

Curriculum, Assessment, and Accountability in Day Treatment and Residential Schools

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ABSTRACT: *This study determined school-level curricular, assessment, and accountability policies and practices in private and public day treatment and residential schools for elementary-age children with emotional or behavioral disorders (E/BD). A national random sample of 271 (56.45%) principals and 229 (47.70%) teachers responded to a mail survey. No significant differences existed between teacher and principal reports of school-level curricular, assessment, and accountability policies. However, several statistically significant differences existed in school policies for schools that served students from a single district and those that served students from across a single state or more than one state. Across all schools, teachers and principals indicated a prescribed school curriculum was common. District and state standards and student individualized education programs (IEPs) were used to receive information on curriculum of local schools. Approximately two-thirds of all of the schools administered district and state assessments and most schools used their state's accommodations guidelines. Assessment results were frequently reported to parents, teachers, and used to adjust instruction and curriculum. Implications and suggestions for future research are provided.*

The demand for increased accountability for schools and school districts has been among the most visible and controversial of the educational reforms undertaken in the United States. Improved student performance on assessments and other important indicators has been at the forefront of national educational policy for well over a decade, and the recent reauthorization of Title I of the Elemen-

tary and Secondary Education Act (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001) has moved the accountability requirements for schools to an even higher level. The dominant feature of today's educational accountability is the emphasis on assessing student performance (Fuhrman, 1999; Heubert & Hauser, 1999; Linn, 2000; Olson, Jones, & Bond, 2001; Thurlow, Nelson, Teelucksingh, & Ysseldyke, 2000) and the logic that it is necessary

to test students' knowledge to know whether they have met the content standards.

New federal and state accountability systems also focus directly on schools. School-level data, most notably student achievement, are collected and reported publicly statewide, typically on school report cards. In the new systems, performance data are used to sanction or reward individual schools as well as target improvement efforts at the school level (Fuhrman, 1999; Linn, 2000; Olson et al., 2001). Consequences range from public reporting of performance on key indicators to rewards and sanctions. These reports are an almost universal feature of accountability systems.

When students are held directly accountable, it is most typically at the high school level and based on completion of a specific curriculum or set of courses (Heubert & Hauser, 1999). All but four states prescribe the minimum number of courses that high school students must take in specific academic areas (Guy, Shin, Lee, & Thurlow, 1999). In 1998, most states required students to complete 4 years of English, 3 years of social studies, and 2 years each of mathematics and science to receive a high school diploma. In addition, in a recent national survey, Olson et al. (2001) indicated that 27 states have policies that require students to pass some sort of assessment to receive a high school diploma, though only 19 states currently administer the exams. Increasingly, these "exit" tests focus on 10th grade standards or higher (American Federation of Teachers, 1999).

For the students who receive special education services, the new demands for public accountability for student achievement represent a major shift from an accountability model that was grounded in individually referenced individualized education program (IEP) goals and the school system's compliance with procedures (Thurlow et al., 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 2002a). Accountability for individual student performance or educational outcomes has been individualized and based on the IEP review process, as opposed to being benchmarked against a standard and publicly reported in the aggregate (McDonnell, McLaughlin, & Morison, 1997; McLaughlin & Thurlow, 2003; Wolf & Hassel, 2001). The 1997 amendments to the Individuals

With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) clearly established new policies regarding assessment, accountability, and the expectation that every student with a disability will be held to the same high expectations as their typical peers. Among these new IDEA provisions are the requirements that students with disabilities be provided access to the general education curriculum, participate in state and local assessments with appropriate accommodations, and have their results reported in the same manner as other students. The intent of these new provisions is to promote higher expectations and better results for all students with disabilities.

One group of students who may challenge the implementation of these new policies are students with emotional or behavioral disorders (E/BD) who are being educated in separate day treatment and residential schools. Students with E/BD often have difficulty remaining part of the mainstream educational environment (Kauffman, 2001; Muscott, 1997) and are placed in exclusionary settings, such as day treatment and residential schools, which offer greater behavioral and therapeutic support than the regular public school. For students ages 6 to 21 who are served under IDEA, those with E/BD are more likely to be placed in restrictive settings than youth in any other disability classification (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a). Currently, approximately 77,000 students with E/BD, ages 6 to 21, are educated in these settings (U.S. Department of Education, 2002b).

The ultimate goal for most elementary-age students with E/BD who are placed in day treatment or residential schools is to transition back to their home or public school (Grosenick, George, & George, 1987). Although information is limited, most of these students do transition to a less restrictive setting within traditional schools (Baenen, Glenwick, Stephens, Neuhaus, & Mowrey, 1986; Gagnon & Leone, 2003). For this transition to be successful, the students must have continuous access to curriculum and instruction that is based on general education standards. They must also be afforded the benefits of school improvement strategies and initiatives designed to promote higher achievement. Furthermore, students with E/BD who expect to graduate from high school must be afforded the opportunity to

learn the critical content necessary to pass required coursework and assessments. To ensure that students with E/BD who are being educated outside of mainstream schools do have access to the curriculum, their performance must be assessed, reported, and accounted for within the educational system.

This study investigated current school-level educational policies and practices in private and public day treatment and residential schools for elementary students with E/BD. The results reported in the current study represent one component of a larger national survey of day treatment and residential schools serving students with E/BD that investigated the characteristics of students, teachers, principals, and programs, as well as a variety of school-level policies and practices (see Gagnon, 2002). The results related to school-level curricular policies, assessment, and accountability are discussed in this report. The following five questions are addressed:

1. What are the curricular policies?
2. What are the policies related to assessment of student academic performance (e.g., participation in assessments, assessment accommodations, alternate assessments)?
3. What are the policies related to educational accountability (e.g., primary accountability, reporting assessment results, using assessment results)?
4. Do policies and the percentage of students participating in district or state assessments relate to student and program characteristics?
5. Do reports of school policies relate to respondent roles (i.e., teacher and principal)?

METHODOLOGY

Survey research of teachers and administrators provides an opportunity to identify salient features of school-level educational policy (Epstein, Foley, & Cullinan, 1992). The study described here included one survey for teachers and another for principals.

INSTRUMENTATION

The first author developed the two surveys for the study based on a review of literature, consideration of current educational reform, discussion

with experts in the field of special education, and separate teacher and principal focus groups. There were five sections on both teacher and principal surveys: (a) teacher or administrator and student characteristics; (b) characteristics of the educational program; (c) curricular policies; (d) accountability; and (e) entrance and exit policies. However, the current description focuses on the curricular policies and accountability sections of the survey (see Gagnon & Leone, 2003 for other results).

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE SURVEY

Possible threats to reliability were addressed through the standardization of the survey format, directions, and questions for each of the two groups (i.e., teachers, principals; Fink, 1995). Prior to data entry, returned surveys were used to develop a codebook. Decisions were noted regarding missing data, handwritten messages on the surveys, and conflicting answers (Litwin, 1995). Additional data entry issues and decisions were made by the primary investigator and entered into the codebook, as necessary, during data entry. Reliability checks were conducted on data entered for 30% of teacher and 30% of principal surveys. Agreement was calculated by dividing the number of agreements by the number of agreements and disagreements $\times 100$. Reliability for teacher surveys was 99.87% and 99.86% for principals.

To increase the validity of the survey instrument and allow for greater generalizability, an advisory group consisting of leaders in the field of special education reviewed the survey and methodology. In addition, teachers and administrators participated in separate focus groups and commented on six issues: (a) layout of the survey; (b) ease of directions; (c) clarity of questions, (d) consistency between research questions and survey categories and questions; (e) importance of the categories and specific questions; and (f) recommendations for additional categories or questions (Krueger, 1998). The surveys were modified based on feedback.

SURVEY SAMPLING PROCEDURES

The study included a random sample of private and public day treatment and residential schools

for students with E/BD that serve students in any of Grades 1 to 6. Because there was no comprehensive national list of schools that met the criteria for inclusion in the study, a three-stage process was followed to identify the sample. In the first stage, a database was obtained from Market Data Retrieval (2002). However, no national list existed that specifically identified the schools of interest. Thus, the company provided a more comprehensive list that included public and private day treatment and residential schools serving elementary-age students with E/BD. Specifically, the schools were grouped into six segments. Each segment included a variation of school classification (e.g., public, private non-Catholic, Catholic, state school, county school), and school type (e.g., special education school, alternative school, alternative program).

In the second stage, a decision was made on an appropriate sample size and a random sample of schools was selected. Although it was anticipated that the database would include many schools that were not of interest in the study, the total 6,110 schools were used to calculate the number of schools necessary for a .05 margin of error at the 95% confidence level ($n = 362$). A random sample of 20 schools was called to identify an approximate percentage of schools that fit the criteria for inclusion in the study. Assistants who made the calls followed a specific written protocol. Schools needed to satisfy three requirements: (a) served as a day treatment or residential school for children with E/BD, (b) was not solely a hospital program, and (c) provided educational services for any of Grades 1 to 6. The calls revealed that approximately 10% of the schools qualified for the study. Thus, with a goal of surveying approximately 400 schools, a random sample of 4,000 schools was selected from the database.

In the third stage, a phone call was made to each of the 4,000 schools to verify that each school was a day treatment and/or residential school program for children with E/BD. During the process of calling schools, 20 schools refused to provide any information. Another 104 schools had gone out of business, moved, and/or the phone number had been disconnected. An additional 12 schools had only partial phone numbers in the database. These 136 schools were deleted

from the database. Based on the remaining 3,864 phone interviews, 636 schools were identified as fitting the criteria for inclusion in the study.

Following administration of the survey, 156 schools responded that they had been inaccurately classified as a day treatment or residential school program for children with emotional or behavioral disorders. Thus, the final sample consisted of 480 schools.

The sample of 480 included schools from 48 states and the District of Columbia. All census bureau regions were represented, with 25.4% ($n = 122$) from the Northeast, 26.3% ($n = 26$) from the Midwest, 29.6% ($n = 142$) from the South, and 18.8% ($n = 90$) from the West. The total sample also consisted of 61 (12.7%) alternative education schools, 15 (3.1%) alternative education programs, and 404 (84.2%) special education schools. Most schools in the sample were included in the combined category of county, state, private non-Catholic, and Catholic schools ($n = 326$, 67.9%). An additional 154 (32.1%) were public schools. The schools were primarily located in suburban areas ($n = 193$, 40.7%), followed by urban areas ($n = 160$, 33.8%) and rural locales ($n = 121$, 25.5%). In addition, 67.6% ($n = 324$) of the schools had enrollments between 1 to 99 students.

PARTICIPANT SELECTION

Because of possible variations in perceptions of school policy according to job title (Hollenbeck, Tindal, & Almond, 1998), the principal and one randomly selected teacher were surveyed from each randomly selected school. The principal was defined as the person responsible for supervision of the educational program. Although the actual title varied among facilities, the survey cover letter requested that the person responsible for the education program complete the survey. Each principal was directed to randomly pick a teacher to complete the survey. The cover letter in each principal packet included specific directions on the method for randomly choosing a teacher to complete the survey (i.e., select the first name in an alphabetized list of teachers who instruct students in any of Grades 1 to 6).

DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected between January 2001 and March 2002. An introductory letter was mailed to each principal informing him or her that a survey would be arriving and the purpose of the survey. Two weeks later, each principal received a packet that included five items: (a) cover letter to the principal; (b) principal survey; (c) teacher survey; (d) \$2.00 bill attached to each survey; and (e) two self-addressed, stamped envelopes. Three weeks after the first mailing, a second mailing occurred. Packets and cover letters were adjusted in instances where a response was obtained by the teacher only, principal only, or neither the teacher nor principal. At the time of the second mailing, an assistant began contacting nonrespondents by phone to urge them to complete the survey. These calls continued until the deadline for accepting responses. A third mailing occurred 3 weeks after the second mailing.

RESPONDENTS AND NONRESPONDENTS

A total of 271 (56.45%) principal surveys and 229 (47.7%) teacher surveys were returned representing 284 schools. Of these, 216 (44.58% of schools in the sample) schools had both a teacher and principal survey returned. In instances where a teacher responded that the program was not a day treatment or residential educational program serving students with E/BD in any of Grades 1 to 6, but the principal identified that the school was such a program ($n = 4$), both surveys were included.

Respondent and nonrespondent comparisons were completed using school-level data from the Market Data Retrieval (2002) database. Teachers and principals from each school were surveyed separately. Thus, three types of respondent and nonrespondent chi-square comparisons were conducted: (a) schools with only teacher respondents versus schools with only principal respondents, and schools with neither teacher nor principal respondents; (b) schools with only principal respondents versus schools with only teacher respondents, and schools with neither teacher nor principal respondents; and (c) schools with both teacher and principal respondents versus schools with neither teacher nor principal respondents.

With a single exception, statistically significant differences did not exist between respondents

and nonrespondents. Only school type (e.g., alternative education schools, alternative education programs, special education schools) was significant ($\chi^2 = 26.179, 2, p < .01$) when comparing proportions of schools in which both teacher and principal surveys were returned and schools in which no surveys were returned. One hundred and ninety-seven special education schools had surveys returned by the teacher and principal. Fewer alternative education schools ($n = 12$) and alternative education programs ($n = 7$) had both surveys returned. With this exception, the sample appeared to be nationally representative of day treatment and residential elementary schools for students with E/BD.

DATA ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics and chi-square analysis were used to answer each of the five research questions. Specifically, descriptive statistics (e.g., frequency, percentage) were used to summarize responses concerning school-level curricular, assessment, and accountability policies. Chi-square analysis was conducted to identify if statistically significant independence or dependence in proportions existed and to answer two research questions: (a) do policies and percentage of students participating in district or state assessments relate to student and program characteristics?; and (b) do reports of school policies relate to respondent roles? All analyses were conducted separately for teacher and principal responses. In cases where more than 20% of the cells had an expected value less than 5 or the minimum expected frequency was less than 1, rows or columns were collapsed (Norusis, 1997). To maintain a balance between controlling for Type I and Type II errors, a common alpha level of .01 was set.

RESULTS

Chi-square analyses were calculated to compare teacher and principal responses for the 216 schools in which both principals and teachers returned surveys. Responses were compared for questions relating to school-level curricular policy (e.g., existence of prescribed curriculum, basis of prescribed curriculum, method of school text and curriculum materials selection); assessment (e.g., existence of policy regarding accommodations on

district and state assessments, basis of the accommodations policy); and accountability (e.g., primary accountability). No statistically significant differences in responses were noted. Additional results are organized under five general categories: (a) curricular policies; (b) primary accountability and participation in assessments; (c) alternate assessments and assessment accommodations; (d) reporting and using assessment results; and (e) school policies as they relate to student and program characteristics.

CURRICULAR POLICIES

Teachers and principals were asked to respond to several questions to address the research question, "What are the curricular policies?" (see Table 1). Most teachers ($n = 176$, 77.9%) and principals ($n = 219$, 83.9%) responded that their school followed a prescribed curriculum. In addition, many teachers ($n = 67$, 39.9%) in schools using a prescribed curriculum indicated that their school followed a state curriculum, whereas 27.4% ($n = 46$) of teachers reported that their school based its curriculum on the curriculum of the local district. Also, 27.4% ($n = 46$) noted their school had developed its own curriculum. Principal responses concerning the basis of the prescribed curriculum were relatively evenly distributed for school-developed curriculum ($n = 59$, 23.3%), curriculum of the local district ($n = 65$, 25.7%), and curriculum of the state ($n = 59$, 23.3%).

Teachers and principals were also asked to identify school policies for obtaining information on local school curriculum and the selection process of school texts and other curriculum materials. Teachers and principals reported the primary method for obtaining information about local school curriculum was through district and state standards ($n = 178$ and $n = 218$, respectively) followed by individual student IEPs ($n = 168$ and $n = 207$, respectively). Also, when asked how their school's text and curriculum materials were selected, teachers ($n = 54$, 28.0%) and principals ($n = 61$, 26.8%) reported that decisions were made by a multidisciplinary team. Remaining teachers and principal responses were spread across several approaches (see Table 1).

PRIMARY ACCOUNTABILITY AND PARTICIPATION IN ASSESSMENTS

More than half of all teachers ($n = 131$, 59.0%) and two-thirds of the principals ($n = 167$, 66.3%) reported using assessments required by the local district and/or state as the basis for their school's accountability. But, about 30% ($n = 66$) of teachers and almost one fourth of all principals ($n = 56$, 22.2%) reported that it was their school policy to permit individual teachers to select the assessment methods of student performance that would be used for accountability.

Teachers and principals who identified that school accountability policies were based on local district and/or state assessment were also asked to identify the percentage of students who participated in assessments. Most teachers ($n = 81$, 58.7%) and principals ($n = 119$, 64.7%) reported that 81% or more of students in their schools participated in district and state assessments. However, 22 (15.9%) teachers and 17 (9.2%) principals reported fewer than 20% participating.

Based on the principal responses, student participation in district and state assessments differed significantly among schools serving different student populations (e.g., students from within district, across a single state, or from more than one state); ($\chi^2 = 13.668$, 3, $p < .01$). Schools in which 61% or more of students participated in district and state assessments commonly served students from within a single district ($n = 47$, 26.7%) or from within their state ($n = 52$, 29.5%).

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENTS AND ASSESSMENT ACCOMODATIONS

Teachers and principals who identified district or state assessments as their primary accountability for student learning were also questioned on school policies concerning alternate assessments and assessment accommodations. Both groups of respondents indicated that state standardized norm-referenced or criterion-referenced assessments were used at their school for alternate assessments (teachers $n = 57$; principals $n = 76$). The next most common response was teacher-made assessments ($n = 47$ and $n = 57$, respectively). In addition, 18 teachers and 17 principals reported no alternate assessments were available at their school.

TABLE 1
School-Level Curricular Policies

<i>Policy</i>	<i>Teacher Response No. (%)</i>	<i>Principal Response No. (%)</i>
School Follows a Prescribed Curriculum		
No	50 (22.1)	42 (16.1)
Yes	176 (77.9)	219 (83.9)
Description of Prescribed Curriculum		
School-developed	46 (27.4)	59 (23.3)
Entire school follows a prescribed curriculum of the local district	46 (27.4)	65 (25.7)
Entire school follows a prescribed curriculum of the state	67 (39.9)	59 (23.3)
Other	9 (5.4)	29 (11.5)
Method for School Staff to Receive Information on Curriculum of Local Schools*		
Student IEPs	168	207
District and state standards	178	218
Personal communication with district teachers and principals	106	155
Teachers attend district staff development	90	127
Local education agency liaison	55	94
School curriculum specialist	60	79
Principal provides information	134	132
Staff do not receive information on curriculum of local schools	15	10
Other	5	11
Method of Selecting School's Text and Other Curriculum Materials		
Based on local districts	28 (14.5)	50 (21.9)
Based on student IEPs	25 (13.0)	30 (13.2)
Based on individual teacher judgment	38 (19.7)	24 (10.5)
Based on group teachers' judgment	31 (16.1)	39 (17.1)
Based on administrator or administrative board judgment	7 (3.6)	9 (3.9)
Based on multidisciplinary team	54 (28.0)	61 (26.8)
Other	10 (5.2)	15 (6.6)
Policy for Communicating With Public or Home School Regarding Educational Needs of Students With Disabilities*		
Exchange of student records	198	222
Specific procedures for inviting public or home school teachers to student IEP meetings	121	182
Personal communication with district teachers and principals	125	169
Meeting with local education agency liaison	92	152
Other	9	22

Note: * = Where respondents were asked to mark *All That Apply* to a question, no percentages are provided.

Most teachers ($n = 117$, 86%) and principals ($n = 157$, 84.4%) reported that their school had a policy for assessment accommodations. When asked to identify the basis of their school's accommodation policy, 66.7% ($n = 74$) of teachers and 79.2% ($n = 118$) of principals indicated that their school used state accommodations guidelines.

REPORTING AND USING ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Teachers and principals who indicated that local, district, state, or school-developed assessments were used in their schools were asked how assessment results were reported. The most frequent responses were: (a) reporting assessment results to parents or guardians ($n = 113$ and $n = 169$, respectively); (b) reports to teachers ($n = 113$ and $n = 157$, respectively); and (c) results maintained in each student's file ($n = 115$ and $n = 162$, respectively). A relatively large number of teachers and principals ($n = 83$ and $n = 133$, respectively) also noted that reports were made to each student's home district and fewer noted aggregate assessment results were reported to the state ($n = 55$ and $n = 97$, respectively). Teachers and principals also responded that assessment results were used to adjust instruction and curriculum ($n = 109$ and $n = 157$, respectively) and identify areas in which school performance was unacceptable and where improvement was needed ($n = 101$ and $n = 139$, respectively). Approximately one-fourth of teachers ($n = 23$) and principals ($n = 24$) reported that assessment results were not used.

SCHOOL POLICIES ACROSS STUDENT AND PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

Teacher and principal reports of school-level curricular, assessment, accountability policies, and student participation in district and state assessments were compared separately across student characteristics (i.e., whether students were served from within the district in which the facility is located, within the state, or other) and six program characteristics: (a) primary philosophical orientation (i.e., biophysical, psychodynamic, psychoeducational, behavioral, sociological, ecological, no primary philosophical orientation); (b) person(s) responsible for setting school policies (i.e., administrative board, principal, group of teachers and

the principal, multidisciplinary team, other); (c) balance between education and treatment/behavior management; (d) length of school day; (e) total daily academic instruction; and (f) school days in academic year.

Principal responses were also compared using the school policies and six student characteristics: (a) population served; (b) length of enrollment in the residential program; (c) length of enrollment in the day treatment program; (d) previous or current involvement in foster care; (e) current involvement in juvenile justice because of identification as in need of supervision; and (f) current involvement in juvenile justice because of delinquency. In situations where Chi-square expected cell size was less than 5, certain comparisons are not reported. For example, comparisons of communication with public or home schools on student admission and student characteristics omitted three variables with insufficient expected cell size: (a) previous or current involvement in foster care, (b) current involvement in juvenile justice because of identification as in need of supervision, and (c) current involvement in juvenile justice because of delinquency.

Curricular Policies Across Student and Program Characteristics. Based on teacher reports, a comparison of school policies for selecting text and curriculum materials and the student population served was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 18.084$, 6, $p < .01$; see Table 2). Schools that served students from within the district in which the school was located tended to base text and curriculum selection on local districts. Schools that served students from within a single state commonly relied on teacher judgment ($n = 30$, 17.4%). Similarly, schools that served students from the "Other" category (e.g., state in which the program is located and other states, more than one district, more than one county) also relied on teacher judgment ($n = 21$), but more frequently used multidisciplinary teams ($n = 29$). Teacher reports of school-level policies were also compared across the six program characteristics and no significant differences were noted.

Principal responses were compared across the school policies and the same six program characteristics used for teacher responses. Daily academic instructional time and existence of a schoolwide policy identifying a prescribed cur-

TABLE 2
Teachers: Basis of Selecting School's Texts and Curriculum Materials and Student Characteristics

Student Characteristics	No. (%)					Significance	
	Local District	Student IEP	Teacher Judgment	Multi-disciplinary Team	df	χ^2	p
Population Served					6	18.084	.006
Students from school district where school is located	16 (9.3)	7 (4.1)	17 (9.9)	10 (5.8)			
Students from state where school is located	5 (2.9)	8 (4.7)	30 (17.4)	29 (16.9)			
Other	6 (3.5)	9 (5.2)	21 (12.2)	14 (8.1)			

Note: Other = Students from both the state where school is located and other states or other configurations.

riculum was the only statistically significant comparison ($\chi^2 = 10.371$, 2, $p < .01$; see Table 3). Based on 252 principal responses, schools with a prescribed curriculum commonly had four ($n = 80$, 31.7%) or five ($n = 107$, 42.5%) hours of academic instructional time daily. Schools that did not have a prescribed curriculum, most commonly had four hours ($n = 25$, 9.9%).

Principal responses were also compared using the school policies and six student characteristics. Several comparisons yielded significance. A comparison of the basis for prescribed curriculum (e.g., school developed, local district, state, other) and student population served was statistically significant (see Table 4; $\chi^2 = 30.221$, 9, $p < .01$). In schools where students were primarily from local districts, the local district curriculum was commonly the basis for the prescribed curriculum ($n = 33$, 16.0%). Additionally when students were enrolled from across the state in which the facility was located, use of a prescribed curriculum of the state and a school-developed curriculum were equally common ($n = 28$, 13.6%).

Based on principal responses, there was a significant relation between how a school's text and other curriculum materials were selected and two student characteristics (see Table 5). The students served and proportion of specific curricular selection policies was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 18.487$, 6, $p < .01$). In schools where students were enrolled from the local district, a relatively large number of respondents ($n = 24$, 12.2%) said that their school relied on the local district policies as the basis for selecting texts and curriculum materials. In contrast, schools that enrolled students from across a single state commonly ($n = 34$, 17.3%) relied on the judgment of the school's teachers to select the text and other curriculum materials.

The length of enrollment in a day treatment program was also statistically significant when comparing the basis of text and curriculum material selection ($\chi^2 = 17.262$, 6, $p < .01$). In schools where the average length of enrollment was 2 years, teacher judgment ($n = 25$, 14.3%) was most commonly the basis of selecting texts and curricular materials. However, for day treatment schools with average enrollment lengths of 3 years or more, a multidisciplinary team was

most frequently the basis for text and curriculum materials selection ($n = 28$, 16.0%).

Participation in Assessment and Student and Program Characteristics Teacher reports of student participation in district and state assessments were compared to student population served and the six program characteristics previously noted. Participation in district and state assessments and number of days in an academic year was the sole comparison identified as statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 7.824$, 1, $p < .01$; see Table 6). A relatively large number of teachers ($n = 46$, 34.1%) reported their school had 161 to 180 days in an academic year and 61% or more students participating in the assessments. Those schools with 181 days or more in an academic year were evenly distributed, with 36 (26.7%) having 0% to 60% of students participating and 37 (27.4%) having 61% or more students participating.

Based on principal reports of student participation in district and state assessments, no significance was noted for the six program characteristics. However, significance existed for a single student characteristic. Student participation in district and state assessments was statistically significant for different student populations (e.g., students from within district, within state, within state and other states; $\chi^2 = 13.668$, 3, $p < .01$; see Table 7). The greatest number of schools ($n = 20$, 11.4%) with less than 60% of students participating enrolled students from within the state in which the facility is located. Schools in which 61% or more of students participate in district and state assessments served students from within a single district ($n = 47$, 26.7%) or from within one state ($n = 52$, 29.5%).

DISCUSSION

The findings in the current study further our knowledge of school-level policies in day treatment and residential schools for children with E/BD and provide a national picture regarding curriculum, assessment, and accountability within these settings. Results also reveal several issues that must be addressed to ensure that students with E/BD who are being educated within these separate settings receive the quality education to which they are entitled and which is necessary for their eventual reintegration into public or home

TABLE 3
Principals: Prescribed School Curriculum and Program Characteristics

<i>Program Characteristics</i>	<i>No. (%)</i>		<i>df</i>	<i>Significance</i>	
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>		χ^2	<i>p</i>
Responsible for Setting School Policies			3	.372	.946
An administrative board	39 (17.7)	10 (4.5)			
Principal	22 (10.0)	5 (2.3)			
Group of teachers and the principal	26 (11.8)	5 (2.3)			
Multidisciplinary team	94 (42.7)	19 (8.6)			
Primary Philosophical Orientation			2	.469	.791
Psychoeducational	61 (26.3)	11 (4.7)			
Behavioral	110 (47.4)	21 (9.1)			
None	23 (9.9)	6 (2.6)			
Emphasis on Education vs. Treatment			1	.919	.338
First behavior management, then education	34 (14.8)	9 (3.9)			
A balance between education, therapy, behavior management	159 (69.1)	28 (12.2)			
Length of School Day			1	1.958	.162
5 hr	57 (22.4)	15 (5.9)			
6 hr or greater	157 (61.8)	25 (9.8)			
Daily Academic Instructional Time			2	10.371	.006
3 hr	23 (9.1)	7 (2.8)			
4 hr	80 (31.7)	25 (9.9)			
5 hr or greater	107 (42.5)	10 (4.0)			
Academic Time With Mental Health Professional Per Week			5	5.364	.373
None	14 (5.5)	6 (2.3)			
1 – 30 min	43 (16.8)	11 (4.3)			
31 – 60 min	73 (28.5)	9 (3.5)			
61 – 90 min	41 (16.0)	7 (2.7)			
91 – 120 min	21 (8.2)	5 (2.0)			
121 min or more	22 (8.6)	4 (1.6)			

schools. Five general areas of school-level policies are discussed: (a) school policies based on respondent roles; (b) curricular policies; (c) primary accountability and participation in assessments; (d) alternate assessments and assessment accommodations; and (e) reporting and using assessment results. Limitations to the current study are also addressed.

SCHOOL POLICIES BASED ON RESPONDENT ROLES

The consistency of responses across teachers and principals, coupled with the random selection of

participants, supports that the school-level policies and practices reported throughout the current study are an accurate representation of day treatment and residential school policies and practices in the United States.

CURRICULAR POLICIES

Students commonly return to public or home school settings following enrollment in day treatment and residential schools (Gagnon & Leone, 2003). Upon return, students are met with an increasingly rigorous curriculum, emphasis on high

TABLE 4
Principals: Description of Prescribed Curriculum and Student Characteristics

Student Characteristics	No. (%)			Significance			
	School Developed Curriculum	Local District Curriculum	State Curriculum	Other	df	χ^2	p
Population Served					9	30.221	.000
Students from school district where school is located	8 (3.9)	33 (16.0)	12 (5.8)	7 (3.4)			
Students from state where school is located	28 (13.6)	19 (9.2)	28 (13.6)	14 (6.8)			
Other	23 (11.2)	12 (5.8)	14 (6.8)	8 (3.9)			
Length of Enrollment — Residential					4	11.368	.023
1 year or less	9 (10.3)	9 (10.3)	17 (19.5)	--			
2 years	14 (16.1)	9 (10.3)	10 (11.5)	--			
3 years or more	9 (10.3)	9 (10.3)	1 (1.1)	--			
Length of Enrollment — Day Treatment					4	11.368	.110
1 year or less	9 (5.1)	7 (4.0)	15 (8.5)	8 (4.5)			
2 years	19 (10.7)	16 (9.0)	15 (8.5)	9 (5.1)			
3 years or more	22 (12.4)	32 (18.1)	17 (9.6)	8 (4.5)			
Previous or Current Involvement in Foster Care					6	6.410	.379
10% or less	20 (9.7)	29 (14.1)	14 (6.8)	9 (4.4)			
11% – 25%	13 (6.3)	11 (5.3)	17 (8.3)	6 (2.9)			
26% – 100%	25 (12.1)	24 (11.7)	26 (12.6)	12 (5.8)			
Current Involvement in Juvenile Justice — In Need of Supervision					6	3.684	.719
10% or less	36 (18.2)	45 (22.7)	34 (17.2)	17 (8.6)			
11% – 25%	11 (5.6)	7 (3.5)	13 (6.6)	4 (2.0)			
26% – 100%	7 (3.5)	10 (5.1)	10 (5.1)	4 (2.0)			
Current Involvement in Juvenile Justice — Delinquency					6	4.640	.591
10% or less	43 (21.5)	48 (24.0)	40 (20.0)	21 (10.5)			
11% – 25%	7 (3.5)	9 (4.5)	7 (3.5)	2 (1.0)			
26% – 100%	4 (2.0)	5 (2.5)	10 (5.0)	4 (2.0)			

Note: Other = Students from both state where school is located and other states or other configurations.

TABLE 5
Principals: Basis of Selecting School's Texts and Curriculum Materials and Student Characteristics

Student Characteristics	No. (%)				Significance	
	Local District	Student IEP	Teacher Judgment	Multi-disciplinary Team	df	χ^2 p
Population Served					6	18.487 .005
Students from school district where school is located	24 (12.2)	7 (3.6)	15 (7.7)	13 (6.6)		
Students from state where school is located	12 (6.1)	14 (7.1)	34 (17.3)	26 (13.3)		
Other	11 (5.6)	8 (4.1)	11 (5.6)	21 (10.7)		
Length of Enrollment — Residential					6	13.528 .035
1 year or less	11 (12.1)	3 (3.3)	16 (17.6)	5 (5.5)		
2 years	6 (6.6)	7 (7.7)	13 (14.3)	13 (14.3)		
3 years or more	1 (1.1)	3 (3.3)	4 (4.4)	4 (4.4)		
Length of Enrollment — Day Treatment					6	17.262 .008
1 year or less	16 (9.1)	2 (1.1)	15 (8.6)	9 (5.1)		
2 years	12 (6.9)	11 (6.3)	25 (14.3)	16 (9.1)		
3 years or more	17 (9.7)	12 (6.9)	12 (6.9)	28 (16.0)		
Previous or Current Involvement in Foster Care					6	6.096 .412
10% or less	16 (8.1)	13 (6.6)	15 (7.6)	27 (13.6)		
11% – 25%	12 (6.1)	6 (3.0)	18 (9.1)	13 (6.6)		
26% – 100%	21 (10.6)	10 (5.1)	26 (13.1)	21 (10.6)		

Note: Other = students from both state where school is located and other states or other configurations.

TABLE 6
Teachers: Student Participation in District or State Assessment and Program Characteristics

Program Characteristics	No. (%)		df	Significance	
	0%–60%	61%–100%		χ^2	p
Responsible for Setting School Policies			4	5.420	.247
An administrative board	9 (6.7)	20 (14.8)			
Principal	9 (6.7)	7 (5.2)			
Group of teachers and the principal	6 (4.4)	6 (4.4)			
Multidisciplinary team	27 (20.0)	40 (29.6)			
Other	2 (1.5)	9 (6.7)			
Length of School Day			1	1.855	.173
5 hr	12 (8.9)	12 (8.9)			
6 hr or greater	39 (28.9)	72 (53.3)			
Daily Academic Instructional Time			1	.651	.420
4 hr	20 (17.5)	36 (31.6)			
5 hr or greater	25 (21.9)	33 (28.9)			
Number of School Days in Academic Year			1	7.824	.005
161 – 180 days	16 (11.9)	46 (34.1)			
181 days or more	36 (26.7)	37 (27.4)			

TABLE 7
Principals: Student Participation in District or State Assessment and Student Characteristics

<i>Student Characteristics</i>	<i>No. (%)</i>			<i>Significance</i>	
	<i>0%–60%</i>	<i>61–100%</i>	<i>df</i>	χ^2	<i>P</i>
Population Served			3	13.668	.003
Students from school district where school is located	6 (3.4)	47 (26.7)			
Students from state where school is located	20 (11.4)	52 (29.5)			
Students from both state where school is located and other states	10 (5.7)	9 (5.1)			
Other	7 (4.0)	25 (14.2)			
Length of Enrollment—Residential			2	.806	.668
1 year or less	10 (12.5)	23 (28.8)			
2 years	6 (7.5)	22 (27.5)			
3 years or more	6 (7.5)	13 (16.3)			
Length of Enrollment—Day Treatment			2	5.145	.076
1 year or less	5 (3.2)	27 (17.3)			
2 years	7 (4.5)	47 (30.1)			
3 years or more	20 (12.8)	50 (32.1)			

standards, and increasing graduation requirements (Gagnon, McLaughlin, Rhim, & Davis, 2002). Thus, it is important to link the curriculum and texts within the exclusionary settings to the local district and state. Two topics are discussed concerning curricular policies and the current study: (a) prescribed curriculum; and (b) selection of texts and other curriculum materials.

Prescribed Curriculum. Although teacher and principal reports indicated a prescribed school curriculum was common, approximately one-third of the teachers and one-fourth of the principals responded that their prescribed curriculum was school developed. For those schools, the extent to which this curriculum was linked to local district and state curriculum guidelines is unknown. Concerns with the basis for prescribed curriculum should be viewed in light of a related issue. Teachers and principals also reported district and state standards and student IEPs as primary methods of receiving information on the curriculum of local schools. However, IEPs are not necessarily standards based. Rather, they may reflect the individualized goals and instructional strategies needed by a student with a disability without regard for specific curricula goals and objectives. An IEP is not a curriculum (Nolet & McLaughlin, 2000) nor can an IEP define a scope and sequence or the performance expectations of a general education curriculum. Several principals also reported that staff in their school did not receive information on the curriculum of local schools.

There was a statistically significant difference between schools in terms of population served and the basis of the prescribed curriculum. In schools that enrolled students from local districts, the local district curriculum was most often reported as the basis for the school's prescribed curriculum. In contrast, when students were enrolled from across the state in which the facility was located, schools most often used the prescribed curriculum of the state or a school-developed curriculum.

It is a concern that 25% of the day treatment and residential schools offer a school-developed curriculum that may not be related to the "general education curriculum." If youth enrolled at these schools are to be held accountable for learning specific content at specific levels, then

That most schools have 80% or more of students participating in assessments is a promising and positive finding.

these students are at an educational disadvantage. This is particularly the case for students as they transition back into home schools and districts. Greater collaboration is required between day treatment and residential schools, local school districts, and state departments of education. In addition, "sustained and planned staff development" (Thurlow, Elliott, & Ysseldyke, 1998, p. 156) should be a key requirement in these separate schools to ensure that all teachers understand the state standards and the general education curriculum and assessments.

Selecting Texts and Curriculum Materials. Most teachers and principals reported use of multidisciplinary teams to select texts and other curriculum materials. However, it is unclear from the current study who comprises these teams. Many schools also relied on individual or group teacher judgment to select school texts and curriculum materials. Textbooks and other curriculum materials should also be aligned with a state's standards and curriculum. Based on teacher and principal responses, how a school selected texts and curriculum materials was, not surprisingly, significantly related to the student population served. Schools that enrolled students from across a single state faced the challenge of selecting texts and curriculum materials that would be appropriate in a variety of districts, each of which might have a different text for math or science or a different reading series. Yet, the issues surrounding selection of curriculum materials further punctuates the need for teachers, administrators, and multidisciplinary team members in the separate schools to receive professional development focused on standards, curriculum, and assessments. Such information and training is necessary to assure that day treatment and residential schools' texts and curriculum materials are aligned with district and state standards and assessments.

PRIMARY ACCOUNTABILITY AND PARTICIPATION IN ASSESSMENTS

Most of the schools indicated they were using state and local assessments as their accountability

mechanism and also reported that about 80% of their students participated in these assessments. Further, about one-third of all schools reported fewer than 80% of their students participating in state or local assessments. Schools reporting fewer than 60% of their students participating in assessments enrolled students from across the state in which the school was located or served students from more than one state. That most schools have 80% or more of students participating in assessments is a promising and positive finding. However, several questions remain unanswered: (a) to what degree do assessments match the IEP instructional and curricular goals of students?; (b) were students receiving instruction in the general education curriculum?; (c) were students tested in appropriate curricular domains?; and (d) did individual students receive accommodations during instruction and did they also receive these accommodations on the assessment? As noted earlier, almost all principals noted the IEP as a source of receiving information on the curriculum of local schools and there is no suggestion that any relationship exists between student IEP goals and assessments.

Approximately one-third of the teachers and a fifth of the principals identified teacher-selected assessments as the primary accountability for student learning. In addition to relying on teacher assessments, about 11% of both teachers and principals noted that their school primarily used school-developed assessments.

These findings suggest that a number of day treatment and residential schools may have little or no link to district and state accountability systems. Although there is a need to ensure that day treatment and residential schools administer district and state assessments and full student participation, it is also clear that schools enrolling students from multiple states may have unique needs concerning which assessments to administer. As such, greater collaboration and communication with home districts regarding accountability demands is necessary.

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENTS AND ASSESSMENT ACCOMMODATIONS

In the current study, teachers and principals representing 31 states indicated that state standardized norm-referenced or criterion-referenced

assessments were available to students as alternate assessments. However, state policies regarding alternate assessments are still evolving and a number of different methods are being used. As policies develop and are implemented, continued research is necessary to identify the link between the school policies and practice and state policies. Furthermore, information is needed regarding the basis for deciding which students receive alternate assessments.

Accommodations. Although over 80% of teachers and principals reported that their school had an assessment accommodation policy, approximately 20% of day treatment and residential school staff reported that their schools offered no assessment accommodations. These findings are disconcerting because the IDEA and Sec. 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act establish the right to accommodations. Teachers and principals must be provided with comprehensive training to ensure they are aware of student rights concerning assessment accommodations.

REPORTING AND USING ASSESSMENT RESULTS

In addition to simply administering state assessments, both the IDEA and Title 1 of the No Child Left Behind Act require that assessment results of students with disabilities be reported separately at school and district levels and that separate performance benchmarks be set for this subgroup of students. According to both teachers and principals, student assessment results were commonly reported to parents or guardians. Less encouraging is that fewer teachers and principals noted that assessment results were reported to each student's home district or state. Reporting of assessment results is a key element of accountability. The results provide educators, parents, and policymakers with the information necessary to see that students with and without disabilities are benefiting from their educational program (Ysseldyke & Bielinski, 2002).

The most common use of students' assessment results was to adjust instruction or curriculum and identify areas where school performance was acceptable and where improvement was needed. Some teachers and principals also responded that their schools used assessment data to make decisions regarding students'

return to their public or home schools. How they used the assessment data to make these decisions, which criteria were used, and how criteria were used to make these decisions is not clear, particularly given the nature of many of the state assessments.

LIMITATIONS

Two limitations exist with the current study: (a) low response rate; and (b) differences in the characteristics of respondents versus nonrespondents. Researchers (Weisberg, Krosnick, & Bowen, 1989) acknowledge that 50% is an acceptable response rate for mail surveys. However, the more commonly accepted return rate is 70%. The 56.45% response rate from principals satisfies the less rigorous standard. However, the 44.58% of teacher surveys returned only approaches this criterion. Additionally, as noted, a single significant difference existed for respondents and nonrespondents. As such, some caution is necessary when generalizing the results.

IMPLICATIONS

FUTURE RESEARCH

The current study provides an initial view into school-level curriculum, assessment, and accommodations policies in day treatment and residential schools for elementary-age youth with E/BD. The results of this study indicate a need for more research concerning how the policies related to increased accountability are being implemented in special schools. For example, as indicated in this study, many of the day treatment and residential schools developed their own school curriculum and assessments. Future research is needed to identify the reasons for this choice and to determine the degree to which these curricula and assessments are aligned with district or state prescribed curricula. Additionally, inquiries should be made into the extent to which school-developed assessments are referenced to district and state accountability.

In addition, day treatment and residential schools that serve students from across a state or more than one state differ from schools serving only students from a single district in their approach to school-level curriculum, assessment,

and accountability policies. More in-depth analyses are needed to identify the potentially competing demands on schools from district and state accountability requirements and how individual schools broker these demands. Through such research, it may be possible to identify specific processes to help schools provide access to general education standards, curriculum, and assessments and support the effective reintegration of youth into their home district or school.

Future research should triangulate the results of the survey using a combination of direct classroom observation, teacher and administrator interviews, and reviews of school-level policy documents and student records. For example, a review of school-level policy documents on assessment accommodations could be compared to district and state policy documents. Further, school documents could be compared to accommodations listed on student IEPs, and those observed in class and during district and state assessments. Research is needed to identify

The survey results indicate that many students with E/BD in day treatment and residential schools are exposed to a curriculum that has little link with the general education curriculum.

trends within schools that rely on teacher decisions for choosing curriculum materials, selection of assessments, and development of alternate assessments. Additionally, comparisons should be made between schools that rely on teacher judgment and those that rely on principal decision, district policies, or state policies.

In light of teacher and principal responses regarding accountability for student learning, more information is needed on the standards required for state Department of Education accreditation of day treatment and residential schools and the extent to which schools are actually held accountable for these standards. Specifically in question are school-level policies for assessment accommodations, alternate assessments, and the manner in which data are reported and used.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Significant implications exist for a number of school-level curriculum, assessment, and account-

ability policies in day treatment and residential schools:

- School curriculum, curriculum materials, and texts should be aligned with districts and states. For successful reintegration, students must have access to a rigorous curriculum that is comparable to peers in their public or home school. To ensure that this occurs, comprehensive and ongoing professional development should be provided to all principals of day treatment and residential schools. This is critical to ensure that they understand state policies regarding standards, curriculum, and assessments.
- During the accreditation or approval processes for day treatment and residential schools, state education agencies should ensure that the school is providing all students with a curriculum that is aligned with their respective content and performance standards.
- All students should participate in district and state assessments with appropriate accommodations or participate in an alternate assessment that is recognized by the state department of education.
- District and state assessment results should be reported at the district and state levels, by each student's home school, and by the day treatment or residential school the child is attending.
- Schools that serve students from multiple districts and/or states should increase their collaboration with districts and states to assure that curriculum and accountability measures are consistent with students' public and home schools.
- District and state assessment data should be used for their intended purposes, which is school accountability. These assessment results should not be used to decide if a student with E/BD can be reintegrated into his or her public or home school, unless they have specifically been validated for these purposes.
- Ongoing and comprehensive staff development should be conducted for teachers and administrators in the separate schools to assure adequate understanding of district and state curriculum, assessment, and accountability policies.

CONCLUSIONS

We know through previous research (U.S. Department of Education, 2000; Wagner, 1995) that

academic outcomes for youth with E/BD are often negative. These students typically have high dropout rates and difficulty maintaining employment (Carson, Sitlington, & Frank, 1995; Malmgren, Edgar, & Neel, 1998). They may also be at risk for involvement with the juvenile or adult justice systems (Doren, Bullis, and Benz, 1996; Silver et al., 1992; U.S. Department of Education, 1994). Although information is limited, students who attend day treatment or residential schools are also at high risk for incarceration as adults (Davis & Cooper, 1998). Day treatment and residential schools may provide a valuable and necessary service to these students and their families.

The survey results indicate that many students with E/BD in day treatment and residential schools are exposed to a curriculum that has little link with the general education curriculum. This finding supports previous research conducted by Sands, Adams, and Stout (1995) and Steinberg and Knitzer (1992). Increased emphasis on providing access to a rigorous curriculum and participation in assessment and accountability will create incentives to improve the curriculum provided to students in day treatment and residential schools. Additionally, participation in district and state assessment, as well as reporting and use of assessment results are crucial to assuring that youth in these schools are not forgotten within the school improvement process.

Day treatment and residential schools must not be separated from the general education curriculum policies and district and state assessments. Also, these schools must be accountable for their students' academic outcomes. Local districts and state departments of education must share responsibility for including day treatment and residential schools in their school improvement efforts, holding them accountable for improving student learning, and providing the necessary training and support to assure students in these settings receive a quality education.

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