

AN EXAMINATION OF PRACTICES FOR REDUCING THE OVERREPRESENTATION
OF BLACK STUDENTS IN THE MENTAL RETARDATION/INTELLECTUAL
DISABILITY ELIGIBILITY CATEGORY

Jill K. Brown

Dr. Barbara N. Martin, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to describe district practices related to reducing the overrepresentation of Black Students in the Mental Retardation/Intellectual Disability eligibility category due to inappropriate identification by examining learning processes and dissemination of knowledge. One suburban school district was purposefully selected as it no longer was identified as being significantly racially disproportionate. The researcher conducted two focus groups and three interviews. The two focus groups consisted of a total of ten K-12 special education process coordinators divided into two groups. From those focus groups, two process coordinators were chosen based upon their knowledge from the focus groups for individual interviews to gather further information one-on-one instead of in a group setting. A third individual interview consisted of an elementary special education teacher. Data were collected using audio-recorded focus groups and interview and a review of district documents. Three themes emerged from the data: 1) impact of dialogue on knowledge creation, 2) impact of dialogue on determining further district needs, and 3) implementation of district-wide initiatives for change. Implications of the study could assist other school districts who have been identified as significantly racially disproportionate.