



A randomized trial examining the effects of Conjoint Behavioral Consultation in rural schools: Student outcomes and the mediating role of the teacher–parent relationship☆

Susan M. Sheridan^{a,*}, Amanda L. Witte^a, Shannon R. Holmes^a, Michael J. Coutts^b, Amy L. Dent^c, Gina M. Kunz^a, ChaoRong Wu^a

^a Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, 216 Mabel Lee Hall, Lincoln, NE 68588, United States

^b Children's Hospital & Medical Center in Omaha, 8200 Dodge Street, Omaha, NE 68114, United States

^c Harvard University, William James Hall, 33 Kirkland St, Cambridge, MA 02138, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 1 March 2016

Received in revised form 10 September 2016

Accepted 7 December 2016

Available online xxxx

Keywords:

Family-school partnerships

Rural education

Conjoint Behavioral Consultation

Randomized controlled trial

Disruptive behaviors

Learning-related behaviors

ABSTRACT

The results of a large-scale randomized controlled trial of Conjoint Behavioral Consultation (CBC) on student outcomes and teacher–parent relationships in rural schools are presented. CBC is an indirect service delivery model that addresses concerns shared by teachers and parents about students. In the present study, the intervention was aimed at promoting positive school-related social-behavioral skills and strengthening teacher–parent relationships in rural schools. Participants were 267 students in grades K–3, their parents, and 152 teachers in 45 Midwest rural schools. Results revealed that, on average, improvement among students whose parents and teachers experienced CBC significantly outpaced that of control students in their teacher-reported school problems and observational measures of their inappropriate (off-task and motor activity) and appropriate (on-task and social interactions) classroom behavior. In addition, teacher responses indicated significantly different rates of improvement in their relationship with parents in favor of the CBC group. Finally, the teacher–parent relationship was found to partially mediate effects of CBC on several student outcomes. Unique contributions of this study, implications of findings for rural students, study limitations and suggestions for future research are discussed.

© 2016 Society for the Study of School Psychology. Published by Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Symptoms associated with behavioral and social–emotional challenges in our nation's youth are among the most commonly identified reasons for mental health referrals (Stephan & Connors, 2013). Left untreated, disorders associated with behavioral and social–emotional difficulties can profoundly influence academic achievement, social relationships, and outcomes later in life (Bradshaw, Schaeffer, Petras, & Jalongo, 2010). The presence of social–emotional and behavioral challenges, especially excesses in negative behavioral patterns, are related to poor academic performance (Lane, Barton-Arwood, Nelson, & Wehby, 2008; Reid, Gonzalez, Nordness, Trout, & Epstein, 2004), and predictive of later school drop-out, failure to attend college, and socioeconomic disparities during adulthood (McLeod & Kaiser, 2004). Taken together, the pervasive negative effects of behavior problems on

☆ The research reported here was supported by the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, through Grant R324A100115 to the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views of the Institute or the U.S. Department of Education.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: ssheridan2@unl.edu (S.M. Sheridan).

Action Editor: S. Andrew Garbacz

children's academic achievement appear to persist from early childhood through adolescence and beyond (Masten et al., 2005; Reinke, Herman, Petras, & Jalongo, 2008).

Conversely, behavioral and social-emotional competence in the early school years – reflected in sustained attention, self-regulatory skills, and prosocial responses – is predictive of academic success. These foundational skills enable young students to adaptively engage in academic environments and appropriately respond to teacher instruction; thus, they are widely considered precursors to achievement (DiPerna & Elliott, 2002; Kwon, Kim, & Sheridan, 2012). Based on laboratory tasks (McClelland et al., 2007) and teacher reports (McClelland & Morrison, 2003), learning behaviors contribute to a range of children's academic skills, including literacy and math, at the beginning of kindergarten (McClelland & Morrison, 2003).

1. The importance of context

Children's behavioral, social-emotional, and academic skills are strongly influenced by *context*. Academic and social-emotional skills are the cumulative product of experiences within multiple overlapping ecologies, including communities (Miller & Votruba-Drzal, 2013), schools (Connor et al., 2014; Ponitz, Rimm-Kaufman, Grimm, & Curby, 2009), homes (Baker, Mackler, Sonnenschein, & Serpell, 2001; Dearing, McCartney, Weiss, Kreider, & Simpkins, 2004), and interactions among them (Barbarin, Downer, Odom, & Head, 2010; Crosnoe, Leventhal, Wirth, Pierce, Pianta et al., 2010). Whereas the direct effects of school and home environments on learning and behavior are often recognized, less empirical attention has been afforded to the role of geographic and community contexts on student outcomes. However, community context clearly contributes to differential student experiences and social-behavioral outcomes. In a recent study of a large, nationally representative sample, Sheridan, Koziol, Clarke, Rispoli, and Coutts (2014) found that rural children experienced greater difficulties with externalizing behaviors than children in cities and towns. Findings such as these are increasingly urgent given that one-third of U.S. schools are located in rural communities and 20% of our nation's children – nearly 10 million – are educated in rural schools (Johnson, Showalter, Klein, & Lester, 2014).

By definition, rural communities are small and geographically isolated, have small population bases, and experience limited revenue, which limits availability of and access to specialized services and ongoing support (Fortney, Owen, & Clothier, 1999; Monk, 2007). Lack of anonymity and trust (Hartley, Korsen, Bird, & Agger, 1998; Owens, Richerson, Murphy, Jagelewski, & Rossi, 2007) along with fear of disclosure and stigmatization (Susman, Crabtree, & Essink, 1995) have been identified as psychological barriers within rural communities, leading to under-identification of problems and failure to seek help (Girio-Herrera, Owens, & Langberg, 2013).

Given that child and youth services suffer in low-density areas (Hodgkinson, 2003), rural communities often depend on schools to serve many functions beyond their primary mission of education (National Education Association, 2008). Rural schools have a below-average share of highly trained teachers to serve students with emotional and/or behavior disorders, and they struggle to provide specialized services (Monk, 2007). Although rural schools generally have small class sizes, this potential benefit is attenuated by teachers with fewer credentials and resources, lower salaries, and limited opportunities for professional development, all of which contribute to challenges in teacher recruitment and retention (Monk, 2007; Roscigno & Crowley, 2001). Most rural teachers indicate that supporting children's behavioral and mental health are part of their role but feel unprepared to meet the educational needs of students with behavioral problems (Roeser & Midgley, 1997). Perhaps due to the perception that students in rural communities are better protected from mental health problems than their peers in urban communities, services to address problems are often poorly developed, ineffective, or fragmented (Moore, 2001). Whereas some studies have found positive benefits of behavioral interventions based on family-school partnerships (e.g., daily report card intervention, biweekly consultation meetings, and behavioral parenting sessions; Owens, Murphy, Richerson, Girio, & Himawan, 2008) on disruptive student behavior (e.g., hyperactivity, impulsivity, and conduct disorder symptoms) in rural schools, there remains a need for rigorous intervention research that identifies evidence-based social-behavioral interventions for students through partnerships in the rural context.

1.1. Relationships and partnerships between families and schools

Positive, constructive relationships between teachers and parents represent a potential opportunity to augment support services for rural students and families, and are increasingly recognized as a unique context supporting learning and development. This concomitant focus on relationships between families and schools embedded within the broader community context (i.e., exosystem) as the foundation for healthy development is grounded in ecological-systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1992). Accordingly, children develop within both immediate (i.e., microsystems) and distal (i.e., exosystem) contexts, and development is optimal when effective relationships and continuities (i.e., mesosystems) are strengthened. Empirical evidence supports that teacher-parent relationships, defined as each person's perception of the affective quality of the home-school connection (Vickers & Minke, 1995), are critical to children's academic achievement and social-behavioral functioning. The quality of relationships between teachers and parents has been found to explain both the association between children's background characteristics (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity) and both their engagement in the classroom (Hughes & Kwok, 2007), and the benefits of parents' motivational beliefs (e.g., parental self-efficacy and role construction) on children's adaptive functioning and externalizing problems (Kim, Sheridan, Kwon, & Koziol, 2013). Importantly, addressing student problems without high quality teacher-parent relationships reduces the capacity to intervene in ways that fully promote children's social and behavioral competence (Garbacz, Sheridan, Koziol, Kwon, & Holmes, 2015).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/4939766>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/4939766>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)