

# NASET Special Educator e-Journal



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## Special Education Legal Alert

Perry A. Zirkel

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This monthly legal alert focuses on two recent cases with costly consequences, one arising from a student's concussion and the other the failure to have the IEP ready at the start of the school year. For automatic e-mailing of future legal alerts, sign up at [perryzirkel.com](http://perryzirkel.com); this website also provides free downloads of various related articles, including those specific to the complaint procedures avenue under the IDEA.

**In *Lincoln-Sudbury Regional School District v. Mr. and Mrs. W.* (2018), a federal district court addressed the IDEA and Section 504 claims of the parents of a high school student who had a concussion. As a result of the concussion, their daughter missed two weeks of school and, also based on doctor's orders, had reduced school activities for another two weeks. She was a good student before and, with rather routine accommodations arranged by the guidance counselor, after this limited period. However, after the parents became upset with the math teacher's recommendation for an advanced but less rigorous math class for the next year, they unilaterally placed their daughter in a local prep school and filed for a due process hearing, seeking tuition reimbursement. They lost the hearing and filed for judicial review for their claims of child find, eligibility, and denial of FAPE. The defendant district counter-claimed attorneys' fees for alleged frivolous litigation for improper purpose.**

The court rejected the parents' IDEA claims, concluding that the relatively brief effects of the concussion did not come close to the requisite reasonable suspicion for child find or special education need for eligibility.

Avoid over-generalizing this conclusion to all concussion cases, but it illustrates that proactive but prudent attention to the severity and duration of the concussion under the individual circumstances of the child is warranted. In some cases, for example, an individual health plan may suffice.

The court similarly rejected the parents' alternative Section 504 claims, concluding that the temporary impairment fell far short of substantially limiting learning or any other major activity.

The lessons for Section 504 are that "substantial" includes duration and its frame of reference is the average person in the general population, not the individual's potential. See, e.g., the Publications item

	under Section 504/ADA in 2015 re concussions and 504 plans.
The court ruled in the district's favor for attorneys' fees, concluding that the parents' legal action in this case was frivolous and for an improper purpose. The court reserved determination of the specific amount, which the district claimed was more than \$150K, for a subsequent proceeding.	This case is a relative exception. In most such cases under the limited avenue for "reverse" attorneys' fees under the IDEA and civil rights legislation, what districts perceive as frivolous and for improper purpose, the court views instead as merely part of the litigation process. See, e.g., the Publications item under Remedies in 2015 re "reverse" attorneys' fees.

**In *School District of Philadelphia v. Kirsch* (2018) the Third Circuit Court of Appeals addressed the failure to have the IEPs for two twins with autism in effect at the start of their initial, kindergarten year. The IEP team met during the prior June but, despite the parents' repeated inquiries, did not complete the process during the summer. The parents unilaterally placed the twins in a private program after providing timely notice to the district. The district finalized the IEPs in December. The hearing officer ruled in the parents' favor for reimbursement for the basic tuition and transportation but not the extras, such as a 1:1 aide, from September to December, but concluded that the final IEPs were appropriate. On appeal, the district court affirmed the hearing officer's decision, but (a) extended the reimbursement to the intervening, lengthy stay-put period, and awarded the parents \$185K for their attorneys' fees. Both sides filed appeals to the Third Circuit.**

First, the Third Circuit upheld the denial of FAPE for the September to December period. The district argued that the procedural violation did not harm the twins because the parents had enrolled them in a private program. However, the court concluded that the violation in this case significantly impeded the parents' opportunity for participation because the district failed to timely provide them with important details regarding the proposed placement.	The IDEA requires the IEP to be in effect "at the beginning of each school year." The significant addition here is that the court found the requisite second step loss to be in terms of parental participation. However, this determination was based on the particular facts of this case, with generalization in terms of either student or parental loss at the second step of procedural FAPE analysis to other cases depend on the circumstances of each one.
Second, the Third Circuit not only upheld the extension for the now four-year stay-put period but also the parents' out-of-pocket costs for the 1:1 aide, which the district had recognized as part of FAPE in its December IEPs. The resulting total was approximately \$420K minus any scholarships the	This costly consequence (here to the district, where the first case conversely represented the costly consequence to the parents) largely reflects—as did the Second Circuit case in the February 2018 monthly alert—the expansive effects of the stay-put provision due to the ponderous adjudicative process under the IDEA, particularly on

twins received for the private school. The court also rejected the district's request to reduce the award based on the equities, concluding that the parents acted reasonably.	cases that move to the judicial levels. However, the determination of the "extra" out-of-pocket costs and the equities of the parties' conduct was the other contributing factor.
Third, the Third Circuit rejected the parents' counterclaim for more complete reimbursement under Section 504 and the ADA, concluding that the deliberate indifference standard applied to their claim and that they failed to prove that the district's actions reached that high level of wrongdoing.	As my website Publications item under "Section 504 and the ADA" (article entitled "Do the Courts Require a Heightened, Intent Standard for Student Section 504 and ADA Claims Against School Districts?"), more and more courts are using this heightened standard for alternative or additional claims under these civil rights laws.
Finally, the Third Circuit upheld the attorneys' fees award of approximately \$185K, finding that the district court's modest reduction of the requested amount and overall calculation was not an abuse of discretion.	Again, the transaction costs of the litigation process are regrettably high, giving pause to both school districts and parents, especially given the specific IDEA provisions for attorneys' fees. These costs are one, but not the only factor, to consider for settlements.

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# **Mental Burnout, Attrition and Administrative Support among Incoming Special Education Teachers: What Can be Done?**

**William E. Woods**

**University of Nevada Las Vegas**

## **Abstract**

Teachers entering the field of special education tend to do so with the expectation of having a long and fruitful career. Once in the field, many may experience unexpected events that may cause them to re-evaluate their decision to remain in the field. Some of the issues may come from mental fatigue, undue stress, classroom management as it relates to unruly behavior and leading to attrition. The purpose of this review is to examine this phenomenon to determine if the teachers entering the field are aptly prepared to handle the mental, emotional and social rigors associated with the profession. This paper is written based on the hypothesis stating teachers entering the teaching arena are leaving in large margins based due to feeling lack of support from the administration, the community and even peers. This paper also examines the support systems available for these professionals as they start their careers.

Keywords: Attrition, mental exhaustion, mentoring.

## **Attrition and administrative support for incoming special education teachers: What can be done?**

Teaching is one of the oldest and most honorable professions. Those who answer the call are tasked to educate, train and prepare the youth to become productive members of society. Many enter the field with high aspirations, goals and enthusiasm to make a change. Once in the field, the realities of the profession replace the initial feelings (Bay and Katz, 2009). Those entering the field tend to find out how many hats a teacher has to wear in the classroom. Some hats range from managing so many feelings at once to support from the school administration and community (Kokkinos, 2007; Lavian, 2015). Those who may not feel supported, aware and knowledgeable about the latest trends will leave the profession (Bay and Katz, 2009). A profession that is considered to be the most honorable also has the highest attrition rate among incoming teachers (Conley and Graham, 2009; Theoharis, 2013). This trend is most seen in special education teachers.

Special education teachers have the highest attrition rate in the field (Conley and Graham, 2009; Edgar and Pair, 2005; Theoharis, 2013). The usual expectancy in the profession ranges between two and five years before leaving to pursue other opportunities (Conley and Graham, 2009; Edgar and Pair, 2005; Theoharis, 2013). Many argue that mental burnout due to exhaustion, stress and other classroom related issues can lead to attrition (Cancino, Albrecht & Johns, 2013; Naring, Vlerick & Van de Ven, 2012; Williams and Dikes, 2015). School support and lack of mentoring is also considered to be a contributing factor (Bay, 2009; Whitaker, 2000).

These issues create a gap in the field and the students in the room are the ones suffering. This manuscript is written to address this issue and offer possible solutions that may cause a reverse trend related to attrition. It is critical to find a way to keep those entering the field in the classrooms. It is equally critical to make sure that the

support systems are in place for those who may need assistance adjusting to a new environment and completing a job at a high level of fidelity. This discourse is written to meet the following objectives: (a) address/identify the initial reasons teachers decide to leave the profession and (b) recommend systems to be put into place to reverse the trend that exists related to attrition in the field.

## Issues in special education

Special education is in a state of emergency. There has been a gross influx of students due to misdiagnosis of a disability and an overrepresentation within a specific class of students identified for special services (Skiba, Horner, Chung, Rausch, May & Tobin, 2011). This influx can be a burden to those tasked to educate them each day. By adding more students through classification and identification, the teachers tend to become overwhelmed and stressed. This stress, with the lack of resources available, can cause qualified teachers who want to educate the youth to leave the profession early. For this to happen, it is important to discuss the following three issues associated with the early departure: (a) mental exhaustion, (b) minimal support from the school administration and (c) no continuing education related to evidence based practices.

**Mental Exhaustion.** Teachers in special education deal with a myriad of issues each day. These issues can involve classroom management, lesson planning and defusing the students' behavioral issues. Each element can be an undue burden on that professional and their mental state throughout the day. An incoming teacher who is not acclimated to this experience may feel overwhelmed at the end of the day. This feeling, if it is concentrated throughout the year, can become too much for said teacher, resulting in the teacher leaving the school and profession early, which can be an overload for the veterans in the field. It is the veterans who would take in the students in the departed teacher's classrooms.

**Lack of support.** Many professionals will argue that completing this task is an arduous one if no support is provided from the school administration. Many special education teachers are an entity to themselves in the classrooms. Without support, they can only do the best they can with limited resources and supports. If supports are provided, then more teachers would stay in the field.

**Lack of mentorship.** Teachers entering new schools do not know how things work or who to ask for help. This is due to the fact that some schools do not offer mentorships to show the teachers the ropes, how to access materials or who to get them from. Most schools leave it up to the teachers to figure out, which can be an arduous task in itself.

**No continuing education.** Teachers entering the field may not know the latest issues, trends and interventions to help them in the classroom. By not having this option, each teacher has to figure out how to control issues that may arise without any prior knowledge of a method that can defuse that issue quickly. This can make the teacher feel unappreciated in the school, leading to either transfer or resignation.

## Recommendations

If teachers are leaving the profession due to lack of support, guidance or awareness of interventions and models that can help them in the classroom setting, then something should be done to offer those services. Novice teachers entering a new educational system tend to get lost in the milieu of the school, do not know how to access resources or do not know who to ask if help is needed. While some may argue that many attend some form of orientation, others will rebuff saying that the orientation is not enough. Having a concrete system in

place to aid the new teachers may reverse the trend of attrition that exists. Here are some examples of programs and plans that can aid those incoming professionals.

**Mentorship.** Novice teachers could have a chance to stay in schools longer if someone would show them the ropes initially and help them navigate the new spaces. Teachers entering new schools do not know policies, rules, how things work or where to find valuable resources that can be used in the classroom. A mentor can serve as an advocate for the new student, a support system for any problems that may arise and a liaison to the administration for any other issues. A mentor will ease the transition for the novice teacher and possibly give them the incentive to stay in the school system

**In-Service sessions.** Continuing education (CE) is a vital part of the educational system. CE helps all teachers, assistants and administrators have access to the latest evidence based programs and interventions related to their field of study. In special education, teachers and assistants would learn about the latest positive behavioral interventions, de-escalation methods and social skills modeling interventions to help with their students who may need them. Teachers are very busy and some of them may not have access to materials that can help them in the classroom. Some may also not be aware of the existence of an intervention that can help them defuse issues that can be a problem. Some teachers may also not be aware of the latest tools, techniques and methods to effectively manage a class. By allowing CE in the schools, teachers will be able to have access to those materials and maybe use them in the classroom setting. If there is no CE or support in the schools for new teachers, they will most likely leave the field all together leaving their students without a teacher for the coming future.

**Special education support services.** Schools have limited resources to provide aid to the teachers in the classrooms. Those resources are also divided between general and special education. Unfortunately, a majority of that division goes to general education, leaving special education teachers with an overloaded classroom and minimal resources to meet the needs of the students attending. Teachers who are seasoned in the field will understand how to navigate this trend. Novice teachers may not, giving them probable cause to leave the profession.

Novice teachers entering the field tend to have a universal expectation of the profession and how things will work in the classroom. Many entering the field with the expectations of having the support of the administration and staff and find out that, in some cases, it is not like that. Many new teachers do not have a mentor to show them the ropes or know how to access resources to help them navigate their classrooms successfully. This feeling of non-support can be followed by frustration. That frustration, if allowed to magnify, can lead to the teachers leaving the profession for good.

## Summary

Attrition among novice special education teachers occurs at an alarming rate. Those entering the field out of a teacher education program are most likely to resign, transfer or go into general education three to five years after starting their position. When asked, most will attribute their decision to leave to mental exhaustion, lack of support, no guidance or personal issues. When the teachers do leave, their students suffer the most. Their teacher is no longer with them, which means they will have to transfer to another classroom, adding to the workload of a teacher who already has a full roster. The purpose of this discourse was to address this issue, state why it is a problem and what possible solutions may exist to reverse the trend.

When asked, those currently in the field claim that continuing education, administrative support and a mentor program to guide the new teachers could reverse the trend. These three items could provide the incoming teacher with someone who knows the system and will also show them how things tend to work in the school itself. This can create an environment that can help the teacher feel comfortable and confident in the new setting. The same thing can also happen with administrative support.

Administrative support will allow the teacher to have access to materials that can help run the classroom effectively. Such support can also pass resources to the teacher if any problems arise. Lastly, administrative support will send a message to the teacher saying that both parties are invested in the educational process and both want to make sure that each student has access to a quality education. The last item was continuing education.

Continuing education can offer the teachers access to the latest materials and strategies related to behavioral issues and classroom management. Providing such insight to incoming teachers can reverse the trend by informing them about the new strategies that can help them control the classroom. The potential outcome could be a reduction in mental exhaustion and stress.

Keeping teachers in the classroom should be a priority item in the field of education. Those who are called to do so are taking on a task that is stressful, draining and demanding. It is also a worthwhile profession. Teachers are vessels of knowledge who want to do all that is possible to prepare their students for the real world outside. This may seem like an easy task, but it is far from that. A teacher must handle a myriad of behaviors, issues, trends and stories from each student in their classroom. Having the right tools, knowledge and support to do so will help all involved. If not, then more will leave the field, leaving a gap in the special educational system.

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### About the Author

I am a doctoral student at the University of Nevada Las Vegas in the College of Education-Education and Clinical Studies department. Before attending the University of Nevada Las Vegas, I attended the University of Oregon, The University of Memphis and Lane College which is where I received my Masters of Science, Masters of Arts in Teaching and Bachelors of Arts degree(s) respectively. My area of interest focuses on positive peer to peer and teacher to student relationships between those in special education and general education, specifically students with emotional and behavioral disorders and Autism. I am a fan of Positive behavior interventions and their implementation in schools and productive educational experiences for those within that population. My future plans will focus on learning more about positive behavior interventions and how they can improve the educational experience for those in special education. I would also like to teach PBIS at the college level to those entering the field.

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# Book Review: The Moral Imperative of School Leadership

**Erica Williams-Sanders**

## Abstract

This book conveys the message that in order for the school system to change, there must be a whole system transformation, with the principal as the main change agent. As the school leader, the principal must take the lead in creating a trusting school culture. Encouraging teachers to be leaders and building relationships with all school employees will build a positive morale in the school. The principal must have the moral imperative to want to produce school leaders in order for the change to come.

Fullan, Michael. *The Moral Imperative of School Leadership*. Thousands Oak, CA: Corwin Press, Inc., 2003. 80 pp. \$22.88.

“Principals and other school leaders must become agents and beneficiaries of system transformation”. Michael Fullan, author of many successful leadership and educational reform books, motivates leaders in education to be open to shared leadership and the understanding that school leadership is a collective endeavor, because the task of evolving leadership in others require those to have a moral imperative.

“It is no longer acceptable or doable to expect great leaders to evolve in numbers in organizations that do not cultivate them”. Fullan brings clarity to the issues at hand for principals and other school leaders and why they must have moral imperative to revamp their role as leaders, to bring about education reform in both schools and school districts.

Fullan believes the current state of leadership is not producing school leaders that are pivotal to system change. When it comes to transforming leadership in schools, the focal point to the undertaking of altering the system as a whole is critical and must, rely on creating and maintaining moral imperative in every school.

The moral imperative is a road map for principals and other school leaders to embrace a higher-level of thinking and to take action to change the context of education. Fullan challenges all educational leaders and the system to acknowledge and rethink the pivotal role of principals as it relates to implementing and leading with moral purpose. Fullan’s insightful recommendations to the role of school leadership will galvanize leaders, whom want to make a difference in the future of education, by transforming the role of principal/leader. The time for reform in the school system is critical.

Fullan conveys his point to all levels of leadership through several means. Fullan suggest, working on the question “What would the system look like if it did know what is was doing? Fullan shares guidelines and orientations to inspire principals and other school leaders to work towards moral imperative. First, he reveals changing the context as it relates to leadership, environment, and framework in the school system. Some changes he states are (1), because there isn’t any cohesiveness in school reform, changing the environment in the school system is imperative. There needs to be a core purpose, not only focused on academic achievement, but on the social and personal development of the employees within the school. (2) School leadership should be shared between the teachers and the administration. Principals should encourage teacher leaders to actively

work together to tackle the barriers with an emphasis on the lack of progress within leadership and schools themselves. (3). Fullan demonstrates how barriers that are self and system imposed leads to narrowness of preparation for future principals, these gaps need to be filled. (17). As principals play it safe when it comes to retaining or restoring stability in other words their perception of the system is limited and moral purpose is loss (17). The constraints of the absence of a system change strategy, the lack of leadership development and role overload illustrates the failure to understand the moral imperative of schooling (17). Fullan sheds light on the levels of moral imperative. Making a difference in the today's school system and beyond is priority and it requires moral imperative at its highest level of the four to transform its current state. The depiction on the current school system is not conducive to accomplishing hierarchy at the highest level (29). In order for change to happen, principals need to have the audacity and potential to create new cultures on the basis of trusting relationships, disciplined, inquiry and action (45). It is essential for system leaders to come to the realization, that school leadership is pivotal to school and system improvement (48). It's imperative for school leaders to heighten their awareness of the bigger picture, to become effective leaders of the future (49). Fullan reminds leaders and other school leaders, of the first lesson of the moral imperative is "Don't forget the why question and Don't get lost in the how-to-question" (61). Although, there is not a conclusive answer to implementing moral imperative. However, school leaders with more resources for school development and new mandates at the center of the transformation can make a difference (80). Lastly, Fullan shows "Principals and other school leaders they must become agents and beneficiaries of the processes of getting there".

I didn't find any weak points in the book. Fullan makes a solid argument, as there is a need for the levels of moral imperative in leadership and schools to make an impact on education reform. The overwhelming demands of school leaders and their lack of resources, are brought to light by Fullan. Fullan stresses that effective leaders that lead with a moral purpose believe in shared leadership and uses it to help students and teachers to excel.

In comparing two books by Micheal Fullan, "The Moral Imperative of School Leadership" and "Leading in a Culture of Change", I found both to have similarities in regards too, school leadership as it relates to moral purpose. Both books illustrate essential reasons why leading with a moral purpose can make the difference in the lives of students not to mention the school and the school system as a whole. Fullan mentions in both books that effective leaders develop relationships and leadership in others at all levels to make a difference. The two books reflect on large scale transformation. Although, there are many similarities there are few differences in the books as well. "The Moral Imperative of School Leadership" depicts the four levels of The Moral Imperative and how each level is a guideline to making a difference from individual to school and so on. In "*Leading in a Culture of Change*", Fullan provides A Framework for Leadership with moral purpose setting the context to being effective in complex times, followed by understanding change, relationships, knowledge building and to sum it up with coherence making, which allows leaders to lead effectively during these intricate times. "*Leading in a Culture of Change*" has several real-life examples of how the framework of leadership has helped some leaders in education to transform schools and school districts. In "*The Moral Imperative of School*", Leadership the primary focus is the principal or the head of the school, where Fullan's aspiration is to make principalship more exciting and doable. Fullan's "*Leading in a Culture of Change*" is a valuable tool to not only educators and administrators but to those in business especially in the position of management. The point of "*The Moral Imperative of School Leadership*" is to bring lucidity to the need of individual and system changes for principals to become a force of power for school as well as school system reform.

The Moral Imperative for School Leadership is a must read for principals and other school leaders who want to make a difference by transforming schools and principalship as we know it.

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## About the Author

Erica Williams-Sanders is a Varying Exceptionalities teacher at Koa Elementary School, where she works with students with disabilities, grades K-2. She graduated from Columbia Southern University, Magna Cum Laude with a Bachelor's degree in Health Care Administration in 2015. After graduation, she worked a private school with students with disabilities and behavior issues. She is currently seeking her Master's Degree in Special Education with an Autism Endorsement at Florida International University. Erica lives in Central Florida with her husband and four children.

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# Cultural Influences to Collaboration between Special Education Teachers and Parents in Saudi Arabia

**Manal Alsheef**  
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## Abstract

Collaboration between special education teachers and parents is an important area that schools have to deal with. Effective collaboration is influenced by many factors such as cultural competency among school personnel. Many special education teachers lack cultural awareness and understanding of students diverse cultural backgrounds. Given the importance of effective collaboration among special education teachers and families of students with disabilities, it is necessary to explore cultural factors that may influence effective collaboration. This paper, explores cultural factors that influence effective collaboration between special education professionals and families of children with disabilities in Saudi Arabia.

## Introduction

Saudi Arabia is a developing country in the southwestern region of Asia. It is divided into five provinces with Riyadh being the capital city. With an estimated population of 20,702,536 (Nations Encyclopedia, 2015), the country, which is considered the home of Islam is the world's largest manufacturer, producer, and exporter of oil.

In 1932, before the unification of Saudi Arabia, education was accessible to a small fraction of the population. This started to change when the Ministry of Education was established in 1953. From only thousands of students in approximately 300 schools receiving education prior to the change, there were five million students in 47,325 schools with more than 420,443 teachers working in those schools (Nyrop, 1984). Alongside this development, the system of special education in Saudi Arabia moved from segregating students with special needs to mainstreaming them in public schools. The number of schools offering mainstreaming programs has increased remarkably in attempts to serve all students with special needs in the country. In order to facilitate their participation in school, the government supports students with special needs in terms of living expenses, assistive technology, and transportation. These developments have brought about new challenges including the need for schoolteachers to collaborate with the families of the children with disabilities that they serve.

According to the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia (2010), the education system of Saudi Arabia has grown intensely since its establishment 78 years ago. In the beginning, education was an opportunity only of children of privileged and wealthy families. Presently, there is a successful education system and facility construction in Saudi Arabia, with over 25,000 schools built and more being constructed (Alquraini, 2010).

Family collaboration is an essential part of the special education process (Alquraini, 2010). Research demonstrates that children with disabilities yield better educational outcomes if their schoolteachers work closely with their families (Alquraini, 2010). However, for effective collaboration to occur, schoolteachers need

to be culturally competent especially in multicultural societies; Saudi Arabia is increasingly becoming a multicultural society with many immigrants from different countries such as Egypt, Sudan, or Syria, among others (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2011).

### **Collaboration and Culture**

There is limited collaboration between schoolteachers and parents in Saudi Arabia. Cultural competency for schoolteachers means that the schoolteachers have to understand the cultural tendencies of their students (Cirelli et al., 2016). It is not just simply knowing the cultural traditions of students from different cultures. Instead, cultural competency entails that schoolteachers develop an awareness of the individual differences and how to work with students from different cultures in their classrooms (Cirelli et al., 2016).

Schoolteachers have a unique challenge in their efforts to meet local and state standards, meet legal needs, and create a culturally competent learning experience for all (Palcis, Jurbers, & Kelley, 2009). In order to achieve this, schoolteachers can collaborate with each other in finding resources that will support them (Cirelli et al., 2016). Research indicates that students' academic success correlates with family-school-community collaboration (Palcis et al., 2009). Current research also demonstrates that family/school collaboration is key in the academic success of all students regardless of environment, socio-economic status, and disability (Shriberg, Schumacher, McMahon, Flores, Moy, Swidzinski, & Tompkins, 2012). For any intervention to be successful, collaboration between school, family, and community is crucial. In order to accomplish effective collaboration, all cultures need to be respected, valued, and represented schoolwide to create a solid learning community (Shriberg et al., 2012). Educators need to understand and educate themselves on each culture and then find evidence-based interventions to support their community of students and family.

Research indicates that it is important for schoolteachers to understand the Muslim/Arab culture especially as the population of Americans of Arab descent in US continues to rise (Goforth, 2011; Haboush, 2007). However, there is lack of Arabic cultural awareness because of the absence of empirical studies in this area (Goforth, 2011; Haboush, 2007). According to the Arabic culture, for example, it could be difficult for parents to work with a professional of the opposite sex (Hall & Livingston, 2006). Research in the Arab world has found that some parents prefer to get treatment for their children with disability from religious leaders (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2011); parents trust religious leaders more than the professionals because the leaders live within the local community and they have the same worldviews, make no diagnoses like professionals do, and use spiritual interventions (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2011). Parents from Arabic culture believe that spiritual interventions are effective for their children with disability (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2011). Understanding the cultural conceptualization and implications of disabilities is therefore important for everyone who works with Muslim/Arabs families and students.

In Saudi Arabia, Al-Krenawi and Graham (2011) reported that many parents from Arabic culture complained of lack of compassion when they communicated with teachers. The parents complained that schoolteachers used unsympathetic and cruel language. In order to increase the competency along with responsibility of educating all students, interventions need to be put in place to support all students, cultures, and disabilities. When introducing these interventions, schoolteachers have reported that although they want to be competent and supportive of all students, they have some reservations with any new intervention that is introduced (Cirelli et

al., 2016). Many schoolteachers and schools are nervous about budgeting concerns and professional development, among others concerns, when considering interventions (Gross, 2011).

Families in the US stated that they felt more confident when there was constant communication between the school and teachers of their students (Shriberg et al., 2012). There is an obvious importance of multidisciplinary approaches when it comes to success in working with families, students, and the communities (Shriberg et al., 2012). Parents have the most insight into their children as they see them in all environments and because of this, the opinion of the family needs to be honored and respected. Schoolteachers can find solutions and insight by just listening to the family (Alquraini, 2010). Parents have expressed that they would like to just be listened to and have their opinions valued and represented throughout the growth process of their children (Gross, 2011).

### **The Effect of Cultural Perceptions on Collaboration**

Disabilities in Arabic world are often referred to using stigmatizing language (Gharaibeh, 2009). For example, a disability in children is called *i'aqa*, which means handicap (Gharaibeh, 2009). A male with disability is called *mu'aq* and a female is *mu'aqah*, which are both negative words meaning retarded, delayed, or backward (Gharaibeh, 2009). The words promote stigma and make individuals feel ashamed of having a disability.

According to Gharaibeh (2009), in the Arab world, "there are degrees of stigma, hierarchy of some sort" for disabilities (p. 70). In the Arab community, intellectual and developmental disabilities or mental illnesses are considered worse than physical and sensory disabilities (Gharaibeh, 2009). Females with disability are stigmatized more than males and are also more likely to be institutionalized (Gharaibeh, 2009). Even parents use stigmatizing language when describing their own children with disability (Crabtree, 2007). Some mothers hide the fact that they have a child with disability for fear of societal stigma, divorce, or having the husband marry a second wife, as mothers are the ones blamed for having children with disability (Crabtree, 2007). These negative aspects may extend to the siblings especially sisters, as people may not want to marry from a family when they know that the family has a child with disability (Turmusani, 2003; Young, 1997). These cultural perceptions may certainly influence teacher-family collaboration.

Some parents may choose to keep their children with disability at home and avoid the ignominy that could accompany the public exposure of their child. Crabtree (2007) confirms this and states that some parents in Saudi Arabia felt sympathy for their children, struggled to accept the fact that they had a child with disability, and had difficulty accepting their children's limitations and needs for special education services. This situation could obstruct access to an appropriate education for many children with disabilities in the country. Even if they are able to access education, the quality and appropriateness of that education may be negatively affected. Research indicates that if parents feel sympathetic to their children with disability, they may become over-protective and at times may end up viewing schools as unsafe environments (Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Thurlow, 2000), which could limit the extent to which they may allow their children to participate in schooling activities. This could hinder the children's educational development (Taub, 2006).

Furthermore, some parents from Arabic culture feel uncomfortable and ashamed to discuss personal, familial issues, abuse, sexual activities, and their children's disabilities even with professionals (El-Islam, 2008; Hall & Livingston, 2006). They are leery about revealing their private life to outsiders or non-family members (Youssef

& Deane, 2006). This may inhibit their ability to share information about their children or family with schoolteachers, which impedes meaningful collaboration (Dwairy, 2006; Nobles & Sciarra, 2000; Sayed, 2003) as that information could be invaluable to the development of appropriate education programs for children with disabilities.

### **How to Overcome Cultural Barriers to Collaboration**

In order to overcome some of the cultural barriers to school-family collaboration, the Saudi government should consider promoting more awareness of disability issues in the country. Educating people about disability has been found to promote change in perceptions about disability (Al-Shammari, 2006; Park & Chitiyo, 2009). Therefore, developing disability awareness programs targeting the public in the community as well as professionals could help promote positive attitudes and perceptions about disability in the country.

Furthermore, promoting the development of support groups for families of children with disabilities may be helpful. Research indicates that if parents have good social support, they will have a more positive experience parenting their children with disabilities (Ceballo & McLoyd, 2002; Ha, Greensberg, & Seltzer, 2011). Support groups tend to promote positive interactions for the families of children with disabilities (Ha, Greensberg, & Seltzer, 2011), which may translate into a positive experience for the families. Such families may feel more confident and therefore may engage school professionals better—enhancing the collaboration process.

Professionals also need to improve their skills so that they can serve parents of children with disabilities better. Professionals' lack of understanding of the experience of having a child with a disability can hinder effective collaboration with families of children with disabilities (Anderegg, Vergason, & Smith, 1992). Further, if parents consider that their contributions are not being valued, they may feel disrespected and therefore may disengage (Allred, 2015). Developing professional development programs for schoolteachers in the area of special education may therefore, help to promote the active participation of families in the special education process of their children. Such programs could focus on effective collaboration skills, cultural awareness, and special education and disability issues, among other topics. Good professional development programs could enhance the quality of the special education process, including family collaboration (Chitiyo, Hughes, Changara, Chitiyo, Montgomery, 2017).

### **Conclusion**

As Saudi Arabia continues to develop, progress has to be made across a variety of fields. One such area is the field of special education. In order for this to occur, there has to be better collaboration between school teachers and the families of the children they serve. Therefore, this paper addresses an important area of cultural factors that may interfere with effective collaboration between school teachers and parents. School teachers have to be familiar with the culture of the children with disability and their families. Effective collaboration will help the school districts to clearly understand the parents' views related to services for the children with disabilities. When families and teachers work effectively together, for the sake of students with disabilities, that might improve the special education outcomes for children with disabilities in Saudi Arabia.

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## Book Review: Effective Supervision: Supporting the Art and Science of Teaching

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Marzano, R.J., Frontier, T., and Livingston, D. *Effective Supervision: Supporting the Art and Science of Teaching*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD Books, 2011. 183 pp. \$27.95

### Introduction

“The ultimate criterion for expert performance in the classroom is student achievement. Anything else misses the point” (Marzano, Frontier, and Livingston, 2011). Robert J. Marzano, Tony Frontier, and David Livingston combined their knowledge in the field of educational leadership to write the highly- acclaimed book, “Effective Supervision: Supporting the Art and Science of Teaching.” Marzano is the cofounder and CEO of Marzano Research Library and the author of more than 30 books and 150 articles on the topics of instruction, assessment, writing and implementing standards, cognition, effective leadership, and school intervention. Tony Frontier is a professor of doctoral leadership studies and director of teacher education at Cardinal Stritch University. His areas of specialization include: curriculum development, organizational learning, research methods, and statistics. David Livingston is an associate at Marzano Research Library and specializes in school and district level leadership and school improvement.

### Purpose and Thesis

The purpose of this book is to provide school and district administrators with an effective framework for the supervision of teachers. The authors propose that the following five conditions must be met to systematically develop teacher expertise and increase student achievement: 1) a well-articulated knowledge base for teaching, 2) focused feedback and practice, 3) opportunities to observe and discuss expertise, 4) clear criteria and a plan for success, and 5) recognition of expertise.

### Themes

The themes portrayed in the book include:

- a) Teacher expertise is directly related to student achievement.
- b) Expertise is a function of *how* strategies are used, not *how many* strategies are used.
- c) Education has traditionally isolated teachers throughout their careers.
- d) Achieving set scores should not be the goal. The goal should be reaching a standard for how much growth we expect to see within a given time- period.
- e) A variety of assessments should be used to measure “value-added” achievement.

- f) Teacher evaluation systems have recently received a great deal of criticism regarding rigor and viability.

Chapter 1 introduces the concept of “supervision that develops expertise”. The authors believe the following four domains are the knowledge base for teaching:

Domain 1- Classroom Strategies and Behaviors

Domain 2- Planning and Preparing

Domain 3- Reflecting on Teaching

Domain 4- Collegiality and Professionalism

These domains are like a popular model designed by Charlotte Danielson in 1996. Her model includes the following domains:

Domain 1- Planning and Preparation

Domain 2- The Classroom Environment

Domain 3- Instruction

Domain 4- Professional Responsibilities

The authors believe their model shows more causal linkages to student achievement because of the order of their domains. They believe that classroom strategies and behaviors should be at the top of the sequence as they have the most direct effect on student achievement.

Chapter two provides a history of teacher supervision and evaluation in the United States. The authors state that the history provides a “gradual evolution” to the recommendations of their book. They state that teacher evaluations should not be based completely on their knowledge base. Focused feedback and practice are supported by the models proposed by Glatthorn, McGreal, and Glickman. These models propose that true teacher development comes from self-reflection and clear goals for improvement. The conditions of clear criteria for success and recognizing expertise can be linked to ideas of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century that state that student achievement should be directly linked to teacher evaluations.

Chapters three through seven provide in-depth descriptions of the five conditions of their framework. The five conditions have similarities to Fullen’s Framework for Leadership. Both contain attributes of knowledge sharing, relationship building, coherence making, and understanding change.

Chapter three breaks down sixty specific elements of the four domains of the knowledge base for teaching. Domain 1 deals with classroom strategies and behaviors and is thought to have a direct effect on student achievement. It is the most detailed of the domains as it contains 41/60 elements. Domain 2 is related to planning and preparing and is thought to have a direct relationship with Domain 1. Reflecting on teaching is the third domain is thought to have a direct relationship on Domain 2. Collegiality and professionalism is the fourth domain and is the environment necessary for the other three domains to function properly.

Chapter four discusses the importance of focused feedback and clear levels of performance. There must be a continuum of progress in the evaluation method for it to show progress. Simply “checking off” strategies and skills does little to show a teacher what area(s) they need to work on. The following numeric values are recommended for the corresponding levels of progress: Innovating-4 points, Applying- 3 points, Developing-2 points, Beginning- 1 point, Not Using- 0 points.

Chapter 5 states that for teachers to move through the developmental phases, they must have opportunities to observe and discuss expertise. “Unfortunately, the current K-12 education system in the United States is not well designed to meet this need. To the contrary, K-12 education has traditionally isolated teachers throughout their careers” (Marazano, Frontier, and Livingston, 2011). The authors present the following five techniques to help teachers develop expertise: 1) instructional rounds, 2) expert coaches, 3) expert videos, 4) teacher-led professional development, and 5) virtual communities.

Chapter 6 states that criteria for success must be established in the following two areas: 1) Domain 1-classroom strategies and behavior and 2) Value-added achievement. The authors state that this is the most effective way to link teaching strategies to student achievement. Once this is instituted, teachers can create relevant professional growth and development plans.

Chapter 7 states that teacher evaluation systems need a serious overhaul. The authors believe that evaluations should recognize different stages of development in the progression towards expertise. In other words, they do not think it is valid to use the same evaluation methods for a first-year teacher as they do for a veteran teacher. They recommend breaking the stages of development and evaluation up into the following stages: 1) Initial Status Teacher, 2) Professional Teacher, 3) Mentor Teacher, and 4) Master Teacher.

I felt like Chapter 3 was one of the strongest parts of the book. The explanations of how the different domains of the knowledge base for teaching are arranged and related made perfect sense to me. I think classroom strategies and behaviors have a right to be in the first domain as they are obviously directly related to student achievement. Domain 2 has a direct relationship with Domain 1 because a teacher must plan and prepare properly to implement appropriate strategies. Domain 3 has a direct relationship with domain 2 because a teacher should be reflecting on what has been effective/ineffective when they are planning. I agree that teachers must work in an environment of collegiality and professionalism to learn and grow.

I think that the ideas presented for developing expertise were creative and interesting but probably difficult to implement in a school environment. It is hard to make time for activities like “instructional rounds” and “teacher-led professional development” when you are already trying to balance testing, paperwork, meetings, etc. Expert coaches are a great idea but in my experience a lot of schools end up using them as back-up administrators and substitute teachers.

Overall, I thought the five-part framework presented in this book was comprehensive and appropriate to use for evaluating teachers. It was based on over 200 years of research and practice in the field of educational leadership. I would feel confident using this framework if I was an administrator.

**About the Author**

Amy Marie Combs is a Special Education teacher at Victory Ridge Academy in Lake Wales, FL. She has been teaching Intensive Reading and Special Education classes at a variety of grade levels for the past 10 years. She is currently taking graduate classes at Florida International University in the field of Special Education and Autism. She has an 11-year old son named, Rhett.

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# **Literature Review: Action Research Plan for How Reader's Theater Can Improve Fluency in Reading**

**Melissa Bedasie-DeClaire**  
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## **Introduction**

How can Reader's Theater improve students' fluency in reading? For struggling readers fluency may be an area of concern and it can be instrumental in the learning and teaching process. When students have difficulty reading smoothly and identifying words accurately, they can experience a variety of issues which may prevent them from fully benefiting from the curriculum. As students advance in age and grade level the specific skills needed to become fluent readers can become increasingly difficult if not addressed in the early stages of learning. It is fundamental for students to have a firm understanding of the basic skills needed to achieve success with reading fluency. For struggling readers, fluency can affect their ability to engage in social interactions, effectively understand the curriculum, and have good self-confidence. It is important to recognize the role of reading word units in connection with how this affects reading fluency and automaticity when students are developing many of the skills needed to become proficient readers (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). As a result of the deficiencies in these areas, students can become disengaged in the lesson, have difficulty making necessary academic learning gains, making meaningful relationships in social settings, and exhibit low self-esteem. Many aspects of a student's education can ultimately be reliant on each other. If these deficiencies are not detected and addressed as soon as possible, it can create a snowball effect which creates additional challenges for students. It is imperative to have a thorough understanding of each student's abilities and their needs, as a preliminary starting point in order to implement the most appropriate and effective interventions. Rasinski, Homan, and Biggs (2009) explained how the impacting roles of a teacher can affect the reading fluency of students. These roles include modeling fluent reading, fluency coaching, facilitating reading, collecting materials, and providing a setting for performance, and encouraging celebration (Rasinski et al., 2009). Thoughtfully selecting an engaging, meaningful, and evidenced based method may make the needed difference in the teaching and learning process to assist struggling readers with the challenges they face with fluency in reading

Reader's Theater is an example of a fluency intervention with a multidimensional structure which can provide qualitative and quantitative results. Students and teachers can both benefit from this flexible and engaging strategy. There are a variety of successful studies that have evidenced the success of Reader's Theater and the impacts it has on students of various ages and abilities. Reader's Theater is engaging, flexible, comprehensive, and meaningful. These attributes along with the proper implementation can increase students' ability to be fluent readers and further allowing them to effectively access the curriculum. Success with fluency in reading is heavily dependent on the delivery, instructions, and curriculum in which the student must have a clear understanding of the material and what is expected of them.

When students experience success in reading they will increase their success with additional academic and social subjects, enabling them to partake in social activities which include reading as a form of understanding or communication and increase reading comprehension skills. Using effective learning strategies to address

reading fluency will benefit the students' processing abilities in a variety of settings and potentially eliminate various barriers (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974).

## Fluency In Reading

A student's ability to read with fluency allows them to comprehend text at a faster rate and as a result they will attain a larger volume of knowledge within a shorter period (Rasinski, 2000; Young, & Nageldinger, 2014). Oral reading fluency includes word recognition accuracy, word recognition automaticity, and prosody (Mraz et al 2013). Fluency can allow students to decode and accurately interpret text with a meaningful understanding which is a complex and interactive process (Mraz et al., 2013; Smith, 2011). Automaticity is an essential component of fluent reading and analyzes how many words students can read in approximately one minute which produces a specific reading rate (Smith, 2011). Illustrated by the automaticity theory, reading comprehension has a role at the forefront of the educational focus when students have proficient fluency skills in reading. When fluency is automatic, students can work on comprehension skills without the challenging hurdles presented by dysfluency in reading (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974).

## Sociocultural Factors

An instrumental factor to consider is each student's background. Some students may not have adequate exposure to literacy and experiences with proficient fluency skills, which can bring a story to life (Parker, 2016). Learning occurs in many settings where individuals require various types of social interactions with society, which is also the sociocultural theory. The sociocultural aspects of a students' life may have a significant impact on their reading abilities (Cotter, 2012). Deficits which occur before entering school may present challenges upon entering into the educational setting. The students' exposure to the multidimensional skill of reading fluency includes experience with a print rich environment and learning foundational skills which are basic literacy skills. The results of the study conducted by Cotter (2012) which included 5 second graders indicated that four out of five students were not meeting the benchmark assessment requirements. With the fluency interventions which were obtained, the study highlighted that the students showed an increase in WCPM, specifically the first students made gains of 34 WCPM, the second student made gains of 72 WCPM, the third student made gains of 48 WCPM, the fourth student made gains of 33 WCPM, and the fifth and final student made gains of 47 WCPM (Cotter, 2012). Students that interact with text and social settings have a greater chance of success with reading skills (Cotter, 2012). The study conducted by Parker (2016) has also yielded positive results, however, the gains were of low statistical significance. What the study did specifically illustrate, was that fluency improvements for students who are Multi-racial, improved by 15%; Caucasian improved by 5%; female overall improved by 5%; and English Language Learners improved by 20% which was the highest level of improvement. An indicator of how students will perform in their future lives as adults and young adults, is weighted heavily on the reading proficiency by the third grade (Parker, 2016), this statement explains the growing concern of the effects of dysfluency in reading (Parker, 2016).

## Fluency and Comprehension

Reading with adequate fluency is an element which is required to have success with reading comprehension. Both go hand in hand and can be found in formal and informal contexts (Cotter, 2012). When students participate in oral reading at the appropriate rate/speed, with the correct intonation, and proper phrasing, their reading will reflect their spoken language. As a result students who struggle with fluency may take longer to complete an assignment. However, reading at a faster rate (with fluency) does not always

guarantee that a student will automatically increase their performance with reading comprehension, as reading is a complex process with many components (Mraz et al., 2013). But exploring comprehensive and engaging interventions can allow students an opportunity to make learning gains with their fluency in reading. Research by Smith (2011) suggests that when students experience success with fluency skills such as decoding, they can focus their efforts on reading comprehension (Smith, 2011). An added benefit to this success is that the students experience increased self-confidence and improved comprehension skills as a result of proficient fluency in reading (Caluris, 2006). Specifically, the data from this study yielded positive results as other studies in this review. Caluris (2006) conducted a study which consisted of groups of five to six students of various abilities, which the students were categorized as academically challenged, general education, bilingual, and special needs which covers a large spectrum of the student demographic. The assessments targeted skills such as, expression and volume, phrasing, smoothness, and pace. In the area of expression and volume the pre-test scores were 1.6 and the post-test scores were 2.6; in the area of phrasing the pre-test scores were 1.8 and the post-test scores were 2.8, in the area of smoothness the pre-test scores were 1.7 and the post-test scores were 2.7; lastly, in the area of pace the pre-test scores were 2.1 and the post-test scores were 2.8. This study also indicates positive trends in reading fluency when the intervention of Reader's Theater is utilized (Caluris, 2006).

## **Reader's Theater as an Intervention to Improve Fluency in Reading**

Developing reading fluency through the use of rhyming poetry and other texts beyond the narrative and informational texts that have been traditionally used for reading instruction (Rasinski et al., 2016). Vasinda, and McLeod (2011) explain how something old can become something new with Reader's Theater. This intervention allows students to recreate another character's emotions, attain a deep understanding of the plot, and understand goals and motives of the character they are portraying (Vasinda & McLeod, 2011). Reader's Theater creates opportunities for students to interpret dialogue, communicate meaning and awareness, and give students an appreciation of plays as a form of literature (Grant, 2011). This was evidenced in the study conducted by Grant (2011). The study consisted of two subgroups, one which would partake in the intervention and the other was a comparison group. The assessment utilized with both groups was DIBELS. Initially the intervention group was given the DIBELS assessment as a pre-assessment and had a mean score of 38.5 and the post-assessment mean score was 53.2 indicating the success of this intervention. This group did demonstrate a slightly greater score than the comparison group (Grant, 2011). Considering the audience for a performance, compels the reader to formulate in deeper analytical perspective in order to make the story come alive, so that the audience can envision the story which the characters are trying to relay (Guzzetti, 2002). Similarly, Rasinski and Young have demonstrated that Reader's Theater can serve as a pathway to learning. Learning can be interesting and enjoyable. Their research included second grade students who participated in this specific intervention and experiences and positive trends were observed. A DRA was administered to these students a goal was set for the expected level the students should be on by the end of the intervention, which was level 28. The pre-test reported that the students' DRA level was 19.4 at the end of the intervention the post-test revealed that the students surpassed the goal and scored on level 31.2, further reinforcing this strategy (Young & Rasinski, 2009). Reader's theatre is an engaging and differentiated strategy which can improve a student's fluency and therefore increase their reading rate, accuracy, expressive reading, and comprehension (Bellinger, 2011; Mraz et al., 2013). The study conducted by Parker (2016) agrees with the findings of Bellinger, (2011) but also reports improvements in reading comprehension which demonstrated the comprehensiveness of this intervention. The results of the study indicate that students who engaged in the

Reader's Theater intervention improved their fluency skills, which is evident by their DIBELS scores. One student's scores improved from 67% to 92%, and their reading rate time decreased by twenty-six seconds. The other student improved their score by 1% which was from 97% to 98% and decreased their reading rate by one minute and fifty seconds, but was also able to read more smoothly than at the beginning of the study. Added improvements which were reported were advances made with voice inflection, improved fluency. The strategy proved to be engaging and increased students' social involvement (Bellinger, 2011).

The intervention of Reader's Theater provides the students with an opportunity to gain meaning of the text in an alternative but effective manner (Parker, 2016). Also concurring with the results of the Reader's Theater intervention strategy are Mraz et al. (2013). The study they conducted explains the gains which the students in this study made over a six week period, which evaluated the areas of word recognition accuracy, automaticity, and prosody. Word recognition accuracy was measured by the number of words which were read correctly, automaticity was measured by the students' reading rate, and prosody was measured using a multidimensional fluency four point scale. Before the intervention was implemented the students scored 55WCPM and 6.7 errors and after the intervention the students scored 93 WCPM and 1.2 errors which demonstrated the success of this intervention (Mraz et al., 2013).

Reading books and literature are methods which have been relied upon for the acquisition of various reading skills. Text can be multidimensional which presents opportunities for students to experience reading in different forms. Scaffolding or combining these forms can be beneficial for teaching and learning in the area of reading. Combining specific text and performance is an option which includes speeches, songs, scripts, and poetry (Rasinski, 2010). These forms of text which can be presented orally and showcase a student's oral and prosodic reading skills (Rasinski et al., 2016). Keeping this in mind with all students including general education students, struggling readers, ESOL students, and students with disabilities can improve their reading fluency skills. Instructional materials must be provided at the student's independent/instructional reading level (Rasinski, 2010; Rasinski et al., 2016). Informational text can be adapted into a format suitable for Reader's Theater, however this can be less engaging than selecting a script which will pique the interest of struggling readers. (Rasinski et al., 2016). Texts which are adapted into dialogue are an alternative to locating a script which fits the needs and academic levels of the students. Readers's Theater allows students to form meaning of the text using interactions with other students and the audience (Young & Nageldinger, 2014). Examples of these types of texts are scripts, speeches, monologues, and presentations. Specifically, scripts might not come from existing text, students can create their own scripts which can be used in the performance of literature (Young & Nageldinger, 2014).

## **Engaging Students With Reader's Theater and Their Perspectives**

Because entertaining an audience is a motivating factor rehearsal and locating an audience is imperative. Fortunately, there are many sources for an audience. You can invite parents, administrators, other classes, or other school staff. If audiences are scarce, the students can always perform for their peers, but involving parents, faculty and other students can increase students' confidence and give added meaning and purpose to their performance and hard work (Bellinger, 2011; Young & Nageldinger, 2014). After analyzing interviews of the students and their experiences with Reader's Theater, it was reported that students displayed and expressed their acceptance of the strategy, enjoyment of participating in this strategy, and the extended social and academic benefits they experienced. Students also reported that the repeated reading was challenging but beneficial (Vasinda & McLeod, 2011).

## Teacher's Perspectives

Reader's Theater allows students an opportunity to read with expression which is an essential skill in proficient reading. This strategy is comprehensive in that it connects with the content and is consistent with the natural course of the class day. Teachers and students both noted that reading with expression was important and necessary with Readers Theatre and that the repeated practice helped them to improve expressive reading (Vasinda & McLeod, 2011). The live audience performance component to this intervention which can also serve as a repeated reading method (Rasinski et al., 2016; Smith, 2011). Teachers found that Readers Theatre fit well into the rhythm of the classroom, and they also appreciated the connection that the Readers Theatre texts made to the content standards (Vasinda & McLeod, 2011).

## Extensions

Fluency in reading can be found in many forms and settings and can evolve with the needs of the students and the educational environment. Utilizing the skills learned with the intervention of Reader's Theater students can extend and incorporate their abilities into poetry and practice with rhyming skills (Rasinski et al., & Nichols, 2016). During the performances students can also add props to make learning more engaging. As a result students experienced increase reading rate and oral reading skills (Bellinger, 2011). Another extension of Reader's Theater can be explored using technology. Computers and mobile devices have recording and editing capabilities. The performances, individual repeated reading, choral reading, speeches, monologues, and rehearsals can be recorded and shared with parents or uploaded to other websites where peers and other professionals can view them (Vasinda & McLeod, 2011).

## Method of Implementing Reader's Theater and Specific

Learning through performance can augment the learning of reading skills (Young & Nageldinger, 2014). To demonstrate this theory Young and Nageldinger (2014) conducted a study which consisted of a five-day format over the timeframe of a week.

Day 1 – teacher models appropriate and fluent reading skills by reading all the engaging scripts students can choose from. Next, to gain understanding of the script and to select which part they would like to play, the students read the script themselves.

Day 2- the students highlight their parts and study unknown words and the correct pronunciation.

Day 3- Practice reading with fluency and prosody, using appropriate expressions in their voices when the text calls for it and therefore demonstrating their oral reading and reading skills in conjunction with each other.

Day 4- Practice scripts and performance which is a form of repeated reading as added support.

Day 5- "Big Premier" simultaneously students will present an engaging performance where they will demonstrate their ability to read with fluency and how this skill can be adapted into reading text material with fluency. (Young & Nageldinger, 2014). As a result students are engaged and have the opportunity to learn fluency skills utilizing an alternative method of acquisition.

Another study which was conducted by Vasinda and McLeod (2011) over 10 weeks, spanned from October 2007 through January 2008. This study included 35 struggling readers in the second and third graders which were able to comprehend first-grade level text. The study included repeated reading, recording, podcasting, and

listening to their own voice recordings. Although, evaluating students as individuals demonstrated learning gains which ranged from mid-kindergarten to fifth-grade comprehension levels (Vasinda & McLeod, 2011). Groups consisted of four to eight students and the groups were determined by the number of parts of the selected play. This strategy was structured in two ways, one which was whole group using only one play and small groups in which a variety of scripts were selected. In this study the strategy was incorporated into the regular classroom schedule for a ten to fifteen minute block of time (Vasinda & McLeod, 2011). As a result the data specifically stated that, after the 10 week intervention the grade-level equivalency gain for the struggling readers as a group was 1.13 years. The individual gains spanned from one semester's growth to three years' growth as measured by the DRA and CRI (Vasinda & McLeod, 2011). Similarly, in a study conducted by Caldwell et al. (2006) the students demonstrated improvements with reading fluency due to the intervention strategy of Reader's Theater. The data were collected over a six week timeframe and indicated that the students scored higher during the intervention period compared to the last two years. The pre-test indicated the largest gain made was 69 WCPM and the smallest gain was 21 WCPM further supporting this strategy as an effective intervention to improve students' reading fluency (Caldwell et al. 2006).

In another study, researchers also explore Reader's Theater as an oral reading fluency intervention. This strategy was implemented in the classroom setting with nineteen third graders who were struggling readers. Of these nineteen students nine were girls and ten were boys. These students were in the lower socioeconomic status category. 85% of the school's population utilizes free or reduced lunch program. In order to determine what the starting reading level should be they utilized the pretest data, the STAR Reading Test and the districts quarterly reading assessment. The classroom teacher chose six Readers Theatre scripts that were on the students' instructional level and which were already created and formulated. The program and scripts were read daily during the first 30 minutes of the two hour literacy session (Mraz et al, 2013). At the end of the six week intervention, pre-test results were compared to post-test results in which word recognition accuracy was measured by the number of words read correctly, automaticity was measured by reading rate, prosody was measured using the Multidimensional Fluency Scale (MFS). The MFS utilizes a rubric to rate four aspects of prosody on a 4-point scale, with 1 identifying poor performance and 4 indicating good performance. The gains students made as a result of the Reader's Theater intervention were due to the instrumental components of modeling, echo reading, buddy reading, choral reading, and repeated reading (Mraz et al, 2013).

A separate study by Caluris (2006) on Reader's Theater as an intervention to address fluency in reading, consisted of 35 third graders in a culturally diverse community. The groups were structured in groups of five to six students. To implement this study the teacher first began with a modeling strategy where she read the script to the students and practiced repeated or rereading throughout the process. Students recorded themselves and viewed the recording after to evaluate their own performances and generate feedback. Similarly as found in other research discussed in this review, the students' improved abilities in fluency allowed students to focus on reading comprehension skills (Caluris, 2006). As a result of this study the students improved their reading rate, accuracy in word recognition, expression, and attitude (Caluris, 2006).

Exploring the social contexts that children are exposed to demonstrates how this factor has a meaningful impact on their experiences in learning and literacy, which is the focus of this study by Cotter (Cotter, 2012). This body of research included sixteen students in the second grade over the span of nine months. Initial assessment included the data obtained from the benchmark assessment. A component to this assessment includes a timed reading which is read aloud to the teacher to assess how many words the student can read in a minute. For additional assessment, data were also collected utilizing field notes, observations, and anecdotal notes. This intervention consisted of small group and whole group implementation. As students progressed

with their practice and rereading, their reading fluency increased and they were reading on the Lexile levels consistent with the requirements for the second grade (Cotter, 2012) indicating that the students are fluently reading on grade level.

In a study by Smith (2011) acquiring the baseline data needed for the research, the pre assessment and post assessment was structured using DIBELS assessment also Motivation to Read Profile (MRP), and ERAS was administered before and after the study to measure attitudes towards reading. The targeted group of students consisted of eighty-five second graders. This study measured fluency, motivation, and reading attitude. Implementation of the Reader's Theater strategy utilized the existing textbooks and the necessary modifications were made in order to adapt the text into the Reader's Theater format. This intervention consisted of a five step process which included choosing the book, read the story, build a script from the story, practice and refine the performance, and lastly perform for an audience. Specifically, the data indicates that the students who participated in the Reader's Theater intervention scored on the DIBELS assessment pre-test average score was 50.0 and the average post-test score was 78.3; on the MRP they scored 31.8 on the pre-test and 32.3 on the post-test; and ERAS scored 20.4 on the pre-test and 20.4 on the post-test. In comparison in the case of the students who participated in the repeated reading strategy on the DIBELS assessment on the pre-test the had an average score of 47.7 and post-test score of 79.1; on the MPR the pre-test score was 31.0 and post-test was 32.5; and in the ERAS the pre-test score was 23.9 and the post-test score was 22.3. This data illustrates how students made improvements with this strategy in the area of fluency and attitudes towards reading, which supports that Reader's Theater demonstrated a greater gain than repeated reading (Smith, 2011).

## Conclusion

Fluency is an essential component in the acquisition of proficient reading skills. Without adequate fluency in reading students may have a difficult time learning other skills such as reading comprehension and social skills as illustrated by the literature which is part of this review. These deficiencies can exist as a result of limited exposure to literacy due to their sociocultural situations. Also discovered after the review of the various studies, is the effectiveness of Reader's Theater as a reading fluency intervention and its success. This strategy is engaging, flexible, adaptable, enjoyable, comprehensive, and challenging. Students of all abilities can partake in these types of activities and practice various skills while participating in the lesson which applies the concept of scaffolding. Finding engaging alternatives for fluency in reading can make the difference in a student's education and Reader's Theater is a comprehensive support which students will benefit from and will continue to make learning gains as a result of the skills they learn during the process.

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## About the Author

Melissa Bedasie-DeClaire is an educator in the public school system of Broward County, Florida, specializing in reading. Growing up with her mother Tess and younger siblings Tiffany, Nicholas, and Melanie allowed her to teach others new skills at a young age and share learning experiences with them. At the start of her journey into the realm of education, she began teaching science programs to underprivileged students in Broward County with the Mad Science organization. These programs were offered to organizations like the Hispanic Unity Organization. These experiences helped her to solidify her commitment to education. Her experience as a paraprofessional in the public school system allowed her to work with students with disabilities, which opened the door for new career opportunities and a new purpose. She earned a Bachelor's Degree in Special Education from Broward College, in which she graduated with honors. Melissa's passion for education did not end there. Next, the field of education has steered her to her newest pursuit of a Master's Degree, in Special Education, at Florida International University. These accomplishments were driven by her desire to make a difference in the lives of her two sons Kaleb and Raylan, which could not be realized without the boundless support of her husband Derek. Her current research is on the positive impact reader's theater has on the reading fluency of students with disabilities.

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## **Book Review: Leadership: Key Competencies for Whole-system Change (How Education Leaders Can Develop Creative, Productive School Cultures)**

**Melissa Bedasie-DeClaire**  
**Florida International University**

The author Lyle Kirtman, he is an experienced executive coach in which he was employed by the Massachusetts Municipal Association, the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the governor's office as the Manager of Boston's Public Schools.

Throughout his professional career, author Michael Fullan has influences which have an international reach. His professional focuses were consultation, educational reform, and change. He was an honored individual for his ability to bring innovative ideas to world. For these impressive accomplishments he was awarded the Order of Canada, which is considered a high honor. Along with these successes his is also an established author of several impacting books.

**Purpose** of this book is to provide a tool for leaders in education regardless of the specific stage you are in. Also, this book examines shared experiences and practices of many different educational leaders. Throughout this book the authors explore the issues related to the staggering multitude of initiatives and new practices, but detail simple and impacting methodologies. More is not always better.

**Thesis** of this book is that with simplicity, diversity, risks, and organization, a comprehensive plan to improve student performance and develop a knowledgeable team will improve the educational system as a whole no matter the size of the specific population.

In the current global society where educators and leaders are tasked with the meaningful job of providing a diversified education for all students, it can be a grueling expedition to find what works best. The authors Lyle Kirtman and Michael Fullan bring a clarified and filtered perspective to leadership and what it means to have an effective team. These strategies can be adapted to a variety of professional facets, but this review will focus on the educational capacities. Kirtman and Fullan introduce their research of these important issues by explaining in their first chapter of the book, how sometimes the roles which high performing leaders play can be lonely. These types of leaders are out there, "These prisoners are everywhere in the United States and around the world challenging the status quo in education but often feeling alone in their pursuit" (pp1 and 2). It is important to consider that there are others who are experiencing the same challenges and collaboration with other professionals can bring new ideas and solutions to the table. Each system no matter the setting, will exhibit strengths and weaknesses, which need to be identified and collaboratively assessed in order to find the right solutions. Cultivating new and effective leaders is a strategy which can be utilized to accomplish many of the school goals and build a lasting learning community.

Clear thinking results in clear goals and clear solutions. When there is transparency in the plan and methodologies, then there is less confusion in the process. The moral purpose must be a transparent component, as this will be the driving force of the changes which are needed for positive progress. Change must include reculturing, innovativeness over innovation, and consider that there is always a learning curve (Fullan,

2001). On a more educational component which is complex is the political forum. Political leaders and state representatives create the mandates which schools must strictly abide by. Unfortunately, politicians may make changes in accordance with their own agendas in order to appear as though they are impacting society and education. They could benefit from making policies simpler, rather than increasingly complex. Leaders and educators all over the world are looking for an easier way to implement effective practices. Sometimes even researchers may complicate the process with their analysis and their perspectives on the educational topics.

When change is required, the leaders of the school will select an evidenced based practice or initiative which is most fitting for the deficit area. This can be the beginning of the confusion or the beginning of clarity. Some of the appropriate questions to ask are, is this the most fitting initiative, is the timing suitable, and is the intensity appropriate (pp4). All the questions must be addressed collaboratively and meaningfully with the moral purpose always in mind. The moral purpose will bring positive change to the plan; it includes comprehending change, establishing relationships, and valuing ideas that work (Fullan, 2001). Per the research from this book, the authors describe experiences from other leaders such as, leader Mary Ann, which describes a situation where she broke down the need to the development of vocabulary skills and writing in all subjects. This concentration produced success in all subject areas (M.A. Jackman, personal communication, July 18, 2014). In order to achieve a level of success similar to Mary Ann's, an overload in initiatives is not the solution. More is not better. Too many initiatives will provoke waves of confusion that will take just as much time to undo. Successful leaders may eliminate distractions to assist with focusing on the important issues and respect the commitment of others and the work they produce, and consider meaningful and manageable goals on a day-to-day perspective. As education is a current global concern, this brings even more perspectives from different areas and circumstances. These aspects drive policies and legislation. Getting through the red tape slows the process of producing effective educational experiences and curriculum to all students equally.

Another concept educational leaders must consider, is whole system change. This is facilitated using the entire team, rather than compartmentalizing change. But it is important to also recognize the pitfalls or the potential negative aspects. Fullan (2011) has detailed four features that guide negative changes. "1- negative accountability 2- individualistic strategies 3- technology and 4- ad hoc policies" ( pp7). To combat these negative features, Fullan has also described how to develop core competencies for continuous improvement – organizing principle, "drive for cultural change needed to be successful" (pp7). Along with the five areas for success which are "1-minimal politics, 2-minimal confusion, 3- high morale, 4- high productivity, 5- low turnover of talented leaders" (pp8). With these great skills to consider and the acknowledgment of the negative possibilities, together with the team you all can connect with other leaders and reach into the future.

Positive plans to move your school into the future, these researchers have found that good leaders will have a clear and concise plan to bring improvements to their existing educational framework. This book describes a system which includes "Seven Leadership Competencies" which can be found throughout the contents of chapter two. Kirtman's (2014) seven competencies are "1-challenges the status quo, 2- builds trust through clear communications and expectations, 3- creates a commonly owned plan for success, 4-focuses on team over self, 5-has a high sense of urgency for change and sustainable results in improving student achievement, 6- has a commitment to continuous improvement for self and organization, 7-builds external networks and partnerships" (pp12). This book illustrates these steps in detail and their functionality. The first competency deals with the barriers which are connected with maintaining the status quo. Good leaders may not put compliance at the top of the list but this is not say that they would break any laws in doing so. The status quo or

personal motivations come in as a second to the main goal of focusing on results. Learning has to play a leading role in the mission to, educate all students and build a strong administrative framework. In doing this, the principal will have to work hard to determine which team members will take administrative roles, which is a form of delegation. In this competency the authors explain that it would be beneficial to decrease the policies which are counterproductive to progress. Risk taking is another factor to consider. The only way to determine if a strategy will work is to try it. When a leader/principal needs guidance they may seek advice from their supervisor, which serves as a sounding board and modifications to the strategy can be made as a result of the collaboration. Trends are often times the topic of conversation and being innovative will be a key in moving into the future of education.

A good leader will contest decisions made with district and school mandates when necessary. Traditionally, people do not want to take risks associated with change. With changes, come risks that people are not usually willing to take. The sacrifice of the risk is sometimes perceived as too great to take. However, there is an abundance of effort geared towards making situations comfortable and supportive. Sometimes it can be an over load with this focus. A good leader will not make changes straight away on the first day. It is important to enter into the culture of the school and listen as a primary objective. However, the status quo must be addressed early in the process. Employees must feel open and free to be honest without being criticized. Each member of the team must feel valuable to the principal. Also, a good leader will move forward with change and pull back to check for understanding just as we would with all students. The second competency, deals with constructing an honest relationship utilizing transparent communications and expectations (pp19). Some of the features which are essential to comprehend are conflict resolution, methods of communication, and setting clear expectations. These components can lighten the tension on the playing field and promote transparency with the moral purpose in mind. The third competency is also established with collaboration as a primary component. Again, here in this competency, simplicity is the theme. The authors explain that “fragmentation from overly complex plans creates, extra, unnecessary work that ties up the same people” (pp22). These types of tasks include meetings, revising the endless pile of documents, and exploring various strategies. It is hard to find the time to make changes when there are more tasks than time in the work day. Complexity is not always the best solution, simplicity may make the plan easier to undertake. The fourth competency connects capacity building and teamwork. With this strategy, a principal must seek out the best employee options for positions in their school. It is important not to settle on who you make a team member of this comprehensive and knowledgeable team. According to Fullan (2001), he explains that many teams do not place the appropriate value on training and creating a knowledgeable team, which can create more confusion and this will affect the results of how successful plan is. When changes are made with hiring staff members, these new teammates will change the existing structure but must be incorporated in order for the team to run smoothly. The fifth competency reflects the importance of making these changes in a timely manner with the goal of improving student performance. Again, scaffolding on the idea of simplicity, this competency relies on making things easy to implement and understand. This removes confusion and misunderstandings in the process. Data is essential in moving forward with selecting the appropriate measures to take, in order to accomplish educational goals to improve students’ performance. The sixth competency involves a continuum of constant improvement of self-reflection, reflection of current practices, accountability, and organization. When something doesn’t work, it is important to change it. Leaders will need guidance from other leaders or supervisors in order to determine what changes will be effective, manageable, and meaningful. Assessment and evaluation of current practices will be needed as well. Otherwise, the school may be implementing an ineffective initiative and wasting valuable time. Competency 7 is

another competency about collaboration. Collaboration with community members and utilizing resources outside of the school system can improve results in student performance. Learning occurs everywhere and planning for learning comes from outside sources just as much as internal sources. Although, adhering to the competencies in order is not a requirement, all the competencies are needed in order to have a successful, simple, and comprehensive plan. All the parts of competencies contribute to a successful plan. This ideal allows all individuals to remain focused on the moral purpose and improving student learning as the main goals. Collaboration includes the input of everyone and everyone's input is valuable.

Effective plans will be determined by evaluating and assessing them in a timely manner and utilizing an easy to understand methodology. The data has to be collected and used in the most effective manners, which means that the same data can be used in a variety of facets or departments. This information is vital for the developing the most appropriate educational frameworks for students, but it is also utilized to assess and evaluate a school as a whole. Data driven change is needed but the data sometimes this information doesn't hold the necessary value when it drives the wrong purpose. Accountability is where teachers may find challenges, due to the data reflecting on their abilities to teach. With determining who is accountable and why inconsistencies are occurring, the modifications made sometimes complicate matters more than needed. Finding time to make all these changes and fulfill the components in the plan requires a great deal of time management and planning. A school has the ability to run similar to a business when the responsibilities and day-to-day requirements are concerned. "A manager must set up systems for reporting, monitoring results, filing documents, and other operational tasks required to run and maintain a business" (pp60). Self-management will be a strong characteristic which can bring all these features together to create a motivational system with an effective moral purpose. Innovative learning environments which are fun and productive

The moral purpose must always be at the forefront of each mission at hand in order to stay on course. This is the only way you can determine if the strategies you have selected are effective. Adhering to only part of the plan will not give you true results and is an injustice to the plan, the teachers, and all students. With a cohesive plan, many different things happen which can create a productive and effective learning environment. This is a desirable quality for employees. When leaders are committed to the moral purpose and the team, the team is more likely to contribute to a positive working environment; the authors explain that, "Most talented people are looking for a reason to stay and bring their friends" (pp69), which will ultimately increase productivity. Other features which are important to consider, are making changes whenever and wherever necessary. Success can be achieved in any setting, rural, urban and in between. Work from the ground up.

Leaders have an important job of maintaining a mutual culture to accommodate all professionals and students. Problems cannot be left for others to find solutions for. Through the change process however things turn out it is important for the principal to remain constant through thick and through thin. Educational frameworks must be open to consider all opinions, perspectives, and ideas. Team members must be innovative and welcoming to allow everyone to feel comfortable to ask questions and take risks, but always including measurable goals. Also making connections within the local community can bring a well-rounded experience to the table for leaders, teachers, and students. Community members and organizations can provide a great deal of opportunities and assistance that can bring your team and school into a positive future. Creating education networks to tackle the big issues no matter if it is on a small scale or large. Lastly, a successful educational environment in a global society must be accepting of change and feedback (negative and positive) to make pathways of improvement.

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## About the Author

Melissa Bedasie-DeClaire is an educator in the public school system of Broward County, Florida, specializing in reading. Growing up with her mother Tess and younger siblings Tiffany, Nicholas, and Melanie allowed her to teach others new skills at a young age and share learning experiences with them. At the start of her journey into the realm of education, she began teaching science programs to underprivileged students in Broward County with the Mad Science organization. These programs were offered to organizations like the Hispanic Unity Organization. These experiences helped her to solidify her commitment to education. Her experience as a paraprofessional in the public school system allowed her to work with students with disabilities, which opened the door for new career opportunities and a new purpose. She earned a Bachelor's Degree in Special Education from Broward College, in which she graduated with honors. Melissa's passion for education did not end there. Next, the field of education has steered her to her newest pursuit of a Master's Degree, in Special Education, at Florida International University. These accomplishments were driven by her desire to make a difference in the lives of her two sons Kaleb and Raylan, which could not be realized without the boundless support of her husband Derek. Her current research is on the positive impact reader's theater has on the reading fluency of students with disabilities.

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# Information Brief: Everett Public Schools Preferred Provider School Counseling Model: Cost Savings with Increased Service to Students and Families

**Michael R. Baldassarre, Ed.D.**

## Setting the Stage

Whether pursuant to an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or not, many students require and benefit from school-based mental health counseling services. Students in need who receive social-emotional and mental health support improve both behaviorally and academically. On a larger scale, these programs serve to decrease school suspensions and dropouts while improving school attendance rates.

While school based mental health counseling programs are implemented with the best intentions for the well being of students, services are often delayed or out-of-reach for many. The special education process calls upon school officials to retrieve parental consent for evaluation; then evaluate; present findings in a scheduled IEP team meeting; and await parental consent for a proposed IEP service to be implemented. By regulation, this process can take up to 45 school days.

Since school-aged children and young adults spend the majority of their time in school and in school-sponsored activities, the time available for mental health services in clinics is limited to evenings and weekends. Because clinicians are often unavailable at these times, waiting lists become lengthy with many students waiting more than one month to be seen.

In response to the aforementioned, the Everett Public Schools partnered with Eliot Community Human Services in the creation of the *Preferred Provider Model*. In just one school year, this program quadrupled the number of students receiving mental health counseling in school; while, at the same time, reduced the cost of services to the district by more than 50%.

## What is the Preferred Provider Model?

The Preferred Provider Model makes mental health counseling available and accessible in school via a community based human services agency. The human services agency appoints licensed clinicians who are placed full-time in the public schools. Counseling sessions are billed to Mass Health and other student health insurance plans, and only minimally funded through the local school budget.

## Case Study: Shelly

Shelly is a 17-year-old female who is in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade at Everett High School. She enjoys listening to music, spending time with her boyfriend, and participates in competitive cheerleading. She also works part time after school and is on track for a supervisor position at her part-time job. Last quarter, Shelly received all A's in her classes and has a goal to attend college to pursue a career in forensics and criminal justice. She is entertaining, caring, intelligent, and a strong advocate for herself.

Shelly began working with a Preferred Provider Clinician at the start of the 2016-2017 school year as a 10<sup>th</sup> grader. At the start of treatment, Shelly had been removed from her home and placed with her father because of aggression towards her grandmother. Before the start of the school year, Shelly had physically

assaulted her grandmother and spent a brief time in the custody of the Department of Youth Services (DYS). Shelly reported that from a young age she had met with therapists intermittently for the physical abuse she sustained under the care of her mother.

Shelly also reported a long history of emotional abuse from her grandmother as well. She noted a history of suicidal ideation, self-injurious behaviors, and was hospitalized in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade for attempting to overdose on Advil. Shelly had a limited knowledge of the impact of the trauma she had suffered at that time and struggled with low frustration tolerance, agitation, and difficulties managing her affect and modulating her behavior. Academically, Shelly was struggling to pass her classes and frequently got into verbal and sometimes physical altercations in school. Shelly met with her guidance counselor in school and requested to meet with a Preferred Provider Clinician as she was aware that her difficulties in managing her anger were negatively impacting her functioning. Shelly was motivated to make a change.

Upon intake, her clinician was impressed with Shelly's ability to be open and honest with her behavioral and mental health concerns. Shelly advocated for weekly therapy in school, as she historically had been unable to consistently meet with clinicians, over transportation concerns and lack of motivation. She also requested referrals to be made for a Therapeutic Mentor (TM) and In Home Therapy (IHT). Once her clinician explained the Intensive Care Coordination (ICC) service to Shelly, she was motivated to participate in this as well. These services were available through the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI). By the end of September 2016, Shelly and her mother were working with an ICC who helped the family connect with a TM and an IHT provider with an outside agency. Meeting with all providers weekly, she and her mother came together with the team once a month for care planning to coordinate care and to track progress on therapeutic goals.

Over the last year and a half, Shelly was able to graduate from Intensive Care Coordination and Therapeutic Mentoring services, and will soon be graduating from In Home Therapy as well. She continues to meet with the Preferred Provider Clinician on a biweekly basis in school for ongoing support. Shelly has shown significant improvement in her ability to manage her affect and modulate her behavior. Her self-esteem has improved, and she is incredibly self-aware and emotionally intelligent. She has learned the ways in which her past experiences with physical and emotional abuse have impacted her thoughts, feelings, and behaviors and has developed a number of helpful coping and self-regulation skills. Shelly is able to transfer the skills she learned in therapy to multiple settings in order to be more successful at home, work and school. She attends school daily and has no behavioral concerns with peers or adults in the building.

Currently, Shelly maintains a 3.7 GPA, which is a drastic improvement from her GPA of 1.4 last school year. Shelly reports no major struggles with symptoms related to depression, and no longer endorses passive suicidal ideation or struggles with thoughts of self-injurious behaviors. She has also worked very hard with her IHT clinician in family therapy to decrease arguments and fighting with her mother in the home and has no concerns with her grandmother at this time as well. Shelly is working on an application for the Gateway to College Program, as she hopes to earn college credit and raise her GPA to improve her chances of getting into a four-year school. Shelly has received a great deal of support and has dedicated just as much effort and hard work to change her life's path. Shelly truly has a bright future ahead of her, and her Preferred Provider Clinician is confident that she will utilize her experiences in life and in treatment to make a positive impact on the lives of others.

As a student who would not qualify for special education services, Shelly would have been a student in need of ongoing clinical services and on a waiting list at a clinic in Everett. It is questionable whether or not she would ever have made it to an appointment. Further, access to CBHI services would have been less likely if she were to receive only triage support in school. This is one example of how the Preferred Provider Model is making a difference in the lives of children and young adults in the Everett Public Schools.

## **How do Children and Families Access the Preferred Provider Model?**

Students and parents are connected with clinicians by school staff often as a part of a team process or in response to an untoward disciplinary, social-emotional or other situation. When parents consent for services, consent is also provided for Preferred Provider Clinicians to communicate with school staff and release and receive information pertinent to the student's success in school.

## **Are Counseling Services Provided in Student IEPs?**

No. The Preferred Provider model allows students to be seen in school more than or less than what is stated in an IEP service delivery grid. It also provides services via the CBHI such as therapeutic mentoring and family counseling during the days and hours that school is not in session. Counseling goals and objectives are developed with parents, students, and clinicians. A statement is added to the additional information section of the IEP to inform school staff that services are provided by clinicians from the local human services agency.

## **How is the Preferred Provider Model Funded?**

The largest portion of funding for the Preferred Provider Model comes from student health care plans. The human services agency directly bills insurance companies for services rendered to students. In cases where students have co-pays, no insurance, or insurance that does not cover mental health counseling, the district is billed an hourly rate. The district also pays an annual fee per clinician for work that cannot be billed to insurance, such as professional development and benefits packages.

## **How Have Services and the Budget Been Impacted in the Everett Public Schools?**

In Fiscal Year 2016, the Everett Public Schools paid \$1.1 million in salaries and benefits to 10.0 FTE school employee clinicians and 1.0 FTE Clinical Supervisor. In Fiscal Year 2016, the total number of students receiving counseling via the IEP was 101. The Everett Public Schools first implemented the Preferred Provider Model in September, 2016. In March of 2018, 12.0 FTE Preferred Provider clinicians are reported to serve 444 students at a total cost of \$360 thousand dollars for the fiscal year. The two-year savings of this model now exceeds \$1 million.

**A Comparison of Typical School Based Counseling Services  
and the Preferred Provider School Based Counseling Model**

<b>Typical School Based Counseling</b>	<b>Preferred Provider Model</b>
Some students receive only triage support with little to no follow up	Students who receive triage support are provided follow up in the form of referral for services through the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI), if necessary
Students referred for assessment wait up to 45 school days to receive regular services via the IEP	Students referred for assessment are assessed on the day of referral and receive services within 24 hours, if necessary
Students who receive services via the IEP are seen weekly until such time as the service is removed from the IEP, whether counseling is needed or not	Students receive services only as long as it is necessary and of benefit to the student
School employee clinicians participate in scheduled non-counseling related duties such as hall monitoring and lunch supervision pursuant to the collective bargaining agreement	Preferred Provider clinicians focus only on providing services to students with little to no interruption or interference due to school district collective bargaining
School employee clinicians have a limited understanding of and fewer connections to wrap-around and other services available in the community	Preferred Provider clinicians are employed by the organization that provides wrap around and other support services
School employee clinicians attend professional development workshops on days and hours that school is in session, thereby limiting access to students in need	Preferred Provider clinicians attend professional development workshops on days and hours that school is not in session
Counseling services are only available when school is in session	Counseling services are available after school hours, on weekends, and over school vacation
Local budget funds clinical services	Services are funded by Mass Health and other student health plans with only a portion of the cost paid by the local budget

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## About the Author

Dr. Baldassarre is a lifelong educator with more than twenty years of experience working with children, young adults, and families. Working in schools he has held the positions of Special Education Teacher, Principal, Director of Special Education, and Superintendent of Schools. He is one of only 36 professionally registered instructors (worldwide) of Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for Families (TCIF), Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for the Developmentally Disabled (TCIDD), and Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for Schools (TCIS) by Cornell University's Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research.

He holds a Bachelor of Science in Social Development from Buffalo State College; a Master of Education in Foundations of Education from Niagara University; a second Master of Education in Educational Administration from Niagara University; and a Doctoral Degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Massachusetts at Lowell.

Dr. Baldassarre currently serves the Everett Public Schools as Director of Special Education. With more than 1,200 students educated under the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA), he has devoted his service to improving outcomes for children and young adults by addressing their social and emotional needs in school. Because of his involvement in this endeavor, the Everett Public Schools now has more than 200 faculty and staff fully trained in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for Schools and more than 400 students receiving mental health services while school is in session.

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## Buzz from the Hub

All articles below can be accessed through the following links:

[www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-feb2018-issue2/](http://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-feb2018-issue2/)

### **How to Keep Students with Disabilities Safe in Lockdowns, Evacuations, and Other School Crises**

With lockdowns and evacuation drills becoming a regular occurrence in schools, students with disabilities are often faced with disruptions of routine, unrealistic behavior expectations, accessibility problems, and other challenges that may not have been addressed in the IEP to provide necessary supports. This article discusses how schools can include these students in their planning for unexpected events and how parents can make sure their children's needs are accounted for.

### **Bullying Laws: Your Child's Rights at School**

Being bullied at school or online can damage everything from children's self-confidence to their academics. Fortunately, they have legal protections that require schools to act when students are bullied. The article is also [available in Spanish](#).

### **Resource Collection on Positive Behavior Supports, Functional Behavioral Assessment, and School Discipline**

For many children with disabilities, an important ingredient for well-being are the positive behavior supports and interventions that can be provided at school and at home. This CPIR resource collection is compiled for Parent Centers by Parent Centers, with lots of information you can share with families and professionals.

### **Supporting vs. Enabling**

It's not always easy to figure out what counts as supportive and what is enabling when a child's mood, anxiety, distractability, and behavior vary from day to day. How do you know if you are being considerate of your child's difficulties or limiting his growth by taking on tasks he can do himself?

### **Risk and Prevention of Maltreatment of Children with Disabilities**

Children with disabilities are at least three times more likely to be abused or neglected than their peers without disabilities, and they are more likely to be seriously injured or harmed by maltreatment. This bulletin from the Child Welfare Information Gateway describes the problem, risk factors, assessment of children with disabilities for maltreatment, and strategies for prevention.

### **ED's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking**

To ensure the Department's "significant disproportionality" regulations effectively address this serious issue, the Department of Education is proposing to **postpone the compliance date by two years**, from July 1, 2018, to July 1, 2020. The Department also proposes to **postpone the date for including children ages 3 through 5 in the analysis** of significant disproportionality with respect to the identification of children as "children with disabilities" and as "children with a particular impairment" from July 1, 2020, to July 1, 2022. [\*\*Read the proposed new rule and see where to submit your public comments.\*\*](#)

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## Latest Employment Opportunities Posted on NASET

\* **Assistant Principal / BCBA** - We are currently seeking a qualified and enthusiastic Assistant Principal / BCBA for our school in Sherman Oaks. This is an exciting hybrid role that will work directly with our current Assistant Principal, as well as serve as the BCBA. To learn more - [Click here](#)

\* **Special Education Teacher** - Instruction demonstrates recognition of skill deficits and effective implementation of appropriate accommodations and supports to optimize student engagement. After thorough review of records, develop strong working knowledge of each student's learning challenges, from which IEP goals are formulated and appropriate instructional supports and materials are employed to facilitate progress. To learn more - [Click here](#)

\* **Early Intervention Teacher** - Requires graduation from a four-year college or university with a bachelors and/or master's degree in early childhood special education, early childhood education, child and family studies, early intervention, deaf education, visual impairments, special education K-12, elementary education or communication disorders and speech language pathology. To learn more - [Click here](#)

\* **Early Childhood Special Educator** - Sterling Medical has an opening for an Early Childhood Special Educator to work with children of American military families stationed at Okinawa, Japan. Position works in a home-based early intervention program, providing services to infants and toddlers of American military families stationed overseas. To learn more - [Click here](#)

\* **Full-Time/Tenure Track - EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION** - To teach courses in early childhood special education, core curriculum, and/or required for the CA Child Development Permit; teach face-to-face as well as online classes; maintain currency in the field of early intervention; knowledge of the Child Development Permit process; participate in the SMC Early Childhood Education Lab School with a focus on the early intervention assistant program. To learn more - [Click here](#)

\* **Special Education Teacher - Jewish Child & Family Services** (JCFS) provides vital, individualized, results-driven, therapeutic and supportive services for thousands of children, adults and families of all backgrounds each year. JCFS is currently seeking a Special Education Teacher to work with individuals and small groups of children (K - 12) with emotional and behavior disorders in a therapeutic special education classroom. The Therapeutic Day School is located in West Rogers Park, Chicago, IL. To Learn More - [Click here](#)

\* **Special Education Teacher - Various** - \$50,000/school year (185 days), summers off with year round pay and year round appreciation. Special Education Teachers needed in Arizona (Phoenix and surrounding cities). Needs are in the self-contained and resource settings serving students with emotional disabilities (ED), Autism (A), Severe/Profound (S/P), and Intellectual Disabilities (ID). STARS is the largest school contract agency in AZ. STARS is owned and operated by Occupational Therapists. You will be an employee and receive full benefits. To learn more - [Click here](#)

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