



G R O U P i & i

# THE LATEST

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## **New Research Associate, Dr. Sara Spikes, Engages in Special Education Review**

Dr. Sara Spikes is a data and research specialist with experience in quantitative and qualitative data. She began her research career conducting studies in the physical and biological sciences, but her passion for justice and her experience in science education led her in a different direction – education research. Sara has closely researched issues such as school practices and challenges associated with science teachers’ retention, health disparities education, early childhood education, and initiatives such as STEM, designed to help empower students from all backgrounds by providing them with a solid education in science, technology, engineering, and math.

She recently joined Group i&i as a new research associate and immediately supported Group i&i's evaluation of the U.S. Education-funded Transition and Post-Secondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) at Bergen Community College. Her experience so far has been very positive. “It’s a wonderful team,” she reported, “and the cooperative method at Group i&i creates a great team environment, a collaborative effort with different levels of knowledge and expertise pooled together. You really develop an appreciation for everybody’s role and input.” She speaks passionately about her respect for the other team members. “Toufic has such dedication,” she said. “That is what you want in leadership.”

Group i&i's vision and mission aligned well with Sara's background and goals. Group i&i helps socially conscious groups and organizations in different sectors (including education) to increase their positive impact and organizational sustainability – and this is done by using analytical techniques that quantitatively evaluate the outcomes achieved by programs and projects. Sara first learned about Group i&i from some colleagues at Texas A&M University who had worked with Group i&i on other evaluations of a community-college-based grant project. She likes having the opportunity to get more professional experience with data analysis and research while making tangible improvements in a sector so close to her heart.

She particularly appreciates how much she is learning about the available resources and challenges in the education sector. In the future, Sara hopes to help her local community in Texas to implement a program similar to the New Jersey's TPSID initiative. "I hope to be able to serve more people in the future with this type of program," she said. "That's the thing. That's my thing: serving others – and that's what Group i&i is all about."

Sara has worked in research in support of various projects, among them: a human services agency's Healthy Start Initiative, the Policy Research Initiative in Science Education at Texas A&M University's College of Education., and research activities at the MD Anderson Cancer Center. Sara holds a B.S. in Chemistry, an M.S. in Microbiology and Molecular Genetics, and a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction.

Kathy Wiener, Senior Principal of Group i&i, reflected the team's views when she shared that "we're very pleased to have Sara join Group i&i. Her expertise and background add depth to our data analysis and research teams. Her deep commitment to the work is highly consistent with our own."