

Chapter 6

Developing Assurances for Service Delivery Models

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines ways in which a school or school district can look at its service delivery models to ensure that certain strategies are in place, such as monitoring, evaluation, supervision, inspection, and quality control. These procedures can then be reviewed, either by an outside agency or by the special education program itself, as an evaluation tool to determine if the service delivery model is meeting the standard as well as identifying areas that need improvements. The chapter also discusses the standards that the Council of Exceptional Children has established, which all stakeholders, administrators, teachers, para-professionals, parents, etc. must abide by in order to have a distinguished special education program. The chapter concludes with a discussion about future trends in regards to the quality that should be visible for all service delivery models in special education.

INTRODUCTION

A successful quality strategy begins with an organization environment that fosters quality, followed by an understanding of the principles of quality, and then an effort to engage employees in the necessary activities to implement quality.
– Swaleha Sindhi (2013)

Service delivery models are designed to adapt to their population. They can change as often as the needs of each individual student within special education program changes. These models are not solidified based upon creation; they can be transformational. Best practices in special

education lean toward meeting the individual needs of students with disabilities and following the legal mandates proposed in the federal law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Wehmeyer & Schalock, 2001). Just as IDEA (2004) has assurances in place to support its practices, such as teachers being highly qualified, holding a license to teach special education, and “utilizing research-based interventions, curriculum, and practices” (§ 665[b][2][D]), there must be assurances for service delivery models too.

Increasing demands on and concerns in the special education community revolve around IDEA and No Child Left Behind’s (NCLB, 2002) mandates “to provide access to the general cur-

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-7397-7.ch006

riculum on the education of students with special needs” and to ensure the adequate yearly progress of all students (Wehmeyer & Schalock, 2001, p. 1). Developing assurances for service delivery models cannot only improve programs but also enhance the quality of life for special needs students as they embark on their educational journey. The quality of life for special needs students is embedded in the teacher’s ability to work with special needs students in all aspects of the general education curriculum and provide quality education for all students.

IDEA (2004) stipulates that service delivery to students with special needs is of the utmost importance. Researchers believe that the concept of service delivery is dynamic and no one model should be used exclusively (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association [ASHA], 1999). In any circumstance, a service must be provided with quality. The only way that this can happen is if a process has been formulated to ensure that the best possible products or services are being provided. This process is called quality assurance. This chapter will not only define quality assurances in service delivery models but also offer a process-centered approach to their development for special needs programs.

This chapter will:

- Describe quality assurances.
- Explain and summarize how service delivery models in special education programs are developed.
- Justify the criteria for the development of assurances in these programs.

BENEFITS OF QUALITY ASSURANCES

Every educational institution must take a look at itself to ensure that it is doing everything possible to educate all its students. In order to do this, it must follow an:

... assurance system designed to look into the quality of the institution’s educational provision and inform stakeholders on the effectiveness of the system put into place to ensure and improve quality. Such a system should be developed collectively through the participation of key players of the institution. Ideally they should work towards identifying the relevant areas that need addressing by the system as the needs would vary with size and complexity of the institution in consideration. (George, Muigai, & Nyakwara, 2013, p. 106)

Although the student population of a school will vary, the benefits of providing quality assurance to an educational institution are many. One such benefit has to do with the pride the teaching, non-teaching, and professional staff can feel in knowing that they have put forth their best efforts to make the service delivery model at their educational institution the best it can be. Their efforts will not only benefit them but will also prove to all stakeholders that the school and/or district cares about the program and the students. In addition, even though the service delivery model may be a good one or even the best in the state, there is always room for improvement. As such, it is essential that the service delivery model be reviewed on a continuous basis to ensure that the high quality that teachers, non-teaching staff, and administrators think they are providing is in fact the case. Providing quality assurance allows all stakeholders the opportunity to review resources, ensure that they are being used to their full potential, and identify any needs that may become apparent as a result of the evaluation. In this era of budget cuts for all public educational institutions, resources cannot be wasted, and thus consistent program evaluation will be a check and balance for efficiency. Next, the assurance assessment of the service delivery model could serve as a professional development for all stakeholders, especially in the areas that need improvement. The school administrators can bring in outside sources, or the people in the areas that need improvement can attend a class

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