## Southern New Hampshire University

#### Abstract

The implementation of special education services was compared between rural and urban public schools in the United States. To answer this question, existing laws and policies were evaluated and analyzed, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), among others. Interviews were conducted with rural and urban families and educators who are involved in special education. Interviews were used to gain personal experience and opinions on SPED implementation. The literature collected includes information surrounding the history of special education, other laws and policies that protect the rights of students with disabilities, the services provided in urban and rural public schools and their limitations, special education teacher preparation, and the relationship between special education and race. Findings from this research showed that there are few differences between rural and urban schools, with the main difference being the amount of funding the two regions receive. There has been great progress in special education, but more improvements can be made.

#### **Background Information**

Early special education history began with an era of institutionalization where individuals suspected of having a disability were sent to asylums. These asylums were created to protect society. School managers were allowed to expel students who they felt to be undesirable, immoral, and economically unnecessary to the community. It was not until 1900 that state laws began to be passed. Federal action began in 1930 with advocacy evidence and the first federal law, the Americans with Disabilities Act, was passed in 1990.

Americans with Disabilities Act (1990)

Section 504 of Education for the Rehabilitation Act (1973)

All Handicapped **Children Act** (1975)

Individ with Disabil Educat (1990)

Restricted against any person with a physical handicap.

discrimination handicap can be schools must excluded from

No person with a Federally funded Adaptati provide access school activities to SPED services characte

the EHA person-f

## The Implementation of Special Education Services in **Rural Versus Urban Public School Districts**

## Marisa Cota

#### Interviews

uals ities ion Act	No Child Left Behind (2002- 2015)
ion of but with first erization	Federal grants issued based on standardized test performance levels

Interviews were conducted with both rural and urban educators and families whose child(ren) were under IEPs. A special education coordinator was also interviewed to provide further background and expertise to the research. Participants were voluntary and answered specific sets of questions relating to their role in special education.

# Educators

- Lack of resources to help with needed services

- Struggle of school leadership making connections for SPED

- Teachers need to be creative in accommodating for students
- Creativity in catering content to meet all students' needs

#### Urban

Rural

- Vocal parents fighting for
- students to get needed services
- Classroom aides pulled for
- teacher coverage
- Poor distribution of federal and local funding
- Less students involved in SPED

### SPED Coordinator

Teachers and parents need to be more informed to ensure students are getting their needed services

> Implementation is dependent on regions, districts and how much funding areas receive

#### Rural

• Less funding More funding Smaller levels of from the federal diversity gov't and Diversity • More SPED localities Isolation engagement Higher rates of • Funding employment • Fewer classroom Less engagement in resources Teacher SPED usage • Fewer connections Typically, more with community and beyond high school

#### **Rural Versus Urban**

#### Families

Rural
<ul> <li>Issue of school not offering needed services</li> </ul>
<ul> <li>School did not have proper prior experience for disability</li> </ul>
<ul> <li>Issue of not including student as often as needed, isolation is quickest approach</li> </ul>
<ul> <li>School did not have enough funding to cover services</li> </ul>
Urban
- Positive experience with SPEE services
<ul> <li>Twice yearly meetings, additional meetings held when needed</li> </ul>
- Positive experience of family

involvement, families should receive training when worried about working with disabilities

- Additional funding after school for college costs

Teachers must also act as advocates for their students. Advocates are available but can be expensive or have long waitlists

#### Urban

educated teachers

It is the responsibility of special education teachers, school staff, and administrators to ensure students with disabilities are benefitting. Special education administrators are obligated to provide equitable education for students with disabilities. Providing a strong educational foundation, including resources and knowledge, benefits both students with disabilities and their educators. Teachers have improved their responsibility in special education. Technology has played a large role in service implementation to aid students with basic material. Both rural and urban school districts experience limitations to technological access, forcing schools to accommodate a nontechnological approach to learning. There is a balance between too much reliance on technology and not enough. Issues of teachers relying too heavily on technology typically imply that teachers have not fully prepared to work with students with special needs. There are also issues with teachers not using technology to its fullest potential, due to traditional approaches.

Minority students with disabilities have significantly lower academic performance levels. Not only do students with disabilities have lower graduation rates, but race and ethnicity also contribute more to these rates. Racial discrimination is evident in numerous societal issues. In education, and more so in special education, more Black students are enrolled in special education programs or receiving more accommodations than their white counterparts. Students with disabilities are more likely to experience cases of racism and ableism in both rural and urban public schools. Black students who suffer from behavioral disabilities are more susceptible to suspensions due to their actions being perceived as more vicious or aggressive than white students.

Overall findings from this study showed what prevents special education services from being implemented. There are minimal differences between rural and urban public schools with some differences being funding for needed services, the lack of teachers in the field, how often students are sent for interventions or diagnosis, district resources, and connections with higher education or the community. Districts in certain areas, mostly rural, struggle to provide teachers with what they need causing them to leave the district. Existing prejudice leads to disadvantages for minority students in special education. There has been a great amount of progress made in special education but there is still more to go. The next steps should focus on inclusion in the classroom, race, funding, and teacher preparation.

#### **Teacher Preparation**

#### Race

#### Findings