



Questions That Educators Can Ask About the Participation of Students With Disabilities in School Reform and Improvement Models

About This Resource

Questions That Educators Can Ask About the Participation of Students With Disabilities in School Reform and Improvement Models is intended to help educators consider strategies that can be used to improve the participation of students with disabilities in comprehensive school reform (CSR) and improvement models. Researchers report that externally developed school reform models are being implemented in thousands of schools, impacting millions of students throughout the United States.¹ National data suggest that students with disabilities are among the large number of students who receive services in schools at which CSR models are in place. According to the latest data available, more than five million students, ages 6–21, received services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Approximately 50% of these students received these services in regular education classrooms approximately 80% of the time.² Therefore, for a majority of their time, the majority of students with disabilities are receiving special education services in regular education classrooms.

In this context, educators are faced with increasingly diverse classrooms, including students with a wide range of learning needs that may be attributed to a disability. *Questions That Educators Can Ask* provides educators with strategies to ensure that students with disabilities have access to learning opportunities offered through CSR models.

Building From CSRQ (Comprehensive School Reform Quality) Center Reports

Questions That Educators Can Ask advances the work of CSRQ Center Reports. These reports are a series of “Consumer Reports”-like reviews and supplemental guidance on the effectiveness and quality of leading elementary, middle, and high school CSR models and Education Service Providers (ESPs). The CSRQ Center does not conduct field research. Rather, the CSRQ Center’s researchers gather and review existing studies and evidence of the effectiveness and quality to provide ratings on CSR models and ESPs. The production of these reports is guided by the CSRQ Center’s Quality Review Tool, or QRT. The QRT provides the criteria and procedures for independent, fair, and credible reviews of models. Development of the QRT process involved several steps. First, the CSRQ Center’s staff developed review

¹ Borman, G. D., Hewes, G. M., Overman, L. T., & Brown, S. (2002). *Comprehensive school reform and student achievement: A meta-analysis*. Baltimore, MD: Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk.

² U.S. Department of Education. (2002). *Twenty-fourth annual report to Congress on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*. Retrieved June 5, 2006, from <http://www.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/osep/2002/index.html>

frameworks in consultation with some of the nation's most respected education researchers, program evaluators, and school improvement experts. The QRT also drew on prior and current efforts to conduct rigorous research reviews, including standards set by the U.S. Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse. Then, the QRT was reviewed, piloted, and revised with the support of the CSRQ Center's Advisory Committee, a nationally respected panel of experts that includes leading education practitioners, methodologists, and researchers from a variety of fields, including education, sociology, psychology, and economics.

Each model in each CSRQ Center Report is evaluated on the following dimensions of quality:

- Category 1: Evidence of positive effects on student achievement
- Category 2: Evidence of positive effects on additional outcomes, such as reduced dropout rates or improved discipline
- Category 3: Evidence of positive effects on parent, family, and community involvement
- Category 4: Evidence of link between research and the model's design
- Category 5: Evidence of services and support to schools to enable successful implementation

Enhancing the Participation of Students with Disabilities in Comprehensive School Reform Models

Using information from the *CSRQ Center Report on Elementary School CSR Models*, this guide provides information about specific features of elementary school CSR models that address the needs of students with disabilities. The guide provides educators with suggestions about strategies to enhance the engagement and progress of students with disabilities in school reform models. The guide also integrates the work of the CSRQ Center with knowledge and resources gleaned through the work of the American Institutes for Research (AIR) on other national technical assistance centers, such as the Access Center, which is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.

Whenever possible, CSRQ Center Reports offer information on model results for specific types of school settings and for specific types of student groups, such as students with disabilities and English language learners. Information about students with disabilities was the basis for *Enhancing the Participation of Students with Disabilities in Comprehensive School Reform Models*, which was produced by the CSRQ Center and released in May 2006 (see text box).

For *Questions That Educators Can Ask*, researchers collected descriptive information about how each model addresses the needs of students with disabilities through seven components: organization and governance, curriculum and instruction, scheduling and grouping, technology, family and community involvement, monitoring student progress and performance, and professional development and technical assistance. These components provide a useful framework for administrators and educators as they make decisions to select and implement particular models. (These components were also used in the *Enhancing the Participation* guide.)

This resource is not a review of empirical evidence, nor was an empirical process used to synthesize the considerations described in it. For reference to specific elementary school models, readers are encouraged to review the CSRQ Center's *Enhancing the Participation* guide.

Questions That Educators Can Ask also relies on professional content offered by national technical assistance centers, such as the [Access Center: Improving Outcomes for All Students K–8](#), which is funded by the [U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs](#). Professionals from the Access Center provide technical assistance to state and school personnel to facilitate the participation and progress of students with disabilities in the general education curriculum. In these venues, technical assistance staff work closely with educators to implement strategies that often complement school improvement programs. This resource offers considerations for incorporating these strategies into school improvement efforts, therefore, enhancing the participation of students with disabilities in the general education curriculum.

Using This Resource

Questions That Educators Can Ask challenges educators to think about the broad range of students who may be affected by school reform and improvement models and provides educators with considerations for seven components of school reform models. Model developers, publishers, administrators, and school personnel can use this resource as the foundation for activities that seek to ensure that students with disabilities participate in school reform and improvement efforts. All students are unique, including students with disabilities. Therefore, educators need to consider the academic and functional implications of a particular disability and not just the disability label. This resource can be helpful in enhancing the breadth of school reform and improvement models and their ability to serve a diverse range of students.

Consideration Checklist

Organization and Governance

- Are instructional leaders and professionals with experience in addressing the needs of students with disabilities included in the organization and governance of this model?
- Does the model’s structure enable collaboration among a broad range of professionals, including general and special education professionals?
- Do parents and families of students with disabilities have opportunities to contribute to the organization and governance of the model?
- Does the model’s components reflect and adhere to special education regulations and policy?

Curriculum and Instruction

- Can the curriculum be adapted, without affecting the integrity or rigor of the curriculum, to accommodate students with disabilities?
- Will educators be able to use differentiated instruction strategies to facilitate the participation of students with disabilities?

- Does the model enable students to engage in the curriculum in multiple ways and are students able to demonstrate their learning in diverse ways (universal design principles)?

Scheduling and Grouping

- Is the model's schedule flexible to meet the needs of students with disabilities and will the schedule impact the ability of students with disabilities to receive support services?
- Does the model use flexible grouping strategies or innovative classroom arrangements that allow for interaction between students with and without disabilities?
- Do educators have skills and knowledge to work in co-teaching and diverse grouping arrangements?

Technology

- Can technology and assistive technology be used in instructional delivery to facilitate student engagement in the curriculum and as a means for students to demonstrate their learning?
- Do staff have knowledge and skills to incorporate the use of technology in educational delivery?
- Is technology used to capture data about student performance to facilitate the ability of educators to modify instruction on a continuous basis?
- Are parents and families of students with disabilities invited into the school to learn about the technology, and are there opportunities for students to use technology at home?

Monitoring Student Progress and Performance

- Do data collection and assessment measures include tools to determine the progress of students with disabilities?
- Do educators receive training and guidance on assessment techniques related to students with disabilities?
- Are students with disabilities included in all classroom, school, and state assessments?

Family and Community Involvement

- Are families of students with disabilities included in family outreach?
- Are community organizations that serve students with disabilities included in communication or outreach activities?

- Do communication materials targeted at families and communities refer to the impact of the model on diverse student populations?

Professional Development and Technical Assistance

- Are professional development opportunities available to educators that focus on issues related to students with disabilities?
- Do professional development and technical assistance services involve opportunities for professional exchange between general and special educators?
- Does the model encourage professional development opportunities available through special education and disability-related sources, such as the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs?

Additional Resources

Questions That Educators Can Ask builds on the work of other resources produced by the CSRQ Center and the Access Center and is intended to be one tool that educators can use to enhance their ability to select and implement school improvement models. Readers are encouraged to use these additional resources.

CSRQ Center

The CSRQ Center (<http://www.csrq.org>) is operated by AIR and funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, through the Comprehensive School Reform Initiative Grant (S332B030012). The CSRQ Center's mission is to provide timely and reliable tools and technical assistance to support urban and rural educators and education decision makers in choosing the highest-quality CSR models to meet locally defined needs. The CSRQ Center's goal is to help education decision makers identify and apply "what works" in the area of CSR that, in turn, will raise student achievement and improve other important student outcomes for millions of children. To meet its mission, the Center produces CSRQ Center Reports and makes them widely available; develops partnerships with communities and education and policy organizations; and provides technical assistance to selected states, districts, and schools through state education agencies. *Questions That Educators Can Ask* is one forum through which the CSRQ Center provides technical assistance. Several other resources are also available from the CSRQ Center:

- *CSRQ Center Reports* is a series of reports that provides evidence through consumer-friendly reviews of the effectiveness and quality of widely implemented elementary, middle, and high school CSR models and ESPs.
- *Moving Forward: A Guide to Selecting and Implementing Comprehensive School Reform Models* is a train-the-trainer workshop that helps educators select, implement, and evaluate CSR and improvement models and programs.
- *Enhancing the Participation of Students with Disabilities in CSR Models* helps readers to acquire specific strategies that are related to elementary school reform models to facilitate the participation of students with disabilities in such models.

The Access Center

The Access Center (<http://www.k8accesscenter.org>) is a national technical assistance center that is also operated by AIR and funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs. Drawing from national legislation, such as the No Child Left Behind Act and IDEA 1997, the Access Center is designed to connect states and districts with research-based practices, tools, and materials that can help students with disabilities access the general education curriculum. The Access Center also specializes in helping decision makers use data to improve instruction and services for students with disabilities. This is accomplished through a variety of technical assistance strategies, including direct consultation, Web-based services, and information-sharing communities for both districts and states. Several other resources are also available from the Access Center:

- *Strategies to Improve Access to the General Education Curriculum* presents an overview of strategies to increase the participation and progress of students with disabilities in rigorous academic content.
- *Enhancing Your Instruction through Differentiation* delivers information and tools to technical assistance providers and district and State personnel about implementing differentiated instruction.
- *Universal Design for Learning (UDL)* provides an overview of UDL and offers suggestions on how to implement UDL in school and classroom settings.