THE IMPACT OF THE NEWLY IMPLEMENTED COMMON CORE CURRICULUM ON IEP STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM

By

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to analyze the results of a survey given to students receiving academic special education services through an Individualized Education Program at Alexander Doniphan Elementary. The purpose of this study was to use to determine the degree to which special education students at Alexander Doniphan Elementary students are engaged in the newly implemented, more rigorous, Common Core curriculum in the general education classrooms by measuring key indicators of student engagement. A review of literature regarding the importance of student engagement on student achievement was undertaken and conclusions and recommendations were made based that research. A Chi square analysis was used to analyze the survey responses. The findings of this study indicate that overall IEP students continue to enjoy reading and writing lessons in the newly implemented curriculum, though they do not enjoy math lessons. Likewise, students do feel that they contribute to class activities and projects and that their teachers are satisfied with the work they do in their classrooms, but they lack confidence in their ability to understand the work in the new curriculum. The study suggests that though IEP students are currently engaged in the newly implemented, the administration and faculty should consider further examination of instruction and possible additional support for IEP students.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Background

With newly adopted Common Core State Standards the faculty at Alexander Doniphan Elementary School has made significant changes to the English Language Arts curriculum and mathematics curriculum and assessment tools in order to prepare students to meet the increased rigor of the standards. Anytime significant changes are made it is essential that educators consider the impact on those who are most at risk for failure, which often includes students receiving special education services through Individualized Education Programs. With the newly implemented curriculum, students at all grade levels are now expected to perform at higher levels in all content areas, an increase in performance that may challenge even non-disabled and typically developing students. The pace of instruction and material covered is significantly increased from what has been practiced in past years. The Common Core State Standards become increasingly complex in each grade level such that if a student falls behind in kindergarten and intervention is not implemented early, it may be difficult for him or her to catch up to peers in later grades. The Common Core State Standards also require students to engage in higher level thinking and real world application of skills in all content areas rather than simple rote memorization of material, a process that is very difficult for many lower learners. Finally, developing high quality written expression skills across all content areas is a key component of the new curriculum, which unfortunately is an area in which many special education students struggle. Since the implementation of No Child Left Behind, educators have struggled to find ways to assist students with disabilities meet the expectations to learn at the same high levels as their non-disabled peers. The implementation of the new Common Core State Standards has once again raised the bar of expectations, therefore new information must be gathered to make
sure that the staff at Alexander Doniphan Elementary is doing everything possible to see that students are given the opportunity to achieve high levels of learning.

**Conceptual Underpinnings for the Study**

Student engagement in the classroom or lack thereof has long been known to be a predictor of academic success or failure. If students are engaged in their classrooms, they are more likely to learn the content. Student engagement is understood to be more than merely remaining “busy” on learning activities. Engagement does encompass a student’s cognitive activity and whether or not the student is able to understand and participate in learning activities in the classroom such as teacher instruction, group discussions, group and partner activities, and individual skill practice opportunities. However, student engagement also includes a student’s perception of and attitude towards the activities and learning in his or her classroom. Educators must consider whether or not the student is willingly participating and whether or not the student has positive feelings towards the learning experiences in the classroom. Likewise, educators must consider the student’s feelings of ability, success, and failure when considering engagement. If a student is not emotionally engaged, he or she will not reap the full cognitive benefit of the activity and may not be able to demonstrate skill mastery. Administrators and faculty at Alexander Doniphan Elementary need to ensure that special education students are engaged in the classroom in order to capture instructional time and create an environment in which students feel safe and are excited about their learning in order to increase their likelihood of academic success.
Statement of the Problem

Students who received academic services through an Individualized Education Program are at a disadvantage from their peers in terms of being able to meet and master grade level expectations. The bar has been raised for students across the board at Alexander Doniphan Elementary with the implementation of a new curriculum aligned to the Common Core State Standards. In levels of performance expectation has been raised at all grade levels in the areas of math, reading, and written expression. In the past, prior to the increase in rigor, many of the special education students, had difficulty mastering grade level content and participating in activities in the general education classroom. Students, especially lower performing students, are at an increased likelihood for academic achievement and behavioral success when they are engaged in their classroom. With the change in curriculum and increase in expectations, it is unknown how our students on Individualized Education Programs will respond and how engaged our students will remain. It is also unknown how much additional support in the form of adult support our students may need. Our current assessments are able to determine the level of skill mastery and cognitive engagement but are unable to determine the level of student emotional and psychological engagement, which is a long term predictor of student success. The present study is intended to measure the emotional and psychological engagement of students in their general education classrooms given the change in curriculum with the new Common Core State Standards.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the perceptions that students receiving academic special education services through Individualized Education Programs have of the curriculum that has been implemented in their general education classroom in relation to their level of
engagement. It is important to determine whether or not these students are engaged in the new curriculum and the instruction that is currently taking place in their classrooms as engagement is a predictor of academic success. The information gained from this study will be used to make instructional decisions regarding possible increased levels of support, modifications, or accommodations that students on Individualized Education Programs may need in order to increase engagement in the classroom. Ultimately, the end goal of the study is to increase the likelihood of all students at Alexander Doniphan Elementary achieving high levels of learning through high engagement in the general education classroom.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions presented via survey to the students. The questions were presented in statement form to which students were asked to respond by circling a happy face if they agreed with the statement or a sad face if they disagreed with the statement. The wording of the questions on the survey was simplified to increase student comprehension.

RQ1: Do IEP students enjoy math lessons in the general education classroom?

RQ2: Do IEP students enjoy reading lessons in the general education classroom?

RQ3: Do IEP students enjoy writing lessons in the general education classroom?

RQ4: Do IEP students feel that they contribute to class projects and activities?

RQ5: Do IEP students feel that their teacher is satisfied with the work they do in the general education classroom?

RQ6: Do IEP students feel that they are capable of understanding the work in the general education classroom?

RQ7: Do IEP students feel that their teacher provides the help they need if they do not know how to complete a task in the general education classroom?
Null Hypothesis

H1: IEP students do not enjoy math lessons in the general education classroom.
H2: IEP students do not enjoy reading lessons in the general education classroom.
H3: IEP students do not enjoy writing lessons in the general education classroom.
H4: IEP students do not feel that they contribute to classroom activities and projects in the general education classroom.
H5: IEP students do not feel that their teacher is satisfied with the work they do in the general education classroom.
H6: IEP students do not feel that they are capable of understanding the work in the general education classroom.
H7: IEP students do not feel that their teacher provides the help they need if they do not know how to complete a task in the general education classroom.

Anticipated Benefits of Study

This study will provide the administration and staff at Alexander Doniphan Elementary School with important information regarding out students who are receiving academic special education services through Individualized Education Programs (IEP) are responding to the newly implemented Common Core curriculum. All grade levels have implemented instructional changes and more rigorous expectation of student achievement in the areas of reading, writing, and math. While common formative assessments will provide some information regarding skills that students on IEPs are attaining, there is not currently a subjective means of measuring the level of engagement of these students. This study will provide information regarding perceptions of students that may be pulled together to assess the degree of student engagement. The study
will allow administrators and staff to identify content areas in which our IEP students are at risk of disengaging.

Definitions of Terms

CCSS: Common Core State Standards
ELA: English Language Arts
GLE: Grade Level Expectations
DESE: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
IEP: Individualized Education Program
NCLB: No Child Left Behind

Summary

The newly implemented curriculum aligned with the Common Core State Standards raises the bar of academic performance for all students. While there is some initial concern that students with disabilities will struggle to meet the increased expectations, it is agreed that high standards for learning benefits all students. The aim of this study is to gain information about how special education students experience the learning environment of the general education classroom as a gauge of their level of engagement. The information gained about the level of student engagement will allow administrators and teachers to make informed decisions about classroom instruction, curriculum, and student supports to increase academic growth and student success.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction: Common Educational Standards and Assessments

The notions of education reform, common standards, common assessments, and pressures to adjust instruction to meet the varying needs of diverse students while ensuring that guidelines set from external bodies met are not new within schools. The first development of ideas that would lead to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) might be traced back as early as the National Education Summit of 1996, a bipartisan meeting of governors interested in standards based education reform (Rust 2012). In January of that same year Missouri adopted the Show-Me Standards in an effort to establish educational consistency across the state by defining the content and skills that students in Missouri public schools should have upon graduation (http://www.dese.mo.gov/standards/). With the increased accountability of high stakes testing that came with the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), many states recognized the needs for clearly defined state-wide expectation for instruction and achievement. In 2004, Missouri adopted the Missouri Grade Level Expectations (GLE) and Course Level Expectations (CLE) to communicate to school districts the expected level of academic achievement that would be assessed through the Missouri Assessment Program under NCLB (http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/curriculum/GLE/). In the years since the passage of NCLB educators have lodged many complaints against the legislation. In terms on bringing about national educational reform, one complaint that has been raised is that states across the nation continue to have varying educational standards, with some of them being quite low. While the hope was to increase learning for all students, the reality was that most students were not, in fact, any more prepared for post-secondary school life than pre-NCLB. In 2009 the National
Governors Association collaborated with the Council of Chief State School Officers to develop CCSS for Math and English Language Arts (ELA) (Rust 2012). After presenting drafts to educators and reviewing feedback, the final standards were presented in June 2010, and since then 45 states, including Missouri, have adopted the CCSS. Assessment of student achievement under the new CCSS will begin in school year 2014-2015, though many schools began implementing the curriculum as early as the 2011-2012 school year (http://www.corestandards.org/).

Common Core State Standards

The CCSS have some unique features and designs that make them different that previous educational guidelines and standards. Upon even a cursory comparison review of the CCSS with Missouri’s GLE’s, one will quickly notice the increased rigor of the CCSS, and it should be noted that Missouri has been long recognized as one of the states with the highest student academic achievement standards. The reason for the increased rigor of the CCSS lies in the design: the CCSS was designed with the end in mind. The educators who developed the CCSS wanted to ensure that all students graduating from schools in states that had adopted the CCSS would be equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to be successful in college or entry level jobs in the work force (http://www.corestandards.org/). The authors of the standards began with the rigorous, college based, higher level thinking skills and worked backwards all the way to kindergarten to develop a progression of skills necessary for students to develop the skills needed to compete for jobs and be successful in the United States and abroad. The process the authors used indicated that previously schools were not providing students with enough opportunity to master rigorous content. Ultimately, the greatest benefit claimed of the CCSS is that they raise the level of expectations for all students.
Much like the GLE’s the CCSS are a set of expectations of skills that students are to master at each grade level in ELA and math in order to be college or career ready when they graduate. The CCSS provide school districts and teachers with the outline of skills but they do not provide the curriculum or dictate the strategies or the scope and sequence that must be followed within the school year in order to comply with the CCSS (http://www.corestandards.org/). Local school districts will still be free to make decisions regarding their own curriculum and teachers will still be responsible for designing instruction to meet the needs of the individual students within their own classrooms. The CCSS will, however, identify cognitive processes and learning strategies needed to acquire and retain curriculum content (Rust 2012). Professional development will also be available to educators in state adopting the CCSS.

Students with Disabilities and the Common Core

While all educators want to see students increase their learning, there is some concern for those students who struggled to keep up with their peers when the expectations were lower. The fear is that with the increased rigor of the CCSS, the achievement gap between students with disabilities and their peers will increase. In his article, “Challenges Seen in Testing Special Education Pupils on Common Core” Nirvi Shah describes the research of Arizona State University education professor Stephen Elliott who found that special education students were taught less of the content and standards than their peers and that in order to get an equitable opportunity to learn, special education students would need an average of an additional 30 to 40 school days. Shah further concludes that as the rigor increases the disparity is likely to increase (2012). The challenge for educators will be to raise the bar of expectations for students on Individualized Education Programs (IEP) and to find ways to help these students with disabilities
increase their level of academic achievement so that they aren’t being left behind as the rigor in the classroom increases.

*What is Student Engagement?*

It has long been understood within education that the degree to which students are engaged in the classroom is an indicator of the learning taking place among the students and the level academic achievement that will be attained. While there was a time when it was believed that if students were “busy” they were engaged and learning, this is now known to be untrue. True engagement in learning involves much more than merely being busy. There are a number of definitions, indicators, and factors considered within the notion of student engagement including the student’s behavioral, cognitive, and emotional responses and connectivity to instruction and activity within the classroom environment (Sciarra 2008). Some examples of definitions of student engagement that have been used in educational research provided by Appleton, Christenson, and Fulong (2008) are as follows:

- Extent to which students participate in academic and nonacademic activities and identify with and value the goals of schooling
- Energy in action, the connection between person and activity; consisting of three forms: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive
- Sustained behavioral involvement in learning activities accompanied by positive emotional tone
- Initiation of action, effort, and persistence with schoolwork and ambient emotional states during learning activities

*Student Engagement and Academic Achievement*
Having considered the various facets of student engagement the question are now the degree to which student engagement impacts student achievement and if the impact is significant how educators are to increase the engagement of all students, especially those who are at most risk for failure in schools. Research has shown the various positive outcomes of student engagement in school and conversely the negative outcomes of disengagement. Katherine Covell describes this dichotomy: “Pupil participation and engagement in school enhances commitment to learning, achievement, academic aspirations, enjoyment in school, self-esteem, and optimism for the future. … Pupils who are highly involved in school show increased attendance and fewer behavior problems. … Pupils who show low levels of engagement are at heightened risk of inappropriate behavior, school failure, and dropout” (2010). When students are engaged in school they learn both the academic content and the social skill necessary to be successful in life.

As school districts across the nation consider student achievement and move towards the more rigorous standards of CCSS the issue of student engagement must be on the forefront of the minds of educators. Appleton, Christenson, and Furlong write, “Every school irrespective of school level, geographic locale, or demographic characteristics of students has students who are disengaged and engaged. … All schools have students who are uninvolved, apathetic, and/or discouraged learners” (2008). Because students with disabilities are at an increased risk for failure in school and therefore are more at risk for becoming disengaged learners. As the CCSS are implemented, educators must be particularly intentional about providing access to the curriculum and means of keeping these students engaged. Research indicates that the lowest achieving students benefit more from engagement in the classroom than their peers (Carini 2006).
Instruction that Promotes Engagement

Educational Research has found that there are numerous means by which educators can increase the likelihood of student engagement in their classrooms. Engagement is often related to motivation, particularly for low-achieving students. When educators are able to find ways to make learning relevant and intrinsically motivating engagement increases (Crumpton 2011). In their work, Crumpton and Gregory found that a direct explicit explanation of the purpose of the task was enough to provide personal relevancy for some students and thereby increase engagement. Likewise, students are more likely to be engaged when they are given authentic learning opportunities such as problem solving tasks based in real world experiences (Moreillon 2011). The focus in these tasks aligns with the CCSS as they teach students critical thinking skills rather than having students memorize a set of given facts.

Many students with disabilities have skill gaps that inhibit them from fully participating or engaging in their classroom environment. Speech therapists, special education teachers, and regular classroom teachers can work together to build skills in those deficit areas so that students with disabilities can be more fully engaged. Often students simply need to be taught an appropriate way to ask teachers or peers for help when they do not understand an assignment or project (Johns 2008). Likewise, students can be taught through direct instruction how to contribute in class discussions and then be given opportunities to practice doing so outside the classroom so that a level of comfort is built and the skill can be generalized in the classroom setting (Ornelles 2007). Some students with high functioning autism who have difficulty engaging in the classroom are able to do so if given an opportunity for brief physical exercise immediately preceding the academic task (Nicholson 2011). The implementation of Cooperative
Learning Strategies is another means of increasing the engagement of not only students with disabilities who are often at risk of social isolation but of all students (Grey 2007).
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Problem and Purposes

Alexander Doniphan Elementary School has adopted new curriculum aligned with the Common Core State Standards. The impact of the new, more rigorous curriculum on the classroom engagement of low and at-risk learners is unknown. The purpose of this study is to determine whether or not students receiving academic services through Individualized Education Programs at Alexander Doniphan Elementary School perceive themselves to be engaged learners in the new Common Core curriculum in their general education classrooms.

Research Design

The study employed a non-experimental survey research design to collect data. A chi-square analysis was used to determine statistical significance. An alpha level of .10 was used to determine the rejection or acceptance of the null hypothesis.

Variables Used in the Study

Both independent and dependent variables were used in this study.

Independent Variable: The students receiving academic services through an Individualized Education Program are the independent variable.

Dependent Variable: The perceptions of the individual students of himself or herself as an engaged learner in his or her general education classroom are the dependent variable.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions presented via survey to the students. The questions were presented in statement form to which students were asked to respond by circling
a happy face if they agreed with the statement or a sad face if they disagreed with the statement. The wording of the questions on the survey was simplified to increase student comprehension.

RQ1: Do IEP students enjoy math lessons in the general education classroom?

RQ2: Do IEP students enjoy reading lessons in the general education classroom?

RQ3: Do IEP students enjoy writing lessons in the general education classroom?

RQ4: Do IEP students feel that they contribute to class projects and activities?

RQ5: Do IEP students feel that their teacher is satisfied with the work they do in the general education classroom?

RQ6: Do IEP students feel that they are capable of understanding the work in the general education classroom?

RQ7: Do IEP students feel that their teacher provides the help they need if they do not know how to complete a task in the general education classroom?

Null Hypothesis

H1: IEP students do not enjoy math lessons in the general education classroom.

H2: IEP students do not enjoy reading lessons in the general education classroom.

H3: IEP students do not enjoy writing lessons in the general education classroom.

H4: IEP students do not feel that they contribute to classroom activities and projects in the general education classroom.

H5: IEP students do not feel that their teacher is satisfied with the work they do in the general education classroom

H6: IEP students do not feel that they are capable of understanding the work in the general education classroom.
H7: IEP students do not feel that their teacher provides the help they need if they do not know how to complete a task in the general education classroom.

**Study Group**

The study group was made up of students from Alexander Doniphan Elementary School who receive academic support through an Individualized Education Program (IEP) in the Resource Special Education Setting. The students participating in the survey spend between 65% and 93% of their day with their peers in the general education setting and between 7% and 35% of their day in the special education setting. Students completing the survey receive services under the following eligibility categories: autism, specific learning disability, and other health impaired.

**Data Collection and Instrumentation**

Data was collected in the form of an anonymous survey distributed by the paraprofessional staff in the Special Education Resource Room. The format of the survey was simple statements to which students were instructed to circle a happy face if they agreed and a sad face if they disagreed. Paraprofessional staff provided oral instructions for the survey and also provided read aloud of the survey statements for students who lack reading skills sufficient for reading the survey questions.

**Data Analysis**

A Chi Square analysis was the statistical tool used to identify the dependence of IEP students’ perceptions on their engagement in the new Common Core curriculum. The Vassar Stats software was used to calculate the results with an alpha level of .10.
Summary

This research will be shared with the administration, special education staff, and general education teachers at Alexander Doniphan Elementary School to ensure that the needs of students on IEPs are being met as the school continues to transition to the new Common Core curriculum. The data will be analyzed and the findings will be shared to ensure that all students at Alexander Doniphan Elementary are as fully engaged in the general education classroom as possible. The administration and staff will consider areas in which students are receiving enough support and areas in which more support may be necessary in order to ensure student success.
CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND RESULTS FROM DATA ANALYSIS

_Presentation of the Data Analysis by Research Question_

Results for Research Question #1:

RQ1: Do IEP students enjoy math lessons in the general education classroom?

H1: IEP students do not enjoy math lessons in the general education classroom.

For this question the Chi Square “Goodness of Fit” Test was used to determine if the IEP students at Alexander Doniphan Elementary enjoy math lessons in the general education classroom setting.

As identified in Table 1, the Chi Square Value is 1.72 and the P value is 0.1897. The alpha level was set at 0.1. The null hypothesis is accepted, as overall IEP students do not enjoy math lessons in their general education classrooms.

**Table 1. Chi-Square Research Results for Research Question 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Chi-Square</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ 1. Do IEP student enjoy math lessons in the general education classroom.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1897</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sign = or < 0.1

Results for Research Question #2

RQ2: Do IEP students enjoy reading lessons in the general education classroom?

H2: IEP students do not enjoy reading lessons in the general education classroom.
For this question the Chi Square “Goodness of Fit” Test was used to determine if IEP students at Alexander Doniphan Elementary enjoy reading lessons in their general education classrooms.

As identified in Table 2, the Chi-Square Value is 3.04 and the P value is 0.0012. The alpha level was set at 0.1. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. IEP students do enjoy reading lessons in their general education classrooms.

**Table 2. Chi-Square Research Results for Research Question 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Chi-Square</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ2: Do IEP students enjoy reading lessons in the general education classroom?</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0812</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sign = or < 0.1*

*Results for Research Question #3*

RQ3: Do IEP students enjoy writing lessons in the general education classroom?

H3: IEP students do not enjoy writing lessons in the general education classroom.

For this question the Chi Square “Goodness of Fit” Test was used to determine if the study participants enjoy writing lessons in their general education classrooms.

As identified in Table 3, the Chi Square Value is 4.76 and P value is 0.0291. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. Students on IEPs at Alexander Doniphan do enjoy writing lessons in their general education classrooms.
Table 3. Chi-Square Research Results for Research Question 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Chi-Square</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ3: Do IEP students enjoy writing lessons in the general education classroom?</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0291</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sign = or < 0.1

Results for Research Question #4

RQ4: Do IEP students feel that they contribute to class projects and activities?

H4: IEP students do not feel that they contribute to class projects and activities.

For this question the Chi Square “Goodness of Fit” Test was used to determine if IEP students feel that they contribute to class projects and activities in their general education classroom.

As identified in Table 4, the Chi Square value is 3.04 and the P value is 0.0812. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. The students on IEPs at Alexander do feel that they contribute to class projects and activities in the general education classroom.

Table 4. Chi-Square Research Results for Research Question 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Chi-Square</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ4: Do IEP students feel that they contribute to class projects and activities?</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0812</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sign = or < 0.1
**Results for Research Question #5**

RQ5: Do IEP students feel that their teacher is satisfied with the work they do in the general education classroom?

H5: IEP students do not feel that their teacher is satisfied with the work they do in the general education classroom.

For this question the Chi Square “Goodness of Fit” Test was used to determine if IEP students at Alexander Doniphan Elementary feel that their teacher is satisfied with the work they do in the general education classroom.

As identified in Table 5, the Chi Square value is 6.68 and the P value is 0.008. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. IEP students do feel that their teacher is satisfied with the work that they complete in the general education classroom.

**Table 5. Chi-Square Research Results for Research Question 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Chi-Square</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ5: Do IEP students feel that their teacher is satisfied with the work they do in the general education classroom?</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.86</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sign = or < 0.1
Results for Research Question #6

RQ6: Do IEP students feel that they are capable of understanding the work in the general education classroom?

H6: IEP students do not feel that they are capable of understanding the work in the general education classroom.

For this question the Chi Square “Goodness of Fit” Test was used to determine if the study participants feel that they are capable of understanding the work in their general education classroom.

As identified in Table 6, the Chi Square value is 0.76 and the P value is 0.3833. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted. Though students enjoy both reading and writing lessons in the general education classroom and feel that their teacher is satisfied with the work that they do in the general education classroom, students on IEPs at Alexander Doniphan do not feel that they are capable of understanding the work in the general education classroom.

Table 6. Chi-Square Research Results for Research Question 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Chi-Square</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ6: Do IEP students feel that they are capable of understanding the work in the general education classroom?</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3833</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sign = or < 0.1
Results for Research Question #7

RQ7: Do IEP students feel that their teacher provides the help they need if they do not know how to complete a task in the general education classroom?

H7: IEP students do not feel that their teacher provides the help they need if they do not know how to complete a task in the general education classroom.

For this question the Chi Square “Goodness of Fit” Test was used to determine if students on IEPs at Alexander Doniphan Elementary feel that their teacher provides the help they need if they do not understand how to complete a task in the general education classroom.

As identified in Table 7, the Chi Square value is 12.2 and the P value is 0.0005. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. Students do feel that their teacher provides the help they need if they do not know how to complete a task in the general education classroom.

Table 7. Chi-Square Research Results for Research Question 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Chi-Square</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ7: Do IEP students feel that their teacher provides the help they need if they do not know how to complete a task in the general education classroom?</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sign = or < 0.1

Summary

The findings of this study illustrate both strengths and areas of concern in the newly implemented curriculum at Alexander Doniphan Elementary in regards to the engagement in the general education classrooms of students who receive academic special education services.
through IEPs. The findings indicate that overall IEP students at Alexander Doniphan have a positive perception of the instruction, activities, and their role in the general education classroom, which is a significant indicator of engagement. While students report that they enjoy both reading and writing lessons, it is of concern that overall the students report a lack of enjoyment of math lessons. Administrators and faculty will need to consider the cause for the negative perception of the mathematics curriculum. It is also significant in terms of student engagement that the IEP students reported feeling that they contribute to class projects and activities. Below, in Figures 1, 2, and 3, it is noted that while a significant number of students report feeling that they are not capable of understanding the work in the general education classroom, the majority believe that their teacher is satisfied with their work, and the vast majority believe their teacher provides the help they need to complete a task if they do not understand.

![Figure 1. Student perception of student ability](image-url)

**Do IEP students feel capable of understanding work in general education classroom?**

- Yes: 62%
- No: 38%
Do IEP students feel that their teacher is satisfied with the work they do in the general education classroom?

80% Yes
20% No

Figure 2. Student perceptions of teacher satisfaction

Do IEP students feel that their teacher provides the help they need to complete a task they do not understand in the general education classroom?

90% Yes
10% No

Figure 3. Student perceptions of teacher support

Administrators and teacher will need to work together to gain an understanding of the students’ perceptions in this area. Are students truly feeling incapable of understanding the curriculum content? Are teachers praising students in such a way that students feel that the students feel that the teacher feels satisfied but that the student still lacks understanding? Is the teacher provided assistances for task completion leading to understanding of curriculum content or merely to task completion? Administrators and teachers will need to work together to not only increase the IEP students’ levels of academic achievement but also their confidence.
CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

The purpose of this field study was to determine the impact of the newly implemented Common Core curriculum on the engagement of IEP students in their general education classrooms. The new curriculum includes an increase in rigor and performance expectations across all content areas. Knowing that many students with disabilities struggled to progress in the general education curriculum at the same pace as their non-disabled peers prior to the increase in rigor, there was some concern that the higher expectations would cause special education students to become discouraged and disengage from learning in the general education classroom. Because student engagement is a key predictor of academic achievement this field study intended to gather information on the indicators of engagement of IEP students so that administrators and teachers can make informed decisions regarding instruction, accommodations, and supports to ensure that all of our students have the ability to succeed in the newly implemented curriculum.

Discussion of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of this study indicate that overall the administrators, faculty, and staff at Alexander Doniphan Elementary have implemented the new Common Core curriculum in such a way that the majority of students receiving academic services through and IEP continue to have a positive regard for learning in the general education classroom setting, though there is still some work that could be done to ensure that these students remain engaged in the classroom. Of significant interest is the IEP student feeling that they contribute to class projects and activities.
When considering engagement, valuable contribution to community projects is an indication of a
sense of belonging, worth, and involvement in learning activities. When looking at the specific
content areas, students report enjoying reading and writing lessons but not math lessons. The
school staff should further examine the learning experience and feelings of these students during
math lessons in the general education classroom to determine if instructional changes or
additional support is necessary. The staff should also consider comparing the reported lack of
enjoyment with progress monitoring of grade level skills to determine if overall the IEP students
are also failing to meet grade level expectations.

Of some concern is the seemingly conflicting results of the questions regarding whether
students feel capable of understanding the work in the general education classroom, whether the
students feel their teacher is satisfied with their work, and whether students feel their teacher
provides them with the help they need to complete a task they do not understand. The study
found that IEP students do not feel that they are capable of understanding the work in the general
education classroom, yet they feel their teacher is satisfied with their work and they feel that
their teacher provides them with the help they need to complete a task they do not understand.
The administration and faculty should look further into these questions to consider whether we
are providing adequate support to assist our student to not only complete a task but to also
understand the task. The feeling of being incapable is significant as it could quickly lead to
discouragement and disengagement as students get older. The faculty at Alexander Doniphan is
currently balancing this by communicating to students a satisfaction with the work that the
students are completing, but further investigation should be done to determine how additional
support and confidence could be added.
Summary

In summary, the administration and staff at Alexander Doniphan has successfully implemented a new curriculum aligned with the Common Core State Standards. The new curriculum and standards includes increased rigor and higher performance expectations across all content areas. While having high expectations for student learning is a good thing for all students, there was some concern that those students who were already struggling academically might find the increased expectations too rigorous and begin to disengage in the general education classroom. While there is some indication that there is a risk for disengagement in the math curriculum, overall the results of this study are very positive, indicating that the IEP students at Alexander Doniphan are remaining very engaged in the learning and instructional activities in the general education classrooms.
REFRENCES


APPENDIX A

Student Survey

Directions: Read the statement. If you agree with the statement circle the happy face. If you disagree with the statement circle the sad face.

I like learning math in my classroom.

Reading lessons are fun in my classroom.

My teacher is happy with the work I do in my classroom.
I help other kids with projects and activities in my classroom.

![Sad face] ![Happy face]

The work in my classroom is too hard to understand.

![Sad face] ![Happy face]

Writing is fun in my classroom.

![Sad face] ![Happy face]

My teacher helps me if I don’t know how to do something in my classroom.

![Sad face] ![Happy face]
RESUME

Certification: Special Education Mild/Moderate Cross Categorical K-12

Education:
- William Jewell College, Liberty, Missouri
  Degree: B.A. Major: Psychology Date: May 1999
- Major: Religion Date: May 1999
  Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Kansas
  Degree: M.A. Date: May 2003
- Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville, Missouri
  Degree: Alternative Certification Date: December 2009
- Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville, Missouri
  Degree: M.S.Ed. in Special Education Date: April 2012
- Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville, Missouri
  Degree: Education Specialist: Elementary School Principal Date: May 2012-
  Present
- Liberty Public Schools Leadership Academy Date: August 2012-
  Present

Fieldwork:
- I have 5 years of experience teaching special education resource in an elementary school setting in the North Kansas City School District and Liberty Public Schools. I have worked primarily with students with Emotional Disturbances, Autism, and Specific Learning Disabilities. I have done extensive individual research on working with children with autism as well as the PBIS and BIST behavior improvement strategies. I am very familiar with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Employment:

Special Education Teacher at Alexander Doniphan Elementary School 2011-present

Responsibilities include: collaborating with general education teachers, other service providers, and parents to develop and implement Individual Education Plans, providing instruction to students related to IEP goals, collecting data and monitoring progress towards IEP goals, developing and implementing behavior plans for students with behavior needs, providing behavior triage for students with behavior needs, administering formal testing to determine Special Education eligibility, reporting test results to parents, providing interventions as a part of the RTI process, and participating on building Child Study Team, Mandt Team, and Crisis Team.
Special Education Teacher at West Englewood Elementary School  2007-2011
Responsibilities include: collaborating with general education teachers, other service
providers, and parents to develop and implement Individual Education Plans, providing
instruction to students related to IEP goals, collecting data and monitoring progress
towards IEP goals, developing and implementing behavior plans for students with
behavior needs, providing behavior triage for students with behavior needs, participating
on building team for Response to Intervention, participating in work of Professional
Learning Community, serving on building committees including Positive Behavior
Interventions and Supports committee, Math committee, and Special Events Team.

Resident Director/Office of Student Affairs at William Jewell College  2000-2007
Responsibilities include: managing residence hall for first year women, hiring and
supervising residence life student staff, providing counsel and guidance to students,
enforcing college policy, responding to emergency situations, planning and executing
social and educational programming, assisting in the development of residence hall
procedures and policies, providing opportunities for student development.