

Qualitative Data Summary of Piloted Observation Instrument for Designing Adaptations in Inclusive Settings

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Abstract : The successful inclusion of students with disabilities depends upon many factors, including the collaboration between general and special education teachers for meeting student learning goals as outlined in the Individualized Education Plan (IEP). However, Individualized Education Plans do not provide sufficient information on accommodations and modifications for the variety of general education contexts and content areas in which a student may participate. In addition, general and special education teachers lack observation skills and tools for gathering essential information about the strengths and needs of students with disabilities in relation to general education instruction and classrooms. More research and tools are needed for planning adaptations that increase access to content in general education classrooms. This paper will discuss the outcomes of a qualitative field-based study of a structured observation instrument used for gathering information on student strengths and needs in relation to social, academic and regulatory expectations during instruction in general education classrooms. The study explores the following questions: To what extent does the observation structure and instrument increase collaborative planning of adaptations in general education classrooms for students with disabilities? To what extent does the observation structure and instrument change pedagogical practices and collaboration in general education classrooms for fostering successful inclusion? A hypothesis of this study was that use of the instrument in the context of lessons and in collaborative debriefing would increase awareness and use of meaningful adaptations, and lead to universal design in the planning of instruction. A finding of the study is a shift from viewing students with disabilities as passive participants to a more pedagogical inclusion as teachers developed skills in observation and created content/context-specific adaptations for students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

Keywords : adaptations, collaboration, inclusion, observations

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