First Annual Performance Report
for
The North Carolina State Improvement Grant:
Improving North Carolina's System of Education for Exceptional Children
Grant Award # H323A000012
May 31, 2001

I. See Cover Sheet

II. Executive Summary

The purpose of the North Carolina State Improvement Project is to establish and implement, in alignment with the comprehensive system of personnel development, program support
services to significantly improve the performance and success of students with disabilities in North Carolina. Below, a summary of the progress made during the first year of the project on each of the four major goals of the project is provided.

1. Improve Basic Skills Performance for Students with Disabilities

Significant progress in Goal 1, as measured by progress toward attaining the objectives associated with this goal, has been made. A Network of ten Research-Based Training and Demonstration Centers has been established. During this first year of the project a major effort has been made to develop the Centers to an acceptable level of readiness to provide training and demonstration beginning in the Fall of 2001. Each the Best Practice Centers has (1) set up an office and communications procedures, (2) established classroom locations for demonstration and training (3) identified a Center coordinator, (4) identified and provided training for Center staff, (5) provided preliminary/pilot instruction for students enrolled in the Center's classrooms, (6) identified the instructional model or approach which will be used for training and demonstration, (7) developed a plan for their second year of operation, and (8) have participated in an end of year "readiness review and needs assessment."

Extensive staff development has been provided to the staff of the Centers focusing on development of an understanding, and the associated teaching skills, of the research-derived principles of instruction for teaching reading and writing, mathematics, and in the use of effective positive behavioral supports in classroom. As a result of the needs assessment approximately 50% of the Centers demonstrate the abilities to begin training and demonstration outreach activities at the start of the second school year. It is expected that the remainder of the Centers will be ready to engage in outreach training and demonstration later in the 2001-2002 school year. Eight Centers are focusing on improving reading and writing skills of students with disabilities. Four of these Centers have adopted the Wilson Reading System instructional procedures and materials. Two Centers have adopted the Language! instructional procedures and materials. One Center has adopted the SRA Corrective and Mastery Reading instructional programs, and one has adopted and developed an approach using the LIPS and Lindamood-Bell approaches to teaching reading and writing. The mathematics Center is focusing on improving algebra performance of students with disabilities and has adopted the Algebraic Thinking instructional program which relies heavily on multisensory instruction and learning.

2. Increase The Percentage of Qualified Teachers of Students with Disabilities

Progress has been made in three strategy areas; (a) establishing a statewide teacher recruitment program to increase the number of teachers being trained in special education; (b) planning for the redesign of the course and competency requirements for teacher certification with an emphasis on assuring that, to be qualified, teachers must demonstrate specific competencies in using multisensory instructional procedures for teaching and remediating basic skills; and (c) expansion and improvement of a statewide, higher education partnership providing e-Learning courses and resources to support individuals working toward licensure in special education.

3. Increase Graduation Rates and Decrease Drop-Out Rates of Students with Disabilities

Although this is a separate goal area, the strategies implemented under goals 1 and 2 are also the strategies that will impact on Goal 3. As indicated above, substantial progress has been made in goals 1 and 2

programming. The major additional strategy and set of activities within goal 3 is to develop a data collection, analysis and reporting system that provides progress information across years. Although much of these data are currently available, analyses and reporting these data in any formal accountability process needs to be developed. Work has begun in planning the data collection and reporting system. More emphasis and effort will be directed toward development of the comprehensive data collection system during the remainder of year one and during the second year of the project.

4. Improve Parent Satisfaction With, And Support of, School Services.

During this first year, a Parent Collaboration, Training & Support Center has been established to (1) improve collaboration between parents and schools, (2) address the Significant parent information needs created by the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and (3) involve parents of children with disabilities in all aspects of the state's system change and implementation activities. Communications and contracting procedures to establish the Parent Collaboration, Training & Support Center slowed the work activities pertaining to this goal. However, the Center has been quite active during the spring of 2001 and the planning and development work will be completed by the end of the first year of the project. The Center will begin pilot training efforts during the fall, 2001.

The project is still in the process of developing a comprehensive data collection system for collecting parent satisfaction and participation data. The subcontract agreement with the Evaluation, Assessment, & Policy (EvAP) Center, has just recently been approved and the project expects to field-test the parent evaluation and accountability system during the second year of the project.

III. Project Status

This progress report will report on the first ten months of the project through April 30, 2001. Below, each of the project's goals and the objective associated with the goal are presented followed by (1) the year 1 strategies associated with each project objective, as presented in the approved plan; (b) a discussion of the Year I project activities; (c) accomplishments and outcomes associated with the objective; and (d) a statement indicating the extent to which the objective has been attained.

Goal 1: Improve Basic Skills Performance of Students with Disabilities

Objective 1.1: Improve teacher's instructional skills in reading, writing, and mathematics through the use of intensive and explicit multi-sensory teaching strategies.

Objective 1.1 - First Year Project Strategies in Approved Application

*Strat*egy *1*. Establish Demonstration and Training Centers and provide orientation training for centers' staff. Center planning and selection of specific instructional programs reflecting best practices as indicated by research
Strategy 2. Train Best Practice Centers' Staff
Strategy 3. Develop and Identify Staff Training Materials and Resources
Strategy 4. Pilot Training Procedures, Resources, and Materials With Best Practice Centers' Teachers

Objective 1.1 - Description of Project Activities

During the Fall of 2000, NC SIP established a network of ten Best Practices Centers located strategically across the state of North Carolina. The Centers were established with two primary purposes:

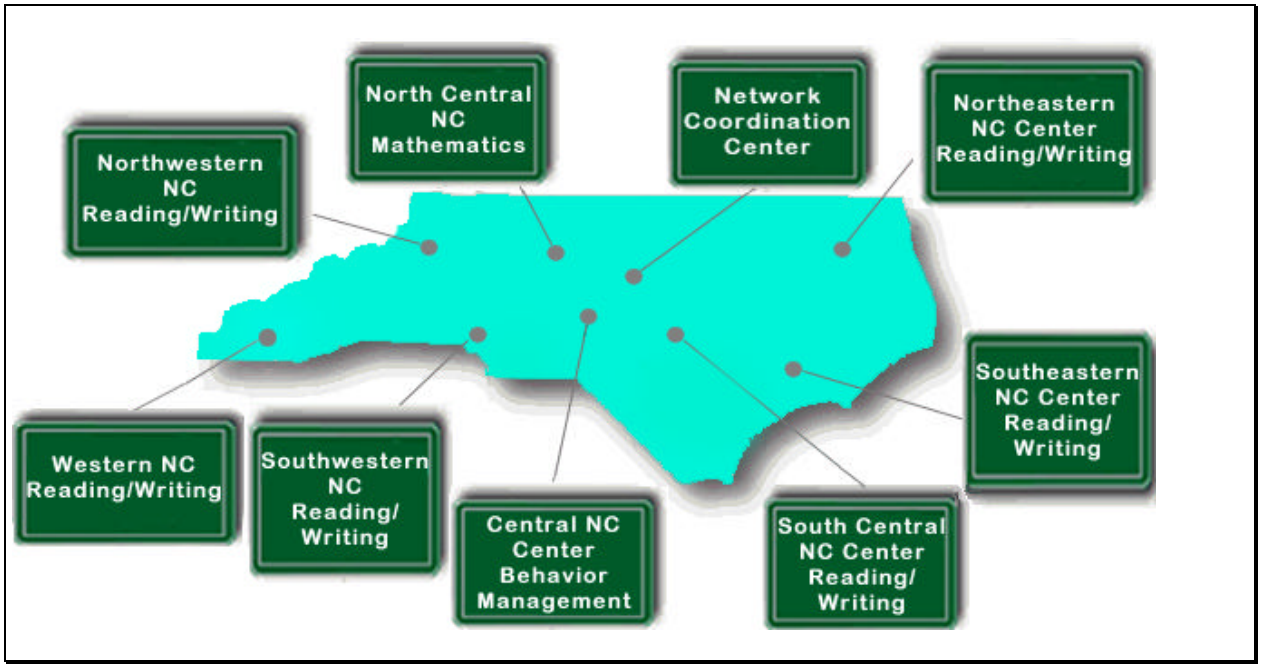
a. To provide a teaching and learning demonstration model for the delivery of selected best practices--based on research in the field--within the context of public school instructional programs. This model will be used to demonstrate the daily operation of best practices in improving basic skills performance of students with disabilities.
b. To develop teacher preparation procedures, resources, and materials (i) for teaching reading, writing, and mathematics and (ii) for the use of positive behavioral supports in classrooms.

During the development of the application and plan for the state improvement grant, the Department of Public Instruction sent out a request to all school districts in North Carolina, inviting the submission of a plan to host a Best Practice Center. As a result, eight Best Practice Centers have been established to focus on improving teaching of reading and writing, one Center for improving teaching of mathematics and one center for improving the use of positive behavioral supports in classrooms. It should be noted that two Best Practice Centers have been established within the Western North Carolina region are referred to together as the Western North Carolina Best Practice Center.

The criteria for selection of the Centers included: (1) evidence that the school district has demonstrated the potential to implement an effective Best Practice Center in the area of reading and writing, mathematics, or use of positive behavioral supports, (2) evidence that the district has a basic understanding of the research and best practices reported in the literature, (3) evidence that the district has the ability to provide an effective demonstration and training center, and (4) location of the district to assure a comprehensive and regional approach to provide demonstration and training across the state. The names and location of the Centers are shown on the map below.

As a result of the selection process, ten school districts were chosen to host North Carolina State Improvement Project Best Practice Centers. The names and location of the Centers are shown on the following map (Two Centers have been established in Western North Carolina).

The Best Practices Teacher Preparation Network of Centers



The summary table below shows the location of the center, its focus, and the agencies involved in the implementation of each center. A more detailed description of each center can be found in Appendix A.

Summary of the Best Practices Teacher Preparation Centers

Center Location	Focus of Center	Lead Agencies
Northeastern NC Northhampton County Schools	Reading and Writing: • Explicit code-based reading instruction • Reading Comprehension Strategies • Writing Strategies	• Northhampton County Schools • Elizabeth City State University • East Carolina University

Eastern NC Onslow County Schools	Reading and Writing: • Explicit code-based reading instruction • Language! Program • Reading Comprehension Strategies • Writing Strategies	• Onslow County Schools • UNC Wilmington
South Central NC Cumberland County Schools	Reading and Writing: • Explicit code-based reading instruction • Reading Comprehension Strategies • Writing Strategies	• Cumberland County Schools • Fayetteville State Univ. • Pembroke State University
Central NC Durham Public Schools	Positive Behavioral Supports: • Functional Assessment • Behavioral Support Planning • Intervention Strategies	• Durham Public Schools • North Carolina Central University
North Central NC Wake County Schools	Reading and Writing: • Explicit code-based reading instruction • SRA Reading Mastery and Corrective Reading • Reading Comprehension Strategies • Writing Strategies	• Wake County Schools • NC State University • UNC - Chapel Hill
South Central NC Montgomery County Schools	Reading and Writing: • Explicit code-based reading instruction • LIPS Reading Program • Reading Comprehension Strategies • Writing Strategies	• Montgomery County Schools • NC A & T University • UNC-Charlotte
West Central NC Rockingham County Sc	Mathematics Instruction: • Multi-Sensory • Explicit - Direct Instruction • Hands-on Experienced-Based	• Rockingham County Schools • UNC at Greensboro
Western NC Transylvania County Schools and Haywood County Schools	Reading and Writing Instruction: • Explicit code-based reading instruction • Reading Comprehension Strategies • Writing Strategies	• Transylvania and Haywood County Schools • Western Carolina University
Northwestern NC Watauga County Schools	Reading and Writing Instruction: • Explicit code-based reading instruction • Wilson Reading System • Reading Comprehension Strategies • Writing Strategies	• Watauga County Schools • Appalachian State University

During the first ten months of operation of the North Carolina State Improvement Project, contracts were negotiated with each of the ten school districts. Center Coordinators were identified, the location of the Center's offices and classrooms were identified, the Center's purposes and goals were established, the students to be served by the center were identified, the instructional model to be developed was identified and described, and the personnel responsible for training and demonstration for the Center were identified.

One strategy that was added to the plans for improving instruction for students with disabilities has been the identification and establishment of additional Best Practice Centers. Using state and other federal funds, eight additional Best Practice Centers will be added to the Network focusing on early reading instruction (phonemic awareness). Second year plans include orientation and training for these projects in the instructional principles with a major emphasis on teaching phonemic awareness to young children with disabilities. These Centers will focus primarily on early childhood intervention and prevention of reading difficulties and are located in the following school districts: Asheville City, Brunswick County, Cabarrus County, Catawba County, Edgecombe County, Granville County, Hickory City and Wake County school districts.

In addition to the establishing the early childhood Best Practice Centers, the Exceptional Children Division has also decided to fund four more Positive Behavioral Support Regional Centers. The Durham Public Schools was selected as the site for the State Improvement Project Center devoted to demonstration and staff development to foster the use of positive behavioral supports in schools across the state. The additional Best Practice Centers have been established in the Gaston County Public Schools, Watauga County Public Schools, Brunswick County Public Schools and Roanoke Rapids City Schools. These centers will work closely with the Durham Center to establish a statewide network of demonstration and staff development centers focusing specifically of the use of positive behavioral supports. These programs have just begun their efforts to identify research based positive interventions and to develop the demonstration programs.

Gaston County's goals for the Behavioral Support Center Network are two-fold. The first goal is to serve the students of the county in the most successful and innovative ways possible. This is being achieved by refining the programs at Warlick Alternative School. These expanded services include transitional services for returning to their home schools, on site mental health counseling, and the Gaston Alternatives Program. The Gaston Alternatives Program will serve as an afternoon high school program and day reporting program for suspended students and will offer the occupational course of study classes and work program components. The second goal is to provide hands on training on effective behavior management skills, social skills, and concepts such as character education, peer mediation, and class meetings to a wide range of teachers and school staff, both in and outside of Gaston County. This goal will be met in conjunction with outreach services provided by University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

Watauga County Public Schools, in conjunction with Appalachian State University, has begun implementing several of the Positive Behavioral Support Center goals which have been established for the State Improvement Grant. A screening procedure to identify emergent risk factors in children has been developed and implemented. They have also developed and implemented a school-wide social skills curriculum, "The Missing Curriculum: Teaching Social Competencies in the Classroom".

Watauga County's efforts include the use of inter-agency and parental participation in educational/behavioral planning for students with special behavioral or emotional needs. In addition they are coordinating programs to more efficiently disseminate in-service training to the county's teachers, parents, and ASU students.

Brunswick County Public Schools plans to implement programs that support the belief that well trained teachers who are provided staff development, support, and exposure to best practices for behavior modification will produce the desired outcomes in a student population. They have established a collaboration with the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, which will allow for development of comprehensive pre-service training. A major objective of the center is to develop and implement a follow-up component to ensure theory has been transformed into practice.

Roanoke Rapids City School district is actively involved with a System of Care Community Collaborative. The coordinator currently transfers information and participates in every in-take meeting with parents of students in the county's Akers Alternative Learning Program. The Learning program provides intensive behavioral management alternative classrooms at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The Behavioral Support Center will address the ever-growing need for information, support, and training for regular and special education school-based staff. Ultimately, the Center will assist with assessments and interventions aimed at reducing referrals to Akers.

The University of North Carolina Network Coordination Center

As proposed in the SIG application, a Network Coordination Center was established at the University of North Carolina during the first year of the project. An office for the UNC Network Coordination Center has been established in Chapel Hill at the University of North Carolina General Administration office complex, and David Lillie has been hired to coordinate the center's activities. The center has contracted with two reading specialists, Dr. Rebecca Felton and Ms. Linda Miller to provide training and technical assistance for the eight Best Practice Centers focusing on improving teaching of reading. During the first year, the Network Coordination Center has developed a plan for staff development, has conducted a series of five sequential staff development workshops, and has implemented a system of needs assessment and evaluation strategies with the Centers.

The Network Coordination Center has also worked with the Center for Evaluation, Assessment, and Policy Connections (EVAP) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to establish a preliminary set of evaluation

plans and procedures for the Best Practice Centers. A contract has been negotiated and agreed upon with EVAP to assist with evaluation activities for the State Improvement Project and will be executed before the end of the first year activities.

BEST PRACTICE CENTERS: READING AND WRITING

During the first year of the NC SIP, the eight Centers focusing on improving reading and writing instruction have participated in a year long staff development program designed to expand each staff member's basic foundation of knowledge and skills in reading instruction, gleaned from the extensive research literature on teaching students with severe reading difficulties to read. A primary goal of the staff development program was to provide the centers' staff with the information and knowledge needed to select a specific set of reading instructional approaches which incorporate the instructional principles supported by research on teaching students with severe reading difficulties who are also identified as having a disability.

A series of five workshops were provided for the Best Practice Centers Staff. The purpose of the workshops was to provide comprehensive training representing on a research to practice continuum. Reading instruction research, primarily funded by the OSEPs and the Institute of Mental Health, was identified and the instructional principles derived from these research efforts were summarized. These principles were then used as a basis of translating the research finding into classroom instructional strategies and procedures that were presented in detail. To assure development of instructional skills, all participants were required to complete "workshop assignments" in their Center's classrooms with their students. Staff from each of the eight Best Practice Centers focusing on improving reading and writing participated in the series of five workshops with a total of approximately 35 participants attending each of the workshops. Agendas for each of the workshops can be found in Appendix B.

The staff development content and procedures have been built on two primary considerations:

1. The reading and writing performance of students with disabilities enrolled in the regular curriculum is dismal. In North Carolina, students with disabilities participating in the state's accountability testing program score at less than one-half the reading level of the total population of students taking the tests. In this high-stakes testing atmosphere the consequences of this low, and unacceptable, level of performance are striking. Students not performing at or above grade level may be: (a) held back at grade level, (b) denied a diploma, or perhaps worse, (c) a shift from a diploma curriculum track to a non-diploma curriculum track.

2. There is clear research evidence that the vast majority of students with disabilities can learn to read on grade level IF appropriate, research validated instruction and learning techniques are effectively employed.

The NC SIP divided teacher training leading instruction into two phases: (1) Reading Instruction Foundation Training, and (2) Training in the Use of a Specific Proven and Tested Teaching Procedures and Materials Model or Approach. Staff members, including leadership staff, of all eight of the reading and writing centers have completed Phase 1 training as of the writing of this report. Several, but not all, of the eight reading and writing center staff have participated in Phase 2 training.

Phase 1. Reading Instruction Foundation Training

The NC SIP staff development resource program adopted a staff development program*; Teaching Students with Persistent Reading Problems.* Rebecca Felton and David Lillie have developed the content and media in this program in partnership with the Guilford County, North Carolina Schools. The staff development program has been designed to introduce teachers to the knowledge, skills and procedures needed to provide effective instruction for students with persistent reading difficulties. An extensive body of instructional research involving students with reading difficulties supports the teaching principles, techniques and strategies presented in the program.

The program provides teachers with a solid foundation of knowledge and skills needed to deliver effective instruction for students, who, after several years of instruction and learning experiences in reading, still have difficulty reading fluently and are significantly behind their age peers. The program consists of twelve units and provides a solid foundation on which to build an effective reading instruction program.

The content and teaching techniques presented in the program are derived directly from the extensive research-based literature available on teaching students with severe reading difficulties. The program reflects the findings of

two recent National reports addressing the instructional needs of students with reading problems, *Teaching Children to Read*, a report of the National Reading Panel, and *Preventing Reading Problems of Young Children*, a report sponsored by the National Reading Council of the National Academy of Sciences.

Teaching Students with Persistent Reading Problems, is designed to be used as a self-directed learning program and a primary training resource in support of staff development programs for practicing teachers or as a supplemental program for pre-service teacher education courses. It provides a prerequisite solid foundation of knowledge and skills to begin using research-proven teaching strategies and to make long range decisions about the use of instructional procedures and materials. The staff development program, *Teaching Students with Persistent Reading Problems*, is organized into twelve units as listed below.

1 Introduction
2 Learning to Read, A National Problem
3 The Major Principles of Reading Instruction
4 The Structure of Language - What Teachers Need to Know
5 Assessment of Basic Reading Skills
6 Teaching Phonemic Awareness
7 Teaching Letter-Sound Associations
8 Teaching Word Identification: Decoding and Sight Words
9 Teaching Spelling
10 Developing Automaticity and Fluency
11 Teaching Reading Comprehension
12 Selecting and Implementing an Effective Reading Program

Content from all the units, except Teaching Reading Comprehension, was addressed across the five staff development workshops provided by NC SIP for the teaching and training staff of the reading and writing centers. Staff in teaching reading comprehension will occur during the second year of the project.

Unit 2 presents an overview of the increasing scope of the reading problem in the United States. The research literature indicates that a significant percentage of students with reading difficulties are identified as having a learning disability and/or dyslexia. Units 3 and 4 focus on basic principles to guide instruction and what teachers need to know about the structure of the English language in order to deliver effective instruction in reading. Students' current reading abilities must be assessed to plan effective instruction. In Unit 5 information is provided about reading skills assessment and teachers will be asked to practice using assessment tools which are necessary for planning instruction.

In Units 6 through 8, an overview of explicit instructional techniques will be provided for teaching phonemic awareness, letter-sound associations, and word identification. Unit 9 addresses teaching spelling and presents several learning strategies that have been demonstrated to improve spelling abilities.

The ultimate goal of word identification and decoding instruction is the immediate, facile translation of a printed word into its spoken equivalent (Suzanne Carreker, Teaching Reading in Birsh, J.R., Multisensory Teaching of Basic Language Skills, 1999, Baltimore: Brookes Publishing). To this end, Unit 10 presents teaching and learning techniques for developing automaticity and fluency. Fluent and automatic word identification permits the student to concentrate on the comprehension of what is being read, which is addressed in Unit 11.

The final instructional unit addresses the selection and implementation of a comprehensive reading program, which incorporates the features discussed throughout this program. In addition to the basic foundation knowledge and skill developed using this program, all teachers (including learning disability, reading and language specialists) who work with students with persistent reading difficulties should have the background knowledge and skills to effectively use one or more carefully selected sets of procedures and materials. However, it is not the intent of this program to teach how to effectively use a specific set of materials or procedures. Currently, there are a number of well-designed, comprehensive programs that focus on procedures and materials for teaching students with reading problems that incorporate the instructional principles derived from the research-based literature. In Unit 12, information about four specific reading programs is provided for the staff development participants consideration:

- The Hill Methodology
- Language!

- SRA Corrective Reading
- The Wilson Reading System

These programs have been included based on the following criteria:

1. Designed to Teach Reading to Students with Persistent Reading Problems
Each of these approaches has been specifically designed to facilitate substantial growth in reading skills of students who, after one or more years of reading instruction, are significantly behind their classmates in reading abilities.

2. Evidence of Effectiveness
Each of these approaches has reported evaluation information supporting the use of the model. There is a great deal of variation, however, across the models in the amount and type of evaluation information reported.

3. Use Over Time
Each of these programs has been used successfully in a variety of settings and over a number of years.

It is important to note that these four programs are presented as examples of programs that meet the above criteria and do not comprise the only programs available that may meet these criteria. In addition to specific information on materials and approaches, the final unit will also provide information and guidance concerning effective implementation of reading instruction within schools and systems. Topics include:

- Student Selection and Effective Grouping for Instruction
- Teacher Training
- Allocation of Sufficient Instructional Time
- On-going Instructional Support for Teachers
- Continuity of Instruction Across Grades and Schools
- Administrative Support Necessary for Success

Objective 1.1.- Accomplishments and Outcomes

Four related evaluation strategies were employed to determine the impact and outcomes of the staff development efforts on the knowledge and skills of the participants and on the developmental progress of the centers; (1) Participants perceptions of the effectiveness of the training, (2) Before and after training self-evaluations, (3) Evaluation of participants classroom work products and assignments, and (4) an evaluation of each Center's readiness to provide staff development in their region of North Carolina. Each of these are discussed briefly below.

The UNC Network Coordination Center with the assistance of the project evaluator, developed a rating scale to be used by participants entitled, *SIP Staff Development Evaluation*. The instrument, which can be found in Appendix C, was used to measure the training participants perceptions of the effectiveness of the training they received. Table 1 presents the average participant ratings across the eight items rated using the form.

Table 1
Review and Summary of SIP Staff Development Evaluations
Using a four point rating scale (4 = Strongly agree, 3 = Agree, 2 = Disagree, and 1 = Strongly Agree) the average ratings across the eight items ranged from 3.3 to 3.6.

STATEMENT	TOTAL SC	AVERAGE SCO
1) The principles of instruction for students with disabilities derived from research on reading.	83	3.6
2) How to use research-based principles of reading instruction in planning reading programs for students.	80	3.5
3) The structure of the English language	78	3.4
4) How to effectively teach English language structure to students with disabilities	75	3.3

5) The necessary components to assess individual students' reading abilities	81	3.5
6) How to use this information in developing and conducting individual assessments.	77	3.3
7) Strategies for teaching phonemic awareness	79	3.4
8) How to effectively teach students who need phonemic awareness.	79	3.4

When asked what was most useful, the most common response was that the review of the reading programs, and instruction, were the most helpful aspects of the training. Many also felt that learning how to properly assess the students was of great benefit. A few also cited the CD ROM as quite useful, as well as hearing from other Centers and participants directly about their programs and how they have set about to achieve their goals.

Few participants had questions, or areas that needed clarification. A majority of those that did, however, seemed to be most concerned with what the expectations of the program are for both teachers and students. They wanted a more clearly defined set of goals and expectations, particularly as required by the SIG. Overall, the reviews were quite positive and constructive in nature.

A second form, entitled, *NC SIP Teacher Performance Profile*, (found in Appendix C), was designed to measure the training participants perceptions of their competency level across 14 performance competencies. The performance competencies reflect the desired outcomes for teachers who participated in the *Research to Practice Foundations for Teaching Reading to Students with Persistent Reading Problems* training content and procedures previously developed by Dr. Rebecca Felton and Dr. David Lillie in partnership with the Guilford County Schools. Twenty-one participants representing staff from seven of the eight Best Practice Centers independently completed the before and after training self-evaluations at the end of the series of five workshops. Staff members from the eighth center were unable to attend the last workshop because of classroom schedule conflicts and their self-evaluation will be retrieved during the last two weeks in May.

The *NC SIP Teacher Performance Profile* was also used by the projects reading specialists, Dr. Rebecca Felton and Ms. Linda Miller to evaluate the quality of the participants work assignments. The training tasks participants were required to complete are included in the *Research to Practice Foundations for Teaching Reading to Students with Persistent Reading Problems* training program. The tasks were assigned at the end of each unit in the training program and were designed to provide follow through practice of the desired skills imbedded in the program competencies. Most of the tasks included interactions with identified students with severe reading problems. The series of required tasks can be found in Chart 1.

Table 2, following, presents a summary of the participants before and after training self evaluation ratings across each of the competencies addressed in the training. The results of the evaluations of the quality of the participants work assignment products, as a proxy for observed behaviors, are also included in the Table 2.

A six point rating scale was used in the performance profile on a continuum from Novice, Intermediate and Expert with 1 representing the least competent (Novice) and 6 the most competent (Expert). As can be seen in Table 2, participants perceptions of their knowledge and skill competencies in teaching students with disabilities to read using principles derived from research findings improved across all ten competencies. The highest self-ratings gains from before training to after training were reported for competencies 1 (2.05 gain); 5 (1.8 gain); and 3 (1.7 gain). The lowest self-rating gains were reported for competencies 9 (.74 gain); 5 (1.25 gain); and 7 (1.32 gain)

Table 2
Evaluation of the Impact of the Series of NC SIP Workshops on Participants Competencies in Teaching Reading

Workshop Series Target Competencies	Before Self Rating	After Self Rating	Task Perfor-mance Rating*

1. Summarize the instructional content and principles supported by the reading research on students with persistent reading problems including students identified as dyslexic.	2.45	4.5	5.1
2. Demonstrate a basic level of understanding of the structure of the English language.	2.95	4.55	3.6
3. Conduct an effective reading skills assessment for individual students with serious reading problems.	3.2	4.9	**
4. Demonstrate effective ability to plan, using assessment results, and teach phonemic awareness to a group of students.	3.35	4.75	**
5. Demonstrate effective ability to plan (using assessment results) to teach Letter-Sound Association skills to a student, and/or group of students.	2.95	4.75	**
5a. Demonstrate effective ability to teach Letter-Sound Association skills to a student, and/or group of students.	3.55	4.8	**
6. Demonstrate effective ability to plan (using assessment results) to teach Word Identification skills to a student and/or group of students.	3.25	4.6	**
6a. Demonstrate effective ability to teach Word Identification skills to a student and/or a group of students	3.25	4.65	**
7. Demonstrate effective ability to plan (using assessment results) to teach spelling to a student and/or group of students	3.1	4.42	**
7a. Demonstrate effective ability to teach spelling to a student and/or group of students.	3.05	4.42	**
8. Demonstrate effective ability to plan (using assessment results) to teach Automaticity and Fluency skills to a student and/or group of students.	2.98	4.34	**
8a. Demonstrate effective ability to teach Automaticity and Fluency skills to a student and/or a group of students.	3.0	4.34	**
9. Demonstrate effective ability to plan (using assessment results) and teach Reading Comprehension skills to a student, and/or group of students.	3.52	4.26	**
10. Demonstrate ability to provide classroom instruction using an identified, research supported, reading program with fidelity to the instructional principles and procedures of the program.	3.36	4.72	***

***** Average rating of the quality of the participants workshop assignment products
****** Data will not be available until assignment is completed and evaluated.
*** To be measured in the Fall, 2001 using classroom observations

A more objective rating of the participants teaching of reading abilities was conducted through a structured review of the products developed in response to the training assignments. The assignments, displayed in Chart 1, were designed to provide the review team with information, products and artifacts which are representative of the application of knowledge and skills developed as a result of the training.

Chart 1
Workshop Learning Tasks: Teaching Reading

Workshop #1 Learning Tasks (Tasks Correlated with Performance Competency 1 and 2)

1. Obtain and read the Summary Report of the National Reading Panel. Summarize the findings in the areas of Phonemic Awareness Instruction, Phonics Instruction, Fluency and Comprehension.

2. Present your summary of the National Reading Panel's report to your school faculty.
3. Take the Knowledge of Language Structure Pre Test. (Administered during the Workshop)
4. Administer the teacher assessment instrument, Knowledge of Language Structure, to the teachers in your school. This can be done during a faculty meeting but be sure the teachers work independently and do not provide them any help with the answers. Gather and keep the assessments, which will be used as baseline data for further school level planning.
5. Read Chapter 2 "Development of Oral Language and Its Relationship to Literacy" by LH Soifer in Multisensory Teaching of Basic Language Skills (J. Birsh, Editor).

Workshop # 2 Learning Tasks (Tasks Correlated with Performance Competency 10)

1. Reading Program Evaluation

1a. As you investigate various reading programs for adoption in your school district, use the following guidelines and then report on each area. If the program you choose does not address all areas, please include a statement of how you will include instruction in the missing components. Overall, does the program meet the broad NICHD recommendations, as summarized in "A Synthesis of Research on Reading from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development", Bonnie Grossen (1997).
Recommendations from the NICHD Study on "How to Teach Reading"

Chart 1 Workshop Learning Tasks: Teaching Reading Continued

Begin teaching phonemic awareness at an early age (kindergarten.)
Teach each sound-spelling correspondence explicitly.
Teach frequent, highly regular sound-spelling relationships systematically.
Show children exactly how to sound out words.
Use connected, decodable text for children to practice the sound-spelling relationships they learn.
Use interesting stories that are read to children to develop language comprehension.

Balance, but don't mix. Children shouldn't be asked to read stories which contain patterns that they have not yet been explicitly taught, but at the same time they need to have other material containing the more complex language read to them, so that they continue their vocabulary development and language development.

2. Is the program a **Multisensory** one? According to Moats: "The term **Multisensory** Structured Language Teaching refers to systematic, sequential, explicit teaching of language structure at all level-phonetics, phonology, sound symbol relationships, syllabication, the organization of English orthography, and the meaningful parts of words. It includes as well the teaching of sentence structure, paragraph and text structure and reading comprehension processes. **Multisensory** means with all senses and modalities-reading, writing, listening and speaking."
3. A comprehensive reading program should have the following components – A) Be based on good research. (Cite) Has the program been included in clinical or research studies? (Please cite), B) Include training in phonological/phonemic awareness (Cite scope and sequence), C) Teach decoding word attack. Sequentially and systematically (Cite scope and sequence), morphology, sight-words-How are these taught? What is the sequence? Are there decodable texts? How many? What time frame instructional sequence do they span? D) Teach spelling – What is the scope and sequence? How is the instruction integrated with the decoding E) Include fluency training – What are the fluency activities? F) Vocabulary Development – What are the vocabulary teaching strategies? Are figurative and idiomatic expressions taught? G) Reading Comprehension – What types of text structure are taught, and in what sequence? H) Writing Composition – How and when is written language started? How is it integrated with the systematic decoding?
4. Additional Questions - 1) Is training and/or mentorship required or recommended for the program? Describe the training, i.e. how many days, cost, follow-up. 2) Is there software? If so, what is covered and how is it integrated with the program? 3) Does the program contain placement tests? If so, what are they, and how are there benchmark assessments to use at various points in the program? If so, what are they? What are the recommendations if a child has completed a sequence, but not mastered it? 5) Costs: per teacher and per student as well as training costs and any required/suggested follow-up.

Workshop #3 Learning Tasks (Tasks Correlated with Performance Competency 4)

1. Review Units 1-6 of the CD ROM (*Teaching Students with Persistent Reading Problems*, Staff Development CD ROM, Guilford County Schools)
2. Using the phonemic awareness portions of student assessment completed for Workshop #2, write at least one IEP goal and at least two objectives for your student in the area of phonemic awareness. Write an instructional plan for achieving this goal and the objectives (the plan should be comprehensive rather than a single lesson for a single day). Include instructional activities and materials. You should use the information in the CD-ROM to help you with this assignment.

Chart 1 Workshop Learning Tasks: Teaching Reading Continued

Workshop # 4 Learning Tasks (Tasks Correlated with Performance Competency 5, 5a, 6, 6a, and 7a)

1. Using the letter-sound association, word identification, and spelling portions of the student assessment completed for workshop # 2, write at least one IEP goal and two objectives for your student in each of these areas. Write an instructional plan for achieving these goals and objectives. Note: Any individual who wishes to be a Foundation level trainer in your district must complete the task assignments in order to be considered. (Timeline: Complete and bring this and all assessment protocols with you to workshop # 5.
2. Be prepared to discuss your center's plans for the Best Practices Demonstration Center (including staff development, parent involvement, Foundation level trainers, center location and staffing, service delivery to students).

Workshop # 5 Learning Tasks (Tasks Correlated with Performance Competency 8 and 8a)

Part 1: Using information on spelling from your student assessment (along with information from other sources such as analyses of the student's writing or classroom spelling tests), write at least one IEP goal and objectives for spelling. Describe your educational plan for achieving this goal and objectives.
Part 2: Do a fluency assessment of oral text reading for a student of your choice (this may be the student you have used for the earlier assessment or a different student). The text should be at the student's instructional or independent reading level.
Include the following information:
1. Description of the student (if different from the one used for other assessment);
2. Description of the text used including the number of words and the level of the text (e.g., if decodable text, give level such as 2.1 WRS or J&J Reader 18; if non-decodable, give approximate grade level);
3. Qualitative description of the student's oral reading (e.g., too fast, slow, fluent, choppy, read with expression, correct attention to punctuation, reread words or phrases, self corrects using context, sounds out words, etc.);
4. Quantitative description of student's oral reading including: words per minute, % errors, # self-corrections, types of errors (guessing based on partial letter cues, decoding but doesn't know letter-sound associations, wild guesses).

In addition to the evaluation of the competencies of staff members of each Best Practice Center, the project was interested in determining the extent to which each of the Centers were ready to go on to the next stage in the Centers training and demonstration efforts. Another major purpose of the evaluation was to determine the additional needs a Center might have for training and technical assistance before they are clearly ready to provide demonstration and training activities. To conduct the review, end of first year site visits to each of eight Best Practice Centers in reading have been scheduled for May and June. Site visits for the two Best Practice Centers focusing on mathematics and using Positive Behavior Supports will take place this summer. Two of the site visits were conducted during the writing of this report and the preliminary results of these reviews will be included in this report to provide reviewers with an understanding of the procedures being used.

This evaluation was conducted using the *NC SIP Best Practice Center Readiness Review Form*, which was developed by the project staff with assistance with the project evaluator. The purpose of this form, which can be found in Appendix C, is to evaluate and review the readiness status of the NC SIP Best Practices Centers top for

teaching students with disabilities. The review form addresses five areas of readiness to train and demonstrate. These are (A) Clarity and Integrity of Model, (B) Clarity and Appropriateness of the Model's Service Delivery Procedures, (C) Administration and Management, (D) Staff Readiness to Teach, and (E) Staff Readiness to Train.

The site visit review team is comprised of two members, a NC SIP leadership person (Fred Baars or David Lillie) and a reading instruction specialist (Rebbeca Felton or Linda Miller). As part of the review process the review team reviews and evaluates materials prepared by the center, which include a revised and updated Project Description for the Center and an updated Project Plan for the Center. In addition, the review procedures factor in the results of the valuation of the training task assignments completed by Center's teaching and training staff and observations of instruction in one or more of the Center's classrooms designated to be demonstration classrooms.

During the site visit, a meeting is held with a selected group of Center staff to review and discuss the rating form questions and criteria within the context of the Center's readiness status. At the end of the discussion the review team and the Center staff, using the Readiness Rating Scale, rate the item being discussed. If there is disagreement about the rating a discussion follows to reconcile any differences in item ratings.

To date, two of the Best Practice Centers have been reviewed following the procedures discussed above. The remaining site visits for the reading and writing centers are scheduled for review site visit in May and June. The readiness review for the other two Centers will be conducted later in the summer. Table 3 reflects the results of the two reviews conducted to date.

For a Best Practice Center to be effective in its training and demonstration efforts NC SIP has established a criteria of 3 (Yes, with some exceptions) across all readiness milestones. As indicated in Table 3 the two Centers reviewed to date demonstrate an average rating that meets or exceeds the criteria for six of the sixteen milestones rated so far.

Perhaps the most important outcome of the site visits will be the needs assessment aspect of the process. As a part of the rating discussion, the review team and the center staff discuss what actions need to be taken, and what types of assistance are needed, to improve the readiness rating. Using this information an improvement plan will be developed by the Center for the areas which demonstrated a need for improvement.

Table 3

NC SIP Best Practice Center Readiness Review Form
Average Cross-County Evaluation Scores

Readiness Milestones	Average Readiness Rating *
A. CLARITY AND INTEGRITY OF MODEL	
1. The Center's model is clearly described in writing in terms of explicit instructional procedures and materials	2.5
2. The models components, instructional procedures and materials are clearly observed and are used appropriately in the Center's classrooms that were observed.	3.25
3. All Center staff can clearly articulate the essential features and instructional procedures of the model.	3.25
B. CLARITY AND APPROPRIATENESS OF MODEL'S SERVICE DELIVERY PROCEDURES	
1. The Center's five-year plan includes a comprehensive model with training and demonstration across grade levels.	2.0

2. Placement of students in instructional programs is based on assessments designed to indicate student competencies in basic word identification skills (e.g.,phonemic awareness, spelling, naming/retrieval skill) may be evaluated as necessary.	2.5
3. Time engaged in specific model reading and writing instructional procedures exceed four hours per week for each participating system.	2.5
4. Individual and high intensity instruction is provided to individual students when indicated by teacher assessment and student response to instruction.	2.5
5. Small group instruction (ideal – no more than 3 to 4 students in an instructional group) is the primary instruction delivery system for the model.	3.0
C. ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGEMENT	
1. The Center's purpose, goals and procedures have been clearly articulated and are supported by school administrators and leadership personnel and by parents.	2.75
2. Responsibilities of the Center Director or Coordinator are clearly specific and supported by t school administrators and school leadership personnel.	2.75
3. A continuous system of training and classroom support, and supervision for the Center staff has been planned and is operational.	3.5
4. The Center has developed a working partnership with one or more teacher education programs, including a partnership plan.	2.0
D. STAFF READINESS TO TEACH	
1. The Center's teaching staff demonstrate the competencies necessary to effectively teach students with persistent reading problems as demonstrated by participation in the ***Research to Practice Foundations for Teaching Reading to Students with Persistent Reading Problems*** and by the quality and scope of the workshop Task assignment products.	**
2. The Center's teaching staff demonstrate the abilities to provide instruction using explicit instructional procedures and materials outlined in the model selected.	3.25
3. The Center's teaching staff demonstrates an understanding of the structure of the English language necessary to provide effective reading instruction. (As demonstrated by the Structure of the English Language PostTest).	2.25
E. STAFF READINESS TO TRAIN	
1. The Center's training staff demonstrate the competencies necessary to effectively teach students with persistent reading problems as demonstrated by participation in the ***Research to Practice Foundations for Teaching Reading to Students with Persistent Reading Problems*** and by the quality and scope of the workshop Task assignment products.	**
2. The Center's training staff demonstrate the abilities to provide instruction using explicit instructional procedures and materials outlined in the model selected (as indicated by structured classroom observations).	3.25
3. The Center's training staff demonstrate an understanding of the structure of the English language necessary to provide effective reading instruction. (as demonstrated by the Structure of the English Language PostTest).	2.25

***** Average Readiness Status rating across the Best Practice Centers using the following rating scale: 1 = No; 2 = To Some Extent but many inconsistencies and/or lack of clarity; 3 = Yes, with some Exceptions; 4 = Yes

****** Ratings will be completed this summer

Finally, as mentioned previously, an "unplanned" accomplishment and outcome has been the expansion of the Best Practice Center Network with State funds. As a result of the activities of the North Carolina State Improvement

Project during this first year, eight additional projects will be added to the Best Practice Center Network. Second year plans include orientation and training for these projects in the research to practice instructional principles with a major emphasis on teaching phonemic awareness to young children with disabilities and other disadvantages. These centers will focus primarily on early childhood intervention and prevention of reading difficulties.

TEACHING MATHEMATICS: ALGEBRAIC THINKING

The Best Practice Center for improving the teaching of mathematics for students with disabilities was established in the Rockingham County Schools in the North Central Region of North Carolina in the Fall of 2000. In North Carolina all students must pass a course in Algebra to qualify for graduation. Without appropriate instruction, this policy could have a very negative effect on students with disabilities--leading to larger numbers of dropouts and fewer numbers of students with disabilities graduating with a diploma. In response to a major need to improve the quality of teaching Algebra, the Center has focused its activities at the middle school level. A more specific description of the program can be found in Appendix A.

During the summer of the first year of the project, Algebraic Thinking Level l Training took place in two five-day sessions. Eighteen teachers participated in the first five-day workshop and nineteen teachers participated in the second five-day workshop. The teachers represented four high schools, three middle schools, and the Score Alternative Center in the county. The content and materials for the program was selected based on the instructional principles gleaned from classroom instructional studies with students with disabilities. The focus of the training was to assist teachers in developing and understanding a multi-sensory methodology for teaching Algebra to exceptional learners. The Algebraic Thinking program has been developed by Dr. Brian Enright, a special educator recognized nationally for his work in the development of instructional strategies and materials that are multisensory in nature and that have found to be very effective for teaching students with disabilities.

Algebraic Thinking is a three part series of instructional strategies and materials which is designed to be used with average and below average students in middle school, or with students experiencing math difficulties in high school. The program is fundamentally different based on its' methodology. The program leads students through three levels of understanding mathematics, from the concrete level where students build understanding of the concepts through manipulative based activities, to the pictorial level where students extend that understanding through visual understanding, to the procedural level where students learn to apply the skills in a problem solving setting. Therefore, a central feature of the program which develops across the three years is a problem solving process known as SOLVE. The program incorporates all of the essential knowledge of algebra and builds that knowledge through these three levels of understanding. Each lesson is constructed to lead the student through experiences that result in the student understanding and then using the skills in a meaningful way. In addition, a lesser noticed but important feature of Algebraic Thinking is the use of games and a variety of interesting activities instead of boring repetition to get and keep the students' interest.

Demonstration and training classrooms have been established at three high schools and one middle school. Preliminary use of the Algebraic Thinking materials has taken place during the 2000-2001 school year. At the time of writing of this report, anecdotal records from the project indicate significantly higher passing rates of students enrolled in the project classes. An outline of training conducted in the series of workshop is presented here.

Workshop Agenda

Algebraic Thinking Level l Training
- Overview of Project
- Three Stages of Learning Mathematics: Concrete-Pictorial-

Abstract
- SOLVE: A Five Step Approach to Problem Solving
- Building an Understanding of a Use of Fractions
- Building an Understanding of a Use of Integers

-Building an Understanding of a Use of Order of

Operations
Building an Understanding of a Use of Functions
Building an Understanding of a Use of Equations
Building an Understanding of a Use of Inequalities

All participants observed demonstrations of actual methodology used to teach students the above concepts. Participants then worked in collaborative pairs and practiced those methodologies in a supervised setting. Each participant also reviewed all materials that they would be piloting the following year and received these materials for implementation. The numbers, types and levels of the teachers receiving staff development by the Best Practice Center are shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Teaching Thinking
Workshop Attendance

First Workshop (July 18- 21)	EC Teachers	Algebra Teachers
High School	4	10
Middle School	1	3
Second Workshop (July 24-27)		
High School	2	14
Middle School	1	2
Totals	8	29

Accomplishments and Outcomes

The response of the teachers attending the staff development workshops, as illustrated in Table 5, was extremely supportive and positive toward the workshops.

Table 5
Participants Perceptions of Quality and Usefulness of

the Algebraic Thinking Workshops

		5	4	3	2	1
1.	Materials, supplies, and equipment were ready at the beginning of the training activity.	37	0	0	0	0
2.	The objectives for the training were clearly explained and met.	37	0	0	0	0
3.	The Content of the workshop reflected careful planning and organization.	37	0	0	0	0
4.	The presenter(s) was/were well prepared.	37	0	0	0	0
5.	The presenter(s) provided for a variety of learning styles.	37	0	0	0	0
6.	The presenter(s) modeled effective use of time.	35	2	0	0	0
7.	Provisions were made to actively involve participants in the learning process.	37	0	0	0	0
8.	Adequate time was allowed for participants to reflect on and relate material to their experiences and needs.	37	0	0	0	0
9.	Questions and concerns were handled appropriately.	37	0	0	0	0
10.	Visual aids and handouts were useful and understandable.	37	0	0	0	0
11.	Adequate provisions were made for participant comfort.	37	0	0	0	0
12.	Overall, this workshop was a successful training experience for me.	37	0	0	0	0

* 5 = Strongly Agree; 4 = Agree Somewhat; 3 = Uncertain/ No Opinion;
2 = Strongly Disagree; 1 = Strongly Disagree

In addition to the workshop ratings, anecdotal observations demonstrated that all teachers attending the workshops were able to demonstrate skills teaching the main concepts included in the workshops. Periodic follow-up observations and conferences were held throughout the academic school year (2000-2001) and individual meetings were scheduled with the reading specialist, Brian Enright, to identify any needs of the participants during the year. Follow-up Level 2 training has been scheduled for May 28 – 31, 2001. Part of this training will be a plus delta evaluation of the program led by a secondary education director who is trained in the quality management system.

An affiliation with UNC Greensboro was developed to facilitate data collection. The development of a data collection and reporting system is underway in coordination with the UNC Network Coordination Center. This system will be finalized during the summer of 200l and applied to all sites on a regular basis during the 2001-2002 school year.

BEST PRACTICE CENTER FOR INCREASING USE OF POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL SUPPORTS

During the first year of the NC SIP, a Best Practice Center has been established in the Durham Public Schools. As can be seen the Center's description in Appendix A, the Center's leadership staff, training staff, and teaching staff have been identified. In the Fall 2000, the Center got off to a somewhat slow start. The two staff members hired to provide leadership for the Positive Behavior Support Center (PBSC) were already Durham Public Schools employees at the time of the establishment of the center and had to be freed from their previous duties before beginning their new roles. The project has secured additional funding so that the two leadership staff positions (program manager and teacher-trainer) could be increased to full-time. This also freed up some funds from money that had been budgeted for salaries. These funds have been reallocated to provide stipends to teachers and other staff who will be involved in the project to receive training over the summer months.

The Best Practice Center has established offices and classrooms in the Oak Grove Elementary School. Oak Grove Elementary currently uses positive behavior supports and has gained the support of school administration and the school's site-based decision making team. Varying levels of services are now available at Oak Grove Elementary. Support services target all children in the school, not just those with serious difficulties. Services are at the primary level (whole school), secondary level (at risk and exhibiting difficulties), and tertiary level (highly involved with multiple or services). Primary services are delivered to staff in the form of consultation. Secondary services are delivered to parents in the form of workshops and linkage to other community services, and to students in the form of direct services. Tertiary services are delivered to students, parents, and staff in the form of team consultation and assistance with planning for movement along the continuum.

During the first project year to date, monthly training sessions have been provided for all Exceptional Children's Facilitators in Functional Behavior Assessment and creating Behavior Intervention Plans. In addition, training has been provided in Non-Violent Crisis Intervention for the Best Practice Center staff as well as other staff in the Durham Public Schools. Monthly meetings have been held for the Outreach/Resource teachers for students with Behavioral/Emotional Disabilities and dates have been established for summer training dates for host-school site. As indicated earlier, selected teachers will be paid stipends and will work over the summer to strengthen and codify the school-wide behavior management system. Experienced teachers will then be paired with new teachers to insure continuation of social skills training at a high level among K-2 classes.

Summer training will include; developing functional behavior assessment and behavior intervention plans, instruction of social skills, leading anger management groups, leading peer mediation groups, instituting a school-wide discipline plan, leading classroom meetings, training in non-violent crisis intervention, and training children in problem solving techniques.

Finally, School Guidance Counselors at the host site have been relieved of their duties as testing coordinators, and will focus more of their time in the next year on providing pro-active support to the PBS program by leading support groups and anger management groups for Oak Grove students. Training in leading these groups will be provided over the summer through the Office of Student Support Services.

Accomplishments and Outcomes for the Positive Behavioral Support Center

- Secured funding necessary to increase the leadership positions to full-time by working with the Office of Student Support Services. Used "regular education" money for this purpose, thus expanding the program beyond Exceptional Children's Programs (ECP) and into the life of the school as a whole. State Improvement Grant (SIP) money is now matched by one local dollar for every two dollars of SIP money

- Located the program at Oak Grove Elementary School after working with the administration, the school climate committee, and the site-based decision-making committee. Oak Grove School is providing classroom space, office space, and support staff to the program. Oak Grove has been involved in modeling programs for other schools within Durham Public Schools both due to its hosting a specialized program for seriously involved BED students (the Community Outreach for Program for Education – COE program) and because it uses both a school-wide social skills training program and a school-wide pro-active behavior management plan.

- Hired a full-time program manager (Allen Murray) and a full-time teacher-trainer (Cynthia Wilson) to serve as lead staff to the program. Currently working with North Carolina Central University to serve as a placement site for a graduate assistant in their graduate special education program.

- Held an all-staff celebration at Oak Grove to "kick-off" the PBSC for staff members. Two Assistant superintendents from DPS were in attendance.

- Arranged for both full-time staff members of PBS Center to attend the following: the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's Summer Institute offered by the Behavior Support Section, the state-wide Council for Exceptional Children conference, the North Carolina Council for Children with Behavior Disorders Conference in September, and the National Council for Children with Behavior Disorders Conference in October. Collaborative work between the PBS Center and the ECAC has already begun.

- Two staff members (in addition to two who are already trained) are registered for the Training of Trainers offered by the Crisis Prevention Institute in July.

- Funds have been allocated for stipends, and senior staff members from the Exceptional Children's Program and Student Support Services have been identified to work during the summer, creating training packets in the areas referenced above. Technical assistance will be sought through contract funds to have training packets organized into a standard format and to have a system-wide Positive Behavior Support manual created.

Extent to Which Objective 1.1 Was Attained

The North Carolina State Improvement Project has made significant progress in establishing a network of Best Practices Centers for the purpose of providing training and demonstration to special education teaching staff across North Carolina. Ten Centers have been established and are now operational. Although the evaluation of the readiness of these Centers to train and demonstrate in their respective districts and regions has not been completed at the date of this report, it appears that approximately 50% of the centers have developed a level which will allow them to begin training at the beginning of the school year in the Fall, 2001. The remaining centers will be ready to engage in outreach training and demonstration later in the 2001-2002 school year.

One aspect of the readiness of the Center's abilities to begin training and demonstration is the competency level of the teachers in the Centers in the use of research supported principles of instruction. To this end an ambitious and intensive series of workshops entitled, *Research to Practice Foundations for Teaching Reading to Students with Persistent Reading Problems* training program, has been conducted with staff of all the reading and writing centers. An evaluation system has been established and is being used to determine the effectiveness of the workshops and the resulting competency level of the teachers in the reading and writing centers. This evaluation is currently underway and the results to date are promising as reported above. The same procedures will be used this summer and next fall to evaluate the teacher competencies in the mathematics and the positive behavioral support centers.

Objective 1.2: Improve the knowledge of leadership personnel of needed service delivery strategies to support the use of research-proven best practices

Objective 1.2 - First Year Project Strategies in Approved Application
Strategy 1. Develop and/or identify best practices training content for school leadership personnel.
Strategy 2. Develop and/or identify training materials for leadership personnel, including videos, Web/CD video clips, UK On-line Academy training, and portfolio projects for restructuring school instructional settings.
Strategy 3. Pilot the use of the training procedures, resources, and materials with leadership personnel located in the schools and center's host LEAs.
Strategy 4. Training of trainers and school leadership faculties.

Objective 1.2 - Description of Project Activities

The project believes that leadership personnel need to be knowledgeable about research findings, principles of instruction derived from the research findings, and the skill and knowledge teachers must have to effectively teach students with persistent reading difficulties to read. Accordingly, the Best Practice Centers Coordinators and some of the districts Special Education Administrators participated in the training provided for Center teachers and teacher trainers. The content of the *Research to Practice Foundations for Teaching Reading to Students with Persistent Reading Problems* training program has been developed for the areas of improving teaching of reading and writing and for teaching mathematics. These training procedures and activities as well as the training content have been described above. The project is in the process of modifying the content and procedures developed for teaching and training staff to be used in the leadership training program to be conducted during the coming months.

Objective 1.2 - Accomplishments and Outcomes

- Research to Practice content and training procedures have been developed and the project is in the process of revising the workshops conducted for teachers to provide a major training module for leadership staff, including principles, in this content area for the second year of the project.

- Leadership training follow-up procedures have been developed including annual summer workshops and mentoring for new leadership personnel.

Extent to Which Objective 1.2 Was Attained

This objective has been partially met. The best practices training content has been developed and training procedures have been conducted for leadership personnel. During the second year of the project, the research to practices training content developed for teachers will be organized into a training module for leadership personnel. This module will be incorporated into the annual leadership training activities conducted by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

Objective 1.3: Increase the percentage of students with disabilities enrolled in the standard curriculum who are performing at or above grade level on the statewide end-of-grade ABC testing from the current levels of 30-40% to a level of at least 80% of the performance level of non-identified students in basic skill areas of reading, writing, and mathematics

Objective 1.3 - First Year Project Strategies Planned in Approved Application

Strategy 1. In collaboration with the Accountability and Testing Division of the Department of Public Instruction, establish a system of standards and accountability for improving the education of students with disabilities.
Strategy 2. Disseminate standards for programs for students with disabilities and conduct a campaign to raise performance expectations of teachers, school leadership, parents, and students with disabilities.
Strategy 3. Train LEA staff development teams in the use of the revised Special Needs, Special Teaching staff development resources and materials, and set up a master schedule of statewide staff development.
All other planned program strategies designed to accomplish Objective 1.3 will be implemented during subsequent years of the project

Objective 1.3 - Description of Project Activities

This objective and related activities represent an extremely important aspect of the NC SIP project because of its relationship to a major education initiative by the North Carolina State Board of Education referred to as "Closing the Gap." Closing the academic achievement gap that exists between at-risk students has been given top priority by the State Board of Education. The emphasis in this initiative has been primarily on closing the achievement gap between white and minority (African American, Hispanic and Native American) students. NC SIPs goal is to raise the profile of students with disabilities as at-risk students who must be included and accounted for in the initiative. North Carolina is working to close the gap by requiring local school systems to develop annual plans for closing the gap, increase funding, develop resource centers and pilot programs, encourage community/school collaboration, and implementing other initiatives to ensure that the achievement gap closes. As the NC SIP project develops and gains momentum, the plan is to integrate the project's efforts for students with disabilities with the Closing the Gap initiative.

In order to attain the growth in achievement for students with disabilities identified in Objective 3.1, a comprehensive system of collecting, analyzing and reporting achievement data for students with disabilities must be developed. To this end the project is collaborating with the Accountability and Testing Division of the Department of Public Instruction to establish a system of standards and accountability for improving the education of students with disabilities. Fred Baars, NC SIP Project Director and David Lillie, Director of the UNC Network Coordination Center, a unit of the NC SIP program, have met twice with personnel from the Accountability and Testing Division of the Department of Public Instruction. Tentative agreements and plans call for the Accountability and Testing Division to assist the project with the identification, collection and analysis of annual End-of-Grade performance in reading, writing and mathematics data across all areas of disabilities by school district and by school building. In addition, the Accountability and Testing Division has agreed to assist the project with the identification, collection and analysis of drop-out, suspension, expulsion and attendance data across all areas of disabilities by school district and by school building.

To enforce the legal requirements established in the reauthorization of IDEA and to raise performance expectations for students with disabilities, the North Carolina State Board of Education and the Department of Public Instruction disseminated standards and accountability policies on March 29, 2001 to all LEA Superintendents, LEA Test Coordinators, and LEA Directors of Special Education Programs. The accountability standards for students with

disabilities enrolled in the North Carolina Standard Course of Studies curriculum are the same as for all students. The new policies also end the practice of exemptions for students with disabilities, establishes procedures for use of testing modifications and alternative testing procedures, and the polices governing the use of End-of-Grade and End-of-Course Tests in promotions and retention decisions for students with disabilities. This letter can be found in Appendix D.

Objective 1.3 - Accomplishments and Outcomes

Using data collected and tabulated by the Accountability and Testing Division, baseline (May, 2000) End- of-Grade performance data for the ten school districts operating the project's Best Practice Centers have been desegregated. Performance of students identified as having a Specific Learning Disabilities has been reported for the ten school districts operating the projects Best Practice Centers. This example data gathered for SLD is presented in Table 6. The procedure developed to retrieve the data in Table 6 will be used to collect and display performance data across the categories of the students with disabilities that are primarily served in the standard curriculum) SLD, BED, MI, VI, HI, S&L, OH, and OHI

Table 6

Reading And Mathematics End-Of-Grade Scores Of Learning Disabilities Students In Best Practice Centers Districts Compared To All Students And All SLD Students In North Carolina

MAY, 2000

SCORES	3rd Grade Reading	5th Grade Reading	8th Grade Reading	3rd Grade Math	5th Grade Math	8th Grade Math
All NC Students	74.4	79.1	82.5	71.8	82.9	80.6
All LD Students	37.6	44.8	48.9	48.6	58.7	52.1
Cumberland County	27	31.6	43.4	48.6	51.6	42.3
Durham County	37.7	38	60.3	43.8	58.5	51.6
Haywood County	29.5	60.4	40.5	55.4	71.7	66.7
Montgomery County	11.4	39.4	26.3	36.8	47.1	31.6
Onslow County	47.1	46.9	48	58.8	59	43.1
Northhampton County	53.8	64.7	72.7	64.3	70.8	40
Rockingham County	35.3	40.3	55.6	51.9	64.8	65.5
Transylvania County	50	50	66.7	50	88.9	90.5
Wake County	55.3	63	60.1	58.4	70.8	56.8
Watauga County	46.2	55.6	69.7	62.5	54.1	74.3

As can be seen in Table 6, students with learning disabilities in the districts hosting the Best Practice Centers are significantly below the percentages for the total student population performing at or above grade level in North Carolina. In reading achievement students with learning disabilities perform at one half the performance level of the total student population at grade three and approximately 40% lower at grade eight. Although math achievement is somewhat better overall, the achievement gap in math is also very significant.

During the summer of 2001 the project will complete the collection of the baseline data across the categories of students with disabilities who are enrolled in the standard curriculum. All baseline data will be made available on the internet and at the end of each year of the project, student progress will be measured and reported across three levels; (1) students receiving instructional services in the Best Practice Centers, (2) students in the Best Practice Centers' school districts, and (1) all students in North Carolina. This data will be reported by disability categories including those categories of students who are primarily enrolled in the North Carolina standard curriculum.

Extent to Which Objective 1.3 Was Attained

This objective has been partially met during the first year of the project, a general data retrieval, analysis and reporting system has been planned. EOG baseline data has been reported for each school system in the state. The project staff is in the process of trying to identify the students, or classes, or schools that will show change due to the SIG. We will need to spend much of this year understanding the data being collected. For example the expulsion rate rose sharply from 7% in 1998-99 to 25% in 1999-00. We have several systems change efforts at work at the same time which we are a collaborator. These include large state efforts such as the Closing the Gap and the state focus on student achievement. The state is providing data training for local personnel. Our baseline data may continue to show worse results for the next years as the data collection system is refined and before the positive effects of the SIG programs start showing up on data collection systems.

Goal 2: Increase Percentage of Qualified Special Teachers, Regular Class Teachers

and School Leadership Personnel Providing Instructional Programs

Objective 2.1: Decrease to 5% the percentage of special education teachers teaching without appropriate certification.

Objective 2.1 - First Year Project Strategies in Approved Application

Strategy 5. Develop a portfolio teacher evaluation system of classroom artifacts and products of teachers to evaluate level of teacher competency.

Objective 2.1 - Description of Project Activities

In addition to Strategy 5 in the application, strategies 1, 2 and 3 under Objective 2.3 also contribute substantially to the attainment of Objective 2.1 The strategies and activities addressing these two objectives overlap substantially and the reader is referred to the discussion on Objective 2.3 for additional information. The discussion below includes (a) evaluation of teacher competencies, (b) stipends for teacher training, and (c) recruitment. In addition, strategies discussed on page 42 which include topics on establishing a statewide recruitment system, redesigning of the license requirements, and expanding and improving access to coursework via a comprehensive system of e-Learning opportunities also address this objective.

Evaluation of Teacher Competencies

Under this objective the program plan includes the development of a portfolio teacher evaluation system of classroom artifacts and products (Strategy 5 above). This strategy has also been employed in pursuit of Objective 1.1 and these activities have been discussed earlier in this report. Chart 1 on page 17 presents the classroom artifacts. This strategy has also been employed in pursuit of Objective 1.1 and these have been discussed earlier in this report.

Teacher Stipends for Training

Although most of the program strategies included in the approved application for Objective 2.1 are not scheduled to begin until the second year of the project, several activities conducted by the Exceptional Children Division in the NCDPI are integrated with the State Improvement goals and plans in this area. These activities are discussed below.

Each of the thirty-four institutions of higher education with special education programs were invited to list their Summer Courses for special education. Tuition applications were sent to all special education teachers and posted on our web site. Up to $115 / semester hour will be reimbursed for teachers taking courses to meet their provisional license requirements if they are employed during the Fall and pass the courses.

As of May 1, 2001 North Carolina Public Schools employ 3,636 special education teachers on a provisional license. The NC SIP has allocated $83,000 of State Improvement Grant funds to provide tuition assistance. This will purchase 240 three-semester hour courses. These funds will be matched with IDEA Part B funds to permit the Exceptional Children Division to award 480 courses to teachers and speech language pathologists on provisional license who are under contract with a school system for Fall 2001. Eighteen Summer Institutes will make training available to approximately 900 teachers. These training activities are focused on advanced in-service training needs and require participants to complete a follow-up evaluation during the fall to determine their implementation of the new skills.

Recruitment

The State Improvement Grant staff convened a group of stakeholders including teachers, local school systems, North Carolina Association of Educators, parents, university staff, State Education Agency Staff in Licensure and

Exceptional Children Education, the National Clearing House for Professions in Special Education and Mid-South Regional Resource Center; the outcomes of this effort are:

A working draft presently called "Proposed Legislative Initiatives to Improve the Quality of the Education Received by Students with Special Needs" was developed. This draft proposed a long-range plan to address the supply and retention of qualified personnel serving exceptional children. A bill was introduced into legislature for differentiated pay for special education teachers. This action opens the door for change during the next year.

A summary document was drafted to present a focus on four initiatives. The state has announced a freeze on new expenditures due to a major state budget deficit. This material has been shared with the Mid-South states and will help direct the efforts in this region.
Support efforts to expand the NC Teacher Cadet Program through NC Association of Educators will receive State Support to attract high school students to a career in special education.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction has made a comment to increase from six local school systems to approximately twenty systems that use "Teachers.Com" or other email based recruitment services. We have the commitment from the Human Resources Division, Department of Public Instruction, to support the development of this service into a statewide effort during the next three years. All other planned program strategies designed to accomplish Objective 1.3 will be implemented during subsequent years of the project.

Table 7 presents the data that will be used as a baseline to measure progress on this objective. As can be seen there are currently 2, 973 teachers teaching out of field across the licensure areas in special education. The assumption the project is using in pursuit of this objective is that full certification in a special education specialty area indicates that the teacher is qualified to teach students in that particular disability area. Of course this assumption is not always true and so other strategies to improve quality of teaching have also been discussed. At the end of each of the next four years of the project, progress in reducing the number of teachers who are teaching out of field will be reported using the current data as the baseline.

Table 7
Number and percentage of Exceptional Children Teachers
Holding Provisional and Full Licenses
School Year 2000-2001

Area of License	Provisional License *	Full License	Total	Percent Provisional
88001 Cross Category	546	1632	2178	26%
88002 Severe Profound	60	353	413	15%
88081 Mentally Disabled	602	5683	6285	9.6%
88082 Speech & Language	115	1373	1488	7.7%
88083 Visually Impaired	6	106	112	5.4%
88085 Behav. Emo. Disabled	584	2446	3030	19%
88086 Spec. Learn. Disability	1003	5918	6921	14%
88088 Hearing Impaired	33	574	607	5.4%
88099 Directors Exc.Children	15	312	327	4.6%

Total All E.C **	2,973	8,195	11,168	26.6%

* Do not meet requirements for full license
** Includes additional areas of Exceptional Children licenses not displayed in Table
Note: These files include duplicate count.

Objective 2.1 - Accomplishments and Outcomes

• Components of a portfolio evaluation system have been developed and have been field tested during the first year of the project.

• Baseline data indicating the numbers and percentages of teachers who are teaching with appropriate training and competencies have been collected and organized to enable the tracking of the progress in reducing the percentage of teachers who are not qualified to teach students with disabilities.

• A plan and procedures have been developed for the use of State Improvement Project funds in support of training stipends for teachers who are teaching out of field in special education. Most of these funds will be allocated this summer.

• In partnership with the National Clearing House for Profession in Special Education and the Mid-South Regional Resource Center, a plan has been developed to begin a statewide recruitment campaign.

• A statewide, comprehensive e-Learning system has been established with course and resources available beginning in the summer of 2001.

Extent to Which Objective 2.1 Was Attained

The strategies and activities scheduled for year one which impact on Objective 2.1 have been implemented. These strategies will continue over the next four years and it is anticipated that a reduction of the number of teachers teaching in special education without an appropriate license will be seen in the annual data review.

Objective 2.2: Decrease to 10% the percentage of special education administrators working without appropriate certification.

Objective 2.2 - First Year Project Strategies in Approved Application
Strategy 1. Revise Best Practices training materials developed for Goal 1 to use in training Special Education Program Directors in Best Practices curriculum approaches.
Strategy 3. Develop a series of portfolio products to be produced by Special Education Program Directors to demonstrate leadership competencies.

All other planned program strategies designed to accomplish Objective 2.2 will be implemented during subsequent years of the project.

Objective 2.2 - Project Activities

The project activities devoted to pursuit of this objective overlap with the project activities discussed for Objective 1.2. As described earlier, North Carolina needs approximately twenty new Exceptional Children Program Directors each year due to retirement and changes in jobs. The role of ECPDs is very demanding and varies greatly from small school systems to large systems. Their duties vary greatly in the amount of direct supervision, programming and administrative support they provide. Experienced directors developed the training based on their needs. Eight personnel development modules were developed based on 135 contact hours of two and a half-day blocks of time. The training cycle takes two years to complete with homework assignments between training activities. Forty participants enrolled at the beginning of the cycle and thirty-five completed the training and passed the required PRAXIS exam and were licensed as Exceptional Children Program Directors. The

participant's evaluation rated the training as most effective, timely, meeting their real job requirements as well as allowing for individual needs. A bonus for this type of training was the strong peer relationships that developed that will enable these professionals to develop collaborative relationships. Three of these graduates have already taken on state leadership roles with the Council for Exceptional Children. On the job follow-up is provided by the state's six regional consultants for exceptional children.

One of the major changes to the Exceptional Children Personnel Development System is the implementation of follow-up procedures for all training activities. The Best Practices Centers in Reading, Mathematics, and Positive Behavior Supports require participants to develop a follow-up contract to assist in assuring appropriate implementation of new skills. Training for Exceptional Children Program Directors has both mentors and six regional consultants to provide follow-up on each training module. The summer institutes for teachers usually have follow-up surveys concerning the implementation of the new skills. Direct in-class follow-up is provided for programs like the interpreters training or the use of the new Woodcock-Johnson III Achievement Test.

Objective 2.2 - Accomplishments and Outcomes

• Leadership training has been provided for forty Exceptional Children Program Directors during the year.

• Eight personnel development modules were developed based on 135 contact hours of two and a half-day blocks of time.

• Leadership training follow-up procedures have been developed including annual summer workshops and mentoring for new leadership personnel.

• Thirty-five Exceptional Children Program Directors completed leadership training during the year and all have subsequently passed the PRAXIS examination and have been licensed.

Extent to Which Objective 2.2 Was Attained

This objective has been partially met. Thirty-five Exceptional Children Program Directors have been newly certified as a result of the leadership training efforts associated with the NC SIP project. Currently **15** active Exceptional Children Program Directors are not fully certified which is a decrease of **50%** from the previous year. The project is currently working on developing leadership-training modules to improve understanding and use of the principles of basic skills instruction supported by research for students with disabilities. During the second year of the project, the research to practices training content developed for teachers will be organized into a training module for leadership personnel. This module will be incorporated into the annual leadership training activities conducted by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

Objective 2.3: Increase the number of new teachers entering the field of Special Education in North Carolina through initial entry and/or lateral entry.

Objective 2.3 - First Year Project Strategies in Approved Application

Strategy 1. Establish a recruitment campaign targeting college graduates with undergraduate majors in fields associated with special needs individuals, such as Psychology and Human Resources Development.
Strategy 2. Create widespread access to, and improve quality of, coursework leading to certification in a variety of areas of teaching students with disabilities.
Strategy 3. Establish incentives for retaining experienced teachers of students with disabilities in cooperation with the NCDPI and the Excellent Schools Act.

All other planned program strategies designed to accomplish Objective 2.3 will be implemented during subsequent years of the project.

Objective 2.3 - Project Activities

The strategies and activities conducted to attain Objective 2.3 overlap extensively with those strategies and activities presented for Objective 2.1 above and some of this discussion will be redundant.

North Carolina has made a major effort to attract graduates from fields other than special education that allow them to enter the teaching profession on a lateral entry license. To accomplish this objective, three strategies have been initiated during the first year of the project; (a) establish a statewide recruitment system, (b) redesign of the license requirements, and (c) expand and improve access to coursework via a comprehensive system of e-Learning opportunities.

Establish a Statewide Recruitment System

During this first year of the State Improvement Project, project staff have met several times with Dr. Phoebe Gillespie and representatives of LEAs to develop a plan to become one of ten states selected to use four public service announcements developed by the Council for Exceptional Children's National Clearinghouse for Professionals in Special Education. A preliminary plan for recruitment in North Carolina has been developed and has received endorsement by the Department of Public Instruction, and the institutes of higher education. Planning is continuing on the development of an evaluation system to determine the effectiveness of the recruitment initiatives. This will be an ongoing effort to increase the universities' capacity to recruit diverse special educators.

The State Improvement Project staff convened a group of stakeholders including teachers, local school systems, North Carolina Association of Educators, parents, university staff, State Education Agency staff in Licensure and Exceptional Children Education, the National Clearing House for Professions in Special Education and Mid-South Regional Resource Center; the outcomes of this effort are:

1) A working draft presently called "Proposed Legislative Initiatives to Improve the Quality of the Education Received by Students with Special Needs" was developed. This draft proposed a long-range plan to address the supply and retention of qualified personnel serving exceptional children. A bill was introduced into legislature for differentiated pay for special education teachers. This action opens the door for change during the next year.
2) A summary document was drafted to present a focus on four initiatives. The state has announced a freeze on new expenditures due to a major state budget deficit. This material has been shared with the Mid-South states and will help direct the efforts in this region.
3) Support efforts to expand the NC Teacher Cadet Program through NC Association of Educators will receive State Support to attract high school students to a career in special education.

We have made a commitment to increase from six local school systems to approximately twenty systems that use "Teachers.Com" or other email based recruitment services. We have a commitment from the Human Resources Division, Department of Public Instruction, to support the development of this service into a statewide effort during the next three years.

Redesign of the Licensure Requirements

The second strategy initiated to accomplish this objective deals with redesigning the license requirements for teachers of students with disabilities. The goal of this effort is to integrate the competencies and staff development procedures being developed by the NC SIP Best Practice Centers into the official state requirements for certification in special education licensure areas. To this end, a team of professional educators has been selected to attend the June, 2001 Symposium on Teacher Education sponsored by the National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education. The team includes representatives from the Exceptional Children Division and the Teacher Certification Division of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, special education teacher education programs, and LEA staff members. The team will consider strategies and information provided at the symposium as they continue to plan for restructuring the licensure requirements. It is the project's goal to establish the new set of competencies and course requirements by the end of the second year of the project.

Establishing a Comprehensive e-Learning System of Courses and Resources

The third strategy initiated in pursuit of this objective is to expand and improve access to coursework via a comprehensive system of e-Learning opportunities. Over the last three years, North Carolina has launched a statewide distance education program leading to add-on certification in two specific fields in special education, SLD and BED. These efforts have been supported by two personnel preparation grants from OSEPs, one at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the other at Elizabeth City State University. These programs have

established a partnership network of nine teacher education programs in the UNC system of higher education. The NC SIP project staff worked with the UNC General Administration to provide the resources and infrastructure to continue the work begun by the OSEP Personnel Preparation projects. UNC General Administration contracted with a private firm to establish a statewide infrastructure of an inter-institutional, comprehensive e-Learning environment to serve several areas of professional education. An expanded special education distance education certification system has been established as a major component of this effort. The infrastructure being provided through UNC-GA includes a comprehensive internet course authoring system, faculty author training, maintenance of a URL and server dedicated to the program, and a 24 hours, seven days a week on-line and telephone help system for students and faculty. Three courses are now on line for the summer sessions of 2001, with three more courses to be added in the fall of 2001. The NC SIP project sees the expansion and improvement of the current distance education effort as a major accomplishment. The plans are to grow the system to include all special education teacher education programs in North Carolina and to provide a comprehensive series of courses and e-Learning resources to support easy access to a variety of licensure areas in special education.

Objective 2.3 - Accomplishments and Outcomes

• A statewide system for recruitment of teachers in special education has been established in partnership with the National Clearinghouse for Special Education.

• A planning team has been established and has initiated work on the redesign of competencies and course requirements for certification in special education licensure areas to aligned these requirements with the efforts of the North Carolina State Improvement Grant program.

• A comprehensive infrastructure has been established to enable the continuation and expansion of the e-Learning access to professional preparation courses and resources.

Extent to Which Objective 2.3 Was Attained

In this first year of the grant the foundation for accomplishing this objective has been constructed and three major efforts have been initiated. Thus, the strategies and activities planned for the first year of the project have been followed. To measure the extent to which this objective has been met over the next four years of the project, the number the number and percentage of special education teachers teaching without an appropriate license for their assignment will be tracked statewide. Data have been collected indicating the current number and percentage of teachers in special education who are teaching out of field and can be found on page 38 in Table 7 entitled Number and Percentage of Exceptional Children Teachers Holding Provisional and Full Licenses, School Year 2000-2001. This data will be used as a baseline to measure progress toward increasing the number total number of teachers who are teaching with full certification.

Goal 3: Increase Graduation Rates and Decrease Drop Out Rates

Objective 3.1 : Increase teacher competencies in the use of positive behavioral supports.

Objective 3.1 - First Year Project Strategies in Approved Application

Strategy 1. Establish the Center for Positive Behavioral Supports and provide orientation training for Centers' staff. Center planning and selection of specific instructional programs reflecting best practices as indicated by research.

Strategy 2. Train staff of Centers and Staff Development team in host LEA.

Strategy 3. Develop and/or identify training materials, including demonstration videos, web-based/CD ROM video clips, Course Outlines and Syllabi, UK's On-line Academy training, experience-anchored tasks, and portfolio project assignments to be constructed by teachers and personnel to demonstrate competencies in effectively using positive behavioral supports.

Strategy 4. Pilot the use of the training procedures, resources, and materials with

teachers in the LEA hosting the Center.

All other planned program strategies designed to accomplish Objective 3.1 will be implemented during subsequent years of the project.

Objective 3.1 - Project Activities

The project activities devoted to attainment of this objective were described earlier under Objective 1.1 in the section discussing the establishment of the Best Practice Center for Increasing Use Of Positive Behavioral Supports (p.27).

Objective 3.1 - Accomplishments and Outcomes

The project accomplishments and outcomes for this objective were described earlier under Objective 1.1 in the section discussing the accomplishments and outcomes for the Positive Behavioral Support Center (p.28**).**

Extent to Which Objective 3.1 Was Attained

The foundation for attainment of Objective 3.1 has been established during this first year of the project. The Best Practice Center for the Use of Positive Behavioral Supports is now functional, training of the staff is underway, and plans have been developed for initiating outreach training and demonstration during the second year of the project.

Objective 3.2: Decrease the drop-out rate of students with disabilities from the current rate of approximately 50% of students with disabilities exiting schools to a rate no larger than 25% of students with disabilities exiting schools.

Objective 3.3: Increase the graduation rate of students with disabilities from the current rate of approximately 48% of students with disabilities exiting schools to a rate at least 75% of students exiting schools across the five years of the project.

Objectives 3.2 and 3.3. - First Year Project Strategies in Approved Application

Strategy 1. Activities conducted to attain Objective 1.1 will also be used to attain Objectives 3.1 and 3.2. Students demonstrating grade level academic performance are more likely to graduate and less likely to drop out of school.
Strategy 2. Activities conducted to attain Objective 1.2 will also be used to attain Objectives 3.1 and 3.2. The improved quality of teachers and higher teacher expectations will impact positively on students' interest and ability to stay in school and to graduate.
Strategy 3. Activities conducted to attain Objective 1.3 will also be used to attain Objectives 3.1 and 3.2. The improvement in leadership personnel knowledge of special needs students and effective curriculum approaches will impact positively on students' interest and ability to stay in school and to graduate.

All other planned program strategies designed to accomplish Objectives 3.2 and 3.3 will be implemented during subsequent years of the project.

Objectives 3.2 and 3.3 – Project Activities

As indicated in the approved application, the strategies used to attain Objectives 3.2 and 3.3 are identical to the strategies used to address Objectives 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3. Rather than duplicating the discussion of project activities undertaken during the first project year, the reviewer is referred to the section of this reports that begins on page 3**.**

Objectives 3.2 and 3.3 – Accomplishments and Outcomes

The reviewer is referred to page 31 for a discussion of the accomplishments and outcomes in working toward the attainment of Objectives 3.2 and 3.3.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction currently collects data on student dropouts and graduation across all school systems. Table 8 below shows the number of students who dropped out of school in the ten school districts where the project has located Best Practice Centers. The project also plans to include data collected on the numbers of students who moved out of a district, but there is no record of continuing in another system. This data strongly suggests that these students dropped-out of school because the state had a very reliable system of tracking students who move to another school system. If students subsequently enroll in another school district the data system will pick them up. Although the raw data on graduation rates and drop-out rates is available across all school systems in North Carolina, currently there is no system for desegregating this data and reporting by exceptionalities by school districts and school buildings. In order to measure progress toward attaining these objectives, the project must develop the analysis and reporting system. This effort is discussed under Objectives 3.4 and 3.5.

Table 8
Exceptional Children Student Drop Out Rate
North Carolina
1999-2000

COUNTY	Moved-Did not Continue	Dropped out	Total
Cumberland	18	149	167
Durham Public	12	90	102
Montgomery	N/A	10	10
Northhampton	15	21	36
Onslow	13	52	67
Rockingham	6	48	54
Transylvania	1	14	15
Wake	109	153	262
Watauga	N/A	10	10

Extent to Which Objectives 3.2 and 3.3 Were Attained

Objectives 3.2 and 3.3 are long term objectives for the project and clear evidence of the extent to which these objective have been attained will not be available until later in the project. Program structures and procedures to enable the attainment of these objectives have been developed during the first year. The assumption underlying the activities devoted to this objective is that widespread improvement in instruction in basic skill areas and the widespread use of positive behavioral supports will have an impact on the graduation and drop out rates of students with disabilities enrolled in the standard curriculum in the State's public schools.

Objective 3.4: Decrease the yearly rates of suspension, expulsion, and absence by 5% per year in years two through five of the project.

Objective 3.5: Establish a uniform method across school districts to develop a reliable, valid, and timely system of collection of suspension, expulsion, and absence data.

Objective 3.4 - First Year Project Strategies in Approved Application
Strategy 1. Establish a uniform method, across school districts, to develop a reliable, valid, and timely system for the collection of suspension, expulsion, and absence data to establish a baseline and yearly benchmarks.
Strategy 2. Establish standards and an accountability system for suspensions, expulsions, and absences, and provide rewards to systems meeting the standards. .

Objective 3.5 - First Year Project Strategies in Approved Application
Strategy 1. Review current database and data collection procedures.
Strategy 2. Design data collection approach, instruments, and procedures.
Strategy 3. Pilot the revised data collection process.
Strategy 4. Train LEA personnel in the use of the data collection procedures.

Objective 3.4 and 3.5 - Project Activities

The project's strategies for Objectives 3.4 and 3.5 are similar and overlapping and therefore these two objectives are grouped together for reporting purposes. As indicated in the approved application, the strategies used to attain Objectives 3.4 are identical to the strategies used to address Objectives 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3. Rather than duplicating the discussion of project activities undertaken during the first project year, the reviewer is referred to the section of this reports that begins on page 3.

Strategies 1 and 2 associated with this objective relate to the development of an evaluation and accountability system to measure and report progress made statewide and in the Best Practice Centers' school districts on the reduction of the yearly rates of suspensions, expulsions, and absences.

Currently the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction collects data on expulsions, suspensions and absences as a component of the ABC Accountability program. However, currently this data is not desegregated by disabilities or disabilities categories. In order to determine the extent to which these objectives are being met, a comprehensive system of collecting, analyzing and reporting this data for students with disabilities must be developed. To establish reliable and valid data in these areas, the project staff is collaborating with the Accountability and Testing Division of the Department of Public Instruction. Project staff have met twice with personnel from the Accountability and Testing Division of the Department of Public Instruction and discussed the need and feasibility of developing such a system of data analysis and reporting system. Tentative agreements and plans call for the Accountability and Testing Division to assist the project with this effort. As a result, the Accountability and Testing Division has agreed to assist the project with the identification, collection and analysis of drop-out, suspension, expulsion and attendance data across all areas of disabilities by school district and by school building.

Objectives 3.4 and 3.5 - Accomplishments and Outcomes

• The current system of data collection in the areas of suspensions, expulsions, and attendance has been reviewed.

• Project staff has met and developed an agreement with the Division of Testing and Accountability to improve the system of analyzing and reporting these data.

Extent to Which Objectives 3.4 and 3.5 Were Attained

Although work on developing the data system which these objectives focus on has begun, the project is behind schedule in attaining these objectives. Additional time will be devoted to these objectives during the summer and fall of 2001.

Goal 4: Improve Parent Satisfaction with, and Support of, School Services

Note: During the first year of the NC SIP, the activities conducted to address the objectives have extensively integrated and these two objectives will be addressed together in the description.

Objective 4.1: Increase parent involvement with their own children/students, teachers, and school system.

Objective 4.2: Increase parent inclusion in program planning, implementation, and evaluation to 100% inclusion in all partnership decision-making events.

Objective 4.1 - First Year Project Strategies in Approved Application

Strategy 1. Plan and develop parent support and training materials including video, sound, graphics, and printed materials on the following topics (a) Using positive behavioral supports in the home, (b) Using collaboration in

improving reading, writing, and mathematics abilities of students, (c) Establishing and maintaining high expectations, and (d) Understanding the schools' expectations and progress reports.
Strategy 2. Conduct pilot parent training on above topics with parents in LEAs hosting the Best Practices Centers.

Objective 4. 2 - First Year Project Strategies in Approved Application

Strategy 1. Best Practices Centers will develop procedures for assuring parent participation on the demonstration site teams, including establishment of a Parent-Center Advisory Committee and participation of school-based improvement teams.
Strategy 2. Plan and develop a Leadership Workshop for parents in Best Practice Centers schools and school districts to provide leadership training for parents in other school districts. Leadership Training topics will include (a) Skills for participation on school advisory committees, (b) Personal skills for establishing trust and clear communications, and (c) Decision-making for improving results for students with disabilities.

Objective 4.1 and Objective 4.2 - Project Activities

During this first year, a Parent Collaboration, Training & Support Center has been established as a component of the NC SIP program to (1) improve collaboration between parents and schools, (2) address the significant parent information needs created by the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and (3) involve parents of children with disabilities in all aspects of the state's system change and implementation activities. The Partnership will provide a comprehensive and collaborative system of parent involvement, training, and support.

The Center offices are located in Davidson, North Carolina as a unit of the Exceptional Children's Assistance Center (ECAC). The NC SIP Parent Center works in collaboration with the ARC of North Carolina, the Learning Disabilities Association of North Carolina and the NC Department of Public Instruction. A coordinator for the NC SIP Parent Center has been hired. During this first year of the project the Parent Center has been involved in extensive planning, site visits to the Best Practice Centers, and the development and field-testing of training materials which are coordinated with the goals and content of the NC SIP program.

In coordination with the mathematics Best Practice Center in Rockingham County Schools the SIP Parent Center staff have conducted planning meetings with the Center staff. Plans developed call for the production of an informational video about the best practices in algebra instruction for students with disabilities. The videos will be accompanied by informational handouts, and will serve as an introductory presentation for parents and families. Production plans have targeted the Fall of 2001 as a completion and distribution dates for the training materials.

In addition, the parent center has planned a process for assessing parent experiences with and understanding of, mathematics, including algebra instruction, in order to be able to determine the nature and extent of mathematics and algebra information that families may need. Accordingly, ECAC will be meeting with the first year teachers on May 31 to formulate that content so that the math materials will be available for distribution and web-site posting when school resumes in the Fall.

The Parent Center has also initiated work activities with the Positive Behavior Supports Best Practice Center. An information packet for parents and families has been completed. Also a training curriculum and overheads for a two-hour introductory workshop for families on positive behavior supports has been developed and field-tested. The workshop emphasis is on the principles of PBS, the necessary components of an effective individualized intervention plan, and applicability to a various home and school environments. In addition, Parent Center staff have met with staff of the PBS Center and have initiated work on the development of training of trainers to work with parents and families on the use of positive behavioral supports.

The Parent Center staff has also been involved in program activities with the network of eight Best Practice Centers focusing on improving reading and writing instruction. These activities include (a) participation in the series of foundation training meetings described earlier, (b) conducting a survey of the Best Practice Centers' staff to obtain their perspectives about the kind of information about reading instruction content and procedures that should be provided through a variety of strategies including parent and family volunteers; parent and family information sessions, the ECAC News Line; and on-line chat sessions. Based on the results of the survey, the parent component is proceeding, in partnership with the Learning Disabilities Association of North Carolina (LDANC), to develop the literacy information packet for families, and to formulate content for the project workshop for families on

reading. The information packet will be available for distribution at workshops, via mail and on web site in time for the beginning of the new school year in August. The parent involvement plan also includes the offering of a workshop for families in the Fall of 2001.

The plans for improving parent involvement and participation include providing additional support materials for families and schools. The ECAC parent component of NC SIP will provide copies (free of charge to families statewide) of a newly published manual entitled *Teaching Students with Disabilities to Read*., published by the Parents Engaged in Education Reform (PEER) project of the Federation for Children with Special Needs in Boston. The discussion of reading instruction and accompanying support strategies are applicable to the research proven methodologies included in the NC SIP training content for the Best Practice Centers. The availability of these support materials was publicized in the May issue of the ECAC News Line. The ECAC parent component has also made plans to provide to sites a reference copies *of The Reading Tutor's Handbook* for use in the development of possible tutoring strategies. In addition, based on April feedback from the NC SIP sites, a reading tutor information packet will be made available in the fall of 2001.

Objectives 4.1 and 4.2 - Accomplishments and Outcomes

- A contract has been negotiated with the Exceptional Children Assistance Center, a statewide parent support system, to establish a NC SIP Parent Collaboration, Training & Support Center.
- The Center's offices have been set up, staff hired and planning and activities have been initiated.
- Center staff has participated in the series of Best Practice Reading and Writing Workshops.
- Planning meetings with the mathematics and positive behavioral support Best Practice Centers have been conducted.
- Work on a comprehensive plan of services has been initiated and should be completed by the end of the first year of the project.

Extent to Which Objectives 4.1 and 4.2 Were Attained

Contracting and communication procedures to establish the Parent Collaboration, Training & Support Center slowed the work activities for these objectives at the beginning of the project. However, the Center has been quite active during the spring of 2001 and the planning and development work will be completed by the end of the first year of the project. The Center will begin pilot training efforts during the fall, 2001.

Objective 4.3: Establish reliable and valid procedures for the collection of parent satisfaction data, and use this data to establish a baseline of benchmarks by the end of the first year of the project.

Objective 4.3 - First Year Project Strategies in Approved Application
Strategy 1. Review current database and data collection procedures.
Strategy 2. Design data collection approach, instruments, and procedures.
Strategy 3. Pilot the revised data collection process.
Strategy 4. Train LEA personnel in use of the data collection procedures.

Objective 4.3 - Project Activities
The subcontract agreement with the Evaluation, Assessment, & Policy (EvAP) Center, as discussed in the project evaluation plan included in the NC SIP application has just recently been approved and the project is behind schedule on the activities planned to attain this objective. In meetings with the staff of the EvAP Center preliminary plans have been developed for the initial collection of parent satisfaction and involvement data. The planning activities included the reframing of the objectives into evaluation questions. These questions and the strategies planned to gather data to respond to the questions are presented in the following chart.

Chart 2

Evaluation Questions	Data Collection Procedures
4.1: How has parent inclusion increased in program planning, implementation, and evaluation so that parents are represented in all partnership decision-making events?	• Annual review of program and school documents to collect incidences of parent involvement. • Annual parent surveys • Analysis of parent focus groups discussion to be conducted by Best Practice Center staff at least once per year.
4.2: To what extent has the number of official complaints, administrative hearings and lawsuits initiated by parents been reduced by 10% each year of the project through collaborative parent training and involvement in all regions of the state?	• Annual review and tabulation of state and school district records indicating frequency of parent complaints, administrative hearings and lawsuits.
4.3: To what degree has the project, as part of the project evaluation and accountability program, during the first year established reliable and valid procedures collection of statewide parent satisfaction data to establish a baseline?	• Review and Analysis of the project's evaluation procedures and data by independent evaluation consultants
4.4: In years two through five, how has the project measurably increased the level of parent satisfaction with educational services for students with disabilities each subsequent year of the project?	• Comparisons of parent involvement implementation activities with satisfaction data collected yearly.

In initial reviews during the first year of the project, it has been found that there is very little parent satisfaction data routinely and uniformly collected in school districts across the state or in the Department of Public Instruction. Plans have been developed for this activity and the data collection instruments and procedures will be developed during the summer of 2001. Training of staff will be conducted and data collection is scheduled to begin in the 2001-2002 school year.

Numbers of official complaints, administrative hearings and lawsuit are now compiled by the Department of Public Instruction at the school district level as well as statewide. This data will be reviewed for accuracy and comprehensives to determine if the data collection procedures need to be expanded or revised. This data will be reported yearly by the North Carolina State Improvement Project to LEAs, parent groups and other interested parties to determine the extent of change.

Accomplishments and Outcomes

• Evaluation plans and procedures have been developed to provide annual data that is reliable and valid.

Extent to Which Objective 4.3 Was Attained

Progress toward attainment of this objective has been slow during the first year. A heavy investment of time and resources into the establishment of the Best Practice Centers Network has prevented the project from moving ahead on this objective as much as planned. During the second year of the project, priority will be given to program activities in pursuit of this objective.

IV. Budget Information
Section 4. Budget Information

Budget Reporting Period: July 1, 2000 - April 30, 2001 Year 1 of Grant Award Period: July 1, 2000 - June 30, 2001

Report of SIP Funds Only

	Budget Category:	**Actual Expenditures for Report Period**	**Additional Anticipated Expenditures 4/30/01**	**Explanation of Anticipated Expenditures**
I & II	Personnel + Fringes	--	--	--
III	Travel	1,396.00	1604.00	⦿ In-State Site Meetings ⦿ National CSPD Meeting
IV	Equipment	--	--	--
V	Supplies	134.00	5368.00	⦿ Printing of Training ⦿ Mail to LEA
VI	Contractual	959,000.00	10,000.00	
VII	Construction	--	--	--
VIII	Other	1,693,.00	162,391.00	⦿ Summer Institutes
	Subtotals	960,963.00	217,180.00	⦿ Tuition Reimbursement
	Total Direct Cost		1,140,252.00	= Actual + Anticipated Expenses
	Total Indirect Cost (0.19)		69,748.00	
	Total		1,210,000.00	

By June 30, 2001 SIP funds will be obligated through contract awaiting invoice or tuition grants awaiting appropriate documentation to claim reimbursement. Any slippage in anticipated expenditures should not result in more than $30,000 in funds being carried beyond July 1, 2001. Items such as indirect cost usually produce some unanticipated carryover due to the state's accounting system.

All SIP funds are accounted for and expenditures are on tract with first year time lines.

V. Supplemental Information/Changes.

North Carolina does not need to request any changes to the SIP performance objectives and activities at this review. The review of our Performance Report demonstrates that we are on schedule with the expected training activities. Our internal review process is ongoing and has surprised us with the enthusiasm the program has received from local school systems hosting the Best Practice Centers. They have been eager to commit local funds and embrace change.

The Northeastern geographic area of the state is not being reached as effectively as we would like with our existing centers. We will need to identify additional state funds to enhance our effort to impact this part of the state. The SIP program role with parents and the university system is beginning to take shape and is presently meeting expectations. Our efforts to leverage change with the Human Resources Division to improve the recruitment and retention of teachers has great potential for major change as this section of the Department of Public Instruction is being modified.

Our web site is up and running. Changes will be made to assist teachers and parents get to information easier. During July at the state Exceptional Children Conference teachers statewide will be provided their first introduction to the NC SIP program and how they will benefit. We will begin getting greater evaluation information from participants during the fall, after we have implemented major summer training programs.

APPENDIX A

BEST PRACTICE CENTERS PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

APPENDIX B

RESEARCH TO PRACTICE WORKSHOP AGENDAS

APPENDIX C

EVALUATION DATA COLLECTION FORMS

APPENDIX D

NORTH CAROLINA END-OF-GRADE SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

APPENDIX E

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

APPENDIX F

PROPOSED LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

APPENDIX G

LONG RANGE PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION