Closing the Achievement Gap with a Vengeance: Park City School District, Utah
ON THE FRONT COVERS:

Asperger: Mason Johnson “Aspie” child, with his mother Rachel. Article featured on page 6. Photo by Kami Averett, Artography by Kami: artographybykami.weebly.com

Bright Spots: Closing the Achievement Gap with a Vengeance: McPolin Elementary School, Park City, Utah

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This issue of *The Utah Special Educator* focuses on the bright spots or positive deviance in Utah schools. Positive deviance is “an approach to behavioral and social change based on the observation that in a community, there are people (Positive Deviants) whose uncommon but successful behaviors or strategies enable them to find better solutions to a problem than their peers, despite having no special resources or knowledge” (wikipedia.org).

A well-known example of positive deviance occurred in 1990, when Jerry and Monica Sternin took part in the *Save the Children* project for millions of malnourished children in Vietnam. Rather than seek help from outside experts to solve the problem, they went to the villages in order to discover the positive deviants—those families whose children were healthier than the rest. They then assisted other villages with teaching each other how to use these effective practices with their own children. The project emphasized examining where the problem didn’t happen—the positive deviant moments—and in understanding how that happened, moving the effective practitioners into an awareness of their competence and then working with them to spread their successful practices.

Stern and Choo (2000) wrote: “The traditional model for social and organizational change doesn’t work...Maybe the problem is with the whole model for how change can actually happen. Maybe the problem is that you can’t import change from the outside in. Instead, you have to find small, successful but ‘deviant’ practices that are already working in the organization and amplify them. Maybe, just maybe, the answer is already alive in the organization—and change comes when you find it.”

A less well-known example of positive deviance is powerfully illustrated by the William Kamkwamba story. In 2002, when William was 14, his poor farming family could no longer afford to send him to school when Malawi was hit with its worst famine in decades. He decided to continue studying on his own, however, and chanced upon a library book about wind power. Much to the amusement of his friends and neighbors, William began constructing a homemade wind turbine from...
wood scraps, plastic, and old bicycle parts. But their skepticism quickly turned to wonder when William demonstrated that his contraption could provide enough energy to power lights and radios in his family’s home, when only 2% of Malawi’s residents enjoyed household electricity.

William continued to modify and improve his homespun turbine, which he eventually linked to a series of car batteries to store electricity for his family and their neighbors. When word of his design reached the organizers of the TED Global Conference in Tanzania, they invited him to appear as a guest speaker, which subsequently led to a wealth of attention. Besides continuing his studies, William has traveled extensively to explore renewable power sources in other parts of the world, and he hopes to bring large-scale wind power to Africa one day. (To learn more about the amazing story of William Kamkwamba and his windmill, visit: http://www.youtube.com.

Regarding the challenges of initiating and managing positive change in education, Fixsen and Blase (2006) remind us that “we cannot change a whole system at one time, we need to manage the old while creating the new and work to retain the best (of the old) while changing the rest.” Ultimately, the most effective way of embedding and sustaining positive change is to find a way of identifying and promoting positive deviance. The best way the UPDC has found for doing this is by examining the data. The data speak volumes about what district leadership teams, principals, and teachers are doing to achieve positive outcomes for students, particularly students who are most at risk for academic failure.

For example, Park City School District has systematically worked to close the achievement gap between their general student population and students with special needs. The district’s Criterion Reference Test (CRT) data show that students with disabilities and ELL populations are making steady academic progress. Such progress is the result of a strong multi-tier system of supports (MTSS) in each school, principals who understand and fulfill their roles as instructional leaders, and a district leadership team that makes student learning their main focus. (For more information about the Park City School District’s successes in closing the achievement gap, see the Van Gorder, Todd, and Burchett article in this issue.)

Another example of positive deviance is found in Lewiston Elementary, a Title I school in Cache County School District. Lewiston recently won national recognition for academic achievement. It’s one of about 300 schools in the nation and one of only two schools in Utah that was selected.

The school is located in rural Lewiston. They have an enrollment of about 500 students in grades K through five. Forty-eight percent of the students are economically disadvantaged, and about ten percent are English language learners. Despite these conditions, students score well above the state average, and make significant progress every year toward even higher scores. Under the instructional leadership of Adam Baker, principal at Lewiston, teachers and paraprofessionals at the school helped students achieve remarkable results.

Lewiston Elementary is a Utah Multi-Tier System of Supports (also known as ABC-UBI) project graduate. Differentiated, small group instruction; an evidence-based reading curriculum (http://www.youtube.com/user/iseesamdotcom); progress monitoring; parent involvement; and instructional coaching are some of the factors that helped contribute to the school’s success.

Park City School District and Lewiston Elementary School are just two examples of Utah districts and schools that are successfully implementing evidence-based practices that make a difference for all students. The UPDC will continue to identify the many bright spots in Utah districts and schools. We’ve discovered that these professionals have a low regard for the status quo. Their successes make it difficult for others to respond by saying: “That can’t work in Utah public schools,” or “Our school is different than yours,” or “That won’t work with students in my classroom.” Their passion for improving student outcomes is demonstrated by their relentless focus on implementing effective practices. It’s the kind of deviance worth following.

The articles in this issue promote practices designed to help struggling students achieve. They highlight the many bright spots we see in Utah schools and enable us to find better solutions to the challenges of effectively teaching diverse student populations.

Lowell K. Oswald, Wasatch Front Coordinator, Utah Personnel Development Center (UPDC)
Bright Spots in Utah: Improving Educational Results

Glenna Gallo, Director of Special Education, Utah State Office of Education

Utah educators have a strong history of providing quality instruction using innovative methods. That history continues today with school improvement activities being implemented at the local school and state levels in an ongoing effort to improve educational outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities. While there are a variety of ongoing improvement efforts in Utah districts and charter schools, they all have one common theme: improve educational results for students. In a September 2010 Utah Special Educator article, author Suraj Syal asked readers to “Follow the Bright Spots,” meaning to “investigate what is working and clone it” (http://essentialeducator.org/inst-inter/follow-the-bright-spots). To accomplish this task, we need to be aware of our current efforts and review our results to determine exactly what those Bright Spots are.

In late 2009, the Utah State Board of Education released Promises to Keep (http://www.schools.utah.gov/main/), the premise of which states that there are essential, core promises in public education in Utah, ensuring literacy, numeracy, quality instruction, and establishing curriculum with high standards and relevance for all Utah children. These core promises can raise Utah’s educational standards by requiring effective assessment to inform high quality instruction and accountability. For those involved in Utah public education, whether as an administrator, educator, related service provider, parent, or student, these promises strengthen and maintain an already existing statewide focus on the needs of all students, including students with disabilities. Utah schools are responding to Promises to Keep through implementation of research-based initiatives such as tiered instruction, Response to Intervention (RtI), school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports, and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in an ongoing effort to improve educator effectiveness and instruction, as well as student academic and behavior skills. We are able to identify the Bright Spots as schools improve student performance on state-wide assessments, reduce office disciplinary actions, and increase collaboration among educators.

The Utah State Office of Education Special Education Services section, in collaboration with the Utah Personnel Development Center (UPDC), is providing targeted IDEA-related technical assistance and professional development to school district and charter school
administrators and staff, parents, students with disabilities, and other stakeholders in order to create additional opportunities for learning, collaboration, and support. Our focus is to continue improving educational outcomes for students with disabilities throughout Utah. These technical assistance and professional development efforts are based on current research and student and educator need, and designed to proactively address current and upcoming state and federal requirements, and disseminate educational best practices. Some examples of ongoing state-level Bright Spots include:

- Utah continues to receive Personnel Improvement Center (PIC) support for attracting, developing, and supporting new and existing special education personnel. State universities and colleges with a teacher licensure program meet regularly with the USOE and school district special education directors to discuss needed skills for new special education teachers.

- Progress monitoring professional development is available to provide educators with additional skills to monitor instructional and intervention impact on student academic skills and behavior; thereby providing opportunities to adjust instruction to meet student needs quickly.

- The National Post-School Outcomes Center provides targeted technical assistance to Utah. The purpose of this statewide technical assistance is to support students to be ready for employment and adult life.

- Utah has recently received two federal assessment grants, one of which will assist in the development of a new alternate assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities, and will eventually replace the current Utah Alternate Assessment (UAA). The second grant will improve assessments for all students, including students with disabilities. This year students with the screen reader accommodation may access an embedded toolbar, which will read aloud test passages, questions, and answer options on all of Utah’s CRTs starting in the spring of 2011.

- The Utah State Board of Education adopted Common Core standards, which will be implemented in Utah over the next few years (Common Core Standards may be found at http://www.core-standards.org).

- At the recent state-sponsored Early Childhood Conference, Kellie Garcia and Jennifer Salazar, two Early Childhood Teachers of the Year, were recognized for exemplary teaching skills, collaboration, and mentoring.

Data, used to determine technical assistance and professional development needs, are collected in a variety of ways, such as from LEA self-assessments, state and federal reports (e.g., child count), UPIPS monitoring, and state-wide assessments. With the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) in 2004, the law was amended to require that each state develop a State Performance Plan (SPP) to evaluate the implementation of the IDEA through an additional collection and analysis of data. The SPP includes baseline data, measurable and rigorous targets, and improvement activities for 20 federally required indicators. These 20 indicators address both the academic and behavioral performance of students with disabilities in the state (e.g., graduation and dropout rates, performance on state-wide assessments, and least restrictive environment rates), as well as compliance requirements (e.g., initial evaluation timelines, correction of noncompliance as soon as possible and no later than one year). The Utah State Office of Education (USOE) compiles and analyzes data from all Utah school districts and charter schools to complete the Annual Performance Report (APR) describing progress on each indicator, which is submitted to the U.S. Department of Education each February. This report, along with the data used from each school district and charter school, is available publicly (APR and LEA data may be found at http://www.schools.utah.gov/sars/Quick-Links/Performance-Plan.aspx). Utah has continued to make improvements in the various indicators and we need to strive to progress even more.

State and LEA data show we are making progress in areas of our improvement efforts, but to increase the effect and sustain education improvement, Utah stakeholders need to continue to search for targeted and strategic improvement opportunities that directly impact students. I recently attended parent-teacher conferences with my 9th-grade daughter and had an opportunity to experience another Bright Spot when her geography teacher utilized technology, that is becoming commonplace in the lives of students and parents, to engage his students in learning beyond the classroom and encourage family-school partnerships. How did he do this? He simply provided us with an opportunity to sign up by text through our cell phones for his classroom Twitter page; this sign up provides all of us with free text messages of upcoming due dates of assignments and other interesting tidbits of geography-related information, which we were then able to use to initiate conversation about classroom discussions and prompt for upcoming projects. Special educators in the state are using technology, such as iPads, email, web pages, in creative ways to increase learning.

During my daily interactions with school and district personnel, students, and parents, I have many opportunities to see the Bright Spots in our educational system. These are the moments that remind me of the purpose of our efforts; efforts which include whole-systems collaboration to ensure that together we reach our goals of improved educational outcomes for all students.
One District’s Journey Into Tiered Instruction (RTI/MTSS)

In June of 2009, the Park City Student Services Department and Curriculum Department sat down with our elementary principals to review our elementary language arts CRT data, paying particular attention to subgroups. We asked the question, “Are we happy with our data?” The answer was a resounding, “No!” We were at a crossroads in our school district. With one of the highest second language student ratios in the state of Utah, we were failing to consistently close the achievement gap of our Limited English Proficient (LEP), special education, Hispanic, and low socio-economic students with the performance of our Caucasian students. Our LEP scores were consistently below the state average. District administrators asked themselves, “Why was this happening?” Other districts in the state were showing much better results with far more challenging populations and far fewer resources. While individual schools had put forth efforts in various ways to address their individual needs, the results were discouraging. A decision was made at that meeting that we could not wait another year to act. Serious changes needed to be made and those changes would need to be coordinated and involve all schools.

The District Needed to Focus and Coordinate at Every Level

We realized that our entire system needed to be re-focused. As in many districts, Park City has very hard working administrators who focused on the needs of their schools first. District administrators, wearing many hats, went about their business independent of each other, occasionally working on common projects together. We decided early on that for any meaningful long-term change to happen, there had to be a coordinated effort as a team across the district, which was a new approach for our schools. Student Services had to coordinate with the Curriculum Department. All of our funding efforts needed to be focused on one main goal, which was to close the achievement gap with a vengeance. When principals left our bi-monthly meetings, we all had to be on the same page, disseminating the same message. No longer could the message be, “The district is making us do this.” From that point forward, we were all, “the district.” We also needed the school board and superintendent to be on the same page and support the coordinated efforts to close the achievement gap. They needed to understand the changes we were putting in place and support those changes when things got tough, which they did as a result of several board presentations articulating the plan.

First Things First

Where would we start? We decided immediately that we would have to start at the beginning: Tier 1 instruction. We decided our efforts for year one needed to address how our regular education teachers were providing Tier 1 instruction to all students with consistency and fidelity. Were we able to show that 80% of our elementary students were proficient in language arts? Overall, school-by-school data indicated, “yes.” However, when that data was disaggregated by sub-groups, the answer was clearly, “no.” In 2009, our elementary school’s Caucasian students registered a 95% passing rate on our elementary language arts score. However, our LEP pass rate was a dismal 55%. This data had been fairly consistent for the preceding years as well, and represented a 40 percent gap! Our special education numbers were higher (67%) but still left a lot of room for improvement.

We needed to attack the Tier 1 deficits on many fronts. Listed are the multiple actions we took and continue to take in our efforts to shore up Tier 1 instruction in our district:

- Comprehensive Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) professional development for every elementary staff member. One Friday afternoon per month, September through May, was dedicated mandatory training. This has continued this school year to finish the
professional development on the entire model and move on to complete implementation in each classroom. Teachers were required to implement the SIOP protocol in phases starting with content and language objectives and adding the other components as they were presented. These were expected to be observable in the walkthroughs described below.

- Comprehensive Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) professional development for every district administrator, which included principals, cabinet members and the superintendent. One full day per month was dedicated to training each administrator in understanding and utilizing the SIOP protocol. This training also included our district coaches to support their work in each school assisting and collaborating with teachers in their particular buildings. Principals and district staff began the process of utilizing the SIOP protocol in our walkthroughs. Eventually principals will be required to complete the SIOP protocol on their staff and report on those findings both as a whole school and for individual teachers to the superintendent.

- Comprehensive Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) professional development for every secondary (8-12) staff member. Secondary schools submitted SIOP professional development plans that were approved for last year and this current year. Principals had similar expectations of the secondary teaching staff and utilized the SIOP protocol in their walkthroughs as well. Mandatory expectations will continue to grow throughout this current year in the implementation of SIOP in every classroom.

- A SIOP model teacher cohort district-wide was created using Emergency Immigrant Funding. Each school in the district had the opportunity to select highly skilled content area teachers to be trained to teach SIOP model classrooms. Teachers were given intensive five-day training in SIOP and then were required to gradually implement SIOP principles throughout the school year. An independent trainer, hired by the school district, worked individually with each cohort member and led monthly study groups to discuss their progress. These teachers now serve as a school-level resource to other teachers to support the implementation of SIOP in each classroom. A second cohort of 20 model teachers have been identified to be trained during the 2010-11 school year to help build our capacity to support SIOP at each school. Each teacher earns a stipend of $1,000 for the extra duties required by the training.

- We established a data-collection system built into our student information system (Powerschool). Data personnel were hired using AARA funding from both Title 1 and special education. Our technology department in collaboration with data personnel created a student detail report that reflects a snapshot of a student’s educational history. This report includes a student’s entire attendance record, standardized testing results over time (ITBS), criterion-referenced scores over time (U-PASS), language acquisition scores over time (UALPA), and reading progress-monitoring data over time (DIBELS). This year we will also be able to include data from Tiers 2 and 3 interventions in the report of those students participating in more intensive intervention. Each grade-level teacher has access to this report with a click of the mouse. Data is imported as progress monitoring occurs so the report remains current.

Continued on page 10
We required mandatory weekly grade-level-team Tiered Instruction meetings at each elementary school. Budgets were established using Title 1 ARRA funding and district funding to pay for half-day substitutes at each school site on Fridays. The first several months, only the grade level teachers and building principal were invited to attend. With the focus on Tier 1 instruction, we needed to reinforce the idea that all the teachers on a grade-level team were responsible for every student in that grade. During these meetings, the Student Detail Report (described above) is used to evaluate intervention effectiveness for students not meeting benchmark standards. Progress is discussed and all reading instruction is considered including the introduction of more intensive intervention where necessary. Gradually, reading specialists, ESL teachers and special education staff were incorporated. At present, special education staff attend meetings only if the team is discussing the progress of students already identified as eligible for special education.

Superintendent/Cabinet conducted weekly school visits. One morning per week, the superintendent and cabinet have visited two of our eight schools. The school principal at each site participates in classroom walkthroughs with this district-level administrative team. This has been an incredibly useful activity. Not only has this effort reinforced the importance of the district’s efforts to close the achievement gap, but it has allowed administrators to see all the incredible work our teachers do on a daily basis.

We began Latinos in Action (LIA) class at Park City High School. LIA students were trained in reading and math tutoring strategies. Then, they were assigned to classrooms in one of our Title I elementary schools to serve as positive role models and to assist struggling students in reading and math. During the 2010-11 school year, a second cohort was established at Treasure Mountain Middle School (grades 8-9) to serve our other Title I elementary school.

Tying our current model of Tiered intervention to the creation of a Response to Intervention process has been a formidable task. We recognized the importance of making data-based decisions about interventions (what and how much?); and ultimately, special education eligibility. It was clear that these data were coming from a number of different sources and complicated to pull together. What has evolved, thanks to our incredible data manager and web master, is the ability to have a couple clicks of the mouse produce the necessary data to drive decision making about the possible disability status of an individual student following the implementation of interventions over a period of time.

What about Tier 2 and Tier 3?

A great challenge we have faced over a period of several years has been developing interventions. It was important to identify interventions that we could afford, staff, measure consistently, and be able to monitor the fidelity of implementation. Using the problem-solving model, teams continually ran into barriers about what to do for students who continued to struggle. The infrastructure was not in place to deliver interventions. This led to a process that was frustrating to all who were involved. In the problem-solving meetings, teams were feeling the pressure to come up with things that were new and highly individualized for struggling students. We quickly realized that there was not a consistent intervention being used across schools. There were many options available but their implementation varied from school to school. Our ability to measure the effectiveness of interventions was limited because we faced so many fidelity issues and there was only a small group receiving each intervention. We also knew that in a pure sense, Tier 3 interventions were absent from our model. Reading instruction had not been set up in a systematic way to increase the intensity of the intervention when needed. One of our main goals last year was to develop and strengthen our Tiered interventions.

A Committee, What Else?

We established a committee that included ESL, reading and special education personnel, administrators, and Kathleen Brown, Ph.D., from the University of Utah. They reviewed the research on programs that were currently in use somewhere in the district with the goal of recommending standard protocol interventions across the elementary schools. Using the recommendation of this committee, a very limited number of interventions would be used district-wide for struggling readers. The district settled on the following interventions for Tiers 2 and 3:

- **Early and Next Steps**—Grades 1-3 (At this point, the availability of this intervention is based on trained personnel but each site was required to begin with at least first grade)
- **Reading Mastery**—Grades K, 4-5 (This program may be used for both ESL and special education instruction as well as an intervention within regular education)
- **Language!**—Grades 4-5 (Intensive students 90 minutes per day)

New This Year!

Along with everything else going on last year, the district had already begun the process of adopting a new language arts series. A committee, that had piloted several options, selected Houghton-Mifflin’s Journey’s. One really cool thing about this new series is the inclusion of ESL strategies and SIOP principles built into Tier 1 instruction. Along with the new curriculum comes the mandate that the core language arts instruction be scheduled for 180 minutes per day, Monday through Thursday. One hour whole group, one hour small group, 30 minutes targeted Instruction (Tier 2), and 30 minutes language arts (focused writing, vocabulary). Interventions described above are in addition to this core language arts instruction.

Additional Supports

- Along with our Tiered changes we also have three day a week after school programs for our struggling students focusing on specific skills. These are funded through our Education Foundation at one school, Title 1 ARRA funds at another and are supported with our Homeless/Minority funding for another school.

- We ran a six-week summer school for targeted students paid for with Title 1 funds. The last of our ARRA funds have been set aside to help fund the program for a second year. Data will be reviewed to see how effective this proves to be for our students.

- Family Literacy classes are offered at three schools through our state family literacy grant.

- We are in the process of expanding our current preschool offerings and hope to go district-wide next year putting a three and four-year-old classroom in each elementary school. We believe this to be one of the most critical links in closing the achievement gap. Once again, the district has complete support for this project from the school board and superintendent on down.
Results!

As evidenced by the CRT data, our district is on its way to closing the gap. We have a long way to go but feel we have the tools and personnel in place to make a difference with our students.

What Have We Learned?

Developing our Tiered system has been and continues to be a long journey that requires patience, flexibility, and the cooperation/collaboration of everyone in the school district. The buy-in and support of leadership is critical. Changes this extensive could not have been pulled off successfully without the complete support from the entire school district leadership team. This team begins with the school board and includes district-level administration and each building principal. The role of the building principal is critical to district-wide changes. They are the instructional leaders that ensure required professional activities teachers have been trained in are implemented in the classroom. They are able to do this through a systematic plan of accountability that involves all players. The necessity of personnel development, required participation, together with required implementation cannot be overstated. The support of the technology and data personnel has also been immeasurable. We are confident that by training our coaches and our model SIOP classrooms teachers, as well as using a curriculum that we feel confident about, we will be able to fully support the implementation of a strong Tier 1 program in language arts. The next step is to take what we have learned and apply it to the other academic, social and behavioral areas in which our students struggle.

Editor’s Note: The authors presented this paper to the Utah Special Education Consortium on 11/11/2010. To view this archived presentation in WIMBA, go to: http://wiki.updc.org/groups/consortium/blogs
Achievement Gap?

The achievement gap is an academic language gap. In most schools, the lowest performing subgroups continue to be English Language Learners (ELL), students in special education, and students in poverty. The common denominator between each of these three groups is the lack of proficiency in academic language. ELL’s lack of academic language is due to lack of exposure (language different). Special education students often exhibit academic difficulties (language disabilities) that limit academic progress in mainstream environments. Students living in poverty often lack the background knowledge and vocabulary associated with enriched environments, and struggle with comprehension and overall achievement in content classes (language deprived). Separate, pullout, catch-up classes for these subgroups have traditionally failed to close this achievement gap. Removing students from content level classes to participate in separate (and not equal) instruction further removes them from access to the academic core and the specialized, essential academic language associated with comprehension and learning. These three groups of students suffer from the “Matthew Effect,” where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Students who need the most language exposure get the least; only two to four percent of their day is spent practicing academic language (CALLA, 2008).

Teachers Matter Most

How effectively teachers deliver content has the greatest impact on student learning that is in the control of a school and district. The single greatest determinant of learning is not socioeconomic factors or funding levels, it is instruction (Schmoker, 2006). Teaching had six to ten times as much impact on achievement as all other factors combined (Mortimore & Sammons, 1987). Quality professional development (PD) is the key to supporting quality faculty, and quality professional development must be carefully planned and supported. Quality PD is observable (did the PD make a difference in teacher practice and is it being used?), measurable (how often, to what extent and to what outcomes is the PD being applied in the classroom?), and coachable (a set of well-defined practices observable by trained coaches and administration, and ongoing coaching cycles leading to increased fidelity of implementation and reflective practice are observed and strengthened). When done well, professional development will “stick,” teachers will be supported as they adopt and apply new practices, and measurable improvement in school culture and student achievement will be evidenced. When not well conceived or delivered, professional development can appear fragmented, teachers may lack the ongoing, formative support necessary for successful implementation, and the initiative can die an ugly and expensive death.

For the past eleven years, this writer has had the pleasure of assisting districts and schools in Utah with their professional development needs and plans. During this time, I have seen many promising practices and initiatives come and go, while others have thrived and are making a difference for children and youth of Utah. Why the difference between “life” and “death” in professional development? My best answer, as the only answer that always works for challenging situations is “It depends,” perhaps a convenient platitude. In reality, there is not any ONE answer, as programs and practices that thrive in one district or school do not always adapt 100% (without adaptation and consideration of local circumstances) to another district. I have found that it is as important to know and be able to balance the best research, with in-depth, personal knowledge of district demographics and strong, trusting, reciprocal relationships with key district personnel. All teaching/learning begins and is supported by quality relationships. For years, I have had the distinct pleasure of supporting Park City educators and collaborating with them on their professional development needs. Because of this relationship, I offer the following observations.
Specialists at the Utah Personnel Development Center (UPDC) are concerned that the PD support they give to districts will impact the bottom line, meaning more students doing better work. In order to examine the delivery of our professional development activities, we have adopted the Five Levels of Professional Development Evaluation as proposed by Thomas Guskey (see attached table). From our experience, few district or state-level professional development workshops or conferences adequately address all five necessary levels of evaluation, fall short of their desired goals, and many fail or disappear. This reality is as frustrating to PD specialists as it is to district personnel and teachers. Consider a conference or multi-day district in-service you may have recently attended. If at the end of the training an assessment was required, it was most likely a self-report of participant satisfaction, level 1. Level 1 constitutes an important step (worth asking), but produces the weakest change regarding implementation (perhaps 5%) improvement in practice. If only Level 1 is assessed and addressed, this is a significant waste of precious district resources, both financial and personnel. Often Level 2 is also assessed, where participants are asked to reflect on their pre and post workshop knowledge and skills. Although better than Level 1 alone, Level 2 fails to significantly improve or change practice, and may be considered weak professional development (little bang for the buck). If the goal of the conference/workshop is awareness of an issue, this format may be adequate. However, much professional development with greater aspirations falls into this category. It is reinforcing for educators to attend large, one or two-day conferences where the big-name speakers are engaging, the atmosphere positive and the refreshments adequate, but implementation and systematic change in practice from such events rarely translates to improved student outcomes.

Park City did their homework. They realized that if they were serious about closing the achievement gap between their traditionally high performing Caucasian students and that of lower performing subgroups, they needed to concentrate on increasing the focus on academic language in all Tier 1 classrooms. To translate this vision into action would take collaboration, commitment, and a special, ongoing focus on professional development. After consultation with consultants and considering several options, they decided that the SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) model would be the best option, as it is a content-free system of delivery (teacher behaviors), focusing on building academic language and increasing student engagement K-12th grade. SIOP enhanced instruction would become the foundation for their Tier 1 program to support all academics in all classrooms.

Why is the Park City program for unmistakable impact working? For the district perspective, read the preceding article by Tom Vangorder et. al. From the perspective of a personnel development specialist, the following are the key research-evidenced practices that have supported this BRIGHT SPOT, and are presented here.

**Five Levels of Professional Development Evaluation** (Thomas Guskey, 2007)

**LEVEL 1:** Participants’ Reaction, designed to improve program design and delivery.

Park City elementary educators initial satisfaction with SIOP professional development was less than favorable. First, SIOP was seen as a set of teacher behaviors that would benefit only English Language Learners and perhaps special education students, while “dumbing or slowing down” the learning for the majority of Park City students. Many educators were exposed to SIOP while obtaining their ESL endorsements, or through sporadic, school professional development, and were opposed to hearing the same message again. Initial trainings were held in school cafeterias with all elementary educators in attendance, and differentiating in this venue was not possible with one trainer. Level 1 assessment data were collected, educators’ concerns were listened to, and the training design and delivery modified. Dedicated and well-trained SIOP coaches stepped up, then designed and delivered differentiated training sessions by grade level/specialty, and this improved teacher satisfaction and buy-in significantly.

**LEVEL 2:** Participants Learning, to improve program content, format, and organization.

Participants participated in formative workshop activities designed to assess their knowledge and skills for learning and applying SIOP components into their instruction. Reflection papers were required of all participants, and coaches started to compile a portfolio of teacher examples to share with grade-level teams. **Continued on page 14**
The question was less about entry-level knowledge of the SIOP model, and more about how to implement the required teacher and student behaviors into an already packed core program.

**LEVEL 3: Organization Support and Change**, to document and improve organizational support and inform future change efforts.

Administration from all levels and coaches received a parallel strand of professional development in order to formatively assess and lead progress. The focus on this strand was to raise awareness of the Why and HOW of SIOP, and to formally assess if practices were being followed with fidelity through observations and classroom walk-throughs. In addition, the Superintendent and district administration continue to conduct a rotating schedule of weekly walk-through visits of classrooms and schools. Building level administration has “homework” to document that walk-through observations and feedback were taking place. Level 3 supports continue to make a significant contribution to the progress of Park City students.

**LEVEL 4: Participants’ use of new Knowledge and Skills**, to document and improve the implementation of program content.

Park City already had a talented cohort of literacy and SIOP coaches, and this group met regularly to plan observational schedules and support teachers. More coaches were added to this cohort and trained. SIOP coaches played a pivotal role in planning and delivering professional development activities, which significantly helped teacher buy-in and practice. Coaches participated in separate trainings with their administrators, which facilitated closer collaboration within buildings. In at least one elementary school, coaches capture teacher lessons on video, edit these, and bring them to weekly grade-level teacher meetings for viewing and group coaching (Professional Learning Communities). This last development is extraordinary, and illustrates how a transparent collaborative school culture benefits teachers and student outcomes.

**LEVEL 5: Student Learning Outcomes**, to focus and improve all aspects of program design, implementation and follow-up, and to demonstrate the overall impact of professional development.

Data, data, data. As part of their comprehensive RTI program, Park City designed and modified existing and new data gathering procedures, and created simple, streamlined reports to proactively identify individual student learning concerns at each school. These reports were then used by school and district level RTI teams to problem solve and design tiered interventions. These data provide administration and teams with all of the pertinent data needed to examine progress on a weekly basis, including attendance, behavior, and academic achievement. The data speak for themselves; the majority of students formally at risk are making progress towards closing the achievement gap between themselves and their peers, and as a related benefit, referrals for special education evaluation are significantly decreased. For example, in an elementary school that typically made 12 referrals to special education in one year, that number has dropped
to two referrals. Now, when a student is unsuccessful at tier 3 in language arts, the assessment team uses those data to determine eligibility.

**In summary, Park City:**

- Asked the right questions and refused to accept NO for an answer.
- Invited all of the key players to participate.
- Developed a shared, non-negotiable vision: all children and youth WILL learn.
- Established leadership at all levels; top-down, bottom-up...
- Spent more time planning and collaborating, and less time admiring the problem.
- Improved and integrated their data collection and decision-making practices.
- Focused on quality professional development for teachers and built in all levels of PD evaluation to drive their practice.
- Focused on quality PD for administrators and instructional coaches to ensure fidelity of implementation and positive school culture change.
- Developed an attitude of change as a work in progress, of constant improvement, over time.
- Focused on building and maintaining their infrastructure from within, without over reliance on outside consultants, or one-time sources of new income.

Park City truly has the “right stuff,” and is my nominee for the bright spot of the year. Well done friends, well done!

**Editor’s Note:** Principals, is there an achievement gap at your school between the general student population and students with disabilities or English language learners? Would you like to learn how to increase achievement of typically lower performing subgroups while maintaining high standards and academic rigor? Could you dedicate two days away from your school to learn and practice a set of research-based practices that will make a difference in student outcomes? If you answered YES to one or more of these questions, then the Utah Coaching Network (UCN) administrative strand is for you. The next UCN training session for school principals will be held on March 17 & 18, 2011 at the Provo Marriott Conference Center. Online registration for this event will be available January 24, 2011 at: [http://www.updc.org/registration/](http://www.updc.org/registration/)
Behind the Schoolhouse Door: *Eight Skills Every Teacher Should Have*

Glenn Latham, Utah State University (January, 1997)
The story is told of a boy who was seen searching frantically for a coin he had lost. It was dark. The boy was down on his hands and knees beneath the corner street light looking for his coin. He was very intent. A man happened by and asked the boy what he was looking for. It went like this:

Boy: “I dropped a coin and I’m trying to find it.”
Man: “Where did you drop the coin?”
Boy: “Oh, I dropped it over there,” as he pointed to a spot well beyond the area illuminated by the street light.
Man: “If you dropped the coin over there, why are you looking for it over here?”
Boy: “Because it’s lighter over here.”

Like that little boy, the education decision makers of America, over the centuries, have spent their time and energies—wasted their time and energies—looking in all the wrong places for the answers to education’s most compelling and perplexing problems. Rather than looking for answers where the problems are, that is, in the classroom where education takes place, they have been looking elsewhere. In fact, they have been looking almost everywhere else. With what effect? Nothing of substance has changed. That is, the process of teaching children has not changed nor improved systematically in any measurable way. This is a centuries-old dilemma with which education has just never come to grips. In 1632, John Amos Comenius, the father of modern day group instruction, in his book The Great Didactic noted, “For more than a hundred years much complaint has been made of the unmethodological way in which schools are conducted but it is only within the last 30 that any serious attempt has been made to find a remedy for this state of things. And with what results? Schools remain exactly as they were.”

In 1993, Dr. David Brite, President of the Children’s Television Network, noted, “Schools today are one of the few places in our society that our grandparents would easily recognize” (Brite, 1993). Modern day educational researchers have come to the same conclusion noting that, “Teaching patterns [have remained] unchanged over the past century” (Neevels and Gage, 1991, p.7).

Having experienced what works, and knowing what the data say about effective instruction, I began in 1980 to visit schools and classrooms across the United States and throughout the world to observe what actually happens in classrooms between teachers and learners, and to ask educators what can be done to improve teachers’ ability to function successfully in the classroom. The study took me into 252 schools in all 50 states, all American Territories and Protectorates, and 14 foreign countries. Interviews were conducted with 769 teachers, 253 administrators, and 23 “other” school personnel, primarily school counselors and psychologists. Observational data were taken in 303 classrooms, of which 134 were in elementary schools, 69 were in middle/jr. high schools, 51 were in high schools, and 49 were “others,” including alternative schools, private schools, special schools, and residential schools. Geographically, 97 schools were located in rural and remote areas, 128 were urban/suburban schools, and 27 were inner city schools. Eighty-eight percent of the schools were selected at random. Visits to schools in foreign countries were typically not randomly selected since there were often governmental regulations prohibiting spontaneous visits to schools. Also language barriers made it necessary that arrangements be made in advance.

These visits were conducted over a 16-year period (1980-1996), with results ranging from delightful to distressing.

The findings which produced the greatest delight were that, universally, teachers are remarkable people who are extremely concerned for the education and general well-being of their students, and who want to do a good job serving their students. From these interviews and visits came touching accounts of teachers who labored under immense personal, economic, political, and organizational/administrative constraints to serve the children in their classes.

Among the most distressing findings were the frustrations and even anger teachers expressed for how poorly they were trained at the university college of education level to teach and to manage student behavior. When I asked teachers to rate the adequacy of their college of education teacher training programs in preparing them for their work in the classroom the average rating of all responses (on a five point scale, 1 being inadequate to 5 being adequate) was 2.41. When asked to rate the adequacy of their training in preparing them to manage student behavior, using the same scale, the average of all responses was 1.71. When asked to rate the quality of the support services available to them through school psychology and counseling programs in working with teachers serving behavior-problem students (again, using the same 5-point scale), the average response was 1.27. It is no surprise to any knowledgeable person in education that college of education teacher training programs are simply not—as a rule—doing an adequate job preparing teachers for the work that lies ahead of them in the classroom (Rigden, 1996, p. 64).

It seems doubly tragic that even though we know what works for both instruction and the management of student behavior, what is known is not being universally taught in our college of education teacher training programs. Occasionally, when I came upon classes where splendid things were happening and teachers were being remarkably effective, by the teachers’ own admission, the skills they possessed which accounted for their remarkable success were rarely if ever linked to anything they had learned in their college of education teacher training programs. They noted to me time and time again, had it not been for their practicum experiences and student teaching opportunities (which were rarely long enough), their preservice training programs would have been “a total waste.”

One particular instance, by way of example, comes to mind. Through random selection, I found myself in the class of a teacher who a short time before had been honored as the outstanding teacher of the year for her state.

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As I sat in the back of her classroom taking data, I began to realize that it was no wonder why this woman had been selected as the outstanding teacher of the year. She was doing everything right.

After the class period ended, we went to the faculty room where we sat at a round table to discuss my observations. I said to her, “Well, it is no wonder to me why you have been chosen as this state’s teacher of the year. You did everything right.” She answered with some surprise, “Oh, what did I do that was so right?” I then spread the data on the table before her and pointed out what she had done that was so noteworthy, and which accounted for her success. With each data point, her eyes got larger and larger until at last she exclaimed with excitement, “Did I do all of that?” I assured her she had and asked where she had learned to do those things. She answered, “I don’t know. I guess I just learned through trial and error.” She was fascinated at the data, and asked me if I would send her some materials that related to our discussion—which I did. A few weeks later, I received a lovely letter in which she said, “I have learned more during the two hours of our visit and from the material you sent me about how to create an effective learning environment than I learned in college all the way through to a masters degree.” Though I was delighted that she had learned so much from our brief visit and what I had sent, I thought how tragic it was that through seven years of college she had been taught so little about teaching and classroom management.

Unlike medicine and dentistry, in which the transition from school to practice is relatively smooth and seamless, the transition from the college class to the school classroom is abrupt, traumatic, and confusing. What is covered in teachers’ preservice training programs typically bears such little resemblance to what actually happens in classrooms that new teachers are left almost entirely to their own devices in knowing what to do next, “…totally unprepared for the impact of teaching itself” (Rigden, 1996). Left to their own devices, they quickly turn to other teachers for help, learn through trial and error, and muddle their way through doing the best they can until they learn what works and how to survive.

This struggle to survive prompted me to look at how members of other professions approach the solving of problems common to their professions. I randomly selected 20 engineers, 20 physicians, 20 lawyers, and 20 educators and asked them to describe for me a problem commonly experienced in their work. I then asked them how they set about solving that problem, including what it was that formed the basis for their solution. I also asked them if other members of their profession would approach a similar problem in a similar way. Engineers referred to laws, principles, formulas related to force, stress, motion, pressure etc. Physicians referred to their knowledge of physiology, anatomy, microbiology, chemistry, the central nervous system, the flow and circulation of body fluids, etc. Lawyers referred to constitutional law, statutes, precedent, logic, courtroom procedures, and their knowledge of the judicial system, etc. Teachers’ responses made absolutely no references to any kind of science, any body of professional literature, any principles or laws to explain what they did. Rather, they said things like, “It seemed at the moment a be good way to handle the situation,” “I’ve used it before and it’s worked well,” “It was suggested to me by a fellow teacher,” “That is the way the teachers manual said to do it,” “I was taught to do it that way at the university,” “I don’t really know. I never thought much about it.” The most frequently given response was, “I just fly by the seat of my pants.” Surely, as a profession, we can do better than this. Surely, we can do a better job, a more professional job, in preparing teachers to assume the heavy responsibilities they face in the classroom at any level.

From a practitioner point of view, teaching is an art form. When I asked principals and teachers “Is teaching an art or a science,” the overwhelming response—nearly 100%—regarded teaching as an art; aided, at best, by science. Only two teachers and one principal responded that effective teaching was dependent on a sound knowledge of the science of instruction and human behavior. This is astounding!

In this regard, while questioning principals about their roles as instructional leaders (a role very few principals related to!), I asked, “When you visit a classroom what do you see that tells you whether you have an effective or an ineffective teacher?” One elementary school principal answered (and she was serious), “I know I have a good teacher who, when she screams at the kids, can be heard for a mile and a half!” Though this is an extreme example, it nevertheless points to a serious problem in education;
that is, teacher effectiveness is measured in terms of personal characteristics not professional skills. An analysis of principals’ responses to the above question reveals that 81% of those responses related to personal characteristics (e.g., dress, grooming, demeanor), 13% were related to experience (e.g., years teaching, degrees held, variety of teaching assignments), and only 6% were related to skills.

From my observations and interviews in schools over the past 16 years, I have identified eight skills every teacher should have as they relate, particularly though not exclusively, to effectively managing the learning environment. Teachers who possess these skills are better able to create and maintain the kind of learning environment in which children both learn what they need to learn, and enjoy doing it. These skills are:

1. Skill #1: The ability to teach expectations.

2. Skill #2: The ability to get and keep students on task.

3. Skill #3: The ability to maintain a high rate of positive teacher-to-pupil interactions.

4. Skill #4: The ability to respond noncoercively to inappropriate behavior that is consequential.

5. Skill #5: The ability to maintain a high rate of risk-free student response opportunities.

6. Skill #6: The ability to serve problem-behavior students in the primary learning environment (that is, the classroom).

7. Skill #7: The ability to avoid being trapped.

8. Skill #8: The ability to manage behavior scientifically.”

(For a more detailed description of the above skills, visit: http://www.updc.org/leadership/)

End Note:

Despite the endless stream of education reform rhetoric that has invaded humankind’s senses for centuries, education has not been, and is not being, reformed. It has only been, and is only being, remodeled, redecorated, and embellished.

Recently, while spending the Christmas holiday with our daughter and her family in Detroit, we visited the Henry Ford Museum. As I studied the evolution of forms of transportation, I was struck with the sharp contrast between animal-drawn forms of transportation, and transportation powered by the internal combustion engine. Prior to the paradigm shift from muscle to machine, so-called advances were little more than trimmings and embellishments: a buckboard with shock absorbing springs beneath it and padded, upholstered seats; artistically arrayed features, designs, and dressings; a surrey with a fringe on top; enclosures against the weather and dust, and even wood-burning heaters. But no matter what was done to beautify and make it more functional it, was still a horse-drawn buggy.

And so it is with education. Today, as it has been for centuries, education remains a matter of telling students what they need to know, assigning them related things to do, testing them on how much they can recall, then attaching a symbol of some sort as a measure of success or failure. In the name of reform, decorations, trimmings, and embellishments have adorned education: individualized instruction (a term without meaning), back-to-basics (education is the only enterprise I know which is heading into the 21st Century with its eye fixed keenly on the rear view mirror!), classrooms without walls (a euphemism for an invitation to chaos), graduation requirements, teacher pay and performance requirements, compliance standards, LRE, and on and on.

No matter what has been, or is being, done in the name of reform, the very essence of education remains static; essentially no more than a matter of telling students what they need to know, assigning them related things to do, testing them on how much they can recall, then attaching a symbol of some sort as a measure of success or failure. The paradigm is paralyzed, and like the horse and buggy, the best we can hope for is something that looks good—referred to in scientific parlance as face validity.

As with transportation’s advance to the internal combustion engine, science offers education a new paradigm, one that is as dramatic as the shift from muscle to machine. It is found in the literature of education, psychology, and behavior under such headings as “fluency,” “free-operant conditioning,” “schedules of reinforcement,” “precision teaching,” “celeration,” “critical learning outcomes,” “learning channels” (not related to TV), “elimination of procedure-imposed ceilings,” “component-composite relations,” and more—much more (Binder, 1996; Lindsley, 1996; Foxx, 1996).

These terms are as foreign to the education establishment of today as was the language of physics and engineering to the makers of horse-drawn carriages and buggies. But it is the language of education’s future; that is, if education hopes to have a future that is anything more than an embellished extension of its antiquated past.

Editor’s Note: Dr. Glenn Lathan passed way on July 10, 2001. Dr. Latham is best known for his parenting workshops and for his books, “The Power of Positive Parenting” and “What’s a parent to do?” He was also widely known for his work with students with disabilities, including founding the Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center at Utah State University. At the time of his death he was Professor emeritus of Special Education at USU. His work is truly one of the bright spots in the field.
Authors: Dean Fixsen, Karen Blase, Robert Horner, & George Sugai, University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill, University of Oregon, and University of Connecticut

**Italian Proverb:**

**Between saying and doing Is the sea**

**Abstract**

The significant investment in developing evidence-based practices and other innovations will be “worth it” if it helps further the education of students and benefit their families and communities. The State Implementation and Scaling up of Evidence-based Practices (SISEP) Center helps States establish adequate capacity to carry out effective implementation, organization change, and system transformation strategies to maximize the academic achievement and behavioral health outcomes for students statewide. Working in close cooperation with State leaders and relevant TA Centers, SISEP provides the critical content and foundation for establishing a technology of large-scale, sustainable, high-fidelity implementation of effective educational practices. As a benchmark, “scaling up” innovations in education means that at least 60% of the students and schools in a State who could benefit from an innovation actually are experiencing that innovation in their education setting.

**Introduction**

Limited understanding of large-scale implementation has emerged as a major barrier to effective educational reform. The past 50 years have been characterized by unprecedented advances for improving education practices, but only modest application of this knowledge to benefit students on a useful scale. The OSEP Center on State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices (SISEP) provides the critical content and foundation for establishing a technology of large-scale, sustainable, high-fidelity implementation of effective educational practices.

The SISEP Center builds on the work completed in the past 25 years in State-level implementation of health and human service programs, early literacy, and positive behavior support practices, as well as current work on implementation, organization change, and systems transformation being conducted by the National Implementation Research Network (http://www.nim.fpg.unc.edu) and the OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (http://www.pbis.org). The central thesis of the Center is the importance of comprehensive capacity development at the State level (e.g., policy, funding, evaluation/monitor, personnel preparation, in-service, coaching, administrative leadership, information systems). To date, evidence-based practices have been disseminated via useful but insufficient strategies such as (a) State mandates, (b) knowledge sharing/in-service, or (c) descriptions of exemplary sites. As a result, evidence-based education practices to impact academic and behavioral outcomes have yet to reach the mainstream and have yet to provide the promised benefits broadly to students across the country. For evidence-based practices to move from demonstrations to “standard operating procedures” a different approach to implementation is needed. In this article, we will outline the scaling up process, the role of States, and the role of the SISEP Center. The outline is accompanied by an annotated review of the research and practice literature related to the scaling up design and the major concepts introduced in this article (see the Annotated Bibliography under the “resources” tab on the [http://www.scalingup.org](http://www.scalingup.org) website). In addition, several “briefs” describing key aspects of scaling up are on this website.

**Scaling Up Defined**

Scaling up is defined as having enough of something so that it is useful to individuals and to society. Scaling up is the process of moving from “exemplars” to the “typical.” The process of scaling involves the development of organizational capacity to move from exemplars sustained by extra-ordinary supports (called “ghost systems”), to typical application with organizations and systems that are designed to make full, effective, and sustained use of innovations (called “host systems”). While there is no firm agreement about the level at which “scaling” is achieved, we hypothesize that an organization or system (district, State) has reached the “tipping point” for functional scaling when approximately 60% of the units in the organization or system are implementing a practice with fidelity and demonstrable benefits to students.

**Scaling Up Innovations**

For innovations to reach at least 60% of all students and schools in a State requires fundamental changes in the education system. Systems are powerful. The complex webs of inter-relationships among components of current systems exert powerful influences on current outcomes. In most systems, these inter-relationships have evolved over time, a collection of good ideas and good intentions that currently may or may not produce desirable outcomes in the aggregate. It is a truism that current federal and State education systems (wittingly or unwittingly) fully support current education practices and current outcomes. It also is axiomatic that if we continue to do what we always have done we will continue to get what we always have gotten. In education and human service systems today, powerful forces in current systems only make use of innovations that fit current system functions. There is an expectation that teachers and staff will change their practices to better educate children, but no expectation of change in how schools, districts, or States function. For those innovations that do not fit current systems, it does not take long before the system wears down innovations (and innovators) and last year’s good ideas are discarded in favor of this year’s promising practices.

New practices often do not fare well in well-established systems and, to the extent they are used at all, new practices often are maintained only by extra-ordinary supports. For example, the PBIS Technical Assistance Center is designed to create and support School-Wide Positive Behavior Support applications, the SFA Foundation is designed to create and support Success for All...
Developing the Capacity for Scaling Up the Effective Use of Evidence-Based Programs in State Departments of Education

Effective Education Practices

To maximize benefits to students, effective practices need to be used competently in all education settings including classrooms, hallways, lunch rooms, playgrounds, and buses. Parents and community agencies need to be involved to support and sustain gains in literacy, numeracy, science, and behavior. Comprehensive school reforms, whole school interventions, and a variety of classroom educational and behavioral practices have been demonstrated to be effective in these education settings. In each State, parents, stakeholders, and education leaders know best what their needs are and will choose the evidence-based practices they want to use. For the purposes of scale up, the education practice that is chosen a) should be supported by considerable research demonstrating substantial benefits to students (i.e., an effect size of 0.50 or better), b) should be more efficient than other alternatives, and c) should be a good fit with the needs in the schools and the State.

The role of the SISEP Center is to help States a) assess and create readiness for scaling of the evidence-based practice chosen by the State, b) effectively implement the practices they have chosen, c) create the infrastructure, strategies, and data systems they need to assure effective and sustained implementation of those practices in every school across the State, and d) create the infrastructure, strategies, and data systems necessary to maintain a scale-up function in the State in order to take advantage of new evidence-based practices over the coming decades.

Selecting What to Implement

The selection of an evidence-based practice is an important decision. From the perspectives of parents, stakeholders, and State leaders, the practice must be an effective solution to an apparent need and the expected benefits must warrant the effort required to implement and scale up the practice in the State. There is no advantage to scaling up new education practices that are no more effective than current practices. That would be a waste of limited resources. Multiple advantages accrue to students and to State education systems when demonstrably effective practices are implemented effectively in every school. The following is an example of a well-established evidence-based practice (many more evidence-based education practices can be found in the literature and on the What Works Clearinghouse website: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/). This example is provided to illustrate the changes in school routines that should be expected as part of implementing any evidence-based practice.

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An Example of an Evidence-based Practice

The School Transitional Environment Project (STEP) is designed to reduce drop out rates and improve education outcomes by enhancing the experience of students during school transition. Students who are considered to be well-suited for the STEP program are those who are considered to be at-risk for behavioral problems and who reside in communities that have large junior or senior high schools with multiple feeder schools. STEP has been used in urban, suburban, and rural settings. Across several experimental trials, clear declines in drop out rates in high school of 40-50% or more have been common. Students in STEP also are more likely to avoid drops in academic performance and achievement levels in high school and have lower levels of behavioral difficulties.

Fundamental elements of STEP include developing students’ perceptions of school as a safe, cohesive, and well organized environment in which to learn and grow. Strategies are also employed to reduce student anonymity, increase student accountability, and clarify students’ understanding of school rules and expectations. These key features are implemented through the homeroom teacher’s interaction with the students and their families.

At the practice level, students in this program are assigned to student cohort groups, each of which has a homeroom teacher. These cohorts remain together for homeroom as well as core classes (e.g., mathematics, English). Cohort classrooms are purposely grouped together in the larger school in an effort to create a feeling of community and to decrease the likelihood that participating students will engage in conflicts with older students.

Homeroom teachers take on the roles of teacher, counselor, and administrator in their relations with the students. These teachers keep track of attendance and follow up with parents about any absences. They also talk with students in their homerooms about class schedules and any personal problems the students may be having. Homeroom teachers also are responsible for working with students’ families, explaining STEP, following up with parents concerning absences, and enhancing communication between families and the school. Teachers also meet with other homeroom teachers to discuss potential student problems as well as students who may need counseling or extra attention.

Teachers provide the majority of the support for students in STEP. Homeroom teachers are assigned to 20-30 STEP students and serve as the primary link between home, student, and school. These teachers perform many of the guidance and administrative tasks such as helping students select classes and talking with students about personal problems. STEP homeroom teachers meet several times a week to discuss students who may be having problems and other concerns arising in their classrooms. They also consult with school guidance staff and attend trainings for team-building and to improve their student advisory skills (From: http://www.ncset.org/publications/essentialtools/dropout/part3.3.09.asp)

Implementation of Effective Education Practices

Choosing an evidence-based practice is one thing, implementation of that practice is another thing altogether. Evidence-based practices must be carefully selected to meet student needs and they also must be implemented well in order to achieve benefits for students. One without the other is not sufficient for reliably producing educational benefits to students. If the selected practice is not effective, it can be implemented well but still not produce benefits to students (i.e., it was not useful in the first place). If the selected practice is effective but not implemented well (i.e., not actually used as intended), it will not produce benefits to students. Thus, a) selection of the evidence-based practice is important and b) executing effective implementation strategies is important.

Once the evidence-based practice is selected, the focus shifts to implementation of that practice—a whole new set of activities. The use of evidence-based practices can benefit students and education systems but evidence-based practices, like STEP, almost always require changes in the day-to-day activities of teachers, staff, and administrators and changes in school structures and routines. Changes to the status quo should be expected, planned, and embraced as part of the implementation process.

Implementation activities are focused on teachers, staff, and administrators learning to support and use an evidence-based practice competently. There is a large body of literature in education...
and other fields demonstrating that practices are effective only when they are used fully. High fidelity uses of education practices lead to better outcomes. Low fidelity uses of those practices lead to less desirable outcomes. It is not enough to say we are using the practice. It is not enough to use only some aspects of the practice. To be effective the practice must be used fully, as designed by the developers and tested experimentally. Does this mean there is a rigid script to follow? The answer is no. Does this mean there is a flexible but limited range of possible ways to assure the core functions of an evidence-based practice are implemented? The answer is yes. Thus, supports for professional development for teachers, staff, and administrators are an essential part of any attempt to implement an evidence-based practice with fidelity and good outcomes for students and communities.

Based on the commonalities among successfully implemented programs, several core implementation components have been identified. The goal of implementation is to have practitioners, such as teachers and education staff, use innovations effectively. To accomplish this, there are several core implementation components called implementation drivers related to developing competency and providing organization supports. The interactive processes outlined below must be integrated to maximize their influence on both staff behavior and organizational culture. Being integrated means that all the implementation drivers must be present and working together effectively to produce the desired outcomes. The interactive implementation drivers also compensate for one another, in that a weakness in one implementation driver can be compensated for by strengths in other drivers. The following sections briefly review each of the implementation drivers in order to illustrate the role they play in effective implementation of evidence-based practices.

**Developing Competency**

At the practice level, teachers, staff members, and administrators need to become competent users of the evidence-based practices. According to the literature, developing competency at the practice level involves selection, training, coaching, and performance assessments for the teachers, staff, and administrators who are expected to engage in the evidence-based practice.

**Staff selection:** Effective staffing requires consideration of several questions. Who is qualified to carry out the evidence-based practice or program? What are the best methods for recruiting and selecting teachers, administrators, and staff who possess necessary qualifications? In addition to prerequisite academic qualifications and experience factors, certain practitioner characteristics may be difficult to impart in training sessions, so they must be included in selection criteria. Staff selection also intersects with a variety of larger system variables. General workforce development issues, the overall economy, organizational financing, salaries and benefits, personnel policy constraints, and the demands of the innovation in terms of time and skill can all affect the availability of staff that are best qualified to implement an evidence-based practice.

Staff selection is important even when implementation is attempted in a school with a full complement of staff already in place. The new evidence-based practice can be described to all teachers and then teachers can be invited to “apply” to be in the first groups to learn the new practices. The “interview process” might be short but still is necessary to assure a reasonable match between the teacher and practice. The better interview protocols have questions and exercises to assess the philosophy, values, knowledge, and skills of teacher-candidates to assure a good fit with the practice that is about to be implemented.

**Training:** Evidence-based practices represent novel ways of providing education to students. Teachers and others at an implementation school need to learn when, where, how, and with whom to use (and not use) new approaches and new skills. Training is an efficient way to provide knowledge of background information, theory, philosophy, and values; to introduce the components and rationale for key practices; and to provide opportunities to practice new skills and receive feedback in a safe training environment. However, training experiences alone are not sufficient to assure that teachers and staff will develop the competence and confidence to effectively implement an innovation. The inadequacy of training by itself is one of the most widely replicated outcomes in education and other fields. One study after another shows that about 5-10% of those participating in training actually use new ideas or skills in their practice.

**Coaching:** Most skills needed by effective teachers and others can be introduced in training but must be practiced and mastered on the job with the help of a coach. A coach provides specific information about the application of an evidence-based practice in a school setting as well as advice, encouragement, and opportunities to practice and use skills specific to the innovation. The implementation of new education practices usually requires behavior change at the practitioner, supervisory, and administrative support levels. Training and coaching are the principal ways in which behavior change is brought about for carefully selected staff in the beginning stages of implementation and also throughout the life of evidence-based practices. Training followed by in-class coaching results in about 95% of the newly trained teachers using their new ideas and skills in the classroom. The “train and coach” approach produces vastly improvements over the results of the “train and hope” approach.

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Performance Assessments: Evaluation of staff performance is designed to assess the application and outcomes of the skills that are reflected in the selection criteria, that are taught in training, and that are reinforced and expanded in coaching processes. Assessments of teacher, administrator, and staff performance include measures of fidelity and also provide feedback useful to interviewers, trainers, coaches, managers, and others regarding the progress of implementation efforts and the usefulness of selection, training, and coaching in promoting and sustaining the new way of work. These data also are essential in interpreting outcome data and using data for continuous quality improvement.

Organization Supports

At the school level (organization, administrator), the implementation drivers involve using decision support data systems, facilitative administrative practices, and system interventions strategies. These organization supports are critical to establishing, improving, and sustaining evidence-based practices across generations of teachers and students.

Decision Support Data Systems: Measures such as quality improvement information, school-wide fidelity measures, and student education and behavior outcomes assess key aspects of the overall performance of the school. Data such as these help to support decision making to assure continuing high fidelity implementation of the core intervention components over time.

Facilitative Administration: Facilitative administrators provide leadership and make use of a range of data inputs to inform decision making, to support the overall implementation and intervention processes, and to keep staff organized and focused on the desired education outcomes. In organizations with this advantage, administrators give special attention to policies, procedures, structures, culture, and climate to assure alignment of these organizational components with the needs of teachers, staff, and others as they implement the evidence-based practices. It is the responsibility of administrators to make sure that teachers, staff, and others have the skills and supports they need to perform at a high level of effectiveness with every student.
System Interventions: Systems interventions are strategies to work with external systems to ensure the availability of the financial, organizational, and human resources required to support the work of the teachers, staff, and others. Again, alignment of these external systems to support the work of practitioners is an important aspect of systems intervention.

Leadership

Over the decades it has been rare to find a description of implementation that does not include some discussion about the critical role of leadership at organization and system levels. It has been equally rare to find a description of what good leaders do and when they do those things to achieve benefits to consumers. Fortunately, recent advances have shed some light on this important aspect of implementation. For example, recent research has found that top management support and access to dedicated resources during exploration were related to making the adoption decision but were not related to later implementation outcomes. However, top management support and access to dedicated resources during initial implementation were directly related to later implementation outcomes. These findings and others indicate “leadership” is not a person but different people engaging in different kinds of leadership behavior as needed to establish and sustain effective programs as circumstances change over time.

Different kinds of leadership are required a) to cope with complicated, but manageable problems, and b) to resolve complex problems. Complicated problems can be broken down, worked on, and managed. This requires technical leadership that focuses on analytic skills, personnel management skills, and goal attainment. Complex problems often are not well defined and are reactive when solutions are attempted. This requires adaptive leadership that focuses on convening groups to build consensus on problems and solutions, persistence in the face of adversity, and a willingness to change the status quo. Scaling requires both technical and adaptive leadership skills at each stage of the process.

SISEP and Scaling Up Implementation Activities

Now we get to the core elements of “scaling up.” People often talk about “scaling up evidence-based practices.” While this is an important outcome, the heart of scaling up is “scaling up of effective implementation methods.” As noted above, evidence-based practices without effective implementation methods do not produce student benefits (and vice versa). Evidence-based practices typically are very specific, as noted in the STEP example described previously. Fortunately, effective implementation methods are general and apply to a wide range of evidence-based practices. Therefore, scaling up the “capacity to implement” can have far reaching impacts on education. Once the capacity to implement is established, that capacity can be used year after year to implement a range of specific evidence-based academic and behavior improvement practices in a State. It will not be necessary for administrators and system managers to try to think up some new way to implement each new innovation that comes along. The capacity for implementing evidence-based practices and other innovations and policy initiatives already will be established, available, and effective.

As noted in the preceding sections, implementation is an intensive and highly interactive process requiring considerable knowledge and skill. Implementation requires changes in teachers’, staff, and administrators’ behaviors; changes in school structures and routines; and changes in the type and substance of supports provided by districts and States. While the science and practice of implementation have advanced to the point of making the success of these changes more predictable, it still requires the intensive application of considerable skill and excellent judgment.

Scaling up also requires the participation and support of parents, unions, professional education associations, and other key stakeholders in each State. As noted above, the parents and stakeholders are part of the process for assessing needs and selecting evidence-based practices that might meet those needs. Similarly, the involvement and support of parents and stakeholders are essential to the scaling up process locally, in districts, and in the State. Regular meetings with parent groups and other key stakeholder groups are anticipated as the scaling up process unfolds.

Conclusion

The capacity for making full and effective use of evidence-based programs and other innovations does not exist in State systems of education or other human services. The science of implementation, organization change, and system transformation is growing and applied “best practices” have been identified. Given the recent advances in knowledge, it is now possible for States to deliberately and systematically develop and make effective use of an implementation infrastructure to accomplish educationally and socially significant outcomes for students statewide. With a focused and determined effort, the capacity development process described in this article should take no more than five years, a small investment of time and resources to achieve a noble goal in education.

Editor’s Note: This article has been edited from the original document to fit this publication. For more information about state implementation and scaling up the effective use of evidence-based programs, visit: http://www.scalingup.org
Seeing is Believing—Visible Learning and Teaching

Jeri Rigby, Program Specialist, Utah Personnel Development Center (UPDC)

Visible Learning and Teaching

We are all familiar with the statements: “a picture is worth a thousand words,” and “seeing is believing.” So when it comes to finding the Bright Spots in Utah schools, we at the Utah Personnel Development Center (UPDC) are noticing some visible evidence of improved outcomes for students and teachers throughout the state. It’s exciting to learn from teachers who are making a difference. But merely learning from the bright spots isn’t enough, we need to share what works with others. In the book, *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard,* the authors indicate that a bright spot is “a successful effort worth emulating.” So the quest must be to capture the visible evidence of successful teaching experiences and share the details with others.

Where Do We Start?

The research literature is full of recommendations concerning what teachers and schools should do. In fact, it is TOO full. Teachers are inundated with information about teaching techniques, programs, and teaching practices that all claim to work with children. Teachers often experience decision paralysis—a situation that occurs when there are too many choices, too much to think about, and too much to consider. Consequently, a person returns to what he has always done, the status quo, even if it isn’t necessarily successful. We see that “choice no longer liberates, it debilitates.” As noted in *Switch,* we need to “bring a noble goal within the realm of everyday behavior.” We have to shrink the change so it doesn’t overwhelm teachers (or students), and focus on a few powerful practices that result in visible evidence. For purposes of this article, I will highlight one tool to assist us in identifying these practices and shrinking the change so anyone can make it happen. It is called, *Visible Learning,* by John Hattie, and it provides information about not only what—but to what degree a given practice works.

What is Visible Learning?

*Visible Learning* is a book that includes 15 years of research and synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses related to influences on achievement in school-aged students. It builds a story about the power of teachers and of feedback, and constructs a model of learning and understanding. Hattie’s book is about “the power of directed teaching, focusing on what happens next through feedback and monitoring. This approach informs the teacher about the success or failure of their teaching: making learning for both the teacher and student ‘visible’.”

Visible learning also brings the concept of “seeing is believing” to life! Having visited hundreds of classrooms in the past 20 years—and at least a dozen in the last few months—I can see visible learning taking place. Teaching and learning are visible in the passion displayed by the teacher and student when successful teaching and learning occurs.

What Makes the Difference?

What teachers and students DO make the visible difference. To say that a teacher makes the difference is not quite right. It’s teachers undertaking certain teaching practices with appropriately challenging curricula and showing students how to think or strategize about the curricula. Teaching requires deliberate interventions to ensure there are improved outcomes for students. The good news is that ALL teachers can learn to make a difference.

What is a teacher that makes the difference? It’s a teacher who is open to experience, learns from errors, seeks and learns from feedback from students and colleagues; and who fosters effort, clarity, and engagement in learning. Visible Teaching and Learning occurs when (Hattie, p.22):
1. Learning is the explicit goal.

2. Learning is appropriately challenging.

3. Both teacher and student seek to ascertain whether and to what degree the challenging goal is attained.

4. When there is deliberate practice aimed at mastery.

5. Feedback is given and sought.

6. There are active, passionate, engaging people involved in learning.

In classrooms where visible teaching and learning occur, teachers are using powerful strategies that have the greatest effect on student outcomes.

**What Are Powerful Strategies and What is the Effect?**

Making some gain is not enough, there needs to be evidence of meaningful gain, more than what a year of maturation of simply attending class can provide. Instead of asking, “What works?” we should be asking “What works best?” “We need a barometer of success that helps teachers to understand which attributes of schooling assist students in attaining their goalposts” (Hattie, p. 19). Hattie uses the effect size of various strategies to determine which are the most effective. The “hinge point” is .40 – meaning we need to engage in practices with about .40 effect size or higher. Practices that have an effect size greater than .40 are in the “zone of desired effects”—they are influences that had the greatest impact on student achievement outcomes (Hattie, p. 19).

**Okay, So What Works Best?**

Based on the earlier discussion of “decision paralysis”– we do not need lots of practices, we just need a few that work best. Hattie’s book actually puts the practices in rank order – making it very easy to see what works best. The good news is that most teachers already use many of these practices, so it may merely require refining our skills in their use instead of learning entirely new behaviors.

Here’s a short list of ten (of the more than 100 practices evaluated) with the associated effect size – all of which are above the .40 zone of desired effects. The first eight on the list focus on what teachers do in their classroom setting, and the final two on the list focus on how to support teachers as they’re making the changes in their classroom practices.

1. **Comprehensive interventions for learning disabled students** (.77 effect size), including:
   - combining approaches of strategy instruction and direct instruction
   - attention to sequencing, drill-repetition-practice, segmenting information into parts for later synthesis, control task difficulty through prompts and cues, systematically modeling problem solving steps, making use of interactive small groups, and use of technology (Hattie, p. 218)

2. **Teacher Clarity** (.75 effect size)
   - teacher clearly communicates intentions of lesson and what constitutes success

3. **Reciprocal Teaching** (.74 effect size)
   - comprehension strategy which includes summarizing, questioning, clarifying, and predicting
   - supported through dialogue between teacher and students as they attempt to gain meaning from text (Hattie, p. 201)

4. **Feedback** (.73 effect size)
   - includes feedback to students as well as FROM students in terms of what students know, what they understand, and when they have misconceptions

5. **Teacher-student relationships** (.72 effect size)
   - listening, empathy, caring, and having positive regard for others (p. 118)

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6. **Repeated Reading Programs** (.67 effect size)
   - student reads passage repeatedly, while receiving feedback
   

7. **Direct Instruction** (.59 effect size)
   - Stating the learning objectives & success criteria, then engaging students in moving towards these (Hattie, p. 207)
   - Teacher modeling, guided practice, independent practice, and checking for understanding throughout the delivery (I do it, We do it, You do it)
   - Increased opportunities to respond – with feedback
   - Adams & Englemann (1996) indicate the principle objective of direct instruction is to teach more in less time

   

8. **Mastery Learning** (.57 effect size)
   - numerous feedback loops (between teacher & student), based on small units of well-defined, appropriately sequenced outcome (Hattie, p. 170)


9. **Providing formative evaluation** (.90 effect size)
   - also known as “coaching” – formative feedback to teacher on their own practices
   - attention to the purpose of the teaching practice (innovation), a willingness to seek negative evidence (i.e., seeking evidence of where students are not doing well) to improve the teaching innovation, the keenness to see the effects on all students, and the openness to new experiences that make the difference (Hattie, p. 181)


10. **Microteaching** (.88 effect size)
    - organized teaching practice—mini-lessons delivered by a teacher (often to peers acting as students), observation data gathered on a few critical teaching behaviors, then post-discussions/debriefing about the lessons
    - multiple opportunities to practice with ongoing feedback and coaching

    As you can see, the most powerful strategies are easily within reach of ALL classrooms and programs. In fact, the final two on the list have been the primary structure utilized in the Utah Coaching Network (UCN) during the 2009-2010 school year.
Seeing is Believing

What is The Next Step?

The next step is truly to take the first step, which means effectively using one of these practices in your setting. Knowledge doesn’t change behavior—we have to practice what we want to have happen. We have to SEE learning through the eyes of our students. A most critical aspect contributed by the teacher is the quality of their teaching as perceived by the students. It is what teachers help students DO in the class that emerges as the strongest component of the accomplished teachers’ repertoire (Hattie, p. 35).

Teachers can make the above ten practices the norm as they open up to new experiences, learn from errors, seek and learn from feedback from students and colleagues; and foster effort, clarity, and engagement in learning. As teachers, we must know when to experiment, learn from the experience, learn to monitor, and know when to try alternate learning strategies when others do not work.

Educators: focus your vision on what you want to have happen, decide on a teaching practice that works best, implement it with fidelity, monitor your progress and your students, seek feedback on how to improve, and SEE the VISIBLE difference you can make. YOU can be the bright spot worth emulating.

References for this article are available in the online Essential Educator version, which can be accessed at: www.essentialeducator.org

Powerful Practices

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Effect Size</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Interventions for learning disabled (LD) students</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>Combining approaches of strategy instruction &amp; direct instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Clarity</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>Clear objectives aligned with specific outcomes</td>
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<td>Reciprocal Teaching (comprehension strategy)</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>Summarizing, predicting, questioning &amp; clarifying</td>
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<td>Teacher-student relationship</td>
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<td>Repeated Reading</td>
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<td>Reading repeatedly with feedback provided</td>
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<td>Direct Instruction</td>
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<td>Modeling, guided practice, ind. practice, feedback</td>
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<td>Mastery of carefully sequenced skills</td>
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<td>Formative evaluation</td>
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<td>Microteaching</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>Mini-lessons with peers, organized teaching practice</td>
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In the book “Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard” (Heath & Heath, 2010), the authors share an analogy for change by referring to a rider on an elephant. The rider represents the logical side of a person. The elephant represents an individual’s motivation. In seeking to bring about change you should address both the rider and elephant in ourselves and others. People have to be motivated to move and know where to go and how to get there. As change agents we can also make progress possible by clearing the path in front of the them. It’s about making sure people are motivated to change, having the skills necessary to make that change, and removing road blocks in front of them.

As part of an ongoing series on making a switch in education, the switch to progress monitor our students, this particular article addresses the concept of the rider in this analogy. In order to address the rider there are three things we can do: 1) Follow the Bright Spots, 2) Script the Critical Moves, and 3) Point to the Destination.

Follow the Bright Spots

If you are planning to implement progress monitoring individually, as a school, or as a district, you may not know where to start. You know there are others out there who are doing it successfully, but it can be difficult to know what it takes to get there. We can try to figure it out ourselves and risk spinning our wheels or we can find somebody who is already doing it successfully and replicate it. If you want to be a master cellist, follow the technique of Yo Yo Ma. Professional baseball shortstop? Follow Derek Jeter’s approach. Education is no different. If you want to implement progress monitoring in your setting, talk to those who are doing it effectively and replicate it. At the Utah Personnel Development Center (UPDC) we are passionate about helping educators and Local Education Agencies throughout the state progress monitor. Hence, we recently set out to identify the bright spots and help others replicate it.

It didn’t take much effort to find those bright spots in Utah. We spoke to a few principals that were successfully progress monitoring in their schools. They administer benchmarks three times a year to identify struggling students. Once identified, those students are given additional support on a consistent and regular basis. Students receiving supplemental or intensive supports are progress monitored frequently to measure their response to instruction and intervention. The principals meet with grade level teams regularly to look at the data and make decisions accordingly. The teachers exhibit “relentless tenacity,” as Anita Archer describes it, in educating their students. There is a clear sense of urgency about what they are doing. These principals and teachers represent examples of many in the state. There may be bright spots around you. What are they doing? Identify it and clone it. Bright spots can “illuminate the road map for action and spark the hope that change is possible” (Heath & Heath, p. 48).

Script the Critical Moves

When implementing a change, it can be difficult to know what steps to take. Rather than being overwhelmed with having to climb to the top of a mountain, identify the few specific, critical moves it will take to get there. This provides clarity in identifying what it will take to get where you want to go and makes it less overwhelming. What might be the critical moves to implementing progress monitoring? I would suggest that the critical moves are identifying the following:

• Students to be progress monitored. In a school setting this generally involves screening students three times a year to identify low-performing students. Standards for comparison (e.g., benchmarks, norms) must be identified. With students receiving special education services the answer is easy—progress monitor all of your students on each of their goals found in their Individualized Education Plans.
Materials needed. There are a number of probes available for progress monitoring students in multiple academic areas. Reading probes are available from DIBELS, AIMSweb, STEEP, www.interventioncentral.com, and Six-Minute Solution. Math probes can be used from Monitoring Basic Skills Progress, www.MathFactCafe.com, and www.interventioncentral.com. The skill to be monitored must be selected and students should be progress monitored on materials that are at, or near, their instructional level. Additional information on progress monitoring tools can be found at the National Center on Response to Intervention website.

Procedures for collecting data. This includes answering the questions of who, where, when, and how students will be progress monitored. A teacher in a resource classroom might administer a one-minute reading probe to each of his students twice a week to measure their response to the instruction and intervention. A teacher working with students with significant disabilities could progress monitor a student on a daily basis on functional skills such as identifying colors. You may have a trained assistant work with students while you progress monitor. Paraprofessionals could assist in monitoring. Your specific situation and resources will dictate this but once the routine has been established, it becomes easy and efficient to carry out.

System for data-management. Whether using a paid program such as DIBELS or AIMSweb, or a free tool such as CBM and PM Focus (www.cbmfocus.com) or www.EasyCBM.com, a system for managing data is critical. The system should be easy to use and provide you with useful data to assist you with decision making. Data represented in a graph is most easily interpreted and shared with other teachers, students, and parents. Students themselves can be trained on how to graph the data, which can serve as a powerful reinforcer as well as teach them how to create and interpret graphs.

Point to the Destination

This concept refers to knowing where you are going and why it’s worth it. Pointing to the destination gives you direction and purpose. The goal should be nothing but a S.M.A.R.T. one (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely). A New Year’s resolution of “be healthier” is useless because it gives no real direction or specificity. “I will lose 15 pounds by June 1” is a S.M.A.R.T. goal. At Tolman Elementary in Centerville, where I am working as an administrative intern, we are progress monitoring students receiving additional support. Under the direction of a savvy principal, David Pendergast, who understands the importance of progress monitoring, we selected a S.M.A.R.T. destination: “We will screen all of our students in reading in the fall and progress monitor struggling students on a weekly basis at least three times by November 12.” The destination has been clearly defined and shared with all teachers. Training and ongoing support has been provided to assist our teachers in carrying this out, and we are working toward the destination with relentless tenacity.

We also recognize that with any change there will be difficulties and inevitably there will be an implementation dip. As the authors of “Switch” point out, “Any new quest, even one that is ultimately successful, is going to involve failure” (p. 162). Following the initial stages of excitement and hope there will be some failure and struggle. By recognizing and anticipating this failure, however, we can persist and push through this phase until we are successful.

References for this article are available in the online Essential Educator version, which can be accessed at: www.essentialeducator.org

Bright Spots • December 2010
Distinguishing Difference from Disability: The Common Causes of Racial/Ethnic Disproportionality in Special Education

Communities Flourish When Equity Matters

Education expands our understanding of ourselves, the worlds in which we live, and the possibilities of what we can become. Students have a right to high-quality learning opportunities in which their cultures, language, and experiences are valued and used to guide their learning. Equity is measured by the degree to which people belong, feel included, and are empowered. Universal equity cannot be achieved without creating systems that embody the principles of everyday justice.

Since Lloyd Dunn’s report (1968) on the overrepresentation of Black and Latino students in special education countless federal, state and district reports, as well as research studies exist that document the various facets of educational practice impacting these rates. Most recently the over-representation picture is troubling: in 2008, the school enrollment of Blacks (15.5%) differed greatly from their representation in special education (20.4%) and among students with an Emotional Disturbance classification (29.1%); while enrollment of Whites (55.5%) was mirrored in special education (55.9%) and among students with an ED classification (56.3%). This disproportionate representation is at the heart of the issue. According to a report released in 2006 by the U.S. Department of Education, one important consequence of over-representation has to do with the educational access and participation that students who are placed in special education experience once they become part of the special education population. Fortunately, we know a great deal regarding the effect of disproportionality on the educational and social mobility of racial/ethnic minority groups. For example, students are less likely to receive access to rigorous and full curriculum (Harry & Klingner, 2006; Fierros & Conroy, 2002); limited academic and post-secondary opportunities (Harry & Klingner, 2006); limited interaction with “abled” or academically mainstreamed peers and increased sense of social stigmatization (Gartner & Lipsky, 1999; National Research Council, 2002); and a permanence in their placement (Harry & Klingner, 2006).

Given some of the negative consequences of special education placement, there is urgency in understanding the practices that lead to identification and placement and why it happens disproportionately to Black, Latino and Native American student populations. In the absence of a research base for why Black, Latino and Native American representation in special education is not proportionate to their representation in general education (Blanchett, 2006; O’Connor & Fernandez, 2005), then educators must consider whether our local, state, and national educational policies and practices place racial/ethnic minority and low-income student groups at risk. In this article, I highlight some of the common policies, practices and beliefs that place racial/ethnic minorities and low-income students at risk.
Addressing Disproportionality:
State Performance Plan Indicators 9 and 10

Each year state education departments inform school districts whether they have met the measure of racial/ethnic disproportionality in special education. The formula and the threshold of what is disproportionate vary across the country. In supporting states to create equitable school systems for all students, the Equity Alliance at ASU recognizes that the disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education programs is both a result and an indicator of inequitable practices in schools. This Equity In Action is intended to provide educators and researchers with the most comprehensive, praxis-oriented information on identifying and reducing disproportionality in schools.

Since 2004, the Metropolitan Center for Urban Education has housed the New York State Center on Disproportionality (also known as the Technical Assistance Center on Disproportionality [TACD] – www.steinhardt.nyu.edu/metrocenter/tacd). TACD’s work has involved assisting school districts cited for disproportionality to:

1) Understand the citation
2) Identify the root causes of this outcome
3) Develop a strategic plan for addressing the root causes
4) Implement the plan and develop capacity to continuously monitor rates of disproportionality

Over the course of developing and piloting a data-driven process (2004-2010) for identifying root causes, we’ve gained insight into not only the root causes but also the driving forces (internal and external to district) of these root causes. Our data driven root cause process focused on examining various areas of the schooling process in order to understand the interaction of school practice (inputs) and student outcomes. This process involved examining the following three areas: 1. Quality of curricular and instructional supports (e.g., type of core program, stage of core program implementation, capacity of instructional staff, and learning outcomes of students), 2. Intervention services for struggling students (e.g., type of available interventions, frequency of intervention usage, stage of implementation, length of intervention implementation, and number of students participating in intervention programs by race/ethnicity, gender and grade level), and 3. Predominant cultural beliefs (perceptions of race and class, perceptions of different learning styles versus a disability, perceptions of how race and class interact in school practice, and cultural responsiveness of current policies and practices).

The examination of this data for the last 6 years across 30 districts has resulted in our identification of common root causes of disproportionality. These causes are not the only ones but tend to be present in every district and maintain the most significant effect on the rate of disproportionality in school districts.

Unpacking the Common Causes of Disproportionality

**Topic I: Gaps in curriculum and instructional implementation disproportionately affect struggling learners**

Endemic in most school districts is the question of instructional wellness which includes responsiveness—does and can our instruction maximize the learning capacity of all students? In our data-driven root cause process, multiple causes emerged as contributing to disproportionality rates. The wellness of instruction and curriculum as it is represented in instructional support teams/teacher assistance teams, intervention services, assessment, and gifted and talented programs continuously emerged as maintaining gaps in practices that disproportionately affected struggling learners.

Minimally articulated core curriculum and consistent support of teaching ability. Due to various factors, many school districts did not have in place a current curriculum and/or agreement on instructional approaches that considered the range of learners. As a result, students who persistently could not attain proficiency on the state exam were promptly considered for special education services. Additionally, some districts were continuously changing or adding curriculum, assessment and instructional strategies from year to year. Although every school district contends with such changes, we found that in our districts such structural changes affected struggling learners the most. For example, practitioners tended to comment that they lacked the ability to adequately service students at the lowest quartile of performance. Therefore instructional staff were experiencing a steep learning curve regarding a new curriculum and/or assessment, meanwhile feeling inadequate to address skill deficiencies with students even based on the prior curriculum or assessment.

The policy change in IDEA 2004 regarding response to intervention (RtI) has greatly pushed the conversation among practitioners to recognize the impact of an inadequate curriculum, particularly in reading, on struggling learners. Many of our school districts are acknowledging the absence of a reading series and program as preventing them from truly understanding and locating the reading capacity of students in grades K-5.

**Remedy:** Identification and sustained implementation of appropriate reading and math core program that is sequenced K-12. Additionally, sequenced and sustained support for non-tenured and tenured teaching staff to build ability to effectively implement curriculum and/or assessment, as well as instructional capacity.

Continued on page 34
Too many interventions for struggling learners

In our examination of curriculum and the related interventions, we found that many school districts maintained an exhaustive list of interventions for students demonstrating academic difficulty. The overabundance of interventions for struggling learners indicated that staff were not proficient in differentiating the core curriculum to address the needs of a range of learners. Unfortunately, without a well-articulated core curriculum and instructional program that services all students, this gap disproportionately affected not only struggling learners but also new students to the districts (including newly arrived English Language Learners).

Remedy: Identification and implementation of targeted, evidence-based, intervention programs for students demonstrating academic difficulty while core curriculum program is redeveloped.

Inconsistent knowledge of the purpose and implementation of assessments. Various school districts were utilizing assessment tools that were developed to screen students at risk for reading difficulty as measures of diagnosing reading skill deficiency. This appeared to be a result of inconsistent knowledge surrounding these assessments, that is, what information it captured, how to translate the assessment information into targeted interventions, etc. In another district, the Kindergarten screening being used maintained a specific threshold of which students were potentially at risk and the common practice with this assessment was to go 25% above that threshold and identify all those students as “not ready” for their school environment. This inconsistent knowledge base regarding assessments allowed for the implementation of interventions and strategies that were not tailored to meet the specific needs of struggling learners. Therefore, instructional support teams and/or child study teams would receive information about a child’s reading difficulty sometimes after months or a year of inadequate interventions.

Remedy: Continuous professional development on purpose, application and interpretation of curriculum, assessment and instructional strategies.

Poorly structured intervention services for struggling learners. In New York State and New Jersey, academic intervention services are legislated to exist for struggling learners, particularly in Title 1 school districts. However, our root cause process revealed the implementation of these programs was inconsistent and as a result, the intervention process became the gateway for special education referrals. For example, students referred and classified tended to reach below basic proficiency over multiple school years. Meanwhile the academic intervention staff did not receive training on how to move students from far below basic proficiency up toward proficiency; staff tended to receive training focused on moving students that would assist a school in reaching Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), which are generally those students just below proficiency. The long-term effect is two-fold:

1) Students who are far below proficiency are not given the adequate and sustained opportunity to accelerate their learning.

2) Students who are barely into proficiency tend to “slide” in and out of proficiency thus, they are constantly receiving instruction and interventions that is only enough to get them to proficiency but not enough to master academic skills.

Remedy: Re-development of a tiered system of academic supports for struggling learners, identification of research-based interventions for targeted groups of students, and targeted professional development for academic intervention staff (i.e., non-tenured and tenured, including content specialists).

Inconsistent in referral process, including referral forms. School districts are generally good at ensuring they abide by special education regulations, including referral timeframes, involvement of practitioners, etc. However we found that school districts maintained inconsistent pre-referral information, as well as different forms for each school building in a district. Again, much of these system inconsistencies were not intentional but rather reflective of the bifurcation existing in the district between special education and general education. In many instances special education directors would describe how they could only suggest to building administrators about adopting one common referral form or insisting on general education teachers to complete the specifics of the pre-referral strategies.

Remedy: Development of a common process and form for pre-referral; outline an annual evaluation process for examining the efficiency and effectiveness of this process. Provide training on appropriate interventions and fidelity of implementation for general education teachers.

Limited information regarding intervention strategies. One of our steps in the root cause process is to conduct a records review of a representative sample of files; this ranged from 40 to 100 files, depending on the number of students receiving special education services. On most forms we found a text box in which general education teachers would describe the strategies they’d already tried. In most instances general education teachers annotated how moving a student’s seat, matching them with a buddy, or providing the content or skill again but at a slower pace did not work, even though they considered it a practical strategy. The plethora of strategies lacked any sense of feasibility as competent strategies and also lacked any sense of summative evaluation as to their impact. Teachers tended not to note any type of pre/post evaluative summary—instead the standard answer was “I tried and it didn’t work.” Even with the addition of response to intervention (RtI) in IDEA 2004, which forced school districts to re-vamp their pre-referral/problem-solving team forms so that they request information about interventions provided by general education teachers, there still existed a
gap in knowledge among practitioners regarding what is and is not an intervention in Tier 1.

**Remedy:** Provide training on evidence-based interventions and fidelity of implementation for general education teachers and instructional support teams/teacher assistance teams.

**Topic 3: Limited Beliefs about Ability**

Special education is viewed as fixing struggling students. In most school districts, the general and special education staff rarely interact with each other. Through our root cause process, we worked with a cross district team that included general and special education teachers, administrators, content specialists, etc., and more often than not there were disconnects in the conversation due to a limited understanding among practitioners regarding what constitutes a disability. General education teachers tended to express the belief that special education maintains the “magic fairy dust” that will “fix” the learning capacity and outcomes of students. Some of this belief may be due to the reality that prior to the addition of response to intervention in IDEA 2004, special education processes were perceived as organized to provide services to students who fell outside of the normal curve of academic performance. Though RtI is part of the water stream of conversation in most school districts, for some practitioners in our districts RtI is viewed as the new process for “getting a student classified” versus a process for ensuring quality instruction and interventions.

**Remedy:** General and special education participate in professional development regarding curriculum, assessment and instructional strategies together, including special education regulations; analysis of data regarding interventions for struggling students must involve general and special education teachers.

Poor and racial/ethnic minority students are viewed as not “ready” for school. We commonly heard school district staff struggling with the idea that somehow being poor/low-income and being from a racial/ethnic minority group compromises how “ready” these students are for their school environment. More specifically, school and district staff at times perceived the cultural practices of the home environment as making low-income and racial/ethnic minority children unable to learn or contradicting school practices. In one district, many of the participants rallied around the concept of “urban behavior” as a driving force of why the Black students were in special education. In another district, an ESL teacher hypothesized that English Language Learners were over-represented in special education with speech/language impairment because in “Latin culture they listen to music loud.” Yet another district hypothesized the Latino and ELL students were such a distraction in the classroom that they could be better served with “other disability groups.” Such perspectives are not solely found in school districts cited for racial/ethnic disproportionality; in fact, such perspectives can be found in many urban, suburban and rural districts as well. Part of the difficulty with such a belief is that it is a distraction from engaging how teaching matters in learning outcomes. That is, we found practitioners were willing to cite the family and community (e.g., poverty, limited reading materials at home) as the reason why poor/low-income and racial/ethnic minority students were struggling academically, meanwhile attributing the academic performance of proficient students to their teaching practice. So there needs to be a paradigm alignment regarding the connection between teaching and learning, as well as an understanding of how to harness the types of knowledge students demonstrate.

Additionally, these predominant beliefs regarding poor/low-income and racial/ethnic minority status as a “risk” factor. In several districts, for example, we conducted focus groups with students to ascertain what it took to get good grades; low-income and racial/ethnic minority students often reported feeling that they were seen and treated as “different.” In one particular district, the boys in two of the elementary schools talked about “only girls” as getting good grades.

**Remedy:** Continuous professional development around creating culturally responsive school environments with particular sessions on stereotype threat, vulnerability, racial/ethnic identity development within the five developmental domains, examination of whiteness (Apple, 1997; Blanchett, 2006; Cooper, 2003), and cultural developmental expressions as additive not subtractive (Irvine and York, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1999).

**Conclusion**

In order to embark on a process of remedying a district or school of disproportionate representation, one must begin with a substantive inquiry into why and how these patterns exist. The following are suggested steps:

1. Develop a district/school-wide team: This team must be comprised of administrators, general and special education teachers, intervention and reading specialists, parents, curriculum and assessment coordinators, etc. The purpose of the team will be to jointly collect, examine, interpret, and outline the core root causes.

2. Conduct an analysis of disproportionality rates: At the onset a thorough analysis of disproportionality rates must be conducted. We suggest utilizing TACD’s Disproportionality Data Analysis Workbook, which contains the necessary calculations (See Additional Resources).

3. Conduct a survey of culturally responsive practices: At the heart of disproportionality is the recognition that racial/ethnic minority groups are over represented in special education, and as such there needs to be a consideration as to whether school practices are responsive to culturally and linguistically diverse populations. We suggest utilizing a tool such as the School Self-Assessment Guide for Culturally Responsive Practice (See Additional Resources).

In summary, the disproportionate representation of racial/ethnic minority and low-income students in special education occurs because of complex intersections. Therefore, educators, schools, and school systems have a responsibility to engage a deliberate inquiry process that critiques existing practices and policies against a criteria of responsiveness to the populations of students served.

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References for this article are available in the online Essential Educator version, which can be accessed at: www.essentialeducator.org
No Excuses University:

A Place Where Children Beat the Odds
What is a No Excuses School and why are they successful?

This is a question we hear all the time. A “No Excuse University (NEU)” is a complex series of exceptional systems in which the teachers, staff, and principal are tenacious and never waver in their commitments to create successful learners in ALL children. These schools are making a difference in low poverty situations. We believe ALL children will have the abilities to go to college (if they so chose) and as faculty members we are responsible for preparing ALL children in academic excellence.

Creating a Culture of Universal Achievement is the first step. There must be a belief that disadvantaged children can be successful and the efforts of the school will make it a reality. Making excuses like, “my dog ate my homework” or “no support at home” or “the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree” are NOT accepted at NEU. These excuses are neutralized and abolished. The culture is a positive learning environment in all aspects.

The next exceptional system is Teacher Collaboration. We have developed a teacher compact expressing what we will do to ensure ALL children will succeed. We hold high expectations for all children, provide consistent and high-quality instruction in a supportive and non-threatening environment, provide meaningful work, communicate with parents and students, and display an “urgency” for the academic proficiency of every student. Discussions revolve around strategies, methods, and obligations for academic performance.

Alignment of standards is crucial for success. It means re-writing the old lesson plans and/or curriculum maps. We create common classroom lessons and articulate across grade levels to reinforce the same language throughout the school. Alignment plans are written and available for everyone to review and add revisions. We talk as groups to make sure the holes in the curriculum are plugged. Our lessons do not just rely on the textbook, CORE curriculum, and national standards. We rely on the needs of the student and our belief that ALL students will be proficient.

The next system relies on formative and informative assessments. We have developed a quarterly summative-assessment plan for the school year. The data received is informative and meaningful. Student and teacher discuss the data to create meaningful goals for their education. A class goal and strategies to reach the goal are decided upon and displayed. Articulation meetings are held where the teacher, principal, reading coach, math coach, special education teacher, and any other person involved directly with the student attends and discusses the data to make recommendations for actions regarding individual students.

Data used is managed by individual student files passed from grade level to grade level. The principal keeps a file on all students discussed in articulation meetings and actions/strategies for implementation.

Interventions take courage and creativeness. A grade level intervention may look differently from other grade levels. The interventions will change based upon the assessments and needs of the student. Classroom interventions are constantly revolving and reorganizing; again, based on the data. Behavior interventions stem from our “Pyramid of Success” program developed by Coach John Wooden. We strive for positive, consistent, and non-threatening learning environments. Community interventions provide resources for our children.

For more information, please visit: noexcusesuniversity.com

Katie Amsden and Melanie Stokes, Roosevelt Elementary, Weber School District

Creating a Culture of Universal Achievement is the first step. There must be a belief that disadvantaged children can be successful and the efforts of the school will make it a reality. Making excuses like, “my dog ate my homework” or “no support at home” or “the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree” are NOT accepted at NEU. These excuses are neutralized and abolished. The culture is a positive learning environment in all aspects.

For more information, please visit: noexcusesuniversity.com

Damen Lopez is the founder of NEU and schools must apply to be accepted into the network. We are proud to be a NEU school! We have seen great improvement in the short time we have been involved and we know we have a ways to go!

Excerpts taken from, “Turn Around Schools: Creating Cultures of Universal Achievement” written by Jeff King and Damen Lopez.
Utah schools are no strangers to implementing Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The Utah State Office Board of Education passed Board Rule 277-609 stating that it is the school district’s responsibility to: “develop and implement a board approved comprehensive district plan for school discipline. The plan shall include: written standards for student behavior expectations; effective instructional practices for teaching student expectations; systematic methods for reinforcement of expected behavior and uniform methods for corrections of student behavior; uniform methods for annual evaluation of efficiency and effectiveness; ongoing staff development.”

Since that time many schools, districts and charters are making PBIS part of their school culture. A number of Utah schools are implementing PBIS as part of the Utah Multi-Tier System of Supports (UMTSS formally known as ABC-UBI) Initiative (73 schools for the 2010-2011 school year). While the majority of schools are traditional elementary and secondary sites, this article will focus on the insight gained from three alternative secondary settings, Blue Peak High School in Tooele County School District, Horizonte in Salt Lake City School District and East Hollywood High, a Charter school in West Valley.

For this article, I spent a few hours at each school talking to the administrator and building coordinator (PBIS team leaders) about the barriers and facilitators to implementing positive behavior support in their settings. The schools’ involvement with UMTSS ranged from two years to four years. At East Hollywood High, students complete an application process to attend the school. Their student population is comprised of students who have an interest in film and students who were not successful in a mainstream high school setting. At Horizonte and Blue Peak, students are referred to the school from the other high schools in their districts. The administrators talked about the challenging behaviors they see in their student population and that many of their students have a long history of academic and behavioral failure at school. They have to change the way their students view the school environment and the staff. All of the sites encourage their staff to adopt a 4:1 positive-negative interaction ratio with their students by implementing school-wide positive reinforcement programs. Mindi Holmdahl, an administrator at Horizonte, talked about the change she sees in parents when they are notified of the good things their adolescents are doing at school, as many parents have never experienced that before.

Another challenge faced by Horizonte and Blue Peak is the number of special programs housed at each of their schools. These range from adult education to teen parents to ESL classes and vocational programs. Trying to get all programs on the same page definitely presents a challenge. At Horizonte, in addition to all the programs, they also have satellite sites. One way they address this challenge is by making all of their PBIS materials available on-line for all staff to have easy access to the materials and information needed for implementation. All schools talked about the challenge of finding time to meet as a team and attend trainings together. There are a few trainings a year which require the
They have great plans for the direction they need to go, and are using data to make decisions and creating positive school environments for some of the most challenging student populations. They are creating environments where students feel connected and successful.

entire team to attend, however, these schools have a small staff and most of the staff members are on the team, so it’s impossible to send the entire team to a training. The dissemination of information presents a challenge to the few educators who represent their team at the trainings. Nicole Broberg from East Hollywood High shared that the team can really see the fruit of their labors when they hear all staff members starting to use the common language of positive behavior interventions in their school. Mark Ernst, a Blue Peak administrator, talked about the benefit of having all teachers on the same page when it comes to behavioral correction. Having a consistent discipline program and using data to make decisions points everyone in the same direction at the school.

While the implementation of PBIS in an alternative setting may take longer than at a traditional school and they may face different challenges than other schools, all team leaders and administrators were excited to talk about the positive changes they are seeing in students, staff and parents. They have great plans for the direction they need to go, and are using data to make decisions and creating positive school environments for some of the most challenging student populations. They are creating environments where students feel connected and successful. These schools are doing amazing things and it’s a pleasure to work with them as participants in the UMTSS initiative. They are truly bright spots.

To watch some of the video highlights of the school interviews with the administrators and team leaders, visit www.updc.org/abc/
“Go to class,” “you’re going to be late,” or “clear the halls,” were common phrases spoken during passing times; none of which sounded, nor were motivating to our students. Highland Jr. High is a designated Title I School with 77% of the students receiving free or reduced lunch. Our school also has a very diverse population of students. We have a very dedicated staff working hard to provide a quality education that meets the needs of all students.

During the 2009-2010 school year, we were alarmed that student tardies were on the rise and the things that we were doing as a staff did not seem to be working. We were using the practice of having teachers in the halls during passing times to encourage students to move quickly between classes. However, it did not seem to be enough of an intervention to eliminate or even reduce the rate of tardies. Students appeared resistant to our efforts, even ignoring adults’ direct requests to go to class. This was a particularly challenging issue when a group of students were in the hall conversing and only one adult approached them. The students simply ignored the adult’s presence and any requests that were made. One ranch hand simply was not enough to move the herd.

Teachers wanted to spend instructional time instructing. Frequently, 50 to 60 students would remain in the hall after the tardy bell. Because teachers did not want to waste time, they were beginning class, catching up the late comers and as a result neglecting to report all of the tardies. It was clear that something had to be done, but what? We considered and tried various options. Basic praise as reinforcement clearly wasn’t enough. However, punishment alone wasn’t a good option either. Periodically, counseling students, sending them to the office, and even suspending chronic offenders did little to improve the problem. Even worse, students were not in class when they needed to be there.

During late Spring of 2010, Mrs. Bennington and Mr. Peters attended the Utah Multi-Tier System of Supports (UMTSS) Conference and learned about Randall Sprick’s “START on Time” program. We were certainly ready to give it a try! The program is a tardy round-up of sorts. Teachers are near the doorway to their classrooms during passing times greeting students and reinforcing good behavior in the hallway. They also remind students of behavioral expectations. When the bell rings, the teacher simply closes the door to their classroom and begins teaching. All remaining available staff members are involved in the round-up process. We use all teachers who have that time block as a preparation period, administrators, and available support staff to facilitate the actual round-up of the remaining students in the hallways. The group, known as the Sweep Team, begins at the end of each hallway and work inward, sweeping all of the remaining students with them as they go. When the Sweep Team has rounded up and corralled all of the tardy students in the central meeting area, names are taken and students are escorted to class. Teachers also are able to flag down members of the Sweep Team during the passing period to handle problem behaviors.

By being proactive and using effective interventions, teachers have been able to get back to the important work of teaching.
Head ‘em Up, Move ‘em Out!

Steve Barker, Assistant Principal; Jessica Bennington, PBIS Coordinator; Tim Peters, Principal; Highland Jr. High School, Ogden City Schools

The outline of Randall Sprick’s “START on Time” program has a consequence hierarchy. The first and second time a student is late to class his name is recorded and a note is sent home. The third and fourth time a note is sent home the student receives after school detention. The fifth time includes the note home, after school detention, and the student meets with an administrator. The sixth tardy results in a note home, after school detention, and personal contact is made with the parents of the student. The seventh tardy includes all of the previously listed consequences, and the parents come and meet with the administrator. With the eighth tardy, a note is sent home and the student spends a half day in the In-School Suspension (ISS) Program. The ninth tardy results in the student spending a full day in the ISS Program.

At Highland, after the third tardy, we are using a daily tracker. It is a daily communication with the student’s parents. When the student completes five days with no tardies, the student is no longer required to use the tracker. We are also focusing on reinforcing appropriate behavior. Beyond the immediate and daily praise students receive for attending class on time, we have created zero-tardy parties that are held quarterly. Additionally, grade-level teams have created incentives for students who are on time for class and meeting citizenship requirements. Last year we also began the Principal’s 200 Club designed to reward students who follow the school rules.

In addition, we have created a Student Support Center. Although the Center serves many functions, it also hosts students during ISS. The Center has provided an option beyond sending students home for poor behavior. When students are at the Center, they are required to complete assignments from their courses. Staff members at the Center are also utilized to monitor students with trackers.

The Hall at Highland Jr. High

There is nothing like bringing in the herd and the data show it. The under reported number of tardies for the first month of school last year were recorded at 2,800. This year, after only the first month of school, the number of tardies had decreased dramatically to 1,100! We are happy to report that the trend is continuing to improve. Now, hallways are practically empty when the bell rings. By being proactive and using effective interventions, teachers have been able to get back to the important work of teaching. School secretaries, not teachers, enter the data on tardies enabling us to continually monitor progress. Using this approach, it is estimated that teachers have gained 5 to 10 minutes of instructional time every class period.

The unexpected benefits of implementing this program have been numerous. Problem behavior such as students fighting in the halls has been greatly reduced. Text messaging and the resulting social drama have decreased as students don’t have time to engage in this behavior. Student reports of bullying have become less frequent as groups of students no longer have a designated turf as a result of consistent supervision.

One key to our success is due to the fidelity of implementation. We realize that we will need to teach and re-teach our expectations. The paradigm that junior high students should know how to behave and we will punish those who do not comply is shifting. All staff must be involved in teaching every student how to behave in each setting within the school environment including hallways, lunchroom, classroom, assemblies and even the restrooms.

The “START on Time” program has enabled us to circle the wagons. The effort required to put the program in place has been worthwhile. Our staff has developed new habits and routines, and refined others. With a positive focus, we have enhanced school safety and increased instructional time. The school climate has improved dramatically. Teachers feel empowered that they, not the students, are in control of the school.
A major challenge that teachers face is students who are consistently late. Tardiness can negatively affect classroom learning—not just that of the tardy student. When children come into the classroom late, the lesson is interrupted and the teacher has to help them catch up, taking precious time away from an already busy school day.

Researchers at the David O. McKay School of Education have found that as teachers use positive praise notes, student punctuality improves. Their research presentation recently received the Edward G. Carr Research Award at the 7th Annual Conference of the Association for Positive Behavior Support.

Paul Caldarella, Lynette Christensen, and Dean K. Richard Young decided to perform the study after the principal of a local elementary school mentioned to Christensen that she and the teachers were concerned about students coming quite late to school—in some cases an average of more than 100 minutes late. “They were worried about the interruption to class flow and the decrease in instruction time,” Christensen stated.

Caldarella explained that the school’s main way of dealing with tardies had been to send warning letters home to parents—the more the students were tardy, the more severe the letters became, ending ultimately in a notification for truancy court. “We explored the literature and found that punishment was the standard,” Caldarella recalled. Being a positive behavior support organization, and having had success with praise notes in the past, the researchers decided to design a positive intervention. “We had the teachers identify candidates based on past tardiness, and asked them to write one note for each day those students came on time,” he summarized.

Results showed that student punctuality improved, especially for those students whose tardiness was less severe. Feedback from parents was also positive. “We are excited that such a simple intervention had such a positive effect,” Christensen stated.

As the researchers presented their findings at the conference, they were surprised by the amount of interest generated by their work. “We had very prominent scholars in our field stopping by the booth, asking questions,” Caldarella stated. Then they were informed that their research would be the first to receive The Edward G. Carr Research Award, which was created to honor the passing of Dr. Carr, a leading scholar in the field.

“It was a great honor for us to receive the award,” Christensen expressed. “It was a validation of the work we are doing in schools by prominent scholars in our field, and we greatly appreciate it.”

Reprinted, with permission, the David O. McKay School of Education, Brigham Young University, education.byu.edu June 7, 2010
“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it’s the only thing that ever has.” The truth of Margaret Mead’s quote is evident in the work of a group of Utah Special Education New Teacher Induction Coordinators over the past several years. This group is a “Bright Spot” example that has come together to share ideas and practices that support teachers in their first years of teaching.

There is a critical shortage of special educators that exists in all parts of the United States—98% of school districts nationwide reported a shortage in a 2002 Education Week study. Retention of those teachers who are hired is also an issue. According to the Council for Exceptional Children (2000), over 40% of special education teachers leave the field in their first five years of teaching. Utah faces similar challenges in finding and keeping special education teachers. In addition, 45% of Utah’s special education teachers in 2009 were unlicensed and participating in alternative teacher preparation programs.

In the past decade there has been an emphasis on creating new teacher induction programs in order to support and mentor teachers, increase job satisfaction and improve retention rates. Utah school districts are required to provide mentoring for new teachers in their first three years of service. In response to this unfunded mandate, Utah districts began to create induction programs. In some districts, general education and special education induction efforts were combined; in others, they were separate. Educators in districts were often given the responsibility of facilitating induction without training and guidance—they had the challenge and opportunity of developing their own programs and job description.

The State Personnel Development Grant Program (SPDG), funded through the Office of Special Education Programs in the Department of Education, has played a significant catalytic role in helping to build and strengthen Utah’s new special education teacher induction programs. Bruce Schroeder and Dan Morgan wrote the grant and have facilitated its implementation, along with Utah Personnel Development Center specialists and Utah school district partners.

One of the Utah SPDG’s goals relates specifically to new teacher induction: To implement strategies that are effective in promoting the retention of highly qualified special educators (especially new special educators). This goal has five performance measures:

1. New special education teachers will demonstrate increased knowledge and skills in scientifically-based instructional practices.
2. New special education teachers will report higher levels of job satisfaction and support.
3. New special education teacher retention rates will be greater than 70% after three years of teaching experience.
4. Performance of students with disabilities taught by new special education teachers will improve.
5. The job satisfaction of mentors/coaches of new special education teachers will improve.

Continued on page 44
Several special education coordinators from districts throughout the state have provided an endorsement for the value of their experiences in the Induction Group. Their comments follow:

“What’s mine, is yours!” In working with the different induction coordinators the last five years, that has been the ongoing sentiment within this group. Not only is everyone very collaborative when planning joint professional development for new teachers, but also in sharing what works ideas that they have developed. Whether it be Powerpoint presentations, forms, or just some good ideas I can always count on this group to share what works for new teachers!”
—Sharon Johnson, Granite School District

“I was straight out of the classroom and a coaching newbie when I was put in charge of our induction program. The Special Education New Teacher Induction Group encircled me with training and support that gave me the courage, ideas, and tools to begin to develop what is now a significant part of our special education program. I no longer carry my responsibilities alone. Because of their input and with the great support of our director, David Forbush, Cache now has a strong, vibrant team that regularly collaborates and functions with great coordination to provide individualized help to our new teachers. For example, our first year teachers spend two full days in what we call Survival 101 with the Induction Team. They are introduced to an overview of district expectations concerning curriculum, effective teaching practices, assessment and data collection, classroom management, and IEP forms and procedures. These areas are then addressed in greater depth during monthly induction meetings with the combined group and also in breakout groups with their own domain peers and their coaches. The involvement of all staff together, including speech-language pathologists, has helped confirm the expectation of frequent opportunities to respond, high rates of positive to negative interactions, etc., have become common in discussion. We have developed a fairly comprehensive and ever growing set of observation tools that coaches use to frequently collect the data needed to drive those conversations. All of this, and so much more, is the direct result of the mentoring that I personally received from the state induction group. Now, our district induction team is becoming increasingly effective because the state has helped us develop a common language and a common set of experiences at the workshops we have attended together.”
—Sandi Cook, Cache County School District

This goal and the accompanying performance measures have provided direction and continuous feedback to those working on the SPDG Grant Project and participants from districts over the years.

In 2002, Dan Morgan brought a small group of special education induction coordinators together with the intention of building capacity to address induction needs. Since then the group has grown to include 15 school districts. In addition to meeting on a regular basis, professional development and resources have been provided to members of the group through grant funding. The coordinators meet to share ideas so that induction becomes more than a district orientation that had been provided in the past. Addressing the critical needs of brand new special education teachers has been the focus. Group members have assisted in creating an instructional coaching model to help new teachers master critical teaching behaviors.

The group joined with Marilyn Likins and Cindy Myers from Utah State University to develop and present Running Start, a summer training week for those teachers in alternative teacher preparation programs. Marilyn expresses her view of the process, “The power of Running Start lies in its rich collaborative nature. The group has worked together over the past two to three years to develop a training program for brand new teachers that meets the needs of districts, universities and the teachers themselves. With the guidance of a facilitator, the group demonstrates the essence of collaboration. All members participate, listen and provide feedback. All members have ownership for its success.”
now had information and success that we wanted to share with others and the group continued to grow across the state. I think this group is a perfect example of Anita Archers famous “I do it. We do it. You do it.” We have watched and learned from others. We have worked together and supported each other. Finally, we have been empowered to create induction programs that work for individual districts as we provide training and support for new coaches supporting our new teachers. These years with the Induction Coordinators have been some of the most rewarding years in my career. I love being able to work with and continue to learn from some of the most talented special educators in the state.” — Joanne Hampton, Jordan School District

“The group benefited all of us in a multitude of ways. It was exciting to gather with people from across the state who shared a passion for mentoring and induction for new teachers. Many of us started as strangers, but trust and camaraderie grew quickly. I think this occurred so quickly partly because we were excited about the opportunity to effect positive change for the profession through supporting new teachers, and partly because of the leadership and facilitation skills of those organizing our efforts. We were able to see excellent leadership, collaboration and presentations modeled and then were given opportunities to participate in leadership with support—coaching. It furthered us individually, and as professionals. I was profoundly changed as I grew from the interactions and experience of and with others—true synergy. It furthered our district programs exponentially. Our vision grew more quickly, but also more deeply than I believe it ever could have on our own. Our experiences exemplified the best of what we were attempting to grow in our districts. I am deeply grateful for the experience, and to the leaders whose vision made it possible. It was an honor to work with such dynamic, intelligent, visionary persons.”—Marilyn Runolfson, Weber School District

Finally, Dan Morgan expresses his view of the group, “In retrospect, what impresses me is how organic the growth process was for Utah’s district induction specialists. It happened so naturally. They came together willingly and openly to share ideas, to learn from each other, to support each other. Their collective energy and commitment, combined with a contagious camaraderie, has resulted in a solid system of supports for Utah’s new special education teachers. Working with these folks during those years ranks as the most gratifying experience of my professional career.”

Dan also shares results that have been gathered related to induction efforts: The most important questions to ask when assessing the impact of a new teacher induction program are (1) are retention rates improving to acceptable levels, and (2) are the new teachers making a positive difference with the students they serve? Other questions have been asked as well, such as: (a) what are the job satisfaction levels for new teachers, (b) do they enjoy their work, and (c) are they receiving appropriate support from mentors/coaches and their building administrators. Some abbreviated answers to these questions follow below.

**Retention.** The SPDG has meticulously tracked new special education teacher retention rates for a number of years. For example, of the 240 brand new special education teachers for the 2007/08 school year, 82% of them were still teaching during the 2009-10 school year. Ninety percent of the 266 new special education teachers who began the 2008/09 school year returned for their second year of teaching. Of the 227 new special education teacher who began last year (2009-10), over 93% have returned to start their second year of teaching. We have also learned that there are very small—almost negligible—differences in retention rates between new licensed special education teachers and new unlicensed special education teachers.

**Job Satisfaction.** The SPDG has regularly surveyed new teachers over the years to get a picture of their perceptions and reactions to their first year of teaching. The results have been illuminating. Utah’s new special education teachers are either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with a number of working condition factors assessed by the survey; e.g., support from administration, availability of resources and materials, principal’s leadership and vision, supportive and collegial atmosphere, professional prestige, salary and benefits.

Almost 90% of the most recent sample indicated their school is a great place to work and learn. Responding to the question, “I get a lot of joy from my job as a special education teacher,” approximately 92% strongly agreed or agreed with that statement. It can be safely said that Utah’s first year special education teachers—about 85% of them—were either satisfied or very satisfied with their job.

**Support received.** A large majority all new teachers have reported that their mentors/coaches provided emotional support, opportunities to discuss concerns and to identify challenges and possible solutions. In addition, a large majority (78%) of all respondents indicated that their mentor/coach had been a valuable resource to them.

To summarize evaluation efforts, “This is just a very small snapshot of the work that has been done to assess the impact of the Utah’s efforts to support new special education teachers. This work continues as we attempt to make what we do better than what we’ve done in the past. And what’s been done in the past has been pretty good.”

The Induction Group has accomplished a great deal over eight years of work together. Goals for the future include a greater emphasis on providing meaningful coaching to improve instruction and student performance, extending support in the second and third years of teaching, including more Utah school districts in the group and creating online training resources for induction. Another goal would be to continue to build on the synergy of the group process—to continue to be what Paula Kashiwaeda from Ogden School District describes as COLORFUL:

**C:** Collaborative

**O:** Organized

**L:** Lively

**O:** Open

**R:** Resourceful

**F:** Friendly

**U:** Unwavering

**L:** Limitless
USU: New Masters Transition Specialist Program

Bob Morgan & Jared Schultz, Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation, Utah State University
A Masters-Level, Interdisciplinary, Transition Specialist Program at Utah State University

Despite federal legislation and research on evidence-based transition practices, many school districts and transition teachers continue to struggle to achieve positive post-school outcomes for their young adults with disabilities (Rusch, Hughes, Agran, Martin, & Johnson, 2009). Evidence of this problem includes prevalent unemployment or underemployment, high drop-out rates from high school, minimal post-school education, low independence, and limited self-determination (Baer et al., 2003; National Longitudinal Transition Study-2, 2007; Rusch et al., 2009; Wehmeyer & Palmer, 2003).

National surveys of young adults with disabilities or their legal guardians conducted by the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS-2, 2009) provide data on the current state of post-school outcomes. According to NLTS-2, 58.0% of young adults held a paid job one to four years out of high school, with most working only part-time. Only 7.7% attended four-year colleges and 12.8% attended two-year colleges. Young adults in Utah perform relatively well in relation to these numbers, although improvement is certainly possible, especially considering reduced levels of adult services awaiting them. In a review conducted by the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC), Test et al. (2009a) identified predictors of successful post-school outcomes. Findings from this review, as well as NLTS-2 (2007) suggest that successful transition depends on getting young adults with disabilities involved in outcome-oriented programs with heavy emphasis on inclusion, work experience, support, and self-determination. All stakeholders need to focus on what it takes to achieve successful outcomes.

The Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation at Utah State University has been awarded a U.S. Department of Education grant supporting a two-year, 39-credit program leading to a M.S. or M.Ed in Special Education with a concentration in transition specialty. The program, endorsed by the Utah State Office of Education, Special Education Transition Services, will prepare special education teachers licensed at the bachelor’s level and other eligible graduate students to (a) provide transition services preparing individuals with disabilities for adult living, and (b) support and monitor individuals with disabilities in post-secondary education and supported/competitive employment.

School-to-work transition services require an understanding of two systems of service provision. In addition to special education, teachers need to have a sound understanding of adult service and vocational rehabilitation. For this reason, interdisciplinary training is an important component of this program. Although this project will support masters-level special education students, these students will take several courses and carry out field assignments alongside masters-level students in the department’s rehabilitation counseling program and work with rehabilitation counseling faculty. As such, participants will become interdisciplinary technicians skilled in all aspects of transition from school to adult life. The Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation is in a unique position to provide this interdisciplinary training as there are not many departments with both special education and rehabilitation counseling programs. The program will involve “core” masters courses and 15 credits in transition/rehabilitation counseling. Students interested in a post-masters certification may focus exclusively on the courses in transition/rehabilitation counseling. Upon exit from the program, university project staff will follow graduates and conduct research on the effects of transition specialists’ performance and impact.

Courses will commence Fall Semester 2011. Because of the need to place masters-level graduates into the field as soon as possible (about two years into the grant period), the grant emphasizes full-time course work for those who can arrange it. For full-time students (9 credits per semester), support will consist of paid tuition and generous stipends covering cost-of-living expenses. For part-time students, support will consist of paid tuition. There are “pay back” provisions for full-time and part-time students who receive support.

Courses will start at 4:30 p.m. or later to facilitate teaching schedules. Students may attend course sessions in Logan, although one distance site will be established for Wasatch Front students (likely in either Ogden or Layton).

One semester-length practicum will be dedicated to providing services in supported or competitive employment. A second practicum will be carried out providing services in post-secondary educational programs for young adults with disabilities. Practica will be scheduled the same semester as courses related to supported/competitive employment and post-secondary education. Course content will be closely aligned with field-based assignments so that knowledge, research and pedagogy are directly linked to practice.

At least a portion of practica must be carried out in a designated “high need” school district (for purposes of this grant, the high need district is Ogden City School District). Students will be expected to arrange schedules and transportation to provide direct service in the Ogden District.

Anticipated impacts of the grant are increased post-secondary education placements and increased employment among individuals with whom transition specialists work, and better coordinated transition service delivery within the school district or organization. This project will produce special education transition specialists who are taught using an evidence-based curriculum and who operate in applied settings by delivering evidence-based practices. Student participants will become experienced in research by carrying out a terminal project based on empirical data.

For more information, contact Sharon Melton, Advisor
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Save the Dates: 2011 UAAACT Conference, Cultivating Success with Assistive Tech

When: Wednesday, February 9th and Thursday, February 10, 2011
Where: Ogden Eccles Conference Center, 2415 Washington Blvd, Ogden
Keynote Speakers: Feb. 9th: Gail Van Tatenhove; The Core Vocabulary Classroom, Doing More With Less
Feb. 10th: Dave Edyburn, AT Research and Evidence Based Practice
Cost: Free to Utah Educators!
Information: www.uaaact.org, or call Craig Boogaard, 801-887-9533

25th Year Utah Mentor Teacher Academy Reunion and Conference!

When: Feb. 17-18, 2011
Where: Provo Marriott Hotel, Provo UT.
Keynote Speakers: Feb. 17: Steve Kukic, Track 1 mentor
Feb. 18: Jennifer Abrams
Special Reunion Social, Feb. 17, 3:00 – 5:00
Cost: Free to UMTA graduates tracks 1-26
Information & Registration:
http://updc.org/registration (after 12/10/2010)

Utah Legislature passes SB150; Reading Requirements for Student Advancement

This bill generally prohibits a school district from promoting a student in first, second, and third grades to the next grade level if the child is not reading at or above grade level. Districts/charters must provide parents with notification and directs the State Board of Education to make rules. No additional funds to districts/charters are available in this bill. Provisions do not apply to a student with a disability who may be exempt. Text of the bill can be accessed here:

First Autistic Presidential Appointee Speaks Out

In December, Ari Ne’eman was nominated by President Obama to the National Council on Disability (NCD), a panel that advises the President and Congress on ways of reforming health care, schools, support services and employment policy to make society more equitable for people with all forms of disability. Now, as the first openly autistic White House appointee in history—and one of the youngest at age 22—Ne’eman is determined to change that. Read More http://www.wired.com/wiredscience/2010/10/exclusive-ari-neeman-qa/all/1#ixzz142l1wB76a

President Obama Speaks out on Bullying

The White House has entered the discussion regarding bullying in US schools. Specifically, the government is asking educators to help prevent bullying and protect students, saying that in some cases the harassment might violate students’ civil rights. The Obama administration is offering guidance to school districts and colleges on how to address discrimination resulting from bullying that in some cases has led students to commit suicide. “We’ve got to dispel this myth that bullying is just a normal rite of passage,” President Obama said.

“Our goal here is to provide school districts, colleges and universities with details about when harassment can rise to the level of a civil rights violation and what they should be doing about it,” Russlynn H. Ali, assistant education secretary for civil rights, said Monday.

Certain types of harassment rooted in sex-role stereotyping or religious differences may be a federal civil rights violation, according to new guidance from the U.S. Department of Education’s office of civil rights aimed at putting school districts on notice about their responsibilities to address bullying.

“Simply put, we think in this country bullying should not exist,” U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan told reporters Tuesday during a conference call to discuss the guidance, which was written as a 10-page letter to school officials. “Students simply cannot learn if they feel threatened, harassed, or in fear.”

FREE Anti-Bullying Resources

The Southern Poverty Law Center has produced a powerful anti-bullying 40 minute DVD with viewers guide for administrators and educators. From the Teaching Tolerance website:

“Bullied is a documentary film that chronicles one student’s ordeal at the hands of anti-gay bullies and offers an inspiring message of hope to those fighting harassment today. It can become a cornerstone of anti-bullying efforts in middle and high schools.

Bullied: A Student, a School and a Case That Made History
• Level: Grades 6 to 8 Grades 9 to 12
• Subject: Reading and Language Arts Social Studies Science and Health Arts ELL / ESL
• A 40-minute documentary film (DVD), with closed captioning and with Spanish subtitles
  • A two-part viewer’s guide with standards-aligned lesson plans and activities for use in staff development
  • Additional materials online

Bullied is designed to help administrators, teachers and counselors create a safer school environment for all students, not just those who are gay and lesbian. It is also intended to help all students understand the terrible toll bullying can take on its victims, and to encourage students to stand up for their classmates who are being harassed.

Note: Limit of one kit per school. Order online at:
http://www.tolerance.org/bullied

For more Hot, New & Very Cool, visit the online Essential Educator which can be accessed at: www.essentialeducator.org
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