

Application Cover Page for  
2009 School Psychology Research Collaboration Conference

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## Personal Research Agenda

The rates of students exhibiting disruptive behavior continue to climb. This is no more apparent than in urban schools. In my work as a consultant conducting applied research in schools over the last five years, my focus has been in the area of prevention of disruptive behavior in urban schools. While all schools have challenges, urban schools contend with a host of variables that are unique to the urban setting. Community, family, and individual child factors all impact the daily functioning of schools. These factors coupled with systemic variables (e.g., high teacher turnover, many novice teachers) can make for a challenging learning environment. Bringing empirically supported practices for reducing disruptive behavior to urban schools should be of utmost importance. My research agenda aims to examine the factors that are crucial for adoption and high-fidelity implementation of empirically supported practices in urban schools to intervene with students displaying disruptive behavior.

My recent scholarly efforts in urban schools have investigated aspects of these issues at an individual child (Lannie & Martens, in press), classroom (Lannie & McCurdy, 2007), and nonclassroom levels (McCurdy, Lannie, & Barnabas, in press) in urban schools. In addition, my work on grant-funded projects has examined the retention efforts necessary for enhancing parent participation in parent management training in urban settings and the implementation of tiered systems approaches for behavior in urban schools. The common thread among these studies and professional work is the implementation of empirically supported interventions for reducing disruptive behavior (e.g., self-management, Good Behavior Game) in urban schools and the supports necessary for high-fidelity implementation.

Over the next 3-5 years, I plan to continue to examine interventions to prevent and reduce the occurrence of disruptive behavior in urban schools, with a focus on bridging school efforts

with family support. Accordingly, my proposed areas of research include interventions integrating school and home components for young school children at-risk for behavior disorders, and implementation of school-based parent training.

Specific to integrated home and school interventions, my research will investigate the type of adaptations of empirically supported interventions essential for high-fidelity implementation in urban schools, and the level and methods of support necessary for parent involvement in intervention planning and implementation. Young children who enter schools with established patterns of problem behavior are often on a trajectory for poor social and academic outcomes. To be most effective, early intervention for these students should involve school and home where interventions are complementary and implemented in conjunction. Gaining an understanding of the variables necessary for implementation of coordinated home and school interventions in urban schools will assist in bridging the research to practice gap.

My second area of research is school-based parent training. The specific research questions in this area will examine the minimum level of parent training to have an impact on children's behavior at home and school, and what alternative methods of training can be employed to achieve similar effects as with traditional approaches. Parent management training is a well-established intervention for addressing children exhibiting disruptive behavior. However, recruitment and retention for training can be a significant barrier for implementation in schools where personnel have limited time to engage in intensive recruitment and retention efforts. Identifying novel methods for disseminating parent management skills can provide parents with the information in an efficient and effective manner. Given the limited resources in schools but high need for some parents, identifying effective and efficient means to deliver the intervention is important.

## References

- Lannie, A. L. & Martens, B. K. (in press). Targeting performance dimensions in sequence according to the Instructional Hierarchy: Effects on children's math work within a self-monitoring program. *Journal of Behavioral Education*.
- Lannie, A. L. & McCurdy, B. L. (2007). Preventing disruptive behavior in the urban classroom: Effects of the Good Behavior Game on student and teacher behavior. *Education and Treatment of Children, 30*, 85-98.
- McCurdy, B. L., Lannie, A. L., & Barnabas, E. R. (in press). Reducing disruptive behavior in an urban school cafeteria: An extension of the Good Behavior Game. *Journal of School Psychology*.

## Abstract

Young school children exhibiting disruptive behavior are at-risk for negative social and academic outcomes. For these students living in urban areas, the risk factors are multiplied (Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2004). Early intervention is crucial to divert the path and teach critical skills for success. The purpose of the proposed research is to investigate the implementation of empirically support interventions to reduce disruptive behavior of students in urban schools, where systemic variables (e.g., high teacher turnover, many novice teachers) can be barriers to implementation. In addition, the proposed research will seek to engage parents in intervention planning and implementation to evaluate the degree of impact parent participation has on student's behavioral and academic functioning at school and home. Approximately 100 students enrolled in kindergarten through second grade will participate. Implementation will be carried out across three urban school districts in various locations of the United States. The proposed research will identify the modifications needed for high-fidelity of empirically supported interventions to reduce disruptive behavior in urban schools as well as the level and methods of support necessary for parent involvement in intervention planning and implementation.

## Proposal for a Collaborative Multi-site Research Program

Urban areas present with challenges that span community, family, school, and individual child factors and are associated with multiple risk factors (Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2004). For students exhibiting disruptive behavior in urban schools, these settings can exacerbate displays of antisocial behavior (McCurdy, Mannella, & Eldridge, 2003). Intervening early with these students and interrupting the pattern of disruptive behavior is paramount. Unfortunately, systemic variables (e.g., high teacher turnover, many novice teachers) that pervade urban schools are frequent barriers to successful early intervention.

As a service provider, schools are in a focal position given the access to students and their families, and availability of services. There are a number of school-based interventions found to be effective in reducing disruptive behavior (Hoagwood & Erwin, 1997; Rones & Hoagwood, 2000). However, intervening only at school will likely have limited impact on the student's functioning beyond the school day, particularly in urban settings. Involving parents in intervention planning and implementation is critical (Walker et al., 2004). Thus, implementation of interventions integrating home and school will be most effective in reducing disruptive behavior and promoting prosocial behavior.

In accordance with my research agenda, the proposed research program will investigate the implementation of empirically-supported interventions in urban schools as well as the methods of support necessary for parent involvement in intervention planning and implementation. The specific questions to be addressed through this research are:

1. What adaptations must be made to empirically supported interventions to fit the needs of urban schools and staff?

2. What methods of support (i.e., level of training, performance feedback) are necessary for high-fidelity implementation in urban schools?
3. What impact will these modified interventions have on the student's behavioral and academic functioning in school?
4. What type of support is necessary to actively involve parents in intervention planning and implementation?
5. What is the impact of parent participation in intervention planning and involvement on student's behavioral and academic functioning in school, and at home?

### *Context and Participants*

The proposed research will be implemented in three urban school districts across the United States. Distinctions will be made among the sites in terms of inner-city and urban, as differences have been attributed to these geographic regions (Noguera, 2003). Students in kindergarten through second grade who are exhibiting disruptive behavior will be identified for participation. Students will be identified via screening methods (e.g., Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders (SSBD); Walker & Severson, 1992). Approximately 100 students are estimated for participation.

### *Estimated Budget*

Category	Description	Cost
Personnel	3 Primary investigators at .50 FTE 3 Research assistants at 1.0 FTE	\$175,000
Travel	Travel to and from school sites, presentations at conferences	\$15,000
Supplies	Duplication costs, protocols, equipment (laptop)	\$10,000
Other Costs	Teacher training, teacher stipend	\$15,000
TOTAL		\$215,000

### *Advantages and Challenges*

A multi-site research project will offer numerous advantages. The first is access to a diverse population representing various geographic regions across the United States. Secondly, the unique context of these various sites will inform the modifications of empirically-supported interventions and broaden the methods to engage parents in intervention planning and implementation. Finally, the multiple research teams involved will bring rich knowledge to the project and novel approaches to working with school staff and parents. This pooled knowledge has the potential for a replicable approach with robust external validity.

While the advantages are many, implementing across multiple sites will indeed present challenges. Given the expectation that empirically-supported interventions will be adapted to fit the urban school context and parent need, applying these modifications consistently will be a challenge. Intervention modifications must be applied systematically and documented with agreed upon data decision rules to minimize possible uneven implementation. This will require a dedication to collaboration and consistent communication among the research teams at each site.

## References

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