

Financing Special Education in New Jersey
New Jersey School Boards Association
September 2007

Report of District Visits

Thirty-four districts were visited from those that submitted the Survey (Appendix B). The visits were used to extrapolate and validate the information submitted on the survey. Visitations were organized to meet with representatives of every district operating type of district, every district factor group and each of the state's 21 counties. During this time, researchers traveled, talked to people and listened.

Across the state, Directors of Special Services share the concerns that exist in regard to limited resources and expensive options for some special education students. They also shared with us many unique and creative programs established to benefit students and better manage costs. But as one superintendent said,

“Special education is expensive; it costs more to educate a special education student than a general education student. I announce that to my Board. You cannot win an argument about special education costs. What you can do is spend the money wisely and be accountable for delivering appropriate programs at the most reasonable costs.”

While there is a vast range of issues and solutions, there are also many singular themes that emerge. Special education does not exist in a vacuum. By code, special education classification is provided only to those students who cannot obtain true benefit from the general educational program. Some Directors spoke of class size as a key indicator in their district. Districts with class sizes of 21 or 18 were much more successful with their teachers' ability to differentiate instruction and provide extra assistance to students in need. The converse is also true that schools with class sizes in the mid to upper 20s have significantly more trouble making accommodations for students. Several Directors spoke of their high power curriculums and pressure for college entrance making it difficult for a group of students who are curriculum disabled. These students need accommodations and support to be successful with the curriculum in their particular school environment and, therefore, are classified.

There are districts that are attacking literacy with a multi-sensory approach in the early grades for all students who are “at risk.” This pragmatic approach helps eliminate the need for some students to be classified and provides additional help for those who are classified. The multi-sensory approach to reading is research based and represented throughout New Jersey by several phonics analysis approaches. Some Directors questioned why the universities have not incorporated this philosophy into their teacher training programs for both special education and elementary teachers. Universities were also chided for not being more flexible in their degree programs for speech therapists and learning consultants. These programs are structured so that it is next to impossible to attend as a part-time student, thereby excluding a majority of current teachers. There are shortages of both speech therapists and learning consultants in our schools. The scarcity

of these professionals impacts directly on the high cost of their services as consultants. It reflects the simple economic principle of supply and demand.

Another theme high on the agenda is the runaway tuition for out-of-district placements and the transportation costs that accompany them. Capping out-of-district tuition, better oversight of private schools, budgets, mandated county programs for most severely disabled and full funding for extraordinary aid are all examples of suggestions to control the most expensive component of special education costs.

The visitations also yielded concerns about aspects of support provided by the New Jersey State Department of Education. There was almost universal gratitude expressed for the county-level child study supervisors and their efforts. Beyond that, however, the DOE is perceived as understaffed to the point that leadership initiatives and statewide support for districts are limited. In fact, the perception is that the erratic flow of information from the State and either hurried timelines or delayed processing present a hardship to the districts in meeting their responsibility to provide data. In regard to Special Education Code, Directors believe some positive steps have been taken, but all of those visited feel more could have been done to streamline delivery of services without harming students. Three key areas of concern about administrative code were:

- Alternate Proficiency Assessment (APA) – Directors feel this process is cumbersome, time-consuming and labor-intensive. The state requirement is excessive, compared to the federal code requirements and those of other states.
- Transition – Directors would like to see state code reflect the age required by the federal government (16) for identifying the transition services students would need to reach post-school goals. New Jersey requires this at age 14.
- Individual Education Programs and In-class support – Directors strongly question the need for goals and objectives for students involved in in-class support programs since they are in the general education classroom.

The topic of classroom and instruction aides created a good deal of feedback during the visits. The topic of classroom and instruction aides created a good deal of feedback during the visits. Discussion included the possibility of creating multiple categories of aides based on their credentials and the explosion in hiring of aides as a result of the growth of in-district programs for more severely disabled children.

However, the key discussion point concerning aides was the cost of salary and benefits. One Director of a large district that employs 100 aides placed his district's benefits costs for aides at \$1 million. Although it was a frequent topic of discussion, no agreement exists on how to approach the situation. For example, there are those who recommend adjusting aides' schedules to 29.5 hours per week, thereby eliminating benefits. Others feel providing benefits improves the quality of candidates. Candidate quality is especially important, as the new codes allows for greater involvement of aides in the instructional process.

The number one area of need identified unanimously by Directors is staff training; training for *all* teachers in a variety of special education topics. Appropriate support,

such as training, is critical if general education teachers are to be more involved with special education students. The need for training also exists among the instructional aides. Also, many districts are trying to encourage parents to attend trainings to both better understand the needs of their children and to understand the efforts of the school.

As illustrated by the following reports of district visits, the percentage of special education students in separate settings is a critical indicator of monitoring by both the New Jersey and the U.S. departments of education. The summaries also report child study team/student ratios and how Directors of Special Services perceive their caseloads. Statements of what districts believe they do well and the areas in which they would like to see growth complete the briefs.

District 1: a K-12 district of 28,000 students housed in 47 buildings. The district, in the northern region, is in District Factor Group B. Its student placement percentages show movement toward a more inclusive approach, with 33% involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 33% involved in general education 40% to 80% of the day, 28% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and 6% of the students in separate settings. The district has made great strides in initiating programs that foster a more inclusive approach, and there are positive results with much of the special education population. The district is now focusing on the more involved special education students to further reduce the need for self-contained classes. It has moved 50% of its autism spectrum students back to the district and hopes to provide more mainstream opportunities. The 6% out-of-district placement rate is below the state average.

Child Study Team caseload results in a ratio of one team member for every 33 classified students. The Director feels that 50% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 50% on consultation and case manager services. To better serve the students, each child study team member has an assigned role in the school in addition to the traditional child study assignments. The school psychologist, for example, has the responsibility to serve as the behavioral expert in the building to support teachers with all students' behavioral issues and to lead collaborative problem-solving for staff, students and parents.

In identifying program strengths, the Director cited the inclusion specialist position function created by the district. Every building has an inclusion specialist, a respected teacher of the handicapped who coaches and supports all staff as programs move to more inclusive settings and general education teachers adjust to new responsibilities.

The Director also felt the myriad of problems facing urban districts cannot be adequately addressed without Building Special Education Action Plans that prioritize problems, establish activities and annually evaluate the results. A committee that always includes the principal and the inclusion specialist creates the plans each year.

The number one need for the district is additional professional training for all staff in dealing with a more inclusive setting rather than an exclusionary one. This need for training is especially felt at the high school level. Training is also needed for teachers' aides to make them more capable and to move them along the continuum from ancillary

helpers (student travel, toileting, one on one support) to true assistants in the delivery of instruction.

District 2: a K–12 district of 11,000 students housed in 12 buildings. The district, in the southern region, is in district factor group DE. Its student placement percentages are more inclusive than state averages, with 59% of students involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 22% involved in general education from 40% to 80% of the day, 13% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and 6% of the students in separate schooling. The district has a classification rate of 22%, which is significantly higher than the state average (14.7%).

Child Study Team caseload results in a ratio of one team member for every 80 classified students. The Director feels the majority of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services. A cadre of social workers provides consultation services for the extensive autism program. However, the established child study teams struggle with case management.

The Director is extremely proud of the Verbal Behavior Autism Program that has allowed the district to provide a complete program in district to a population that requires unique and complex services. Returning students to the district and providing them extensive programming and training has helped each individual student to function better in the community and has allowed for exposure to peers. The in-district programming has created a high degree of parent satisfaction, as well as nominal cost savings.

An exciting Pilot Program involves the development of a training model for human services staff and school district staff. The two groups will receive extensive training on the roles, responsibilities and procedures of each other's organization. The object is to eliminate wasted time and energy and to maximize services to the clients – students and their families. This could serve as a model to be replicated throughout the state.

Looking to the future, the Director continues to struggle with more inclusive placements due to the lack of training available to general education teachers. Differentiated instruction, inclusion and transition are training topics that must be given priority if programming is to be more inclusive. The training needs to be supported with materials for staff, and class size must be adjusted downward to accomplish these instructional changes. Additional funds, if available, would be used to support more child study team members so that more consultation and support could be provided.

District 3: a K-12 district of 10,200 students housed in 13 buildings. The district, in the northern region, is an Abbott district in district factor group A. Its student placement percentages show 49% involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 17% involved in general education 40% to 80% of the day, 30% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and 4% of the students in separate schooling. The percentage of students in separate schools (4%) is significantly below the state average of 10% and demonstrates a serious commitment to educating students in district.

Child Study Team caseload results in a ratio of one team member for every 35 classified students. The Director says that 40% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 60% on consultation and case manager services. A department policy requires each child study team member to work in the classroom for two periods a day from September to March.

The Director was especially pleased about the extensive alternative program offered for both middle and high school students. The program has maintained students in district and also helped to keep the district drop-out rate at 2%. For over-age middle school students, there is a one-year option that offers a work component and the potential for earning high school credit. This option has kept students focused by providing a realistic option. The district's intervention system is complex, with the child study team members serving as significant participants.

Looking to the future, the Director would like to see the state simply live up to its obligations. The district has requested more than \$1 million through the Extraordinary Special Education Costs aid formula, but this year's allocation is less than 25% of those costs. If the district were to receive additional dollars, the Director would like to provide training for general and special education teachers and parents on issues facing emotionally disturbed students. The district would also hire more social workers to help with community-based and school issues that affect all students, but especially special education students. Often, these issues intrude on the educational process and negatively affect it.

District 4: a K-12 district of 5,300 students housed in six buildings. The district, in the central region, is in district factor group FG. Its student placement percentages are more inclusive than the state averages, with 48% involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 39% involved in general education 40% to 80% of the day, 5% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and 8% of the students in separate schooling. The district has doubled in size over the last ten years, and it is projected to almost double again during the next decade.

Child Study Team caseload results in a ratio of one team member for every 42 classified students. The Director says that 40% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 60% on consultation and case manager services. Striving for inclusive education, the district provides in-class support from K-12 in all subjects as needed. Aides are used in classrooms where there is a need for focus, organization and structure, but teachers are assigned to all settings where methodology is needed.

The Director believes that classification by disability rather than by program is a problem and makes it harder to blur the lines between general and special education and indeed among special education students themselves.

The Director is pleased with the low percentage of classified students (8%) sent out of district, and the district has a goal to reduce the percentage further, to less than 5%. The interaction of child study staff with parents and teachers is another positive factor, which the director attributes to the fact that team members are stationed and "imbedded" in the

schools. The district's dedication to the in class support model has made it successful for the vast majority of students.

Looking toward the future, the Director would like to add significantly to the training experience for general and special education staff and, in certain instances, for parents. The district is home to approximately 50 autism spectrum students. Much more needs to be done to accommodate this population with appropriate supports.

District 5: a K–12 district of 4,700 students housed in nine buildings. The district, in the northern region, is in district factor group GH. Its student placement percentages are much more inclusive than state averages, with 71% of the students involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 13% involved in general education 40% to 80% of the day, 7% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and 9% of the students in separate schooling. While the district classification rate is 2% higher than the state average, the Director explains this as a cultural anomaly. There are several religious and cultural schools in the district serving a significant segment of the community. These families only send their disabled children to the public school for the available services, thus inflating the classification rate.

Child Study Team caseload results in a ratio of one team member for every 50 classified students. The Director feels 70% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 30% on consultation and case manager services.

The Director is especially proud of the research-based, fully documented Preschool Autistic Program housed in a building with non-disabled preschool students. The district is also proud of its strong literacy program that has an early intervention program for general and special education students led by two reading specialists at the elementary schools. Starting next year two reading specialists will be assigned to the middle schools. The extensive staff training in a multi-sensory approach to reading enhances the literacy program. Training is provided to all kindergarten and first grade teachers, as well as to various other staff members, K through 12. There is also a strong multi-sensory approach to reading used in the high school with special education students.

Looking to the future, if more dollars were available, the Director would add staff to support social issues: guidance counselors for the elementary grades; and social workers to address family issues and student mental health issues. The Director would also provide more training on special education issues for general and special education teachers.

To streamline paperwork, the Director would like to see multi-year IEPs for in class support students without the need for goals and objectives since the students are in general education classes.

District 6: a K-12 district of 4,400 students housed in seven buildings. The district, in the central region, is in district factor group GH. Its student placement percentages are significantly more inclusive than the state averages, with 59% involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 30% involved in general education 40% to 80% of

the day, 5% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and only 6% of the students in separate schooling. The district is especially proud of the fact that there are only 38 students in out-of-district placements and that half of these students had already been placed in these programs when they entered the district.

Child Study Team caseload reflects a ratio of one team member for every 38 classified students. The Director says that 60% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 40% on consultation and case manager services. The Director believes that for an inclusive program to succeed there needs to be extensive training for general and special education teachers on various instructional ideas. The concept of “more of the same” just doesn’t work for the special education student.

According to the Director, the district’s strong emphasis on reading, with a full-time specialist at each elementary school level, is a genuine strength that allows many students to be helped prior to the need for referral. Special education students reading instruction is enhanced by the ten teachers extensively trained in a multi-sensory approach.

The district jointly runs an alternative program for high school students with another district. This epitomizes the ultimate in sharing services. The Director is also proud of the district’s integrated preschool program, which strives to develop each student’s potential to the maximum.

Staff development is important and the district devotes significant monies to send staff out to network and to then return to the district to turnkey the staff.

Looking to the future, the Director would like additional facilities for students. The priorities are to build an early learning center for preschool special education students and to add space to bring back out-of-district ED students.

District 7: a K–12 district of 4,300 students housed in five buildings. The district, in the southern region, is in district factor group FG. Its student placement percentages are slanted slightly toward less inclusive options compared to state averages, with 38% involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 30% involved in general education from 40% to 80% of the day, 20% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and 12% of the students in separate schooling. Although the programming/placement rates are more restrictive than state averages, the district’s classification rate, 13%, is lower than the state average (14.7%).

Child Study Team caseload results in a ratio of one team member for every 62 classified students. The Director says that 65% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 35% on consultation and case manager services.

The Director is extremely proud of the autism programs, serving grades K through 2. These programs are a response to the desire to establish services in district rather than sending children out of district simply because their needs are significant. The in-district programs allow for greater monitoring and control of all aspects of instruction and therapy. Another positive enhancement has been the addition of a Life Skills component

to the Multiple Disability program at the middle school. The in-class support model helps increase the amount of time students spend in general education classes. The program is offered for all four core courses at the middle and high school. However, the high school program is structured for delivery every other day due to staff limitations.

As special education costs continue to rise, it becomes increasingly important to establish new in-district programs with the appropriate supports. The Director senses a strong need for staff development for both general and special education teachers. Concepts such as differentiated instruction and in class support must be supported with intensive training for the general education staff.

District 8: a K–12 district of 3,700 students housed in five buildings. The district, in the southern region, is in district factor group CD. Its student placement percentages show 42% involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 35% involved in general education from 40% to 80% of the day, 18% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and 5% of the students in separate schooling. These percentages are in line with the state averages except for separate schooling, which at 5% is significantly below the state average (10%). The district classification rate of 13% is also below the state average (14.7%).

Child Study Team caseload results in a ratio of one team member for every 42 classified students. The Director feels that 50% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 50% on consultation and case manager services.

The Director is pleased with two general education initiatives that support inclusive programming. The high school has established an additional level of instruction to accommodate students who are having academic difficulty. This level exists for most major academic subjects and involves reduced class size and additional staff supports. The classes have both general and special education students, who have enjoyed marked improvement. The district Intervention and Referral Services is a most comprehensive program through which cases are scrutinized and extensive follow-up occurs. The presence of child study staff on the committees has enhanced the recommendations that emanate from these discussions. Constant follow-up with the students has enabled many cases to be resolved prior to the classification process.

District 9: A K-12 district of 3,625 students housed in seven buildings. The district, in the central region, is in district factor group I. The student placement percentages are much more inclusive than the state averages, with 65% involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 22% involved in general education 40% to 80% of the day, 7% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and 6% of the students in separate schooling. Test scores for special education students on all state assessments are excellent, especially in language arts where scores range from 62% to 92% proficient.

Child Study Team caseload reflects a ratio of one team member for every 55 classified students. The Director feels that 40% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 60% on consultation and case manager services. The district is making a concerted effort in documenting classroom assessment, thereby providing more

concrete student data analysis at re-evaluation time. This longitudinal data is both more valuable and negates the need for some child study team testing. Another benefit of the testing process to the child study teams is the extensive use of learning consultant interns and psychologist interns. The district has relationships with several universities.

The Director is especially proud of the fact that 13 teachers have been trained in a multi-sensory approach to reading through a community-based funding program. The district is highly focused on literacy, as is evidenced by initiatives that exist in few if any other communities:

- The employment of a literacy coach, a reading specialist who works with elementary teachers on reading issues, presents workshops and spends time in classrooms providing assistance and instruction.
- The establishment of the Saturday Program for Reading that provides an hour of one-to-one instruction during the school year. Funding for the program is solicited from the community, with 70% to 100% of the cost borne by non-district sources over the past two years. This is especially valuable for those students in need of this program whose families can least afford the cost.

Looking to the future the director would like to expand the use of assistive technology specifically classroom FM amplification systems and additional computerized instruction.

District 10: a K–12 district of 3,400 students housed in eight buildings. The district, in the central region, is in district factor group DE. Its student placement percentages are slightly above the state averages, with 40% involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 40% involved in general education from 40% to 80% of the day, 12% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and 8% of the students in separate schooling. The district classification rate is in line with the state average.

The Child Study Team caseload reflects a ratio of one team member for every 60 classified students. The Director feels that 75% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 25% on consultation and case manager services.

The Director is pleased with the elementary class size, which is under 20 students and affords an environment supportive of differentiated instruction. The district is involved in a coalition with other school districts that offers programs for autistic students. The coalition provides services that would be very difficult for individual districts to replicate. The initiative has been very positive and, as an extension of that program, a transition class in district has been established to serve as an intermediary step to inclusion.

The Director is pleased with several training programs for their special education teachers. Elementary teachers have been receiving staff development on the resource room, and high school teachers have been receiving staff development on transition services.

Looking to the future, the Director would like to place a greater emphasis on staff development, specifically for general education teachers on differentiated instruction, the in-class support model and teacher collaboration. If additional dollars were available, the district could support common preparation time during which general and special education teachers would interact. This would benefit both resource and inclusive students.

District 11: a K–12 district of 3,300 students housed in five buildings. The district, in the southern region, is in district factor group DE. Its student placement percentages show 32% involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 56% involved in general education from 40% to 80% of the day, 6% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and 6% of the students in separate schooling. The district classification rate of 16% is slightly above the state average.

Child Study Team caseload results in a ratio of one team member for every 75 classified students. The Director says that 50% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 50% on consultation and case manager services. The district is also managing a full continuum of programs with a special education teaching staff that is significantly smaller than the state average and results in a ratio of 14 students per teacher. The state average is closer to 11 students per teacher.

The Director cited two programs for commendation. An integrated preschool program has yielded positive results for all those involved. At the high school level, the district has initiated a small alternative program for students who have been out of district and/or involved with law enforcement. The program operates on a reduced time schedule, but includes a full complement of teachers and support staff. For many districts, the emotionally disturbed population is a disability group that can be difficult to manage in district. The alternative program represents a strong effort in least restrictive programming to serve that population.

Looking to the future, the Director would like to expand the alternative school concept to the middle school for students with severe behavioral issues. In addition, a full-time behavior analyst would provide support to enhance student performance and train staff.

District 12: a K–12 district of 2,400 students housed in four buildings. The district, in the southern region, is in district factor group B. Its student placement percentages are somewhat in line with state averages, with 37% involved in general education more than 80% of the day; 45% involved in general education from 40% to 80% of the day; 6% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and 12% of the students in separate schooling.

Child Study Team caseload reflects a ratio of one team member for every 45 classified students. The Director says that 70% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 30% on consultation and case manager services. The main impediment to increased consultative services is the large student mobility factor, which results in an annual turnover rate among special education students of more than 50%. Consequently, more than 200 special education students move in and out of the district

each year, with all the paperwork, scheduling and program issues that such moves generate.

The Director is most pleased with the strides the district has made in inclusive and collaborative situations for students. An example is the hiring of a half-time Inclusion Facilitator to support special and general education teachers in addition to providing staff development and review IEPs. Another positive step is the cross training for general and special education teachers in all core curriculum areas. If more special education students are involved in general education classes, then general education teachers need to be equipped to maximize instruction. Another key has been the development of data-driven instruction and placement in which all students are tested two times a year in Reading, Language and Math. The students are tested by class section and results are provided within a week, allowing child study staff to monitor classified students progress compared to their general education peers. All of these initiatives are the result of a grant from the Department of Education.

Looking to the future, if more dollars were available, the Director would provide more literacy coaches, especially at the elementary level. To further staff development, teachers would be trained during the summer in data analysis to better understand and utilize the results of the data-driven instruction.

District 13: a K-12 district of 2,200 students housed in three buildings, K-3, 4-8, 9-12. The district, in the central region, is in district factor group I. Its student placement percentages are better than the state averages, with 44% involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 37% involved in general education from 40% to 80% of the day, 12% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and just 7% of the students in separate schooling. Test scores for special education students on the New Jersey assessments are quite good, more than 50% of the students scoring at proficient levels.

Child Study Team caseload results in a ratio of one team member for every 50 classified students. The Director says that 80% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 20% on consultation and case manager services. In discussion of classification rates, the Director attributed the district's lower-than-state-average classification rate to attempts to improve the general education reading program at the first-grade basic skills level. This has been done through a multi-sensory phonics based program.

The Director is proud of the district's ability to return students to in-district programs where they are monitored more often by district staff. Out-of-district transportation costs of more than \$13,000 per student are especially troubling in these times. Establishing trust with parents and follow through on promised activities is an accomplishment that has yielded zero due process cases over the last several years. In a district experiencing significant growth, the department appears to have managed well an increase in staff, from 40 to 75, without sacrificing program quality.

On the horizon for the district, which has a new high school, is providing more class options at the secondary level and more career services. Also, employing full-time staff in the specialist area – therapy services and behavior management – represents the K-12 objectives to improve program quality while enhancing cost-effectiveness.

District 14: a K–12 district of 1,900 students housed in three buildings. The district, in the central region, is in district factor group I. Its student placement percentages are much more inclusive than the state average, with 61% involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 30% involved in general education from 40% to 80% of the day, 1% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and 8% of the students in separate schooling. Test scores for special education students on all state assessments are good, especially the HSPA, with 80% passing the Language portion and almost 70% the Math portion.

Child Study Team caseload results in a ratio of one team member for every 40 classified students. The Director feels that 50% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 50% on consultation and case manager services. While the classification rate of 11% is well below the state average, parents are extremely active and spend time with the teams on programs and supports.

The Director is most appreciative of the collaborative approach to all issues by the administration and the view of special education students as part of the whole educational community, not an extra component. Instructionally, there is a strong commitment to inclusive education with small class size, teacher training and collaboration between general and special education teachers and supports that help that commitment.

Although all aspects of the program appear strong, the Director would like to provide more study skills options and add child study staff to offer more intervention and support services.

District 15: a K-12 district of 1,675 students housed in seven buildings. The district, in the southern region, is in district factor group FG. Its student placement percentages reflect an extremely high out-of-district population: 45% of special education students are involved in general education more than 80% of the day; 17% are involved in general education 40% to 80% of the day; 18% are involved in general education less than 40% of the day; and 20% of the students are in separate schooling. The separate schooling percentage is twice the state average. The Director believes that the district is moving away from the old philosophy of sending students with severe needs out of district. Students are being brought back slowly in order to provide appropriate supports.

Child Study Team caseload reflects a ratio of one team member for every 42 classified students. The Director says that 50% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 50% on consultation and case manager services. Strengthening and mandating more intervention services and educational supports for the general education population would result in a decrease of referrals and classifications according to the Director.

The Director is pleased with the child study staff's frequent contact with, and response to, parents. The district has a very active, sophisticated parent group. Child study staff members are extremely active on the Intervention and Referral Services Committees. The district offers a high school Work/Study program that serves students who would otherwise be marked for out-of-district programs.

Looking to the future, the Director would like to see a significant increase in professional training on special education topics for both general and special education teachers. There is a serious need for special education teachers to be trained in a multi-sensory approach to reading. An expansion of the Work/Study program with supports, in addition to the initiation of other programs in district, would allow more students to return to the district to be educated in a less restrictive environment at a cost savings to the district.

District 16: a K-12 district of 1,250 students housed in three buildings. The district, in the southern region, is in district factor group A. Its student placement percentages are slanted toward less-inclusive options when compared to state averages, with 35% involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 26% involved in general education from 40% to 80% of the day, 34% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and 5% of the students in separate schooling.

The district has a child study classification rate in excess of 20%. The Director believes that the family income level and the number of classified students moving to the district due to affordable rentals are large factors in the classification rate.

Child Study Team caseload results in a ratio of one team member for every 60 classified students. The Director feels that 90% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 10% on consultation and case manager services.

The Director was especially proud of the staff. Long-term staff, mostly from the community, consists of involved teachers with a true sense of what is happening in the community. Two programs that the district feels are most successful are (1) an after-care program that provides one hour of instruction followed by recreation daily, and (2) a high school life skills/work skills program that operates a small retail stand in the community during the spring and fall.

Looking to the future, the Director would like to see some dollars for staff development for both general education and special education teachers on special education topics especially – Working with the Difficult Student. He would also like to see more hands-on programs – technical education and work partnerships for the special education population.

District 17: a K-12 district of 1,200 students housed in three buildings. The district, in the southern region, is an Abbott district in district factor group A. Its student placement percentages are less inclusive than the state average, with 40% involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 22% involved in general education from 40% to 80% of the day, 26% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and 12% of

the students in separate schooling. The district, with a classification rate of 24%, has significantly more disabled students than the state average (14.7%).

Child Study Team caseload reflects a ratio of one team member for every 50 classified students. The Director says that 50% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 50% on consultation and case manager services. Fifty classified students at the high school come from sending districts, which affects the ratio of child study staff to students. In addition, one sending district utilizes the district's child study team through contracted services.

The Director feels the community presents a myriad of issues that the district has been addressing, especially with the additional state funds provided to Abbott districts. With 95% of the students on free or reduced lunch and gang and drug influence similar to other urban areas, there is a need for many services. Over the last three years the number of special education teachers has doubled to 31, allowing for a full continuum of program in the schools. While progress is slow, improvement has been seen, especially at the elementary level where a multi-sensory approach to reading is being utilized.

The Director feels that a variety of issues need attention. The county technical school rarely accepts the district's special education students into its program since the admission process is competitive. However, technical education is exactly the program many special education students need after high school. Therefore, he feels, there is a need to dedicate slots at the technical school for special education students.

While progress is slowly being made in instructional areas, state testing for a significant percentage of the special education population is not appropriate and creates many problems. The option of Alternative Proficiency Assessment is not practical for large numbers of students. In this director's opinion, there needs to be a better way assessment method.

District 18: a K-8 district of 4,700 students housed in eight buildings. The district, in the central region, is in district factor group GH. Its student placement percentages are above the state averages with 41% involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 47% involved in general education 40% to 80% of the day, 4% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and 8% of the students in separate schooling. The district's classification rate of 11.3% is significantly below the state average.

Child Study Team caseload reflects a ratio of one team member for every 35 classified students. The Director feels there is adequate time for mandated diagnostic services and consultation and case manager services.

The Director is extremely proud of the intervention and identification process the district follows carried by the child study team accessibility to staff and parents. The low district classification rate also speaks well of the intervention process. The district has also made a serious commitment to staff development that benefits all. There is also a comprehensive New Teacher Academy for one week in August, with follow-up monthly throughout the year.

If additional funds were available, the Director would like to see more staff development in the multi-sensory approach to reading and the hiring of an additional staff member to provide “coaching support” for teachers and to enable more continuity among buildings. One area the Director would like to see changed is the Department of Education’s requirement for Alternative Proficiency Assessment (APA). The process is lengthy and cumbersome, with the state requirements significantly more involved than the federal mandate.

District 19: a K-8 district of 1,250 students housed in two buildings. The district, in the northern region, is in district factor group FG. Its student placement percentages are inclusive, with 59% involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 32% involved in general education 40% to 80% of the day, 3% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and 6% of the students in separate schooling. The district prides itself on providing an inclusive program whenever possible. Teachers employ the In-Class Support Model extensively and a classroom support model-utilizing aides is also part of the continuum. In grades K through 4, in-class support is utilized for Language Arts and Math, while in grades 5 through 8 in-class support is employed for the four core subjects: Language Arts, Math, Science and Social Studies.

Child Study Team caseload results in a ratio of one team member for every 48 classified students. The Director feels that 40% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 60% on consultation and case manager services.

The Director listed the integrated Preschool Program as a huge success in weaving typical and disabled students together in an inclusive setting. The program has been beneficial to both groups, and the district receives nominal funds from the parents of the typically developing students.

The district has also given significant attention to social issues with drug and alcohol awareness training targeted at the special education population. Social skill training is also provided twice weekly for three months during the school year. Research seems to indicate that special education students are more susceptible to coercion in drug and alcohol situations and less able to deal with asserting themselves in peer pressure situations.

The director is also pleased with the Teacher Resource Center – an inventory of all the materials available to the teachers in the district.

Issues on the horizon are the related services and at-home services requested for students in the autism spectrum. While students’ needs should be met, simply providing more services and more aides is not realistic or sound educational practice. This is an area that needs study and analysis.

District 20: a K-8 district of 1,000 students housed in two buildings. The district, in the southern region, is in district factor group GH. Its student placement percentages are much more inclusive than the state averages, with 64% involved in general education

more than 80% of the day, 29% involved in general education 40% to 80% of the day, 5% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and only 2% of the students in separate schooling.

Child Study Team caseload reflects a ratio of one team member for every 45 classified students. The Director feels that 60% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 40% on consultation and case manager services. In discussing the state code, the Director feels the age for transition services should be 16 (the federal requirement) rather than 14. The Director would also like to see less paperwork in regard to goals and objectives, especially for students in resource and in class support programs.

The Director is proud of the extensive tracking of the district's special education students and cited quarterly reports to parents as an example. A special education Homework Club that meets twice weekly, for an hour each day from October 1st to June 1st has had a real impact on achievement. The Director feels the parents are very involved and have definite thoughts on their children's needs, and the child study team is very patient with the parents in responding to their concerns.

Looking to the future, the Director would like to provide much more training to all teachers on various special education topics.

District 21: a K-8 district of 650 students housed in two buildings. The district, in the southern region, is in district factor group CD. Its student placement percentages are mostly in line with the state averages, with 51% involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 22% involved in general education 40% to 80% of the day, 19% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and 8% of the students in separate schooling. A distinction for the district is the fact that 51% of its special education students are involved in general education more than 80% of the day versus the state average of 42%.

Child Study Team caseload provides a ratio of one team member for every 36 classified students. The Director feels 60% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 40% on consultation and case manager services. The district classification rate at 17% is somewhat higher than the state average (14.7%).

The Director is proud of the full range of programs available for special education students, which allows them to stay in their home district. There is an option called general education with modifications that has enhanced the amount of time students spend in the general education classroom. The identified students have classroom aides who circulate and assist as necessary. The resource teacher consults and checks the students' work on a weekly basis. This program takes advantage of the state's new code.

The Director is especially pleased with the small school atmosphere and the sensitivity of all teachers to the special education population. There is a true feeling of inclusion and acceptance among all the staff.

An issue on the horizon is the new code requirement that limits the age range to a maximum of three years. While most classes currently are compliant with the coming regulation, this restriction could pose a serious financial hardship for a small district and require two additional staff members next year.

Another important consideration for this Director is the ongoing need for staff training on collaborative education. Teachers need training in order to understand their roles in the in-class support mode.

District 22: a K-8 district of 450 students housed in two buildings. The district, in the northern region, is in district factor group I. Its student placement percentages reflect a totally inclusive program, with 95% of the students involved in general education more than 80% of the day, and 5% of the students in separate schooling.

Child Study Team caseload reflects a ratio of one team member for every 20 classified students. The Director feels there is ample time for consultation and case manager services in addition to all diagnostic services.

The Director is extremely proud of the fact that the district is a totally inclusive district with no self-contained classes and no pull-out resource room. Every grade level maintains collaboration between the general education teacher and the in-class support teacher.

The district also has an integrated Pre-school program that allows for a least restrictive environment as special education preschoolers attend school with non-disabled preschoolers from the community. With the presence of autistic students, district has implemented a parent component to work in conjunction with the child's current program. The program not only trains parents to deal with their children's academic, social and adaptive functioning but, more significant, it serves as a support system that links them with the school, other parents and the community. It has been extremely well received by the parents.

Looking to the future, the Director would like to have additional trained instructional aides to help facilitate differentiating instruction and mainstreaming the students focus.

District 23: a K-8 district of 400 students housed in one building. The district, in the northern region, is in district factor group GH. Its student placement percentages are in line with the state averages, with 48% involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 31% involved in general education 40% to 80% of the day, 19% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and 2% of the students in separate schooling.

Child Study Team caseload results in a ratio of one team member for every 60 classified students. All the child study staff is part time due to the size of the district. Their job is made more difficult since they only work together one day per week to provide full-team-required activities. The responsibility for crisis response is often not with the case manager, but with the team member who happens to be present. With these numbers, the

Director feels 40% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 60% on consultation and case manager services.

The Director of this one-building district feels strongly that the state regulation cutting the maximum age range from four years to three years is wrong for small districts. Districts should be allowed to make decisions based on student levels. This code change will require an additional teacher, an increase in instructional aides and an additional classroom dedicated to special education. This represents an extreme hardship and will force additional expenditures.

The Director pointed to many positive aspects of the district's program for special education students. There is a strong emphasis on multi-sensory reading instruction. All of the district's special education teachers and all kindergarten, first- and second-grade teachers have been trained in Project Read. There is a significant effort to integrate special education students into the general education classes and to differentiate instruction. The close-knit community atmosphere translates to teachers with a long tenure in the district and a true commitment to the students.

The program could be improved in two areas: additional special education teachers could provide greater program options, such as in-class support and pull-out resource for other than language and math; and additional training for general education teachers on special education topics. The Director would also like to see training for staff on their obligation in regard to New Jersey Administrative Code (6A:14) for special education and the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

District 24: a K-8 district of 375 students housed in one building. The district, in the southern region, is in district factor group B. Its student placement percentages are more inclusive than the state average, with 52% involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 29% involved in general education from 40% to 80% of the day, 15% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and 5% of the students in separate schooling. The district's classification rate is at the state average.

Child Study Team caseload reflects a ratio of one team member for every 38 classified students. The Director says that 50% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 50% on consultation and case manager services. Since the district only has part-time child study staff, the coordination of scheduling is important to the delivery of services.

The Director is extremely pleased with the evaluation process and all code compliance issues. Due to the small size of the community, parent communication is excellent, with almost immediate response from parents. This attitude results in issues being resolved quickly and almost always positively.

The Director is concerned with the code requirement allowing for a maximum three-year age span in elementary classes. The district is pleased with a program that supports two special education enrollments of four and five students. However, the age-span restriction would require a third class and would be cost prohibitive and not beneficial to

the instructional process. The Director is also concerned with the state assessment for a selected number of students whose participation causes them harm, yet who are not eligible for exemption, according to the state.

District 25: a K-6 district of 1,900 students housed in four buildings. The district, in the southern region, is in district factor group B. Its student placement percentages are more inclusive than the state average, with 48% involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 40% involved in general education 40% to 80% of the day, only 7% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and 5% of the students in separate schooling. The district however has a classification rate of 19%, which is significantly higher than the state average (14.7%).

Child Study Team caseload results in a ratio of one team member for every 60 classified students. Even with these numbers, the Director still feels that 40% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 60% on consultation and case management. This district is located an area with a high degree of family movement, reflecting a 15% to 20% annual mobility rate. This impacts the special education program since almost 20% of the classified population changes during the course of the year.

The Director is especially proud of the opportunities offered for reading enhancement for all students. The district provides a multi-sensory approach to reading before and after school for 3rd and 4th graders and after school for 5th and 6th graders. The program is voluntary and 35% of the special education students participate. State test scores in excess of 60% proficient for the special education population is due in-part to this program. More than half of the general and special education teachers in grades 3 through 6 are trained in a multi-sensory approach to reading and employ these techniques in their classrooms. Overall, a class size below 22 makes it easier for the classroom teacher to differentiate instruction for the classified student. Finally, a strong commitment to professional development for all staff on special education issues has created a positive atmosphere.

Looking to the future, the Director would like to hire an additional Child Study Team member to reduce the caseload and concentrate on counseling for the emotionally disturbed population. The Director also sees the need for a formal time-out facility.

District 26: a K-6 district of 1,550 students housed in three buildings. The district, in the southern region, is in district factor group FG. Student placement percentages are much more inclusive than the state averages, with 65% involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 18% involved in general education 40% to 80% of the day, 15% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and only 2% of the students in separate schooling. With a classification rate of 12.4%, the district is below the state average (14.7%).

Child Study Team caseload reflects a ratio of one team member for every 45 classified students. The Director says that 50% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 50% on consultation and case manager services.

The Director feels an inclusive approach is dependent upon staff training, adequate staff, high expectations and accountability. The Director cited several enhancements. In speech, the district employs a 3-to-1 service model where the students receive three weeks of direct instruction (traditional group instruction) and one week of indirect instruction during which the speech therapist works with the students in their classroom. The in-class support model works in part because of a district class size of less than 22 and the use of instructional aides to provide support services when an in-class teacher is not required. This component has yielded many benefits to the children socially and academically. The multiply-disabled program involves the students taking a half-day community-based trip every week. To make the IEPs teacher friendly, the Director created a rollover IEP for each teacher consisting of just seven pages – the pages needed by a teacher to implement programs. It has been very well received since teachers generally seem bothered with the usual 20- to 30-page documents.

On the horizon for the district is the creation of a sensory room for OT services, implementation of social skills training especially for the 25 autistic children in the district. If the district is to successfully keep the autistic population in district, a full time facilitator is needed.

District 27: a K- 6 district of 750 students housed in two buildings. The district, in the northern region, is in district factor group J. Its student placement percentages are more inclusive than the state averages, with 48% involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 36% involved in general education 40% to 80% of the day, 9% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and 9% of the students in separate schooling. Scores for special education students on the state assessments are outstanding with language proficiency scores in the 80% range and math proficiency scores in the 50% range.

Child Study Team caseload reflects a ratio of one team member for every 30 classified students. The Director feels that 50% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 50% on consultation and case manager services.

The Director is pleased that most teachers are trained in a multi-sensory approach to reading and are well versed in providing differentiated instruction. Both of these issues are important in working with special education students. The school has a rich curriculum with a variety of co-curricular experiences built into the day for all students. The school is a prominent part of the community, with teachers who are especially engaging with the students. This attitude, in part, is a response to highly motivated and involved parents.

Issues on the horizon are a need for research money to document best practices about teaching math at the elementary level and a need to invest more in assistive technology.

District 28: a K-6 district of 400 students housed in one building. The district, in the northern region, is in district factor group DE. Its student placement percentages are among the best in the state, with 93% involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 3.5% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and 3.5% of the

students in separate schooling. This district has a classification rate of 9%, well below the state average of 14.7%.

Although the child study staff is part time, their caseload provides a ratio of one member for every 17 classified students. With these numbers, the Director feels that 20% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 80% on consultation and case manager services.

The Director is most proud of the fact that there has never been a due process issue over the last 25 years. The special education program is structured as a full inclusion program with no self-contained or pull-out resource program. The program success is based on differentiated instruction and true support for the staff. The support includes two extra teachers to shadow 5th and 6th grade students and teachers and aides to assist the general education teachers at the lower grade levels. The child study staff is in the classrooms all the time. The concept flows smoothly in this building, which has been practicing the inclusion formula for many years.

If the Director had additional funds, the top priorities would be more teaching staff to reduce class size below 20 and more assistive technology to allow the students to be both more involved and more successful in their classrooms.

District 29: a K–6 district of 185 students housed in one building. The district, in the southern region, is in district factor group CD. Its student placement percentages are as follows: 25% involved in general education more than 80% of the day; 48% involved in general education from 40% to 80% of the day; 11% involved in general education less than 40% of the day; and 16% of the students in separate schooling. These profile percentages do not truly reflect the school program, with 80 students plus ten classified students all involved in resource room. The profile percentages also include 100 students in grades 7 – 12, who attend school another district through a sending relationship.

All Child Study Team services are contracted, with the exception of the full-time Director. The Director provides all consultation and case manager services.

The Director stated that a K–6 average class size of 11 allows for differentiated instruction in the general education class with the help of in-class support. The struggle for this district is whether to support a school and all the related costs for 80 students or incorporate those students with the neighboring district as they do for grades 7-12.

An indication of school's personal level of service occurred during the visit, when a 3rd grader reported ill to the nurse. The parent was contacted; however, since the parent did not have transportation, a police officer was called to the school to give the child a ride home.

District 30: a 7-12 district of 1,600 students housed in two buildings. The district, in the northern region, is in district factor group I. The student placement percentages are much more inclusive than the state averages, with 62% involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 27% involved in general education 40% to 80% of the day, 4% involved

in general education less than 40% of the day, and 7% of the students in separate schooling. These percentages are especially positive considering that the district is a regional serving grades 7 through 12 and that the vast majority of the district's special education population enters its schools already classified.

Child Study Team caseload reflects a ratio of one team member for every 50 classified students. The Director says that 60% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 40% on consultation and case manager services.

The Director is pleased with a unique program that utilizes special education teachers in an effective manner. Using a nine-period day, special education teachers are assigned each period to a communication center where they are available to staff and parents to answer questions, research issues and provide support. To complement the communication teacher, the district also assigns a special education teacher each period to the position of itinerant teacher. The itinerant teacher works to ensure the implementation of IEPs, provides assistance to instructional aides and teachers and monitors the classroom performance of students.

Looking to the future, the Director is concerned with the shortage of both learning consultants and speech therapists and the resulting financial issues brought about by these shortages. There is concern that the universities are not sympathetic to district students or their needs. There appears to be very little flexibility within training programs in these two areas.

District 31: a 9-12 Regional District of 4,400 students housed in three buildings. The district, in the southern region, is in district factor group DE. Student placement percentages are shaded toward more restrictive programming compared to the state averages, with 27% involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 40% involved in general education from 40% to 80% of the day, 19% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and 13% of the students in separate schooling. These statistics are somewhat misleading for a regional high school district that receives students already in program. A more telling statistic for this district may be an out-of-district population of 90 students, down from 130 only two years earlier and representing a 30% reduction.

Child Study Team caseload results in a ratio of one team member for every 77 classified students. The Director feels that 70% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 30% on consultation and case manager services. Although the caseload appears somewhat high, as a grade 9–12 district, most students enter the district classified and less than 20 new evaluations are required each year.

The Director was especially pleased with an 11th grade initiative that provides a double period of Language and Math for the classified population. This effort has produced the best special education scores in the county on the HSPA, with more than 80% proficient in Language more than 50% in Math. As a complement to this concept, the district has recently begun a reading program for freshmen who have not succeeded in the Language

portion of the GEPA. The program has a computer-based tracking component that allows for constant feedback.

As a regional district that receives students from five middle schools with varying programs and curricular approaches, it is necessary to devote child study staff to gaining an understanding of students' needs. This is done each spring.

The Director sees the need for more general academic support. This support would raise the level of success of all classified students. Unfortunately, the school day is full and so the answer for this district would be to add a period to the school day.

District 32: a 9-12 technical school of 2,400 students housed in one building. The district is in the northern region.

Child Study Team caseload reflects a ratio of one team staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 50% on consultation and case manager services. Technical Schools provide vital services to all students on a countywide basis. This county-based school is committed to serving all students and so 20% of all seats are reserved for special education students who qualify. In addition, there are four programs specific to special education students at various instructional levels.

The Director is especially proud of the district's efforts in regard to special education students' performance on the HSPA. For students who do not enter the school proficient on the GEPA, there is a mandatory course developed especially for special education students. The class rotates on a two-week cycle so that students stay interested in both Language Arts and Math.

As a cost effective measure, the school has negotiated with teachers to teach an additional period per day. This has helped to solve the teacher shortage in critical areas and is also cost effective since paying five teachers a stipend for an extra class is less expensive than hiring a teacher with salary and benefits costs.

Another advantage the Director sees is the size of the school. As a large countywide program, it offers a full array of special education programs at a reasonable rate. Regardless of the student's disability, there is an appropriate program.

Looking for the future, the Director sees the county looking to the Technical Schools to also serve the more emotionally involved special education students, who tend to be sent out of district to expensive private schools. With adequate preparation, self-contained ED satellite programs could be implemented as an alternative to out-of-district placements. The students could then attend the Technical School for their occupational component.

District 33: a 9-12 district of 1,000 students housed in one building. The district, in the southern region, is in district factor group DE. Its student placement percentages are more inclusive than the state averages, with 58% involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 20% involved in general education 40% to 80% of the day, 13%

involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and 9% of the students in separate schooling.

As a regional high school district that receives students from three districts, communication about the special education population is critical and an area that needs greater attention to better plan programs, according to staff. The district offers a full array of programs for the special education population with a large in-class support component for all four core subjects: Language, Math, Science and Social Studies.

Child Study Team caseload reflects a ratio of one team member for every 64 classified students. The Director feels that 50% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 50% on consultation and case manager services.

The Director is pleased with the core of instructional aides as most are college graduates and certificated in some area. They bring a great deal of professionalism to their responsibilities. Effective teachers with longevity in the district provide a strong sense of community in the school. Programmatically, the Multiply Disabled program has allowed the district to provide a local option for students previously sent out of district. The district has also found success with a Reading Center that provides computer-led instruction for a 90-minute block for special education students in need. The Reading Center is a major tool in preparing students for the HSPA.

Looking to the future, if the district had more funds available, the Director would expand the Reading Center program to reach more students, hire more teachers for in-class support in other subjects and establish a second Multiply Handicapped program.

District 34: a 9-12 Regional District of 950 students housed in one building. This district, in the central region, is in district factor group GH. Student placement percentages are much more inclusive than state averages, with 70% involved in general education more than 80% of the day, 14% involved in general education from 40% to 80% of the day, 4% involved in general education less than 40% of the day, and 12% of the students in separate schooling. The scores for the HSPA are strong with more than 80% proficient in Language and almost 60% proficient in Math.

Child Study Team caseload reflects a ratio of one team member for every 42 classified students. The Director says that 50% of child study staff time is spent on mandated diagnostic services and 50% on consultation and case manager services. The Director was extremely pleased with the state's direction on re-evaluation and assessment, especially for the high school level. Child study staff time formerly spent on mandated testing can be better utilized on consultative services if the student is established in a program, doing well and on target for graduation.

The Director is most proud of the collaborative inclusive approach utilized in the school. With 70% of the special education students involved in general education more than 80% of the day, this is an inclusive environment. The 70% involvement rate is significantly above the state average rate of 42%. The key to this success is the involvement of general education teachers and their willingness to work with the special education and

child study staff to create opportunities for students. The Director feels there is a direct correlation between the general education teachers' attitude toward collaboration and inclusion and the amount support and training that they receive.

There is still a variety of issues to be addressed in the district, according to the Director, with the top two being:

- (1) Establishment of a regional special education curriculum position to analyze the records from the five sending districts and better coordinate services for the incoming students. This position could also provide curriculum recommendations to all the sending districts to encourage program continuity.
- (2) Establishment of an Autistic Program at the high school.