There are many difficulties in categorical programs for students with special needs as they are currently implemented. The technique of 20/20 Analysis is a simple and effective method of developing an integrative service delivery system in which students who show the least and most progress on significant outcome variables receive intensive study and instruction. The analysis consists of a two-phased process. In the initial phase, teachers and administrators select an area of learning and assess the achievement of students within that area using existing data. Achievement levels for students below the 20th percentile, or above the 80th, are identified as "low 20" or "high 20" groups for whom curriculum adaptation or intensive instruction are needed. This analysis provides a systematic outcome-based approach to meeting special needs of students. It allows for a reliable and cost-effective way to identify service needs as it undoes the current practice of labeling children. Focusing on the individual needs of students and promoting collaboration among professionals are benefits of 20/20 Analysis.

Research results from elementary schools in a large urban district show that 79% of those children labeled as special education students and almost all in Chapter 1 program were in the "low 20." These results are predictive of the usefulness of 20/20 analysis. Three related publications are listed. (SLD)
Fostering Resilience and Learning Success in Schools: 20/20 Analysis by Maynard Reynolds
Current categorical programs designed to serve students with special needs are ineffective and cause a number of problems. In many schools 50% or more of all students are placed in special categorical programs at some point between grades K and 12. The time and cost involved in such categorical evaluations and placements is staggering. Major trends indicating a need for reform include: evaluation systems often place students in inappropriate programs; discrepancies exist in racial distribution within categorical programs; there is resentment and concern about child labeling; proactive efforts in preventing learning and behavior problems are lacking; federal, state, and local regulatory processes are excessive; a lack of coordination exists among different service programs; and ineffective use is made of psychologists and other service specialists.

**What Is 20/20 Analysis?**

20/20 Analysis is a simple and efficient method of developing an integrative service delivery system in which students who show the least and most progress on significant outcome variables receive intensive study and instruction. The goal of the program is to aid in identifying students most in need of special help. It assesses students on important outcomes of education, such as general reading ability, arithmetic, and/or classroom behavior. By identifying students in the lowest 20th and highest 20th percentiles, 20/20 Analysis pinpoints those students for whom the existing instructional program is least effective so that it can be adapted to suit their individual needs.

**How Does It Work?**

20/20 Analysis consists of a two-phase process. In the initial phase, administrators and teachers select an area of learning—such as reading or math—and assess students' achievement levels within that area. Using existing data from standardized achievement tests, and/or curriculum-based assessment and teacher evaluations, the school staff then examine grade-wide and schoolwide achievement levels to identify students who require "special" interventions. Achievement levels for individual students below the 20th percentile or above the 80th percentile are identified as "low 20" or "high 20" groups for whom curriculum adaptation and/or intensive instruction are needed. By focusing on both the lowest and highest ends of the achievement continuum, 20/20 Analysis provides a broad, systematic, outcome-based approach to serving students with special needs. It is designed as an alternative to the current practice of identifying or "certifying" students for the existing narrowly framed (and mostly disjointed) categorical programs; which tend to result in child labeling and program segregation.

Phase two identifies and analyzes alternative ways to modify curriculum and practice to enhance the learning needs of individual students in the high and low 20 groups. Emphasis at this stage centers on programmatic implementation concerns that address the needs of the individual students and the development of individual program plans. The process calls for committees of teachers, parents, and related service providers to develop and evaluate collaborative and coordinated services that can be provided to enhance learning opportunities for each student who requires a special intervention.

**What Advantages Does 20/20 Analysis Offer?**

20/20 Analysis directly addresses many of the current problems in the delivery of special or categorical programs by:

- Providing a reliable, accountable, and cost-effective process for identifying instructional and related service needs of the students in a given school/district. The
current practice for identifica-
tion and classification of stu-
dents for special programs has
become an increasingly costly
venture. Program categories are
ill-defined, and classification is
unreliable. The 20/20 procedure
seeks to appropriately adapt
school programs according to
simple yet comprehensive
and systematic procedures. This al-

dows schools to quickly identify
which students need extra sup-
port, without having to use
costly and stigmatizing identi-
fication and classification
methods in order to gain access
to services. Schools can then
apply the money they would
have spent on testing and cat-
egorization toward much-
needed services.

• Attempting to undo the com-
mon practice of labeling chil-
dren (as mentally retarded,
emotionally disturbed, etc.).
The current classification and
labeling system not only fails
to provide any specific and
practical interventions that can
be used to meet the needs of
the individual student, but is likely
to generate resistance from par-
ents and have deeply stigmatic
effects on children. When using
20/20 Analysis procedures, the
first step in diagnosis is not la-eling but direct assessment of
the learning needs and progress.

• Focusing on individual needs
of students, especially those
whose learning progress is mar-
ginal. This adds important di-

densions of student achieve-
ment in ways that are instruc-
tionally relevant.

• Seeking to bring about col-
aborative efforts among pro-
fessionals with specialized ex-
pertise who sometimes operate
in disjointed and competitive
ways, and encouraging school-
and district-wide coordination
of programs.

• Concentrating on the impor-
tant outcomes or goals of edu-
cation and the basic compo-
nents of student learning, such
as reading, quantitative think-
ing, and classroom behavior.
In 20/20 Analysis, learning
difficulties are indicators of
intervention needs rather than
student deficits. Greater effi-
ciency and effectiveness in the
delivery of special services
can be accomplished through
early detection, description of
learning needs, and interven-
tions.

Overall, 20/20 Analysis provides
schools with the information nec-

dary for building service systems
that encompass a full range of co-
ordinated approaches to meet the in-
dividual needs of all children, in-
cluding and especially those at the
margins of the achievement con-

nuum, and to avoid fragmentation
of services. Thus, 20/20 Analysis is
intended to facilitate schoolwide
implementation efforts in ways that
involve all categorical programs.

How Effective Is 20/20 Analysis?

20/20 analyses are being carried
out in selected schools in several
major cities. Feedback from these
schools has been strongly support-
ive and has indicated that the analy-

sis is a feasible process and an ac-
curate indicator of which students
require greater-than-usual instruc-
tion and related services. Further-
more, the school staffs see this as a
useful process for fostering a

categorical approach to achiev-
ing targeted learning outcomes for
individual students.

Findings from a study conducted
in elementary schools in one of the
nation's largest school districts pro-
duced the following results: (a) 79% of
children labeled special education
students, and almost all children la-
abeled Chapter 1 students, were in-
cluded in the group whose achieve-
ment level was within the bottom
20th percentile; (b) most of the
lowest performing students in
reading were not receiving inten-
sive instructional help of any kind;
(c) students needing extra instruc-
tion in English were overrepre-
sented in lower 20th percentile
groups (these students were not suc-
ceeding in reading and were judged
to be in need of a strong language
development program); (d) in most
cases, special education teachers had
a full-time aide and worked with a
maximum of 6 pupils at a time—but
in the earliest grades, dozens of stu-
dents were not receiving the help
they needed; (e) only a small per-
centage of high-achieving top 20th per-

centile students were receiving dif-
ferentiated instruction—most high
performers were overlooked; and (f)
school attendance was a major prob-
lem for students whose reading
achievement was in the low 20th per-
centile.

These results are positive predic-
tors of the usefulness of 20/20 Analy-

sis as an innovative diagnostic/plan-
ning strategy. Through repeated ap-
plications over time, the 20/20 plan

has been proven as an alternate pro-
cedure that can significantly improve
schools' capacity to redirect their re-

sources toward implementing "what
works" to improve instruction and
learning for students.

* * * * *

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

manual for 20/20 Analysis: A tool for in-
structional planning. Philadelphia: Temple
University Center for Research in Human
Development and Education.

Zetlin, A. G., Campbell, B., Lujan, M., &
Lujan, R. (Spring 1994). Schools and fami-
lies working together for children. Equity
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