



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

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# Our Goals for Rural Students



Optimal  
Development of:

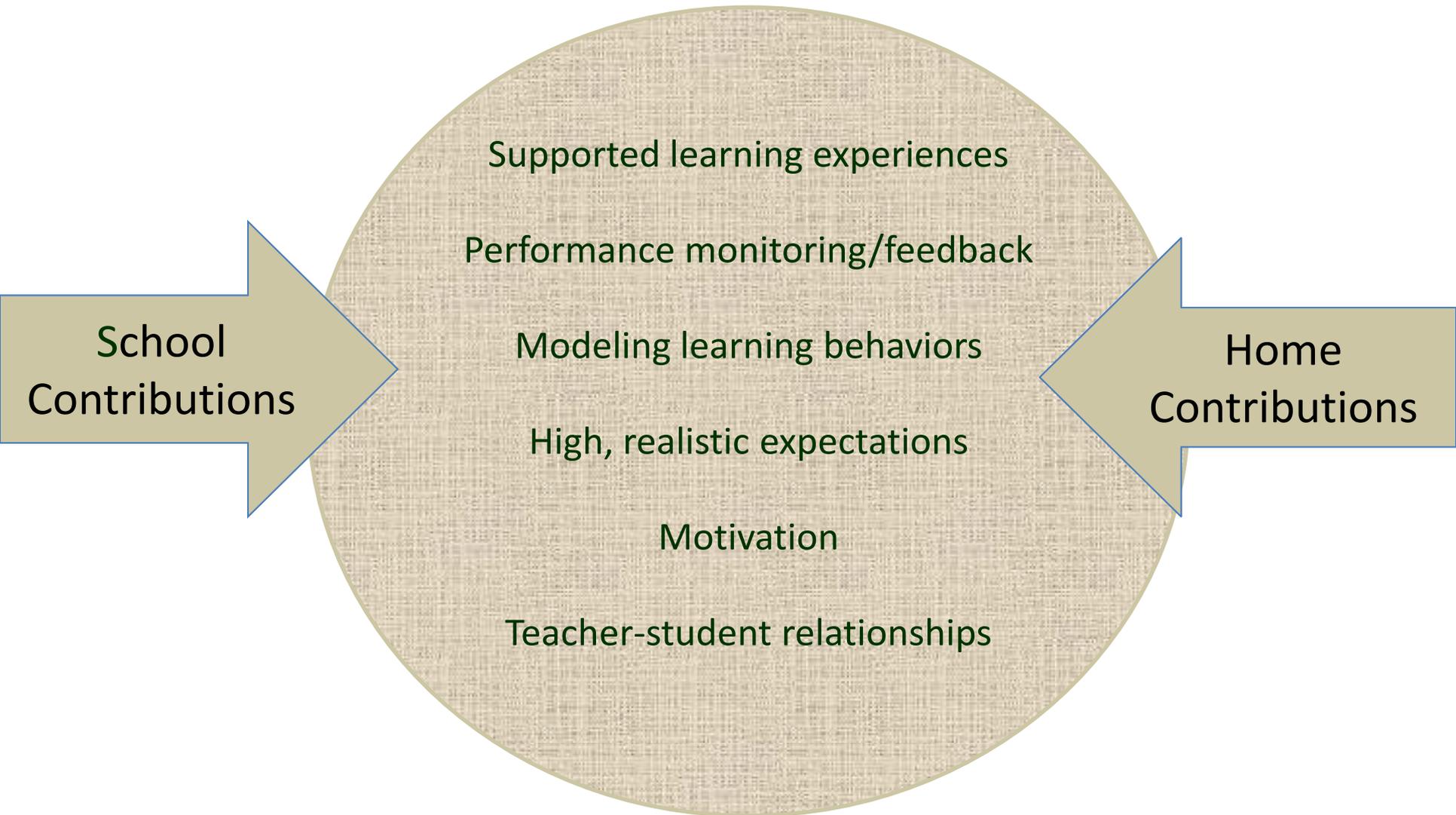
***Academic Skills***

***Academic  
Behaviors***

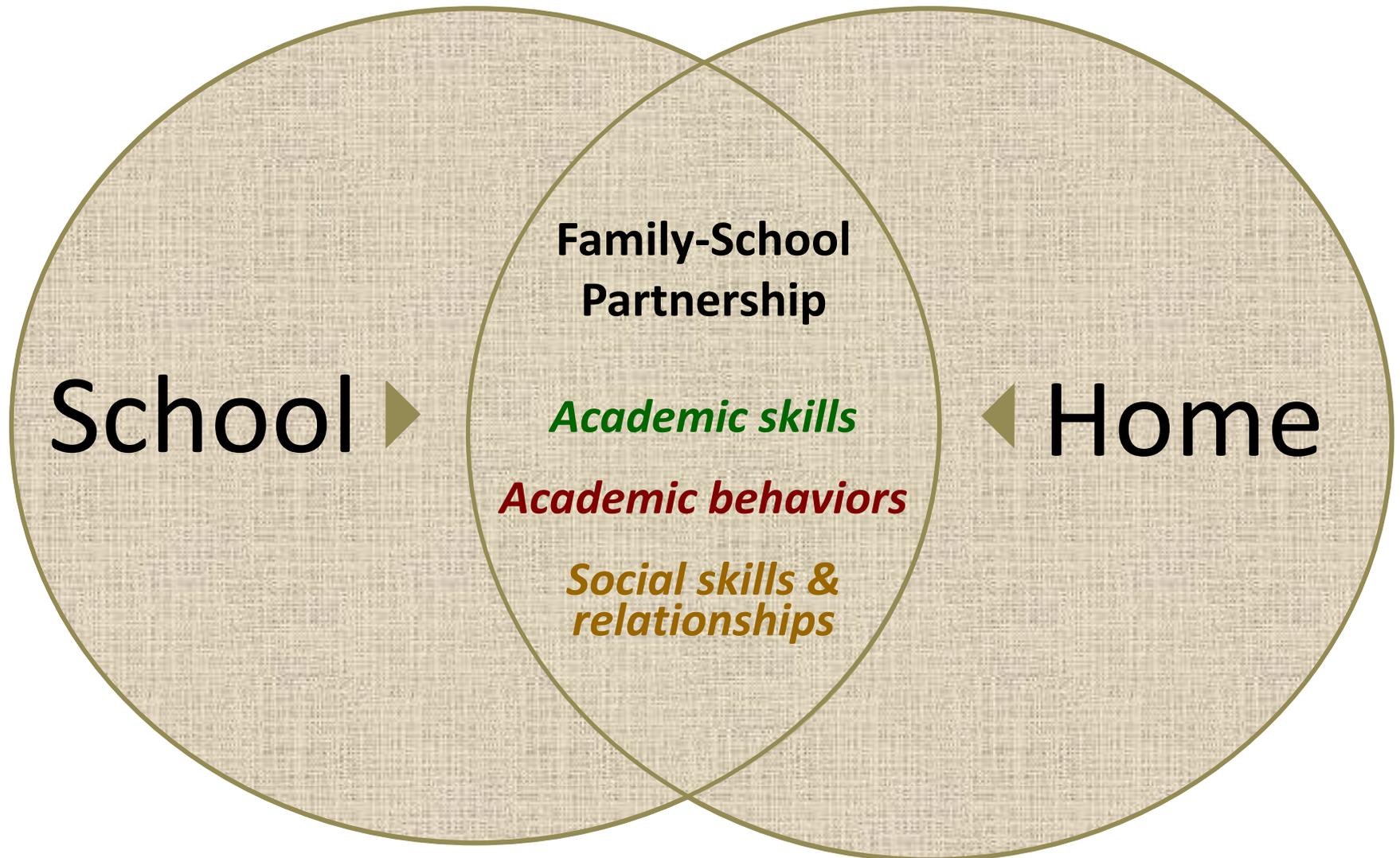
***Social Skills &  
Relationships***



# What Promotes Learning?



# What Strengthens Learning?



# 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

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	Total (n=90)	Experimental (n=58)	Control (n=32)	
Mean (SD) Age	6.9 (1.19)	6.9 (1.2)	6.69 (1.18)	
Gender (Male)	82%	83%	81%	
Disability Status	64%	66%	63%	
Ethnicity	White non-Hispanic	91%	89%	94%
	African American	2%	2%	3%
	Hispanic/Latino	6%	7%	3%
	Other	1%	2%	0%
Risk Factors	0	43%	47%	38%
	1	37%	36%	38%
	2	17%	14%	22%
	3	3%	3%	3%

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# Parent Demographics

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



# 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



**THANK YOU!**

For more information on CBC or this study, please contact Sue Sheridan, Gina Kunz or Amanda Witte  
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