



# **THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ELEMENTARY LONGITUDINAL STUDY (SEELS)**

## **Relationship of Research Questions to Instrument Items**

## **Background**

The following tables indicate the SEELS data collection instruments items that correspond to the research questions. Four instruments are included in these tables:

- A parent telephone survey,
- A language arts teacher survey,
- Student's overall school program survey to be completed by a special education teacher or other school staff member, and a
- School-wide characteristics and policies survey to be completed by the principal.

These 4 instruments constitute the 4 columns on the attached matrix.

The questions and indicators included in the tables resulted from discussions among task force participants at their meeting on November 23, 1998, and from review by the advisory group. The task force, composed of parents, teachers, principals, related service practitioners, researchers, local, state and federal policy makers, and advocacy organizations, was asked to identify the range of information needs that could potentially be met by SEELS, translate those information needs into research questions, and help to envision a conceptual framework to guide the study in addressing those questions. The tables correspond to the major domains in the SEELS conceptual framework (SRI, 1998).

**Table 1  
RESEARCH QUESTIONS – STUDENT AND HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS**

	Parent	Teacher	Program	School
<b>STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS</b>				
* What are students' identified disabilities, as indicated by:				
• Disability category assigned by LEA.			B2a	
• Parent report of "disabilities or conditions" for which children received special education.	B1a-d			
• Disabilities (including secondary conditions) noted in students' school records (including IEP).			B2a	
* What is the pattern over time of students' special education disability classifications, including::				
• Change in disability category with transitions.	B3a-e		B2a	
• Change in classification as developmentally delayed after age 9.	B3a-e			
• Declassification/exit from special education.	D13a-e		A7	
* What are the implications of disability for student functioning in terms of parent reports of students' ability to hear, see, use arms/hand, and legs/feet?	B4a, B4c, B5c, B5d, B7a-b			
* What are students' strengths as reported by parents?	I2			
* What are students' special education and broader treatment histories in terms of:				
• Parent reports of age at which students identified and first received services for disability/condition.	B2a-b, B4b, B5a			
• Parent reports of whether students received early intervention (if ages birth to 3 for first service).	B2c			
• Parent reports of whether students received preschool special education (if before age 5 for first service).	B2d-e			
• Parent reports of when children first had an IEP/received special education in school.	B2f			
• Changes in placement over time (including attendance at special schools)	D12a-c, D14a-c, F1a-c			

**Table 1  
RESEARCH QUESTIONS – STUDENT AND HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS (Continued)**

	Parent	Teacher	Program	School
* What are students' demographic characteristics, including: (parent report unless otherwise indicated)				
• Age.	A2a & b			
• Gender.	A1			
• Ethnicity.	A3			
• Speak a language other than English at home.	A4a			
• Specific language other than English spoken at home.	A4b			
• Teacher report of English proficiency.			D3	
* What are students' experience with health insurance in terms of:				
• Parent reports of whether covered.	C1, C3			
• Parent reports of Medicaid vs. private.	C2			
• Parent reports of having managed care.	C4a-b			
• Parent reports of adequacy of coverage to meet students' disability-related needs.	C5, C6a-b,			
* How frequently have students changed schools?	D11a-b			

**Table 1  
RESEARCH QUESTIONS – STUDENT AND HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS (Continued)**

	Parent	Teacher	Program	School
<b>Household Characteristics</b>				
* What is the composition of households in which students in special education live in terms of parent reports of: the following: (Track changes over time, e.g., marital status, household change, such as custody change, foster care change, moving among family members)				
• Number of adults and children.	J1, J2a, J4a			
• Relationship of adults to student (e.g., live with both parents, no parents).	S11,12 A5a-c,e,f, J5a-b, J6b			
• Whether other household members have disabilities.	J2b, J4b			
• Age of parent/guardian	J8			
• Marital status of parent/guardian(s).	J6a, J7			

**Table 1  
RESEARCH QUESTIONS – STUDENT AND HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS (Concluded)**

	Parent	Teacher	Program	School
* What are the socioeconomic characteristics of households of students in special education in terms of parent reports of:				
• Parent education level.	J9, J12			
• Parent current employment (full/part time).	J10a-c, J13a-c			
• Receipt of benefits from TANF, Food Stamps, SSI for student.	J14a, J14c, J15, J16a			
• Household experience with welfare reform. I.e., did they previously receive TANF benefits and now no longer receive them? Why? Did the student previously receive SSI benefits and now no longer receives them? Why?	J14b, J14d, J14e, J16b, J16e			
• Household income.	J17a-e			
• Adequacy of transportation to meet household needs.	J18			

**Table 2  
RESEARCH QUESTIONS – NON-SCHOOL FACTORS**

	Parent	Teacher	Program	School
<b>Presence and Participation</b>				
* To what extent do students in special education participate in organized group activities:				
• At school, as reported by parents.	G5, G7			
• In the community, as reported by parents.	G6, 67			
• In ways that include the students with nondisabled peers, as reported by parents.	G7			
• In ways that include the students and/or parents with other children with disabilities (e.g., Special Olympics) and families (e.g., family support groups), as reported by parents.	G7			
* Are students with disabilities supervised after school? What are their after school care experiences and needs? (Parent report)	G1-3			
<b>Use of Accommodations, Adaptations, Enrichments or Compensations to Achieve Outcomes</b>				
* What services and supports do families provide for their children outside of their school programs, in terms of:				
• Providing computers at home for educational/recreations purposes.	E14			
• Arranging for additional related services beyond the special education program (e.g., tutoring, therapies).	B9a-b			
• Providing a quiet place at home to do school work.	E13			
* What medical or other disability-related assistive devices do students use, including:				
• Parent reports of students “regularly taking prescription medicine for disability.”	B8b			
• Parent reports of whether students take Ritalin specifically.	B8c			
• Parent reports of whether students use medical devices (e.g. oxygen mask), mobility device (e.g., wheelchair), sensory aid (e.g., hearing aid), communication aid (e.g., communication board), glasses.	B4d-g, B5b, B6c, B7c-d, B8f-i			
* Do students have a case manager through some other organization than the school?	B9a-b			

**Table 2**  
**RESEARCH QUESTIONS – NON-SCHOOL FACTORS (Continued)**

	Parent	Teacher	Program	School
<b>Family Involvement*</b>				
* To what extent do parents/guardians of students with disabilities engage in activities at home that support the educational and social development of their children in terms of parent report of:			C4	
• Reading to students.	E11			
• Checking students' homework.	E10			
• Taking students to the library.	G12			
• Talking to students about school.	E9			
• Using sign language to communicate with child.	B4j			
* What are parents' expectations for students regarding:				
• Educational attainment (finish high school, postsecondary education).	K2-5			
• Independent living after high school.	K6			
• Getting a drivers license	K1			
• Employment.	K7			

\*NOTE: Questions related to direct parent-school interactions are included in the school programs domain.



**Table 3  
RESEARCH QUESTIONS – SCHOOL PROGRAMS**

	Parent	Teacher	Program	School
<b>General</b>				
* What are students' current grade levels?	D15		A2	
<b>Program Participation</b>				
* To what extent do students who had been in special education exit from special education over time?	D13a-e		A8a	
* What are the other school programs in which students in special education participate?			A5	
<b>Classroom Characteristics</b>				
* What are all of the settings in which students spend the school day and how is time distributed among them?	D14a-c		A3a; B1	
* What are the characteristics of the classrooms in which students in special education are instructed in language arts, as indicated by:				
• The number of students in special education.		A3		
• The number of students in general education.		A3		
• The number of teachers and adult aides.		A3		
• Physical modifications to accommodate students in special education.		B11		
* To what extent do language arts teachers report using different approaches to discipline in working with special education students?		B6		

**Table 3  
RESEARCH QUESTIONS – SCHOOL PROGRAMS (Continued)**

	Parent	Teacher	Program	School
<b>Curriculum and Instruction</b>				
* To what extent are students in special education exposed to the regular education curriculum, as indicated by:				
• Teacher report of where students fall in a continuum marked by: 1) using same materials/textbooks as regular education students; 2) using a mix of materials/textbooks that includes some materials regular education students use and some that are special education materials or materials uniquely provided for the student’s special needs, or 3) using all special education materials or materials uniquely provided for the student’s special needs.		B2; C3		
• Teacher reports of where students falls in a continuum marked by: 1) curricular information is presented to the student in the same manner as to regular education students; 2) curricular information is presented to the student in largely the same manner as regular education students, with modifications; 3) curricular information is routinely presented to the student using strategies tailored to the student’s special needs.		A7, B3; C4; C5		
* What subjects do students take?			A3	
* What are the characteristics of instructional practices used with students in special education in terms of teacher reports of:				
• Specific instructional approaches.		A7, B3		
• How instructional time is used.		B3; B4	A4; D2	
* What vocational experiences are included in the curriculum for students in special education in terms of school staff report of:				
• Vocational services received (e.g., job readiness training, specific vocational skill training).			SS6	
• Whether the school programs for the students involve community-based or school-based work experience.			SS7	
• Amount of time in a typical week spent in vocational education/training.			A3	
* To what extent are community-based (other than vocational) experiences included in the curriculum?			SS7	

**Table 3  
RESEARCH QUESTIONS – SCHOOL PROGRAMS (Continued)**

	Parent	Teacher	Program	School
<b>Student Assessment</b>				
* How is student progress evaluated in terms of teacher reports of:		B5; C6		
• Students being included in regular classroom and school-wide testing.			B7	E3; E4
• Students who are in regular classrooms being expected to work up to the performance standards of other students in the classroom.		B12		
• Students who are in regular classrooms being expected to learn/demonstrate the same skills as other students in the classroom.		B12		
• Regularity with which students are evaluated/provided feedback.		D5	C5	F2
• Grading standards/policies applied to the students.		B5	C6	
<b>Use of Accommodations, Adaptations, Enrichments or Compensations to Achieve Outcomes</b>				
* What medical or other disability-related assistive devices do students use, including:				
• Parent reports of students taking medication that is administered at school.	B8d-e			
• Parent reports of whether students use a medical device (e.g. oxygen mask), mobility device (e.g., wheelchair), sensory aid (e.g., hearing aid), or communication aid (e.g., communication board) in the classroom.	B4e1, B6c1, B4k, B7e, B8g1, B8j			
• Teacher reports of whether students use a medical device (e.g. oxygen mask), mobility device (e.g., wheelchair), sensory aid (e.g., hearing aid), communication aid (e.g., communication board) in the classroom.		B11	B4; B5a	
• Teacher reports of whether students use a device in the classroom that requires attention from school staff.			B5a	
• School reports of having emergency medical plans for the students.			B5b	
* What accommodations or modifications do teachers report that students receive in:				
• Instruction.		B11; C7	B11	
• Evaluation/assessment.		B11; C7	B4	

**Table 3  
RESEARCH QUESTIONS – SCHOOL PROGRAMS (Continued)**

	Parent	Teacher	Program	School
* What related services do students in special education receive as part of their special education programs in terms of:				
• Type.	B9a-b		B6	
• Intensity (e.g., days per week/hours per day).			B6	
<b>IEPs</b>				
* What are students' IEPs like in terms of:				
• Who was involved in their development.	E5, E6a		B8	
• Whether there are goals in specified domains (e.g., social, reading).			B3	
<b>Transitions</b>				
* What preparation or support for the transition from elementary to middle and middle to high schools do students in special education receive?	D9a-b, D10a,d		A5; A6	G1
* What is postsecondary transition planning like for students in terms of school staff reports of:				
• Who is involved in planning.			SS10	
• Age at which planning begins.				H4
• Post-high school goals of students' educational programs.			SS8	
<b>Family Involvement</b>				
* What is the level of contact between teachers and the students' families in terms of:				
• Parent reports of attending IEP meeting(s), involvement in IEP goal setting	E4a-b, E5, E6a			
• Parent reports of visiting the classroom (e.g., back to school night, parent conference, volunteering).	E1a-b, E2a-b, E3a-b, E8a-c			
• Parent reports of being contacted by the school for academic and behavior issues	D26			
• Teacher reports of how active parents are in students' education.		D7	C6	
• Teacher reports of the number of times have had contact with families not related to trouble.		D5; D6	C4; C5	

**Table 3  
RESEARCH QUESTIONS – SCHOOL PROGRAMS (Concluded)**

	Parent	Teacher	Program	School
<b>Personnel</b>				
* What are the characteristics of teachers who serve students in special education in terms of:				
• Years experience teaching.		E3	D7	C4; C5
• Year experience teaching students in special education.		E4	D8	
• Certification.		E6; E7; E8	D4; D10	C3
• Educational attainment.		E5	D3	
• Ethnicity.		E13	D5	
• Use of a language other than English in his/her work.		D3b	C7b	
• Perceived preparedness/competence to teach students in special education.		E10; E11	D12	
• Perceived preparedness/competence in content area.		E10	D12; D13	
* What professional development is provided to language arts teachers who serve students in special education in terms of:				
• In-service and preservice training in content area.		E9	D11	
• In-service and preservice training in teaching students in special education.		E8, B 9	D11; D13	
* Do students have a case manager at school?	B9co	E8	B6, D1; D6	

**Table 4  
RESEARCH QUESTIONS – SCHOOLCHARACTERISTICS**

	Parent	Teacher	Program	School
<b>General</b>				
* What are the schools like that serve students in special education in terms of:				
• Type (e.g., regular, special, magnet, charter; public, private).	D8a-d, D12a, F1a-c			A1; A2
• Location	D5b-c, D7a-b			A5
• Student enrollment.				A4; H1
• Student body characteristics.				A5; B1; B6; B3; B4; B2
• Aggregate performance indicators, such as:				
- Average daily attendance.				B5
- Aggregate number of suspensions/expulsions.				D3
- Drop out rate; graduation rate				H4; H2
• Grade levels served.				A3
<b>School Climate</b>				
* What are the characteristics of principal leadership as indicated by teacher reports of such factors as the principal providing adequate support for teachers, frequently present in the classroom, using evaluation/feedback regularly and appropriately, sharing decision-making and problem solving?		E11	D13	
* How safe are the schools, as indicated by:				
• Parent reports that students have been victims of threatening or violent incidents at school (i.e., fights, stealing, bullying).	D24a-f			
• Teacher perceptions of safety of the school.		E11		
• Principal reports of number of school-wide violent incidents.				D2
* To what extent do teachers and principals report feeling pressure to have students succeed academically/focus on instruction as highest priority?				D1

**Table 4  
RESEARCH QUESTIONS – SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS (Continued)**

	Parent	Teacher	Program	School
<b>Policies</b>				
* What policies and practices related to special education are pursued by schools in terms of principal reports of:				
• Use of prereferral strategies/early intervention approaches.				E1
• Team problem-solving related to students with learning problems.				E1
• Referral process to determine special education eligibility.				E1
• Disciplinary policies.				E9
• Grade retention policies.				E10
• Inclusion in school-wide testing.				E3; E4; E5; E6; E7
<b>Resources</b>				
* What placement options are available at the school for students in special education?				C6
* What programs operate at the school to support student learning and well-being (e.g., Chapter 1, Reading Recovery, Accelerated Schools, school-based health services, after-school care, after-school enrichment activities, consultation for teachers)?				C2
* To what extent are paraprofessionals used as direct service providers to students?		A3; B9	B4	C1; E2
* What personnel resources are at the school to support student learning and well-being (e.g., reading specialist, school counselor, school nurse)?		B11; C7		C1
* What specific special education interventions are in use in the schools?			B4	C2
* How large a student caseload is carried by special education teachers?		C1		
<b>Family Involvement</b>				
* What actions do schools take to encourage/support family involvement in the school (e.g., provide transportation to IEP meetings, holding parent meetings at places convenient to the parent, providing child care for school-wide events or parent meetings)?				C2; F1; F2; F3
<b>Reforms</b>				
* What school-wide reforms have schools implemented and how are students in special education included in them?				E8

**Table 5  
RESEARCH QUESTIONS – STUDENT OUTCOMES**

	Parent	Teacher	Program	School
<b>Academic and Functional Literacy</b>				
* What is the academic functioning/performance of students in special education as measured by:				
• A direct assessment of their reading abilities by an on-site professional (other than the student’s own teacher).				
• A direct assessment of their mathematics abilities by an on-site professional (other than the student’s own teacher).				
• A direct assessment of their academic problem-solving abilities by an on-site professional (other than the student’s own teacher).				
• Students’ grades in elementary school	D20a-c			
• Students’ grades in middle and high school	D20a-c	D2		
• Scores on most recent standardized tests (school records indicating type and year of test and type of score).			C3	
• Teacher reports of students’ functional grade level equivalents in reading and mathematics.		D1		
• Parent reports of students’ ability to tell time, read common signs, count change, look up telephone numbers and use the telephone.	I4b-e			
* What is the level of engagement in school of students in special education as measured by:				
• Attendance/Enrollment in school/Enrollment in special school.	D1a-c, D5a, D6, D12b-c, E15a		C1	
• Teacher assessment of students’ ability to stay focused on his/her work, participate in classroom discussions, and complete homework on time.		C4;D4		
• Student reports of extent to which they look forward to going to school.				
• Parent or school report* of students dropping out.	D2-4			
* How well do students in special education communicate, as indicated by:				
• Parent reports of students’ ability to make needs/feelings known through speech and other means.	B4g-i, B6a-d			
• Teacher reports of students’ ability to make needs/feelings known through speech and other means.		D4		

\* Tracking of student school enrollment will identify dropouts, as reported by the school.



**Table 5  
RESEARCH QUESTIONS – STUDENT OUTCOMES (Continued)**

	Parent	Teacher	Program	School
* To what extent do students in special education use computer technology, as indicated by:				
• Teacher reports of students’ ability to use computers as part of the instructional program (e.g., keyboarding ability, find materials on the Internet); actual computer use at school.		C3		
* What are students’ past academic experiences in terms of previous grade promotion and retention?	B16a-b, B17a-b, F2a-b, F3a-b, F4, F5			
<b>Personal and Social Adjustment</b>				
* To what extent are students in special education socially engaged, * as indicated by:				
• Parent’s report of frequency of seeing friends, being invited over to others’ home, receiving phone calls from peers.	G9, G10, G11			
• Student’s report of frequency of seeing friends, being invited over to others’ home, receiving phone calls from peers.				
• Parent’s perception of whether student is lonely.	I1m			
• Student’s report of loneliness and rejection.				
• Student’s report of satisfaction with number of friends, quality of friendships.				
• Teacher reports of whether student has friends at school.		D4		
* To what extent do students in special education get along with others, as indicated by:				
• Student’s ability to control behavior in the classroom, get along with other students and teacher.	D21, D22	D4		
• Parent report of student behaviors.	I1a-s			
• Parent report of whether student’s behavior creates problems at home.	I1j			

\*NOTE: Group-related aspects of social engagement are included under nonschool-factors in the domain of “presence and participation.”

**Table 5  
RESEARCH QUESTIONS – STUDENT OUTCOMES (Continued)**

	Parent	Teacher	Program	School
* To what extent are students in special education personally well-adjusted, as indicated by:				
• Parent reports of students having a positive self-concept/outlook.	I1n			
• Students having a positive self-concept/outlook as indicated in direct assessment by on-site professional (not the student’s own teacher).				
• Student reports of having hobbies/interests.				
<b>Contribution and Citizenship</b>				
* To what extent do students in special education abide by rules, as indicated by:				
• Suspensions, expulsions, other disciplinary actions.	D18a-b, D19a-b		C2	
• Parent reports of whether students have ever been arrested; arrested in the last year (ages 13 and up only).	I6			
• Parent reports of how manageable students are at home.	I1j			
• Teacher reports of extent to which students follow directions in class.		D4		
* To what extent do parents report that students in special education are involved in volunteer/community service activities?	G8			
<b>Responsibility and Independence</b>				
* How independent are students in special education in terms of:				
• Self-care, as indicated by parent reports of students’ ability to dress and feed themselves and handle toileting.	I3a,b			
• Mobility, as indicated by parent reports of students’ ability to get around inside and outside the house.	I4a			
• Financial management, as indicated by parent reports of students having own money (e.g., allowance), making small purchases.	G13			
• Contributing to household management, as indicated by parent reports of students doing chores (e.g., picking up own living area, making own lunch).	I5a-d			
* How do students in special education spend their leisure time, as reported by parents?	G4-9			

**Table 5  
RESEARCH QUESTIONS – STUDENT OUTCOMES (Concluded)**

	Parent	Teacher	Program	School
* To what extent are older students in special education beginning to take on adult roles in terms of:				
• Employment, as indicated by parent reports of students working for pay outside the home (type of work, hours worked, amount paid).	H1-11			
• Having a driver’s license or learner’s permit (parent expectation).	K1			
• Marriage and family formation	J3a-c			
<b>Physical health</b>				
* How healthy are students in special education in terms of:				
• Parent reports of students’ general health.	B8a			
* To what extent do students in special education participate in risk behaviors in their teen years, including smoking, gang activity, and substance use, as reported by students in year 5 only when all students are ages 13 to 17 (potentially through completing anonymous brief written questionnaire during direct assessment).				
<b>Satisfaction</b>				
* How satisfied do parents of students in special education report being with:				
• The students’ schools.	D25			
• The students overall school programs, teachers.	D23a-f, D25b-d			
• IEP goals for the students being challenging, appropriate.	E6b			
• Students getting the support and services from the school that are needed to succeed in school.	D25c-d			
• Transition activities provided by school prior to school change	D10b-c,e			
• The amount and difficulty of homework assigned.	D25e			
* How satisfied are students in special education with their schools and school programs, as indicated by the extent to which they report liking school?				

Additional questions considered, but not included:

- Parent reports of when students first referred to special education in school. We question whether parents can distinguish between referral and beginning to receive services in school, since there is usually a fairly short time period between these 2 events.
- Participation in group activities school, as reported by teacher. We felt the parents are a better reporter of this information.
- Teacher's report of using positive approaches to discipline in the classroom. The issue of social desirability made phrasing of these questions difficult and problematic. As a result, these questions were rewritten to ask teachers to what extent their discipline approach is different from that used with other students in the classroom.
- Aggregate standardized test scores. This item was eliminated because the availability of this data would be uneven and therefore not comparable across schools.
- Other school options. This item was eliminated because the focus of SEELS is on specific schools.
- Report of students dropping out will also be available through tracking school enrollment which will identify if students drop out during the period of SEELS.

