Rural Parents and Teachers as Partners: Preliminary Results of a Randomized Trial

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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
- Teacher-student relationships

School Contributions

Home Contributions
What Strengthens Learning?

School

Family-School Partnership

Academic skills

Academic behaviors

Social skills & relationships

Home
School + Home *Partnerships*

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
What Interferes with School-Home Connections 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
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 Process

- Student goals and achievement are emphasized
  - Uses a data-based approach to ensure that relevant learning and behavioral goals are attained, rather than focusing on deficits
- Joint and collaborative contributions of teachers (school) and parents (home) are emphasized
  - Solutions are the focus, rather than blame
- Teachers and parents collaborate to:
  - Provide input in developing student learning targets
  - Cooperatively design and implement consistent plans at home and school
  - Monitor students’ progress
  - Ensure achievement of student goals
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
# Student Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total (n=90)</th>
<th>Experimental (n=58)</th>
<th>Control (n=32)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean (SD) Age</strong></td>
<td>6.9 (1.19)</td>
<td>6.9 (1.2)</td>
<td>6.69 (1.18)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gender (Male)</strong></td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>81%</td>
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<td><strong>Disability Status</strong></td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>66%</td>
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<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>White non-Hispanic</td>
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<td>89%</td>
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<td>African American</td>
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<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
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<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<td><strong>Risk Factors</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>47%</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>22%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
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## Parent Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total (n=90)</th>
<th>Experimental (n=58)</th>
<th>Control (n=32)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean (SD) Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33.86</td>
<td>33.89</td>
<td>33.81</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6.79)</td>
<td>(7.04)</td>
<td>(6.44)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Household income</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>150% poverty</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>84%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Less than HS diploma</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>HS diploma or GED</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>28%</td>
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<tr>
<td>College degree</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduate coursework or degree</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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CBC Procedures

Implemented via 4-stage process operationalized by semi-structured *conjoint* interviews

• Needs Identification (“Building on Strengths”)

• Needs Analysis/Plan Development (“Planning for Success”)

• Cross-setting Plan Implementation

• Plan Evaluation (“Checking and Reconnecting”)
Measures

• **Student Outcomes**
  Behavior Assessment System for Children-Teacher Report (BASC); Parent Daily Report (PDR); Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement (select); Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)

• **Parent Outcomes**
  Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (APQ); Parent Teacher Relationship Scale (PTRS); Parent Competence in Problem Solving (PPPS); Parent Engagement in Consultation Scale (PECS); Parent Efficacy for Helping Children Succeed in School (PEHCSS)

• **Teacher Outcomes**
  Teacher Strategies Questionnaire (TSQ); Parent Teacher Relationship Scale (PTRS); Competence in Problem Solving (TPPS); Teacher Beliefs About Parent Involvement (TBAPI)
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

• Significant group differences in favor of the CBC group and improvements over time for treatment group only are evident on:
  • Teacher-reported BASC scores on the *behavioral symptoms index**
  • Parent reports* and teacher reports** of *communication
  • Parent *engagement in consultation** and competence in the problem solving process**

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

Significant changes over time are evident for CBC but not control students:

• Decreases on teacher-reported BASC scores of externalizing problems**, internalizing problems**, and school problems** and improvements on scores of adaptive skills*

• Decreases in arguing**, noncompliant**, and tantrum** behaviors at home

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

• Significant group differences at post-test in favor of the CBC parents, with the treatment group reporting:
  - More *positive involvement* with their child
  - Less use of *corporal punishment***
  - Greater *feelings of interpersonal connection with the teacher**

• Significant changes over time evident for CBC but not control parents, with the treatment group reporting:
  - Decreased use of *inconsistent discipline strategies***
  - Improvements in *self-efficacy for helping their children succeed in school***

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

Significant group differences at post-test in favor of the CBC teachers, with the treatment group reporting:

- More effective strategy use**
- Greater competence in the problem-solving process**
- Stronger beliefs about the importance of parental involvement*

*p<.05; **p<.01
Summary of Preliminary Results

• CBC appears promising for students whose behavioral challenges interfere with learning in rural schools

• Effects of CBC appear to extend beyond student outcomes to positive practices and beliefs of teachers and parents who are responsible for students’ learning and adjustment

• Effects are especially encouraging given the need for effective services in rural areas for students with behavioral concerns
Early Findings within the Rural Context

For rural teachers:

• Teachers in the CBC condition reported greater use of effective strategies for addressing challenging student behavior

• “These approaches were so classroom friendly! I am seeing tremendous success and think every school should participate in this service.”
Early Findings within the Rural Context

For rural parents:

• Parents receiving CBC reported having a stronger connection with their children’s teacher and also reported greater involvement in their children’s education and greater self-efficacy for helping their child succeed

• “The plan didn’t add a lot of time; it actually took away from the work I was already doing nagging [my son]. Now instead of having a bad time, we are focusing on having good times as a family.”
Early Findings within the Rural Context

For strengthening relationships and partnerships:

• Partnership-building strategies used by CBC consultants may effectively address family-school partnership barriers unique to rural settings:
  – small communities, 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
Early Findings within the Rural Context

• Consistent with previous research (Sheridan et al., 2012), CBC has a positive effect on children’s social skills and disruptive behaviors

• Adds to the growing evidence base that CBC is an effective intervention for students, families and schools across settings (e.g., rural, urban)

• Impact on teachers and parents is at least consistent across studies, if not better for teachers and parents in rural relative to urban contexts
Research Realities and Challenges

• Physical locations of schools, homes, consultant support services
• Small school and classroom sizes
• Limited school and community resources
• Difficulty sustaining programs without resources
• Stigma associated with service access
• Cost associated with research procedures in distal locations (data collection, implementation, fidelity)
• Lack of familiarity with innovations in educational services (“word of mouth”)
• Generalization across rural settings/regions
Additional Research Challenges

• Some teachers and parents invited to participate decline
  – Teachers report little need, despite the fact that rural students entering school have been found to exhibit significantly more behavioral challenges than those in other settings (ECLS data; Sheridan et al., in submission)
  – One-third of parents whose children were ranked by teachers as having the most significant problems failed to participate
  – 40% of students nominated by teachers and meeting eligibility criteria had parents who chose not to participate

• Pressing Research Question: What drives rural parents and teachers of students with challenging behaviors to accept or decline invitations to partner?
Future Directions

• Moving toward scale up studies to determine application and efficacy in the context of “authentic” practice
• Continue to discern unique and specific characteristics of rural settings that impact implementation
• Explore mechanisms that influence outcomes in rural settings
• Determine the factors in rural communities that influence outcomes
• Examine means to infuse practice into natural rural school structures; focus on sustainability
• Assess long-term outcomes
For more information on CBC or this study, please contact Sue Sheridan, Gina Kunz or Amanda Witte cyfs@unl.edu

The research reported here was supported by the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, through Grant # R324A100115 to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views of the Institute or the U.S. Department of Education."