



National Center for **Research** on  
**Rural** Education (R<sup>2</sup>Ed)

# Rural Family-School Partnerships: Bridging Research and Practice

Gina M. Kunz, Susan M. Sheridan, Amanda Witte, Shannon  
Holmes, & Kristen Derr

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# Our Goals for Rural Students

Optimal  
Development of:

*Academic Skills*

*Academic  
Behaviors*

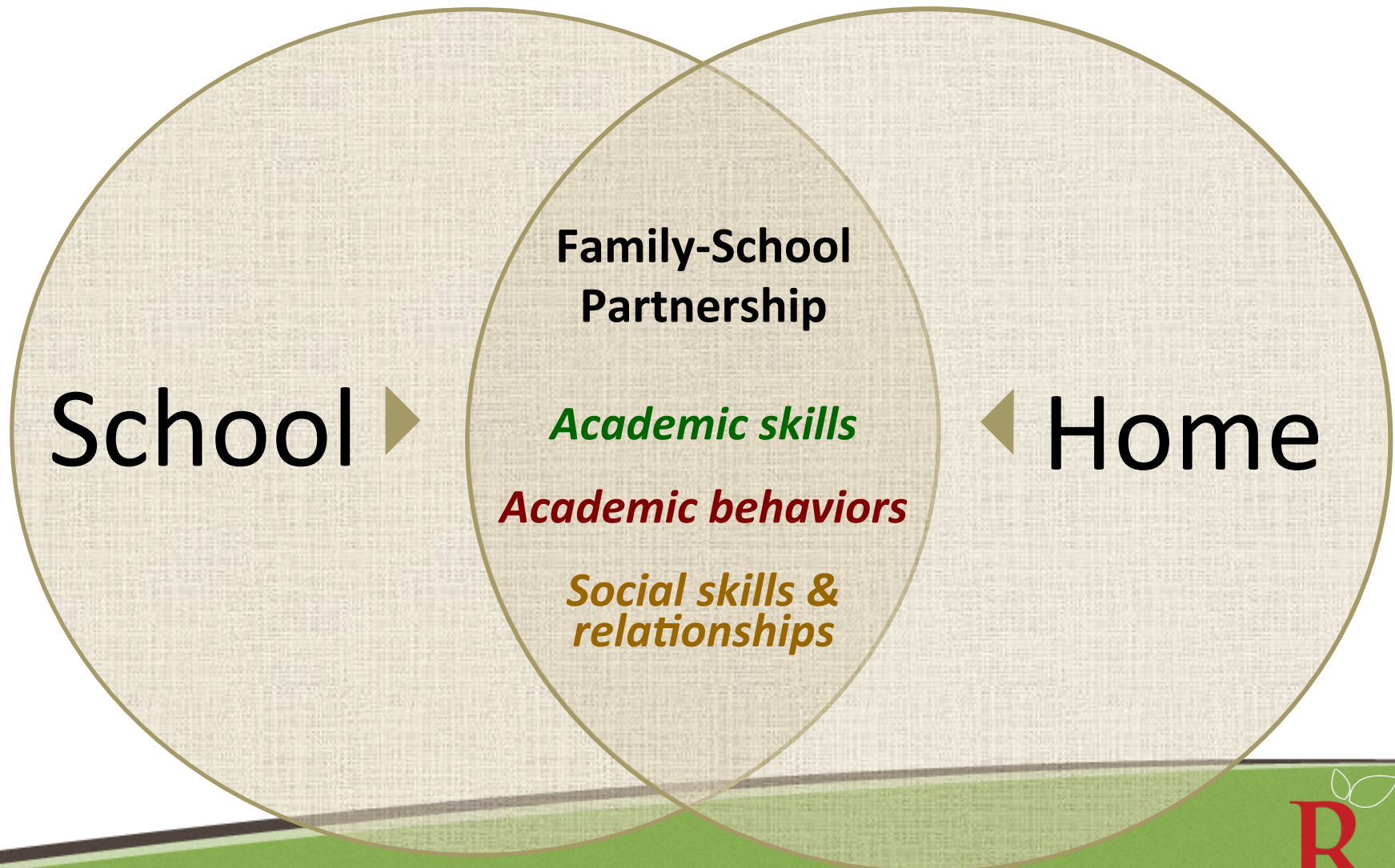
*Social Skills &  
Relationships*



# What Promotes Learning?



# What Strengthens Learning?





**HOW CAN THIS BE ACCOMPLISHED?**

# Family-School Partnerships



# 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)

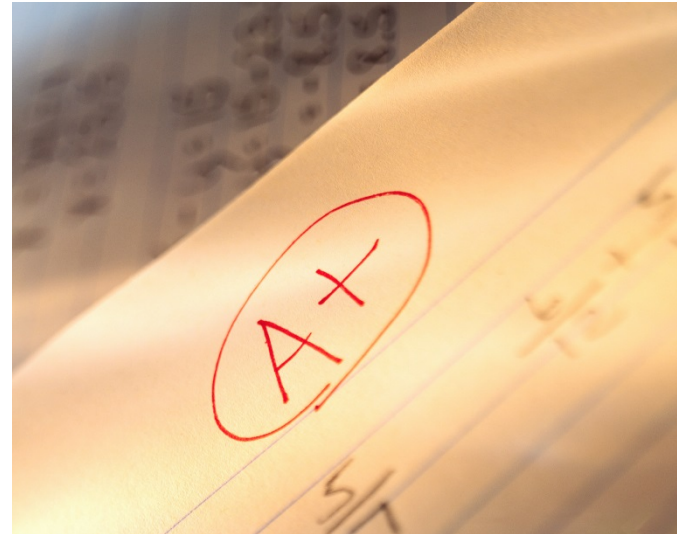


# Goals of Family-School Partnerships

- 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”)



# 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

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$





# CBC in Rural Communities

Addresses challenges to partnerships in rural settings:

- Provides access to effective instructional and behavioral supports
- Increases meaningful interactions and communication between parents and teachers
- Fosters shared responsibilities for parents and teachers who work as partners
- Focuses on and enhances strengths of all parties
- Strengthens relationships through cooperative, goal-directed, solution-oriented services



# 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

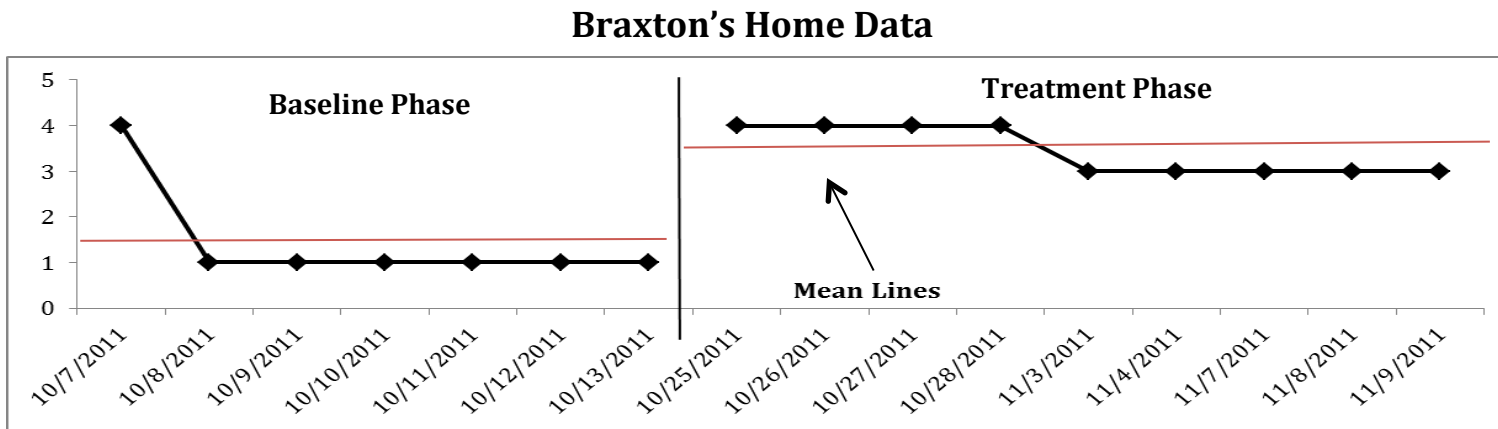
- **Target behaviors:**
  - Home: Following directions
  - School: Following directions
- **Home and school plan components:**
  - Chart moves, scheduled breaks, after school routine checklist, labeled praise for compliance, contingent rewards, and a home-school note



# Braxton's Outcomes

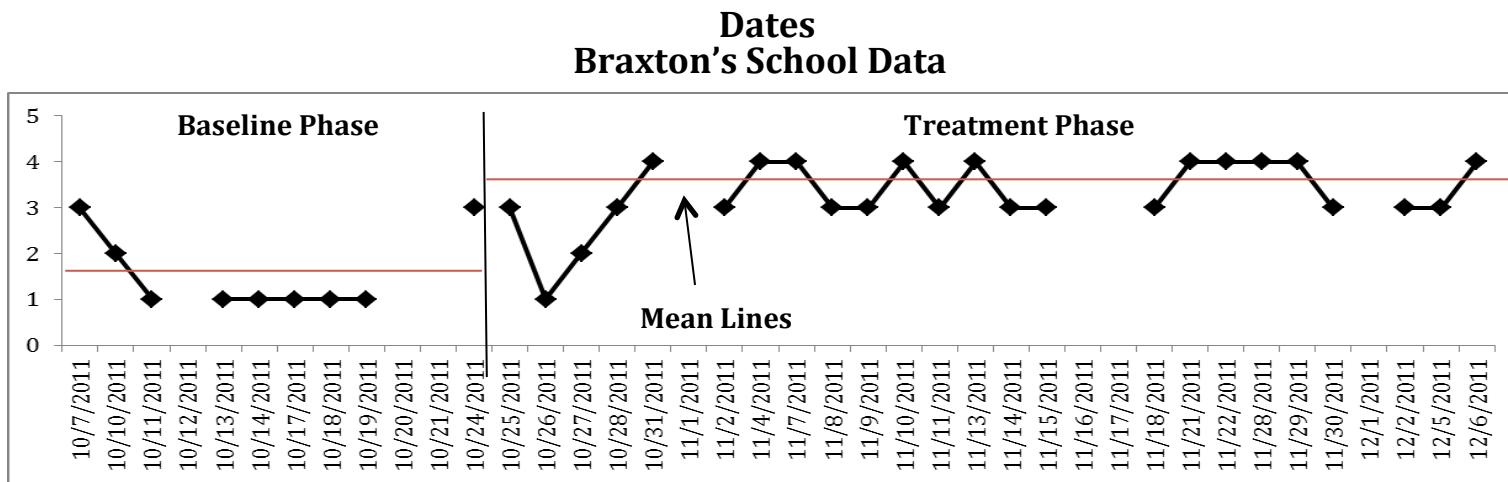
Following Directions:

Performance Rating Scale



Following Directions:

Performance Rating Scale

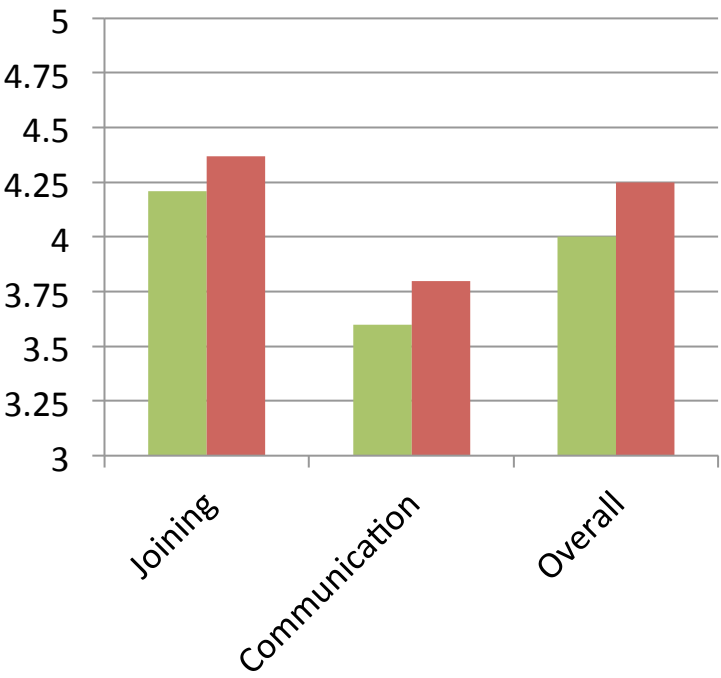


Dates

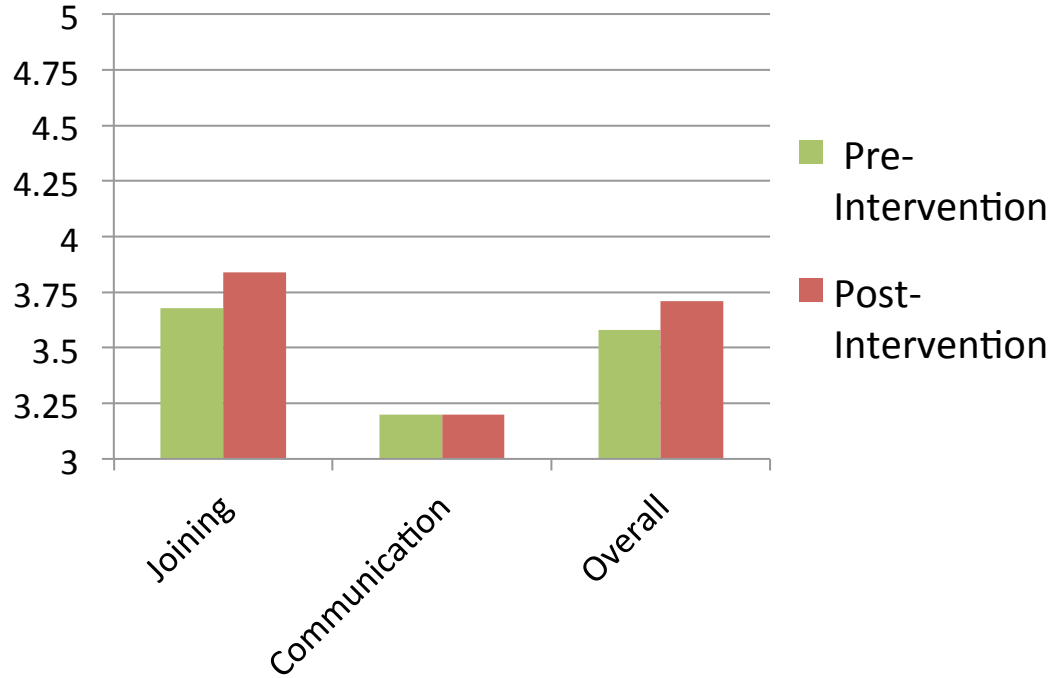


# Parent-Teacher Relationship

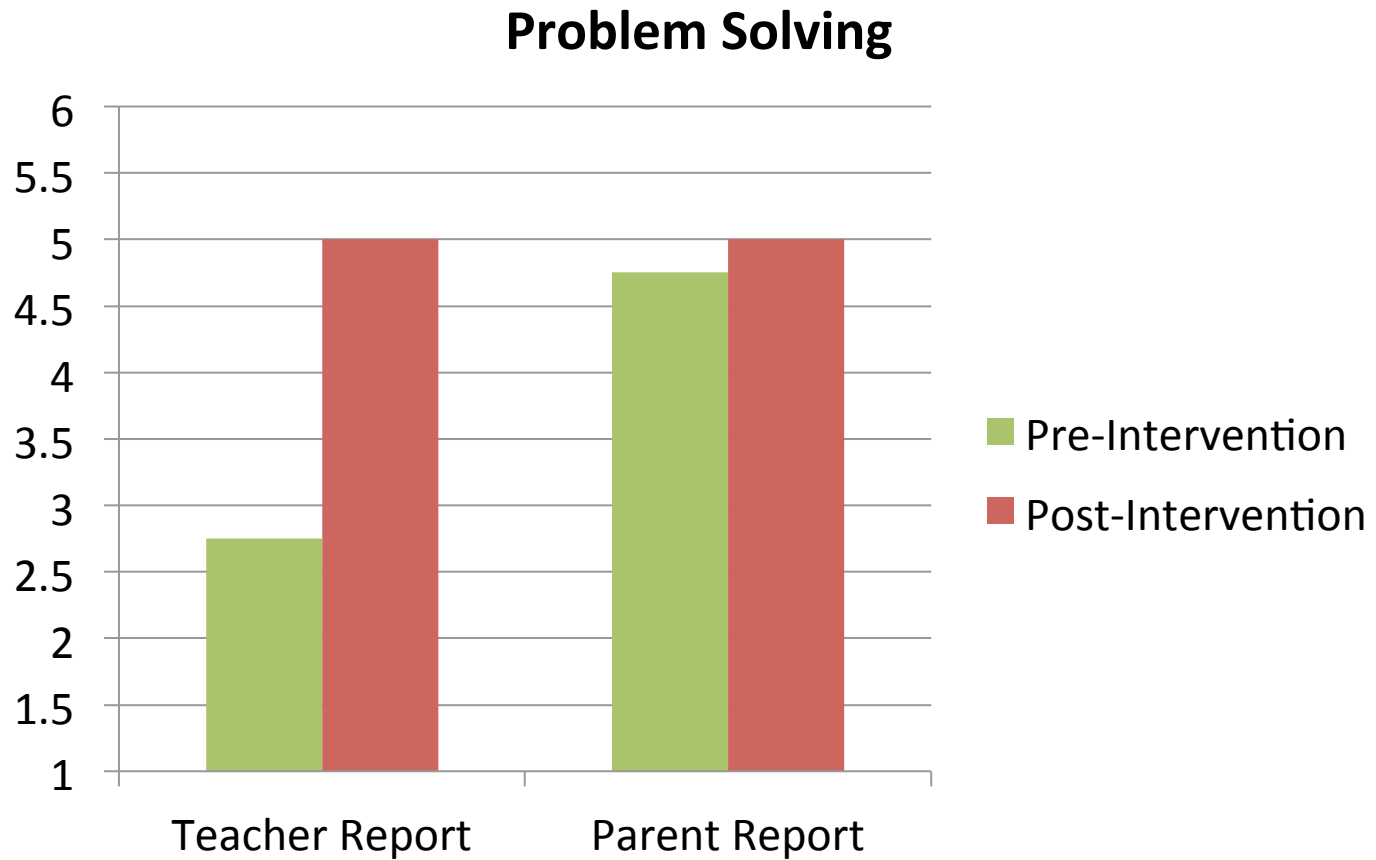
### Parent Report



### Teacher Report



# Parent-Teacher Competency in Problem Solving





# 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



# Key Take Away Point 1

Family-School Partnerships are critical in promoting positive outcomes for young children in rural communities.



# Key Take Away Point 2

CBC appears promising for students in rural schools whose behavioral challenges interfere with learning. CBC improves (a) children's social skills and disruptive behaviors, (b) teachers' use of effective strategies for addressing challenging student behavior, and (c) parents' connections with their children's teachers, their involvement in their children's education and their self-efficacy for helping their child succeed.



# Key Take Away Point 3

Through CBC, family-school consultants guide parents and teachers through a structured strengths-based, problem-solving approach to develop and implement cross-setting plans that contribute to successful outcomes for students. Consultants also serve to build a meaningful partnership between the child's parent(s) and teacher that can persist and maintain over time.



# Contact Information

Susan M. Sheridan, [ssheridan2@unl.edu](mailto:ssheridan2@unl.edu)

Gina M. Kunz, [gkunz2@unl.edu](mailto:gkunz2@unl.edu)

Amanda Witte, [awitte2@unl.edu](mailto:awitte2@unl.edu)

**Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools**

Website: <http://cyfs.unl.edu>

**National Center for Research on Rural Education (R<sup>2</sup>Ed)**

Website: <http://r2ed.unl.edu>

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# Facilitated Discussion

- How can information from this study inform or advance early childhood practice?
- How can information from this study inform or advance early childhood public policy?
- What additional research is needed to inform or advance early childhood practice and/or policy?

