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ABSTRACT

To meet the challenge of effective instructional support, districts should develop and implement policies governing remedial education that are tailored to the needs of students and the resources of their local communities. An overview of state and federal remedial education programs is provided. Varying combinations of factors within and outside the school environment shape student academic performance. Eligibility for existing remedial instruction programs should be based on careful assessment of a broad range of student skills and abilities. A number of instructional support models can be implemented to increase student academic gain: (1) pullout model; (2) in-class model; (3) supplementary programs; (4) replacement programs; (5) summer programs; (6) early intervention and family-centered learning; and (7) accelerated school. A summary of recommendations prefaces the booklet, and a sample remedial instruction policy statement is appended. (45 references) (SI)

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# All Children Can Learn

## The Challenge of Remedial Education



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*A Position Paper of the*  
**New York State  
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# All Children Can Learn

## The Challenge of Remedial Education



*A Position Paper of the*  
**New York State**  
**School Boards Association**

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# Summary of Recommendations

1. School boards should recognize their important role in the delivery of instructional support.
2. Federal and state funding regulations should give districts the flexibility to choose from and provide a variety of instructional support models, tailored to the needs of students and the resources of their local communities.
3. Schools should be held accountable for overall achievement and be allowed to develop programs within general parameters, replicating and modifying effective program models.
4. District achievement gains should be rewarded with decreased state requirements for program reporting and monitoring.
5. Scheduling requirements contained in the Commissioner's Regulations, Part 100, should not hinder the effort to adequately prepare non-college bound youth for the workplace, meaningful employment, and responsible citizenship.
6. Remedial program goals must include raising student achievement to grade level and returning students to the regular classroom.
7. Students should be assessed carefully to determine whether they are in need of special education services and/or in need of remedial programs.
8. District policies and remedial program eligibility criteria should require assessment that is based on more than just PEP test scores and standardized test percentile cutoffs. Teacher and principal referrals should be based on appraisals of a broad range of student aptitudes, abilities and skills.
9. District policies should promote the development of varied programs matched to student needs.
10. Factors other than student deficit should be considered when exploring the causes of academic difficulty and developing and prescribing remedial or special education programs.
11. Students who are eligible for remedial programs should receive a gamut of services to promote the social, emotional and physical health necessary for effective learning.
12. Program evaluation should center on educational outcomes. Programs that show significant student academic gain should be embraced, while those that do not should be discarded.
13. Early intervention during pre-kindergarten and primary grades often decreases the need for extensive instructional support in later grades and should be incorporated into district remedial programs.
14. Remedial education programs should address the variety of student learning styles.

15. Districts should recognize the special needs of the student with limited English proficiency.
16. Board policies should incorporate, to the extent possible, volunteers, parents, aides, assistants and peers into the instructional support process to increase individualized attention and support for children with special educational needs.
17. Collaborative consultation among regular teachers and remedial specialists, whether informal or formal, can facilitate the effective delivery of remedial instruction in the classroom.
18. Content area specialists can most effectively use their skills to broaden the ranks of those equipped to assist students in need of instructional support.
19. Lead or master teachers with experience in remedial strategies should be involved in inservice training and consultation.
20. Schools with bilingual student populations should actively recruit bilingual personnel, in order to increase the number of positive role models for these students and decrease the possibility of misdiagnosis of LEP students.
21. Common branch, or elementary and secondary teachers should receive preservice and inservice training based on effective methodologies for learning improvement.
22. District policy should ensure that parents are an integral part of the educational process.



## Introduction

**A**ll children can learn. The often hidden potential in every child *can* be tapped. High achievers who once were low achieving students at risk of failure to complete school can be found in schools, colleges and workplaces across New York State and the nation. Often the most effective recipe for ensuring student success combines talented and enthusiastic teachers committed to improving student achievement and a school philosophy based on rules and challenging courses.

For many students, supplemental instructional support can make the difference between success and failure. Most students need and benefit from additional instructional help at some time during their school careers. School district programs that offer extra instructional support encompass federal, state and local initiatives and a multitude of models of delivery.

### What is Remediation?

Instructional support can run the gamut from a few minutes of extra teacher assistance to informal tutoring arrangements to structured remedial education programs. Remediation, according to the New York State Education Commissioner's regulations, is defined as instruction using materials and techniques specifically designed to meet the individual instructional needs of students who are identified by the classroom teacher or principal as having "basic skill deficiencies," or who score below the state reference point on competency tests.<sup>1</sup>

Remedial education is often referred to as compensatory education, the term derived from the initiatives of many programs to compensate for student educational disadvantage.

### **Local School District Policies: The Crucial Ingredient**

While support for traditional remedial programs is provided by federal and state compensatory education aid, student needs must be met at the *local level*. Studies have shown clearly positive results from the development and implementation of school district policies on services to children with special educational needs.<sup>2</sup>

District policies determine the integration, collaboration and coherence of instructional programs for students (see Appendix A for sample policy). District and building decisions shape the design of instructional support and determine the coherence of instruction from site to site. District policies can encourage collaborative planning and can effectively integrate regular, remedial and special education.<sup>3</sup> Absence of policy increases the fragmentation of services and decreases the effectiveness of efforts to educate all children well.

While there has been a substantial increase since the early 1980s in the proportion of students scoring above the State Reference Point (SRP)—a minimum standard of competency on the New York State Pupil Evaluation Program (PEP) tests—the challenge of providing effective instructional support still remains. In 1988, 17 percent of third grade students, and 20 percent of sixth grade students scored below the SRP, on the PEP test in reading. In math, nine percent in third grade and 16 percent in sixth grade fell below the SRP. On the fifth grade writing test, one of every ten students failed to meet the minimum standard.<sup>4</sup>

To meet this challenge, districts should develop and implement policies governing remedial education that are tailored to the needs of students and the resources of their local communities. Federal and state funding regulations should give districts the flexibility to explore a variety of avenues to student success.

## **Overview of State and Federal Remedial Education Programs**

### **The Federal Initiative**

While several urban programs to improve academic achievement of disadvantaged youth were initiated during the 1950s, major national

commitment to compensatory education began with the enactment of federal legislation during President Johnson's War on Poverty. Signed into law in 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act targeted funds to economically deprived areas for the provision of services to those students with low achievement levels.

Title 1 funding, based on the correlation between conditions of poverty and low academic achievement, also incorporated into its funding structure support for students regardless of family income.<sup>5</sup> While federal funds were distributed to school districts based on the number of families living below the poverty level, Title 1 programs were to be provided to all students performing below a certain percentile on districtwide pupil assessments.

Title 1 continued as Chapter 1 with the enactment of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act in 1982. The Augustus F. Hawkins-Robert T. Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments of 1988 reauthorized Chapter 1 until 1993.

In the reauthorization, provisions include a five percent set aside for innovative projects at the local level and concentration grants to districts with high numbers or percentages of economically disadvantaged students. In districts in which 75 percent or more of the students are from low-income households, Chapter 1 funds may be used for schoolwide programs.

Chapter 1 mandates that remedial education services be provided equitably to public and nonpublic school students. The 1985 United States Supreme Court ruling in *Aguilar v. Felton* stated that funds could no longer be used to provide remedial services on sectarian school premises. The resulting additional costs for neutral sites, transportation, and related services decreased district funds for actual instruction.

Although New York State provides aid to districts to help meet the additional expenses which are a result of the *Aguilar* decision, there has been a reduction in nonpublic students served by Chapter 1 programs. If a student attends private school in a different district, the district of residence must agree with the school district in which the nonpublic school is located to provide services.<sup>6</sup> In New York City, mobile instructional units provide the required neutral sites. However, regardless of district arrangements for compliance with the *Aguilar* decision, more students are served when teachers go into the schools than when students are sent to outside programs.

## State Remediation Programs

State aid, which began as the State Urban Education Program targeting 12 cities, expanded to all districts in 1974 under the Pupils With Special Education Needs (PSEN) program. Unlike federal aid for compensatory education, state aid is not determined by poverty levels but by district scores on state required PEP tests.

***“State policies require that mathematics and language arts remediation supplement, rather than displace, regular instruction with no resultant reduction in units of study in English or mathematics.”***

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Initially, the program provided services to students who performed two or more years below grade level. Commissioner's regulations later amended the program to target students failing to attain the statewide reference point on state competency assessment or students referred by teachers or principals as in need of instructional support. Low performing schools that do not show sufficient improvement in student achievement may be required to implement state-approved approaches to remediation. In this case, remedial education plans are reviewed by the State Education Department.

Part 100 regulations, the embodiment of the Regents Action Plan, ensure that children who score below the SRP on PEP tests, or who fail Regents competency tests, will receive remedial education to enable them to score above the SRP or to pass the competency tests prior to graduation. Commissioner's regulations contain provisions for coordinating remedial and regular classroom instruction and notifying parents.

In grades seven and eight, time requirements may be reduced but not eliminated in subjects other than English or mathematics, to allow time for remedial instruction. State policies require that mathematics and language arts remediation supplement, rather than displace, regular instruction with no resultant reduction in units of study in English or mathematics. Language arts (reading and writing) remediation, if given within the English course, also may take the form of individual instruction.<sup>7</sup>

State funding for remedial education again expanded in 1987 with a new apportionment that provided the “Big Five” cities (New York City, Yonkers, Buffalo, Rochester and Syracuse) with aid for Pupils With Compensatory Educational Needs (PCEN). Its purpose is to expand services to students in the state's largest urban areas.<sup>8</sup> PSEN funds are distributed to all districts based on the number of students scoring below the SRP on PEP reading and math tests administered

at the third and sixth grades, while Part 100 funding is distributed to the selected city school districts based on a legislatively mandated formula.

Among proposals for change in state remedial program funding is that aid increases should be based on "economic and social disadvantage," rather than solely on educational outcomes.<sup>9</sup> The extension of PCEN and PSEN remedial services to students enrolled in kindergarten also has been proposed. At present, these funds are used for programs serving students in grades one to 12.

## **Impact of Mandated Remediation Programs**

To date, no evaluations of Regents Action Plan implementation have examined specifically the success or failure of mandated approaches to remediation. School districts continue to be concerned about the cumulative effect on students, especially in grades seven and eight, of having to participate in remedial programs while trying to fulfill relatively heavy regular course schedules. The potential impact, ranging from stress and lowered self-esteem, to dropping out at age 16 or before, needs careful, longitudinal assessment.

As one specific illustration of changes wrought by Part 100 regulations for remediation in the middle grades, the 1986 New York State School Boards Association's survey on Educational Trends in the Middle Grades revealed that the remedial program scheduling policy typically has resulted in course time reductions in technology in 10 percent of responding schools, and in home and career skills in 12 percent of the schools.<sup>10</sup>

For students who may not plan to enter college, occupational and technological training at the secondary level is especially important. The final report of the William T. Grant Foundation Commission on Work, Family and Citizenship, entitled *The Forgotten Half*, stresses that non-college bound youth must be adequately prepared for the workplace, for meaningful employment and responsible citizenship.<sup>11</sup> State regulations and policies should not hinder that effort.

Concerns with current funding structures center on the lack of incentives for excellence. There is no incentive for schools to provide more than the minimum amount of time for remediation. Districts receive full funding for a required minimum 90 minutes-per-week in each remediated area. The arbitrary use of the State Reference Point to determine success discourages program flexibility, and schools may lose hundreds of thousands of dollars when they succeed in bringing students up to the minimum level of competence.

Clearly, schools with students most in need of assistance should be assured adequate funding while at the same time, those schools whose students do improve must continue to receive the funding necessary to sustain the gains. Alternatives to current cutoff points include a "save harmless" model, in which funding for remedial programs would

be reduced by a small percentage or not at all, and various fiscal mechanisms to reward success.

Chapter 1 provisions set aside up to five percent of support for innovations in remedial programming. This support may be used to continue services for children whose improvement traditionally would disqualify them for remedial services in order to sustain their gains.

Schools should be held accountable for overall achievement, yet be allowed to develop programs within general parameters, replicating and modifying effective program models. District achievement gains also should be rewarded with decreased state requirements for program reporting and monitoring.

## **Causes of Differing Student Performance**

**T**he inherent contradictions in the allocation of aid result, in part, from differing perceptions of who is most in need of compensatory education and the causes of that need. It is unrealistic to make broad generalizations when considering the causes of differing student achievement levels. Varying combinations of factors within and outside of the school environment shape student academic performance.

Changing family and social structures, increasing levels of poverty, and homelessness are associated with less than ideal learning conditions. Presently, 25 percent of children in New York State live below the poverty level. It is estimated that there are 16,000 homeless children in the state, more than half older than six years of age.<sup>12</sup> The ability to learn suffers when children are hungry and lack adequate clothing and shelter.

Other factors also may contribute to the need for additional instructional support. These include transience, physiological and perceptual disabilities, limited English proficiency and differing student learning styles.

Transience, symptomatic of a society on the move, often creates problems for students. Enrolling in a new district, a student may need instructional support to "catch up" to fellow students.

Part 100 regulations require screening of transfer students in grades four, five, seven, and eight to assess the need for remediation in reading and mathematics. Students entering schools at grades six, seven, or eight are tested for competency in writing. Within a school district, compensatory educational needs also are often created when students

***“It is difficult to ascertain the exact cause of a particular learning disability. A more immediate issue for educators is the identification of learning disabled students and the provision of appropriate instructional support for those students.”***

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move from one program to another or from one grade level or building to another.

Learning difficulties can be caused by physiological and perceptual disabilities. Disabilities have a number of possible causes including genetic factors, injury, chemical imbalance, or effects of the environment. It is difficult to ascertain the exact cause of a particular learning disability. A more immediate issue for educators is the identification of learning disabled students and the provision of appropriate instructional support for those students.

Special attention should be paid to the increasing number of students with limited English proficiency (LEP). According to the 1980 census, more than 17 percent of school age children speak a language other than English at home. More than half of those children are Spanish-speaking. LaFontaine, in his study of the educational challenges of the LEP student, states that programs requiring quick transitions to “all English” result in overrepresentation of such students in special education and remedial programs and underrepresentation in gifted and talented programs. Further, he notes that lack of English proficiency often is mistakenly equated with low cognitive ability.<sup>13</sup>

However, one cannot attribute a student’s academic ability entirely to forces outside the school. Academic performance variation also can be attributed to the tendency to fit students to one-dimensional programs, rather than accommodating the diversity of student learning styles.

A particular learning style can be a combination of cognitive, motivational and psychological elements. These elements affect student information processing, persistence and adaptation to work environments.<sup>14</sup> A variety of student aptitudes should be assessed and academic programs should be adapted to students who may learn more effectively through movement, visual representation and verbal

communication, or who may learn at varying levels of persistence and adaptability to their surroundings.

Once scientists and researchers sought a single cause for learning differences; recent thought centers on a broader view, recognizing the complex interaction of personal, social, and educational factors. By recognizing and building support programs to address the variety of student needs, schools can educate and improve the lives of students.

## Eligibility Criteria

**E**ligibility for existing remedial instruction programs should be based on careful assessment of a broad range of student skills and abilities. In the late 1970s, New York State put into place the Regents Competency Testing Program that set statewide standards for student performance. As a result, increased focus was placed on students who fall short of state-established competencies. The PEP tests and many standardized tests used by districts to determine eligibility for state PSEN/PCEN and Chapter 1 programs are limited, however, to math, reading and writing skill assessment. Eligibility, as well as school accountability, should not be based on narrowly defined assessments.

A frequent criticism of remedial programs is that the student is viewed as deficient. Stereotyping should be avoided when identifying those students most in need of instructional assistance. Selection for remedial and special education may stigmatize students, beginning a cycle of declining self-esteem and expectation.

Programs that segregate slower learners often inadvertently label those children. Special programs should be evaluated carefully to avoid unnecessary and irrelevant labeling. Addressing concerns with labeling, a panel of the National Academy of Sciences recommends that placement teams, in this case for special education, ". . . demonstrate that any differential label used is related to a distinctive prescription for education practices . . . that lead to improved outcomes."<sup>15</sup>

Ironically, once a student is put in remediation or special education programs, there is often the perception that the student *won't* achieve. Frequently, students remain in remedial programs throughout their school careers. Program goals must include raising student achievement to grade level and returning students to the regular classroom.

Students must be carefully assessed to determine whether they are learning disabled and/or in need of remedial programs. While students in need of remediation are identified by performance on PEP and standardized tests, or by teacher or principal referral, under

federal legislation, students with mildly handicapping conditions or learning disabilities are identified by the committee on special education (CSE).

The CSE is a multidisciplinary team mandated to include a school psychologist, teacher or administrator of special education, school physician, and parents. Students so identified for special education services are also eligible for remedial support. Remedial programs can be recommended as part of a student's individualized education program (IEP), but cannot be mandated. Initiatives to provide the "least restrictive environment" enable special education students to be part of the regular classroom, to be educated with their peers, to a degree appropriate to their abilities.

Too often, however, distinctions between "learning disabled" and those in need of remediation are ambiguous. That ambiguity may result in misplacement of students. With the development of more sophisticated methods of diagnosing handicapping conditions, the probability of misdiagnosis will diminish.

Districts should be aware of the special needs of the student with limited English proficiency (LEP). Of the five percent of New York's public school population receiving LEP instruction, many need remedial assistance legitimately. New York State schools offer two types of LEP programs: a full bilingual program and the English as a second language (ESL) method that offers intensive English instruction and content-area instruction in English. Students are selected for these programs through standardized evaluations.

Students who need remediation are identified by failure to score above the statewide reference point or by teacher referral. The challenge is to appropriately balance remediation and instruction in English. Curricular requirements at the state level should be flexible enough to accommodate the needs of students with diverse educational needs. Reports on Chapter 1 programs recommend that districts establish comprehensive policies to ensure that students eligible for more than one program are appropriately assigned.<sup>16</sup>

School districts, when establishing and reshaping remedial and special education policies, should reassess perceptions of the sources of student performance. Factors other than student deficit should be considered when exploring the causes of academic difficulty and developing and prescribing remedial or special education programs.

With the variety of placement options and support services available, educators can ensure that all children with special educational needs receive appropriate instructional assistance. Options range from special classes for students with severe handicapping conditions to the New York State Educationally Related Support Services Program, which provides aid for a number of short-term support services to maintain nonhandicapped student placement in a regular classroom.

It is crucial that districts have comprehensive policies for determining student eligibility and assigning students to the appropriate program or combination of programs.

Policies should require assessment that is based on more than just PEP test scores and standardized test percentile cutoffs. Teacher and principal referrals should be based on appraisals of a broad range of student aptitudes. Policies should promote the development and subsequent assignment of programs matched to student needs.

## Models for Learning

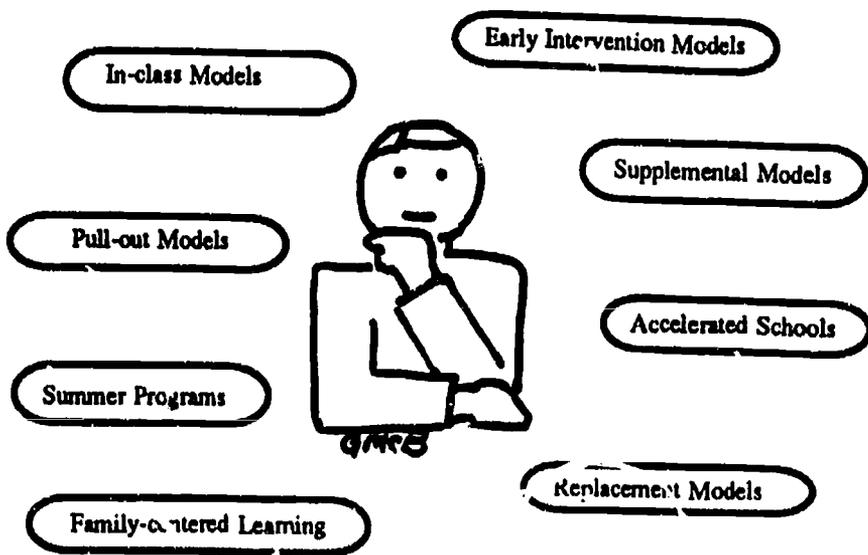
**D**etermining which of an array of instructional support models to implement can be a challenging experience for educators. Evaluation should center on the educational effects of the programs. Is student improvement truly significant? Programs which show significant student academic gain should be embraced, while those that do not should be discarded.

Remedial education programs should be more than just academically oriented. Eligible students should receive a gamut of services to promote social, emotional, and physical health ensuring the personal well-being necessary to learn effectively. To adequately serve students with special educational needs, all aspects of schooling must be integrated, not fragmented.

A number of program models have been developed, partially in response to state and federal funding requirements. Early in the history of American education, the teacher and older, more advanced, students provided extra instructional support. With the onset of federal- and state-funded remedial programs, models were shaped to ensure that only eligible students were served. These were the origins of the pull-out model, the most prevalent form of remediation, in which students leave the classroom to receive supplemental instruction.

### The Pull-out Model

Research is mixed on the advantages of the pull-out model. Although pull-out remedial programs may result in small instructional groups and high staff-to-student ratios, the negative effects include decreased instructional time, fragmentation of instruction, stigma and decreased expectations, lack of communication between teacher and remedial instructor, segregation (a greater percentage of minority students receive compensatory education) and lack of a strong achievement oriented school climate.<sup>17</sup> Some studies have shown few differences in outcome when comparing pull-out and in-class models of remediation.<sup>18</sup>



## In-class Models

Proponents of in-class models assert that effective instruction occurs when children learn with a group of peers. Many of the negative effects of pull-out models are avoided. Self-esteem is bolstered when students are not stigmatized by programs that isolate them from their classmates. Classroom expectations are more likely to apply to *all* students.

Other benefits of in-class arrangements are increased and less fragmented instructional time for all students. In-class arrangements have been found to be less costly than traditional pull-out models.<sup>19</sup> Results of studies indicate that cooperative learning and peer tutoring successfully increase student achievement in heterogeneous groupings, benefiting *all* students, not just those in need of instructional assistance.

Robert Slavin, in his work at the Johns Hopkins University Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools, found that continuous-progress models, in which students work in small, mixed-ability groups, produced gains of 50 to 100 percent more in grade equivalents than traditional classes and at considerably less cost per pupil.<sup>20</sup>

Another variation of in-class instructional models is the use of remedial specialists as consultant teachers, assisting the regular classroom teacher in the delivery of instructional support. An amendment to the Commissioner's regulations in 1988 authorized committees on special education to recommend consultant teacher services as part of a student's IEP. While the regulations refer specifically to special education for children with handicapping conditions, collaborative con-

sultation among regular teachers and remedial specialists, whether formal or informal, can facilitate the effective delivery of remedial instruction in the classroom.<sup>21</sup>

### **Supplementary Programs**

Intensive supplementary programs also have proven effective. Supplementary models include preventative tutoring, in which specially trained tutors work with at-risk first graders, and remedial tutoring, in which adult one-on-one volunteers or older students provide extra help to students. Computer-assisted instruction is another effective model. Tutoring and computer instruction also fit within Chapter 1 guidelines that limit funded services to eligible students.

### **Replacement Programs**

Some schools implement "replacement" programs, which provide separate classes for a given subject, or in some cases, separate schools, for Title 1 students. Replacement programs also may "replace" the traditional classroom arrangements with programs which integrate a variety of remedial methodologies, draw on the skills of all teachers to remediate and serve a more heterogenous group of students.

The Kansas City School District developed Project Alternative Rooms (PAR) for its Chapter 1 eligible schools. Basic skills instruction is provided to a homogeneous group of Chapter 1 eligible students. Classes are restricted in size and are team taught, maintaining a high degree of teacher-student interaction.<sup>22</sup>

Variations on replacement models can be found in districts across New York State. At the Roosevelt Academy in Buffalo and in the Livonia School District, programs feature heterogenous groupings of students, reduced teacher-student ratios, team teaching arrangements that include shared responsibility for remediation and individualized instruction.<sup>23</sup>

### **Summer Programs**

Summer programs, particularly for students in transition from elementary to junior high school or from junior high to high school, have been successful. Scott Thomson, executive director of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, found that "... there is a tendency for slow learners to be fast forgetters" pointing to academic losses of 60 to 70 percent over the summer months."<sup>24</sup>

In Fresno, Calif., a middle school summer program combines computerized remediation with work experiences. A study of the Summer Training and Employment Program (STEP) revealed that students had higher reading and math scores at the end of the summer than a similar group that had summer jobs but no remediation.<sup>25</sup>

Project SMART (Summer Math and Reading Tasks) provides

instructional support to Buffalo students in third through sixth grades. Students complete weekly assignments at home and receive computer printouts charting their achievements. Dial-A-Teacher is available to assist students as they progress through reading and math activities.<sup>26</sup>

### **Early Intervention and Family-centered Learning**

Broad programs that focus on family learning and that employ various means of early intervention show great promise. Early intervention, during pre-kindergarten and primary grades, often decreases the need for extensive instructional support in later grades.

Federally-funded Even Start provides grants to local education agencies to develop model programs that simultaneously educate pre-school children and their parents. Family-centered projects are intended to “. . . help parents become full partners in the education of their children, . . . assist children in reaching their full potential as learners, and . . . provide literacy training for their parents.”<sup>27</sup>

The New York State Primary Mental Health Project focuses its efforts on children in grades pre-K through three in an attempt to reduce later academic failure and behavior problems. Systematic screening identifies those students exhibiting early school adjustment problems. Child aides, supervised by a school psychologist or social worker, provide extra attention and support to ease the transition from home to the requirements of school.

### **The Accelerated School**

Taking a different approach, Henry M. Levin and his associates at Stanford University have developed a model for “accelerated” schools. The model emphasizes high expectations and rather than slowing the pace for learners, attempts to bring all children up to grade level by sixth grade.

The accelerated school is a transitional school. Students are expected to enter regular secondary school on schedule with their peers. The program integrates parent and community resources and features an extended day during which extracurricular activities take place and college and senior citizen volunteers assist individual students.<sup>28</sup>

## Remediation Methods

**W**hile opinion is mixed on the effects of program setting,<sup>29</sup> instructional design and methodology and the quality of the remediation curriculum do affect student achievement. Studies have shown that the quantity of high quality instruction decreases, rather than increases, in many remedial programs. Researchers have found that remediation teaching methodology often involves blanket, rather than individualized, instruction with an emphasis on drill and practice seatwork.

While the effects of drill and practice exercises have been shown to diminish over time in some research studies,<sup>30</sup> there is evidence that computer-assisted instruction (CAI) programs, which also involve drill and practice, raise student achievement levels. Particularly when used as a supplement to regular instruction, CAI has been effective, most notably with low-achieving students.<sup>31</sup>

In reading remediation, a variety of methodologies should be integrated. Those methods may include reading for meaning, decoding skills, sustained silent reading, and various forms of practice and reinforcement exercises. Remediation in math also should involve creative problem-solving and hands-on activities with concrete materials, along with practice exercises. The goals of federal and state compensatory programs emphasize the development of more advanced skills.

Remedial education programs should address a variety of learning styles. Remedial instruction usually involves smaller teacher/student ratios and supplemental instruction more readily adjustable to individual learning styles.

Many students learn well through movement, visual representation, verbal communication and by means other than the narrow drill and practice, skill orientation of some remedial education methods. Given the diversity among children with special needs, programs should offer truly individualized instruction, which draws on a variety of teaching methodologies.

An example of a program that integrates art and remedial reading is Learning to Read Through the Arts, serving elementary and junior high students in New York City. Artists and teachers work with cultural institutions to develop art activities that also focus on improvement of reading skills. Activities are planned on an individualized basis, geared to the reading level of each student.<sup>32</sup>

Along with content, the time spent learning affects achievement. Researchers have explored the relationship between achievement and learning time.<sup>33</sup> In studies of mastery learning, it was found that all students could learn required skills. Students differed, however, in the amount of time needed to master the prescribed tasks. It fol-

lows that achievement gains made by remediation can be achieved, at least partially, by extra time devoted to learning content in the regular classroom.

Remedial instruction, in its many forms, can be a powerful and adaptable technique in furthering academic development. Efforts at the state level and revisions in the 1988 reauthorization of Chapter 1 are expanding delivery model options and encouraging innovation at the local level. It is hoped that this trend continues. Schools should have the flexibility to choose from and provide a variety of models, tailored to the needs of students.

## Who Can Help?

**F**or student performance to improve, a concerted effort must be made by professional educators, school board members, parents, community volunteers, and peers.

As with the Primary Mental Health and Even Start programs described earlier, support can be provided by varying mixes of professional and paraprofessional personnel, as well as parents and volunteers. The overriding prerequisite for specialists, aides, parents and community volunteers is that they be concerned, caring and committed.

Board policies should state an intent to bring volunteers, parents, aides, assistants and peers into the instructional support process so that individualized attention and support for children with special educational needs can be increased.

Under state regulation, remedial programs are conducted by specialists and non-specialists depending on the content area. Remedial reading teachers at the elementary level must be certified in reading. There are no requirements for math remediation at the elementary level and this may be done by a common branch teacher.

At the secondary level, teachers of remedial reading and math must be certified in those speciality areas. For remediation in writing, required by New York State for those students scoring below the state reference point on the fifth grade writing PEP test, there is no requirement for special certification at the elementary level. In secondary school, remediation in writing is delivered by certified English or reading teachers.

The idea of providing remedial specialists in all content areas is gaining support with some educators. The specialists then would assist teachers and students to enhance learning. However, specialist teachers can help only a limited number of students. Content area special-

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ists can most effectively use their skills to broaden the ranks of those equipped to assist students in need of instructional support.

However, all instructional support need not be conducted by specially trained teachers. Alternatives that have proven effective often employ older students who demonstrate academic gains themselves as a result of the tutoring experience.

Community members are paired with elementary school students who have been identified by their teachers as needing remediation through the L.O.V.E. (Lending Our Valuable Experience) volunteer program in Bangor, Pa. The local Chapter 1 coordinator finds the most impressive achievement to be the change in student attitude when someone makes a commitment to that student's success.<sup>34</sup>

Adequate preparation is crucial for those engaged in improving student performance. Both common branch, and elementary and secondary teachers should receive preservice and inservice training based on effective methodologies for learning improvement. Lead or master teachers with experience in remedial strategies should be actively involved in inservice teaching and consultation. Teachers who are familiar with the diversity of student learning styles and the resulting needs are less likely to make inappropriate referrals.

Studies affirm the great impact of teachers on student learning success.<sup>35</sup> A teacher's expectation can depress or motivate student performance. Teachers are powerful role models for young children. Schools with bilingual student populations should actively recruit bilingual personnel, thereby increasing the numbers of positive role models for students while decreasing the possibility of misdiagnosis of LEP students because of poor communication.

Collaboration among specialists, lead or master teachers, and classroom teachers who reflect community diversity will increase the

effectiveness of classroom instruction, decreasing the need for programs that separate low and high performing students.

Parents are an important factor in student academic achievement. Parents can reinforce learning, help prevent learning loss during the summer months, and successfully guide their children to greater achievement.

The use of parents in instructional support programs benefits both children and parents. In a project sponsored by City College of New York and a New York City elementary school, semi-literate parents are taught how to tutor their children. Both parents and children demonstrated improvement.<sup>36</sup>

Unlike parents of special education students who have clearly defined roles under Public Law 94-142, parents of students in remedial programs have few legal or procedural guarantees. However, Chapter 1 legislation has expanded parental involvement, including requirements for parent meetings at least once a year and parent consultation in the design and implementation of programs. Commissioner's regulations governing PSEN/PCEN funded programs require the inclusion in the district plan of procedures for parent notification of student eligibility and subsequent semi-annual progress reports.

District policy should ensure that parents are an integral part of the educational process. The 1987 New York State School Boards Association position paper, *Home-School Partnership, School Board and Parents*, recommends implementation of comprehensive parent involvement policies that "promote the complete development of children, enhance the role of the parent as primary educator and caregiver of the child, and help parents develop and use knowledge and skills that will enhance the level of families."<sup>37</sup> For students who do not have parents, school communication with foster homes and residential facilities is vital.

It is often difficult to actively engage parents in the learning process. Parents may feel their opinions are unimportant or that communication from the school is more likely to be negative than positive. Districts often fear that parent involvement will bring unreasonable demands.

Schools cannot successfully encourage parent involvement by periodically sending home announcements and notices. Schools should reach out actively and engage parents, offering informative programs designed to expand parent awareness of the learning process and to explain district policies and programs.

Parent involvement should begin in the earliest grades and *positive* home-school contact should continue throughout a student's school years. District curriculum developers should build parent roles into the curriculum.

For many parents and care-givers who work during regular school hours, taking an active role in the school is more difficult. Educa-



tional programs should be scheduled at times convenient to parents, and child care should be provided. School social events can present opportunities for increasing parent participation in the school "community." Districts that successfully encourage parent involvement gain a rich resource that is neglected too often.

## Helping All Children Learn

**P**rograms that once offered remediation in its narrowest sense are evolving into multi-service models that stress active intervention. Young children *and* their parents are the focus of family-centered early intervention strategies that seek to improve the school success of all children. New models are being tested and replicated across the country as educators explore ways to serve children with a broad range of educational needs.

Variations on pull-out, in-class, replacement and supplemental models will enable districts to shape programs that improve academic achievement, while making the best use of school and community resources. Programs that promote nurturing learning environments, engage caring and committed adults, and predicate instruction on the many ways children learn will help those who are most in need.

# Appendix

## LAMPS Sample Policy 4325

### Remedial Instruction

The Board of Education, in its commitment to providing an educational program which meets individual student needs, recognizes the importance of remedial instruction. The Board therefore directs the Superintendent of Schools to oversee the development, maintenance and evaluation of a remedial instruction program. The program will specifically address the needs of students who must be provided remedial instruction as a result of test scores on state-required tests (in compliance with the Regulations of the Commissioner), as well as the needs of all students who are having difficulty in any subject.

To determine student eligibility for such program, the Superintendent and his/her designee shall design appropriate student assessment procedures. Assessment shall be a collaborative effort involving parents, regular classroom teachers, guidance and special education personnel. Referrals may be initiated by Building Principals and/or classroom teachers, based in part on low student scores on state competency tests, but also taking into consideration a broad range of student needs.

Individual assessment shall attempt to gauge a student's need for emotional and/or physical health services, and seek to determine whether his/her academic performance has a basis in a physical or emotional handicapping condition. Student learning style and level of proficiency in speaking/reading/writing English should also be assessed. If the latter is a factor, instruction in English as a second language and/or bilingual instruction shall be provided prior to any determination regarding the need for further specialized instruction. All transferring students and new entrants shall be screened to determine their need for remedial instruction.

If a student is eligible for remedial instruction, he/she shall be assigned to a teacher trained in remedial programs, or (on the secondary level) certified in remedial instruction. Inservice training in remedial methods/programs shall be provided to all teachers periodically.

The actual instruction shall vary in approach. Meetings with trained faculty shall be scheduled during the school day, but all faculty members should be available after school hours to provide a period of help,

instruction and make-up work.\* Teachers should coordinate remedial instruction with the student's regular classwork and homework load. Teachers are encouraged to involve parents, community volunteers, teacher aides/assistants, and student peers whenever possible.

All remedial instruction programs shall be evaluated yearly. Evaluation shall be based on objective student outcomes, including test scores, classroom performance, and student behavior. When seeking to improve existing programs, the Superintendent or his/her designee shall research effective program models used by other districts in New York State and nationally. Such models shall be adapted to districts resources and needs. All program outlines shall be submitted to the Board for prior approval.

In addition, the district shall seek all applicable state and federal funding to improve its remedial instruction programs and services.

Cross-ref: 4200, Curriculum Development  
4326, Bilingual Instruction  
4720, Testing Programs

Ref: Regulations of the Commissioner Sections 100.1(g); 100.2(r);  
100.3(b); 100.4(d)(e)

*\*Note:* According to the Taylor Law, teacher availability after regular school hours is a mandatory subject for collective bargaining, and as such should be clearly negotiated prior to imposing a new policy. If current district practice already includes such an after-school help session, the policy may not need to be negotiated; however, districts should consult their school attorney on this matter.

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