

PRACTICAL WAYS TO HELP STUDENTS WHO MAY BE "DIFFERENT"

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OBJECTIVES

- Learn practical ways to help students who are "different." Being "different" may include:
 - (a) having a disability
 - (b) being a member of a minority group "Culturally or linguistically diverse" (CLD)
 - (c) having unusual characteristics.
- Practice a simple method of data analysis that may help point the way to useful interventions.
- Move from data analysis to identifying causes to action

WHY IS HELP NEEDED?

- "You laugh because I'm different. *I laugh because you're all the same.*"
- May be laughed at or harassed.
- May have to cope with stigma or bias.
- May need accommodations, adaptations, or other forms of support or assistance.
- Help in time might prevent lawsuits if the right type of help is given.
 - Here is an example of what seems to be the wrong type of help:

HEYNE V. METROPOLITAN NASHVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS, BOARD OF EDUC., AND SCHOOL OFFICIALS

- A white high school student was suspended for 10 days for violating the school's Code of Conduct when he injured the foot of an African-American student with his car on school property. The African-American student responded by threatening to kill the white student; the African-American student received no discipline as a result of the threat.
- Parents of the white student sued in state court alleging violation of his right to Equal Protection and due process because he was discriminated against based on his race because the principal instructed staff to "be more lenient in enforcing the school's Code of Conduct against African-American students because there were too many African-American serving in suspension" and he was given a harsher punishment to avoid appearance of favoritism which might appease claims of bias by parents of African-American students.
- The federal 6th Circuit Court of Appeals found the student had sufficiently alleged his federal claim but there is no indication he pursued it; rather, he pursued the state claims in state court and lost.

BUILDING A FRAMEWORK FOR SELECTING HELPFUL INTERVENTIONS: 1. SELECT INITIAL FOCUS PREVENTION LEVEL(S)

- Primary prevention - universal interventions for the whole school or whole class
- Secondary prevention - selective interventions that can be relatively easily implemented for some students who are at risk for specific types of known problems
- Tertiary prevention - intensive and individualized interventions for unique students with serious or chronic needs

2. INITIAL FOCUS ON CHANGING THE ENVIRONMENT (SCHOOL POLICIES / PRACTICES) OR CHANGING STUDENT(S) WHO ARE "DIFFERENT?"

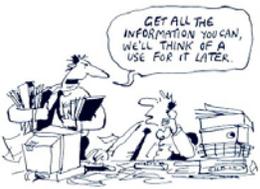
- Interventions intended to change students may be deficit-based or strength-based - or "function-based"
- Here are some examples:

- Deficit-based: Teach social skills to student(s) who are lacking social skills.
- Strength-based: Discover talents, interests, achievements and build on these to help improve the situation.
- Function-based: If behavior problem needs to be resolved, a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) may provide a basis for a positive behavioral intervention (BIP) as a solution to the problem.

	Change Environment (examples)	Change Student(s) (examples)
Primary	Cultural sensitivity training for all staff	School-wide bullying prevention program
Secondary	"Check-in, Check-out (CICO)" program (Also known as "Behavior Education Program")	After-school program for Latino students
Tertiary	Hire more behavior specialists and counselors	FBA & BIP

- WITH SO MANY DIFFERENT POSSIBLE INTERVENTIONS, HOW DO YOU KNOW WHERE TO START?**
- Start with an analysis of existing available data
 - Identify potential causes for patterns emerging from the data
 - Identify possible actions to address the causes
 - Reach out to families

- ANALYSIS OF EXISTING DATA**
- What data are relevant to determine student support needs?
 - Dimensions on which students "differ"
 - (a) having a disability
 - (b) being "Culturally or linguistically diverse" (CLD)
 - (c) having unusual characteristics.
 - Data on students'
 - disability status and diagnostic label
 - race/ethnicity
 - ELL status
 - ?

- FOR EXAMPLE.....**
- We want to examine if students who are CLD are appropriately supported in general education classrooms or are over-identified for special education services
 - What data do we need?
 - Enrollment
 - by race/ethnicity
 - by disability category
 - by race/ethnicity within disability category
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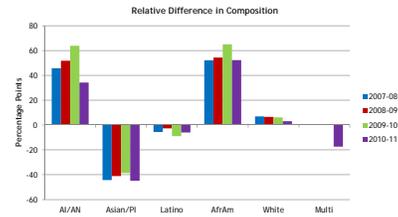
- CALCULATING DISPROPORTIONATE REPRESENTATION IN SPECIAL EDUCATION**
- See U.S. Office Of Special Education/Westat Task Force (2004). *Methods for assessing racial/ethnic disproportionality in special education: A technical assistance guide.* Washington, DC: Author.
 - Demonstration of an Excel spreadsheet programmed with the recommended formulas and graphs.
 - Only overall enrollments and special education enrollments by race/ethnicity need to be entered

DISPROPORTIONALITY METRICS

- Relative Difference in Composition:
 - For example:
 - What is the percentage of AI/AN students receiving special education services compared to the percentage of AI/AN student enrolled?
 - Interpretation of Relative Difference in Composition:
 - E.g.: "In Oregon in 2007-08, AI/AN students represented 3.06% of SpEd students, but only 2.10% of enrolled students. The percentage of SpEd students that was AI/AN is 45.71% larger than the percentage of students that was AI/AN."
- Risk Ratio:
 - For example:
 - What risk do AI/AN students have of receiving special education services for cognitive disabilities compared to the risk of all other students?
 - Interpretation of Risk Ratio:
 - E.g.: "In Oregon in 2007-08, AI/AN students were 1.50 times more likely than all other students to received special education services for cognitive disabilities."

CURRENT TRENDS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION IDENTIFICATION IN OREGON

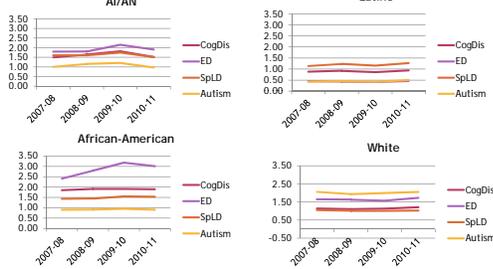
- Relative Difference between Special Education and Total Enrollment Composition



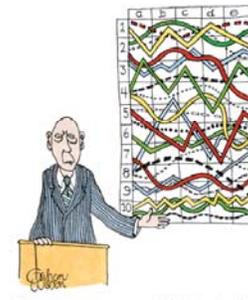
Graph reads: "In Oregon in 2007-08, the percentage of special education students who were AI/AN was 45.71% larger than the percentage of students who were AI/AN."

CURRENT TRENDS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION IDENTIFICATION IN OREGON

- Risk Ratios for disability categories by racial/ethnic group across years



GRAPHS, GRAPHS, GRAPHS...



WHAT DO THE DATA TELL US?

- "Soft" disability categories (cognitive disability, emotional disturbance, learning disability, autism) tend to be somewhat subjectively interpretable.
- Inconsistent assessment and decision-making processes may result in decision bias for these categories
- In Oregon, Latino/a students are half as likely as all other students to be identified with emotional disturbance.
- Is this the case in your school?

IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL CAUSES BASED ON DATA PATTERNS

- What patterns exist in your special education eligibility data?
- Why do the identified patterns occur?



WHY DO THE IDENTIFIED PATTERNS OCCUR?

- 3 core areas to examine:
 - Instruction and resources
 - Beliefs and attitudes about ability
 - Pre-referral process

◦ From: Fergus, E. (2010). *Distinguishing difference from disability: The common causes of racial/ethnic disproportionality in special education*. Equity Alliance.

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INSTRUCTION AND RESOURCES

- Inequitable student access to highly qualified and experienced instructors
- Insufficient teacher support in delivery of core curriculum
- Too many interventions for struggling learners
- Insufficient knowledge of how to assess students
- Poorly structured intervention services

INSTRUCTION AND RESOURCES

- How do we know if these causes exist?
 - Data on teacher qualifications and experience
 - Data on teacher support
 - Number of interventions
 - Data on qualifications of individuals conducting assessments
 - Data on intervention delivery (how quickly do students get access to the right interventions?)

BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT ABILITY

- CLD students are viewed as not ready for school
- Special education is viewed as “fixing” students

BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT ABILITY

- How do we know if these causes exist?
 - Are conversations about racial/ethnic equity part of staff meetings?
 - Do informal conversations about equity occur?
 - Are school personnel able to identify racial microaggressions?
 - Are school personnel able to spot “detours”?

PRE-REFERRAL PROCESS

- ◉ Inconsistencies in referral process, e.g. referral forms
- ◉ Limited information regarding intervention strategies
 - What has been tried?
 - How was the intervention's success or failure determined?
 - Was the intervention tailored to student's needs?

TAKING ACTION

- ◉ Make the intervention process your own
 - collect your own data
 - do your own analyses
 - review your outcomes
 - formulate an action plan



"It has come to my attention that the building is on fire. Let's bring in a consultant next week and see what sort of action he recommends."

REGULAR DATA REVIEW

- ◉ Multiracial team
- ◉ Review current status of special education data
- ◉ Examine trends across time

DETERMINE AREAS OF CONCERN

- ◉ Instruction and Resources?
- ◉ Beliefs and Attitudes?
- ◉ Pre-referral processes?
 - Supplement quantitative data with qualitative data (e.g. talk to parents, students, teachers)

DEVELOP AN EQUITY ACTION PLAN

- ◉ Define strategy/action steps
- ◉ Assign tasks based on available staff time
- ◉ Define timeline
- ◉ Identify fiscal resources (budget)
- ◉ Identify measurable outcomes
- ◉ Define datasets to demonstrate outcomes

ACTION PLANNING

- ◉ Based on the patterns in your data, and your hypotheses about potential causes
- ◉ What would be a feasible strategy to effect change?
- ◉ What would be the intended outcomes
- ◉ What data would you need to demonstrate outcomes?

IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

- Students whose parents are involved in school tend to
 - Have higher academic achievement scores
 - Have better attendance
 - Have better social skills
 - Graduate on time

IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

- Schools with high family engagement tend to
 - Build trusting relationships among teachers, families, and community members
 - Recognize and address family needs and cultural differences
 - Adopt a philosophy of partnership where power and responsibility are shared

CURRENT STATUS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL

- Based on 2007 data,
 - Parental involvement is greatest in elementary school
 - 80% of White students had parents who attended school events.
 - 65% of Latino and African-American students had parents who attended school events
 - 54% of White students had parents who volunteered
 - 32% of Latino students had parents who volunteered
 - 35% of African-American students had parents who volunteered
 - 77% of English-speaking parents reported attending school events
 - 57% of non-English speaking parents reported attending school events

COMMON BARRIERS

- Parents feel alienated from school based on
 - Negative prior experiences
 - Lack of trust
 - no follow-ups after parents raise a concern, meetings scheduled during work times, lack of attention to needed resources such as childcare, transportation, interpretive services
- Assumptions about school personnel's beliefs and attitudes
- Immigration status

COMMON BARRIERS

- School personnel's assumptions and beliefs about parents
 - e.g. single parent households, "model minority," preservation of culture and tradition

HOW TO OVERCOME BARRIERS

- Proactive and regular outreach to parents
- Contact parents to deliver positive news about student's achievement
- Provide basic resources (interpreter, childcare, scheduling) for parents to participate in school activities

HOW TO OVERCOME BARRIERS

- ◉ Build parent engagement into action plan
- ◉ Increase accountability
- ◉ Provide professional development opportunities
- ◉ Place bi-lingual staff into key positions