School Consultation: Promoting the use of Evidence Based Practices
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Objectives

• Identify:
  • Who is responsible for translating research into action
  • At least two forms of consultation
  • At least two examples of what consultation is not
  • At least three characteristics of effective consultation
  • At least five skills that effective consultants have
  • Two resources for consultants

School consultation: Helping teachers translate research (Evidence based practices-EBPs) into practice

“...the teacher mediates between the skills of his or her students—be it behavioral, emotional or academic—and the application of the scientific knowledge associated with learning and teaching. The teacher represents the pivotal decision point at which evidence-based practice achieves its intended outcome.” (Gravois, 2012)
What is consultation?

- Consultation is a voluntary, non-supervisory relationship between professionals from differing fields designed to aid professional functioning. (Conoley & Conoley, 1992)
- All consultation involves a consultant, consultee and client(s) or organization and takes into account the ecological or organizational system in which the presenting problem is discussed.

Is that different from Building Capacity?

"The phrase "building capacity"—a widely used bit of education jargon—refers to any effort being made to improve the abilities, skills, and expertise of educators." Related questions:
- Capacity to do what?
- What are some examples?
- How might the capacity be improved?
- May change the relationship from voluntary, non-supervisory
- There are still similarities

Important questions about consultation

- What is the function? Refers to the point of impact
  - Prevention of problems before they occur
  - Intervention in current problems
  - Correction of problems after they occur

Where does the consultant spend the most time?
What is most effective?
Important questions about consultation

• What form of consultation?

<table>
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<th>Client centered</th>
<th>Consultee centered</th>
<th>Collaborative</th>
<th>System centered</th>
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<td>Consultant develops an intervention plan to be carried out (Prescriptive)</td>
<td>Consultant discusses different and alternative ways to resolve the problem (Nonprescriptive intended to create changes teacher's beliefs, thinking and actions) (Hylander, 2012)</td>
<td>An interactive process that enables groups of people with diverse expertise to generate creative solutions to mutually defined problems (Idol, Nevin &amp; Paolucci-Whitcomb)</td>
<td>Consultant helps members of a group see interactional patterns that are interfering with success May also focus on structural or procedural problems</td>
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Related questions

• Who is the client?
  ➢ Student
  ➢ Teacher/school staff
  ➢ District
  ➢ Family
  - Most school consultation

• Who is the consultee?
  - May be the same person - the teacher

• Who might be collaborators?

• What is the system?
  • Is it too big to tackle?

What do all forms of consultation have in common?

• They deal with specifics
• “How’s it going?” is not consultation or capacity building
Advantages and Disadvantages

• Client (Student) Centered
  • Advantages:
    ✓ Focuses directly on the problem
    ✓ Takes advantage of the consultant’s expertise
  • Disadvantages:
    ✓ Assumes the consultant’s solution fits the problem
    ✓ Requires the consultee (teacher) to follow the “prescription”
    ✓ May be frustrating for consultant and consultee
    ✓ Consultee must have good motivation, high trust and the prerequisite knowledge and competence to carry out the program.
    ✓ Assumes there is a deficit in the consultee
    ✓ May increase short term compliance but decrease self-motivation and commitment to learn principles of intervention/practice

Advantages and Disadvantages

• Consultee (Teacher/School staff) Centered
  • Advantages:
    • Goal is to cause a change in the way problems are perceived
    • Takes advantage of the consultant’s experience and expertise through discussion of a variety of ways to solve the problem
    • Consultees are asked to try interventions that seem plausible to them
    • Increase the consultee’s ability to solve problems in the future
  • Disadvantages:
    • Takes more time
    • May require several reframes of the problem
    • Requires patience on the part of the consultant who knows what needs to be done

Advantages and Disadvantages

• Collaborative
  • Advantages:
    • All members of a group are able to share expertise as well as gain knowledge and skills
    • Consultant role is practiced reciprocally which increases communication and sharing of resources
    • Facilitates beneficial liaisons with other agencies and families
  • Disadvantages:
    • Requires administrative buy-in and willingness to provide adequate time for the process
    • May not be as productive or efficient if all participants do not have similar, or a wide variety of, expertise
Advantages and Disadvantages

- System Centered
  - Advantages:
    - Has the potential to make changes for many individuals
    - Views each individual as a part of a larger system
    - Leads to better fit of individuals within systems (e.g., inclusion)
  - Disadvantages:
    - Requires buy-in from multiple individuals
    - Requires extensive study of the systems and individuals involved (and related consultant expertise)
    - Requires high levels of commitment and effort on the part of consultant as well as individuals within the system

One thing they all have in common!
“The Learner is always right!” (I ♥ ABA!)

- It’s true for teachers/school staff in the same way it is true for students!
- What does that mean?
  - Doesn’t mean that learners don’t make mistakes
  - Does mean that the learner tells us how effective our instruction/consultation is
    - When learners make mistakes (or don’t change behaviors) it is a signal to us that we need to change something about what we’re doing so that we meet the learners’ needs.
  - When things don’t go well, we might blame the learner/teacher/school staff member - they don’t work hard enough or that they’re not smart enough
    - If that’s the case, where do we go as instructors/consultants?

Skills needed for consultation (similar to an FBA)
(Conoley & Conoley, 1992)

What is the problem? (Identify and assess the target behavior)
  - Frequency, intensity and duration?
  - Conditions under which the problem occurs?
  - What is the required/desired level of performance?
  - What are the client’s (consultee’s) strengths?
  - How has the problem/behavior been assessed?
  - How effective has the consultee been in intervening?

“Consultee’s construction of the problem is the consultation problem. Consultants . . . should not imagine they are searching outside of the consultee for the problem.”
**Skills needed for consultation**  
(Conoley & Conoley, 1992)

- Feedback (Any information that informs a person about the affects of his/her behavior on another)
  - Not only negative
  - “Not demanding a behavior change but offering information that might facilitate one”
  - Nonjudgmental in delivery
  - Nondefensive in receipt
  - Effective giving and receiving increases the impact of the consultation

**Giving feedback**

- Is it necessary or useful? What is the potential?
  - An example: “Do you know anything about instructional control?”
    - If the consultee knew about instructional control, you would probably know
    - The potential is to embarrass the consultee, put the person in a defensive position
    - What’s a better way to say it?
  - Are you trying to punish?
    - An example: “I’m going to need to talk to your principal, my supervisor, etc. about this”
      - Why? – to report a potentially dangerous or illegal action?
      - If your intent is to punish – remember the definition of punishment – to reduce the likelihood that the behavior will happen again
      - What’s a better way to say it?

**Giving feedback**

- Describe without being judgmental, evaluative or demeaning. How has the consultee’s behavior affected you?
  - An example: “I was really hoping when I came today that I would see some progress toward what we talked about last time.”
    - It is not about you
    - What’s a better way to say it? Describe without being judgmental, evaluative or demeaning. How has the consultee’s behavior affected you?
    - Remember the purpose of the consultation.
Giving feedback

• Give the feedback in a tentative way to allow the consultee to probe for more information
  • An example (assuming there has been conversation) “I’m seeing some of your concerns about classroom management. Tell me what you’d like to see improved.”
• Focus on what can be changed
  • An example: Conversations about time, personnel and $$ are usually not helpful

Giving feedback

• Consider the timing – when the consultee can hear (not when pre-occupied or overwhelmed by feedback & not when you are angry or overwhelmed)
  • Discussing behavior management strategies in the midst of a giant tantrum may not be good timing
• Check for understanding (can the consultee repeat what you have said?)
  • Also make sure that you haven’t given too much information. A good rule of thumb is 1 or 2 positives to no more than 3 suggestions

Effective consultation

• The most effective plans have both technical adequacy and contextual fit
Technical Adequacy and Contextual Fit

• Technical adequacy
  ✓ The degree to which plans have the features that reduce problems and increase learning
  ✓ One woman’s opinion – Applied Behavior Analysis, Systematic Instruction and a critical eye on curriculum

• Contextual fit
  ✓ The extent to which the plan is consistent with the setting and the values, skills and resources of implementers

How do we get that?

TEAMWORK

The most effective consultation is consultation that includes a partnership with the teacher/school staff (consultee)

Skills needed for consultation (Conoley & Conoley, 1992)

Plan Generation (include both technical adequacy & contextual fit)
  ✓ Brainstorm Literature search
  ✓ Experience and expertise
  ✓ Determine feasibility
  ✓ Communicate choice (even when you know the answer), different interventions may need to be tried
  ✓ Communicate that the problem may re-occur when circumstances change
When technical adequacy is lacking

- Use the same steps as you would in teaching a new skill to a student
  - Assess skill level
  - Provide theoretical information and knowledge (books/articles)
  - One to one teaching and modeling
  - Demonstration
  - Practice with feedback
  - Fidelity checks
  - Generalization

Skills needed for consultation
(Conoley & Conoley, 1992)

Implementation
- Keep in touch
  - Clarification, reassurance
  - Cueing, monitoring, reinforcement

Evaluation
- If the plan is not working does it need to be changed, abandoned or tried for a longer period of time?
- Is it being implemented with fidelity

Specific consultation skills for Autism Spectrum Disorders

- Strong background in ABA (most Evidence Based Practices are rooted in ABA)
- Autism specialization or Board Certified Behavior Analyst
- Strong background and experience in working with students with ASD
- Special and general classroom experience
- Trained in conducting Functional Behavior Assessments (formal and informal)
- Has (or is able to develop) credibility with teachers and parents
- Experience and training in the development of social skills training programs
- Able to work collaboratively with other professionals

(Schillinger, 2010 The administrators guide to building and maintaining a comprehensive autism program)
Specific consultation skills for Autism Spectrum Disorders (Maryann’s additions)

Experience and training in the following:

• Core deficits of autism
• Development of functional communication
• Development of strategies related to behavior management and challenging behaviors
  • Instructional control
  • Antecedent strategies
  • Positive, negative and differential reinforcements
  • Function based strategies

Specific consultation skills for Autism Spectrum Disorders (Maryann’s additions)

Experience and training in the following:

• Development of strategies related to building behavior
  • Including the development of functional skills
• Priority interventions for students with ASD
  a. Functional, spontaneous communication
  b. Social instruction
  c. Teaching play skills
  d. Cognitive development with generalization . . . as important as acquisition
  e. Strategies that address problem behaviors
  f. Functional academic skills
• Assessment for students with ASD
• Curriculum evaluation and revision
• Resources

Resources

• The National Professional Development Center on ASD http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/
  • AFIRM – Autism focused Intervention Resources and Modules
  • Autism Program Environment Rating Scales (APERS)
• Center for Development and Disability Information Network Library http://c95037.eos-intl.net/C95037/OPAC/Index.aspx
Questions???

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