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Project L.I.F.E. (Lifelong Impact from Education): Final report.

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ABSTRACT

Project LIFE (Lifelong Impact From Education) was a 3-year federally funded program to develop, field test, and disseminate a collaborative model that increases the capacity of neighborhood schools and local education agencies to provide appropriate educational services to children with deaf-blindness in general education settings and improve students' individually determined valued life outcomes. The model's major steps involve determining valued life outcomes from a family-centered perspective and developing a student's educational program components and supports referenced to those outcomes, addressing those educational program components in integrated settings using variations of an established problem-solving method, and evaluating the impact of the educational program by referencing it to changes in the student's valued life outcomes. This final report includes goals and objectives of the project, the conceptual framework and description of the Project LIFE model, description of research studies, methodological and logistical problems, and annotated bibliography of 10 major project products, and a summary of dissemination efforts and evidence of project impact. (JDD)

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Abstract

Project L.I.F.E. (Lifelong Impact From Education) was a three year project funded from October 1, 1991 to December 31, 1994 by the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services in the funding category: "Innovations for Educating Children and Youth with Deaf-Blindness in General Education Settings" (CFDA 84.025F). The purpose of Project L.I.F.E. was to develop, field-test, and disseminate a collaborative model that increases the capacity of neighborhood schools and local education agencies to provide appropriate educational services to children with deaf-blindness in general education settings and improve students' individually determined valued life outcomes. The final report includes: (a) goals and objectives of the project, (b) the conceptual framework & description of the Project L.I.F.E. model, (c) description of research studies, (d) methodological and logistical problems, (e) annotated bibliography of major project products, and (f) dissemination and impact of the project.

I. Goals and Objectives of the Project

The purpose of Project LIFE was to develop, field-test, and disseminate a collaborative model that increases the capacity of neighborhood schools and local education agencies to provide appropriate educational services to children with deaf-blindness in general education settings and improve students' individually determined valued life outcomes. The Project LIFE model has three major steps, each consisting of a series of sequential substeps used within the framework of a collaborative team. The first step focuses on determining valued life outcomes from a family-centered perspective and developing a student's educational program components and supports that are referenced to those valued life outcomes. The second major step focuses on ways to address those educational program components in integrated settings using variations of an established problem-solving method. The third major step focuses on evaluating the impact of the educational program by referencing it to changes in the student's valued life outcomes.

The objectives of Project LIFE were:

1. To complete development of and field-test a step-by-step process for determining valued life outcomes from a family-centered perspective and developing a student's educational program components and supports that are referenced to those valued life outcomes.
2. To complete development of and field-test a step-by-step process for addressing educational program components in general education settings using variations of an established problem-solving method.
3. To complete development of and field-test a step-by-step process for evaluating the impact of the educational program by referencing it to changes in the student's valued life outcomes.
4. To provide training on the Project LIFE model to participating Section 307.11 State or Multi-State Coordinators for Deaf-Blind Services and University staff that allows them to offer technical assistance on the components of Project LIFE to local teams serving students with deaf-blindness.
5. To evaluate the impact of the Project LIFE model upon students with deaf-blindness, their families, and service providers.
6. To disseminate data-based information throughout Vermont, New England, and the rest of the country describing the need for, purpose of, and impact of the Project LIFE model upon the

development of exemplary educational programs for students with deaf-blindness in general education settings.

7. To disseminate information that will increase the capacity of neighborhood schools and local education agencies to provide appropriate educational services to children with deaf-blindness in integrated settings and improve the quality of students' lives.

II. Conceptual Framework & Description of the Project LIFE Model

The LIFE model consisted of three major steps, each made up of a series of substeps and accompanied by a process for accomplishing the steps.

STEPS

Prerequisite Condition

A team is established including the family, general and special educators, related service personnel, and potentially others (e.g., peers, administrators, advocates).

1. **Determine Valued Life Outcomes, Student Educational Program Components and Supports Prior to Implementation**
   a. team determines the student's valued life outcomes from a family-centered perspective;
   b. team assesses student needs and identifies family-centered priorities for IEP goals and other learning outcomes for improving valued life outcomes;
   c. team determines general supports/accommodations needed for improving valued life outcomes and ensuring student access and participation in the educational program; and
   d. team develops student schedule to address educational program components in general education classroom activities.

2. **Address Student Educational Program Components in General Education Activities on an Ongoing Basis During Implementation**
   a. on an ongoing basis, team analyzes facts about the student and the class/activities and uses them to brainstorm options for meeting student needs in general education settings and activities;
   b. team selects options and refines its plan; and

c. team implements the educational program as designed

3. Evaluation of Educational Program Impact

a. team evaluates educational program based on student attainment of IEP goals and objectives;
b. team evaluates student's opportunities for participation in integrated settings and activities;
c. team evaluates educational program based on impact on valued life outcomes; and
d. team adjusts planning and implementation based on evaluation.

Each step and substep of the Project LIFE model is addressed by a building-based team process that is designed to enhance the members' abilities to meet the educational needs of students with deaf-blindness (refer to Table 1). Step 1 is addressed by using a process called **C.O.A.C.H.** (Choosing Options and Accommodations for CHildren: A Guide to Planning Inclusive Education) (Giangreco, Cloninger & Iverson, 1993). Step 2 is addressed by using a variation of the **Osborn-Parnes Creative Problem-Solving Process** (Parnes, 1988) developed specifically for use in adapting educational experiences to include learners with diverse characteristics (Giangreco, 1993; Giangreco, Cloninger, Dennis & Edelman, 1994). Step 3 is addressed by the **Evaluation Impact Process** (Giangreco, Cloninger, Edelman & Dennis, 1992).

Table 1: Project L.I.F.E. - Model Steps

STEPS	PROCESSES
Prerequisite Condition A team is established (including family, general and special educators, related service personnel)	
1. Determine Valued Life Outcomes, Student Educational Program Components and Supports Prior to Implementation	
a. Team determines student Valued Life Outcomes from family-centered perspective	COACH (Part 1)
b. Team assesses student needs and defines the components of the student's educational program (e.g., family-centered priorities for the IEP, other learning outcomes)	COACH (Parts 1 and 2)
c. Team determines supports/ accommodations needed for the student to access and participate in the educational program	COACH (Part 2)
d. Team develops student schedule to address educational program components in integrated settings	COACH (Part 3)
2. Address Student Educational Program Components in Integrated Activities on an Ongoing Basis During Implementation	
a. Team analyzes facts about the student and the setting options for meeting student needs in integrated settings	Osborn-Parnes Creative Problem-Solving (variation) (Fact-Finding, Solution-Finding)
b. Team selects options and refines plan	Osborn-Parnes Creative Problem-Solving (variation) (Fact-Finding, Solution-Finding)
c. Team implements educational program	Osborn-Parnes Creative Problem-Solving (variation) (Acceptance-Finding)
3. Evaluation of Educational Program Impact	
a. Team evaluates educational program based on student progress toward IEP goals, objectives, etc.	Evaluation of Impact Process
b. Team evaluates number of opportunities for participation in integrated settings and activities	Evaluation of Impact Process
c. Team evaluates educational program based on impact on Valued Life Outcomes	Evaluation of Impact Process
d. Team adjusts planning and implementation based on evaluation	Evaluation of Impact Process

Rationale for the Model Steps and Processes

The following section explains the rationale for the Project LIFE model steps and the processes used to achieve them:

Step 1: Determine Valued Life Outcomes, Student Educational Program Components and Supports Prior to Implementation

Establishing a team is the foundation upon which the Project LIFE model is based. The team consists of people who would be effected by the decisions and actions of the team (Thousand & Villa, 1992). Therefore, family members, the student when appropriate, educators, paraprofessionals, related service personnel, and potentially others (e.g., peers, administrators) constitute the team. Given the potentially large size of such a group, it may be difficult for the team to function effectively with all team members together at the same time; it also may not be necessary at all times. Therefore, situational teams may be established and dissolved to address specific team tasks. Additionally the team may be organized into a core team and extended team. The core team consists of the people who have frequent and substantial involvement with the student (e.g., special educator, general educator, paraprofessional, parents, student when appropriate). Extended team members include the core plus those with less frequent involvement (e.g., itinerant related service personnel, administrator).

Hutchinson (1978) reminded us that "...calling a small group of people a team does not make them so" (p. 70). Merely bringing together many people does not ensure that they will function as a team. Two of the most foundational characteristics of teams are that they develop a shared framework (Giangreco, in press) to pursue a unified set of goals and they reach consensus decisions based on their unified goals (Giangreco, Edelman & Dennis, 1991). The COACH process (used to operationalize Step 1) creates mechanisms for teams to establish a shared framework, develop unified goals, and make consensus decisions about student learning outcomes and general supports.

In addition to a variety of characteristics, such as sharing resources and engaging in participatory interactions, that improve the team's work, effective teams serve a collective evaluation function. COACH includes a self-monitoring and peer coaching component to assist team members to help each other.

Establishing a team is identified as a prerequisite condition for effectively using the Project LIFE model. It is important to realize that teamwork practices are infused in all of the steps.

An early step in developing a shared framework is to establish what constitutes valued life outcomes for a student. These valued life outcomes initially were identified through interviews with parents whose children are deaf-blind (Giangreco, Cloninger, Mueller, Yuan & Ashworth, 1991). COACH provides a method for assessing the student's current status relative to valued life outcomes and desired future status. The family is relied upon to offer this vision for the student based on their personal values, desires, and wishes for their child. Having the family establish their vision of valued life outcomes both sets a meaningful context for educational planning and allows the selection of educational priorities and other educational program components to be referenced to valued life outcomes.

Given the high rate of turnover within special education and the sheer number of professionals likely to interact with the family, parents are probably the only people who will continue to be involved in the student's life throughout his/her entire educational career. This constancy factor creates a powerful rationale for including parents and assisting them to become full partners on the educational team as well as skillful consumers of educational and related services.

COACH provides a method for determining family-centered educational priorities that are translated into IEP goals and objectives. The problem-solving method used in COACH relies on alternating between divergent and convergent steps to assist families in determining priorities. COACH relies on families to generate a small set of top priorities representing the focal point of the educational program. These priorities are "discipline-free," meaning that they are not generated based on what is valued by various disciplines (e.g., OT, PT, SLP), but rather based on family perspectives of student needs referenced to valued life outcomes.

It is a fair concern that total reliance on a small set of discipline-free goals may promote an educational program that is unduly narrow, and may not adequately reflect the breadth of learning experiences required to pursue identified valued life outcomes. Therefore, COACH also provides methods to determine additional learning outcomes that should be targets for instruction as well as supports/accommodations through parent and professional collaboration. Supports/accommodations refer to things we do to or for students (not necessarily requiring any student behavior change) that either allow them access to educational opportunities and/or are needed for the student to pursue identified learning outcomes and valued life outcomes. While supports/accommodations are often thought of as physical, sensory, or

personal accommodations (e.g., tube feeding, catheterization, handling/ positioning, providing appropriate lighting, making environmental modifications), they also may include activities which facilitate social relationships, such as teaching others (e.g., professionals, peers, co-workers) how to communicate and socialize with a student.

Traditionally we have evaluated student success in reference to learning outcomes (e.g., IEP goals), with the hope that it would lead to improvements in valued life outcomes. However, supports/ accommodations can also have a positive impact on a student's valued life outcomes. In essence, things we do to or for a student, without requiring any change in the student, may improve his/her valued life outcomes. This notion encourages us to think about education as a process of mutual change, both the student's as well as our own.

To assist teams in developing a student schedule that addresses educational program components in general education settings and activities, COACH includes a matrix that compares the student's educational program components with general education classes, activities, and routines. Overall, the processes embedded in COACH address each of the substeps of Step 1.

Step 2: Address Student Educational Program Components in Integrated Activities on an Ongoing Basis During Implementation

A common problem facing teams attempting to include students with deaf-blindness in general education settings and activity pertains to curricular and instructional relevance. While some students with deaf-blindness may be pursuing the general education curriculum with accommodations to account for their sensory and/or other disabilities, many students with deaf-blindness have individual education plans that differ extensively from those of non-disabled students of the same chronological age. There is no question that addressing the needs of students with deaf-blindness in general education settings can be a challenge. It is also evident that the heterogeneity of this population precludes the use of standard (one-size-fits-all) approaches to planning daily activities and lessons.

Some individual student planning teams in Vermont and elsewhere have used an innovative approach to curricular/instructional adaptation with promising results. This approach is based on the use of the **Osborn-Parnes Creative Problem-Solving Process**, known as **CPS**, (Parnes, 1988, 1992) and variations of it that have been specifically developed to address the needs of

students with deaf-blindness in general education classrooms (Giangreco, 1993; Giangreco, Cloninger, Dennis & Edelman, 1994).

CPS was first described by Alex Osborn (1953), the person who coined the term, "brainstorming." While the term "brainstorming" is used in a variety of ways today, Osborn, and later his colleague Parnes, developed a complete method for problem-solving, including brainstorming as just one part. The CPS model has been used extensively in advertising, business, and education, although it is primarily associated with education for students labeled gifted. CPS proceeds through six major stages:
a) problem sensitivity and identification of a general problem (the "Mess"); b) data gathering ("Fact-Finding"); c) clarification of the problem statement in a way that encourages idea generation ("Problem-Finding); d) generation of a quantity of ideas through deferred judgment and with the use of specific idea-generating techniques ("Idea-Finding"); e) evaluation of ideas based on criteria to select solutions ("Solution-Finding"); and f) refinement of selected solutions, development of an action plan, and implementation of the plan ("Acceptance-Finding).

The power of the CPS process is that it: 1) enhances the capacity of the team to solve its own problems; 2) is a relatively simple, straightforward process; 3) can be used in a relatively short period of time; 4) can be used by teachers, teams of professionals, family members, classmates, co-workers, etc.; 5) can be applied to a wide variety of problems/challenges; and 6) can be adapted to match individual circumstances.

One of the key aspects of CPS is "Idea-Finding." While it is easy to say, "generate a large quantity of ideas" it is almost always harder to do. Many problem-solving approaches do not offer methods to generate ideas; CPS does. The reason CPS Idea-Finding stresses quantity is because the tendency of most people is to offer standard answers first. These ideas may be useful, but they limit us to what we already know. By stretching beyond the standard or obvious solutions we can break through to creative solutions. One technique for "stretching beyond," particularly applicable to general class integration issues, is called "forced relationships."

Forced relationships occur when you take two or more apparently unrelated objects, concepts, etc., and try to combine them to devise something new. In essence, including a student in class where his/her individual needs are very different from the rest of the class may be considered a naturally occurring forced relationship. By taking a fact about the student with deaf-blindness (e.g., she is learning to be responsive to the presence and

interactions of others) and a fact about the class (e.g., students pass in homework, quizzes, projects, to the teacher), ideas can be generated. These ideas can be generated by considering how these two apparently unrelated things can be related if they were made bigger, smaller, rearranged, reversed, eliminated, etc. For example, using rearrangement, the papers could be handed in to the student rather than the teacher, thus providing multiple opportunities for the student to respond to the presence and interactions of her classmates as they approach her, communicate with her, and hand in their work. In this example, the supports/accommodations could be teaching others how to communicate a greeting to a person who is deaf-blind (e.g., signing into his/her hand; touching). Exploring various combinations of forced relationship facts with idea-generating techniques in pilot-testing has lead to interesting, novel, and relevant solutions.

When faced with the challenge, "In what ways might we address Helen's (a girl with deaf-blindness and multiple disabilities) educational needs in an eighth grade science class?," a variation of CPS was used to generate several options that were acceptable to the science teacher and met Helen's needs. In other classes, students without disabilities were included in the process of problem-solving using teacher-supported variations that took from 2 to 10 minutes to complete. Involving classmates not only offered additional ideas, it built a sense of community among the youngsters, and provided non-disabled students with a problem-solving skill they could apply to both school and non-school challenges.

Use of CPS is consistent with both the substeps in Step 2 as well as this funding category's intention to develop building-based procedures that enhance the capacity of the neighborhood school to provide an appropriate education for students with deaf-blindness. A side benefit of this approach during initial field-testing has been its positive impact on non-disabled students and the positive reaction from general education personnel.

Step 3: Evaluation of Educational Program Impact

While the first two steps of the Project LIFE model hold great potential, ultimately they are only important if they lead to positive valued life outcomes changes for the student and family. Valued life outcomes may be improved by changes in student behavior (e.g., attaining IEP objectives) or by changes in the behaviors of others (e.g., attention to support needs, attitudes, opportunities).

Project LIFE staff developed a two-tiered process that explicitly evaluates the activities and outcomes of the educational program as related to a student's

valued life outcomes. The first tier explores the status of student achievement related to learning outcomes; the second references achievement to valued life outcomes. Additionally, evaluation may identify that valued life outcomes was improved by changes in what was done for the student without necessarily observing changes in student achievement.

In the first example, a student with deaf-blindness and multiple disabilities has a goal to improve his eating skills (e.g., chewing, swallowing, amount of food intake). This goal may have been selected as a priority of the family because the child has such a difficult time eating that he is frequently undernourished and under hydrated. The doctors have told them if this doesn't change soon the child will need a gastrostomy tube for feeding. Additionally, problems with swallowing occasionally result in the aspiration of food leading to respiratory infections. At the first tier of evaluation the student's chewing, swallowing, and food intake skills is evaluated (using standard data collection methods). If the student's eating skills improve, it is not enough to claim impact. The second tier considers whether those changes have resulted in a valued life outcome improvement (in this case, improved health as determined by a decrease in aspiration-related illness, weight gain, improved nutrition and vitality). The family is necessarily going to be important in evaluating whether the valued life outcomes has improved.

There are also occasions when a team may consciously decide that they are not targeting certain skills for learner behavior change. Rather, they intend to improve the student's valued life outcomes by providing supports/accommodations in general education settings and activities. They may establish a "Circle of Friends" to develop personal relationships, ramp buildings to allow access to new places, or provide different equipment or techniques to improve the student's health. Consideration of supports/accommodations is not done to abandon skill development; skill development is an important vehicle to improvements in valued life outcomes. At the same time, it is unreasonable to make skill development a prerequisite of all valued life outcomes. What could be the rationale for exclusively requiring behavior change on the part of an individual who experiences serious challenges to learning, while not simultaneously asking non-disabled people (presumably with less challenges to learning) to also make changes? This notion is particularly important as it relates to access to integrated school environments. In the past, and still in some places today, students are asked to "earn" the right to be included by demonstrating skill development/behavior change. Students are able to reap valued life outcome benefits of general

education placements given supports/ accommodations without necessarily demonstrating significant behavior change. This fundamentally changes what constitutes success in an educational program.

Use of this type of evaluation process referenced to valued life outcomes is consistent with the substeps presented under Step 3, family-centered perspectives, current best practices, and the Project LIFE intention to ensure that student's lives are better as a result of being educated in inclusive general education settings.

III. Description of Research Studies

(presented in chronological order)

In this section each of the data-based studies generated from Project LIFE are abstracted. The publication source for each of these studies is provided; these are resources for detailed descriptions of the participants, methods, results, and discussions.

Giangreco, M.F., Cloninger, C.J., Dennis, R.E., & Edelman, S.W. (1993). National expert validation of COACH: Congruence with exemplary practice and suggestions for improvement. The Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 18 (2), 109-120.

The content and social validity of an educational planning tool named COACH (Choosing Options and Accommodations for CHildren) were explored through two studies. Study 1 presents questionnaire feedback from six groups of experts (N = 78) in the field of deaf-blindness and multiple disabilities regarding the purpose, philosophy, content, process, and presentation of COACH Study 2 presents social validation feedback from parents (N = 44) whose children are deaf-blind and have multiple disabilities regarding a set of valued life outcomes included in COACH. The combined results of these two studies provide initial validation that COACH is congruent with exemplary practice and offer consumer-based suggestions for its potential improvement.

Giangreco, M.F., Dennis, R., Edelman, S., & Cloninger, C. (1994). Dressing your IEPs for the general education climate: Analysis of IEP goals and objectives for students with multiple disabilities. Remedial and Special Education, 15 (5), 288-296.

This article describes characteristics of IEPs of 46 students from nine different states in kindergarten through grade 12 who have multiple disabilities and receive all or part of their education in general education classes. Through categorical coding of the students' IEP goals and objectives, several themes were identified that highlight problematic characteristics of individual education plans. Alternatives are suggested which the authors believe may more adequately communicate the unique needs of individual students to their teachers in general education classes and improve the usefulness of IEPs.

Giangreco, M.F., Edelman, S., Dennis, R., & Cloninger, C.J. (in press). Use and impact of COACH with students who are deaf-blind. The Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the use and impact of COACH (Choosing Options and Accommodations for Children: A Guide to Planning Inclusive Education) with 30 students with deaf-blindness who attended general education classes in public schools. Interview and observational data were analyzed qualitatively while document data were analyzed quantitatively. The findings and discussion centered around five evaluation questions: a) How do people use COACH? b) Does the use of COACH result in educational program components referenced to valued life outcomes identified by parents and/or students? c) How do educational programs developed using COACH differ from those developed prior to its use? d) In what ways did the use of COACH effect relationships between parents and professionals? and e) In what ways did the use of COACH effect valued life outcomes for students? Implications for educational planning in inclusive settings are discussed.

Dennis, R., & Giangreco, M.F. (1995). Creating conversation: Reflections on cultural sensitivity in family interviewing. Burlington, VT: University of Vermont, University Affiliated Program of Vermont. Manuscript submitted for publication review.

There has been growing attention in the literature of education and special education to the importance of providing services for families and students in ways that respect, acknowledge and promote their cultural diversity and strengths. The family interview is a common component of program planning in special education. The purpose of this study is to create a conversation about culturally sensitive practice in family interviewing by sharing the perceptions and experiences of individuals selected as experts meeting certain criteria. They are members of cultural minority groups in the United States and who work as professionals in the field of special education. The article reviews literature relevant to cultural sensitivity and family interviewing, describes the method of the study, presents findings using document analysis related to major themes in the data and concludes with a discussion of implications for enhancing culturally sensitive practices in family interviewing.

Edelman, S., Knutson, J., Osborn, D., & Giangreco, M.F. (1995). Heidi's Inclusion in Junior High: Transition and Educational Planning for a Student with Deaf-Blindness. Burlington, VT: University of Vermont, University Affiliated Program of Vermont. Manuscript submitted for publication review.

This case study relates one student's successful transition from a self-contained regional special education class into an inclusive program in her home community's junior high school. COACH: Choosing Options and Accommodations for CHildren was used as a tool to plan inclusive education for Heidi, a fourteen year old student with deaf-blindness. The account of this experience is based on qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with Heidi's mother, the special education teacher who served as her inclusion facilitator, site observations, videotaped school and work activities, a review of her IEP prior to and after completing COACH, and written team meeting records of the use of a problem-solving process to facilitate educational inclusion. Preparation for transition, program planning and

implementation are described as are specific ways that Heidi's life has been significantly changed. Future-mindedness, risk taking and expectations for learning are described by the team as characteristics of changing perspectives brought about through the use of COACH and problem-solving during this process.

IV. Methodological and Logistical Problems

The following section describes four methodological/logistical problems encountered during the administration of Project LIFE.

1. Difficulty Obtaining Research Sites

Preliminary efforts during the application for funding of Project LIFE included contact and arrangements with five State or Multi-State Deaf-Blind Coordinators who committed to participate in the project. Part of their responsibility was to assist in identifying appropriate research sites in their respective states. The states were selected because the coordinators originally said they could identify 20 students in their states who were deaf-blind and were educated in general education classroom as their primary placement. In reality none of the five original states (which were geographically distributed) delivered 20 students.

Each State Deaf-Blind Coordinator and a faculty member from a university in their respective states attended a two-day orientation/training meeting in Vermont. This was designed to have people in the state comfortable with providing training and technical assistance regarding Project LIFE components and to increase their sense of involvement in the project. Despite this investment, and numerous repeated attempts to identify research sites in two of the original states, research sites never materialized. In two other states the number of research sites numbered less than five. Only one state (VT) had more than 10 research sites throughout the project period. Rather than the original intention to have 100 research sites, 46 were identified.

In retrospect, given the qualitative nature of the primary evaluative data collection and the low incidence population being studied, 100 sites was probably overly ambitious given the resources attached to this project. Even

with approximately half the number of sites the data set was so large that saturation on data themes was realized far before accessing all the collected data, thus indicating that the same findings likely could have been identified with substantially fewer research sites.

2. Attrition of Sites

Throughout the project period attrition caused the number of research sites to decline from 46 to 30. The reasons for this attrition varied, including the death of two students (not included in the original 46), and the choice of approximately five site liaisons in the public schools to not pursue project activities once they had begun the intake process. The most frequently cited reason for non-participation by school personnel was "lack of time." Ironically, they simultaneously indicated that their review of the Project LIFE materials prompted them to think that the approaches could "really help," yet they said they could not see themselves expending the time and energy to learn something new. This was a pervasive problem, even among sites that participated throughout the project period. This was evidenced by their selective use of Project LIFE materials, primarily COACH (Part 1). School personnel used other Project LIFE materials/process (i.e., COACH Parts 2 and 3), less frequently. The most prevalent reason for attrition (approximately 11 sites) was that Project LIFE staff identified that several students did not meet the general education criteria for participation. School personnel had reported that students were in general education classes as their primary placement, yet detailed questioning by Project staff or site visits revealed that several students were actually educated in special education classes as their primary placement, with occasional opportunities to be in general education classes -- these sites were given access to complimentary Project LIFE materials yet no further data were collected once the placement discrepancy was identified. This apparent miscommunication highlights the reality that people do not share a common definition or understanding of what constitutes "primary placement in general education."

Future research might focus on sites that chose not to become involved in project activities or do not meet their initial agreements to participate after having started on a project. It would be revealing to more fully understand the reasons for non-participation and low levels of participation, especially when school personnel express the opinions indicating that the project

activities would be helpful. Such reasons could be a window into the stresses and barriers that impede school personnel from pursuing important professional development. The identification of these issues ultimately could lead to the development of strategies that could enhance school reform efforts. Additionally, the confusion around what constitutes general education placement of students with disabilities and what constitutes school "inclusion" also warrant further scrutiny. It is clear that just because a student is placed in a general education classroom it does not mean that his or her educational experience is inclusive. Given the high turnover in staff, such as getting a new general education teacher each year, turnover in paraprofessionals and special educators, and ongoing shortages in related services personnel the most rudimentary issues and strategies about inclusive schooling will be relevant on an ongoing basis.

3. Difficulty Identifying Students From Under-represented Groups

Part of the Project LIFE design included the selection of five states specifically because of their populations of students from a variety of cultural minorities (e.g., African-American, Asian-American, Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, Native American). Unfortunately, the two states where no sites were established were ones originally targeted specifically to access students of African-American and Asian-American descent. Therefore, approximately 75% of the students involved in Project LIFE were Caucasian while, 25% were minorities, primarily Hispanic/Latino and Native American. When access to the five original states did not yield enough minority students, calls were made to Coordinators of Deaf-Blind Services in several other states with known populations of minority students. As a result, research sites were established in seven additional states to extend the number of sites established in three of the originally selected states.

Identifying students with deaf-blindness who are taught in general education classes and who are from cultural minorities is likely to continue to be a challenge. In a search for students meeting all three of these criteria for a different activity at the end of the Project period, requests were posted nationally on the SpecialNet Deaf-Blind Bulletin Board and the Deaf-Blind Listserver at the University of Kentucky. This posting yielded only two responses and identified only one student who met all the criteria. Access to this type of information nationally is not readily available. In our limited experiences attempting to identify these students we found that they were

frequently living in rural or remote areas. This may be partially due to the possibility that inclusive educational options for students with deaf-blindness are lagging behind opportunities more generally available for students in other disability categories. This may also be a function of the fact the inclusive educational options are more or less available depending on what state one lives in and whether one lives in urban, suburban, or rural areas. It is a reality that a student with deaf-blindness in one community may be fully included, while a student with comparable characteristics and educational needs in another community (in the same state or a different state) may be educated in a special education classroom or a special education school. Given the disparity in inclusive opportunities from place to place, one is left to wonder whether students with deaf-blindness, including those from traditionally underrepresented cultural groups, who happen to live in communities or states that have not vigorously pursued less restrictive educational placement options are receiving the same opportunities available to students as a matter of course in other places. It would be enlightening to determine the numbers of students with deaf-blindness who are educated primarily in general education classes and their numbers by racial/cultural background. This data could shed light on whether students of color who are deaf-blind are over represented in special education classes and schools in their respective states as has historically been problematic for students with mild disabilities. By determining this information, it could influence potential future funding priorities to ensure that promising and exemplary educational practices are being made available to traditionally underrepresented students.

4. Locus of Control

Although Project LIFE was successful in gaining a national perspective by collecting data in 10 states that were geographically distributed across the country, this approach to the collection of qualitative data raised concerns regarding follow-through and locus of control. The old adage "out of sight -- out of mind" seemed to apply. Given the busy nature of public schools it became apparent that responsibilities pertaining to participation in Project LIFE were not high on the priority list for many school personnel. In many cases this was exacerbated by having the researchers access information primarily through a site liaison, often the special education teacher. This often resulted in the liaison being aware of project needs and

responsibilities, that were not always passed along to other team members. The importance of maintaining a reasonable locus of control was evidenced in part by the fact that we had the most sites and the highest level of participation by professionals in the home state of the researchers. We also had a higher level of participation from sites in one midwestern state where the state's Deaf-Blind Coordinator took an active and visible role in supporting Project LIFE activities. In other locations it seemed that without that type of presence there often were so many competing responsibilities for school personnel that voluntary activities such as participation in Project LIFE were seen as a lower priority. One result of having many research sites with limited locus of control was that we collected a large quantity of data, yet much of it was at a surface level. Future projects would be improved by establishing a stronger locus of control. One way this could be done is by having a smaller number of sites commensurate with project resources; this would allow researchers to get data beyond the surface level and, if our earlier stated data saturation estimates are accurate, still obtain more than sufficient data to generate meaningful analysis. Secondly, research sites should be geographically close enough to access on at least a monthly basis. If the nature of the project activities necessitates having research sites at greater distances, a project staff member should be identified in that geographic area to maintain visibility and presence. Finally, it will be helpful to maintain some ongoing communication and interaction with each project participant rather than working through a liaison exclusively. Each of these suggestions is designed to enhance the researchers locus of control to increase the likelihood of participation and follow through in project activities. A given is that the activities school personnel are asked to engage in are a relevant and meaningful to their work. This highlights the need for action research and other collaborative ventures between university faculty and school personnel that match identified educational needs.

V. Annotated Bibliography of Other Major Project Products

(presented in chronological order)

During the tenure of Project LIFE, other products were developed for several reasons: to assist in implementation of project components; to disseminate information about the project; to share other learnings and perspectives

resulting from project activities. These major products are briefly described and their publication sources are provided. Data-based studies are described in Section III and are not repeated here.

Giangreco, M., Cloninger, C. (1991). Project LIFE Brochure. Burlington, VT: University of Vermont, University Affiliated Program of Vermont.

The brochure described Project LIFE, activities associated with it, and criteria for being involved.

Edelman, S., Giangreco, M., Cloninger, C., & Dennis, R. (1992). COACH Part 1: Family Prioritization Interview (videotape and companion forms). Burlington, VT: University of Vermont, University Affiliated Program of Vermont. Distributed by the National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials, Stillwater, OK. Call 1-800-223-5219, order #V189.090.

This videotape and companion show an entire interview using COACH Part 1. The interview is carried out by one of the COACH authors with a parent of a child with deaf-blindness. A companion forms booklet illustrates the forms that were completed during the interview process and are coded to be used as the videotape is watched.

Giangreco, M., Cloninger, C., Edelman, S., & Dennis, R. (1992). Evaluation of impact process, Burlington, VT: University of Vermont, University Affiliated Program of Vermont.

The Evaluation of Impact Process (EIP) is a question-asking tool used by educational teams in an effort to determine the impact of educational actions on a student's valued life outcomes. Questions on the EIP are designed to guide group discussion and move beyond the evaluation of goals and objectives to explore impact on valued life outcomes (see more detailed description in Section II).

Giangreco, M.F., Cloninger, C., & Iverson, V. (1993). Choosing options and accommodations for children: A guide to planning inclusive education. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

COACH - Choosing Options and Accommodations for Children: A Guide to Planning Inclusive Education is a planning process designed to assist individual student planning teams in identifying the content of individual educational programs for students with moderate to severe disabilities in inclusive educational settings and activities. Although COACH primarily has been used with this low incidence population, its concepts and procedures are generically applicable for use with students who have a much wider range of characteristics, with minor adaptations to its content. COACH is based upon a series of six underlying assumptions as well as a set of five valued life outcomes.

COACH is organized into three major parts. Part 1 (Family Prioritization Interview) is used to identify a small set of priority learning outcomes for the student. These priority learning outcomes are family-selected, individualized, and are selected based on their proposed impact on valued life outcomes. Part 2 (Defining the Educational Program Components) is used to: (a) translate the family-selected priority learning outcomes into IEP goals and objectives, (b) assist the full team (including the family) in identifying other important learning outcomes in addition to those selected exclusively by the family, and (c) determine general supports and accommodations to be provided to or for the student to allow access and participation in the educational program. This part of COACH ensures that the selection of a small set of priorities will not unnecessarily limit the breadth of the student's learning opportunities and explicitly documents the contents of the educational program in a succinct format (i.e., Program-at-a-Glance) for practical use by classroom staff. It further assists team members by distinguishing between student learning outcomes and supports or accommodations. Particularly with students who have severe disabilities, confusion regarding this distinction has led to conflicts among team members, and IEPs (Individual Education Plans) that are unnecessarily passive. Part 3 (Addressing the Educational Program Components in Inclusive Settings) is used to determine options for addressing students' educational program components in general education class settings and other settings with people who are not disabled (e.g., community, vocational)

through the use of a scheduling matrix and a set of lesson adaptation guidelines.

Giangreco, M.F. (1993). Using creative problem solving methods to include students with severe disabilities in general education classroom activities. Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 4(2), 113-135.

Increasingly, students with intensive educational needs are receiving special education services in general education classes. This level of heterogeneous grouping poses curricular and instructional adaptation challenges. Variations of the Osborn-Parnes Creative Problem-Solving (CPS) process are presented as methods for meeting the educational needs of diverse groups of students within general education activities. Specific examples are provided based on field-testing in elementary schools. An evaluation component and future implications are discussed.

Dennis, R.E., Williams, W., Giangreco, M.F., & Cloninger, C.J. (1993). Quality of life as a context for planning and evaluation of services for people with disabilities. Exceptional Children, 59 (6), 499-512.

Quality of life has become a dominant theme in planning and evaluating services for people with disabilities. This article reviews definitions of quality of life, explores the concept from the perspective of the optimal theory of personal well-being, and surveys the research on the concept and its implications for planning and evaluating services. This article explores the subjective nature of quality of life, particularly for people with disabilities, and relates the concept to both cultural norms and universal human values and needs. Each person experiences life, and disability, in unique ways. Practitioners need to consider quality-of-life issues as a context in planning and evaluating quality services.

Giangreco, M.F., Cloninger, C., Dennis, R., & Edelman, S. (1994). Problem-solving methods to facilitate inclusive education. In J. Thousand , R. Villa, & Nevin, A. (Eds.), Creativity and collaborative learning: A practical guide to empowering students and teachers (pp. 321-349), Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Inclusive educational practices require people to work together to invent opportunities and solutions that maximize learning experiences of all children. This chapter presents ways of planning, adapting, and implementing inclusive educational experiences for students of varying abilities; it is a how to chapter. After presenting some basic characteristics of inclusive education and distinctions between inclusion-oriented and traditional approaches to educating students with diverse characteristics, the remainder of the chapter is divided in to five sections. The first section presents contextual information regarding the challenges associated with educating a diverse group of students in general education environments and activities. Second, the chapter describes characteristics of effective problem-solvers as well as the steps of the Osborn-Parnes Creative Problem-Solving (CPS) Process. The third section delineates three variations of the CPS process that utilize the creative powers of children and adults to generate options for the inclusion of classmates with diverse needs. The fourth section offers suggestions for evaluating the impact of CPS strategies on educational experiences of students. The final section discusses implications of using CPS in education.

Baumgart, D., & Giangreco, M. (in press). Key lessons learned about inclusion In D. Lehr & F. Brown (Eds.), Persons who challenge the system: Persons with profound disabilities. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

This chapter discusses two legal cases and their legal precedents in the movement toward greater inclusion and educational rights of students with the most severe disabilities. Next, the chapter introduces the "socio-relations" perspective on differences and its relation to policies and practices that guide educators. The chapter concludes with the presentation of seven key lessons learned as we move toward inclusion-oriented education and related school reform.

Giangreco, M.F., Baumgart, D., & Doyle, M.B. (in press). How inclusion can facilitate teaching and learning. Intervention in School and Clinic, 30 (5). This article has three primary purposes. First, it seeks to clarify some of the confusion regarding inclusive education by highlighting what it is and discussing what it is not. Second, it describes seven ways inclusive education can provide opportunities for teachers to improve the education they provide for all the students in their class. The article concludes by

suggesting potential actions individuals can take to facilitate inclusive education.

Giangreco, M.F. (in press). Choosing options and accommodations for children (COACH): Curriculum planning in inclusive classrooms. In W. Stainback & S. Stainback (Eds.), Handbook of Practical Strategies for Inclusive Schooling. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

When a student with disabilities is placed in a general education class, one of the most universal concerns expressed by families and school personnel is the need to develop a relevant educational plan that meets the student's individual needs and makes sense in the context of general education. This chapter presents information about COACH (Choosing Options and Accommodations for CHildren: A Guide to Planning Inclusive Education) , a planning tool designed to assist teams with their individual student planning efforts in inclusive schools. The chapter is divided into three major sections. First, COACH is described. Second, the results of recent research pertaining to COACH are described. This section includes: (a) a national expert and social validation of COACH, (b) cross-cultural feedback on COACH, and (c) what has been learned about the use of COACH and its impact on students, families, and professionals. The third major section discussions implications for the future use of COACH.

Cloninger, C.J., & Giangreco, M.F. (in press). Including students with deaf-blindness in general education classes. Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness.

Students with deaf-blindness are being afforded new opportunities to be educated in general education classrooms with their peers who do not have disabilities. With these new opportunities come questions and challenges related to how the inclusion of students with deaf-blindness will be successfully achieved in settings where people are unaccustomed to their presence. This article offers background information about inclusive education and describes three field-tested approaches for: a) planning a student's educational program in an inclusive setting, b) making support service decisions, and c) developing lesson accommodations to include

students with deaf-blindness in typical class activities. Future directions are discussed.

VI. Dissemination and Impact

This section estimates the number of people who were directly effected by Project LIFE activities through: (a) participation in field-testing at research sites or review Project LIFE materials, (b) technical assistance or information sharing with individuals who were not participants in Project LIFE, (c) estimates of the number of products produced through Project LIFE that have been disseminated, and the number of people who have received training by Project LIFE staff on content related to project activities. The total number of people effected by Project LIFE exceeds 100,000.

Six hundred and eighty-eight people participated in field-testing at research sites or review Project LIFE materials. These people included 46 students with deaf-blindness, approximately 521 people who were members of individual student planning teams for the students with deaf-blindness (including parents), 78 national experts (including parents and professionals), 44 additional parents who reviewed the valued life outcomes in COACH, and 15 members of the Vermont Deaf-Blind Advisory Council.

Approximately 500 additional people received individualized technical assistance or information resources regarding Project LIFE. This support and dissemination occurred in person, over the phone, or by mail.

Sections III and V of this report list a combined total of 16 products developed and disseminated by Project LIFE including 1 brochure, 1 video, 5 research studies, 8 additional articles and book chapters describing aspects of Project LIFE, and 1 manual (COACH). Based on circulation figures we conservatively estimate that a cumulative total of approximately 100,000 copies of Project LIFE materials have been distributed.

Various adult teaching activities conducted over the life of this project by project personnel included conference presentations, course presentations, workshops, short courses, and institutes delivered in 22 states, as well as three countries to approximately 5528 people. The states and countries where teaching activities occurred were: AK, CA, CO, IA, IL, IN, KS, LA, MA, MD, ME, MI, NH, NM, NY, PA, SD, TX, UT, VA, VT, WA, and Canada, New Zealand, and Honduras. Audiences receiving the training included parents and family members of students with deaf-blindness and other significant disabilities,

special and general education personnel, related services personnel, general and special education administrators, State and Multi-State Deaf-Blind personnel, college and university faculty, advocacy groups, Advisory Council, and others. Some of the organizations, agencies, and programs where trainings were delivered included: CEC, National and State TASH, ASCD, State SAFE, State Deaf-Blind Projects, OT/PT Task Force, local school districts, and State Departments of Education. Project LIFE dissemination activities were far-reaching not only for children and youth with deaf-blindness, but for other students with significant disabilities, their families, and educational personnel.

VII. REFERENCES NOT PREVIOUSLY ANNOTATED

Giangreco, M.F. (in press). VISTA: Vermont Interdependent manual, Baltimore: Brookes Publishing Co.

Giangreco, M.F., Cloninger, C.J., Mueller, P., Yuan, S., & Ashworth, S. (1991). Perspectives of parents whose children have dual sensory impairments, Journal of Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 16(1), 14-24.

Giangreco, M.F., Edelman, S., & Dennis, R. (1991). Common professional practices that interfere with the integrated delivery of related services. Remedial and Special Education, 12(2), 16-24.

Hutchinson, D. (1978). The transdisciplinary approach. In J.B. Curry & K.K. Peppe (Eds.), Mental retardation: Nursing approaches to care (pp. 65-74). St. Louis, MO: C.V. Mosby.

Osborn, A. (1953). Applied imagination: Principles and procedures of creative thinking. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Parnes, S. (1988). Visionizing: State-of-the-art processes for encouraging innovative excellence. East Aurora, NY: D.O.K. Publishing.

Parnes, S.J. (1992). Source book for creative problem-solving: A fifty year digest of proven innovation processes. Buffalo, NY: Creative Education Foundation Press.

Thousand, J. & Villa, R. (1992). Collaborative teams: A powerful tool in school restructuring. In Villa, R., Thousand, J., Stainback, W. & Stainback, S. (Eds.), Restructuring for caring and effective schools: An administrative guide to creating heterogeneous schools (pp. 73-108). Baltimore: Paul Brookes Publishing Co.

VIII. Locations of Further Information

Further and more detailed information can be found in the publications that resulted from this project as indicated in the bibliographical listings in Sections III, V and VI. A copy of the project and the final report can be found in ERIC.

IX. Assurance Statement of Distribution

A copy of this final report has been sent to ERIC and copies of the title page and abstract have been sent to: HEATH Resource Center, National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education, National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY), Technical Assistance for Parent Programs Project (TAPP), National Diffusion Network, Child and Adolescent Service System Program (CASSP), Northeast Regional Resource Center, MidSouth Regional Resource Center, South Atlantic Regional Resource Center, Great Lakes Area Regional Resource Center, Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center, Western Regional Resource Center, and the Federal Resource Center.