Special School District

Program Evaluation for Students with Specific Learning Disabilities

Chair
Virginia Bender

March 2, 2005

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Appendices

Executive Summary

The Learning Disabilities Program Evaluation is part of a comprehensive process in which the District reviews programming for all its students. This evaluation took place from August 2004 to January 2005. Stakeholders were sought from teachers, administrators, parents, partner districts, universities, and community members. The questions defined by the team and approved by the Board of Education were designed to provide a review of programming across the county for students with learning disabilities. The review would allow the team to identify any strengths or challenges in current programming as defined by: literature review, document review, teacher surveys, administrator surveys, parent surveys, and a public forum.

Introduction

The introduction of the report provides the definition Missouri uses to identify students as having a specific learning disability. The service and placement options are defined. Within the group of students identified as having a specific learning disability it is important to note that placement codes do not provide an extensive picture of their services. The placement codes are based on the amount of time a student is served outside the general education classroom. Therefore any minutes of service provided within the general education classroom are not reflected in the placement code. For many students and students with learning disabilities in particular, significant amounts of minutes may be provided through the service delivery of Collaborative Teaching (CT) or what was formerly referred to as Class within a Class or CWC.

According to the Special School District of St. Louis County, unduplicated counts for the school years 2002/2003, 2003/2004 and 2004/2005, the percentage of our students identified as having a specific learning disability have decreased from 50% to 48% and to 45% respectively (DESE, 2004). By comparison, during the years 2002/2003 and 2003/2004, the state's percentage of students with disabilities identified as learning disabled were 44% and 42% respectively (DESE, 2004). During the school years 2002/2003 and 2003/2004, the nation's percentage of students with disabilities identified as learning disabled were 45% and 47% respectively (US Department of Education, 2004).

Board of Education Evaluation Questions
1. How are students identified as requiring special education due to a specific learning disability?
2. How are services provided at the elementary level and at the secondary level?
3. What are essential components of a special education program that serves students with learning disabilities as identified by related literature?

4. How are students receiving special education for a learning disability assessed for progress?

Related Literature

The following areas of best practice were found in the literature across sources and decades of research in the field of Learning Disabilities. The team further defined these areas by grouping smaller areas of focus from research as well as discussion. The following outline organizes the best practice areas with identifiers for each. It became clear as we reviewed the literature and our own internal district practices that treatment of diversity and technology were best served as part of each section rather than distinct entities. Universals and the 30 day checklist refer to District communication resources and training for area coordinators and teachers. The 30 day checklist is a group of observable items or actions that are expected to be part of each teacher's classroom each year. The checklist is used as a structure for discussion between the area coordinator and the teacher that facilitates support and feedback. The term universals refers to a group of supports available in any learning environment in response to the unique needs of a particular group of students. One classroom may need the schedule posted on the wall, in another the schedules may need to be taped to each desk or translated into picture form. Direct instruction and small group instruction were best practice activities present across the literature. Direct instruction highlights two principles. First, students need to be overtly taught specific skills to allow them to be independent as possible in their education. Second, instruction needs to be strategic which means it is planned, paced and evaluated to promote improved student outcomes based on the curriculum presented and the individual needs of the students.

Environment
- Classroom Management (Universals)
- 30 day checklist
- Resources for students
- Diversity
- Technology

Quality Instruction (How)
- Systematic (assess/plan/teach)
- Lesson Design (direct)
- Feedback
- Student Engagement
- Diversity
- Technology

Curriculum (What)
- Social Skills

- Self-Advocacy
- Literacy
- Reading
- Math
- Writing
- Learning Strategies
- Transition Skills
- Diversity
- Technology

Service Delivery
- Collaborative Teaching
- Small Group Instruction
- Individual Instruction
- Diversity
- Technology

Methodology

The team designed surveys to gain significant information about programming for students with learning disabilities that would require a moderate amount of time and energy on the part of staff. We also utilized the results of surveys already designed and implemented by the district to gain information from our students' parents. We designed a public forum with a relaxed format to engage parents, partner district staff, and community members in discussion as well as to seek individual input to our evaluation. Review of district documents as well as related literature completed our methodology. For related literature we first identified what we considered to be credible sources such as scholarly journals, professional association publications and websites, and books and articles by renowned authors in the field. Initially members were assigned to sources so that the team would not duplicate its efforts, but interest caused team members to search further for related articles and materials.

Results

Our surveys were analyzed in reference to our four questions. There are six methods for data collection to answer the board of education evaluation questions: quality indicator of best practices, document review, staff survey, administrator survey, parent survey, and public forum.

The results of staff, administrator, and parent surveys are as follows:
  - Special School District teachers of students with learning disabilities are well qualified.

- The majority of teachers provide direct instruction in reading, writing, math, and study skills instruction, but not social skills, transition skills, and self-advocacy skills.
- The majority of teachers use IEP goal/benchmarks to assess student progress.
- Overall, teachers and administrators indicated that they implement the majority of the skills to a large extent such as classroom management, lesson plans with observable student outcomes, differentiated instruction, etc. There are several skills that teachers may not implement to a great extent but they still rate themselves at above average use such as; integrate technology into learning environment, implement strategies to improve students social and emotional needs, etc.
- Teachers indicated that they used the following supports for their students:
  - (a) learning strategies
  - (b) materials and resources
  - (c) collaborative teaming
- Administrators indicated the following supports utilized for students in their area of supervision:
  - (a) professional development
  - (b) collaborative teaming
  - (c) computer technology support and
  - (d) materials
- Teachers also indicated that they need additional supports in:
  - (a) learning strategies
  - (b) computer technology support
  - (c) administrative support
- Administrators indicated the following areas need additional supports:
  - (a) professional development
  - (b) administrative support
  - (c) collaborative teaming
  - (d) computer technology support and materials resources.
- Overall, parents were satisfied with the services that their children received from SSD. For example, parents believe their children's achievement has increased through more emphasis on teachers building meaningful relationships with their children.

Public Forum: Overall strength includes the adaptation and modification of assignments by special education staff. Overall needs include: content based reading instruction at the high school level across the county and skill assessment before scheduling students into high school math

<u>Cost Analysis</u>

To analyze the costs associated with programming for students identified as learning disabled in our district we completed the following activities:

- We obtained the weekly IEP service minutes for all students identified as having a disability, including related services. (14,880,945 minutes per week across all disability categories)
- These were subdivided by the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) placement codes and by primary disability.
- The tuition calculation uses fiscal year 2005 budgeted expenses and includes both direct instructional and indirect costs, which equals $237,545,337.
- We multiplied the weekly service minutes by 36 weeks converting to an annualized amount.
- We divided the annual expense by the annual service minutes in each category to arrive at a per minute cost.

The weekly minutes for the Program for students with Learning Disabilities totaling 6,518,906 were itemized by LRE placements and annualized. The annualized amount of minutes were multiplied times the per minute cost to reflect an estimated annual cost for the program which amounts to $99, 319,765. This annual cost for Learning Disabilities Programming was divided by the December 1 count (2004) to arrive at an estimated per pupil per year cost of $7,888 excluding Extended School Year (ESY) programming.

Recommendations
Instructional Best Practice
> Continue focus on our quality indicators
> Continue focus on middle and high school literacy programs
Instructional Training
> Continue focus on Strategic Instruction Model (SIM) training
Collaboration
> Continue alignment of elementary literacy programming with Partner Districts through the use of inclusive teacher training
> Continue focus on availability of instruction in both general education and special education settings
> Continue focus on Collaborative Teaching (CT)
Assessment
> Increase teacher competency on student academic assessment analysis in order to use assessment results to change instruction
> Increase teacher utilization of assessment strategies to determine social and emotional needs of students in order to design and/or implement social skills instruction

Technology
- ➤ Continue to integrate technology into the learning environment
- ➤ Continue to consider the assistive technology needs of students

Identification
- ➤ Continue to monitor changes in identification criteria for students with specific learning disabilities as defined by DESE in response to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act 2004

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Learning Disabilities Program Evaluation is part of a comprehensive process in which the District reviews programming for all its students. This Learning Disabilities Program Evaluation took place from August 2004 to January 2005. Stakeholders were sought from teachers, administrators, parents, partner districts, universities, and community members (Appendix I). The questions defined by the team and approved by the Board of Education were designed to provide a review of programming across the county for students with learning disabilities. The review would allow the team to identify any strengths or challenges in current programming as defined by: literature review, document review, teacher surveys, administrator surveys, parent surveys, and a public forum.

How are students identified as requiring special education due to specific learning disabilities?

Criteria
"Specific Learning Disability" means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage (DESE, 2004).

Curriculum
Curriculum for school-age students with the educational diagnosis of specific learning disabilities follows the general education curriculum of the school district where the student attends school. While all students participate in specific curriculums, additional instructional strategies, based on best practices associated with their educational disability, are employed to assist the student's access to the curriculum and demonstrate achievement. Such practices might include training in study skills, learning strategies, and organizational skills (SSD Teacher Handbook, 2003-2004).

Service and Placement Options
The individual needs of each child are considered by the IEP team to determine educational programming, services and placement. Educators and parents of children work together to consider the best environment and services to meet the child's educational needs. The team follows three basic guidelines: (a) maintain the child in the

least restrictive setting where services can meet special education needs; (b) consider all service delivery options before finalizing placement decisions; and (c) consider carefully the child and family variables along with evaluation information in making programming decisions (SSD Program Definition, 2003).

Given these guidelines, educators and parents consider the following placement options:

> Outside Regular Class less than 21 percent of day: Children with disabilities who receive special education and related services outside the regular classroom for less than 21 percent of the school day.

> Outside Regular Class at least 21 percent/No more than 60 percent: Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services outside the regular classroom for at least 21 percent but no more than 60 percent of the school day.

> Outside Regular Class more than 60 percent of day: Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services outside the regular classroom for more that 60 percent of the school day. This category does not include children who received education programs in public or private separate day or residential facilities.

> Public Separate (Day) Facility: Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services for greater than 50 percent of the school day in public separate facilities.

> Private Separate (Day) Facility: Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services, at public expense, for greater than 50 percent of the school day in private separate facilities.

> Public Residential Facility: Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services for greater than 50 percent of the school day in public residential facilities.

> Private Residential Facility: Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services, at public expense, for greater than 50 percent of the school day in private residential facilities.

> Homebound/Hospital: Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services in hospital programs or homebound programs.

Engagement Activities
Families are the most important social unit for children. Consistent with this belief, parents are encouraged to share their hopes for their children at annual IEPs, participate in the educational plan development, and maintain regular communication with both regular and special education teachers. Parents also complete surveys relative to program satisfaction. In addition, parents are linked with the Parent Advisory Councils within their home districts and have access to information and resources from the Family & Community Resource Center (SSD Program Definition, 2003).

Partner District Collaboration Efforts
Special education staff and administrators participate in numerous collaborative activities with partner districts. Included are staff development activities, care teams, parent conferences, involvement in associations for parents of children with disabilities, and school and level change transition activities (Program Definition, 2003).

Student Count and Placement Continuum
According to the Special School District of St. Louis County, unduplicated counts for the school years 2002/2003, 2003/2004 and 2004/2005 the percentage of our students identified as having a specific learning disability have decreased from 50% to 48% and to 45% respectively (DESE, 2004). In comparison during the years 2002/2003 and 2003/2004 the state's percentage of students with disabilities identified as learning disabled were 44% and 42% respectively (DESE, 2004). During the school years 2002/2003 and 2003/2004 the nation's percentage of students with disabilities identified as learning disabled were 45% and 47% respectively (US Department of Education, 2004).

Our most recent unduplicated count from December of 2004 lists 12,594 students as learning disabled. Of that number
> 8,130 students are served though the placement of "Outside the Regular Class less than 21% of the day.
> 2,939 students are served through the placement of "Outside the Regular Class 21-60% of the day.
> 787 students are served through the placement of "Outside of the Regular Class more than 60% of the day. (see Appendix II for more detail)

Within the group of students identified as having a specific learning disability it is important to note that placement codes do not provide an extensive picture of their services. The placement codes are based on the amount of time a student is served outside the general education classroom. Therefore any minutes of service provided within the general education classroom are not reflected in the placement code. For many students and students with learning disabilities in particular, significant amounts of minutes may be provided through the service delivery of Collaborative Teaching (CT) or what was formerly referred to as Class within a Class or (CWC).

Board of Education Evaluation Questions
1. How are students identified as requiring special education due to a specific learning disability?
2. How are services provided at the elementary level and at the secondary level?
3. What are essential components of a special education program that serves students with learning disabilities as identified by related literature?
4. How are students receiving special education for a learning disability assessed for progress?

Chapter 2: Literature

> **What are essential components of a special education program that serves students with learning disabilities as identified by related literature?**

The literature review was taken from articles the work group submitted and determined were pertinent in consideration of best practices. These articles were from a variety of sources including professional journals, textbooks, and online information. Several were summaries of other research and literature reviews. The work group reviewed all of the articles to consider best practices and answer the question, "What are nationally recognized best practices in the field of learning disabilities as identified by related literature?" Four themes became apparent and were identified as elements of effective programming for students with learning disabilities:

Environment:	classroom management, 30 day checklist, resources for students and consideration of diversity, and technology
Quality Instruction:	systematic, lesson design, feedback, student engagement through the use of direct instruction and consideration of diversity and technology
Curriculum:	social skills, self-advocacy, literacy (reading, writing, and math), study skills, learning strategies, transition skills, self-management, and consideration of diversity and technology
Service Delivery:	collaborative teaching, small group instruction, individual instruction, inclusive instruction, and consideration of diversity and technology

Each theme is discussed separately, but in practice, must be interactive components of a comprehensive program for students with learning disabilities. Technology and diversity are purposely incorporated into all four themes.   A synopsis of the research reviewed from each area is presented in the following sections.

Environment
The environment in which instruction occurs is an important consideration. The classroom needs to be conducive to a variety of learning styles and varying cultures. The classroom must have the essential materials for students to learn and achieve.

Another very important element that is needed for students with learning disabilities is classroom management. Clear and concise rules, expectations, and routines need to be in place. As well, organization strategies need to be in place and utilized by the classroom teacher and students. Consideration needs to be given to what is in place before the students with learning disabilities enter their classroom.

Jon Saphier in his book titled The Skillful Teacher cites the work of Maslow, Dreikurs and Gray, Schutz and Glasser as he sets forth his propositions about the importance of classroom climate (Saphier, 1997, p. 358).

1. The universal list of basic psychological needs include: safety, self-control, affection, inclusion, self-esteem, recognition, self- actualization and freedom (Maslow; Dreikurs and Gray; Schutz; Glasser)
2. The amount of energy and attention that is available for learning is dependent on one's psychological needs being met.
3. The classroom climate contributes and influences directly how students do in school.

Learning accelerates when the climate goes beyond meeting the basic needs and begins to focus on the development on the dimensions of climate (i.e. community, risk taking and influence) (Saphier, 1997, p. 358).

Expectations for student achievement set the parameters of teaching and the atmosphere or environment of the classroom. Teachers define the parameters as well as the standards through both their teaching style and their method of feedback.

Teacher expectations relate to four basic areas of student performance:
1. Quality and quantity of work – individual output and production.
2. Work habits and work procedures – how students go about their work.
3. Business and housekeeping routines – nonacademic work-related procedures
4. Interpersonal behavior – how students interact with each other and cooperate with the teacher (Saphier, 1997).

There is a strong correlation between the behaviors and how the expectations are communicated. There are several qualities that are important factors for communication of expectations to students. Teachers must be direct, specific and repeat often their expectations. Expectations communicated to students must be relayed with positive expectancy, tenacity and modeled frequently. The teachers' effective use of modeling as a method of communicating their expectations has a great impact on students and how they will respond and learn in the classroom.

Students with learning disabilities must be taught using quality instructional methods that encourage students to increase their capacity to learn. More importantly students should be provided with an understanding of how they learn best. A students' perception of their academic capabilities is linked to their self-concept and has an impact on future performances. The teachers' communication of expectations assists the student in dealing with the impact of their disability on their academic performance. Effective teachers adapt the pace and level of instruction based on the learning rates of the students in their class to provide all students an opportunity for success.

The Attribution Theory (Saphier, p.374) suggests that we start with changing the way students look at success and failure. Teachers need to provide explicit instruction in methods of solving problems so that students do not attribute their success or failure to the presence of luck or an easy or hard task, but rather evaluate the result based on their individual effort. "What they need to do is to work long enough, be resourceful, and learn strategies that will help them. Teachers' responsibility is to teach them strategies explicitly." (Saphier, 1997, 374)

Quality Instruction
Special educators should possess the knowledge of research based instructional strategies to individualize instruction for students with Learning Disabilities. Through research, it has been proven that utilizing these strategies enhances the student's critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills and increases their self-awareness, self-management, self-control, self-reliance, and self-esteem (Council of Exceptional Children, 2004). According to Lee Swanson and his colleagues, there exist two major intervention practices that produce large outcomes. The first practice is called direct instruction. It describes how we teach or the process we use to teach content. The second process that provides significant outcomes is the teaching of learning strategy instruction. This practice is about what we teach, specifically the content (Swanson, 2004).

 Direct instruction is a comprehensive, teacher-led approach that emphasizes maximizing not only the quantity of instruction students receive, but also the quality. It includes clear demonstrations of new information in small segments, organizers, meta-cognitive modeling, teacher guided practice, immediate and elaborate feedback to students on their own work. It includes monitoring student performance and requiring mastery learning (Deshler, 1986; Tralli, 1996).

Learning strategy instruction, as defined by Deshler and Schumaker (1984), includes techniques, principles, or rules that enable a student to learn to solve problems, and to complete tasks independently (Deshler, 1986). Learning strategy instruction falls into

three broad strains: acquisition, storage, and expression (Tralli, 1996; Sturomski, 1997). Assisting students to learn how to learn and how to use strategies found to be effective in promoting successful performance of academic, social, or job related skills is another vital educational tool. Students need to be strategic learners. The strategies enable students to become strategic, effective, and lifelong learners.

Learning is fostered when direct instruction, learning strategies and "expert" feedback is provided to a student. Literature supports the need for instructional interactions between teachers and students. The effect of this instructionally based interaction greatly enhances the development of higher order thinking and problem-solving abilities-abilities that students with disabilities often lack. From the literature, there exist four instructional features effective teachers utilize: a) higher-order thinking and cognitive processes embedded in holistic and situated activities; b) a richness in dialogue between teachers and students and among students toward promoting self regulation; c) responsiveness to the needs, capabilities and interests of their students; and d) emphasis on classrooms as learning communities in which teachers and students alike, engage in inquiry-related activities (Englert, 1992).

 In addition to the four instructional features utilized by effective teachers, a well developed program for learning disabled students must include the following components: planning, instructional methods, curriculum materials and assessment. For students to be highly successful, a very systematic approach to providing instruction must be a vital part of a student's academic program (Strumoski, 1997).

Curriculum
Reading Instruction
Across all curriculum areas it has been shown that directly teaching the subject, skill or content area is the most effective method for teaching students with learning disabilities. This teaching should include opportunities for drill, practice, repetition and review with lessons broken into small segments using strategic instruction. In the area of reading, direct instruction needs to include the areas of phonological awareness, decoding, acquisition of sight words, reading accuracy, fluency, spelling and comprehension. This instruction should not be limited to elementary students. Direct instruction on these basic reading and reading-related skills helps students approach learning in systematic ways. Strategic teaching rather than crisis teaching (tutoring) helps students learn more efficiently (Smith, 2004). Phonological awareness, including a phonemic approach to reading has been the missing piece in reading instruction has the potential for improving reading skills across the nation (Ellis, 1995). Studies have shown that children with learning disabilities can master learning strategies that improve comprehension skills. These strategies include questioning,

paraphrasing, summarizing, clarifying and predicting. These skills encourage student interaction with the text and maximize comprehension (Sturomski, 1996). Students from culturally or linguistically different backgrounds may lack basic reading skills due to lack of opportunity placing them at a disadvantage when they enter school. Early intervention, using scientific, research based methods that establishes readiness skills and basic literacy skills, bridges the cultural barriers and reduces their risk of being identified as learning disabled at a later date (Cegelka, 1995).

Writing Instruction

Written expression requires multiple, complex cognitive operations and motoric skills, all of which must be executed spontaneously. Traditional approaches have focused on the product rather than the process of writing. Specific, direct instruction teaching the process of planning, organizing, drafting, and editing skills has proven most beneficial for the student with a learning disability. The use of technology has been helpful overcoming the mechanical difficulties for many students with use of word processing in the classroom. Many software programs are now available to assist in the cognitive stages such as webbing and mapping; this makes visible for students the underlying thought process that guides writing (Cegelka, 1995).

The need to provide students the cognitive skills or metacognitive strategies necessary for writing is not a new concept. These skills are designed help students bring their writing skills beyond special education instruction to writing activities produced on a daily basis. While students are able to show improvement in writing skills through specific teacher directed activities, they fail to achieve durable results. They do not reach the last key state, which is to generalize these skills across their curriculum. More success has been found when students are taught metacognitive strategies. An effective writing program includes, "skill training, metacognitive training, and instruction in the significance or importance of such activities." (Harris, 1985, page 28)

Mathematic Instruction

Math educators have identified essential components in math curriculum. Four of the components directly related to teaching students with learning disabilities include: problem solving, communicating mathematical ideas, applying mathematics to every day situations and focusing on appropriate computational skills. They also identified an efficient teaching process that involves three steps: demonstration, guided practice with prompts feed back and independent practice with feedback. They also stressed the importance of frequent checks for understanding and monitoring of progress as well as making instructional adaptations based on observations to ensure student learning. Research shows that teachers who provide immediate corrective feedback on errors produce higher skill acquisition. Teaching skills to mastery (80%) level is also

stressed so that students can concentrate using, rather that remembering a skill. When studying error patterns with students with learning disabilities the majority of errors fall in the areas of multiplication and division. Many of the errors indicated a lack of student readiness; the implication is that students must be allowed to learn in a step by step approach (Jones, 1997).

Social Skill Instruction
 The literature was very clear about the connection between learning disabilities and social skills delays. Several reviews have been completed. Hazel and Schumaker suggested that, "social problems are a reality for a significant number of LD youths"(Hazel & Shumaker, 1988 p.337). The possible difficulties include difficulties in social competence (Gresham, l988); social cognition (Maheady & Sainato, l986); social behavior (Thompson & Kronenberger, l990); social relationships (Pearl, Donahue & Bryan, l983); peer status (Wiener, l987); self-concept (Chapman, l988); interpersonal skills (LaGreca, l987); social adjustment, (Bender & Smith, l990); communicative competence (Donahue, Pearl & Bryan, l983); motivation (Licht & Kistner, 1986); and anxiety (Margalit & Zak, l994).

There is a danger that with legislation such as The No Child Left Behind Act 2001, educators may narrow the focus in their classrooms leaving little time for social skills instruction. Researchers found 75% of students with learning disabilities possess deficits in the social skills area such as, learning to compromise with peers, taking turns, accepting "no" for an answer, dealing appropriately with their anger and frustrations, how to approach a child or group, listening to others, making friends, sustaining friendships, problem solving, accepting responsibility and consequences for mistakes, following directions and how to receive attention appropriately.   Social skills training which is matched to a particular need of a child is the most effective in shaping appropriate social responses (Kavale & Forness, 1995).

 In a social skills program it became apparent that there are certain components identified as elements of effective programming for students with social skills needs: (a) direct instruction; (b) modeling; (c) role playing/behavior rehearsal and practice; (d) coaching and prompting; (e) contingent reinforcement. Each area is discussed separately but in practice must be interactive components of a comprehensive program for children with learning disabilities. The research shows teaching these skills at a younger age, such as 8 years old is often most effective.   A synopsis of the research reviewed from each area is presented in the following sections (Rhode, 1995).

During direct instruction the student is taught the skill and how it improves the interactions with others. The child is given examples of these skills and when it is

appropriate to use them. Modeling could be taught through live demonstrations, video and or audiotapes, books, puppets and any other form that the child could experience. In this way the students would be given the opportunity to practice the skills that they have been taught through instruction and modeling. Often when the child is given the opportunity to practice these skills in a group setting it is beneficial. The teacher models appropriate responses and then allows the students to practice the skill. The opportunity to practice enhances the student's ability to actually acquire the new skill.

The teacher is a leader in providing verbal cues or instruction in the rules of interaction. Many teachers spend hours with their classroom students each day. The students are connected to him/her and their influence is great. The teacher can give positive feedback on what is working well in students' interactions. Giving praise motivates the student to keep working on the other more difficult skills, which still need to be acquired. The teacher can observe those skills within the school setting but the real test is when the skills are used outside the school setting. If these skills aren't transferred in their daily life, it isn't as effective long term. Both the praise and positive attention focused on these skills can help the child use these skills in daily life (Goldstein, Glick, Gibbs, l998). The practice outside of the school setting broadened the scope of their new skills. Goldstein, Glick and Gibbs' criticism of social skills training is that the skills are not generalized outside the school setting. Through the homework, students could be coached and given feedback on their responses and interactions.

All the adults in the school setting need to model and support the social skills, which are taught to help encourage the appropriate skills. The major stumbling block to providing social skills intervention rests with the school teachers' perception they are in the classroom to teach academics not peer relationships (Goldstein, Glick, Gibbs, 1998).

Kavale and Mostert completed research on the most effective programs in social skills training (SST). Kavale and Mostert found from their meta-analysis research, one program was 58% effective and students significantly benefited from the training. They believe current social skills trainings are mostly experimental interventions by the teacher. If teachers were better trained then the effectiveness would be even higher r. Many of the social skills programs' structures are loose which makes it difficult to measure the true effectiveness of the programs. More research needs to be completed regarding the duration of a program, assessment instruments and the specific elements that should be included in training. It is not unusual for intervention practice to be ahead of research (Kavale and Mostert, 1996).

Gresham (l998) suggests that social skills training should be rebuilt as a comprehensive treatment for students with learning disabilities. He believes it holds promise for improving social functions of the students who receive it.

Learning Strategies Instruction
According to Lenz, et al (1996) the definition of strategy in the development of the Strategic Instruction Model (SIM), is defined as, "an individual's approach to a task…when it includes how a person thinks and acts when planning, executing, and evaluating performance on a task and its outcomes." The meta-cognitive and behavioral approaches to the strategy are what guide student planning, performance, and evaluation in successful implementation of strategic performance (Lenz, 1996).

The works of several researchers were examined to define learning strategies and identified several key components of an effective instructional strategy: explicit instruction, teacher modeling of the process, cues to use previously taught strategies, guided practice and feedback, teacher-student dialogue, and generalization (NICHCY 2004; Swanson, 1999; Levine, 1994; KU-CRL, 2004; Cegelka, 1995; Division for LD, 1999). Strategy instruction falls into three broad theoretical categories: acquisition strategies, storage strategies, and expression strategies (Tralli et al, 1996).

Study Skills Instruction
The research makes a distinction between learning strategies and study skills. Study skills are identified as a set of steps or a procedure related to meeting a specific demand. The delineation between learning strategies and study skills indicate that study skills, unlike learning strategies, do not address how students plan, think, or evaluate their processes. The study skill is usually designed to complete a specific academic task, for example, steps to completing a long division problem (Lenz et al, 1999; Cegelka, 1995). In addition to academic skills, specific skill sets are required in order for students to be successful in school including critical school behaviors, organizational techniques for self and materials, and time management (Cegelka, 1995).

Self Management Instruction
According to Englert and colleagues (1992), self-management is at the core of teaching learning strategies. Students experience modeling and guided practice on behavioral and meta-cognitive strategies prior to implementing a particular skill independently. This lends itself to an open dialogue in the classroom creating a culture of same vocabulary, process, and actions for all students. When students are practicing strategies, they assume responsibility for the process and self-talk while teachers gradually fade their role and support.

Over time, cognitive processes that were once teacher led become student led. The meta-cognition then becomes internalized by the students. Classroom learning communities create many opportunities for students to share in a mutual dialogue; research indicates this interaction provides an opportunity to rehearse and practice their newly acquired self-regulatory skills, thus, further enhancing their retention of the strategy (Englert et al, 1992).

Transition Instruction
"Transition is defined as the process for ensuring that students successfully move from school to the work world" according to Cegelka and Berdine. This process is designed to improve outcomes for students in the areas of work, living arrangements, and community networking after graduation from high school. Research indicates that transition planning should begin much earlier than high school if students are to be successful. As early as upper elementary grades, students should be exposed to activities that promote self-advocacy and exploration of strengths and weaknesses.

A lack of transition planning often results in the following situations, students dropping out of school, young adults not attending post-secondary education or training, high unemployment rates, and significant numbers of former students having no connection with adult service agencies or other community resources. Transition planning should "incorporate programs and opportunities that lead to [young adults] living successfully in their communities." Cegelka cites key indicators of quality transition programming which include:

- a written plan of action with designated timelines
- student-centered strategies in self-advocacy, work experience, vocational training/education and job seeking skills
- communication and collaboration among families, schools, adult service agencies
- other community resources

Programs that foster a climate where transition planning is valued will create positive post-school outcomes for their students. Student participation in any transition planning process is of vital importance because students provide the necessary information about their choices and preferences. The transition plan that is developed should focus on the student's vision of his or her own future. "The Personal Futures Planning process strives to personalize the process while incorporating self-advocacy" (Cegelka p. 430, 1995). Parents and other family members can be invaluable resources in this process facilitating motivation and influencing attitudes toward work and career options. The literature sites the need for schools to train parents in the process of adult agency referral and navigation of community services (Cegelka, 1995).

Service Delivery

According to the U. S. Department of Education as of 1999, students with learning disabilities receive 80% of their education in general education classrooms, with 50 states reported to have inclusive education programs (Weiss, 2004). These districts reported co-teaching as their inclusion model. Co-teaching is defined as "two or more professionals delivering substantitive instruction to a diverse, or blended, group of students in a single physical space (Weiss, 2004). To date there is little complete research that supports the success or failure of co-teaching for students with learning disabilities. Naomi Zygmund's research suggests that in full inclusion classrooms, academic achievement rises for about 50% of learning disabled students while the other half show no improvement or even regress (Allen, 2000). Current research indicates while educators are being encouraged to adopt the model of co-teaching, they are not able to implement research based strategies and effective teaching strategies through this model. Further study, research and professional development are needed.

In his address during the Learning Disabilities Association 40th Anniversary celebration Don Deshler stated," The issue I am raising here is not one of inclusion or 'non-inclusion' the issue is what kinds of instructional conditions must be in place to enable students to make significant gains. So again, the issue of effectiveness is not where students are taught but the instructional conditions under which they are taught. We need to ensure that the right kind of instructional conditions are in place so that the instruction we are offering on targeted skill deficit areas and strategy deficit areas will be sufficiently intensive so that we can engage in the kind of modeling, feedback and mediated practice that is needed"(Deshler, 2003).

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter discusses the methods of collecting information to answer Board of Education's evaluation questions.

The program evaluation process has engaged a variety of stakeholders, which includes SSD director, administrators, instructional facilitator, teacher, partner district personnel, parent, and community member. The committee met almost every week.

Methods for Data Collection

There are six methods for data collection. Table 1 displays data collection methods and evaluation questions. These evaluation questions (posed to the Board of Education) would be answered by using these data collection methods.

Table 1: Evaluation Questions and Data Collection Method

LD Program Evaluation Questions	Data Collection Method (Methods of asking questions)					
	Literature Review	Document Review	Survey			Public Forum
			Staff	Admin-istrator	Parent	
1. How are students identified as requiring special education due to a specific learning disability?		X				
2. How are services provided at the elementary level and at the secondary level?		X	Program description X			X
3. What are essential components of a special education program that serves students with learning disabilities as identified by related literature?	X	X	X	X	X	X
4. How are students receiving special education for a learning disability assessed for progress?		X	Assessment X			

Literature Review (Quality Indicator of Best Practices)
The committee reviewed the literature and developed the quality indicators list of best practices of learning disabilities to guide the survey development. These theme areas are student behavior, quality instruction, student performance, and professional growth.

Document Review
The committee reviewed documents on learning disabilities criteria and student educational disability placement. The evaluation questions specifically numbers two, three and four link back to the District's Comprehensive School Improvement Plan CSIP that lists, "Improve Student Performance". Within this CSIP goal, activities are listed that the team considered as they designed items within the teacher survey, administrator survey and questions for the public forum, " B. use desegregated data on state and district assessments to adjust curriculum and instruction; C. Implement instructional programs to meet needs of students, practice and procedures to support these programs; D. Provides instructional resources and equipment for teachers and students to support and extend the curriculum; E. Provide a positive climate for learning and a focus on academic achievement; and G. Insure professional development is an integral part of the educational program and all school improvement initiatives." (SSD CSIP document) The activities listed in the CSIP plan also provided a focus for the literature review.

The teacher and administrator surveys were designed to illustrate our teachers' and administrators' perceptions about the implementation of skill sets defined in our new teacher training. The skill sets are divided into three categories: Academy I for first and second year teachers, Academy II for third through fifth year teachers and Action Research and Collaborative Learning for sixth year teachers and beyond. The skill sets, which include: student behavior, quality instruction, student performance/literacy and professional growth were used to create response items on the teacher and administrator surveys. The teachers were asked to rate their implementation of the listed skills on a Likert scale. The administrators were asked to review the implementation of these same skill sets by two of their teachers.

The skill sets are useful because they include benchmarks that link directly to the CSIP goal and activities. The skill sets are also supported in the literature review, specifically by the Council of Exceptional Children, an international special education research and lobby group that includes, parents, special educators and professionals working in the field of special education.

Objectives under the heading of "Student Behavior" include: establishes universal classroom structures and supports to promote student behavior conducive to learning; utilizes assessment strategies to analyze and determine the social and emotional needs of students within the context of collaborative teams; and promotes generalization and maintenance of self-discipline, self-regulation and self-control through instruction and creation of support systems. These objectives link to The CSIP activity listed as: E. Provide a positive climate for learning and a focus on academic achievement.

The Objectives listed as "Quality Instruction" include: interprets data from district assessments to determine student needs within the context of collaborative teams and selects strategies to increase student achievement based on analysis of student needs within the context of collaborative teams. This links to the CSIP activity C: Implement instructional programs to meet needs of students, practice and procedures to support these programs.

Objectives listed as supporting "Student Performance/Literacy" include: assesses student abilities and selects research based strategies to meet specific student needs and interests; proficiently integrates technology into the learning environment; and continues to plan instruction to reflect cultural and ethnic diversity. These objectives are aligned with the CSIP activity listed as: C. implement instructional programs to meet needs of students, practice and procedures to support these programs.

Objectives listed as supporting "Professional Growth" include: examines current teaching practices to support district goals; engages in collaborative planning and reflection throughout all instructional area including assessment, intervention and evaluation. These objectives support CSIP activity listed as: G. Ensure professional development is an integral part of the educational program and all school improvement initiatives.

CSIP activities B. Use desegregated data on state and district assessments to adjust curriculum and instruction is aligned with the response item asking teachers to respond to the following statement, "I use student assessment results to change my instruction in the following ways. Please describe". CSIP activity D. Provides instructional resources and equipment for teachers and students to support and extend the curriculum is matched to the questions posed on each survey and as part of the parent forum format which included listing resources that each group identified as effective supports or resources used with students with learning disabilities and additional resources or supports identified as essential for working with students with learning disabilities.

Staff Survey

The committee developed the survey based on best practices to examine to what degree teachers implement effective teaching. We incorporated academic and behavioral skill sets from our new teacher training modules. Teachers having 5 or more students with learning disabilities on their caseload received a survey. There were 974 teachers identified from the system as having 5 or more students with learning disabilities.

Administrator Survey (Checklist)

Along with the teacher survey, administrators also provided their feedback on a survey form (checklist) regarding effective teaching of their teachers. Each administrator was required to submit 1 survey for each of 2 of his/her teachers who had more than 5 students with learning disabilities on the teacher's caseload.   Administrators were asked to fill out the survey based on their observations, non-observed data from the students, parents, general and special education staff and community members, drop-in visits, conferences, staff meetings, and conversations with the teacher. If an administrator did not have the opportunity to observe his/her teacher implementing one or more of the skills, he or she would mark "not applicable or I do not know" option on those particular items.

Parent Survey

Special School District conducted two parent surveys each year—parent climate survey in May 2004 and parent satisfaction survey in November 2004. This program evaluation would utilize the results of these two parent surveys.

Public Forum

In order to engage more stakeholders beyond the committee membership and parent surveys, the public forum was developed to get input from the parents/guardians, partner district personnel, staff, and community members on best practices as well as concerns. The public forum information was posted on the Special School District website, was sent via email to classroom teachers to disseminate to parents, and sent via the voice mail system to all SSD employees. The forum was held in the Special School District Central Office with in room 60 on January 13, 2005, 6:30 to 7:30pm. The two parent surveys were also available at the public forum. The committee members took notes from the public forum.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter discusses the results by answering the following questions: (a) how are services provided at the elementary, middle, and high school levels? (b) How are students receiving special education for learning disabilities assessed for progress?

Surveys were sent to 974 SSD teachers having 5 or more students with learning disabilities on their caseload. 555 teachers returned the survey. The return rate is 57%.

<u>School level and educational placement</u>
Of these 555 teachers, the majority of them are cross-categorical resource room teachers. One third of the 555 teachers are in elementary school, one third are in middle school, and one third are in high school. The majority of teachers spend more than 75% of their time with students with learning disabilities. The majority of students with learning disabilities on these teachers' caseloads are in the educational placement category of less than 21% of school day outside of regular class.

<u>Teacher qualification and certification</u>
Special School District teachers are well qualified. Of these 555 teachers, the majority have a master's degree or beyond, more than 16 years of experience in an educational setting, and more than 11 years of experience in the area of special education. In terms of certification, the teachers have multiple areas of certification. Of these 555 teachers, 72% indicated they have certification in learning disabilities; 62% indicated they have certification in behavior disorders/emotional disturbance; and 50% indicated they have certification in mental retardation.

How are services provided to students with learning disabilities at the elementary, middle, and high school level?

Program "Service" description
The majority of teachers provide direct instruction in reading, writing, math, and study skills instruction but the length of time is varied by school levels. However, less than 50% of teachers provide social skills, self-advocacy skills, or transition skills. (See Table 2 Program "Service" Description).

Based on survey results, the majority of teachers in elementary and middle schools provide direct reading instruction to students with learning disabilities about 150 to 350 minutes per student per week in a small group form. Only 45% of high school teachers provide direct reading instruction.

The majority of teachers in all 3 school levels provide direct writing instruction to students with learning disabilities in a small group form; however, the minutes of instruction are varied among school level.

The majority of teachers in elementary and middle schools provide direct math instruction to students with learning disabilities in a small group form; however, the minutes of instruction are varied among school level. Only 37% of high school teachers provide direct math instruction.

The instructional materials or curriculum for reading, writing, and math include teacher made, commercial, or partner district.

The majority of teachers in 3 schools levels provide direct self management skills/study skills/learning strategies instruction to students with learning disabilities in a small group form; however, the minutes of instruction are varied among school levels.

Less than 50% of teachers in these 3 school levels provide direct social skills, self-advocacy skills, or transition skills instruction. The instructional materials heavily rely on teacher made. Only high school teachers (50%) provided direct transition skills instruction to students.

Table 2 Program "Services" Description

Direct <u>reading</u> instruction	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
% of teachers provide direct reading instruction to students	90%	66%	45%
# of minutes/student/week	150-350 min (78%)	150-350 min (73%)	<80 min (33%) 250-350 min (31%)
Instruction provided in	Small group (SES) [1] (95%)	Small group (SES) (93%)	Small group (SES) (90%)

Direct <u>writing</u> instruction	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
% of teachers provide direct writing instruction to students	85%	78%	62%
# of minutes/student/week	80-249 min (74%)	150-350 min (70%)	<80 min (36%) 150-350 min (44%)
Instruction provided in	Small group (SES) (95%)	Small group (SES) (92%)	Small group (SES) (87%)

Direct <u>math</u> instruction	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
% of teachers provide direct math instruction to students	75%	58%	37%
# of minutes/student/week	80-249 min (74%)	150-350 min (70%)	<80 min (36%) 150-350 min (44%)
Instruction provided in	Small group (SES) (89%)	Small group (SES) (84%)	Small group (SES) (76%)

Use of instructional materials or curriculum for reading, writing, math direct instruction	Teacher made Commercial Partner district	Teacher made Commercial Partner district	Teacher made Commercial Partner district

---

[1] SES: Special Education Setting

Direct self management skills or study skills or learning strategies instruction	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
% of teachers provide direct self management skills instruction to students	61%	84%	64%
# of minutes/student/week	<80 or 80-149 min (74%)	150-350 min (57%)	150-350 min (54%)
Instruction provided in	Small group (SES) (80%)	Small group (SES) (96%)	Small group (SES) (93%)

Direct social skills instruction	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
% of teachers provide direct social skills instruction to students	45%	42%	28%
# of minutes/student/week	<80 or 80-149 min (80%)	<80 or 80-149 min (70%)	<80 or 80-149 min (68%)
Instruction provided in	Small group (SES) (80%)	Small group (SES) (86%)	Small group (SES) (75%)
Use of instructional materials or curriculum for <u>self management</u>, and <u>social skills</u> direct instruction	Teacher made Commercial	Teacher made Commercial	Teacher made Commercial

Direct self-advocacy instruction	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
% of teachers provide direct self advocacy skills instruction to students	16%	38%	36%
# of minutes/student/week	<80 min (60%)	<80 min (64%)	<80 min (53%)
Instruction provided in	Small group (SES) (81%) Individual (66%)	Small group (SES) (86%)	Small group (SES) (73%) Individual (63%)
Use of instructional materials or curriculum for <u>self-advocacy skills</u> direct instruction	Teacher made	Teacher made	Teacher made

Direct transition skills instruction	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
% of teachers provide direct transition skills instruction to students	18%	39%	50%

How are students receiving special education for a learning disability assessed for progress?

Assessment

On this portion of the survey more than one-third of the teachers left this write in item requesting information on their use of assessment results blank. We are unable to determine whether that illustrates their lack of comfort discussing the use of assessment results to change instruction or whether it was the function of survey fatigue since this was the final survey distributed to teachers for the fall 2004. The teachers who did respond to the survey item provided comprehensive responses illustrating the use of assessment results to change instruction. Some examples included: modification of assignments, adjustment of curriculum or pace; reinforce with related lessons; plan collaborative instruction; change expected outcome; analysis of errors; reteach concepts; and check classroom test validity.

The majority of teachers use IEP goals/benchmarks to assess student progress. Based on survey results, elementary and middle school teachers reported that they use IEP goals/benchmarks to assess student progress, followed by daily work, classroom grades, district standardize tests, then MAP. High school teachers use classroom grades to assess student progress, followed by daily work, IEP goals/benchmarks, district standardized tests, then MAP.

Elementary school teachers tend to use IEP goals/benchmarks to assess student progress more than middle school and high school (p<.05). Middle school and high school teachers tend to use class grades more than elementary school (p<.05). Even though district standardized tests were not used as frequently as other measurements by teachers, elementary school teachers utilize district standardized tests to assess student progress more than middle and high school teachers (p<.05).

Teacher & Administrator Survey Results

Teacher Survey	**Administrator Survey**

There are 39 questions in the survey under four elements of best practices for education program for students with learning disabilities that also align with district practices. The survey scale is a 5-point Likert scale with 1 meaning not implementing the skills at all and scale 5 meaning always implementing the skills.

There are also 39 questions in the administrator survey that match exactly the same questions asked teachers under four elements of best practices for education program for students with learning disabilities aligned with district practices. The survey scale is a 5-point Likert scale with 1 meaning not implementing the skills at all and scale 5 meaning always implementing the skills.

Based on teacher's perception of the extent they implemented these 4 elements, the highest rating is on quality instruction, followed by student performance, student behavior, and professional growth.

Based on administrator's observations on their teacher's implementation of these 4 elements, the highest rating is on student behavior and student performance, followed by quality instruction, and professional growth.

Overall, teachers indicated that they implement the majority of the skills to a large extent. There are several skills that they may not implement to a great extent but still rate themselves above average.

Overall, administrators indicated that their teachers implement the majority of the skills to a large extent. There are several skills that they may not implement greatly but still above average. There are more similarities than differences between administrators' observations and teachers' implementation of the skills.

Strengths (mean >= 4.0)
Because the district places emphasizes on (a) student behavior management, (b) systematic instruction, and (c) data driven decision making, teachers marked implementation at a high level on universal support (q13[2]), classroom

Strengths (mean >= 4.0)
Because the district places emphasize on (a) student behavior management, (b) systematic instruction, and (c) data driven decision-making, administrators' observations are consistent with teachers' implementation on universal support (q5),

---

[2] q13 stands for question # 13 on the survey.

Teacher Survey

structures/management (q14), assess student abilities and analyze data to make instructional change (q22), plan lessons with observable student outcomes (q24), techniques to promote student involvement (q25), specialized instruction (q26), feedback to students (q27), differentiate instruction (q42), evaluate and change instruction based on student data (q38), systematic instruction (q23), and innovative strategies (q37). These are the 11 highest scoring questions in the strength category.

Progressing (mean>3.0 but <4.0)
Teachers indicated they did not implement to a great extent the following skills in comparison with the rest of the skills but still above average:

- integrate technology into the learning environment (q32)
- implement specific assistive technology (q28)
- study effective practice and implement research based strategies to improve student social and emotional needs (q21)
- provide leadership in collaborative projects with partner district to improve student performance (q49)
- monitor student's social and emotional development and select strategies to teach social skills (q18)
- utilize assessment strategies to determine the social and emotional needs of students within the context of collaborative teams (q17)

These are the 6 lowest scoring questions in

Administrator Survey

classroom structures/management (q6), assess student abilities and analyze data to make instructional change (q14), plan lessons with observable student outcomes (q16), techniques to promote student involvement (q17), specialized instruction (q18), feedback to students (q19), differentiate instruction (q34), and analyze student performance and teacher behavior to determine improvement needs (q12). These are the 9 highest scoring questions in the strength category.

Progressing (mean>3.0 but <4.0)
Administrators indicated they did not observe their teachers' implementation to a great extent on the following skills. Administrators and teachers replied similarly to the first three questions.

- integrate technology into the learning environment (q24)
- implement specific assistive technology (q20)
- studies effective practices and implements research based strategies to improve student social and emotional needs (q13)
- plan lessons that reflect cultural and ethnic diversity (q26)
- examines current teaching practices to support district goals (q38)

These are the 5 lowest scoring questions in the progressing category.

Teacher Survey

Administrator Survey

the progressing category.

Challenges (mean<=3.0)
There are no items with mean lower than 3.0

Challenges (mean<=3.0)
There are no items with mean lower than 3.0

_____

Teacher and administrator comparison:

_____

School level comparison:

The degree of teacher's implementation of these skills varied among their school levels. Findings indicated that there are no differences in teachers' implementation in the majority of the skills among school levels; however, some skills were implemented more in elementary school level than middle or high schools such as identifying components of literacy, and ensure student schedules reflects all the components of literacy (p<.05) [3]. Some skills were implemented more in middle school level than elementary or high school level such as utilize assessment strategies to determine social and emotional needs of students, and monitor students social and emotional development and select strategies to teach social skills (p<.05).

Several questions have big discrepancies between administrators' observations and teachers' implementation of the skills. (one group has mean lower than 3.8) Teachers rated themselves lower than administrators on: (a) utilize assessment strategies to analyze and determine the social and emotional needs of students within the context of collaborative teams (p<.05); (b) monitors the students' social and emotional development and selects strategies to teach social skills (p<.05); and (c) provide leadership in collaborative projects with partner district to improve student performance (p<.05).

Teachers rated themselves higher than administrators on: (a) plan lessons that reflect cultural and ethnic diversity (p<.05); (b) develop innovative strategies and instruction to meet the needs of students (p<.05); (c) examine current teaching practices to support district goals (p<.05).

_____

[3]
p<.05 means there are statistic significant differences between/among groups.

Effective supports teachers used and additional supports teachers need

Teacher Survey: Supports used	**Administrator Survey:** Supports used
Teachers indicated that they used the following supports for their students: (a) learning strategies including KU strategies, small group instruction, etc.; (b) materials or resources including books, graphic organizers, etc.; (c) collaborative teaming including collaborative teaching with general education teachers, communication and feedback with staff, etc.	Administrators indicated the supports utilized for students in their area of supervision: (a) professional development including KU learning strategies, balanced literacy, differentiated instruction, thoughtful teaching, etc.; (b) collaborative teaming including collaborative teaching with general education teachers, peer coaching, common plan time, etc.; (c) computer technology support and (d) materials including adapted materials, modified textbooks, etc.
Teacher Survey: Supports needed	**Administrator Survey:** Supports needed
Teachers also indicated that they need additional supports in (a) learning strategies including modification and manipulative strategies, small group instruction, etc.; (b) computer technology support including hardware, software, and technical support; (c) administrative support including smaller class size, more physical space, research based instruction, social workers, less paper work, etc.	Administrators indicated areas need additional supports: (a) professional development including current research regarding techniques for teaching skills, training on academic areas, self-advocacy, organization, etc.; (b) administrative support including literacy coaches, reading strategies specialists, effective practice specialists, smaller class sizes, etc.; (c) collaborative teaming including support for general education in adapting/modifying curriculum, collaborative plan time with general education grade levels, etc.; (d) computer technology support and materials resources.

Parent Climate Survey Results

Special School District mailed parent surveys to parents twice a year for district overall improvement—climate survey (May, 2004) and satisfaction survey (November, 2004) to get input from parents regarding their satisfaction and their perception of district climate.

In May 2004, 1,570 parents were randomly selected to receive climate surveys. 147 surveys were returned and the return rate was 9%. Of the 147 surveys returned by parents, 48 were parents of children with learning disabilities. There were 27 items in the parent climate survey, with the scale including 1 meaning strongly disagree to 5 meaning strongly agree. There were no items that parents responded to under scale 3; 3 items were between scale 3.0 and 3.9; the rest of the 24 items that parents responded were above scale 4.0.

Strengths (mean >4.0) (Top 4 items)

The top 4 items that parents responded were: parents reported that they support their children's learning at home (q16); the special education teachers show respect for their children (q3); parents respect the school's special education teachers (q10); parents are welcome to discuss their children's special education needs with the special education staff (q9).

Progressing (mean>=3.0 but <4.0)

The lowest 2 items that parents responded were: (a) the special education teacher helps me to help my child learn at home (q15); (b) Special School District has a good public image (q14).

Concerns (mean <3.0)

No items were in this category.

Parent Satisfaction Survey Results

Because of the low return rate on parent surveys in May 2004, SSD decided to randomly select more parents to receive satisfaction surveys. In November 2004, instead of 1,570 parents, 5,683 parents were randomly selected to receive satisfaction surveys. 425 surveys were returned and the return rate was still 7%. Of the 425 surveys returned by parents, 246 were parents of children with learning disabilities. The survey was designed to evaluate parents' satisfaction with special education services that children received. There were 44 items in the parent satisfaction survey, with the scale including 1 meaning strongly disagree to 5 meaning strongly agree. There were no items that parents responded under scale 3; 27 items were between scale 3.0 and 3.9; the rest of the 17 items that parents responded were, above scale 4.0.

Strengths (mean >4.0) (Top 4 items)

The top 4 items of parents' responses included: parents reported that they believe their children's achievement has increased through their involvement as a parent (q3); parents believe their children's achievement has increased through more emphasis on teachers building meaningful relationships with their children (q9); parents believe their children's achievement has increased through their support of their children's learning at home (q11); parents are satisfied with the effective use of time during IEP meetings (q36).

Progressing (mean>=3.0 but <4.0)

The lowest 3 items of parents' responses were: parents were satisfied with the planning and supports for identifying appropriate transition options for students leaving high school (q33); parents were satisfied with the timeliness of technical expertise provided by SSD (q15); parents were satisfied with the transition planning and supports from SSD staff at my child's previous level to assist with transitioning to my child's new level (q32).

Concerns (mean <3.0)

No items were in this category.

Public Forum

The forum was designed to allow participants the opportunity to provide general strengths and needs of programming for students with learning disabilities as well as respond to specific best practices such as self advocacy, learning strategies and transition. An overall strength included the adaptation and modification of assignments for a student identified as learning disabled. Overall needs were identified as context based reading instruction at the high school level across the county, reading comprehension, and skill assessment before scheduling students into high school math.

In the area of self advocacy the following strengths were noted. SSD staff informally, but consistently promotes self advocacy skills and encouraged it throughout middle school and high school. The relationship (rapport established between student and teacher) is more important than any canned program.

In the area of learning strategies it was noted as strength that strategies are being taught consistently throughout K-12. The following needs were identified: county-wide consistent research based strategies, students' motivation to use strategies, and using strategies in peer environments rather than in isolation.

In the area of transition the following strength was noted: preparation for post high school outcomes. The following need was identified: more effective team based transition plans and activities.

Cost Analysis

To analyze the costs associated with programming for students identified as learning disabled in our district we completed the following activities:

- We obtained the weekly IEP service minutes for all students identified as having a disability, including related services. (14,880,945 minutes per week across all disability categories)
- These were subdivided by the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) placement codes and by primary disability.
- The tuition calculation uses fiscal year 2005 budgeted expenses and includes both direct instructional and indirect costs, which equals $237,545,337.
- We multiplied the weekly service minutes by 36 weeks converting to an annualized amount.
- We divided the annual expense by the annual service minutes in each category to arrive at a per minute cost.

The weekly minutes for the program for students with Learning Disabilities totaling 6,518,906 were itemized by LRE placements and annualized. The annualized amount of minutes were multiplied times the per minute cost to reflect an estimated annual cost for the program which amounts to $99, 319,765. This annual cost for Learning Disabilities Programming was divided by the December 1 count (2004) to arrive at an estimated per pupil per year cost of $7,888 excluding Extended School Year (ESY) programming.

Chapter 5: Recommendations

As a result of our program evaluation, several strengths in current programming emerged. These strengths are supported by the review of related literature. One of these strengths is the use of direct instruction to overtly teach curriculum. Specifically strategic instruction, which includes appropriate planning, pacing and evaluation, is valued and implemented by our staff based on survey results. While no items translated to concerns based on the results of the surveys, certain items could be considered relative needs. The teachers and administrators rated the use of direct instruction for teaching social skills and transition skills much lower than other areas of curriculum associated with literacy or study skills. While social skills and transition skills are taught, they appear to be embedded in instruction rather than treated as a separate topic. Another area of relative need was identified in the use of assessment data to change instruction. A significant number of teachers did not answer the item requesting this information. The following recommendations include practices that our district already engages in and other practices that need to be enhanced. Teachers and administrators listed professional development and increased knowledge of learning strategies as well as technology support as additional supports needed.

Instructional Best Practice
  ➢ Continue focus on our quality indicators
  ➢ Continue focus on middle and high school literacy programs
Instructional Training
  ➢ Continue focus on Strategic Instruction Model SIM training
Collaboration
  ➢ Continue alignment of elementary literacy programming with Partner Districts through the use of inclusive teacher training
  ➢ Continue focus on availability of instruction in both general education and special education settings
  ➢ Continue focus on Collaborative Teaching CT
Assessment
  ➢ Increase teacher competency on student academic assessment analysis in order to use assessment results to change instruction
  ➢ Increase teacher utilization of assessment strategies to determine social and emotional needs of students in order to design and or implement social skills instruction
Technology
  ➢ Continue to integrate technology into the learning environment
  ➢ Continue to consider the assistive technology needs of students
Identification

> ➢ Continue to monitor changes in identification criteria for students with specific learning disabilities as defined by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education DESE in response to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act 2004

References

Allen, R. (2000). Learning Disabilities the Assessment Crossroads. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Bender, W.N., & Smith, J.K. (l990). Classroom behavior of children and adolescents with learning disabilities: A Meta Analysis. <u>Journal of Learning Disability</u>. 23, 298-305.

Bryan, T.S., & Pearl, R. (l979). Self-concept and locus of control in learning disabled children. <u>Journal of Clinical Child Psychology</u>, 8, 223-226.

Bruck, M. (l986). Social and emotional adjustments of learning disabled children. A review of the issues. In S.J. Ceci (Ed.), Handbook of cognitive, social, and neuropsychological aspects of learning disabilities (pp. 361-380). Hindsdale, NJ: Erlbaumbaum.

Billingsley, B. (2004). Promoting Teacher Quality Retention in Special Education. <u>Journal of Learning Disabilities.</u> v 37 N 3 370-375.

Cegelka, P. Berdine W. (1995). <u>Effective Instruction for Students with</u> <u>Learning Difficulties.</u> Allyn and Bacon.

Chapman, J.W. (l988). Learning disabled children's self-concepts. Review of Educational Research, 58, 347-371.

College Planning for Students with Learning Disabilities (1997). Educational Resource Information Center.

Council for Exceptional Children (2004). Definition of a Well-Prepared Special Education Teacher. 1-13.

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Missouri (2003) website: http://www.dese.state.mo.us/divspeced/stateplan/Regulation%20III%20Identification%20and%20Evaluation.pdf

Deshler, D. (2003). Factors for Success with LD Students. Excerpts from his speech "A Time for Modern-Day Pioneers," <u>Stratenotes</u>. KU- CRL. V 12 issue 1.

Deshler, D. (2003). Above and Beyond: Effective teaching involves more than checklists and mnemonics. KU-CRL.

Deshler, D. (2004). We've been waiting for this moment.. Are we ready? KU-CRL.

Deshler, D., Schumaker, J. (1986). "Learning Strategies: An Instructional Alternative for Low-Achieving Adolescents", Exceptional Children, vol. 52.

Donahue, M., Pearl, R., Bryan, T. (l983). Communicative competence in learning disabled children. In I. Bialer & K. Gadow (Eds.), Advances in learning and behavioral disabilities (vol. 2, pp. 49-84). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Elias, M. (2004) The Connection between social-emotional learning disabilities: Implications for Intervention. Learning Disability Quarterly, Vol. 27, Winter 2004

Elksnin, L. & Elksnin, N. (2004). The Social-Emotional Side of Learning Disabilities, Learning Disability Quarterly, Vol. 27, Winter 2004

Ellis, W. (1996). Phonological Awareness. News Digest 25

Englert, C., Tarrant, K. and Mariage, T. (1992). Defining and Refining Instructional Practice in Special Education: Perspectives on Good Teaching. Teacher Education and Special Education, V15, N2, 62-86.

Gagnon, J., Maccini, P. (2001). Preparing Students with Disabilities for Algebra. Council for Exceptional Children. V34, N1, 8-15.

Goldstein, A.P., Glick, B., & Gibbs, J. C. (l998). Aggression replacement training: A comprehensive intervention for aggressive youth. Champaign, IL: Research Press

Gresham, F.M. (l988). Social competence and motivational characteristics of learning disabled students. In M. Wang, M. Reynolds, & H. Walberg (Eds.), Handbook of special education: Research practice (vol. 2, pp.283-302). Oxford, England: Pergamon Press.

Harris, K.Graham, S., (1985). Improving Learning Disabled Students' Compositional Skills: Self-Control Strategy Training. Learning Disability Quarterly. V5, 27-36.

Hazel, J.S., & Schumaker, J.B. (1988). Social skills and learning disabilities: Current issues and recommendations for future research. In J.F. Kavanagh & T.J. Truss (Eds.) Learning disabilities: Proceedings of the national conference (pp 293-344). Parkton, MD: New York Press.

Jones, E, Wilson R., Bhojawani, S. (1997). Mathematical Instruction for Secondary Students with Learning Disabilities. Journal of Learning Disabilities. v 30, N2, 151-163.

Kavale, K. A. & Forness, S.R. (1996). Social Skill deficits and learning disabilities: A meta-analysis. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 29(3), 226-237

Kavale, Kenneth. & Mostert. M (2004). Social Skills Interventions for Individuals with Learning Disabilities, Learning Disability Quarterly, Vol. 27, Winter 2004

LaGreca, A. M. (1987). Children with learning disabilities: Interpersonal skills and social competence. Journal of Reading, Writing, and Learning Disabilities International. 3, 167-185

Lavoie, R. (2004). Tales From the Road, Some Thoughts on Success. LD Online.

Lenz, B.K., Ellis, E.S., & Scanlon, D. (1996). Teaching learning strategies to adolescents and adults with learning disabilities. Austin, TX.: PRO-ED.

Levine, M. (1994). Educational Care, A System for Understanding and Helping Children with Learning Problems at Home and School. Educational Publishing Services Inc. 1-9.

Licht, B.G., & Kistner, J.A. (1986). Motivational problems of learning-disabled children: Individual differences and their implications for treatment. In J.K. Torgesen & B,Y.L. Wong (Eds.), Psychological and educational perspectives on learning disabilities (pp. 225-255). Orlando, FL: Academic Press.

Maheady. L., & Sainato, D. (1986). Learning disabled students; perceptions of social events. In S. J. Ceci (Ed.), Handbook of cognitive, social, and neuropsychological aspects of learning disabilities (pp. 381-402). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum

Margalit, M., & Zak, I. (1984). Anxiety and self-concept of learning disabled children. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 17, 537-539.

Mercer, C., & Miller, S. (1992). Teaching students with Learning problems in Math to Acquire, Understand, and Apply Basic Math Facts. Reading and Special Education. V13, Issue3, 19-35, 61.

Miller,S. (2004). Educational Options for Students with Learning Disabilities: Maximizing Potential. Family Resource.com.

Pearl, C. (2004). Laying the Foundation for Self Advocacy: Fourth Graders with Learning Disabilities Invite their Peers Into the Resource Room. Council for Exceptional Children: Teaching Exceptional Children. 44-49.

Pearl, R., Donahue, M., & Bryan, T. (l986). Social relationships of learning-disabled children. In J. K. Totgesen & B.Y. L. Wong (Eds.) Psychological and educational perspectives in learning disabilities (pp.l93-224). Orlando, FL: Academic Press.

Rhode,G., Jenson, W., & Reavis, H (l995). The Tough Kid Book. Longmont, CO: Sopris West.

Saphier, J., & Gower, B. (1997). The Skillful Teacher. Research for Better Teaching, Inc. 296-374.

Smith, D. (2004). Introduction to Special Education Teaching and Age of Opportunity. Pearson, 5th Edition.

Special School District (2003). SSD Teacher Handbook 2003-2004. Special School District, St, Louis, MO.

Special School District (2003). SSD Program Definition. Special School District, St. Louis, MO.

Sturomski, N. (1996). "Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities to Use Learning Strategies" News Digest 25).

Swanson, H. L. (1999). Intervention Research for Adolescents With Learning Disabilities: A Meta Analysis Of Outcomes Related to High- Order Processing. Learning Disabilities of "America 2004".

Swanson, H. L. (1999). Successful Strategies for Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities. Learning Disabilities of America.

Thompson, R.J. & Kronenberger, W. (l990). Behavior problems in children with learning problems. In H.L. Swanson & B.K. Keogh (Eds.), Learning disabilities: Theoretical and research issues (pp 155-174). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Tralli, R. Colombo B., Deshler D., and Schumaker J (1996). "The Strategies Intervention Model", Remedial and Special Education, vol. 17, July.

Wiener, J. (l987). Peer status of learning disabled children and adolescents: A review of the literature. Learning Disabilities Research, 2, 62-79.

Weiss, M. (2004). Co-teaching as Science in the School House: More Questions than Answers. Journal of Learning Disabilities. V37, N3, 218-223.

Zygmond, N. (1996) What Makes an Effective Teacher? CEC Today. October 12.