Rural Family-School Partnerships: Bridging Research and Practice

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Our Goals for Rural Students

Optimal Development of:

- **Academic Skills**
- **Academic Behaviors**
- **Social Skills & Relationships**
What Promotes Learning?

- Supported learning experiences
- Performance monitoring/feedback
- Modeling learning behaviors
- High, realistic expectations
- Motivation
- Adult-child relationships

School Contributions

Home Contributions
What Strengthens Learning?

School  Family-School Partnership  Home

- Academic skills
- Academic behaviors
- Social skills & relationships
HOW CAN THIS BE ACCOMPLISHED?
Family-School Partnerships

What are they?
Characteristics

- **Relationships** involve: close collaboration between parents and schools that have clearly specified *rights* and *responsibilities*.

- **Relationships** that are:
  - Valued
  - Balanced
  - Cooperative and interdependent
  - Based on mutual respect, trust, and open communication
  - Student-centered

(Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2009, p. 1)
Goals of Family-School Partnerships

- Improve experiences and outcomes for children
- Strengthen relationships (among adults & with child)
- Address education across settings (e.g., home, school)
- Increase:
  - cooperation and collaboration
  - diversity of expertise and resources
- Increase shared:
  - commitments to educational goals
  - understanding of problems, challenges, needs across settings
  - ownership for problem solution
- Adopt various perspectives
WHY DO THEY MATTER?
Key Research Findings

Highly correlated with many positive outcomes for students, families, and teachers

• Improved academic skills and performance
• Improved academic behaviors and decreased disruptive behaviors
• Long-term academic success; school completion
• Teacher enhancement in instructional skills
• Greater parental knowledge of school functioning
Federal Policy and Learning Across Settings

• Students spend 70% of their waking hours outside of school from birth-18 (Clarke, 1990)

• Offers valuable learning time

• Mandates schools to engage in partnerships with parents to meet the increasing academic, behavioral, and social needs of students

• IDEA, NCLB for federal mandates calling for parents as partners in their child’s education
FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS PROMOTE SUCCESS FOR STUDENTS NEEDING ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS
Conjoint Behavioral Consultation (CBC)

A strength-based, cross-system problem-solving and decision-making model wherein parents, teachers, and other caregivers or service providers work as partners and share responsibility for promoting positive and consistent outcomes related to a child’s academic, behavioral, and social-emotional development

– Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2008, p. 25
CBC Goals

• Bring together families and schools on behalf of children’s learning
• Establish and maintain positive home-school relationships via partnership
• Promote positive outcomes for students through joint, cross-system planning
• Promote parent engagement via meaningful participation
• Establish daily, positive home-school communication system
CBC Procedures

Implemented in a 4-stage process by semi-structured *conjoint* interviews used to guide meetings with the child’s parent(s) and teacher(s) and facilitated by a trained CBC Consultant

- Needs Identification (“Building on Strengths”)
- Needs Analysis/Plan Development (“Planning for Success”)
- Cross-setting Plan Implementation
- Plan Evaluation (“Checking and Reconnecting”)

CBC Procedures
What Interferes with Family-School Partnerships in Rural Communities?

• Lack of access to services
• Lack of specialized information
• Physical distance
• Limited interactions
• Feelings of isolation
• History of negative relationships
• Lack of perceived need; reluctance
• Stigma
Family-School Partnership Research Needed in Rural Communities

• Well-documented research support in non-rural settings
• Lack of research studies conducted in rural areas
• Need for research examining effects of family-school partnerships in rural communities led to a current study – “CBC in Rural Communities”
Current Research Questions

• What are the effects of CBC in rural communities on behavioral and social-emotional outcomes of students with or at risk of developing behavioral disorders?

• What are the effects of CBC in rural communities on parent and teacher practices, relationships, engagement, and beliefs about family-school partnerships?
Setting and Participants

• Setting
  – Rural schools (n = 20) defined using NCES locale codes; rural and town included
  – Population < 31,000
    – Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas
• 90 K-3 students displaying externalizing behaviors and their parents
• 54 K-3 teachers
Preliminary Analyses

• Independent group $t$-tests were used to compare mean scores between the control and treatment groups.

• Repeated measures $t$-tests were used to evaluate change in scores from pre-test (wave 1) to post-test (wave 2) for the control and treatment groups.
Preliminary Findings

- Preliminary results suggest promising effects of CBC for parents, teachers, and students, including:

  **Teacher-Report Behavioral Symptoms Index**
  - Aggression
  - Conduct Problems
  - Depression

  **Parent* and Teacher** Communication
  - Talk about concerns
  - Share student progress
  - Ask for suggestions

  **Parent Engagement in Consultation**
  - Share information
  - Communicate effectively
  - Decision-making

  **Parent Competence in Problem-Solving**
  - Set goals for child
  - Collect data
  - Figure out what works

*p<.05; **p<.01
Preliminary Findings: Students

Significant changes over time for CBC students:

**Externalizing Problems**
- Hyperactivity
- Aggression
- Conduct problems

**Internalizing Problems**
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Somatization

**School Problems**
- Attention Problems
- Learning Problems

**Adaptive Skills**
- Adaptability
- Leadership
- Social Skills
- Study Skills

**Behaviors at Home**
- Arguing
- Noncompliance
- Tantrums

*p<.05; **p<.01
Preliminary Findings: Parents

Significant group differences in favor of CBC parents:

- **Positive Involvement***
  - Talk with child
  - Volunteer
  - Fun activities

- **Corporal Punishment** **
  - Spank
  - Slap
  - Hit

- **Joining with Teacher***
  - Trust
  - Cooperation
  - Respect

Significant changes over time for CBC parents:

- **Inconsistent Discipline***
  - Threaten
  - Talks out of punishment
  - No punishment

- **Self-Efficacy**
  - Know how to help child
  - Feel successful about help
  - Make significant impact

*p<.05; **p<.01
Preliminary Findings: Teachers

Significant group differences in favor of CBC teachers:

**Competence in Problem-Solving***
- Set goals for child
- Collect data
- Figure out what works

**Effective Strategies***
- Praise good behavior
- Use time-out
- Ignoring

**Beliefs about Parental Involvement***
- View parents as partners
- All families have strengths
- Parents know how to help

*\( p < .05 \); **\( p < .01 \)
Early Findings within the Rural Context

• CBC provides access to effective instructional and behavioral supports often lacking in rural schools
• Partnership-building strategies used by CBC consultants may effectively address family-school partnership barriers unique to rural settings:
  – isolation, perceptions and attitudes of participants based on generational histories
• Increased trust and altered negative attitudes may result from:
  – frequent contact, constructive problem solving, mutual input toward solutions, individual roles and responsibilities, and home-school communication
SPECIAL FOCUS: CASE STUDIES HIGHLIGHT UNIQUE APPLICATIONS OF CBC IN THE RURAL CONTEXT
Unique Case Features for “Braxton”

- 5 years old, Kindergarten student
- Poverty and drug use
  - Low-income, single-parent household
  - Family received several social supports (e.g., Medicaid, free/reduced lunch)
  - Parent participation was a significant concern given concerns with drug use in the home
- Lack of access to services
  - Typical and available school services were largely insufficient to address Braxton’s behavior
“Braxton’s” Needs and Supports

• **Target behaviors:**
  – Home: Following directions
  – School: Following directions

• **Home and school plan components:**
  – Chart moves, scheduled breaks, after school routine checklist, labeled praise for compliance, contingent rewards, and a home-school note
Braxton’s Outcomes

Braxton’s Home Data

Baseline Phase

Treatment Phase

Braxton’s School Data

Baseline Phase

Treatment Phase

Following Directions: Performance Rating Scale

Dates

Mean Lines
Parent-Teacher Relationship

Parent Report

Teacher Report

- Pre-Intervention
- Post-Intervention
Parent-Teacher Competency in Problem Solving

Problem Solving

Teacher Report | Parent Report
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Pre-Intervention | Post-Intervention
Bridging Research and Practice

• Partnership Academy Training available through CYFS

• Three Packages:
  – “Power of Partnerships” (Foundational Seminar)
  – “Nuts and Bolts of Partnerships” (Hands-on Workshop)
  – Customized

• Two Location Options:
  – UNL campus
  – On-site at the organization
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