

SREE 2020 Proposal Submission

Development of the EXPERT Training Program: How Do We Enhance Collaborative Teacher Expertise in Data-Based Decision Making for Reading Intervention?

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Background and Context

Despite strong empirical evidence to support research-based core instruction and supplemental intervention, there remains a significant number of students for whom these practices do not seem to be sufficient in closing achievement gaps with their typically achieving peers (e.g., Al Otaiba & Fuchs, 2006; McMaster, Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2005; O'Connor & Fuchs, 2013; Torgesen, 2004). The delivery of effective instruction is especially important in the upper elementary years as students who have not attained proficiency by fourth grade rarely catch up across their school years (Brasseur-Hock, Hock, Kieffer, Biancarosa, & Deshler, 2011; Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz, & Fletcher, 1996; Moats, 1999; Vaughn et al., 2003). Providing intensive, individualized intervention has been shown to improve academic outcomes for students with persistent reading difficulties (Denton, 2012; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2012; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Malone, 2017; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Vaughn, 2014; Fuchs & Vaughn, 2012; Vaughn & Wanzek, 2014). An essential feature of intensive intervention is the use of assessment data to drive instructional decisions. Research has revealed the importance of systematic, formative assessment to inform instructional adjustments, which has been observed to result in superior achievement of students over those whose teachers do not use such a process (see Filderman, Toste, Didion, Peng, & Clemens, 2018).

Evidence suggests that federal policies and initiatives have increased the availability of objective data collected on a frequent basis. Burns and Ysseldyke (2009) found that approximately 75% of special educators reported using formative assessment at least weekly. However, the survey did not collect information on how teachers defined “formative assessment” or how the data were actually used to inform instruction. Mellard et al. (2009) surveyed schools implementing RTI and found that nearly all schools reported procedures for monitoring reading progress of students receiving supplemental “Tier 2” interventions, but there was a great deal of variation in types and frequency of measurement. Similarly, Balu et al. (2015) observed that over 90% of schools used CBM oral reading fluency to monitor students who were below grade level in reading, regardless of whether the schools were implementing RTI practices or not.

It is clear that, to date, we have not successfully engaged teachers as experts in the use of data to inform instructional decision making. Further, most students with RD spend the majority of their day in general education, but differences in training and lack of collaboration among general education and special education teachers pose instructional challenges. We aim to develop a collaborative, teacher-driven coaching model to improve teachers’ use of data for instructional decision making: the EXPERT Training Program.

Purpose and Objectives

The focus of this “in the pipeline” session is to share process and preliminary findings from the first year of our IES-funded program development project. Overall, the purpose of the Project EXPERT will be to improve the knowledge and skills of special education and general education teachers of students with RD in 3rd to 5th grade. The theory of change is represented in Figure 1. Our outcomes of interest are (a) teacher content knowledge of reading, effective

assessment, and data-based decision making (DBDM); (b) teacher skills in implementing DBDM; and (c) student reading outcomes. The objectives in this early phase of development are to *understand current practices and perceptions of DBDM among special education and general education teachers* who educate students with RD. We will seek feedback from participating teachers as we develop program and training materials. This initial study is critical to establish relevancy and feasibility of the EXPERT Program—which will be further developed, refined, and tested for efficacy in future studies.

Setting and Participants

The EXPERT Program development work is taking place in a major urban center in the Southwest U.S. and its surrounding regions. We are working with teachers and students from 8 schools representing public school districts and public charter schools. Participants are special and general education teachers, grouped into *teaching dyads*, who teach reading to students with RD in 3rd to 5th grades. We invited at least one teacher dyad per school campus and have 22 participating teachers. Each dyad identified 2-3 target students for whom they share reading instruction. Target students are those who: (a) are identified for special education services with an IEP goal related to word reading, and (b) score below the 25th percentile on a screening measure of word reading skills.

The EXPERT Program

The EXPERT Program will develop teachers' expertise in DBDM; namely, their ability to evaluate student assessment data and understand when ineffective interventions should be changed, and identify how interventions should be individualized, using evidence-based practices. As many students with RD spend at least a portion of their school day in general education, the program will target collaboration between special and general educators to promote greater communication and consistency of instruction. EXPERT will feature three core components: (1) Formation of collaborative dyads among special educators and general educators; (2) Coaching to provide individualized knowledge and skill development for teachers; and (3) Self-monitoring procedures implemented by teachers on DBDM practices using a web-based app, the *EXPERT Monitoring Tool*.

Research Design

An iterative development phase process will be used to design, refine, and validate the EXPERT Program across four years. In this first year, we investigate current practices in DBDM among special education and general education teachers through a detailed observation phase. We will closely work with participating teachers to collect the data sources outlined below. This includes: student assessment, teacher surveys, reports of data use for individual student's instructional decision-making, direct observations, and focus groups. We will also collect regular feedback from teachers on the EXPERT materials we are developing (e.g., coaching protocols and the *EXPERT Monitoring Tool*).

Data Sources

Over the course of the year, the Instructional Content Emphasis–Revised (ICE-R; Edmonds & Briggs, 2003) to observe reading instruction. We will conduct 6-8 observations in each teacher's classroom (whole class instruction and small group intervention). Using the ICE-R, instructional events are coded by main instructional category and a subcategory. For each

instructional event, the coder also assigned scores for student engagement and instructional quality. Observation data will be examined alongside assessment data collected from target students (e.g., reading skills), as well as data tapping teachers’ knowledge, skills, and efficacy related to DBDM. Table 1 provides an overview of all data sources being collected during this phase of program development.

Table 1. Data Collections During Development Phase

Measure/Data Source	Timepoint	Participant
Demographic Information	Fall	All participants
Teacher Knowledge		
Teacher Knowledge Assessment: Language and Print	Fall	Teacher
Teacher Perceptions about Early Reading and Spelling	Fall	Teacher
Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale	Fall	Teacher
Instructional Planning Questionnaire	Fall	Teacher
Teacher Knowledge Survey—Assessment	Fall	Teacher
Teacher DBDM Skills		
DBDM Skills Survey	Fall	Teacher
Assessment/feedback of EXPERT Monitoring tool	Spring	Teacher
Student Reading Achievement		
WJ-III Word Identification	Fall	Student
TOWRE-2 Sight Word Efficiency	Fall	Student
Polysyllabic Word Reading Test	Fall	Student
WJ-III Word Attack	Fall	Student
TOWRE-2 Phonemic Decoding Efficiency	Fall	Student
WRMT-III Oral Reading Fluency	Fall	Student
CBMReading	Fall	Student
Teacher Feedback on Program Materials		
Focus groups	Spring	Teacher

DBDM = Data-based decision making; WJ-III = Woodcock-Johnson – Third Edition; TOWRE-2 = Test of Word Reading Efficiency – Second Edition; CBMReading = FastBridge|oral reading fluency

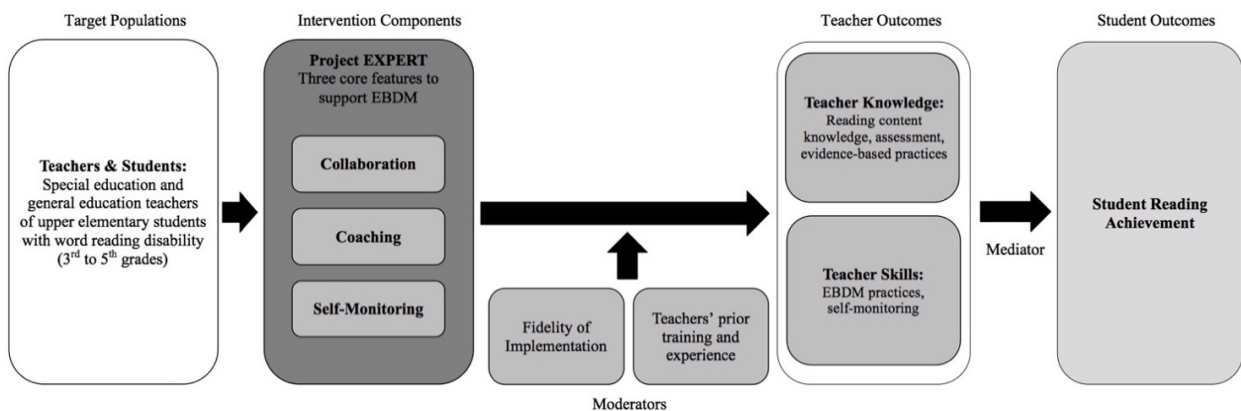


Figure 1. Theory of Change Model for Project EXPERT

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