

CHAPTER V: SUMMARY

Key Findings

This research supports the hypothesis, as stated in the introduction, that the data from the assessments given to determine eligibility for Specific Learning Disabilities have discrepancies in the scoring and that inflated scores have a direct impact on whether a student will be placed for Special Needs services. Documentation from the scored protocols is the supporting evidence.

The following points are additional notable findings that the research provided; these points may provide topics for future research projects:

1. The amount of instructional training given on how to administer and score assessments showed no correlation between evaluators and their perception of their competence. As training increased the evaluators did not perceive they were more competent. The group that received the least training felt they were adequately trained and felt comfortable administering the WJR-III.
2. 33% of all of the persons surveyed who administer the educational evaluation discussed in this study did not feel adequately trained. Even though they felt they had not been adequately trained they were still administering the WJR-III. These individuals are making decisions about the futures of children with possible learning disabilities. If they are not scoring protocols correctly, students may not receive the services they need.
3. Examiners must have adequate training on administering assessments.
Sixteen to thirty-two minutes is not ample time to learn how to give and score

a test. Lack of training and practice causes inconsistency and discrepancies which ultimately affects student eligibility.

4. The chairperson for the Special Needs Department in each school should be an individual who is knowledgeable about current trends and issues for students who have disabilities. This person, because of his/her knowledge, should be a mentor to other Special Needs staff and offer support. This person should be familiar with the evaluation process and the assessments that are being given. Only 59% of the chairpersons who responded to the survey have had any training with the most widely used educational evaluation.

Recommendations

Training seminars on instructing evaluators how to administer and interpret assessments need to be increased. Evaluators need more time to practice during the seminar to ensure that they understand how to properly administer and score the test. Subtests that are open to interpretation and human error need to be covered more intensely. The “Administering and Scoring Guide for Individual Subtests” should be an integral part in the interpreting of protocols of the training process. It needs to be covered during the training along with the Appendix B of the scoring manual. The Appendix B of the scoring manual does not provide enough information to give a complete score of protocol answers. Some additional recommendations are as follows:

1. The WRJ-III Achievement Battery has training video packages and evaluator training workbooks that are available for purchase. These resources would be invaluable in helping evaluators who are learning how to give the assessment

to target their strengths and weaknesses. It is recommended that they be used as an integral part of the training.

2. WJR-III Educational Achievement training should be mandatory for all Special Needs Teachers and Counselors. This training should provide a support network for staff and provide the knowledge necessary to interpret data that is disseminated to parents during the eligibility process whenever possible.
3. Whenever possible, protocols should be scored by two evaluators who come to a consensus. If this procedure is followed, it should alleviate discrepancies that could prevent eligibility. If this is not economically feasible, then it is recommended that a district-wide auditor be employed to randomly check protocols for accuracy. Inconsistencies found should be corrected and additional training should be offered to the evaluator.

Further Research and Study

Through this research, specific areas have been pinpointed that need to be addressed in order to ensure that students who have possible learning disabilities will be given accurate assessments and proper identification. This research was limited to one school district in North Carolina.

This research could be expanded to cover other local education agencies within the state to determine if testing discrepancies are having an impact on student eligibility across the state, or nation. Also, further research could be conducted to determine if assessment training is the same across the state. Follow-up studies might be conducted to

try to determine how much time is needed for training or how to redesign the program so that evaluators are competent in administering the WJR-III.