

University of Vermont

ScholarWorks @ UVM

College of Education and Social Services
Faculty Publications

College of Education and Social Services

Winter 2008

Final report: Project EVOLVE (Expanding and validating options for learning through variations in education).

Michael Giangreco
michael.giangreco@uvm.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/cessfac>



Part of the [Special Education and Teaching Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Giangreco, M. F. (2008). Final report: Project EVOLVE (Expanding and validating options for learning through variations in education). Burlington, VT: University of Vermont, Center on Disability and Community Inclusion.

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Education and Social Services at ScholarWorks @ UVM. It has been accepted for inclusion in College of Education and Social Services Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ UVM. For more information, please contact donna.omalley@uvm.edu.



**U.S. Department of Education
Grant Performance Report (ED 524B)
Project Status Chart**

OMB No. 1890-0004
Exp. 10-31-2007

PR/Award # (11 characters): H324M020007

SECTION A - Performance Objectives Information and Related Performance Measures Data (See Instructions. Use as many pages as necessary.)

1. Project Objective Check if this is a status update for the previous budget period.

To identify and describe a series of existing service delivery support strategies that have not yet been sufficiently described in the professional literature, and are underutilized.

1.a. Performance Measure	Measure Type	Quantitative Data					
		Target			Actual Performance Data		
		Raw Number	Ratio	%	Raw Number	Ratio	%
Number of identified and web-posted additional alternatives	Program; Project		/		15	/	NA

1.b. Performance Measure	Measure Type	Quantitative Data					
		Target			Actual Performance Data		
		Raw Number	Ratio	%	Raw Number	Ratio	%
Number of published, refereed, journal articles pertaining to Objective 1.	GPRA; Program; Project		/		6	/	NA

Explanation of Progress (Include Qualitative Data and Data Collection Information)

1.a. This objective was substantively achieved during the previous reporting periods and reported on during earlier performance reports. During the period of the entire grant, a total number of 16 different alternatives to overreliance on paraprofessionals were identified, described, and posted on the project web site. These include: (1) resource reallocation, (2) co-teaching, (3) dual-certified teachers (general and special education), (4) building capacity and increasing ownership of teachers and special educators, (5) reassigning roles, (6) differentiated teacher roles, (7) improving working conditions of special educators, (8) improving working conditions of teachers, (9) peer support strategies, (10) self-determination (involving students decisions about their own supports), (11) information sharing (with parents, teachers, etc.), (12) physical placement and rearrangement (for access to regular class and ensure participation), (13) paraprofessional pools, (14) temporary assistants with corresponding fade plans, (15) rotating paraprofessionals, and (16) changes in IEPs (how services are described). Information and descriptions about these alternatives are posted on the project web site as sub links under the headings, *Project EVOLVE Planning Tools* and *News and Updates*.

1.b. This objective was substantively achieved during the previous reporting periods and reported on during earlier performance reports. During the period of the entire grant, a total number of 6 different, referred, journal articles were published that were completed dedicated to or included some in-

formation about alternatives to overreliance on paraprofessionals. As previously reported, in the fall of 2004 the following article was published in a peer-reviewed journal:

Giangreco, M.F., Halvorsen, A., Doyle, M.B., & Broer, S.M. (2004). Alternatives to overreliance on paraprofessionals in inclusive schools. *Journal of Special Education Leadership*, 17(2), 82-90.

Since the last performance report, five additional articles have been published that are focused on, or include some information about, alternatives to overreliance on paraprofessionals. These journal articles include:

Giangreco, M.F., & Broer, S.M. (2005). Questionable utilization of paraprofessionals in inclusive schools: Are we addressing symptoms or causes? *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 20, 10-26.

Giangreco, M.F., Yuan, S., McKenzie, B., Cameron, P., & Fialka, J. (2005). "Be careful what you wish for...": Five reasons to be concerned about the assignment of individual paraprofessionals. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 37(5), 28-34.

Broer, S.M., Doyle, M.B., & Giangreco, M.F. (2005). Perspectives of students with intellectual disabilities about their experiences with paraprofessional supports. *Exceptional Children*, 71, 415-430.

Giangreco, M.F., Smith, C.S., Pinckney, E. (2006). Addressing the paraprofessional dilemma in an inclusive school: A program description. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 31(3), 215-229.

Giangreco, M.F., Broer, S.M. (2007). School-based screening to determine overreliance on paraprofessionals. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 22(3), 149-158.

At the time of submission of the final report at least one additional article is being submitted for publication review that provides culminating data regarding the 26 schools that implemented their Project EVOLVE Action Plans.



**U.S. Department of Education
Grant Performance Report (ED 524B)
Project Status Chart**

OMB No. 1890-0004
Exp. 10-31-2007

PR/Award # (11 characters): H324M020007

SECTION A - Performance Objectives Information and Related Performance Measures Data (See Instructions. Use as many pages as necessary.)

2. Project Objective Check if this is a status update for the previous budget period.

To develop and refine a self-assessment tool to assist schools to reflect on their own status regarding service delivery strategies designed to support students with disabilities in general education classrooms.

2.a. Performance Measure	Measure Type	Quantitative Data					
Development and distribution of a self-assessment tool pertaining to objective 2	Program; Project	Target			Actual Performance Data		
		Raw Number	Ratio	%	Raw Number	Ratio	%
		1	1 /1	100	1	1 /1	100

Explanation of Progress (Include Qualitative Data and Data Collection Information)

2a. This objective was substantively achieved during previous annual reporting periods and reported on during earlier performance reports. The project developed and refined the following tool that was distributed to all project sites and posted on our project web site so that it was available to the public at <http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/evolve/gsa.html>.
 Giangreco, M.F., & Broer, S.M. (2003). *Guidelines for selecting alternatives to overreliance on paraprofessionals*. Center on Disability and Community Inclusion, University of Vermont: Burlington, VT.



**U.S. Department of Education
Grant Performance Report (ED 524B)
Project Status Chart**

OMB No. 1890-0004
Exp. 10-31-2007

PR/Award # (11 characters): H324M020007

SECTION A - Performance Objectives Information and Related Performance Measures Data (See Instructions. Use as many pages as necessary.)

3. Project Objective Check if this is a status update for the previous budget period.

To develop and refine a model planning process (based on an adaptation of validated problem-solving methods), to assist schools to identify locally relevant solutions by: (a) adopting existing strategies, (b) adapting existing strategies, or (c) inventing new strategies, that facilitate the education of students with disabilities in general education settings.

3.a. Performance Measure	Measure Type	Quantitative Data					
Develop and refine the model planning process.	Program; Project	Target			Actual Performance Data		
		Raw Number	Ratio	%	Raw Number	Ratio	%
		1	1 / 1		1	1 / 1	100

Explanation of Progress (Include Qualitative Data and Data Collection Information)

3a. This objective was substantively achieved during previous annual reporting periods and reported on during earlier performance reports. The project developed and refined the following model planning process that was distributed to all project sites and posted on our project web site so that it was available to the public at <http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/evolve/gsa.html>.
 Giangreco, M.F., & Broer, S.M. (2003). *Guidelines for selecting alternatives to overreliance on paraprofessionals*. Center on Disability and Community Inclusion, University of Vermont: Burlington, VT.



**U.S. Department of Education
Grant Performance Report (ED 524B)
Project Status Chart**

OMB No. 1890-0004
Exp. 10-31-2007

PR/Award # (11 characters): H324M020007

SECTION A - Performance Objectives Information and Related Performance Measures Data (See Instructions. Use as many pages as necessary.)

4. Project Objective Check if this is a status update for the previous budget period.

To collect evaluative data on the process, implementation, and outcomes of schools' planning regarding service delivery support strategies to facilitate the education of students with disabilities in general education settings.

4.a. Performance Measure	Measure Type	Quantitative Data					
Number of general education schools where data were collected	Program; Project	Target			Actual Performance Data		
		Raw Number	Ratio	%	Raw Number	Ratio	%
		24	24 /24	100	27	27 /24	+100%

4.b. Performance Measure	Measure Type	Quantitative Data					
Number of consumer feedback questionnaires collected from planning team members on the use of the Project EVOLVE planning tool.	Program; Project	Target			Actual Performance Data		
		Raw Number	Ratio	%	Raw Number	Ratio	%
			/		213	/	NA

4.c. Performance Measure	Measure Type	Quantitative Data					
Number of model demonstration site schools where demographic and planning data were collected.	Program; Project	Target			Actual Performance Data		
		Raw Number	Ratio	%	Raw Number	Ratio	%
		24	24 /24		27	27 /24	+100%

4.d. Performance Measure	Measure Type	Quantitative Data					
Number of model demonstration site schools where demographic and planning data were collected.	Program; Project	Target			Actual Performance Data		
		Raw Number	Ratio	%	Raw Number	Ratio	%
			/		75	/	NA

4.e. Performance Measure	Measure Type	Quantitative Data					
Number of observations conducted at project sites.	Program; Project	Target			Actual Performance Data		
		Raw Number	Ratio	%	Raw Number	Ratio	%
			/		29	/	NA

4.f. Performance Measure	Measure Type	Quantitative Data					
Number of impact/outcome reports collected from schools at the end of second year with the project.	Program; Project	Target			Actual Performance Data		
		Raw Number	Ratio	%	Raw Number	Ratio	%
			/		26	26 /26	+100%

Explanation of Progress (Include Qualitative Data and Data Collection Information)

- 4a. This objective was substantively achieved during previous annual reporting periods and reported on during earlier performance reports. We established a total of 27 model demonstration sites in six states (CA, CT, KS, NH, VT, WI). The sites included 11 elementary schools, 3 elementary / middle schools (grades K-8), 8 middle schools, 2 high schools, and 2 central schools (K-12). A total of 26 sites went through the complete model planning process. One school, in Wisconsin, started the process and as a result of their use of the project's screening tool, the team made a decision that they did not need to move forward with the remainder of the process. These sites were divided into three different cohorts that started and completed data collection at various points in time (i.e., Cohort I: Fall 2002-Spring 2005; Cohort II: Fall 2003-Spring 2006; Cohort III: Fall 2004-Spring 2007). A complete list of the schools is maintained on the Project EVOLVE web site at the following URL: <http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/evolve/sites.html>
- 4b. This objective was partially achieved during previous annual reporting periods and reported on during earlier performance reports. New information generated during this final reporting period is included in this section. After teams at project sites completed their action-planning, each team member was asked to complete a 2-page, Likert-style, consumer feedback questionnaire regarding their participation in using the planning process. During the past reporting periods we collected questionnaires from 195 team members including teachers, special educators, administrators, parents of children with disabilities, person with disabilities, paraprofessionals, "critical friends", and others. We received an additional 18 questionnaires, bringing the total to 213 questionnaires. This represents a response rate of 87% (213/244). Respondents rated their "level of participation" as follows: (a) 73% (n=153) "Very Involved"; (b) 18%

(n=38) "Somewhat Involved"; and (c) 9% (n=19) "Minimally Involved". All received data have been coded and imported into SAS for data analysis. Initial data analysis indicates that the vast majority of respondents either "agree" or "strongly agree" that the Project EVOLVE model planning process: (a) is an important activity for their school (99%), (b) is a logical process (98%), (c) is easy to use (89%), (d) helped the respondent gain insights about educational support issues in their school (95%), (e) helped the respondent understand the perspectives of others about educational support issues (98%), (f) helped the team select appropriate priorities based on the screening and self-assessment steps (99%), (g) helped the team develop an appropriate action plan to address their self-identified priorities (98%), and (h) is worthwhile enough that the respondent would recommend its use to other schools who are interested in improving their educational supports for students with disabilities within general education settings (97%). Overall, 0% of respondents rated the process "poor", 8% "fair", 48% "good", and 44% "excellent". Respondents were also asked to provide narrative comments on strengths and weakness of the tool as well as suggestions for improvement. Those comments are being imported into a qualitative text-sorting program, *HyperQual3*, for theme analysis once all the surveys have been submitted.

- 4c. This objective was partially achieved during previous annual reporting periods and reported on during earlier performance reports. New information generated during this final reporting period is included in this section. Varying types of data have been collected from all schools in all three cohorts. These data include: (a) ongoing, longitudinal demographic data over three school years (e.g., total enrollment, number of students on IEPs, number of special education paraprofessionals, number of 1:1 paraprofessionals, number of special educators), (b) team membership information (e.g., configuration, numbers), (c) each team's screening responses to 16 items designed to assist in determining whether their respective schools are overreliant on paraprofessionals, (d) each team's self-assessment responses to 20 items pertaining to positive school practices associated with avoiding overreliance on paraprofessionals, (e) each team's selected priorities for action based on the 20 items pertaining to positive school practices associated with avoiding overreliance on paraprofessionals, (f) each team's action and evaluation plan, and (g) a maintenance follow-up at the end of the third year for each school. All received data have been coded and imported into SAS for data analysis. The data set is complete for the 26 schools that completed the entire Project EVOLVE model planning process.
- 4d. This objective was partially achieved during previous annual reporting periods and reported on during earlier performance reports. New information generated during this final reporting period is included in this section. During the previous reporting periods, 68 individual, semi-structured interviews with 65 different people were completed with faculty and staff and the model demonstration sites. During the current reporting period the seven additional interviews were conducted, bring the total number for the project period to 75 individual interviews of 72 different people. On average interviews were approximately one-hour long. All interviews have been audio-taped and all have been transcribed into over 2,600 pages of text data. All transcribed interviews have been imported into a qualitative text-sorting program, *HyperQual3*, to facilitate coding and theme analysis. Coding and theme analysis are in progress. Given the volume of data and the time-consuming nature of qualitative data analysis, it will continue beyond the end of the project's funded period.
- 4e. This objective was partially achieved during previous annual reporting periods and reported on during earlier performance reports. New information generated during this final reporting period is included in this section. During the previous reporting period a total of 24 site observations were made at 22 different sites in Vermont, New Hampshire, Wisconsin and Kansas. During the current performance period five additional site observations have been conducted. All participating sites were visited and observational data recorded. A total of 248 school faculty have been observed during 88 hours of recorded observations resulting in over 500 pages of fieldnotes of observations in classrooms and other school environments. All observational fieldnotes have been imported into a qualitative text-sorting program, *HyperQual3*, to facilitate coding and theme analysis. Coding and theme analysis are in progress. Given the volume of data and the time-consuming nature of qualitative data analysis, it will continue beyond the end of the project's funded period.
- 4f. This objective was partially achieved during previous annual reporting periods and reported on during earlier performance reports. New information generated during this final reporting period is included in this section. At the end of each sites second full year of model demonstration implementation, each school's team submitted a written report of the impact and outcomes of the implementation of their action-plan. Although sites have flexibility in reporting, they were asked to follow a template for reporting that is embedded in the planning process and is linked to the evaluation component in their action plan. This reporting outline is found in p. 34 of the model planning process *Guidelines for Selecting Alternatives to Overreliance on Paraprofessionals* which can be downloaded from the project's web site at the following URL: <http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/evolve/gsa.html>
- We have received the impact/outcome reports from all 26 schools that completed the project's model planning process. All impact/outcome reports have been imported into a qualitative text-sorting program, *HyperQual3*, to facilitate coding and theme analysis. Coding and theme analysis are in progress. Given the volume of data and the time-consuming nature of qualitative data analysis, it will continue beyond the end of the project's funded period.



**U.S. Department of Education
Grant Performance Report (ED 524B)
Project Status Chart**

OMB No. 1890-0004
Exp. 10-31-2007

PR/Award # (11 characters): H324M020007

SECTION A - Performance Objectives Information and Related Performance Measures Data (See Instructions. Use as many pages as necessary.)

5. Project Objective Check if this is a status update for the previous budget period.

To collaborate with a national and statewide coalition of advisory partners to improve the quality of project activities and relevance to service providers, policy makers, families, and self-advocates.

5.a. Performance Measure	Measure Type	Quantitative Data					
		Target			Actual Performance Data		
		Raw Number	Ratio	%	Raw Number	Ratio	%
Maintain ongoing communication with state and national advisory council members.	Program; Project		/		NA	/	NA

Explanation of Progress (Include Qualitative Data and Data Collection Information)

5a. The project established and maintained both Vermont and National Advisory groups. The Vermont Advising Partners include individuals representing the following organizations: (a) *Vermont Department of Education*, (b) *Green Mountain Self-Advocates*, (c) *Vermont Parent Information Center*, (d) *Vermont Council of Administrators of Special Education*, (e) *Vermont Superintendents Association*, (f) *Vermont Principals Association*, (g) *Vermont School Boards Association*, (h) *Vermont NEA Paraeducator Task Force*, and (i) *Northeast Regional Resource Center*. Vermont Advising Partners met with project staff in May 2004, in conjunction with a meeting that will include school leaders from the 12 Vermont field-test sites. Additionally, the Project Director has maintained email, phone, and mail correspondence with the Vermont Advising Partners to keep them informed about project activities (e.g., sent publications) and to solicit their input.

As reported in earlier performance reports, the project also established a set of National Advising Partners. This set consists of representatives of the following organizations, the majority of whom comprise the original *IDEA Partnerships* members:

- National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services*
- CEC-ASPIIRE: Association of Service Providers Implementing IDEA Reforms in Education*
- CEC-ILIAD: IDEA Local Implementation by Partnerships Local Administrators*
- FAPE: Pacer Center*
- PMP: Policymaker Partnership (National Association of State Directors of Special Education)*

Since the original IDEA Partnerships Project (at CEC) ended, some of the partner organizations no longer exist in the original form; therefore they are no longer available as advising partners. Project EVOLVE maintains contact with the remaining National Advising Partners. Communication with National Advising Partners has been exclusively through email, phone, and mail correspondence to keep them informed about project activities and to solicit their input. The National Advising Partners also has a designated role to assist in the dissemination of information about the project through their networks of consumers and partners. They are sent Project EVOLVE publications as they become available so that they may share the findings with their constituents.



**U.S. Department of Education
Grant Performance Report (ED 524B)
Project Status Chart**

OMB No. 1890-0004
Exp. 10-31-2007

PR/Award # (11 characters): H324M020007

SECTION A - Performance Objectives Information and Related Performance Measures Data (See Instructions. Use as many pages as necessary.)

6. Project Objective Check if this is a status update for the previous budget period.

To maintain and extend a web site to provide up-to-date information regarding service delivery support strategies to facilitate the education of students with disabilities in general education settings.

6.a. Performance Measure	Measure Type	Quantitative Data					
		Target			Actual Performance Data		
Number of web pages	Program; Project	Raw Number	Ratio	%	Raw Number	Ratio	%
					/		300+

Explanation of Progress (Include Qualitative Data and Data Collection Information)

6a. A web site dedicated to Project EVOLVE was established during previous reporting periods. It has been maintained and extended at www.uvm.edu/~cdci/evolve/. This site contains a host of project-related information, documents, tools, and links to other sites; several hundred pages of html pages or multi-page pdf documents. The site is updated regularly and includes both recent and archived project materials. To date we have posted over 300 web pages. The Center on Disability and Community Inclusion at the University of Vermont intends to maintain and extend the web site contents after the federal funding period.



**U.S. Department of Education
Grant Performance Report (ED 524B)
Project Status Chart**

OMB No. 1890-0004
Exp. 10-31-2007

PR/Award # (11 characters): H324M020007

SECTION A - Performance Objectives Information and Related Performance Measures Data (See Instructions. Use as many pages as necessary.)

7. Project Objective Check if this is a status update for the previous budget period.

To disseminate the project's model steps, tools, and findings nationally through a variety of outlets and in a variety of media and formats.

7.a. Performance Measure	Measure Type	Quantitative Data					
Number of journal articles and book chapters published or in press.	GPRA; Program; Project	Target			Actual Performance Data		
		Raw Number	Ratio	%	Raw Number	Ratio	%
			/		13	/	NA

7.b. Performance Measure	Measure Type	Quantitative Data					
Number of national and regional project presentations.	Program; Project	Target			Actual Performance Data		
		Raw Number	Ratio	%	Raw Number	Ratio	%
			/		30	/	NA

Explanation of Progress (Include Qualitative Data and Data Collection Information)

7a. This objective was partially achieved during previous annual reporting periods and reported on during earlier performance reports. New information generated during this final reporting period is included in this section. The following is a list of the project's publications (N=13) divided into two categories: (a) peer-reviewed journal articles (n=10), and (b) book chapters (n=3) that were completely or partially supported project activities. Given the volume of data generated by this project, project staff anticipates writing one or more articles for publication submission that are listed here.

Journal articles:

Giangreco, M.F. (2003). Working with paraprofessionals. *Educational Leadership*, 61(2), 50-53.
 Giangreco, M.F., Halvorsen, A., Doyle, M.B., & Broer, S.M. (2004). Alternatives to overreliance on paraprofessionals in inclusive schools. *Journal of Special Education Leadership*, 17(2), 82-90.
 Giangreco, M.F., & Broer, S.M. (2005). Questionable utilization of paraprofessionals in inclusive schools: Are we addressing symptoms or causes? *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 20(1) 10-26.
 Giangreco, M.F., Yuan, S., McKenzie, B., Cameron, P., & Fialka, J. (2005). "Be careful what you wish for...": Five reasons to be concerned about the assignment of individual paraprofessionals. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 37(5), 28-34.

- Broer, S.M., Doyle, M.B., & Giangreco, M.F. (2005). Perspectives of students with intellectual disabilities about their experiences with paraprofessional supports. *Exceptional Children*, 71, 415-430.
- Giangreco, M.F., Smith, C.S., Pinckney, E. (2006). Addressing the paraprofessional dilemma in an inclusive school: A program description. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 31(3), 215-229.
- Giangreco, M.F. (2007). Extending inclusive opportunities. *Educational Leadership*, 64(5), 34-37.
- Giangreco, M.F., Broer, S.M. (2007). School-based screening to determine overreliance on paraprofessionals. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 22(3), 149-158.
- Causton-Theoharis, J., Giangreco, M.F., Doyle, M.B., & Vadasy, P.F. (2007). The "sous chefs" of literacy instruction: Guidelines for effective use of paraprofessionals. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 40(1), 57-62.
- Giangreco, M.F., Suter, J.C., & Doyle, M.B. (in press). Recent research on paraprofessionals in inclusion-oriented schools. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*.

Book Chapters:

- Giangreco, M.F., & Doyle, M.B. (2004). Directing paraprofessional work. In C.H. Kennedy & E.M. Horn (Eds.), *Including students with severe disabilities* (pp. 185-206). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Giangreco, M.F., & Doyle, M.B. (2007). Teacher assistants in inclusive schools. In L. Florian (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of special education* (pp. 429-439). London: Sage.
- Giangreco, M.F. (2006). Foundational concepts and practices for educating students with severe disabilities. In M.E. Snell & F. Brown (Eds.), *Instruction of students with severe disabilities* (6th ed., pp. 1-27). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education/Prentice-Hall.

- 7b. This objective was partially achieved during previous annual reporting periods and reported on during earlier performance reports. New information generated during this final reporting period is included in this section. The following is a list of the project's presentations (by Project Director, M. Giangreco and colleagues as noted below) divided into two categories: (a) national presentations (n=14), and (b) regional presentations (n=16).

National presentations:

- "The Paraeducator Conundrum: Concerns and Emerging Solutions" presented at the annual conference of TASH (Disability Advocacy Worldwide), Boston, MA, December 2002
- "Guidelines for Selecting Alternatives to Overreliance on Paraprofessionals," a poster session presented at the 2003 OSEP Research Project Directors' Conference, Arlington, VA, July 2003
- "Guidelines for Selecting Alternatives to Overreliance on Paraprofessionals" presented at the annual conference of TASH (Disability Advocacy Worldwide), Chicago, IL, December 2003
- "Alternatives to Overreliance on Paraprofessionals," a 90-minute national teleconference as part of the series *Effective Strategies to Access the General Education Curriculum and Achieve Inclusion Outcomes for Children with Significant Disabilities*, sponsored by TASH, Baltimore, MD, May 2004
- "Project EVOLVE: Expanding and Validating Options for Learning through Variations in Education" a poster session presented at the 2004 OSEP Research Project Directors' Conference, Washington, DC, July 2004
- "Questionable Utilization of Paraprofessionals: Are we addressing the symptoms or root causes?" presented at the annual conference of TASH (Disability Advocacy Worldwide), Reno, NV, November 2004
- "Questionable Utilization of Paraprofessionals: Are we addressing the symptoms or root causes?" presented at the annual conference of the Council for Exceptional Children, Baltimore, MD, April 2005
- "Project EVOLVE: Expanding and Validating Options for Learning through Variations in Education: Data and Dissemination" a poster session presented at the 2005 OSEP Research Project Directors' Conference, Washington, DC, July 2005
- "Perspectives of Students with Intellectual Disabilities About their Experiences with Paraprofessional Support" a poster session presented at the Alliance for Full Participation Summit 2005, Washington, DC, September 2005
- "Collaborative Leadership and Change to Address the Paraprofessional Dilemma in an Inclusive School" presented at the annual conference of TASH (Disability Advocacy Worldwide), Milwaukee, WI, (co-presenter, Carter Smith, Williston School District), November 2005
- "Collaborative Leadership and Change to Address the Paraprofessional Dilemma in an Inclusive School" presented at the annual conference of Council for Exceptional Children, Salt Lake City Utah, April 2006

- "Research on Alternatives to Overreliance on Paraprofessionals in Inclusive Schools" a breakout session to be presented at the 2006 OSEP Research Project Directors' Conference, Washington, DC, July 2006
- "Research on Alternatives to Overreliance on Paraprofessionals " a session to be presented at the annual conference of TASH (Disability Advocacy Worldwide), Baltimore, MD, November 2006
- "Paraprofessional Utilization, Effectiveness, and Career Development" presented research on alternatives to overreliance on paraprofessionals as part of a panel presentation to be presented at the 2007 OSEP Research Project Directors' Conference, Washington, DC, (other panelists included: R. Chopra, N. French, M. Gavilan, & B. Wilson), July 2007

Regional presentations:

- "Teachers, Special Educators & Paraprofessionals Working as a Team to Teach Students with Disabilities in General Education Classrooms" (co-presenter, Mary Beth Doyle), a two-day institute for school personnel sponsored by the Anchorage Public Schools, Anchorage, AK, August 2003
- "Paraprofessionals in Inclusive Classrooms," keynote address presented at the 6th Annual Best Practices Conference on Education for All Children, co-sponsored by the New Hampshire School Administrators Association, the New Hampshire Association of Special Education Administrators, the New Hampshire Department of Education and the Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire, Concord, NH, October 2003
- "Research and Practice Involving Paraprofessionals in Special Education," presented to a group of school administrators, co-sponsored by the Massachusetts Urban Project and the Education Development Center's Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative, Worcester, MA, November 2003
- "Critical Issues in the Work of Paraprofessionals to Support Students with Disabilities," a two-day conference for teachers, special educators, administrators and paraprofessionals sponsored by the Office of Education Outreach, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI, April 2004
- "Research and Practices Regarding Paraprofessionals in Inclusive Schools," a full-day workshop for school administrators, sponsored by the Vermont Principal's Leadership Development Institute, Montpelier, VT, May 2004
- "The Impact of Paraprofessional Service Delivery on Teacher Engagement," a breakout session offered at the 2nd Annual Conference on Effective Practices in Special Education and Rehabilitation: Interventions Across the Life Span, co-sponsored by the University of Utah and Utah State University, Salt Lake City, UT, June 2004
- "Special Education Paraprofessional Issues" training and consultation provided to the administrative leadership team of the New Bedford Public Schools, New Bedford, MA, February 2005
- "Questionable Utilization of Paraprofessionals in Inclusive Schools" presented to faculty and graduate students in the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA, February 2005
- "Practical Tools for Increasing Access to the General Education Curriculum by Students with Disabilities", scheduled presented to school-based professionals and faculty of higher education as part of a statewide leadership institute, sponsored by the Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities (UCEDD) at Rhode Island College, Providence, RI, February 2005
- "Paraprofessional Supports in Inclusive Classrooms" and "Schoolwide Planning Tools to Improve Paraprofessional Supports and Special Education Service Delivery", presented at a district-wide conference, Literacy, Diversity, and Differentiation: Keys for achieving Instructional Success, sponsored by the Indian Prairie School District #204, Naperville, IL, March 2005
- "Alternatives to Overreliance on Paraprofessionals in Inclusive Classrooms: Project EVOLVE", workshop presented at the Annual Spring Conference of the Vermont Superintendents Association and the Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators, Killington, VT, 5/05
- "Paraprofessional Supports in Inclusive Classrooms: Why We Need Alternatives" breakout session presented at the statewide conference, Including ALL Students in Neighborhood Schools: Maryland Moves Forward! co-sponsored by the Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education, Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, and Professional Development in Autism Center, Baltimore, MD, October 2005
- "Paraprofessional Supports in Inclusive Classrooms: Why We Need Alternatives", breakout session presented at the statewide Pennsylvania Department of Education conference, Making the Grade: Successful Students, Successful Schools, organized by the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network, Hershey, PA March 2006
- "Research on Alternatives to Overreliance on Paraprofessionals in Inclusive Schools" two workshops presented at the spring conference of the Vermont Superintendent's Association and the Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators, Lake Morey, VT, May 2007
- "Paraprofessional Supports in Inclusive Classrooms: Why We Need Alternatives", an audio-conference presented for parents and professionals sponsored by the PEAL Center (Parent Education & Advocacy Leadership Center) of Pittsburgh, PA June 2007
- "Paraprofessionals in Inclusive Classrooms" a two-day summer institute sponsored by the Statewide Autism Resources and Training (START) Network at Grand Valley State University and the Michigan Department of Education, co-presented with Dr. Mary Beth Doyle, Lansing, MI, June 2007



U.S. Department of Education
Grant Performance Report (ED 524B)
Project Status Chart

OMB No. 1890-0004
Exp. 10-31-2007

PR/Award # (11 characters): H324M020007

SECTION B - Budget Information (See Instructions. Use as many pages as necessary.)

The instructions for completing this Final Report indicate:

" For budget expenditures made with Federal grant funds, you must provide an explanation in Section B (Budget Information) of the Project Status Chart, if you have not drawn down funds from the Grant Administration and Payment System (GAPS) to pay for these budget expenditures."

The project has drawn down all funds to complete grant activities (see Cover page Item 8) during this no-cost extension year. See "Financial Status Report" on final page of report.

SECTION C - Additional Information (See Instructions. Use as many pages as necessary.)

The following additional information is not complete because the amount of data collected exceeded the time available to analyze and report on all of it prior to the completion of this report. Some complete results are reported in published articles and studies referred to earlier in this report, and therefore will not be reiterated here. What follows are some additional points of information that I hope will assist readers who may be pursuing special education service delivery improvements in their schools. I anticipate that additional findings will be reported in the professional literature after the submission of this report, once all data is thoroughly analyzed.

1. Utilizing your evaluation results, draw conclusions about the success of the project and its impact. Describe any unanticipated outcomes or benefits from your project and any barriers that you may have encountered.
2. What would you recommend as advice to other educators that are interested in your project? How did the original ideas change as a result of conducting the project?

Responses to questions 1 and 2 are combined in the following subsections:

Key Findings: Schools that used the Project EVOLVE planning tool took varying actions, therefore, they had varying outcomes. Regardless of actions, two outcomes were significantly improved (on average) for the entire set of schools. First, overall special educator caseloads were decreased from an average of 14.9 students on IEPs in Year-1, to an average of 11.86 students on IEPs in Year-3. This was a significant decrease ($M= 3.07$, $SD=4.02$, $t(25) = 3.89$ $p =0.0006$). A second statistically significant difference across all of the schools was decrease in the ratio of special educator FTE to total school population from an average of 111.34 in Year-1 to an average of 87.48 in Year-3. This was a significant decrease ($M= 23.86$, $SD=26.15$, $t(25) = 4.65$ $p =0.0001$). Several other variables showed a positive impact based on intervention (e.g., overreliance on use of paraprofessionals, overreliance on the use of one-to-one paraprofessionals). In these cases, not surprisingly, when a school took a targeted action, they typically experienced a corresponding positive outcome. But since not all schools took the same actions, those that did not did not have those same corresponding outcomes, thus depressing the overall findings. Therefore, when interpreting the findings, it is more appropriate to consider the findings in light of what actions schools took, grouping those who took the same actions together. A summary of those results are available online in the presentation slides from a presentation of Project EVOLVE data at the 2007 OSEP Project Director's meeting, July 16, 2007 at the following URL: <http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/evolve/?Page=evolvenews.html>.

Catalyst for Positive Change: One of the most consistent findings was that participants in Project EVOLVE reported that becoming involved in the project, specifically, committing to forming a cross-stakeholder team to use the planning tool, "Guidelines for Selecting Alternatives to Overreliance on Paraprofessionals" was a catalyst for action and for constructive dialogue among various members of the school community. Interestingly, all of the schools recognized that they were having challenges associated with their utilization of paraprofessionals, yet they took no actions. Many respondents indicated that

without the structure, framework, and impetus of the planning tool, they likely would not have taken actions as soon or as targeted. Therefore, school leaders interested in exploring constructive changes in their special education service delivery might consider utilizing the Project EVOLVE planning tool as a mechanism to initiate actions and spur dialogue.

Process can be Successfully Completed without Training or External Involvement from the Developers

One of our key interests in implementing this field-test was to determine whether the planning tool we developed on Project EVOLVE, "Guidelines for Selecting Alternatives to Overreliance on Paraprofessionals", could be effectively utilized and result in positive outcomes without the need for training or support from the developers. Our thought was that the utility of the tool would be compromised if required us to provide support because it would make it difficult to scale-up. We were pleased to learn that school personnel have the capacity to use the Project EVOLVE planning tool to facilitate their own school improvement. From a research perspective, the challenge is that it is unlikely that any two teams will use the tool in exactly the same way or interpret the content items in exactly the same way -- so this poses a challenge to procedural fidelity. In fact, I would suggest that teams need to follow the basic process of the tool, but at the same time they must interpret the content of items (e.g., screening, self-assessment) within their local contexts. Therefore, from a practical perspective, it is less important for a team to have reliability with the developers of the tool about the meaning of any particular content item than it is for the team to assign their own meaning to an item that they agree to as a team. This is why the directions encourage such local interpretation and allow for teams to edit wording so that their own meaning is clarified.

Processes Begin Neatly and Become Messy: The nature of the planning tool, "Guidelines for Selecting Alternatives to Overreliance on Paraprofessionals" was reported by participants to be quite logical and sequential. Participants described how it neatly guided them through a planning process that led to a clear and relevant written plan. What they reported also was that no matter how neat their plan appeared to be, the process of implementation was virtually always "messy". In other words, what was neat on paper was, not neat in reality. This meant that teams had to be persistent if they expected to follow through on their plans and bring them to fruition. It would be helpful to tell team members in advance to expect this messy implementation because some participants reported feeling lulled into a sense of order and control throughout the planning process, only to be partially stymied by the messy aspects of the real life in schools (e.g., varying attitudes and commitments to change). Nonetheless, when planning teams and school leaders persisted in implementing their plans, even under messy (real world) conditions, they had positive outcomes (see Giangreco, Smith & Pinckney, 2006) as an in depth example.

Student Involvement

Although students the "Guidelines for Selecting Alternatives to Overreliance on Paraprofessionals" were designed to include a student with a disability on the team, only some included them as members. Those that did include student members consistently reported two main findings: (a) the students' participation was valuable -- they brought important insights to the dialogue, and (b) the students' abilities to participate were much better during the earlier parts of the process that tended to call for more discrete responding (e.g., screening and school self-assessment). Students uniformly had a more difficult time participating in the later sections of the action planning that were less discrete. This suggests that more work needs to be done to find relevant ways for students to participate in these later sections and verifies the importance of including students.

Unintended Consequences

A problem that occurred in a small number of cases was that their action-plan implementation inadvertently led the school in a direction that they did not want or intend to go. For example, in one school where the faculty were strongly committed to inclusive (regular class) opportunities for the full range of students with disabilities, they found that as they lowered their special educator's caseloads to provide more instructional time, that special educators were increasing their "pull out" instruction -- this was contrary to their historical practices and intended direction. This suggests that any plan that targets one aspect of a school's operation must be closely scrutinized to determine whether proposed innovations are compatible and hopefully synergistic with other aspects of the school's approach. Fortunately, the faculty self-identified this problem and were able to adjust their course of action so that their new instructional was provided in-class learning supports and opportunities.

Success Happens when Students, Faculty, and Communities All Win

One of the most important things we learned is that success for different constituencies can be achieved simultaneously -- one group need not win at the expense of the other. In fact, the best-case scenarios are those where all major constituencies benefit. We found that the implementation of quality plans based on "Guidelines for Selecting Alternatives to Overreliance on Paraprofessionals" could result in win-win-win situations where positive outcomes were achieved for students, faculty (special and general education), and school communities. At times these different constituencies compete with each other in ways that disrupt educational equity and quality. We found results where students benefited (e.g., academic and social gains), teachers and spe-

cial educators benefited (e.g., more targeted supports, lower caseloads), and communities benefited (e.g., school boards could see that resources were being utilized more effectively).

3. If applicable, describe your plans for continuing the project (sustainability; capacity building) and/or disseminating the project results. The work of this grant continues in a variety of ways. First, as mentioned earlier, Project EVOLVE generated so much data (both qualitative and quantitative) that data analysis and reporting will continue over at least the next year -- hopefully resulting in additional dissemination in the form of published studies and related articles. Secondly, the quantitative aspects of the project resulted in the development of a related set of data collection tools, referred to as *Numbers that Count*, designed to augment the *Guidelines for Selecting Alternatives to Overreliance on Paraprofessionals*. These measures include: (a) a school demographic questionnaire, (b) a questionnaire for special educators about their caseload and roles, and (c) a questionnaire for special educators about their students who receive one-to-one paraprofessional supports. These data collection tools were utilized during the project's carryover year with funding from state and local sources to collect data in 19 Vermont schools, analyze the data, develop a report for each school, and debrief with them about the findings to facilitate their own school improvement planning. The results of this work (spurred by Project EVOLVE) have been accepted for publication:

Suter, J.C., & Giangreco, M.F. (in press). Numbers that count: Exploring special education and paraprofessional service delivery in inclusion-oriented schools. *Journal of Special Education*.

This work is also having an impact on state and local service delivery in Vermont through its dissemination to the *Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators* (i.e., to their Executive Committee in July 2007; at their annual conference in November 2007) and to the *Vermont Department of Education* (i.e., to the State Director for Special Education in July 2007; to Vermont Department of Education State Special Education Consultants and Monitoring Team members in November 2007). Third, the work of Project EVOLVE has been embedded into technical assistance provided by the *Center on Disability & Community Inclusion* (Vermont University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities) to 14 Vermont schools since 2006. There will continue to be opportunities to disseminate project related information. For example, a summary of the project's findings have been accepted for presentation at the annual conference of the *Council for Exceptional Children* in April 2008 in Boston -- others opportunities will undoubtedly become available for additional dissemination more findings are analyzed and reported. Lastly, the findings from Project EVOLVE will likely yield future research to expand our knowledge about special educator and paraprofessional service delivery options to support students with a full range of disabilities in general education settings.