

EQUITY AUDIT

Focusing on Distance Education
Students and Students with
Individualized Educational Plans

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Many inequities exist in representations of students and access to school programs in public schools. Analyzing school processes, demographics, student learning, and stakeholder perceptions can help to understand problems in achievement, school programs, and representation. A thorough understanding of these concepts will help to pave the way to research based interventions and improved educational success for all students. This equity audit will focus on special education and include distance learning opportunities in schools of St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana.

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Equity Audit of St. Tammany Parish Special Education
And Distance Education

INTRODUCTION

St. Tammany parish is a suburban area located on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain. The area provides, a high quality of life, a variety of great housing, a growing population, as well as proximity to a variety of technology assets -- including the Stennis Space Center, the Michoud Space Center, and the University of New Orleans' Technology and Research Park being built in Slidell (Northshore Business Council). There are 80,000 acres of nature preserve, scenic bayous and lakefront vistas in the area. Fishing and paddling are tourist attractions in St. Tammany parish (VisitLouisianaCoast.com). The 2014 census reported 245, 829 residents living in St. Tammany parish of the total 4,649,676 residents living in Louisiana. There is a median household income of \$60,000 and 10.6% of the people are living in poverty. Most residents in the area are White (79%). The census reported 12.1% Black residents, 5.5% Hispanic residents, 1.6% Asian, and 2.6% American Indian/Alaskan Native, and .1% Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander. The percentage of residents 25 years old or older with high school diplomas is 88.4%, and the percentage of residents 25 years or older with a bachelor's or higher degree is 30.1%. There are currently 36, 513 students attending public schools in St. Tammany parish. This includes 55 schools of which 25 are elementary, 8 are middle schools, 13 are junior high schools, 8 are high schools, one is an early learning center, and two are online learning centers for grades 6 through 12.

In this report, school programs will be evaluated in an effort to determine equity of service delivery. Schools have various programs to improve and enhance the educational performance of students. Programs that enhance performance include school clubs and athletics. Programs that directly aim to improve academic performance and access to quality education include

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special education and distance education programs. Along with implementing programs, efforts to monitor and make upgrades regularly function to ensure quality. Stakeholders who are interested in the quality of school programs include students, parents, funding sources, and those responsible for accountability. This evaluation will explore programs for students, reveal challenges that exist, and reveal successes of the programs relating to student achievement. Inequities that influence student performance will be identified. Inequities exist when there are disparities amongst representation of one or more groups in school programs. Summary statements, suggestions for further analysis, and recommendations will be provided.

The Purpose of This Audit

1. Understand factors contributing to achievement inequities in St. Tammany Parish Schools' programs and identify areas of significant achievement differences (race, socio economic, gender, etc.). This includes identification of home, school, classroom, and individual level barriers to high performance.
2. Assist the district in identifying professional development and educational interventions to reduce achievement gaps and enhance district wide success of all students.

The Research Questions That Will Drive This Audit

1. What do current district data reveal about inequities with St. Tammany Parish Schools' programs when compared to state and national data?
2. What factors do stakeholders identify as contributors to inequities?
3. What initiatives (district level, school level, and classroom level) can be implemented to build competence and enhance student learning experiences in St. Tammany Parish?

Supporting Literature

An equity audit is used to provide a systematic method for analyzing a system to determine whether programs are represented adequately by participants. Marshall & Olivier (2010) point out that equity audits are able to provide explicit explanations for achievement, focus public attention on gaps in performance, provide accountability data for stakeholders as well as

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civil rights activists, and focus school and district leaders on their responsibilities to educate all students equitably. Marshall & Olivier reported that laws that support the concepts and theories relating to this equity audit are found in the U. S. Department of Education and include the following:

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, and national origin.
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 which prohibits disability discrimination.
- Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 which prohibits disability discrimination by public entities.

A review of current research was accomplished to gather a sound basis for this equity audit. Data relating to one of the three areas of equity that were described by Marshall & Olivier (2010) will be used to guide this audit. The area included here relates to programmatic equity. Furthermore, Bernhart's Multiple Measure of Data Construction will be used to describe the programmatic equity. Bernhart's four measures include demographics, school processes, student learning, and perceptions.

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Overview of the Data

Quantitative descriptive data and surveys will be reviewed. Demographics will be reviewed first. The National Center for Educational Statistics was used to obtain an overview of national, regional, Louisiana, and parish data relating to regular education students, special education students, and distance learning students. Louisiana's State Special Education Data Profile for 2009 - 2010 was used to provide an in depth analysis of schools' special education programs with a focus on speech or language impaired students as well as gifted and talented students. The National Center for Educational Statistics was another source for data. Demographics were obtained relating to student profiles, success rates, and student challenges. Local data were obtained from parish resources as well.

Second, a review of the literature on current processes used at schools was completed. This includes a discussion of the referral process for students with Individualized Learning Plans (IEPs), the evaluation process, distance education enrollment, teacher training, and parent

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education. Processes that involve St. Tammany Parish schools were given priority during this literature review. Outlining a description of processes at schools that directly and indirectly support students' achievement was the reason for reviewing school process literature.

Thirdly, data relating to student learning were researched. This data focused on district level strategies for identifying students who need extra services like those of the special education program and distance education program. Local data related to St. Tammany Parish strategies will be discussed along with strategies used statewide and nationally. Discovering factors that are widely known to influence student achievement was the intent of this review.

Finally, perceptual data relating to students were researched. Obtaining stakeholders perceptions of school programs and factors influencing students' success helped to provide a thorough audit that is inclusive of values and impressions of those who are influenced by school programs. Current literature that was reviewed for the purpose of this audit consisted of articles, papers, studies, and dissertations conducted primarily within approximately 10 years.

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Programmatic Equity

Purpose of Demographic Data

The purpose of reviewing and compiling demographic data is to provide a sound basis for claims made during the equity audit. This equity audit of school programs includes quantitative descriptive data. Data relating to all special education (SPED) students with a focus on speech impaired students, talented students, and gifted students will be discussed along with data from schools' distance learning programs.

How it relates to the problem.

Stakeholders want to be sure that students have access to good resources, accommodations, and instruction. The current problems with school programs involve misrepresentation of majority students and minority students (Douglass, 2014 and Brown, 2015). Special education programs have been criticized for overrepresentation of minority students.

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African American (Black) students specifically have been called out as the single most over represented group in special education. Similarly, White students have overrepresented the gifted and talented programs. Problems with this imbalance stem from lack of equal access to opportunities and can impede the ability of students to contribute and participate fully. Another problem for SPED populations involves the least restrictive placement for students. This relates to inclusion vs resource or pull out placements. Whereas some stakeholders believe inclusion is the best option, others doubt its value. Many of these stakeholders believe the tailored instruction and slow pace of the SPED environment are important for success. Moreover, the distance education programs in many areas of Louisiana are still in the development stages. Recent literature reports that special education populations are benefiting from distance education courses with increasing numbers and an audit can help to answer questions relating to equitable representation of students and access to services. Many school programs are under constant scrutiny by those who need to be accountable and by funding sources. Demographic data can help to explain dominating beliefs and practices.

Description of the data collection process

The data collection involved compiling data from national and regional statistics and comparing them with similar data from Louisiana statistics. Finally, local parish wide data of comparable interest was compared to determine whether inequities existed at each level. Specific data relating to profiles of students with disabilities, gifted & talented students, speech or language impaired students, and distance education students were obtained for comparisons. In some cases current state data were limited to 2009 – 2010 due to recent changes in availability of information by Louisiana's state superintendent. For this reason, comparisons are based on data from the 2009 - 2010 school year unless otherwise noted. For purposes of this audit, public school data were compared. Numbers in tables reflect numbers and percentages of enrollments. Situations of five percentage points difference or greater between comparisons of national, regional, state, local data will be reported as inequities. Because this local area lacks diversity,

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5% difference was considered an adequate amount of difference to determine the presence of inequity. Numbers in italics were computed from existing published statistics. Dashes (--) indicate the data are not available or could not be located.

Research Findings

Special Education Students

Most Louisiana schools are classified as private schools, public schools and charter schools. Public education students include all students such as those who are enrolled as regular education students and students with disabilities. Table 1-1 identifies populations of public school programs. Using 5 percentage points difference as a guide, an inequity existed between the percentages of regular education students in the state and in the parish. This evaluation was focused on special education and distance education. The inequity related to regular education students in the parish and state was included to provide background information and a foundation for comparisons in the study.

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Table 1-1
Public Students' Programs

<i>Group</i>	<i>National</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>St. Tammany</i>	<i>Inequity</i>
Public Ed.	49,373,307	690,939	36,428	<i>Non applicable</i>
Regular Ed.	-- (86.9%)	583,965 (84.5%)	27,349 (75.1%)	9.4% <i>St/StTam</i> 11.8% <i>StTam/Nat</i>
SwD	6,481,000 (13.1%)	81,418 (11.8%)	5,907 (16.2%)	<i>No</i>
Gifted & talented S.	--	25,555 (3.7%)	3,172 (8.7%)	5% <i>StTam/St</i>
SLI of SwD	1,416,000 2.9%	20,649 (25.4%)	1599 (27.1%)	22.5% <i>Nat/S</i> 24.2% <i>Na/StTam</i>

SLI = Speech of Language Impaired; SwD = Students with Disabilities

A total of 49,373,307 students were enrolled in public schools nationally during 2009 - 2010. A total of 86.9% of those students were in regular education and 13.1% were students with disabilities. The comparison with parish, state, and national level regular education data revealed that Louisiana had 84.5% students in regular education and St. Tammany Parish had 75.1% regular education students during 2009 - 2010. This indicated that the state had 9.4% more regular education students than the parish and the nation had 11.8% more than the parish.

District special education departments enroll students using individualized educational planning. These students many times receive primary instruction outside of the regular setting. Students with disabilities comprise of most students in the special education department. Other special education categories include speech or language impaired students, gifted students, and talented students. Some service delivery options include self-contained classes, resource classes, pull out classes, mainstream services inside the regular education class, and monitoring services as pull out or inside the regular education classes. Participation in the special education program by those students with identified needs is not mandatory; however, most parents who

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are concerned about their children's progression appreciate the help that is offered by the program.

Nationally, there were 6,481,000 public school students with disabilities. There were 81,418 students with disabilities at public schools in Louisiana, and there were 5,907 students enrolled in St. Tammany Parish's programs for students with disabilities. An analysis of the special education data indicated that Louisiana had 11.8% students with disabilities and St. Tammany Parish had 16.2% students with disabilities. No significant inequity was noted among state and parish data for students with disabilities.

Gifted and talented programs include students whose performances are outstanding on areas of academic or artistic coursework. These students go through an evaluation process that examines their ability to outthink or outperform others. Participation in the gifted or talented program is voluntary. Students are able to join the gifted or talented program one year and opt out the next if they choose to do so. When comparing gifted and talented students, the data showed that the parish had 8.7% students enrolled in the gifted/ talented program whereas the state had 3.7% students enrolled. This indicated a 5 % difference and the presence of inequity among the students enrolled in the gifted/ talented program.

Speech or Language impaired students are students with problems that include one or more of the following: articulation, language, voice, fluency, pragmatics, and social language. These students have difficulties that can impede their ability to be successful in the regular education classroom. Speech or language impaired students frequently attend regular classes and are pulled out for speech therapy in the younger grades. Many of these students are mainstreamed or exit the program before reaching high school.

Data in Table 1-1 show that there were 1,416,000 students with speech or language impairments nationally during 2009-2010 (2.9% of students with disabilities). In Louisiana, there were 20,649 speech or language impaired students enrolled in public schools throughout the state during 2009-2010. They accounted for 25.4% of the students with disabilities. In St.

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Tammany parish 1,599 students were enrolled in speech therapy programs accounting for 27.1% of the population of students with disabilities. There were inequities of more than 20% among speech or language impaired (SLI) students nationally versus SLI students in Louisiana and SLI students in St. Tammany parish. Differences can partially be explained by use of a southern dialect in influencing academic performance in Louisiana and should be addressed via parent and faculty education.

The distance education program provides online courses for students who are interested or are not able to meet the requirements of traditional brick and mortar classes. States and parishes have guidelines for course delivery that can include online school labs and online study at home, as well as course delivery from brick and mortar schools. There are also options for blended models which sometimes include study with brick and mortar school input. For purposes of this evaluation, online courses include courses that are 100% online unless otherwise noted. Testing onsite may or may not be required. Louisiana currently has distance education course delivery options that can be accessed via local schools or state sources. Students are able to notify their school if they wish to participate in the state provided distance education course options or work directly via online schools. St Tammany parish has two district online learning programs that provide distance education courses for students in grades six to twelve. Data in Table 1-2 show enrollments of distance education students.

Table 1-2
Distance Education (DE) Enrollments (Numbers and Percentages)

	US districts	Southeast Districts	Louisiana Districts	St. Tam Districts	Inequity
Districts w/ Enrollments	1,816,400 (55%)	518,770 (78%)	--	--	23%
# and % Public S	--	--	--	800 2.9%	--
#/% Sw/IEP's	--	--	--	--	--

Legend: S = Students, SLI = Speech or language Impaired, Tam = Tammany

National data revealed that 55% of school districts reported distance education student enrollments. The region with the most enrollments was the Southeast region. The southeast

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region included Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. Data showed that 78% of districts in the southeast region reported students enrolled in distance education courses. This revealed a 23% difference and an inequity in the comparison of distance education enrollments. Table 1-2 also shows the number and percentage of students participating in the local district. Data relating to distance education enrollments for students with IEPs were not available or could not be located. A detailed survey can provide valuable information. Comparisons of public education students to students with IEPs including students with learning disabilities, gifted, talented, and speech or language impaired students should be completed to determine levels of inequities.

Providing distance education courses to special education students including students with disabilities is important to stakeholders. Participation of students with disabilities is a growing concern among policymakers who need to ensure that students with disabilities are getting a good education in the least restrictive environment (Burdette, Greer & Woods, 2014).

Table 1-3 shows the percent of states enrolling students with disabilities in online instruction. According to Burdette, Greer & Woods (2014), who administered a survey to online program directors of 46 states and non-state jurisdictions related to k-12 online learning, students with many different types of disabilities are participating in online learning. The study surveyed participation during 2009 and 2012. Table 1-3 shows some of the results of that survey.

Table 1-3
Nationally Reported Online Instruction for Students with Disabilities

Groups	2009	2012	Difference
Specific Learning Disabilities	82%	88%	+6%
Speech or Language Impaired Students	55%	72%	+17%
Inequity	27%	16%	n/a

Table 1-3 shows that of the states that reported monitoring students, 82% indicated participation of students with specific learning disabilities in online programs, supplemental courses, or other blended programs during 2009. The study showed that 55% of states reported

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speech or language impaired students' participation during 2009. Furthermore, the study reported an increase during 2012 with 88% of states indicating participation of students with specific learning disabilities and 72% reporting participation of speech or language impaired students. A future audit can probe the numbers and percentages of students participating in online instruction who have IEPs including speech or language impaired, gifted, and talented students nationally. The data should be analyzed for inequities.

Summary of Findings Relating to Distance Education Programs

1. The distance education program reported enrollments of 23% more public school districts in the southeast region than other regions nationally.
2. Nationally, there were 6% more students with disabilities enrolled in distance education programs in 2012 than in 2009.
3. Nationally, there were 17% more speech or language impaired students enrolled in online programs during 2012 than in 2009.

School Processes

The school processes that relate to students with IEPs include the referral process, the pre-evaluation intervention process, the evaluation process, and the placement process. These processes include assistance to teachers and students who are at risk in St. Tammany parish.

Referral process: Students who have problems such as earning failing grades, not turning in homework, struggling to obtain concepts, or receiving unsatisfactory standardized test scores are first identified by the teacher. On occasion, parents who assist students with homework notice unusual difficulties that students have in completing assignments and working independently. These parents may seek a medical diagnosis to explain students' behavior and approach teachers with an outside evaluation. The teacher then contacts the Student Assistance Team to discuss findings.

Pre-evaluation intervention process: The student's teachers and parents meet with an interdisciplinary team to discuss difficulties that are hampering the student's success. At this point, the teacher may be sent back to collect more data on the student. This can include ongoing curriculum based assessments. Frequently, interventions are initiated such as an online

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instructional program, tutors, reinforcements, or a change in study habits. On occasion, the counselor, mental health provider, or speech and language therapist is solicited to assist with their screenings and their related service interventions. Interventions are scheduled for a predetermined period of time. At the end of that time the team re-convenes to discuss findings. A decision is made then to continue interventions, discontinue interventions, or move forward with the evaluation. Parent permission is required before any screening or evaluating is initiated.

Evaluation: Those students who participate in the evaluation process are seen by diagnosticians who do an in depth analysis of behaviors relating to those areas which are interfering with the student's progress. Classroom observations, testing, and interviews with parents as well as faculty are made to assist the evaluation process. Once completed, the results of the evaluation are presented to the parents and faculty. If the student meets classification of a disability, an individualized educational planning meeting ensues to discuss the student's needs. If the student does not meet qualifications for a disability, the Student Assistance Team can reconvene to discuss findings and determine future actions to assist the student's performance.

Similarly, the gifted and talented student is identified by teachers based on standardized test scores, class grades, and other school-wide data. These students are discussed at the Student Assistance Team and referrals for evaluations are made. Parent permission is required to initiate all testing. Students who participate in the evaluations for gifted or talented programs have the options of accepting or declining services when results are discussed with them and their parents.

Distance education enrollment for various school districts is approached differently. In some cases, classes are offered to high school only students and in other cases classes are offered to elementary, junior high school, and high school students. Distance education courses may or may not be suggested as an intervention at the Student Assistance Team meetings. Students may see advertised distance education offerings via signs or newsletters in some cases and in some cases the school counsellor may offer these courses to students who seem to

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require a more distant approach to learning. In other cases, parents who are aware of distance education possibilities can seek out appropriate course offerings for their children. In St. Tammany parish, distance education courses are offered to 6th through 12th grade students at special campuses. Courses have involved online study at home with testing on site. Traditional brick and mortar schools are primary initiators and provide contacts for students to the online program office in order to facilitate enrollments.

Conclusion

Parent education and faculty education are important in the referral process and the evaluation process. This holds true for students who can benefit from the individualized education program as well as those who can benefit from distance education. Parent and faculty education can facilitate inclusion of students into the program that best suits them.

Furthermore, students with needs should be represented at interdisciplinary meetings by faculty members which include people of similar ethnicity. Many faculty members are trained to deal with various characteristics of students and families. Parents and faculty who are not trained must be provided the information and training in areas related to student achievement that can prevent inequities in representation during the process of referral and evaluation (Douglas, 2014 and Brown, 2015).

Student Learning

Various strategies are in place in special education and distance education classes to ensure student success. Some strategies include small student to teacher ratios, accommodations to learning such as repeated directions, increased visual cues, collaborative designs, specialized books and materials, as well as paraprofessionals in the class. Although data relating to students' standardized scores and data pertaining to graduation rates are not included in this report, the data were collected and results are incorporated into recommendations and summary statements. Included in this section is information relating to benefits of school

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programs such as speech and language therapy, gifted program, talented program, and distance learning program.

Speech and or language impaired students benefit from pull out speech therapy that helps to increase the level of practice and comprehension of skills necessary for coursework. Speech and language therapists provide therapy in a comfortable environment and are sensitive to practical needs of students with difficulties that include the areas of articulation, voice, fluency, language, pragmatics, and social skills.

Gifted and talented students benefit from coursework that allows them to gain in knowledge and practice skills in areas that can stimulate and enrich their educational performance. These students are not held back by a curriculum that does not challenge them or give them adequate opportunities to be creative which is sometimes the case in regular classes.

Distance education courses are for students who are not benefitting from the routine of the traditional brick and mortar school. Students with family difficulties, psychological concerns, or medical concerns sometimes benefit from distance education courses. Similarly, students who would like to try an innovative approach at learning are able to enroll in distance education courses. Students can register for one course, more than one course, and in some cases a full load of online learning. Students can make decisions each semester in terms of what their schedule for learning will be based on course availability and student interest. Students with disabilities are able to enroll in distance education courses and have requirements of their individualized educational plans met at the same time. These students along with their family and faculty members should be well educated on requirements and options for meeting them before beginning distance education courses. See Success of distance learning environments (Dupree, 2014) for strategies on how to ensure the success of all distance learning students.

Perceptions

Perceptions of stakeholders involved in education vary for special education students. Some faculty members believe students are best educated in the regular education class and

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prefer an inclusion model to education. Others believe the smaller class and more individualized nature of the special education class is best. Speech or language impaired students vary in terms of the level of individualized needs. Some students benefit from intense pull out therapy and others benefit from monitoring. Students' whose needs can be met by the speech or language program in pull out sessions should not be placed in self-contained classes or resource classes. Levels of needs for speech or language impaired students can change as the progression of therapy continues and should be monitored with changes throughout. Ethnicity related inequities are sensitive topics for students and faculty as well as parents of students in special education programs and should be monitored continuously.

The overrepresentation of Black male students in special education is a topic that has many stakeholders concerned. Educating stakeholders involved in the referral and evaluation process is a solution to this problem. Stakeholders who are aware of the situation are better able to face the dilemma and work positively towards resolutions. The study by Douglas (2014) surveyed faculty in areas relating to administrative, cultural, and environmental/ heredity factors that may result in over-representation of Black students in special education. Results of this study indicated that there are significant differences relating to administrative and cultural factors. Researchers found differences between the gender, age, ethnicity, and type of stakeholder within the decision process of referring Black males to special education. The authors reported that these differences may ultimately lead to the overrepresentation of the Black male student in special education programs. Implications for special education, as the insights provided from the data, may indicate opportunities for additional training, teacher preparation, or evaluation and placement processes for special education. Douglas used two surveys in his study.

Using a survey such as the one authored by Gresham (2005) can be adapted for use to survey faculty members and other stakeholders involved in the referral process for special education students in St. Tammany parish. Reviewing this survey and editing the language to be less abrasive is recommended before administrating it to stakeholders. Having stakeholders

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complete an adapted form of this survey and analyzing results can provide information that will pinpoint areas of concern in reference to over- representation of black males in this area.

Training and education in the areas of concern can then help to alleviate the problems caused by over-representation of one group, specifically Black male students. The survey can also be adapted to address other overrepresented minorities as the situation may arise. The survey is included in the research by Douglas (2014).

A study reported by E. Brown of the Washington Post during April 2015 involved gifted students. This study addressed issues of misrepresentation of students. The study was conducted by Grissom, et al (2014) and analyzed placement of students in Gifted programs of more than 2000 schools in 2003-4 and 2011-12. Grissom, et al (2014) found that Black students are more likely to be identified as “gifted” when they attend schools with higher proportions of Black teachers and Latino students are more likely to be called gifted when they go to schools with more Latino teachers. This correlation is fundamental to the notion that students need an equitable representation of faculty members of the same ethnicity in order to equitably obtain access to school programs.

In a study relating to distance education, perceptual data was obtained from online learning directors across the nation. The study by Burdette, Greer, and Woods (2014) confirmed that distance education among students with disabilities is a complex topic and needs careful consideration with additional support. Burdette, Greer, and Woods noted that students with disabilities are increasing in numbers of distance education enrollments. They surveyed directors of online learning programs and reported challenges they faced when serving students with disabilities. The challenges include the following:

- a. Not being able to meet the needs of students with severe disabilities
- b. Lack of communication between the student’s school of residence and the virtual public school
- c. Being able to ensure students with disabilities were receiving sufficient support
- d. Providing adequate numbers of support staff to be able to provide services to all enrolled students with disabilities
- e. Lack of adequate funding
- f. Not being adequately prepared to serve students with disabilities

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g. Having to revise curriculum to meet accessibility requirements

Conclusion

Various factors influence students attending school programs. Ethnicity issues can be addressed by including perceptions of stakeholders in decisions related to referral and placement of students. Efforts to provide an equitable representation of ethnic groups during interdisciplinary team meetings and when establishing guidelines for the referral/ evaluation process are important in providing equitable access for students. Educating stakeholders to the different types of and benefits for disabilities can enable them to make better decisions. Distance education is an innovative approach to learning and little data are available to document the inclusion of an equitable representation of students with disabilities. More research in the area of distance education and educating students with disabilities in the online environment will help to answer questions related to equity and provide solutions to current issues relating to improving learning opportunities for students.

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Recommendations for Future Practice

1. Increase consideration of distance education to include options at all grade level student assistance team meetings.
2. Educate faculty and parents on differences in ethnicities and school program options.
3. Make efforts to provide an equitable representation of faculty by ethnic groupings in all classes, during student assistance team meetings, and during other interdisciplinary team meetings.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. A local survey to faculty on areas of concern for students with IEPs who are enrolled in distance education is beneficial to address needs for resources and professional development.
2. Research state and parish data on faculty ethnicity in distance education and education of students with IEPs to determine equitable representation.
3. Research numbers and percentages relating to the ethnicity of students with IEPs who are enrolled in distance education programs in the parish, state, and nation to determine equitable representation.

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Final Summary

St. Tammany parish is a community with approximately 35,000 students. A majority of students attending public schools in the parish are in regular education classes. School programs like distance education and special education need ongoing monitoring and interventions to ensure adequate service participation of all students. This audit provided data relating to school programs as they influence student achievement. Recommendations for future practices and research were provided in this document.

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