



WHAT'S NEW FROM SEELS

Fall 2003



SEELS is an important national study being conducted for the U.S. Department of Education by SRI International and Westat. This study documents the educational experiences and progress of thousands of elementary and middle school students nationwide who received special education in 1999. We are following their progress by collecting information from parents, teachers, and students themselves at three points over a 6-year period, and are now beginning the fifth year of this study. We have compiled a voluminous and rich database describing the national picture of students with disabilities' experiences, including their academic performance, school experiences, family supports, social adjustment, and personal growth in this critical time of transition from elementary school to middle school, and from middle school to high school. We are indebted to the many thousands of teachers, students, and parents who have taken the time to participate in our data collection. We greatly appreciate your time and effort.

Data Collection Update

We are now beginning the final wave of data collection for SEELS and wish to provide you with an update of the activities planned for the coming school year.

Parent telephone interviews will begin in the spring of 2004. Parents will be asked questions about their child's educational experiences, academic and social development, and family supports. Nearly 7,500 SEELS interviews were completed in the second wave (spring 2002), and we hope this final effort will be just as successful.

Student assessments will begin in January 2004. These assessments collect information about academic performance on standardized tests of reading and mathematics as well as students' perceptions of school. These assessments are administered in face-to-face interviews by SEELS field assessors who are locally hired professionals. Many experienced field assessors are returning the upcoming assessments.

School data collection will begin in the fall of 2003. To minimize burden on school staff, we are recruiting study coordinators to serve as the single point of contact for the study at the school site. We will ask district and school staff to recommend someone at the school to serve in this role. Site study coordinators' role include updating SEELS on student participant enrollment and will distribute questionnaires to the appropriate teachers. Site study coordinators also will complete the **School Characteristics Questionnaires** about the policies and characteristics of their schools. Coordinators or their schools will receive stipends as a "thank-you" for their effort and time.

Teachers will provide important perspectives on educational services, behavior, and performance through two surveys. The **Language Arts Teacher Questionnaires** provides information about the student's instructional goals, classroom experiences, assessment, accommodations, social adjustment, and performance in his or her language arts classrooms. The **School Program Questionnaires** collect information about the student's entire educational program, such as goals, placements, accommodations, and participation in accountability systems.

SEELS welcomes feedback!

Call our toll-free number: 1-800-961-9895

E-mail: SEELS@sri.com



Recent Findings from SEELS

Below are some recent findings from SEELS teacher questionnaires about the classroom experiences of students with disabilities. Full reports can be found at www.seels.net.

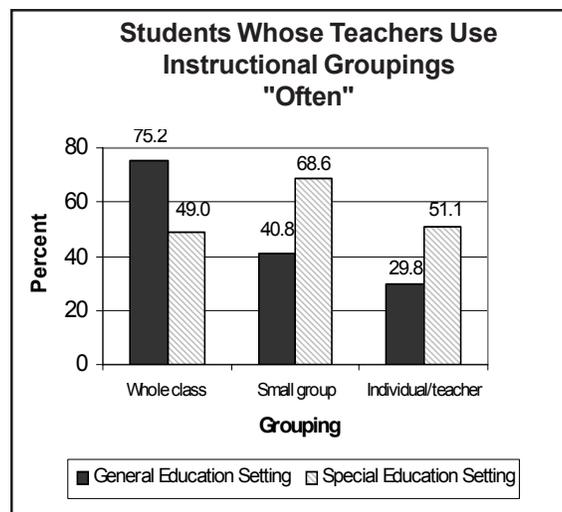
Our findings suggest considerable diversity in the ways in which language arts instruction is provided to students. For some students with disabilities, language arts instruction closely resembles that of classmates in general education with only a small number of additional supports provided. For others, language arts instruction occurs in special education settings with greater individual attention and extensive support.

American teachers report that their classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse in terms of culture, language, and diversity. SEELS confirms these observations. SEELS data shows that, for every disability classification, some students receive language arts instruction in both general and special education settings. Language arts teachers in special education settings face students with a very different mix of disabilities than do general education teachers. For example, students with disabilities in general education language arts classrooms are most likely to be classified as having speech impairments or learning disabilities. By comparison, those in special education settings are most likely to be classified as having learning disabilities, mental retardation, or emotional disturbances.

American schools are organized into a variety of settings to match the needs of students with disabilities. SEELS data show that two-thirds of elementary and middle school students with disabilities receive instruction in both general and special education settings. However, students with disabilities who spend any time in general education classes typically spend the majority of their

time there (approximately 5 hours a day), and receive the majority of their instruction in academic subjects there. Resource rooms are the most common special education setting, whereas self-contained classrooms are far less common.

An important strategy for addressing heterogeneity in classrooms is to alter the size of the instructional grouping. SEELS data show that most students receive a combination of whole class, small group, and individual instruction.



Whole class instruction is more common in general education language arts settings than in special education settings, while small group and individual instruction are more common in special education settings than in general education settings.

Accommodations provide another key mechanism to support students' needs so they can

perform at levels consistent with their abilities. SEELS data reveal that accommodations play an important role for the vast majority of students with disabilities. The accommodations or supports most often provided to students include increased time for assignments and for tests, and progress monitoring by special education staff (about 65% or more of students received each of these accommodations). About half of students have tests read to them and take modified tests, have slower-paced instruction, receive shorter or modified assignments, or receive more frequent feedback on their progress and performance. Across all disability categories, students receive more accommodations or supports in special education (between 8 and 10) than in general education (between 4 and 9).

Please check our Web site for additional SEELS findings and reports.

Visit <http://www.seels.net>