

UNIVERSITY of
NORTHERN COLORADO



Together, we CAN do more

With your help, the National Center on Severe and Sensory Disabilities can continue its mission
of

...Making a Difference in the Lives of One Million Children...

This document was originally created by Ann Sebald, Ed.D., in March, 2007, when the National Center on Severe and Sensory Disabilities was known as the National Center on Low-Incidence Disabilities.
Revised January 2009 by Kay Ferrell.



What Can You Do with a Nickel?

Children with low-incidence disabilities account for only 1% of the total enrollment in America's schools. Yet adults with low-incidence disabilities account for 36.7% of persons receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI), each receiving a federally supported income averaging \$384 per month.

With funding totaling only 5¢ per child per month, the National Center on Severe and Sensory Disabilities (NCSSD) has:

- Changed teacher preparation by creating online programs that enroll students from Colorado (69%) and 25 other states across the nation
- Celebrated the skills of 20 excellent teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities
- Created the only annual conference devoted exclusively to scientifically based research in low-incidence disabilities
- Developed cutting-edge, award-winning applications of technology and instructional design for education
 - Designated as a Program of Excellence by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education
 - Best Practice Award for the Innovative Use of Technology from the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
- Conducted national needs assessments about the education of students with low-incidence disabilities
- Helped parents negotiate the legal maze with our Pop-up IEP – providing responses to all-too-common statements heard about children with low-incidence disabilities
- Analyzed over 40 years of literacy research to determine how best to teach literacy to blind, deaf, and severely impaired children
- Supported the production of videos for families and educators on early education strategies for infants and toddlers who are deaf and hard-of-hearing
- Demonstrated that children with low-incidence disabilities are behind their peers in statewide assessments in literacy and math

The federal government spends \$11 billion dollars a year on Supplemental Security Income for individuals with low-incidence disabilities. Often this is the byproduct of a failed education. The goal of NCSSD is to make a difference in the lives of one million children by improving the quality of educational services they receive.

Think what NCSSD could do with 10¢, or 25¢, or even \$1.00 per child per year....

“All students in America can learn...All of us understand we have an obligation to make sure no child is left behind in America.”
(President George W. Bush, December, 2, 2004)



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Concept Papers

Here at the National Center on Severe and Sensory Disabilities, we have a five year history of conducting projects designed to continue our missions of Policy Analysis, Information Exchange, Local Support, Professional Development, and Research to Practice. The subsequent Concept Papers are projects that, if funded, will continue to address the needs associated with this population of students.

Concept Project Descriptions	Amount Requested	Page
NCSSD Operational Support	\$343,338	9
Out Reach to Teach	\$2,080,000	17
Excellence in Education Award Winners and Banquet	\$922,465	21
Highly Qualified Teachers	\$427,268	25
Transition Curriculum for Students with Sensory Disabilities	\$226,968	29
Service Outcome Profiles of Legally Blind Children and Youth	\$218,268	33
National Caseload Study	\$117,268	37
SPED Nexus	\$92,002	41

If you are interested in supporting one or more of these projects, please contact:

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NCSSD's Five Strategies to address its Mission:

Policy Analysis, to bring to Washington regulatory and legislative awareness that supports the education of students with low-incidence disabilities.

Information Exchange, to increase the information resources for families, teachers, school administrators, and other service providers about promising practices for students with LID.

Local Support, to increase specialized services to children and their families with LID and to the professionals who serve them in public schools.

Professional Development, to increase the supply of teachers specialized in LID.

Research to Practice, to contribute new knowledge about educational practices for children with LID.



Operational Support

I. Introduction/Background

The National Center on Severe and Sensory Disabilities was established in 2001 by a Congressional earmark spearheaded by United States Senator Wayne Allard from Colorado. During the five years of funding provided by Congress, UNC's National Center has helped to focus the nation's attention on the educational and social status of students who comprise less than one-half of one percent of the school-age population – students who are so few in number that schools and communities are hard-pressed to meet their unique and sometimes extraordinary needs for specialized instruction. The National Center has placed the needs of children with low-incidence disabilities – those who are blind or visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing, and those with severe disabilities – on the nation's agenda by:

- Advocating for more federal money for states to train highly qualified teachers;
- Giving parents a better sense of what specialized services their children need, through our Pop-up IEPs;
- Supporting other universities to create online degree programs with support from our online library of course modules;
- Gathering data that confirm that children with low-incidence disabilities have lower achievement rates in mathematics, literacy and science; and
- Demonstrating that there is a dearth of evidence-based practice in literacy and mathematics by conducting meta-analyses of the literature in blindness, deafness, and severe disabilities.

While these achievements are noteworthy in themselves, they also point out that there is more work to be done.

Training the next generation of educational leaders is a UNC hallmark. Students who have worked with the National Center now hold leadership positions nationally and internationally in state departments of education, public and private agencies, local public schools, and institutions of higher education. Their work with the National Center has helped them to apply their coursework to real life situations and prepared them to focus on the complex needs of infants, children, and youth with low-incidence disabilities.

NCSSD has planned an agenda based on our work over the last five years that will harness the power of the internet to recruit teachers, evaluate technology, and provide services to communities without the financial resources to support children with low-incidence disabilities to live, learn, work, and play. We hope to implement this agenda over the next two years.

II. Objective

To continue the work of the National Center by assuring an operating budget that allows continuation of an agenda in policy analysis, information exchange, local support, professional development, and research to practice.

III. Impact

Operational support will continue the work of the National Center and allow it to diversify its activities and seek funding from other external sources. The attached logic model (Figure 1) depicts visually how the National Center's activities lead to a strategic outcome: *Increased rates of high school graduation, participation in post-secondary education, employment, and independent living.*

Examples of our impact have come from parents and professionals across the country:

"Thank you, BTW from someone whose child directly benefits from all your hard work." (Pennsylvania)

"Thank you so much for your efforts and work to make [the course library] happen. This project may be the most important contribution to our field for years to come." (Florida)

"There is no doubt in my mind that such a [program] would remind all in Colorado why UNC is the state's university with a primary mission in teacher education." (Virginia)

"Children [with low-incidence disabilities] can benefit greatly from education when they have opportunities to receive services which use up-to-date, researched based methods of teaching." (Colorado)

"Thanks for the push and the support. I'm having a lot of fun with the results. And am having a very fulfilling career." (California)

"[NCSSD is] considered number one in the country among people that support the e-learning structure." (Virginia)

IV. Link to University of Northern Colorado Mission

The University of Northern Colorado's National Center on Severe and Sensory Disabilities implements UNC's mission to promote the advancement of knowledge, research, and a commitment to service. As the only Colorado institution that trains teachers and educational leaders in the specialized fields of visual disabilities and deaf and hard of hearing, UNC's purposes and goals for graduate education – to acquire the ability to work in an increasingly diverse population, to engage in scholarly activity and research, to acquire advanced knowledge and skills, to develop a commitment to life-long learning, and to develop competencies essential to assuming leadership positions -- are reflected in the National Center's activities.

V. Resources Required

This funding opportunity provides basic annual operating costs for implementing the agenda of UNC's National Center.

Director (1.0 FTE) (with fringe benefits)	\$109,800
<i>The Director provides faculty leadership for the National Center.</i>	
Professional Staff (2.0 FTE), including fringe benefits	\$121,538
<i>Professional staff consists of a Technology Manager to further the National Center's award-winning technology applications, and a Project Manager to implement NCSSD's activities.</i>	
OCE.....	\$15,000
Other expenses include supplies, travel, braille embossers, and technology hardware and software.	
Contracts with project leaders.....	\$25,000
The National Center's activities will be implemented with the assistance of specialists across the university and the nation.	
Contracts are activity-based and require deliverables.	
Total	\$271,338

UNC's training mission is mirrored in the National Center, which has provided leadership training to graduates in universities and state departments of education. The work they conduct for the National Center advances the mission of the University while training the students for future work placements. Each Graduate Assistant employed by the National Center on a fiscal year basis engenders \$24,000 in costs.

(3) Graduate Assistants, in Blindness, Deafness, Severe Disabilities	\$72,000
Total annual operating expenses	\$343,338

Additional Funding Sources:

The University of Northern Colorado continues to support the National Center on Severe and Sensory Disabilities and has agreed to contribute \$70,000 in operating costs.

VI. Long-Term Funding Goals

The National Center on Severe and Sensory Disabilities plans to continue funding its missions through the submission of state and national grants, continued collaboration with UNC, and its contracted projects with other organizations. Pending grant submissions include four projects totaling more than \$4 million and will last three to five years: Utah State Office of Education (Project Priorities for Improving Results for Children with Disabilities), CFDA 84.133G-2 (Field Initiated Development Project), CFDA 84.133G-1 (Service and Outcome Profiles of Legally Blind Children and Youth), and CFDA 84.133-2 (Development of Web-Enabled Stimulated Braille (WES Braille) for Online Instruction and Practice).

VII. Evaluation

The National Center evaluates its activities using the attached logic model (Figure 1) and applying the eight-level rubric (Table1) for impact evaluation of our long-term objectives. Quantitative data are collected on website visits and staff hours per activity, and used to revise staff assignments and activities. Objectives and outcomes relating to various projects will be held to this standard of evaluation by the Center's internal evaluator. Projects will be discussed by the Leadership Team of the National Center and documented three times each year. An internal report will be drafted annually by the Center's internal evaluator and made available to the Daniels Fund. Additionally, an external evaluator will be hired to support the Center in meeting its assigned missions. The external evaluator will play the role of evaluation coach in support of the internal evaluator, communicating as needed and, on a regular basis, conducting interviews of key NCSSD stakeholders to identify their thoughts perceptions, and ideas about the Center and, in particular, what seems to be working well and what might be improved regarding the Center mission-related outcomes and activities.

VIII. Conclusion

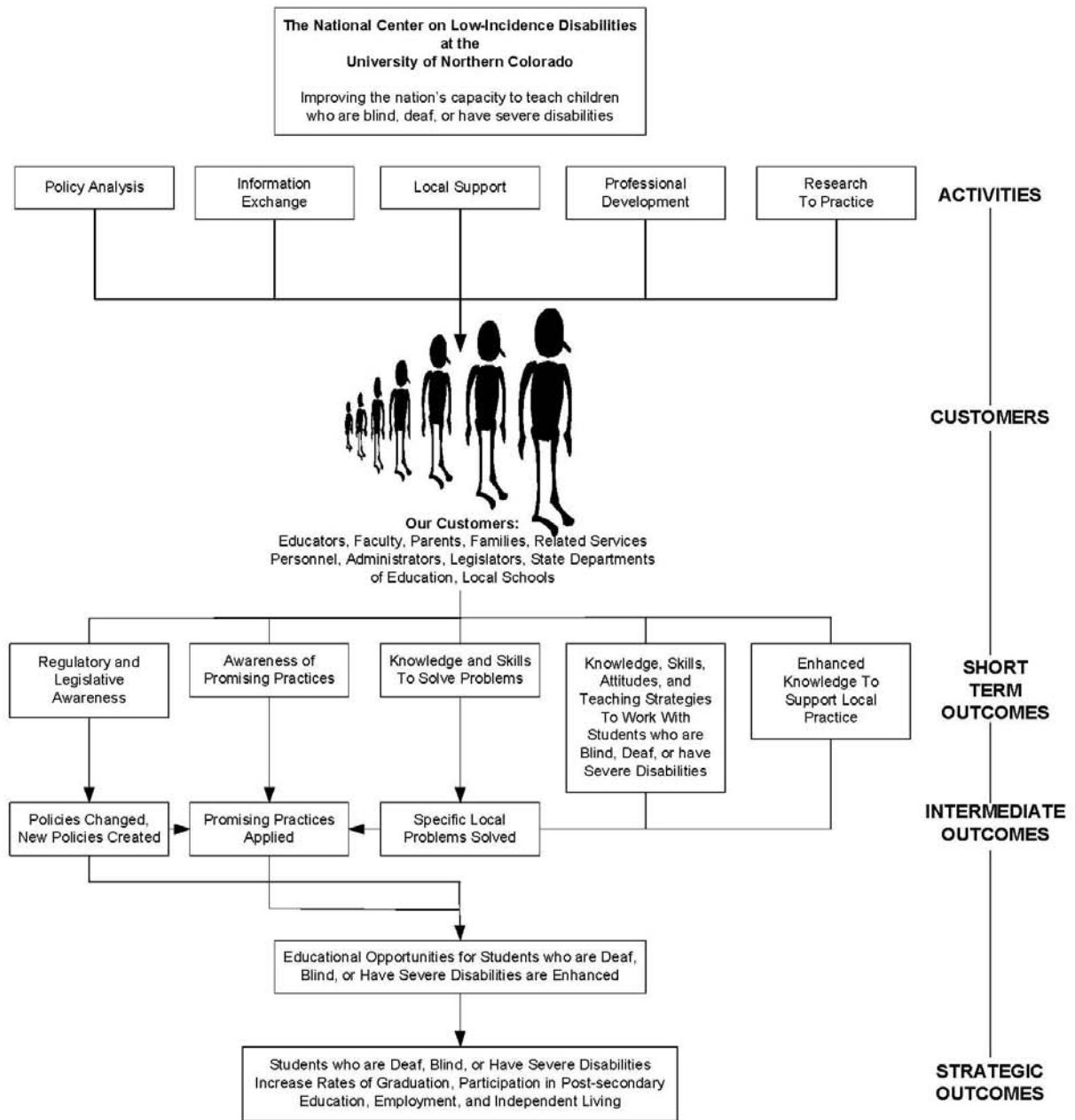
The National Center has already shown that it can make a difference in the lives of 1,000,000 American children, their parents, their educators, and their future teachers by focusing federal attention on their complex challenges. With stable funding, we can continue to address the reasons why:

- Less than 50% of students with low-incidence disabilities are graduating from high school with a diploma and 20% or below receive a certificate of attendance (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005).
- Students with low-incidence disabilities are participating in post-secondary education at levels lower than other students (Wagner et al., 2005).
- Youth with low-incidence disabilities show the lowest rates of engagement in school, work, or preparation for work shortly after high school of all disability categories

(Wagner et al., 2005).

- More than 75% of out-of-school youth with low-incidence disabilities lived with a parent or guardian in 2003 (Wagner et al., 2005).

Figure 1. Logic Model for the National Center on Severe and Sensory Disabilities



... Making a Difference in the Lives of One Million American Children ...

Table 1

Evaluation Rubric for Projects

- Level 1 - In progress
- Level 2. Completion of specified activities, including producing and submitting final paper, report, presentation, or web product.
- Level 3. Presentation, web product, paper, or grant document has been delivered, placed online, published in newsletter or similar source, or panel reviewed, respectively.
- Level 4. Juried or invited manuscript has been accepted for publication.
- Level 5. Body of evidence exists showing that a project's material is being examined by practitioners, researchers, parents, or advocates within or across a low-incidence field.

	Single Site	Multiple Sites
In-state only	a	b
Out-of-State Presence	c	d

- Level 6. Body of evidence exists showing that material has been applied with students who have low-incidence disabilities.

	Single Site	Multiple Sites
In-state only	a	b
Out-of-State Presence	c	d

- Level 7. Body of evidence exists showing that material has been intentionally applied and certain targeted results achieved with students who have low-incidence disabilities. Evidence must involve measurement; it cannot consist solely of anecdotal reporting or subjective impressions.

	Single Site	Multiple Sites
In-state only	a	b
Out-of-State Presence	c	d

- Level 8. Body of evidence exists showing that an application known to be successful has become institutionalized within our fields

Current list of Project Evaluations can be viewed at <http://vision.unco.edu/NCSSD/projects/projlist.php>.



OUT REACH TO TEACH

I. Introduction/Background

The *National Plan To Train Personnel To Serve Children who are Blind or have Low Vision* (2000) projected that an additional 5000 teachers of students with visual impairments and 5000 orientation and mobility instructors were required to meet the needs of the nation's almost 94,000 children with visual impairment. Yet the average number of new educators produced annually is less than 300, hardly enough to meet the projected need, even without normal attrition. This means that thousands of children with visual impairment, with and without additional disabilities, are not receiving the consultation or specialized instructional service they need in order to live, learn, work, and play. Similar challenges exist within the field of deaf education.

II. Objective

The purpose of this project is to harness technology using both existing (braille embossers, screen readers, laptops, telecommunication devices for the deaf (TDD), closed captioning, FM systems and the Internet) and new (cell phones, personal data assistants) to (a) deliver instructional and other educational services and (b) provide an online curriculum of specially-adapted courses, to sensory impaired students in Colorado with limited or no access to a specialized teacher.

III. Impact

The teacher shortage has been a concern since the early 1990s, but with little progress made in addressing the shortage. This project would address that shortage in Colorado by enabling the Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind to deliver specialized services *at a distance*. Certified teachers would communicate with students, teachers, families, and schools using a variety of technologies and providing services ranging from simultaneous interpretation, to braille transcription, to materials adaptation, to direct instruction in specialized methodologies. Children who are deaf and hard of hearing or blind and visually impaired could attend neighborhood schools and still have the specialized instructional support they need to learn.

Out Reach To Teach also proposes the online delivery of courses that require specific accommodations or specialized methodologies to enable students with sensory impairments to acquire the concepts, such as science, advanced mathematics, or languages. These courses would range from supplemental instruction for courses taken at a neighborhood school, to stand alone courses for credit that are not available in rural neighborhoods.

We believe this project can reduce costs and increase services at the same time. Accordingly, the project would include economic and outcomes studies to document efficacy and to allow dissemination to other states. After an initial infusion of funding for technology at CSDB and in local schools, the funding would be absorbed within the existing special education budget. In order to demonstrate efficacy, however, funds are requested for three years.

IV. Link to University of Northern Colorado Mission

The University of Northern Colorado's National Center on Severe and Sensory Disabilities was created in 2001 with the purpose of increasing the nation's capacity to educate individuals with deafness, blindness, and severe disabilities. The Center implements UNC's mission to promote the advancement of knowledge and research and demonstrates its commitment to service by disseminating knowledge and research for the benefit of family members and educators of students with low-incidence disabilities.

V. Resources Required

We anticipate that after an initial infusion of funding for technology and personnel, costs will decrease over time as existing resources are reconfigured and the project is integrated into the service delivery system.

Year One

Personnel (Project Manager, Technology Manager/Programmer, Teachers of Students with Visual Impairment, Teachers of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students, Interpreters, economist, instructional designer, Graduate Assistants, Brailleists)	\$500,000
OCE.....	\$50,000
Initial technology investment.....	\$500,000
<i>Total, Year One</i>	<i>\$1,050,000</i>

Year Two

Personnel (small decrease in personnel needed).....	\$500,000
OCE.....	\$20,000
<i>Total, Year Two</i>	<i>\$520,000</i>

Year Three

Personnel (small decrease in personnel needed).....	\$500,000
OCE.....	\$10,000
<i>Total, Year Three</i>	<i>\$510,000</i>

Grand Total:.....\$2,080,000

VI. Conclusion

The critical nationwide shortage of teachers of students with sensory impairments results in a public education that is inappropriate and inadequate at best. Students with sensory impairments are falling behind on statewide assessments, do not pursue post-secondary education, and as adults, consume millions of dollars in federal entitlement programs. Specialized, just-in-time educational services can be delivered to schools, students, and classroom teachers without incurring additional time and expense by driving. While this itinerant model may be successful in urban areas, it is expensive and sometimes prohibitive in rural areas.

There is evidence that schools hesitate to identify students with sensory impairments because, with the nationwide shortage, teachers cannot be hired to meet their needs. Specialized schools can transcend space and time by providing educational services – whether direct instruction, simultaneous interpretation, on demand courses, braille production, captioning, or descriptive video – through a variety of technologies already available but vastly underutilized.



Excellence in Education Awards and Banquet

I. Introduction/Background

Children and youth who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, who are blind or have low vision, and those with severe cognitive disabilities comprise only one-fourth of one percent of the school-age population. These disabilities significantly alter the manner in which individuals learn and interact with others, yet the teachers who spend the most time with them are inadequately prepared to meet their needs. Consequently, students with these disabilities often present uncommon and complex challenges that are not easily met by the public schools:

- Students who are deaf or hard of hearing invariably have communication problems because of the persistent and cumulative absence of adequate experiences with language. The ongoing absence of these experiences poses broad problems for these students with respect to successful access to the general education curriculum and to the friendships that ensure membership in our culture and society.
- Students who are blind or have other visual disabilities are faced with equally debilitating problems, including difficulty in forming complete concepts. This arises from the absence of visual information, challenges of accessing and negotiating daily activities and settings in home, schools, and communities, and limited access to written information. As with individuals with hearing loss, these problems interfere with participation across the general education curriculum and in the social lives of these individuals within the school and community.
- Students with severe disabilities are often faced with the same concerns that face students with vision and hearing problems, but these are further complicated by medical, physical, and mental disabilities. Participation in the social and academic activities of the school often requires additional support, such as special devices for communication and movement, behavioral support plans, curriculum modifications that accommodate intellectual problems, and adaptations for chronic and acute medical conditions.

Highly qualified teachers for students with these disabilities are in short supply. They are consistently among the highest areas of shortage, perhaps because there are so few university programs available to train them: Nearly 80% of states do not offer teacher preparation programs in all 3 low-incidence areas and 30% of the states offer no programs at all in deafness, blindness, or severe disabilities. In addition, these disabilities are so rare that few people know about the career possibilities; research has shown that most individuals enter this highly specialized subset of special education because of an individual relationship with someone who has the disability. Because the low-prevalence nature of these disabilities extends into adulthood, personal encounters are few and far between. Past recruitment and retention efforts have not significantly

increased the production of new teachers in blindness, deafness, and severe disabilities over the last 10 years.

Acknowledging excellent staff who are devoted to working with this population of students is critical to the National Center on Severe and Sensory Disabilities (NCSSD). In 2002 through 2004, NCSSD recognized exceptional educators within the low-incidence fields who went above and beyond in their quest for educating students who were blind or visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing, and those with significant support needs. Unfortunately, due to budget cuts, NCSSD has not been able to maintain this project.

II. Objective

The purpose of this project is to continue the work began in 2002 to recognize exceptional educators within the low-incidence fields who go above and beyond in their quest for educating students who are blind or visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing, and those with significant support needs. To accomplish this goal, parents, students, colleagues, and administrators will nominate prospective teachers. Nominees will then be asked to submit a packet containing personal reflections and letters of reference. Staff at NCSSD will conduct a formal review process that includes review of applications and formal observations. Nominees will be evaluated for leadership, effective teaching, collaboration, advocacy, service for students, and innovation. Winners of this award will be flown to Denver, Colorado where they will be formally recognized by the National Center on Severe and Sensory Disabilities, the University of Northern Colorado, and by each of the prospective fields of low-incidence disabilities.

III. Impact

The impact of this project was evaluated this past year through a survey of previous award recipients. Findings indicated that responders believed they had benefited from the award both personally and professionally. Teachers surveyed indicated they did believe the award positively influenced others' perceptions of them professionally, but did not believe they were thought of differently by those colleagues as a result of the award. There appeared to be no general negative effects for participants, although two did share one personal and one professional side note. Of those surveyed, all stated they had a positive experience with the award process and believed this project should continue.

Examples of our impact on past recipients can be seen in the comments we received...

“It earned me immediate respect with our director of special education.”

“I team every week with many staff members. I believe having national recognition makes the entire team have confidence in each other and our ability to offer families valid suggestions and a course for progress.”

“It was extremely rewarding to be recognized by such a distinguished group of professionals. It meant a great deal to me.”

“If I ever decide to change districts, I know it will be a huge plus on my resume.”

“I’m not aware that there were any professional benefits that came about as a result of me receiving this award. However, there definitely was the personal satisfaction of knowing that my efforts to maintain a high quality of education for my students had been recognized.”

“It would be my hope that NCSSD would provide numerous opportunities for future award recipients to be highly involved in sharing their expertise with professionals in (my) field.”

IV. Link to University of Northern Colorado Mission

The University of Northern Colorado is the premier teacher training institution in the state with a history of supporting low-incidence teacher preparation programs. NCSSD was created in 2001 with the purpose of increasing the nation’s capacity to educate children and youth with deafness, blindness, and severe disabilities.

V. Required Resources

Funds are requested for the human resources necessary to develop and implement this project for five years. Ongoing maintenance can be incorporated into existing NCSSD resources.

NCSSD Required Resources

Project Coordinator (1), including fringe benefits	\$61,268
Graduate Research Assistants (2)	\$52,000
Travel for Teacher Observations	\$10,000
OCE.....	\$30,000

Expenses for Winners (Up to 9 Winners Possible/Year)

Travel for Winners to Greeley @ 500/winner	\$4,500
Financial Award of \$1,000/winner	\$9,000
Award Sculptures @ \$175 each.....	\$1,575
Lodging (3 nights) @ \$300.....	\$2,700

Expenses for Banquet

Banquet Room	\$5,000
Banquet Meal @ \$40/plate (approximately 50 people)	\$900
Speakers Transportation (6 speakers @ \$1,000 each)	\$6,000
Speaker Gifts (6 speakers @ \$20 each)	\$120
President of University gift.....	\$30
Photography	\$900
Other Misc.	\$500
Total Project Expenses per Year	\$184,493
Total Project for 5 Full Years	\$922,465

VI. Conclusion

When students with low-incidence disabilities leave the school system, the challenges they face as adults echo larger, longstanding issues experienced in public education. In far greater numbers than other student populations, these individuals do not complete public education, are unemployed or underemployed, do not enter post-secondary education programs, and live with higher levels of dependency on others. The first step in addressing these issues is to assure the availability of highly qualified teachers specially trained to teach in ways that 99.75% of other teachers do not – without the use of vision or hearing – who remain in the profession and contribute to a collaborative community of best practice.



Highly Qualified Teachers of Students with Low-Incidence Disabilities

I. Introduction/Background

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed legislation that reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to include stronger accountability for results, increased freedom for states, use of scientifically-based research, and school choice for parents (20 U.S.C. § 7801). Per the requirements of this new law, now known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), states are required to have all classrooms staffed with highly qualified teachers by the end of the 2007-2008 academic year. According to a recent report by Secretary of State, Margaret Spellings, states have been working hard to help teachers achieve the goal of 100% but have yet to arrive at saturation (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).

Highly qualified teachers for students with disabilities are in short supply. They are consistently among the highest areas of shortage, perhaps because there are so few university programs available to train them: Nearly 80% of states do not offer teacher preparation programs in all 3 low-incidence areas, and 30% of the states offer no programs at all in deafness, blindness, or severe disabilities. In addition, these disabilities are so rare that few people know about the career possibilities; research has shown that most individuals enter this highly specialized subset of special education because of an individual relationship with someone who has the disability. Because the low-prevalence nature of these disabilities extends into adulthood, personal encounters are few and far between. Past recruitment and retention efforts have not significantly altered the production of new teachers in blindness, deafness, and severe disabilities over the last 10 years.

Teachers who work with students with low-incidence disabilities often are the child's main instructor for content, as well as special education needs. For example, many teachers of students with severe disabilities work with their students in reading, writing, and math, and must also instruct them in science, social studies and history. According to NCLB, this group of teachers must be highly qualified in each of these subject areas.

II. Objective

The National Center on Severe and Sensory Disabilities (NCSSD) is interested in expanding a project originally developed for the Utah School for the Deaf and Blind (USDB). Beginning January of 2007 and continuing through August of the same year, NCSSD, with support from USDB, will offer two online courses designed to support 30 teachers of students with sensory disabilities to become highly qualified in elementary education, math, science, or multiple subjects. NCSSD and USDB would like the opportunity to a) expand and b) research this project. First, we would like to expand these courses to support an additional 500 special education teachers throughout the United States who work with students with special needs, including those with low-incidence disabilities. In addition, we would like to research the impact of providing online courses to teachers of students with special needs. To accomplish these goals, we would gather information on teachers who take the courses and state exams to become highly qualified and compare this information with a control group of teachers who do not take the courses yet still take state exams to become highly qualified.

The intended outcomes of this project are that special educators who complete these courses will...

1. Improve their teaching in math and science to students with special needs, including those with low-incidence disabilities;
2. Help their students improve academic performance in math and science;
3. Teach and support other educators in their school or district to accommodate math and science information for students with disabilities, including those with low-incidence disabilities; and
4. Become highly qualified in elementary education, math, science, or multiple subjects.

III. Impact

Special education teachers who take these courses will have the necessary content knowledge and access skills needed for teaching students with hearing loss, vision loss, and severe cognitive disabilities. Additionally, because these courses are available in an online format, NCSSD can reach teachers from across the United States, thus, helping states achieve the goal of 100% of their staff becoming highly qualified.

Examples of our impact for current teachers of students with sensory disabilities indicate their commitment to becoming highly qualified...

“I’m sure this class will improve my teaching with the high school students I have now.”

“I am taking this course for several reasons...(1) the pursuit of being Highly Qualified...(2) I am very fond of science...(3) I am also looking with interest at how online courses are being taught, and always have thoughts of how the technology involved in these kinds of classes could work with our populations...”

“I have to put in a plug for online learning. I think it's great! Speaking as someone who lives out in the boonies, I really appreciate not having to drive to a class. I can definitely see potential applications for our student population and [school] staff.”

“This is my first online class and it is a brave step for someone as technologically challenged as I am. I'm sure I'll learn a lot, because I have a lot to learn!”

“I have been determined to be "highly qualified" as an elementary teacher and as a secondary teacher in Language Arts.”

IV. Link to University of Northern Colorado Mission

The University of Northern Colorado is the premier teacher training institution in the state of Colorado with a history of supporting low-incidence teacher preparation programs. NCSSD was created in 2001 with the purpose of increasing the nation's capacity to educate children and youth with deafness, blindness, and severe disabilities.

V. Required Resources

Funds are requested for a) maintaining and updating courses, b) providing for partial or full tuition for teachers, c) support for textbooks and course materials, d) payment for course instructor(s), and e) GA support for impact evaluation of this project (i.e., research on impact of providing online courses to support teachers of students with special needs in becoming highly qualified in elementary education, math, science, or multiple subjects).

Project Coordinator (1), including fringe benefits	\$61,268
Graduate Assistant (1).....	\$26,000
Full Tuition Support for Teachers (\$540/3 credits)	\$270,000
Textbook Support (\$100 toward textbooks)	\$50,000
Control Group (\$100 toward state exam for 100 teachers).....	\$10,000
OCE.....	\$10,000
Total	\$427,268

VI. Conclusion

When students with low-incidence disabilities leave the school system, the challenges they face as adults echo larger, longstanding issues experienced in public education. In far greater numbers than other student populations, these individuals do not complete public education, are unemployed or underemployed, do not enter post-secondary education programs, and live with higher levels of dependency on others. The first step in addressing these challenges is to assure the availability of highly qualified teachers who are specially trained to work with students in ways that 99.75% of other teachers do not. Additionally, we need teachers such as these to remain in the profession and contribute to a collaborative community of best practice.



Transition and Students with Sensory Impairments

I. Introduction/Background

On February 1, 2001 President George W. Bush announced his New Freedom Initiative, a comprehensive program developed to promote the full participation of people with disabilities in all areas of society by increasing access to assistive and universally designed technologies, expanding educational and employment opportunities, and promoting increased access into daily community life. Unfortunately, this initiative assumes that persons with disabilities have background associated with self-determination and independence – skills necessary to achieve the goals established within the President’s initiative. Research indicates that students with disabilities must be taught skills associated with constructs of self-determination and independence.

While the research indicates that direct instruction of skills associated with transition are necessary for some populations, to date, limited research addressing curricula and their effectiveness for self-determination training of students with sensory impairments has been conducted. One reason may be that there is no self-determination transition curriculum designed specifically for students of these populations. To develop a separate curriculum for students with sensory impairments would be cost prohibitive due to low numbers of participants, high costs associated with curriculum development, and low return on investment due to low numbers of clientele. Children and youth with hearing and visual impairments comprise a uniquely small portion of the school-aged population (1.21% and .44% respectively) (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). A cost-effective alternative to satisfying the challenge of limited resources for this population is to adapt existing self-determination transition curriculum.

II. Objective:

The purpose of this research project is three fold. First, it aims to implement a preexisting self-determination transition curriculum developed and field tested for students with mild to severe cognitive disabilities, and define specific adaptations for use with students who are deaf or hard of hearing and those who are blind or visually impaired. Second, this project will document the necessary accommodations required for successful implementation with the specified population. Finally, this project will infuse the Principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) into the development of accommodations and modifications of lesson plans and assessment protocols by helping teachers discover multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement.

Years one and two of this three-year project will focus on the training and implementation of the *CHOICEMAKER Self-Determination Transition Curriculum*. Teachers of students with sensory disabilities will receive training on the four sub-curriculums: Choosing Educational Goals, Self-Directed IEP, Choosing Employment Goals and Taking Action. Additionally, teachers will identify necessary adaptations made for their students in the implementation of this curriculum while considering aspects of UDL. Finally, year three of this project will consist of analyzing preliminary data regarding the effectiveness of identified adaptations, submitting manuscripts for publication, and developing an Online Adaptation Guide for the *CHOICEMAKER Self-Determination Transition Curriculum*. Information learned from this project will be used to guide future research regarding self-determination of students with hearing or vision loss.

III. Impact:

Training associated with problem solving, decision-making and goal setting is important for students with sensory disabilities to help them become independent contributors of society to the greatest extent possible. Recent research indicates that children and youth with sensory disabilities have not yet achieved the level of independence as required within the President's Freedom Initiative. Instead, individuals with low-incidence disabilities (i.e., students with hearing loss, vision loss, and those with severe cognitive disabilities) account for 36.7% of persons receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI); each receiving a federal stipend averaging \$384 per month (Social Security Administration, 2004). Youth with low-incidence disabilities show the lowest rates of engagement in school, work, or preparation for work shortly after high school of all disability categories (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). And more than 75% of out-of-school youth with low-incidence disabilities lived with a parent or guardian in 2003 (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). In order to promote educational and employment opportunities and increase access into daily community life, it is imperative to support the development of self-determination and independence among students with sensory disabilities.

IV. Link to University of Northern Colorado Mission:

The University of Northern Colorado is the premier teacher training institution in the state of Colorado with a history of supporting low-incidence teacher preparation programs. NCSSD was created in 2001 with the purpose of increasing the nation's capacity to educate children and youth with deafness, blindness, and severe disabilities.

V. Required Resources

Funds for the three year project are being requested to conduct teacher training associated with the curriculum and to conduct research relative to impact of implementing a transition curriculum with students with sensory disabilities.

Project Coordinator (1), including fringe benefits	\$61,268
Graduate Assistant (1).....	\$26,000
Travel to Implementation Sight	\$9,000
Dissemination Travel	\$3,000
Webcams.....	\$1,200

Curriculum (Publisher will match)	\$3,000
OCE.....	\$30,000
Curriculum and UDL Trainers.....	\$10,000
Travel for Trainers	\$6,000
Content Area Consultants (DHH and BVI)	\$25,000
Travel for Content Area Consultants	\$6,000
Teacher Stipends (\$1,000/year)	\$30,000
\$50 Gift Certificates from Barnes and Noble for student participants	\$12,000
Food for trainings and monthly meetings	\$4,500
Total	\$226,968

VI. Conclusion

When students with low-incidence disabilities leave the school system, the challenges they face as adults echo larger, longstanding issues experienced in public education. In far greater numbers than other student populations, these individuals do not complete public education, are unemployed or underemployed, do not enter post-secondary education programs, and live with higher levels of dependency on others. An important step in addressing these issues is to assure that students have the skills necessary be successful with President Bush's goal to promote the full participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of society. In other words -- to be self-determined.



SERVICE AND OUTCOME PROFILES OF LEGALLY BLIND CHILDREN AND YOUTH

I. Introduction/Background

The education of children with visual impairment began in the United States in 1829 at the Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown, Massachusetts. Long before children with disabilities were guaranteed the right to a free public education, many states followed Massachusetts' lead and built their own specialized schools for children with visual impairment. Students learned not only academic skills, but life skills that would lead them into productive members of their communities. In 1900, the first public school class for children with visual impairment was created in Chicago, but the predominant form of education for legally blind children remained the separate specialized school through the 1950s. Since the passage of the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, the number of legally blind children enrolled in specialized schools has steadily declined. Today, more than 90% of all children with visual impairment attend their neighborhood schools.

This phenomenon has occurred as a result of political and economic forces, and with little attention to how these trends affect the adult outcomes of persons with visual impairment. The proportion of blind adults who are gainfully employed has not improved over the last 50 years, and few young adults live independently or pursue post-secondary education.

Remarkably little is known about the type, quantity, or quality of educational services provided to legally blind students in either inclusive or specialized schools, or how these services impact educational and adult outcomes. This project will for the first time gather and analyze data about the educational services provided to children with visual impairment in the United States and take the first step toward determining which constellation of services leads to improved outcomes for children who are legally blind.

II. Objective

Utilizing a survey instrument piloted in the state of Colorado, the survey will address the following research questions based on a randomly-selected sample of children with visual impairment, stratified by geographic location, age, and minority status:

1. What types and amounts of educational services are provided to legally blind students?
2. How do those services differ among placement options?
3. How do parents and teachers rate the academic and functional competence of legally blind students?
 - a. Do ratings of competence differ among placement options?
 - b. Is there a relationship among service delivery characteristics and student characteristics?
4. Do parents and teachers agree about student competence and the amount of service provided?
5. What characteristics of educational programs are identified by successful blind adults?
 - a. How do these identified characteristics relate to the findings from the national study?
6. What characteristics of educational programs are identified by rehabilitation specialists?
 - a. How do these identified characteristics relate to the findings from the national study?

III. Impact

The study has the potential to inform decision-makers about the best combination of services for children with varying visual characteristics and abilities. Because the sample will be randomly selected and stratified against age, race, and geographic factors, the results will provide an accurate picture of the current efficacy of educational services. Results will be used to improve services for the future.

IV. Link to University of Northern Colorado Mission

The University of Northern Colorado's National Center on Severe and Sensory Disabilities was created in 2001 with the purpose of increasing the nation's capacity to educate individuals with deafness, blindness, and severe disabilities. The Center implements UNC's mission to promote the advancement of knowledge and research and demonstrates its commitment to service by disseminating knowledge and research for the benefit of family members and educators of students with low-incidence disabilities.

V. Resources Required

Project Coordinator (1), including fringe benefits	\$61,268
Graduate Research Assistants (2)	\$52,000
OCE.....	\$30,000
Participant incentives	\$75,000
Total	\$218,268

VI. Conclusion

This research study can be conducted over a two-year period, including time for development, data collection, and data analysis. Results will be disseminated through the National Center's website, in journal articles, and at conferences.

The results of this project will help parents and educators make data-driven educational decisions based on fact rather than philosophy, expediency, or the availability of services.



National Caseload Study

I. Introduction/Background

The question of reasonable caseload size for educators serving students who are blind, deaf, or who have severe disabilities is one that has often been raised by practitioners, but has rarely been addressed in the published research. As stated in the Council for Exceptional Children's (CEC) recent Bright Futures Technical Report,

The number one concern of special education teachers responding in a national survey was "caseload"! The answer is not, however, simple arithmetic. The number of students that is deemed a "manageable" caseload depends on age/grade ranges, types and severity of exceptionalities involved, content area expectations for the teacher, and level of support given to the teacher(s) responsible for meeting students' needs.

Teachers say that they are continually being asked to do more for more students with more diverse and intense needs, but with less time, materials, and support. What we do know is that special educators across the country are leaving in record high numbers and that overwhelming caseloads is one of the top reasons given for this exodus.

Teachers often voice concern about the sizes of their caseloads, but little information is available that describes typical caseloads of teachers in various settings with various students, or shows how different caseload sizes and configurations impact services. Some research has been conducted related to caseload size and class size among special educators. The research has not, however, addressed the concerns of educators who have voiced the complaint that their caseloads are too large to provide effective services. This is especially troubling because special education is intended to provide an intensity of support and a level of individualization that necessarily exceeds what is provided students without disabilities, yet we assign service loads to teachers without knowledge of what limits to learning and service provision are associated with different sizes and caseload compositions across different service delivery models.

II. Objective

Preliminary data gathered from a pilot study conducted by the National Center on Severe and Sensory Disabilities (NCSSD) within the state of Colorado indicates...

- (a) Teachers licensed to serve students with low-incidence disabilities are relatively homogeneous.
- (b) Caseload size, composition, and delivery models are highly variable across teachers.
- (c) Educational services are being provided in multiple settings.
- (d) Students with low-incidence disabilities are being supported by teachers with and without the required credentials.

The purpose of this proposed national study is to expand upon our preliminary findings to comprehensively examine and describe caseload sizes, caseload configurations, and associated variables for teachers serving students with low-incidence disabilities within the United States. To accomplish this, NCSSD would disseminate an online survey to teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities throughout the country over a one-year period.

Data gathered in this study will allow us to explore how caseloads of teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities compare with their colleagues of high-incidence special educators, as well as to class sizes for general educators. Additionally, these data will allow us to investigate how students with low-incidence disabilities are distributed in relation to teachers with different licensures, and in relation to different service-delivery models. The instrument used will be based on an online survey used in the pilot study of Colorado educators.

III. Impact

Completion of this research project will contribute to knowledge in the field of low-incidence disabilities in several ways. First, the data will yield a comprehensive picture of caseload sizes and configurations for teachers, both those who serve students with low-incidence disabilities and others in special and general education. Because we will also have information on the respondent teachers and on the districts in which they reside, we can also describe caseload patterns in relation to factors such as teacher licensure status and models of service delivery, and in terms of rural versus urban population demographics. Second, we will have teacher opinions on the appropriateness of their caseload sizes and configurations. This information will reveal perceptions as to whether students with low-incidence disabilities are receiving services that teachers feel are effective and necessary given their needs. Third, the data will allow us to explore potential correlations between models of service delivery associated with special education services and caseload sizes. Fourth, because the National Center has preliminary data, we are now able to further this research to a national level. For example, although our study yields critical descriptive information and information on teacher perceptions about service delivery adequacy, this future research will explore in greater depth what standards should guide caseload assignment. Fifth and finally, the information that we will be gathering comes from all three low-incidence fields. This provides the faculty and staff of the National Center with the continued opportunity to work together to explore common concerns, to identify similar problems, and search together for solutions associated with issues that affect us all.

IV. Link to University of Northern Colorado Mission

The University of Northern Colorado is the premier teacher training institution in the state of Colorado with a history of supporting low-incidence and high-incidence teacher preparation programs. NCSSD was created in 2001 with the purpose of increasing the nation's capacity to educate children and youth with deafness, blindness, and severe disabilities. Knowledge regarding caseload sizes and configurations will help staff at the University of Northern Colorado, and those at the National Center on Severe and Sensory Disabilities, better prepare special educators within the field of low-incidence disabilities.

V. Required Resources

Funds are requested for the human resources necessary to develop and implement the online survey, as well as analyze the results of this study.

Coordinator (1), including fringe benefits	\$61,268
Graduate Assistant (1).....	\$26,000
OCE.....	\$30,000
Total	\$117,268

VI. Conclusion

Students with low-incidence disabilities have unique needs. Providing support to students based on numbers of students or staff availability does not necessary keep the student at the focus. The National Center on Severe and Sensory Disabilities wants to help students of this population have the most knowledgeable and highly trained professionals who have an understanding of the challenges with supporting the appropriate size and configuration of students on their caseloads. To aid in this effort, teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities must be able to advocate for student needs. Understanding the overall caseload size and configuration for a unique population across the United States is critical to achieving this endeavor.



SPED Nexus

Problem: The nature of low-incidence disabilities is that individuals involved are geographically dispersed. Even in fairly large metropolitan areas, significant numbers of children with low-incidence disabilities are seldom in close proximity. Parents, teachers, and support staff are often isolated in geographically based silos of effort with little opportunity for mutual support.

Concept: Create an online community for anyone involved with low-incidence disabilities to come together for support, and information.

Strategy: Creating an environment is easy, but getting people to use it is much more difficult. Key to this effort is a “stepping stone” approach that creates opportunities for individuals to participate at their own comfort levels while providing scaffolding for moving along the path to full interaction. Simple technologies like listservers and discussion boards are entry level kinds of activities. More substantial kinds of environments like those offered by *Tapped In* or community platforms like *Drupal* are potentially very powerful and require very little in the way of adaptation for disability access.

Possible Partners: NASDSE, ACRES

Task: Set up a basic community structure using something simple like a listserv and a discussion board community. Invite partners from NASDSE, ACRES, AFB, and others. Monitor and encourage participation including teaching participants how to use internet resources effectively.

Required Resources: The resources necessary to implement this project are:

Project Coordinator (1), including fringe benefits	\$61,268
Programmer/Server Administrator (1/2 time).....	\$30,634
Server	\$100/year
Total	\$92,002



NCSSD Quotes

The following is a list of quotes from people who have been affected by the work at the National Center on Severe and Sensory Disabilities. Additional information contains discussion of low-incidence disabilities issues surrounding their education. Finally, information regarding past Graduate Research Assistants from NCSSD are included.

“THANK YOU for giving me the opportunity to come to Vail and to speak at your conference on Low-Incidence Disabilities. I am also particularly appreciative of your focus on doctoral students, and [student] benefited in a numbers of ways based on his experiences in Vail.”

(North Carolina)

“Thank you for a wonderful summit; the experience was fabulous. I wish I had something like this when I was working on my doctorate!”

(Colorado)

“Thank you for the response. When I sent the request for help I had no idea anyone would be "listening" ...I am truly impressed with 3 very prompt responses. WOW!”

(Pennsylvania)

“Thanks so much for the initial information you provided- it set me off on the right path to gather the information I needed to negotiate with the school.”

(Texas)

“Thank you, BTW from someone whose child directly benefits from all your hard work.”

(Pennsylvania)

“Out of all the websites available I find myself going to the NCSSD for information.”

(Tennessee)

“Thanks for all your support and the efforts of the National Center.

(Missouri)

“Children across the world will be among the beneficiaries.”

(Colorado)

“Just wanted to say how grateful I am to you for your contribution to where I am today.”

(California)

“Thank you so much for your efforts and work to make [the course library] happen. This project may be the most important contribution to our field for years to come.”

(Florida)

“I just learned about the National Center on Severe and Sensory Disabilities (NCLD) through an announcement regarding your I.E.P. Pop Up tool. What a great idea and product. I am making information about this product and your site on three lists that I moderate”

(Florida)

“You have a great site with helpful information, resources & links!
(Congratulations on maintaining such an informative web site).”

(Michigan)

“We were able, with the financial support provided by [NCSSD] to deliver free access to essential literature over the Internet to a selected group of university programs and their students. Through this unparalleled support, [we were] able to help expand training efforts of educational and rehabilitation personnel dedicated to serving visually impaired persons, and was also able to facilitate distance learning initiatives at universities addressing the critical shortage of these personnel.”

(New York)

“Makes me realize once again how much I owe you for pushing me to show myself how much I could accomplish. How did you know how far you could push me? . . . So, thanks for the push and the support. I'm having a lot of fun with the results. And am having a very fulfilling career.”

(California)

“At a time when teacher education programs increasingly are looking to technology for strategies to better prepare more teachers, the online service you [provide is] extremely welcomed.

(Florida)

15 states offer *no* programs in any low-incidence disability area

Only 12 states have comprehensive programs in all three low-incidence areas.

“The challenges of providing quality services to learners with low-incidence disabilities becomes significantly challenging in [rural and remote] settings.”

(Virginia)

“Children [with low-incidence disabilities] can benefit greatly from education when they have opportunities to receive services which use up-to-date, researched based methods of teaching.”

(Colorado)

“The nation faces a looming shortage of qualified teachers in all areas at the same time as children with low-incidence disabilities are increasingly included in regular classrooms.”

(California)

“I have found the teacher education programs, technical assistance activities, and research in the area of low-incidence disabilities to be of great value to the children with families served by our school district.”

(Colorado)

“97% of students report that they would not have been able to complete their graduate coursework without the distance learning option.”

(Program Evaluation)

“We know [UNC] to be well-informed educators of sound character with a commitment to meeting the needs of students with disabilities and their families and to meeting the needs of the staff members in schools.”

(Colorado)

“There is no doubt in my mind that such a [program] would remind all in Colorado why UNC is the state’s university with a primary mission in teacher education.”

(Virginia)

“Of all the benefits that could be realized . . . surely the greatest benefit is in the potential outcome it will have for children.”

(Colorado)

“[NCSSD] has become a national center—provided enormous amount of online resources for teachers and professionals; lots of services that support national data collecting; technical assistance to national groups and organizations; ongoing state of the art workshops; they have one of the best web e-learning developers for web programming.”

(MacLaughlin Associates)

“They are considered number one in the country among people that support the e-learning structure. Also, the online library going to be a huge benefit to the country – collecting seminars, class discussions from university classes to share nationwide – a huge boost in training when it is completed.”

(MacLaughlin Associates)

“[A]s a group, the faculty and staff adopted and practiced the “can do” approach to their work. Priority was driven by need and a desire to serve a traditionally underrepresented group of citizens, their families, and those who serve them. In fact some interviewees remarked that ‘even if we do not receive the requested funds to do the project, we do it anyway because people need it!’”

(MacLaughlin Associates, 2003)

“Forming strategic alliances has the potential for creating opportunities for success and leveraging additional resources.”

(McLaughlin, 2003)



Low-Incidence Disabilities

The US Department of Education defines low-incidence disabilities as “a visual or hearing impairment, or simultaneous visual and hearing impairments, a significant cognitive impairment, or any impairment for which a small number of personnel with highly specialized skills and knowledge are needed in order for children with the impairment to receive early intervention services or a free appropriate public education.” Students with low-incidence disabilities present unique and often complex issues when it comes to meeting their educational needs.

In response to both federal mandates and the rapidly progressing movement toward content standards, individuals with low-incidence disabilities are more likely than ever to receive educational services in their neighborhood or charter schools. While the research often shows important benefits associated with this arrangement, it places additional pressures on public schools to meet the needs of these individuals while still maintaining a focus on their mission to broadly serve all students. The expertise needed to meet the individualized needs of these students can be difficult to acquire and to deliver in consistent, high quality ways, especially in rural areas and in schools that are experiencing these changes in service provision for the first time.

When students with low-incidence disabilities leave school to participate in society, they face challenges that are similar to that of other young adults. However, in greater numbers than many other student populations, these individuals do not complete their public education, they find themselves unemployed or underemployed, they do not enter post-secondary programs, and they live with high levels of dependency on others.

These disappointing outcomes, of course, have many causes. *However, a primary contributing factor is that many educators do not have access to the knowledge and expertise they need to make a difference in the lives of these students so that they become contributing citizens.* Few classroom teachers in our public schools were prepared by their university programs to provide the learning supports that are required by these students. Some classroom teachers may have completed a single class in special education; many received no preparation whatsoever before becoming responsible for the education of a highly diverse group of students.

Given this lack of training among classroom teachers the role of special educators moves into the forefront. They must work collaboratively with classroom teachers to ensure student access to a school’s curriculum. Unfortunately, the vast majority of special educators come out of university programs ill-equipped to work with students who present these especially significant

needs. This is because university special education programs are often geared to prepare educators to work with milder learning problems.

Further complicating this picture is the fact that the teachers who do possess adequate expertise for working with low-incidence populations are themselves in very short supply in most states. A recent report estimates that more than 1900 new teachers of blind children are needed in each of the next ten years. These needs will be difficult to meet when most states do not have institutions of higher learning specializing in comprehensive low-incidence teacher preparation. Nearly 80% of states do not offer teacher preparation programs in all three low-incidence areas and 30% of the states offer no programs at all in deafness, blindness, or severe disabilities.



NCSSD “Graduates”

The National Center has employed a number of Graduate Research Assistants at various stages in their doctoral programs, and has hired a number of advanced doctoral students in leadership positions. Its program graduates have gone on to take jobs in higher education, state departments of education, state-operated schools, local public schools, and industry across the nation.

Comments from Students:

“Part of my job at the Center was to connect, to network with people within the university and externally. I was able to acquire the big picture. . . . The projects that I worked on related well to what I am doing right now.”

“These students are head over heels beyond my other students – it is because of the experience and the fact that they had to build it as they went; There was no roadmap!”

“These students leave here as the experts – they have a better grasp on the literature than any other graduate. Their own research agenda will be set!”

“My involvement has enabled me to tackle material that I was only tangentially connected with in the past. This was a change to address an applied problem.”

“Because of our work at the Center, we’ll be much more marketable.”

“We’re learning how to become leaders, professors, researchers in an applied setting. The [program] and Center complement each other.”

“The Center is like a community where we meet and interact – it is a transdisciplinary environment in which we all share our perspectives regardless of our background.”

Comments from McLaughlin Associates regarding training function of NCSSD:

“A focus group interview with several doctoral students revealed a number of domains in which the Center added value to their professional preparation. Central to these was the opportunity to participate in field research The Center work [gives] students an opportunity to practice and extend learning.”

(McLaughlin, 2003)

UNC Graduates (since 2001) with NCSSD Work Experience

Silvia Correa Torres, Ed.D.
Florida State University

Julie Durando, Ed.D.
Graduated 12/2008

Jennifer Johnson Howell, Ed.D.
Curriculum Director, Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind

Jon Johnson, Ph.D.
Information Support Specialist/Web Programmer, University of Kansas

Nathan W. Lowell, Ph.D.
NCSSD Technology Manager

Laurie MacDonald, Ph.D.
Instructional Design Coordinator, NCSSD

Karen McCaleb, Ed.D.
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

Sheryl Goodwin Muir, Ed.D.
Aurora Public Schools

Robert Pearson, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, University of Northern Colorado

Ann Sebald, Ed.D.
University of Northern Colorado, School of Special Education

Ling Thompson, Ph.D.
Instructional Design Specialist, Regis University

John Young, III, Ph.D.
Statistical Analyst, Return Path, Inc.



NCSSD Partners and Collaborators

Our motto, “Together we can do more,” reflects the partnerships and community we have formed. At NCSSD, we believe that the best way to lead is by example. Consequently, we have developed our own Community of Researchers and Collaborators. Additionally, the NCSSD Leadership Team, Graduate Research Assistants, and the degree programs in low-incidence disabilities have been recognized repeatedly with awards from UNC, the state of Colorado, and national organizations. These partnerships and recognitions help to articulate how the National Center on Severe and Sensory Disabilities is committed to improving access to quality educational services for students with low-incidence disabilities by serving as a central resource for information, research, training, and technical support for families and educational professionals.

Community of Researchers and Collaborators

[American Foundation for the Blind](#)

[American Institutes for Research](#)

[American Printing House for the Blind](#)

[Anchor Center for Blind Children](#)

[Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired](#)

[Association of College Educators - Deaf/Hard of Hearing](#)

[California State University, Los Angeles](#)

[Center for Teacher Quality](#)

[Colorado Department of Education](#)

[Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council](#)

[Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind
Hands and Voices](#)

[Hawai'i Department of Education](#)

[National Association for Parents of the Visually Impaired](#)

[National Association of State Directors of Special Education](#)

[National Center for Educational Outcomes](#)

[National Center for Leadership in Visual Impairment, Pennsylvania College of Optometry](#)

[National Federation of the Blind](#)

[North Dakota Department of Education](#)

[Northwest Vista College](#)

[Olander Elementary School](#)

[PEAK Parent Center](#)

[Sopris West Educational Services](#)

[Southwest Missouri State University](#)

[SRI International](#)

[TASH](#)

[University of Massachusetts, Boston](#)

Awards and Recognitions

College of Education, Outstanding Scholar (1993, 1994, 1997, 2000)

UNC, Outstanding Achievement in Sponsored Programs (1999, 2003)

Strohbehn Internship, Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT)
(2000, 2002)

American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education, Best Practice Award for the
Innovative Use of Technology (2001)

UNC Academic Excellence Certificate for Outstanding Academic Accomplishment, Cesar
Chavez Cultural Center (2001)

Colorado Commission on Higher Education, Program of Excellence (2001)

UNC, A.M. & Joe Winchester Distinguished Scholar Award (2001-02)

Graduate Dean's Citation for Excellence (2004)

Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council, Don B. Davidson Award for Excellence in Inclusion in Education (2004)

Council for Exceptional Children, Division on Deafness and Communication Disorders, Outstanding Contributions to the Fields of Communication Disorders and Deafness (2004)

Outstanding Dissertation Award (2000, 2003, 2004)