November 27, 2013

Melinda Hollis Thomas

Executive Editor

Current Issues in Education

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Dear Ms. Thomas,

Thank you for your favorable decision regarding our manuscript “Factors Associated with Access to the General Curriculum for Students with Intellectual Disability”. My co-authors and I appreciate the valuable feedback from your reviewers and have made changes accordingly. In the following pages we describe the major review items and our responses to them. The final, fresh, unmasked manuscript follows.

Once again, thank you for your favorable review and the opportunity to share our findings with your readers. Please let me know if you need any additional information.

Sincerely,

Meagan Karvonen, Ph.D.

Response to Reviewers

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| **Major review items** | **Response to reviewers** |
| *Reviewer 1* |  |
| Research Methods …too much detail… confusing at times.  | This comment is in tension with some of the other comments asking for more methods details. By re-ordering of the Methods text as suggested below, we hope we have addressed the confusion. |
| Placement of Table 5 was confusing | This table was presented in landscape format, and thus originally located at the end of the text for formatting simplicity. We have moved it into “final” position for this draft. |
| Table 3 repetition of “grade band” and “grade band match”  | Thank you for identifying this duplication. We have removed these rows from the Teacher part of the table. |
| Table 3 length of this table made it particularly difficult to follow. | We added spanners to the table to distinguish the natural groupings of variables associated with the teachers and with the students. |
| Unclear how protection of human subjects across multiple states was ensured  | We added a sentence in the data collection section about IRB approval and informed consent.  |
| Unclear how the availability of gift cards for some participants affected participation. | We added a sentence about the similarity of response rates for the one state without gift cards and the other states. |
| Difficult to follow the number of teachers and number of target students in each category of analysis.  | We reiterated these numbers in the text and tables.  |
| *Reviewer 2* |  |
| Literature is reduced and made tighter that what is currently presented as it made the article too long.  | We did not reduce the length of the literature review, as we believe the content foregrounds the discussion section.  |
| The abstract must end with a statement on implication of the study.  | Because this study was exploratory, we do not make highly specific statements about implications in the abstract; however, to address the reviewer’s point, we added a single broad sentence. |
| Repetitions in the literature review that foregrounds the research.  | We deleted the repetitive information from the results section. |
| Missed information on how the sample was selected. Not clear how the authors recruited the participants and the settings.  | In the context of re-ordering the Methods section, we believe this is slightly clearer: that is, each state had its own method of identifying teachers who administer alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards. The sample consisted of the voluntary survey respondents within the sampling frame that was described. We added a sentence describing the selection of the nine states. |
| What ethical procedures were undertaken in this research, considering the research was on vulnerable groups? | See earlier comment about IRB and teacher consent. |
| Report setting and sample before data collection procedures.  | We rearranged the text as suggested. |
| Acknowledge correlates that are weak and moderate and give plausible reasons for these. | We added a brief commentary on weak canonical correlations to the discussion section.  |
| *Reviewer 3* |  |
| The study may have inevitably set its own limitations in its methodology in examining a large-scale data for a very small population and its usage of canonical correlation analysis and cluster analysis methods. There is however my apprehension that the author may have involuntarily manipulated or dictated the results of the study in the way that the author wanted to as I lift in the text “it is not surprising that the final clusters yielded statistically significant differences on the access variables. This situation is compounded when “not all surveyed teachers completed both ELA and math parts of the survey, therefore the sample sizes for these two CCAs differ.” | Research on this population, and on AA-AAS, is full of small-scale studies, including single-subject, qualitative, and mixed methods. A data set with more than 600 records is very unusual. It is a strength of the study, not a limitation. Further, the “it is not surprising…” comment refers to results that indicate the cluster analysis effectively identified distinguishable groups. The outcome of that cluster analysis seems separate from the reviewer’s larger concern about our manipulation of the results. We respectfully disagree with this comment. |
| Provide subheadings for conclusions and recommendations. Arrange findings on the following subheadings as anchored on the problems he/she is sought to resolve. | We have incorporated a few more subheadings and reworded to parallel the research questions as you suggested.  |
| No. 4 and its answers correspond to the title, which the study is primarily exploring, that is: “Factors Associated with Access to the General Curriculum for Students with Intellectual Disability”. Use of “extent of academic instruction” different in context and concept from the “access to the General Curriculum”. | We agree that the scope of this manuscript is broad. Defining the extent of academic instruction was a necessary precursor to examining the correlates of general curriculum access. General curriculum access is also a broad topic, of which “extent of academic instruction” is one part. The title reflects the part of the study that is the biggest contribution to the field of researchers doing this work. We decided not to change the title.  |