

Special Education Quality Indicator Study

Research Bulletin

August 2003



Program Quality and Its Effect on the Placement of Preschool Education Children in School-age Programs

Dear Colleagues:

In 1996, the Board of Regents and the State Education Department adopted goals to reform the preschool special education program. The goals focused on increasing the integration of preschool students with disabilities in settings with their age-appropriate peers without disabilities in a more cost effective manner. These goals are consistent with the 1997 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act that view special education as a service to support children's education, rather than a place, and emphasize program accountability, student results and access to general education.

The Department's preschool reform strategies have yielded positive results. The percentage of preschool students with disabilities served in integrated settings has increased from 32.3 percent in 1995-1996 to 57.7 percent in 2000-01. The percentage of preschool students with disabilities who are declassified prior to transition to school-age programs has increased from 10.2 percent in 1995-96 to 19.5 percent in 2000-01. Per pupil expenditures have decreased 14 percent from 1995-96 to the 2000-01 school year.

The Quality Indicator Study initiated in the fall of 2000 was another strategy designed to further guide the efforts of the Department. The study, conducted by MAGI Educational Services, Inc., resulted in three products for the field: a research study, described in this document, that provides information on New York State's Preschool Special Education Program and identifies the educational practices that affect general education placement rates when preschool students enter kindergarten or school-age programs; learning outcomes and indicators for kindergarten participation; and, research-based quality program indicators, including a guide for providers to self-assess program components. Training on the program indicators will be provided in 2003 along with an opportunity for supported implementation and evaluation for individual programs.

The findings of the study indicate where further research is needed as we continue our efforts to provide a quality education program to all children. The study provides tools for improvement and outlines the challenges we face as we continue to improve the preschool special education program's capacity to be a result-oriented, supportive environment for children and their families.

Lawrence C. Gloeckler
Deputy Commissioner



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Program Quality and Its Effect on the Placement of Preschool Education Children in School-age Programs

Prepared by MAGI Educational Services, Inc.

Introduction

Eight years ago, New York State's preschool special education program faced spiraling yearly enrollments at rates double the national average. The enrollment increases, moreover, were accompanied by ballooning costs, which exceeded one-half billion annually. Added to that, New York served a larger percentage of preschool special education children in separate settings than any other state in the nation. Despite the belief that intervening early would avoid the need for future special education, more than 90 percent of the program's preschoolers went directly into the school-age special education system.

In 1996, the Board of Regents endorsed six goals to reform the preschool special education program and the New York State Education Department (NYSED) launched a number of specific reform strategies. Today, increasing percentages of preschool students with disabilities are being served in integrated settings, per-pupil expenditures have significantly decreased and more students are being declassified when transitioning to school-age programs. There is room for improvement and the Department remains committed to its reform agenda. The Quality Indicator Study is central to moving that agenda forward.

Purpose of the Quality Indicator Study

The **Quality Indicator Study** was undertaken at a time when preschool special education reform was just gaining momentum. Conducted by MAGI Educational Services, Inc. under a contract with the State Education Department, the study was designed for a dual purpose:

- 1) to furnish information on the quality of preschool special education programs, and
- 2) to identify the educational practices that affect general education placement rates when preschool students enter kindergarten or school-age programs.

A number of data collection procedures were used to address these purposes including survey methodology, interview, observation and analysis of student placement data. The primary instrument for the study was a comprehensive Program Survey, which was completed by 258 preschool special programs or 70 percent of the total number of State-funded programs. All types of programs were represented in the data: special class settings, integrated class settings and Special Education Itinerant Teacher (SEIT) programs. The survey was designed to measure research-based quality indicators of early childhood special education.^{i*}

A companion instrument for the study was a Preschool Student Placement Survey. This survey asked programs to report the school-age placement of transitioning students for the 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 academic years. The information generated by these instruments helped to determine how the State's preschool special education programs fared on the continuum of quality as defined by the research literature as well as to identify program practices that contributed to student placement outcomes.

* Endnotes i through xii are located on page 16 of this document.

This study was characterized by a number of features that served to strengthen the interpretation of the findings. There was a systematic data collection plan that incorporated a number of converging procedures. For the program and placement surveys, there was a high response rate with acceptable statewide representation in terms of region, district type and size of program. There was strong reliability of the comprehensive survey as a measurement instrument for determining program quality.

Additionally, there were a number of limitations that needed to be considered. Chief among these was the self-report nature of both the comprehensive program survey and the school-age placement survey. While these activities enabled the collection of vast amounts of information, the data was subject to potential biases and random distortions on the part of the respondents.

The reader is reminded that this study was a first look at measuring program quality and at identifying educational practices that affect the rate of placement of preschool students with disabilities in general education classes when these students enter kindergarten or school-age programs. While this outcome is important, it is not the only outcome measure that could be studied. Investigating how program quality relates to other outcome measures may be important for future studies. Furthermore, far more investigation is needed to determine the relationship of all the various factors that influence the rate of placement in general education for students with disabilities entering kindergarten or school-age programs.

The results of the [Quality Indicator Study](#) are presented in two parts: Part 1 provides a descriptive account of program quality and is based on data from the comprehensive Program Survey. Part 2 discusses the link between quality and student outcomes and incorporates data from the Program Survey and Student Placement Survey. Below is more information about the study methods.

Methodology

Part 1: Program Quality. Program quality was assessed by measuring five major areas and sub-areas of preschool special education programs (see Table 1, page 4). This was done through a series of survey scales that represented a point-by-point translation of the quality indicators. The scales were "scorable;" the higher the score the better the quality. By summing all the scores, an overall quality index was created.

To facilitate data interpretation, the index and scales were divided into four levels based on the percentage of quality indicators implemented by preschool programs.ⁱⁱ

- Level 4: 80 percent or more of the quality indicators were implemented.
- Level 3: 60 to 79 percent of the quality indicators were implemented.
- Level 2: 30 to 59 percent of the quality indicators were implemented.
- Level 1: Less than 30 percent of the quality indicators were implemented.

Programs that scored at Level 3 and Level 4 were designated as **quality programs**, having implemented most of the quality indicators. Level 2 programs were considered as approaching the quality threshold but not yet having reached it. Level 1 programs were considered as performing below the quality threshold.

Part 2: Link Between Quality and Student Outcomes. The effect of program quality on the following two outcomes were examined:

- Percent of students declassified while in preschool (data obtained from the Program Survey)
- School-age student placements (data obtained from the Student Placement Survey)

In addition to program quality, the influence of certain “antecedent” factors on the two outcomes was studied. These factors included, a) the *type of school district* in which a child was served: New York City District, “Large 4” District, Other City District, Suburban District, Rural District; and b) *the severity of a child's disability*.ⁱⁱⁱ Several statistical procedures were used to assess program, district and severity effects including multiple regression and analysis of variance.

The next section presents the key study findings . To illustrate the quantitative results, we have inserted, where relevant, descriptive vignettes — “Field Notes”—drawn from our in-depth case studies of 10 programs.

Case Study Methodology

Complementing the analysis of the survey data, case study procedures were followed to investigate and describe quality practices, implementation of programs and services and transition practices for school-age placement. Ten preschool special education programs across New York State were involved in this activity. Case study methods included interviews, classroom observation and document review. Interviews were conducted with parents, teachers, related services staff, administrators and CPSE/CSE (Committee on [Preschool] Special Education) Representatives.

Table 1

Program Areas and Sub-Areas Assessed by the Program Survey

Organization/Administration

1. **Program Design:** The instructional setting for service delivery (integrated vs. separate special education classes), including the extent to which related services are delivered in the classroom.
2. **Governance/Management:** The extent to which programs a) have a well-defined vision that conveys high expectations for academic success; b) have in place policies and procedures that govern all areas of program operations; and c) involve key stakeholders -- board of directors members, parents, staff, community agencies, policymakers, etc., in program planning, decision-making and program design.
3. **Climate:** The extent to which programs a) maintain a safe, orderly environment conducive to learning; b) implement curricular and instructional activities that affirm and respect cultural/linguistic diversity; and c) have a “professional culture” that supports ongoing communication among stakeholders, frequent staff collaboration and planning and staff autonomy in instructional decisions; and d) the degree to which chief stakeholders support and value the program.
4. **Program Evaluation Procedures:** The degree to which the programs a) conduct systematic evaluations/self-assessments and b) provide evaluation reports to key audiences.

Personnel

5. **Qualifications of Staff:** The extent to which the program a) is staffed by qualified professionals who have appropriate educational degrees and specialized credentials; and b) the extent of staff continuity (low turnover).
6. **Professional Development:** The content and intensity of professional development activities; and the extent to which programs use more “professionalized” forms of staff development such as mentoring, study groups and workshop series (as opposed to stand-alone workshops).
7. **Staff Evaluations:** The extent to which programs conduct formal and informal staff evaluations using various strategies such as observation by peers, parent feedback, administrator observation and self-evaluation.

Family Relationships

8. **Family Involvement:** The extent to which programs a) regularly communicate with families; b) use a variety of strategies to promote parent involvement; and c) involve parent in program activities - conferences, curriculum design, classroom volunteer work, parent workshops and child assessment.
9. **Family Services:** The extent that the program provides opportunities to build parents’ skills/capacities such as linkages to parent education programs, social services, health care, counseling and family-to-family networking, etc.

Teaching and Learning

10. **Curriculum:** The extent to which programs a) use a skill-oriented curriculum; b) support the curriculum through appropriate and up-to-date materials; and c) the degree to which staff have a high level of understanding of the curriculum.
11. **Instruction:** The extent to which programs a) follow a daily routine; b) use a variety of learning formats and materials that build on children’s interests; and c) use methods of behavior management that emphasize problem-solving and social skills instruction.
12. **Staff Collaboration:** The extent to which special education and related services professionals collaborate with each other on various instructional matters.
13. **Assessment:** The extent to which programs frequently assess children in a variety of skill areas, using a variety of strategies.

Partnerships

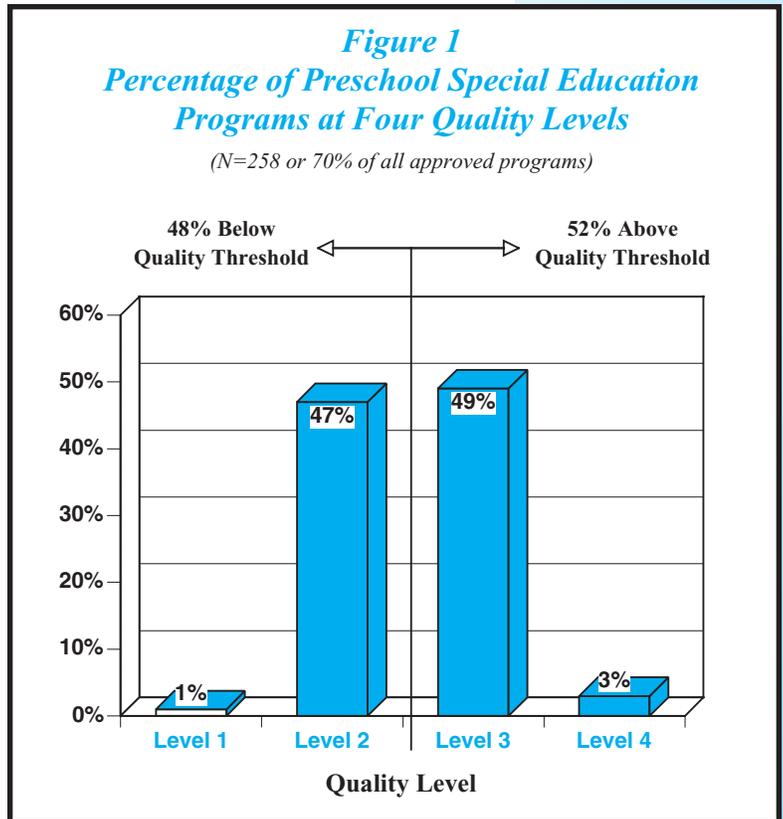
14. **Agency Collaboration:** The extent that programs collaborate with community agencies and service providers and have formal, written agreements for doing so.
15. **Relationship with CPSEs:** The extent to which programs have procedures in place for communication with CPSEs, including processes for submitting timely reports; and the frequency with which programs notify CPSEs of child progress.
16. **Transition Strategies:** The extent that programs use a variety of strategies to facilitate the transition of children from preschool to school-age programs; and the quality of transition-related training provided to staff.



Part 1: Program Quality

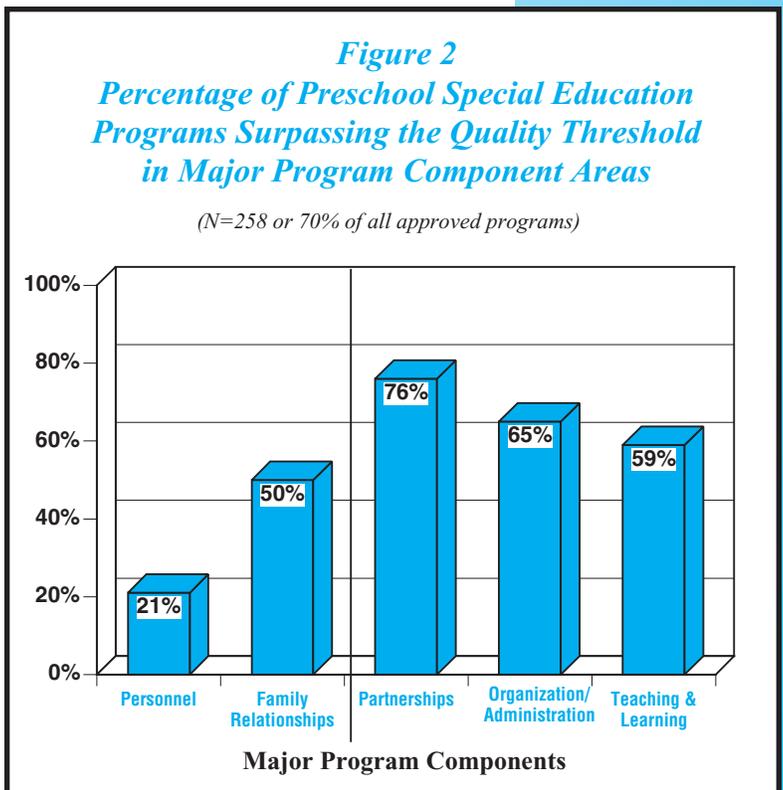
More than half of the preschool special education programs can be considered quality programs. (See Figure 1)

- Using the quality index, more than half of the 258 participating programs (52 percent) scored at Level 3 or Level 4, which means they surpassed the quality threshold. In these programs, **60 percent or more** of the quality indicators were in place.
- Seven programs (3 percent) performed exceptionally well, implementing **80 percent or more** of the quality indicators.
- Of the 48 percent that scored below the quality threshold, only 1 percent performed at the lowest level (i.e., **less than 30 percent** of the quality indicators were implemented). The remaining programs have implemented **30 to 59 percent** of the quality indicators.



Programs performed particularly well in three component areas: **Partnerships, Organization / Administration and Teaching and Learning.** (See Figure 2)

- *Partnerships.* More than three-quarters of the participating programs (76 percent) scored at Level 3 or Level 4 (see page 3) on this component scale and thus surpassed the quality threshold.
- *Organization/Administration.* Two-thirds of the programs (65 percent) scored at Level 3 or Level 4 on this component scale and surpassed the quality threshold.
- *Teaching and Learning.* On this scale, 59 percent of the programs scored at Level 3 or Level 4 and surpassed the quality threshold.





Programs fared less well in the component areas of Personnel and Family Relationships. (See Figure 2)

- *Personnel.* Only about one-fifth of the participating programs (21 percent) surpassed the quality threshold on this component scale which includes the elements of staff qualifications, professional development and staff evaluation. It was a major area of weakness.
- *Family Relationships.* Performance in this component area was mixed as half of the programs (50 percent) in the study surpassed the quality threshold, while the other half did not. This component includes family involvement and family services.



There were several areas within the major components where most programs excelled.

Field Notes

Family Communication

Some programs have moved the *Student Notebook* to the next level, specifying child information that is useful to all team members, e.g., likes and dislikes, helping strategies, independent work schedule, necessary equipment, photographs of family/friends.

Three-quarters or more of the 258 participating programs had the following quality elements in place:

- *Vision* - A philosophy/vision that conveys high expectations for academic success and the belief that special education children should be integrated with their non-disabled peers.
- *Policies and Procedures* - Clearly defined policies and procedures for directing all operations; comprehensive record keeping procedures; and frequent review/update of policies and procedures.
- *Environment* – A safe program environment conducive to learning.
- *Stakeholder Support* – Support for the program among important stakeholders: parents, board members, district staff and community members/agencies.
- *Family Involvement* – Frequent communication with parents/families.
- *Family Services* – A variety of opportunities to meet parents'/families' needs and build their skills and capacities.
- *Curriculum* – A skills-oriented curriculum that prepares children for the school-age curriculum.
- *Instruction* – A consistently followed daily routine; a variety of learning formats and instructional material to address a range of student performance levels; and methods of behavior management that emphasize problem solving and social skills instruction.

Field Notes

Curriculum

None of the programs visited adopted a single skills-based curricular model. Rather, programs tailored their curricular approaches to meet children's individual needs.

- *Agency Collaboration* – Frequent collaboration with community agencies/providers in planning services for children and families, making referrals, case management and managing resources.
- *Relationships with CPSE* – Collaborative working relationships with the CPSE to ensure that children receive appropriate services.
- *Transition Strategies* – A variety of strategies to facilitate the transition from preschool to school-age programs.



There were other areas where many programs performed below the quality threshold.

Areas of program functioning that require serious attention include the following:

- *Involvement of Stakeholders* – There is limited involvement of program stakeholders in determining/developing program policies and procedures, in making program decisions, in determining the program budget and other aspects of program design.
- *Evaluation Reporting* – Dissemination of evaluation results is mainly confined to internal program stakeholders, e.g., staff and administrators.
- *Staff Credentials* – A large percentage of preschool special education teachers—56 percent—lack certification or credentials in early childhood education.^{iv}
- *Staff Turnover* – The staff turnover rate averages 18 percent.
- *Professional Development Strategies* – There is limited use of “professionalized” forms of staff development e.g., direct classroom assistance from external consultants, mentoring/peer coaching, teacher study groups – strategies that research considers as more effective than traditional stand-alone workshops.
- *Staff Evaluation Strategies* – Strategies to evaluate staff are confined to administrator observation; there is limited use of other strategies such as observation by peers, self-assessment and parent feedback.
- *Level of Parent Participation* – In several areas of program functions, levels of parent participation were low. Few parents, for example, were reported to perform volunteer work in classrooms, participate in training sessions, be involved in program decision-making or participate in program evaluation activities.

Field Notes

Transition Strategies

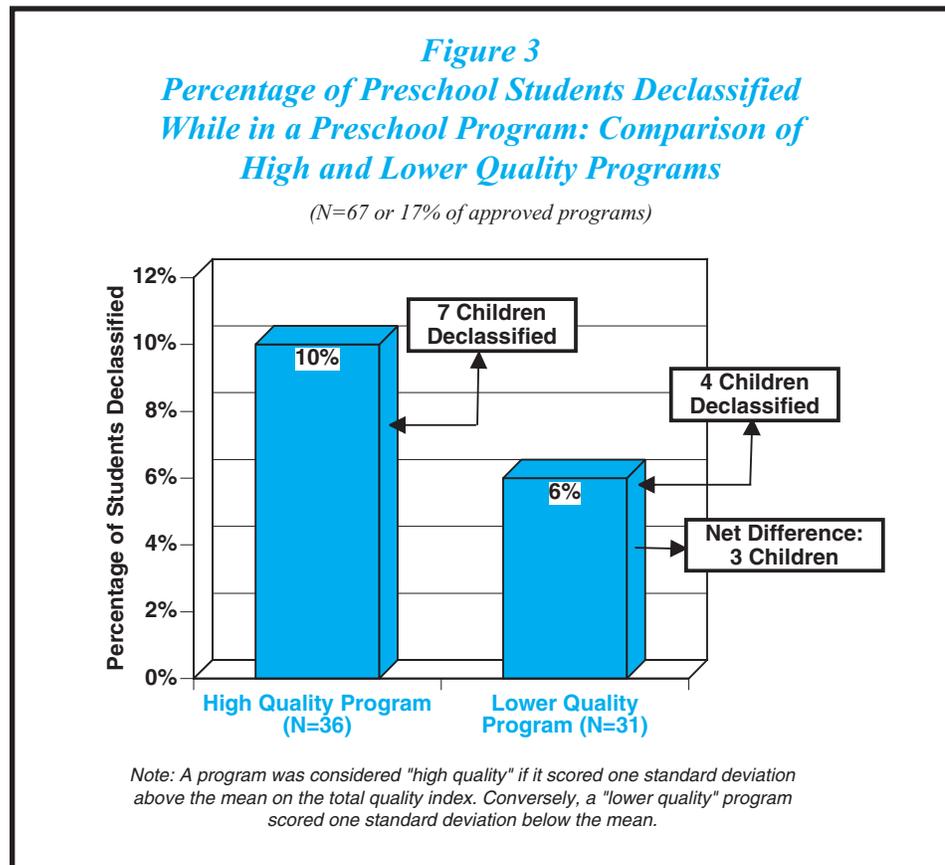
Facilitating the transition of children to school-age programs is structured differently by each of the programs in the case studies. Programs with children from a large number of districts have a more difficult task of facilitating all of the communication among parents and CPSE/CSE representatives. While their programs offer a variety of transition activities—meetings, discussions, observations, etc.—they are hard-pressed to address some of the procedures and practices idiosyncratic to a specific district.

Part 2: The Link Between Program Quality and Student Outcomes

A. Percent of Students Declassified While in Preschool



The quality of preschool special education programs is significantly associated with the percentage of students declassified while in preschool. (See Figure 3)



Multiple regression analyses revealed a statistically significant relationship between program quality and declassification rates — the higher the quality, the greater the percentage of students declassified while in preschool.

- On average, 7.3 percent of preschool children with disabilities enrolled in the 67 programs completing the second survey, Preschool Student Placement, were declassified in 2000-01, or 5 children per program based on the average program enrollment of 66 children.
 - ❖ In programs identified by this study as “high quality”,^v more than 10 percent of preschool children with disabilities were declassified in 2000-01, or approximately 7 children. This compares with a 6 percent declassification rate in lower quality programs, or approximately 4 children.
 - ❖ The study indicates that in a high quality program we can expect that 3 more children will be declassified while in preschool, as compared with a lower quality program.



Certain quality components are more critical than others in contributing to higher student declassification rates.

The analyses identified several organizational, staffing and partnership features of programs that significantly correlated with a higher percentage of children being declassified while in preschool. These included the following:

- Clearly defined policies and procedures for governing operations.
- Active involvement of various stakeholders in program planning, decision-making and design.
- Support for the program among important stakeholders: parents, board members, district staff, community members, etc.
- Highly qualified staff — i.e., those with specialized credentials in early childhood education.
- Low rates of staff turnover.
- A variety of strategies for evaluating staff coupled with frequent staff evaluations.
- Formal interagency collaboration policies and procedures.
- A variety of strategies to facilitate the transition from preschool to school-age programs.

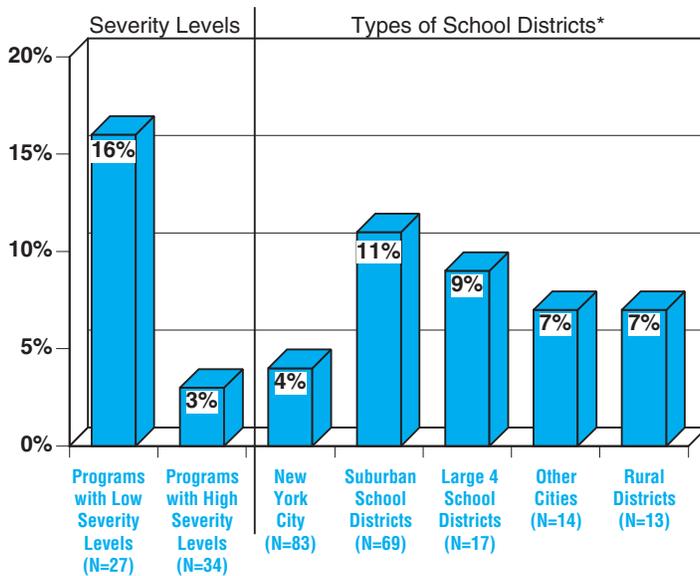


In addition to program quality, the severity of a child’s disability and the type of school district in which a child is served are also powerful predictors of pre-school declassification rates.

Multiple regression analyses revealed a statistically significant negative association between the severity of a child's disability and declassification rates — the higher the severity, the lower the percentage of students declassified while in preschool.

Figure 4
Percentage of Preschool Students Declassified While in Preschool: By Severity Levels and Types of School Districts^{viii}

(N=67 or 17% of approved programs)



* Most preschool programs serve a number of school districts with varying needs/resources.

- In surveyed programs with higher levels of severity^{vi} (typically, a 12:1:3 class with special education students only), an average of 3 percent of the children were declassified. This compares with a 16 percent declassification rate for programs with lower levels of severity (typically, a 12:1:1 integrated class). (See Figure 4)

The study analyses also revealed statistically significant differences in declassification rates among the types of school districts in which children are served.

- New York City had the lowest percentage of students declassified in preschool (4 percent), while suburban districts had the highest percentage (11 percent)^{vii}. The declassification percentages of other types of districts ranged from 7 percent (rural districts) to 9 percent (Large 4 districts — Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Yonkers). (See Figure 4)

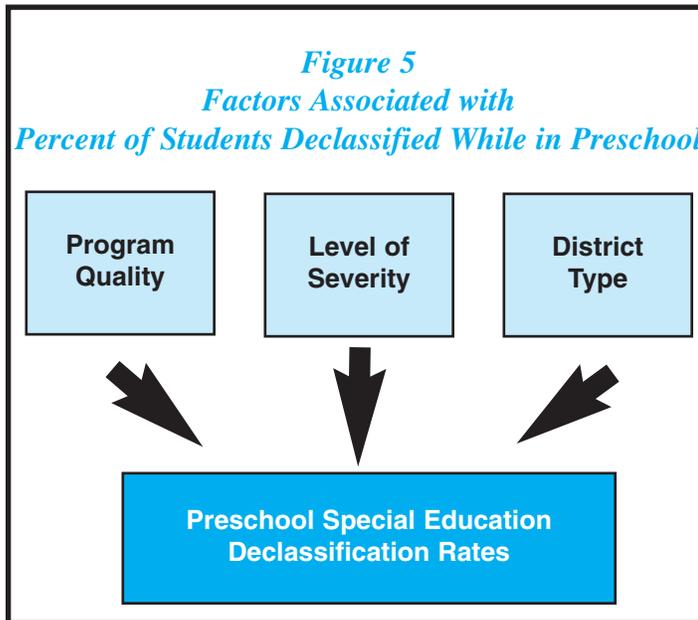


Overall these findings suggest that a student with a disability is more likely to be declassified while in preschool if s/he attends

- a high quality program,
- located in a suburban school district,
- that serves children with lower levels of severity (integrated class or SEIT).



The findings also suggest that program quality makes a difference even when taking into account the strong influence of severity of disability and district type. (See figure 5)



B. School-Age Placement



The best indicator of school-age placement in a less restrictive environment is the type of school district in which a child is served.

The study analyses revealed statistically significant differences in school-age placement rates among school districts, with New York City and rural districts having the lowest percentages of students declassified or moving to a less restrictive environment (LRE) upon reaching school-age programs. (See Table 2)

Table 2
School-Age Placement Recommendations
Compared Across District Types^{ix}

Type of District	Percent of Children Declassified at Time of Transition	Less Restrictive Environment than Preschool	Similar Environment	More Restrictive Environment
New York City (N=78)	22%	22%	47%	9%
Large 4 Cities (N=18)	28%	19%	38%	15%
Other Cities (N=39)	31%	22%	36%	11%
Suburban (N=67)	27%	24%	40%	9%
Rural (N=13)	19%	24%	40%	17%
TOTAL (N=225)	26%	22%	42%	10%

- On average, approximately 48 percent of preschool students participating either were declassified (26 percent) or transitioned to a less restrictive environment (22 percent) upon reaching school-age programs, while 52 percent transitioned to either a similar (42 percent) or more restrictive environment (10 percent).^{x, xi}
- In New York City programs, 44 percent of the children were either declassified (22 percent) or moved to a less restrictive environment (22 percent) from preschool to school-age programs. And in rural area programs, 43 percent were either declassified (19 percent) or moved to a less restrictive environment (24 percent).
- Suburban districts and districts in other cities (excluding the Large 4), had declassification/least restrictive environment placement rates above 50 percent.



Program quality was not found to be a statistically significant factor in determining school-age placement of transitioning students.

Field Notes

Placement at School-Age

Based on the case studies conducted, there appears to be a number of variables — beyond quality — that contribute to the types of school-age placements made. Availability of classroom options, school district philosophy, student readiness and parent advocacy were a few of the variables identified by parents, teachers, administrators and CPSE/CSE members. In general, school districts start from the premise of placing children based on their strengths and needs. However, this is often shaped by what is available (or possible) given the availability of resources and the capacity of staff of individual school districts. Overall, there was no consensus across districts or within programs as to those preschool program practices associated with school-age placement.

Conclusions

Evidence from the **Preschool Special Education Quality Indicator Study** leads us to four conclusions:

- 1. Program Quality Makes a Difference in Student Outcomes and May Result in Significant Cost Savings.** The results showed a sharp difference in preschool special education declassification rates between high quality preschool programs and those of lesser quality.
- 2. Strong Program Management and Staffing are Vital Indicators of Effectiveness.** Successful preschool programs — those with the high preschool declassification rates — distinguished themselves from other programs by virtue of their management procedures and staff qualities. In these programs, clear policies and procedures set the direction for all operations. The policies/procedures were reviewed and updated several times a year, with input from key stakeholders. These programs also had systematic staff recruitment procedures and were able to attract and maintain a highly qualified teaching staff with credentials in early childhood education.
- 3. Location Matters.** Compared with other types of districts, programs in suburban school districts had the highest percentage of students declassified while in preschool. Conversely, New York City programs had the lowest percentage of students declassified while in preschool. The differences between the suburban programs and the New York City programs were statistically and educationally significant (effect size > .5). This effect held even when the influence of program quality and severity of disability were held constant. Geographic location also played a role in school-age placement outcomes. Here, New York City and rural areas of the State had the lowest percentages of students declassified or moving to a less restrictive environment upon reaching school-age programs. Suburban areas and other cities had the highest combined declassification/LRE rates. The exact reason(s) for these findings is unclear. What seems clear, however, is that it is the characteristics, conditions, and various factors in the locations that create differences. Further study is merited to determine and explain these factors.
- 4. Most Preschool Programs Are Making Clear Headway in Striving for Quality.** The student declassification and placement outcomes reported here, are significantly better than those observed when this study was first undertaken.^{xii} Since this study has demonstrated a strong correlation between program quality and preschool student declassification rates, the assertion is made that the majority of programs are making distinct progress in the direction of quality reform. As time goes on we can expect that many more programs will have sufficient indicators in place to meet high quality standards.

In summary, the findings underscore the importance of quality in preschool special education. They provide a firm basis upon which action can be taken. The New York State Education Department will give careful consideration to these findings and, along with other stakeholders, decide on appropriate steps to ensure that all students have greater access to the general education curriculum and are integrated with their non-disabled peers throughout their educational experience.

Table 3 provides a “snap-shot “ summary of the key research findings.

Table 3

Summary of Research on Program Quality and Student Declassification Outcomes				
<i>Research-based Quality Indicators</i>	<i>Implementation of Quality Indicators: How Programs are Performing</i>			<i>Quality Indicators Positively Correlated with the Percentage of Students Declassified while in Preschool</i>
	<i>Performing Very Well</i>	<i>On Track</i>	<i>Needs Improvement</i>	
Vision	✓			
Policies and Procedures	✓			✓
Environment	✓			
Stakeholder Support	✓			✓
Family Involvement	✓			
Family Services	✓			
Skills-Oriented Curriculum	✓			
Instruction	✓			
Agency Collaboration	✓			✓
Relationship with CPSE	✓			
Transition Strategies	✓			✓

Table 3
(continued)

Summary of Research on Program Quality and Student Declassification Outcomes				
Research-based Quality Indicators	Implementation of Quality Indicators: How Programs are Performing			Quality Indicators Positively Correlated with the Percentage of Students Declassified while in Preschool
	<i>Performing Very Well</i>	<i>On Track</i>	<i>Needs Improvement</i>	
Cultural Inclusiveness		✓		
Professional Culture		✓		
Evaluation Methods		✓		
Professional Development Content		✓		
Parent Involvement Strategies		✓		
Curricular Materials		✓		
Staff Understanding of Curriculum		✓		
Staff Collaboration		✓		
Student Assessment		✓		
Instructional Setting			✓	
Stakeholder Involvement			✓	✓
Evaluation Reporting			✓	
Staff Qualifications			✓	✓
Staff Continuity (low turnover)			✓	✓
Professional Development Strategies			✓	
Staff Evaluation Strategies			✓	✓
Level of Parent Involvement			✓	

Endnotes

- i The indicators were drawn from the Preschool Special Education Quality Indicator System after an extensive review and synthesis of the literature, feedback from our national advisory panel and discussions with practitioners and state level stakeholders.
- ii These levels correspond to commonly accepted statistical criteria for determining educational significance.
- iii We created a scale to estimate the severity of disability using the child to teacher ratio. The scale ranged from 0 to 16. A score of 16—most severe—was equivalent to a 6:1:1 or 6:1:2 special class of students with disabilities only. A score of 0 was equivalent to SEIT services. A score of 1 was equivalent to a 15:1 integrated class, where no more than 50 percent of students are students with disabilities.
- iv Certification in early childhood special education is a recent requirement by the Department.
- v A program was considered “high quality” if it scored one standard deviation above the mean on the total quality index. Conversely, a lower quality program scored one standard deviation below the mean.
- vi A program was considered “high severity” if it scored one standard deviation above the mean on the severity index, which was equivalent to a 12:1:3 special class. Conversely, a low severity program scored one standard deviation below the mean, which was equivalent to a 12:1:1 integrated class.
- vii It should be noted that New York City and suburban districts did not differ significantly in the severity of children’s disabilities.
- viii Most New York State approved special education preschool programs serve multiple school districts with varying needs/resources. Therefore, it was not appropriate to identify preschool programs by specific need/resource categories when doing the analyses.
- ix The table summarizes the recommended placement of children at the time of transition to school-age programs and can be read by rows and columns. For example, scanning across the New York City row indicates that 22 percent of the children enrolled in the 78 New York City preschool programs included in this analysis were recommended to be declassified at the time of transition; 22 percent were recommended for a placement in a less restrictive program; 47 percent were recommended to be placed in a similar program; and 9 percent were recommended for enrollment in a program more restrictive than their preschool program.
- x These percentages are based on known placements. The school-age placement was known for 89 percent of the students.
- xi The New York State Education Department is currently funding a longitudinal study to examine the provision of preschool special education services and the impact of these services on the educational achievement, emotional well-being, social adjustment and placement of students as they progress from preschool through grade 4. This study, being conducted by MGT of America, Inc., will run through 2007.
- xii According to VESID records, in 1998, only 3 percent of preschool students with disabilities were declassified while in preschool; another 10 percent were declassified when transitioning to school-age programs.