

AN ANALYSIS OF DISABILITY SPECIFIC CURRICULUM
IN A SPECIALIZED SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND: A CASE STUDY

by

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DEDICATION

*This dissertation is dedicated to my father,
Kenneth H. Merrill Jr.
(April 19, 1948 – December 21, 2004)
whose uncompromising faith in my abilities drove me
further than I ever thought I could go.
“Take no prisoners!”*

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the changes in disability-specific curriculum that took place in one specialized school for the blind driven by academic priorities from 1995 to 2005. The framework used in this case study approach analyzed the school's past and present (1) Artifacts - visible organizational structures and materials, (2) Expressed Values- explicitly written or stated beliefs and policies, and (3) Underlying Assumptions- unspoken attitudes and beliefs. Variables for change among the areas of teacher training, team teaching, evaluation systems, IEP's, state standards, the school improvement plan, short term and summer programming, as well as the residential program were all targeted to balance academics with an Expanded Core curriculum. The results indicate a balanced curriculum for some of the variables while other areas continue to reflect the struggle of mandates.

I: INTRODUCTION

When asked what blind people wanted from their communities, one woman who is visually impaired said, “The right to be equal and the opportunity to be different,” (Hatlen, 1996). This quote not only reflects what blind adults want from their communities, but also what type of opportunities and specialized skill development they should be receiving as children. The opportunities for specialized skill development will become more limited if programs can only provide service support that focus only on the “equal” component and not the “different.”

A focus on specialized skills is needed for visually impaired children because their learning and developmental exceptionalities are unlike those of any other disability. It is often said that 80% of what we learn comes from observation. For children with visual loss, this means that they are unable to learn, model from, perceive, access, and be motivated by 80% of the opportunities and experiences that occur in the world around them.

Behaviors and skills that are typically learned through observation should begin early in life and continue throughout the developmental stages, so that strong foundations can be built upon continuously. By focusing on specialized skills needed for visually impaired children, schools can build such behaviors and concepts for them. Giving them the experiences and opportunities their nondisabled peers are obtaining incidentally can assure a complete education. Furthermore, future sections in this paper will reflect evidence (i.e. DeMario, Rex, and Morreau’s, 1990) that supports the need for these educational experiences in areas such as dependability, positive attitudes, personal-social

skills, good communication skills, and a wide range of independent living and other specialized skills so that students who are visually impaired can better transition and be more employable as adults.

Instruction in specialized skills related to visual impairment, called the Expanded Core Curriculum (Hatlen, 1996) is needed for students who are visually impaired because it addresses the development of skills in the areas of compensatory academic, social development, recreation and leisure, independent living skills, technology, career development and visual efficiency.

Programs at specialized schools for the blind, which historically have focused on specialized skills, must teach both basic and specialized skills due to the nature of their roles. Some specialized schools have focused more and more on academic areas and less on specialized skills due to the mandates of accountability. Some have become more like public schools, limiting their ability to offer more specialized curriculum than public schools can, including the full spectrum of the Expanded Core areas. Meeting state and federal mandates such as state testing and basic academic skills while maintaining the identity of a specialized school for the blind through systematic and generalized instruction is challenging for administration and staff.

The Governor Morehead School for the Blind in Raleigh, North Carolina, which was the first state to be held accountable for the ABC's (see Definitions) over a decade ago, has been undergoing the same changes as NC public schools over time. By 2003, this specialized school reflected the ramifications of being driven by academic priorities and not balanced with an Expanded Core curriculum. The drive for accountability

reflected time constraints, outside agency restraints, and lack of teacher training in vision specific areas.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the changes in disability-specific curriculum that took place at the Governor Morehead School between the mid 1990's and the present. Using a case study approach, the paper identifies the factors that affected change, using The Protective School Culture Model of cultural analysis as the framework of analysis (Bosworth, Goode, Embry, Castro, Bigian, Rohrbach, Bludau, Gingiss, Adelman, Hammond, Capuano, Phelps, and Taylor, 2000). This model reflects culture as operational by levels that ultimately affect areas such as organizational structure, beliefs, and policies. It also reflects the roles and responsibilities of students, staff, administrators and stakeholders of the school as active participants. It is this framework that will be used to establish a balanced program that incorporates both the academic and Expanded Core areas. Many professionals in the field of visual impairments believe that quality programming will occur by identifying a balance of the academic and Expanded Core areas (Lueck, 1999; Wolffe & Sacks, 1997).

Similar constraints may be experienced by other schools for the blind; therefore, this method can potentially benefit the growth and balance of specialized schools across the nation. Specifically, this study addressed the following research questions:

1. Were there changes in the disability-specific curriculum at GMS between 1995 and 2005, as indicated in The Protective School Culture Model by artifacts

(visible organizational materials and structure), expressed values (explicitly written or stated beliefs and policies), and underlying assumptions (unspoken attitudes and beliefs about the school)?

2. How did identified changes affect student educational programs, as documented in the areas of (1) teacher training, (2) team teaching, (3) evaluation systems, (4) IEP's, (5) state standards, (6) the school improvement plan, (7) short term programming, (8) summer programming, and (9) residential programming?

The state of GMS after it has responded to accountability mandates and the methods being used to infuse disability specific curriculum were examined by looking at the overall program needs through interviews, surveys, and observations. A case study approach is the chosen methodology and analytical framework for an investigation of this kind. The background and rationale for this study are presented in the Introduction and the Literature Review. The case study process will be described in Methodology, and the outcomes and implications will be detailed in the Results and Discussion and Conclusion sections.

Definitions

ABC's: In 1996 the State Board of Education began implementing the ABCs of Public Education. The ABCs focuses on 1) strong Accountability with an emphasis on high educational standards; 2) teaching the Basics; and 3) maximum local Control. This model sets growth and performance standards for each elementary, middle and high school in the state of North Carolina. End-of-Grade (EOG) and End-of-Course (EOC) test results and other components are used to measure the school's growth and performance. The philosophy behind this model is that ALL students should grow academically for a year's worth of education. In addition to growth, the goal is for all students to be proficient in reading, writing and mathematics.

Accountability: North Carolina has developed Student Accountability Standards for students in grades 3, 5, 8 and 12. These grades are referred to as the Gateways because they are transition grades before the next major step in a student's educational program. The SAS was developed to make sure students are ready to be promoted to the next grade.

Compensatory Skills: Adaptations and modifications that are made to standardize materials so that they are accessible.

Core Curriculum: General education goal and benchmark areas that all students must obtain prior to high school graduation as mandated by the state. Also referred to as the state standards.

Expanded Core Curriculum: Skills that are specific to visual impairment or blindness are developed through systematic and sequential instruction. Goal eight from the National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairments, Including Those with Multiple Disabilities.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB): The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was signed into law by George W. Bush in 2002. The goal of the No Child Left Behind Act legislation is to have ALL students achieving at a proficient level, as defined by each state, by the 2013-14 school year. The main three requirements of the new law are: 1) closing the achievement gap for low-income students, minority students and students with disabilities; 2) holding schools accountable for ALL students performing at a high level; 3) and have a highly qualified teacher in ALL classrooms.

Specialized schools for the Blind: A school placement consideration on the spectrum of Least Restrictive Environments (LEA) that is specific to students who are visually impaired. Typically a state funded school.

Specialized Skills: Areas of required development and skill which are unique to specific physical, cognitive and sensory disabilities.

Visual impairment: The terms low vision, legally blind, and totally blind are used in the educational context to describe students with visual impairments. They are defined as follows: "Low vision" generally refers to a severe visual impairment, not necessarily limited to distance vision. Low vision applies to all individuals with sight who are unable to read the newspaper at a normal viewing distance, even with the aid of eyeglasses or contact lenses. They use a combination of vision and other senses to learn, although they may require adaptations in lighting or the size of print, and, sometimes, braille; "Legally blind" indicates that a person has less than 20/200 vision in the better eye or a very limited field of vision (20 degrees at its widest point); and "Totally blind" students learn via braille or other non-visual media.

II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Historically, specialized schools for the blind were the only options students with visual impairments had for their educational programming. Throughout the 1800's and mid 1900's specialized schools provided instruction in primarily the core curriculum or academic areas (Zebehazy & Whitten, 1998). Their focus was to teach students how to read and write using Braille. At that time the goal may have been to make the visually impaired person literate, but not necessarily employable and independent. Up to the 1950's 88.4% of students with visual impairments attended specialized schools for the blind (Lowenfeld, 1982). This trend shifted because of the increase of infants with retinopathy of prematurity (ROP), and a new direction toward inclusive settings was therefore developed. Today, most specialized schools are moving toward inclusive settings in one form or another (Erin, 1993) through collaborative short term programming, summer programming and dual programming. Because of these and other factors, the role and curriculum at specialized schools for the blind have changed. This chapter is organized into two main sections that will discuss 1) the role of specialized schools and 2) curriculum in schools for children who are visually impaired. Past research studies reflected in this section will further support the research questions addressed in this paper and the selected framework.

History and Status of Curriculum in Schools for Children Who are Visually Impaired

There are many timelines, articles, and legislative landmarks that reflect the evolution of specialized schools the author has chosen to utilize those resources, and incorporate a perspective that will assist in understanding the historical relevance of the

curriculum provided and the service population specific to a specialized school. We can better determine the best service models to serve children today and in the future by examining five major historical trends that affected the population and curriculum in specialized schools. This examination reflects the diversity of programs offered in specialized schools for the blind and their effects over time.

1832-1900

The first historical trend began with the birth of the first residential schools. In 1832, schools for the blind opened in Boston, New York City, and Philadelphia. The New England Asylum for the Blind (now the Perkins School for the Blind) was the first to be incorporated in 1829. Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe was the first Director at Perkins and was a forerunner in the education of blind children (Bledsoe, 1993) in this era, raising the issue of mainstreaming visually impaired children into the public schools. However, society was not ready for such a radical idea.

Specialized schools for the blind were the only educational option for visually impaired students. Throughout the 1800's and mid 1900's specialized schools provided instruction primarily in academic areas (Zebehazy & Whitten, 1998). Prior to 1950, these schools were havens for academic learning for the blind. Children with additional disabilities were almost non-existent, and academic programs were offered that were at least as good, and often times better, than non-disabled students received in regular schools (<http://www.tsbvi.edu/Outreach/seehear/summer03/evolution.htm>). The most prevalent cause of vision loss schools for the blind encountered was from ophthalmia neonatorum and interstitial keratitis, both of which were related to venereal diseases and not typically

causality of other disabilities that would impede students cognition further (Scholl, 1993). This explains why the majority of students attending specialized schools were high functioning and therefore receiving instruction to support an academic component.

One study on the comparison of residential and public school settings (Scholl, 1947) found that there was little difference between the academic curriculum administered in public and residential settings at that time. In fact, students at specialized schools were made to learn and look as “sighted” people even when in their restrictive settings. Students did not use canes because that would encourage independent travel as well as make them look blind, and they were required to read their Braille books while wearing a large black bib to cover their hands (Scholl, 1993) so others could not see them accessing materials differently. Additional areas of instruction included physical education, sewing, home economics, and music (Scholl, 1993). However, as history would suggest, these ancillary areas were not taught as a means to instill independence and skill in students (Scholl, 1993). The first historical trend brought the birth of specialized schools, an academic curriculum, and a large population of students who needed to be served. However, as the mid 1900’s approached specialized schools would encounter multiple shifts in trends over the next 75 years.

1900-1940

The second historical trend began in the early 1900’s and carried through to the late 1930’s with the decrease of enrollment. Research indicates that the academic-driven curriculum of the past was still prevalent during this timeframe.

(<http://www.tsbvi.edu/Outreach/seehear/spring03/history.htm>). By 1915, approximately 15 cities

established day classes for students at the specialized schools. In 1931 there was focus on curriculum for African American students when ten separate departments in specialized schools and five independently administered schools were opened (Koestler, 1976). Enrollment numbers began to dwindle, as schools were no longer serving as many children with the predominant eye condition of the previous century. However, Howe's idea of mainstreaming began to resurface in the 1920's when the Maryland School for the Blind adopted a joint program with the public and vocational schools (Bledsoe, 1993). The Maryland mainstreaming model did not have adequate support or consequent opportunity to expand. In 1930 schools for the blind began mainstreaming a few of their senior high school students in local high schools (<http://www.tsbvi.edu/Outreach/seehear/spring03/history.htm>), yet this model was still not considered the wave of the future. The second historical trend reflects little change in the focus of academically driven curriculum or educational services to African Americans. However, a new trend on the horizon would increase the number of children served in specialized schools once again.

1940-1960

The third historical trend began in the 1942 when specialized schools encountered a new eye condition referred to as retrolental fibroplasia. Retrolental fibroplasia, which is now referred to as retinopathy of prematurity (ROP), is a potentially blinding eye disorder that primarily affects low birth weight (weighing 1250 grams or less) infants born before 31 weeks of gestation (A full-term pregnancy has a gestation of 38–42 weeks). The smaller a baby is at birth, the more likely the baby will develop ROP and

other physical or cognitive delays. This disorder, which usually develops in both eyes, was one of the most common causes of visual loss in childhood during that time and lead to lifelong visual impairment and blindness (<http://www.nei.nih.gov/health/rop/index.asp#2>).

Curriculum through the 1940's and 1950's expanded beyond the solely academic focus of the past to include arts and crafts, music, physical education, health education, home economics, and industrial arts (Scholl, 1993). Students began receiving instruction in more vision specific areas like orientation and mobility and social skills to promote independence (School, 1993). This movement toward independence was developed for blinded veterans who were returning from the battlefields of World War II. Blinded veterans returning from Europe and Japan took up residence at Valley Forge Hospital in New England. Richard Hoover and the staff at Valley Forge created techniques to assist blind adults in becoming self-sufficient and independent so they could better transition back to their post war lives. Consequently, the profession of orientation and mobility, the techniques, curriculum, and philosophy, were all designed around the needs of blind adult males (<http://www.wayfinding.net/publcsch.htm>). Soon after, O & M was applied to children with visual loss in specialized schools. The third historical trend reflects change in curriculum as it addresses vision specific areas, and the emergence of a new service population. However, enrollment would once again dwindle at the end of this era as movement toward mainstreaming soon took off and a new population of students with additional needs was rising.

1960-1990

The fourth historical trend occurred in the early 1960's and was greatly influenced by legislation like P.L. 94-142. Mainstreaming was the wave of the future and specialized schools were serving more students with multiple disabilities. The adjustment to the students who were now being served and new focus to a more functional curriculum caused almost half of the teachers to leave education in specialized schools (<http://www.tsbvi.edu/Outreach/seehear/spring03/history.htm>). Western Pennsylvania School for the Blind converted to a school exclusively serving students with visual impairment and additional disabilities. Other schools for the blind diversified their enrollment and began serving students with other disabilities (New York Institute for Special Education). One such example was the North Dakota School for the Blind (<http://www.tsbvi.edu/Outreach/seehear/spring03/history.htm>). As schools for the blind began accepting students with additional disabilities, they struggled to provide outstanding services for divergent populations with diverse curriculum needs on one campus. Public school versus residential school was a common myth as well (Bina, 1993; Maron, 1978; Hapeman, 1977) as debate between legislators, educational professionals and parents attempted to decide appropriate student placement.

Local school programs developed without much guidance from established schools for the blind. Visually impaired students were academically successful in public schools despite the limited resources (Hatlen, 1993). Teacher assistants learned Braille and therefore became de facto instructors. Teachers provided students with auditory instruction and resource materials (Scholl, 1993). However, this compensation for

service did not always reflected a positive outcome. Hatlen (1993) refers to the early 1970's as a difficult time in the field of visual impairments because a large number of students who were blinded by ROP were graduating from the public schools:

“Many of them have never spent time in a school for the blind. We have great hopes for them. After all, they are the beneficiaries of the same educational curriculum as their sighted classmates and have attended classes and socialized with their sighted classmates throughout their school careers. These young blind people should be ready to be assimilated into the community, be competitively employed, move on to higher education, be socially integrated into their communities and be a part of society... It is not happening. Most of these early graduates of our integration efforts remain at home with their families.”(pg 172).

This quote reflects outcomes consistent with Kirchner's (1985) research, which reported that in 1977, 32 percent of individuals with visual impairments were employed compared to 77 percent of their sighted peers. Articles revealed (Hatlen, 1993) that visually impaired students who were succeeding academically in the public schools were still missing a critical element in their curriculum.

Hatlen and Curry's study (1993) found that by 1987, mainstreaming visually impaired students into the regular classroom had become an established practice. However, educators and parents expressed concerns about the difficulties frequently encountered in addressing the unique education needs of those with visual impairments. Research also revealed that students who were succeeding in specialized schools were again missing a critical element. DeLaGarza and Erin (1993) found that between 1985 and 1990 graduates of one specialized school reflected high levels of satisfaction, independence and community integration; yet two-thirds of the graduates were unemployed. The fourth historical trend reveals changes and outcomes in placement settings (both positive and negative) in public and specialized settings, the need for

service for students with multiple disabilities, and focus to a more functional curriculum at specialized schools. A move away from the “public school versus residential school” mentality toward an atmosphere of partnership begins to emerge as student outcome data from both settings arise.

1990-Present

The fifth historical trend begins in 1990 and continues to develop today. New models are being created based on current student outcomes. This research indicates that neither full mainstreaming nor specialized schools can individually meet the full range of educational and developmental needs of visually impaired students (DeMott, 1993). Therefore, specialized schools must be the primary resource to provide public schools with the outreach programs and materials necessary to accommodate visually impaired students. Partnerships among agencies recognize the individual student rather than the population as a whole. Today, most specialized schools are moving toward mainstreaming and inclusion settings in one form or another (Erin, 1993) through collaborative short-term programming, summer programming, and dual programming. Curriculum content is also a priority. Although some specialized skills like orientation and mobility, social skills and independent living skills were taught during previous historical eras, the term Expanded Core Curriculum was not coined until 1996 (Hatlen, 1996). Current research indicates that specialized schools and public schools should be providing instruction in the eight areas of the expanded core curriculum for visually impaired students as well as those with additional disabilities. This creates a new struggle for specialized schools which must now provide both compensatory and

Expanded Core instructional support through their outreach services (McCuspie, 1996). In addition, specialized instructional programs serving full-time students struggle with similar factors as their outreach service departments, but have the additional responsibility for mandated core curriculum. Time constraints cause overburdened case loads and need for knowledgeable teachers (McCuspie, 1996). These factors also create new limitations and challenges for models that align to best practice. Some research supports going beyond the school day hours to provide optimal learning experiences and best practice modalities as effective functional learning opportunities (Koenig & Holbrook, 2000). The prevailing question facing specialized schools becomes, when and how to address governmental mandates and the overall educational need of the student.

The historical trends over the past 175 years reveal a pendulum swing from one mainly an academic focus to diversity with regard to student population and the curriculum being provided. The curriculum and populations at specialized schools have also shown evidence of influence in public school education service delivery and placement in those settings. Current research supports a balance between student placement and specialized curriculum as the appropriate key element. Partnerships between short-term programming, summer programs, and dual placements, are now believed to result more positive outcomes for students than individual placement alone for many students as supported by professional belief.

Educational Curriculum and Students with Visual Impairments

Visually impaired students are significantly impacted by three areas of the learning experience. 1) Core curriculum -- primarily academic skills, 2) Compensatory

skills, as an alternative way to access the core curriculum, 3) Expanded Core Curriculum, a curriculum that is designed to meet the unique needs of persons who are visually impaired (Hatlen, 1996). These areas will be addressed in greater detail in this chapter.

Core Curriculum

The core curriculum addresses skills which all students, sighted or blind, are expected to learn by the time they reach high school graduation (National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 1999). The existing core curriculum, based on state standards, consists of Language Arts, Mathematics, Health, Science, Fine Arts, Social Studies, Economics, Business Education, Vocational Education, and History.

Every state in the country, except for Iowa, has established state standards with which schools and districts are mandated to comply. This ensures that all students will have acquired, or at had an equal opportunity to acquire, these skills by graduation. Visually impaired students are held to the same state standards as their sighted peers with regard to the development of skills in the core curriculum. However, in order to have an equal opportunity to acquire those skills necessary for graduation, adaptations must be made to the curriculum so that visually impaired students can access the same reading, writing, arithmetic, and other curricula activities that are received by their sighted peers.

Compensatory Skills

Compensatory skills are the alternative way to access the core curriculum (National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairments,

Including Those with Multiple Disabilities, Hatlen & Stryker, 1996). There is virtually no curriculum or learning experience that sighted students receive, which cannot be adapted for a visually impaired learner because of the techniques used by specialized teachers of the visually impaired. (Pugh & Erin, 1999).

However, just because the core curriculum is required for all students and equal access is mandated do not mean it is equitable for all students. In order for education to be equitable, a “level playing field” must be established for all parties (Holmes, 1980). That level playing field is achieved when the instruction and content being presented and assessed is common to all students (Stainback & Stainback, 1996). For blind and visually impaired children, even modified concepts addressed in the core curriculum can not fully be visualized or perceived. In order for these students to obtain equitable educational experiences, instruction cannot be limited to the core curriculum (National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairments, Including Those with Multiple Disabilities, Hatlen & Stryker, 1996).

Compensatory skills address only modifications in the general curriculum therefore, experiences that are unique to persons who are visually impaired and specific to their disability may not be addressed. For visually impaired students to have equitable experiences, there must be specific instruction that expands beyond the core curriculum and its access through compensatory skills.

Expanded Core Curriculum

The National Advisory Council of the National Agenda has adopted the following statements as their own Core Curriculum for Blind and Visually Impaired Children and Youths, Including Those with Additional Disabilities:

- Blind and visually impaired students are entitled to receive the same education as they would get if they were sighted.
- Vision loss results in limited opportunities for children and youths to acquire information and knowledge casually and incidentally from their environment.
- Inability or limited ability to learn visually in an incidental manner means that blind and visually impaired learners will need to acquire these educational experience through instruction.
- Blind and visually impaired students, therefore, have two sets of essential educational experiences: (1) regular curriculum offered to all students and (2) learning experiences required because of vision loss.
- Both sets of educational experiences are vital if the student is to be successfully prepared for adult life.
- Therefore, the Core Curriculum for blind and visually impaired students consists of both the regular curriculum and an expanded curriculum designed to compensate for lack of visual learning experiences (National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairments (Hatlen & Stryker, 1996).

The expanded core curriculum is designed to go beyond the core components of math, reading and writing, to address essential areas and experiences unique to visually

impaired persons (Pugh & Erin, 1999). These areas should be taught in addition to the core curriculum because they are specific to the disability of blindness. The eight areas in the expanded core curriculum are learned incidentally and through modeling for sighted persons. For those with visual loss there is little or no opportunity to learn these skills. Through sequential systematic instruction by a knowledgeable person, visually impaired persons have the opportunity to acquire these skills that are necessary to be successful. The expanded core curriculum is designed to construct community concept development for blind individuals (National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youth with visual Impairments, Including Those with Multiple Disabilities, Hatlen & Stryker, 1996). The eight areas identified within the expanded core curriculum include: Compensatory Academic skills, Social Development, Recreation and Leisure, Orientation and Mobility, Independent Living skills, Technology, Career Development, and Visual Efficiency skills (Hatlen, 1996). This curriculum is a longitudinal process that requires instruction by a person who is knowledgeable about these exceptionalities.

Compensatory Academic Skills. A differentiation between compensatory academic and functional skills must be established since these are terms that are commonly confused. Hatlen (1996) identifies compensatory academic skills as those skills that blind and visually impaired students need to access all areas of the core curriculum and the development of organizational skills, concept development and a communication mode such as Braille or large print. Mastery of compensatory skills usually means that the visually impaired student has access to learning in a manner equal to that of sighted peers. Functional skills refer to those skills that students with multiple

disabilities, non-academic learners, need in order to develop the skills that are necessary for play, work, socialization, and hygiene.

Social Interaction Skills. Socialization begins at infancy with eye gazes, gestures, and smiles between a baby and its caregiver. Parents of infants who are visually impaired, there is no or little reciprocation of such visual cues (Adelson, 1983; Als, 1982; Frailberg, 1977; Friedman, 1986). This increases the risk of attachment issues for the child with parents and eventually peers. Further research indicates that visual impairments affect social development, including self-esteem, social competence, and the maintenance of friends (MacCuspie, 1990, 1996; Warren, 1984, 1994), especially those friendships with sighted peers (Warren, 1994). Because blind and low vision individuals cannot learn social interaction skills in a casual and incidental fashion, they require learning experiences that derive through sequential teaching (Sacks, 1992). Areas within social development that require systematic instruction include physical skills such as eye contact, gestures, body language, and inappropriate movement. Assertiveness training, appropriate tone of voice, assertive rather than passive or aggressive behavior, the ability to make positive statements, and self advocacy skills are also valuable (Sacks, 1993).

One study found that students with low vision were involved in fewer social activities than their sighted peers (Wolffe & Sacks, 1997). The study also indicated that, overall, most of the visually impaired students were spending their time after school home alone watching television or listening to the radio, rather than going to movies, hanging out at the mall with friends, and going to friends' houses like their sighted peers.

This pattern of isolation may continue for adolescents who have restricted opportunity to socialize with peers and thus disrupt the path to a successful transition into adult life.

Recreation and Leisure Skills. Students who are visually impaired have often been limited from recreational activities. One study compared the lifestyles of blind, low vision, and sighted youth, revealing that most visually impaired students were engaging in few or no recreational activities (Wolffe & Sacks, 1997). Further research indicates a correlation between children's athletic and academic abilities and their social standing among peers (Kekelis, 1992). Recreational activities promote not only physical fitness (Martinez & Grayson, 1978), but also self-esteem, socialization, and independence.

Adaptations can be made to most recreational activities to include visually impaired participants. These adaptations may include modifying the environment, such as installing a railing around the inside of a track so a visually impaired person can run independently, or orienting the visually impaired person to the recreation setting. Believeau and Rutberg (1978) define five effective methods for orienting the visually impaired person to the recreational space: 1.) Describe simply the general dimensions, 2.) From the doorway, identify boundaries using compass directions, 3.) From the doorway, walk around the entire perimeter of the room, 4.) Using the door as a reference point, walk to each major object with returning to your point of reference in between, 5.) Find a second reference point and repeat the first four tasks. Recreational activities for visually impaired students should be encouraged and be based on their abilities, not their limitations.

Technology (Assistive). Technology has enabled blind persons to access information that was otherwise unobtainable. With the introduction of e-mail, telecommunications, CD-ROM, and the Internet, the availability of assistive technology has grown exponentially. Devices such as Braille displays, Braille printers, Braille note takers, and speech synthesizers facilitate blind users to benefit themselves, to manipulate information otherwise only available to sighted persons (D'Andrea & Barnicle, 1997).

Technology enhances communication and learning, and expands the world of the blind or visually impaired person in many ways. Instruction in this area should be a continuous process in education that is consistent with the advancements in the technological world. Wolffe (1999) suggest that students' fields of interest should be linked with their instructional goals when developing technology skills. Critical points to be considered by the teacher include the type of technology used. Another consideration is will the technology will be used in the workplace. If not, when will the students be using technology that is comparable to the workplace? It should also be determined where students will access to such training. Current technology allows for increased and diverse job opportunities for visually impaired persons then ever before (Wolffe, 1999).

Orientation and Mobility. Blind and sighted children do not have the same spatial and sensory understanding of their environments. This is due to the fact that a sighted child's conception of his environment is based on his observations. A blind child's conception of his environment is based on his ability to explore it (Baird & Goldie, 1979). If a visually impaired child is not able to explore his environment systematically,

his perceptions about the world are limited and misconceived. Through orientation -- where a person is in the immediate environment , and mobility instruction -- the ability to physically move and be safe (Hudson, 1997)), a visually impaired person has a systematic way not only to explore his environment, but also to learn to the greatest extent possible from the environment through which he is passing (Hatlen, 1996).

Instruction in Orientation and Mobility is ultimately to enable visually impaired persons to move purposefully in any environment, familiar or unfamiliar, and to function safely, efficiently, gracefully, and independently (Hill, 1986). Instruction in this area is valuable to the individual because it goes beyond the capabilities of getting from point A to point B. Instruction also has many intrinsic values including psychological, physical, social, economic, and daily living skills (Hill, 1986). All of these areas are enhanced and facilitated through the independence that derives from appropriate orientation and mobility instruction.

Independent Living Skills. An activity encountered on a daily basis, for example making a sandwich, is often learned incidentally through observation. Students with visual impairments require systematic instruction in these activities of daily living to assist in independence, concept, and skill development. Instruction in daily living skills should begin in preschool with focus on toileting, dressing, and mealtime (Barraga & Erin, 1992). The instruction should carry over to elementary school where focus should be directed at managing self-care and personal possessions. By high school, the emphasis should shift to the individual's responsibility for grooming, self-care, and organization of personal possessions (Barraga & Erin, 1992).

Daily living skills need to be instructed in a way that will promote “best practice” so the student will be able to generalize the skills into different and realistic settings. For this reason, instruction should not always occur in the classroom during school hours, but during optimal learning times when learning can derive from everyday experiences (Koenig & Holbrook, 2000). Optimal times may include before school hours when a student is trying to coordinate his clothes for the day and pack a lunch and after school when dinner needs to be prepared and chores are being done. These are experiences that would be more meaningful when instruction to the student is facilitated in a realistic environment, not in a classroom.

Career Education. The transition from student to employee for all students, visually impaired and non-disabled, involves the development of many areas including awareness of internal and external abilities, interests, values, increased self-confidence and self control, decision making regarding careers, planning, problem solving, job variations and access into those fields (Healy, 1982, cited in McBroom & Tedder, 1993). DeMario, Rex, and Morreau (1990), found that students with visual impairments do not master the skills necessary for successful employment after graduation. Further research indicates that only 25% of persons who are visually impaired between 21 to 64 years of age are employed (McNeil, 1993). In comparison, there are as many visually impaired students attending college as their sighted peers (Marder & D’Amico, 1992), yet 75% of blind or visually impaired adults are unemployed (Kirchner and Peterson). Career education is a vital area to the expanded core curriculum because much of what we perceive the work world to be is based on prior visual experiences (Hatlen, 1996). Non-

disabled persons learn these visual experiences incidentally, but for the blind and low vision learner general instruction assumes the basic skills. DeMario, Rex, and Morreau's (1990) study further discusses and identifies the skills as necessary for employment such as dependability, positive work attitudes, personal-social skills, good communication skills, and a wide range of independent living skills. Ironically these are the areas in which the visually impaired person is not fully prepared by graduation.

Wolffe (1996) identifies the essential elements in designing a career education program for students with visual impairments as career awareness, preparation, placement, maintenance, and mentoring. Career education programs have been developed using Wolffe's design (McInerney, Leonard, Allura, & Simpson, 1997) to intervene and improve the quality of career education for blind and visually impaired students before it is too late. This provides learning experiences and an increase in employment for people with visual impairments.

Visual Efficiency Skills. Two people with the same clinical acuity measures or functioning may use their vision differently. One individual may complete task or retrieve information from their immediate environment (Corn & Koenig, 1996), more successfully than another individual. Through adequate instruction, individuals with functional vision can learn how to use their vision more efficiently, feel comfortable using it in unfamiliar environments, and adapt the environment to make it more accessible for themselves (Corn & Koenig, 1996).

Students who are visually impaired do not acquire visual skills in efficiency incidentally, therefore, direct instruction is essential. Factors affecting visual efficiency

in students include personal attributes, the onset of visual impairment and self concept, visual attributes, the type of visual impairment and the severity, expectations of the visually impaired person's social network, role models, instruction in efficiency skills, additional disabilities, and cognitive and sensory factors (Corn, DePriest & Erin, 2000). Optical and non-optical devices as well as other instructional strategies, as determined through assessments, are considerations when developing visual efficiency skills in students with low vision. By teaching students to depend on their vision rather than using tactile or auditory modes as their primary function they can be more independent, have more information readily available, and a better understanding of their environment.

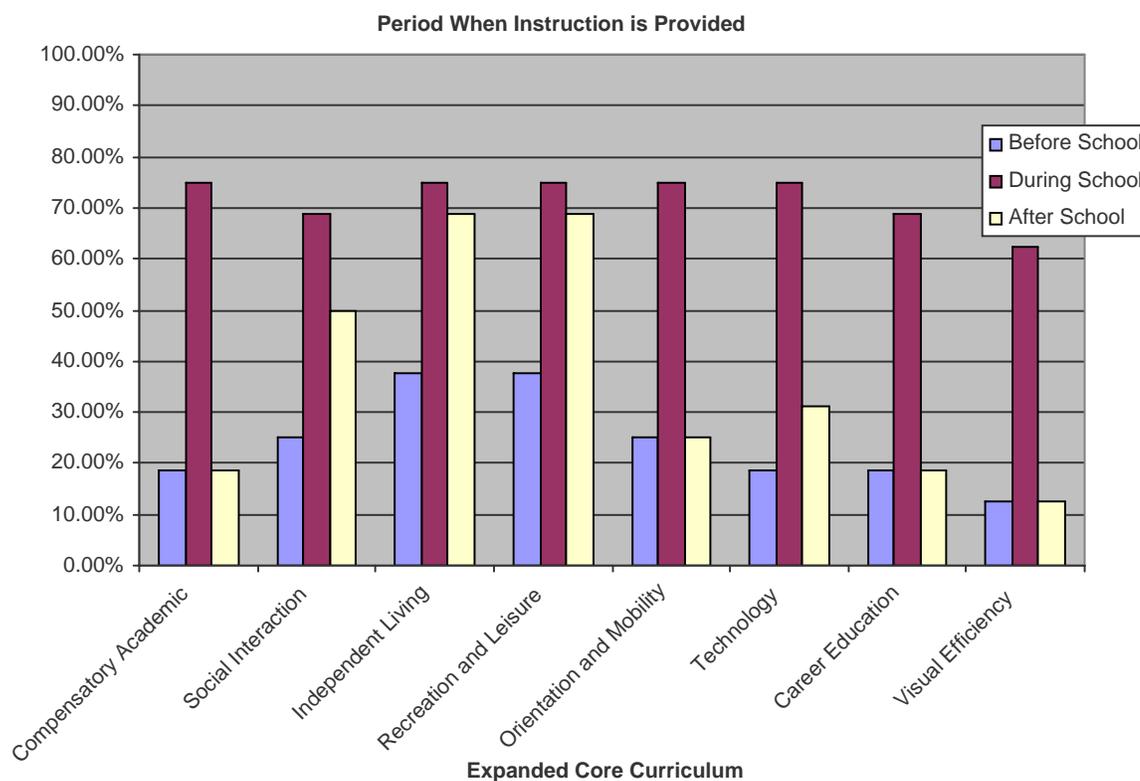
Access to the core curriculum is essential, but it is not enough for the visually impaired. The expanded core curriculum goes beyond the core curriculum, and exposes blind and visually impaired students to concepts and experiences that would otherwise only be acquired through incidental learning and modeling (Sacks, 1992).

Research indicates that, in the United States, specialized schools for students who are blind or visually impaired are providing instruction in the eight areas of the expanded core curriculum. Direct instruction in the eight areas is not equally distributed. For example, very little instruction is dedicated to the development of visual efficiency skills. However, specialized schools for blind or visually impaired students are going beyond the school day hours to provide optimal learning experiences and best practice modalities in the areas of social interaction development, recreation and leisure, and independent living skills.

Many professionals believe that the most effective learning results from frequent instruction during the times when a skill can be functionally applied. According to Koenig and Holbrook (2000), instruction after school hours should not be limited to social interaction, recreation and leisure, and independent living development. All areas of the expanded core curriculum can and should be facilitated throughout the day. According to one study (Lohmeier, 2001), over 71% of instruction in expanded core areas occurs during the school day. Although beneficial, instruction in each of the eight areas should also occur during alternate times when learning can be derived from everyday experience (Koenig & Holbrook, 2000). For example, a student at home trying to locate and organize his notebook and backpack so that materials will be readily available at the beginning of the school day may not be able to generalize all of the skills learned in the classroom to accomplish the task (less than 19% of instruction is provided at this optimal learning time in `compensatory academic skills). Locating bus routes to go to a doctor's appointment after school goes beyond the good of just getting from point A to point B.

In addition to the areas being addressed, the researcher identified the time of day the areas were being taught.

Figure 1, Period When Instruction is Provided in the Expanded Core Curriculum



The researcher found an average of 24.22% of schools were providing instruction in the expanded core curriculum before school, and an average of 36.72% were providing instruction after school. This is compared to an average of 71.88% of schools that were providing this instruction during the school day. For example, fewer than 30% of responding schools were providing mobility and orientation instruction outside the regular school day even though most mobility and travel needs are associated with the community. The question of how much instruction outside the school day is optimal is an area to be addressed in future research so that schools can plan effectively for their students' learning.

Many professionals believe that instruction in the expanded core curriculum may well contribute to successful adult adjustment for students who are blind or visually impaired. Even before the term “expanded core” was identified as a whole, experts such as Hill (1986), DeMario, Rex, & Morreau (1990), and Sacks (1992) were aware of the affects and intrinsic values derived from its individual parts- including psychological, physical, economical and social, in the transitioning of young adults who are blind and visually impaired.

Successful transition into adulthood or the least restrictive educational environment, is based on variables including the quality of service delivery provided to the individual (Zebahazy & Whitten, 1998). As educational mandates continue to encourage opportunities that are equal, some specialized schools are trying to balance this with “...opportunities to be different.” A specialized school with a quality balanced program is dependent not only upon the level of service provided in the core and Expanded Core areas, but how such a balance is accepted, supported and controlled by the individuals leading the process. This document is a case study on one specialized school for the blind and its methods for identifying and implementing steps toward a stronger and more balanced program.

III: METHODOLOGY

The research methodology described below will explore how the curricular emphasis of a specialized school was changed from a standardized curriculum to one that included skills specific to visually impaired students. A case study is the ideal methodology for analysis when a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991). This approach will allow the principal investigator to review existing and long term areas of strength in the school, as well as areas of needed change. A triangulation approach will be incorporated in the collection and analysis of data to include multiple perspectives. Frye (1999) advocates the use of case studies to describe complex examples while providing insight into the context of a problem and illustrating the main point. A case study will allow the application of theoretical concepts to be demonstrated, thus bridging the gap between theory and practice (<http://www.materials.ac.uk/guides/casestudies.asp>).

The process for exploring the needs and successes of The Governor Morehead School, (GMS), is a qualitative method that uses a framework found in organizational leadership. One unique factor of this study is that the researcher is also the current principal and will be the person assessing the needs and strengths of the school, carrying out future interventions, and analyzing the results for the purpose of school improvement. It is significant to understand the historical background and structure of GMS before further discussing the Theoretical Framework and Data Plan sections of this document. The background will provide understanding of how specific functions and components of the school could have been lost or refocused upon over time.

Case Study Site

The Governor Morehead School's innovation extends back to its roots. The school was established in 1845 as the eighth school for the blind in the United States. Equally impressive is that North Carolina was the first state to serve the African-American blind and deaf population, beginning just four years after the Civil War.

The school moved to the current location on Ashe Avenue in Raleigh in 1923 and was renamed in 1964, in honor of former Governor John Motley Morehead. African-American students attended school at the Garner Road campus until an exchange of students began in 1967, with full integration being achieved in 1977.

There have been significant and numerous changes at GMS in Raleigh, North Carolina, over the past five years – many of which were made as a result of decisions by the Department of Health and Human Services and the North Carolina General Assembly. While challenging for school staff, organizational changes can also provide opportunity to scrutinize current educational practices and services with the intention of improving the education provided to the students.

GMS has been a part of North Carolina's Department of Health and Human Services for the past five years. In that time, the school has been administered by three different entities: the Division of Services for the Blind (DSB), the Division of Early Intervention and Education (DEIE), and the Office of Education Services (OES). Both DEIE and OES were newly formed, requiring time to complete the central office staffing and initiate a full range of support. These changes, combined with the elimination of a

residential school for the deaf in Greensboro, left students, families, and staff uncertain about the future of residential schooling in North Carolina.

During the same five-year time period, there have been numerous changes in the administrative staff at the school. Three different individuals have served as Superintendent and three other individuals serving as School Director. Until 2000, the school's instructional leaders included a Principal and an Assistant Principal. The Assistant Principal position was eliminated at that time due to declining student enrollment (enrollment fell from 400 students to a total of 62). The Principal provided instructional leadership in the areas of educational service, outreach programs, and short-term services for residential and public day students until 2002. Enrollment increased to a total of 78 students in 2004 and the Assistant Principal position was reinstated. Overall, the instructional program has had four different school Principals and two Assistant Principals in the past five years.

History of Service Change

Age Range

GMS currently serves students ranging in age from birth to 21 years old. Under the authority of the Division of Early Intervention and Education the age range served by the school was reduced to 5-21 years and later was returned to birth to 21 years under the Office of Education Services. Since the preschool provides services to more than 500 children across the state, moving this program out and later returning it to the school resulted in significant programmatic and organizational change within the school.

Moving the preschool on to campus created a logistical “domino effect” requiring the elementary school be moved into the secondary level instructional building in 2003.

Instructional Program

Forty-nine GMS staff members serve residential and day students during school hours. While historically providing specialized educational services, the instructional program is held to the same state mandates as public schools in North Carolina. In 1996, the first state mandated end-of-grade yearly tests were administered to students in the areas of reading, writing and math. An accountability team was brought to GMS in 1999 to facilitate this transition. The team, under the direction of DHHS, hired certified teachers in general education areas, developed instructional pacing guides for the standard course of study, and developed student quarterly assessments. Curriculum focus and teacher training in these areas continued until 2003. The program had minimal support for students with additional disabilities and enrollment of students with additional needs was not reflective in the student demographic as compared nationally. From 2003 to the present time, a focus on vision-specific areas has been incorporated into the instructional program in order to provide better curricular balance.

Expansion of Outreach and Short Term Services

Since initial implementation of the federal law (PL 94-142) and the subsequent reauthorization of IDEA, the expectation that disabled children will be served in the least restrictive setting possible is very clear. It is the task of each child’s IEP team to determine the services needed and the setting required to implement the services

appropriately. For the majority of disabled children, the least restrictive setting is in their home community. Heavily populated areas of North Carolina have qualified staff to serve blind and visually impaired students. Less densely populated areas have consistent difficulty finding and retaining staff. GMS had provided support to children in their home schools through assessments, some direct intervention, and training for staff serving children in their home districts. Some school districts advocate intensive short-term intervention for students to address vision-specific needs and recommend children for short-term sessions. The goal of this program is to provide blind and visually impaired students across the state with specialized services that will enable them to stay in their home communities and benefit from their local school system.

Impact on Policy Development

Through each of these organizational transformations, current system-wide policies have been reviewed with new ones written and implemented. An updated compilation of LEA policies was provided by the Office of Education Services during the 2004-2005 school year. The development of local school procedures to align with current OES policy is in process.

In summation, an extensive amount of organizational change is obvious. Five years ago, GMS was its own single school LEA and managed itself as such. The LEA management changed from the Division of Early Intervention and Education to the current Office of Education Services. In addition to the numerous changes in instructional leadership, there were significant changes in enrollment, student demographics, and the types of services required by blind and visually impaired children

in the state. As with public schools in our state, we move forward with state standards and procedural clarifications and modifications regarding education in general (i.e. NCLB) and special education in particular (reauthorization of IDEA). This paper will examine the effects of the change in school curriculum and the balance of disability specific areas.

Theoretical Framework

Many models of organizational leadership build culture within schools and businesses, however, none specifically address specialized schools for the blind. Therefore, a case study approach is the chosen methodology and analytical framework for an investigation of this kind (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991). The uniqueness of the school's historic and current changes may limit replication, but analysis will provide a detailed record of the factors that have influenced curricular changes at GMS. A model was chosen to reflect assessment and investigation of the foundation for program implementation and related outcomes. The selected framework needed to reflect evidence of change in areas like organizational structure, attitude, and policies, which ultimately affects every component and function of a school. They also reflect the roles and responsibilities of students, staff, administrators, and stakeholders of the school as active participants.

For these reasons, the Protective School Culture Model, developed by Bosworth, Goode, Embry, Castro, Bigian, Rohrbach, Bludau, Gingiss, Adelman, Hammond, Capuano, Phelps, and Taylor (2000) was selected. This model analyzed a school culture

that linked drug abuse prevention with student success. These same researchers state, “Culture is the most pervasive influence in a school, and even seemingly minor steps to create a positive culture can have profound effects on students’ lives, yet it is frequently overlooked or taken for granted.” The same components for building a school culture that links drug abuse prevention with student success will be used and refocused in this study. As with the Protective School Culture Model, the intent is to build and maintain a school culture at GMS that links the balance of vision-specific and core areas with student success. The Protective School Culture Model identifies three areas to a successful school culture: (1) Artifacts - visible organizational structures and materials, (2) Expressed Values- explicitly written or stated beliefs and policies, and (3) Underlying Assumptions- unspoken attitudes and beliefs.

The table below shows The Protective School Culture Model areas and how they are defined. The table also reflects how this model is used to modify the framework above in order to determine a revised framework that can be used to assess the specific operated levels of a specialized school.

Table 1, Model Definitions

Area	Protective School Culture Model Definition for Public Schools	Lohmeier’s School Culture Model Definition for Specialized Schools for the Blind
Artifacts	Visible organizational structures and materials (such as drug-free school posters, parent volunteer systems, displays of student work, student handbooks).	Visible organizational structures, systems and materials representative of a specialized school for the blind (such as VI information, parent/teacher support systems, displays of student work, field related articles and other resources).
Expressed Values	Explicitly written policies, such as vision, mission statements, and personnel policies.	Explicitly written policies at a specialized school for the blind; and specific departmental procedures in the individual programs.
Underlying Assumptions	Unspoken attitudes and beliefs about “the way things are in the school.”	Nurturing beliefs and attitudes as to what the role of a vision teacher is, and the function of a specialized school for the blind.

Data Gathering Strategies

Observations, interviews, and documentation analysis will be used to conduct assessments of the artifacts, expressed values and underlying assumptions currently at GMS. Although there will be some overlap among the methods used, observation will be used as the main method for artifacts in the school, documentation analysis as the main method for determining expressed values, and interviews as the main method for determining the current underlying assumptions. The major areas of focus and development needed to determine change over time and ultimately provide a balanced program that supports both the core and Expanded Core Curriculum will be identified.

Artifacts

Observations will consist of utilizing the visible materials and structures that have been used and are currently being used to represent GMS and a balanced program. This will include the way materials are displayed in the school and the information and topics that are most reflected. It will also include how and to whom materials are distributed. Environmental assessments will be conducted in classrooms and around the school to determine the accessibility and utilization of such materials.

Expressed Values

The principal investigator will be using GMS's Five Year School Improvement Plan as documentation to provide a means of holding the school and staff accountable in areas that can enhance a balanced program. The school improvement plan is a document that reflects the mission, goals, and objectives that all schools must develop to maintain

their accreditation. The principal investigator can determine the values and direction of the school over time by looking at the long term goals for the school. Staff evaluations provide a strong source of accountability and focus which must be followed on an individual basis. Documentation of past staff training schedules and agendas will be beneficial in assessing school values. The principal investigator will look at Individualized Education Plans (IEP's) and the standard course of study requirements to assist further with identifying the forces which are affecting the curricular and programmatic needs of the school.

Underlying Assumptions

Formal interviews will be conducted with a sample of staff members who have been employed with GMS for over ten years. In addition, informal conversations will be used to determine how the staff perceive their roles as teachers of the visually impaired, the overall role of a specialized school for the blind, and their personal abilities as instructors. It will also provide information on how they feel they are supported by their administrators and other departments on campus. Identifying areas for positive adjustment based on collaborative assessment will allow for an overall sense of entitlement for the GMS staff. They will be part of the process of change and thus more likely to promote its successful implementation. Refocusing the school's change will be a continuous process that requires constant evaluation, work and acceptance from everyone involved.

Variables of Change

The school principal, who is also the principal investigator, conducted a needs assessment in early spring of 2003 that would eventually assist in identifying the variables of change targeted in this study. The areas were chosen, because of their intrinsic values that could ultimately affect a school culture that supports balance among the core and expanded core areas. The areas required for long term change were determined by observing the current visible artifacts, analyzing documentation of expressed values, and talking with staff about underlying assumptions currently at GMS. The areas to be addressed at GMS over time are: (1) training opportunities specific to visual impairments to ensure instructors skills and knowledge are current, proficient and resourceful, (2) team teaching among teachers and related service providers to ensure carry over, generalization, and support, (3) instructor evaluation system that encourages a way to measure and hold teachers accountable for vision-specific skills and teaching of such skills, (4) IEP's that include vision specific information and individualization, (5) state standards to be used as spring boards to enhance concept development and generalization, (6) a school improvement plan that reflects a vision - specific focus, (7) short term program that connects with the instructional program to alleviate severance of VI resources, (8) institute a summer programs that support the initiative of the school and meaningful services to VI students across the state, and (9) a residential program that is used to its fullest extent by going beyond the school day to provide service, support and collaboration. The table below reflects the nine areas expressed for change over time and the components assessed within the school to determine an area of change.

Table 2, Variables of Change

Variables of Change	Artifacts	Expressed Values	Underlying Assumptions
Teacher Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visible resources from the VI field • Classroom Observation • Displays of Student Work • Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Descriptions • Staff development rosters and agendas • Licensure requirements 	Teachers beliefs about their own teaching abilities and skills in the areas of BRL, LMA, FVA, ECC and other vision specific skills
Team Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe Teachers Working together • Structured teacher support systems • Displays of collaborative student works and activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom Schedules • Lesson Plans • Planning Periods 	Teacher attitudes about working with other staff to bridge concepts and generalization
Evaluations System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations in classrooms • Interviews • Structure of the system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual growth plans • Evaluation Procedure/policy • End of the year evaluation form 	Teachers beliefs about what is important personnel goals to focus on as teachers of the visually impaired
IEP's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe IEP Meetings • Interview IEP Members • Structure of the IEP process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present Levels of Performance • Goals and objectives • Team meeting notes 	Beliefs about what areas should be considered on IEP's for VI Students
State Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe teachers in core areas • Displays of student work • Structure for support service pull-outs during academics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson Plans • IEP's • Standard Course of Study document 	Attitudes about how state standards can be utilized to address VI areas
School Improvement Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision Statement • Mission Statement • Other school posters • Structure of the plan and its development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current School Improvement Plan • Student/Staffing Rosters • Office Of Education goals • National Agenda 	Beliefs about where the school is and where it is going
Short Term Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing Resources • Displaying similar materials and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum • Student Rosters • Staffing • Budget 	Attitudes about other programs and their roles
Summer Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer school structure • Publicity for the summer program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum • Student Rosters • Staffing • Budget 	Attitudes about what should be offered during summer and if the current system is effective
Residential Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing Resources • Displaying similar materials and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential Curriculum • Staff Training • Staff / Student Ratios 	Attitudes about other programs on campus and their roles

A need to balance the Expanded Core areas and the core curriculum areas has been proposed, by the principal, as the critical need for GMS. The nine areas identified above are the means by which those needs are to be addressed. The next section of this document will discuss in detail how each of these nine areas has been addressed at GMS in the past and how each is currently implemented.

IV: RESULTS

The results section is organized into three major areas: (1) Artifacts, (2) Expressed Values, and (3) Underlying Assumptions. Within each of the three major areas, the nine areas expressed in Variables of Change are discussed and supported by evidence from both past and current information.

Artifacts

Artifacts and their implications for the variable of change were assessed through observation of visible materials and structures that represented GMS both past and present. Materials were analyzed based on displays, distribution, and ultimate outcomes. Environmental assessments were conducted throughout the school to determine the materials' accessibility and subsequent utilization.

Table 3, Past and Present Artifacts

Variables of Change	Past Status	Present Status
Teacher Training	No subscription to professional journals, no submittals from GMS to newsletters and/or professional journals, little to no VI curriculum and resources for teachers, and no reference to Expanded Core and National Agenda in the school.	Subscription to professional journals, articles from GMS submitted to newsletters and/or professional journals, available VI curriculum and resources for teachers, and reference to Expanded Core and National Agenda in the school.
Team Teaching	Few instructors were team teaching, no overlap outside of same subject/service areas, no collaborative student work displayed, and little to no Braille displayed.	Bulletin boards reflecting individual and group projects displayed outside of classrooms, and articles co-authored by teachers reflecting successful combined lessons are visible.
Evaluation System	The system reflects supervisors support as vital and continuous, the instrument is general and does not hold accountability to vision specific skills or techniques for teachers, and no accountability for environmental assessments reflected on observations.	The system continues to reflect supervisors support as vital and continuous, the instrument is general, teachers are required to reflect goals on their IGP's that build their skills as vision teachers, and current supervisors base observations on both general and vision specific instructional techniques.

Variables of Change	Past Status	Present Status
IEPs	Restricted access to IEP document, meetings were formal, discussions limited, and teachers did not actively participate in them.	IEP documents are more accessible, meetings are more personal, and teachers lead the IEP meetings.
State Standards	Most visible structure reflected core curriculum, visible general education resources, no structure bridging core and Expanded Core areas, and state recommended text were not easily accessible.	Developing visible structure bridging core and Expanded Core areas (i.e. resources guides), and recommended state text are more accessible.
School Improvement Plan	Mission and vision statements were visible, goals and direction in the plan was not emerged in the school, and the development process supported limited input.	Mission and vision statements are visible, goals and direction in the plan are emerged in the school, and the development process supports school wide participation.
Short Term Program	Outreach primarily served students in their home districts, and there was little evidence of shared resource among them and other departments on campus.	Serves students in public schools at GMS, provides resources and works more collaboratively with other departments on campus.
Summer Program	No summer school flyers, rosters, materials, and no overall structure identified at GMS for summer programming.	Flyers, public recognition, photos, rosters, materials, and overall structure are identified at GMS for summer programming.
Residential Program	Recreation was a separate department from residential, structure supported off-campus activities, but no formal residential curriculum that focused on vision specific areas.	Recreation is under the residential program, structure does not support frequent off-campus activities, and formal instruction is reflected in a residential curriculum.

Teacher Training

Past. Past resources about how teachers were assisted in maintaining updated information and skills in the field of visual impairments were difficult to locate. The school was not receiving newsletters from COSB (Council of Schools for the Blind) or submitting information to COSB in the past. In fact, the past director indicated that GMS had not even been involved with COSB for at least the past ten years. Other resources such as journal articles and professional publications were outdated or non-existent. The

school did not subscribe to RE:View and had no journal articles from JVIB more recent than 1991. Teacher resource books and curriculum specific to VI were also unavailable in classrooms where they could be utilized to support and direct instruction. One teacher working with students with multiple disabilities was using a teacher's guide published in the early 1970's and provided lesson plans for working with students with mental health issues. Only one copy of the New Programmed Instruction in Braille (Third Edition), by Ashcroft, Sanford and Koenig (1994), was located. No references of the Expanded Core curriculum or the National Agenda were identified on the school web site, brochures, bulletin boards, or student handbook.

Present. Current artifacts are highly visible resources at GMS. The school subscribes to both RE:View and Journal of Visual Impairments and Blindness. GMS staff members have had five articles published in the Council of Schools for the Blind in the past three years. Four more articles regarding instructional methods in areas like daily living skills, orientation and mobility, and transition have recently been submitted and await publication. Applicable journal articles are copied and given to instructional specialists (i.e. the PE teacher receives copies of articles about adapted PE or related information). Teacher resource guides specific to VI are among the other visible artifacts as well. All teachers have a copy of the National Agenda, the New Programmed Instruction in Braille, and Craig's Nemeth code in their classrooms. Additionally, teachers working with students with multiple disabilities have the Syracuse Curriculum by Syracuse University and Working with Students who Are Visually Impaired with Multiple Disabilities by Millie Smith. Reference to the National Agenda and the

Expanded Core are now also reflected on the GMS web site, brochures, bulletin boards, and student handbooks.

Team Teaching

Past. Virtually no past artifacts reflecting team teaching, such as the written evaluations of a successful lesson that were filed in the school. According to past teacher observation records completed by their supervisor, team teaching was reflected in only two areas during observation times: (1) the physical education teachers working together during class-time, and (2) the mobility instructors shared resources. No overlap or team teaching was observed outside of same subject or same service areas as noted in written observations. Student work in the past was displayed primarily in individual classrooms as reflected in interviews. Math classes displayed students' geometry work and Language Arts classes displayed students' poetry. There was no display of individual or collaborative student work in the hallways. In addition most displays of student work were in print and there was little display of students' work in Braille. The elementary, middle, and high school combined, utilized only two bulletin boards as displays and resources.

Present. Student work and staff accomplishments are now reflected throughout the school. Every classroom has a bulletin board hanging outside the door where student work is displayed in both print and Braille. The boards display resources for teachers and students, and collaborative student projects. Articles co-authored by staff describing successful combined lessons are visible to promote the model for team teaching.

Evaluation System

Past. The previous evaluation system reflected a continued growth of skills and the presence of accountability among teachers and supervisors. The system was designed to support a continuing employee / employer relationship. The visibility of the supervisor in the classrooms through observation (typically two to four a year), facilitating mid year reviews, interviews, end of year review and final evaluation, suggest that the support system is a continuous and vital component to the organization's structure. The evaluation system reflects a sequence of steps to be taken by the teacher and supervisor to build support and accountability however the structure was not specific to a specialized school for the blind. Teachers' instructional focus and supervisors' overall expectations were not specifically identified by past evaluation systems nor were they reflective of vision-specific skills, but rather general education content. For example, one teacher's goal stated "Will increase communication with parents and dorm staff". According to interviews, the lack of visible information in multi media coupled with the absence of additional lighting sources, and appropriate contrast for students indicates a low level of environmental reinforcement in classrooms as well as a low level of staff accountability.

Present. While the current legal requirements of the system and timeline have not changed, the internal expectation for vision related artifacts around the school have changed significantly as reflected by the environmental assessments referred to in current observation documents by supervisors. Teachers are aware that current supervisors are observing the content and flow of the lesson, as well as the modifications to the lesson and accessibility to the environment. Teachers provide materials in a variety of

modalities during formal and informal observations. Tactile information such as calendars hang in classrooms, additional lighting is visible, and adaptive technology is being incorporated. After visiting ten classrooms, 100% of them had computers with JAWS and Zoom Text, tactual calendars, and both print and Braille displays of student work hanging on the walls. These visible materials, devices, and resources are evidence that lessons are more accessible for students under the current system.

IEP's

Past. In the past, teachers had restricted access to the IEP document and little or no structural control over IEP meetings. Records were stored in a separate building and times for review had to be scheduled with the IEP coordinator. IEP meetings were held at arbitrary times during the school day and were attended by the IEP coordinator, who ran the meeting, as well as classroom teachers, relevant related staff, and the students' parents. The structure of the meeting was formal and shared information was limited to the content of the IEP document. According to interviews, classroom teachers were typically charged with scribing minutes rather than participating actively.

Present. The current structure of the IEP process has changed substantially. Results indicate that staff roles, records, and locations have been affected by the current structure. The IEP records are now housed in the school office providing improved accessibility. Federally mandated documentation is still required to record who is viewing the file, however viewing appointments are no longer required. IEP meetings are currently scheduled during the participating teacher's planning period so they are not being pulled from class to attend an IEP. The meeting itself is held in the teacher's

classroom to promote a more personal feeling for parents and staff. This environmental change makes the students' classroom work accessible when teachers are discussing the present levels of performance. Teachers are now the primary leader in the IEP meeting; directing the pace, personalizing the information, and providing additional resources if necessary. The IEP coordinator acts as the agency representative and provides administrative support through scheduling the meetings, providing procedural safeguards, scribing, and maintaining compliance. Related service staff are encouraged to communicate with parents regarding student's progress frequently through means other than just the IEP. Therefore they do not have to attend every IEP meeting.

State Standards

Past. The visibility of the state standards was more predominant than any other past area within the variables of change. The structure of the school was to focus primarily on the instruction of the state standards and to ensure teachers were knowledgeable in teaching the content area. The classroom curriculum and visible resources from the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), reveal a program that prioritized a general curriculum through their text books recommendations. Text books from DPI were chosen not for their accessibility or transcription but because they aligned with North Carolina's state standards. For example, a math text by Addison-Wesley was on DPI's recommendation list and chosen by GMS. However, a Scotts-Foresman text on the same state recommendation list was a better choice because of its ease of Braille transcription and content base, as well as the fact that it does not have nearly as many illustrations and graphics as the Addison-Wesley text. Findings indicate that there was

no structure or visible material that indicated state standards were being infused into vision specific areas or held to the same standard of consideration or implementation as the state standards in past years.

Present. The visibility of the state standards continues to be predominant in the school program and is bridged with vision specific areas. Special consideration is given to how the standard content is being selected and provided. Before a text is adopted at GMS, the teachers and the Braille specialist view the text and consider if it aligns with North Carolina state standards. Then the staff determine how accessible the text and supplemental materials will be, along with the level or error that could occur with transcription. A resource guide is being developed to better support the structure in North Carolina to align the state standards with vision specific requirements so that vision teachers can bridge and generalize concepts, maintain compliance, and address vision specific needs. The increased visibility of specialized curriculum and general education curriculum in classrooms at GMS is an indicator that instruction from both the state standards and the Expanded Core curriculum are significant to the education of students with visual impairments.

School Improvement Plan

Past. While the mission and vision statement were reflected on the school website, handbook and some brochures for quite sometime, the school improvement plan was not previously visible in the school according to teacher interviews. In addition, it was not visible on the past 1998 web site or parent handbook. The visibility of the school improvement plan was reflected throughout the school in fall of 2004 during the SACS

(Southern Association Council of Schools) reaccreditation tour took place. During that time, GMS's mission and vision statements appeared throughout the facility. SACS reaccredited GMS and provided recommendations to the school structure for the 2005-2008 school improvement plan. Those recommendations included a continued focus on vision specific areas, developing goals for the new school improvement plan without the influence of outside agencies, and creating a document that could be referenced.

Present. The current school improvement plan was developed in the spring of 2005. The structure required school wide participation to ensure representation and visibility of every program and department. Five goal areas were specified by the GMS's Office of Educational Services, from which benchmarks were developed. The goal areas are compliance, safety, transition, curriculum and instruction, and parent partnerships. The current structure requires committees in each area create the benchmark and oversee the progress. The school improvement plan continues to be visible through its mission and vision statements in the halls of the school building, and represent various departments and programs on each committee.

Short Term Program

Past. In the past, there was little evidence of outreach teachers on campus because their primary function was to serve students in their home districts. There was no evidence found on past brochures or calendars to indicate that the outreach and instructional school program had shared structures or systems to support collaborative instruction in past years.

Present. Recently outreach added another dimension to its service structure referred to as “short term.” The short term program is identified in the variables of change because it serves students on the GMS campus from across the state. The short term program works collaboratively with the school day program because of their shared location (the GMS campus) and student population. The structure of the short term program, as reflected on the GMS web site and short term brochures, serves students statewide who will benefit from a short period of intensive instruction in the expanded core curriculum areas. Short term sessions are one week in length and held monthly on the campus of GMS. Short-term teachers who are vision certified instruct students in disability-specific skills. This equates directly to classroom success and provides individualized instruction to meet specific learning needs. In addition to working with the short term teachers, students mainstream into the school day classes in areas including physical education, technology, and group mobility. The shared partnership between the instructional school program and short term program is becoming more evident through combined camps, lessons, and teacher trainings.

Summer Program

Past. In the past, the GMS summer program focused on serving only GMS students not students enrolled in public schools. No summer school rosters prior to 2003 were located to reflect students from public schools attendance to GMS during summer months. There were no materials such as flyers, curriculum, the web site or brochures to identify the program. Underlying assumptions and documentation provide more evidence of how the summer school program functioned in the past.

Present. Many artifacts were identified including flyers, funding and staff assignments, to structurally and visibly support the current summer school program. Flyers were sent to parents of GMS students and public schools about the different programs. The information regarding the summer program was distributed electronically and by hard copy through the short term and traditional instructional programs program. Photographs that were taken throughout the summer program provide visible evidence of the summer program. For example, photos were displayed to share experiences during the deep sea fishing trip, goal ball tournaments, cooking activities, and a day of golfing at Pine Hurst. T-shirts that were made for the students and staff that read “Governor Morehead School’s 2005 Expanded Core Sports Camp“ The program’s curriculum included Finding Wheels by Rosenblum & Corn, Social Development Skills, by Sacks, and Independent Living Skills by Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Students and GMS job coaches are visible in the community on job sites through the workplace program also. A variety of transportation systems were utilized to support students getting to and from work . Other current systems for the work place program include employer awareness/support, provisions for adapted equipment on the work site, and public recognition of supporting businesses (i.e. through newsletters, web sites) providing employment opportunities for students at GMS.

Residential Program

Past. The past residential program at GMS focused on recreational and off campus activities. Certified residential staff took students on camping trips, and to athletic tournaments through the auspices of a separate entity that coordinated after

school trips and sports. In addition, students with approved clearance, traveled off campus with to go to the mall or out to eat after school hours, as evident from past mobility instructors' files and clearance list. No formal residential curriculum was found through a hard copy or reflected on the 1999 web page of GMS.

Present. The current residential program has been entirely restructured from what it was just a few years ago. The recreation program is currently supervised by the residential program and as such, no longer supports staff taking students on weekend recreation trips. Since it has been under the supervision of the residential program, the recreation programs is limited to providing students with off campus opportunities, as evident through staffing numbers, funding and curricula support in the community. The current structure requires students to have formal instruction after school hours in areas reflected in their residential curriculum. The curriculum was developed in the last four years and is currently under revision.

Expressed Values

The GMS Five Year School Improvement Plan was one of many documents analyzed for evidence of procedures and accountability. Staff evaluations provided a strong source for measuring accountability. Documentation of past staff training schedules and agendas were used to assess school values. Students' Individualized Education Plans (IEP's) and standard course of study requirements also provided evidence of change.

Table 4, Past and Present Expressed Values

Variables of Change	Past Status	Present Status
Teacher Training	Focused primarily on district and state mandated topics, and little to no VI training was available for support.	Focus is on district and state mandated topics, and VI specific topics and methodologies.
Team Teaching	No coordination among teacher' schedules, little to no collaboration and generalization of subject areas and lessons, and primarily direct instruction by related service providers.	Coordinated teacher schedules, increased collaboration and generalization of subject areas and lessons, and both direct and group instruction by related service staff.
Evaluation System	IGP goals tended to focus on the general operations of the school, and little to no goal focus or accountability on skills and training specific to the role of vision teachers.	IGP goals focus on both general operations and VI teacher roles, supervisors observations reflect both general education and vision specific instruction and methodologies used in the classroom.
IEPs	IEP's were general and focused primarily on core areas, little to no reference of vision specific skills beyond Braille and Orientation and Mobility.	IEP's reflect increased vision specific areas, Expanded Core sheet communicated at every IEP, little to no goals reflected in adaptive PE.
State Standards	Procedures and materials reflect the state standards as the primary focus in the classrooms.	Procedures and materials reflect core curriculum (state standards), compensatory skills and the Expanded Core curriculum as the primary focus in the classroom.
School Improvement Plan	Goals primarily addressed academic areas, and no evidence was located of who developed the plan.	Goal areas were provided by local district (OES), and objectives developed by the school focused on diverse areas.
Short Term Program	Outreach focused on serving students in their LEA, services were primarily compensatory, and short term programming did not exist.	Outreach focuses on serving students in their LEA and on the GMS campus (short term), and services are primarily compensatory and Expanded Core.
Summer Program	No programmatic structure to summer programming, little to no funding available, personnel and staffing available for summer programming.	Programmatic structure reflects four major areas that contain purpose, criteria, and focus; personnel and staffing available for summer programming.
Residential Program	No residential curriculum, and budgets for recreational activities and off-campus activities available,	Residential curriculum with increased focus in independent living skills, but few other vision specific skills; budgets for recreational activities and off-campus activities are limited.

Teacher Training

Past. Past staff development rosters indicated teacher training that focused on district and state mandated topics. A 1994 SACS Visiting Committee report indicated the need for continuing education, mentoring, and a university program to accelerate the teachers training in visual impairment. Prior to 2003, there was little VI training available to teachers. GMS staff development training rosters reflect only one training specific to visual impairment conducted from June 1998 until January 2003. There were no staff development rosters prior to 1998 to determine if any VI-related training was offered. Training topics during this timeframe included Blood Borne Pathogens, Directive 61, HIPPA, Safety Training, Discipline & Visitor policies, and EOG updates. Some training occurred annually while others occurred only occasionally.

Present. Current expressed values indicate a renewed focus for teacher training related to visual impairment at GMS. Within the past three years, staff development rosters and other documentation indicate increased numbers of vision specific trainings. A total of seven major VI-related staff trainings have been conducted between 2003 and 2005. Trainings ranged in duration from one session to sixteen sessions depending on the topic area. Meeting agenda notes indicate that two staff meetings were scheduled specifically to discuss the Expanded Core, its relevance, and how other specialized schools for the blind were addressing it in their curricula. Braille training was taught by an adjunct faculty member from the Visual Impairment Program at North Carolina Central University and the school principal to develop teacher's proficiency in the Braille code. A proficiency test implemented at the end of the sixteen-week training course

yielded 95% Braille proficiency among participating staff members. One year later, the same staff was required to take an alternant version of the proficiency test to measure their code retention and to assess its significance at GMS. Scores indicated that teachers were within a 10% range of their original proficiency score or higher.

Contracts were also used to assess current expressed values in the area of teacher training. A Clinical Low Vision Specialist for example, was contracted to train the GMS staff for a total of 80 hours in the area of functional vision assessment. The training was given to teachers, teacher assistants and related service staff. Training topics included:

- Structure and function of the eye
- Adaptations and modification of materials
- Lighting, contrast, low vision devices
- Environmental assessments
- Learning Media Assessments (i.e. Sensory channels, John's Reading Inventory)
- Interpretation of vision information and reports
- Design of a Clinical Low Vision area for GMS (i.e. essential materials and equipment, layout of a designated room)

Vision-specific training, like the aforementioned as well as individualized programs, is being offered to all GMS staff. Credential renewal documentation and staff development rosters indicate that an intense sixteen week training took place specifically with the teachers who serve classrooms of students with multiple disabilities. The training focused on community based instruction, the Syracuse curriculum, and assessing and maintaining data on students with additional disabilities. Documentation reflects a significant change from past training in areas such as universal precautions and state testing mandates, as well as vision specific trainings.

Team Teaching

Past. Team teaching among teachers in the past years at GMS was not evident through documentation analysis. Past master teacher schedules reflect no coordination among planning periods for the elementary, middle school, and high school programs. Schedules were not designed with collaboration among individual programs in mind. High school teachers need the allocated time in the day to communicate thematic lessons and generalize concepts. Past schedules of related service providers (i.e. Orientation and Mobility, counselors) did not reflect time for providing group instruction or service to students in the classroom or in the community. Their schedules reflected only direct service time through pull-out with one student. There was little or no opportunity for teachers to observe techniques and terminology used by the related service provider limiting the teachers' ability to consistently carry those same skills throughout the week. That evidence in the expressed values indicated that each professional is most effective as a specialist who should focus on their own area of expertise.

Present. Current master schedule reports reflect something very different. In the past two years, the master schedule has been designed with collaboration and team teaching in mind. For example, all elementary teachers have the same planning period during the last hour of the day while students attend an alternating art class and cooking class. Middle school teachers all have the same planning period as well while students attend an alternating physical education class and technology class. The high school teachers' schedule reflects the same expressed values allowing for collaboration during the last hour of the day while students take elective courses or hold community based

employment. Current schedules of related service staff (mobility instructors, daily living skill specialists, counselors, speech therapists) reflect the same protocol for team teaching. Counselors' schedules reflect group lessons in the classrooms with the teacher conducting social development skills at least once a week with each program. Orientation and mobility instructors' schedules reflect group instruction with different classrooms week at all grade levels in the community multiple times per week. This group instruction occurs in addition to individual direct service time. The results indicate a significant level of increased opportunity for teachers and related service providers to meet, collaborate, and team teach. Furthermore, documents indicate team teaching is occurring in the classrooms and the community.

Evaluation System

Past. There has been little change in the past and the present with regard to the evaluation process itself. As mandated and reflected on the SERVE evaluation document, the steps begin early in the year (mid September) when teachers are required to develop an Individual Growth Plan or IGP with two to three goals that they will be working toward during the school year. The growth plan form reflects the goals, the actions taken by the teacher toward meeting the goal and a timeline. Classroom observations are conducted, a mid year review occurs in January, an interview with the principal and teacher to discuss aspects of teaching will occur at the end, and the year end evaluation that is dependent on these cumulating factors. The documentation from twenty past IGP's, observations, mid-year evaluations, interviews and final evaluations were used as evidence to determine what values were expressed by teachers. Results

indicate that prior to 2002, IGP's focused on four areas: (1) teachers earning certification and license renewal credits (2) attending general education workshops through the DPI, (3) achieving testing mandates, (4) and communicating customer service. Customer service was the most prevalent goal of teachers in the past. Documentation from past observations revealed little or no reference of vision specific goals. The only significant references to vision related areas were documented by Orientation and Mobility instructors.

Present. As stated earlier, the current evaluation system still requires teachers to have two or three goals on their individual growth plan as reflected by SERVE guidelines. However, teachers now must make at least one vision specific goal on their growth plan as reflected by the instructional evaluation guidelines developed by the school principal. Individual growth plan forms completed by teachers within the past two years were used as the primary source of documentation. Goals were analyzed and categorized as either "vision specific goals" or "other." Results indicate that 100% of certified staff had at least one vision specific goal on their IGP. Furthermore, 40% of the IGP's analyzed reflect a vision specific goal that is infused or collaborative with another core area. The other vision specific goals focused on a specific training or skill that the individual wanted to increase or develop. Below is a sample that reflects a recent selected goal, and the actions and timelines documented by the teacher on the IGP.

Individual Goal	Actions	Timeline
<p>A. To Work with O&M staff in bridging geometry concepts with O&M language used in their lessons so that students can better generalize the subject area.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teach unit on angle relationships with parallel lines and transversals 2. Design a lesson in traveling with geometry students and how they can relate positions with angles and lines to geographic locations 3. Present lesson to O & M teachers for integration of an ideas they can suggest to improve the lesson discussed with teacher, about idea and to arrange meeting 4. Plan a field trip with the geometry students to the location and execute the plan 5. Students write a paragraph on their experiences 6. Write a one page summary of reflection on the project I did 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. October 2003 – lesson plans 9/24, 9/25, 10/27, 10/30, 1/22, 2/12 2. November 2003 – lesson plans and diagram in print and Braille 3. January 2004 – list of suggestions or reactions to the lesson 4. February/March 2004 – submit field trip plans and take students 5. March 2004 – students write and turn in journal writing 6. March – one page typed summary

In addition to the vision specific goal required on the growth plan, current observation documents reveal a significant increase in reference to vision specific areas, methods, and resources. For example, reference to teacher abilities to use hand over hand, low vision devices, bridging core and Expanded Core concepts, assistive technology, adaptations and modifications of materials are currently evident.

IEP's

Past. Teachers of the visually impaired perform numerous and varied roles and functions in the classroom. Spungin and Ferrell (1999) identified one of the significant roles as the developer of the IEP and other similar documents. There were no past standards in North Carolina or at GMS for documentation of the expanded core curriculum on the IEP's of blind and low-vision students to ensure that these skills were acquired by graduation. In addition, no documentation was found to hold teachers or administrators accountable for both providing appropriate instruction and training on how

to write IEP's that consider these areas. The IEP goals analyzed revealed that prior to 2002, there were three consistent competency goals- Language Arts, Mathematics and Orientation and Mobility. The IEP's analyzed represented students from elementary school to high school who were college bound as well as students with multiple disabilities. None of the goal reflected areas such as social development, visual efficiency and independent living skills or adapted physical education. The inability to identify vision specific goals such as these on the IEP express that academic learning was the most important goal of education for a visually impaired student.

Present. Current documentation reflecting the expressed values of the Expanded Core curriculum are evident in the new school improvement plan. Under the compliance goals in the school improvement plan, considerations for all Expanded Core areas will be addressed at every IEP meeting. Of the nine current IEP's analyzed, each had the consistent Language Arts and Mathematics goals. However the documents also reflect community-based activity for students with additional disabilities. Social development goals and daily living skills goals were common for students with multiple disabilities. Current goals in orientation and mobility tend to reflect and infuse more visual efficiency skills as well. Out of the nine IEP's analyzed, none of them had adapted physical education goals reflected.

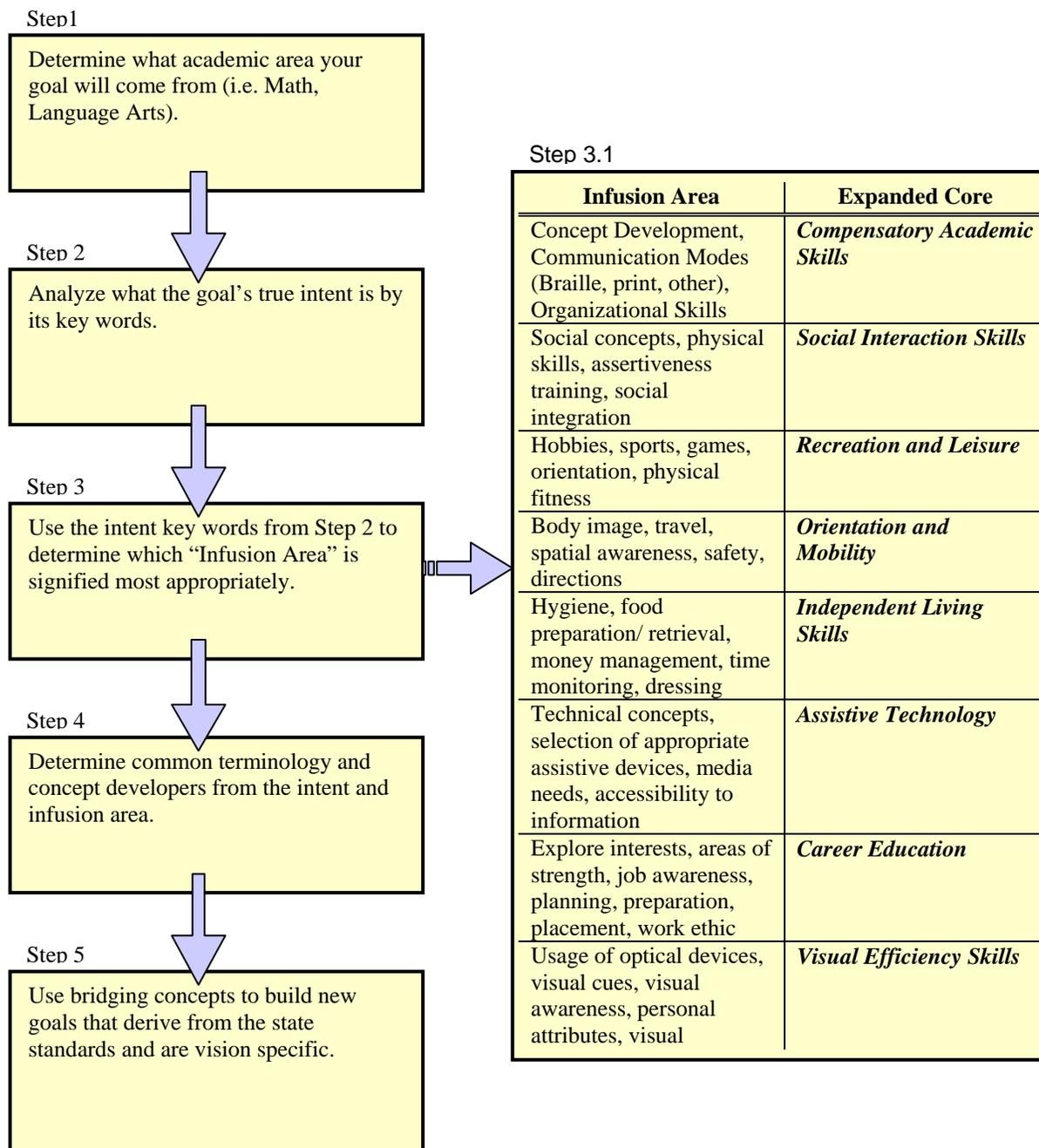
State Standards

Past. Past documents including the school improvement plan, North Carolina Standard Course of Study requirements, accountability guidelines, pacing guides and summaries of past school wide assessments, reveal that the Standard Course of Study or

state standards were identified as the primary focus at GMS. Teacher familiarization of the state standards and subject area knowledge was strong as reflected by licensing documentation and the accountability team analysis summary from early 2000. Little documentation identified that required core area teachers to also teach information or concepts outside the state standards. Therefore, state standards were viewed as goals and concepts that were taught primarily in isolation, not bridged for use as springboards to broader concepts.

Present. Current documents reflect that in addition to the past expressed values, state standards are being infused significantly more with vision specific areas during the school day. According to the DPI and the Standard Course of Study requirements existing areas within the state standards in North Carolina are Language Arts, Science, Arts education, Computer and Technology skills, Guidance, Healthful Living, Information Skills, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Career Technical Education,. Of these ten areas, 50% already closely address and can easily bridge to the Expanded Core curriculum. For example, many of the goals under the Healthy Living standard naturally align with concept development within Independent Living Skills. Current lesson plan formats reflect accountability the standards alignment with vision specific goals. The remaining 50% of the state standards reflect how teachers align areas that may not be as obvious. This bridging is reflected in a current resource document to ensure that teachers are consider how all academic areas can be bridged and generalized for students who are visually impaired. Below is a copy of one document that reflects the expectation of the protocol.

Figure 2, Aligning the State Standards with the Expanded Core Curriculum



(Lohmeier, 2003)

Current lesson plans, IEP goals, and text books, reflect more capable alignment between the state standards and the Expanded Core Curriculum. Procedures that actively support the alignment of state standards and the Expanded Core curriculum at GMS were found in unexpected areas. North Carolina does not have state standards for functional skills to support students with multiple disabilities on the certificate pathway. However, the Syracuse Curriculum for Students with Multiple Disabilities was recently adopted specifically for of its alignment with many of the state standards and Expanded Core areas. The current alignment of state standards with the Expanded Core areas allows GMS teachers and administrators to better address vision specific needs while meeting state mandates. The ability to meet these needs is evidence to support that state standards can be interwoven with vision specific skills.

School Improvement Plan

Past. Past documentation revealed a school improvement plan that dated back to 1998. At that time, appointees from the Department of Health and Human Services and Public Instruction conducted a review of GMS to determine the school's readiness to teach the ABC's of Public Instruction. The 1998 report needs assessment revealed no recommendations for the implementation or continuation of instruction in any vision specific area. The data from this document was collected through interviews, observations, and test score documentation. The findings in this document reflected the following recommendations for GMS's structure and foundation for its school improvement plan:

- Assign a special assistance team to work daily, on-site, to help the school learn to use the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and implement the ABC's of Public Education
- Begin in-depth training during the summer of 1987 for administrators, faculty, and staff on the following items: ABC's of Public Education, North Carolina Standard Course of Study, curriculum alignment, pacing guides, and best practices in general education
- Maintain in-depth training throughout the year with in-class coaching, demonstration of lessons, study groups, structured feedback
- Develop and maintain an instructional program that emphasizes high level of proficiency in reading, writing, and math
- Identify students who are not participating in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and End-of-Grade testing and develop an accountability program for those students

The recommendations from this document are significant because it used as the foundation for the content in past school improvement plans, and it is evidence of the school's general focus, direction, and priority for the next five years. The two school improvement plans that were developed since that recommendation reflected goals in similar areas. Areas of focus for the GMS school improvement plan in the past reflect vision specific support for staff and or students in two out of the six areas. Other areas included campus safety, and students reflecting yearly measurable growth in academic areas as reflected by standardized test. Furthermore, less than 20% of the objectives within each of the six areas in the school improvement plans targeted vision specific areas. These values suggest that core curriculum areas were held to a higher regard than vision specific areas and that long term goals of the program were not supportive of the Expanded Core curriculum.

Present. Although the current 2005 school improvement plan goal areas do not reflect vision specific needs due to directives outlined by OES, the objectives within each

area were developed by current GMS staff and show a greater number of vision specific skills than past objectives did. For example the current plan has “Compliance” as one of its five focus areas. Though compliance is a general area, the GMS committees were able to reflect one objective which “incorporates and considers each of the Expanded Core curriculum areas into every child’s IEP.” Documents from the National Agenda, along with the 2004 recommendations from the SACS committee, alternative school goals, and a 2004 Needs Assessments from OES were used when the GMS committees were developing their current school improvement plan. Currently in each of the goal areas, 40 to 60% of the objectives are vision specific. Objectives related to daily living skills, social development, Learning Media Assessments, assistive technology, community based instruction, and career development outline the focus and direction of GMS over the next five years. The results indicate that the goal areas of the current school improvement plan express values toward the operation of a successful public school, while the objectives of each goal express the values of a specialized school for the blind.

Short Term Program

Past. The GMS Outreach Program is the result of House Bill 230 (1995, Section 23.21) that developed a collaborative agreement between the North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction and GMS to provide appropriate educational opportunities to students across the state. Past documentation reflected outreach focused on serving public school students across the state, but not on the GMS campus. Recommendations from the 1994 SACS Visiting Committee report reflects the great

potential these types of services will have as they continue to be offered in the public schools. Furthermore, the document also reflects the need for “mainstreaming opportunities for all children with visual impairments” including those with additional disabilities (pg 49). The results suggest that the outreach program was primarily serving academic students in their home districts. No documentation was found in the mid to later 1990’s supporting the establishment of a short term program model at GMS. Therefore, the findings indicate that the outreach program primarily focused on the compensatory skills in the public schools for visually impaired students and not intense instruction in the Expanded Core curriculum.

Present. Currently, the Governor Morehead School Outreach Program assists North Carolina's Local Education Agencies (LEAs) by serving visually impaired students, including those with multiple disabilities, who are enrolled in their home districts. Reports (i.e. Director Reports, Monthly Enrollment reports) indicate that the outreach program serves approximately six-hundred students across the state each year. The Outreach Program provides a flexible service delivery model designed to meet the needs of the student's school system and family members. According to personnel records, there are eight Outreach staff, the majority of whom travel to the schools to provide services, assessments, and staff training. Other positions to support the short term program are located on the GMS campus. Since 2000 the Outreach Program has provided an Expanded Core Curriculum Short-Term session. According to the Outreach Services (Expanded Core Curriculum Short-Term) Policy, these sessions are one week in length, held monthly on the campus of GMS, and serve academic students throughout the

state who can benefit from a short period of intensive instruction in some area of the Expanded Core curriculum. Monthly enrollment reports reflect three to six students being served through the short term program at GMS per session. Furthermore, student enrollment rosters and admission letters from the instructional school program over the past three years indicate that five to seven students per year have attended the short term program and changed their fulltime placement to GMS accounting for a 28% increase in enrollment for the instructional school program.

Summer Program

Past. The 1994 SACS Visiting Committee report recommended that plans be developed and funding obtained for expanding summer activities to make them available to children across the state. However, there was no documentation found that provided a programmatic structure. Further findings indicate that there was support by eighteen to twenty-three staff members, according to personal records, during the summer months with no evidence of how they were being utilized. The staff consisted of certified teachers, teacher assistants, and related service providers. Documentation from past IEP's reflect that many student had ESY marked "yes" on there IEP, but there was no qualifying evidence for the notation as required by IDEA. Results indicate that in the past there were adequate staffing and students from GMS to facilitate the operation of a summer program, but no criteria of eligibility or program structure existed to support the program. The staffing and structure discrepancies in the past indicate that school personnel did not regard the summer program as a period to support the extension of specialized skills or progression of growth beyond the regular school year for students.

Additional past evidence of the structure of the summer program is reflected in the Artifacts and Underlying Assumptions in the results section.

Present. Documentation including budgets, IEP's, ESY eligibility requirements, cooperative agreement documents, state and federal mandate guidelines, and personal records were analyzed to determine if there are current written procedures in place to support the implementation of a summer program at GMS. Results indicate that written procedures and expectations are present to create and support a summer program with four major components: (1) Work Experience Program, (2) Extended School Year or ESY, (3) Expanded Core Camp, and (3) Focused Intervention. Each program currently has a documented purpose, criteria, and focus to ensure structure and accountability. The summer workplace experience program is designed to prepare students for the workforce and is available for GMS juniors and seniors. Records indicate twelve to fifteen students are involved in the program each summer. It is a three-week program requiring students to work 30 to 40 hours per week in the community. Community job placements include working at local restaurants, clerical positions, gas stations, book stores, cafeterias, local parks, library for the blind and a variety of other businesses. The ESY program is clearly defined by the eligibility requirement and should not be viewed as day or respite care service for students, nor as a summer recreation program. GMS clearly defined its ESY service eligibility based on the North Carolina Code for ESY 115-C-110, 115C-113. Current IEP's reflect four to six students per year meeting the criteria for ESY. The GMS summer program uses the following criteria when determining participant eligibility:

1. Regression-recoupment factors
2. Critical learning stages
3. Least restrictive environment considerations;
4. Teacher and parent interviews and recommendations;
5. Data-based observations of the student
6. Consideration of the student's previous history; and
7. Parental skills and abilities.

The purpose of the Expanded Core Camp is to provide instruction in vision specific areas in a fun and systematic way. The camp has an emphasis on athletics. For instance, a mobility lesson becomes a mountain hiking trip that is planned with the PE and mobility instructors. Enrollment records indicate an average of 30 students join this camp annually. The emphasis at the Expanded Core Camp differs from the regular school year by emphasizing recreation and leisure rather than academics while incorporating other vision specific areas. Additionally, North Carolina has developed Student Accountability Standards (SAS) for students in grades 3, 5, and 8. These grades are referred to as the "gateways" because they are transition grades to the next major step in a student's educational program and include a component referred to as Focused Intervention. The SAS was developed to ensure students are ready to be promoted to the next grade. North Carolina public schools and GMS administer several tests to monitor the proficiency of students in grades 3-12. North Carolina Testing requires that schools must provide Focused Intervention during summer to any student in grades 3-8 who fails a mandated test. Records indicate only one student requiring this program since 2002. The focus, criteria, and purpose of the four areas in the summer program are documented below.

GMS SUMMER PROGRAM

WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAM	ESY (Extended School Year)	EXPANDED CORE CAMP	FOCUSED INTERVENTION
Purpose: To place students in a full-time paid summer work experiences in the community	Purpose: To further serve students who may not be reflecting progress toward individual goals	Purpose: To address vision specific areas through a fun and systematic approach, with emphasis in athletics	Purpose: To address the academic growth students may not have meet as reflected on state testing mandates
Eligibility: GMS Standard Course of Study and Life Skill students	Eligibility: GMS students who meet ESY criteria and reflect ESY on there IEP	Eligibility: GMS and Outreach Middle School. And High School students	Eligibility: 3 rd , 5 th , 8 th graders who did not meet proficiency on EOG's (Reading, Math)
Focus: Job placement and related social and O&M skills	Focus: Specific individual IEP goals and objectives.	Focus: Assistive Technology, O&M, Music, Recreational Sports, Social Skills and Daily Living skills	Focus: Reading, Math, Writing 4 th & 7 th

The four focus areas in the summer program are based on students with visual impairments needs as reported in the National Agenda, federal mandates of IDEA, and North Carolina educational mandate guidelines. Verification of employment data like teacher contracts and temporary pay requisitions, were also used to determine the number of people currently staffed to operate and implement this summer program. The data shows twenty-one certified and non-certified staff working the month of June. This number includes teachers, orientation and mobility specialists, job coaches, teacher assistants, and counselors used to operate the program. Funds to support the operation of the camp/programs as reflected through the educational service budget line in the instructional program reveal current funding which was not allocated in the past. School wide plans, like the school improvement plan, also document the current summer program function. The expressed value of the summer program has changed from a

continuation of a general academic program, to the individualization of instruction for students who are visually impaired through experiences and generalization.

Residential Program

Past. No documentation prior to 2001 reflected a formal residential program. The 1994 SACS Visitor Committee report indicated that the residential staff should begin to participate in the development of IEP goals focused on independent living skills so they could assist in the goal implementation. Past policies reflected discipline procedures, visitor policies and off campus traveling, but none reflected curricular support. There was evidence of recreational activities both on and off campus and budgetary support through policies and personnel records. The results indicate that the past residential program did not have a formalized curriculum.

Present. Currently a residential curriculum does exist at GMS. Residential enrollment packets address independent living skills, social and behavioral components, and recreation and leisure areas as the after school focus. Curricula was also identified for the Independent Living Program (i.e. Independent Living Skills by Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired), but not for the social and recreation components. Although there is no longer a separate after school recreation program, the residential program has a recreational component. The findings indicate that a strong focus in independent skills, but not in the social, recreational or other vision specific areas as evident by curriculum, budget, and personnel support.

Underlying Assumptions

Formal interviews were conducted with a sample of staff members who have been employed with GMS for over ten years. In addition, informal conversations were used to determine how the staff perceives the nine areas within the variable of change.

These materials provided information on how teachers perceived the level of support from administrators and ancillary campus departments. Identifying areas for positive adjustment based on collaborative assessment will allow for an overall sense of entitlement for the GMS staff and direction for future implications.

Table 5, Past and Present Underlying Assumptions

Variables of Change	2000 Status	2005 Status
Teacher Training	Training was weak in regards to vision and was general, and felt their own skills were not adequate in specific areas.	Teachers feel like they are better trained in vision and want the support and resources in specialized areas to continue.
Team Teaching	Perception of existing barriers, limited expectations and direction.	Perception of existing opportunities, more administrative emphasis on collaboration, higher expectations.
Evaluation System	No emphases to address vision specific skills or instruction, rules were not consistent, and supervisors were not diversely competent in observations.	Clear emphasis on instruction, more ownership of the goals they are writing, supervisors are knowledgeable when observing staff.
IEPs	Teachers were not fully invested in what they were writing; it was not a living document, many restrictions.	Teachers perceive it as a living document, driving the educational program, more ownership.
State Standards	Teachers only focused on teaching the core curriculum, and lack of leadership lead to this primary focus.	Teachers feel they have more opportunities, resources and leadership to bridge concepts.
School Improvement Plan	Administrators developed the plan, little to no input from staff, and no ownership felt by staff.	Involvement in developing the plan occurred, increased feelings of ownership and focus.
Short Term Program	Outreach services should only be provided at the home district, LEA's should be providing services, and they were isolated from other departments.	Short term placements on campus are available, program focus on the Expanded core, and more lessons are planed in collaboration with other departments.

Variables of Change	2000 Status	2005 Status
Summer Program	Was an extension of the regular school year, focused on only core curriculum, and not individualized.	Reaches specific skill types, targets diverse instructional settings, and more focused.
Residential Program	Mixed feelings and assumptions about the efficiency of the residential program.	Mixed feelings and assumptions about the efficiency of the residential program.

Teacher Training

Past. Student –focused, visually specific teacher training provides a balanced education program for a specialized school. Previous assumptions revealed that 9 units of university VI coursework was appropriate for teacher licensure in the state of North Carolina., GMS staff members indicated no vision-specific training was provided through GMS. One staff member said that in the past, “It was very weak. There was not a lot of opportunity to take classes and workshops that were offered.” Another staff member indicated, “The trainings were more generic in nature, meaning more school related, but not specific to VI. I’m not suggesting that everything we have to do has to be specific to visual impairment, but it would certainly be a good thing if at least a significant number were primarily VI or related to blindness since that is who we work with.”

Results indicated that teachers receiving insufficient training in VI from GMS, as well as the state of North Carolina. Prior to 2005, North Carolina required only nine units of university course work to license teachers in the areas of visual impairments. The nine units were not specific courses, but rather left to the individual’s choice. Based on this historical standard, it is questionable whether teachers at GMS possessed a strong VI

foundation from the local university program or from continuing education on site.

Results of surveys completed by teachers are consistent with these underlying assumptions. Fewer than 27% felt proficient and able to demonstrate competency in the following areas, as reflected from a 2003 survey completed by staff:

- Functional vision assessments
- Learning Media Assessments
- Nemeth Code
- Braille code
- Community Based Instruction
- Expanded Core Curriculum and the infusion of
- Developing appropriate I.E.P.'s

Present. The current assumption reflects a three-year training plan developed and implemented for GMS to expand and support these areas through teacher training. The result has been positive according to current interviews and conversation. “One of the biggest things that has come into play within the past couple of years is the Expanded Core and its components. I feel like more has been offered with Braille, Nemeth and abacus than before...continuing the proficiency in this is a must,” said one teacher. The assumptions suggest that teachers have established an appreciation for the focus and ownership in the training process. The establishment of a strong foundation at GMS will allow staff members to develop future VI- specific training.

Team Teaching

Past. Team teaching is an important component of this plan and as such demands collaboration. Teachers at GMS indicated a number of perceived barriers to team teaching such as conflicting planning periods and limited planning time. Interviews further indicated that there was not a concerted effort to coordinate. One person stated,

“There was no active encouragement for people to coordinate with each other when it was sensible to do so, to reinforce each other. I felt people were pretty much left to operate in a vacuum.”

Present. The current assumption reflects more collaboration among teachers and an overlap of instruction. Curricular programs may vary; however, with appropriate planning, they can be interwoven to provide a concept continuum for all classes. Core licensed teachers are teaming with one another, as well as related service providers (i.e. orientation and mobility instructors, daily living skills specialist, counselors for social development skills, career education specialist) to bridge concepts and build generalization. “I have noticed just within the past three years there has been more emphasis from the administrators in the school on how different folks can work together so kids know we are on the same page”, states one orientation and mobility instructor. He continues, “We have done several cross curricular lessons just this year with Social Study classes. A coordinated trip to the state capitol building was planned ahead of time with the social studies teacher. Students knew the background of the historical Senate House Chamber before they arrived. While we were navigating the vintage granite steps (ca. 1840) we could talk about how they were broken in places where people pushed up wheelbarrows filled with wood for the 18 fireplaces that heated the building.” Staff members now take an active role in collaborative curriculum coordination. This renewed spirit of collaboration has had a positive impact on the students who are aware that staff members are working together.

Evaluation System

Past. A successful evaluation system must focus on and support VI areas. The evaluation system used by certified staff at GMS is referred to as an Individual Growth Plan (IGP). The IGP reflects the established goals, actions, and timelines on which teachers will be evaluated by their supervisor at the end of the year. Goal areas are developed by the teacher and supervisor early in the school year. In the past, the evaluation system was general and could be used by any school in North Carolina. Teachers felt that they were not accountable to teach vision specific areas because the supervisors evaluating them had no vision background. One teacher indicated, “With the evaluation system there were not specific goals or objectives that would address it (VI). Goals were encouraged to just address the content areas and planning.” The assumption was that rules were always changing with the system so it was easier to keep things general as well. In other words, the system was said to be “... going through the motions and not tailored to where we are.”

Present. Current assumptions require that each staff member’s IGP include a vision-specific goal. Supervisors are required to have a strong visual-impairment background and staff members are expected to perform vision-specific tasks in the classroom to meet year-end goals. One staff member says, “What we’re doing now gives us a chance to write specific goals that relate to the vision - specific things we are doing. I got to choose things that had an impact on what I was doing.” The evaluation system is used as a tool for the teacher and supervisor to determine which vision - specific area can be best utilized in a specific core area. An individual’s IGP may focus on improving a

teaching skill like becoming more proficient at using a John's Reading Inventory for a Learning Media Assessment (LMA) or the Nemeth Code with students. The IGP evaluation system focuses on the individual's personal growth.

IEP's

Past. All students at GMS are special education eligible and as such, each has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). An IEP for a visually impaired student addresses and reflects their vision-specific services and support as determined by appropriate levels of performance and goals developed by the IEP team. Past assumptions at GMS reflect IEP's written with a more regulatory that student focus. When asked their impressions of IEP's, one teacher stated "I think people viewed it as something we have to do, but that after it was in the file there were times when some people seemed to forget them because they went about their classroom duties. The tie between what they had written and what they were doing was not as obvious as it should have been." Teachers felt that the expectation for "how" IEP's were written and not "why" they were written was lost over time. There was a sense that things were continuously changing, but little training was being done to support expectations. Teachers polled could not recollect, for example, any time when training was done on how an IEP could be written for a student who was VI. They felt it was important to be able to look at an IEP and readily identify if the child was VI, HI, or LD to understand the student's needs, but did not know really how to interpret the information.

Present. The current assumption is that the IEP drives GMS. It is a living document. One teacher states, "In the past couple of years we have moved to a greater

awareness of, ‘... if I’m writing this I better be doing this for this twelve month period’, which is how it should be if it is going to be a living and evolving document.” He continues to say; “There is also a greater awareness that because this is a living document that we may need to amend it at some point if what we’ve done is not suitable for some reason.” Also indicated, was an overall greater level of professionalism on the part of the staff, and a higher awareness that what is being put into the document is driving the program for that student. Further interviews indicated that as new staff join the team, that they too receive support and training on how to write appropriate IEP’s for students with visual impairments. Overall, the current assumption reflects an administrative expectation that all staff members be aware of students’ IEP goals and prepared to carry out those goals to meet the needs of the student.

State Standards

Past. The state standards have been identified to see if mandated curriculum is being used or infused by teachers in vision specific areas to support the bridge of both the core and Expanded Core areas. In the past, the assumption was that people made the best effort they could, but the state test mandates were really forcing teachers to just focus on teaching the state standards. They were not expected to focus on vision specific areas during the school day in isolation or through infusion of the state standards. One teacher stated, “We did not have the information to even try to bridge the concepts or areas of the Expanded Core to the state standards- that is all very new to this school. Those are important to teaching and working with students with VI and we didn’t even have that knowledge back then so I know it was not used.” Results further indicate that teachers at

GMS were focusing primarily on the compensatory aspects, like modifying and adapting materials so students could have access to the general curriculum or state standards, but not recognizing or instructing Expanded Core curricula.

Present. The current underlying assumption is one that reflects more knowledge and a higher expectation for a more targeted curriculum. One person's current perception reflects the following about the aligning of the state standards with the Expanded Core, "In the past few years it has come into our school and is now one of our main focuses. I think teachers are definitely better at bridging the concepts just because we know *what* to bring in the classroom. For example, like infusing math with technology and even recreation." Teachers also feel now that they have been given the opportunity and resources to learn not only the areas to bridge, but methods for bridging those concepts. There is an awareness now of how core areas, compensatory skills, and Expanded Core curriculum is each defined and how each is significant to the educational program.

School Improvement Plan

Past. The past and present underlying assumptions about the school improvement plan provide information about the campus-wide long-term goals and focus of the school for the blind. Results indicate that in the past, both administrators and staff assumed that it was the job of administrators to develop the school improvement plan. In addition, staff felt that they were not as involved with planning and setting long-term goals for the school improvement plan. One individual said, "There were primarily a few people who drafted pretty much most of the plan with a little bit of input from the others." Another

teacher stated, “In the past, I’ve never had anything to do with the school improvement plan. We were never required to do anything so I could not tell you who did it, what was done and what the goals were.” Similar responses support that staff was unclear about the focus and purpose of the school improvement plan. Therefore, results indicated that prior to the last school improvement plan, staff was unaware of the developmental process of the school goals and the focus areas.

Present. Current assumptions indicate that staff feels more like participants in the development process of the school improvement plan. “This plan has been a lot of work, but there has been more involvement across the board. Everybody on this staff has been a member of a sub committee”, one individual stated. According to interviews, the staff feels they were encouraged to provide input and their opinion is valued. Participation on the committee helped the staff take ownership of the plan and invest in the school program. The researcher can not determine if the focus has remained constant because there was no information provided through interview on the past focus of school improvement plans. However, the results clearly reflect that staff is aware of the current school improvement focus: transition, curriculum and instruction, safety, parent involvement and compliance. In addition, people feel that the specific goals and objectives within these areas cover the majority of what they do and will be doing at GMS.

Short Term Program

Past. Short-term programming is as an extension of the instructional school program providing vision specific services to students across the state on the GMS

campus without changing placement. In the past, assumptions reflected that outreach teachers only at the home district or LEA should be providing outreach services.

“Outreach was just that, out there and we had nothing to do with them,” one individual stated. There was no opportunity for collaborative services to focus on intense vision specific areas for students across the state that attend GMS on a short-term basis.

Teachers in the instructional program felt they did not know their counterparts in the outreach program, nor and the type of services provided. Another assumption was that short term intense services were only provided for students in the past few years. In fact, as far back as the year 2000 students were able to attend a two-week session on campus and remain isolated from the instructional school program. This model was unsuccessful because students were missing too much time from their regular school and were falling behind when they returned from the two-week session at GMS.

Present. Short-term programming is a success now and functions in almost a seamless fashion with the instructional school program. The model is a one-week session on the GMS campus for visually impaired students. The program focuses on Expanded Core areas in isolation with the certified vision teachers. The short-term program participants are integrated with students who attend GMS full time throughout the week with classes in technology or physical education. One staff stated, “We continue to plan lessons for the short term program and the traditional instructional program which provides the opportunity to combine all students within a grade group.” This collaboration provides students from the residential program and short-term program with social opportunities, academic opportunities, and ability to share educational setting

experiences. Teachers believe resources are well utilized and shared more between departments. The short-term program has also supported the additional enrollment of many students coming full time to the instructional school program once having had the opportunity to spend a week on campus and experience the program.

Summer Program

Past. The summer program at GMS provides support beyond the school year and yet serves a student's individual needs. In the past, GMS has had one summer school for full time GMS students. Past perceptions reflected that the summer program simply had more students in a traditional school setting--a four week program that focused on only academic areas with no difference between the summer and the traditional school year. One teacher stated, "In the past the summer school program was only instructional and taught students what they were learning during the school year like reading, math and social studies. It was a regular school day." When asked how Extended School Year (ESY) was set up with the past summer school model, teachers responded that there was no program designed specifically for students who qualified for ESY as reflected on IEP's. "I had never heard of ESY or the Expanded Core until the principal started in 2003," one teacher stated.

Present. According to one staff member, the revised summer program is "... more targeted which is better. It is specifically related to the Expanded Core camp, sports camp activities, and the Extended School Year program in order to reach specific skill types. It makes sense with our population to gear it to their needs." The GMS summer school program currently has four programs (ESY, Focused Intervention, Work Place

Program, and Expanded Core Camp), and serves students state wide. Staff enjoyed working with the outreach department to bring students into the Expanded Core camp, and placing students in community businesses through the Work Place Program. The general feeling is that all students are served in a need-based format. The GMS summer program will continue its current and cater to the 50 students attending the past summer.

Residential Program

Past. The residential program in a specialized school like GMS typically is an extension of the instructional school day program. Its purpose is to provide students access to their education by as they reside on campus. A residential program may have an after school component that supports VI areas through curriculum and instruction that is applicable to activities that would occur outside of the school day. In the past, there were mixed feelings about the efficiency of the residential program and its relationship with other programs on campus. These assumptions reflected that the residential program to have more collaboration and communication, while others perceived it to have been disconnected more so in the past with the instructional program. This variable for change reflects the most diverse assumptions then any of the other areas.

Present. Current assumptions reflect the same split of positive and negative attitudes as the past ones did. One teacher said, “The lack of communication creates negative effects with the instructional program.” They feel that there needs to be a separate recreation program with staff that can actively participate with the students and build moral among students as well. Currently, the residential program directs the recreation program by having their residential coordinators and dorm staff lead it.

Another statement reflected the following “I appreciate the job the residential staff does and I think they do a wonderful job.” The one comment that was consistent among all current assumptions was that there needs to continue to be better collaboration among the residential and instructional programs.

V: DISCUSSION

This section will discuss the findings within each area of the Variables for Change, the future implications, and the conclusion of this study. The Artifacts, Expressed Values, and Underlying Assumption framework that is used will enable the researcher to identify the change and trends of the Governor Morehead school in the past and the present.

The most significant impact among the nine areas within the Variables of Change in the past three years was evident in teacher training. Teacher training and support in vision specific areas and methods was virtually non-existent at GMS prior to 2003. Teachers were expected to follow the state standards, adhere to the pacing guides, and teach to the test. They were trained to accomplish these tasks. Teachers were not specialists in teaching visually impaired students. Today, GMS teachers are trained to conduct assessment of sensory channels, incorporate vision specific areas, employ assistive technology, and use the terminology of trained vision teachers. Teacher training requires continuous attention to maintain current skill levels, and reinforce the teacher's role at a specialized school for the blind.

Previously, team teaching was not reinforced and teachers were isolated in their classrooms. This perceived isolation inhibited teachers' ability to bridge concepts, generalize instruction, and develop resources and support within the school system. The current structure supports team teaching and provides the opportunity for communication, allowing the practice to become more prevalent at the school. GMS teachers are learning

to work collaboratively to overlap instruction, infuse vision specific areas into the general curriculum, and provide intensive instruction in vision specific areas.

An evaluation system was developed to define accountability and ensure all staff members were accomplishing specific skills and procedures. Although the evaluation system continues to be general, the role of the evaluator has become more specific. All this has had a positive impact on the GMS staff and students. Teachers are focused on professional development as a means to provide a high quality and diversified classroom experience for their students. Students better receive the specific training they require within the general and vision specific curriculum they need.

Now, classroom instruction is driven by the state standards as well as students' IEP's goals. The IEP better reflects the unique need of each GMS student and ensures they receive quality, individualized instruction -- however, writing appropriate IEP goals and objectives requires some additional teacher training.

State standards continue to be the foundation for the instructional school program, however, the method by which they are taught is changing significantly. The standards are now used as a springboard to incorporate concepts and infuse vision specific areas. GMS continues to struggle with the state requirements and OES's requirement to utilize there pacing guide to ensure standards are taught and students are reflecting a years worth of growth on grade level. Students with visual impairments have splinter skills that make achieving this requirement difficult.

The school improvement plan is a significant part of GMS. Although the staff did not choose the goals, they were able to unite and personalize the plan's objectives to

reflect the unique needs at GMS. In the future, the belief is that goals should be aligned with those goals of the National Agenda.

To provide quality instruction to students across the state, GMS developed the short - term program that benefits students from other counties. The short - term program has had a positive impact on GMS's outreach and instructional school programs. It provides a source for intense vision specific service for students who do not need to be enrolled in a full-time residential program. The instructional school program benefits from marketing of the school's services without direct recruitment. The short term program also provides additional resources while allowing residential students an opportunity to socialize with their public school peers.

The summer program was not previously designed to meet students' vision specific or individual needs, but to function as a continuation of the school year. The current summer school program supports individual and vision specific needs for GMS students, as well as students statewide. The program has been very successful and is another area within the Variables for Change that has reflected significant growth over the past three years.

The residential program has reflected some change; not all of which has been positive. The program has gone from primarily recreational to primarily instructional. In the residential areas, the need for balance among recreation, social development, independent living, community activities and just leisure time is critical. However, the program tends to reflect a pendulum swing rather than a balance between the two extremes.

Future Implications

This study was conducted in one specialized school for the blind. Although schools vary widely, the findings may be of value to other schools. There are two major truths that affect the future of specialized schools for the blind nationwide: first, accountability is prevalent in all schools that receive governmental funding and second, the changing population make it necessary for the schools to change in order to thrive and meet student needs. Three years ago, Governor Morehead School was addressing only academics. The school provided little specific to visual impairment service, and even less attention was paid to students with multiple disabilities, which had many negative effects. The future for specialized schools for the blind is to be simultaneously a public school and a specialized school. To provide a predominantly academic focus assumes specialized schools are not needed. To provide a predominantly academic focus at a specialized school would assume that students do not need a quality education because of their disabilities. Specialized schools for the blind must provide curriculum and support that goes above and beyond the public school offerings. Meeting the standards of accountability and making the changes needed to meet the unique needs of all visually impaired students, including those with multiple disabilities, should be the future framework of specialized schools for the blind

Summary

Educational trends at Governor Morehead School have changed significantly in the past three years. Prior to 2003, the school focused on academics and provided scant

evidence of vision specific curriculum, programming, or support. The framework used to determine this reviewed past and present Archives, Expressed Values, and Underlying Assumptions to reveal a true picture of what the school was and what it is. The Variables for Change to be addressed with the framework over time at GMS were: (1) training opportunities specific to visual impairments to ensure instructors skills and knowledge are current, proficient and resourceful, (2) team teaching among teachers and related service providers to ensure carry over, generalization, and support, (3) instructor evaluation system that encourages a way to measure and hold teachers accountable for vision-specific skills and teaching of such skills, (4) IEP's that include vision specific information and individualization, (5) state standards to be used as spring boards to enhance concept development and generalization, (6) a school improvement plan that reflects a vision - specific focus, (7) short term program that connects with the instructional program to alleviate severance of VI resources, (8) institute a summer program that supports the initiative of the school and meaningful services to VI students across the state, and (9) a residential program that is used to its fullest extent by going beyond the school day to provide service, support and collaboration. Through this framework, the school has come closer to balancing both the core curriculum and Expanded Core curriculum within the school.

VI: CONCLUSION

Governor Morehead School faced a dilemma in finding a balance between state and federal mandates while maintaining the identity of a specialized school for the blind; other schools may also face this challenge. This study identified a framework through (1) Artifacts - visible organizational structures and materials, (2) Expressed Values- explicitly written or stated beliefs and policies, and (3) Underlying Assumptions- unspoken attitudes and beliefs, that could be used by other specialized schools for the blind to target variables for change and balance vision-specific and core areas.

As indicated by this study, targeting variables for change over time can produce the necessary balance, and should include: (1) training opportunities specific to visual impairments to ensure instructor's skills and knowledge are current, proficient and resourceful, (2) team teaching among teachers and related service providers to ensure carry over, generalization, and support, (3) an instructor evaluation system that encourages teacher accountability for vision-specific skills and teaching of such skills, (4) IEP's that include vision specific information and individualization, (5) state standards to be used as spring boards to enhance concept development and generalization, (6) a school improvement plan that reflects a vision - specific focus, (7) short term program that connects with the instructional program to alleviate severance of VI resources, (8) a summer program that supports the initiative of the school and meaningful services to VI students across the state, and (9) a residential program that is used to its fullest extent by going beyond the school day to provide service, support and collaboration.

This suggests that specialized schools for the blind must be aware of ramifications that affect the overall function of the school requiring a strong balance to be planned and maintained. Furthermore, the opportunities for specialized skill development for students will be severely limited if programs can only provide service support that focus only on the “equal” component and not the “different.”

It has been well documented that students who are blind and visually impaired require instruction in areas that go beyond the general curriculum. These areas have historically been the purview of specialized schools for the blind. Since the extended mandates of accountability, Governor Morehead School did not assume the historic responsibility for many years that is typical of a specialized school. A case study approach was appropriate for this study in order to review existing and long term areas of strength in the school, as well as areas of needed change. Although it cannot be replicated because schools are distinctive, it offers evidence of change that may benefit schools with similar goals. Although the results of the present study are both unique and preliminary, the evidence suggests that change can take place with intentional planning and ongoing collaboration among administration and faculty.

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