

# **An Inquiry Into The Educational Services Provided By State Funded Programs.**

In May of 2005, E.N.O.B.L.E. began sending out a four page survey inquiring into the educational resources provided by state funded programs to adults with developmental disabilities from Providence to Middletown.

. The survey received a 70 % return with many teachers sending letters of encouragement and comments about specific educational needs that they saw among their students. The population overview and participation in ABLE classes is as follows:

- 75 % of those agencies and organizations surveyed provide day program services to a population that ranges in age from twenty one to over seventy. This means that roughly ninety percent of the State's adult population with developmental disabilities is dependent upon these services for transportation, meals, education and socialization.
- 90 % of those Agencies and Organizations surveyed provide some form of ABLE classes at least twice a week.
- 50 % of those individuals who attend these day programs will participate in at least one class that is offered.
- 75 % of those individuals who currently attend ABLE classes have graduated from special education programs in a public school. This means effectively that a full generation has passed since the closing of State institutions, and that these students may have a higher capability than their predecessors.
- The average ABLE class size in a day program setting is twelve to eighteen students.

The study asked teachers of ABLE classes to assess their student's levels in reading, writing, and math. The results showed that while approximately 50 % fall into the second to fourth grade levels in reading and math, 25 % performed at a lower than second grade level, and 25 % performed above a fourth grade level. Writing skills throughout the classes were weaker, with 50% of the students below a second grade standard.<sup>1</sup>

Students who have computer and calculator skills is also a small margin of the class, with only six out of eighteen students capable of using a computer to write or access online information and nearly the same number of students have the capability of using a calculator. In our study returns we found that each time members of a class could add the sum total of a grocery list, it corresponded with the number of students who can use a calculator.

These figures correspond to the specific needs that teachers addressed. In their

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<sup>1</sup>table 3

handwritten comments, most mentioned a need in the teaching of computer skills and practical math.

Reading levels were also mostly at a second to fourth grade level as well, but we found that at 70 % of students who attend ABLE classes read at least a part of the newspaper each day, though less than 33 % will read a book.

E.N.O.B.L.E. also wanted to examine the education that support staff give to those individuals in assisted living apartments and group homes.

We found that here, agencies have the strongest network of support staff and skilled workers. Throughout the State we found strong programs in daily living skills with 75 % of individuals living in assisted apartments capable of performing at least two community skills such as banking, using public transportation, using a theater, library or other public venue, and knowing how to live safely in their community.

The study also found that Agencies who had participated in a Clinton era program to recruit and register disabled voters had followed through with registering new voters as they joined the program. By the election of 2004, nearly 70 % of the State's developmentally disabled population were registered to vote. Agencies also provided " voter education " to those voters, but only 30- 40 % voted in the election. Of course one could say this mirrors the general populations apathy at election time, but still, many resources are available to get these individuals to the polls.<sup>2</sup>

E.N.O.B.L.E also received a number of requests for assistance in specific areas

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<sup>2</sup> see table 3

such as job development skills ie: acquiring the skills to fill out job applications, to prepare for a job interview. Safety classes were also requested, and classes concerning personal relationships and sexual relations.

Results from this study will help E.N.O.B.L.E. to focus on targeted area's of education and the individual needs of communities.

What we find most from the study is that adults with disabilities are more capable than ever, and so their service needs become more complex as well. Organizations and agencies who provide these services to individuals will be severely challenged in the coming months to keep these programs intact, with budget cuts looming and dwindling resources at local levels throughout Rhode Island.

It will be a critical effort as we recruit volunteers from the State's colleges and from the community to provide the education that we can. E.N.O.B.L.E. members will review the results and recommendations from this study will be mailed out to the participants as well as a request for a follow up interview.

Service providers who were not surveyed may write to E.N.O.B.L.E. c/o

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