <http://www.aft.org/edissues/downloads/rocketsci.pdf>)

Teaching Reading: Sourcebook for Kindergarten Through Eighth Grade

By Bill Honig, Linda Diamond, and Linda Gutlohn. Arena Press: Novato, CA; 2000; 800 pages; order number 22737. A resource for teaching reading that combines the features of an academic text with a practical, hands-on teacher's guide. Includes research-proven and practical teaching methods. Also offers valuable advice for teachers of English language learners.

Textbooks and the Students Who Can't Read Them: A Guide to Teaching Content

By Jean Ciborowski. Brookline Books: Cambridge, MA; 1999; 102 pages; order numbers 22475 and 22476. Offers practical and motivating strategies for including low readers more effectively in textbook learning.

What Reading Research Tells Us About Children with Diverse Learning Needs: Bases and Basics

By Edward Kame'enui and Deborah Simmons. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: Mahwah, NJ; 1998; 399 pages; order numbers 22629 and 22630. Examines research findings on key reading issues and discusses their curricular and instructional implications for diverse learners. Topics include vocabulary acquisition, word recognition, text organization, emergent literacy, phonological awareness, and metacognitive strategies.

TECHNOLOGY

Opening the Doors to Learning: Technology Research for Students with Learning Disabilities

By the Office of Special Programs, U.S. Dept. of Education, Washington, DC, 1999; 34-minute video; 32-page guide; order number 21798. Offers positive examples of how students with

learning disabilities and their teachers can benefit from use of technology in the classroom. Includes questions and answers about learning tools and instructional strategies, a how-to guide on developing effective instructional practices, and an extensive resources listing.

Tales from the Electronic Frontier

By Mayumi Shinohara, editor. WestEd: San Francisco, CA; 1996; 80 pages; order number 21312. A compilation of the work and stories of ten teachers who share their experiences and projects using the Internet in K–12 science and mathematics classes. Shows how the Internet can—and cannot—support teaching and learning. Includes over 50 annotated resources for online math/science organizations and websites. (Also available online at <http://www.wested.org/tales/index.html>)

TEACHER QUALITY

The Case for Change: Rethinking the Preparation of Educators

By Seymour Sarason. National Professional Resources: Port Chester, NY; 1993; 300 pages; order number 7850. Discusses what fundamental changes in schools mean for students, teachers, and administrators, with suggestions for reform in teacher training.

Special Education in an Era of School Reform: Preparing Special Education Teachers

By Michael Hardman, John McDonnell, and Marshall Welch. Federal Resource Center for Special Education: Washington, DC; 1998; 34 pages; order numbers 21164 and 22047. Examines three principles that are driving change in preparing teachers: collaboration and cross-disciplinary training; general and special education interface; and field-based training for partnerships between higher education and public schools. (Also available online at <http://www.dscc.org/frc/pubs/hardman.pdf>)

Teacher Education in Transition: Collaborative Programs to Prepare General and Special Educators

By Linda Blanton, Cynthia Griffin, Judith Winn, and Marleen Pugach, editors. Love Publishing Company: Denver, CO; 1997; 276 pages; order number 22325. Offers collaborative models of teacher training programs as the path to positive and effective reform in education; presents the efforts of ten exemplary collaborative training programs from across the country, with detailed description of each approach and why it is effective.

APRIL 3, POMONA, CALIFORNIA

APRIL 4, SANTA CLARA, CALIFORNIA

26th Annual EdSource Forum on California Schools Reforms

This forum designed for educators is designed to grapple with the difficult questions of how California uses education data to measure and improve school and student performance; whether or not a focus on data makes a real difference; how this focus is changing school leadership and instruction; what changes are ahead for California's school reforms; and more. For more information, call 650/857-9604 or visit website: <http://www.edsource.org>

APRIL 30–MAY 2, 2003

"It's not just about the money: Toward a new children's coalition" CMHACY Conference 2003

This annual conference of California Mental Health Advocates for Children and Youth offers support and resources from the only statewide organization in California dedicated to advancing children's mental health services. Monterey, California. Contact 707/795-4261 or go to <http://www.CMHACY.org>

MAY 8–10, 2003

Computer-Using Educators Inc.: 2003 Spring CUE Conference

This three-day conference is geared for teachers, administrators, students, parents, and other professionals, offering over 200 concurrent sessions that address all areas of curriculum, well known speakers, over 150 vendor displays featuring the latest in education technology resources, hands-on training, and professional development seminars. Anaheim, California. For more information, call 510/814-6630 or visit the following website: <http://www.cue.org/>

JUNE 27–28, 2003

"Leadership for Character Education: The Heart of Good Schooling"

This fifth Character Education Leadership Academy from the International Center for Character Education is designed for principals, counselors, teachers, parents, and community members, and offers an

opportunity to share ideas on programs, practices, curriculum, and teaching; and learn how effective character education programs can increase student achievement, reduce violence, and promote the peaceful resolution of conflict. San Diego, California. For more information, call 619/260-2250 or visit the following website: <http://teachvalues.org/>

To help parents understand the No Child Left Behind Act and the important changes it will bring, the U.S. Department of Education has launched a new monthly television series entitled Education News Parents Can Use. Check your local listings for the following programs in this series:

APRIL 15: SPECIAL EDUCATION

MAY 20: EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

JUNE 17: SUMMER READING

HOST YOUR OWN REGIONAL EVENT

If your school or organization is interested in bringing together general and special educators and families in implementing effective, research-based, educational programs and strategies, you may be able to get help. The CalSTAT Project offers financial, administrative, and logistical support for leadership institutes locally hosted throughout the state. These events would coordinate with a statewide effort to improve student outcomes through integrating systems of educational support.

The structure of these events are geared toward adapting a "whole systems" approach, building professional connections that last, and sharing experiences and expertise. The intended outcomes for these regional institutes also include the following:

- A sustained and expanded effort toward general and special education collaboration
- Meaningful family involvement in school and district-based education renewal
- Expanded capacity of school and district site teams to effectively provide and use site-to-site technical assistance
- Shared successful practices that support safe and healthy schools, improve student literacy, encourage general and special education collaboration, and increase partnerships between families and educators

Please go to www.calstat.org/institute for more information. If you have questions, contact Marin Asbell: email marin.asbell@calstat.org or call 707/849-2265.

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Keeping Disabilities from Becoming Handicaps

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By Bill Tollestrup, Elk Grove Unified School District, Director of Special Education

he *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) made a bold new commitment to one standard: that every boy and girl is learning, regardless of race, background, socioeconomic status, or disability. This piece of legislation may be the very disturbance from outside that enables our system of education to evolve into a collaborative effort that is accountable for all children.

NCLB is based on four fundamental premises: accountability for results, flexibility in service provisions, research-based methodology, and parental choice—indisputable educational premises. Yet something in this act evokes fear, anxiety and resistance among many in education. What is the basis of this fear? Do we believe that some of our children cannot learn? If so, most district mission statements need to be rewritten.

However, I don't think that will need to happen. Most educators are true champions of all children and, once they recognize the potential in the premises of NCLB, will view them as stepping-stones to greater collaboration, increased opportunities for everyone to learn, and a more vibrant partnership with our parents and community.

Prior to the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1975, approximately one million children with disabilities were shut out of schools. Ninety percent of children with developmental disabilities were housed in state institutions. Today, thanks to IDEA, three times the number of young people with disabilities are enrolled in colleges or universities, and twice as many of today's 20-year-olds with disabilities are working.

Despite these advances, millions of children are still being shut out of schools—not by physical barriers, but by barriers of low expectations, lack of accountability, and the lack of a belief that all children can learn. Since 1966, the federal government has spent \$321 billion dollars to help disadvantaged children; and federal discretionary spending on education has more than doubled since 1996. Yet even in the face of this increased spending, we show the following figures:

- Fewer than one-third of our fourth graders read proficiently.
- Reading performance has not improved in more than 15 years.
- Fewer than 20 percent of our nation's twelfth graders score proficiently in math.
- Among the industrialized nations of the world, our twelfth graders rank near the bottom in science and math.

It is my belief that NCLB will help create the collaborative support systems so desperately needed to turn these figures around and provide all children with the opportunity to learn. The legislation both encourages and requires teams of experts from all areas of education to collaboratively provide and design

learning opportunities for all children that will ensure academic achievement. It supports parents as partners in fact, not just in another cliché attached to a school district's mission statement. Mike Schmoker in his book *Results* summarizes the intent and spirit of NCLB by writing that "when the three concepts of teamwork, goal setting, and data use interact, they address a misunderstanding prevalent in schools. The misunderstanding is that we can improve without applying a certain basic principle:

People accomplish more together than in isolation . . . We must ensure that these three concepts operate to produce results." These three concepts govern the implementation of NCLB.

The 105th Congress of the United States found that "Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of the individual to participate in or

contribute to society. Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities." The right of the individual to participate in or contribute to society should be, and has been, expanded and incorporated into national policy through the No Child Left Behind Act. We cannot prevent disabilities, but we can prevent children from becoming educationally handicapped.

Perhaps the anxiety generated by NCLB comes out of a fear that it will become another morass of rules, regulations, and litigation that limit and hinder learning. It is my personal belief, that if implemented with the intent of providing opportunities for all students and in a spirit of collaboration and collegiality, it will be an opportunity for the educational system to realize a quality education for all children.

Something in NCLB evokes fear, anxiety, and resistance among many in education.

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