

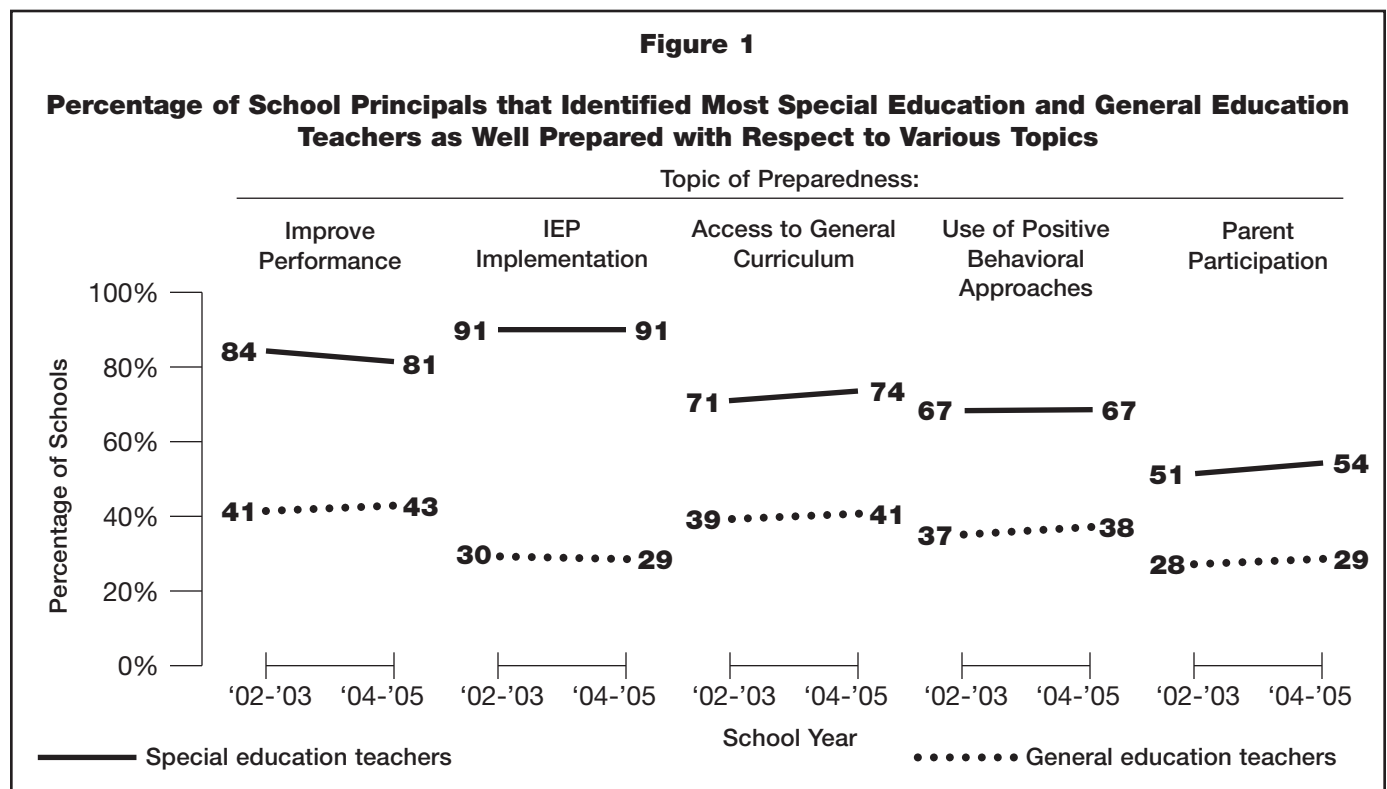
Teacher Preparedness and Professional Development to Educate Students with Disabilities

Improving the “instructional capacity” of general and special education teachers is a key element to successful implementation of recent educational reforms. Targeted professional development and other capacity-building strategies that translate standards and incentives into effective instruction and strong student performance are needed. Below are findings from the 2004-2005 school year on the preparedness of general and special education teachers and their participation in professional development, reported by school principals; unless otherwise noted, no significant changes were found from the 2002-2003 school year.

Principals reported that most of their special education teachers are well prepared to educate students with disabilities, but the preparedness of general education teachers is substantially lower. (See Figure 1)

For instance, our study found that:

- Most principals reported that most special education teachers were well prepared to improve the performance of students with IEPs (81 percent), develop and implement IEPs (91 percent), increase access to the general education curriculum (74 percent), and use positive behavioral approaches (67 percent). About half the principals reported that most special education teachers were well prepared to increase parent participation (54 percent).
- Fewer than half of principals (43 percent) reported that most general educators were well prepared to improve the performance of students with IEPs and increase access to the general education curriculum (41 percent). Thirty-eight percent said most teachers were well prepared to use positive behavioral supports, and less than one-third reported that most were well prepared to develop and implement IEPs (29 percent) and increase parent participation (29 percent).



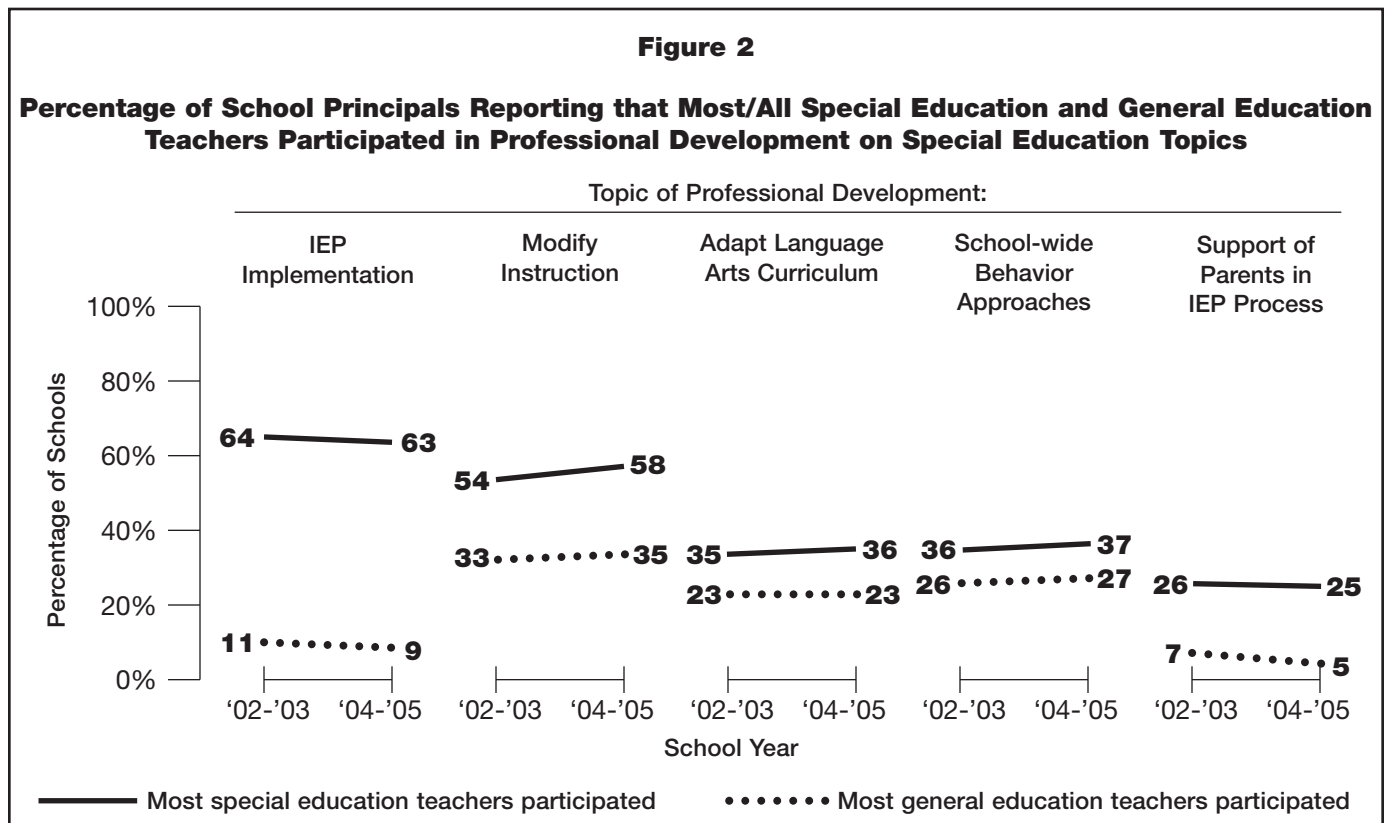
Discrepancies in the preparedness of general and special education teachers are not surprising, as principals report that special education teachers are more likely to participate in professional development than are general education teachers, who have increasing responsibility for students with disabilities. (See Figure 2)

For instance, our study found that:

- Just over half of principals reported that most special education teachers participated in professional development on IEP development and implementation (63 percent) and modifying instruction (58 percent).
- Few principals indicated that most special education teachers participated in professional development related to adapting the language arts curriculum (36 percent),

school-wide behavior approaches (37 percent) and supporting parents in the IEP process (25 percent).

- A smaller percentage of principals reported that most general education teachers participated in professional development on topics related to students with disabilities. About one-third of principals (35 percent) reported that most general education teachers participated in professional development on modifying instruction. Moreover, less than one-third reported that most general education teachers participated in professional development on school-wide behavior approaches (27 percent), adapting the language arts curriculum (23 percent), and IEP implementation (9 percent). Only 5 percent of principals indicated that most general education teachers participated in professional development related to supporting parents in the IEP process.



The results summarized in this fact sheet are based on the six year *Study of State and Local Implementation and Impact of IDEA (SLIIDEA)* supported by the Office of Special Education Programs, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, U.S. Department of Education, as part of Contract ED-00-C0-0026, conducted by Abt Associates Inc. Any points of view expressed in this fact sheet are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Education.

Surveys were mailed to key personnel responsible for or familiar with special education issues in all 50 states and the District of Columbia - a total of 959 districts and 4,434 schools. For state, district, and school surveys, response rates were 100 percent, 89 percent, and 80 percent, respectively in the 2004-2005 school year. Similar response rates were obtained for the 2002-2003 school year.

From Abt Associates Inc (2006 April). *Marking the Progress of IDEA Implementation and Volume I: The SLIIDEA Sourcebook Report (1999-2000, 2002-2003, 2003-2004, and 2004-2005 School Years)*. Study reports, data tables and technical documentation are available at <http://abt.sliidea.org>.