
Introduction

Accountability has become the mantra for education reform. Holding students responsible for their performance on state and district-wide tests is increasing in popularity among presidents, governors and legislators. Almost all of the states now have performance-based tests to measure student mastery through state and district-wide test. These tests are called *high stakes tests* because so many critical decisions are based on the test results; with rewards and punishments for students, teachers, administrators, and schools. For students, these tests are used to make high-stake decisions, such as graduation, receiving a diploma, and promotion/retention decisions.

There is growing concern about many students with learning disabilities not passing these tests, thereby being denied a high school diploma and dropping out of school, which reduces their prospects for employment and post-secondary training. Although IDEA requires that states develop alternate assessment tools and policies on accommodations for students with disabilities, parents are finding it difficult to get these accommodations. It is important to remember that the impetus for these standards-based tests was the desire to improve teaching and learning so all students could demonstrate the knowledge and skills needed in the global economy of today and the future. Testing is only one part of the picture. The most critical piece is providing all students with the opportunity to learn. Unless students with learning disabilities are given adequate opportunities to learn, higher standards will victimize students already harmed by gross inequities in the education system. It is encouraging to learn that the Learning Disabilities Association of America is working with the Office of Civil Rights to develop policies on High Stakes Testing that would take into account the rights and needs of students with learning disabilities.

The Articles in This Issue

Exploring Speech Recognition Technology: Children with Learning and Emotional/Behavioral Disorders by Debra Faris-Cole and Rena Lewis reports on the results of a study in which students with learning disabilities used speech recognition technology.

Two Heads (or More) ARE Better than One: Successful Collaboration within Universities by Mary E. Little and Patricia A. Crawford describes a course development program initiated through the collaboration of an interdisciplinary university team. Collaborators included the university, a school district, and state department personnel and resulted in course development at the university.

Using Computers to Modify the Curriculum for Students with Learning Disabilities by Barry W. Birnbaum discusses five areas of computer technology used to modify the curriculum of students with learning disabilities: selection of software, using computer games, the Internet as a tool for teaching across the curriculum, and using hypermedia.

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College Graduates with Disabilities and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): Do They Know their Employment Rights? by Raymond A. Witte examines the general knowledge of the Americans with Disabilities Act of college graduates with learning disabilities. The authors conclude that college students with learning disabilities need more information about the ADA and how the law affects them.

Effective Practices for the Documentation of Learning Disabilities at the Post-secondary Level by Joseph W. Madaus and Melissa Madaus discusses the importance of appropriate documentation of a learning disability at the post-secondary level for students with learning disabilities.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue of the Journal.

Janet W. Lerner
Editor