RESEARCH

Report on an Educational Program

Department of Research and Accountability

INTERVENTION ASSISTANCE TEAM
2001–2002

Houston Independent School District

HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Executive Summary

Intervention Assistance Team
2001–2002

Program Description

The Intervention Assistance Team (IAT) was a model of collaborative problem solving at the campus level. A group of professionals with expertise in a variety of fields worked together in a supportive and mutually beneficial way to meet students' needs. Therefore, IAT's purpose was to seek solutions for effective academic and behavioral interventions in the classroom.

The IAT process involved several steps. The first step was for teachers to make a request for assistance by completing a form that was submitted to the IAT. In this form, teachers identified the student and the problem that concerned them. The second step was for IAT members to review the request. Also, IAT members found it helpful to collect pertinent student records such as grades and test scores to review with the request. Once the request was reviewed, the third step taken by the IAT was to conduct a problem-solving meeting. At this meeting, members identified the problem, brainstormed possible interventions, evaluated the possible interventions, selected an intervention, and then wrote an action plan. The fourth step was for teachers, with the support of the IAT, to implement the intervention. The fifth step in the IAT process was to conduct a follow-up meeting. At this meeting, it could be determined that there had been adequate improvement and the case is closed, or that continued monitoring by the IAT is needed. In some cases, a new action plan may need to be developed by the IAT. Only after all forms of intervention have been exhausted does the IAT make a referral for a special education evaluation. The Houston Independent School District's Office of Special Education Services implemented the IAT process through its objectives. The objectives of the program were:

1. to provide adequate training for team members in the IAT process,
2. to implement IAT in HISD schools, and
3. to reduce the number of special education referrals.

The purpose of this report was to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of IAT. The following research questions were addressed:

1. What were the perceptions of team members regarding the IAT training they received?

2. What were the perceptions of team members regarding the implementation of IAT in their schools?

3. What were the perceptions of team members regarding the effectiveness of IAT in their schools?

4. How many students have been referred to special education since the implementation of IAT?

Findings

- The perception of 86 team members regarding the IAT training was assessed through questions in the IAT Survey. When asked the question, "Did the IAT training prepare you to implement the program at your school?" an overwhelming majority at 94% indicated "yes," while 6% indicated "no."

- To disseminate the implementation of IAT in the school, team members were encouraged to make a presentation to the faculty. About 65% of the team members indicated that they had made a presentation to the faculty and 35% indicated they had not.

- In response to the question, "Has your IAT developed an evaluation plan to assess effectiveness?" about 58% of the IAT members indicated "yes," and 39% indicated "no."

- About 45% of IAT members indicated that they met "monthly," 18% indicated "weekly," 17% indicated "never," and 3% indicated "daily." Another 13% indicated "other," which meant as needed.

- The majority (54%) of IAT members stated that they have "a lot" of contact with the IAT campus liaison. Twenty-two percent indicated "some," 8% "very little," and 13% "not at all."

- About 47% of IAT members indicated that they use IAT for both campus and student–level problems. Forty-three percent indicated only student–level problems and 3% campus–level problems.

- IAT members were also given an opportunity to comment on what additional support or training their IAT needed. These comments were categorized as "feedback/follow-up," "additional training/strategies," "finding time," "none needed," and "noncategorical items."

- IAT members were asked what the greatest challenge for their IAT has been. These responses were categorized as "scheduling time to meet," "getting started," "parent involvement," "commitment," "no challenges," and "noncategorical items."

- The perception of 26 IAT members regarding the effectiveness of IAT was also assessed. Seventy-three percent of IAT members indicated "yes" their IAT was effective in reducing special education referrals.

- Also, 58% of IAT members indicated "yes" their IAT was effective in increasing accuracy rates in special education identification.

- Eighty-one percent of IAT members indicated "yes" that there were positive student outcomes in learning or behavior.

- Observations conducted during IAT meetings also found that these teams were made up of a diverse group of professionals who each contributed their expertise in developing effective academic and behavioral interventions for students.

- The total number of special education referrals prior to the implementation of IAT was 4,989. During IATs' first year of implementation, the total number of special education referrals decreased by 679 cases to 4,310. During IATs' second year of implementation, the number of referrals decreased to 4,144, which was a decrease of 166 cases. The number of referrals during the third year of implementation decreased by 246 cases to 3,898. During the fourth year of implementation, the number of referrals increased slightly by 31 cases to 3,929.

- An examination of the number of referrals between the year prior to implementation of IAT and the fourth year of implementation indicated that referrals decreased in each administrative district with the exception of the Alternative District.

- During the 2001–2002 school year, 42% of special education referrals fell under the primary disability of "learning disability."

Recommendations

1. According to survey responses, IAT members need additional administrative support. The majority of IAT members believe that they received adequate training, but do not believe they have the support needed to implement the training they received. The Office of Special Education Services may consider providing an inservice for administrators regarding IAT. As the literature suggested, administrator support plays an important part in the success of an intervention team.

2. IAT members also indicated several challenges that their team faced in implementing the program. The Office of Special Education Services may consider providing IAT members with strategies on how to overcome challenges such as scheduling time to meet and increasing parent involvement. This can be done during IAT networking meetings.

3. The Office of Special Education Services needs to provide the IAT members updated literature on other intervention programs during IAT networking meetings . Reading about the successes of other intervention teams may inspire and convince all team members about the benefits of an intervention team.

4. Continued monitoring of the IAT will provide additional information on the program's effectiveness. Also, a final evaluation of the IAT at the end of its fifth year will yield the full outcome of the program.

Intervention Assistance Team
2001–2002

Purpose: *To evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the Intervention Assistance Team (IAT).*

Design*: Nonexperimental*

Population*: IAT members in Houston Independent School District (HISD) schools.*

Methods*: Results were gathered from participant observations made during IAT training and meetings, surveys, interviews and the School Administrative Student Information System (SASI) database. Qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics.*

Findings: *The evaluation of IAT, which was based on members' responses to a survey, suggested that team members believed they had received adequate training, but faced challenges in implementing the IAT program. In addition, the majority of IAT members believed their team was effective in reducing special education referrals and increasing accuracy rates in special education identification. The findings also suggested that the number of special education referrals has decreased since the implementation of IAT.*

Conclusions*: Recommendations were made for increased support for IAT members, providing strategies to IAT members regarding overcoming challenges, and for continued monitoring of IAT, which will determine the five-year outcome of the program.*

Introduction

Program Description

The Intervention Assistance Team (IAT) was a model of collaborative problem solving at the campus level. A group of professionals with expertise in a variety of fields worked together in a supportive and mutually beneficial way to meet students' needs. Therefore, IAT's purpose was to seek solutions for effective academic and behavioral interventions in the classroom.

The IAT process involved several steps. The first step was for teachers to make a request for assistance by completing a form that was submitted to the IAT. In this form, teachers identified the student and the problem that concerned them. The second step was for IAT members to review the request. Also, IAT members found it helpful to collect pertinent student records such as grades and test scores to review with the request. Once the request was reviewed, the third step taken by the IAT was to conduct a problem-solving meeting. At this meeting, members identified the problem, brainstormed possible interventions, evaluated the possible interventions, selected an intervention, and then wrote an action plan. The fourth step was for teachers, with the support of the IAT, to implement the intervention. The fifth step in the IAT process was to conduct a follow-up meeting. At this meeting, it could be determined that there has been adequate improvement and the case is closed, or that continued monitoring by the IAT is needed. In some cases, a new action plan needs to be developed by the IAT. Only after all forms of intervention have been exhausted does the IAT make a referral for a special education evaluation.

Houston Independent School District's (HISD) Office of Special Education Services implemented the IAT process through its objectives. The objectives of the program were:

1. to provide adequate training for team members in the IAT process;
2. to implement IAT in HISD schools; and
3. to reduce the number of special education referrals.

Program History

HISD's Office of Special Education Services began implementing the program in the 1998–1999 school year. This program has been part of a five-year plan to provide training in the IAT process to all HISD schools. The Office of Special Education Services, with the assistance of Region IV Education Service Center (ESC), has provided 750 HISD staff with IAT training. Also, there have been 19 staff members trained as trainers. About 123 HISD schools have been trained in IAT.

Funding Source

Special Education Department funded IAT through both federal and state monies. The department spent about $800 per campus for training. The average cost has been $17,000 per year.

Purpose of the Evaluation Report

The purpose of this report was to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of IAT. The following research questions were addressed:

1. What were the perceptions of team members regarding the IAT training they received?
2. What were the perceptions of team members regarding the implementation of the IAT in their schools?
3. What were the perceptions of team members regarding the effectiveness of the IAT in their schools?
4. How many students have been referred to special education since the implementation of IAT?

Review of Literature

During the past two decades, more and more schools have adopted intervention teams to provide general education teachers assistance with students exhibiting academic and/or behavioral problems. According to Ormsbee (2001), "In this regard, 'assist' refers to team activities designed to facilitate staff cooperation and coordinate educators' efforts to develop functional interventions for students experiencing educational problems, as well as to reduce special education referrals and placements" (p.147). The intervention team is an alternative to the traditional practice of "refer-test-place."

The success of intervention teams is dependent on several components. The literature on intervention teams explored these different components to uncover the elements needed for a successful intervention team. A study conducted by Burns (1999) found that students who attended schools with special education personnel on their intervention team had a significantly less chance of being referred for special education testing than students who attended schools without special education personnel on their intervention team.

Another study conducted by Kruger, Struzziero, Watts, and Vacca (1995) suggested that the success of an intervention team is dependent on the satisfaction of its team members and consumers. This study found that organizational support factors had strong positive relationships to intervention team satisfaction. The four types of organizational support were administrator support, perceived purpose of intervention team, social support, and training. Of these, administrator support accounted for more than 50 percent of the variance in consumer satisfaction. For instance, help finding release time, providing positive feedback, and encouraging teachers to use the intervention team are some forms of administrator support.

The literature also suggested that follow-up is an important part of the IAT. As Bahr, Whitten, Dieker, Kocarek, and Manson (1999) explained:

> Immediate follow-up allows the team to support the problem identifier, usually the teacher who brought the case to the team, in getting an intervention started. Ongoing follow-up permits modifications to the intervention, checks for treatment integrity, and assessment of intervention effectiveness. (p. 68)

Methods

Participants

During the 2000–2001 school year, 153 IAT members from 39 HISD schools that had most recently attended training were sent a survey. However, only 86 members returned the survey, resulting in a 56% response rate. Of those that returned a survey, 30% were general education teachers; 22% were special education teachers; 14% were campus administrators; 12% were counselors; and 22% indicated Other.

About 44% of these team members received IAT training in November of 2000, and 26% in October of 2000. Also, 13% of the team members received IAT training in September of 2000, with 5% in December of 2000. Thirteen percent of the team members indicated that they had received IAT training in the 1998–1999 or 1999–2000 school year. These team members may have transferred from schools that had

already received IAT training.

During the 2001–2002 school year, 26 IAT members that attended an IAT networking meeting completed a survey regarding the effectiveness of IAT. The results from both the 2000–2001 and 2001–2002 survey instruments are included in this report.

Instrument

IAT members' perceptions on the quality of the training, implementation, and feedback on needed support were elicited through the Intervention Assistance Team Survey administered during the 2000–2001 school year that included both closed-ended and open-ended questions (see **Appendix A**). First, members were asked about their position and the IAT training date they attended. The next two questions asked IAT members if their IAT training prepared them to implement the program and if the referral rate seemed to have decreased since the implementation of IAT in their school. The next five questions referred to implementation issues. Members were asked if they had made a presentation to faculty and if they had developed an evaluation plan to assess effectiveness. Also, members were asked about how often they met, types of problems IAT was used for, and how much contact they had with their IAT campus liaison. The last section of the survey included open-ended questions to determine recommendations for improvement of IAT.

A second instrument developed by staff in Psychological Services and administered during the 2001–2002 school year (see **Appendix B**) was used to gather IAT members' perceptions on the effectiveness of IAT. IAT members were asked about their team's effectiveness in reducing special education referrals. Also, IAT members were asked about their team's effectiveness in increasing accuracy rates in special education identification. In addition, IAT members were asked if there are positive student outcomes in learning and/or behavior as a result of their team. The survey also included open-ended questions to determine what IAT members liked most and least about their team.

Data Collection

Information on IAT's goals, budget, and implementation history was collected through interviews with personnel in the Office of Special Education Services. The Intervention Assistance Team Survey was distributed through a mail out. The second instrument was distributed during an IAT networking meeting. Special education referrals were calculated by counting initial referral dates using the School Administrative Student Information System (SASI) database for the 1997–1998 school year through the 2001–2002 school year. Referral counts for the 2001–2002 school year were calculated from the SASI database as of July 4, 2002. Two limitations of using the SASI database to calculate referrals were the direct data entry by the schools and the possibility of the same student referral information being duplicated from one school year to the next. Qualitative data were also gathered through participant observations made during IAT training and meetings.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data that were gathered. For instance, percentages were calculated for survey items. A coding scheme was developed for each of the open-ended questions. Responses were then coded according to the emergent categories.

Results

What were the perceptions of team members regarding the IAT training they received?

The perception of 86 IAT members regarding the training they received was assessed through questions in the IAT Survey. IAT members where asked, "Did the IAT training prepare you to implement the program at your school?" An overwhelming majority, at 94%, indicated "yes," while 6% indicated "no." The team members were also asked to explain their responses. The following are quotes from IAT members who believed the IAT training had prepared them to implement the program:

- The program was helpful, particularly the materials.
- The two-day training prepared us very well.
- The training was excellent! All materials needed to implement the program were provided.
- The workshop provides a good foundation to follow.
- The training offered alternatives/intervention strategies to consider before referring students for special education services.
- Yes, it helped in developing a multi-discipline team to assist teachers with techniques and ideas to work with at-risk children.

One of the team members that did not believe that the IAT training prepared him/her to implement the

program stated, "I don't believe that a program that doesn't have follow-up and additional training can be implemented successfully!"

Observations made during IAT training in December of 2000 documented several participants that were pessimistic about the IAT program. These participants did not think that IAT would work in decreasing the number of inaccurate referrals to special education. Furthermore, these members believed they would not be able to accomplish the tasks required of the IAT.

What were the perceptions of team members regarding the implementation of the IAT in their schools?

The perceptions of IAT members regarding the implementation of IAT in their schools were also assessed using the IAT Survey. In order to disseminate the implementation of IAT in the school, team members were encouraged to make a presentation to the faculty. About 65% of the team members indicated that they had made a presentation to the faculty, and 35% indicated they had not. The following are quotes from team members who had not made a presentation to the faculty:

- We plan to conduct one very soon.
- Program is not quite off the ground.
- A presentation is being planned for the first available in-service date.
- Have not been asked to do so.
- An intervention plan is already in place.

Team members were also asked, "Has your IAT developed an evaluation plan to assess effectiveness?" About 58% indicated "yes," and 39% indicated "no." Some of the reasons given by team members for not developing an evaluation plan were:

- Need more upper level administrator support.
- I think we need more training.
- Program just began to be implemented.
- That's something the team has to work on. We often get feedback in faculty meetings. . .
- There is not a need as of yet.

Observations made during an IAT meeting at an HISD elementary school found that these team members found it helpful to give assisted teachers a feedback form. The form consisted of six questions regarding the team's helpfulness. IAT members stated that the feedback forms helped them improve their team.

In addition, IAT members were asked, "How often does your IAT meet?" About 45% indicated that they met "monthly," 18% indicated "weekly," 17% indicated "never," and 3% indicated "daily." Another 13% indicated "other," which meant as needed.

The majority of IAT members (54%) stated that they have "a lot" of contact with the IAT campus liaison, while 22% indicated "some," 8% "very little," and 13% "not at all." During training, team members were encouraged to use IAT for both campus and student–level problems. About 47% of team members indicated that they use IAT for both campus and student level problems. Forty-three percent indicated only student–level problems and 3% campus–level problems.

The last section of the survey included two open-ended questions. The first asked, "What additional support or training do you recommend for your IAT?" **Table 1** presents a content analysis of the team members responses to this question. The team members responded with a total of 39 items that were grouped into five categories.

The category with the most items was "feedback/follow-up." About 31% of the comments were grouped in this category. Some of the quotes included:

- Follow-up visits from campus liaison.
- Review for teacher, some positive reinforcement or behavior modification techniques.
- We need someone to call so that we can receive constant feedback in regards to the program.

Twenty-eight percent of the comments were grouped under the category, "additional training/strategies." The following are quotes from this category:

- Possibly sitting in on an IAT meeting that has some experience.
- Update training every year or so.
- I believe it would be extremely beneficial to students if all faculty were trained in the IAT process. The training was very beneficial to me, and I think

Table 1: Categories of IAT Members' Responses to the Question, "What additional support or training do you recommend for your IAT?"

Comments	N	%
Feedback/Follow-up	12	31
Additional training/strategies	11	28
Finding time	4	10
None needed	7	18
Comments that could not be categorized	5	13
Total	**39**	**100**

that much of the faculty would appreciate it. If all faculty was trained, they would be able to be a part of the process and truly understand how it can benefit their students.

There were several comments regarding additional support or training that could not be categorized. Some of these responses included:

- Stipends for after-hour worktime and planning.
- Organizational assistance.
- The IAT has not been used. No referrals have been made.

IAT members also commented that they needed additional support to find time to meet. An IAT member explained, "I would prefer for the IAT to be able to meet during regularly scheduled school hours. This would mean additional funding for aides to cover teachers or members of the IAT team." About 18% of the IAT members indicated that they did not need any additional support or training.

The second question asked, "What has been the greatest challenge for your IAT?" **Table 2** presents the content analysis of this question. IAT members responded with a total of 43 items that were grouped into six categories. The category with the most items was "scheduling time to meet." About 30% of the comments were grouped in this category. The following are quotes from this category:

- Scheduling meetings with the whole group....Time, time–this could be a full time position!
- Arranging a time when parents, teachers, and team can meet.
- Getting the team together at one time–release time.

Fourteen percent of team members indicated that "getting started" has been the greatest challenge for their IAT. Another 14% indicated that "parent involvement" has also been a challenge. An IAT member explained, "Getting the parents involved in their children's education on a consistent basis. Parents reinforcing interventions at home."

Table 2: Categories of IAT Members' Responses to the Question, "What has been the greatest challenge for your IAT?"

Comments	N	%
Scheduling time to meet	13	30
Getting started	6	14
Parent involvement	6	14
Commitment	4	9
No challenges	3	7
Comments that could not be categorized	11	26
Total	**43**	**100**

About 9% of the IAT members mentioned, "commitment." For instance, an IAT member stated, "Commitment from faculty to be a part of an Intervention Assistance Team" is the greatest challenge. Seven percent of the IAT members suggested that their team did not have any challenges. As one of the IAT members stated, "We have worked together effectively as a team."

The IAT members offered several comments regarding challenges that could not be categorized. The following are quotes from this category:

- Keeping consistent with tracking, monitoring, and follow-up!
- Greatest challenge is making sure that adequate experts are on campus to cover the needed support that the general education teachers need. Also, the need for the team to have practical and workable objectives or strategies for the general education teacher to use.
- Many students referred. . .Tremendous amount of additional paperwork. One positive note though, students get help. . .the whole purpose of our IAT training was to allow the schools to run IAT ourselves. Considering we must (have been told) to only hold IAT meetings when district representatives are present, we have found this to be a huge stumbling block. . . .

What were the perceptions of team members regarding the effectiveness of the IAT in their schools?

The perceptions of 26 IAT members regarding the effectiveness of IAT were assessed using a survey that was given during an IAT networking meeting. Seventy-three percent of IAT member respondents indicated "yes" their IAT was effective in reducing special education referrals, while 8% indicated "no." Another 19% of IAT members indicated that "maybe" their IAT was effective in reducing special education referrals. Also, 58% of IAT members indicated "yes" their IAT was effective in increasing accuracy rates in special education identification, while 4% indicated "no." Another 39% of IAT members indicated that "maybe" their IAT was effective in increasing accuracy rates in special education identification. Eighty-one percent of team member respondents indicated "yes" there were positive student outcomes in learning or

behavior, while 4% indicated "no." Another 15% of IAT members indicated "maybe" there were positive student outcomes in learning or behavior.

Team members were also given an opportunity to comment on their likes regarding their IAT. Team members responded with a total of 22 items that were grouped into four categories. The category with the most items was "working together." About 41% of the responses were grouped in this category. Some of the comments included:

- Team-work, the ability to get the job done.
- We work well together. No one dominates discussion, all participate and are forthcoming with their own time and resources to solve problems.
- I think our school team works well together. Different individuals contribute different points of view and [provide] helpful ideas when discussing the different children.

Eighteen percent of the comments were grouped under the category, "diverse knowledge." The following are quotes from this category:

- The connection of minds that the team exemplifies. The diversity of areas of profession brings creative ideas.
- Members consist of a wide knowledge base in different areas.
- Sharing different ways of helping the classroom teacher.

Fourteen percent of comments were categorized as "helpful." Some of these comments included:

- Positive outcomes.
- They help teachers and parents recognize student's strengths and weaknesses.
- It assures that what is best for the child happens.

Twenty-seven percent of comments could not be categorized. Some of these comments included:

- Positive team members.
- The teachers make referrals to the contact person.
- Smaller team [so it is] easier to arrange meetings.

Team members were also given an opportunity to comment on their dislikes regarding their IAT. Team members responded with a total of 24 items that were grouped into four categories. The category with the most items was "time." About 46% of the comments were grouped in this category. Some of these comments included:

- Time involved.
- Time taken away from my own class.
- It takes time! We are all heavily loaded to begin with and the extra time required can be a burden.

Also, 21% of the comments were grouped under the category, "paperwork." For instance, a team member commented, "Too much paperwork!" Another 12% of comments were grouped under the category, "no scheduled meetings." A team member explained, "Don't meet on a regular schedule to discuss progress."

About 21% of the comments could not be categorized. Some of these comments included:

- Getting the parents to come to the meeting.
- That the team members are only interested when its convenient for them.
- It's just an additional step in the referral process to special education.

Furthermore, observations of IAT meetings conducted at several schools found that IAT was being implemented. IATs observed were able to set scheduled meeting times. For instance, at one school the IAT met every Monday at 2 p.m. A scheduled meeting time makes it easier to make arrangements with parents, teachers, students, and teacher aides who cover classes for IAT members.

Observations also revealed that some IATs found it useful to create a spreadsheet (see **Appendix C**) of students referred to IAT. The spreadsheet allowed IAT members to keep track of the students they assisted. Observations during the meeting also found that IATs were made up of a diverse group of professionals who each contributed their expertise in developing effective academic and behavioral interventions for students. The IAT meetings observed illustrated that professionals can work together to meet students' needs.

How many students have been referred to special education since the implementation of IAT?

Table 3 provides referral counts by administrative district for the 1997–1998 school year through the 2001–2002 school year. In order to make comparisons, baseline data are given for the 1997–1998 school year, which was the school year prior to the implementation of the IAT program. The total number of special education referrals prior to the implementation of the IAT was 4,989. During IATs' first year of implementation, the total number of special education referrals decreased by 679 cases to 4,310. During IATs' second year of implementation, the number of referrals decreased to 4,144, which was a decrease of 166 cases. The number of referrals during the third year of implementation decreased by 246 cases to

Table 3: Number of Special Education Referrals by Administrative District, Year Prior to Implementation Through the Fourth Year of Implementation of IAT

Administrative Districts	Year Prior 1997-1998 N	Year 1 1998-1999 N	Year 2 1999-2000 N	Year 3 2000-2001 N	Year 4 2001-2002 N	Year Prior-Year 4 Diff. N
Central	407	151	163	187	194	213
East	312	291	301	269	283	29
North	334	259	227	200	201	133
North Central	366	404	347	259	277	89
Northeast	330	315	358	375	259	71
Northwest	343	302	300	252	215	128
South	310	221	242	228	249	61
South Central	446	381	331	349	328	118
Southeast	240	187	210	152	172	68
Southwest	649	578	499	450	460	189
West	629	520	563	591	555	74
Acres Homes	56	65	52	40	17	39
Alternative	567	636	551	546	719	-152
Districtwide	**4,989**	**4,310**	**4,144**	**3,898**	**3,929**	**1,060**

3,898. During the fourth year of implementation, the number of referrals increased slightly by 31 cases to 3,929.

An examination of the number of referrals between the year prior to implementation of IAT and the fourth year of implementation indicates that referrals decreased in each administrative district with the exception of the Alternative District. Central District experienced the greatest decrease by reducing special education referrals by 213 cases. Overall, districtwide the referral count decreased by 1,060 since 1997–1998. Furthermore, Northwest District and Acres Homes Coalition were the only districts that experienced a steady decrease from year one to year four.

Table 4 provides referral counts by primary disability for the 1997–1998 school year through the 2001–2002 school year. The primary disability with

Table 4: Percentages of Special Education Referrals by Primary Disability, Year Prior to Implementation Through the Fourth Year of Implementation of IAT

Primary Disability	Year Prior 1997-1998		Year 1 1998-1999		Year 2 1999-2000		Year 3 2000-2001		Year 4 2001-2002	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Auditory Impairment	54	1.1	59	1.4	55	1.3	58	1.5	62	1.6
Autism	48	1.0	58	1.3	47	1.1	50	1.3	65	1.7
Deaf-Blind	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Emotional Disturbance	569	11.4	429	9.9	365	8.8	346	8.9	510	13.0
Learning Disability	2,568	51.3	2,132	49.4	1,977	47.7	1,800	46.2	1,653	42.1
Mental Retardation	173	3.5	150	3.5	166	4.0	166	4.3	148	3.8
Non-categorical	12	0.2	13	0.3	23	0.6	15	0.4	10	0.3
Other Health Impairment	423	8.4	422	9.8	433	10.4	406	10.4	429	10.9
Orthopedic Impairment	252	5.0	212	4.9	158	3.8	122	3.1	118	3.0
Speech Impairment	859	17.1	792	18.3	870	21.0	890	22.8	894	22.8
Traumatic Brain Injury	11	0.2	18	0.4	17	0.4	17	0.4	12	0.3
Visual Impairment	40	0.8	35	0.8	32	0.8	28	0.7	28	0.7

the greatest number of referrals during all years of implementation was "learning disability." During the 2001–2002, school year 42% of special education referrals fell under "learning disability." The next primary disability with the highest percentage of referrals was "speech impairment" with 23%, followed by "emotional disturbance" with 13%. The primary disability, "other health impairment" comprised 11% of the referrals. The primary disabilities, "mental retardation," and "orthopedic impairment" made up less than 4% each. The additional primary disabilities each make up less than 2% of the special education referral rates with deaf-blind and non-categorical early childhood having the least number of referrals.

Discussion

The purpose of this report was to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the IAT in relation to its stated objectives. This was accomplished by distributing surveys to the IAT members, conducting observations, and calculating special education referrals. The first objective was to provide adequate training for team members in the IAT process. According to the responses given by the IAT members, the majority believed that they had received adequate training. However, many members stated challenges that they faced in trying to implement the program. For instance, the greatest challenge for IAT members was scheduling time to meet. The IAT members also needed additional support in the form of feedback or follow-up from the campus liaison. Furthermore, team members recommended that additional training or strategies be provided to them.

The second objective was to implement IAT in HISD schools. According to the responses given by the IAT members, the majority of IAT members indicated that they have implemented IAT in their schools. For instance, the majority of IAT members had made a presentation to their faculty regarding the IAT process. Also, observations conducted at several schools found that IATs were meeting at a scheduled time. In addition, IATs were being used for both campus and student–level problems.

The third objective was to reduce the number of special education referrals. The majority of IAT members believed their team was effective in reducing special education referrals and increasing accuracy rates in special education identification. The perceptions held by IAT members is supported by the districtwide decrease in special education referrals since the implementation of IAT.

Conclusions

Much of the literature on intervention teams suggests that these teams have had positive effects on reducing the number of special education referrals and, most importantly, providing students with the assistance they need. The Office of Special Education Services should continue its efforts in supporting the implementation of IAT in HISD schools. Moreover, Ormsbee (2001) suggests that, "If building-level preassessment teams develop and follow systematic procedures, their teachers will be more likely to view the team as a helpful, rather than a bureaucratic, option. Most important of all, students will benefit from the power of a multidisciplinary, multitalented professional team of educators who are working together to help each child succeed."

Recommendations

1. According to survey responses, IAT members need additional administrative support. The majority of IAT members believe that they received adequate training, but do not believe they have the support needed to implement the training they received. The Office of Special Education Services may consider providing an inservice for administrators regarding IAT. As the literature suggested, administrator support plays an important part in the success of an intervention team.

2. IAT members also indicated several challenges that their team faced in implementing the program. The Office of Special Education Services may consider providing IAT members with strategies on how to overcome challenges such as scheduling time to meet and increasing parent involvement. This can be done during IAT networking meetings.

3. The Office of Special Education Services needs to provide the IAT members updated literature on other intervention programs during IAT networking meetings . Reading about the successes of other intervention teams may inspire and convince all team members about the benefits of an intervention team.

4. Continued monitoring of the IAT will provide additional information on the program's effectiveness. Also, a final evaluation of the IAT at the end of its fifth year will yield the full outcome of the program.

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Appendix A

Intervention Assistance Teams
Survey

INSTRUCTIONS: The purpose of this survey is to help us understand how the Intervention Assistant Teams (IAT) were being implemented. We would appreciate you taking a few minutes to answer the questions in this survey. Your answers are very important to us. Please do not write your name on this survey or the **SCANTRON** sheet so that your answers will be anonymous. When you have completed this survey please return it to your campus liaison who will send it to the HISD Research and Accountability Department by February 12, 2001.

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

1. Position:

A	B	C	D	E
Special Education Teacher	General Education Teacher	Campus Administrator	Counselor	Other _____

2. Date of Training:

A	B
1998-1999 School Year	1999-2000 School Year

3. If you did not answer question 2, what training date did you attend?

A	B	C	D
September 2000	October 2000	November 2000	December 2000

4. Did the IAT Training prepare you to implement the program at your school?

A	B
Yes	No

Explain:

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. Based on the number of students being tested, has the referral rate decreased since the implementation of IAT at your school?

A	B	C
Yes	No	Do not Know

Continue on Next Page➔

Appendix A (continued)

6. Has your IAT made a presentation to the faculty?

A	B
Yes	No

If no, why?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. Has your IAT developed an evaluation plan to assess effectiveness?

A	B
Yes	No

If no, why?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. How often does your IAT meet?

A	B	C	D	E
Monthly	Weekly	Daily	Never	Other: _____

9. What type of problems do you use IAT for:

A	B	C
Campus level problems	Individual (Student) level problems	Both

10. How much contact do you have with the campus liaison?

A	B	C	D
A lot	Some	Very Little	Not At All

Continue on Next Page➔

Appendix A (continued)

11. What additional support or training do you recommend for your IAT?

12. What has been the greatest challenge for your IAT?

Appendix B

CONFIDENTIAL PROFESSIONAL SURVEY
INTERVENTION ASSISTANCE TEAMS

Thank you for your time in answering this survey. Your comments will help better understand current trends in the use of the Intervention Assistance Team model.

Do you think that your Intervention Assistance Team is effective in reducing special education referrals?
Yes_____ No_____ Maybe____

Do you think that your Intervention Assistance Team is effective in increasing accuracy rates in special education identification?
Yes_____ No_____ Maybe____

Are there positive student outcomes in learning or behavior?
Yes_____ No_____ Maybe____

What do you like best about your Intervention Assistance Team?_____
_____
_____
_____

What do you like least about your Intervention Assistance Team?_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank You!

Appendix C

Intervention Assistance Team Log

Name	Parent Contact Date	Grade	Teacher	Date	Status	Reason	Notes
Student 1	2/15/01	4	Teacher A	2/15/01	IAT follow-up scheduled with parent/teacher on 3-14-01 @ 2:00	Academic/Behavior	
Student 1	2/1/01	4	Teacher A	1/29/01	IAT follow-up scheduled with parent/teacher on 2-14-01 @ 2:00	Academic/Behavior	
Student 1	1/29/01	4	Teacher A	1/29/01	IAT follow-up scheduled with student and parent on 1-31-01 @ 1:30	Academic/Behavior	
Student 1		4	Teacher A	1/12/01	IAT Meeting with Parent/Teacher scheduled for 01-24-01at 2:00	Academic/Behavior	
Student 1		4	Teacher A	1/12/01	IAT Request for Assistance/Preliminary Review Meeting scheduled for 01-17-01	Academic/Behavior	
Student 1		4	Teacher A	1/12/01	referral committee recommended IAT and behavior contract	Academic/Behavior	
Student 2	3/19/01	3	Teacher B	3/19/01	student signed IAT behavior contract; follow-up rescheduled for04-04-01 @ 2:30	Behavior	
Student 2	2/27/01	3	Teacher B	2/27/01	IAT meeting with parent/teacher scheduled for 3-7-01 @ 3:00	Behavior	
Student 3	2/22/01	4	Teacher C	2/22/01	committee recommends referral for diagnostic evaluation and truancy follow-up	Academic/Behavior	
Student 3	2/5/01	4	Teacher C	2/5/01	IAT meeting with teacher/parent scheduled for 02-21-01 @ 3:00	Academic/Behavior	
Student 4	2/15/01	1	Teacher D	2/15/01	IAT follow-up meeting scheduled for 03-14-01 @ 3:00	Academic	
Student 4	1/29/01	1	Teacher D	1/29/01	IAT meeting with parent/teacher scheduled for 02-14-01 @ 3:00	Academic	
Student 5		3	Teacher E	1/12/01	follow-up progress	Academic/Behavior	
Student 6	2/15/01	4	Teacher F	2/15/01	IAT meeting with teacher/parent scheduled for 03-14-01@ 2:30	Academic/Behavior	
Student 6	2/1/01	4	Teacher F	1/29/01	IAT follow-up scheduled with parent/teacher on 2-14-01 @ 2:30		
Student 6	1/29/01	4	Teacher F	1/29/01	Follow-up meeting with student and parent to present contract on 1-31-01@ 1:45	Academic/Behavior	
Student 6		4	Teacher F	1/12/01	IAT Meeting with Parent/Teacher scheduled for 01-24-01at 3:00	Academic/Behavior	
Student 6		4	Teacher F	1/12/01	IAT Request for Assistance/Preliminary Review Meeting scheduled for 01-17-01	Academic/Behavior	
Student 7	2/22/01	3	Teacher G	2/22/01	IAT Meeting with Parent/Teacher scheduled for 3-07-01 @ 2:00	Academic	
Student 7		3	Teacher G	1/29/01	IAT follow-up scheduled for 2-21-01 at 2:00	Academic	
Student 7		3	Teacher G	1/12/01	IAT Meeting with Parent/Teacher scheduled for 01-24-01at 2:30	Academic	
Student 7		3	Teacher G	1/12/01	referral committee recommended IAT	Academic	
Student 7		3	Teacher G	1/12/01	IAT Request for Assistance/Preliminary Review Meeting scheduled for 01-17-01	Academic	
Student 8	3/19/01	3	Teacher H	3/19/01	student signed IAT behavior contract; follow-up rescheduled for 04-04-01 @ 2:00	Academic/Behavior	
Student 8	2/27/01	3	Teacher H	2/27/01	IAT Meeting with Parent/Teacher scheduled for	Academic/Behavior	
Student 8	3/19/01	3	Teacher H	3/19/01	student signed IAT behavior contract; follow-up rescheduled for 04-04-01 @ 2:15	Academic/Behavior	
Student 8		3	Teacher H	2/27/01	IAT Request for Assistance/ IAT recommends referral	Academic/Behavior	
Student 8	2/22/01	1	Teacher I	2/22/01	The committee recommends summer school and tutorials; continuing with CSRT and re-evaluate in Fall of 2001; needs more time and exposure to English	Academic	new to country
Student 8	1/29/01	1	Teacher I	1/29/01	IAT Meeting scheduled with parent/teacher on 2-21-01 @ 2:30	Academics	