Perspectives Of School Board of Broward County Florida Postgraduate Alternatives for Secondary Students (PASS) Instructors on Quality of Life for Students Who Have Completed the PASS Program.

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Abstract

This qualitative study investigated perceptions of instructors using the post-graduate alternatives for secondary students (PASS) instructional model to learn about quality of life (QoL) for students with intellectual disability (ID). A framework of QoL developed by Schalock (2000) was used to analyze responses from three instructors. Six out of the eight indicators for QoL from Schalock’s hierarchy were being addressed by the PASS instructors. The two indicators that were not discussed included material and physical well-being. However, these can be viewed as the responsibilities of the students’ families, and not necessarily a school district responsibility. Implications of this study point to the need for an increased level of family involvement in the PASS instructional model to maintain student gains.
**Introduction**

Lives of people with intellectual disabilities (ID) have greatly changed from a time when they were hidden in family homes and warehoused in institutions (Turnbull III, 1990) to a time when there has been an on-going movement to normalize their lives (Rosenberg, 2005). Part of this effort has centered around the developmental model of *quality of life* (QoL) and how it can be defined or measured (Brown & Brown, 2005). My interest in the topic of QoL was generated as a result of my current work with high school students in a specialized varying exceptionalities (SVE) classroom, and my past work with adults who had disabilities.

The SVE classroom I work in consists of students who have a wide variety of disabilities like Autism, Downs Syndrome, and Cerebral Palsy, to name a few. The characteristic that these students share is that they all fall under the category of intellectual disability (ID) having subnormal IQ’s between 40 to 69 which places them in the mild to moderate range of mental retardation (Kirk, Gallagher, Anastasiow, & Coleman, 2006). Because students with disabilities are able to stay in school until age 21, based on the federal IDEA 2004 regulations, all high schools with post secondary programs in our southeastern metropolitan district have trained instructors for students with ID using the post-graduate alternatives for secondary students (PASS) model.

The principles of this model include “how to design settings, how to visually schedule events and how to promote communication so that students can perform more independently in adult environments…key is designing and implementing successful transition to adult environments” (Post-Secondary SVE Classroom, n.d.). The students in my class will eventually age out of SVE and have the opportunity to participate in the PASS model of instruction. For this reason, and because I have worked at the other end of the age spectrum with adults who have ID;
I was particularly interested in changes of QoL for students being instructed with the techniques of the PASS instructional model.

Because many students with ID have difficulty with expressive or receptive communication (Kirk, Gallagher, Anastasiow, & Coleman, 2006), I chose to interview instructors who use the PASS model to gain their insights on QoL for post-high school students with ID who have participated in the PASS instructional model. In my opinion, the issue of QoL for persons with ID is important because this population comprises some of the most vulnerable people in our society and they function at a very low mental capacity. It is imperative that they be safeguarded and empowered to gain a positive identity and increased self-esteem by being provided inclusive spaces for them in our communities.

My goal was to gain insight into the PASS instructional model and learn about perceptions of instructors on QoL. I wanted to know about the life skills students gained and if that helped them maintain reasonably improved QoL as a result of the PASS instructional model. I had the opportunity to speak to a teacher trainer of the PASS model. The trainer wanted to know if I could finish the study this year. She stated that what they are really looking at to gauge student success for students with ID was not employment per se, but rather QoL. She stated they have been revising their success outcome measures because so few students with ID are actually able to maintain steady post secondary employment.

The issue of QoL for students with ID is important to both the students and the parents because students with ID have many challenges in life, and parents are not always going to be around to make sure that their adult childrens’ needs are met. If these students are able to acquire meaningful lives with a high level of QoL, there is a possibility that they will be become happier more productive members of society. My belief is that when students with ID are able to gain
valuable skills and competencies in real world settings they benefit from an increased self-esteem. The problem that we are dealing with is the transition of students with ID from high school to the adult world where more is expected of them. Since employment success rates continue to remain extremely low for students with ID (Moore, Feist-Price, & Alston, 2002) researchers have started trying to quantify or measure QoL in lieu of employment success for people with ID (EP Magazine, 2005; Kober & Eggleton, 2005; Turnbull III, Turnbull, Wehmeyer & Park, 2003).

Challenges for achieving an acceptable level of QoL are based on the need of these students to have high levels of support in order to achieve any goal because of their cognitive disability. Additionally, many families in our community have limited resources and social capital to pull from to make their own lives better (Park, Turnbull, & Turnbull III, 2002).

Addressing QoL is significant because the population with ID is vulnerable due to their mental incapacities. Many of these students are at risk for institutionalization due to family’s inabilities to meet their needs, and often these students outlive their family support systems. I wanted to determine how instructors using the PASS model measure QoL success for students with ID. My research questions included:

1. What do you believe students gain by completing the PASS program?
2. What challenges do you believe students face after completing the PASS program?
3. How do Special Education teachers perceive the concept of quality of life in general, and specifically for their students in the PASS Program?

These questions were important for teachers, parents, and students with ID because they want to know if what is being taught in post-secondary programs is making a difference in the ability of students with ID to obtain meaningful QoL in the community post-high school.
Literature Review

The structured literature review consisted of the following process: deciding on keyword descriptors, choosing databases, establishing database search criteria, performing the database searches, choosing relevant articles, and evaluating articles.

Deciding on Keyword Descriptors

The search descriptors work coupled with the word mental retardation were chosen for the initial database searches. Other words such as employment could have been used, however since work and employment are almost synonymous in meaning, it was decided to keep work as a search descriptor. Currently we live in a world of politically correct terminology. Disability communities and some researchers employ the term intellectual disability (ID) for what has otherwise been known as mental retardation. However, since federal and legal language continue to employ the term mental retardation, for the purposes of this paper these terms will be used interchangeably.

Other search descriptors were also chosen in order to tap into additional sources of employment information for students with mental retardation. Many students in special educational programs often transition into vocational training programs; therefore search descriptors of vocational training and mental retardation were also chosen.

However, as a result of fruitless database searches using the above descriptors, and after talking with the teacher trainer from the PASS model, I realized my search descriptors required revision. According to the teacher trainer, work was not necessarily the primary goal for these students. In fact, the focus now was on quality of life (QoL). For this reason, new search descriptors were chosen of mental retardation and quality of life.
Choosing Databases

Academic success and global outcome measures for all students, including those with mental retardation, are the concern of public education administrators, legislators, and special education professionals; therefore education databases were used for the searches. Five educational databases were selected: ERIC- Education Resource Information Center, Education Full Text, PsychINFO, Elservier Science Direct, and Proquest.

Establishing Database Search Criteria

Boolean searches consisted of all types of literature combining the terms mental retardation and work. A second search was completed combining the terms mental retardation and vocational training. Lastly, a third search was conducted on mental retardation and quality of life (QoL). Search dates were unlimited in order to span the history of special education transition information in the disabilities field dealing with the topic.

Performing Database Searches

Database searches were conducted on September 16, 2007 and on October 14, 2007. Articles associated with information on vocational training, QoL, and mental retardation were singled out for review. The two database searches conducted on both days combined in a culmination of a total of 477 hits.

Choosing Relevant Articles

Following the database search I chose articles germane to the topic of QoL, mental retardation, and vocational training. Articles not related specifically to quality of life and mental retardation were removed from further consideration. Eliminated articles included topics dealing with religious supports, parental reflections on community supports, classroom systems, general education inclusion, specific training systems, end of life issues, and challenging behavior.
Focus on QoL in the disabilities community started as early as the 1970s (Brown & Brown, 2005), and developed into a social construct by the 1980s (Schalock, 2000). Moving into the 1990s QoL was being “used in at least three different ways as sensitizing, as a social construct, and as a unifying theme to focus on the multifaceted nature of the concept,” (Schalock, 2000, p. 117). Application of QoL concepts in high school post secondary educational settings appears to be needed due to the extremely low rates in which all levels of students with ID are able to obtain and maintain post-high school employment or supported employment (Moore, Feist-Price, & Alston, 2002). For these students QoL may not be related to work experiences, therefore other indicators of QoL require attention. Quality of Life (QoL) according to Schalock “is a concept that reflects a person’s desired conditions of living related to eight core dimensions of one’s life: emotional well being, interpersonal relationships, material well-being, personal development, physical well-being, self determination, social inclusion, and rights,” (p. 121).

Another interpretation of QoL includes the domains of “satisfaction, competence/productivity, empowerment/independence, and social belonging/community integration,” (Blacher & Kraemer, 2005, p. 64). Humanistic qualities pervade all of these constructs and are exemplify critical foundation principles including (a) starting where the person feels is most important; (b) allow the person’s choices to guide the process (c) offer support and self-empowerment; and (d) develop person’s self image (Brown & Brown, 2005). Humanistic principles are also evident in Schalock’s (2000) theoretical model of QoL. His model was developed by using a hierarchy to assess the dimensions of QoL which includes the following: (a) emotional well-being; (b) personal development; (c) self-determination;
QoL as a concept applicable to persons with disabilities has been embraced by the disabilities community, in part, according to Cummins (2005), as reaction against the medical model (as cited by Wofsenberger, 1972). However it is important to note that QoL concepts are transferable to virtually all people, regardless of ethno-cultural backgrounds (Cummins, 2005; Blacher & Kraemer, 2005; Schalock, 2000). Corporations have also taken ownership of the QoL concept as a way to demonstrate according to Rapley & Ridgeway (1998) “...a more general ‘Quality Revolution’ “(As cited in Schalock, 1994, p. 266).

Based on the aforementioned QoL definitions one would say that improving QoL is desired outcome for students with ID. However, difficulty arises when one starts to ask, “How do you measure QoL?” Compound the problem of measuring something that is subjective in nature by asking those questions to persons who generally have difficulty in expressive or receptive language; as is the case with persons with ID (Kirk, Gallagher, Anastasiow, & Coleman, 2006). EP Magazine (2005) states that self-reporting is not reliable with these populations due to “low language ability and well-known inherent response biases in individuals with mental retardation interfered with valid responding in interviews” (p. 41, as cited in Perry & Felce, 2002). Gaudet, Crethar, Pulos, & Berger (2002) support this by stating that “unfortunately, it is widely believed that individuals with DD (developmental disability) and others with neuro-cognitive impairments are unable to make evaluative judgments about the quality of their own lives, especially when questionnaires are used,” (p. 24, as cited in Heslegrave, Awad, & Vorunganti, 1997).
The most mentally impaired students may benefit from increased QoL when advocates and supportive family members take active roles in their lives. Persons acting in these supportive roles have also weighed in on the meaning of QoL. Mothers who were interviewed about what they felt was most important for their children with ID responded by communicating the following:

(73%) mentioned recreation, activities, and hobbies as important components of their young adult child’s quality of life. Other common responses included having their son or daughter’s basic needs met (53%), having their son or daughter belong to a social network (40%), and having their son or daughter be happy or content (37%) (McIntyre, Kraemer, Blacher, & Simmerman, 2004, p. 132).

Notice that the mothers interviewed did not mention work as a desired outcome for their children. Parents may be well aware of the activities that enhance their children’s QoL. This in no way means that students with ID are not capable of engaging in work activities.

This brings us to the measurement considerations of QoL. One could investigate either personal/subjective outcomes or empirical/objective outcomes (EP Magazine, 2005) in relation to QoL. For the purposes of this review there will be a discussion of personal outcomes, and then the focus will shift to empirical outcomes. Personal outcomes tend to be subjective in nature based on self-reporting (Marquis & Jackson, 2000) to questions like “are you happy?” In the case of persons that have communication or intellectual impairments, others may act as proxies for them to speak on their behalf (EP Magazine, 2005; Gaudet, Crethar, Pulos, & Berger 2002). The use of proxies in QoL assessment runs against the grain of self-determination however. Wehmeyer and Schalock (2001) blame the educational process for not having prepared students “adequately to become self-determined young people,” (p. 2) which then goes on to impact to
decreased chances for success when they leave school. Turnbull III, Turnbull, Wehmeyer, and Park (2003) also point fingers to a skewed interpretation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, IDEA (2004) which requires us to:

“… to take a serious look at IDEA with regard to its original and continuing intent and to focus on the global outcome of quality of life for students with disabilities and their families. This focus does not assert that academic outcomes are unimportant: indeed, while they are important, and measuring them is necessary but not sufficient if special educators and their allies in general education intend to be serious about outcomes. But this new kind of focus on the more global outcomes and on academic performance, raises issues that have not been part of the discussion concerning the education of students with disabilities, IDEA, and school reform,” (p. 68).

Academics are said to be important, but the global outcome of QoL is purported to be the true intent of the law. This leads us to the very profound question of “how do we focus on academic standards for students who function below the average IQ and support QoL standards for these same students in our post secondary educational settings?” A study on the perceptions of students with ID in post secondary educational settings, and their proxies may start to answer some of these questions. While perhaps not the ideal methodology, in the case of non-verbal and low communication students, it might be one of the best options for looking into the reality of their world.

Empirical outcomes have been touted as a companion measurement for personal outcome measures (EP Magazine, 2005) to increase the reliability of personal outcome measurements. They are at once quantifiable and measurable. Empirical outcomes can be determined by asking questions like “how many times have you been to the doctor in the past year?” It is very easy to
answer this type of question; even proxies would be able to respond objectively to such inquiries. Because “empirical outcome measures- are equally if not more important than personal outcome measures. These measurements look at issues such as “access to health care and involvement in regular on-going employment and recreation activities” (EP Magazine, p. 40).

It has been found that “…people with ID placed in open employment are integrating more with their community and have a greater feeling of social belonging than people placed in sheltered employment” (Kober & Eggleton, 2005, p. 759). It is significant to note that although we have legislation in place that encourages “the social integration of people with disabilities in mainstream society, unless people have the ongoing support of natural family and friendship networks, expansion of roles and relationships and social contact may be limited and lacking in relation richness” (Marquis & Jackson, 2000, p. 422). It therefore falls onto researchers who investigate QoL to include appropriate QoL interventions and measurements in their work (Smith-Bird & Turnbull, 2005). Due to the fact that QoL has limited research directed towards students in post secondary educational settings, it is vital that we address this so as to align our schools with the basic intent of IDEA (2004) for global student success on QoL indicators.

Participants

Currently out of 32 high schools in the district, the ones with SVE programs which have post secondary programs have also received training in the PASS model in this southeastern metropolitan district according to a PASS teacher trainer. She states there are probably about 5 high schools with SVE programs that have not completed training in the PASS model. I tried to contact several departments to obtain more accurate information on the numbers of schools with SVE programs, but was not able to obtain the data. I interviewed 3 instructors from 3 different schools. The interviewees consisted of Ben, a white 29-year old male, Mary a white 59-year old
female, and Tanya a black female. Mary and Tanya both hold two Bachelors degrees; one in special education and the other in elementary education. Ben also holds two Bachelors degrees; one in business and the other in education, and he is currently working on his masters. All interviewees have worked in education for several years and have worked from 2-10 years instructing students in the PASS model.

Setting

All participants work in a southeastern metropolitan district that has roughly a total 258,000 students. Ben and Tanya work with students in high schools that have respective student totals of 2,672 and 5,240. Mary works at a center that has a total of 45 students. To date, all high schools with SVE programs, which also have post-secondary programs, have received training in the PASS instructional model, with the exception of five schools according to a PASS teacher trainer in the district.

Data Analysis

This researcher utilized a framework of QoL developed by Schalock (2000). He created a hierarchy to assess the dimensions of QoL which included the following: (a) emotional well-being; (b) personal development; (c) self-determination; (d) interpersonal relations; (e) social inclusion; (f) rights; (g) material well-being; and (h) physical well-being. The highest dimension in the hierarchy is emotional well-being, and the lowest dimension is physical well-being. In order to analyze responses from instructors who use the PASS model, these dimensions were used as a framework for understanding and comparison when the data was coded from the interviews.
Discussion

The organization of this discussion will be centered on Schalock’s (2000) eight indicators of QoL. Responses from each of the candidates that matched those indicators will be cited, and following that will be a discussion of implications. It should be noted that some of the responses overlapped into different indicators illustrating that they served more than one function in the development of QoL for persons with ID in the PASS instructional model.

Emotional well-being was the top indicator of QoL as indicated by Schalock (2000). Ben and Mary were the only two interviewees that alluded to emotional well-being directly related to the PASS model of instruction. Tanya did refer to the concept when she discussed her general ideas of the meaning of QoL. Ben stated that his students now feel good about themselves prior to the PASS model because the curriculum content was beyond their abilities. He explained that:

Before PASS came along, my students were getting frustrated sitting in a classroom doing school-work that was too difficult because they hit a ceiling long ago. Getting them out, in the community has given them a sense of pride that transcends the classroom.

Mary was the only instructor that shared that in her PASS model she accessed school resources to insure both the physical and emotional well being of her students. She stated:

A Family Counselor works with a student in need and has contact with the parents. A Social Worker is sent out to the home if the need arises. Agency workers are available to provide services to the students and family members as needed such as Vocational Rehabilitation, Paratransit, etc.

The next QoL dimension after emotional well-being was that of personal development. All interviewees related personal development to the instruction and attainment of basic life
skills. Tanya shared the experiences that her students gained as a result of PASS like this:

Some examples of tasks on a daily schedule are shredding, entering data onto a spreadsheet, using a copy machine, obtaining a checking account and all aspects that go along with it, folding/hanging/washing sheets/pillowcases/pants/shirts/matching socks, ABC filing, monthly filing, addressing/stuffing envelopes, stuffing mail boxes, sorting items, reading bus schedules, filling orders/packaging/labeling boxes, sorting clothes knobs, bagging groceries, stocking shelves, cooking, cleaning (mopping, washing tables, sweeping, washing dishes), use a microwave, DVD player, and social skills (playing video games, card games, talking on the computer, listening to music, and dancing.) All information is emailed to the students and put in their personal mail boxes. I take the students to get Florida ID cards and register them to vote every year. In the community we find job training sites for the students (only two students at a time) with the hope that at the end of the year our students who are 22-yrs-old are offered a job.

All of these tasks may sound rather menial, since most of us perform this kind of work routinely. However, for students with ID valuable life skills like choosing leisure activities, reading email, and getting Florida identification cards might be unattainable without support and guidance. Ben described how his goal is to prepare his students for employment, which is the first step to self-sufficiency in adult life. He shares:

We have two CBI buses and ten work sites with 13 students. The ultimate goal is to get the student set up at a work site receiving paid employment, and then have them stay there after completing the program. We also work toward living independently. (We have an apartment here on campus where the students practice daily living skills).

Mary creates a school environment where her students develop independent by planning and
devising their daily schedules with support. Again, most of us have agendas, planners, and to-do lists, but many students with ID may have never been taught this skill. Mary states:

The students spend a few hours in the morning on campus following a classroom schedule as they go from exercise, social groups or tasks assigned to them. Then they go to groups to prepare with their assigned staff person for the day. Then they leave campus for work, shopping, recreation, eating in restaurants, etc. They return to campus in the afternoon for structured social activities before going home.

It is clear that attaining basic life skills as described by the three interviewees will have a great impact on the students if they are able to maintain these skills when they have completed the PASS instructional model.

Self-determination is the next dimension on Schalock’s (2000) hierarchy of QoL. All three interviewees expressed themes of self-determination in regard to making every day decisions in their lives. Tanya expressed that:

My class doesn’t go to lunch at the same time because in the real world the whole job site doesn’t take lunch at the same time. As they proceed to their next task they will have to retrieve another schedule that directs them how to perform the task correctly. The whole objective is for the students to go about their work day with as little assistance and teacher interaction as possible.

Ben also felt that his students experienced self-determination through independence as a result of the job experiences at various locations and by learning what they were capable of achieving. Mary summarized the whole theme of self-determination thusly:

We teach independence. If the student is able to prepare simple meals or snacks, take care of their own clothing, use the bathroom appropriately, can ask for assistance in a store,
know how to navigate in a movie theatre or library or bookstore and order food in a preferred restaurant or bookstore café and not have to rely on another person to assist them, this contributes to quality of life.

Interpersonal relationships, followed by social inclusion are the next two dimensions on Schalocks (2000) QoL hierarchy. Since the two dimensions are closely related they will be combined for this section. Ben’s belief is that the PASS model advocates for students:

…being out in the community. They have work sites such as Publix, TJ Maxx, Broward Microfilm, SWR & Weston Library, YMCA, and Miramar Hospital (as well as others) where they can get trained by not only the teachers, but the staff as well.

This points to the development of interpersonal relationships in the world of work and socially inclusive practices in society in general. Tanya takes these two themes a step further by volunteering to meet the students in the community after school hours in a special program she has developed. She describes her program:

Finally, once a month the students plan a Friday night outing, usually to the movies. Their parents drop them off and then return to pick them up. This is usually the first time they have been dropped off with friends and left by themselves. I’m there to supervise but I remain in the background even in the theater they go and sit and remain in the back by myself.

The outing she describes speaks to both themes. In order for students to plan independently they must have the skills needed for effective communication in interpersonal relationships. Additionally, independently navigating community resources with support may make them feel more socially included in society.
Only one interviewee spoke about the next QoL dimension of rights. Tanya shared that she made sure that all students had Florida ID cards, and that they were registered to vote. This falls under the category of citizenship rights. She also spoke of educational rights required by IDEA and self advocacy saying:

I work closely with the parents to determine where the students will be living after completing FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education), how they will be getting around the community, and what activities they could get involved with. Third, I do my best to teach the students self advocacy but I find that most of the time students will not stand up for themselves especially with a person that they haven’t known very long such as their boss.

The dimension of rights was never mentioned by any of the other interviewees. It could be because students with ID require so much support and guidance due to their mental functioning that just empowering them with basic living skills is the first priority in their education.

Lastly, the final dimensions of Schalocks (2000) QoL hierarchy consists of material well-being and physical well-being. Only Mary mentioned anything related to this dimension and that was in the way of accessing public services. She said that she:

…supplies information about programs and services and offers to assist with filling out forms or accompanying the families to various programs. In most cases, the families do not avail themselves of this. During the last few weeks of school the parents often panic and ask for help in getting the services.

It could be that because families are responsible for providing for the material and physical well-being of their children this is not a domain applicable to the post secondary PASS instructional model.
In addition to the comparison of instructors who use the PASS model and the Schalocks (2000) hierarchy of QoL the question of how PASS instructors view QoL in general was also asked. Interviewees responded with statements that reflected a high regard for emotional well-being, personal development, and social inclusion. Mary summed it up best when she stated:

We teach independence. If the student is able to prepare simple meals or snacks, take care of their own clothing, use the bathroom appropriately, can ask for assistance in a store, know how to navigate in a movie theatre or library or bookstore and order food in a preferred restaurant or bookstore café and not have to rely on another person to assist them, this contributes to quality of life. Respect, independence, honesty, knowing how to make a choice, knowing what to do with your down time, self advocating and a method of communicating are the qualities we try to instill in our students to improve the quality of their adult lives.

Implications

This study on the PASS instructional model and it’s impact on QoL for students with ID based on the perceptions of PASS instructors is significant because it demonstrated that six out of the eight indicators for QoL based on Schalock’s (2000) hierarchy are being addressed by the PASS instructors. The two exceptions included material and physical well-being, but it is thought these are perhaps the domain of the students’ families, and not necessarily the responsibility of the school district.

It must be noted that perhaps, more emphasis could be placed on the QoL dimension of rights, but this may have to be qualified. The reason for qualification on the QoL dimension of rights is that many of these students will end up as adults with legal guardians due to the low mental capacity that may contribute to difficulty making reasonable decisions in some cases. For
adult students with ID, federal laws like IDEA (2004) and The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as well as various state laws like Florida’s Bill of Rights for Individuals with Disabilities mandate humanistic treatment for people with disabilities and delineate their legal rights.

Further implications of this study point to the need for an increased level of family involvement in the PASS instructional model. All three interviewees lamented the fact that often times families of students with ID appeared to lack the knowledge or motivation to continue with educational gains achieved by the PASS instructional model after their students completed the program. For example, Tanya stated that if a student had a job, and then lost it after exiting the program, the parents were not able to locate a new job for the student. Thereafter, the student was relegated to a life of staying at home watching television. Perhaps with increased family education and involvement, coupled with an expansion of resources, scenarios like the one described above would decrease, resulting in a higher level of QoL for students exiting such school programs.
References


Post-Secondary SVE Classroom Training Manual, n.d


Rosenberg, H., personal communication, September, 2005


Title: Exploring Instructors’ Perspectives of the Postgraduate Alternatives for Secondary Students (PASS) Program

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES: The PASS program experience for PASS post-high school students from the perspective of PASS instructors will be explored. The following questions will be investigated by the researcher:

- What do you believe students gain by completing the PASS program?
- What challenges do you believe students face after completing the PASS program?
- How do Special Education teachers perceive the concept of quality of life in general, and specifically for their students in the PASS Program?

SUBJECT RECRUITMENT: The instructors will be recruited from the School Board of Broward County PASS Program with a preference for those instructors who have worked in the PASS program for at least five years.

METHOD AND PROCEDURES: The researchers will interview School Board of Broward County PASS instructors who are currently working in a PASS program site. Each interview will be tape-recorded for transcription purposes. Participants will be invited to review their transcriptions to ensure accuracy. Thereafter, researchers will seek out themes and code the information discovered in the interview process. The researcher will use member checking of the coded material to confirm accuracy of discovered themes.

There will be a comparison and an analysis of the themes revealed in the interviews to understand quality of life for post-high school PASS students from the perspectives of the PASS instructors. Triangulation of the data will come as a result of comparing any available data on student success rates in the School Board of Broward County PASS programs to the perceptions of success that PASS instructors share in the interviews.

BENEFITS:

There are no specific benefits to the subjects. However, there are potential benefits to educational programs for students with trainable mental handicaps (TMH) as more insight on quality of life are examined as a result of completing this study. Moreover, further information on specific issues for PASS instructors and expectations for students will be studied. Here to now, post-high school vocational programs have focused on the employment success rate of TMH students who complete them. However, now educators are taking an interest in quality of life issues.

RISKS TO SUBJECTS:

There are no anticipated risks to subjects.
INFORMED CONSENT:
Informed consent will be obtained from the participating instructors prior to the collection of data.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA:
Completed observations will be collected, coded, and analyzed by PI. No personally identifying information will be reported; student observations will be displayed in written form with anonymity protected (using pseudonyms).
Appendix B

Consent to Participate in Research
Perspectives Of School Board of Broward County Florida Postgraduate Alternatives for Secondary Students (PASS) Instructors on Quality of Life for Students After Completion of the PASS Program.

Dear Participant,

I am conducting an investigation on the perspectives of PASS instructors on what constitutes student success upon completion of the PASS Program. This study will focus on quality of life issues for students completing the PASS program. The investigator of this study is Whitney Moores-Abdool, a doctoral student at FIU and a Ft. Lauderdale High School SVE Teacher with the School Board of Broward County. Participants will include three instructors who have been employed with the School Board of Broward County PASS program for at least 3 years.

The interview should take no more than one hour of your time. You will have the opportunity to review the transcription and edit it for accuracy.

There are no known risks related to this investigation. There is no cost to you or to the school for this study. Your anonymity will be protected at all times and no information that reveals your identity will be published.

If at any time you wish to be removed from the study, you may do so. You may ask questions about the study at any time. If you would like to know more about this research after it is done, you can contact the Principal Investigator, Whitney Moores-Abdool at 954-839-4430. If you feel that you were mistreated or you have any questions about being involved in the study, you may contact Dr. Patricia Price, the Chairperson of the FIU Institutional Review Board at 305-348-2618 or 305-348-2494.

If you have had all of your questions answered thoroughly and would like to participate in the study, please sign below.

_____________________ _______________________________  ___________
Signature of Participant    Printed Name          Date

I have explained the research procedure, subject rights and answered questions asked by the participant. I have offered him/her a copy of this informed consent form.

_____________________  __________
Signature of Researcher       Date
Appendix C

Interview Protocol for the study titled:

Perspectives Of School Board of Broward County Florida Postgraduate Alternatives for Secondary Students (PASS) Instructors on Quality of Life for Students After Completion of the PASS Program.

1. Please share some information about yourself.
2. Please describe your educational background.
3. Please describe your professional experience in Special Education.
4. Tell me about how the PASS Program runs at your school.
5. What do you believe students gain by completing the PASS program?
6. What challenges do you believe students face after completing the PASS program?
7. How do you perceive the concept of quality of life in general?
8. Please describe how the PASS program affects the quality of life for your students.