

1998

# Report Card Grading and Adaptations for Students with Disabilities: A Survey of Practices in East Central Illinois

Melissa L. Jones

*Eastern Illinois University*

This research is a product of the graduate program in [Special Education](#) at Eastern Illinois University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

---

## Recommended Citation

Jones, Melissa L., "Report Card Grading and Adaptations for Students with Disabilities: A Survey of Practices in East Central Illinois" (1998). *Masters Theses*. 1759.  
<https://thekeep.eiu.edu/theses/1759>

This is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Theses & Publications at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact [tabruns@eiu.edu](mailto:tabruns@eiu.edu).

# THESIS REPRODUCTION CERTIFICATE

TO: Graduate Degree Candidates (who have written formal theses)

SUBJECT: Permission to Reproduce Theses

The University Library is receiving a number of request from other institutions asking permission to reproduce dissertations for inclusion in their library holdings. Although no copyright laws are involved, we feel that professional courtesy demands that permission be obtained from the author before we allow these to be copied.

PLEASE SIGN ONE OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

Booth Library of Eastern Illinois University has my permission to lend my thesis to a reputable college or university or the purpose of copying it for inclusion in that institution's library or research holdings.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Author's Signature

12/12/98  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I respectfully request Booth Library of Eastern Illinois University **NOT** allow my thesis to be reproduced because:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Author's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Report Card Grading and Adaptations for Students with  
Disabilities: A Survey of Practices in East Central Illinois  
(TITLE)

BY  
Melissa L. Jones

1973-

**THESIS**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Science in Education

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1998  
YEAR

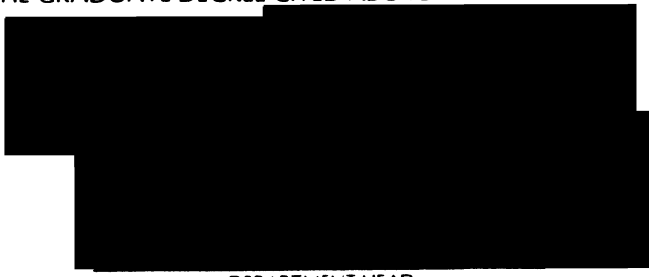
I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING  
THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE

11-19-98  
DATE

11-19-98  
DATE

11-19-98

11-19-98



DEPARTMENT HEAD



Report Card Grading and Adaptations for Students with Disabilities: A Survey of  
Practices in East Central Illinois

Melissa L. Jones

Eastern Illinois University

## Abstract

The issue of grading the academic performance of students with disabilities has become a challenge as the restructuring of special education has placed these students in general education settings. A survey was conducted within the Illinois counties of Clark, Coles, Cumberland, Douglas, Edgar, Moultrie, and Shelby in hopes of determining current policy, desired grading formats and practical grading adaptations for students with disabilities. One hundred responses, which questioned the attitudes and opinions of each group, as well as written policy and guidelines were solicited from each of four defined subgroups (teachers of special education, elementary level classroom teachers, secondary level classroom teachers and school administrators).

Results of this self-report survey yielded information pertaining to district grading policies including the number of districts utilizing mandatory guidelines for the general population as well as those with special guidelines for students with disabilities. Policy requirements and methods of communicating the policies to teachers and parents were also addressed. In addition, results revealed data concerning classroom grading policies, requirements, and other grading considerations. Philosophical issues and acceptability of various grading adaptations indicated diverse, and often contradictory, responses from those surveyed. Results were discussed in comparison to the results from previous studies on grading practices and adaptations. Implications for future research and practice are also included.

## Dedication

This study is dedicated to the many very special individuals whom I have had the opportunity to serve in some regard. As a teacher of children and adults with disabilities, I do not hesitate to credit these individuals with the vast knowledge I have learned from them. Many important lessons I wished to impart on my "students" have evolved into my education in the "school of life". Watching the day to day struggles and joys have shown me how precious life truly is and taught me to appreciate each accomplishment no matter how small. In addition, these individuals' continued persistence and endless enthusiasm have reminded me why I became involved in the field of special education, inspiring me in my quest to improve the education and thus the lives of those with disabilities. To all of these individuals I would like to say "thank you" and encourage them to never give up.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the members of my committee, Dr. Rori Carson, Dr. Judith Ivarie, Dr. Kathlene Shank, and Dr. Don Smith for their guidance. Their vast knowledge of educational issues has proven invaluable in my quest to contribute to the knowledge base of information in the field of special education. I would also like to thank Dr. Doug Bower for assisting me in the data analysis for this project. Not only did he provide suggestions and direction, Dr. Bower taught me how to enter and analyze the results. In addition, a special thanks goes to Dr. Carson for all of her assistance and suggestions as well as the endless encouragement she has given me.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my husband Doug for more than just his help with addressing envelopes, entering data, proofreading, and checking references. Without his love and support I would never have finished such a frustrating endeavor. I'm sure he will not forget the many weeks of cleaning house, fixing my computer problems, and staying at home on Saturday nights simply so I could continue to write and revise.

Finally, I would like to thank my grandparents for not only their help with checking data, but also for finishing many of our projects around the house, running errands, and doing many other tasks that they consider trivial, never realizing how important their help actually is.

## Table of Contents

	Page
Review of Literature .....	9
Purpose of Grading .....	10
Methods of Grading .....	12
Grade Reporting Systems .....	13
Attitudes Toward Grading .....	15
Grading Adaptations .....	16
Legal Aspects .....	17
Purpose of Study .....	17
Method .....	19
Design .....	19
Sample .....	20
Instrumentation .....	20
Data Collection and Analysis .....	22
Results .....	24
Demographic Data .....	24
Professional Characteristics .....	24
Service Provision Characteristics .....	25
District Policy/Procedures .....	27
Mandatory Guidelines .....	27
Grade Reporting Systems .....	28
Scale Requirements .....	28
Grade Requirements .....	29
Policy Communication .....	30
Philosophical Issues Related to District Grading Policies .....	31
Grading Policies for Students with Disabilities .....	31
Policy Establishment .....	32
Classroom Grading Practices .....	32
Classroom Practices in Comparison to District Policies .....	32
Classroom Grading Requirements .....	33
Grading Considerations .....	34
Philosophical Issues Related to Classroom Grading Practices .....	42
Grading Adaptations .....	42
Discussion .....	61
Implications of Variables .....	61
Service Provision Characteristics .....	61
District Grading Policy .....	62
Communicating Grading Systems .....	63
Philosophical Issues in the Determination of District Policy .....	63
Grading Policies for Students with Disabilities .....	64



Classroom Grading Practices.....	65
Grading Adaptations.....	66
Limitations of Study .....	68
Implications for Further Research .....	69
Conclusion.....	70
References.....	71

## List of Tables

Table	Page
1. Return Rates by Group.....	23
2. Total Group Demographic Characteristics .....	26
3. Categorical Disabilities Served.....	27
4. District Grade Reporting Systems .....	29
5. District Grade Requirements.....	30
6. Classroom Grade Reporting Systems .....	33
7. Classroom Grade Requirements .....	35
8. Administrators' Ratings of Grading Considerations .....	37
9. Elementary General Education Teachers' Ratings of Grading Considerations .....	38
10. Secondary General Education Teachers' Ratings of Grading Considerations.....	39
11. Special Education Teachers' Ratings of Grading Considerations.....	40
12. Mean Ratings of Grading Considerations.....	41
13. Grading Philosophies in Relation to Students with Disabilities .....	43
14. Administrators' Ratings of Grade Reporting Systems .....	45
15. Elementary General Education Teachers' Ratings of Grade Reporting Systems .....	46
16. Secondary General Education Teachers' Ratings of Grade Reporting Systems .....	47
17. Special Education Teachers' Ratings of Grade Reporting Systems.....	48
18. Mean Ratings of Grade Reporting Systems.....	49
19. Administrators' Ratings of Grading Adaptations.....	51
20. Elementary General Education Teachers' Ratings of Grading Adaptations .....	53
21. Secondary General Education Teachers' Ratings of Grading Adaptations.....	55
22. Special Education Teachers' Ratings of Grading Adaptations .....	57
23. Mean Ratings of Grading Adaptations .....	59

## List of Appendices

Appendix	Page
1. Special Education Teachers' Survey .....	78
2. General Education Teachers' Survey .....	84
3. Administrators' Survey.....	90
4. Cover Letter .....	96
5. Subgroup Breakdown of Categorical Labels Served.....	97

Report Card Grading and Adaptations for Students with Disabilities: A Survey of  
Practices in East Central Illinois

Review of Literature

A controversy has always surrounded grading practices used for students in America's schools (Hess, Miller, Reese, & Robinson, 1987; Wiggins, Schatz, & West, 1994). The debate becomes complicated as the issue of including and grading children with disabilities in the general education classroom enters the picture (Carpenter, Grantham, & Hardister, 1983; Calhoun, 1986; Michael & Trippi, 1987). When these children return to the regular classroom, not only must the teacher plan and modify the curriculum, he or she also assumes the task of evaluating the student's progress. This challenge increases in complexity as the factors associated with grading are taken into consideration. For example, the teacher must decide the purpose of grading, the intended meaning of the grades, an appropriate grading system, and then ultimately the grades that will be given to each student (Lieberman, 1982).

Each of the above issues contributes to the complexity of the grading process and therefore must be addressed before a policy is adopted or grades are assigned. Cohen (1983) recommends that the following questions be resolved before grades are given to students with disabilities:

1. Who is responsible for assigning the report card grade?
2. Should the grade be based on the discrepancy between the student's actual and potential performance or between the actual performance and the grade level expectancy?
3. What type of grading feedback should be given on a daily basis?

4. What type of descriptive annotation will best compliment the system's report card grading procedure?
5. Who should the parent contact to discuss a grade? (p. 86)

### Purpose of Grading

Assigning grades by letters and percentages, as most schools do, began in the early 20th Century as an attempt to make education and evaluating student's performance more efficient (Cohen, 1983; Polloway, Epstein, Bursuck, Roderique, McConeghy, & Jayanthi, 1994). Today, grading is utilized for a variety of reasons (Bradley & Calvin, 1998; Carpenter et al., 1983; Cohen, 1983; Kiraly & Bedell, 1984; Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1994; Ornstein, 1994). For example, grading is used to demonstrate content mastery, to establish instructional groups, to indicate progress, to compare, to motivate and even to punish students in rare situations.

Grades can be used as measures of learning. They are meant to convey information regarding a student's competence or mastery of some skills, knowledge or ability (Carpenter et al., 1983). In other words, an 'A' in freshmen English might mean that a student can write and speak well on a ninth-grade level. Grades are also utilized to reflect individual achievement or progress during a specific amount of time (Carpenter et al., 1983; Kiraly & Bedell, 1984). For instance, an 'A' in freshman English at the end of the first semester might mean that the student demonstrated considerably better skills, knowledge, or abilities at the end of that time frame as compared to the beginning.

A second reason for grading focuses on the impetus for educational decision-making (Kiraly & Bedell, 1984). For example, students can be divided into instructional groups such as excellent readers, average readers, or poor readers. This function of

grading can also help determine possible "tracks" or future recommendations for further study. Placement in honors classes, vocational programs, and college bound courses are examples of this function of grading.

Finally, grades can be used as motivators or punishment (Kiraly & Bedell, 1984). Ornstein (1994) points out that grades often separate students into "winners" and "losers". Competition and the promise of subsequent positive opportunities such as awards, college admission, and future employment motivate students to earn good grades. Conversely, the fear of failure, poor self-concept, and undesirable behaviors such as cheating and dishonesty force grades and the process of grading to serve as abuses to some students (Vasa, 1981).

Vasa (1981) categorizes the five common purposes for grading and lists the following functions: administrative, student, teacher, guidance, and parental. He follows the listing with the suggestion that all possible aspects of each function be evaluated and prioritized before adapting or implementing any grading policy. Christiansen and Vogel (1998) provide a systematic decision model in their problem-solving approach to grading students with disabilities. Ornstein (1989) and Shanks (1986) also endorse the idea that appropriate district policies governing grades be formulated thoughtfully and communicated carefully to all who read them, as well as be reviewed regularly to maintain consistency and reliability.

Although it is doubtful that any one grade or symbol can communicate the intended message of the grader when a variety of purposes are possible (Terwilliger, 1977). Those making the grading decisions must take into account the members of their audience. Carpenter et al. (1983) identified four major groups of consumers who hold

specific expectations of grades. Students, the primary group of consumers, expect grades to reflect something about their performance in each particular class as well as predict future performance to some extent. Parents, on the other hand, view grades as a vehicle for communicating their child's progress. Similarly, school personnel rely on grades to provide a holistic academic picture of the child. The fourth group of consumers sees grades as an indication of future success in a variety of settings including the job site, college, and as a citizen.

### Methods of Grading

Within the topic of grading, the issues of purpose, meaning, and interpretation are not the only important ones. Perhaps when one views the entire picture, the method that is used to report or assign a grade becomes the central focus. Little, if any, consistency exists in this area. Grading methods vary across the nation, within each state, and even among districts (Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1994). Underlying the grading issue regarding students with disabilities is a fundamental conflict between how students are typically evaluated in a regular program and how students are evaluated in special education programs (Warger, 1983). While general education programs have typically utilized a common standard by which all students are graded, special educators have determined grades according to students' individual needs.

This multifaceted system was acceptable and used by many when "pull-out" programs and "special" schools served as typical placements for students in need of special education. With the implementation of P.L. 94-142 (1977) and implementation (1990) and the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1997), and the best practice ideals of inclusion, these children are becoming a part of the regular

education classroom. With the arrival of these children, come many questions. One of the most difficult according to Calhoun and Beattie (1984) is "How do I fairly grade students with special needs when they are 'included' in the regular classroom".

### Grading Reporting Systems

The need for change is evident, but the question of how to grade students with disabilities in the regular classroom continues to raise serious concerns. Several suggestions have been made, many lacking empirical data to support them (Bradley & Calvin, 1998; Carpenter, 1985; Terwilliger, 1977). However, without systematic study of different procedures combined with survey results regarding acceptability from grade consumers, we may never be able to accurately identify which system best serves all purposes involved.

To provide a common knowledge base, various grading systems outlined by Beckers and Carnes (1995) and Alff and Kearns (1992) will be discussed briefly with additional references provided for each.

1. Traditional grades (such as letter grades "A,B,C,D,F") utilize numbers or percentages which are assigned by the teacher based on the student's performance on a number of tasks (Rojewski, Pollard, & Meers, 1990).

2. A Pass-Fail system includes broad-based criteria established to determine whether or not a student has passed the class (Hess et al., 1987; Lieberman, 1982; Missouri University College of Education, 1987; Rojewski et al., 1990). This system does not rank students, but rather implies a cut-off that establishes a minimum level of mastery.

3. Through the use of Individualized Education Plan (IEP) grading, competency



levels on students' IEPs are translated into the school district's performance standards (Missouri University College of Education, 1987; Oklahoma State Department of Education, 1991).

4. In Mastery Level or Criterion Grading the content is divided into subcomponents. Students earn credit when their mastery of a certain skill reaches an acceptable criterion (Hess et al., 1987; Missouri University College of Education, 1987; Rojewski et al., 1990). Checklists (Gronlund, 1981) or Curriculum-Based Measurement (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1988) can be used.

5. Multiple Grading allows the student to be graded in several areas such as ability, effort, and achievement (Carpenter, 1985; Gronlund, 1981; Hess et al., 1987).

6. Shared Grading refers to the partnership in which two or more teachers determine a student's grade based on established criteria, observation, effort, and product (Alola, 1983; Bursuck, Polloway, Plante, Epstein, Jayanthi, & McConeghy, 1996; Davis, 1982; Lindsey, Burns, & Guthrie, 1984).

7. Contracting involves the student and teacher agreeing on specified activities required for a certain grade. This format makes the student aware of specific expectations required to receive desired grades (Borders, 1981; Hess et al., 1987; Lieberman, 1982; Rojewski et al., 1990).

8. Portfolio/Authentic Assessment utilizes a cumulative portfolio that is maintained of each student's work demonstrating achievement in key skill areas throughout a child's school career (Adams & Hamm, 1992; Coutinho & Malouf, 1993; Flood & Lapp, 1989; Poteet, Choate, & Stewart, 1993; Tindal, 1991).

9. Narrative Reports or Conferences with parents and students are used by

teachers to convey specific, detailed information regarding performance which offers students a more complete explanation of their progress (Hess et al., 1987; Kiraly & Bedell, 1984; Rojewski et al. 1990).

### Attitudes Toward Grading

Many educators feel it is unnecessary to modify the curriculum or grading procedures to accommodate students with disabilities (Polloway et al., 1994). People with these views argue that if students with special needs are appropriately placed in the regular education program, they will be able to do the work assigned and should be judged using the same standards (Warger, 1983). In addition, Zigmond, Levin, and Laurie (1985) point out that approximately 60-75% of the students they surveyed who were integrated into mainstream secondary classes received passing grades without any modifications.

Conversely, Valdes, Williamson, and Wagner (1990) in the National Longitudinal Transition Study reported 60.2% of high school students with disabilities had grade point averages of 2.24 (D grade) or lower. Furthermore, researchers found that greater than one third of these students enrolled in general education classes had at least one failing grade. In addition, Osborne, Schulte, and McKinney (1991) and McLeskey and Grizzle (1992) provide some discouraging statistics related to grade level retention rates of students with disabilities. In a study by Osborne et al. (1991), the researchers found that 64.3 % of the students with learning disabilities in their study had been retained at least once during their school career. The examples mentioned above reflect a persistent lack of academic success, particularly compared to grade reports for students without disabilities (Donahue & Zigmond, 1990; Truesdell & Abramson, 1992; Wood, Bennett, Wood, & Bennett,

1990). Polloway et al. (1994) conclude by stressing the apparent need to consider modifications and adaptations in policy and practice.

### Grading Adaptations

Numerous studies have been conducted to identify curricular and grading adaptations that are used for students with disabilities, the desirability of each, and which adaptations are most often utilized (Fuchs, Fuchs, Hamlett, Phillips, & Karns, 1995; Gersten, Vaughn, & Brengelman, 1996; Polloway, Bursuck, Jayanthi, Epstein, & Nelson, 1996; Rojewski, Pollard, & Meers, 1992; Vaughn, Haager, Hogan, & Kouzekanani, 1992; Vaughn, Schumm, & Kouzekanani, 1993; Vaughn, Schumm, Niarhos, & Gordon, 1993; Wiggins et al., 1994).

In his research on curricular modifications, Ellett (1993) included a list of 35 adaptations with four strategies specifically related to grading practices for students with disabilities, while the list of 30 strategies developed by Schumm and Vaughn (1991) includes only one with explicit attention to grading. Of these, only two grading adaptations, sharing or posting grades, and talking with parents about efforts to improve grades were rated highly by teachers (3.33 and 3.29 respectively on a 4 point scale). Providing additional ways to improve grades (utilizing extra credit), reducing grades on late assignments, and adapting scoring or grading criteria were rated as unreasonable or undesirable (Ellett, 1993; Schumm & Vaughn, 1991). To conclude, Witt and Elliott (1985) note that considerations about the "attractiveness" of the intervention are important; if the treatment is not deemed acceptable, it is unlikely that it will be implemented.

Although extensive research has been done on curricular adaptations and grading practices for students with disabilities, few studies have yielded attitudinal data that compared the feelings of administrators, general educators, and special educators. The need for this information is evident. To improve upon our current grading system, we must first review grading policies, the subgroups' interpretations of these policies, the ways in which these policies are formulated and implemented, and finally the methods by which we assess the effectiveness of these systems.

#### Legal Aspects

Not only are there pertinent questions that must be answered before adopting a grading policy, legalities and best practice ideals abound. In Illinois, two of the most important issues focus on discrimination. The first point of concern revolves around the system used to report grades. By law, the same grading system must be used on report cards of all students at each grade level within the public school regardless of whether or not the individual being graded is labeled "exceptional" (Illinois State Board of Education, personal communication, June 15, 1995). Secondly, Freagon, Keiser, Kincaid, Atherton, Peters, Leininger, & Doyle (1993) note that according to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Illinois School Student Records Act (1976), a report card containing a notation that modified grades were received or that a special education label was attached to a student may be a violation of the student's rights and therefore may not be included in a student's permanent file.

#### Purpose of Study

The fact that many schools currently have some type of grading policy does not necessarily deem it appropriate for students with disabilities. Nor does the policy

guarantee that grades provide meaningful, standardized information to the various groups (teachers, students, parents, administrators, and employers) who rely on them. In fact, a broad range of opinions exists regarding grading and how students with disabilities should be evaluated. One group of educators expresses concern regarding adjustments in grading procedures. They fear that standards will be lowered and course integrity will be compromised (Alff & Kearns, 1992; Bradley & Calvin, 1998). Proponents of the group at the other end of the spectrum feel that students with disabilities are already "fighting uphill battles" and need modifications and adaptations in order to learn and feel successful (Bursuck et al., 1996, p. 311). These conflicting viewpoints provide a rationale for this study and the information to be gleaned from the results.

With all of the problems surrounding the issue of grading students with disabilities and the endless number of grading system possibilities, this study will examine the following research questions:

1. Do school districts have written policies for assigning grades to the general education population? What components are included in these policies? How are these policies communicated to parents and teachers?
2. Do school districts have special policies for grading students with disabilities? How are these policies determined?
3. What types of grades do classroom teachers utilize? How appropriate are these grades for students with disabilities? Upon what requirements are grades based?
4. Should adaptations in grading standards be considered for individual students with disabilities? How should these individualized adaptations be determined?
5. What adaptations are most likely to be utilized for students with disabilities?

## Method

This study is based on a combination of three previous studies by Buckley (1987), Bursuck et al. (1996), and Polloway et al. (1994). The current study extends the investigations of the previous studies by focusing on the process and policy of assigning grades to students with disabilities who participate in the general education setting for at least a portion of the school day. This study does not compare students receiving special education services to their peers without identified disabilities. Rather, it uses responses from a sample of special educators, general educators, and administrators to obtain information on grading systems and requirements as well as to examine opinions regarding the acceptability of a number of grading adaptations designed for use with students who have disabilities.

## Design

Cross-sectional surveys developed by Buckley (1987), Bursuck et al. (1996), and Polloway et al. (1994) were combined, revised, and used to ascertain policies and opinions regarding students with identified impairments who receive special education services. According to Borg and Gall (1989), "In the cross-sectional survey, standardized information is collected from a sample drawn from a predetermined population" (p. 418). This design was used to systematically sample special education teachers, elementary classroom teachers, secondary classroom teachers and administrators in a region in east central Illinois. These groups represent people who provide or are responsible for the services provided and the grades assigned to students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

### Sample

The 1997-98 Regional Office of Education Directory for the east-central Illinois counties of Clark, Coles, Cumberland, Douglas, Edgar, Moultrie, and Shelby provided a comprehensive list of the staff employed within each represented school district. After dividing subjects into the categories of general education teachers (elementary vs. junior and senior high school), special education teachers, and administrators, a table of random numbers (Borg and Gall, 1983) was utilized to systematically select 100 subjects from each of the four subgroups following guidelines specified by Sudman (1976). Thus, a total of 400 surveys were mailed to subjects across four subgroups.

### Instrumentation

The surveys on grading practices were developed in the following manner: First, an extensive review of literature was conducted to explore related research on grading and grading adaptations for students with disabilities. Six survey questions written by Buckley (1987), 13 questions from Bursuck et al. (1996), and three items used by Polloway et al. (1994) were then revised and combined with eight additional new questions to form the survey for this study. The new surveys were piloted by asking 10 teaching colleagues to complete the survey and provide constructive criticism. They were asked to review the instructions and content of the survey instrument and identify any components that required further explanation or modification. Comments regarding the survey included questions about directions, the identification of grammatical and typographical errors, and suggestions for revised page layout. In addition, those who participated in the pilot test, provided ideas for deletions and additions needed to

completely but concisely address the topic. Based on the input received, a final revision of the survey was completed.

The final surveys were 30-item questionnaires regarding report card guidelines and grading adaptations for students with disabilities including 17 objective questions asking about policies and current practices and 13 subjective items querying attitudes and opinions (see Appendices A, B, and C).

The first eight items were designed to obtain the following demographic information: (a) current position, (b) building type, (c) grade(s) and subject(s) taught, (d) gender, (e) age, (f) number of years of experience, (g) level of education, and (h) labels of students served. Survey items nine through 19 requested information on district grading policies and procedures including (a) written guidelines, (b) required policy, (c) grade types, (d) scale requirements, (e) grade requirements, (f) teacher communication regarding grading policies, (g) parent communication regarding grading policies, (h) specific guidelines for students with disabilities, (i) how guidelines are established, and (j) feelings regarding the policy. The next four items dealt with classroom grading policies and practices. Finally, items 24 through 27 were meant to obtain information regarding subjects' attitudes concerning grading adaptations for students with disabilities. Included were items asking about preferences for specific adaptations, the benefits of certain grading systems as well as opinions surrounding philosophical issues in grading.

Questionnaire formats each included 13 questions that required respondents to select only one answer and six that asked respondents to identify all that were applicable. Three items (28 individual components) required rating on a 3-point Likert-type scale utilizing categories of "Very", "Somewhat", and "Not at all". Five questions required a



descriptive response from each participant and one question asked respondents to provide estimated percentages.

### Data Collection and Analysis

A goal of a 50% rate of return overall was set prior to mailing the surveys based on response rates for similar published studies on the same topic. Polloway et al. (1994) acquired an overall return rate of 40.9% in their study which ascertained types of grading policies nationwide as well as determined whether those policies addressed guidelines for students with disabilities. A 48.4% rate of return was utilized in a study conducted by Rojewski et al. (1992) to examine current grading practices of secondary teachers and their perceptions on grading and evaluation issues for students with disabilities in the mainstream. In addition, Zigmond et al. (1985) analyzed information on teacher attitudes and student performance in mainstream high school programs based on a return rate of 31%.

The initial mailing to each subject included a cover letter, the survey instrument, and a self-addressed, stamped return envelope. Surveys were coded to allow the researcher to follow-up with a second mailing if return rates were not acceptable. Finally, participants were asked to return the survey within two weeks.

A follow-up mailing was not performed because the end of the school year was approaching. The return rate of 50.5% met the goal set prior to mailing the surveys and is considered acceptable according to guidelines outlined by Babbie (1973). The return rates for each subgroup are reported in Table 1.

Table 1

Return Rates by Group

	Surveys Sent	Surveys Returned
Position	<u>n</u>	<u>n</u> ( %)
Admin.	100	(49)49.0
Gen. Ed. (Elem.)	100	(50)50.0
Gen. Ed. (Sec.)	100	(51)51.0
Spec. Ed.	100	(51)51.0
Total	400	(201)50.5

## Results

The purpose of this study was to examine grading systems and grading adaptations used for students with disabilities. In addition, attitudes and opinions regarding appropriate and effective evaluation of students receiving special education services were explored. Special educators, general education teachers, and administrators in east central Illinois were randomly selected and surveyed with the results based solely on the answers provided by respondents in each subgroup.

Results will be reported in narrative using whole group data for the section on district grading policies, though an appendix provided the interested reader with information regarding subgroup responses. All subsequent sections will report whole group data and data broken down by subgroup. This will allow the reader an overview of the results in addition to the information needed to form comparisons between subgroups. Demographics data will not be subsectioned and analyzed according to specific variables, as correlational data is not appropriate for the study (D. Bower, June 10, 1998). Descriptive statistics in the form of numbers and percentages as well as means will be utilized.

### Demographic Data

The first eight items on the survey asked teachers to provide demographic data and information relative to experience working with students who have identified disabilities.

### Professional Characteristics

Analysis of the total group showed that 67.8% of the respondents were female and 32.2% were male. Respondents' ages ranged from 22 to 60 years with an average age

of 44.41 years. The group responded that 35.3% held a bachelor's degree, 54.2% held a master's degree, 10% held a specialist degree, and .5% held a doctorate degree.

Experience ranged from first year teachers to education professionals with 36 years of experience. The average number of year's experience was 15.49 years (Table 2).

### Service Provision Characteristics

The final question in this section focused on the provision of services to students with specific types of disabilities. Of all the respondents who completed surveys, 100% had served students with one or more identified impairments (Table 3). The number of respondents who have served students with learning disabilities totaled 97.5%, while 81% have served students labeled behavior disordered, and 32.5% have served students who are mentally retarded. In addition, 36.5% of respondents reported serving students with visual impairments, 57% have served students with hearing impairments, and 26% have provided services to students with communication disorders. Finally, 47.5% of respondents have served students with physical disabilities, 47% have served students with health impairments and 6% report having served students with other disabilities which were not specifically listed (e.g. autism, traumatic brain injury, and attention deficit disorder). For breakdown by subgroup see Appendix E.

Table 2

Total Group Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	<u>n</u>	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	135	67.8
Male	64	32.2
<b>Age</b>		
Range	22-60	
Mean	44.41	
<b>Educational Level</b>		
B.A./B.S.	71	35.3
M.A./M.Ed.	109	54.2
Ed.S.	20	10.0
Ph.D	1	.5
<b>Years Experience</b>		
Range	1-36	
Mean	15.49	

Table 3

Categorical Disabilities Served

Variable	<u>n</u> (%)
Learning Disabilities	195(97.5)
Behavior Disorders	162(81.0)
Hearing Impairments	102(51.9)
Communication Disorders	52(26.0)
Mental Retardation	65(32.5)
Visual Impairments	73(36.5)
Physical Disabilities	95(47.5)
Health Impairments	94(47.0)
Other	12(6.0)

Note. Total may add up to more than 100 percent because respondents were asked to mark all disability groups they had served.

District Policy/ProceduresMandatory Guidelines

When asked about guidelines utilized to grade the general education population, 61.7% of respondents indicated that their districts have required written guidelines, while

30.3% do not. An additional 8% were unsure whether their districts have mandatory guidelines for grading. Of those districts with written grading policies, 82% require that all teachers adhere to the guidelines.

#### Grade Reporting Systems

When asked to identify the grading systems required by district policy (Table 4), 95% of respondents indicated that letter grades were utilized and 16% used percentages, while only 1.7% used number grades. Comments or narratives were a part of the mandatory policy according to 54.6% of respondents. Pass-fail or satisfactory-unsatisfactory ratings were utilized by 41.2% of those responding and 39.5% of respondents were required to use symbols. Checklists were imperative in 26.1% of district policy and 9.2% of respondents indicated some type of system other than those specified.

#### Scale Requirements

The scale requirements were less diversified. Respondents indicated that 73.1% of their districts' grading scales used percentage cut-offs translated to traditional letter grades (A-F), while 3.4% utilized percentage cut-offs converted to other letter grades (S, N, U, I, O). Only 4.6% of respondents were required to use a point scale while 18.5% of respondents were not required to use any specific grading scale.

Table 4

## District Grade Reporting Systems

Grading Format	n(%)
Letter Grades	113(95.0)
Number Grades	2(1.7)
Percentages	19(16.0)
Pass-Fail/Satisfactory-Unsatisfactory	49(41.2)
Comments/Narratives	65(54.6)
Checklists	31(26.1)
Symbols	47(39.5)
Other	11(9.2)

Note. Totals may add up to more than 100 percent because respondents were asked to mark all grading reporting systems included in district policy.

Grade Requirements

District policies varied in terms of the requirements upon which grades were based (Table 5). Daily work was part of the grade requirement in 62.4% of respondents' district policies, while 56.4% required homework. In addition, 62.4% of respondents indicated that their district grading policies required tests or quizzes, 54.7% required projects, and 49.6% required papers. Requirements other than those specified were listed by 8.5% of respondents while 36.8% reported no specific work requirements.



Table 5

District Grade Requirements

Variable	n(%)
Daily Work	73(62.4)
Homework	66(56.4)
Tests or Quizzes	73(62.4)
Projects	64(54.7)
Papers	58(49.6)
Other Requirements	10(8.5)
No Requirements Specified	43(36.8)

Note. Totals may add up to more than 100 percent because respondents were asked to mark all requirements listed in district policy.

Policy Communication

District policies are effective only if they are successfully communicated to teachers and parents. Faculty meetings or inservice training were cited by 51.7% of respondents as ways grading policies were communicated to teachers. In addition, 37.3% replied that teachers receive information on grading policies from new teacher training while 22% were informed by teacher mentors. A majority, 89% indicated that the school handbook was an important means of communicating guidelines for grading. Only 22% of respondents gleaned information on grading requirements through an interview with

the administrator and 6.8% listed other methods of communicating policies and procedures relative to grading standards.

District grading policies were communicated to parents at school registration according to 20.3% of respondents and 30.5% utilized open house as a means to convey grading standards. The school handbook was cited as a way that grading policies were communicated to parents by 92.4% of those responding, while 41.5% indicated that their districts utilized a letter sent home by the school or teacher to inform parents of grading standards. Grading policies and procedures were communicated through parent teacher conferences according to 67% of respondents and 12.7% listed methods for communicating grading standards other than those specifically mentioned.

#### Philosophical Issues Related to District Grading Policies

When asked philosophical questions regarding grading procedures and standards, 56% of respondents felt that a written school or district policy should be utilized. Only 32.1% held the opinion that a policy should not be required, while 11.9% were unsure. The belief that grading guidelines should be the same for all teachers at the same grade level throughout the school was held by 58.8% of respondents. On the other hand, 34.5% of those who responded did not feel that identical grading guidelines should be required for teachers at a given grade level and 6.7% were unsure.

#### Grading Policies for Students with Disabilities

Finally, respondents were asked if their districts utilized specific written guidelines for grading students with identified impairments. A small number (18.5%) reported that their districts did indeed have special guidelines, while 61% indicated that

their districts did not have a written policy for students receiving special education services, and 20.5% did not know.

### Policy Establishment

In those districts with a policy for grading students with disabilities, 8.2% of respondents reported that the school board establishes the guidelines and 18.4% credited administrators with this task. The special education cooperative was responsible for determining specialized district guidelines according to 14.3% of respondents and 8.2% utilized a district committee to establish such policies. Of those who responded, 26.5% listed other ways in which guidelines were established while nearly one quarter (24.5%) of respondents did not know who determined special education grading policies.

### Classroom Grading Practices

#### Classroom Practices in Comparison to District Policies

Classroom grading policies differ greatly from those mandated by the district (Table 6). For example, 44% of those responding reported supplementing the district grading system with other grade reporting formats. On the other hand, 37% of respondents indicated that they use only the grading format that is specified by district guidelines. A smaller number of respondents (19%) reported that their district grading guidelines do not specify the format that is to be used to communicate a child's academic performance.

Table 6

## Classroom Grade Reporting Systems

	Admin.	Gen. Ed. (Elem.)	Gen. Ed. (Sec.)	Spec. Ed.
	<u>n</u> (%)	<u>n</u> (%)	<u>n</u> (%)	<u>n</u> (%)
Letter Grades	32(65.3)	44(88.0)	41(80.4)	40(78.4)
Number Grades	11(22.4)	11(22.0)	15(29.4)	9(17.6)
Percentages	20(40.8)	23(46.0)	30(58.8)	31(60.8)
Pass-Fail/Sat.-Unsat.	23(46.9)	26(52.0)	10(19.6)	20(39.2)
Comments/Narratives	23(46.9)	37(74.0)	18(35.3)	29(56.9)
Checklists	17(34.7)	20(40.0)	7(13.7)	18(35.3)
Symbols	6(12.2)	13(26.0)	6(11.8)	4(7.8)
Other	6(12.2)	4(8.0)	2(3.9)	3(5.9)

Note. Totals may add up to more than 100% because respondents were asked to mark all grade reporting systems they use.

### Classroom Grading Requirements

Regardless of the grading format used, a variety of requirements are combined to determine the final grade (Table 7). Work completed in class was reported as a requirement by 81.7% of respondents, while 82.3% included homework and 95.1% included scores from tests or quizzes in the final grade calculation. Reports or papers

were required by 59.1% of respondents and 57.3% utilized projects as part of a student's grade. Presentations were included by 42.1% of those responding as a component of the final grade while, 24.4% required a notebook or portfolio. In addition, 32.3% of the educators that responded base grades on cooperative learning scores or group product, 20.1% utilized informal observation and 7.9% listed other grade requirements (Table 7).

When asked to estimate the overall percentage of students' report card grades that was determined by each requirement, respondents indicated that 20.63% of the final grade was based on in-class work and 17.09% was based on homework. Tests and quizzes made up 33.29% of the end grade and 5.81% was determined by reports and papers. Projects accounted for 5.62% of a student's report card grade and 3.37% was based on presentation scores. Notebooks or portfolios made up 2.15% of the final grade and group product or cooperative learning scores accounted for 2.65%. Informal observation was worth 2.07% of the ending grade and other requirements were combined to determine 1.44% of the resulting grade.

### Grading Considerations

In addition to standardized requirements, other factors are taken into consideration when determining report card grades. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of a variety of considerations on a three-point scale with one as "very important" and three as "not important". When asked about the level of ability of a child, 51.7% of respondents indicated that it very important, 35.5% felt it was somewhat important, and 12.8% viewed this consideration as unimportant. Attendance was regarded very important by 40.5% of respondents, while 38.2% felt it was somewhat important, and 21.4% indicated that it was not important. Class participation was

Table 7

Classroom Grade Requirements

	Admin.	Gen. Ed. (Elem.)	Gen. Ed. (Sec.)	Spec. Ed.
	<u>n</u> (%)	<u>n</u> (%)	<u>n</u> (%)	<u>n</u> (%)
In-class work	26(13.88)	44(32.63)	28(11.17)	36(24.03)
Homework	32(16.59)	32(12.90)	38(22.63)	33(16.05)
Tests/Quizzes	33(34.79)	44(30.80)	41(42.20)	38(24.78)
Reports/Papers	29(9.97)	20(3.07)	19(4.22)	29(6.78)
Projects	28(8.06)	22(2.93)	19(5.85)	25(6.11)
Presentations	22(5.82)	12(1.02)	14(3.85)	21(3.16)
Notebook/Portfolio	12(2.26)	7(1.39)	11(2.88)	10(2.08)
Cooperative Learning	11(2.26)	13(2.15)	10(2.51)	19(3.70)
Informal Observation	8(2.21)	11(2.37)	3(.54)	11(3.32)
Other	4(1.03)	3(2.71)	3(1.46)	3(.54)

Note. Totals may add up to more than 100 percent because respondents were asked to mark all requirements upon which they base grades.

considered very important by 42% of respondents, somewhat important by 47.7% of respondents and not important by 10.2% of those who responded.

Effort was considered very important in deciding final grades by 71.8% of those responding, while 23.2% viewed effort as somewhat important and 5.1% felt it was unimportant. Half of those who responded indicated that attitude was a very important consideration in determining report card grades, while 38.6% felt it was somewhat important and 11.4% viewed attitude as unimportant in making grading decisions. A student's behavior in class was regarded as very important by 36.8% of respondents, while 43.1% viewed it as somewhat important, and 20.1% felt it was an unimportant factor in determining report card grades. Preparedness and organization were considered very important by 50.9% of those who responded, while 40% considered it somewhat important, and 9.1% felt this was not important.

When asked to indicate how important a child's progress was in determining his final grade, 58.9% of respondents rated it very important, 36.6% felt it was somewhat important, and 4.6% viewed progress as unimportant. Only 7.9% of respondents considered a child's comparison to his classmates as very important in determining the report card grade, 37.3% felt this was somewhat important and 54.8% indicated that this comparison was not important. The level of materials a child uses was regarded as very important by 21.8% of respondents, while 51.1% viewed it as somewhat important, and 27% considered it unimportant. Finally, respondents were asked to rate the importance of the anticipated reaction to the grade. Only 2.8% felt this factor was very important, 19.9% regarded it as somewhat important, and 77.3% viewed it as not important (See Tables 8-11 for individual subgroup ratings and Table 12 for mean scores).

Table 8

Administrators' Ratings of Grading Considerations

	<u>n</u>			<u>Mean</u>
	V	S	N	
Level of Ability	19	13	8	1.73
Attendance	18	18	4	1.65
Class Participation	20	18	2	1.55
Effort	26	13	2	1.41
Attitude	18	20	3	1.63
Behavior in Class	11	20	10	1.98
Preparedness/Organization	16	21	3	1.68
Progress	23	17	1	1.46
Comparison with Classmates	6	16	19	2.32
Level of Materials	16	19	6	1.76
Anticipated Reaction to Grade	1	9	31	2.73

Note. V=Very Important, S=Somewhat Important, N= Not Important; Mean scores reflect the rating of "Very Important" equal to one and continue with "Not Important" receiving a rating of three.



Table 9

Elementary General Education Teachers' Ratings of Grading Considerations

	<u>n</u>			<u>Mean</u>
	V	S	N	
Level of Ability	21	18	5	1.64
Attendance	6	22	14	2.23
Class Participation	14	23	8	1.87
Effort	26	15	4	1.51
Attitude	16	21	8	1.82
Behavior in Class	11	21	11	2.00
Preparedness/Organization	21	19	6	1.67
Progress	33	12	1	1.30
Comparison with Classmates	5	19	22	2.37
Level of Materials	9	27	8	1.98
Anticipated Reaction to Grade	2	9	35	2.72

Note. V=Very Important, S=Somewhat Important, N= Not Important; Mean scores reflect the rating of "Very Important" equal to one and continue with "Not Important" receiving a rating of three.

Table 10

Secondary General Education Teachers' Ratings of Grading Considerations

	<u>n</u>			<u>Mean</u>
	V	S	N	
Level of Ability	20	18	4	1.62
Attendance	20	15	9	1.75
Class Participation	16	23	5	1.75
Effort	35	7	2	1.25
Attitude	24	13	6	1.58
Behavior in Class	20	15	8	1.72
Preparedness/Organization	25	14	3	1.48
Progress	20	20	2	1.57
Comparison with Classmates	1	16	26	2.58
Level of Materials	2	23	17	2.36
Anticipated Reaction to Grade	1	8	34	2.77

Note. V=Very Important, S=Somewhat Important, N= Not Important; Mean scores reflect the rating of "Very Important" equal to one and continue with "Not Important" receiving a rating of three.

Table 11

Special Education Teachers' Ratings of Grading Considerations

	<u>n</u>			<u>Mean</u>
	V	S	N	
Level of Ability	29	12	5	1.48
Attendance	26	11	8	1.60
Class Participation	24	20	3	1.55
Effort	40	6	1	1.17
Attitude	30	14	3	1.43
Behavior in Class	22	19	6	1.66
Preparedness/Organization	27	16	4	1.51
Progress	27	15	4	1.50
Comparison with Classmates	2	15	30	2.60
Level of Materials	11	20	16	2.11
Anticipated Reaction to Grade	1	9	36	2.76

Note. V=Very Important, S=Somewhat Important, N= Not Important; Mean scores reflect the rating of "Very Important" equal to one and continue with "Not Important" receiving a rating of three.

Table 12

Mean Ratings of Grading Considerations

	Admin.	Gen. Ed. (Elem.)	Gen. Ed. (Sec.)	Spec. Ed.
Level of Ability	1.73	1.64	1.62	1.48
Attendance	1.65	2.23	1.75	1.60
Class Participation	1.55	1.87	1.75	1.55
Effort	1.41	1.51	1.25	1.17
Attitude	1.63	1.82	1.58	1.43
Behavior in Class	1.98	2.00	1.72	1.66
Preparedness/Organization	1.68	1.67	1.48	1.51
Progress	1.46	1.30	1.57	1.50
Comparison with Classmates	2.32	2.37	2.58	2.60
Level of Materials	1.76	1.98	2.36	2.11
Anticipated Reaction to Grade	2.73	2.72	2.77	2.76

Note. Mean scores reflect the rating of "Very Important" equal to one and continue with "Not Important" receiving a rating of three.

### Philosophical Issues Related to Classroom Grading Practices

The final question in this section on classroom grading practices asked respondents if they felt that individual teachers should decide their own grading philosophy and standards. Almost half (43.3%) of administrators replied that they indeed felt that teachers should assume this responsibility as did 72.7% of secondary general education teachers, 37% of elementary classroom teachers and 43.5% of special educators. On the other hand, 43.9% of administrators indicated that they did not feel teachers should be allowed to decide their own grading philosophy and standards. In addition, 20.5% of secondary general education teachers held the same view, as did 41.3% of elementary classroom teachers and special educators respectively. A small percentage (9.8%) of administrators was unsure of their feelings on this topic, as were 6.8% of secondary general education teachers. Also undecided were 21.7% of elementary classroom teachers and 15.2% of special educators.

### Grading Adaptations

The first few items in the section on grading adaptations asked respondents about their opinions on philosophical issues relating to grading standards (Table 13). The first question asked the respondents if they feel that all students in a class (regardless of ability) should be graded using the same standards. Set standards for grading all students were favored by 29% of respondents. Conversely, 65% disagree with this view while 6% have mixed feelings. When asked if mainstreaming should occur only if the student can complete general class content and be graded using the same standards, 37.2% responded that they indeed agree, while 57.3% disagree and 5.5% were unsure.

Table 13

Grading Philosophies in Relation to Students with Disabilities

	Admin.	Gen. Ed. (Elem.)	Gen. Ed. (Sec.)	Spec. Ed.
Variable	<u>n</u> (%)	<u>n</u> (%)	<u>n</u> (%)	<u>n</u> (%)
All students (regardless of ability) Should be graded using the same Standards.	18(37.5)	13(26.0)	22(43.1)	5(9.8)
Students should be mainstreamed only if they can complete general education class content and be graded using the same standards.	11(23.4)	18(36.0)	31(60.8)	14(27.5)
Different grading standards should be Considered for students with disabilities.	32(66.7)	32(64.0)	21(42.0)	40(78.4)
It is preferable to keep the same Grading standards but modify content and assignments.	32(71.1)	36(73.5)	29(59.2)	42(84.0)

Respondents were then questioned about their feelings regarding the consideration of modified grading standards for students with disabilities who are mainstreamed. A majority, 62.8% of those who responded believed that modifications in grading standards should be considered on an individual basis, 30% did not view adaptations in grading standards as appropriate, and 7% were not sure how they feel about this issue. On the other hand, 72% of those questioned stated that they prefer to keep the same grading standards, but modify content and assignments.

When modifications in grading standards are utilized for students with disabilities, 70.8% of respondents felt that adaptations should be based on a collaborative decision between the general education teacher and the specialist. In addition, 60.9% felt that the decision should be made by the multidisciplinary team and specified in the child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). According to 36.5% of respondents, the classroom teacher should make the determination of modified standards, while 29% felt the special educator should assign the grade if standards are modified. A written building or district policy was preferred by 29.2% of those who returned completed surveys and 14.1% favor a state policy.

The next question asked respondents to rate how beneficial they considered each type of report card grade for students with disabilities (See Tables 14-17 for individual subgroup ratings and Table 18 for mean scores). Comments or narratives were considered the most beneficial with 74.8% of respondents rating this type of grade format very beneficial. Checklists were rated very beneficial by 49.2% of respondents. Traditional letter grades were considered very beneficial by 38.4% of those who responded, while 26.9% of respondents viewed percentages as very beneficial. Pass

Table 14

Administrators' Ratings of Grade Reporting Systems

	<u>n</u>			<u>Mean</u>
	V	S	N	
Letter Grades	18	23	7	1.77
Number Grades	4	24	16	2.27
Percentages	6	27	11	2.11
Pass-Fail/Sat.-Unsat.	5	30	12	2.15
Comments/Narratives	38	7	1	1.20
Checklists	23	16	5	1.59
Symbols	0	25	19	2.43

Note. V=Very Beneficial, S=Somewhat Beneficial, N= Not Beneficial; Mean scores reflect the rating of "Very Beneficial" equal to one and continue with "Not Beneficial" receiving a rating of three.



Table 15

Elementary General Education Teachers' Ratings of Grade Reporting Systems

	<u>n</u>			<u>Mean</u>
	V	S	N	
Letter Grades	15	26	8	1.86
Number Grades	3	23	18	2.34
Percentages	10	25	11	2.02
Pass-Fail/Sat.-Unsat.	12	28	8	1.92
Comments/Narratives	40	7	0	1.13
Checklists	28	16	2	1.40
Symbols	7	16	16	2.17

Note. V=Very Beneficial, S=Somewhat Beneficial, N= Not Beneficial; Mean scores reflect the rating of "Very Beneficial" equal to one and continue with "Not Beneficial" receiving a rating of three.

Table 16

Secondary General Education Teachers' Ratings of Grade Reporting Systems

	<u>n</u>			<u>Mean</u>
	V	S	N	
Letter Grades	15	23	6	1.80
Number Grades	7	23	15	2.18
Percentages	14	21	9	1.89
Pass-Fail/Sat.-Unsat.	11	27	7	1.91
Comments/Narratives	22	22	2	1.57
Checklists	15	18	10	1.88
Symbols	1	17	22	2.53

Note. V=Very Beneficial, S=Somewhat Beneficial, N= Not Beneficial; Mean scores reflect the rating of "Very Beneficial" equal to one and continue with "Not Beneficial" receiving a rating of three.

Table 17

Special Education Teachers' Ratings of Grade Reporting Systems

	<u>n</u>			<u>Mean</u>
	V	S	N	
Letter Grades	25	21	3	1.55
Number Grades	7	16	22	2.33
Percentages	19	21	8	1.77
Pass-Fail/Sat.-Unsat.	8	29	11	2.06
Comments/Narratives	39	7	1	1.19
Checklists	22	21	4	1.62
Symbols	2	18	24	2.50

Note. V=Very Beneficial, S=Somewhat Beneficial, N= Not Beneficial; Mean scores reflect the rating of "Very Beneficial" equal to one and continue with "Not Beneficial" receiving a rating of three.

Table 18

Mean Ratings of Grade Reporting Systems

	Admin.	Gen. Ed. (Elem.)	<u>Gen. Ed.</u> (Sec.)	<u>Spec. Ed</u>
Letter Grades	1.77	1.86	1.80	1.55
Number Grades	2.27	2.34	2.18	2.33
Percentages	2.11	2.02	1.89	1.77
Pass-Fail/Sat.-Unsat.	2.15	1.92	1.91	2.06
Comments/Narratives	1.20	1.13	1.57	1.19
Checklists	1.59	1.40	1.88	1.62
Symbols	2.43	2.17	2.53	2.50

Note. Mean scores reflect the rating of "Very Beneficial" equal to one and continue with "Not Beneficial" receiving a rating of three.

fail/satisfactory-unsatisfactory systems were considered very beneficial by 19.1% of respondents, 11.8% viewed number grades as very beneficial. While only 6.6% felt symbols were very beneficial.

The final question on the survey asked respondents to rate how likely they would be to utilize various report card grading adaptations for students with disabilities.

Grading based on meeting IEP objectives was rated the highest with 56.6% of

respondents indicating that they would be very likely to use this adaptation. Basing grades on academic or behavioral contracts were adaptations that 44.5% of respondents reported they were likely to use. Giving separate grades for process and product was considered very likely to be utilized by 36.7% of respondents, while basing grades on the amount of improvement a student makes was rated very likely to be employed by 33.1% of those who responded. A number of educators (30.2%) felt that they would be very likely to adjust grades according to student ability and 25.6% of respondents were very likely to adjust grade weights.

The use of a modified grading scale was rated very likely to be utilized by 20.7% of those who responded and grading students based on less content than the rest of the class was considered very likely to be used by 18% of respondents. If a student makes a concerted effort to pass, 12.9% of those surveyed reported that they would be very likely to pass the student, and even fewer respondents (1.1%) indicated that they would be very likely to pass a student no matter what (See Tables 19-22 for individual subgroup ratings and Table 23 for mean scores).

Table 19

Administrators' Ratings of Grading Adaptations

	<u>n</u>			<u>Mean</u>
	V	S	N	
Grades based on amount of improvement.	13	23	9	1.91
Grades based on meeting IEP objectives.	31	13	1	1.33
Separate grades for process and product.	11	26	8	1.93
Grade weights are adjusted (projects count more).	12	22	10	1.95
Grade adjusted according to student ability.	8	22	14	2.14
Grades based on less content.	7	27	8	2.02
Grades based on modified scale.	3	27	13	2.23

(table continues)

Table 19 (continued)

	<u>n</u>			<u>Mean</u>
	V	S	N	
Students passed no matter what.	0	3	40	2.93
Students passed if they make an effort to pass.	2	28	14	2.27

Note. V=Very Likely to Use, S=Somewhat Likely to Use N= Not Likely to Use; Mean scores reflect the rating of "Very Likely" equal to one and continue with "Not Likely" receiving a rating of three.

Table 20

Elementary General Education Teachers' Ratings of Grading Adaptations

	<u>n</u>			<u>Mean</u>
	V	S	N	
Grades based on amount of improvement.	16	26	2	1.68
Grades based on meeting IEP objectives.	27	16	2	1.44
Separate grades for process and product.	21	15	9	1.73
Grade weights are adjusted (projects count more).	12	24	8	1.91
Grade adjusted according to student ability.	14	27	4	1.78
Grades based on meeting contract requirements.	22	20	3	1.58
Grades based on modified scale.	10	29	6	1.91

(table continues)



Table 20 (continued)

	<u>n</u>			<u>Mean</u>
	V	S	N	
Students passed no matter what.	1	4	37	2.88
Students passed if they Make an effort to pass.	7	27	9	2.05

Note. V=Very Likely to Use, S=Somewhat Likely to Use N= Not Likely to Use; Mean scores reflect the rating of "Very Likely" equal to one and continue with "Not Likely" receiving a rating of three.

Table 21

Secondary General Education Teachers' Ratings of Grading Adaptations

	<u>n</u>			<u>Mean</u>
	V	S	N	
Grades based on amount of improvement.	10	26	7	1.93
Grades based on meeting IEP objectives.	12	26	5	1.84
Separate grades for process and product.	14	18	10	1.90
Grade weights are adjusted (projects count more).	9	26	9	2.00
Grade adjusted according to student ability.	8	25	11	2.07
Grades based on meeting contract requirements.	13	22	9	1.91
Grades based on less content.	4	21	17	2.31

(table continues)

Table 21 (continued)

	<u>n</u>			<u>Mean</u>
	V	S	N	
Grades based on modified scale.	6	24	12	2.14
Students passed no matter what.	0	1	42	2.98
Students passed if they make an effort to pass.	4	26	12	1.98

Note. V=Very Likely to Use, S=Somewhat Likely to Use N= Not Likely to Use; Mean scores reflect the rating of "Very Likely" equal to one and continue with "Not Likely" receiving a rating of three.

Table 22

Special Education Teachers' Ratings of Grading Adaptations

	<u>n</u>			<u>Mean</u>
	V	S	N	
Grades based on amount of improvement.	21	19	9	1.76
Grades based on meeting IEP objectives.	33	11	5	1.43
Separate grades for process and product.	20	18	10	1.79
Grade weights are adjusted (projects count more).	13	27	8	1.90
Grade adjusted according to student ability.	25	14	10	1.69
Grades based on meeting contract requirements.	23	20	6	1.65
Grades based on less content.	12	24	13	2.02

(table continues)

Table 22 (continued)

	<u>n</u>			<u>Mean</u>
	V	S	N	
Grades based on modified				
scale.	18	25	6	1.76
Students passed no matter				
what.	1	4	44	2.88
Students passed if they				
make an effort to pass.	10	30	9	1.98

Note. V=Very Likely to Use, S=Somewhat Likely to Use N= Not Likely to Use; Mean scores reflect the rating of "Very Likely" equal to one and continue with "Not Likely" receiving a rating of three.

Table 23

Mean Ratings of Grading Adaptations

	Admin.	Gen. Ed. (Elem.)	Gen. Ed. (Sec.)	Spec. Ed.
Grades based on amount of improvement.	1.91	1.68	1.93	1.76
Grades based on meeting IEP objectives.	1.33	1.44	1.84	1.43
Separate grades for process and product.	1.93	1.73	1.90	1.79
Grade weights are adjusted (projects count more).	1.95	1.91	2.00	1.90
Grade adjusted according to student ability.	2.14	1.78	2.07	1.69
Grades based on meeting contract requirements.	1.61	1.58	1.91	1.65
Grades based on less content.	2.02	2.02	2.31	2.02
Grades based on modified scale.	2.23	1.91	2.14	1.76

(table continues)

Table 23 (continued)

---

	Admin.	Gen. Ed. (Elem.)	Gen. Ed. (Sec.)	Spec. Ed.
Students passed no matter				
what.	2.93	2.86	2.98	2.88
Students passed if they				
make an effort to pass.	2.27	2.05	2.19	1.98

---

Note. Mean scores reflect the rating of "Very Likely" equal to one and continue with "Not Likely" receiving a rating of three.

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to ascertain grading policies used for students with disabilities in east central Illinois. Of particular interest were classroom and district policies and grade reporting formats as well as individualized grading adaptations and the array of opinions surrounding the practice and process of grading students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). The results revealed differing perceptions of subgroups regarding classroom grading formats, grade requirements, grade considerations, and grading adaptations. This discussion focuses on the implications of the results on students, teachers, and school districts. Limitations of the study and implications for further research are also delineated.

### Implications of Variables

#### Service Provision Characteristics

According to the responses received all of the teachers and administrators surveyed have been or are currently involved in the educational programs for students with some type of identified impairment. In many cases, a greater number of general education teachers have served students with specific categorical labels. For example, general education teachers were more likely than special education teachers to have provided services to students with learning disabilities, behavior disorders, visual impairments, hearing impairments, and communication disorders. Possible reasons for this finding might include cooperative arrangements used in this region to improve the cost-effectiveness and availability of individuals with expertise in educating students with low-incidence disabilities. The results of this investigation provide an insight regarding current service provision practices for students with disabilities.



### District Grading Policy

According to respondents, 61.7% of the districts utilized some type of district-wide grading policy for the general student population. These results are slightly lower than findings by Polloway et al. (1994) which indicated that 64.9% of districts nationwide had a formal grading policy. Of those districts in east central Illinois reporting a written policy, 82% required compliance by teachers as compared to 78% reported in Polloway et al. (1994).

According to respondents, a majority (95%) of districts in east central Illinois required letter grades. This finding is somewhat higher than the 82.6% of schools across the nation that reported the mandatory use of letter grades (Polloway et al., 1994). In fact, this difference is cause for concern in view of recent research which indicates that teachers at all levels consider pass-fail and checklist-type grades more helpful than letter grades for students with disabilities (Bursuck et al., 1996).

Locally, 41.2% of districts required pass-fail grading systems, while only 26.1% mandated the use of checklists. While 44% of those responding point out that they supplement the district grade reporting system with alternate systems, this still allows over one-half of the teachers to report progress in terms that have been shown to be less than helpful for students with disabilities (Bursuck et al., 1996). In addition, the scale requirements listed were based largely on percentage cutoffs (76.5%). This practice, which reflects normative standards, may inadvertently contribute to an unfair grading system for students with disabilities.

When looking at the basis for grading requirements, it becomes evident that traditional practices continue to prevail. Over half of respondents listed homework, daily

work, and tests or quizzes respectively as requirements in their district's grading policy. Additionally, 54.7% of respondents indicated that they were required to use projects to determine grades. This use of projects is quite encouraging in light of recent trends which use the theory of multiple intelligence to justify the use of "hands-on" learning and the provision of opportunities for students with disabilities to demonstrate what they know.

#### Communicating Grading Systems

Vasa (1981) and Carpenter et al. (1983) suggest that the heart of the grading problem lies in the confusion surrounding the messages grades communicate. Due to multiple audiences and multiple messages, grades and the systems used to report them could be considered misleading at best. To help alleviate this confusion, best practice suggests that parents and teachers must first understand all policies governing grading. An overwhelming number of respondents cite the school handbook as a means of communicating grading policies. The 89% of teachers who relied on the school handbook for grading information was of slightly less concern than the results which indicated that 92.4% of parents received the majority of grading policy information from the same source. The finding that the school handbook was the primary, if not the only, source of grading policy communication for parents might indicate a practice that is cause for concern. A high rate of illiteracy coupled with the fact that parents often have reservations about any direct contact with schools and teachers could force parents to remain uninformed and unable to fully participate in their child's education.

#### Philosophical Issues in the Determination of District Policy

Over half of those who responded favored a district-wide grading policy. Similarly, 58.8% of respondents felt that identical grading guidelines should be employed

across teachers, grades, and schools in a given district. While the utilization of such a policy would encourage consistency, doing so would also eliminate the critical aspects of teacher judgment, modified grading and flexibility from the process of grading.

#### Grading Policies for Students with Disabilities

A small number of respondents (18.5%) reported that their districts did indeed have a formal policy for grading students with disabilities. Compared to findings by Pollway et al. (1994), which showed that 60.3% of districts nationwide stipulated a grading policy for students with identified impairments, the current results are cause for concern. While findings did not reveal frequent use of modified district grading policies for students with disabilities, caution should be exercised when interpreting those results. To fully assess the degree to which grading policies for students with disabilities are intact and adhered to, individual teacher's responses and opinions regarding the willingness to incorporate adaptations must first be reviewed.

In districts where a specialized grading policy was in effect for students with disabilities, the majority of respondents either did not know how the policy was established or listed ways other than those presented (e.g. school boards, administrators, district committees, special education cooperatives). For instance, IEP teams were often mentioned as those responsible for determining grading policy. The fact that approximately one quarter of districts in this area utilizes the IEP as a working document to guide a student's total educational program is positive. But when an equal number of respondents indicated that they were unaware of how these policies were established, it causes concern regarding how consistently the policies are reviewed and revised.

### Classroom Grading Practices

Not surprising was the finding that letter grades continue to be the most utilized form of grading. Comments and narratives also received high ratings of acceptability by all groups except secondary general education teachers. And while Polloway et al. (1994) found pass-fail grades to be the most appropriate reporting system for students with disabilities, only 20% of special educators who responded to this survey favored this method. Caseload numbers and the diversity of students served could be the cause of such data indicating reliance on traditional practices.

Although the majority of reported classroom grading practices consisted of paper and pencil tasks, there was also evidence of authentic assessment and cooperative learning. Approximately one third of respondents listed group product as a component of the report card grade, while 24.4% incorporated a portfolio or required a student notebook. Results from a grading survey in the state of Colorado (Buckley, 1987) indicated that administrators placed more emphasis on teacher made tests in the final determination of a grade; whereas, the administrators in this study were least likely of the subgroups to focus on test scores. Although administrators gave high ratings to the importance of tests/quizzes and homework, they also favored reports and projects.

Elementary general education teachers as well as special educators were the most likely to employ cooperative learning and use in-class work and informal observation as sources of the final grade. Secondary general education teachers focused on tests/quizzes and homework, which is frequently discouraging for students with disabilities at the middle and high school levels. These results corroborate findings by Donahue and Zigmond (1990) which discussed the low grade point averages of students with

disabilities who were mainstreamed into general education classes.

For teachers who attempt to include students with disabilities in regular classroom settings, grading considerations other than the designated requirements can provide insight on teacher expectations of desired behavior. Effort appeared to be a very important factor in grade determination, as it was rated very important by the majority of respondents. While special education teachers consider attitude the second most important consideration, administrators identify progress, and secondary general education teachers list organization and preparedness. Most administrators and elementary teachers recognized the level of a child's ability as very important. On the other hand, secondary teachers and special education teachers placed greater emphasis on a student's attitude in calculating the ending grade.

Interestingly, while the rationale for rewarding students for effort and attitude seems valid, the actual effects of such practices have yet to be proven. Problems can arise from unclear expectations regarding the meaning of a grade. For example, if grades reflect personality traits rather than skill mastery will grades actually convey a standardized message? Ultimately, this process may place students with disabilities at a disadvantage. By creating the illusion that students are making adequate progress, those with disabilities may actually be overlooked in the quest to identify students with skill deficits.

#### Grading Adaptations

The results of this survey indicated that many teachers and administrators were willing to modify the criteria on which grades for students with disabilities are based. For instance, 62.8% of respondents felt that modifications in grading standards should be

considered on an individual basis. This willingness to modify grades is consistent with Polloway et al.'s (1994) study that indicated that the majority of school districts' grading policies included stipulations for grading adaptations. And although most of the current districts surveyed did not provide evidence of such a formal policy, a possible reason may lie in the fact that 72% of those who responded indicated they would rather modify content and assignments. In addition, 57.3% of respondents felt that students with disabilities should be included in general education classes regardless of whether or not they can complete the content and be graded using the same standards as their classmates.

Grading adaptations for students with disabilities should be determined through a joint decision made by the specialist and the general education teacher according to 70.8% of respondents. This result is quite positive as compared to results in Polloway et al. (1994) in which shared grading responsibilities were mentioned by only 12% of those surveyed. The effects of collaboration and joint decision making are evident in all aspects of schools, including grading decisions for students with disabilities. Although the benefits are considered obvious, these endeavors must be continued not only to meet the FAPE guidelines as established in the reauthorization of IDEA, but also to ensure the best services to all students.

Comments or narratives were considered the most beneficial format for grade reporting, while the use of checklists was also highly regarded. Findings from Bursuck et al. (1996) mirror these results. While the data consistently indicates these preferred formats for grade reporting, school policy has reportedly changed little to reflect these preferences. Letter grades continue to be the most popular method of grade reporting in

our region as well as across the nation (Polloway et al., 1994).

Modifications in grading policy and practice will occur only if all stakeholders believe that the adaptations are fair and beneficial. A number of adaptations were considered very likely to be used by a majority of respondents. Grades based on meeting IEP objectives was most highly regarded by administrators, special educators and elementary education teachers, while secondary teachers prefer to give separate grades for process and product. Special education teachers, on the other hand favor adjusting grades to student ability. Using contracts to determine grades was also rated very likely to be used by a substantial number of respondents. Few respondents consider themselves highly likely to utilize a modified grading scale or pass all students no matter what. According to results from a study by Bursuck et al. (1996), general education teachers are most likely to base grades on the amount of improvement an individual makes or give separate grades for process and product.

The lack of consistency regarding preferred grading adaptations and the fact that a number of grading adaptations were rated highly are promising. With such diverse views it is evident that although emotions are a part of final grading decisions, many options are available and utilized.

#### Limitations of the Study

Although this study provides a substantial amount of information, limitations still exist. First, because the data was derived from self-report measures, the reliability of responses may be questionable. Second, due to the limited geographical region utilized to gather data, the results should not be generalized to regions that differ in size, socioeconomic status, location, or other significant characteristics. Third, although the

50.5% rate of return is considered acceptable (Babbie, 1973), a higher return rate would have improved the confidence that could be placed on these results. Fourth, a balance between subgroups was achieved, but a balance across subject(s) taught and grade level was not. In addition, several respondents commented on the fact that they consider grading methodologies and requirements to be subject specific. For instance, in science, a teacher might utilize informal observation, daily work, and tests to determine a student's grade, whereas the same teacher might focus on portfolio assessment and papers in language arts subjects. Forcing respondents to narrow their answers regarding grading requirements may have inadvertently caused the final data to be misleading. Finally, allowing the respondents the choice of "don't know" on many of the subjective questions failed to assess true opinions of those surveyed.

#### Implications for Further Research

Despite the limitations, the results of this survey contribute to the existing knowledge base on modifications for students with disabilities, and adds to the spirited discussion on grading policy and practice. Furthermore, the results provide support for further research in the area of assessment procedures, grade reporting formats, and adaptations. For example, how do the attitudes and opinions of educational professionals regarding grading compare to the attitudes and opinions of parents, students, and employers? Also, how will the implementation of Illinois learning standards and benchmarks effect the ways students with disabilities are assessed? In addition, do differences in teacher training programs result in differences in how teachers view the process of grading and grading adaptations? Finally, is there a connection between the grades received and a child's resulting psychosocial development?



### Conclusion

It becomes evident through a review of the responses that special education is a challenging entity. The process involved in grading students who fall under this umbrella of service provision is not only confusing, but emotional as well. As stated by one respondent, "I have wrestled with grading for 30 years and still don't feel that a good alternative exists."

Although varying opinions were identified regarding what is appropriate, fair, and helpful, the final answer is yet to be found. One participant summarized the overall view of those surveyed. She stated:

Some students with disabilities benefit with modified assignments, others with modified grading. So much depends on the class, project, or test. So much also depends on the student. I have experienced students with IEPs who have abused the system to gain a better grade for less work. The 'system' of fair grading would be as different as the many different types of disabilities. No one system can help all students in all classes.

As educators and professionals, we must remind ourselves of the reasons children receive special education services. These students require specialized instruction and non-traditional teaching methods because a difference exists in the way they learn (Bradley & Calvin, 1998). Atypical strategies in content presentation, practice opportunities, and assessment must be developed. Teachers should not feel forced to sacrifice the aim of the curriculum by creating and utilizing modifications for students with disabilities. Rather, teachers and administrators must strive to address teacher and student goals through fair and objective grade reporting methods.

## References

- Adams, D. M., & Hamm, M. E. (1992). Portfolio assessment and social studies: Collecting, selecting, and reflecting on what is significant. Social Education, 56, 103-105.
- Alff, M., & Kearns, D. (1992). Teacher feature: Alternative grading. Journal for Vocational Special Needs Education, 15, 36-39.
- Alola, G. F. (1983). An effective approach to monitoring the mainstreamed student. Journal of Special Educators, 19, 21-24.
- Babbie, E.R. (1973). Survey research methods. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Beckers, G. G., & Carnes, J. S. (1995). Proof positive...Inclusion works. Paper presented at the Annual International Convention of the Council for Exceptional Children, Indianapolis, IN. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 385 090).
- Borders, J. (1981, April). Contract for success. VocEd, 53, 49-50.
- Borg, W.R., & Gall, M.D. (1989). Education research: An introduction (4th ed.). New York: Longman.
- Borg, W.R., & Gall, M.D. (1989). Education research: An introduction (5th ed.). New York: Longman.
- Bradley, D.F., & Calvin, M.B. (1998). Grading modified assignments: Equity or compromise? Teaching Exceptional Children, 31, 24-29.
- Buckley, M. (1987). Report card and grading survey: Colorado elementary schools. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Colorado.
- Bursuck, W., Polloway, E. A., Plante, L., Epstein, M. H., Jayanthi, M., & McConeghy, J. (1996). Report card grading and adaptations: A national survey of

classroom policies. Exceptional Children, 62, 301-318.

Calhoun, M. L. (1986). Interpreting report card grades in secondary schools: Perceptions of handicapped and nonhandicapped students. Diagnostique, 11, 117-124.

Calhoun, M. L., & Beattie, J. (1984). Assigning grades in the mainstream: Perceptions of teachers and students. Diagnostique, 9, 218-225.

Carpenter, D. (1985). Grading handicapped pupils: review and position statement. Remedial and Special Education, 6, 54-59.

Carpenter, D., Grantham, L. B., & Hardister, M. (1983). Grading mainstreamed handicapped pupils: What are the issues? The Journal of Special Education, 17, 183-188.

Christiansen, J., & Vogel, J.R. (1998). A decision model for grading students with disabilities. Teaching Exceptional Children, 31, 30-35.

Cohen, S. (1983). Assigning report card grades to the mainstreamed child. Teaching Exceptional Children, 15, 86-89.

Coutinho, M., & Malouf, D. (1993). Performance assessment and children with disabilities: Issues and possibilities. Teaching Exceptional Children, 25, 62-67.

Davis, W. E. (1982). The resource teacher's role as tutor and responsibilities for pupil grading. Journal of Special Educators, 19, 55-58.

Donahue, K., & Zigmund, N. (1990). Academic grades of ninth-grade urban learning disabled students and low-achieving peers. Exceptionality, 1, 17-27.

Ellett, L. (1993). Instructional practices in mainstreamed secondary classrooms. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 26, 57-64.

Flood, J., & Lapp, D. (1989). Reporting reading progress: A comparison portfolio for parents. Reading Teacher, 42, 508-514.

Freagon, S., Keiser, N. J., Kincaid, M., Atherton, L., Peters, W., Leiningeer, R. C., & Doyle, M. (1993). Some answers for implementors to the most commonly asked questions regarding the inclusion of children with disabilities in general education.

Unpublished manuscript.

Fuchs, L. S., & Fuchs, D. (1988). Curriculum-based measurement: A methodology for evaluating and improving student programs. Diagnostique, 14, 3-13.

Fuchs, S., Fuchs, D., Hamlett, C. L., Phillips, N. B., & Karns, K. (1995). General educators' specialized adaptation for students with learning disabilities. Exceptional Children, 61, 440-459.

Gersten, G., Vaughn, S., & Brengelman, S. U. (1996). Grading and academic feedback for special education students and students with learning difficulties. In T. R. Guskey (Ed.), Communicating student learning (pp. 47-57). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Gronlund, H. E. (1981). Measurement and evaluation in teaching (4th ed.). New York: Macmillan.

Hess, R., Miller, A., Reese, J., & Robinson, G. A. (1987). Grading-Credit-Diploma: Accommodation practices for students with mild disabilities. Des Moines, IA: Department of Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 249 403).

Illinois School Student Records Act, Ill. Stat. Ann. §1 (1976)  
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997, 20 U.S.C. §1400 et seq.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990, 20 U.S.C.A. §1400 et seq.  
(West, 1990).

Kiraly, J., & Bedell, J. J. (1984). Grading the mainstreamed handicapped student.

NASSP Bulletin, 68, 111-115.

Lieberman, L. M. (1982). Grades. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 15, 381-382.

Lindsey, J. D., Burns, J., & Guthrie, J. D. (1984). Intervention grading and secondary learning disabled students. The High School Journal, 67, 150-157.

McLeskey, J., & Grizzle, K. L. (1992). Grade retention rates among students with learning disabilities. Exceptional Children, 58, 548-554.

Michael, R.J., & Trippi, J.A. (1987). Educators' views of procedures for grading mainstreamed handicapped children. Education, 107, 276-278.

Missouri University College of Education. (1987). Measuring and evaluating student progress: Missouri LINC Module. Columbia, MO: Author. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 321 139).

Office of Educational Research and Improvement. (1994). What do student grades mean? Differences across schools (ED/OERI-93-8; OR-94-3401). Washington, DC: Office of Research.

Oklahoma State Department of Education. (1991). Policies and procedures manual for special education in Oklahoma. Oklahoma City, OK: Author.

Ornstein, A. C. (1989). The nature of grading. The Clearing House, 62, 365-369.

Ornstein, A. (1994). Grading practices and policies: An overview and some suggestions. NASSP Bulletin, 78, 55-64.

Osborne, S., Schulte, A., & McKinney, J. (1991). A longitudinal study of students with learning disabilities in mainstream and resource programs. Exceptionality, 2, 81-95.

Polloway, E. A., Bursuck, W. D., Jayanthi, M., Epstein, M. H., & Nelson, J. (1996). Treatment acceptability: Determining appropriate interventions within inclusive

classrooms. Intervention in School and Clinic, 31, 133-144.

Polloway, E. A., Epstein, M. H., Bursuck, W. D., Roderique, T. W., McConeghy, J., & Jayanthi, M. (1994). Classroom grading: A national survey of policies. Remedial and Special Education, 15, 162-170.

Poteet, J. A., Choate, J. S., & Stewart, S. C. (1993). Performance assessment and special education: Practices and prospects. Focus on Exceptional Children, 26, 1-20.

Public Law 94-142, Education of the Handicapped Act of 1975. (1977, August 23) Federal Register, 42, 163.

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C §794, §504 (West, 1990).

Rojewski, J. W., Pollard, R. R., & Meers, G. D. (1990). Grading mainstreamed special needs students: Determining practices and attitudes of secondary vocational educators using a qualitative approach. Remedial and Special Education, 12, 7-28.

Rojewski, J. W., Pollard, R. R., & Meers, G. D. (1992). Grading secondary vocational education students with disabilities: A national perspective. Exceptional Children, 59, 68-76.

Schumm, J. S., & Vaughn, S. (1991). Making adaptations for mainstreamed students: General classroom teachers' perspectives. Remedial and Special Education, 12, 18-27.

Shanks, R. D. (1986). Grading mainstreamed students: Position paper. Unpublished manuscript. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 278 204).

SPSS 8.0 for Windows [Computer software]. (1998). Chicago, IL: Microsoft.

Sudman, S. (1976). Applied sampling. New York: Academic Press.

Terwilliger, J. S. (1977). Assigning grades: Philosophical issues and practical

recommendations. Journal of Research and Development in Education, 10, 21-39.

Tindal, G. (1991). Operationalizing learning portfolios: A good idea in search of a method. Diagnostique, 16, 127-133.

Truesdell, L. A., & Abramson, T. (1992). Academic behavior and grades of mainstreamed students with mild disabilities. Exceptional Children, 58, 392-398.

Valdes, K. A., Williamson, C. L., & Wagner, M. M. (1990). The National Longitudinal Transition Study of Special Education Students (Vol. 1). Menlo Park, CA: SRI International. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 324 893).

Vasa, S. F. (1981). Alternative procedures for grading handicapped students in secondary schools. Education Unlimited, 3, 16-23.

Vaughn, S., Haager, D., Hogan, A., & Kouzekanani, K. (1992). Self-concept and peer acceptance in students with learning disabilities: A four- to five- year prospective study. Journal of Educational Psychology, 84, 43-50.

Vaughn, S., Schumm, J. S., & Kouzekanani, K. (1993). What do students with learning disabilities think when their general education teachers make adaptations? Journal of Learning Disabilities, 26, 545-555.

Vaughn, S., Schumm, J. S., Niarhos, F., & Gordon, J. (1993). Students' perceptions of two hypothetical teachers' instructional adaptations for low achievers. The Elementary School Journal, 94, 87-102.

Warger, C. L. (1983). An analysis of curriculum and grading forms used by regular secondary teachers. In P. L. Reed (Ed.), Mainstreaming in secondary schools: Focus on research. (pp. 1-8). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 242 721).

Wiggins, J. D., Schatz, E. L., & West, R. W. (1994). The relationship of self-

esteem to grades, achievement scores, and other factors critical to school success. The School Counselor, 41, 239-244.

Witt, J. C., & Elliott, S. N. (1985). Acceptability of classroom management strategies. In T. R. Kratochwill (Ed.), Advances in school psychology (Vol. 4, pp. 251-288). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Wood, P. H., Bennett, T., Wood, J., & Bennett, C. (1990). Grading and evaluation practices and policies of school teachers. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 319 782).

Zigmond, N., Levin, E., & Laurie, T. (1985). Managing the mainstream: An analysis for teacher attitudes and student performance in mainstream high school programs. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 18, 535-541.



## Appendix A

**Special Education Teachers' Report Card Grading Survey**

Please mark only one answer to each question unless otherwise indicated. For any questions that do not apply to your specific situation, please write "NA" (not applicable).

**Demographics**

Current Position (Please mark one)

- Administrator  
 General Education Teacher  
 Special Education Teacher

Building Type (Please mark one)

- Elementary  
 Junior High/Middle School  
 High School

Grade(s) and Subject(s) you teach (Please list) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Gender \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Number of years teaching experience \_\_\_\_\_

Highest Degree Attained (Please mark one)

- BA/BS       Ms.Ed/M.Ed       Ed.S.       Ed.D/Ph.D

Have you served students with the following disabilities in your class or the general education classroom? (Please check all that apply)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learning Disabilities     | <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Retardation    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Behavior Disorders        | <input type="checkbox"/> Visual Impairments    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hearing Impairments       | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Disabilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication Disorders   | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Impairments    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please list) _____ |  |

**District Policies/Procedures**

Please mark only one answer to each question unless specified otherwise. For answers with letter abbreviations use Y=Yes, N=No, DK=Don't Know

1. Does your school district or building have written guidelines for grading all students?

Y            N            DK

**If you marked 'N' or 'DK', go to question 2.**

**If you marked 'Y', please answer the following questions:**

1a. Are these guidelines required to be used by all teachers who teach academics?

Y            N            DK

(appendix continues)

## Appendix A (continued)

For questions 1b.-1f, please mark all that apply.

1b. According to your district's policy, what types of grades are to be utilized on students' report cards?

- Letter Grades (A, B, C . . . )  
 Number Grades (1, 2, 3 . . . )  
 Percentages (90%, 80%, 70% . . . )  
 Pass-Fail/Satisfactory-Unsatisfactory  
 Comments/Narratives  
 Checklists (Competencies, Skill Mastery, etc. . . )  
 Symbols (+, -, etc. . . )  
 Other (Please explain) \_\_\_\_\_  
 No specific guidelines for grade type are utilized

1c. Please describe the scale requirements used by your district \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ No specific scale requirements are utilized

1d. According to your district's policy, upon what requirements must grades be based?

- Daily Work  
 Homework  
 Tests/Quizzes  
 Projects  
 Papers  
 Other (Please explain) \_\_\_\_\_  
 No specific work requirements are utilized

1e. In what way(s) are your district's grading policies communicated to teachers?

- Faculty Meetings/District or Building In-service  
 New Teacher Training  
 Mentors  
 School Handbook  
 Interview with Administrator  
 Other (Please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

1f. In what way(s) are your district's grading policies communicated to parents?

- Registration  
 School Handbook  
 Parent/Teacher Conference  
 Open House  
 Letter sent home by school or teacher  
 Other (Please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

(appendix continues)

## Appendix A (continued)

2. In your district, are there written guidelines for grading students with disabilities (those with special education labels/Individualized Educational Plans) in the general education classroom? Y N DK

**If you marked 'N' or 'DK', please go on to question 3.**

**If you marked 'Y', please answer the following question:**

- 2a. By whom are the district guidelines for grading students with disabilities established?
- School Board
- Administration
- Special Education Cooperative
- District Committee
- Other (Please explain) \_\_\_\_\_
- Don't Know
3. Do you feel there should be a written school/district grading policy? Y N DK
4. Do you feel that grading guidelines should be the same for all teachers at the same grade level in a school? Y N DK

**Classroom Grading Policies/Practices**

5. In the classroom, what format is/should be used to report grades? (Please mark all that apply)
- Only that which district guidelines specify
- Those specified by the district and the following marked below
- District guidelines do not specify, but I use those marked below
- Letter grades
- Number grades
- Percentages
- Pass-Fail/Satisfactory-Unsatisfactory
- Comments/Narratives
- Checklists
- Symbols
- Other (Please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

(appendix continues)

## Appendix A (continued)

6. Please estimate the overall percentage of your students' report card grades that is/should be determined by the following requirements. If a requirement does not/should not count towards the students' grades, please leave the percentage blank and circle DNC (Does Not Count). Your estimated percentages should add up to 100%.

_____ In-class work	_____ %	DNC
_____ Homework	_____ %	DNC
_____ Tests/Quizzes	_____ %	DNC
_____ Reports/Papers	_____ %	DNC
_____ Projects	_____ %	DNC
_____ Presentations	_____ %	DNC
_____ Notebook/Portfolio	_____ %	DNC
_____ Group Product/Cooperative Learning	_____ %	DNC
_____ Informal Observation	_____ %	DNC
_____ Other (Please list) _____	_____ %	DNC
_____ Other (Please list) _____	_____ %	DNC

7. Please rate how important the following considerations are in determining report card grades. Use V=Very Important, S=Somewhat Important, N=Not Important

Level of Ability	V	S	N
Attendance	V	S	N
Class Participation	V	S	N
Effort	V	S	N
Attitude	V	S	N
Behavior in Class	V	S	N
Preparedness/Organization	V	S	N
Progress	V	S	N
How Student Compares with Classmates	V	S	N
Level of Materials Student is Using	V	S	N
Anticipated Reaction to Report Card Grade	V	S	N

8. Do you feel that individual teachers should decide upon their own grading philosophy and standards which are to be used in their classes?      Y   N   DK

(appendix continues)

**Grading Adaptations**

9. Do you feel that all students in a class (regardless of ability) should be graded using the same standards? Y N DK
10. Do you feel that students with disabilities should be mainstreamed only if they can complete general education class content and be graded using the same standards as the rest of the class? Y N DK
11. Do you feel that different grading standards should be considered when assigning report card grades in academic subjects for students with disabilities who are mainstreamed into general education classes? Y N DK
12. If different grading standards are used for students with disabilities who are mainstreamed into general education classes, upon what should these be based? (Please mark all that apply)
- Written State Policy
- Written District/Building Policy
- The Classroom Teacher's Judgment
- A Collaborative Decision Between General Education Teacher and Specialist
- Multidisciplinary Team Decision as Specified in Student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
- Grading by the Special Education Teacher if Standards are Changed
13. Do you prefer to keep the same grading standards but modify content and assignments? Y N DK
14. Based on your experience, please rate how beneficial you consider each type of report card grade used for students with disabilities. Use V=Very Beneficial, S=Somewhat Beneficial, N=Not Beneficial
- |                                       |   |   |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Letter Grades                         | V | S | N |
| Number Grades                         | V | S | N |
| Percentages                           | V | S | N |
| Pass-Fail/Satisfactory-Unsatisfactory | V | S | N |
| Comments/Narratives                   | V | S | N |
| Checklists                            | V | S | N |
| Symbols                               | V | S | N |

(appendix continues)

## Appendix A (continued)

15. Please rate how likely you would be to use each report card grading adaptation. Use V=Very Likely, S=Somewhat Likely, N=Not Likely

- |  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| 1. Grades are based on the amount of improvement an individual makes.                  | V | S | N |
| 2. Grades are based on meeting objectives on Individualized Education Plan (IEP).      | V | S | N |
| 3. Separate grades are given for process (effort) and product (test, work).            | V | S | N |
| 4. Grade weights are adjusted (projects count more than tests).                        | V | S | N |
| 5. Grades are adjusted according to student ability.                                   | V | S | N |
| 6. Grades are based on meeting the requirements of an academic or behavioral contract. | V | S | N |
| 7. Grades are based on less content than the rest of the class.                        | V | S | N |
| 8. Grades are based on a modified grading scale.                                       | V | S | N |
| 9. Students are passed no matter what.   | V | S | N |
| 10. Students are passed if they make an effort to pass.                                | V | S | N |

Please feel free to make any additional comments regarding grading students with disabilities below. Thank you.

## Appendix B

**General Education Teachers' Report Card Grading Survey**

Please mark only one answer to each question unless otherwise indicated. For any questions that do not apply to your specific situation, please write "NA" (not applicable).

**Demographics**

Current Position (Please mark one)

- Administrator  
 General Education Teacher  
 Special Education Teacher

Building Type (Please mark one)

- Elementary  
 Junior High/Middle School  
 High School

Grade(s) and Subject(s) you teach (Please list) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Gender \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Number of years teaching experience \_\_\_\_\_

Highest Degree Attained (Please mark one)

- BA/BS       Ms.Ed/M.Ed       Ed.S.       Ed.D/Ph.D

Have you served students with the following disabilities in your classroom? (Please check all that apply)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learning Disabilities     | <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Retardation    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Behavior Disorders        | <input type="checkbox"/> Visual Impairments    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hearing Impairments       | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Disabilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication Disorders   | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Impairments    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please list) _____ |  |

**District Policies/Procedures**

Please mark only one answer to each question unless specified otherwise. For answers with letter abbreviations use Y=Yes, N=No, DK=Don't Know

1. Does your school district or building have written guidelines for grading all students?  
 Y            N            DK

**If you marked 'N' or 'DK', go to question 2.**

**If you marked 'Y', please answer the following questions:**

- 1a. Are these guidelines required to be used by all teachers who teach academics?  
 Y            N            DK

(appendix continues)

## Appendix B (continued)

For questions 1b.-1f, please mark all that apply.

1b. According to your district's policy, what types of grades are to be utilized on students' report cards?

- Letter Grades (A, B, C . . . )  
 Number Grades (1, 2, 3 . . . )  
 Percentages (90%, 80%, 70% . . . )  
 Pass-Fail/Satisfactory-Unsatisfactory  
 Comments/Narratives  
 Checklists (Competencies, Skill Mastery, etc. . . )  
 Symbols (+, -, etc. . . )  
 Other (Please explain) \_\_\_\_\_  
 No specific guidelines for grade type are utilized

1c. Please describe the scale requirements used by your district \_\_\_\_\_

- No specific scale requirements are utilized

1d. According to your district's policy, upon what requirements must grades be based?

- Daily Work  
 Homework  
 Tests/Quizzes  
 Projects  
 Papers  
 Other (Please explain) \_\_\_\_\_  
 No specific work requirements are utilized

1e. In what way(s) are your district's grading policies communicated to teachers?

- Faculty Meetings/District or Building In-service  
 New Teacher Training  
 Mentors  
 School Handbook  
 Interview with Administrator  
 Other (Please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

1f. In what way(s) are your district's grading policies communicated to parents?

- Registration  
 School Handbook  
 Parent/Teacher Conference  
 Open House  
 Letter sent home by school or teacher  
 Other (Please explain) \_\_\_\_\_



2. In your district, are there written guidelines for grading students with disabilities (those with special education labels/Individualized Educational Plans) in the general education classroom? Y N DK

**If you marked 'N' or 'DK', please go on to question 3.**

**If you marked 'Y', please answer the following question:**

- 2a. By whom are the district guidelines for grading students with disabilities established?
- School Board
- Administration
- Special Education Cooperative
- District Committee
- Other (Please explain) \_\_\_\_\_
- Don't Know
3. Do you feel there should be a written school/district grading policy? Y N DK
4. Do you feel that grading guidelines should be the same for all teachers at the same grade level in a school? Y N DK

### **Classroom Grading Policies/Practices**

5. In the classroom, what format is/should be used to report grades? (Please mark all that apply)
- Only that which district guidelines specify
- Those specified by the district and the following marked below
- District guidelines do not specify, but I use those marked below
- Letter grades
- Number grades
- Percentages
- Pass-Fail/Satisfactory-Unsatisfactory
- Comments/Narratives
- Checklists
- Symbols
- Other (Please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

6. Please estimate the overall percentage of your students' report card grades that is/should be determined by the following requirements. If a requirement does not/should not count towards the students' grades, please leave the percentage blank and circle DNC (Does Not Count). Your estimated percentages should add up to 100%.

_____ In-class work	_____ %	DNC
_____ Homework	_____ %	DNC
_____ Tests/Quizzes	_____ %	DNC
_____ Reports/Papers	_____ %	DNC
_____ Projects	_____ %	DNC
_____ Presentations	_____ %	DNC
_____ Notebook/Portfolio	_____ %	DNC
_____ Group Product/Cooperative Learning	_____ %	DNC
_____ Informal Observation	_____ %	DNC
_____ Other (Please list) _____	_____ %	DNC
_____ Other (Please list) _____	_____ %	DNC

7. Please rate how important the following considerations are in determining report card grades. Use V=Very Important, S=Somewhat Important, N=Not Important

Level of Ability	V	S	N
Attendance	V	S	N
Class Participation	V	S	N
Effort	V	S	N
Attitude	V	S	N
Behavior in Class	V	S	N
Preparedness/Organization	V	S	N
Progress	V	S	N
How Student Compares with Classmates	V	S	N
Level of Materials Student is Using	V	S	N
Anticipated Reaction to Report Card Grade	V	S	N

8. Do you feel that individual teachers should decide upon their own grading philosophy and standards which are to be used in their classes?      Y   N   DK

## Appendix B (continued)

**Grading Adaptations**

9. Do you feel that all students in a class (regardless of ability) should be graded using the same standards? Y N DK
10. Do you feel that students with disabilities should be mainstreamed only if they can complete general education class content and be graded using the same standards as the rest of the class? Y N DK
11. Do you feel that different grading standards should be considered when assigning report card grades in academic subjects for students with disabilities who are mainstreamed into general education classes? Y N DK
12. If different grading standards are used for students with disabilities who are mainstreamed into general education classes, upon what should these be based? (Please mark all that apply)
- Written State Policy
- Written District/Building Policy
- The Classroom Teacher's Judgment
- A Collaborative Decision Between General Education Teacher and Specialist
- Multidisciplinary Team Decision as Specified in Student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
- Grading by the Special Education Teacher if Standards are Changed
13. Do you prefer to keep the same grading standards but modify content and assignments? Y N DK
14. Based on your experience, please rate how beneficial you consider each type of report card grade used for students with disabilities. Use V=Very Beneficial, S=Somewhat Beneficial, N=Not Beneficial
- |                                       |   |   |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Letter Grades                         | V | S | N |
| Number Grades                         | V | S | N |
| Percentages                           | V | S | N |
| Pass-Fail/Satisfactory-Unsatisfactory | V | S | N |
| Comments/Narratives                   | V | S | N |
| Checklists                            | V | S | N |
| Symbols                               | V | S | N |

(appendix continues)

15. Please rate how likely you would be to use each report card grading adaptation. Use V=Very Likely, S=Somewhat Likely, N=Not Likely

1. Grades are based on the amount of improvement an individual makes.	V	S	N
2. Grades are based on meeting objectives on Individualized Education Plan (IEP).	V	S	N
3. Separate grades are given for process (effort) and product (test, work).	V	S	N
4. Grade weights are adjusted (projects count more than tests).	V	S	N
5. Grades are adjusted according to student ability.	V	S	N
6. Grades are based on meeting the requirements of an academic or behavioral contract.	V	S	N
7. Grades are based on less content than the rest of the class.	V	S	N
8. Grades are based on a modified grading scale.	V	S	N
9. Students are passed no matter what.	V	S	N
10. Students are passed if they make an effort to pass.	V	S	N

Please feel free to make any additional comments regarding grading students with disabilities below. Thank you.

## Appendix C

**Administrators' Report Card Grading Survey**

Please mark only one answer to each question unless otherwise indicated. For any questions that do not apply to your specific situation, please write "NA" (not applicable).

**Demographics**

Current Position (Please mark one)

- Administrator  
 General Education Teacher  
 Special Education Teacher

Building Type (Please mark one)

- Elementary  
 Junior High/Middle School  
 High School

Grade(s) and Subject(s) you teach (Please list) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Gender \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years experience as an administrator \_\_\_\_\_

Highest Degree Attained (Please mark one)

BA/BS       Ms.Ed/M.Ed       Ed.S.       Ed.D/Ph.D

Have you served students with the following disabilities in your school? (Please check all that apply)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learning Disabilities     | <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Retardation    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Behavior Disorders        | <input type="checkbox"/> Visual Impairments    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hearing Impairments       | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Disabilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication Disorders   | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Impairments    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please list) _____ |  |

**District Policies/Procedures**

Please mark only one answer to each question unless specified otherwise. For answers with letter abbreviations use Y=Yes, N=No, DK=Don't Know

1. Does your school district or building have written guidelines for grading all students?  
 Y            N            DK

**If you marked 'N' or 'DK', go to question 2.**

**If you marked 'Y', please answer the following questions:**

- 1a. Are these guidelines required to be used by all teachers who teach academics?  
 Y            N            DK

(appendix continues)

## Appendix C (continued)

For questions 1b.-1f, please mark all that apply.

1b. According to your district's policy, what types of grades are to be utilized on students' report cards?

- Letter Grades (A, B, C. . . )  
 Number Grades (1, 2, 3. . . )  
 Percentages (90%, 80%, 70%. . . )  
 Pass-Fail/Satisfactory-Unsatisfactory  
 Comments/Narratives  
 Checklists (Competencies, Skill Mastery, etc. . . )  
 Symbols (+, -, etc. . . )  
 Other (Please explain) \_\_\_\_\_  
 No specific guidelines for grade type are utilized

1c. Please describe the scale requirements used by your district \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_ No specific scale requirements are utilized

1d. According to your district's policy, upon what requirements must grades be based?

- Daily Work  
 Homework  
 Tests/Quizzes  
 Projects  
 Papers  
 Other (Please explain) \_\_\_\_\_  
 No specific work requirements are utilized

1e. In what way(s) are your district's grading policies communicated to teachers?

- Faculty Meetings/District or Building In-service  
 New Teacher Training  
 Mentors  
 School Handbook  
 Interview with Administrator  
 Other (Please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

1f. In what way(s) are your district's grading policies communicated to parents?

- Registration  
 School Handbook  
 Parent/Teacher Conference  
 Open House  
 Letter sent home by school or teacher  
 Other (Please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C (continued)

2. In your district, are there written guidelines for grading students with disabilities (those with special education labels/Individualized Educational Plans) in the general education classroom? Y N DK

**If you marked 'N' or 'DK', please go on to question 3.  
If you marked 'Y', please answer the following question:**

- 2a. By whom are the district guidelines for grading students with disabilities established?

School Board  
 Administration  
 Special Education Cooperative  
 District Committee  
 Other (Please explain) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Don't Know

3. Do you feel there should be a written school/district grading policy? Y N DK
4. Do you feel that grading guidelines should be the same for all teachers at the same grade level in a school? Y N DK

**Classroom Grading Policies/Practices**

5. In the classroom, what format is/should be used to report grades? (Please mark all that apply)

Only that which district guidelines specify  
 Those specified by the district and the following marked below  
 District guidelines do not specify, but I use those marked below

Letter grades  
 Number grades  
 Percentages  
 Pass-Fail/Satisfactory-Unsatisfactory  
 Comments/Narratives  
 Checklists  
 Symbols  
 Other (Please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

6. Please estimate the overall percentage of your students' report card grades that is/should be determined by the following requirements. If a requirement does not/should not count towards the students' grades, please leave the percentage blank and circle DNC (Does Not Count). Your estimated percentages should add up to 100%.

___ In-class work	___ %	DNC
___ Homework	___ %	DNC
___ Tests/Quizzes	___ %	DNC
___ Reports/Papers	___ %	DNC
___ Projects	___ %	DNC
___ Presentations	___ %	DNC
___ Notebook/Portfolio	___ %	DNC
___ Group Product/Cooperative Learning	___ %	DNC
___ Informal Observation	___ %	DNC
___ Other (Please list) _____	___ %	DNC
___ Other (Please list) _____	___ %	DNC

7. Please rate how important the following considerations are in determining report card grades. Use V=Very Important, S=Somewhat Important, N=Not Important

Level of Ability	V	S	N
Attendance	V	S	N
Class Participation	V	S	N
Effort	V	S	N
Attitude	V	S	N
Behavior in Class	V	S	N
Preparedness/Organization	V	S	N
Progress	V	S	N
How Student Compares with Classmates	V	S	N
Level of Materials Student is Using	V	S	N
Anticipated Reaction to Report Card Grade	V	S	N

8. Do you feel that individual teachers should decide upon their own grading philosophy and standards which are to be used in their classes?      Y    N    DK



## Appendix C (continued)

**Grading Adaptations**

9. Do you feel that all students in a class (regardless of ability) should be graded using the same standards? Y N DK
10. Do you feel that students with disabilities should be mainstreamed only if they can complete general education class content and be graded using the same standards as the rest of the class? Y N DK
11. Do you feel that different grading standards should be considered when assigning report card grades in academic subjects for students with disabilities who are mainstreamed into general education classes? Y N DK
12. If different grading standards are used for students with disabilities who are mainstreamed into general education classes, upon what should these be based? (Please mark all that apply)
- Written State Policy
- Written District/Building Policy
- The Classroom Teacher's Judgment
- A Collaborative Decision Between General Education Teacher and Specialist
- Multidisciplinary Team Decision as Specified in Student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
- Grading by the Special Education Teacher if Standards are Changed
13. Do you prefer to keep the same grading standards but modify content and assignments? Y N DK
14. Based on your experience, please rate how beneficial you consider each type of report card grade used for students with disabilities. Use V=Very Beneficial, S=Somewhat Beneficial, N=Not Beneficial
- |                                       |   |   |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Letter Grades                         | V | S | N |
| Number Grades                         | V | S | N |
| Percentages                           | V | S | N |
| Pass-Fail/Satisfactory-Unsatisfactory | V | S | N |
| Comments/Narratives                   | V | S | N |
| Checklists                            | V | S | N |
| Symbols                               | V | S | N |

(appendix continues)

15. Please rate how likely you would be to use each report card grading adaptation. Use V=Very Likely, S=Somewhat Likely, N=Not Likely

1. Grades are based on the amount of improvement an individual makes.	V	S	N
2. Grades are based on meeting objectives on Individualized Education Plan (IEP).	V	S	N
3. Separate grades are given for process (effort) and product (test, work).	V	S	N
4. Grade weights are adjusted (projects count more than tests).	V	S	N
5. Grades are adjusted according to student ability.	V	S	N
6. Grades are based on meeting the requirements of an academic or behavioral contract.	V	S	N
7. Grades are based on less content than the rest of the class.	V	S	N
8. Grades are based on a modified grading scale.	V	S	N
9. Students are passed no matter what.	V	S	N
10. Students are passed if they make an effort to pass.	V	S	N

Please feel free to make any additional comments regarding grading students with disabilities below. Thank you.

Missy Jones  
500 E. Cumberland St.  
Greenup, IL 62428

May 1, 1998

Dear Colleague:

As a phase of my Master's Degree program at Eastern Illinois University, I am conducting a survey of report card grading practices used for students with disabilities in our region. In addition to objective information, I am attempting to ascertain attitudinal data regarding the evaluation of students with special education labels who are mainstreamed into the general education classroom for academics. A representative sample of teachers and administrators is being asked to participate in this study.

Would you please take just a few minutes to respond to the questions in the enclosed survey? The questionnaire should take less than 15 minutes to complete and the answers will be strictly confidential. The surveys are coded in order for me to do a follow-up mailing to home addresses if necessary. In addition, results will be published in the fall issue of Education is the Key.

Thank you very much for your assistance. Your cooperation and contributions are invaluable. Please return the completed survey in the enclosed return envelope by May 15, 1998.

Sincerely,

Missy Jones  
Graduate Student  
Eastern Illinois University

## Appendix E

Subgroup Breakdown of Categorical Labels Served

	Admin.	Gen. Ed. (Elem.)	Gen. Ed. (Sec.)	Spec. Ed.
Variable	<u>n</u> (%)	<u>n</u> (%)	<u>n</u> (%)	<u>n</u> (%)
Learning Disabilities	48(100.0)	48(96.0)	50(98.0)	49(96.1)
Behavior Disorders	43(89.6)	48(96.0)	38(74.5)	46(90.2)
Hearing Impairments	27(56.3)	23(46.0)	32(62.7)	20(39.2)
Communication Disorders	20(41.7)	8(16.0)	13(25.5)	11(21.6)
Mental Retardation	22(45.8)	11(22.0)	5(9.8)	27(52.9)
Visual Impairments	21(43.8)	13(26.0)	26(51.0)	13(25.5)
Physical Disabilities	70(72.9)	17(34.0)	21(41.2)	22(43.1)
Health Impairments	32(66.7)	20(40.0)	21(41.2)	21(41.2)
Other	3(6.3)	3(6.0)	1(2.0)	5(9.8)

Note. Totals may add up to more than 100 percent because respondents were asked to mark all disability groups they had served.