

Special Education Databrief

A Databrief for the CPS Office of Mathematics and Science
Prepared by the PRAIRIE Group, UIC College of Education

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April 6, 2006 Final

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The conclusions drawn in this report reflect the viewpoints of the authors. While there are many potential viewpoints, these reflect a systematic analysis of data by external evaluators. The hope is that these findings can facilitate improvement of this and related programs through open discussion and consideration of data-driven understandings.

*This report is based upon work supported by the
National Science Foundation under grant No. 0085115.*

Since its inception, the Office of Math and Science (OMS) has aimed to improve math and science instruction in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). To achieve its goal, the OMS created the Chicago Math and Science Initiative (CMSI), such that all CPS students attain higher levels of engagement and learning in math and science. To foster the aforementioned instruction, OMS supports *the vision that high-quality, standards-based mathematics and science experiences, as framed by national, state, and local standards, can be provided to all students* (<http://www.cmsi.cps.k12.il.us/departments.asp>). While concern was expressed and conversation circulated among CMSI stakeholders (i.e. OMS staff people, Area Math and Science coaches, City-wide Specialists, School-based Specialists, special education teachers and regular education teachers) regarding including children with disabilities in the CMSI, special education teachers have not received substantive and coherent support to effectively integrate their students into the CMSI.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which serves children with special needs in the public school system mandates that children with disabilities receive an appropriate education by *having high expectations for such children and ensuring their access in the general curriculum to the maximum extent possible* (IDEA 1997, Part A, Section 601(c)(5)(a)). In order to include these children into a district wide initiative such as the CMSI while still serving each child's distinct needs in accordance with IDEA, the OMS needs to both have a clear and cohesive plan to effectively integrate children with special needs into the CMSI by providing the necessary supports and guidance specific to special education teachers. This databrief will outline the main obstacles that prevent the inclusion of special education teachers and, subsequently, students with special needs into the CMSI and propose solutions to ensure that children with special needs have the opportunity to attain the same *high expectations* as their non-disabled counterparts.

Based on past evaluation data, in order for the CMSI to be successfully implemented in special education classrooms and for students receiving special education services to receive their legally mandated free, appropriate, public education, special education teachers require (1) the necessary CMSI curricular materials, (2) special education specific professional development and (3) support from instructional leaders who have knowledge of CMSI curricula. .

Evaluation Methods

Data for this report comes from interviews, focus groups, observations, shadowing sessions, and documents collected from spring of 2002 until fall of 2005. Data used in this report include the following:

- Interviews and Shadowing Sessions from 9 School-based Specialists at 8 different schools throughout 2003-05
- Written reflections from 43 School-based Specialists in 2004
- Observations of 8 meetings with Area Math and Science Coaches throughout 2002-05
- Interviews with 10 Area Math and Science Coaches throughout 2002-05
- Written reflections from 11 City-wide Specialists in 2005
- Interviews with 5 City-wide Specialists from 2005
- Written reflections with 227 first-wave teachers in 2003
- 18 teacher focus groups throughout 2003-2005
- Observations of 12 professional development sessions with teachers throughout 2002-2005
- Interviews with 5 Leadership Academy participants in 2003-04

All of the data in this databrief was found and analyzed by searching every interview, focus group, observation, shadowing session and document that the UIC PRAIRIE Group, external evaluators of the CMSI, collected since the CMSI began in 2002. Because none of the past external evaluation protocols specifically raised questions regarding the implementation of the CMSI in special education classrooms, all of this data is taken from dialogues, written reflections, observations and documents where special education happened to be discussed by the CMSI implementer. As such, because neither Facilitators nor Principals ever discussed special education in relation to the CMSI, these stakeholders were not included in this databrief.

Every document was searched for key terms indicating that special education was referenced (terms included “spec” and “sped”). Then each reference to special education in the context of the CMSI was pasted into another document. Upon finishing a long compilation of special education references, all of the references were then analyzed (with the support of a qualitative inquiry software tool, Atlas TI) for common themes and trends outlined in this databrief.

CMSI Curricular Materials

Since the CMSI began, special education teachers generally received either less or no CMSI materials (text books, teachers guides, manipulatives, etc.) compared to their regular education teacher colleagues. While special education teachers utilized the CMSI curricula, they reported not having all or even any of the materials to teach the CMSI curriculum. Throughout the three years of CMSI, special education teachers reported that they asked their School-based Specialists, Area Math and Science Coaches and other OMS staff for the CMSI materials but, usually, to no avail (Case study school teacher focus groups, 2003-05). Presumably due to the dire lack of CMSI materials in their classrooms, special education teachers reported widespread use of materials other than the CMSI materials.

An influential factor in using curricular materials other than the CMSI may be the limited availability and access to the CMSI materials. Special education teachers have reported that the regular education teachers in their schools were given all of the necessary CMSI materials and that they were simply given whatever was left over. This was best stated by one group of special education teachers whose school has been implementing the CMSI since 2003:

Special education teacher A: *So I don't have anything... Yeah, but what it is, I was told it's sort of like a shortage of the books being in the regular classroom. So there wasn't enough materials for the 5th and 6th grade classroom so, therefore, I assume their needs are met and whatever is leftover that is what I receive.*

Special education teacher B: *You know, we have to get our own materials and stuff.*

Special education teacher A: *But I don't have any guidebook.*

Special education teacher C: *The teacher guide?*

Special education teacher A: *The teacher guide—I don't have it.*

Special education teacher D: *Yeah and they do have them and I have all of the instructional material for my classroom-I don't know about the other teachers for [CMSI curriculum] or whatever books they use but...it's better this year than last year because I was referred to refer to other teachers who had everything and what I did last year would go and get the resource guide or whatever I needed from another teacher, and they have the manipulatives—the other teachers—and I was referred to go, you know, share with the teachers that was at the third grade level.*

Special education teacher C: *Well, there were, I mean, these require a lot of manipulatives and special ed. teachers didn't get the manipulatives--you had to work with what you had (Case study school special education teacher focus group, 2005).*

Special education teachers and other members of the CMSI infrastructure have reported that special education teachers frequently did not have the materials that they needed, not because the school did not have the materials, but because the school did not distribute the materials to the special education teachers. Unless a school administrator or an external CMSI support person put a conscious effort forth, special education teachers frequently went without the necessary materials to implement the curriculum. TAMS providers in a June 2005 focus group confirmed that special education teachers in the schools they served had no materials.

TAMS provider A: *Special ed. had a terrible problem with borrowing books because there were no books for Special Ed. so there were no manipulatives. There were manipulatives in the building. They were in a room with letters on them.*

Researcher: *They were there, but nobody had access to them?*

TAMS provider A: *Well, nobody, well, I shouldn't say nobody...the teachers*

TAMS provider B: *It's not the teachers...*

TAMS provider A: *It was the weirdest thing. Most of the school had the manipulatives needed to run the program. Not a problem. But for some reason for special ed., who really should have [the materials], they didn't have it. For example, I was in two lessons with the special ed. teacher and both times he had to go borrow a book from somebody because they had no student books. They had no teaching manuals, and they had no manipulatives. And they were afraid to tell me, and I wrote some notes on here of the letters of the alphabet that are on the door of this room that has all the manipulatives in [it]. But the only way you can get them is to ask for them from the administration. Now I never got to the point where I would have to ask for them but...but everybody else had them.*

TAMS provider C: *I had been...I would have to say it seems like the communication was little off starting from OMS and at the time it's the end of school year, and they asked us to do a visit. And...the special ed. teacher didn't have any manipulatives...I was under the impression that OMS had notified the school that this is the criteria that they should have, and they [OMS] didn't enforce it. And so I found myself, a lot, explaining to the Principal what type of support we were providing along with the teachers, so we are pretty much informational to begin with. So it seems like I am acting like communication with this whole thing and the Facilitator and the Coach...they didn't know exactly what they were doing at the school on the first day (Focus group, June 2005).*

These TAMS providers described the lack of monitoring and support provided to special education teachers as demonstrated by the lack of CMSI materials for special education teachers. Similarly, the conversation with TAMS providers substantiates that special education teachers receive little support.

Area Math and Science Coaches, principals, specialists and special education teachers alike stated that special education teachers used a diverse set of texts for math and science instruction in addition to the CMSI curricula. CMSI support people reinforced the use of different texts for math instruction by special education teachers as exemplified by a City-wide Specialist when he stated

And of course I keep telling them, you have the degree in special ed. You have the students IEP in front of you. If you think that it would be better to pull something off line or to do an activity that you have done for a long time, or, you know, touch math or something that doesn't show up in [CMSI curriculum], but if you think that it will help the student, use it. Don't think that you're restricted to that (Shadowing, 2005).

This City-wide Specialist believed that special education teachers should be able to pull from a variety of texts for math and science instruction; special education teachers seemed to agree with her statement admitting that they used *whatever works* in teaching their students (Case study school teacher focus groups, 2003-05). Special education teachers seemingly have no support or monitoring to tell them whether to solely rely upon CMSI materials (in which case, where can they go to ensure that they receive all of their CMSI materials?) or to provide guidance as to what can supplement the CMSI curriculum. Whatever OMS' intended message for special education teachers regarding the utilization of the CMSI materials, it trickled down to *use whatever curriculum you feel best suits the needs of your students*.

Not only did special education teachers lack the needed materials to fully implement the CMSI curriculum, but also no one took notice of their inadequate or non-existent materials. Unlike their regular education counterparts, special education teachers were left without the mandatory CMSI materials and without a clear way to attain them. These

issues regarding materials beg a deeper question regarding the curricular direction OMS intended special education teachers to follow.

Discussion Questions:

What is the OMS's &/or CPS's philosophy regarding the inclusion of special education students into initiatives offered to CPS students? How do both ensure appropriate and adequate materials are provided to special education teachers and students? How do both guarantee that the spirit and letter of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is adhered to?

What is the OMS's commitment for CMSI implementation in special education classrooms? How is this commitment communicated to CMSI leaders and special education teachers?

How does OMS instruct CMSI leaders to support special education teachers?

CMSI Professional Development

CMSI professional development is another area in which special education has gone largely unnoticed leaving a gap in providing guidance and support for teachers, regular education and special education alike, who instruct students with special needs, using the CMSI curricula. During the first year of the CMSI offering teacher professional development, 17% of the teachers surveyed were special education teachers (Preliminary Descriptive Analyses: CMSI Intensive Support School First Wave Teachers Survey, summer 2003). While special education teachers comprised 17% of the first wave teachers attending professional development, the remaining regular education teachers presumably also taught students with disabilities, due to the LRE mandate of including children with disabilities into the regular education classroom where appropriate. This presumably large population of teachers instructing students with special needs is reflected in teachers' written reflections which illustrate that teachers wanted professional development to address how to serve children with special needs using the CMSI curricula. For example in 2003, 54 out of 227 (24%) teachers surveyed expressed their desire for curricula-specific professional development to address how they could *reach out to children with special needs* in their classrooms (First Wave Teacher Survey, 2003).

Similarly, OMS staff also expressed concern that the CMSI professional development does not comprehensively address special education issues. An OMS staff-person in summer 2004 stated,

And then incidental to that is the whole issue of how do we respond to Special Ed.? And we pushed the providers about that today in math because they were saying, "Well, do you think we could have a discussion with the teachers during the summer PD?" I said, "No, I don't think so. I think that's a hole that you're acknowledging in your own professional development and I think that it's probably not enough to have a conversation with teachers. I think you really have to offer them more resources." So they said, "Well what about if we had a meeting first among ourselves with a bunch of bilingual teachers and really did flush out the issues from that?" So I said I thought that was a good first step and that's something that's moving now. But they've got resources that they can call on and they're just not doing that. So I think pushing on working...cause that's an aspect of differentiation, which is true for every classroom teacher – "How do I teach all these individual kids?" But the bilingual and Special Ed. are more glaring and you know special instances of it. The differentiation is the basic underlying premise of these materials so they gotta face it in some way (Interview, 2004).

This OMS staff-person admitted that special education needed to be addressed in professional development and that the issues inherent in servicing special education were not going to go away. Yet, special education teachers continued to state that professional development did not meet their needs. This is best stated by one special education teacher:

The issue I have with all workshops is that they never take into account special ed.... When it comes to special ed., they need to give us options...I've found with a lot of workshops, if it's not a special ed. workshop, then it's not tailored to special ed. It's left to me to go back and tailor everything. And that's hard. If it's not tailored to special ed., it's kind of a waste of my time, because I can't do it (2004).

This special education teacher's sentiment that professional development does not fit the needs of special education is common among the special education teacher community in CPS. This statement also shows the importance of professional development in implementing the CMSI; without professional development being tailored to special education, special education teachers cannot effectively implement the CMSI. The feeling that professional development did not address their needs or the needs of their students continued in 2005 as expressed by another special education teacher,

As a special education teacher, I would like to comment that while I find [CMSI curriculum] to be an engaging, excellent, conceptual math program for many children, I see my special ed. students falling through the cracks. Two basic things I do in special ed. are: (1) teach one concept at a time and (2) teach through repetition. [CMSI curriculum] teaches many concepts at once, and is conceptually very difficult for most of my 20 special ed. students. I, therefore, supplement with basic skills sheets to teach basic math skills. I write this not as a complaint but as feedback about your program. Will [CMSI curriculum] at some point address the needs of these students? (Case study school special education teacher written reflection, 2005).

Professional development is intended to inform teachers on how to appropriately and effectively implement the CMSI curricula in their classrooms. As stated by the above two special education teachers, special education teachers require specific knowledge and instruction on how to modify and differentiate the curricula so that their children retain an educational benefit while receiving the same standards-based instruction as their non-disabled peers.

Without the appropriate and pertinent CMSI professional development, special education teachers become further marginalized in their ability to implement CMSI and, understandably, disinterested in attending professional development. As one teacher stated,

Also [I] think that a lot of teachers and, some aren't going to admit it, are not really there at the professional development...it [professional development] doesn't really allow for the teachers who meet with special ed. students...they couldn't really address their needs. They really could not help them on how to help their students and they want them to use these same curricula....A lot of them found themselves not using it because their students became more confused. So there really are no adjustments or modifications for how you use these materials with children with special needs. It's confusing already to children who don't have it. So this was a complaint or a comment I heard a lot from teachers in the workshop I went to who were special ed. teachers (Focus group teacher from an Intensive Readiness School in its second year of implementation, 2005).

Professional development, one of the prongs of the framework upon which the CMSI rests, does not meet the needs of many special education teachers. For regular education teachers, the professional development provided clear instruction and guidance on how to use the CMSI curricula and how to stay on pace with the program; however, for special education teachers, it provided little assistance on how to adapt the curricula to students with special needs. For example, the professional development is specifically geared for grade levels; however, special education teachers who teach in self-contained classrooms teach multiple grade levels generally to students who are significantly below their grade level. Professional development provided no uniform assistance or message to special education teachers regarding what grade level they should attend for professional development and what grade level of texts they should implement (Case study focus groups and shadowing sessions, 2003-05). This problem intensified when special education teachers have self-contained classrooms that span grade levels such as 5-8th grade in which case they are caught between two entirely different CMSI curricula. Without any guidance, special education teachers have to make educated guesses (about curricula that they are, presumably, unfamiliar with) as to which curriculum to implement and then at what grade level.

Professional development not only provides teachers with the necessary knowledge and skill to implement a CMSI curriculum but also serves as a forum for teachers to share both their frustrations and their successes with implementing the CMSI in their classrooms. Professional development offers regular education teachers of the same grade level to build a learning community to discuss math and science education; special education teachers also need this opportunity. Special education teachers who utilized the CMSI curricula, to the extent possible, report that certain modifications to the curricula for students with disabilities helped to mold the curricula to suit their students' needs and make their instruction successful. One widespread comment since the beginning of the CMSI is the

compatibility of the “hands on” CMSI materials with effectively teaching students with special needs. Best stated by one Leadership Academy participant,

I mean almost everybody [teachers] came back and said, “I tried this on the kids and they like it, and they get it” and one of the main things is making that “hands-on” and a lot of comments [about] how this has never been taught this way before. And differentiating it too. In the past, it’s always been like “this is how you do it and that’s it.” We’re showing there’s lots of different ways to do the same type of thing, and if you’re kid doesn’t get one way, try another way. And try making it visual so they can see it, and move it, and touch it. And all the teachers, you know a lot of people come from really low achieving schools or work in special populations or bilingual populations. That type of thing is just wonderful for that. (Leadership Academy participant, 2002).

Special education teachers who had been using CMSI curricula confirmed that the “hands-on” approach utilized in the materials worked well for their students with special needs. However, special education teachers also reported specific problems faced by their students when using the CMSI curriculum. For example, special education teachers reported that the advanced vocabulary embedded in the CMSI curricula was particularly difficult for their students. To alleviate this difficulty, special education teachers reported a variety of tactics including: reading the lesson several times to their students, giving the students the vocabulary the night before the lesson so they can familiarize themselves with it, utilizing reciprocal teaching methods and creating a board of transportable vocabulary terms with illustrations (Teacher focus groups and meeting observations, 2003-2005). Because special education teachers do not have a forum in which they can share their strategies to adapt the CMSI curriculum to fit their students’ needs, these successful recommendations are not shared with their special education teacher colleagues.

Because the professional development did not address special education, special education teachers felt slighted and overlooked by OMS. Special education teachers and external support staff report that, at professional development sessions, the special education teachers are frequently overlooked by the professional development providers, brushed aside because the provider does not know how to integrate them into the discussion, and encouraged to complete other work as the session is irrelevant to them (Interviews and focus groups, 2003-2005). Special education teachers stated that they have reported the need for CMSI professional development specifically for special education; one special education teacher stated that he *wrote that on every comment that professional development [needed to be] specifically for special ed. grouped together* (Case study school teacher, 2005). Some special education teachers have similarly reported the same concerns to their School-based Specialists, Principals, Area Math and Science Coaches and other OMS staff but to no avail (Case Study School focus groups, 2003-2005).

Discussion questions:

How are curriculum providers currently including special education issues in their professional development sessions? Is there a plan to include a track for special education in the summer sessions?

One of the goals of OMS was that teachers attending professional development would begin to see each other as a resource or learning community. How does OMS encourage this among special education teachers?

Disparity of Human Resources

The CMSI involves many different stakeholders serving at the district, the school and the classroom levels. While all of these stakeholders have expressed concern for children with special needs and their inclusion in the CMSI, their apprehension and want for guidance in how to provide this service has manifested into uneven support of and mixed messages to special education personnel. Area Math and Science Coaches, City-wide Specialists, and School-based Specialists range in the services they offered to special education teachers and their students.

Area Math and Science Coaches

Collectively, Area Math and Science Coaches had stated that they wanted to know how to serve children with special needs and include them in the CMSI. At various coaches meetings, coaches stated *I have questions about the special needs components of our schools. The schools, which have high proportions of special needs students, need assistance with alignment. There needs to be a link.* In response to this Coach, another Coach stated, *This is a joint CMSI/special education issue that requires collaborative planning around these issues—this is a challenge for us. How do those resource people find the way to collaborate with schools? We need to take on issues of special needs*

and ELL as part of the implementation of CMSI (Area Math and Science Coach Meeting Observation, 2003). Area Math and Science Coaches have voiced concern on how to support special education teachers with the CMSI; they noted this was a specific *challenge* for them. However, their concerns did not translate into consistent support for special education teachers.

While many Coaches had expressed similar concerns, the services rendered and support offered by Area Math and Science Coaches to special education teachers continued to vary to a large extent. Special education teachers stated that Area Math and Science Coaches generally did not offer them in-classroom support. One Coach stated that she had bought materials for a special education classroom so they could implement the CMSI, but that same coach never supported a special education classroom. A special education teacher at one of that Coach's schools stated that she

had asked the Coach to meet with me to help me to better adapt the [CMSI curricula] to my special education students. However, each time the coach has come to the school and met with teachers, she has not come to see me [even though I] continue to seek her out...the coach has always been busy (Case study school teacher focus group, 2005).

This special education teacher was left without support or assistance from the Area Math and Science Coach even though her regular education colleagues received support from the Coach. This special education teacher stated that the Coach only came to her classroom while on a walk through.

When she came in, and I had borrowed materials from regular education teacher A and regular education teacher B because I had not received my materials and this was in—what was it February? The end of February and I have been working with them, collaborating because I'm a special ed. teacher. They're general ed. teachers. And I got material from them, and I was teaching it. When she came in my room, I was teaching it at that time, and she joined in for a few minutes. She didn't take over or anything. She didn't write anything. She just didn't do anything, and then she walked around my room and then she had the nerve to write on a piece of paper that I didn't have work displayed which was not true because I had my sheets displayed--what we were working on, we had a pacing chart up. Well, there's some things that were written on this piece of paper that was not true, and I called her on it, so that's that. And I finally got the materials last week, and it's March and school is out in 3 more months, and I'm through with them (Case study school teacher focus group, 2005).

This special education teacher's lack of support from the Area Math and Science Coach seems common as reported by other special education teachers who, while they were implementing the CMSI materials, also never saw the Area Math and Science Coaches or any external support CMSI personnel in their classrooms. The following exchange took place in a focus group of special education teachers at a different case study school, which was originally an intensive support school.

Researcher: *What about do you see anyone from OMS coming in here? City-wide Specialists? Coaches? Do any of those people come into your classrooms?*

Special education Teacher A: *We see them coming in, but they don't come into our classrooms.*

[A lot of agreement from other teachers to this comment.]

Special Education Teacher B: *So we like see them [and] "wave."*

Special Education Teacher A: *Walk away and say, "ok"* (Case study school special education teacher focus group, 2005).

From special education teachers' comments, Area Math and Science Coaches provided little to no support especially in terms of classroom support to special education. Even though Area Math and Science Coaches expressed interest in assisting special education teachers and their students, this concern has not yet transcended into reality and, instead, results in uneven and inconsistent support for special education teachers.

Discussion Questions:

How much of Coach training time is spent on inclusion training in the CMSI curricula?
In the big scheme of CMSI, what priority is the inclusion of special needs children?

City-wide Specialists

Similar to the Area Math and Science Coaches, 2 out of 11 surveyed City-wide Specialists also expressed concern over serving children receiving special education services. One City-wide Specialist said he *need[ed] to talk to curricula representatives* regarding special education issues while another City-wide Specialist stated, *My major concern is one—no matter how much time I spend there, it seems like its not enough. The upper grades are getting better, but I am very concerned about the special ed. and some of the primary classes* (City-wide Specialist Written Reflection, 2005). While this concern existed among City-wide Specialists, they did not have a cohesive or uniform plan to address it. At present, City-wide Specialists were all addressing special education with their own unique methods and rationales promoting a mixed and confusing message to schools.

Some City-wide Specialists put forth a specific and conscientious effort to work with the special education population. One City-wide Specialist stated,

I had one set of all the teacher materials for our special ed. resource people so that when they were coming in to do co-teaching or working you know doing their resource thing with the students—that they pulled—that they would have the materials so that they could also be right on page with whatever was going on. And I guess that kind of goes back to, you know, one of the things I've been doing so far is one of my goals was to try to make sure that our special ed. resource people had the materials that they needed so they didn't feel like they were left out of what was going on in the classroom (City-wide Specialist shadowing, 2005).

This City-wide Specialist ensured that he provided the CMSI materials (which, as stated earlier, is a tremendous problem facing special education teachers) to special education teachers. He considered it part of his role to include special education teachers and, therefore, distributed materials to them so they could effectively participate in the CMSI. Also, this City-wide Specialist encouraged, as part of his position, the special education teachers to utilize whatever materials (even those materials outside of the CMSI curricula) within their classrooms (City-wide Specialist shadowing, 2005). This City-wide Specialist promoted the autonomy of special education teachers, trusting that they would find materials to ensure that their students received an appropriate and individualized education.

Another City-wide Specialist observed and provided feedback to co-taught classrooms (in which, a regular education teacher and a special education teacher taught together within one classroom). This City-wide Specialist stated that she offered less support to special education teachers because they were more capable of implementing the curriculum. She explained that *when there are special education people, it is not that they are less important, but they usually support the instruction that is going on in the classroom* (City-wide Specialist shadowing, 2005). The assumption that special education teachers have the capacity to support the CMSI curriculum does not correlate with our previous documentation of special education teachers' perceptions that they rarely received the necessary materials or professional development necessary to support the CMSI curriculum. While the first City-wide Specialist in the case above made a special effort to support special education teachers, the second City-wide Specialist reasoned that these teachers did not need the support that their regular education colleagues received—these are two entirely different perspectives from people in the same working position.

While City-wide Specialists have expressed their concerns in serving special education teachers and their students, they offer disproportionate services and conflicting rationales as to whether support should be provided to special education teachers. Both Area Math and Science Coaches and City-wide Specialists expressed concerns that special education needed to be addressed in the CMSI; however, unlike the Area Math and Science Coaches, the City-wide Specialists varied in whether they provided support to special education teachers. Such large degrees of variance indicate the need for a clear message and consistent practice for Area Math and Science Coaches and City-wide Specialists to uniformly serve special education teachers and their students within their schools.

Discussion Questions:

How much of City-wide Specialist training time is spent on inclusion training in the CMSI curricula?

In schools with City-wide Specialists, what priority is the inclusion of the teachers of special needs children into the workload of the City-wide Specialist?

School-based Specialists

Since the beginning of the CMSI (from when OMS paid for the full-time School-based Specialist in Intensive Support schools until the present), School-based Specialists differed in the support they provided to special education teachers. Some School-based Specialists actively supported their special education classrooms while other School-based Specialists served solely as a liaison to provide their special education teachers with whatever materials were available. The presence and active participation of School-based Specialists inside special education classrooms dramatically differed in scope from helping to co-teach or pull-out students with special needs to never entering a special education classroom. Such varied depth and range of support from the School-based Specialists in special education classrooms exposes the unevenness of support offered in special education classrooms.

Some School-based Specialists actively supported their special education classrooms; one School-based Specialist felt she was spending so much time within special education classrooms that she was not challenging the *high achieving* students (School-based Specialist Interview, 2003-2005). This School-based Specialist stated,

Listen to me they have tried to save money by not putting kids in special ed. and they are going to put them up in a regular classroom .They are going to load them up in a regular classroom, and they are going to say that that regular classroom is going to go on?...It's not...Oh, yeah, Mr.

Duncan your saving money and you can pay the teachers whatever you think that you need to pay the teachers but you are not doing anybody—you are not doing anybody—any justice because these kids are...not only do they have emotional issues so big that you and I couldn't even fathom it. I wouldn't even think that there are these kind of emotional issues out there...but they are pulling down the pacing big time (Case study School-based Specialist interview, 2004).

For this School-based Specialist, the limitations of funding and the misinterpretation of the LRE mandate by placing children with special needs in a classroom without the necessary support occupy much of the School-based Specialist's time and impede the implementation of the CMSI.

Not all School-based Specialists had such extensive collaboration with special education classrooms regarding CMSI implementation. In written reflections from 43 School-based Specialists, only 4 of them noted that they worked with children with special needs (Written Reflections with School-based Specialists, 2004). The proportion of children with special needs in the school did not determine the frequency of support provided by the specialist in special education classrooms. At another school, at which 60% of the student population has special needs, the specialist did not have any intention of working with the special education teachers because *these special ed. teachers are so talented, and they know their students so well, that they'll be able to adapt the program to make it work for their kids* (Case study School-based Specialist interview, 2004). Depending upon the perception of the special education teachers' competency, this specialist admitted and justified not working with the school's special education teachers. At the same school, the following year, the specialist left the school and the new specialist also spent the majority of his time in the regular education classroom. These examples again show the difference in the range and depth of School-based Specialists' work with special education teachers and students.

Different from the abovementioned school-based specialists, some School-based Specialists considered ordering and distribution of materials as their only obligation to special education teachers. A School-based Specialist at an original intensive support school has never entered a special education classroom to provide any support; however, he actively supported and worked in the regular education classrooms everyday (Case Study School Focus Groups, 2003-2005). Special education teachers in this case study school reported that the only assistance the school-based specialist provided them was in the form of materials and making them aware of the professional development.

Across all of the various forms of external and internal support in the CMSI, it seems that no coherent or uniform message exists regarding providing support to special education teachers and their students. Without a clear stance and message distributed to all stakeholders in the CMSI, such disproportionate service and support for special education teachers and their students may continue to grow.

Discussion Questions:

How much of School-based Specialist training time is spent on inclusion training in the CMSI curricula?

In schools with School-based Specialists, what priority is the inclusion of the teachers of special needs children into the workload of the school's Specialist?

Special Education and the CMSI

The main disconnect between special education and the CMSI does not lie with the curricula itself but rather with the overall unevenness and feeling of exclusion expressed by special education teachers. Justified by the inability to receive materials, the lack of appropriate and relevant professional development and the disproportionate availability of human resources, special education teachers felt an overall segregation from the CMSI. The need for the OMS to think about how it is going to include special education was best stated by one group of special education teachers:

Special Education Teacher A: *They [OMS] need more emphasis on addressing special needs students.*

Special Education Teacher B: *They really do.*

Special Education Teacher C: *This is really hands-on with the students all day and they [OMS] need to look at what they can do and not do before they go and make this big project hoping that something will take...it's not working* (Case study special education teacher focus group, 2005).

Since the beginning of the CMSI the interface between the CMSI, a district-wide initiative and IDEA has been nebulous. A clear policy needs to be developed ensuring that students with disabilities are not left behind; a plan so that children with special needs receive the same standards-based instruction as their non-disabled peers but also receive a free, appropriate education individualized to suit their needs. In order to ensure that children with special needs are appropriately included into the CMSI, several key decisions need to be made.

- Materials must be given to special education teachers. This databrief outlines that special education teachers are generally the last group given all of their materials. A monitoring structure needs to ensure that special education teachers and their students have all the materials their regular education counterparts have.
- Professional development specifically for special education teachers needs to be offered. Special education teachers need specific and customized professional development in order to effectively implement the CMSI curricula. They also need a forum where they can share their own problems and offer solutions to others' problems all of which are specifically related to special education.
- A clear policy stating that OMS/CPS supports the implementation of CMSI in special education classrooms and a clear plan that specifies who will support special education teachers (i.e. Area Math and Science Coaches, City-wide Specialists, School-based Specialists, etc) is needed. Special education teachers need to have some external support people who have knowledge of both the CMSI curricula and special education. Such external support people should be able to suggest ways to differentiate the curriculum for special education classrooms so that children with disabilities can effectively access the general curriculum.

Special education teachers feel isolated and deliberately left out of the CMSI; stronger coordination between the Office of Specialized Services and the Office of Math and Science may help to determine how to integrate special education into the CMSI. Special education teachers need a coherent message and support, like their regular education colleagues, so that all CPS students can attain the CMSI vision by *providing coherent programs, more support, and better preparation to enable high quality teaching and thus improved student achievement* (<http://www.cmsi.cps.k12.il.us/departments.asp>). Without addressing the integration of children with special needs into the CMSI, this issue is sure to grow leaving children with special needs behind.