

Beacons of Excellence

Application Packet

Due November 15, 1998

Institute on Community Integration (UAP)

**The College of Education
& Human Development**

University of Minnesota

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A. Introduction to Beacons

As a nation, we are currently in the midst of re-assessing our educational systems and their impact on achieving exemplary results for all students including youth with disabilities. It is no secret that far too many students exit America's educational system experiencing dismal outcomes. Nearly 3,800 youth without disabilities drop out of high school every day of the school year and a staggering number of students graduate from American high schools each year unable to read their diplomas. These statistics refer to students without disabilities; almost without exception, youth with disabilities fare even worse. However, more than a decade of research, demonstration, and innovation regarding effective practices and supports for youth with disabilities currently exists to support professionals, parents, employers, and others in their provision of services to ALL students.

Educational reform efforts in the United States are moving education from an isolated, highly autonomous, pedagogical model to a competitive system focused on quality outcomes for all youth. Reform efforts identify new levels of accountability for our schools. While new goals for schools include higher graduation rates, adult literacy and lifelong learning, increased parental and community involvement, and improved academic achievements for all students, ensuring the inclusion of youth with disabilities must remain a priority. In fact, identifying and promoting the replication of factors related to achieving exemplary learning results for students with disabilities within the context of improving learning for all youth is of critical importance.

Purpose of Research Focus

The Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota, in collaboration with the Council for Exceptional Children, was awarded one of four projects funded by the Office of Special Education Programs in the U.S. Department of Education under a research focus entitled "Beacons of Excellence". The Beacons of Excellence research projects are intended to increase our understanding of how schools can improve learning results for students with disabilities. Our project was funded to identify and study secondary schools achieving exemplary learning results for students with disabilities in the context of efforts to achieve exemplary results for all students.

The purpose of the Beacons project is to study how policies, procedures, curriculum, staffing, school climate, support services, community involvement, and other factors contribute to student success. We will be selecting a few schools, which we will study during an 18-24 month period. We will choose schools that are achieving exemplary learning results whether by the outcomes they currently achieve, or the improvements they have made.

A Partnership for Quality and Improvement

Working together with selected schools to identify factors and promote improvement is the approach we would like to take with the Beacons Project. Once the schools are identified, we plan to spend 18-24 months studying the schools, how they achieved their success, and their recommendations for others. We will need to identify school personnel who are willing to work together to share the school's history and plans for the future. School personnel will, in turn, learn a great deal from involvement in this project, which can be used for continuous improvement. They will also have opportunities to make national presentations and assist in the development of materials describing their school.

Beacons Outcomes Framework

The outcome areas are based on an analysis of current educational reform legislation (e.g., Goals 2,000, STWOA, IDEA) and their attention to post-school outcomes of students, as well as a review of outcome frameworks used in previous work (typically post-school follow-up studies). The framework used by the Beacons project to guide our work includes the following outcome areas:

Academic and Functional Literacy

These outcomes refer to the skills needed to communicate, problem solve and work in teams. The use of technology is another important skill associated with this area.

Career Development and Employment

These outcomes refer to the skills needed to understand one's career interests and goals, prepare for a career, and get and keep a job.

Post-Secondary Education and Lifelong Learning

These outcomes are associated with post-secondary education and lifelong learning, whether for ongoing career development or personal enrichment. Many of the outcomes related to this area are contained in the Academic and Functional Literacy outcome area.

Independent Living

These outcomes are associated with preparation for, and maintenance of, personal growth, health and well-being. Many of these outcomes may be reflected in various aspects of the person's life such as work, recreation, lifelong learning, etc.

Citizenship and Community Involvement

These outcomes are associated with school or community involvement, participation with others, and various activities associated with citizenship.

For each outcome area, school completion and post-school outcomes were identified. These outcomes were found to be associated with the outcome area. We have reviewed current

literature to find support for our associations and while empirical support is hard to find, there is a great deal of work that recognizes relationships based on experts opinion (NCEO, 1993) and long standing practice. It is with this support that we have constructed our framework, which has been socially validated by our consensus groups. *(The complete framework with corresponding outcomes can be found on our web site at www.ici.coled.umn.edu/beacons/).*

School completion outcomes refer to those outcomes achieved by students at the point of school completion that are often associated with the outcome area. School completion means grade 12, end of school, and the time of “aging out” of eligibility for educational services. The National Center for Educational Outcomes (1993) refers to outcomes as the “results of the interactions between students and the educational system,” which is the definition adopted for this effort.

Post-school outcomes refer to those outcomes achieved by individuals who have left school, and are often associated with the specific outcome area.

School Selection Considerations

The intent of the Beacons Research Focus is to study schools achieving exemplary learning results for secondary youth with disabilities in the context of achieving exemplary learning results for all youth. To help determine the results expected of such a school, particularly using data readily available to schools, we surveyed 140 stakeholders (teachers, parents, students with disabilities, local administrators, researchers, others). We asked them to examine our Beacons Outcome Framework (see previous section) and identify measures that would reflect exemplary learning of students participating in the school. *(The results will be on our web site at www.ici.coled.umn.edu/beacons/ within the next few weeks).*

There are several factors that contribute to the success of a school and its students. In determining the schools that we will study, project staff and National Advisory Panel members will determine school selection based on the following considerations:

- Evidence of exemplary results/outcomes for students with and without disabilities
- Evidence of improvement over time
- Secondary School serving students with disabilities within the context of serving all students
- Evidence of students with disabilities included in district and state accountability system
- Evidence of students with disabilities participating in the general education curriculum
- Diversity of geographic locations (national project)
- Diversity of urban, rural, and suburban settings

B. Benefits to Participation

There are a number of ways that you can benefit through involvement in the Beacons of Excellence Project. Some of them include:

- Recognition as a school achieving exemplary results (in addition to disseminating information about your school at national presentations and through print and electronic documents. We will work with you to inform your community through press releases, etc.);
- Opportunity for reflection and educational improvement. Together, school personnel and researchers, will study the factors that are associated with your success, which can inform your future educational improvement efforts.
- Project resources to support the gathering of information (to be determined during planning).
- Opportunity to contribute to an understanding of education effectiveness through the study of your school, and the dissemination of useful findings.
- Written profiles in the Beacons replication guide and on the Web Site.
- Dissemination of information via the Council for Exceptional Children (details to follow).
- Travel support to network with other Beacons sites and share strategies with school teams interested in learning from your work during a Working Forum in 1999-2000.
- Opportunity to participate in a Beacons Listserv, which will give school personnel an opportunity to network and learn from other Beacons schools.
- And other benefits. . . .

C. Criteria for Participation

Please ensure that your school is willing to meet the following criteria for participation prior to submitting this application. During the final stages of selection and initial stages of planning, project staff and school personnel will determine specific expectations for each site.

- Must be a secondary school serving students with disabilities in the context of serving all youth.

- Must be willing to share data with project personnel through surveys, interviews, document review, etc.
- Must be willing to assign a school staff member to assist in coordinating some of the logistics and data collection. Some resources will be available to support this effort.
- Must be willing to participate in various dissemination activities to share what is learned through the study.

D. Submission Instructions

Thank you for your interest in the Beacons of Excellence project. This application is designed for the purpose of gathering information related to the considerations of selection outlined in section A. Please complete the forms and questions. If you have questions, please contact Tom Bartholomay, Beacons Project Coordinator, 612.624.5776 or barth020@tc.umn.edu. The Beacons web site is also a source for information and it will be periodically updated with resources and useful information: <http://www.ici.coled.umn.edu/beacons/>

While you are welcome to include attachments, doing so makes review much more cumbersome. You receive a better chance of having the reviewer understand your responses if you are able to include the entire response after the question. For questions that require more space than is provided, you will need to re-type the question followed by your answer. For your convenience, electronic versions of the application are available. These can be sent to you via diskette or downloaded from our web site.

The software versions are:

- Microsoft Word 6.0 for MAC
- Microsoft Word 95 for Windows

Additional printable (pdf) versions can also be downloaded from our web site.

When you have completed the application, please send four copies to the address below. If you have your application on diskette, please include it with your four copies. Thanks.

Beacons of Excellence

Tom Bartholomay, Project Coordinator
Institute on Community Integration
University of Minnesota
111 Pattee Hall,
150 Pillsbury Drive SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Selection Process and Timelines

Step #1: Schools enter the Beacons selection process by completing the application packet and returning four copies to Beacons by the application deadline. *Due November 15, 1998.*

Step #2: Beacons staff and National Advisory Panel Members review application submissions to identify schools that will be selected for study. *By December 10, 1998.*

Step #3: Beacons staff make site visits to selected schools for the purpose of finalizing the school selection and commencing the study. *By February 1, 1999.*

Step #4: Beacons and school staff work together to identify factors that contribute to school success.

E. Application Information

1.0: Contact Information

Name of Principal _____
(Specify Mr., Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Other)

School Contact Person _____

Official School Name _____

School Mailing Address _____
Street/P. O. Box

Telephone () _____

FAX () _____

E-Mail _____

Web site/URL _____

I have reviewed the information in this package, including the requirements for participation in Section C, and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

Principal's signature

Date

2.0 Background and Demographic Data

Please indicate if your school is: _____Public _____Private (Please check one)

DISTRICT QUESTIONS (Questions 1-3 not applicable to private schools)

1. Total number of students (K-12) enrolled in the district: _____

2. Number of schools in the district:

- _____ Elementary schools
- _____ Middle schools
- _____ Junior high schools
- _____ High schools
- _____ **TOTAL**

3. District Per Pupil Allocation: _____

SCHOOL QUESTIONS (to be completed by all schools)

4. Category that best describes the area where your school is located:

- _____ Urban or large central city
- _____ Suburban
- _____ Small city or town in a rural area
- _____ Rural

5. Number of students enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in your school:

- _____ 7th
- _____ 8th
- _____ 9th
- _____ 10th
- _____ 11th
- _____ 12th
- _____ Other (Specify _____)
- _____ **TOTAL**

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the entire student population in your school:

- _____ % Native American or Native Alaskan
- _____ % Asian or Pacific Islander
- _____ % African American, not Hispanic origin
- _____ % Hispanic
- _____ % White, not Hispanic origin
- _____ % Other (Specify _____)

100.0 % TOTAL

7. School Per Pupil Allocation: _____

8. Student turnover or mobility rate during the past year: _____%

This rate should include the total number of students who transferred to or from different schools between October 1 and the end of the school year, divided by the total number of students in your school as of October 1, multiplied by 100.

9. Limited English proficient students in the school:

_____ Total Number
_____ % of Total Student Population
_____ Number of languages represented

10. Students who qualify for free/reduced price lunch:

_____ Total Number
_____ % of Total Student Population

If this is not a reasonably accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families or your school does not participate in the federally-supported lunch program, specify a more accurate estimate, tell why you chose it, and explain how you arrived at this estimate:

11. Students receiving special education services.

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

_____ Deaf	_____ Seriously Emotionally Disturbed
_____ Deaf-Blind	_____ Specific Learning Disability
_____ Hard of Hearing	_____ Speech Impairment
_____ Mentally Retarded	_____ Visually Handicapped
_____ Multihandicapped	
_____ Orthopedically Impaired	_____ Total Number Served
_____ Other Health Impaired	_____ % of Total Student Population

12. Percentage of students with individualized educational plans in regular classroom:

_____ 100% time (Fully included in Regular Education)
_____ 75-99% time
_____ 50-74% time
_____ 25-49% time
_____ 1-25% time
_____ 0% time (Self-Contained Classroom)

13. Number of students within your school's catchment area who are placed outside your building._____

Please describe the nature of these placements.

14. Number of students attending your school from outside of your catchment area.

Please indicate reasons why these students attend your school.

15. Of the number reported in Question #13, what number of students with individualized educational plans attend school outside the district?_____

16. What percentage of all students live

- _____ % 0 – 5 miles from school
- _____ % 5 – 15 miles from school
- _____ % more than 15 miles from school

3.0 Summary

Please provide a brief description of your school, not to exceed two pages. This description will be used primarily as a public relations document. If your school is selected, your summary statement will become part of the Beacons of Excellence home page. In addition, the summary will provide Beacons staff and National Advisory Panel members with important background information relevant to understanding your school.

Please include information that will provide a description of the general context within which your school is located. For example, you might include a brief description of your state and community, the mission of your school, the students you serve, and other information you consider important in understanding the unique aspects of your school.

Please include your school name, city and state in the first sentence. Please sign below to authorize use of this summary on the Beacons of Excellence web site.

I hereby authorize use of this summary on the Beacons of Excellence web site.

Principal's signature

Date

4.0 Application Questions

Throughout section 4.0. the reviewer will be looking for evidence that your school has been successful in achieving exemplary learning results for students with disabilities within the context of exemplary learning for all students. In describing your achievements, you must convince the National Advisory Panel that all groups within the school have contributed to and share in your success.

In responding to the questions in section 4.0., provide specific details, including illustrative examples and relevant data, to maximize reviewers' understanding of your school and your ability to achieve exemplary learning results for all youth. All schools must respond to all questions (unless otherwise specified).

1. What do you consider the major educational challenges your school currently faces?
2. What co-curricular activities are available for students (with and without disabilities) and how are they accessed?
Indicate how participation is encouraged, what voice students had in planning co-curricular offerings, what percentage of students (with and without disabilities) participate, and the extent to which participation is representative of the overall student body.
3. How has your school demonstrated a commitment to addressing the accessibility (both physical and participatory) of its facilities and programs to students with disabilities?
4. How does your curriculum serve broad goals for student learning and development in the outcome areas listed below?
Please include examples regarding the general student population and describe any differences that may exist for students with disabilities. See brief descriptions of these outcome areas on Page 2 of this application.

Academic and Functional Literacy

Career Development and Employment

Post-Secondary Education and Lifelong Learning

Independent Living

School and Community Involvement

5. How do you ensure that learners with diverse needs (e.g., students with disabilities, gifted and talented students, limited English proficient students, migrant students, and students placed at risk) all have the opportunity to learn challenging content and achieve at high levels?

6. How does your school support the needs and concerns of families?
7. The intent of this project is to study schools achieving “exemplary learning results” for youth with disabilities within the context of achieving such results for all youth. We conducted a survey to identify the outcome indicators considered important when selecting schools. Some of these are addressed in other questions throughout this application, but those not addressed elsewhere are listed below according to the corresponding outcome area. For each of the five indicators listed below, please describe the “exemplary learning results” students with disabilities have obtained through involvement in your school.

Academic and Functional Literacy

Please include reference to the following: competence in communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, and the use of technology.

Career Development and Employment

Please include reference to the following: understanding of career interests and skills, ability to set career goals/objectives, and demonstration of work-related skills and behaviors.

Post-Secondary Education and Lifelong Learning

Please include reference to the following: ability to understand and set post-secondary education goals.

Independent Living

Please include reference to the following: ability to make healthy lifestyle choices, be responsible for self, cope effectively with personal challenges and frustrations, and makes adaptations/accommodations/compensations necessary to achieve outcomes in each of the major life domains.

School and Community Involvement

Please include reference to the following: ability to comply with school and community rules, respect cultural and individual differences, and get along with other people.

8. If your school administers standardized tests developed at the national, state, or district levels, please complete the following table:

Name of Test	Grades levels included in testing	Dates test is administered

9. Did your school exclude some children from the above testing during the 1997-98 school year? _____Yes _____No
10. Please describe the policy on excluding students from testing.
11. Please describe any accommodations that are made for students with disabilities.
12. Please attach documentation of your school's performance on standardized, norm-referenced tests for the past three years in a format that can be easily understood by reviewers. The documentation should include the following:
- Clear labeling of the test used.
 - Distribution of test scores as well as average performance by grade level (include 8th grade if possible)
 - Separate reporting of students with and without disabilities by grade level (include 8th grade if possible)
 - Percentage of all students with IEPs included in each test.
13. Please provide information, to the best on your ability, on the school completion outcomes contained in **Form A** in the Appendix.
14. Please provide information on your graduation rate and the method used for determining completion of requirements by completing **Form B** in the Appendix.

15. What are the results of non standardized, or alternative, assessments of student performance developed at your school?

- Which of your student performance goals are assessed using non standardized, or alternative, assessments?
- Describe the methods you use to monitor student progress toward these goals?
- How are these methods implemented?
- Using these methods, what is the current performance level of the students related to these goals? Please summarize and provide supporting data.

16. What are the students who graduated in Spring 1995 doing as of September 1997?
Report student percentages in the manner indicated below. Explain how you determined the results reported. Duplicate counts are expected.

---- Students ----		
Without Disabilities	With Disabilities (with IEP)	
_____ %	_____ %	graduates who are enrolled in a 4 year Academic College
_____ %	_____ %	graduates who are enrolled in a 2 year Academic College
_____ %	_____ %	graduates who are or have been enrolled in a vocational school
_____ %	_____ %	graduates who are or have been enrolled in community education programs
_____ %	_____ %	graduates who are involved in the Military (full-time)
_____ %	_____ %	graduates who are employed full-time (more than 34 hrs. per week)
_____ %	_____ %	graduates who are employed part-time (less than 34 hrs. per week)
_____ %	_____ %	graduates who are unemployed
_____ %	_____ %	graduates who are living independently (not dependent on parents or relatives)
_____ %	_____ %	unknown

- 17.** What was your school’s record for the past three years in the following areas?
Explain any patterns of increase or decrease as well as special circumstances that affected any of these indicators. Report in terms of percentages listing each of the past three years under each category below. If you use other indicators, please include them.

	1997-98		1996-97		1995-96	
	Students w/o disabilities	Students w/IEPs	Students w/o disabilities	Students w/IEPs	Students w/o disabilities	Students w/IEPs
Daily Student Attendance						
Student Dropout Rate						
Suspension Rate (days)						
Expulsions (days)						

Note: In computing student attendance, both excused and unexcused absences should be counted as absent. A “dropout” is defined as any student who leaves school prior to graduation without enrolling in another accredited program.

- 18.** What are the results of strategies used by the school to measure the student/parent/community member satisfaction with the school’s performance?
Please report according to the general outcome areas to the extent possible. If it is difficult to report the information in this way, please report the satisfaction information you use in the most meaningful way.

- Academic and Functional Literacy**
- Career Development and Employment**
- Post-Secondary Education and Lifelong Learning**
- Independent Living**
- School and Community Involvement**

- 19.** Which awards received by your school, staff, or students are most indicative of school success in supporting students with disabilities?

5.0 References

Please list three teachers (general, special, vocational/transition), three parents (two of whom are parents of students with disabilities), and three members of the community (who are not parents) who could serve as references for your school. We may contact these individuals during the selection process to validate information provided in the application.

Teachers

- 1.a. General Education Teacher Name _____
Telephone Number _____
- 1.b. Special Education Teacher Name _____
Telephone Number _____
- 1.c. Vocational Education/Transition Teacher Name _____
Telephone Number _____

Parents

- 2.a. Name of Parent of Student with Disabilities _____
Telephone Number _____
- 2.b. Name of Parent of Student with Disabilities _____
Telephone Number _____
- 2.c. Name of Parent of Student without Disabilities _____
Telephone Number _____

Community Members

- 3.a. Community Member Name _____
Affiliation _____
Telephone Number _____
- 3.b. Community Member Name _____
Affiliation _____
Telephone Number _____
- 3.c. Community Member Name _____
Affiliation _____
Telephone Number _____

Appendix

Form A For Question #13

Form B For Question #14