

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249834458>

# Understanding the Roles and Responsibilities of Itinerant ECSE Teachers Through Delphi Research

Article in *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education* · September 2006

DOI: 10.1177/02711214060260030301

---

CITATIONS

12

READS

2,428

3 authors, including:



L. A. Dinnebeil

University of Toledo

29 PUBLICATIONS 563 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

# Understanding the Roles and Responsibilities of Itinerant ECSE Teachers Through Delphi Research

Laurie Dinnebeil  
William McInerney  
Lynette Hale  
University of Toledo

The itinerant service delivery model is used across the United States to provide services to young children (ages 3 years–6 years) with disabilities whose primary placement is a community-based early childhood program. Although this model is a common component of the least-restrictive-environment continuum of service delivery options, the roles and responsibilities of itinerant early childhood special education (ECSE) teachers are poorly understood. The purpose of the Delphi studies reported here was to examine the perceptions of diverse stakeholder groups (i.e., itinerant ECSE teachers, ECSE teachers who work with itinerants, parents of children served by itinerant ECSE teachers, and supervisors of itinerant ECSE teachers) regarding the key roles and responsibilities of itinerant ECSE teachers. Delphi methodology enabled the researchers to determine common and divergent perspectives among the four stakeholder groups. Results of this research indicate a wide disparity in the perceptions of the four stakeholder groups regarding the nature of itinerant ECSE teachers' roles and the associated responsibilities.

As the inclusion of young children with disabilities in community-based early childhood programs expands, so does the need for trained special educators who can effectively meet their learning needs. Inclusive education is successful to the degree that general educators and primary caregivers are supported and have appropriate resources to meet children's needs (McWilliam, Wolery, & Odom, 2001). Across the country, young children with disabilities who are included in community-based programs receive services from *itinerant* early childhood special educators. Community-based program sites include childcare programs, Head Start classrooms, nursery schools, family childcare providers and homes. While the job title may vary (e.g., inclusion specialist, consulting teacher, early childhood tutor), there are two common features of professionals in these roles: They travel from site to site, and it is their responsibility to address the Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals and objectives of the children on their caseload.

Odom and his colleagues (Odom et al., 1999) were among the first researchers to describe the itinerant model in early childhood special education (ECSE). Their research on inclusion identified two major types of itiner-

ant services: those in which the teacher's primary work revolves around direct service to children, and those in which the itinerant teacher primarily provides consultation services to staff members of community-based programs in which children are enrolled. In an *itinerant-direct* model, the itinerant teacher visits the child in his or her classroom and works directly with the child on IEP objectives. In contrast, an *itinerant-consultation* model describes a professional who visits a child's classroom and provides consultation and support to the child's primary teacher or caregiver. Although the itinerant teacher in this model may interact with and work with children, her or his primary responsibility is to help the child's primary teacher or caregiver find ways to provide IEP-based instruction in her absence. Odom et al.'s distinction between these service delivery models is a useful one because the nature and intended outcomes of these two types of services are quite different. However, this distinction may not necessarily be made across states or local school districts. Like the term *home visit*, the term *itinerant services* simply denotes the *location* where services are provided as opposed to the nature of the services themselves.

Address: Laurie Dinnebeil, University of Toledo, Early Childhood, Physical, and Special Education, 2801 West Bancroft St., Mail Stop 106, Toledo, OH 43606; e-mail: ldinneb@utnet.utoledo.edu

Understanding the degree to which a service delivery model produces positive effects for children's development and learning is dependent upon a consistent and operational definition of the characteristics of that model (Striffler & Fire, 1999). Currently, it is impossible to judge the degree to which an itinerant model benefits young children with special needs because itinerant practices are not standardized. In an attempt to understand the nature of the itinerant ECSE teacher's activities during visits to children's classrooms, the authors conducted a survey, mailing questionnaires to supervisors whose districts the state had identified as offering itinerant ECSE services. The population included 327 itinerant ECSE teachers from 147 school districts in Ohio. Of that group, 70%, or 229 teachers, participated in the survey (Dinnebeil, McInerney, Roth, & Ramaswamy, 2001). At the time, Ohio was one of the few states that had a formal definition of the program model for itinerant service delivery. Nevertheless, the Ohio statute noted only that itinerant services are those provided in a location other than a school district-sponsored special education setting.

In 1999, via a written questionnaire, itinerant teachers in Ohio were asked to describe their activities during classroom visits to children on their caseload as well as to describe the types of strategies they used to provide instruction. The majority of itinerant ECSE teachers who responded to this questionnaire indicated that they provided direct services to the children they visited. The average duration of their visits was 1 hour, and visits occurred once per week. Indirect instructional strategies, such as providing consultation to the teacher or engaging in coaching activities, were rarely reported. Furthermore, the nature of the itinerant teacher's activity during a visit did not always relate to the child's IEP goals. For example, teachers tended to work with *all* children, even when the child on their caseload had priority objectives related to management of challenging behaviors. This is interesting because one would suspect that children with challenging behaviors (and their caregivers) would benefit most from consultation with the children's primary caregivers to help the children learn alternative behaviors and to modify the environment such that it no longer supports the challenging behaviors. The survey results indicated that the nature of itinerant teachers' activities remained the same irrespective of children's needs, and, at least for teachers who responded to this survey, these activities reflected a direct service delivery approach in contrast to the consultative approach.

A consultative model has been recommended for itinerant services because it supports the primary caregiver in providing intervention on a continual basis rather than the itinerant teacher providing direct but episodic, isolated services. Among other benefits, such continual intervention allows the opportunity for generalization of

skills and behaviors (Buysse & Wesley, 1993; Dinnebeil & McInerney, 2000; Horn, Li, Sandall, & Schwartz, 2000; McWilliam et al., 2001). One of the reasons that itinerant ECSE teachers may fail to differentiate between direct and indirect models of service delivery is that although both early childhood literature and professional standards that guide personnel preparation programs in ECSE address the need to engage in consultation (Sandall, Hemmeter, Smith, & McLean, 2004; Stayton, Miller, & Dinnebeil, 2003), we suspect that preservice teachers rarely receive adequate training in how to do so. In addition to limited coursework related to consultation, preservice ECSE teachers may have limited opportunities to apply knowledge and skills related to consultation to real-life experiences in the field. Another factor contributing to the lack of consultation may be that some ECSE teachers were trained before inclusion in community preschools and routines-based instruction became widespread practices and before training in consultation practices was included in preservice programs. An important factor that may support change toward practices that are more consistent with current recommended practice in ECSE itinerant services is a better understanding of the views of individuals who might be expected to have different perceptions of the role of the itinerant teacher. This information could also contribute to intergroup understanding within service delivery settings.

The purpose of the current study was to understand how representatives from four key stakeholder groups—iterant ECSE teachers, general education teachers with whom itinerants worked, parents of the children whom the itinerant teachers served, and itinerant teachers' supervisors—perceived the roles and responsibilities of itinerant ECSE professionals and how important they believed it was to provide specific training to prepare professionals for those roles. Given the apparent lack of standardization of itinerant ECSE service delivery across the country, we hoped to explore the range of roles and responsibilities identified by representatives from each stakeholder group. Although each group has a vested interest in and perspective on the roles and responsibilities of an itinerant teacher, given these groups' varying degrees of involvement in the process, it may be that their perspectives vary. Including four panels representing each of the four stakeholder groups allowed us to explore the perspectives of a particular stakeholder group.

## METHOD

The Delphi methodology has been widely used in educational research (e.g., Cannon, Idol, & West, 1992; Dailey & Holmberg, 1990; Zoski & Jurs, 1989). This form of survey research reflects the systematic solicitation of opinions from an expert panel concerning a particular topic.

This process is accomplished through the administration of multiple iterations of surveys, with second- and third-round questionnaires reflecting the feedback and opinions provided through experts' earlier responses (Murry & Hammons, 1995). Linstone and Turoff (2002) noted that the Delphi approach is a structured way of facilitating group communication, particularly when panelists are separated geographically. Although a Delphi technique may be modified in different ways to fit a particular research question, it is characterized by four phases: exploring, reaching understanding, resolving disagreements, and confirming results. Participants in a Delphi panel are generally recruited based on their expertise related to a particular topic. Delphi studies are conducted in successive rounds during which panel members rate items, researchers summarize the items, and the panelists then review the revised items for further rating until consensus is achieved. In addition to ratings, participants view the comments of other members so that the reasons for their ratings are clear. Iterations continue until panel members achieve consensus regarding item ratings. Although no standard number of iterations is completed in a Delphi study, three or four iterations are common (Murry & Hammons, 1995). Dalkey (n.d., para. 11), however, believes that the majority of information from a Delphi panel emerges from the first iteration of the group.

### **Participants**

The size of a Delphi panel depends on the homogeneity of members of the panel. In general, the size of heterogeneous panels should be larger than that of homogeneous panels (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1986). Experts agree that little is gained when panel size exceeds 30 panelists (Clayton, 1997; Murry & Hammons, 1995; Wilhelm, 2001). Our initial goal was to recruit 30 participants for each of four stakeholder panels.

Because we were interested in assembling a representative profile of key stakeholder groups, our initial sampling strategy cast a broad net. We needed two stages to recruit a sufficient number of participants. In the first stage, we took into consideration the number of children under the age of 5 years in each state, as well as the number of rural, suburban, and urban households, using 1990 U.S. Census Bureau data. This helped us to determine a prorated number of invitations to mail to each state in each region. Once we determined the number of invitations that a state would receive, we asked the Part B 619 (public school services to preschool children with disabilities) coordinator from that state to identify urban, suburban, and rural local education agencies (LEAs). We mailed invitations to the directors of special education of 321 targeted LEAs from separate geographic regions of the United States in the fall of 1999.

To ensure diverse representation of panelists across school districts, we asked each director to identify one individual from one of the stakeholder groups described previously. For example, we asked Director A to identify an itinerant ECSE teacher, Director B to identify a parent, Director C to identify an early childhood teacher, and Director D to identify a parent. Within the invitation, we specified key criteria that special education directors should use to select participants for this study. We asked that directors select an individual from one of the following: (a) full- or part-time itinerant ECSE teachers with 3 or more years of experience as itinerant ECSE teachers, (b) full- or part-time general education early childhood teachers who either currently worked with an itinerant ECSE teacher or had worked with an itinerant in the previous year, (c) parents of children who were either currently being served or had been served by an itinerant ECSE teacher in the previous year, and (d) supervisors who had 2 or more years of providing supervision to itinerant ECSE teachers.

We sent the directors the recruitment materials to pass along to the person they had identified, with directions to that individual to contact us regarding his or her willingness to participate. This process yielded a pool of 45 individuals, consisting of 9 administrators/supervisors, 21 itinerant ECSE teachers, 6 general ECE teachers, and 9 parents of children who had direct experience with the itinerant ECSE model. Despite the use of considerable incentives and multiple follow-up calls and contacts, we had to conduct a second stage of recruitment to complete the stakeholder pools. In this second stage of recruitment we used a broader sampling strategy, requesting assistance from a number of different groups.

We sent an e-mail request to each state's Part B 619 coordinator asking him or her to provide contact information for representatives from two districts in the state that provided itinerant ECSE services. We contacted newsletter coordinators for local Association for the Education of Young Children (AEYC) affiliates across the country, requesting that a recruitment notice for the study be placed in their membership newsletter and that interested individuals contact the project. We also contacted colleagues across the country who were working with parents and ECSE teachers. Finally, we sought help from directors of each of the Parent Training and Information Centers, asking them to disseminate recruitment requests to parents associated with their centers. Interested parents were also requested to contact us directly via an 800 toll-free phone number (see Note 1).

At the completion of the second recruitment stage, the panels consisted of 32 itinerant teachers, 30 general early childhood education (ECE) teachers, 31 parents, and 27 supervisors. The number of participants who completed all iterations of the Delphi process consisted of 29 itinerants (90% of those who initially agreed to par-

icipate), 24 ECE teachers (80%), 29 parents (94%), and 22 supervisors (81%).

Of these 104 final panelists, 23% lived in the Northeast region of the United States, 38% in the Midwest, 22% in the South, and 17% in the West. A breakdown of panelists by geographic region is available from the authors.

### Panel Demographics

**Itinerant ECSE Teachers.** The average itinerant ECSE teacher had taught for almost 16 years, working as an itinerant for about 5½ of those years. Full-time itinerants reported an average caseload of 17 children ( $SD = 7.36$ ), visiting most children (69%) once a week for an hour a week ( $SD = 47$  min). More than half of the teachers (55%) held a graduate degree and a variety of teaching credentials in special education and/or early childhood special education. Only two panel participants lacked permanent ECSE teaching credentials. Most teachers (about 71%) reported working in an urban community; 25% worked in a suburban community and 4% worked in a rural community. Members of this panel reported seeing the majority of their children in public/private preschools (36.41%), Head Start classrooms (20.3%), or kindergarten settings (18%). Other settings included childcare centers, family day care homes, or children's homes. More than half (58.6%) of the children had speech-language delays, with another 32% reported to have developmental delays.

**ECE Teachers.** Twenty-four teachers comprised the ECE teacher panel. Seventy-five percent of the teachers held at least a bachelor's degree; another 16.7% had an associate's degree. More than 79% identified themselves as a lead teacher in a preschool; half of the panel reported holding a teaching credential in early childhood education. Of the ECE teachers, 54% reported working in an urban community, 24% reported working in a suburban community, and 21% worked in a rural area (numbers do not add to 100% due to rounding). The average age of the ECE teacher panelist was 41 years ( $SD = 11.7$ ). Fifty-nine percent of the panelists reported working in a childcare center, while another 25% reported working in a public/private preschool. The remaining panelists (16%) reported working in Head Start, family day care, or other early childhood settings.

**Parents.** The average age for the parent panel was 35 years ( $SD = 6.56$  years). All of the panelists were mothers. The average age of panelists' children was 4 years ( $SD = .91$  year). Parent panelists were asked when their children attended a community-based program. Almost 38% (11) of the children attended a "morning-only" program every day; close to 27% (10) reported attend-

ing a full-day program 5 days a week. The remaining panelists reported other schedules. Almost 76% of the parent panelists reported that their children attended a public or private preschool, with another 13.8% reporting that their child attended Head Start. The remaining panelists reported that their children either attended a family day care home or another early childhood setting. Speech-language delays or developmental delays were most often checked (72.4% and 51.7%, respectively) as special learning needs of children (multiple categories could be checked).

**Supervisors of Itinerant Teachers.** The supervisors' Delphi panel consisted of 22 supervisors. Close to 75% of the panelists held postgraduate training beyond a master's degree. Panelists had supervised itinerant ECSE teachers for an average of 7.5 years and had been employed as a supervisor for an average of 12 years. Eight panelists (36.4%) had previously been employed as itinerant ECSE teachers. Panelists reported that their agency or district had offered itinerant ECSE services for an average of 10 years ( $SD = 6.3$ ) and that on average, 101 children in their districts were served by itinerant teachers (range = 8–365). Head Start was the most often reported setting in which itinerant services were provided, followed by public or private preschools and children's homes. More than 68% of the children were reported to have speech-language delays.

### Instrumentation

All respondents completed an initial open-ended survey that contained three questions, the results of which were subsequently used to construct the Delphi questionnaire. These questions were as follows:

- What are the primary responsibilities of itinerant ECSE teachers?
- What are secondary responsibilities of itinerant ECSE teachers?"
- What are key roles of itinerant ECSE teachers?

To help participants differentiate between the terms *roles* and *responsibilities*, we defined a *role* as a specific position that an itinerant ECSE teacher assumes as part of her or his job and a *responsibility* as an activity that an itinerant ECSE teacher undertakes as part of her or his job.

We used content analysis methodology (Johnson & LaMontagne, 1993) to categorize the responses to these three questions and then used the results to create closed-ended questionnaires for the iterations in the Delphi study. In conducting the content analyses, we listed the participants' responses to each of the questions and separated responses that contained multiple responsibilities (e.g., "testing the child and sharing the results with par-

ents”). Two coders trained in content analysis procedures reviewed the list of responses for each of the panels and deleted identical responses. These coders then independently reviewed the responses and identified broad categories reflected by the specific responsibilities. In conducting the content analysis, we noted that respondents had difficulty differentiating between a role (a broader category encompassing multiple responsibilities) and a responsibility. In many instances, the terms *role* and *responsibility* were treated interchangeably. For that reason, coders focused on the lists of responsibilities as opposed to the roles.

Once each coder had independently identified broad categories that characterized the responsibilities, the two coders met to discuss their results and to achieve consensus on categories. The coders then jointly developed operational definitions of each category, to define each of the overarching roles. These operational definitions are described in Table 1.

Once the roles had been defined, as a further check on placement of responsibilities within roles, the two coders independently used the definitions to assign specific responsibilities to each role for each of the four groups. Once this independent work was done, they met

to compare results—noting agreements, discussing disagreements, and reaching consensus on the placement of each responsibility within a role. As a result of this process, all of the responsibilities independently identified by each of the stakeholder groups were assigned to one of the six roles defined in Table 1.

Each of the four Delphi questionnaires contained the responsibilities identified by members of that group during the first open-ended survey. We formatted all questionnaires identically using the same overarching role categories and a 4-point rating scale. We included in each questionnaire definitions of the roles used to categorize the responsibilities. Colleagues who were itinerant teachers, ECE teachers, parents, and supervisors of itinerant teachers reviewed drafts of the questionnaires for clarity and organization. Based on their feedback, we revised the questionnaires (see Note 2).

On each questionnaire, respondents were asked to rate each of the responsibility statements, taking into consideration two factors: (a) the importance of the responsibility for effective itinerant service delivery, and (b) the degree to which the responsibility should be included in preservice or in-service training. For each responsibility item, panelists were asked to rate the item

**TABLE 1. Definitions of Itinerant Roles Used in Delphi Survey With All Groups**

Role label	Role definition
Assessor/Monitor	Engages in formal and informal assessment activities ranging from observations of child in natural settings to administering tests for the purpose of determining eligibility. Also includes activities such as writing progress reports, keeping records of child's progress, completing other paperwork related to services described on the IEP, and collecting/managing data related to children's progress in meeting IEP objectives.
Consultant/Coach to other adults	Works with parents, caregivers, teachers, and other adults involved in child's life. Provides written information, activity plans, and materials/equipment related to child's special needs to other adults. Assists other adults in planning appropriate activities and modifying materials, equipment, or activities for child. Models or demonstrates intervention strategies that other adults might use to address IEP goals and objectives. Provides feedback to other adults about their implementation of intervention strategies. Plans and conducts inservice sessions and other trainings targeted to general education teachers and/or caregivers.
Direct service provider	Works directly with child to address IEP objectives individually, in small groups, or in large groups. Prepares materials and activities to use directly with child. Prepares lesson/activity plans that address child's IEP goals and objectives. Helps other children in classroom interact appropriately with children with IEPs. Interacts with and teaches all children in classroom.
Lifelong learner	Accesses materials to improve knowledge about child's specific disability and related needs. Engages in a range of professional development activities designed to remain current in the field.
Service coordinator	Coordinates the provision of services as outlined in the child's IEP. Links parents and other members of inter/transdisciplinary team to other community resources to meet child's needs. Coordinates transition activities as child moves from one program to the next.
Team member	Serves as a member of the child's IEP team. Works with the team to develop the IEP. Participates with colleagues in district planning and engages in public relations activities to promote the services the school district has to offer.

Note. IEP = Individualized Education Program.

by checking the most appropriate choice from four choices: Essential, Highly Desirable, Desirable, and Not Needed. Respondents were also asked to provide written comments explaining their response and to add any responsibilities that they felt had not been included.

### **Procedures**

The first mailing of the Delphi questionnaire included a cover letter describing the Delphi process and providing contact information if participants had questions; a copy of the questionnaire that had been developed for the respondent's particular panel; and a self-addressed, stamped envelope. We asked panelists to return the completed questionnaires within 2 weeks and sent follow-up reminders to those panelists who had not returned questionnaires by that time.

Consistent with the Delphi process (Cannon et al., 1992), we completed a descriptive analysis of the results and compiled written comments related to each responsibility. The second—and all subsequent—iterations of the questionnaire included the percentage of respondents who rated each of the responsibilities using one of the four rating choices in the first round as well as a summary of participants' written comments for each item. Although we did not require respondents to include written comments in their questionnaires, we provided space for comments. We transcribed all written comments verbatim and included them in the next round of the questionnaire.

During the second and all subsequent iterations of the Delphi questionnaire, the respondents were instructed to first review the descriptive statistics and comments associated with each responsibility and then to again rate that item. Panels continued to receive iterations of the questionnaire until each panel had reached a high degree of consistency in their ratings for each item or until it became clear that panelists' ratings were stable from one iteration of the questionnaire to the next. Panelists were asked to rate only those items for which consensus or stability were not yet achieved. We defined *consistency in ratings* as having 80% or more panelists rate an item the same. For example, if 83% of panelists rated an item as Highly Desirable, we determined that they had reached consensus on that item. We defined *stability* as a 20% or less change in the overall mean ratings of an item from the previous iteration. Because each Delphi panel operated independently, the number of iterations of the questionnaire for each panel varied. The parent panel required two iterations of the Delphi questionnaire; the other three panels each required three iterations.

We summarized the results from the final round for each panel into the percentage of panelists placing each

item into each of the four choices noted previously. We then developed tables for each panel to examine consensus patterns within each group.

## **RESULTS**

Results for each of the four panels are provided in Tables 2 through 5. These figures present only those responsibilities on which consensus (agreement among at least 80% of panelists) was achieved within each stakeholder group. Patterns of consensus are described in this section.

### ***Itinerant ECSE Panel***

As shown in Table 2, itinerant ECSE teachers achieved consensus on 22 of the 44 (50%) responsibilities listed on their questionnaire, rating as Essential all but three of these responsibilities, which they rated as Highly Desirable. As with the other panels, the itinerant ECSE teachers rarely rated a responsibility as Not Needed. This rating was given to only 16% (7 of 44) of the responsibilities and was made by few panelists (5%).

The itinerant ECSE panel agreed strongly about the importance of the role of consultant. Of the 22 items on which overall consensus was achieved, 9 (45%) were responsibilities related to this role, and 8 of these were rated as Essential. In contrast, panel members achieved consensus on only one responsibility related to each of the roles of direct service provider (for which six responsibilities [30%] were identified) and service coordinator (for which four [25%] were identified).

### ***ECE Teacher Panel***

The ECE teachers achieved consensus on 14 of the 26 (54%) responsibilities listed on their questionnaire, as shown in Table 3. This panel agreed on 5 of 9 (56%) of the responsibilities related to the role of consultant, 4 of the 7 (57%) related to the role of direct service provider, and 2 of the 3 (67%) responsibilities related to the itinerant's role as assessor. Members of the ECE panel were consistent in identifying all of the responsibilities as Essential, with the exception of one: providing classroom coverage as needed (under the role of direct service provider). This item was identified as Not Needed. They failed to reach consensus on any of the four responsibilities related to the role of service coordinator.

### ***Parent Panel***

Parent results are presented in Table 4. Parents achieved consensus on 15 of the 29 (52%) responsibilities listed

TABLE 2. Itinerant ECSE Teachers' Delphi Results (Figures Represent Percentages)

Role/Responsibility	A	B	C	D
<b>Assessment/Monitor (total items = 7)</b>				
Collect and manage data related to monitoring children's progress in meeting IEP objectives.	89	11	0	0
Write progress reports for annual reviews, including IEP reviews.	86	7	7	0
Observe child in natural environment in order to make decisions about the kinds of services necessary to address the child(ren's) IEP objectives.	89	7	4	0
<b>Consultant to other adults (total items = 15)</b>				
Build rapport with general early-childhood teachers, childcare providers or program directors, and parents of children with IEP.	89	12	0	0
Provide written information to other adults about the child's disability or special need.	0	89	11	0
With other adults, plan intervention strategies that will address child(ren)'s IEP goals and objectives within the context of the daily routine.	81	15	4	0
With other adults, plan ways to adapt materials or equipment so that the child(ren) with IEPs can participate in daily routines and activities.	85	12	4	0
With other adults, plan ways to adapt the physical environment to address the developmental and learning needs of child(ren) with an IEP.	89	11	0	0
With other adults, plan ways to adapt the daily routines to address the developmental and learning needs of child(ren) with an IEP.	81	15	4	0
Demonstrate intervention strategies and interaction skills to other adults.	89	11	0	0
Help parents understand their role as an advocate for their child.	82	11	7	0
Conduct conference(s) with parents, provide support and information as requested, and address parents' concerns.	86	7	7	0
<b>Direct service provider to children (total items = 6)</b>				
Work one-on-one, in small group, or in large group with child on IEP objectives.	89	4	7	0
<b>Lifelong learner (total items = 3)</b>				
Read IEP and available health/developmental reports of child(ren) entering the program.	96	4	0	0
Independently read professional literature to maintain familiarity with current information in the field.	3	83	14	0
Attend conferences/workshops to maintain familiarity with current information and service delivery trends in the field.	3	90	7	0
<b>Service coordinator (total items = 4)</b>				
Coordinate related services at transition time.	89	11	0	0
<b>Team member (total items = 7)</b>				
Coordinate and attend team meetings, including IEP meetings.	89	7	4	0
Work with inter-/transdisciplinary team to write IEP.	82	7	11	0
Collaborate with professionals who provide related services to child(ren) with IEP.	82	15	4	0
<b>Other (total items = 2)</b>				
Understand impact of individual child's disability on developmental growth and educational performance.	81	19	0	0
Develop a thorough understanding of the development of young children in general.	92	8	0	0

Note. A = Essential (Activity is very important to effective ITINERANT service delivery and is essential to include in a training program for itinerant ECSE teachers); B = Highly Desirable (Activity is important to effective ITINERANT service delivery and is highly desirable to include in a training program for itinerant ECSE teachers); C = Desirable (Activity is somewhat important to effective ITINERANT service delivery, and its inclusion in a training program for itinerant ECSE teachers is desirable); D = Not Needed (Activity is not important to effective ITINERANT service delivery and does not need to be addressed in training for itinerant ECSE teachers.); IEP = Individualized Education Program.



TABLE 3. ECE Teachers' Delphi Results (Figures Represent Percentages)

Role/Responsibility	A	B	C	D
<b>Assessment/Monitor (total items = 3)</b>				
Monitors child's progress through classroom observations.	92	8	0	0
Tests the child and writes necessary reports.	100	0	0	0
<b>Consultant to other adults (total items = 9)</b>				
Meets with classroom teachers on a regular basis to discuss the child's needs.	96	4	0	0
Educates classroom teachers about the child's disability and accompanying learning needs.	88	0	12	0
Communicates with other support staff about the child's progress.	88	4	8	0
Teaches classroom teachers strategies to help the child meet her or his IEP goals.	88	4	8	0
Communicates with parents on a regular basis.	84	8	8	0
<b>Direct service provider (total items = 7)</b>				
Works with children on activities related to their educational IEP goals and objectives.	92	8	0	0
Works with children on activities related to their therapy IEP goals and objectives (e.g., speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy).	84	12	0	4
Works with small groups of other children that also include the child with special needs.	88	4	8	0
Works with the child in ways that fit into existing classroom routines.	80	16	4	0
Provides "classroom coverage" if needed.	0	8	12	80
<b>Service coordinator (total items = 4)</b>				
<b>Team member (total items = 3)</b>				
Sets up IEP meetings.	96	4	0	0
Attends team meetings.	96	4	0	0
Works with team to develop IEP.	89	11	0	0

*Note.* A = Essential (Activity is very important to effective ITINERANT service delivery and is essential to include in a training program for itinerant ECSE teachers); B = Highly Desirable (Activity is important to effective ITINERANT service delivery and is highly desirable to include in a training program for itinerant ECSE teachers); C = Desirable (Activity is somewhat important to effective ITINERANT service delivery and its inclusion in a training program for itinerant ECSE teachers is desirable); D = Not Needed (Activity is not important to effective ITINERANT service delivery and does not need to be addressed in training for itinerant ECSE teachers.); IEP = Individualized Education Program.

on their questionnaire. These included 6 of the 6 responsibilities related to the itinerant's role as direct service provider. The parent panel felt strongly that all of the responsibilities listed under this role were critical to successful service delivery (rating them as Essential). Their responses were much more variable regarding the importance of the role of the consultant in itinerant service delivery—although they achieved consensus on 6 of the 14 (43%) items, they rated only 25% of these responsibilities as Essential. They achieved consensus on only 1 of 4 responsibilities related to the itinerant's role as assessor.

### Supervisor Panel

Table 5 lists the results for which members of the supervisors' panel reached consensus. The supervisors achieved consensus on 36% (12 of 33) of the responsibilities listed on their questionnaire. Of the 11 responsibilities related to the role of consultant, this panel achieved consensus on 4 (36%) of these items. They agreed on only 2 of the 7 items related to the role of ser-

vice coordinator. With the exception of one responsibility (independently read professional literature) related to the category of lifelong learner, the panelists rated as Essential all of the responsibilities for which they had achieved consensus; the one exception was rated as Highly Desirable.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to obtain the opinions of four stakeholder groups regarding the degree to which specific responsibilities of itinerant ECSE teachers are essential to effective service delivery and should be included in personnel training programs. Consistent with the Delphi technique (Clayton, 1997), we recruited four national panels representing different key stakeholders: itinerant ECSE teachers, early childhood teachers, parents, and supervisors of itinerant ECSE teachers. All of the panels reached consensus on the essential nature of about half of the responsibilities included in their respec-

TABLE 4. Parents' Delphi Results (Figures Represent Percentages)

Role/Responsibility	A	B	C	D
Assessment/Monitor (total items = 4)				
Observes child in classroom.	100	0	0	0
Consultant to parents, teachers, and other specialists (total items = 14)				
Communicates with parents regarding the child's progress toward meeting goals and objectives.	86	13	0	0
Acts as a sounding board for parents.	4	89	7	0
Consults with classroom teacher about issues or concerns that occur with the child.	93	7	0	0
Teaches classroom teachers how to work on goals and objectives on the IEP.	83	14	3	0
Analyzes the appropriateness of classroom activities for child.	7	86	7	0
Communicates with related service specialists or therapists (e.g., speech therapists, physical therapists) on a regular basis.	89	7	4	0
Direct service provider (total items = 6)				
Works directly with children, providing individualized instruction that addresses their IEP objectives.	86	14	0	0
Modifies classroom activities to allow child to participate at his or her skill level.	96	4	0	0
Helps the child participate in regular classroom activities.	96	4	0	0
Develops lesson plans that address the child's IEP goals and objectives.	89	7	4	0
Creates a loving and supportive relationship with the child.	86	14	0	0
Provides activities and materials appropriate to individual children.	89	11	0	0
IEP developer (total items = 5)				
Helps develop IEP for child.	97	3	0	0
Attends meetings with other teachers and professionals.	86	10	0	4
Other (Has the necessary knowledge to serve children; total items = 2)				
Understands the child's condition and the needs that are present due to the condition.	90	6	4	0
Keeps up-to-date on new ideas or strategies to use with children.	86	14	0	0

Note. A = Essential (Activity is very important to effective ITINERANT service delivery and is essential to include in a training program for itinerant ECSE teachers); B = Highly Desirable (Activity is important to effective ITINERANT service delivery and is highly desirable to include in a training program for itinerant ECSE teachers); C = Desirable (Activity is somewhat important to effective ITINERANT service delivery, and its inclusion in a training program for itinerant ECSE teachers is desirable); D = Not Needed (Activity is not important to effective ITINERANT service delivery and does not need to be addressed in training for itinerant ECSE teachers); IEP = Individualized Education Program.

questionnaires. The parent panel did so in two iterations, the other panels required three iterations to achieve consensus. In cases where consensus was not achieved, panelists did achieve stability in their ratings. The percentage of respondents using a specific category did not differ significantly from one iteration to the next, despite lack of consensus.

Panelists identified a range of responsibilities associated with the diverse roles of itinerant ECSE teachers. These roles included assessor/monitor, consultant, direct service provider, IEP developer, lifelong learner, service coordinator, and team member. Consensus on particular responsibilities was achieved within each panel. Nevertheless, in each group different patterns emerged regarding the roles identified and the types of responsibilities for which consensus was achieved. Of interest is the degree to which each of the panels differentiated responsibilities of major roles. Within groups, some roles were

associated with multiple responsibilities, whereas other roles were less well defined. Across groups, panels differed in the number of responsibilities identified for each role and the degree to which they reached consensus about various responsibilities within roles. Table 6 depicts these results.

### Differences Within Panels

**Itinerant ECSE Teachers.** The group of itinerant ECSE teachers reached consensus on 45% of the responsibilities on the questionnaire. These results indicated a strong degree of consensus regarding the role of a consultant (9 responsibilities related to that role). This is in strong contrast to consensus achieved regarding responsibilities related to direct service provision (1 of 6, or 17%). Itinerant ECSE teachers identified 15 distinct responsibilities associated with the role of the consultant,

**TABLE 5. Itinerant Supervisors' Delphi Results (Figures Represent Percentages)**

Role/Responsibility	A	B	C	D
<b>Assessment/Monitor (total items = 5)</b>				
Observe child in natural environment in order to make decisions about the kinds of services necessary to address IEP objectives.	91	9	0	0
Evaluate the degree to which special education and related services are meeting the child's needs.	86	14	0	0
<b>Consultant to other adults (total items = 4)</b>				
With other adults, plan intervention strategies that will address child(ren)'s IEP goals and objectives within the context of the daily routine.	91	9	0	0
With other adults, plan ways to adapt materials or equipment so that child(ren) with an IEP can participate in daily routines and activities.	86	14	0	0
With other adults, plan ways to adapt the daily routines to address the developmental and learning needs of child(ren) with an IEP.	86	14	0	0
Conduct conferences with parents, provide support and information as requested, and address parents' concerns.	86	14	0	0
<b>Direct service provider (total items = 5)</b>				
Provide direct instruction to child to address targeted IEP goals and objectives.	81	19	0	0
<b>Lifelong learner (total items = 2)</b>				
Independently read professional literature to maintain familiarity with current information and service delivery trends in the field.	14	81	5	0
<b>Service coordinator (total items = 7)</b>				
Coordinate all educational and related services identified on the IEP.	86	10	5	0
Coordinate IEP evaluation and/or re-evaluation activities.	91	5	5	0
<b>Team member (total items = 3)</b>				
Work with inter-/transdisciplinary team to write the IEP.	91	10	0	0
Coordinate and attend various team meetings, including IEP meetings.	91	10	0	0
Serve as member of service delivery team.	81	14	5	0

*Note.* A = Essential (Activity is very important to effective ITINERANT service delivery and is essential to include in a training program for itinerant ECSE teachers); B = Highly Desirable (Activity is important to effective ITINERANT service delivery and is highly desirable to include in a training program for itinerant ECSE teachers); C = Desirable (Activity is somewhat important to effective ITINERANT service delivery, and its inclusion in a training program for itinerant ECSE teachers is desirable); D = Not Needed (Activity is not important to effective ITINERANT service delivery and does not need to be addressed in training for itinerant ECSE teachers); IEP = Individualized Education Program.

indicating a wide variety of tasks associated with this role. Differences within groups could reflect disagreements across panelists, but they could also reflect idiosyncratic approaches to itinerant service delivery. For example, differences in ratings could be a reflection of school district size. Itinerant teachers in small districts might have less specialized roles and need to take on more responsibilities, but larger districts might use a more differentiated staffing model that could result in fewer responsibilities associated with a particular job classification. As the field moves forward using an itinerant model to support high-quality services in inclusive environments, itinerant teachers will need to clearly understand their responsibilities as consultants and the consultation process. In addition, they must be able to communicate that clearly to others.

**ECE Teachers.** ECE teachers were the least divergent group, reaching consensus on the importance of 54% of the responsibilities associated with the itinerant role. For ECE teachers, the roles of the consultant and direct service provider generated equivalent numbers of responsibilities (nine and seven, respectively); however, ECE teachers achieved consensus on a greatest percentage of responsibilities (three of three, or 100%) related to the role of the itinerant as a team member. Itinerant ECSE services are provided in a range of community-based early childhood programs, and characteristics of those programs and their teachers vary. As the field moves forward to implement itinerant ECSE service delivery, general early childhood educators must understand the roles and responsibilities of their itinerant partners. Although general educators must have the

TABLE 6. Within- and Across-Panel Comparisons

Role	Itinerant ECSE teachers	ECE teachers	Parents	Supervisors
Assessor/Monitor	3 <sup>a</sup> of 7 <sup>b</sup> (43%)	2 of 3 (67%)	1 of 4 (25%)	2 of 5 (40%)
Consultant	9 of 15 (60%)	5 of 9 (56%)	6 of 14 (43%)	4 of 11 (36%)
Direct service provider	1 of 6 (17%)	4 of 7 (57%)	6 of 6 (100%)	1 of 5 (20%)
Lifelong learner	1 of 3 (33%)			1 of 2 (50%)
Service coordinator	1 of 4 (25%)	0 of 4 (0%)		1 of 7 (14%)
Team member	3 of 7 (43%)	3 of 3 (100%)		3 of 3 (100%)
Other <sup>c</sup>	2 of 2 (100%)			
IEP developer			2 of 5 (40%)	
Total responsibilities	20 of 44 (45%)	14 of 26 (54%)	15 of 29 (52%)	12 of 33 (36%)

<sup>a</sup>Number of responsibilities for which panelists achieved consensus. <sup>b</sup>Number of total responsibilities associated with each role. <sup>c</sup>Understands impact of child's disability on growth and development. Possesses a thorough understanding of child development.

knowledge and skills to support young children with disabilities in inclusive environments, equally important is that they have knowledge regarding the roles and responsibilities of early childhood special education and related services staff. This knowledge will help them hold appropriate expectations and function effectively as partners.

**Parents.** Similar to the itinerant group, the parent panel reached consensus on 52% of the responsibilities listed in the questionnaire. The parent panel stood alone in endorsing as essential all of the responsibilities related to direct service provision. However, half of the responsibilities that panel members identified were related to the role of the itinerant consultant. They were much less likely to identify responsibilities related to roles as service coordinator, team member, or IEP developer than responsibilities that reflected intervention for and assessment monitoring of their child's development.

Just as it is important for general early childhood teachers to hold realistic expectations of their itinerant colleagues, parents must also possess a clear understanding of how itinerant ECSE teachers can best serve their children. It is not surprising that parents held a somewhat narrow view of the itinerant's roles and responsibilities and that as they advocated for their children, they stressed the importance of "hands-on" services for their children.

**Supervisors.** Of all four panels, the ratings of the supervisor panel members differed the most from each other: They reached consensus on only 39% of all the responsibilities listed on their questionnaire. One third of the responsibilities identified by the supervisor panel were related to the role of the consultant. The roles of

lifelong learner and team member were least differentiated of all the roles identified by the panel of supervisors. One reason for this disparity might be an ill-defined model of itinerant service delivery that provides divergent views on appropriate responsibilities of an itinerant ECSE teacher.

Implementing an effective model of itinerant service delivery that permits empirical study of its efficacy is contingent upon how supervisors and administrators best support itinerant ECSE teachers. Itinerants need the support of their supervisors to function effectively and grow professionally. Educators who prepare individuals for roles as special education supervisors must ensure that these supervisors understand essential elements of different service delivery models.

### Comparisons Across Panels

All four panels identified the following as roles of an itinerant ECSE teacher: assessor/monitor, consultant, and direct service provider. Although these results indicate similarities within each group, a great deal of diversity existed across the groups. Groups differed not only in the degree of consensus they reached about responsibilities associated with roles but also in the number of different responsibilities identified for each role. Not surprisingly, itinerant ECSE teachers identified the greatest number of roles and responsibilities. However, ECE teachers who, after the itinerant teachers themselves, had the most direct experience with the itinerant service delivery model identified the fewest number of responsibilities.

Parents and early childhood teachers rated the importance of the itinerant ECSE teacher as a direct service provider much higher than did either itinerant ECSE teachers or their supervisors. This could be problematic

if local education agencies (LEAs) adopt a consultative approach to itinerant service delivery because consumers of those services might not understand this aspect of an itinerant's role.

Each panel identified one or more roles that were associated with teaming and provision of related services (i.e., service coordinator, team member, IEP developer). These roles are associated with activities that are indirectly related to instruction and do not occur on a regular basis. It appears that responsibilities associated with these roles are not well defined, as roles that emerged from individual panels' responses reflected similar activities and yet differed qualitatively. The results indicate that panels are more likely to achieve consensus on those responsibilities executed on a regular basis rather than those executed incidentally throughout the year.

The role of the service coordinator seemed to be the least well defined of all the roles. Although three of the four panels identified the role of service coordinator as associated with itinerant service delivery, panels were least likely to achieve consensus on the importance of responsibilities associated with that role. In this study, the stakeholders identified service coordination activities as within the realm of the itinerant's responsibilities, but they offered different perspectives concerning the kinds of service coordination activities for which itinerant ECSE teachers are responsible, as well as the relative importance of those responsibilities. At the least, it would appear that there would have been consensus about service coordination with regard to goals and services specified on the IEP or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). Given the complexity of ECSE service delivery within inclusive settings, parents could benefit greatly from the assistance of itinerant teachers in coordinating services for their children.

In essence, these results tell us that what is important to each group is based on the group members' own experiences; that is, individuals within each group may not be aware of those aspects of the role that are not within their own experience. It is also reasonable to assume that experiences may vary as a function of setting. Itinerant services provided in Head Start might be perceived differently from itinerant services provided in a community-based childcare program. However, given that there are no overall guidelines for the delivery of itinerant services across the country, this is not surprising. Professionals in the field need to develop a common understanding of the role of the itinerant ECSE teacher.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Several factors may affect the validity of these Delphi studies. First, using Delphi methodology assumes that the members of the Delphi panel are experts and can

provide accurate and useful information. Members of the panels recruited for these studies, however, could not be considered "experts" because there is no established "recommended practice" for the implementation of the itinerant ECSE service delivery model. We did recruit panelists who were experienced in the use of and familiar with the model as implemented in their locales. The diversity of perspectives evident in this research is reflective of the myriad ways in which the itinerant model is implemented across the country (i.e., responses reflect what *is* rather than what *should be* because *should be* is limited by the respondent's own experience).

Results may also be compromised by the sampling strategies used to identify the Delphi groups. Although we attempted to randomly select qualified panelists to participate in the studies, we could not recruit a sufficient number via truly random selection to complete the studies. We resorted to another method that was less purposeful and may have resulted in a sample of constituents who were not representative of the target populations. For example, parents were on average 35 years of age—considerably older than most parents of preschoolers. Early childhood teachers appeared to be more educated and experienced than the average early childhood teacher, based on our experience with community service providers. Most respondents also were White. In addition, parents, itinerant ECSE teachers, and supervisors reported that the majority of children served in this model were children with language delays. No information is available from this study on whether similar results would have been obtained from participants whose experience with itinerant services related to other populations of children.

The majority of parents also reported that their children were served in community-based preschool programs. The majority of early childhood teachers worked in these community-based programs as well. Itinerant ECSE teachers reported working primarily in preschool settings, while supervisors identified Head Start as the setting most often associated with itinerant services. It could be argued that not only are these different *settings* but also different *systems* for the provision of overall early childhood services, reflective of a range of issues, including compliance with regulations (e.g., Head Start), administration, resources, and staffing. Future studies with larger, more diverse panels are needed to further explore the validity of these results.

Finally, the rating system may have made it difficult for panelists to clearly rate responsibilities because they were asked to consider two criteria when rating each responsibility. As a result, we were unable to clearly identify those responsibilities that are critical to effective itinerant service delivery *or* those responsibilities that should be addressed in preservice or in-service training programs.

## Significance

Despite these limitations, patterns that emerged in this study can contribute to further awareness of the perspectives that primary stakeholders may bring to understanding the itinerant teacher position and can inform personnel training. Although the diversity apparent across and within the groups is not surprising, based on the differing perspectives from which participants were responding, it is alarming because it also underscores the idiosyncratic nature of the itinerant ECSE service delivery model, which is dependent not only on the particular point of view of the respondent but also potentially on the type of setting in which this experience was gained.

That both parents and early childhood teachers appeared to believe more strongly than itinerant teachers and supervisors in the importance of direct service provision could be related to a lack of resources and supports in community-based programs. This could refer to both material resources and the skills (perceived or real) of the early childhood teachers in those settings. Conversely, itinerant teachers and supervisors emphasized the importance of consultation, perhaps reflecting systems that have more supports or procedures in place that enable consultation to be a viable model.

Buysse and Wesley (1993) discussed the changing role of the early childhood special educator. They argued that professional roles in ECSE were changing and expanding beyond that of classroom teaching and described the risks involved in role conflict and role overload. More than 10 years later, the accuracy of Buysse and Wesley's insight is evident. Calls for evidence-based practice underscore the importance of understanding the causal relationships between interventions and outcomes. In the case of itinerant ECSE service delivery, however, this study indicates a general lack of understanding of the nature of the intervention itself or the role of the persons who are "delivering" the intervention.

Consistent implementation of practices recommended by the Division on Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children (Sandall et al., 2004) for use in community-based settings can only occur if teachers and other staff members are prepared to provide them on a daily basis—not once a week while the itinerant teacher is present. Evidence-based principles of instruction and intervention (Horn, Lieber, Sandall, & Schwartz, 2001; Wolery, Ault, & Doyle, 1992) not only facilitate learning but also promote generalization of knowledge and skills that enable young children with special needs to interact successfully in typical ECE environments (Wolery, 2004). These practices are dependent upon consistent implementation in daily routines and activities. If direct service delivery is the primary emphasis of the itinerant model, what is the

extent to which IEP-related instruction occurs in the absence of the itinerant ECSE teacher (McWilliam et al., 2001)?

Based on these principles, many researchers have argued that a consultative approach, if properly implemented, is the preferred method of itinerant service delivery (Buysse, Schulte, Pierce, & Terry, 1994; McWilliam et al., 2001; Odom et al., 1999). Indeed, the role of consultation is broadly addressed in DEC's recommended practices (McWilliam, 2005). A common understanding of how this role is actualized in practice has not occurred, however. In addition to understanding the role of the itinerant professional as a consultant, the early childhood teacher's role as a partner in the consultation process must be considered (Kontos & Diamond, 1997; Lieber et al., 1998).

How can evidence-based practices be applied to the inclusion model if, based on current practices as identified by these studies, the nature of itinerant services to support inclusion is perceived and valued so differently by so many different constituents? In addition, how can systems reform occur when there is so little agreement as to what constitutes effective itinerant services? This research may have critical implications for the continued support of inclusion in early childhood settings and should be a call to action for conducting a national dialogue regarding the importance of coherent indirect service delivery models.

This examination of the perceptions of parents, ECE teachers, supervisors, and itinerant ECSE teachers offers "baseline data" that describe how this service delivery model is implemented currently and how the model is perceived by constituents across the country. This study also suggests a perspective that may or may not be consistent with the recommended practices advocated by leaders in the field (McWilliam et al., 2001; Odom et al., 1999).

Providing Part B 619 services to young children with special needs in community-based settings is becoming more common in response to parent preference, least restrictive environment considerations, and increasing interest in service provision within natural environments (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). The nature of Part B 619 services shifts dramatically when provided through an itinerant model. It is imperative that the profession critically examine what an effective itinerant ECSE teacher would do during visits to the children on his or her caseload. This is the essential challenge to defining and improving itinerant ECSE services. ♦

## NOTES

1. These centers are funded by the Office of Special Education Programs.
2. Samples of all questionnaires are available from the authors.

## REFERENCES

- Buysse, V., Schulte, A. C., Pierce, P., & Terry, D. (1994). Models and

- styles of consultation: Preferences of professionals in early intervention. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 18, 302–310.
- Buysse, V., & Wesley, P. W. (1993). The identity crisis in early childhood special education: A call for professional role clarification. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 13, 418–429.
- Cannon, G., Idol, L., & West, J. (1992). Educating students with mild handicaps in general classrooms: Essential teaching practices. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 25, 300–317.
- Clayton, M. J. (1997). Delphi: A technique to harness expert opinion for critical decision-making tasks in education. *Educational Psychology*, 17, 373–387.
- Dailey, A. L., & Holmberg, J. (1990). Delphi: A catalytic strategy for motivating curriculum revision by faculty. *Community/Junior College Quarterly of Research and Practice*, 13, 129–136.
- Dalkey, N. C. (n.d.). *The Delphi methodology*. Retrieved November 5, 2003, from <http://www.fernuni-hagen.de/ZIFF/v2-ch45a.htm>
- Delbecq, A., Van de Ven, A., & Gustafson, D. (1986). *Group techniques for program planning: A guide to nominal group and Delphi processes*. Middleton, WI: Green Briar Press.
- Dinnebeil, L. A., & McInerney, W. (2000, December). *Project DIRECT: Defining itinerant roles for early childhood teachers*. A presentation at the national DEC conference, Albuquerque, NM.
- Dinnebeil, L. A., McInerney, W., Roth, J., & Ramaswamy, V. (2001). Itinerant early childhood special education services: Service delivery in one state. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 24, 36–45.
- Horn, E. L., Li, J., Sandall, S., & Schwartz, S. (2000). Supporting young children's IEP goals in inclusive settings through embedded learning opportunities. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 20, 208–223.
- Horn, E., Lieber, J., Sandall, S., & Schwartz, I. (2001). Embedded learning opportunities as an instructional strategy for supporting children's learning in inclusive programs. In M. Ostrosky & S. Sandall (Eds.), *Teaching strategies: What to do to support young children's development* (Vol. 3). Denver, CO: Division for Early Childhood.
- Johnson, L. J., & LaMontagne, M. J. (1993). Using content analysis to examine the verbal or written communication of stakeholders within early intervention. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 17, 73–79.
- Kontos, S., & Diamond, K. (1997). Preparing practitioners to provide early intervention services in inclusive settings. In P. J. Winton, J. A. McCollum, & C. Catlett (Eds.), *Reforming personnel preparation in early intervention: Issues, models, and practical strategies* (pp. 393–410). Baltimore: Brookes.
- Lieber, J., Capell, K., Sandall, S., Wolfberg, P., Horn, E., & Beckman, P. (1998). Inclusive preschool programs: Teachers' beliefs and practices. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 13, 87–105.
- Linstone, H. A., & Turoff, M. (2002). *The Delphi method: Techniques and applications*. Retrieved November 5, 2003, from <http://www.is.njit.edu/pubs/delphibook/ch1.html>
- McWilliam, R. A. (2005). DEC recommended practices: Interdisciplinary models. In *DEC recommended practices: A comprehensive guide for practical application in early intervention/early childhood special education* (pp. 127–146). Longmont, CO: Sopris West.
- McWilliam, R. A., Wolery, M., & Odom, S. L. (2001). Instructional perspectives in inclusive preschool classrooms. In M. J. Guralnick (Ed.), *Early childhood inclusion: Focus on change* (pp. 503–530). Baltimore: Brookes.
- Murry, J. W., & Hammons, J. O. (1995). Delphi: A versatile methodology for conducting qualitative research. *Review of Higher Education*, 18, 423–436.
- Odom, S. L., Horn, E., Marquart, J. M., Hanson, M. J., Wolfberg, P., Beckman, P., et al. (1999). On the forms of inclusion: Organizational context and individualized service models. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 22, 185–199.
- Sandall, S., Hemmeter, M. L., Smith, B. J., & McLean, M. (2004). *DEC recommended practices: A comprehensive guide for practical application in early intervention/early childhood special education*. Longmont, CO: Sopris West.
- Stayton, V. D., Miller, P. S., & Dinnebeil, L. A. (2003). (Eds.). *DEC personnel preparation in early childhood special education: Implementing the DEC recommended practices*. Longmont, CO: Sopris West.
- Striffler, N., & Fire, N. (1999). Embedding personnel development into early intervention service delivery: Elements in the process. *Infants and Young Children*, 11, 50–61.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2002). *24th annual report to Congress*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Wilhelm, W. J. (2001). Alchemy of the oracle: The Delphi technique. *The Delta Pi Epsilon Journal*, 43, 6–26.
- Wolery, M. (2004). Recommended practices in child-focused interventions. In *DEC recommended practices: A comprehensive guide for practical application in early intervention/early childhood special education* (pp. 71–106). Longmont, CO: Sopris West.
- Wolery, M., Ault, M. E., & Doyle, P. (1992). *Teaching students with moderate to severe disabilities: Use of response prompting strategies*. White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Zoski, K., & Jurs, S. (1989). Priority determination in surveys: An application of the scree test. *Evaluation Review*, 14, 214–219.

Copyright of Topics in Early Childhood Special Education is the property of PRO-ED and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.