

5. To and From Special Education

- a. *Adaptive Learning Environments Model (ALEM)*: This is a full-time mainstreaming program for exceptional students (learning disabled, socially and emotionally disturbed, visually impaired, and gifted). Evaluations report that students in the mainstreaming classes initiated interactions with teachers more often (32.4%) than students in the non-ALEM classes (4%). Also, they interacted with teachers significantly more for instructional purposes (95.2% vs. 88.1% for the non-ALEM students), and they interacted more frequently with peers for instructional purposes (45% vs. 13% for the non-ALEM classes.) They spent less time on teacher-prescribed activities (63.6% vs. 91% for the non-ALEM classes). At the same time, students in the ALEM situation spent nearly equal percentages of time in group settings (group interactive, 22.3%; group parallel, 25.1%; total, 47.4%) as in individual settings (52.6%). Positive changes in behavior from October to April during the a.m. sessions were transferred to the p.m. sessions only for the ALEM students. Students attitudes improved, self-ratings of the handicapped students were slightly higher than those of their regular peers. Handicapped students in ALEM classes tended to rate their cognitive competence, social competence, and general self-esteem higher than those in non-ALEM classes. Achievement gains for mainstreamed special education students in ALEM classrooms were 1.08 in math and 1.04 in reading. Scores were not significantly beyond the national norm, however they were significantly greater than the expected gains in both reading and math for students with comparable special education classifications.

For more information, see:

Wang, M.C. & Birch, J.W. (1984). Comparison of a full-time mainstreaming program and a resource room approach. *Exceptional Children*, Sept. 51(1): p.33-40.

- b. *Community-level Transition Teams*: These teams assist youth and adults with learning disabilities to prepare for attending a post-secondary institution or determining a career direction, living independently, establishing social support networks, and in establishing transportation options. Results from Oregon included creation of new instructional programs, better communication and collaboration among local service providers, and increased student self-esteem and self-worth.

For more information, see:

Blalock, G. (1996). Community transition teams as the foundation for transition services for youth with learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, Feb 29 (2), 148-159.

- c. *Parallel Alternate Curriculum (PAC) Program*: This teacher training program is designed for teachers to learn classroom methods for ensuring academic success for mainstreamed, low-achieving students. Data indicate that the teacher training establishes a successful setting for mainstreaming handicapped students. Student achievement is improved and both teachers and students like PAC classes. Potential drop-outs also are reported as staying in PAC classes they otherwise would drop.

For more information, see:

Smith, G. & Smith, D. (1985). A mainstreaming program that really works. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, Jun-Jul, 18(6), 369-372.

- d. *Transition Programs for the Handicapped*: These programs were developed to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of transition services for special education students in Maine (where a significant number of local education agencies are not addressing transition needs in a formalized way). Findings indicate that components unique to transition programs were not as successfully implemented, including community involvement, quantity and quality of job placements, student follow-up, post-secondary educational placements, and adjustment to community living. Successful transition programming are reported as sharing some components with special education, such as referral and assessment, interagency collaboration, use of functional curricula, and active participation of parents and students.

For more information, see:

Maine State Department of Educational and Cultural Services, Augusta Div. of Special Education. (1987). *Transition Programs for the Handicapped: Impact and Effectiveness. Executive Summary.*