

Getting the



"Big
Picture"

of IEP Goals and State Standards

James M. Walsh

What effect is the standards reform movement having on the education and classroom placement of students with disabilities? Are we able to meet the requirement to educate these students in the least restrictive environment? Are we able to include such students in general education curriculum, instruction, and assessment? What can districts do to ensure the success of their students with disabilities in a climate of higher expectations and high-stakes assessments? (see box, page 20, “What Does the Literature Say?”).

With the guidance provided by research findings, the Anne Arundel County (Maryland) Public Schools initiated a staff development program to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. This program guides educators through an improved IEP process that provides a better alignment of IEP goals with general education curricular outcomes. This article describes this program and teachers’ responses to it during the 1999-2000 school year.

Staff Development Program on the General Education Curriculum

The district planned a staff development program to assist special education teachers in aligning IEPs with general education curriculums. A major strategy of this program was to ground the training in general education school improvement planning and to involve general education teachers in the planning stages of this effort. The rationale for this strategy was based not only in recognition of the historic absence of a coherent knowledge of general education curriculum among special educators (Pugach & Warger, 1993), but also to ensure wide acceptance and implementation of training practices and materials. In addition, the district wanted to provide curricular materials and procedures that could facilitate and expedite the IEP development process for teachers with limited IEP planning time.

An initial issue to resolve for teachers expected to align IEP goals with general education curriculum was to identify and explain to them what was meant

by “curriculum” (McLaughlin, 1999). In practical terms, how can a special education teacher at the high school level align the IEP of a 9th grade student reading at the 5th grade level with the general education curriculum when the reading curriculum for the 5th-8th grades is not accessible to this teacher? How can this teacher develop instructional goals for this student in the reading area without guidance from a scope and sequence of reading skills contained in the general education curriculum? In Maryland, we found the solution to this problem in the recently approved state content standards, which provide a K-12 curricular framework with specific goals and indicators delineated at grades 3, 5, 8, and 12. Our first staff development task, therefore, was to ensure that these content standards were readily available to special education teachers in all schools. Accordingly, we developed an IEP Alignment binder for teachers that became the central medium and message of the staff development training entitled “Aligning Student IEPs with Maryland Curricular Standards: A Tool for IEP Development.”

Included in the IEP alignment binder were the Maryland Content Standards for English, Math, Social Studies, and Science, as well as student outcomes for Maryland’s alternative assessment program (Independence Mastery Assessment Program, IMAP), and detailed directions and examples to develop IEP goals aligned with general education curriculum. The district provided a staff development program (3 hours) for more than 600 special education and related services staff. The program was planned by a committee of teachers from both special education and general education with the purpose of accel-

What can districts do to ensure the success of their students with disabilities in a climate of higher expectations and high-stakes assessments?

Teacher Comments

“The curriculum alignment organizer is great. It gives me a focus. So is the IEP alignment book.”

“It is so wonderful having all of the content standards in one place.”

“Alignment may help in raising teacher expectations of IEP students.”

erating student achievement using the IEP planning process. The introduction to the IEP alignment binder recognized that, “for too long, teachers have provided instruction based solely on where students with disabilities are currently functioning, not on where they need to go.”

Rationale for Aligning IEPs with Curricular Standards

We began the staff development program with a brief overview of the new IEP provisions of IDEA 1997—particularly the requirements for access to the general education curriculum for students with disabilities and the need to involve general education teachers in the IEP process. In an effort to positively affect the beliefs of participants, we provided an overview of the rationale for the special education policy changes with reference to the extensive research demonstrating that students with disabilities benefit when access to general education curriculum is maximized and high expectations are maintained.

The overview also addressed the need for special education teachers involved in the IEP alignment training to understand the overall context and genesis of the standards-reform movement and its effect on general education. The district emphasized research findings that suggest a correlation between the intensity of curriculum and student achievement (McDonnell, et al., 1997). The trainers pointed out that both special and general educational research has supported the involvement

What Does the Literature Say About the Standards Reform Movement and Students with Disabilities?

Higher and more rigorous expectations for students in general education classrooms pose “great implications for students with disabilities” (Scarpati, 2000, p. 2) and challenge us all within the special education field to “preserve the rights of the individual students within the framework of common standards” (McDonnell, McLaughlin, & Morrison, 1997, p. 65).

Recent revisions of special education policy (1997 Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, IDEA, Public Law 105-17) with regard to accessing general education curriculum by students with disabilities provide us with specific requirements and direction to ensure that students with disabilities are included in systemic initiatives to improve educational outcomes for all students.

But in a climate of standards-based reform and high-stakes assessments, many educators wonder how students with disabilities will be able to meet graduation requirements (Chard, 1999). This concern is particularly valid in light of research documenting that students with disabilities have historically had twice the high school dropout rate of their peers without disabilities (Wagner, Blackorby, Cameto, Hebbeler, & Newman, 1993). High dropout rates have devastating long-term effects, such as high rates of unemployment and problems with the law. Indeed, the stakes for students with disabilities are high, and the response from public schools must be equal to the task.

A suggested starting point for school systems seeking to respond to the challenge of standard-based reform on students with disabilities is a review of the research that supports the new provisions within IDEA for meaningful and measurable access to the general education curriculum for students with disabilities. The finding that integration into general education programs increases the likelihood that students with disabilities will stay in school with improved outcomes after graduation (Hehir, 1999) has provided a firm basis for planning efforts. A second step is a recognition that a process exists to develop a specific support system for each student with disabilities in the form of an individualized education program (IEP). However, schools must first recognize and correct the historical inadequacies of, and passive compliance with, an IEP process (Smith, 1990) that does not communicate the individual needs of students and does not serve as a useful instructional guide for teachers (Giangreco, Dennis, Edelman, & Cloninger, 1994).

The strengthening of the IEP process “as a formal mechanism for deciding how individual students with disabilities will participate in standard-based reform,” as recommended by the Committee on Goals 2000 and The Inclusion of Students with Disabilities (McDonnell et al., 1997, p. 9), is critical to the successful provision of appropriate special education services to students with disabilities. Moreover, the Committee on Goals 2000 reminded us that “before attaching significant stakes to the performance of individual students, those students should be given an opportunity to learn the skills and knowledge expected of them” (p. 10).

of students with disabilities in high curricular standards.

We then introduced the process of aligning IEPs to curricular standards as a means of comparing a student’s current level of performance to the expectations for peers without disabilities of

the same age group, identifying the skills needed for successful involvement in the general education curriculum, and ensuring that teachers teach the content that is measured on standard-based assessments. We stressed the importance of linking the IEP needs of

Teacher Comments

“The IEP alignment book is helpful though I do not agree with the concept of unified standards in special education and general education.”

“Expecting a special education child to meet new state standards is somewhat unrealistic.”

students with daily classroom lesson planning and instruction.

Alignment Process

Surveys of special education teachers (Sands, Adams, & Stout, 1995) have revealed that, in the absence of curriculum to provide direction for special educators, “instructional decision making and practices are often haphazard and widely divergent” (p. 69). Therefore, we emphasized that the alignment process must begin with collaboration with general education teachers regarding the instruction needed to enable students with disabilities to meet curriculum standards. Indeed, the most critical decision made by special and general education teachers regarding the instruction of students with disabilities may be what is *not* necessary for all students to learn to meet high content standards. Rather, we need to be asking what are the essential skills needed “for adequate performance on a curriculum standard and which are optional” (McLaughlin, Nolet, Rhim, & Henderson, 1999, p. 70).

To assist IEP teams in making these critical decisions, particularly in determining the impact of a student’s per-

Our first staff development task was to ensure that state content standards were readily available to special education teachers in all schools.

For too long, teachers have provided instruction based solely on where students with disabilities are currently functioning, not on where they need to go.

formance levels on his or her ability to successfully achieve general education curricular outcomes, we developed a “curriculum alignment organizer” adapted from earlier efforts of the Aurora, Colorado, Public Schools (Fognani-Smaus, 1999). The curriculum alignment organizer (see Figure 1) consists of a worksheet that lists the content standards in each of the major content areas with columns in which the teacher can check how a student will meet the standard:

- In the same way as a student without disabilities (the column marked “G”, for “general standard”).
- With accommodations (GA, or “general standard, with accommodations”).
- Through a modified standard (M).
- Through an alternate standard (IMAP, or Independence Mastery Assessment Program).

If the teacher chooses a modified standard, he or she references the content standards within the IEP alignment resource book to note the particular indicators that align with the student’s level of functioning. These indicators from the K-12 scope and sequence would then serve as the source of the IEP objectives for that student. If the student could meet the standard with accommodations, the teacher noted the accommodation on the worksheet for inclusion in the IEP. Students with disabilities working toward alternative curricular goals would have IEPs referenced to Maryland’s IMAP.

Providing access to the general education curriculum for students with disabilities begins with orienting special education teachers to this curriculum and improving their understanding of it

(McLaughlin, 1999). Special education teachers must be able to interact and communicate with general education teachers about the curriculum. The curriculum alignment organizer (Figure 1, p. 22) can serve as an index and guide for special education teachers to learn and access the general education curricular outcomes as they relate to the individual needs of students with disabilities. It also provides a common language to facilitate the critical collaboration and decision making that must occur over time among IEP team members.

Along with introducing the curriculum alignment organizer and providing training activities for participants to practice its usefulness in accessing the general education curricula, the staff development program also reviewed the difference between an *accommodation* and a *modification* for a student with disabilities.

The challenge for special education teachers is to find the instructional time to help students with disabilities learn rigorous content standards while remediating critical skill deficits.

- An accommodation is a change in *how* a student accesses and demonstrates learning, but it does not substantially change the instructional content.
- A modification is a change in *what* a student is expected to learn and demonstrate.

The difference is critical in light of the high-stakes assessments, which may affect a student’s ability to receive a high school diploma. That is, teachers who decide to reduce or limit the instruction to students with disabilities through an IEP *modification* must be aware of the essential learning that stu-

Teacher Comments

”As a first-year teacher, I think it is nice to have a guide to follow/refer to when writing IEPs so that I can make them as effective as possible.”

dents need for successful participation in state and district assessment programs (Green, & Sireci, 1999).

Our training program also emphasized that part of the alignment process is providing materials or strategies (e.g., the use of a scientific calculator, a memory strategy) that students may need to access the general education curriculum.

Linking IEPs with Instructional Planning

In recognition of the historical inadequacies of the IEP as a guide for classroom instruction (Smith, 1990), the second major goal of the staff development program was to provide strategies and materials to enable special education teachers to link IEPs with the instructional planning and to better communicate student needs with general education teachers. To assist teachers plan lessons based on a summary of the IEP needs of students and to make instructional grouping decisions based on students’ diverse learning needs, we provided participants with a chart used to identify the “big picture” of common instructional needs of a group of students with disabilities. We used this chart as an activity to engage participants in the practice of instructional decision making. We recommended using the “big picture” matrix (Figure 2, p. 23) as a way to provide a visual summary of the instructional needs of a

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Figure 1. Curriculum Alignment Organizer

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	21	22	23	24	25
4.0 Reading: Students compare, contrast and extend the meaning of a variety of self-selected and assigned texts (traditional and electronic) by applying a range of reading strategies and analyzing content areas (PYP 1.1 & 1.7)					
4.1 Literature: Students compare and analyze the meaning of literary texts from their own cultures and others by applying different critical lenses and analytic techniques. Students will explain and give evidence to support perceptions about genre and narrative modes. (PYP 1.1 & 1.7)					
4.2 Comprehension, Reading Fluency, Comprehension of Texts					
4.3 Writing: Students produce substantial, organized, persuasive, and narrative writing that demonstrates an awareness of audience, purpose, and form using stages of the writing process to include idea, drafting, revising, editing and publishing. (High School) DCLC 2.1 and 2.2 Students will locate, retrieve, and use information from various sources to research a topic. (PYP 1.1 & 1.7) Comprehension, Reading Fluency, Comprehension of Texts					
4.4 Language: Students understand and use the structures and conventions of the English language(s) in speaking, spelling, grammar, and writing on formal and informal communication. (High School) DCLC 2.1 and 2.2 Students will identify how language choices in writing and speaking affect thought and feelings. (High School) Vocabulary, Comprehension, Comprehension of Texts					
5.0 Learning: Students demonstrate effective learning to learn, process and analyze the meaning of information. (High School) Comprehension					
6.0 Reading: Students demonstrate fluently a variety of oral literacies, with fluency in letters, punctuation, syntax, punctuation, delivery, pronunciation, fluency					
7.0 (High School) DCLC 2.0: Students will draw their interest that a given text, line of research, has an interest in itself. Students will assess the effectiveness of a range of details, organizational patterns, and choices, syntax, use of language, and rhetorical devices in the student's own composing. Students will evaluate textual changes in a study and identify how these changes affect plot, clarity, meaning, address, audience, or style. (High School) Comprehension, Reading Fluency, Comprehension of Texts					
8.0 Algebra, Functions and Properties: Students will algebraically represent, model, analyze, and solve real-world and mathematical problems involving systems and linear relationships.					
8.1 Algebra: Linear, Exponential, Quadratic					
8.2 Geometry: Students will apply the properties of one-, two-, and three-dimensional geometric figures to describe, reason, and solve problems about shape, size, position, and motion of objects.					
8.3 Measurement: Students will identify attributes, units, and systems of measurement and apply a variety of techniques, formulas, and technology for determining measurements.					
Area, Volume, Surface Area, Circumference					
4.0 Reading: Students will compare, contrast, analyze, and synthesize to make decisions and justify them. (High School) DCLC 2.1 and 2.2 Students will identify how language choices in writing and speaking affect thought and feelings. (High School) Vocabulary, Comprehension, Comprehension of Texts					
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Area, Volume, Surface Area, Circumference					

Legend: C Covered Standard, PYP 1.1 & 1.7 English Core Learning Goals, A Modified Standard with Accommodations, M Modified Standard, IELAP Independent Inquiry Assessment Program

SCIENCE FOR STUDENTS	21	22	23	24	25
3.0 Learning Goals: Students will plan, execute, and evaluate an investigation using scientific inquiry skills and practices. (High School) DCLC 2.1 and 2.2 Students will identify how language choices in writing and speaking affect thought and feelings. (High School) Vocabulary, Comprehension, Comprehension of Texts					
4.0 Reading: Students will compare, contrast, analyze, and synthesize to make decisions and justify them. (High School) DCLC 2.1 and 2.2 Students will identify how language choices in writing and speaking affect thought and feelings. (High School) Vocabulary, Comprehension, Comprehension of Texts					
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8.3 Measurement: Students will identify attributes, units, and systems of measurement and apply a variety of techniques, formulas, and technology for determining measurements.					
Area, Volume, Surface Area, Circumference					

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION	21	22	23	24	25
1.0 Personal Management: Students will demonstrate their ability in the following areas: personal health, appropriate health and safety decisions, emergency preparedness, and use of health care resources. (High School) DCLC 2.1 and 2.2 Students will identify how language choices in writing and speaking affect thought and feelings. (High School) Vocabulary, Comprehension, Comprehension of Texts					
2.0 Communication: Students will demonstrate their ability to communicate effectively and get along with others in the classroom, including the ability to participate in group communication activities.					
3.0 Career Readiness: Students will demonstrate their ability to evaluate possible work activities and behaviors in various levels, personal, community and societal. Students will participate in understanding, employment and an awareness of the workforce.					
4.0 Physical Education: Students will demonstrate their ability to participate in recreational, fitness, and athletic activities. Students will practice with their non-disabled peers in a variety of physical and motor activities.					
5.0 Environmental Health: Students will demonstrate their ability to recognize and create environmental health through a variety of methods, to make decisions, and to act on them. Students will understand the importance of health and safety decisions and compliance with the common environment. Support systems should be in place for each student.					

SOCIAL STUDIES	21	22	23	24	25
1.0 Social Studies Skills: Students will demonstrate an understanding of history and its impact on society, geography, and social studies, developing skills and competencies, and to answer questions that include analyzing and evaluating information from a variety of sources and records. (High School) DCLC 2.1 and 2.2 Students will identify how language choices in writing and speaking affect thought and feelings. (High School) Vocabulary, Comprehension, Comprehension of Texts					

SCIENCE	21	22	23	24	25
1.0 Skills and Processes: Students will demonstrate the thinking and writing behaviors in the practice of science.					
2.0 Earth/Space Science: Students will use scientific skills and processes to explain the chemical and physical interactions (i.e., rates of erosion and uplift, transfer of energy) of the atmosphere, hydrosphere, and the ways in that they vary from time to time.					
3.0 Life Science: Students will use scientific skills and processes to explain the chemical nature of living things, their interactions, and the ways in that they vary from time to time.					
4.0 Technology: Students will use scientific skills and processes to explain the interactions, structures, and relationships of matter in order to support the sustainability of resources and energy transfer systems.					
5.0 Physics: Students will use scientific skills and processes to explain the interactions of matter and energy and the ways in that they vary from time to time.					
6.0 Environmental Science: Students will use scientific skills and processes to explain the interactions of environmental factors (biotic and abiotic) and analyze their impact from a local to a global perspective.					

ACCOMMODATIONS	MODIFICATIONS
How students will be supported in the learning process	Changes to what students are expected to learn/demonstrate

Legend: C Covered Standard, PYP 1.1 & 1.7 English Core Learning Goals, A Modified Standard with Accommodations, M Modified Standard, IELAP Independent Inquiry Assessment Program

class of students. This matrix was also a simple means to inform and involve general education teachers in this collaborative effort.

A final strategy of the staff development initiative was to promote systemic, long-standing change and reinforce the IEP alignment and instructional planning outcomes. We developed a way to include the alignment process in the school system's lesson planning guidelines. This process encompassed the classroom observation and teacher rating process (see Figure 3, pp. 24 and 25). For example, one of the teacher considerations listed in the "context of learning" section of the district's lesson plan guidelines asked the question, "Have I considered an assessment of student needs prior to the lesson?" In the observation form, we added: "How to address IEP Goals/Objectives within curricula outcomes. . . ." Likewise, in another item under "instructional planning," we added: "The lesson plan addresses IEP needs of students in context of the general education curricular outcomes." In this way, teachers and building administrators have the responsibility to consider the IEP planning and implementation process as they guide classroom planning and instruction toward accelerating student achievement.

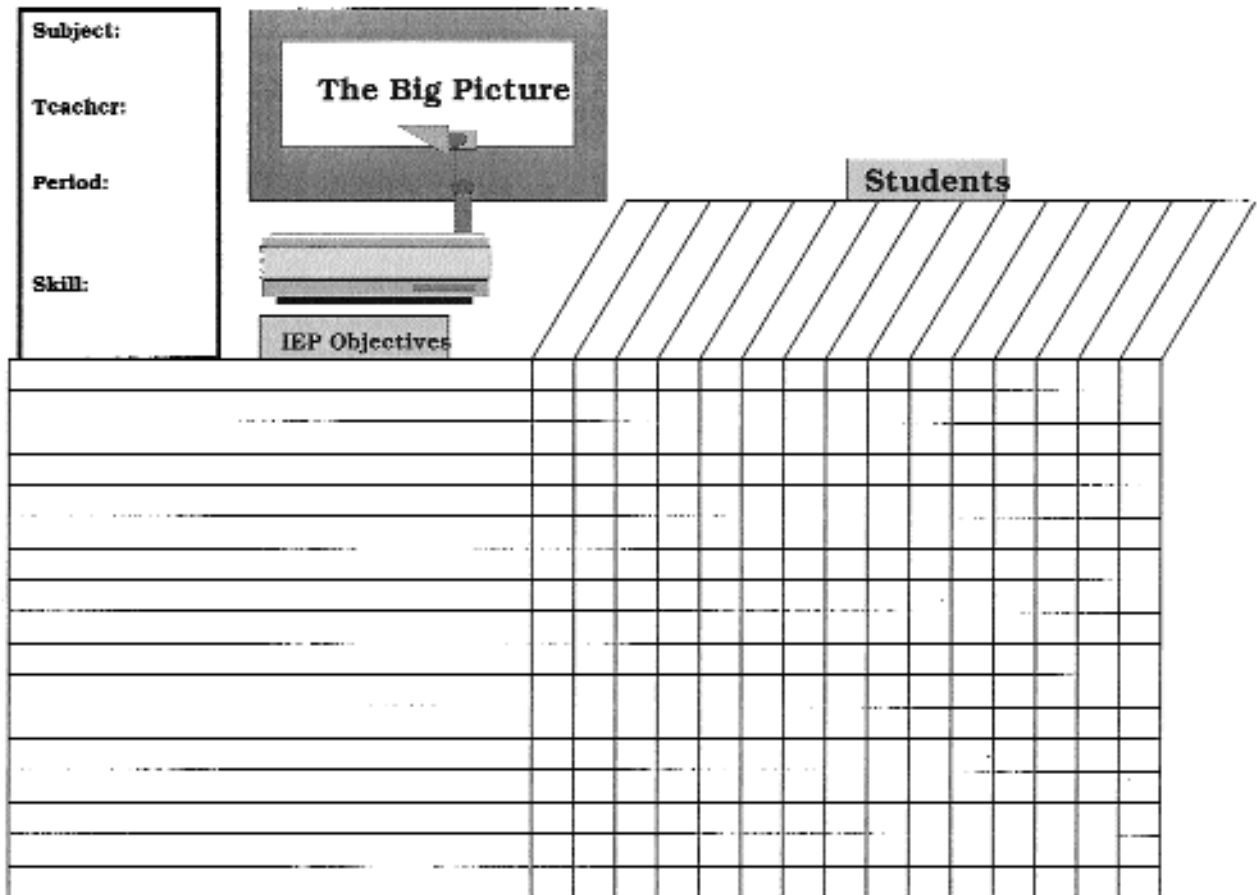
Assessment of the Staff Development Program

At the conclusion of the 3-hour training, we conducted a survey (60% response rate) of staff development participants (N = 628). The survey results revealed that special education teachers understood the need for aligning student IEPs with general education outcomes (83%) and agreed that this is an important topic for staff development (81%). Moreover, the high level of participant

Teacher Comments

"The 'Big Picture' will help meet students' individual needs better if general education teachers have the time/resources to incorporate the IEP into lesson plans."

Figure 2. "The Big Picture" Matrix



agreement (94%) with the guidance provided by the IEP alignment book appeared to affirm previous endorsements by special educators for a centralized framework that standards provide (McLaughlin, Henderson, & Rhim, 1998). The "assessment anxiety" felt by special education teachers regarding how "some" students may or may not meet more rigorous standards (McLaughlin et al., 1998), however, was reflected in lower agreement (64%) with the question whether "aligning IEPs with Maryland Content Standards will benefit students with disabilities with higher levels of achievement."

With regard to materials and strategies provided in the staff training program, participants indicated high levels of agreement with the benefits of the "IEP alignment book" (94%), the "curriculum alignment organizer" (77%), and the "Big Picture" matrix (80%). Moreover, participants indicated high

levels of agreement with achievement of the training outcomes relating to being informed and aware of the importance of IDEA regulation changes in the IEP process (88%), and being better able to align IEP goals and objectives with content standards (85%). Less agreement was found with outcomes relating to improved ability to involve general education teachers in the IEPs of students with disabilities (68%). The latter responses appeared to reflect a general concern among special education teachers with both limited planning time and limited instructional time to identify, prioritize, and teach the critical skills needed for successful participation in a more rigorous general education curriculum. The responses of secondary teachers to the training outcome regarding improved ability to involve general education teachers in IEPs (47%) appeared to indicate particular concern with their ability to modify the curricu-

lum standards of high-stakes, content-specific secondary classrooms for students with disabilities.

A second and more long-term assessment of the outcomes of the staff development initiative was implemented as part of the routine classroom observation and teacher rating process. That is, the training outcomes have been imbedded in the countywide lesson planning and classroom observation guidelines with specific expectations that the IEP needs of students be reflected in daily classroom instruction relative to general education curricular outcomes. Because these expectations for special education

Ask yourself: "Have I considered an assessment of student needs prior to the lesson?"

Figure 3. Correlation of Classroom Observation Form with Instructional Lesson Plan Guidelines for Special Education Teachers

Teacher Rating Report with Special Education Guidelines	Classroom Observations Form with Special Education Guidelines	
<p>Planning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify clear goals and objectives (based on the School Improvement Plan and IEP's District/Obj) relative to students. 2. Adapt lessons to student needs, interests, and ability level vs. IEP Goals. 3. Utilize effective instructional tools for student performance. Research and compare/contrast program based on IEP Goals/Objectives. 4. Adapt Plans and lessons based on student outcomes. Utilize appropriate groupings/learning process. 5. Identify strategies and techniques to describe to growth and discuss with the Maryland Student Performance Program. <p>Instructional Strategies</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Organize the sequence for learning to take place. 7. Plan for daily and long term instruction to address IEP Goals/Objectives. 8. Design appropriate instructional strategies necessary to bring students up to standard in IEP's. 	<p>Instructional Planning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Student outcomes are clearly stated. 5. Planning is based on approved county program and reflects the IEP's goals, objectives, interests and abilities. 6. Planning is based on the assessed needs of students. 12. Lesson Plan includes an appropriate statement of the anticipated student outcomes. 5. Planning is based on approved county program and reflects the IEP's goals, objectives, interests, and indicators. 2. Components of an effective lesson plan are all present. 5. Planning is based on effective teaching/learning models and strategies. 7. Planning incorporates the dimensions of Learning Styles/Diversity. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Effective long range planning is evident. 10. Lesson plan is designed to actively involve learners. 11. Lesson plan includes an appropriate variety of instructional strategies to address student outcomes. 12. Activities are presented in a logical sequence (developmental/learning). <p>Instructional Delivery</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A comprehensive lesson plan and supporting materials are provided. 2. Effective long range planning is evident. 4. Planning is based on the assessed needs of students. 5. Planning is based on effective teaching/learning models and strategies. 9. Lesson plan includes a method for the appropriate grouping of students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IEP Objectives are identified. • IEP Goals/Objectives are aligned with general education outcomes. • IEP Objectives are addressed. • Based on IEP Instructional criteria. • IEP Goals/Obj activities are aligned with general education outcomes. • Differentiated instruction is planned. • Includes appropriate use of teacher materials. • Differentiated materials are included. • IEP objectives are addressed. • Differentiated instruction is planned. • Different learning needs based on IEP are included.
<p>Instructional Strategies</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Describes the focus of the lesson based on IEP Goals/Objectives. 10. Reviews concepts and skills previously learned, as appropriate. 11. Utilize positive reinforcement to address differentiated Learning Outcomes are planned and implemented. 12. Utilize subject/content relevant to students based on developmental appropriate needs/IEP's. 13. Communicates high expectations for all students with clear student objectives. 14. Give positive timely feedback regarding performance. 15. Analyze student performance to provide feedback. 16. Evaluate student performance using a variety of techniques. Document performance to meet IEP Goals/Objectives, encourage student self-monitoring/evaluation. 17. Evaluate student performance based on IEP District/Obj's. 18. Give clear and concise directions and explanations. 	<p>Instructional Delivery</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The focus and purpose of the lesson are established by motivating the student interest in what and how to learn. 1. Prior learning is assessed. 2. Concepts and skills are reviewed as appropriate. 3. Instruction is based on approved county program and reflects IEP's goals, objectives, interests and abilities. 8. Instruction incorporates the dimensions of Learning Styles/Diversity. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Activities and instructional strategies support the achievement of the student outcomes. B. Modifications of the lesson is made as appropriate. 3. Instructional principles are used effectively throughout the lesson. 9. The teacher demonstrates an enthusiasm for the subject (Learning Environment). 13. A high level of on-task behavior is maintained. 12. Effect on questioning techniques are used to promote student learning. 13. Feedback is timely, specific and constructive. 14. Modifications of the lesson is made as appropriate. 16. Student progress is monitored throughout the lesson. 16. Student progress is monitored throughout the lesson. 17. Students are asked to verify the achievement of learning outcomes. 21. The achievement of student outcomes is assessed. <p>Instructional Delivery</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Activities are presented in a logical sequence. 7. Activities and instructional strategies support the achievement of the student outcomes. 22. Effective questioning techniques are used to promote student learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IEP objectives are identified. • As dictated by IEP's. • IEP objectives are addressed. • Based on IEP's. • Determined by IEP criteria.

Part of the alignment process is providing materials or strategies (e.g., the use of a scientific calculator, a memory strategy) that students may need to access the general education curriculum.

teachers were to be observed during the 1999-2000 school year, the district targeted 5 of the 47 items on the classroom observation form (see Figure 3) as representing the lesson-planning expectations of the IEP alignment staff training initiative. As Coordinator of Special Education during the 1999-2000 school year, I collected teacher-performance data on these items from more than 80 special education teacher observations (N = 83). I reported the results as an assessment of teacher compliance with instructional planning based on IEP alignment with general education curriculum outcomes.

The first item on the assessment was the provision of a "comprehensive lesson plan and supporting materials." We found a high rate of compliance with this item (95%). Likewise, in light of long-standing county lesson plan guidelines and administrative requirements for posted student outcomes and daily assessment procedures, the second and third items were also highly compliant; that is, planning was based on "Maryland Student Performance Program outcomes and indicators" (88%), and the lesson plan included "an appropriate assessment of the attainment of student outcomes" (88%). We found much less compliance with two final items: Only 59% of the observed classrooms included methods for the appropriate grouping of students and in just 72% of the lesson plans did teachers address the "assessed needs of students."

The challenge for special education teachers is to find the instructional time to help students with disabilities learn rigorous content standards while reme-

Figure 4. Correlation of Classroom Observation Form with the Teacher Rating Report Including Guidelines for Special Education Teachers

Teacher Rating Report with Special Education Guidelines	Classroom Observation Form with Special Education Guidelines
<p>29. Consider one instructional plan with adjustment to appropriate learning modifications and accommodations utilized by teacher consistent with appropriate accommodations IEP Goals/Objectives and accommodations in other lessons.</p> <p>30. Present core concepts clearly.</p>	<p>6. Activities are presented in a logical sequence.</p> <p>7. Activities and instructional strategies support the attainment of the student outcomes.</p> <p>10. Effective transition, explicit strategy instruction and behavior change in grouping formats.</p> <p>11. Attention pacing is used throughout the lesson.</p> <p>12. Effective questioning techniques are used to promote student learning.</p>
<p>Classroom Management/Organization</p> <p>31. Organize classroom activities for maximum student learning/interest.</p> <p>32. Emphasize on learning based on student performance.</p> <p>33. Use appropriate behavior management strategies in a fair and consistent manner.</p> <p>34. Use space, equipment, and materials to support instruction.</p> <p>35. Establish classroom rules and routines for promoting independence and student independence.</p> <p>36. Maintain a safe, well-organized classroom.</p>	<p>Learning Environment</p> <p>10. Lesson plan is designed to actively involve learners (Instructional Planning).</p> <p>9. The teacher engages students in active learning (Instructional Delivery).</p> <p>14. Modification of the lesson is made as appropriate (Instructional Delivery).</p> <p>1. Effective classroom practices are established and consistently practiced to maximize instructional time.</p> <p>2. Appropriate and effective discipline procedures are followed.</p> <p>3. The physical arrangement and use of space, equipment and supplies support instruction.</p> <p>1. Effective classroom practices are established and consistently practiced to maximize instructional time.</p> <p>2. Appropriate standards for behavior have been established.</p> <p>4. Physical environment is safe, well-organized and supportive.</p>
<p>37. Demonstrate sensitivity to and respect for each student as an individual.</p> <p>38. Demonstrate sensitivity to the concerns and feelings of racial/ethnic, social, economically, and religious groups.</p>	<p>6. The teacher provides a positive learning atmosphere.</p> <p>7. The teacher has established a rapport with students.</p> <p>8. The teacher encourages and dignifies responses from all students.</p> <p>15. The teacher maintains positive accuracy, objectivity and a sensitivity to others.</p>

adapted by other school systems in their efforts to align IEPs and classroom instruction with local general education standards.

We were encouraged by surveys of staff training participants that indicated that special education teachers strongly supported the need for IEP alignment with general education curriculum outcomes to ensure that students with disabilities are not left behind in the standards reform movement. We plan to develop further training programs to address the “assessment anxiety” on the part of special education teachers across the United States.

As a result of the training program and observations described in this article, Anne Arundel County has adapted the special education observation and rating procedures to include the IEP alignment and lesson planning practices recommended by this staff development effort to better assist administrators in their routine supervision and monitoring of special education in their building. In addition, the district is developing further training programs to assist educators in differentiating instruction and in using other small-group strategies to ensure the success of all learners.

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diating critical skill deficits. For this to happen, teachers must daily infuse IEP learning objectives into general education curriculum instruction. We must correct the missed opportunities indicated in the classroom observation summaries, either through a lack of consideration of the assessed needs of the students (which a “big picture” would facilitate) or through a lack of skill in planning grouping strategies to address the multiple and different needs of students with disabilities. Indeed, the use of instructional approaches that promote small-group learning and grouping practices to address the diverse learning needs, styles, and pace of students in

general is a critical need for most teachers confronted with standards-based reform (McDonnell et al., 1997).

Final Thoughts and Future Plans

The tools that the Anne Arundel educators developed, an “IEP alignment binder,” a “curriculum alignment organizer,” and a “big picture matrix,” were designed to improve the curriculum based decision-making process for special education teachers and enhance the communication and interaction with general education teachers regarding the needs of students with disabilities. They can be easily duplicated and

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