

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 116 342

95

EA 007 827

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 TITLE Local Administrators of Special Needs Programs in Vocational Education.  
 INSTITUTION Minnesota Univ., St. Paul. Div. of Educational Administration.  
 SPONS AGENCY Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (DHEW/OE), Washington, D.C.  
 PUB DATE Sep 75  
 NOTE 24p.; For a related document, see EA 007 826  
 EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.76 HC-\$1.58 Plus Postage  
 DESCRIPTORS Administrator Education; \*Administrator Role; Coordinators; \*Disadvantaged Youth; \*Handicapped Students; Inservice Education; Interagency Cooperation; \*Occupational Information; \*Occupational Surveys; Program Coordination; Special Education; Vocational Education; Vocational Rehabilitation  
 IDENTIFIERS Local Special Needs Administrators; LSNA

ABSTRACT

The implications of the 1968 federal Vocational Education Amendments have prompted local programs to create the position of Local Special Needs Administrator (LSNA). The investigation reported here was carried out as the basis for proposing that a training program be developed for Special Needs Administrators. The coordinator or administrator for Special Needs Programs in each of the 50 state education agencies was asked to designate one local program and administrator who could be contacted for this study. Questionnaires were returned by 43 local administrators. The respondents reported their organizational structures, job titles, job duties, and certain opinions about the competencies required in their work. (Author/MLF)

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ED116342

LOCAL ADMINISTRATORS OF SPECIAL NEEDS PROGRAMS  
IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Department of Educational Administration  
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St. Paul, MN 55108  
September, 1975

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Investigators

*This study was supported in part by funds from the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, United States Office of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Office of Education, and official endorsement by the Office of Education should not be inferred.*

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LOCAL ADMINISTRATORS OF SPECIAL NEEDS PROGRAMS  
IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

BACKGROUND AND PROCEDURES

This second report in a series focuses upon the position of administrator of local Special Needs programs in vocational education. The programs are local in that they exist within school districts, local or intermediate. They are Special Needs programs in that the positions are charged with responsibility for handicapped and disadvantaged students in vocational education rather than upon the totality of the vocational education program. The positions are administrative in that the incumbent is responsible for the conduct of a program rather than simply for the provision of direct service to individual students.

A previous report\* was focused upon the state coordinative or administrative counterpart of this position. It may be obtained from the authors.

A concern with local administrators of Special Needs programs in vocational education is a natural outgrowth of an ongoing project in continuing education for special education administrators. The parent project, begun in 1973 at the University of Minnesota and supported by Grant HO-341SS from the Federal Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, is known as the Special Education Administration Training Program (SEATP). Vocational education programs serving disadvantaged and handicapped students (Special Needs programs) were found to be in a stage of expansion similar to that experienced by special education. Further, the resources of vocational education are often blended at the local level with those of special education, together with those of vocational rehabilitation. Because of these two facts (similar newness of position and technological overlap), it has seemed natural to extend an interest of SEATP into the related Special Needs area.

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\* Weatherman, R. and Krantz, G. "National Survey of State Special Needs Personnel Serving Handicapped Students in Vocational Education," Department of Educational Administration, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota 55108, May, 1975.

As a first step in the process of investigating the nature of Special Needs programs, the project contacted the coordinator of Special Needs programs in each state education agency. One of the immediate findings was that the "official" list of these persons was both incomplete and out of date. The turnover rate in this position appeared to be fairly high. However, with the aid of telephone calls and correspondence, responses were received from every one of the 50 states.

The state Special Needs Administrators were asked whether their state had held a statewide cooperative conference involving the three agencies of vocational education, vocational rehabilitation, and special education. Six states were reported to have held such a conference and related mechanisms were evident in several others. However, 29 states reported that they have not held any such coordinating conference.

Inquiry was made of whether the states had an organized program of inservice training for people who directly administer Special Needs programs. No state reported a training program together with evidence that the program was specifically administered in content, although 15 states reported an inservice training program primarily for teachers.

The state level Special Needs Administrators were asked: "In order to help you to better administer your program at the state level, what are your needs in such areas as information, training, and administration?" The largest number of responses (36) dealt with training and training-related needs. The next largest number of responses (21) had to do with instructional strategies and materials and other needs related to service programs. There were 18 responses that focused upon interagency coordination and 14 that dealt with program design and evaluation techniques.

The report of this survey closes with a number of conclusions and recommendations. One recommendation was for the maintenance of a reliable, up-to-date and readily available directory of state Special Needs Administrators. Another was for the development of clearer guidelines for procedure and interagency coordination in Special Needs programming. Perhaps most pertinent here, the state-related survey led to the recommendation that training for local administrators be developed.

In vocational education, the implications of the 1968 federal Vocational Education Amendments are such that local programs have found it necessary to focus specific attention upon the needs of students who are handicapped and disadvantaged. In doing so, they have frequently created a position that did not previously exist, that of the Local Special Needs Administrator (LSNA). Like his counterpart in special education, this LSNA was usually invested with his responsibilities without having had specific preparation. As noted in the previous report, this study inquired in each state about inservice training programs for Local Special Needs Administrators and found none. Neither was a preservice training program found, which is not surprising in view of the newness of the position.

The investigation reported here was carried out as the basis for proposing that a training program be developed for Special Needs Administrators. The coordinator or administrator for Special Needs programs in each of the 50 state education agencies was asked to designate one local program and administrator who could be contacted for this study. Questionnaires were then sent to the local administrators who were nominated, and completed replies were received from 43 of them.

These 43 constitute a sampling of those people who function as local special needs administrators. They cannot be considered representative because of the way in which the sample is drawn. However, they do allow statements to be made of the type: "This at least is the range of Local Special Needs Administrative positions." The respondents reported their organizational structures, their job titles, their job duties, and certain opinions about the competencies required in their work.

## THE POSITION

The LSNA Position. The identity of the respondents was found to closely approximate what had been sought. The tally of position types is shown in Table 1. A generalized organizational chart is shown as Figure 1, with each of the positions allocated to a place on the chart and keyed by a letter to Table 1.

From the Table, it will be seen that most of the respondents meet the definition set forth in the first paragraph of this report. Whether they administer a facility or a contained unit, 30 of the respondents (E and F) are administrative within vocational education and devote their attention to operating programs for handicapped and disadvantaged students. The first four classes of position (A, B, C, and D) have additional responsibilities, but have sufficient concern

Table 1

Responding administrators of local special needs programs nominated by state coordinators of special needs services in vocational education.

<u>Chart Key</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Number</u>
A	Assistant Superintendent for Instruction of a local school district	1
B	Director of special education program in a local or intermediate school district	3
C	Director of a full vocational education school, AVTI, or program	4
D	Administrator (Director or Principal) of a general education or vocational education program with an especially evident special needs component (30%, 40%) or project	3
E	Administrator of a special needs vocational education or special education facility	12
F	Administrator of a special needs program or department located in a vocational education facility	18
G	Coordinator giving direct service to students, liaison with DVR	1
H	Executive Director of a nonprofit corporation furnishing a service purchased by vocational education	1
	TOTAL	43

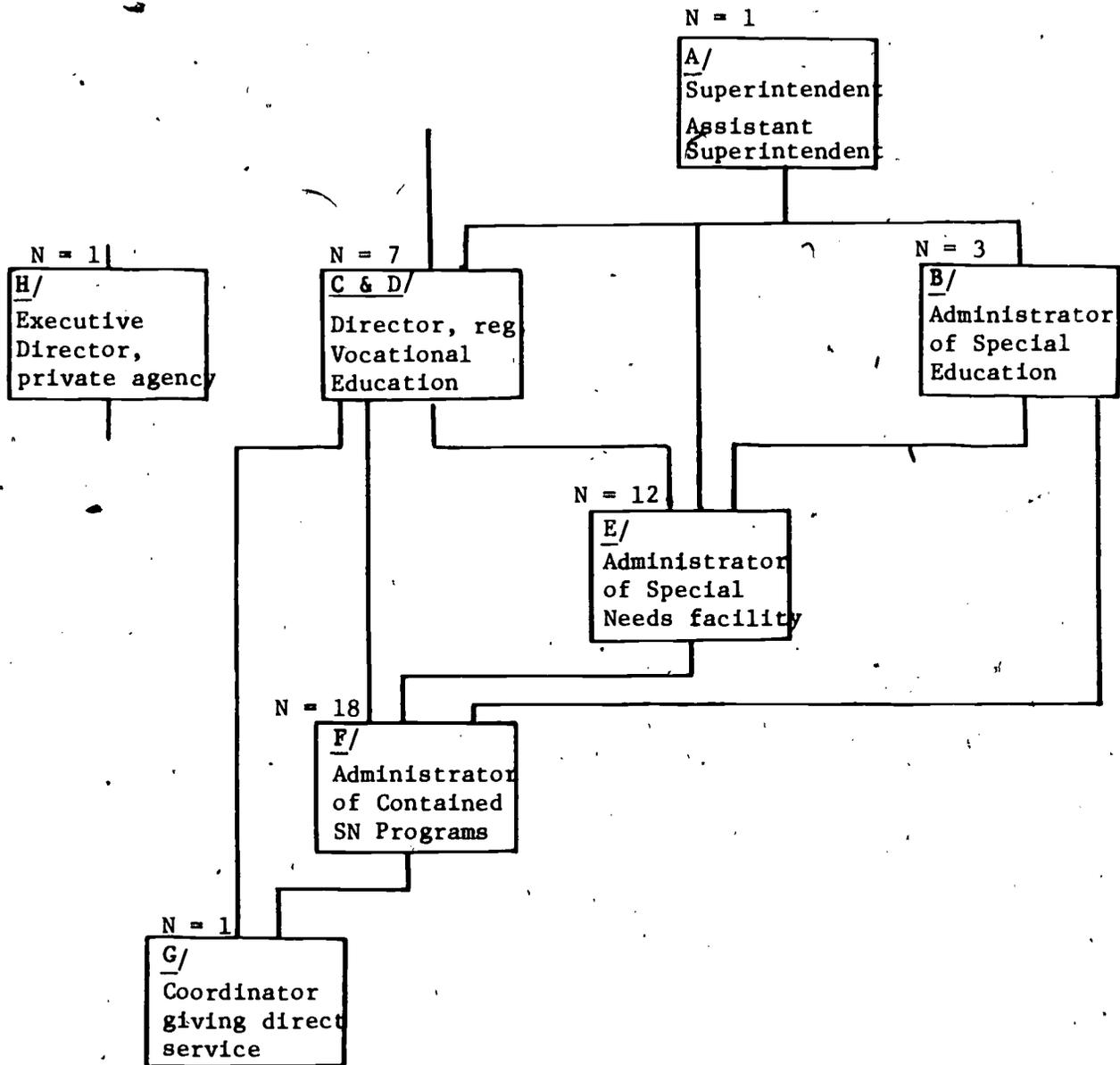


Figure 1

Generalized organizational chart showing relationships among positions described in Table 1. Letter in upper-left of each box corresponds to letter in table.

with students with special needs so that they were nominated by their State Special Needs Administrators and responded to the questionnaire. Table 1 can be collapsed into the categories shown in Table 2. The positions of the respondents collapsed themselves into generally defined roles. Tables 1 and 2 are based upon reported job titles and upon comparison of those titles with the organizational charts and job duty descriptions which were reported by the respondents.

#### CONTEXT OF POSITION

Separateness. The Local Special Needs Administrators (LSNA's) were asked to indicate "which statement best describes where your special needs program operates in relation to the standard vocational education program." Their responses are shown in Table 3.

A fairly even division among possibilities was obtained. This should not be taken as an indication that local Special Needs programs are divided in those proportions; the process of selecting this group almost certainly tended to favor visible and therefore separate programs. In any event, the selection cannot be considered representative, but only indicative of the range. For that purpose, a distribution like the one obtained is the most useful. About as many programs are segregated as are fully integrated into the mainstream, and a similar proportion are a mixture of segregation and integration.

Geographic Setting. The range of programs was expected to include both urban and rural settings, as is shown in Table 4.

The distribution found in this Table gives a wide representation to the possible kind of settings. Most of the programs have some kind of urban-rural mix.

Organization. Although the responsibility for serving students with special needs is charged to the vocational education enterprise, this responsibility is discharged in a variety of organizational structures. See Table 5.

Among the "Other" responses were two instances of a statewide vocational education agency. Over two-thirds of the programs, however, operate under a standard local education agency. It is evident from the responses and from the organizational charts that several of these local agencies have semi-autonomous vocational education programs, although the majority appear to be responsible to a general superintendent under a standard local educational governing board.

Table 2

Positions of respondents collapsed into roles defined in, "A Model to Serve Students With Special Needs in Regular Vocational Programs in Minnesota," (January, 1975).

	<u>Position Keys</u>	<u>Number</u>
Local Vocational or General Education Program Director (involvement with special needs ranging from incidental to substantial)	A, B, C, D	11
Local Administrator of Special Needs Program (within vocational education)	E, F	30
Support Services Manager	G	1
None of the Above	H	1
		<u>43</u>

Table 3

Statement reported to best describe whether the special needs programs are integrated or separate.

	<u>Number of Programs</u>	<u>Percent of Programs</u>
Special needs program operated in a separate center, physically separate from other programs of vocational education or general education	17	39.5%
Special needs program operated as an INTEGRAL part of the standard vocational education program of your administrative organization, no separate special needs areas for students (may have special offices for staff)	13	30.2
Special needs program neither completely separate nor fully integrated	13	30.2
	<u>43</u>	<u>100%</u>

Table 4

Responses of Local Special Needs Administrators as to which is "the one best description of the PRIMARY area served by your program."

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Central city only, population over 50,000, of a metropolitan area	5	11.6%
Suburbs only, of a city with population over 50,000	4	9.3
Central city, population over 50,000, AND its suburbs	6	14.0
Urban/rural, including city or cities of population 10,000 to 50,000	19	44.2
Mostly rural, may include urban areas under population 10,000	7	16.3
Other (to be defined by the respondent)	2	4.7
	<u>43</u>	<u>100%</u>

Table 5

Responses of Local Special Needs Administrators designating "the ONE best description of the kind of organization to which you are responsible in the administration of your program of services to students with special needs in vocational education."

<u>Option</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
A single, local school district which operates a COMPREHENSIVE educational system, including elementary schools; may also operate a vocational-technical school and/or community college; may offer vocational service to residents of other districts	29	67.4%
A local school district organized PRIMARILY FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION; may cover same area as more than one local general education school district	3	7.0
A special post-secondary district which is NOT primarily organized for vocational education; an illustration would be a junior college or community college district which is governed by a specific area within the state and which may also provide vocational education service	2	4.7
An intermediate unit or substate region (educational service agency, board of cooperative services, other formal cooperative with its own governing board, or unit of state education agency) providing a number of educational services; NOT PRIMARILY organized for vocational education	5	11.6
Other (to be defined by the respondent)	4	9.3
	43	100%

Operating Budget. The size of the program's budget is an important characteristic, although it naturally cannot be equated with the importance of the program. The respondents were asked to "please enter the total operating budget amount for your special needs program only during the current fiscal year, rounded to the nearest thousand." Like several other questions, this proved to be a deceptively difficult one to answer. A few programs gave figures that, in the light of other information available, were implausible. Screening out those implausible responses yielded the distribution shown in Table 6.

Nearly one-third of the valid responses indicate that the Special Needs program operates on a budget of less than \$50,000. At the other extreme, four programs appear to have annual operating budgets of over a half million dollars. Between those extremes there is considerable scatter, although nearly two-thirds of the programs have annual operating budgets under \$250,000. Again, the significant interpretation of Table 6 is that the responding programs represent a substantial variety.

Per-Pupil Costs. Cost per pupil of the Special Needs programs is also widely varied, as reported in Table 7. The per-pupil cost was obtained by dividing the reported average daily attendance or average daily membership by the annual operating budget.

Variation is again quite wide, ranging from one program averaging less than \$100 per pupil per year to two programs averaging over \$2,500 per pupil per year.

As with the annual budget figure, the per-pupil cost figure is subject to a very serious limitation in interpretation. The inquiry did not distinguish clearly enough between cost of the student's total program versus cost of the Special Needs portion of his program, although the questionnaire was quite explicit in its instruction to report only the additional cost. Consequently, some programs probably reported the entire cost of operating a vocational program for students with special needs; this is most probably true of the segregated or free-standing programs. Other programs probably reported the additional cost of providing supportive services targeting upon the special needs of the students and omitted the cost of the basic vocational education program. Nevertheless, it remains evident that the programs have highly variable costs.

Fiscal Support Bases. The sources of program operating funds should reveal the effect of two things: the extent to which the supporting sources are committed to facilitating the program, and the identity that is probably felt by the staff of the program. The

Table 6

Total operating budgets for the special needs program, current operating year, 40 programs reporting.

<u>Budget Size</u>	<u>Number of Programs</u>	<u>Percent of Programs</u>
\$0,000 - \$49,999	12	30.0%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	7	17.5
\$100,000 - \$149,999	3	7.5
\$150,000 - \$199,999	5	12.5
\$200,000 - \$249,999	2	5.0
\$250,000 - \$299,999	3	7.5
\$300,000 - \$399,999	1	2.5
\$400,000 - \$499,999	3	7.7
\$500,000 - \$1,000,000	4	10.0
	<u>40</u>	<u>100%</u>

Table 7

Per-pupil cost of special needs programs, calculated from reported program cost and reported average daily attendance/membership. Plausible base figures available from 35 programs.

<u>Per-Pupil Cost Range</u>	<u>Number of Programs</u>	<u>Percent of Programs</u>
\$0 - \$99	1	2.9%
\$100 - \$249	5	14.3
\$250 - \$499	3	8.6
\$500 - \$749	6	17.1
\$750 - \$999	6	17.1
\$1000 - \$1249	5	14.3
\$1250 - \$1499	3	8.6
\$1500 - \$1749	1	2.9
\$1750 - \$1999	1	2.9
\$2000 - \$2249	2	5.7
\$2250 - \$2499	0	0.0
\$2500 - \$2749	2	5.7
	<u>35</u>	<u>100%</u>

Local Special Needs Administrators were asked to "enter in the blanks the approximate percentage of the program's operating budget for the current year (not capital, such as buildings) derived from each of the sources, for SPECIAL NEEDS programs ONLY." Of the many possible ways to display the responses, Table 8 is one of the more complex, but also one of the more complete. A somewhat different view is provided by Table 9, in which the majority support source for the programs is tallied.

Vocational education itself is the major source of funding in most of the programs. All of the programs for which this information is given are able to report that half or more of their operating budget comes from a single source. Seven programs are 100 percent funded by vocational education, two by general education and one by a federal grant. (It is interesting that five programs report no support from vocational education funds, although it should be recalled that every program was designated as exemplary by its State Special Needs Administrator in vocational education.) From these facts, it can be inferred that most of the programs would be considered vocational education in nature and the administrator would relate to vocational education guidelines in most instances.

The respondents were also asked, "is any part of your Special Needs program provided to students in a nonschool public facility such as a sheltered workshop or rehabilitation center, AND the fee paid by the public school, not by vocational rehabilitation?" This question was included in order to get some idea of the extent to which community facilities are used under the fiscal responsibility of the public school. It was not expected that there would be many such programs found, but all 43 responding programs replied to this question and 18 of them (42 percent) answered "Yes." Although the respondents cannot be considered representative of local Special Needs programs in general, and although the selection process is likely to have favored those programs which use community organizations most frequently, the high rate of "Yes" responses is noteworthy. It indicates that schools can and sometimes do discharge their responsibility by purchase as well as provision of service.

#### CLIENTELE

Size of Student Body. The Local Special Needs Administrator was asked the number of students who were the recipients of the Special Needs program. The responses are shown in Table 10.

At least one and perhaps two of the programs reporting more than 1,000 special needs students may have misunderstood the question,

Table 8

Responses to the request for "the approximate percentages of the program's operating budget for the current year (not capital, such as buildings) derived from each of the specified sources, for SPECIAL NEEDS program ONLY."

Reported Percentage.	Number citing sources* in each percentage range						
	GE <sup>1</sup>	VE <sup>2</sup>	SE <sup>3</sup>	VR <sup>4</sup>	Pvt <sup>5</sup>	FG <sup>6</sup>	0 <sup>7</sup>
zero %	21	5	22	27	36	30	33
1 - 10%	4	5	4	6	1	2	2
10 - 25%	3	3	6	3	1	4	1
26 - 50%	8	7	7	2	0	0	3
51 - 75%	1	8	0	1	1	0	0
76 - 90%	2	3	2	0	0	2	0
91 - 99%	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
100%	2	7	0	0	0	1	0

\*Sources:

- <sup>1</sup>GE = General education; local tax levy and state aids including foundation aids.
- <sup>2</sup>VE = Vocational education; local tax levy for vocational education and state vocational education aids, including the federal nongrant monies provided through the state.
- <sup>3</sup>SE = Special education; local tax levy for special education and state special education aids.
- <sup>4</sup>VR = Vocational rehabilitation; include program aid contributions and direct fees paid to the SCHOOL, do not include payments made to the client.
- <sup>5</sup>Pvt = Contributions from private sources including nonprofit organizations.
- <sup>6</sup>FG = Federal GRANTS; include only those grants for which application has been made directly to the federal government.
- <sup>7</sup>0 = Other sources (to be defined by the respondent).

Table 9

Respondents indicating that half or more of their operating budget for the current year comes from each of the indicated sources.

<u>Source</u>	<u>Proportion of Programs</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
General education	8	20.5%
Vocational education	23	59.0
Special education	2	5.1
Vocational rehabilitation	1	2.6
Private contributions	1	2.6
Federal grants	3	7.7
Other	1	2.6
	<u>39</u>	<u>100%</u>

Table 10

Number of "students who are in either average daily attendance or average daily membership in SPECIAL NEEDS programs" as reported by 39 programs.

<u>Number of Students</u>	<u>Number of Programs</u>	<u>Percent of Programs</u>
0 - 49	8	20.5%
50 - 99	5	12.8
100 - 149	10	25.6
150 - 199	5	12.8
200 - 299	1	2.6
300 - 399	4	10.3
400 - 499	0	0.0
500 - 999	3	7.7
1000 - +	3	7.7
	<u>39</u>	<u>100%</u>

in spite of the emphasis lent by setting "SPECIAL NEEDS" in capital letters. Collateral information implies that at least one program reported all of the vocational education students. In the main, however, the responses appear to be plausible. Over one-third of the programs are in the 100-200 pupil range. On the other hand, one-fifth of the programs had fewer than 50 students, and several have more than 300. The range is wide enough to present a variety of administrative requirements.

Student Age Levels. The age levels of the students were requested. The respondents were to "enter in the blanks the approximate percentage of the SPECIAL NEEDS students who are at the following levels in your program." The figures, broken down by elementary, junior, senior, post-secondary, and adult levels are shown in Table 11.

Although the age breakdown was intended to reflect the official categorization of vocational education students, marginal notes by some of the respondents indicate that they had trouble distinguishing between post-secondary students to age 21, and adult students over age 21. Nevertheless, the pattern in Table 11 is clear: the heaviest program loading is at the senior high school level, with the next highest being junior high. The one program with 100 percent adult student body is a vocational follow-up program. In age level as well as the other characteristics, the reporting programs show a good deal of variety.

Causes of Need. By definition, students with special needs are handicapped and/or disadvantaged. The respondents were furnished with a glossary defining those terms and were asked to indicate "the approximate percentages of the students in your program who have the stated characteristics of special needs." Table 12 shows their responses.

The expected scatter is found among student bodies categorized as handicapped, disadvantaged, and both disadvantaged/handicapped. It is interesting, however, that several programs have students who are neither handicapped nor disadvantaged, and four programs report that the majority of their student body do not have either of these characteristics. Approximately half of the programs report that some of their students are both handicapped and disadvantaged.

## CONCLUSIONS

A great deal of variety is evidenced by the local Special Needs programs reported here. It can be confidently said that at least the reported amount of variety exists throughout the nation.

Table 11

Age level distribution of students in the 43 special needs programs.

<u>Age Level</u>	<u>Number Programs With Given Percents</u>				
	<u>Zero</u>	<u>1 - 10%</u>	<u>11 - 89%</u>	<u>90 - 99%</u>	<u>100%</u>
Elementary	35	3	4	0	1
Junior high (7, 8, 9)	16	6	21	1	1
Senior high (10, 11, 12)	6	2	26	4	5
Post-secondary to age 21	29	9	5	0	0
Adult over age 21	33	3	6	0	1

Table 12

Types of students' special needs reported by the 43 programs. Respondents reported the percentage of their enrollment for each "cause-characteristic" of need.

Cause-Characteristic	Each Number Reporting in Percentage Range					
	Zero	1 - 10%	11 - 49%	50 - 89%	90 - 99%	100%
Handicapped only	12	7	6	9	1	8
Disadvantaged only	17	3	11	6	1	5
Both disadvantaged and handicapped	22	8	7	4	1	1
Neither handicapped nor disadvantaged	35	3	1	4	0	0

Note: Nineteen programs, 44.2%, state that their figures are from an existing report rather than an estimate.

These programs are typically under the direction of a Local Special Needs Administrator (LSNA). His primary identity is normally in vocational education, although there is substantial participation by other agencies such as general education, special education, and vocational rehabilitation.

There is a good deal of variation in both the size and composition of the student bodies, as well as in the sizes and sources of financial support for special needs programming.

Administrative structures are heterogeneous. Not only is there variation in apparent autonomy of the Local Special Needs Administrators, but they work in a variety of organizational superstructures. Again, while vocational education is an apparent administrative focal point, responsibility is frequently held by special and general education as well. The use of community resource seems to have practical significance.

It is a separate question, subject to further investigation, as to what competencies are required to effectively administer these programs and what competencies were brought to the job by the incumbents. Tally of additional information furnished by these respondents, together with more representative sampling and more quantifiable questions, will be profitable in clarifying the competencies required by the local administrator of special needs programs in vocational education.