The Power Behind
PowerUp WHAT WORKS
Judith Zorfass, Ed.D., Education Development Center (EDC)
Tracy Gray, Ph.D., American Institutes for Research (AIR)

The PowerUp WHAT WORKS website (www.powerupwhatworks.org) provides a continuum of professional learning opportunities for teachers, professional development facilitators, and school leaders. The goal of PowerUp is to help these audiences meet the needs of students with disabilities and struggling students by connecting information in four areas.

Just as it takes all four legs all of the same length to keep table from wobbling, it takes these four elements to keep struggling students engaged and thriving as learners. To meet these goals, PowerUp has created content, materials, and resources for different education audiences.

**PowerUp Audiences**

**Teachers**
All teachers want their students to succeed in meeting their own state’s standards or the Common Core State Standards. They especially worry about their struggling students, including students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs). PowerUp shows teachers how to integrate the technology tools they already have into evidence-based ELA and math practices that directly align to the standards.

**Professional Development (PD) Facilitators**
The term Professional development facilitators refers to those individuals responsible for the professional learning of teachers and includes staff developers, coaches, curriculum coordinators, teacher educators, and technical assistance providers. Their challenge is to create meaningful professional learning experiences that focus on the intersection of the CCSS, technology, best instructional practices, and students with a range of diverse abilities and needs.

**School Leaders**
School leaders extend beyond the principal (who, of course, is critical) to include school and district leaders with expertise in curriculum and instruction, special education, and assistive and educational technology. Their role is to create a comprehensive school-based technology implementation plan. Such a plan must address essential questions related to vision, goal setting based on data, professional development planning, and technology access and integration. Their inclusive plans must...
MEMBER PROFILE: Jennifer Traufler

JENNIFER TRAUFLER is the Executive Director for Student Services in the Tacoma Public Schools, Tacoma, Washington. Tacoma Public Schools is the third largest district in Washington State, serving more than 28,000 children in kindergarten through grade 12 and has over 4,000 students in special education.

Ms. Traufler has nearly 14 years of leadership experience in the areas of special education and health in three Washington school districts and has been with the Tacoma Public Schools since 2010. She began her career as a special education teacher in 1994 after graduating from Pacific Lutheran University. She completed a master’s degree in bilingual education in 1998 at Heritage College, Toppenish, Washington. In 1999, Ms. Traufler became the Program Coordinator for Special Education in the Wenatchee (Washington) School District, and in 2002, she completed her master’s degree in educational leadership. She subsequently held leadership positions in the Enumclaw and Auburn school districts. In 2008, she completed her superintendent certification program at Seattle University. Ms. Traufler currently serves in a leadership role representing special education on the Washington Association of School Administrators board.

RON: What was the catalyst for your entry into the field of special education?

JENNIFER: It was a professor at Pacific Lutheran University, Greg Williams, who really stimulated my interest in special education. I was planning to be a general education kindergarten teacher, and I took Dr. William’s introductory course in special education because I thought that knowing more about the field and about mainstreaming would make me a better kindergarten teacher. As it turned out, when I graduated, all the school system people wanted to talk to me about was a job in special education, and I ended up accepting a position as a middle school special education teacher. Not quite what I was expecting, but I ended up loving it.

RON: What made it a good first teaching experience?

JENNIFER: It was a small district with only about 15,000 students, and I was lucky that in my first year there were a total of 20 new special education teachers hired. That meant much of the special education teaching staff was new. The district had a wonderful assistant director who met with us once a week—from the opening of school until the winter holiday break—in what I would describe as a “boot camp” for new special education teachers. She tried to give us all that we needed to know to be successful and confident.

RON: How did you end up becoming an administrator?

JENNIFER: It started when I was approached to become a Program Coordinator in the Wenatchee School District. It was an opportunity that just presented itself to me. It was my birthday, the day before Thanksgiving, and I was not having the best day at work. My director came to me and told me that he needed me to leave my teaching position to take on the role of Program Coordinator, a position that had just opened as a result of some personnel shifts in the district. I was reluctant to leave my teaching assignment, but he gave me no choice. He told me that this is where he needed me, and I began the new position a week later. It was a position that focused primarily on compliance and IEPs, and I learned so much. I then went back to school to obtain my certificate in administration. I went on to apply for, and subsequently get, the position of Director of Student Support Services in the Enumclaw School District. That was my first administrative position.

RON: What are the most significant changes you have seen in the field of special education since you began your career?

JENNIFER: Certainly the growth in the number of students with autism has been consequential. I knew very little about autism when I began my career, and now it is a major focus in special education. The increased emphasis on making sure that our special education students are included in general education and are accessing the general education curriculum in a meaningful way has been a huge change.

“...the increased emphasis on making sure that our special education students are included in general education and are accessing the general education curriculum in a meaningful way has been a huge change.”

continued on page 8

Jennifer Traufler, Executive Director for Student Services in the Tacoma Public Schools, Tacoma, Washington

SPOTLIGHT
A Model for Comprehensive Autism Support in an Urban School District

Kimberly Wooden, Chief Student Support Services Officer, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, NV

In the late 1990s, school districts across the nation began to see the exponential growth of children identified as having Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). ASD is marked by deficits in social and communication skills with repetitive or stereotypical behaviors.

Districts struggled with many issues regarding these students. Little was known at that time about appropriate intervention; parents were becoming increasingly litigious; and early identification of students was problematic. The Clark County School District (CCSD) in Nevada also encountered these challenges. After a series of hearings and due process cases, CCSD officials determined that it was necessary to address these issues in a proactive manner.

The first step was a review of current research, as IDEA mandates that intervention practices be research-based. Examination of the literature on autism intervention revealed that several methodologies existed. However, it was necessary to determine those that had solid research and could be easily implemented. As such, CCSD chose to utilize the Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) methodology. ABA is a scientifically validated learning theory which states that learning is a change in behavior that lasts over time and is measurable. In 1973, Dr. Ivar Lovaas published a study that supported the use of ABA in a systematic intervention to improve behavior, communication, and social skills in children with ASD. Since then, replications of that ABA study have supported the results of Dr. Lovaas's research. Subsequently, CCSD selected Autism Partnership, an out-of-district consultant, to assist staff in establishing programs for training, support, and auxiliary services. Autism Partnership employed several people who were involved in the 1973 study with Dr. Lovaas at UCLA and who had extensive, international experience with individuals and schools. Therefore, it was concluded that Autism Partnership would be a good fit to meet the needs of CCSD.

Although the debate over methodology continues in CCSD, as well as in other districts, ABA continues to be the mandated methodology for students with autism in CCSD. Efforts to insert other methodologies have been refuted, as CCSD personnel believe that research solidly supports the use of ABA. However, it takes constant research, training, and collaboration to ensure that CCSD continues to follow best practices for students with ASD. To that end, CCSD relies on the factors outlined in Educating Students with Autism. This book by the National Research Council (with experts in the area of ASD identification and intervention) suggests best practices in ASD intervention. Some of these practices are paraphrased below:

1. Early identification of students with ASD
2. Entry into intervention programs as soon as ASD is seriously considered
3. Active engagement in intensive instructional programming for a minimum of the equivalent of a full school day, 5 days (at least 25 hours) per week with full year programming
4. Repeated, planned teaching opportunities, including sufficient amounts of adult attention on a one-to-one and very small group instruction basis to meet individualized goals
5. Inclusion of a family component, including parent training

continued on page 4
6. Low student-teacher ratios (no more than two young children with ASD per adult in the classroom)

7. Data collection and analysis for ongoing program evaluation and assessments of individual progress, with results translated into adjustments in programming

8. Goals focused on social skills, language (including a functional communication system), development of contingency of reinforcement skills, motor skills, cognitive skills (e.g. symbolic play), replacement of problem behaviors with appropriate behaviors, and basic learning of how to learn behaviors (e.g. asking for help, waiting, organization of materials)

9. Personnel preparation, including training of trainers, technical assistance to teaching staff, hands-on opportunities to practice skills, ongoing consultation for teaching staff, administrative training, and training in specialized procedures for all staff (paraprofessionals, speech-language pathologists, etc.)

CCSD determined that to implement a program following research-based best practices, a team of highly trained personnel in ASD and ABA would be necessary. The Autism Team was formed as part of the Low Incidence Disabilities Team (LIDT) of the Student Support Services Division (SSSD). Today, 15 certified itinerant specialists (IS), 25 paraprofessionals, and three administrators provide a wide range of services for both students with ASD and staff providing the interventions.

Implementing an ABA methodology and ensuring that teaching staff utilize best practice procedures requires a strong training foundation. CCSD embraces this idea by providing professional staff development in ABA methodology and supporting practices. Training begins with a two-day didactic, in which participants learn the characteristics of ASD, review components of ABA, and discuss behavioral programming. The next level of training is a four-day hands-on training, during which participants work with students in a controlled teaching environment practicing trials, prompting, giving and receiving feedback, and providing contingent reinforcement. Participants begin to work on reactive and proactive behavior planning and to utilize critical thinking skills during the process. Further trainings become more specialized and include behavior intervention, social skills, and social-sexual issues. Other offerings address specific staff needs to include training for administrators and for special program teaching assistants (SPTA).

A key component of training involves the provision of technical assistance to teaching staff in the classroom. This vital resource can address the needs of individual students or serve as a vehicle for determining a specific classroom teacher’s needs. It can also be the conduit for more advanced training for teaching staff.

All consultation has the same goal, which is to facilitate the development of a teaching staff that consists of critical thinkers centered on positive behavioral changes. To provide this resource, LIDT ISs must engage in intensive training in ABA themselves. To accomplish this, and to ensure that ISs continue to progress in this methodology, the district collaborates with the Autism Partnership consultant team in this endeavor. Their consultants deliver ongoing mentoring and advanced training to LIDT staff so that ISs are able to offer best practices recommendations to district staff. Training for ISs also involves topics in consultation.

CCSD provides a trio of auxiliary services for students with ASD: Connection Center Parent Training, Focused Autism Support Training (FAST), and the Interactive Language Social Skills Group (Social Club). Connection Center Parent Training focuses on individual student issues that directly impact the home environment. Five sessions are held at LIDT offices, and a minimum of three generalization sessions occur in the home. Team members assist parents in identifying behavioral targets for children (e.g., aggression, food issues, sleep problems). Currently, CCSD offers 30 sessions per week for families of students with autism. Since its inception in 2003, 1,500 families have been served.

“…administrators have learned that an important factor in developing a culture of best practices is to develop a strong team of individuals who believe in and profess this methodology.”
Social Club is an afterschool program for students with ASD. Students are invited and accepted based on entrance criteria focusing on communication, social, and behavioral targets. Targets include social issues such as bullying, dealing with losing, pop culture, sports competition, conversational skills, and individual behavioral issues. Students are grouped with others who have similar targets to maximize teaching opportunities. Typically, Social Club rooms have 10 students and two peers with five staff members. Sixty students rotate through an eight-week cycle. At least 1,000 students have participated in Social Club.

FAST provides direct services to students in addition to providing training for classroom staff. Students requiring a FAST intervention typically have extreme behaviors that require an intensive, direct approach to eliminate or decrease the behaviors. A FAST intervention can continue for three weeks up to several months, depending on student progress data. Fifteen FAST cases per school year are typically accommodated.

LIDT administrators have learned that an important factor in developing a culture of best practices is to develop a strong team of individuals who believe in and profess this methodology. Hence, district administration has steadfastly held to the team concept. The team is the central “well” for training, consultation, and intervention.

The challenges are many. It takes time—and more time—to develop team and individual skills. This is expensive, although not as expensive as completely outsourcing these services would be for this district. Additionally, administrator and teaching staff resistance remain issues, and growth continues to be a challenge for CCSD. Lastly, the transient nature of this community plays a role as well.

Despite these challenges, training continues, and the methodology goes on.

References


“All consultation has the same goal, which is to facilitate the development of a teaching staff that consists of critical thinkers centered on positive behavioral changes.”

THE COLLABORATIVE EXTENDS A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR CORPORATE PARTNERS FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT!
include students who struggle, students with disabilities, and ELL students.

The PowerUp Professional Learning Continuum

Instructional Strategy Guides—Teachers

The power behind PowerUp for teachers is the Instructional Strategy Guides, designed to improve teaching and learning. Teachers looking for fresh ideas will find what they are looking for in these 17 Guides, of which 10 are aligned to the CCSS in ELA and seven to the Math practices.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY GUIDES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELA GUIDES</th>
<th>MATH GUIDES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Questioning</td>
<td>Modeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantic Mapping</td>
<td>Visual Representations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualization</td>
<td>Thinking Aloud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Analysis</td>
<td>Organizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context Clues</td>
<td>Math Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarizing</td>
<td>Interacting with Peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prewriting</td>
<td>Making Sense of Problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drafting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Easy-to-use navigation directs teachers to the following sections in each Instructional Strategy Guide:

- **An Overview and Slide Show Teach with Tech**: Provides evidence-based practices, recommendations for technology enhancements, and suggestions to differentiate instruction.
- **Lessons in Action**: Presents examples of teachers who are using technology in their classrooms to support evidence-based practices and differentiate instruction, as well as a step-by-step instructional process that can easily become the basis for a lesson plan. Embedded in each example are “call-outs” to highlight key elements of best practices.
- **Multimedia**: Includes slide shows, videos, Quick Views (animated slide shows), and infographics to convey key concepts.

**Supporting Research**: Summarizes relevant research with citations and includes brief annotations.

Teachers are not the only key audience for the Instructional Strategy Guides. In addition, PowerUp includes PD Support Materials with directions and handouts about how a facilitator can use these in a variety of settings.

**PD Facilitators**

Whether the goal is to design and conduct professional development activities within a school or to prepare tomorrow’s teachers, PD facilitators must address two central issues—how to make adult professional learning relevant and how to help teachers find information that translates to practice and benefits students.

For the developers, coaches, coordinators, TA providers, and others, the power behind PowerUp is the availability of professional development materials created by experienced PD providers who understand the needs of PD facilitators. This Guide provides realistic suggestions for creating customized professional learning in varied settings; e.g., workshops, team meetings, study groups, and mentoring or coaching situations. Going further, it includes different ways to use PowerUp’s rich resources in extension activities.

One of these core resources is the frequently updated Tech Matters blog. It aligns to relevant ELA and math content. The blog offers valuable and current information about how technology tools can be integrated into best instructional practices, to support struggling students in meeting the CCSS. The Tech Research Briefs go even further to provide more in depth opportunities for exploring trend setting technology topics, such as embedded agents, blogs and wikis, and multimedia tools.

The Overarching Umbrella: Technology Implementation—School Leaders

Research findings indicate that a school’s organization affects the ways in which teachers integrate technology. Teachers may be willing to use technology, but they need access to the appropriate devices and tools, support on how to use these tools, and time to collaborate to share ideas to support their practice.”

continued on page 7
The Power Behind PowerUp ...

and time to collaborate to share ideas to support their practice. In today’s rapidly changing world of technology, school leaders are faced with decisions about how to spend limited resources on technology initiatives, such as Bring Your Own Device (BYOD), 1:1 Computing, Chromebooks, and tablets.

For school leaders, the power behind PowerUp comes from the Technology Implementation Practice Guide, which is accessible from different sections of the website. The Practice Guide has been written with the understanding that schools are already engaged in different stages of a technology implementation process. The guide provides information about how to create an ongoing implementation process; identify who should be on the technology Leadership Team; budget for everything related to purchasing and maintaining technology and the ripple effect (e.g., Internet access, upgrades, funds for apps, etc.); plan professional development; and stay current on technology. PowerUp also provides practical suggestions for translating text on the page to action in your school.

Use the Power

PowerUp WHAT WORKS is now available for your use. After two years of field testing, the website is now being disseminated nationally. Anyone, anywhere, and at any time can use PowerUp at no cost on computers and tablets. Visit PowerUp at www.powerupwhatworks.org and explore the website. Download, modify, and remix content; design professional learning experiences, share your feedback and comments; and please tell others about this exciting resource.

Upon request, the PowerUp team provides free webinars for teachers, PD facilitators, and/or school leaders. Contact Kristin Ruedel at kreudel@air.org.

We welcome your feedback. Please send your comments to powerup@air.org.

Background

The PowerUp WHAT WORKS website has not just suddenly burst on the scene—it has been an ongoing and evolving project since 2009, with five-year funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. The development, testing, refinement, and dissemination of this project represents collaboration among three nonprofit organizations: AIR (American Institutes for Research), EDC (Education Development Center, Inc.), and CAST (Center for Applied Special Technology).

PowerUp 3.0, which will be released this fall (2013), is the result of findings from two rounds of field testing with schools from 15 urban, suburban, and rural school districts, including Dallas, TX; Hauppauge, NY; Passaic, NJ; Paul-Bunyan Cooperative, MN; Sebastopol, CA; Selma, AL; Scituate, RI; Marlborough, MA; Richland, SC; Waseca, MN; and Philadelphia, PA.

The PowerUp team used the information gathered from these field tests to align the website to the needs of its potential users. Through site visits, check-in conference calls, surveys, and quick-fix technical assistance, the team analyzed data to determine how people used the site and what impact the site had on teaching, professional learning, and leadership development as it related to schoolwide technology implementation and classroom-based technology integration.
MEMBER PROFILE: Jennifer Traufler

continued from page 2 • Member Profile…

...autism until I left my teaching position, and now we spend so much time focusing on the issues surrounding the delivery of services to students with autism. Of course, the increased emphasis on making sure that our special education students are included in general education and are accessing the general education curriculum in a meaningful way has been a huge change.

RON: What are the challenges you’re dealing with as a leader in your district?

JENNIFER: I would have to say—particularly since I just left a budget meeting—time and money. I feel really well supported here in Tacoma, and I am beginning the year with a solid plan for getting the job done. We are working on implementing the recommendations that were made by the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative when you conducted an evaluation here last year. Nonetheless, there is so much we need to do with staff in terms of professional development, and this takes time and money. With the financial picture being what it is, we just have to be smarter about what we do and create plans that roll things out a bit more slowly than we would like.

Perhaps bigger than even the time and the money is making changes in the belief systems of some of the staff in the district regarding how we serve students with disabilities. I have found that as we have set out to define the term inclusion for our people, that there is a wide spectrum of beliefs and understandings around what inclusion means and how it should look in the schools. It is more than a third grader with disabilities going to a P.E. class with other third graders. It is about meaningful access and engagement with the curriculum and with typical peers. It is about seeing special education as a service rather than a program.

I am also working on expanding my collaboration with other departments and working outside those silos we often have in central offices and in schools. I once had a principal say to me while we were discussing inclusion, “You know, Jennifer, we can’t mainstream the kids until we mainstream the staff.” I realized she was right, and not just about school staff. My staff and I needed our professional development activities to include going to meetings and conferences that my general education colleagues were attending—not just those about special education. We are doing that now.

RON: Prior to Tacoma, you worked in districts that were much smaller. What is different about the challenges in a larger urban district?

JENNIFER: I find that, across the districts I have worked in, the issues are the same. We are all struggling with the same things. The work is hard everywhere. What is different here in a larger district is the volume. There are so many more people to deal with; so many more people to reach and communicate with. What we are trying to do here as we tackle things like a new electronic IEP system or the implementation of a Multi-Tier System of Supports is to bring stakeholder groups in to discuss why changes are occurring and to develop a plan for how we get things done. You make sure you have representation from the various groups and that these are strong people who work with you to develop that plan. We then communicate regularly with staff so that folks know what is going on. For instance, every Monday we put out a newsletter to all special education staff and school administrators.

RON: What is important for people in educational leadership positions to know?

JENNIFER: Our superintendent, Carla Santorno, once asked us to bring one of our favorite leadership quotes to a meeting with her, and I brought one by Jim Collins, the author of the article “Good to Great.” Collins says that great business leaders “start by getting the right people on the bus, the wrong people off the bus, and the right people in the right seats.” When you have the right people you can really get things going in a positive direction but that has to happen first. It is also important to look at data and use it to support what you want to do. I think I have been effective in using data to support my requests to the district’s leadership.

Having a vision and a plan to act on it is very important. We have great leadership here in Tacoma. Our Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent for Teaching and Learning have set forth a vision and put together policies and goals with clear action steps to get us where we need to be.

RON: Why are you a member of the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative?

JENNIFER: I see our membership in the Collaborative as one of the keys to our efforts to improve outcomes for our students with disabilities. The organization has been of great support to us, not only through the review that was conducted here, but by being available to us to answer questions and provide resources. The Collaborative meetings provide an opportunity to meet, talk, and exchange contact information with people who are doing the same work in urban districts across the country. The sessions are very informative. One of my favorite moments at the last Collaborative meeting in San Diego was when, in a session, I heard from districts that had inclusion rates of 78 and higher. I was astounded, but at the same time it gave me hope that we can get there. As my superintendent says, “hope is not a strategy,” but that session gave me the opportunity to see others who had been down that road and made it happen.

“Necessity is the mother of all invention” was one of Albert Einstein’s favorite quotes, and it is also the mantra for the “Extreme Makeover: Classroom Edition” model. The necessity is to provide practical and effective supports for students with autism in more inclusive settings. A couple of years ago, Metro Nashville Public Schools began converting its special education settings into non-categorical classrooms, with the goal of one non-categorical classroom available in each of the district’s 150 schools. The transition from classrooms exclusively servicing students with autism to non-categorical classrooms servicing all students with disabilities was a concern for the autism team. The team’s deliberations on how best to support the school system’s initiative resulted in the Extreme Makeover: Classroom Edition model.

Traditional Support Model

The historical model of support in Metro Nashville has been one consultant responding to a written request outlining the needs of one student in a school. However, this sole model of support had many drawbacks. For example, with this model in place, the transformation into an inclusive school system would result in an autism team of six members having to respond to the needs of potentially 900 students with autism, in approximately 150 schools, covering an area of 525 square miles. There were other drawbacks associated with this current model, which became clear obstacles:

- **Time:** Consultants travel 30–45 minutes to respond to one request. Efforts in the past to cluster team members into one area have been frustrated by the high number of consult requests and the low number of autism team members.
- **Capacity:** The team was set up as an interdisciplinary team with the hope of meeting the needs of many different professional disciplines in a school building. However, team members faced credibility challenges as they attempted to effectively communicate support plans to a diversity of professionals in a school building.
- **Closure:** The inability to meet with all school teams or gain a collective buy-in for a support plan for a student with autism commonly produced open-ended consults which autism team members could never close. Time and resources were misspent as team members repeatedly responded to the same requests while also experiencing little or no success.

In addition, there seemed to be a common thread among these requests: lack of physical and visual structure, unclear teacher routines, and poor behavior management. It was the hope that the Extreme Makeover: Classroom Edition would remedy these challenges.

What is the Extreme Makeover: Classroom Edition Model?

The Extreme Makeover: Classroom Edition model uses a team-coaching approach in inclusive, non-categorical settings to meet the needs of all students with disabilities, including those with autism. It comprises four steps, and each step is designed to produce long-lasting changes in teacher pedagogy, school culture, and student progress. The flowchart in Figure 1 outlines the steps relative to roles and responsibilities of itinerants, teachers, and specialists.

“Data gathered from a comparison of two school years revealed a 40 percent decrease in consultations during the second year. However, a greater indication of the model’s effectiveness is the number of relationships that have developed between special education teachers and their colleagues.”
cont. from page 9 - Extreme Classroom Makeovers...

Step 1 – Meeting

After a request from an administrator, the team member coordinates a meeting with the administrator and relevant staff. This meeting is the most critical step in the Extreme Makeover: Classroom Edition model and non-negotiable. It is during this meeting that roles, responsibilities, and expectations are discussed and set. The team member explains that a response to a request for support is focused on instruction. During this meeting, the team member also explains the administrator’s role in the process, namely, that as the school’s instructional leader, the administrator is responsible for the continual follow-up and fidelity of the makeover process. A misstep in this initial meeting can negatively affect the entire process. For example, an administrator that is indifferent to the makeover process will impact the success of later steps in the model, such as leveraging school resources and building school capacity. On the other hand, a successful buy-in from the administrator and staff will foster a team spirit.

Step 2 – Needs Assessment

During Step 2, a team member conducts a needs assessment. This step depends heavily upon establishing trust and rapport with the classroom teacher. First impressions are as critical in this step as in any long-lasting relationship. Further complicating team members’ itinerant roles will be the need to provide feedback that may discourage communication. Therefore, an authentic needs assessment will rely heavily on the following elements:

- Set this support as a positive opportunity. Teachers should feel like they have won the lottery! This is not a punitive process.
- Be respectful. Call or e-mail before beginning an observation. Do not interrupt instruction.
- Be flexible. Make time for an informative visit lasting a significant amount of time. Credibility will not be built if the observation is only a few minutes or at a time when the teacher is not comfortable with the presence of another professional in his/her classroom.

This step also includes aligning the roles and responsibilities of the autism team members with the needs documented during the observation. Team roles and responsibilities, along with pictures of the classroom, are e-mailed to available autism team members. School-based itinerants and specialists (i.e., speech therapists, academic coaches, and occupational therapists) are encouraged to participate in the makeover process. Many well-meaning initiatives often fail as a result of a teacher’s underlying belief that “if it’s not broken, don’t fix it.” To prevent failures, autism team members need to know the answers to these questions:

Does the staff, including the teacher and paraprofessionals, have a full understanding of the need for change?
What is the classroom teacher’s background in autism-related strategies (i.e., visual strategies and applied behavior analysis)?

Step 3 – Instructional Practices and Behavior Management Assessment

Information gathered from the needs assessment will inform Step 3, which is assessing instructional practices and behavior management. If either of these areas is identified as a deficit, then the process is temporarily interrupted, and the teacher and staff receive coaching and participate in onsite trainings before moving on.

Step 3 pays close attention to a teacher’s instructional practices, such as lesson plans and schedules. There have been many occasions when a visual schedule for a student has been created that would not be correctly implemented by the teacher. It is a daunting task to create daily lesson plans for a non-categorical classroom that effectively
In the Extreme Makeover model, the need to assist teachers in creating adequate lesson plans is addressed by creating a “blueprint,” which maps out times, content areas, and the roles of paraprofessionals in a variety of teaching settings. The schedule created in the blueprint is embedded in the multilevel worksheet, a document that visually cross-references a student’s IEP goals with curriculum standards (Figure 2).

To determine the makeover model’s success, a fidelity checklist is used to document the ongoing effective use of the strategies used throughout the makeover process. Data gathered from a comparison of two school years revealed a 40 percent decrease in consultations during the second year (Figure 3). However, a greater indication of the model’s effectiveness is the number of relationships that have developed between special education teachers and their colleagues.

The needs of an inclusive school district will require that the Extreme Makeover model build the capacity of teachers to successfully address the needs of all students, including those with moderate and severe autism. Metro Nashville is making significant progress!

### Final Step - Extreme Makeover Model vs. Traditional Model

How does the makeover model compare to the traditional consultation model?

---

**Multilevel Planning and Instruction Worksheet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IEP Goals</th>
<th>Standard Alt Goal</th>
<th>Unit Goal</th>
<th>Differentiated Activities</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Identification and Survival Words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Level 1: Point to name, date, phone, DOB</td>
<td>index cards, worksheets, magnetic letters</td>
<td>Teacher-Made Test &amp; observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify Calendar Topics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Level 2: Read and write personal identification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**9:30-10:15 Language Centers Rotations**

- Retell and dramatize familiar stories
- Listen actively to speaker without interruptions
- Participate in conversation
- Follow three step directions
- Understand “WH” questions
- Read age appropriate short stories
- Define and describe common objects
- Blend sounds to make words
- Break apart to determine sounds (vowels)
- Identify Grade Appropriate Sight Words
- Identify upper and lowercase letters
- Complete and end task
- Attend to group 20 minutes
- Increase independence
- Write with correct letter formation and spacing

**Figure 2. Multilevel worksheet**

**Figure 3. Data displaying significant decreases in consultations.**

Learning that require an increase in direct instruction.

In the Extreme Makeover model, the need to assist teachers in creating adequate lesson plans is addressed by creating a “blueprint,” which maps out times, content areas, and the roles of paraprofessionals in a variety of teaching settings. The schedule created in the blueprint is embedded in the multilevel worksheet, a document that visually cross-references a student’s IEP goals with curriculum standards (Figure 2).

To determine the makeover model’s success, a fidelity checklist is used to document the ongoing effective use of the strategies used throughout the makeover process. Data gathered from a comparison of two school years revealed a 40 percent decrease in consultations during the second year (Figure 3). However, a greater indication of the model’s effectiveness is the number of relationships that have developed between special education teachers and their colleagues.

The needs of an inclusive school district will require that the Extreme Makeover model build the capacity of teachers to successfully address the needs of all students, including those with moderate and severe autism. Metro Nashville is making significant progress!
Dr. Kathleen Hebbeler, Director of the Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) Center at SRI International, will present the opening keynote at the Collaborative's Fall 2013 meeting, November 6–9 in Chicago, Illinois. The primary focus of the meeting is “Success at an Early Age: Improving Outcomes for Young Children with Disabilities,” and Dr. Hebbeler brings a wealth of knowledge and experiences to this topic.

Additionally, Dr. Hebbeler leads the IDEA Center on Early Childhood Data Systems (DaSy). The DaSy Center assists early intervention and preschool special education state agencies in building coordinated early childhood data systems and using the data to address key policy and programmatic questions. Dr. Hebbeler also directed the National Early Intervention Longitudinal Study (NEILS), which examined services and outcomes for more than 3,300 infants and toddlers with disabilities in early intervention programs around the United States. She is a nationally recognized expert on accountability for early childhood programs, assessment, and large-scale studies of children with disabilities, serving on national advisory boards and consulting on major evaluations to help create designs that adequately address such issues as oversampling and measurement of disability.

In addition to Dr. Hebbeler’s presentation and follow-up discussion with meeting participants, a number of Collaborative Member Districts will share program models, methods, and/or strategies they have employed to deliver quality services to infants, toddlers, and young children with disabilities. Following are some of the questions that will be addressed:

- What leadership and professional development strategies have been developed and implemented successfully?
- What exemplars do member districts have for effective partnerships with parents, early intervention programs, and other service providers to improve school readiness and success?
- What assessments have been adopted that contribute positively to planning and implementing programs, services, and interventions?
- What lessons are being learned and continuing challenges being faced?

Registration for the Fall Meeting is now open at www.urbancollaborative.org.

---

1The ECO Center is a 10-year effort to provide national leadership and build the capacity of states to report high-quality data on outcomes for young children with disabilities and their families.
Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) is the fastest-growing area of disability affecting families and educators today. The number of students diagnosed with ASD has steadily risen to approximately 1 in 88 children, according to government estimates. The Collaborative’s Spring Member Meeting, “Covering the Spectrum: Current Trends in the Delivery of Services to Students with Autism,” provided members an opportunity to hear from nationally recognized researchers as well as experts from our member districts about current best practices and policy for delivering services that best meet the unique needs of students on the autism spectrum. 

The meeting, set in beautiful San Diego, California, began with consultancy sessions. The goal of these sessions was to engage participants in facilitated, thought-provoking discussions and problem solving regarding challenges the host district, the San Diego Unified Public Schools (SDUPS), is facing. The two dilemmas that SDUPS presented were (1) improving the provision of appropriate and effective mental health services for students with cognitive/intellectual disabilities and for incarcerated youth, and (2) providing appropriate paraprofessional supports during the districtwide transition toward expanding inclusive practices. More than 80 attendees took part in the four simultaneous consultancy sessions, the largest participation in the Collaborative’s pre-conference networking activities to date.

The next morning, pre-meeting networking activities included rich district size-alike discussions about how to support principals in being leaders of learning for all students. The table discussions focused on excerpts from the latest Wallace Foundation report, The School Principal as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning. Members shared the many ways they currently support school leaders in delivering services to students with disabilities and explored how they might embed recommendations from the report into their district infrastructures.

Following a highly engaging morning of networking conversations and interactive focus groups led by partners of the Collaborative, Bill Kowba, Superintendent of SDUSD, and Dr. Joseph Fulcher, SDUSD Chief Student Services Officer, shared some highlights on the initiatives driving change in their schools. After their addresses, Dr. Michael Wehmeyer, Professor and Associate Director of the Beach Center on Disability at the University of Kansas, and Dr. Diane Zager, Professor at Pace University and president of the Council for Exceptional Children’s division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities, presented latest research on the role of self-determination and instructional delivery for students with ASD. One of the highlights of Dr. Michael Wehmeyer’s presentation was the impact of long-term implementation of the self-determination learning model of instruction based on the School-Wide Integrated Framework.

continued on page 14
Fall Meeting Recap...

continued from page 13 - Fall Meeting Recap...

for Transformation (SWIFT) Center. Dr. Zager’s keynote focused on the key aspects of ASD and the changes in its definition and criteria coming in the new Diagnostic Statistical Manual V (DSM-V). Additionally, she summarized latest research on the disproportionality of autism diagnoses, with a particular emphasis on the under-representation of Hispanic and America Indian students and the over-representation of white students, who are often diagnosed much earlier in life. She closed her presentation by addressing how administrators can support staff in improving outcomes for students with ASD by providing professional development and coaching on effective, research-based practices for teaching students with ASD. As an appropriate follow-up to the keynotes, the next day of the meeting began with concurrent sessions led by 12 member districts. The sessions focused on a variety of programmatic implementation efforts relative to ASD. Attendees heard about innovative practices and professional development efforts these member districts are developing, implementing, and/or improving.

Following is a list of the presenting member districts along with the title of their presentations:

- **Baltimore City Public Schools** (MD): Putting the Puzzle Together: Meeting the Needs of Students on the Spectrum
- **Boston Public Schools** (MA): Applied Behavior Analysis: A System-Wide Change
- **Broward County Public Schools** (FL): Meeting the Unique Program Needs of the Elementary Schools ASD Student
- **Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools** (NC): The Road to Independence: Providing High Quality Instruction to Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder
- **Clark County School District** (NV): A Village Model for Comprehension Autism Support
- **Greenville County Schools** (SC): The Satellite Support Program: A Unique Approach to Inclusion for Students with Autism
- **Houston Independent School District** (TX): Serving Students with Autism through Collaboration
- **Kyrene School District** (AZ): How to Develop an Effective District Level or School Level Team to Support Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder
- **Montgomery County Public Schools** (MD): Model Classroom Grades K–1 for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Partnership between MCPS, Kenney Kriener Institute & the Maryland DOE
- **Metro Nashville Public Schools** (TN): Extreme Makeover: Classroom Edition
- **NYC Special Education District 75** (NY): Meaningful Assessment: Insuring Access to Common Core Standards for Students with Significant Disabilities Including Autism
- **Round Rock Independent School District** (TX): A Journey in Developing the New and Improved LID Service Model in RRISD

These district presentations reinforced the diversity of evidenced-based approaches that school districts are adopting to meet the unique needs of students with ASD, underscoring a point made during Dr. Zager’s keynote, “if you know one kid with autism, you do not know another.” Some presentations showcased traditional practices, such as discrete trial teaching, TEACCH, ABA, PECs, sign language, and social thinking; innovative systemic approaches that coordinate supports for increasing parent engagement, such as parent training led by paraeducators on home learning strategies; and district-wide professional development for school leaders with coaching supports. Others focused on efforts to increase inclusive practices and the types of effective modifications that create success for students with ASD in the least restrictive environments.

The meeting closed with a plenary session that gave participants a glimpse of the Fall 2013 meeting topic, “Success at an Early Age: Improving Outcomes for Young Children with Disabilities.” Following a brief overview of the topic by the Collaborative’s Assistant Director Dr. Claudia Rinaldi and Senior Training and Technical Assistance Associate Kimberly Willingham, attendees participated in the World Café protocol. The World Café, a process for hosting large-group dialogues, is structured so that participants divide into smaller groups and engage in multiple rounds of conversation. (To learn more about the World Café, visit [http://www.theworldcafe.com](http://www.theworldcafe.com/))

The discussion during the protocol engaged the participants in conversation on the following areas: families as partners, collaboration and transition, service delivery, educational outcomes, and professional development. Members generated a range of challenges in these areas that districts are facing in providing early intervention services and improving outcomes for young children with disabilities. Some of the challenges that surfaced included implementing Response to Intervention at the early childhood level given fixed and limited resources; expanding inclusive practices within early childhood; experiencing limited collaboration between early childhood and special education, as well as with external agencies, including pediatricians; providing quality...
The Nexus of Response to Intervention and the Identification of Specific Learning Disabilities

The Urban Special Education Collaborative is pleased to announce the new research brief entitled The Nexus of Response to Intervention (RTI) and the Identification of Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD): Guidelines for District-Level Implementation. This brief summarizes current research in the field and describes the guidance that states have been developing for districts, schools, and educators on the special education referral and eligibility practices for students with potential disabilities in the context of RTI.

Specifically, this research brief:

• Provides a concise history of RTI
• Outlines current guidance on the special education referral and eligibility processes across many states in the context of RTI
• Describes how several districts and schools have operationalized guidance from their states
• Offers specific district-level implications and considerations around addressing the role of RTI practices in the identification of students with SLD

RTI refers to a preventive framework that incorporates universal screening, multiple tiers of instruction and intervention, collaborative and data-driven problem solving, and integrated and ongoing data collection at each tier of service delivery for evaluating responsiveness to the intervention. Additionally, RTI provides a vehicle for responding to a number of persistent challenges, for example:

• Significant achievement gaps among and between student groups
• High drop-out rates
• Disproportionate representation of students identified as having special education needs
• Inconsistencies between existing curricula and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

Increasingly, districts are adopting the RTI framework as a systemic reform with which other educational reform initiatives may be aligned (Murawski & Hughes, 2009; Sailor, 2008; Wixson, 2011). However, the upick in RTI implementation is occurring amid ongoing controversy and ambiguity around its intended use (Castillo & Batsche, 2012)—specifically, how it intersects with the identification of students with SLD.

Consequently, states have started to develop guidance on how to operationalize the use of RTI data in the special education referral and eligibility processes. This research brief reports on RTI guidance documents from 12 states as well as a qualitative study of districts and schools in three states, revealing tremendous variability in terms of guidance and practices. Differences exist in terms of (a) the incorporation of RTI data in pre-referral and referral processes, (b) the use of RTI data in determining eligibility for special education services, and (c) the operationalization of nonresponsiveness to intervention (Rinaldi, Baker, & Sallis, 2013).

The research brief concludes by offering specific district-level implications and considerations around addressing the role of RTI practices in the identification of students with SLD. Among these recommendations are the following:

• Establish specific guidelines around what constitutes a comprehensive evaluation with deliberate consideration toward if and how RTI practices intersect with the referral and identification of students with SLD
• Develop a coherent system, integrating school and district practices, for the use and management of assessment data
• Conduct yearly RTI self-assessments of both district and school rollout plans that report on how these plans are impacting systems, processes, practices, and outcomes.

For more detailed information and additional implications for practice, please read the entire brief, available at www.urbancollaborative.org.

References


NEW COLLABORATIVE MEMBERS

The Collaborative currently links together 93 school districts from 28 states. Seven school districts have joined since April 2013.

Baltimore County Public Schools (MD)
Marlborough Public Schools (MA)
The School District of Lancaster County (PA)
Katy Independent School District (TX)
Dysart Unified School District (AZ)
Highline School District 401 (WA)
Wichita Public Schools (KS)

For a complete list of Collaborative members and enrollment information, please visit our website at www.urbancollaborative.org