

Rowan University

Rowan Digital Works

Theses and Dissertations

5-8-2008

Teachers' attitudes towards the New Jersey's Alternate Proficiency Assessment for students with severe disabilities

Rachel L. Cranin
Rowan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd>



Part of the [Special Education and Teaching Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Cranin, Rachel L., "Teachers' attitudes towards the New Jersey's Alternate Proficiency Assessment for students with severe disabilities" (2008). *Theses and Dissertations*. 691.
<https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/691>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Rowan Digital Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Rowan Digital Works. For more information, please contact graduateresearch@rowan.edu.

TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE NEW JERSEY'S
ALTERNATE PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT FOR
STUDENTS WITH SEVERE DISABILITIES

by
Rachel L. Cranin

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
May 8, 2008

Approved by _____
Advisor

Date Approved May 8, 2008

© 2008 Rachel L. Cranin

ABSTRACT

Rachel L. Cranin

TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE NEW JERSEY'S ALTERNATE
PROFICENCY ASSESSMENT FOR STUDENTS WITH SEVERE DISABILITIES

2007/2008

Dr. Joy Xin

Master of Arts in Special Education

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' attitudes towards the New Jersey's Alternate Proficiency Assessment (APA) for students with severe disabilities. A total of 25 special education teachers, who had experiences in the APA portfolio implementation, participate in this study. A survey including 25 questions on a five point Likert scale was provided to all participating teachers as well as an interview for six teachers to obtain their feedback in depth. Surveyed teachers reported that they were trained to prepare for their students' portfolios as required by the state. However, many concerns were raised by the teachers in regards to the time spent in preparing for each student's portfolio as well as limited benefit to their instructional improvement. The follow-up interview provided detailed comments that were consistent with the survey results. The implications on improving the APA process have been discussed to support teachers in implementing the alternate assessment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank Dr. Joy Xin for reading countless drafts of each chapter and for sitting with me in the afternoons trying to create something meaningful. I would also like to thank my family for without their support and advice, I would not be here today.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	ii
List of Tables.....	v
 CHAPTER	 PAGE
ONE. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Purpose of the Study	4
Significance of the Study	5
Research Questions.....	5
TWO. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	6
Alternate Assessments for Students with Disabilities	6
New Jersey's Approach to the Alternate Assessments	9
Teacher's Perceptions on Alternate Assessments.....	11
Summary of the Literature Review.....	15
THREE. METHOD	17
Participants.....	17
Setting	18
Research Design.....	19
Measurement Materials.....	19
Procedures.....	21
Data Analysis	22
FOUR. RESULTS	23
Survey Scores.....	23
Additional Comments	24
Interview Results	27
FIVE. DISCUSSION	29
Limitations	30
Implications.....	31
Recommendations.....	32
Conclusion	32
REFERENCES	33

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Teacher Consent Form: Survey.....	36
APPENDIX B: Survey Instrument	38
APPENDIX C: Teacher Consent Form: Interview.....	42
APPENDIX D: Interview Questions	44

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
1	General Information of Participating Teachers	17
2	APA Portfolio Teacher Survey Results.....	26

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In the past, students with disabilities were excluded from the state assessments and accountability systems (34 CFR Part 200, 2003). It is estimated that approximately 40% to 50% of school age students with disabilities were excluded from the national education data collection. Because of this missing information, students with disabilities were not provided with proper access and exposure to the general education curriculum, according to McGrew, Thurlow, and Spiegel (1993). Without a system-wide measurement, it would be difficult to track these students' academic progress and evaluate their performance (34 CFR Part 200).

The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1997) mandates all states to include students with disabilities, with accommodations if necessary, in their state and district-wide assessments. This legislation also requires that, for students who are not able to participate in these large-scale assessments with accommodations, an alternate assessment must be provided. As it says, "In general – Children with disabilities are included in general state and district-wide assessment programs, with appropriate accommodations, were necessary. As appropriate, the state or local educational agency develops guidelines for the participation of children with disabilities in alternate assessments for those who cannot participate in state and district-wide assessment programs" (IDEA Amendments of 1997, Sec. 612(a)(17)(A)(i)).

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) furthered the requirements for assessing students with disabilities. It stipulates that assessment results for all students, including students with disabilities, be included in the calculation of each state's Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). This inclusion of students with disabilities in statewide assessment systems is now "considered essential to improving education opportunities for these students and to providing meaningful and valuable information about student performance to schools and communities" (Thurlow, Lazarus, Thompson, & Morse, 2005, p. 233).

Statement of the Problem

In compliance with the reauthorization of IDEA, states began to create their own types of alternate assessments. Because of the Kentucky Education Reform Act in 1990, Kentucky became the first state to create an alternate assessment using portfolios (Kleinert, Kearns, & Kennedy, 1997).

In 1992, Kentucky put into practice an inclusive assessment and accountability system to include all students in statewide testing programs. Using both regular and alternate assessments, in order for schools to evaluate student progress, the Alternate Portfolio (AP) was created. This was created as an alternative for students who are unable to take the regular tests. Approximately .5% of all students in Kentucky take part in the AP assessment. Although it is a small number, these students do count towards the school and state accountability indexes. Kentucky's accountability system is also "high-stakes." Thus, the schools are rewarded or penalized based on their students' overall improvement or decline (Kearns, Kleinert, & Kennedy, 1999).

According to Kleinert et. al, (1999), teachers of students in Kentucky's Alternate Portfolio Assessment found many benefits in their students being included in the state's accountability system. For example, teachers incorporated the portfolios into their daily routines to enable students the ability to track their own schedules and monitor their own progress (Kleinert, et. al, 1999). This way, the portfolios increased their opportunities to learn choice making, self-determination, and enhanced communicative abilities for non-verbal students (Kleinert, et. al, 1999).

Although Kleinert, Kennedy, and Kearns (1999) found generally positive results of implementing portfolio assessments in Kentucky, concerns were raised regarding preparation time, data collection, and effects of such an alternate. For example, teachers complained that it is hard for them to document in the portfolio their students' progress in the general education classroom or in the community (Kleinert, et. al, 1999). At the mean time, many teachers indicated that the portfolio took up additional preparation time to collect data for each student and eventually detracted from teachers actual teaching time (Kleinert, et. al, 1999).

In general, teachers experienced in Kentucky's Alternate Assessment do believe this is a positive change in assessing students with disabilities (Kleinert, et. al, 1999). For example, 52.9% of teachers participated in the study agreed or strongly agreed that there were benefits for their students being included in the state's accountability. Most agreed that by using the portfolios as part of their daily routine, students became more aware of their daily schedules and more in control of their classroom routines. Also, teachers saw positive changes in the communicative abilities of their non-verbal students as a result of the alternative assessment (Kleinert, et. al, 1999).

In New Jersey, an Alternate Proficiency Assessment (APA) has been developed in the form of a portfolio since the 2001-2002 school year. It is designed to measure student progress towards achieving the state educational standards (NJDOE, 2001). These standards are based on New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS) and the Core Curriculum Content Standards for Students with Severe Disabilities (CCCSSSD). Teachers of students with severe disabilities are required to prepare a portfolio containing evidence of student performance collected over a six-month time period. Work samples are assembled to demonstrate the correlation between the work the students are doing and the Content Standards.

New Jersey's APA is a representative of a multi-disciplinary approach to education and an assessment of educational outcomes. It is designed to increase access for students with disabilities to the general education curriculum. It also attempts to ensure the appropriate allocation of resources for these students. Since 2001, it has been six years to implement such an APA in schools. However, little research has been done to examine if the APA is appropriate for teachers to evaluate students' performance.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate teacher attitudes towards New Jersey's APA in regards to teacher training and preparation, responsibilities for teachers for completion, and awareness of the process for students. Also, it will investigate and examine the correlation between the APA outcomes and an overall improvement in education for students with disabilities.

Significance of the Study

Research on alternate assessments and teacher attitudes was conducted in Kentucky and other states (Kohl, McLaughlin & Nagle, 2006). The findings are mixed. In Kentucky, teachers have an overall positive view on the portfolio alternate assessment (Kleinert, et. al, 1999). However, there is not enough information obtained in boarder studies throughout the country. To date, studies have been conducted in several states such as Kentucky, Illinois, and Wisconsin while little research has been done in New Jersey. This study will examine New Jersey's APA and teacher attitudes towards their implementation of the APA.

Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the general perceptions of the selected teachers towards the APA's preparation, implementation, and benefits to their instruction and student learning?
2. What are selected teachers' perceptions on the current requirements for completing the APA in 2007-2008?
3. What are selected teachers' opinions about the correlation between the completion of APA and the possible improvement of education of students with disabilities?

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Alternate Assessment for Students with Disabilities

With the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1997, every state was required to include students with disabilities in their state assessment system. States are also required to provide accommodations if necessary, to report the number of students with disabilities participating in the assessment, and to report the assessment results in the same manner as students without disabilities (Thurlow, Lazarus, Thompson, & Morse, 2005). In addition, No Child Left Behind Act (2002) requires that all students should be included in their state's assessment and accountability systems and assessed in the academic areas of reading, mathematics, and science. According to the Federal Register (2003), states are also permitted to use alternate achievement standards and alternate assessment approaches to students with significant disabilities.

In response to these federal laws, states have created alternate assessment approaches to students with severe disabilities who are not able to take their state's standardized tests even with accommodations. There are two important issues to address when creating an alternate assessment. The first is what should be tested and the second is how it should be tested. According to Westling and Fox (2004), alternate assessment content should be based on the student's curriculum, including functional skills and self-determination in the portfolio as well as their learning experiences in the general

curriculum. Different states place different emphasis on their alternate assessment. For example, the state of Maryland intended to examine the outcomes on students with severe disabilities focusing very much on life skills. The state of Kentucky adopted portfolios as an alternate assessment placing emphasis on the academic expectations linked to the general education curriculum (Westling & Fox, 2004). It is not only important that appropriate skills are assessed, but also the method in which students with severe disabilities is assessed. These assessment formats are determined by individual states. There are four methods to assess these students including observations, interviews and surveys, record reviews, and tests (Ysseldyke and Olsen, 1999). Many states have chosen to combine those different methods into a portfolio. Portfolios allow a teacher to collect a wide variety of data about the student's performance over time. The information collected can then be evaluated as to whether or not the student achieved the stated goals (Westling & Fox, 2004).

Browder, Spooner, Algozzine, Ahlgrim-Delzell, Flowers, and Karvonen (2003) found that alternate assessments had many purposes. Alternate assessments would create greater awareness of students with disabilities in school and state policy decision making. The results from alternate assessments would allow policy makers to know if students with severe disabilities were meeting expectations for learning. This was supported by Thompson, Quenemoen, Thurlow, and Ysseldyke (2001) who reported that all students must be included in the assessment process in order to obtain an accurate view of education.

Browder et. al (2003) also discussed that overall expectations of students with disabilities would increase with the implementation of an alternate assessment. Kleinert,

Keans, and Kennedy (1997) stated a similar view that “one of the keys to ensuring high expectations for every child is requiring that all students be included in measures of educational accountability” (p. 88).

Alternate assessments would allow students with disabilities to have access to the general education curriculum and be assessed according to the same district or state standards. Involving these students in general education curriculum has become an ongoing debate in regards to alternate assessments. For example, Ysseldyke and Olsen (1999) indicated that students with significant disabilities would be working towards life skills that are not focused in the typical curriculum in general education. In contrast, Thompson et. al (2001) indicated that alternate assessments were an alternate way of assessing the same academic goals for the students with severe disabilities as those for the general education students.

In addition, Browder et. al (2003) found that alternate assessments would improve the instructional programs of students with significant disabilities. Kleinert and Thurlow (2001) also discussed this belief stating “Teachers must learn to use alternate assessments not only to document what the students has learned but also to enhance and extend that learning” (p. 14).

Since the passage of IDEA in 1997, states have created their own alternate assessments for students with significant disabilities. Recommendations were provided to appropriately implement alternate assessments. These include how to adapt standards, define eligibility, design the assessment, and score the outcomes. Particularly, it is recommended to use the same content standards for all students, even the students with disabilities who are assessed through an alternate assessment. If an alternate assessment

is provided by using observations, recollections, record reviews, or portfolios, reliable and valid methods to evaluate the student performance should be developed. Thus, the scores can be reliable.

New Jersey's Approach to the Alternate Assessment

According to the New Jersey Department of Education (2001), all teachers must create an alternative proficiency assessment (APA) for their students with disabilities who are unable to take the state tests, even with accommodations. This stipulation must be stated in each student's IEPs, indicating that he / she will be completing the APA, but not the state testing. A portfolio was chosen as the preferred form of the alternate assessment by the state. This portfolio is designed by teachers following the state's format and requirements to evaluate student academic progress. Individual students' educational goals should be aligned with the CCCS / CCCSSSD in order to ensure that they are included in the statewide accountability system.

The APA portfolio has five specific components. First, there must be an introduction to the reviewer. This must be in the student's main form of communication, typically in writing, typed on a word processor, or signed using American Sign Language on a video tape, which is essential knowledge for the reviewer. Second, there must be a table of contents intended to help the teacher organize student work as evidence. Third, a copy of the student's schedule is included allowing the reviewer to demonstrate the student's individualized curriculum and activities. Moreover, there must be various entries with at least three to five pieces of primary evidence in each subject area including reading, mathematics, and science. The collection period is six months consecutively throughout the academic year. Supporting evidence may also be included if

applicable. These entries must be accompanied with the fifth component, entry cover sheets. These cover sheets identify the content area, the CCCS / CCCSSSD, the individual student's IEP goals and objectives, targeted skills, cumulative progress indicators, and other prevalent information. After six months, the portfolios are collected by representatives from the state and scored by a special committee of experienced teachers. A rubric is used to evaluate each portfolio based on six different criteria. The first is an overall view of student progress. The portfolio must provide evidence that the student's IEP is on target in addressing goals and objectives related to the CCCS. Second, student performance must show the connection to the CCCS. Third, the portfolio must present evidence of sustained social interaction both with students with disabilities and students without disabilities. Fourth, the portfolio must address the issue of independence for the student through adaptations, modifications, assistive technology, and natural supports. Fifth, the portfolio must prove that the student demonstrates self-determination skills by making choices to extend his/her performance. Lastly, the portfolio must show the student's generalization skills in other settings or activities. For example, the student must demonstrate different skills and concepts at different locations or with different people (NJDOE, 2001). According to the evaluation rubrics, four levels of performance are graded including novice (lowest), apprentice, proficient, or distinguished (highest) (NJDOE, 2001). These rubrics are based on the following six dimensions: student progress, connection to standards, social interaction, independence, self-determination, and generalization.

Each completed portfolio is sent to the school district where an assigned APA coordinator will collect all portfolios and mail to the state scoring center to be scored by a

group of reviewers. When the portfolios are scored, they will be sent back to the school district, then back to the teachers. This same process has been implemented since 2001 when the state adopted portfolios as the alternative.

Teacher Perceptions on Alternate Assessments

According to Thompson and Thurlow (2001), the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO), nearly half of the states in the nation chose to adopt a portfolio approach as their alternate assessment. Kentucky was the first state to put portfolios into practice. In order to understand different teacher perspectives about portfolio assessments, Kleinert, Kennedy, and Kearns (1999) surveyed 331 special education teachers within Kentucky's school system. These teachers had experiences in implementing portfolios to include special education students in statewide assessment and accountability since 1992.

It is found that 52.9% of the teachers believed their students benefited from participating in Kentucky's portfolio assessment, and 62.2% reported that they used portfolios in their daily classroom routines (Kleinert et al.). Teachers also reported that they were able to use the portfolios to increase students to use their own individualized schedules and evaluate their own academic progress. Similar results were found during teacher interviews. When asked questions about the benefits of portfolios to their students, teachers reported that the opportunities for choice making and the increase in communication for nonverbal students were enhanced. Teachers also reported that the students were more aware of their own schedules.

Concerns were raised by teachers in regards to the difficulty in documentation of observations of larger educational effects. These include the incorporation of students

into the general education classrooms and the increased opportunities for community based instruction. For example, although 48.5% of the teachers indicated that their students with moderate and severe disabilities regularly participated in academic instruction with their age-peers in general education classrooms, only 30.7% attributed this to the alternate assessment (Kleinert, et. al, 1999). Some teachers also reported that certain elements of the portfolios were not appropriate for students with the most severe cognitive disabilities. For example, teachers reported that having students use individualized daily schedules and use adapted checklists to chart their own progress were tasks beyond their students' abilities.

In addition to the study on Kentucky's alternate assessment, another study was conducted to investigate teachers' opinions about their experiences in implementing alternate assessments in Illinois. In Kim et al.'s study (2006), teachers were surveyed to report their perspectives, practices, and concerns about Illinois Alternative Assessment. A total of 234 special education teachers completed the survey. As reported by the participating teachers, their portfolios have a combination of actual student work, photographs, teacher notes, and other documentations to present evidence of their student learning. It was believed that such a comprehensive packet of information would give a comprehensive view of each student through each portfolio. However, though it sounds good in theory, teachers do not think the portfolio assessment is effective in practice. For example, the surveyed teachers almost unanimously agreed that the Illinois Alternate Assessment system was not an accurate assessment for the educational needs of their students. Almost all of the teachers disagreed with the statement such as "students

participation will enhance achievement of their goals.” Teachers reported that their alternate assessment was of little use to teachers and their students (Kim et al., 2006). The results also showed 59.40% of participating teachers indicated there was absolutely no benefit for teachers’ instruction. Only 4.70% reported that they were more aware of their state’s learning standards, which was one of the main purposes of the portfolio. The findings were similar when the same questions were asked about the students’ benefits of participation. About 70.09 % of the teachers reported that there was no benefit for their students (Kim et al., 2006). The concerns were raised by the teachers including the difficulty for students to be involved in the development of their portfolios and the time taken away from teachers’ instruction. Teachers also reported that parents were not involved in the development of the portfolios. For example, one focus is the importance of academic goals for students that are enrolled in a life skills program. Over 38 % of the participating teachers reported that the portfolio assessment did not reflect the educational goals of their students. Teachers indicated that their students should be accountable for their functional goals, as opposed to their academic goals. According to Agran, Alperm, and Wehmeyer (2002), teachers did not find general curriculum as important as functional skills when educating students with severe disabilities (as cited in Flowers et al.). Many students completing the portfolios were not even aware of what they are doing. Only 33% of the students were aware of the process and only 14% understand the meaning of their scores.

This finding is consistent to the results of Flowers et al.’s study (2005) conducted in North Carolina. In their study, special education teachers were surveyed to respond to questions regarding their perceptions on the alternate assessment on students, teachers,

parents, and educational practices as well as the factors that influence alternate assessment outcomes. The results were generally negative. It was found that 63% of the participating teachers reported that the portfolios created higher expectations for their special education students, while only 44% indicated that their students could meet these expectations (Flowers, et. al, 2005). Fifty percent of the teachers indicated that the alternate assessment (AA) competed with individual student needs, and 72% reported that such an assessment took away from teaching time. The teachers also overwhelmingly reported more paperwork required than before to complete AA, and only 37% reported that the documentation was natural to the education environment. In addition, only 28% of the teachers believed that students received an overall better education because of the AA implementation.

On the positive side, Flowers et. al (2005) reported that 66% of the participating teachers reported that the AA encourages the use of age-appropriate materials, and 48% reported that students are able to self-evaluate as part of the AA process.

Overall, teachers' perceptions and beliefs are mixed from state to state. In Kentucky's studies (e.g. Kleinert, et. al, 1999), teachers are generally favorable about their alternate assessment. They understand the benefits and drawbacks of the portfolio assessment, and have been making instructional changes accordingly. Surveyed teachers in Illinois and North Carolina, however, have generally negative views on the alternate assessment. Teachers in both states indicated that their alternate assessment does not truly demonstrate and evaluate their special education students' achievement. Because of these mixed findings in the previous research, further investigations in different states are necessary to add information to the studies on alternate assessments.

Summary of the Literature Review

IDEA and NCLB have mandated educational assessments for all students. With the passage of these federal laws, states are now held accountable for the education of all children, including those with severe disabilities. All students are assessed on their skills in the areas of reading, mathematics, and science. For students with severe disabilities who are unable to take the state's standardized tests, even with accommodations, an alternate assessment must be provided.

In compliance with federal laws, many states, including New Jersey, have adopted portfolios as their alternate assessment. These portfolios are developed based on specific educational goals to align with an individual student's IEP in order to demonstrate evidence of the student's performance outcomes.

During the implementation of alternate assessment processes, teachers' views have been investigated throughout the nation. In Kentucky's studies, their teachers are generally favorable about their portfolio process and content. However, in the states of Illinois and North Carolina, their teachers presented negative opinions and comments. The surveyed teachers in these two states reported that the portfolio process could be considered as an appropriate measure and tool for their students' academic progress, but generally agreed that implementing the portfolio process has detracted from their instructional time.

Because of the mixed findings obtained from teacher surveys and interviews in different states, further investigations are needed. Our state, New Jersey, started its own alternate assessment in 2001, however, to date, little research has been done to investigate teachers' perceptions. The present study attempts to investigate teachers' opinions in

New Jersey regarding their own experience in implementing the portfolio assessment for their students with severe disabilities.

CHAPTER 3

Method

Participants

The participants included 25 teachers employed by two schools located in central and southern areas of New Jersey. These schools currently participate in the state wide APA process and are fulfilling the state's requirements to complete student portfolios, during the school year of 2007-2008. Table 1 presents the participants' information. Of the 25 participants, 11 were from one school and 14 from another, 20 were female and 5 were male. All teachers have had experience in completing the state required APA portfolios for their students.

Table 1: General Information of Participating Teachers

School	Number of Participants	Gender		Age Range				Highest Level of Education		Years of Teaching Experience				
		F	M	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-above	B	M	1-3	4-10	11-15	16-20	20-above
A	11	9	2	1	1	4	5	8	3	2	1	3	2	3
B	14	11	3	2	5	3	4	10	4	2	6	2	1	3
Total	35	20	5	3	6	7	9	18	7	4	7	5	3	3

Participants were also requested to report the number of APA portfolios they had completed. Ten participants reported completing one to three portfolios, while eight reported four to six portfolios. Only four participants completed between seven to nine portfolios. Three participants were not in the process of developing any APA portfolios during this current academic year, but at least one portfolio developed in the past.

Setting

This study was conducted at two different private special education schools in central and southern New Jersey. The first school provides services for children with moderate and severe disabilities, from the age of 3 through 21. Currently, children from over 35 different school districts within three central counties have been sent to this school. There are over 125 students enrolled with a wide range of disabilities including preschool disabilities, multiply disabilities, autism, emotional disturbance, other health impairment, visual impairment, cognitive impairment, communication impairment, and learning disabilities. Fourteen special education teachers are employed as well as a principal, a vice principal, a music teacher, an art teacher, an adaptive physical education teacher, a registered nurse, and a licensed nurse practitioner. Over 45 teacher assistants / one to one aides, and a therapy team consisting of over 15 speech, occupational, and physical therapists are also working with students in this school.

The second school currently provides services for over 190 students, from the age of 3 through 21. This school enrolls students from over 52 local school districts in six different southern counties. All students have moderate, severe, and profound disabilities including multiple disabilities, cerebral palsy, cognitive impairments, visual and auditory impairments, autism, communication impairments, and other health impairments. Over 130 staff members including teachers, assistants / one to one aides, registered nurses, licensed nurse practitioners, physical therapists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, and two adaptive physical education teachers are employed.

Research Design

Qualitative inquiry strategies were used in this study including a survey and individual interviews. Information obtained from individual interviews were categorized and organized into patterns to produce a descriptive, and narrative synthesis.

Measurement Materials

Survey. In order to develop this survey, three surveys in the previous studies in Kentucky, Illinois, and North Carolina were reviewed. In developing the current survey, most statements were taken directly from the three surveys discussed below. The only difference from the surveys in the previous study was to focus heavily on teacher attitudes rather than their perceptions. Thus, some statements were added and modified to meet the needs of the current study.

One survey *The Alternate Assessment Teacher Survey* developed by Flowers, Ahlgrim-Dezell, Browder, and Spooner (2005) was used for a reference. This survey contained 65 Likert-scaled statements in two sections, designed to assess “teachers’ perceptions of the impact of AA (Alternative Assessment) on students, teachers, parents, and educational practices, and factors that influence AA outcome” (p. 82).

Another survey, *Teachers’ Perceptions on Illinois Alternate Assessment* developed by Kim, Angell, O’Brian, Strand, Fulk, and Watts (2006) gathered information on teachers’ concerns and perceptions about the Illinois Alternate Assessment system. The survey was created from similar studies of the Kentucky Alternate Portfolios system. It consisted of four sections including teachers’ perspectives about the IAA system, teachers’ self-reported classroom practices related to the IAA system, open ended items related to teacher; concerns about and suggestions for improving the IAA system, and

demographic information. To ensure validity, five professionals, who are considered experts in the field of special education, were asked to rate the importance of each survey question on a 5-point Likert scale. They also provided comments. Most of the survey questions scored between a 3.80 and 4.80. To ensure reliability, the “test-retest” method was used. “For 81.48% of the items the proportion of identical test-retest scores was greater than .50” (Kim et. al., 2006, p. 87). Overall, the test-retest reliability was judged to be appropriate.

The third survey, *The Impact of Alternate Assessments* was developed by Kleinert, Kennedy, and Kearns (1999) to determine the degree to which teachers believed in the benefits of including the students in state and school accountability and the instructional impact the alternate assessment has on their students. The 11-question survey was created using a 5-point Likert scale. Five hundred and eight surveys were mailed to teachers who had attended mandatory alternate assessment scoring training during the 1995-1996 and 1996-1997 school years with 331 returned. By using an ad hoc analysis of the postmarks on the completed survey, it was determined that all the areas in Kentucky were represented.

Based on the above designed surveys, a survey was developed for this study. It consisted of 32 questions divided into two sections: Background Information and Teachers’ Perceptions (see Appendix A). The first section contained demographic information including the respondent’s gender, age, level of education, years of teaching experience, and number of APA portfolios completed during the current academic year. The second section contained 25 statements on a Likert-scale with five points: 5

representing “strongly agree,” 4 representing “agree,” 3 representing “neutral,” 2 representing “disagree,” and 1 representing “strongly disagree.”

Interview Protocol. A five-question interview protocol was developed to be consistent with the survey content (see Appendix B). These questions include preliminary background information and a series of five questions with sub questions developed to gain a detail of individual teacher’s opinions about and attitudes towards the APA. Participating teachers were also asked to provide comments or concerns they have when implementing the state mandated APA.

Procedures

Survey. After the permission was granted from the principals of both participating schools, copies of the survey were handed out to the teachers in January and February, 2008 (see Appendix C). A cover letter and consent form was attached to the front of each survey. The respondents were required to sign the consent form, and then answer the questions. Once the survey was completed, the teachers were asked to return the survey together with the signed consent form directly to the researcher or place it in a designated mailbox at school. Teachers were requested to complete the survey in one week.

Interview. Each interview was conducted by the researcher. All participants signed a consent form, either provided with the aforementioned survey or at the time of the interview. In the first school, individual interviews were conducted by phone and recorded with a cassette recorder, after the conclusion of a school day. In the second school, interviews were conducted face to face, during the school day. Each interview was also recorded with a cassette recorder. All interviews were conducted throughout January and February, 2008.

Data Analysis

The independent variables included in the study were gender, age, level of education, and years of teaching experience. The dependent variables were the teachers' attitudes towards the Alternative Proficiency Assessment portfolio. Survey results were analyzed using Microsoft Excel software to present means and percentages.

To analyze the interview results, the researcher listened to the recorded interviews three times and summarized into four categories including teacher training, student awareness of APA and inclusion of APA into classroom routines, benefits of APA to educational improvements, and teacher responsibilities. For each theme, narrative descriptions are presented in the results listed in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Survey Scores

Overall, all twenty-five completed surveys present a generally negative view of the teachers towards the entire APA process. Table 2 shows means and percentages of teachers' responses. Of all survey items, only three items were over 3 (the mean of the Likert Scale scores), the rest was below the mean. These three items include "APA competes with individual students needs," "There is more paperwork now than before APA," and "APA is more of an assessment of teachers than students." This means that most teachers agreed with the above statements.

In response to the statement "APA competes with individual student needs," 72% of the surveyed teachers agreed (a mean response of 3.8). Eighty-four percent agreed that they believed APA seemed to become an assessment for teachers, as opposed to their students. Eighty-eight percent of teachers indicated more paperwork was required for teachers because of the APA.

All surveyed teachers disagreed that APA scores reflect the exact performance and real abilities of their students. All teachers disagreed that their students understand the meaning of APA scores. All teachers also disagreed with the statement "my students receive an overall better education because of APA."

Ninety-six percent of teachers reported that APA didn't prepare their students for transitioning into adult living nor did it increase on task time in the classroom. Awareness

of special education students was also a topic on the survey. In response to the statement “APA has increased awareness of my students by others,” 92% of the surveyed teachers disagreed. Ninety-two percent of surveyed teachers strongly disagreed with the statement “as a result of the inclusion of my students in the assessment process, it has been easier to include my students in regular age-appropriate classrooms.” Eighty-four percent of teachers responded that APA has not created greater access to the general curriculum for their students. This indicated that teachers found there was a limited relationship between the implementation of APA and an increase of the inclusion of their students with their peers.

Overall, 92% of surveyed teachers reported that their students were not able to meet the state’s assessment requirements. 44% of surveyed teachers didn’t think it was important for all students to be included in the state’s assessment system.

Additional Comments

In addition to the Likert Scale, 52% of participating teachers provided written comments on the survey. These comments were summarized into four categories. These four categories include time taken away from teaching, APA not meeting the needs of the students, APA as an inaccurate assessment of student abilities, and APA focusing on the wrong skills.

Five teachers commented that the APA takes time away from their teaching. One participant wrote, “APA is a time-waster in my classroom.” Another commented, “APA takes time away from the other students and is way too time consuming.” A third teacher wrote, “APA discriminates against my students by taking time away from lessons that actually meet their needs and abilities.”

Four teachers reported the APA does not meet the needs of their students. One teacher reported, “APA helps us to NOT meet the needs of our moderately to severely cognitively disabled students.” A second teacher reported, “Every year, the process becomes more ridiculous and more irrelevant to my students’ needs.”

In regards to the APA not being an accurate assessment of their students’ abilities, five teachers provided comments. For example, one participant wrote, “Obviously no one in the state of New Jersey is concerned with a fair assessment of APA, or it would have need discontinued by now.” Another participant wrote, “Like any other test, APA is so interpretive; it does not show the true child, who they are, and what their uniquely different capabilities are.”

Five teachers commented that the APA focuses on the wrong academic skills for their students. One participant wrote, “I’ve been teaching special needs students for over 18 years. In the last eight years, I have felt that APA has taken me, as well as my students, away from what they need to function to the best of their abilities, given their different disabilities.” Another participant commented, “It is important for these students to learn functional skills, not fractions, polygons, and identifying the main character of a story.” A third teacher wrote, “The standards that APA is based on have no bearing on the life skills these students need.”

In conclusion, all of the comments were generally negative. One teacher reported, “As a special needs parent, as well as an educator, I see no benefit to a teacher doing APA on my own child. APA is not for the parent of the student or the teacher.”

Table 2: APA Portfolio Teacher Survey Results

Survey Statement	Mean	Percentage	
		Agree	Disagree
1. It is important that all students be included as a part of New Jersey's school assessment process	2.48	32	44
2. I see benefits to having my students included in the assessment process for my school.	2.08	24	76
3. Portfolios are a part of our everyday classroom routine.	1.84	17	72
4a. As a result of the inclusion of my students in the assessment process, it has been easier to include my students in school activities.	1.40	0	92
4b. As a result of the inclusion of my students in the assessment process, it has been easier to include my students in regular age-appropriate classrooms.	1.40	0	92
4c. As a result of the inclusion of my students in the assessment process, it has been easier to provide needed community-based instruction.	1.56	0	88
5. APA competes with individual student needs.	3.80	72	20
6. My students are able to meet the standards set by the state.	1.36	.04	92
7. As a teacher completing APA, I feel I was adequately instructed on how to complete the portfolios.	2.64	28	44
8. My students have greater access to the general curriculum because of the APA process.	1.60	0	84
9. APA has increased the amount of time on task for the students.	1.48	.04	96
10. APA has resulted in increased progress on IEP objectives.	1.40	0	92
11. My students receive an overall better education because of APA.	1.20	0	100
12. My students understand the meaning of APA scores.	1.00	0	100
13. My students who score higher are better prepared to transition to adult living.	1.32	0	96
14. There is more paperwork now than before APA.	4.44	88	.08
15. APA is more of an assessment of teachers than students.	4.28	84	.08
16. APA encourages the use of age appropriate materials.	2.84	40	36
17. APA allows teachers to review progress throughout the year.	2.12	.04	52
18. APA documentation is natural to the educational environment.	1.56	.04	80
19. APA improves instructional strategies.	1.52	.04	88
20. APA is scored consistently.	1.12	0	96
21. APA scores reflect the true abilities of my students.	1.08	0	100
22. APA promotes greater student self-determination.	1.16	0	96
23. APA has increased awareness of my students by others.	1.24	0	92

Interview Results

Six teachers were interviewed. Their responses were summarized into four themes after reading all interview results several times. In addition, interviewees' general comments were included.

Teacher Training. All interviewees were asked if they were provided with any training prior to completing their first APA portfolio and if they had received any training to follow up after their portfolios were completed. All interviewees reported that they received primary training, while only 50% reported receiving additional follow up training. Interviewees were also asked if the training they received adequately prepared them to complete the portfolios accurately. Five of the six interviewees (83%) reported that they were prepared. One commented, "I know exactly how to complete the portfolios. What I don't understand is why I have to."

Student Awareness of APA and Inclusion of APA in Classroom Routines. Interviewees were asked if they thought their students were aware of the APA process and, therefore, provided help in completing their portfolios. Five of six teachers (83%) indicated they completed portfolios without any student's help. When asked if teachers incorporated APA into their daily instructional routines, the majority of teachers reported that APA portfolios are not a daily part of the routines. One commented, "Time is such a rare commodity. We never have enough time to complete all of the activities we want to complete. Implementing the APA would detract from our activities even more."

Benefits of APA to Educational Improvement. Interviewees were asked about the benefits of the APA in regards to improving curriculum, planning, and instruction for students. The responses were very limited when asked if there is a relationship between

the APA implementation and an overall improved education to their students. All interviewed teachers indicated no direct relationship was found. “All APA did is to take time away from the curriculum, planning, and instruction of our students,” one teacher responded.

Teacher Responsibilities. Interviewed teachers were asked if the APA requirements were manageable to them. All teachers indicated that the requirements were manageable. However, the majority reported that it took away from their teaching and planning time. One teacher responded, “I am able to complete the APA portfolios because I am organized and have a good support system in my school. But, the time I spend on APA should be spent for planning more meaningful and engaging lessons for my students.” Another teacher gave the similar comment, “Completing the portfolios isn’t hard, it just places more stress and responsibilities on the teacher. I have enough stress and responsibility without APA.”

General Comments and Remarks. Each teacher provided additional comments during the interview. For example, one teacher said, “APA is a complete waste of time. My students need to be learning life skills and self-management skills. They don’t need to go the formula for finding perimeter.” Another teacher touched on the same topic stating, “APA measures skills and concepts that mean nothing to my students. It has no positive effect on the content of their education.” During the interviews, the teachers also discussed *No Child Left Behind* and raised their concerns, especially the statewide assessment and high stake tests for students with disabilities.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' attitudes towards the APA' preparation and implementation, perceptions on current completion requirements, and opinions about the possible correlation between the implementation of APA and the improvement of education.

The results show that teachers have negative attitudes towards the implementation of the APA. All of the surveyed teachers indicated that the mere preparation of the APA was too time consuming and took away from their teaching time. None of the participating teachers thought the New Jersey's APA was an accurate assessment. All surveyed teachers reported limited benefit was found because of the APA. Seventy-two percent of surveyed teachers reported that APA competed with their instructional time to meet individual student needs. These findings were consistent with those from Kim et. al (2006) and Flowers et. al's studies (2005). In Kim et. al's study, 59.4% of surveyed teachers reported limited benefit of their state's portfolio assessment for teacher instruction. Almost all of the participants in their study unanimously agreed that the Illinois Alternate Assessment System was not an accurate assessment of their students' educational abilities. In their state, 70.9% of teachers reported no benefit for their students to complete the alternate assessment. Further, in Flowers et. al's study (2005), 50% of surveyed teachers reported that their alternate assessment in North Carolina, competed with their instructional time to meet individual student needs.

In regards to teachers' opinions about the required implementation of the alternate assessment, only 28% of the participating teachers in this study indicated that they were adequately prepared to complete the required portfolios. Very few teachers reported that their students could adequately meet the state standards. This finding seems different from that of Flowers et. al's study (2005) where 44% of teachers indicated that their students could meet their state's academic standards.

In this current study, teachers' responses to the APA improving the teacher's instruction and student learning were negative. All of the surveyed teachers reported that the APA had not created a better overall education for their students. These results were similar to the findings in Illinois as Kim et. al (2006) reported. In their study, 59.4% of teachers reported limited benefit of their state's alternate assessment to their instruction. It also reported that the majority of surveyed teachers indicated that time was taken away from their teachers and that the assessment process had no bearing on goals for their students. The results of the current study confirmed their finding. According to Flowers et. al (2005), 72% of their surveyed teachers didn't see an overall better education because of the assessment process. The findings of this current study, as well as the previous by Kim et. al, and Flowers et. al, are in direct opposition with those from Kleinert et. al (1997) in Kentucky, the only study indicating their state's alternate assessment did improve the education for some students especially enhancing opportunities for nonverbal students in choice making and communication.

Limitations

The findings of this study were self-reported by selected teachers in two schools. Therefore, the honesty of the teachers plays a large factor in the reliability of the study.

Other research methods may be considered to validate the findings. Also, the survey was only distributed to 25 teachers that constitutes a small sample group with a convenience selection, rather than a random sample. In addition, only six teachers were interviewed, constituting a very limited sample size. Lastly, the time the survey was distributed and the interviews were conducted was directly after the due date the state required for the APA portfolio submission. It is not sure if the results would be consistent if the survey and interview were provided earlier in the school year, or during the APA portfolio process.

Implications

There are some implications based on the findings of this study. First, after listening to teachers' complaints, the evaluation of the APA process may need to be considered. If the APA was made more applicable and simple, time spent on preparing each portfolio could be saved. The policy makers and state administrators may consider modifying the process and submission schedules, so that teachers could be fully prepared. This way, school administrators could provide support to teachers in preparation and planning to complete the APA. As indicated by most teachers in this study, increased paperwork is leading to a lack of planning time for their instruction. Provided with more time, teachers could plan meaningful lessons and complete the APA. In this study, the majority of surveyed teachers reported that they had not received adequate follow-up training on APA procedures. More statewide or local district wide training would be necessary so that they could better understand the APA process, and successfully complete the required portfolio. Teachers are playing an important role in student learning and assessment. Their willingness in the APA implementation would be a

benefit to their students. I believe changing teachers' perspectives from the negative to the positive would definitely support the schools and state assessment program.

Recommendations

Because of the limited sample size in this study, further research should include a larger group of educators as participants in different regional areas to verify the findings. Other research methods in addition to self-reported survey and interview should be considered to add more information to the outcomes to the alternate assessments. Further research is needed to evaluate portfolio assessments, so that we can improve the services we have provided to students with severe disabilities.

Conclusion

According to Harris and Curran (1998), teacher attitudes are crucial factors in successfully completing student portfolios. "Negative and mistrustful attitudes could make educators more likely to use them [portfolios] ineffectively" (p. 83). In this current study, most surveyed teachers believed that the APA detracted from the quality of education they were providing their students with disabilities. The majority of teachers reported that the APA was not even testing appropriate skills of their students. It seems that APA is focused on academic skills, but all interviewed teachers reported that life skills are more important for students with severe disabilities. I have come to the conclusion that if the skills tested by the APA were more applicable to the severely handicapped population, those teachers may have a more positive attitude towards such as alternate assessment. Hopefully, a more meaningful alternate assessment can be created to help teachers and students achieve their goals.

REFERENCES

- Agran, M., Alper, S., & Wehmeyer, M. (2002). Access to the general curriculum for students with significant disabilities: What it means to teachers. *Education and Training in Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, 37*, 123-133.
- Browder, D., Spooner, F., Algozzine, R., Ahlgrim-Delzell, L., Flowers, C., & Karvonen, M. (2003). What we know and need to know about alternate assessment. *Exceptional Children, 70*, 45-61.
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997, 20 U.S.C.
- Flowers, C., Ahlgrim-Delzell, J., Browder, D., & Spooner, F. (2005). Teachers' perceptions of alternate assessments. *Research & Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 30*, 81-92.
- Kim, Y. G., Angell, M. E., O'Brian, M., Strand, K. H., Fulk, B. M., & Watts, E. H. (2006). Relationships among teachers' perspectives, self-reported practices, and concerns related to an alternate assessment system. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 29*, 83-97.
- Kleinert, H. L., & Thurlow, M. L. (2001). An introduction to alternate assessment. In H. L. Kleinert & J. F. Kearns (Eds.), *Alternate assessment: Measuring outcomes and supports for students with disabilities* (pp. 1-12). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.
- Kleinert, H. L., Kearns, J. F., & Kennedy, S. (1997). Accountability for all students: Kentucky's alternate assessment for students with moderate and severe cognitive disabilities. *Journal for the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 22*, 88-101.

- Kleinert, H. L., Kennedy, S., & Kearns, J. F. (1999). The impact of alternate assessment: A statewide teacher survey. *The Journal of Special Education, 33*, 93-102.
- Kohl, F. L., McLaughlin, M. J., & Nagle, K. (2006). Alternate assessment standards and assessments: A descriptive investigation of 16 states. *Exceptional Children, 73*, 107-123.
- McGrew, K., Thurlow, M., & Spiegel, A. (1993). An investigation of the exclusion of students with disabilities in national data collection programs. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 15*, 339-352.
- New Jersey Department of Education. (2001). New Jersey Alternate Proficiency Assessment Educator's Manual.
- New Jersey Department of Education. (2006). Academic and professional standards: Curriculum and Instruction.
- No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, 115 Stat. 1425 (2002).
- Thompson, S., Quenemoen, R., Thurlow, M., & Ysseldyke, J. (2001). *Alternate assessments for students with disabilities*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Thurlow, M. L., Lazarus, S. S., Thompson, S. J., & Blount Morse, A. (2005). State policies on assessment participation and accommodations for students with disabilities. *The Journal of Special Education, 38*, 232-240.
- U.S. Department of Education (2003). 34 CFR Part 200. Title 1: Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged.
- U.S. Department of Education (2005). *Alternate achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities: Non-regulatory guidance*. Washington D.C.: Office of Elementary and Secondary Education.

- Wehmeyer, M. L., Lattin, D., & Agran, M. (2001). Achieving access to the general curriculum for students with mental retardation: A curriculum decision-making model. *Education and Training in Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities*, 36, 327-342.
- Westling, D. L., & Fox, L. (2004). *Teaching students with severe disabilities* (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Merrill.
- Ysseldyke, J., & Olsen, K. (1999). Putting alternate assessments into practice: What to measure and possible sources of data. *Exceptional Children*, 65, 175-185.

APPENDIX A

Teacher Consent Form: Survey

Dear Teachers,

I am requesting your assistance as part of a study for my thesis course at Rowan University. I am conducting a study investigating teachers' beliefs on New Jersey's Alternative Proficiency Assessment portfolio. Participation in the study is open to all teachers who have completed an APA portfolio this academic year or in the past.

This survey will only take a few minutes of your time. Participation is completely voluntary. All responses are anonymous and no names will be collected.

I know time is a rare commodity, especially in the field of education. However, I would really appreciate any time you could spare to complete the 25 question survey.

If you are willing to participate:

1. Please sign the form below, detach it, place it in the envelope provided, and seal the envelope.
2. Please complete the attached survey, place it in the second envelope provided and seal the envelope.
3. Return both envelopes to me as soon as possible.

If you have any questions, please contact me anytime at (732) 221-7378 or rcranin@bellmawrschools.org. Thank you so much for your cooperation and time.

Sincerely,

Rachel Cranin

✂ -----

I give my consent to participate in this survey investigating teachers' beliefs on New Jersey's Alternative Proficiency Assessment portfolio.

(Print name)

(Sign name)

(School name)

(Date)

APPENDIX B
Survey Instrument

Alternative Proficiency Assessment Portfolio Teacher Survey

Please circle the answer that applies to you.

1. Gender:
Male
Female
2. Age:
21 to 30
31 to 40
41 to 50
51 and above
3. Highest level of education:
Bachelors
Masters
Doctorate
4. Years of teaching experience:
1 to 3
4 to 10
11 to 15
16 to 20
20 and above
5. Will you be completing at least one APA portfolio during this academic year (2007-2008)?
Yes
No
6. If yes, how many portfolios will you complete?
1 to 3
4 to 6
7 to 9
10 and above
7. If no, have you complete at least one APA portfolio in the past?
Yes
No

Alternative Proficiency Assessment Portfolio Teacher Survey

Please circle number 1 if you strongly disagree, 2 if you disagree, 3 if you are neutral, 4 if you agree, and 5 if you strongly agree with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree			Strongly Disagree	
	5	4	3	2	1
1. It is important that all students be included as a part of New Jersey's school assessment process.					
2. I see benefits to having my students included in the assessment process for my school.	5	4	3	2	1
3. Portfolios are a part of our everyday classroom routine.	5	4	3	2	1
4. As a result of the inclusion of my students in the assessment process, it has been easier to:					
Include my students in school activities	5	4	3	2	1
Include my students in regular age-appropriate classrooms	5	4	3	2	1
Provide needed community-based instruction	5	4	3	2	1
5. APA competes with individual student needs.	5	4	3	2	1
6. My students are able to meet the standards set by the state.	5	4	3	2	1
7. As a teacher completing APA, I feel I was adequately instructed on how to complete the portfolios.	5	4	3	2	1
8. My students have greater access to the general curriculum because of the APA process.	5	4	3	2	1
9. APA has increased the amount of time on task for the students.	5	4	3	2	1
10. APA has resulted in increased progress on IEP objectives.	5	4	3	2	1
11. My students receive an overall better education because of APA.	5	4	3	2	1
12. My students understand the meaning of the APA scores.	5	4	3	2	1
13. My students who score higher are better prepared to transition to adult living.	5	4	3	2	1

14. There is more paperwork now than before APA.	5	4	3	2	1
15. APA is more of an assessment of teachers than students.	5	4	3	2	1
16. APA encourages the use of age appropriate materials.	5	4	3	2	1
17. APA allows teachers to review progress throughout the year.	5	4	3	2	1
18. APA documentation is natural to the educational environment.	5	4	3	2	1
19. APA improves instructional strategies.	5	4	3	2	1
20. APA is scored consistently.	5	4	3	2	1
21. APA scores reflect the true abilities of my students.	5	4	3	2	1
22. APA promotes greater student self-determination.	5	4	3	2	1
23. APA has increased awareness of my students by others.	5	4	3	2	1

Please write any comments, concerns, or other thoughts on New Jersey's APA.

Please place all three papers with survey questions into the envelope provided.

Thank you so much for your time!

APPENDIX C

Teacher Consent Form: Interview

Consent form for Interview

I agree to participate in an interview investigating teachers' beliefs on New Jersey's Alternative Proficiency Assessment portfolio. I also give consent for Rachel Cranin to include my opinions and thoughts anonymously for completion of her thesis on New Jersey's Alternative Proficiency Assessment portfolio.

(Print name)

(Sign name)

(School name)

(Date)

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions

Alternative Proficiency Assessment Portfolio Teacher Interview

The teachers will be asked a series of questions pertaining to the alternate assessment portfolios they have completed in the past and portfolios they are currently completing.

The interview questions will first focus on obtaining background information on the interviewee and then will continue as follows:

1. Did you receive any APA portfolio training prior to completing your first portfolio? If yes, have you received any follow up training? Do you feel confident, based on your training, to complete an APA portfolio accurately?
2. Are your students aware of the APA process? Do your students assist with the portfolios on a consistent basis? Are portfolios a part of the daily classroom routine?
3. Are the portfolios beneficial for the students? Have you seen positive changes in curriculum, planning, and instruction since the implementation of APA portfolios? Do you feel there is a correlation between APA portfolios and an improved education for your students?
4. Do you feel that the requirements placed on teachers for completing APA portfolios are appropriate and manageable?
5. Do you have any other comments or concerns about New Jersey's APA Portfolios?

