

# RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

## *Disability Policy*

Turnbull, H. R., Turnbull, A. P., Wehmeyer, M., & Park, J. (2003). A Quality of Life Framework for Special Education Outcomes. *Remedial and Special Education*, 24(2) 271-277.

### BOTTOM LINE

The current accountability system for educators focuses on the assessment of academic outcomes using standardized test. For students with disabilities, measuring academic outcomes, however, is not sufficient. Key legislation on disability (such as the Individual with Disability Education Act) supports accountability not only for the academic outcomes but also for the quality of life outcomes of students with disabilities. This article provides detailed analysis on IDEA and other legislation's mandated accountability for quality of life outcomes.

# Beach Center on Disability

Making a Sustainable Difference in Quality of Life



## TIPS

- Professionals: To ensure students' with disabilities receive access to the general education curriculum, make certain that you include the following IDEA mandated components in your students' IEPs.
  - ◆ The students present level of performance and how his/her disability affects it.
  - ◆ A description of how the student will access and progress in the general curriculum, given his or her needs resulting from the disability.
  - ◆ A list of supplementary aides and services that will be provided to the student so that he/she can access, progress and participate with students who do not have disabilities.
  
- To support IDEA's mandate for quality of life outcomes, professionals, researchers or policy makers should perform the following:
  - ◆ All IFSPs and IEPs should include both family and student quality of life goals.
  - ◆ Researchers should incorporate quality of life measures and interventions in their research.
  - ◆ There needs to be reconciliation between the emphasis on academic subjects and the accomplishment of quality of life outcomes that are tied to IDEA's four goals. This reconciliation must occur at the policy level in order for educators to be able to allocate their time and attention to include quality of life outcomes in the curriculum.

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## KEY FINDINGS

- The Individual with Disability Education Act (IDEA) not only legislates that students with disabilities receive greater access to the general education curriculum but that these students' education results in non-academic outcomes, as well.
- The four non-academic outcomes for individual with disabilities mandated in IDEA include the following: a) equality of opportunity, b) full participation, c) independent living, and d) economic self-sufficiency.
- The IDEA outcome of "equality of opportunity" prohibits discrimination solely based on a person's disability and legislates the provision of reasonable accommodations so that a person with disabilities can participate in many different types of programs.

- The IDEA outcome of “full participation” mandates individuals with disabilities’ full integration into society, including access to the general curriculum and placement in least restrictive education environment.
- The IDEA outcome of “independent living” refers to the right of a person with a disability or the person’s representation to have a say in what happens in the person’s life.
- The IDEA outcome of “economic self-sufficiency” refers to the individual with disabilities’ right to participate in the following activities: income-producing work, or unpaid work that contributes to the household or community.
- Three other laws also support the four non-academic outcomes of IDEA: (1) The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, (2) The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, (3) the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DDABRA) of 2000.
- These non-academic outcomes also closely relate to the study of individual with disabilities’ quality of life.
- Schalock identifies eight domains in quality of life study: (a) Emotional Well-Being, (b) Interpersonal Relationships, (c) Material Well-Being, (d) Personal Development, (e) Physical Well- Being, (f) Self-Determination, (h) Social Inclusion, and (i) Rights.
- The four outcomes of IDEA are closely aligned to the following quality of life domains: (a) Equality of opportunity is linked to quality of life domain of rights; (b) Full Participation is linked to the quality of life domain of social inclusion and interpersonal relations; (c) Independent living is linked to quality of life self-determination domain; (d) Economic self-sufficiency is linked to material well-being, physical well-being, emotional well-being and personal development quality of life domain.

## METHODS

- The article was researched through a combination of a review of the literature and in-depth analysis of disability legislation.

## RELATED PUBLICATIONS

Schalock, R. (2000). Three decades of quality of life: Mental retardation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In M.L. Wehmeyer & J.R. Patton (Eds.), *Mental Retardation in the year 2000* (pp. 335-355), Austin, TX: PRO-ED.

Turnbull, H.R. & Stowe, M.J. (2001). A taxonomy for organizing the core concepts according to their underlying principals. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, 12, 144-176.

Wehmeyer, M.L. & Schalock, R.L. (2001). Self-determination and quality of life: Implications for special education services and supports. *Focus on Exceptional Children*, 33(8), 1-16.

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### Beach Center on Disability

The University of Kansas  
1200 Sunnyside Avenue, 3136 Haworth Hall  
Lawrence, Kansas 66045  
Telephone: 785.864.7600 TTY: 785.864.3434  
[www.beachcenter.org](http://www.beachcenter.org)  
[beachcenter@ku.edu](mailto:beachcenter@ku.edu)

