

## Audience Questions Answered During the Symposium

### ***Q. What pre-service experiences did you have that were critical to prepare you for effective practice?***

A. >> Daniel Sherlock: My master's program is really where I was trained, a solid year of coursework, really going through evidence-based practices, a number of core content areas and behavior. Then the second part of my master's program was a full year of student teaching where we received some great feedback weekly on all the things that we are doing, and it was really driven by evidence-based practices and providing justifications for the practice that we are selecting for our students

### ***Q. What in-service professional development resources have been helpful for continued learning?***

A. >> Daniel Sherlock: I relied heavily on resources like National Center on Intensive Intervention and other publicly funded technical centers, and all the resources that are provided through those. I'm always amazed at how many free resources are out there if you're just willing to put in the time to look through them. A lot of the regional educational laboratories, for example, publish it seems like an unending list of reports on different practices, which are a great way to get familiar with them and then dive in more deeply if you're interested. I've relied a lot on that.

### ***Q. So many good teachers leave the classroom for leadership positions or more money. How do you think we can keep good teachers in classrooms where we need them?***

A. >> Daniel Sherlock: Well, my district has a unique program from what I've seen, specifically aimed at that issue where effective teachers are able to serve part time as coaches, and part time as teachers. I don't know if that's realistic for every district or necessarily meets a need, but I suppose for me, the reason that I decided to stay is because I have found this as a great opportunity to continue learning each year. There's always a new challenge and since I think I was provided with good foundations for that learning, I've really enjoyed it. So, I think providing teachers really strong foundation, so they can be effective and that's motivating in itself, and perhaps the way to stay.

### ***Q. How do we get schools and school districts to focus on the connection between instruction and behavior in a pro-active way?***

A. >> Terry Scott: Systems but within the systems leadership. A school is unlikely to go in a direction that the leadership isn't leading them. So, if we're going in and saying, let's all of us go in this direction and the leader isn't out in front saying, here's how it's connected. We're going to do it this way, we're all going to do these things. I'm going to assess it in these ways. We're going to set these goals. You're going to have personal goals that align with this. It's unlikely that these things are going to happen. So, I think anytime we talk about doing any kind of behavior change, whether it's kids or adults, it's do we have a system in place? I do think that PBIS or MTSS is a great way to think about building a system but again, it's going to come back to leadership. If I were working on changing the school, the first thing I'd want to do is talk to leadership and say, what's our structure? What's our organization? What's your leadership message? How was that leadership message going to be trickled out? How are we going to implement that in a systematic way? Again, I'm just going to get back to effective instruction.

How do we provide prompts for people? How do we encourage people, how do we do formative assessment and give people feedback? How do we set goals and work toward those goals? So again, I think we have to take everything back to systems when we look at it in terms of adults, and those systems will largely be, or the fidelity of those systems will largely be dependent upon the leadership.

***Q. I often find behavior issues overwhelm all other efforts to implement HLPs and other practices. When behaviors are severe and chronic, what should teachers do?***

A. >> Terry Scott: Well, when behaviors are severe and chronic, we need to take advantage of our systems of support. So, one of our systems of support is our PBIS or MTSS and those other things we have going on in our school. The second is our IDEA. We have things in place to provide supports at each of those levels, but I'd like to take it back even a step further than that and say if we don't have those systems in place and working well, then that's not as available to teachers. So, I think I'd like to take this back even a step before we identify kids that have those problems of that size, and say what are the basic things that we as a school believe in, and how do we support and encourage those things across all the adults in our school? Clearly, they are going to be kids for whom everything we've got and everything we can do is going to be insufficient, and they're going to need far more intensive care. The only way we know who those kids are is to have provided all that prevention up front. So, if I'm a teacher and I've got a student in my classroom, who isn't responding to the things that I think are high leverage practices, my first thought is who can I get here to do some assessment with me to think through what I can do to possibly prevent some of that from happening tomorrow. I think that is the first step. How do we have a better tomorrow if we look at this like how do we fix this kid completely? That's a very difficult thing to look at. So, it should always come back to, what are the things that I could do in this room tomorrow that would increase the probability that that student would have some success, that I could use to say good for you and create a higher probability of the next success. Again, it's always going to be we look for support, we try it, we assess it, we see if it's working and if not, we move on to the next thing. There's never we're done. We have to keep taking that next step.

***Q. Are the factors that impact retaining effective personnel similar across disciplines such as Special ed, school psychology, etc.?***

A. >> Michael Kennedy: I don't think they are. Broadly speaking there, certainly I would think be factors that are common. Pressures that impact all teachers: lack of time and issues in preparation. We certainly can't prepare every teacher for every scenario, but I know that there are really big differences across the grade levels, across the disciplinary areas, that are meaningful. I'm thinking about Special Ed teachers and all the paperwork, managing IEP goals, implementing elements of intensive intervention. The body of knowledge and the amount of time that it takes for that teacher to do all the nuanced parts of his or her job are quite different than a science teacher. Then on the other hand, the science teacher has a very specific set of training from their disciplinary perspective, but then they're asked to teach kids with disabilities for whom they've received often very little training. Maybe one course intro to Special Ed, which is not a course that prepares anyone really for anything with respect to implementing evidence-based practices. So, yes.

***Q. How do the HLPs and Evidence-Based Practices intersect? I'm afraid of teachers and others receiving mixed messages about what they should be doing?***

A. >> Michael Kennedy: It's a controversial question. I think there has been a little bit of confusion just in the way that we've talked about HLPs. They're relatively new on the education scene. They've gained a lot of popularity very quick, which is a good thing, which means that the field has been calling for practices of this sort. I think the HLPs have been written in such a way that they make sense to practitioners, they make sense to teacher educators. All of this is a good thing in that we can help to better guide practice. I think where perhaps and I'm one of these people in talking about the HLPs, we haven't always been as explicit as we need to be about how they work alongside evidence-based practices. As been noted several times today, several HLPs like explicit instruction, have a solid evidence base. So we could consider it both to be an HLP and evidence-based practice. Many of the other HLPs, particularly in the accommodation or in the collaboration group, these are practices that haven't had randomized controlled trials, because they don't lend themselves to it. I'm collaborating with my colleagues or collaborating with parents, these are very difficult to study in the kinds of rigorous RCT kind of ways that we often expect. So just because those evidence of that empirical sort doesn't exist, doesn't mean it's not something that's special educators need to do. So that's one of the things that I think we need to talk about that HLPs are not a replacement for evidence-based practices. We shouldn't start doing HLPs and stop doing evidence-based practices. It's exactly the opposite of that. We need to be implementing practices for which we have the very best evidence, the implementing those with fidelity. I think if we do those things, we'll recognize many of the components of evidence-based practices that we know and hold dear actually have many components of the HLPs embedded within them. So, I don't think it's a matter of either, or it's not a matter of HLPs are trying to push evidence-based practice out the door. I think we need to rethink how we're talking about how these practices work together to support the needs of kids, particularly those with disabilities.

***Q. How can families be involved in supporting the retention of personnel in early childhood systems?***

A. >> Margo Candelaria: That's a great question. I think there's two ways parents can be involved, particularly in Part C because it's home based primarily. We are depending on the providers to engage parents. You're not really coaching a peer provider to manage a classroom, you're really coaching a parent to help manage behavior in the home. So that really depends on a partnership with the parent, and the National Pyramid Model has specific training and models that are individual parent coaching, as well as group parent groups. So that's the way I think to use the parent relationship to I think increase confidence and capacity for the workforce. I think a bigger way is, I talked with the leadership teams that the Pyramid Model uses and that has several layers. So, you can be at the state level, a jurisdictional level, or a program level leadership team. They always recommend having parent voice and representation on that leadership team to explain what it feels like from the parent's perspective. To have a child with behavioral or social emotional concerns, or to be involved in a family that's complex and needy in different ways, and what it feels like to receive support for that child or that family situation. I think that also helps the providers understand from a parent's perspective how to engage in that work.

**Q. Can you explain a model of practice-based coaching?**

A. >> Margo Candelaria: Yes. So, practice-based coaching is a cycle of coaching where generally you have four sessions. The most concrete example is you would do a TPOT, which is an observation of a preschool classroom and it's really, it's similar to a class but it's very focused on the social emotional development of children, and what the classroom looks like to do that. So, it's everything from environmental structure to promoting feeling language, to promoting social problem solving. Not having a majority of teacher directed activities. The coach would come in and do a two-and-a-half-hour observation, score the TPOT, and that's your foundation for sitting down with the teacher and saying, let's set an agenda and an action plan around the things that you want to work on. So, you do have to get trained to be reliable in the TPOT, but once you do that, you can really sit down with the teacher and say, these are the strengths I see. Where do you see that you're struggling, and you set an agenda, an action plan? You generally do cycles of four to work on. You set goals, you coach them, you revisit what worked, what didn't. So ideally you do it weekly, but depending on the structure and availability, it can be once a month. It can be virtual, it can be peer coaching. There's been all kinds of adaptations, but it's generally around that structure of having some observation or feedback to say these are your strengths, these are maybe where you're having some challenges. Then where we set some goals, and then you do some check ins and then you can reset from there.

**Q. What are some models that support educators in partnering with parents as part of their implementation of these skills and practices?**

A. >> Rebecca Zumeta Edmonds: I think that MTSS is actually a very useful framework for thinking about communication with parents and families related to their students' progress. By that I mean at the core or tier one level, there should be general efforts to reach out to parents to let them know about the school's program, to do conferences with parents, to let them know about initial screening data for their students and what that information means. Also, general information about the schools, MTSS, RTI or PBIS framework. If there's one in place, that could be done in a PTA meeting or as part of an online webinar or video that you have on the website, or other published materials. Then at that tier two level where maybe a student has been identified is at risk and is receiving some kind of intervention, then the communication also ratchets up. At that point, you are letting families know that they have been identified, the types of intervention support they're going to receive within the context of general education, what you're going to do to help address that challenge. Then also you'll report regularly on the student's progress using valid and reliable progress monitoring data and thinking about formats for reporting on that information in a way that parents can understand. Then finally, when it reaches the level where a student may have an intensive intervention need, or even be referred for special education, at that point this information is not new. They've received some communication and feedback from teachers over the course of time. They've had a chance to develop some relationships and understand what the school has already done to try to help address their student's learning or behavior needs. So, at that point then the intervention planning may become more focused and intentional and again, a special Ed referral may happen at that point as well. I do think that that MTSS model can be helpful for thinking about this. A couple of places that I think provides some really excellent resources are the National Center on Learning Disabilities has some really useful information on their website, and on the

understood.org website for communicating with, for teachers and parents facilitating communication and a parent toolkits for the kind of questions that they may want to ask when their students are being evaluated, or when they're about to attend a meeting to talk about intervention, or potentially special education needs. I also think that it can be helpful. We have a series of materials on our website also designed for communicating with parents and thinking about how you communicate about data to parents, because I think that is one of the places where information can often be very confusing. Finally, I would say offering to meet with parents in a number of formats can be very helpful. As a person who has to travel for works from time to time, I last week had to miss my two-year old's nursery school conferences, first conference. I was very sad that I couldn't be there in person, but because they had a way for me to call in and do a conference call, that meant I could participate and still have that conversation and then follow up separately. I think willingness to think creatively about things like that and whether there are different formats for parents and families, who are working or who have other constraints, can be particularly helpful in facilitating this positive working relationship with families

***Q. Also, what are some of the models that support educators in partnering with parents, and being advocates and champions for improved systems of support for educator retention?***

A. >> Rebecca Zumeta Edmonds: Again, I think models is not necessarily the word I would use, but I think some of the strategies I already noted are particularly critical. I also think that again, coming back to how do we talk about the data that we are sharing with parents, being very clear about when data where we're sharing about students compared to their peers who are working at grade level, versus performance compared to themselves. If they are working well below grade level, and what that may mean for how their performance may look both within the context of intervention they may be receiving, and then versus how they may look on a state assessment or end of year report card or something like that. Again, I think that if you think of this tiered approach to intervention and support, if we think of that in a parallel way for how we talk to parents, I think that that can be useful for how we may triage the level of supports that may be needed for different families, for different students.

***Q. I wasn't trained to do intensive intervention in my preparation program. Where can I learn more?***

A. >> Rebecca Zumeta Edmonds: Well, my first recommendation is our website, the [www.intensiveintervention.org](http://www.intensiveintervention.org). We have a variety of resources that are designed for universal consumption by anyone who is able to open a web browser. We provide information about how to review assessment and intervention tools using our tools charts. We also have several professional modules for TA providers, or technical assistance providers, professional development coordinators for school districts, faculty members that they can take and use and download themselves and embed into their PD or training materials. In addition, we've recently posted a series of online courses that are designed for a similar purpose that could be used in a flipped classroom kind of model. There are prerecorded lectures and practice activities, performance assessments and so forth, that folks can take and use as part of ongoing training. I would encourage anyone who is interested in learning more to spend some time on our website, but also seek out professional learning opportunities related to some of the content

that I spoke about during my session, because those elements are critical features of how to approach intensive intervention.

**Q. Can intensive intervention be delivered in the general education classroom?**

A. >> Rebecca Zumeta Edmonds: I'm not going to say never, but it is unlikely that most intensive interventions are well aligned with what needs to happen in a General Ed environment. So, by that I mean that a general Ed teacher may provide some support, particularly in the area of a student who may have a behavior, intensive behavior needs. They may provide some assessment information or other foundational information to help the intervention team to plan, but the role of the interventionists, special educator related service provider is really those are the folks who really should step in to provide the intensive and individualized instruction that most students with intensive intervention needs require.

## Audience Question Answered After the Symposium

**Q. Any ideas, resources, or strategies for specialized instructional support personnel (SISP)?**

A. >>In many cases, special educators or intervention specialists are responsible for leading the implementation of data-based individualization (DBI) for students with the most intensive academic or behavioral needs. However, SISP such as school psychologists or speech-language pathologists may be key members of the students' DBI or IEP team who are involved in assessment, data-based decision making, and delivering intervention. SISP may be involved in helping the team identify students' areas of need through diagnostic assessment, designing and implementing interventions, and analyzing progress monitoring data. SISP may also be involved in designing a students' IEP goals and determining if the student is making adequate progress towards those goals. If SISP are providing related services (per IDEA) and are responsible for delivering specially designed instruction (e.g., a school social worker or psychologist designing and delivering behavioral intervention), DBI is relevant for their role.

The NCII website provides many resources and tools that would be useful to SISP. The [Educators](#) page on the website highlights information most relevant to school personnel.

**Q. Given the overwhelming focus on minimizing district costs, how are SPED directors supposed to ask for additional coaches or coaching time, ongoing mentoring and supports?**

A. >> One solution may be to restructure the responsibilities of qualified staff so that they have time to do this coaching and mentoring. As Daniel Sherlock mentioned in his response to the question about how to keep good teachers in the classroom, some districts may be able to restructure the workload of effective teachers so that they serve part time as coaches while continuing to teach part-time. Therefore, rather than hiring additional coaches, schools and districts may look to repurpose some of the time of effective teachers to focus on coaching and mentoring.

**Q. I see time as major constraint to conducting meaningful assessments and collecting information needed to plan individualized instruction. Any ideas on how to increase time for assessment?**

A.>>Elizabeth Bettini: Yes, I think time is a huge stressor, and there is evidence that special educators often feel they don't have enough time to do all of the tasks with which they are

charged (e.g., Albrecht, Johns, Mounstevens, & Olorunda, 2009; Bettini, Jones et al., 2017; Bettini, Kimerling, Park, & Murphy, 2015; Vannest & Hagan-Burke, 2010).

There are several steps that administrators may be able to take to help make more time available for valued tasks, such as assessment:

- 1) Reassign tasks that do not require specialized knowledge and skill to classified personnel. The ways administrators can do this will vary depending on their other resources and the specific tasks that a special educator is assigned. For example, an administrator could reassign lunch or bus duty to secretarial staff, so that a special educator has that time protected. Similarly, an administrator could assign secretarial staff to take care of scheduling IEP meetings, checking all dates and signatures within IEP documents, and submitting IEP documentation to the district, so that the special educator can focus on the conceptual and substantive aspects of the IEP (such as assessment and writing goals).
- 2) Reduce case load sizes, so that special educators have fewer students who they are responsible for assessing. Of course, this necessitates hiring more special educators, which may not always be possible.
- 3) Monitor how many students on each special educators' caseload have re-evals each year. Adjust responsibilities for assessment to promote equity in the distribution of assessment responsibilities across special educators within a school.
- 4) For routine formative assessments that are regularly administered as part of monitoring student progress and that have structured protocols for administration (e.g., ORF), consider providing training so that paraprofessionals can administer these assessments to students, under the supervision of special educators. (Note that special educators would still need to be responsible for managing the data and making decisions based on it).

***Q. How does collecting data on widespread teacher and student variables help with retention, especially when you are in a challenging urban environment with limited resources? How does a list of instructional "shoulds" help in these or in rural environments?***

A. >>Michael Kennedy: When schools (and their district offices) collect data with a good cause and act on those data, positive results can be expected. As examples, understanding results of various hiring decisions, how well various placements are working for students, and making instructional grouping decisions are all possible thanks to data sources. District leaders and principals can use data to quickly identify teachers who are struggling, and provide needed professional development or other materials to help them improve. Doing so in the context of limited resources can be a challenge, but the costs of replacing teachers and providing remedial services to students is even more expensive. I recommend districts having a menu of professional development options for teachers that focus on key high-leverage practices, and some evidence-based practices as well (and those that overlap). An example is explicit instruction. All teachers should have a strong grounding in the principles of explicit instruction and use them on a daily basis. For teachers who are weak in this practice coming out of their preparation program, or unsure how to use EI within whatever content/curriculum they are teaching, focused PD that is at the ready can be a sensible solution. There are other practices as

well I would do the same for (e.g., providing feedback, intensifying instruction, creating a positive and organized learning environment).

#### References

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