

Cover Letter SPRCC Application

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Personal Research Agenda

My primary research interests focus on the development and implementation of multi-tiered educational service delivery models based on response to intervention (RTI) logic. In particular, I am interested in studying these models with regard to students with or at-risk for developing emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD). This area of research involves three interrelated strands of inquiry: (1) development and validation of progress monitoring tools for social behavior (submitted a Goal 5 IES Grant), (2) determining the most effective and cost efficient interventions for each tier of support, and (3) transferring what we know works from scientific research to improve the social, emotional, and academic well being of students to real world educational settings (i.e., effectiveness research). I have published, or are under review, several articles that either discuss the application of RTI models for behavior or rigorously investigate interventions to be used within particular tiers of support. I have also co-authored a book with Jeffrey Sprague from the University of Oregon entitled *RTI and Behavior: A Guide to Integrating Behavioral and Academic Supports*.

Most recently, I have been interested in extending the notion of multiple tiers of support and RTI to restrictive educational settings (i.e., top of the triangle) for students with the most serious EBDs. Students with serious EBDs present substantial challenges to schools, teachers, parents, and peers. These challenges cut across disciplinary, instructional, and interpersonal domains and frequently create chaotic home, school, and classroom environments (Kauffman, 2005; Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2004). The social, emotional, and behavioral characteristics of students with EBD often overwhelm the capacity of schools to effectively accommodate their instructional and disciplinary needs, especially in general education settings. Consequently, more than any other group of special education students, students with EBD are placed into restrictive environments (US DOE, 2006).

I intend to conduct a programmatic line of research that challenges the negative stigma associated with restrictive educational settings by discussing and researching the use of a multi-tiered, RTI approach as a way of creating a continuum of intensified educational care that is used to match the

intensity of individualized services to student need, see Figure 1. Within this line of research, particular attention will be paid to the services that constitute the intensified universal, selected, and indicated supports within the restrictive setting, frequency of progress monitoring data collection and data-based decision-making, and treatment integrity. The outcomes of this research will hopefully be a model of service delivery for use in restrictive settings that will improve the social, emotional, and academic welfare of the most difficult-to-remediate students and, ultimately, integrate successfully a number of these students back into the general education environment.

I am currently in the process of writing an article describing the theoretical underpinnings, as well as the supports, assessment methods, and procedures that will constitute a multi-tiered, RTI based model for restrictive settings. I have also conducted a pilot study involving the implementation of the proposed model in three restrictive educational classrooms for students with serious EBD that is being written for publication. The results indicate that within four to five months of implementation approximately 10% of the students can be integrated back into the general education environment. For the remaining students, improvements in academic and behavioral outcomes were noted, with only 1 student out of a class of 12 needing Intensified Tier III supports consisting of cognitive behavior therapy. I am going to use these pilot data to write a federal grant in order to examine this model on a larger scale and with more rigorous methodology.

***References can be provided upon request

Efficacy of the TIERS-Model for Restrictive Educational Classrooms for Students with EBD

Students with serious emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) present substantial challenges to educators, parents, and peers. These challenges cut across disciplinary, instructional, and interpersonal domains and frequently create chaotic home, school, and classroom environments. The social, emotional, and behavioral characteristics of students with EBD often overwhelm the capacity of schools to effectively accommodate their instructional and disciplinary needs. Teachers and classroom aides of students with EBD are likely to suffer burn out and seek reassignment or leave their positions (Bibou-Nakou, Stogiannidou, & Kiosseoglou, 1999; Brownell, Smith, and McNellis, 1997). Consequently, more than any other group, students with EBD are placed and educated in restrictive educational classrooms or settings away from their peers (Stephens & Lakin, 1995).

The placement of students with EBD in restrictive educational settings is disconcerting considering the research showing the poor outcomes for these students. These outcomes include, but are not limited to, poor academic achievement, high rates of absenteeism, mental health problems, contact with the criminal court system, substance abuse, and adult unemployment (Elliot, Hamburg, & Williams, 1995; Kazdin, 1998; Lonigan, Elbert, & Johnson, 1998; Loeber & Farrington, 1998; Mattison & Forness, 1995; NTL-2, 2006; Sack et al., 1987). Also, reports published by the Office of Special Education Programs suggest that youth with EBD are at the greatest risk of dropping out of school, with over half of the students ages 14-years and older dropping out of school (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Criticisms of restrictive educational settings tend to focus on the general lack of improved outcomes for students (Skrtic, Sailor, & Gee, 1996; Stainback & Stainback, 1989). Even so, there are many recognized benefits that restrictive educational settings offer beyond full inclusion in general education settings, including preservation of the general education learning environment, smaller class size, extra layers of staff support, and teachers who are potentially better trained and prepared to meet the unique needs of these students (Kauffman & Wong, 1991; Meadows, Neel, Scott, & Parker, 1994). Thus, the author takes the view espoused by Kauffman, Bantz, & McCullough (2002) who argue that there is a place for restrictive educational settings and that with the right procedures and services restrictive educational environments can effectively address the educational needs of this difficult-to-remediate group of students.

The purpose of the current proposal is to validate a multi-tiered, response to intervention model (TIERS-Model) as a way of organizing and delivering services in restrictive educational environments for students with EBD. The *Tiers of Intensive and Educationally Responsive Services – Model* (TIERS-Model, see Figure 1) was developed to include evidence-based practices at the intensified universal (for

all students in classroom/setting), intensified selected (for some students in classroom/setting), and intensified indicated (for a few students in classroom/setting) levels of support. Using a randomized control design, the TIERS-Model will be compared to business-as-usual restrictive educational programs to determine whether it significantly improves student outcomes in social, behavioral, and academic domains. This proposal meets the requirements for an Institute for Educational Sciences **Goal Three Efficacy** project under the *Social Behavioral Outcomes to Support Learning*.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do students in restrictive educational classrooms with the TIERS-Model significantly improve compared to students in business-as-usual restrictive educational classrooms?
 - a. To what extent do the students' academic outcomes improve?
 - b. To what extent do the students' social behavior outcomes improve?
2. To what extent do teachers judge the TIERS-Model to be more acceptable, reasonable, and effective than teachers in the business-as-usual restrictive educational classrooms?
3. For students in the TIERS-Model condition, what is the distribution of students across the different layers of support (universal, selected, and indicated)?
4. How many students receiving the TIERS-Model improve such that the current placement is no longer the least restrictive environment?

Context and Participants

The design of the proposed project is a multi-site randomized control design. This study will occur across two sites to recruit enough restrictive educational classrooms for students with EBD, operate with sufficient statistical power and ensure the representativeness of the sample of classrooms and students. The unit of sample selection will be restrictive educational classrooms for students with serious EBD. Therefore, classrooms will be randomly assigned to the TIERS-Model or business-as-usual conditions. Restrictive educational classrooms are defined as classrooms on or outside public school premises that include students with serious emotional and behavioral problems who spend at least 75% of their school day in this setting.

Estimated Number of Participants

Since classrooms will be the unit of randomization and corresponding statistical analyses will need to take into account the multi-level nature of the data, I will recruit at-least 20 classrooms (10 at each site), assuming each class will have an average of 10 students per class. This means that there will be approximately 200 participants across 20 classrooms. A power analysis using the G*Power software revealed that to perform a two level (Level 1 students and Level 2 classes) hierarchical linear modeling analysis with 0.80 power to detect an moderate effect of 0.25 as significant at the 0.05 alpha level, 150

Level 1 units and 15 Level 2 units are needed. Therefore, my proposed sample selection will be adequate to operate with sufficient power when carrying out the statistical analyses of the data.

Estimated Budget

Source	Price Per Year	Sum
<i>Personnel</i>		
Principal Investigator	\$25,000 per year X 3 yrs	\$75,000
Co-PI	\$25,000 per year X 3 yrs	\$75,000
8 Graduate Research Assts		
Tuition	\$8,000 per year X 8 students X 3 yrs	\$192,000
Stipend	\$15,000 per year X 8 students X 3 yrs	\$360,000
Consultants		
EBD expert	\$5, 000 per year X 3 yrs	\$15,000
Statistician	\$5, 000 per year X 3 yrs	\$15,000
Incentives		
Stipend for participation	\$2,000 per class X 20 classes	\$40,000
Discretionary funds		
Assessments, computers	\$8,000 per year X 3 yrs	\$24,000
University indirect costs	30% of total	\$238,800
TOTAL		\$1,034,800

Advantages and Disadvantages of Collaborative Multi-Site Research

Advantages	Disadvantages
<u>Collaboration improves quality of work:</u> Two minds are better than one	<u>Poor Communication:</u> The right hand not talking to the left hand
<u>Representativeness of sample:</u> Increase the generalizability of the findings	<u>Diffusion of control:</u> One site could fail to hold up its end of the bargain
<u>Unexpected problems:</u> Salvage study from unexpected events with data from the other site	<u>Disparity in implementation:</u> Inconsistent implementation of program across sites
<u>Participant recruitment:</u> Multiple sites makes it easier to gather a sufficiently large sample	<u>Discrepant findings across sites:</u> Site mitigates the effectiveness of the program

Figure 1

