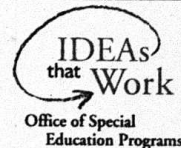


OSEP Research Institutes: Bridging Research and Practice



The article that follows is the third installment of a new column, *Bridging Research and Practice*, that will appear in each issue of TEC for the next year or two. In this column, three of the federally funded special education research institutes report to you, the practitioner, on their progress in areas that will be particularly helpful to you in working with your students. The U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has funded these three research institutes to study specific curricular and instructional interventions that will accelerate the learning of students with disabilities in curricular areas:

CASL (Center on Accelerating Student Learning) focuses on accelerating

reading, math and writing development in grades K-3. The Directors of CASL are Lynn and Doug Fuchs of Vanderbilt University. CASL research sites are also located at Columbia University (Joanna Williams) and the University of Maryland (Steve Graham and Karen Harris).

REACH (Research Institute to Accelerate Content Learning through High Support for Students with Disabilities in Grades 4-8) is examining interventions that reflect high expectations, content and support for students. The Director of REACH is Catherine Cobb Morocco at Education Development Center in Newton, MA. Research partners include the University of Michigan (Annemarie Palincsar and Shirley

Magnusson), the University of Delaware (Ralph Ferretti, Charles MacArthur and Cynthia Okolo), and the University of Puget Sound (John Woodward).

The Institute for Academic Access (IAA) is conducting research to develop instructional methods and materials to provide students with authentic access to the high school general curriculum. The Institute Directors are Don Deshler and Jean Schumaker of the University of Kansas, Lawrence. Research partners include the University of Oregon and school districts in Kansas, California, Washington, and Oregon.

This issue features the IAA.

Making Learning Easier: Connecting New Knowledge to Things Students Already Know

Donald Deshler, Jean Schumaker, Janis Bulgren, Keith Lenz, Jean-Ellen Jantzen, Gary Adams, Douglas Carnine, Bonnie Grossen, Betsy Davis, Janet Marquis

The Institute for Academic Access (IAA) is a collaborative partnership between faculty and staff at the University of Kansas (Jan Bulgren, Don Deshler, Keith Lenz, and Jean Schumaker) and the University of Oregon (Doug Carnine, Betsy Davis, and Bonnie Grossen). The primary goal of the IAA is to determine ways to improve the educational outcomes for adolescents with disabilities by designing instructional methods that take into account the students' unique characteristics and the complex dynamics that are unique to high-school curricula and schools. In order to accomplish this goal, IAA researchers are teaming with classroom teachers to determine ways to restructure courses required for standard high school diplomas so that students with disabilities can be successful. They are:

- Considering the *standards* students must meet;
- Selecting the *critical content* and "big ideas" related to those standards;
- Thinking carefully about course content in light of the *needs of all stu-*

dents in these academically diverse classes;

- Organizing and transforming that content into forms that are "learner friendly" (i.e., *easy to understand and remember*);
- Considering what *processes students must use* to learn the content;
- Showing students *how to use these processes* to learn the content;
- Presenting the content in a way that *involves students* in the learning process;
- Using *specially structured materials* to teach difficult information/skills;
- Setting up *multiple practice opportunities* for students to practice learning the content;
- *Assessing the students' mastery* of the content and attainment of the standards; and
- Providing them with *helpful feedback and further instruction*, as needed, to promote mastery.

During the life of the IAA, several instructional packages will be designed and validated for use in these restruc-

tured courses. The end objective will be to provide educators with a *menu* of validated practices from which they can choose and with which they can build core academic courses that are specially tailored to their students, subject matter, and schools.

Challenges Facing Students with Disabilities in High-School Settings

There are some major trends in education that are making the situation facing high-school students with disabilities challenging. Among these trends are the following:

- The expectation that all learners, including those with disabilities, pass standards-based assessments (Erickson, Ysselydke, Thurlow, & Elliot, 1998);
- The prevailing practice of including adolescents with disabilities in the general education classes (Hock, Schumaker, & Deshler, 1999);
- The growing expectation that students not merely acquire but inde-

