Thursday, Sept. 29, 2011 Morning Discussion

Discussion leader: Steve Robinson

Discussion of special educators—generalist vs. specialist:
- Even full-time experienced teachers do not understand what evidence is; collecting data and using it is “foreign” to many teachers; perhaps should have a certificate of proficiency for RTI—for both generalist and specialist types of tasks
- Special education training; start one-to-one or would never understand what it means to help an individual to learn (contrast with instruction delivered within a group)
- Develop expertise in role—how individual responds or doesn’t without individualization

History:
- Clinical, corrective expertise—can be a downside, too, where student is not able to generalize or use skills in more applied ways
- Teachers need to know both content and pedagogy

RTI today:
- Could have experts in general education and experts in special education
- RTI may take a number of different types of experts—or take on multiple levels of expertise; to work together successfully, CBM becomes the central focus—pulls us together

Data:
- Data bring us together, so put them on the table
- The field doesn’t seem to agree on which data are most relevant
- With high-stakes testing, test data are perceived as critically important

Teacher Preparation:
- We don’t see much of a problem-solving approach in teacher education
- What are our expectations?
- It is difficult to set up preparation programs; characterize them as “special” and the group is “different”
- Need to address institutionalization
Address problem solving within the program—need to model for our own students; for example, develop our own IEPs for students, and monitor their progress—however, we typically have not modeled this process for our students.

Goals for Candidates in Teacher Preparation and Program Goals:
- Developing expertise in special education—can we do that in 2, 3, 4 years in undergraduate education?
- One could be a specialist and still not have expertise
- Teacher Performance Assessment; special educator should function as a detective
- What does it take to be a really good teacher? Where is person in the development process? What rubric is used? Need to have a system of progress monitoring for our teachers
- Basic research question: How do expert teachers develop?
- Coordinate “care” (like medical model) is what the RTI person could do
- What are the elemental skills for all teachers? Then move to more of an expert/specialist role; must have understanding of the child—both academics and social development
- Use case studies first to help candidates make sense of the information; consider behavior change, tutoring
- But this approach may not be intensive enough to stick
- One of the ways to develop expertise is through project-based training; develop agreements with particular schools
- Development of an “identity” for individuals from training program—DBPM identity
- The last part of DBPM is consultation and collaboration—purpose is to support work in the building, but Problem Solving person may need to find allies in the building to work more effectively—need to learn skills associated with consultation/collaboration

Admission to programs:
- May need to look carefully at applicant statements, trying to get at dispositions; in the admission process, we need to recognize that some individuals should not be teachers; need to have characteristic of persistence
- Focus on simplicity; Do you (teacher candidate) want to be an expert? If not, don’t need to stay, but we focus on the development of expertise in this program
- What are entry-level characteristics for admission to the program?
- What would a career ladder look like?
- Need to be able to evaluate at some level on the expert continuum; help students to understand that they should leave with aspirations of becoming an expert

Issues Related to Program Design and Purpose:
- Help individuals to look at data and respond to it
- What are the levels or types of competence we would expect to develop? Sequence? Ways to assess these skills?
- What are the minimum requirements? Consider core skills
In Minnesota’s DD program, students have full year of student teaching—mild to severe and elementary/secondary to help develop more expertise
Use of project-based training as a way to develop these dispositions; part of what happened was faculty “ownership” over how the teachers developed and what they became; the cohort was a good vehicle for training

Issues Related to School Partners:
- What evidence do we need or data to collect to convince principals that experimental teaching and restructuring special education is important; what to do with students who are not responding; what high-impact data can we use?

Thursday, Sept. 29, 2011 Afternoon Discussion
Discussion Leader: Pam Stecker

Reminders of the Past:
- Consultation—either through teachers helping each other or experts providing assistance, especially with data; problem solving focused around student data
- More instructional expertise—use of “clinical teaching” with data-based decision making
- Focus on the details of instruction; provision of feedback and frequent supervision of the teacher candidate (often “watched on the other side of the mirror”)
- Teaching involves flexibility in decision making
- Special education resource teacher (SERT) model—focus on the development of expertise; facilitate decision making, problem solving for individual schools but with other professionals; certificate program or advanced level of knowledge and skills also related to understanding organizational systems and institutional change; giving teachers this body of knowledge

Issues Surrounding some of Today’s Practices:
- Access to the general education curriculum does not necessarily mean instruction within general education classroom; special educators still need to TEACH
- What is the value added of special education?
- At middle and high school levels may need to focus more on helping students to acquire and use learning strategies and reading comprehension skills

Ongoing Challenges and Future Directions:
- Discussion of middle school practices; institutional concerns are grave—organizational structure is not friendly to tiered levels of academic/instructional support
- Problem solving at the secondary level; what does this even look like? Should we be skipping tiers and moving to more intensive instruction earlier than in elementary models of problem solving?
Friday, Sept. 30, 2011 Morning Discussion

**Problem**: How can we better prepare pre-service special educators and support practicing special educators to become effective data-based problem solvers related to students who have intensive needs?

Hard to capture with past/present/future discussion because we don’t have a strong research base from which to draw.

**What makes for an effective special education teacher?** (Who is this person?)

(a) *positive effect on student achievement* and (b) *good problem solver*

- What is the role of the special educator?
- How do we prepare teachers to address the unique needs of nonresponders?
- Does problem solving look different for teachers of students of different age levels? Similarities/differences preschool, elementary, middle/high school?
- Need to help prepare teachers to understand how individual students learn

**Past**—what did we leave behind?

- History in training focus was in training teachers to tailor instruction to meet individual needs—consider type of instruction
- Ideas from the past: Univ. of MN special education resource teachers (SERT) but little evidence to suggest how to best prepare these individuals
- Precision teaching
- Applied behavior analysis
- Direct instruction
- Single-subject research
- Many special educators in the schools were considered highly trained, respected, and whose advice was sought.
- Evelyn Deno (1970) *cascade of services*
- SERT—Addressing what roles teachers should play and developing skills to become skillful in those roles
- Cohorts, involved in same schools for 2 years, “PDS before its time,” meaningful relationship with advisor, development of “identity—this is who we are and what we do”
- More intensive training to deal with individual student problems

**Present**:

- Focus in training is on broader skills, collaboration with other professionals
- Multiple roles—reflective of current roles in schools
- What is the role of the special educator? (harder to define now)
- This role is much less clear today, and RTI models do not have clear expectations for where special educators fit in (or should fit in)
- We have opportunity to shape the role of the special educator...
Future:
Development of proposals for funding with a two-pronged agenda:

(a) develop model preparation programs—development of role of special educator and how this person can establish/maintain a problem-solving approach in the school but also focus on how to better meet the needs of nonresponders to produce positive student outcomes—use of formative evaluation to develop potentially more effective programs for individual students with disabilities. Special education programs will need to make clear the importance of tying to partner schools to better understand the roles these professionals would undertake—but not just with any schools—careful selection of schools—provide professional development for the schools, so select an environment that supports those skills we expect to develop/sustain

(b) consider IES goal structure—exploratory and measurement goals—or perhaps development goal—but need to focus on teacher preparation

Considerations:
Application to DBPM Problem-Solving structure:

- Measurement
- Evaluation
- Collaboration/Consultation

The missing piece from this structure of problem solving is Instruction

- How well do teacher preparation programs help students to understand evidence?
- Recruiting limited to a certain type of individual? Limit to cohorts?
- Collaborations with schools—conduct needs assessment—preparing teachers to fulfill specific expectations and demonstrating the potential effects these teachers can have
- Avoid the mismatch between teacher training and the school environment in which candidates would be working
- What is the vision for special educators?
- Federal funding to support development of teacher preparation
- IES—exploration goal?
  - Individual teacher level—characteristics
  - Characteristics of model teacher prep program (linked to student outcomes)?

Possible research questions:
- What characteristics are related to expertise in problem solving? How would we measure these elements?
- Who are our model problem solvers? Try to identify their characteristics.
- What do the schools see as the role of the special educator?
- What evidence would be compelling to help general education and educational leadership programs to adopt a more problem-solving perspective?
- What core set of skills should our teachers demonstrate to graduate/become licensed?
- How do we characterize a program that is comprised of these features?
- What are some good teacher preparation programs that try to develop good problem solvers? What are these characteristics and competencies that are addressed in the program? What data are collected?
• Considering University of MN’s program—how to match student skills to steps in problem solving model and provide classes that focus on particular aspects/competences within this model? Maintain a thread of problem solving throughout program.
• How much standardization should there be across teacher preparation programs?
• Should we seek accreditation for particular type of specialization in problem solving?
• What approach are schools taking with problem solving? Describe general education perspective.
• Define characteristics of special educators who produce good effects on student achievement. What are they doing? Define an effective special educator.
• What is the “common core” for effective special educators? Develop measures to reliably assess those skills. Is there some global indicator to indicate good teaching?
• What are the characteristics of ideal graduates?
• What data would be collected for this model of preparation?

Consider OSEP demonstration models—address student outcomes
Teacher preparation research: IES goal structure (talk to Commissioner Debbie Speece about the need for a teacher preparation topical area):
Exploration goal topics--
• What are programs doing regarding DBPM? Consider features of DBPM: measurement, evaluation, collaboration/consultation and adding instruction to structure our thinking
• Exploratory study on characteristics of successful special educators—What are characteristics of effective special educators?
• How would we measure these elements and monitor development? Measures to identify the “right” characteristics and tools to monitor the development of these teacher competencies
• Cast these features in a way to ask research questions about these key tasks and development of measures to identify effective teaching
• Develop partnerships with schools—conduct needs assessment; schools need to be in a particular position to accept this partnership)—also bringing “university” knowledge to school setting, so environments need to be ready for change. Do we prepare the effective educator and try to sell that to schools—or do we allow schools to define these roles?

Summary and Conclusion:
• Develop our own programs into model programs—get federal funding to help develop model programs along with collaboration/partnerships with schools. Also examine subsequent effects on student achievement.
• What is an effective special educator?
  (a) has an impact on students and (b) is an effective problem solver

*Rather than focusing on past/present/future monograph, develop proposals for funding for model preparation programs and develop programmatic research questions