Collaborative Problem-Solving from the Start

The Effects of Family-School Partnerships on Child, Parent and Teacher Outcomes

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Early Learning and Development

- Children live in multiple contexts (i.e., home and school) that affect their functioning, both separately and together; continuity and congruence among systems are key.

- Effective cross-system partnerships between families and educators are critical to maximizing the growth potential of a child.

- Children’s social emotional and behavioral competence impacts their ability to learn.
Why Family-School Partnerships?

“The evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing: families have a major influence on their children’s achievement in school and through life… The research continues to grow and build an ever-strengthening case. When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more.”

(Henderson & Mapp, 2002)
Ecological-Systems Thinking

- Children develop optimally when they are part of healthy systems, and when there are healthy relationships among those systems.

- Children growing up in systems that are dysfunctional, conflictual, nonsupportive have difficulties with self-regulation, goal setting, time management, responsible decision making.

- If concerns are indeed the result of the systems within which children reside, therein must our interventions focus.
Ecologically-Based Practices

Requires

• Professionals (teachers, counselors, administrators, parents, and others) to work in tandem with one another

• A focus on facilitating change in the behaviors of adults (teachers, parents) in a child’s life

• Relationship-building and intensive, ongoing communication and collaboration via consultation, program planning, and home/classroom support
Conjoint Behavioral Consultation: A Definition

- 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)

- All stages of consultation (from problem identification to plan evaluation) are conducted with parents and teachers together, in a collaborative manner
Conjoint Behavioral Consultation

- Promotes and supports *home-school partnerships* in the context of cooperative and collegial problem-solving

- Emphasizes meaningful parental/family engagement in education

- A vehicle by which to foster constructive, goal directed, solution-oriented services for children

- An extension of traditional (teacher) consultation that goes beyond the school setting and brings parents into the intervention and decision making process
Stages of Conjoint Behavioral Consultation

- Problem/Needs Identification
- Problem/Needs Analysis
- Plan Implementation
- Plan Evaluation
CBC Goals

- **Behavioral goals** address outcomes on behalf of the child
  - Address children’s learning and behavioral needs
  - Improve skills and knowledge of all parties
  - Enhance generalization and maintenance of treatment effects

- **Process goals** focus on strengthening the partnership between the family and school
  - Improve communication and knowledge about the child, family and classroom
  - Promote shared ownership for solutions
Early Research Findings: Outcomes
(see Sheridan, Clarke, & Burt, 2008)

- CBC provides an effective mechanism for addressing the needs of children with behavioral, academic, and social-emotional concerns (Guli, 2005; Sheridan, Eagle, Cowan, & Mickelson, 2001)

- CBC has been shown to be effective in Head Start classrooms serving children and families living in poverty (Sheridan, Clarke, Knoche, & Edwards, 2006)

- CBC has been demonstrated to be efficacious with culturally diverse clients (Sheridan, Eagle, & Doll, 2006)

- CBC has been found to address concerns of children with developmental disabilities (Ray, Watson, & Skinner, 1999; Wilkinson 2005)
Early Research Findings
(see Sheridan, Clarke, & Burt, 2008)

• Process Research:
  ◦ CBC establishes a collaborative context for joint planning, decision making and problem solving (e.g., Erchul et al., 1999; Sheridan et al., 2002)
  ◦ Relational communication studies demonstrate bidirectional communication and reciprocal relationships in CBC (Grissom, Erchul, & Sheridan, 2003), and its collaborative nature (Sheridan, Meegan, & Eagle, 2002)

• Social Validity Research:
  ◦ CBC is acceptable to parents, teachers, school psychologists (including relative to other approaches; e.g., Freer & Watson, 1999)
  ◦ Perceptions of goal attainment within CBC are high (Sladeczek et al., 2001)
Current Research

• A 4-cohort randomized trial testing the efficacy of CBC (Sheridan, S.M. & Glover, T.A. IES Grant # R305F050284)

• Aims of the study were to determine the efficacy of CBC, immediately and at one year follow up on:
  ◦ Child behavior regulation and social/adaptive skills;
  ◦ Parent engagement, self-efficacy, and involvement;
  ◦ Teacher beliefs and attitudes about parent involvement;
  ◦ Parent-teacher relationships immediately and at one-year follow up
Research Questions

• What is the effect of CBC on children’s disruptive behaviors, adaptive skills, and social competencies?

• What is the effect of CBC on the parent-teacher relationship, and teachers’ beliefs about parent involvement?

• What is the effect of CBC on parent participation in problem solving?

• Does the parent-teacher relationship mediate the effect of CBC on child behaviors?
Participants & Data Collection

- 207 children aged 5-8 (M = 6), their parents and teachers from 21 schools participated over 4 years.
- 82 classrooms were randomly assigned to treatment or control conditions.
- Students with disruptive classroom behaviors (e.g., noncompliance, aggression) were selected based on teacher nomination, ratings on a short behavioral inventory, and the Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders (SSBD; Walker & Seversen, 1990).
- Assessments conducted at baseline and post-CBC; follow up assessments conducted in the following academic year.
Select Measures

- Behavioral Assessment Scale for Children (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004)
- Social Skills Rating Scale (Gresham & Elliott, 1990)
- Family Involvement Questionnaire-Elementary (Manz, Fantuzzo, & Power, 2004)
- Parent Participation in Problem Solving (Sheridan, 2004)
- Parent-Teacher Rating Scale-II (Vickers & Minke, 1995)
- Hoover-Dempsey et al. (1992, 2002) scales measuring teacher beliefs about parent involvement; also parent role construct, self-efficacy
Home-School Interventions

- Consultation team selected interventions for behavioral plans from a *Behavioral Strategies Toolkit* with standardized protocols for evidence-based strategies (from Tough Kid series) to promote behavioral regulation and self-control.

- All behavioral plans contained a *motivation component* (e.g., reward menu) and a *home-school communication system*.

- Additional training and support for parents and teachers were scheduled as needed.

- Fidelity of intervention implementation assessed via self-reports, permanent products, and direct observation (classroom only).
Data Analyses

• The direct effects of CBC on child outcomes and parent/teacher relationships were tested

• The indirect relationship between CBC and child outcomes as mediated by the parent-teacher relationship was also modeled
Current Research Findings: Students

- CBC produced significant improvements in teacher reported child behaviors relative to a control group.

- After controlling for the severity of behavior problems at baseline, children in the CBC group relative to controls demonstrated statistically significant differences in:
  - externalizing problems ($p < .05$)
  - adaptive skills ($p < .05$)
  - social skills ($p < .05$)
Externalizing Behaviors (Teacher BASC)
Adaptive Skills (Teacher BASC)
Social Skills (Teacher SSRS)
Relative to control parents, those who participated in CBC reported to increase their:

- active participation in educational problem solving \((p < .001)\);

- involvement in home-school communication \((p < .01)\)

- improvements in parent involvement appear to continue for at least one year follow up
Parent Participation in Problem Solving
Current Research Findings: Teachers

- Relative to control teachers, positive outcomes for CBC teachers include:
  - *better overall relationship* with parents ($p < .01$)
  - more positive *beliefs about parental involvement* ($p < .01$)
Parent-Teacher Relationship (Teacher)
Teacher Beliefs about Parent Involvement

Graph showing the comparison of CBC and Control groups over two time points (1 and 2). The CBC group shows an increase in teacher beliefs, while the Control group shows a decrease.
Mediation: What Accounts for the Effects?

• Investigated whether the parent-teacher relationship mediates CBC’s effects
  ◦ Answers the question: Does the parent-teacher relationship account for CBC’s efficacy?

• The parent-teacher relationship accounted for the positive CBC effect on children’s
  ◦ Increased adaptive skills ($p < .05$)
  ◦ Increased social skills ($p < .05$)
  ◦ Decreased externalizing behaviors (marginal; $p = .053$)

• Suggests significant implications for how consultation is practiced
Mediation: Parent-Teacher Relationship

The parent-teacher relationship mediates the effects of CBC on child behaviors.
CBC appears to result in important outcomes for all parties:

- Significant improvements in child behavior
- Significant improvement in parent participation & home-school communication
- Significant improvement in teacher beliefs & teacher-parent relationships
Discussion of Findings

- CBC seems to have its effects through the parent-teacher relationship

  - Points to the importance of attending to the parent-teacher relationship within the context of ongoing CBC practice

  - Reinforces belief that it is not just the type of intervention but how it is delivered that makes it effective
Ongoing Research

• Investigating other potential mediators, such as implementation fidelity, parent/teacher engagement, and continuity across home and school

• Need to investigate moderators – under what conditions can we expect CBC to have its greatest effect?

• Effectiveness of CBC for addressing various concerns in other contexts being investigated

• Need to determine application and efficacy in the context of “authentic” practice
Implications for Practice & Policy

- Interventions developed within the context of home-school partnerships are effective for addressing children’s early learning and development concerns.

- Collaborative problem-solving helps to promote continuity and congruence across environments on behalf of children.

- CBC is an effective collaborative problem-solving model that strengthens home-school partnerships and addresses a variety of concerns for young children.
Thank You!!

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