Developing General Education Mentors to Support Early Career Special Educators

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Agenda

- Introduction & Background
- The Elephant in the Room
- Special Education Induction Report
- Study Results
- Questions
Objectives

At the conclusion of today’s session, participants will be able to:

< Discuss common stressors and areas of concern for early career special education teachers (ECSETs).
  ✔ Lead facilitative conversations with ECSETs relating to one specific area of concern.

< Understand the need for district programs for specialized training.
  ✔ Assist ECSETs in addressing instructional concerns and legal compliance.
Early Years

• The transition from being a student learning to teach to a practicing teacher can be overwhelming (Ingerson & Strong, 2011)

• It is estimated that 40% of early career special education teachers (ECSETs) leave in the first five years (Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008)

• It can take up to five years for a teacher to demonstrate effectiveness in the classroom (Harris & Sass, 2007)
The Elephant in the Room

• Why do early career special education teachers leave the profession?
Do early career special education teachers leave the profession?
The Truth

- Curriculum & Teaching
- Time/Scheduling
- Materials
- Collaboration
- Administration
- IEP paperwork
17 Studies Have Asked

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inclusion, Collaboration &amp; Interaction with Adults</th>
<th>Pedagogical Concerns</th>
<th>Managing Roles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Parents</td>
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Pedagogical Concerns

• Special educators have the smallest amount of students the widest range of abilities and behaviors
  < Teaching to all the ability levels
  < Managing all of the behaviors

• The lack of resources and materials
Collaboration

• Making inclusion work
• Working with:
  < general education peers
  < paraprofesionals
  < administrators
  < families
Managing Roles

• Time/Scheduling
• Legal Compliance
  < IEPs,
  < other paperwork, and
  < meetings
• Caseloads
• Role confusion
Mentoring

• Mentors have been credited for new teachers’ increased confidence, professional satisfaction, and retention (Billingsley et al., 2009)

• Formal mentoring programs have been implemented by 48 states as one activity of induction programs for early career teachers. However, this is often an unfunded mandate that is not always clearly defined (Hirsch et al., 2009)
Problem for Special Educators

• One-third of special educators did not find their mentor helpful (Billingsley, 2004)
Deciding Who Mentors

It is suggested that mentors be:

• approachable and available, supportive and patient, and possess strong communications skills (Billingsley et al., 2009)

• selected based on administrator recommendation (Billingsley et al., 2009; Feiman-Nemser & Carver, 2012; Fletcher & Strong, 2009; Marshall et al., 2013)

• located in close proximity to the mentee (Irinaga-Bistolas et al., 2007; Marshall et al., 2013)

• released from teaching duties (Feiman-Nemser & Carver, 2012; Fletcher & Strong, 2009; Pogrund & Cowan, 2013; Wechsler et al., 2012)

• trained in mentoring practices by the district (Billingsley, 2005; Billingsley et al., 2009; Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009; Pogrund & Cowan, 2013)
Mentoring for Special Educators

- Similarity of teaching assignments between mentor and early career teacher is thought to be essential for special educators (Billingsley et al., 2009)

- Special education mentors can help ECSETs:
  - apply the theoretical coursework from preparation programs
  - increase fidelity with evidence-based practices,
  - understand the wide range of student academic abilities and behaviors (Billingsley et al., 2009; Sindelar, Brownell, & Billingsley, 2010)
Availability of Special Education Mentors

- **ECSET** should be mentored by a mentor with expertise in special education (Billingsely et al., 2009)

- However, 
  - Limited availability of veteran special education teachers  
  - Mentoring programs are designed by districts

- Matching mentors based on certification area is not always possible.

- Therefore, we should investigate if quality general education mentors’ knowledge about special education can be developed
A STUDY TO PREPARE AND DEVELOP GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS
Research Questions

Does explicitly designed special education professional development and individualized coaching:

1. Improve the special education knowledge of general education teacher mentors who mentor special education early career teachers?
2. Improve the ability of general education teacher mentors to identify needed components of special education lesson delivery (i.e., proactive behavior management, assessments, and differentiation)?
3. Do early career special education teachers mentored by specially instructed and coached mentors show visible evidence of improved practice in proactive behavior management, assessments, and differentiated lessons after baseline, during the intervention and maintenance phases?

4. Do general education teacher mentors and ECSETs view explicitly designed special education professional development and individualized coaching to be socially valid?
Setting

- **Mid-Atlantic Urban School District**
- **195 schools**
- **≈ 84,730 students**
  - < 85% qualify for free and reduced meals
  - < 83.8% of the population is African American
  - < 15.4% of students are identified with a disability
- **5939 teachers**
  - < 625 special education teachers
  - < 87 new special education teachers SY 14-15
  - < 50% of early career special educators leave within first 3 years
Schools

School A
Elementary School

• 768 students
  < 92% qualify for free and reduced meals
  < 87% of the population is African American
  < 13.1% of students are identified with a disability

School B
Elementary School

• 500 students
  – 96% qualify for free and reduced meals
  – 97% of the population is African American
  – 13.8% of students are identified with a disability
Classrooms

School A
- Self-contained classroom
- 3rd, 4th, & 5th grade students identified with mild/moderate disabilities
- 8 – 14 students present for instruction in reading, math, science, social studies, or writing
  - Some students participated in the general education classroom for instruction in different subject areas

School B
- Self-contained classroom
- 5th grade students identified with mild/moderate disabilities
- 7 – 10 students present for instruction in reading, math, science, social studies, or writing
  - Some students participated in the general education classroom for instruction in different subject areas
## Mentors Who Received Professional Development

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<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Certification Area</th>
<th>Administrative Certification</th>
<th>Certification Route</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Other Positions</th>
<th>Teacher of Record (Yrs.)</th>
<th>Mentor (Yrs.)</th>
<th>Years in Education</th>
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<td>GE</td>
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<td><strong>10.8</strong></td>
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## Mentors Who Received Individualized Coaching

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<th><strong>Cathleen</strong></th>
<th><strong>Joan</strong></th>
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<td>6 year veteran</td>
<td>30 year veteran</td>
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<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; grade teacher</td>
<td>Middle School Language Arts Teacher</td>
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<td>Educational Consultant</td>
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<tr>
<td>M.S.Ed</td>
<td>Ed.D.</td>
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ECSETs

Renee

• 2nd year teacher
• Alternative Certification
• Bachelors Degree (Studio Art)

Raven

• 1st year teacher
• Alternative Certification
• Bachelors Degree (Theater)
Additional Participants

• **District Special Education Liaisons**
  - Special & General Education Elementary Certificate
  - 9 years classroom experience
  - Masters Degree
  - Special Education K – 12 Certificate
  - 19 years classroom experience
  - Masters Degree

• **Research Assistant**
  - High School General Education Math Certificate
  - 12 years classroom experience
  - 2nd year doctoral student
Measures

• Special Education Knowledge Assessment
• Observation Tool
• Social Validity Interview
Knowledge Assessment

- 25 released questions from PRAXIS II Special Education Core Knowledge and Applications
  - Multiple-choice format
- All 25 questions were administered together for the pre-assessment
- Post-assessment measure was administered by domain following professional development
  - 9 questions aligned with proactive behavior management
  - 8 questions aligned with differentiation
  - 8 questions aligned with assessment
Observation Tool

• Observable behaviors in 3 areas:
  < Proactive behavior management
  < Differentiation
  < Assessment

• Behaviors scored as:
  < Not observable
  < Not present (0)
  < Emerging (1)
  < Developing (2)

• Aligned with the domains and indicators from both the Danielson Framework and the Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS) Instructional Evaluation Rubric
Proactive Behavior Management

• Reviews lesson objectives
• Provides advanced organizer
• Alerts students to upcoming transitions
• Models sequential steps and expectations for students
• Checks for understanding regarding procedures
Differentiation

- Provides opportunities with a variety of materials or allows students to demonstrate knowledge in a variety of ways
- Accommodates and modifies materials for students
- Provides instructional content based on student interests and preferences
- Provides age-appropriate instructional content
- Uses various group learning strategies
Assessment

• Checks students’ retention of information from previous lessons through an opening activity (e.g., drill, motivator)

• Collects data that is easily used to inform classroom instruction and student progress

• Checks for understanding by circulating throughout the classroom

• Provides students with behavior specific praise

• Concludes lesson with culminating evaluation (e.g., exit ticket)
Example of behavior aligned with Danielson Framework and District Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protocol</th>
<th>Observation Tool</th>
<th>Danielson Framework</th>
<th>BCPS Instructional Rubric</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scoring</td>
<td>3 points: Not present, emerging, developing</td>
<td>4 points: Unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, distinguished</td>
<td>4 points: Ineffective, developing, effective, highly effective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Component</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indicators or Key Concepts</td>
<td>Provides opportunities with variety of materials or allows student to demonstrate knowledge in a variety of ways</td>
<td>1D Demonstrating knowledge of resources A range of texts Internet resources 1E Designing coherent instruction: Use of varied resources</td>
<td>P1 Know your students Determination of current student performance levels P4 Designs lesson to meet learners’ unique needs: Planning of scaffolded and differentiated tasks</td>
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Example of Rubric Quality Scores

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Provides opportunities with variety of materials or allows student to demonstrate knowledge in a variety of ways</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not observed (.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The lesson does not provide an opportunity to observe this behavior.</td>
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Social Validity

• Semi-structured open-ended questions

• Mentor sample questions
  < How much information/knowledge did you have about special education prior to participating in the program?
  < Was there a topic you felt needed more in depth discussion or explanation?
  < What was the easiest (and most difficult) behavior for you to understand? Why?

• ECSET sample questions
  < Your mentor focused on three behaviors – the proactive behavior management, assessment, and differentiation. Can you talk a little bit about how those have helped you with your teaching or what you liked about being focusing in on those?
  < What was the easiest (and most difficult) behavior for you to implement? Why?
Procedure

• Baseline data were collected during weekly classroom observations.
  < Post observation conferences with mentor
  < Feedback centered around behaviors not included in the intervention (e.g., planned ignoring, limit use of vocabulary with double meanings, roles and responsibilities of special educators).

• After a stable baseline the first intervention phase began.
Intervention

- **The intervention had five components**
  - Direct instruction of targeted behaviors during professional development sessions
  - Modeling a lesson
  - Co-planning, including reviewing student IEP goals
  - Weekly post observation conferences with performance feedback provided for the targeted behaviors.
  - Observation of at least 1 Mentor and ECSET debrief per phase followed by conference with mentor
Research Design

• Multiple-baseline across behaviors with multiple probes at baseline to evaluate the effects of the intervention on the following teacher behaviors:
  < Leg 1: proactive behavior management
  < Leg 2: differentiation
  < Leg 3: assessment

• Compare mentor’s score of the Observation Tool with the research assistant’s score
Research Question 1

• Did the professional development improve the special education knowledge of general education teacher mentors who mentor special education early career teachers?
Knowledge Assessment

Average score on pre-assessment 11.3 out of 25 (45%)
Average score of post assessment 20.5 out of 25 (82%)

< Proactive behavior management
  ✓ Pre-assessment 3.6 out of 9 (40%)
  ✓ Post assessment increased to 8 out of 9 (88.9%)

< Differentiation
  ✓ Pre-assessment 4.3 out of 8 (54%)
  ✓ Post assessment increased to 6 out of 8 (75%)

< Assessment
  ✓ Pre-assessment 3.5 out of 8 (44%)
  ✓ Post assessment increased to 6.67 out of 8 (83%)
Research Question 2

- Did the professional development and individualized coaching improve the ability of general education teacher mentors to identify needed components of special education lesson delivery?
Results

Cathleen
## Results - Cathleen

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<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Slope (Syx)</td>
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<tr>
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Note. PND = percentage of non-overlapping data * Maintenance data were not collected for assessment behavior.
Results
Joan
### Results - Joan

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Note. PND = percentage of non-overlapping data * Maintenance data were not collected for assessment behavior.
“Why haven’t they (the district) offered this training before?”

(Joan, mentor)
Research Question 3

• Do early career special education teachers mentored by specially instructed and coached mentors show visible evidence of improved practice in proactive behavior management, assessments, and differentiated lessons?
Results
Renee
### Results - Renee

<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
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Note: PND = percentage of non-overlapping data * Maintenance data were not collected for assessment behavior.
Results

Raven
## Results - Raven

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<th>Domain</th>
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<td>100%</td>
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</table>

Note. PND = percentage of non-overlapping data. * Maintenance data were not collected for assessment behavior.
Social Validity Interview

• Knowledge of Special Education
  - No longer abstract
  - More than just legal compliance

• Most beneficial supports
  - Instantaneous feedback
  - Professional discourse

• Frequency
  - Once per week not only felt right to the mentors, it helped to establish habits and routines for checking in with all early career teachers
Social Validity Interview

• **Appreciative**
  < Mentors' participation showed their investment in the ECSETs

• **Mentors**
  < Supportive and available
  < Impacted their instructional practice

• **Administrators**
  < Not supportive
  < Do not understand their job or their students
Renee’s Perception of Year

• Overwhelmed with planning for different grades and wide range of abilities with little resources
• Overwhelmed with paperwork
• Frustrated with administrator’s expectations
• “My mentor has been great, if it wasn’t for her I would have left during the year.”
Raven’s Perception of Year

• Felt isolated by peers
• Overwhelmed with planning for wide range of ability levels
• Lack of support from administrator
• “I’ve had a hard time...but I can’t leave. I can’t imagine doing anything else”
Discussion

• Mentors’ knowledge of special education increased
• A functional relationship was demonstrated between the intervention and the mentors’ ability to identify needed components of special education instruction
• ECSETs visibly improved their teaching practices for students with disabilities
• Mentors were supportive and perceived by their ECSETs to have impacted their instructional practice
• General education mentors participating in individualized coaching expressed overall satisfaction with both the professional development and individualized coaching.
YOUR TURN
Facilitative Conversations

1. Single focus
2. Non-judgmental
3. Open-ended
4. Present or future tense
5. Invites teacher reflection
• 12:00 = Same academic level (similar teaching assignment)
• 3:00 = Different academic level (different teaching assignment)
• 6:00 = Similar interests, learning profile, or talent (find someone with a similar hobby)
• 9:00 = Student Choice
Activity

• Clock or Season Partners Grouping strategy
• Get with your 3:00 Partner. Using the criteria for Effective Focused Reflection create three questions you can use to facilitate discussions with your ECSET when working with co-teachers or paraprofessionals.
• If you have a favorite reflective question you use in your work as mentor, be sure to share that first!
Some Starter Questions for Planning

• What criteria can be used to decide instructional strategies to meet the needs of individual students?

• What criteria do you use to decide the order of objectives you address in a teaching unit?

• Can you talk me through your process of incorporating student IEP goals with CCSS and district expectations?
SHARE OUT
Role Play

• Find your 6:00 Partner
Role Play #1

Janie, your ECSET, comes to you in tears. She co-teaches with Mrs. Sage. There are 7 students with disabilities in the general education class. Mrs. Sage always sends her to the copier during their class together, it seems she is 7 copies short.

Janie goes and gets the copies. She is afraid what Mrs. Sage will tell the principal about her, but she is also tired of being an “overpaid assistant”. She wants to be committed to her students and have Mrs. Sage like her at the same time. She doesn’t know what to do...
Role Play #2

Janie is now back in her self-contained/resource room. You have stop by her classroom on 3 different days, this is what you observe:

< Janie is delivering instruction for 2 different content area and 3 different ability levels and running frantically between “stations”.
< Ms. Hardee, the para, is sitting in the back of the room grading papers or reading a book.

You question Janie, you get the impression she is intimidated by Ms. Hardee. “Oh that is just Ms. Hardee. She doesn’t feel comfortable teaching math. Ms. Hardee told me she only grade papers.
SHARE OUT

1. What is similar between these situations
2. What is different
3. What is the Take Away
You Can but Can They?

- 9:00 Partner
What Does it Take to Mentor ECSETs?

• Discuss and create a list of what you would look for in a mentor for ECSETs
SHARE OUT
At Your Table

• Discuss what are you doing in your district for early career special education teachers?
  < Who mentors?
  < What PD is provided?
  < How do you know what is working?
Wrap Up

• Special Educators need different support
• General Educators can be trained to effectively mentor ECSETs
• Takes effort and commitment for sustainability
• Determine what is current practice in your district and what can be done to supplement
QUESTIONS
CONTACT

kyena.cornelius@mnsu.edu