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Implementation and Effectiveness of Supplemental Educational Services for Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners

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What are Supplementary Educational Services?

Under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), schools that have not made adequate yearly progress in increasing student academic achievement for three years or more are required to offer parents of children in low-income families the opportunity to receive free after school tutoring, or supplemental educational services (SES). Districts must use a portion of their Title I federal funding to pay for SES. Tutoring providers must go through a state application and district contract process and take a variety of forms (public, private, not for profit, for profit, faith-based, online, in person, national and local).

Why a Focus on Students with Special Needs?

Our mixed-method, longitudinal study examines SES in five school districts: Austin, Chicago, Dallas, Milwaukee, and Minneapolis. The findings in this brief are based on statistical analysis of all providers in each district and on qualitative data collected from a sub-sample of providers in each district.

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This brief examines whether students’ special needs are being adequately met under SES, as well as to make recommendations for areas in which their needs are not being adequately met. This focus is important for several reasons:

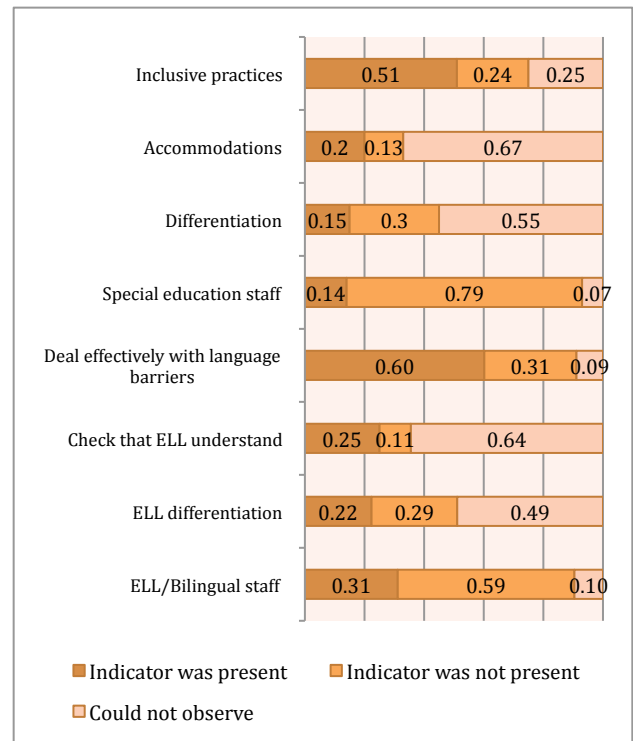
- Educational agencies must count both English Language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities as part of NCLB’s accountability requirements. This disaggregation of high-stakes test scores places greater pressure on districts to find ways of improving these students’ performance.
- As third parties become more involved in the work of school improvement, they assume a larger role in the education of ELLs and students with disabilities. This change in educational service provision raises important questions about the relative capacity of private organizations and public agencies in meeting the needs of these historically underserved populations.
- Of the eleven states to receive NCLB waivers, seven are proposing major changes to one of the policy’s hallmark provisions—the evaluation of school success based on the performance of particular subgroups of student populations, including ELLs and students with disabilities.

How Well Does SES Serve Students with Special Needs?

- In general, neither providers nor districts have created sufficient avenues for accurate and timely identification of students with special needs in SES. In addition to making it difficult for tutors to provide adequate instruction, these challenges affected findings related to our observation indicators. As illustrated in Figure 1, a number of indicators had high rates of “could not observe”, where we either were not able to confirm students with special needs were present in the classroom, or they were present but we did not have sufficient details of their specific needs (e.g., particular accommodations needed for a student with a disability).
- Stakeholders have not sufficiently collaborated to ensure that students with special needs are adequately served. Our observational data suggest that although some tutoring sessions showed promise in relation to students with special needs (e.g. inclusive practices for students with disabilities) many fell short in critically important areas, such as having sufficiently trained staff.

Ultimately, the use of best practices with both ELLs and students with disabilities in SES sessions was inconsistent (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Observed best-practice indicators for students with special needs in SES sessions based on 94 observations between 2009-11



- Increasing sustained participation is critical for all students enrolled in SES. However, as Table 1 illustrates, low enrollment and retention rates in the SES program are particular problems for students with disabilities—more so than for ELLs. Students with disabilities were significantly *less* likely to register for and attend SES, and to reach higher thresholds (40+ hours) of SES attendance (14-21% lower odds). ELLs in four districtsⁱⁱ had 44% greater odds of registering for and attending SES. Although ELLs had lower odds of attending 40 or more hours of SES in the 2008-09 school year, in 2009-2010 they were significantly more likely to attend SES for 40 or more hours in all districts.
- It is not enough to offer supplemental instruction to students with special needs. At the minimum, tutors delivering instruction to these student populations must have basic knowledge of how to effectively address students’ unique needs. Under the current regulations, providers are allowed to

hire tutors who lack the basic training and qualifications needed to serve students with special needs.

- The SES provision is written in a way that fails to address alignment with other relevant federal policies such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or the Family Education

Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Confusion around responsibilities and lack of coordination with laws that also target these subgroups create additional problems, such as preventing instructors from having necessary student educational information or delaying provision of SES services.

Table 1: Student Selection into SES (odds of registering for and attending SES)

	Registered for SES			Attended SES			Attended 40 or more hours		
	2008-09	Chicago 2009-10	4 districts 2009-10	2008-09	Chicago 2009-10	4 districts 2009-10	2008-09	Chicago 2009-10	4 districts 2009-10
	N=	N=	N=	N=	N=	N=	N=	N=	N=
	100,988	63,461	61,032	100,988	63,506	61,032	43,671	10,873	54,686
<i>Student characteristic</i>	<i>Coefficients reported as odds ratios</i>								
ELL	1.438	2.219	1.200	1.437	2.220	1.238	0.870	1.579	1.372
Students w/IEP	1.121	3.459	0.854	1.066	3.501	0.838	0.860	2.385	0.788

Note: For Chicago Public Schools in 2009-10, free lunch eligibility was a requirement for registration.

Table 2: Provider market share for special needs populations and provider advertisement of services (providers with highest market share(s) for each district)

District	Provider	% of ELL served	% of students with IEPs served	Advertise as capable of serving ELL students	Advertise as capable of serving students with IEPs
Combined	Small providers	11%	8%	Varies	Varies
Austin	Group Excellence	29%	-	Yes	Yes
	Read and Succeed	27%	-	Yes	Yes
Chicago	Orion's Mind	24%	17%	Yes	Yes
	Aim High	16%	14%	Yes	Yes
Dallas	Confidence	6%	26%	Yes	Yes
	Group Excellence	24%	15%	Yes	Yes
Milwaukee	Tools of Empowerment	24%	-	Yes	Yes
	Step Ahead	14%	38%	Yes	Yes
Minneapolis	ATS Project Success	21%	18%	Yes	Yes
	TutorCo	20%	11%	No	Yes

What Would Improve SES?

- All students participating in SES, including English Language learners and students with disabilities, need to receive more intensive tutoring, defined as more hours of high quality, appropriately differentiated instruction. We recommend federal policy include a requirement that providers ensure a minimum threshold of instructional hours (>40 hours) for each student.
- States and school districts need to better monitor and control service quality and delivery to ensure that those providers that advertise as able to serve students have capable, informed staff in all aspects of intervention. This includes parent outreach, identification and diagnostic metrics, instructional methods, and regular/appropriate assessment and analysis. Policy changes could include allowing states and districts to require tutor certification in instructional strategies for ELLs and students with disabilities.
- In oversubscribed districts, SES resources should be targeted primarily to students with special needs who are most severely underperforming in school.
- School districts, SES providers and tutors, day school teachers and parents need to better coordinate their efforts concerning students' day school and tutoring educational programs. This can be accomplished through greater sharing of IEPs and communication (written and/or informal) regarding ongoing student performance. Policy changes could include greater specificity on the expectations for Individual Learning Plans created by providers for students.
- Federal policymakers need to address federal policy alignment issues in the language of the reauthorized policy and/or guidance for school districts, particularly in the areas of student identification and student information-sharing (such as IEPs). State policymakers may also be able to mitigate some of these issues depending on state-specific statutes and administrative rules.
- Understanding many of these recommendations would place additional administrative/regulatory burdens on states and districts; therefore, federal policymakers should allow greater flexibility in how SES funds are spent to account for the considerable costs associated with administering SES.

Visit www.sesiq2.wceruw.org for the complete version of this report and more information on SESIQ2. Please contact Patricia Burch (pburch@usc.edu) with inquiries.

SESIQ2: Research Design

Our mixed-method, longitudinal study examines SES in five school districts: Austin, TX; Chicago, IL; Dallas, TX; Milwaukee, WI; and Minneapolis, MN. Our qualitative analysis in this brief draws upon observations of full tutoring sessions (94); interviews with provider administrators (52), interviews with tutoring staff (73), interviews with state and district staff (20), and parent focus groups (168 participants). The quantitative portion employs an interrupted time series design with internal comparison groups and multiple non-experimental approaches to estimate SES impacts on student academic achievement.

ⁱ We define “students with special needs” as including students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or who are ELLs, as identified by standardized English language test scores. Although references to “students with special needs” are meant to indicate both populations, we make separate references to students with disabilities and ELLs when educational/social circumstances, research findings, and/or other relevant information applies to only one of the populations.

ⁱⁱ Chicago Public Schools prioritized students with disabilities in the 2009-10 school year, and thus we find that they are significantly more likely to register for and attend SES in they were also more likely to attend SES for at least 40 hours (138% greater odds). For this reason (and because Chicago Public Schools also appears to have given higher registration priority to ELLs) we separate CPS in our analysis of odds-ratios from the other four districts.