

Meeting the Special Education Professional Development Needs of Elementary Teachers

Abstract

This presentation will report the data from surveys that questioned general education teachers' confidence working with students with special learning needs from two elementary schools in New Jersey and Hawaii. The data results are based on standards proposed by The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC). The literature on inclusive schooling and professional development is the essence of this research. Effectively including students in general education requires general education teachers to have the basic knowledge about special education and the skills to teach students with disabilities. The number of students with disabilities included in general education classrooms is increasing (O'Shea, Stoddard, & O'Shea, 2000). The U.S. Department of Education (2006) reports that about 96% of students with disabilities are included for at least part of the school day and approximately 37.5% spend most of the school day in the general education classroom. However, many general educators feel ill prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities in their classrooms (Cook, 2002; Kamens, Loprete, and Slostad, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Teachers' confidence to teach is one of the key characteristics that predicts teaching ability; those who believe they can positively impact student achievement are more likely to be more effective in meeting students' needs (Eggen & Kauchak, 2006; Poulou, 2007).

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