

An Exploration of Strategist II Teachers' Content Knowledge, Practices, and Dispositions Relating to Literacy for Students with Significant Disabilities

Project Context

Education is a dynamic and continually evolving field, requiring educators to keep abreast of emerging knowledge in order to refine their skill and craft. The delivery of special education services, in particular services for students with significant disabilities, has dramatically changed over the last decade. Recent legislation, including the 1997 and 2004 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 have, in part, provided the impetus for change. With the intent of providing equitable educational opportunities for students with severe disabilities, these initiatives have centered upon the development of challenging standards and a rigorous, academic curriculum grounded in and linked to the general education curriculum.

Literacy learning is one academic area that has received renewed, if not new, attention and emphasis. While learning to read and communicate around print has been a mainstay of the research literature and general education environment for centuries, it is just in the past twenty-five years that it became a topic of interest in the research literature around children with severe disabilities. Thus, the purpose of this research study is to understand, given recent changes in the field of significant disability particularly relating to literacy, what teachers who serve students with significant disabilities know and what they may need in order to meet the demands of the field.

Project Goals

- To identify the literacy content knowledge, practices, and dispositions of strategist II teachers in the state of Iowa
- To describe how teachers serving students with significant disabilities design and implement literacy instruction for students with significant disabilities
- To describe how teachers serving students with significant disabilities assess student literacy progress and how that information guides literacy instructional practice
- To develop a means to describe and ascertain student literacy outcome data related to professional development
- To develop implications and recommendations for professional development to support teachers serving students with significant disabilities in providing an individualized and rigorous comprehensive literacy program for students with significant disabilities