

Individuals with Disabilities Success in Life

Mele'Ani R. Cepeda

Dr. Kimberly Bunts-Anderson

EN202-02

June 14, 2019

Northern Marianas College

Table of Content

Abstract	3
Introduction	4
Background Information	4
Research Questions	7
Method	8
Literature Review	10
Results and Analyzation	12
Discussion	16
Conclusion	18
Reference Page	20
Appendix A	23
Appendix B	25
Appendix C	27
Appendix D	29
Appendix E	31
Appendix F	33
Appendix G	35
Appendix H	37

Abstract

A Northern Marianas College (NMC) student describes an original six-week study on success rates for students with disabilities in education and employment. The student researcher wanted to inform readers about special education programs and opportunities in higher education, as well as, success in employment. Surveys were conducted in the course of five-weeks. The results showed that most people in the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands (CNMI) know individuals with disabilities but do not know about how the education system may help them. Additionally, a literature review showed that only one article was published about the CNMI Special Education system. This study is important because it qualitatively and quantitatively illustrates the importance of special education support in higher education with continued success into employment.

Individuals with Disabilities Success in Higher Education and Employment

Can you imagine not having the basic civil rights for education, employment, and/or even being accepted in a society for something you have no control over? Or being told that you are dumb or slow because it is difficult for you to learn basic things like the ABC's, how to tie your shoes, or just not being able to speak? Or to be hidden away from society because your family is ashamed by your very existence? This has been a big issue in the lives of individuals with disabilities. Families would send their children with disabilities to mental hospitals to be taken care of and hidden from the rest of the world. This is something that, until today, some of the CNMI struggle with. The student researcher herself has experienced first-hand as she has been a part of special education and its programs for ten (10) years. Many people who live on the islands of Saipan, Tinian, Rota and the Northern Islands know someone with a disability, but do not understand how capable they are to succeed in higher education and in life in general.

Background Information

Special education or education for people with disabilities is a fairly new concept to the America and its territories. It was only in 1990 that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was made a law by President George H.W. Bush (2019). The law specifies that it is illegal to discriminate “against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public (2019)”. “ADA” is classified as a “Civil rights law” that ensures individuals with disabilities are treated as equals and given the same opportunities as others (2019). The law was split into five titles or sections: Employment, Public Services, Public Accommodations and Services Operated by Private Entities, Telecommunications, and Miscellaneous Provisions (2019). The main

sections or titles, from ADA, that will be discussed in this paper are Employment and Public Accommodations and Services Operated by Private Entities (2019) as well as their effects on Saipan's colleges capability to help with transitioning into higher education and into employment.

What services are available for special education on Saipan? In Saipan, educational assistance is offered for anyone with a disability. These programs are offered from kindergarten through higher education. As a person who is still a part of one of these programs, the student researcher, wanted to do more research on this topic. There are some similarities and differences in special education from K-12 and higher education.

A similarity between the special education in K-12 and higher education are they are both programs under government based agencies on Saipan, these are the Public School System (PSS) and NMC. PSS's special education mission statement is, "The CNMI Public School System is committed to providing equal access to educational and professional opportunities to all members of our community" (Special Education Program (SPED)) and NMC's disabilities support system mission statement is "Northern Marianas College Disability Support Services's mission is to provide a rewarding learning experience for students with disabilities at the Northern Marianas College." (Northern Marianas College Disability Support Services (NMC DSS)). Though their mission statements are not exactly worded the same they both want to push students to learn and grow. Although both programs have similar missions, there are also differences.

For K-12, for example has a different process for students getting into and assisting students. Such as having the students tested before any assistance is provided. After testing, it is

mandatory for the PSS's SPED department to offer assistance. This is followed with a meeting to discuss an Independent Education Program (IEP). An IEP is an individualized learning plan that is created to help students with specific disabilities and learning styles. Usually students are not a part of these meetings but sometimes parents and teachers do invite the students to join them. After this, a special education teacher follows the student throughout the years at that school. This teacher is responsible to provide support for general education classroom teachers, revisit the IEP annually with a team, revise goals and objectives accordingly and creates a continuous plan for each student. This information is then used to provide support for the student throughout his/her K-12 experience. This differs from how NMC provides support for a student.

At NMC, students have to self declare to access any additional disabilities support. A lot of students do not know about having to do that, so students end up not getting the support they need. But to get into the program students must have evidence which provides information and verifies that the individual has a disability. An example of verifying documents is an IEP from his/her K-12 agency. The student or a student's parent (for extenuating circumstances) must fill out forms so that the institution has a record for the individual. Once a student is in the program, they are motivated to become self-advocates. Usually NMC does not provide testing to find out if students have disabilities that were missed in earlier years. Once allowed into the DSS program, program leaders, counselors and staff encourage the student to become independent.

As talked about in the earlier paragraphs special education in any level of education has its similarities and differences. For example the meanings behind both mission statements, to give students an equal chance at success. An example of differences such as the admissions

processes for the programs. Saipan services for those who have disabilities spans to every level of education.

The research question is : How can the CNMI's educational system help and/or become better suitable to help students with disabilities successfully transfer to higher education and/or employment?

The research collected by the student researcher was done in a six week study based on support systems for special education in higher education, and its effects on employment. The first things that were done was creating two surveys. The first survey being a pilot was up on a Google Doc on May 1, 2019 and continued data collection through June 2, 2019 (Appendix A). The next survey the student researcher did was create a final survey that was made available on May 3, 2019 and collect data until June 5, 2019 (Appendix B). After this, the researcher sent out letters to experts on the topic of special education. The letters were sent to ten specialists; five in the CNMI and five outside of the CNMI. The letters included a background on the topic and why it was chosen, as well as three questions (Appendix C). The researcher also included three informal interviews with a student from the NMC, a counselor from the PSS, and a SPED Aid from PSS. The two people from PSS were chosen because the PSS Special Education program brings in individuals such as behavior therapists, speech pathologists and psychologists who are licensed to test for disabilities and are able to diagnose a student. This plays a role because it allows colleges, like NMC to accept students who have been diagnosed and have been in the SPED program before. The researcher continued to do research on disabilities support services throughout the six weeks along side the original research done. The final research report was made easier with the addition of completed essays from the composition class that the student

researcher has taken . This allowed the student researcher to stress less about the due date of the final report.

Method

Although special education on Saipan is not a topic that many people talk about, it is still a very important topic. Special education helps educate those with different types of disabilities. To gather information based on special education, the use of three different methodologies are being used a survey for two composition classes, ten letters to experts, and interviews with students and educators. This process essay will be talking about the in depth use of the different methodologies used to gather information to answer the question how is Special Education run on Saipan?

The first method is a survey which was shared with two composition classes. The way the two composition classes, as well as, direct discussions. This allowed for easy accessibility and it is a part of the class's assignments. The target number of people to take the survey was 30 because it allowed for a big enough group and to be split into different categories. The survey both, the pilot and final survey, was created on surveymoxy.com. The reason for this is it is easier to create, edit, and analyze the survey questions and answers. The questions and question types changes between the pilot survey and the final survey. In the pilot survey, demographic questions were individually asked. This changed in the final survey to a grid with demographic questions. Demographic questions used were: 1) How old are you? 2) What is your major? 3) Do you work? 4) Are you a part time or full time student 5) Do you have a disability? And 6) Do you know anyone with a disability? These questions were specifically asked the reason it gives a better insight to who is answering the survey. For example the age question is to see a different

view of special education between the generations. In the pilot survey, there was only one open-ended question this changed in the final survey to four questions. This was to gather people's thoughts on how Saipan is doing with its special education programs. The open-ended question was "What are your thoughts on special education on Saipan?"

In the pilot yes or no questions were only asked three times. This changed as well with five questions being yes or no questions. An example of the yes or no question is "Do you know that NMC has a disabilities program?" This question was asked to see how much knowledge they have on special education in their school.

The second method was ten letters to exports. Five letters were sent to people on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota for those who are hard to schedule a meeting with. This allowed for the student researcher to get in contact with the actual people who work for the SPED programs on either of the three islands, as well as, other outside of the public school system. The other five letters were sent to off island experts who can give a better insight into special education, the program's influences with employment, and ways to improve the programs here.

The last method was three interviews. These interviews were divided into one counselor who works at the NMC, an interview with two NMC students; one in the DSS program and another who does not use the DSS program. The other two interviews were from PSS, one a SPED aid from PSS and a counselor. Through experiences and being able to go through, as well as, being in one program still allows the researcher to know people who work in both SPED and DSS programs which simplifies and was convenient in scheduling meetings and talking with these people.

Even with people not talking about special education on the island, it is still a very important topic. Special education is used as a stepping stone for many students with disabilities to succeed. The three methods were used to gather sufficient data and information based on special education. The three methodologies used were a survey from two composition classes, ten letters to experts, and interviews with educators. The methods were used to gather information to answer the question; How is Special Education on Saipan used to help others succeed in life?

Literature review

The student researcher started broad with a google scholar search on May 23, 2019 using the key phrases “college support systems, disability programs, and college disabilities program” a sum total of about “8,290,000” hits. The first significant group of articles discussed educational programs. (Grigal & Hart, 2010; Hadley, 2007; Hall, Kleinert, & Kearns, 2000). The second significant section talked about different programs, not just education but homelessness and health programs, that have helped individuals with disabilities (Greenwood, Stefancic, & Tsemberis, 2013; Marks, Sisirak, & Heller, 2009; Ryndak, Clark, Conroy, & Stuart, 2001). The section with educational programs focused on college opportunities that were offered to students with different disabilities. An example would be learning about learning disabilities, as well as, physical disabilities.

The literature focused mostly on how programs that have students with disabilities supported those who want to earn a degree in higher education and how the program helped students once they are already enrolled. Dr. Hadley looked into student success and classified the success of students in the programs focusing three main points “developing competence,

managing emotions, and developing autonomy” (Hadley, 2007).” To narrow the search the student researcher added “Pacific Islands”.

When the student researcher added “Pacific Islands” to the key phrases search that came to a sum of “22,916” article hits. The first set of articles that were significant had articles that talked about education for disabled individuals in the Pacific (Ratliffe, Rao, Skouge, & Peter, 2012; Harpur & Bales, 2010; Leake & Cholymay, 2004). Harpur and Bales (2010) wrote about a case study that the United Nations did on students with special needs in the South Pacific. In another article, the authors Ratliffe, Rao, Skouge, & Peter (2012) analysed “lessons learned from providing information and communication technologies (ICTs) to individuals with disabilities in the US-affiliated Pacific Islands.” To narrow it even more the student researcher included “Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands (CNMI)” to the phrases.

Results from the student researcher search that included “Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands ” summed up to “645” article hits. There was only one relevant article. That article was written by Carrie Knight and Judy Hawkins who both work for the CNMI Public School System under the Special Education Program. They focused on a case study conducted in the CNMI. The two authors looked into “family's cultural values when developing an individualized family service plan and an individualized education plan (Knight & Hawkins, 2011)” in the CNMI from k-12 and higher education.

One article the student researcher used specifically was “Experiences That Predict Employment for Students With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in Federally Funded Higher Education Programs” the authors were Meg Grigal; Clare Papay, Frank Smith, Debra Hart, and Rayna Verbeck (2018) states a prediction that students with disabilities will benefit

from going through the “Transition and Postsecondary Program for Students with Intellectual Disabilities(TPSID)” (Grigal, Papay, Smith, Hart, & Verbeck, 2018)” from 2010 to 2015. Grigal, Papay, Smith, Hart and Rayana, the authors, looked in to a couple of predictors for students futures based on employment rates with students in the programs and students leaving them with in those years. They looked into "27 Institutions" (Grigal, Papay, Smith, Hart, & Verbeck, 2018) and gave them a grant to work on TPSID programs that will help students that have disabilities (Grigal, Papay, Smith, Hart, & Verbeck, 2018)” . The authors looked through the employment records for the students after they had finished the programs as well as looked in examples of “TPSID” such as “VR”) (Grigal, Papay, Smith, Hart, & Verbeck, 2018)” and explaining their significance to how programs like these could help for students in the "future" (Grigal, Papay, Smith, Hart, & Verbeck, 2018)” .

Results and Analyzation

The results for each method used above are very different. All though differences showed, many have the same believe that students in special education should be given a fair opportunity in life. Those who had slightly different views were concerned the type of disability and severity of the disability.

The results are from the two surveys showed that demographic question, Yes or No questions, and open-ended questions lead to different thoughts based on the questions. The pilot survey, seen in Appendix A, only got eleven (11) people to respond to it. The result showed that 72.2%, which is eight (8) participants were female and 27.3% (3) were male. The final survey, Appendix B, only had twelve (12) participants respond. The results showed that 75% (9) were female and 25% (3) were male. This shows that the majority females are taking taking the class

and are apart of the test group. This can affect the results because females are more caring and are more susceptible to feeling everyone deserve equality. Only nine (9) out of eleven (11) participants who had taken the pilot survey had known and/or knows someone with a disability. In the final survey only eight (8) people know someone with a disability and four (4) have never met someone with a disability, that they know of. For those who know an individual with disabilities, the disabilities spanned from physical disabilities to mental disabilities and in between. But for most, that was as much as interaction and knowledge based on the questions asked that they know.

With questions relating to the process of getting into the disability programs almost all did not know anything about the process. The pilot survey asked about both PSS and NMC programs. For PSS only one (1) person knew about the process, two (2) knew a little about it, and eight (8) participants had said they did not know anything about the process. The final survey only asked about PSS process. This results were eleven (11) out of the twelve (12) had no idea how this process works and only one (1) knew a little about it. This showed that most of the participants do not have previous knowledge based on special education.

This is can be seen as an issue for people in the CNMI and maybe around the world. This is an issue because in order to help individuals with disabilities in education and on into life, those who do not have disabilities need to be able to understand and how these processes work is necessary. Especially when it comes to those in the field of education. These are things that teachers at any level of education will have to work with. This is also good information for those with family members.

The letter to experts that the student researcher sent out was met with four responses (Appendix C). Two (2) responses came from individuals who live on island that work with people who have disabilities. Of these two (2), one (1) of the individuals was Suzanne Lizama. Lizama has a masters in education and is the Director for the Special Education Program in the Public School System. Ms. Lizama's answer to the first question, "In your honest opinion, do you believe that special education programs are helping students prepare for the future?" (Appendix E) the answer given was based on given statistics, "Every year, about 100 students graduate from our high schools and go on to college, the military, work or other training programs". She also talked about how many students and individuals that PSS helps starting at the age of three (3) to Twenty-one (21) (Appendix D). This is important to note because PSS does help students who chose not to go to college or who are not accepted into college create a better future.

The second individual was Greg Borja who is the Program Manager for Northern Marianas Protection & Advocacy Systems, Inc (NMPASI). NMPASI is a local non-profit organization that helps those with disabilities and provide "information, referral and/or technical assistance to people with disabilities, as well as provide training to government departments on working with and helping individuals with disabilities. He answers on the last question on the questionnaire referred to his work. NMPASI goes out and does presentations in schools from K-8, elementary and middle school. Borja believes that "When we educate people at a younger age about the diversity in our community, they may become more tolerant and understanding about the needs of people with disabilities." This is important because the education of the younger generation will influence the growth of the acceptance of disabilities and give more individuals with

disabilities a chance to succeed in the near future. To look at more of their answers look in appendix D and appendix E.

The other two were from experts off island. The first expert is from outside of the CNMI is Dr. Clare Papay a Senior Research Associate from Institution for Community Inclusion . Dr. Papay's answer to the second question about methodology was less based on methods used by educators but “ the most important aspect that I see in regards to the effectiveness of special education is the expectations held by teachers. (Appendix F)” This shows that methodology is not the most important way to help students with disabilities, but the expectations and beliefs of educators. Educators should place high expectations on all of their students, including those who have disabilities.

The last person the researcher heard from was Deane Jesse-Jones who is a special education therapist and the owner of Brain Builder Guam and Saipan, LLC. Brain Builder is a private program that help test, diagnose and educating students with disabilities. When answering the second question Jones talked about the importance of early diagnosis and help. Early diagnosis and help is to push for a more successful future in school and in life.

Lucille Tenorio Deleon Guerrero, the NMC DSS counselor and a student that was for a composition class David Raberto. The two interviews were asked different questions based on their knowledge of special education. Ms. Deleon Gerrero's questions were based on the letters to exports because of her job field. Mr. Roberto was given questions that were similar to the pilot survey that was given out. Ms. Lucille answers specialty to the fourth question, “What are some services or support programs that are available to help students with disabilities transition between college and the workforce?” she explained about PSS support system to start transition

starts by the age of sixteen (16) as well as after high school ADA start to work for that person. In the online interview (Lucille Deleon Gerrero) from NMC gave examples of agencies that NMC DSS program works with, “The Workforce Investment Agency, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Council on Developmental Disabilities, and Center for Living Independently (2019).” According to the interview if students from NMC want to find a job, NMC will help these individuals contact these programs.

The second interview was based on the survey and it showed that Roberto an NMC student attending a composition class, has had a similar experience to those who had taken the two surveys. During the Informal interview (David Roberto) expressed that he believes that all people should be given the chance to succeed. Although he had very little knowledge about the CNMIs Special Education System.

Discussion

The results from the literature review was surprising towards the end. The first search was not as surprising and expected since most of the world has already started to gather information about support system for individuals with disabilities. The second search also came up with quite a few results as well. The last search was extremely surprising for the student researcher. There was only one article that specifically talked about special education in the CNMI and the way it is views in the culture. This is surprising considering that the PSS helps hundreds of students and adults with disabilities. This made it difficult to find literature on special education in the CNMI, that could be of help in answering the research question.

The results were not what the researcher had hoped for. Out of the 30 people that were hoped to have taken the survey but the survey only had 12 people who had taken it. The survey gave enough information to reassure the student researcher's knowledge on how aware the CNMI is about disabilities to include students in higher education. The results also showed the possibility of the CNMI growth in future. It shows that the younger generation is becoming more open and that will make it more acceptable to have students who are high functioning and severe have the ability to grow. The CNMI is slowly growing to becoming accepting and willing to learn more about something and someone that use to be looked at as a shame to the family is now being celebrated and given more opportunities to become successful in life.

The response from the researcher's letter was very informative as well. The experts span from doctors in special education from the mainland United States, to people who have worked in the special education field for many years on island. Although they all had worded their answers differently, they have come to the same opinions on a couple of the answers. The first question asked about individuals with disabilities should go to in higher education. Their answers all agreed that individuals with disabilities should be in higher education. The only thing that has to be done is to make sure that the institutions have the proper faculty, staff, and methods to help. The second question asked about methodology they have seen or used that could really help students. Some experts' answers explain and give examples of methods used like Boja (Appendix E). Others like Dr. Clare Papay, believe that the methodology is not the only thing that helps students but a teacher who has high expectations can help a student succeed. The answers given help because it allows the student researcher to look in to a way to incorporate

good methods and as well as good teachers. The last question asked about how to educate the people of the CNMI on special education. They believed that having more opportunities to teach the students and the community from a young age to be accepting and understand is the best way. The student researcher use these results to get a clear picture demonstrating that community is becoming more aware about educating the people. The only way to keep this going is to keep talking to people about it and letting them understand that a disability should not hold people back but can be something that pushes people to do better.

There were two interviews that happened because a lot of the people the student researcher had got in contact with had unexpected issues show up in life. With PSS pay cuts and major life changes because of this as well as other life issues that they wish to no to be talked about. But with the one interview, the student researcher was able to gather more information. The two different interviews were very different because many times not a lot of people in their late teens up and older know very much about special education and disabilities.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the information the researcher has gathered was insightful and gave the researcher a deeper understanding about special education programs that are available in the CNMI. The questions were answered in ways that surprised that student researcher. The student researcher learned that the CNMI has a lot of great support systems in its islands. The only issue is that many of them are not well known by the people of the island. The student researcher sees this as something that will change over the years with more and more programs helping

individuals with disabilities and people on the island being more accepting and less ashamed of their relatives, friends, classmates, and colleagues.

References

- An Overview of the Americans With Disabilities Act. (2019, June 06). Retrieved from <https://adata.org/factsheet/ADA-overview>
- Greenwood, R. M., Stefancic, A. and Tsemberis, S. (2013), Pathways Housing First for Homeless Persons with Psychiatric Disabilities: Program Innovation, Research, and Advocacy. *Journal of Social Issues*, 69: 645-663. doi:10.1111/josi.12034
- Grigal, M., & Hart, D. (2010). *Think college!: Postsecondary education options for students with intellectual disabilities*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Pub
- Grigal, M., Papay, C., Smith, F., Hart, D., & Verbeck, R. (2019). Experiences That Predict Employment for Students With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in Federally Funded Higher Education Programs. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, 42(1), 17-28.
- Hadley, W. M. (2007). The Necessity of Academic Accommodations for First-Year College Students with Learning Disabilities [Abstract]. *Journal of College Admission*, 9-13. doi:10.1037/e629342009-001
- Hall, M., Kleinert, H. L., & Kearns, J. F. (2000). Going to College!: Postsecondary Programs for Students with Moderate and Severe Disabilities. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 32(3), 58–65. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004005990003200309>
- Harpur, P., & Bales, R. (2010). The Positive Impact of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: A Case Study on the South Pacific and Lessons from the U.S. Experience [Abstract]. *HeinOnline*. doi:10.1163/ej.9789004169715.i-320.85

- Knight, C., & Hawkins, J. (2011). Culturally Competent Case Study: Perspective from the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. *Journal of Occupational Therapy, Schools, & Early Intervention*, 4(1), 34-41. doi:10.1080/19411243.2011.582018
- Leake, D., & Cholymay, M. (2004). *Addressing the Needs of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students with Disabilities in Postsecondary Education. Information Brief. Volume 3, Issue 1*. Place of publication not identified: Distributed by ERIC Clearinghouse.
- Marks, B., Sisirak, J., & Heller, T. (2009, November 30). Health Matters for People with Developmental Disabilities: Creating a Sustainable Health Promotion Program. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED531634>
- “Northern Marianas College Disability Support Services (NMC DSS).” *Disability Support Services of Northern Marianas College*, www.marianas.edu/content.php?id=1&cat=10&mnu=35&sub=121.
- Ratliffe, K. T., Rao, K., Skouge, J. R., & Peter, J. (2012). Navigating the currents of change: Technology, inclusion, and access for people with disabilities in the Pacific [Abstract]. *Information Technology for Development*, 18(3), 209-225. doi:10.1080/02681102.2011.643207
- Ryndak, D. L., Clark, D., Conroy, M., & Stuart, C. H. (2001). Preparing Teachers to Meet the Needs of Students with Severe Disabilities: Program Configuration and Expertise. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 26(2), 96–105. <https://doi.org/10.2511/rpsd.26.2.96>

“Special Education Program (SPED).” *Public School System for the Northern Mariana Islands*,

www.cnmipss.org/contact_info/special-education-program-sped/

Appendix A

Pilot Survey

The survey was created on May 1, 2019, SurveyMonkey.com was where the survey was created, it contained 9 questions, creator of the survey Mele' Ani Cepeda, the people taking the survey NMC students.

Survey 1

Special Education on Saipan

1. What is your Gender

Female

Male

2. How old are you?

3. What is your major?

4. Do you go to work full time or part time?

Full-time

Part-time

I don't work

5. Do you have a disability? If yes, what disability?

6. Is there anyone you know that has a disability? A friend or family member?

7. Do you know the process of getting in to PSS SPED program?

Yes

No

A little bit

8. Do you know the process of getting in to NMC Disabilities Support Services program?

Yes

No

A little bit

9. Do you believe that student with disabilities belong in higher education? Why?

Appendix B

Final Survey

The survey was created on May 3, 2019, SurveyMonkey.com was where the survey was created, it contained 10 questions, creator of the survey Mele' Ani Cepeda, the people taking the survey NMC students.

Survey 2

1. Demography

Gender

Age

School

Major

Work

Full time / part time School

Do you have a disability?

Do you know anyone with a disability?

2. If yes, What disability?

3. 3. Have you ever been classmates with someone with a disability? If yes, what was it like?

4. If you do know someone with a disability, do you know the process of getting in to PSS's disabilities program?

5. Have you ever worked with someone who has a disability?

6. Do you know that NMC has a disabilities program?

7. Do you know the process of getting in to the disabilities program?

8. Do you believe that students with disabilities belong in higher education?
9. What are your thoughts on special education on Saipan?
10. Do you think special need students benefit from being in classes with other students?

Appendix C

Letter to Exports

The letter was created on May 15, 2019, and sent to exports on June 2, 2019, creator of the letters was Mele'Ani Cepeda, the people letter were sent to were exports in the field of Special Education.

Letter to Exports/ Questionnaire

Date: June 2, 2019

Persons Name

Title of job

Contact information

First, a big thank you!

Hello, my name is Mele'Ani Cepeda. I am a student at Northern Marianas College in Saipan. I am currently enrolled in a English Composition class. I am asking for your assistance for my research paper.

My topic is how Special Education programs are run. On Saipan, there are two major programs which serve students with special needs. One of which is the SPED Program that is a part of the Public School System and the other is the Disability Support System program that is a part of Northern Marianas College.

For my research paper, I would like to see how students with disabilities can be better served on Saipan. I was given the assignment to find experts to interview and work with. Based on your experience, I would like to ask you some questions based on special education and other programs that help students with disabilities. I understand that you may be busy and with time differences that it might be difficult for you to get back to me. So I have equipped a short questionnaire found below.

Your time and assistance is truly appreciated.

Many thanks,

Mele' Ani Cepeda

meleani.cepeda@my.marians.edu

Questionnaire

In your honest opinion, do you believe that special education programs are helping student prepare for the future?

What do you believe to be some of the best methods you have seen or used? Why?

With Saipan being a small island with limited understanding of disabilities, how do you think we can educate or bring better awareness to people on disabilities?

Appendix D

Letter to Exports

The Questionnaire was created on May 15, 2019, and sent to exports on June 2, 2019, creator of the Questionnaire was Mele'Ani Cepeda, the people Questionnaire was sent to Suzanne Lizama, M.Ed., Director, Special Education Program in the Public School System, her email is lizamasuzanne@gmail.com

Questionnaire Answers

1. In your honest opinion, do you believe that special education programs are helping students prepare for the future?
 - Yes I do believe special education programs and services help prepare students for future endeavors. Every year the Public School System serves over 900 students with disabilities, 3 to 21 years old in education environments that are designed to meet their individual needs. Every year, about 100 students graduate from our high schools and go on to college, the military, work or other training programs. When students are provided supports and services that are designed to meet their unique needs such as specially designed instruction, appropriate accommodations, related services (Speech and Language, Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Counseling, Psychological services etc), technology, students can and do reach their potential and become contributing members of the community.

2. What do you believe to be some of the best methods you have seen or used? Why?
 - Fortunately for individuals with disabilities, there is no “one” method or “BEST” way to provide the specialized supports or services to individuals in order for them to succeed. What works for one student may not work for another. That is why their educational programs are called, “Individualized Educational Programs”. Each student with a disability is entitled to an education that is designed to meet their individual needs, including intervention methodologies and instructional strategies.

3. With Saipan being a small island with limited understanding of disabilities, how do you think we can educate or bring better awareness to people on disabilities?
 - Support community events that are designed to increase awareness of the needs of individuals with disabilities. Don’t be afraid to ask an individual with disabilities questions about their disabilities. Don’t be afraid to ask...How can I help?

Appendix E

Letter to Exports

The Questionnaire was created on May 15, 2019, and sent to exports on June 2, 2019, creator of the Questionnaire was Mele'Ani Cepeda, the person answer the Questionnaire is Greg Borja who is the Program Manager for Northern Marianas Protection & Advocacy Systems, Inc (NMPASI). His Email is gborja nmpasi.org.

Questionnaire Answers

1. In your honest opinion, do believe that special education programs are helping students prepare for the future?
 - I feel that yes, the special education program is helping students prepare for the future. Based on an individual student's needs the program can prepare them for transition out of high school and into post-secondary education and/or employment. There are some students with specific disabilities that may not be able to reach full independence as a result of their disability. The program does provide guidance in assisting the students parents toward other programs in our community that can support the parents who will be caring for an adult child with a disability.

2. What do you believe to some of the best methods you have seen or used? Why?
 - In some schools the Special Education teachers were using life skills to teach academic basics. For example, one teacher would have the students learn how to make a simple meal using measurements, so that the student can have a hands on

experience with learning the different measurements. The students can visually see what is a teaspoon, or four ounces. Afterward the students also got to enjoy the meal prepared on their own.

3. With Saipan being a small island with limited understanding of disabilities, how do you think we can educate or bring better awareness to people on disabilities?

- One practice that is used here at NMPASI is to get into the elementary and middle schools to speak with the students about people with disabilities and issues surrounding their needs. It is my belief that when we educate people at a younger age about the diversity in our community, they may become more tolerant and understanding about the needs of people with disabilities. I have seen adults and elders in community that do not treat people with disabilities with the same dignity and respect that they may afford others. I have seen families keep a person with disabilities away from others at parties, by keeping them in a room in the house. I see younger adults being more accepting and inclusive with people disabilities as a result of awareness.

Appendix F

Letter to Exports

The Questionnaire was created on May 15, 2019, and sent to exports on June 2, 2019, creator of the Questionnaire was Mele' Ani Cepeda, the person answer the Questionnaire is Clare Papay a Senior Research Associate, Her Email is Clare.Papay@umb.edu , an exports in the field of Special Education.

Questionnaire Answers

1. In your honest opinion, do you believe that special education programs are helping student prepare for the future?

- I think overall, yes. Special education offers many important educational benefits for students with disabilities. If you think about what we had before the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (now the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, IDEA) was enacted in 1975, what is in place now makes a world of difference. Before this, students with disabilities were not guaranteed access to education at all and many were excluded from being educated around their peers. When the IDEA was reauthorized in the 80s and 90s and provisions were added around transition, this was the first time that preparation for adult life was recognized as an important part of education for students with disabilities. In general, I think the requirements of IDEA are a good start in supporting students with disabilities to prepare for the future. I do think there is much more that needs to be done, especially around getting the various agencies that have a part in

supporting students to transition to adult life to work together to coordinate services. Too often, special education ends and students are left without services and supports they need to achieve the adult outcomes that they have been working towards.

2. What do you believe to be some of the best methods you have seen or used? Why?

- Honestly, it's not a method in particular, but the most important aspect that I see in regards to the effectiveness of special education is the expectations held by teachers. When teachers have high expectations for all of their students then those students are provided with a higher quality education and access to greater opportunities that allow them to achieve better outcomes. The preparation of the teacher is also important, especially around understanding what it takes to prepare students with disabilities for adult life.

3. With Saipan being a small island with limited understanding of disabilities, how do you think we can educate or bring better awareness to people on disabilities?

- That is a great question and I don't have a good answer for you! I think understanding the culture and context on the island is important, and I don't know enough to make any recommendations.

Appendix G

Letter to Exports

The Questionnaire was created on May 15, 2019, and sent to exports on June 2, 2019, creator of the Questionnaire was Mele' Ani Cepeda, the people Questionnaire was sent to Deane Jesse-Jones, Owner of Brain Builder Guam and Saipan, LLC, Her email is brainbuiding@gmail.com

Questionnaire Answers

1. In your honest opinion, do you believe that special education programs are helping student prepare for the future?

- Yes I do. But they must be well funded and supported with the proper teachers, methods, and equipment for each student to be successful.

2. What do you believe to be some of the best methods you have seen or used?

Why?

- That's a hard question to answer, because it really varies based on each child and his or her abilities. There is no one size fits all solution. But the earlier a weakness can be identified and addressed the more likely that child is to be successful. Testing is very important. Technology can be a great help to help address differences. But the most important thing is that no one in the child's education team give up or set low expectations for the child. Yes, for some kids if as adults they are able to do some self-care then that's all we can hope for, and they will not be college bound. But everyone learns in different rates

and in different ways, so we need to encourage each child to reach his or her full potential.

3. With Saipan being a small island with limited understanding of disabilities, how do you think we can educate or bring better awareness to people on disabilities?

- I think it begins by people being aware of difference, and then becoming more accepting. Families should not be ashamed to have their disabled participate in church and community events. In order to do this as a community we must make sure we have accessible facilities.

Appendix H

Online Interview

The Online interview was created on May 15, 2019, and sent to exports on June 2, 2019, creator of the Online interview was Mele'Ani Cepeda, the person answer the Online interview is Lucille Deleon Guerrero, a Counselor from the Northern Marianas College Disability Support Services

Online interview

1. In your honest opinion, do you believe that special education programs are helping student prepare for the future?

I believe that, despite our proximity to the US mainland where more tangible resources are readily available, the special education programs here in the CNMI are helping students prepare for the future. The public school system uses 21st Century technology methods in accessing related services such as occupational therapy and speech language therapy services via tele-therapy. Students nowadays are more "tech savvy" regardless of disability which makes the online therapy services more attractive and interactive.

2. What do you believe to be some of the best methods you have seen or used? Why?

Here at NMC, note taking and extended time are the top methods I have used to help students succeed. It helps the students stay up to par with the rest of the students. Test taking can be done orally if the student has difficulty writing.

3. With Saipan being a small island with limited understanding of disabilities, how do you think we can educate or bring better awareness to people on disabilities?

We need more outreach activities that focus on disabilities. I think our community has come a long way as far as acceptance is but it is a continuous learning process, especially for those that still feel the conversation is taboo.

4. What are some services or support programs that are available to help students with disabilities transition between college and the work force?

The public school system requires those students with IEPs to start a transition process by age 16. This is a requirement of IDEA. When a student exits high school, ADA kicks in. The transitioning from college in to the workforce is supported by several partnering agencies that receive federal funding to assist these students in to the real world. The Workforce Investment Agency, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Council on Developmental Disabilities, Center for Living Independently, are just a few agencies that collaborate to help persons with disabilities be gainfully employed.