
Editor's Note

A thought-provoking publication by The Thomas Fordham Institute explores the *Shifting Trends in Special Education* (May 2011). A selection from the Executive Summary is shown below.

Executive Summary

Special education is a field in flux. After decades of steady increases, the population of students with disabilities peaked in 2004-05 with 6.72 million youngsters, comprising 13.8% of the nation's student population. The following year marked the first time since the enactment of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that special education participation numbers declined—and they have continued to do so, falling to 6.48 million students by 2009-10, or 13.1% of all students nationwide.

This report examines trends in the number of special education students and personnel at both the national and state levels from 2000-01 to 2009-10. It finds that the overall population of special education students, after decades of increases, peaked in the 2004-05 school year and has declined since. But within this population, individual categories of students with disabilities differed markedly in their trajectories:

- The population of students identified as having *specific learning disabilities*, the most prevalent of all disability types, declined considerably throughout the decade, falling from 2.86 million to 2.43 million students, or from 6.1% to 4.9% of all students nationwide.
- Other shrinking disability categories included mental retardation, which dropped from 624,000 to 463,000 students, or from 1.3% to 0.9% of all pupils, and emotional disturbances, which fell from 480,000 to 407,000 students, or from 1.0% to 0.8%.
- Autism and *other health impairment* (OHI) populations increased dramatically. The number of autistic students quadrupled from 93,000 to 378,000, while OHI numbers more than doubled from 303,000 to 689,000. Even so, autistic and OHI populations constituted only 0.8% and 1.4%, respectively, of all students in 2009-10.
- In addition, state-level special education trends varied dramatically.
- *Source:* <http://www.edexcellence.net/publications-issues/publications/shifting-trends-in-special.html>

Note: Congratulations to Frank Kline on his appointment as Dean of the School of Education and Movement Studies at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington. Unfortunately, his new responsibilities will not permit him to continue as co-editor of *Learning Disabilities: A Multidisciplinary Journal*. We all thank him for his years as co-editor of the LDA Journal and wish Frank well in his new appointment.

The articles in this issue of *Learning Disabilities: A Multidisciplinary Journal* include:

Building Science Reading Fluency for Students with Disabilities with Repeated Reading to a Fluency Criterion by Douglas Kostewicz and Richard Kubina Jr. The study investigated the effects of repeated readings to a fluency criterion with science text for seven students with disabilities using multiple probe multiple baselines across participants. Overall, repeated readings to a fluency criterion intervention improved science reading fluency for students with disabilities.

A Professional Development School Innovation: A University's Response To Special Education Teacher Shortages by Mary C. Esposito, Shirley Lal, & Dawn Berlin. This study examined the effectiveness of the application of the Professional Development School (PDS) Model (Holmes Group, 1986), to an alternative special education (SPED) credential program designed to prepare SPED teachers (for culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse urban K-12 schools and to ease SPED teachers shortages within our university's service area. The study demonstrates the viability of the CSUDH SPED PDS to increase both quantity and quality of SPED teachers and thus ease severe teacher shortages across the nation.

First Year Co-Teaching: Disclosed Through Focus Group and Individual Interviews by Robert Isherwood, Richael Barger-Anderson, Joseph Merhaut, and Jodi Katsafanas. In this study, focus group and individual interviews were conducted with 47 faculty members and administrators in a rural school district

in Western Pennsylvania to determine strategies for consideration when attempting to establish and implement a co-teaching program. Roadblocks identified in successful implementation included: dysfunctional co-teaching relationships, lack of common planning time, skewed classroom composition, lack of curriculum familiarity, and non-compatibility with the school management information system. A description of potential solutions to these roadblocks was also provided.

Learning Disabilities and Employment Before and in the Americans with Disabilities Act Era: Progress or a Bridge Too Far? by Paul J. Gerber, Ruth Harris, Cecilia G. Batalo, and Edwin O. Achola, The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and its amendments have been in existence for a little more than twenty years. Title One that pertains to employment has had a bearing on employment for persons with disabilities, particularly the high incidence category of learning disabilities, who for the most part work in competitive employment settings. This article examines two data sets—the research on employment of individuals with learning disabilities before and in the ADA era.

Self-Regulated Strategy Development Instruction: Effects of Lesson Structure on a Teacher's Behaviors by Richard M. Kubina Jr. Self-regulated strategy development instruction or SRSD is a method developed for teaching students how and what to think while writing. SRSD instruction for the persuasive writing strategy POW (Pick my idea, Organize notes, Write and Say more) + TREE (Topic sentence, Reasons, Explain reasons, Ending) helps students by teaching them to develop their thoughts into manageable components prior to and during the writing process. In this descriptive study a teacher's behavior was carefully measured to examine the effects SRSD for POW+TREE. The results show a high number of opportunities to respond were provided by the teacher.

We hope you enjoy reading these articles.

Janet W. Lerner
Editor