Joining Forces: Tapping Teacher Specialists to Serve All Students
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Expert Presenters:

Steve Sandoval, executive director of special services, Adams County District 50, Westminster, Colo., and member of the Class of 2016 “Leaders To Learn From”

Chad Anderson, principal, Scott Carpenter Middle School, Adams County District 50

Sarah Gould, principal, Hodgkins Elementary School, Adams County District 50

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Joining Forces: Tapping Into Teacher Specialists to Support All Students

STEVE SANDOVAL, PH.D.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL SERVICES
ADAMS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT 50 – WESTMINSTER, CO
CANDO! YES GO FOR IT

STUCK IN THE MUD
A little about me...

• The kid who announced, “I want to be a Child Psychologist!”
• 5 years as a School Psychologist
• 14 years in SpEd Administration
• Began Adams Co. School District 50 in 2008
• Metro Denver and State involvement
Our “burning platform” in 2008...

- Rapidly shifting demographics
- “Turnaround” status (bottom 5%) and flat achievement
- No status quo... we needed to reinvent, transform ourselves!
  - Personalized learning for all
  - Student learn content at different paces
  - Learning is the constant, time is the variable
  - Learner-centered practices
  - Guaranteed and “viable” curriculum
## Adams County School District 50
### Preliminary Accreditation Plan Designations (August 6, 2014)

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### Districts

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- **Academic Achievement**: 25.0
- **Academic Growth**: 30.6
- **Academic Growth Gaps**: 31.1
- **Postsecondary Readiness**: 33.3
- **Performance**: > 59
- **Improvement**: 47 - 59
- **Priority Improvement**: 37 - 47
- **Turnaround**: < 37

- **District Plan**
  - **Performance**: > 64
  - **Improvement**: 52 - 64
  - **Priority Improvement**: 42 - 52
  - **Turnaround**: < 42

*Hidden Lake High School is designated an Alternative Education Campus and lives under a separate accreditation.*
Our current reality...

- Teacher shortages in SpEd and ELD
- Outcomes for students with disabilities is flat
- Special education has become more and more costly
- Legislative demands have taken a hit on instruction
- Generational Gap: Today’s students learn by tech., hands-on, self-confident, expressive, socially conscious...

But also...

- How students learn differently lends itself for opportunities as well!
- Collaboration, not fragmentation, works
- Culture of outcomes over compliance is occurring
- Federal and state programs allowing flexibility
- Concept of competency (or “proficiency” or “mastery”) gaining steam nationwide
Is Special Services an old paradigm?
What’s special about special services?

• Segregation
• Watered-down curriculum
• Less high-quality instruction, not more
• Stigma
• Litigation & bureaucracy
• Paperwork - Instructional imbalance
• High turnover
• Flat outcomes (why are we surprised?)

Fuchs and Fuchs, 1995; Freedman, 2006
Universal education is key...

Having a disability *alone* does not qualify a student with a disability. Only when the disability prevents the student from achieving in general education are they eligible for special education.

Levenson, 2011

“A student with an impairment can learn and perform in the regular classroom without specially designed instruction, the fact that his health impairment may have a (minimal) adverse effect does not render him eligible for special education”


So, “fixing” special education means *improving* general education!
An epiphany!
Intervention vs. Services

High Quality Instruction

- SpEd Instruction
- ELD Instruction
- GT Instruction
- Title I Instruction
Response to Intervention (RTI)

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)

Adams 50 Interventionist Framework
Vision and mission...

Vision

Supporting students’ needs ahead of their labels

Mission

To educate a 21st Century learner through collaboration, learner-centered practices and by holding high expectations for each other and for all students enrolled at Adams County School District 50
Our values and understandings...

• Students are complex, dynamic and ever-evolving human beings
• Strengths matter
• Supplement, not supplant “first, best” instruction
• Supports all students, including our advanced learners
• Cross-pollination of practices is important
• Eradicate a “one-size-fits-all” mentality
• IEPs, 504 Plans, and CLD Plans still exist
• Blur the lines between high-quality “intervention” and “services”
Adams County School District 50
Blended Approach: Collaborative Services Among Interventionists

Collaboration, not Fragmentation

- IEP Students
- ELD Students
- Struggling Students
- SRD Students
- Advanced Learners

Focus Students*

Students on Track

Levels Teacher

Interventionists

- SPED Teacher
- ELD Teacher
- Title I Teacher
- READ Act Instructor
- GT Teacher

*Specific requirements for IEP, ELD, and Title I students will still apply (e.g., OCR mandates for ELD services, IEP development for Special Education students, etc.).

Essentials...
- Shared Vision
- Collaborative Planning
- Evidence-Based Practices
- Data-Based Instructional Decisions
- Common Professional Development
CBS & THE INTERVENTIONIST FRAMEWORK (MTSS)
ADAMS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT 50

IN A CBS, ALL STUDENTS ARE LEVELED UNIVERSALLY AND PROVIDED DIFFERENTIATION BY CLASSROOM TEACHER

Universal (all)

Targeted (some)
Struggling learners performing >4 levels below expected
Struggling learners performing 2-4 levels below expected

Targeted (some)
High achievers performing 2-4 levels above expected
Highly advanced students performing > 4 levels above expected

Intensive (few)

Strengths-based

Culturally Responsive

Personal-Social Competencies

Strengths-based

Culturally Responsive
Six essential components...

... of the **Interventionist Framework**

1. Shared Leadership
2. Blending services ("cross-pollinating")
3. Role Flexibility
4. Collaborative Planning and Problem Solving
5. Data Driven Outcomes
6. Research-based curriculum and instruction
Our benefits...

THE ADAMS 50 PARADIGM

- Collaborative
- Efficient
- Aligned C & I
- Intervention vs. services blurred
- Needs-driven
- Multiple levels x 3 tiers (multi-dimensional)
- Personal-social competencies key to success
- Early intervening key

A TRADITIONAL PARADIGM

- Siloed
- Often duplicated
- Separate C & I
- Intervention vs. services distinct
- Label-driven
- 3 tiers of Intervention
- Personal-social skills are implied
- “Wait to fail” prior to intervening
Hodgkins Elementary School
Dr. Sarah Gould, Principal

Background:

• 665 Students PreK-5, three SPED learning centers (2 Autism and 1 SSN)
• High poverty (85% FRL) and high EL population (55%)

Academic Progression:

• Improvement Plan - steady increase in all content over the past 8 years
Who serves whom?

Services based on individual student needs

Example: A Literacy interventionist (with a Special Education background) works with students on phonemic awareness. This small group may have English Learners, students with disabilities, and impoverished students who are all needing that specific strategy. Within this flexible group, data is collected and a meeting occurs to determine next steps for students individual needs.

As a result of the Interventionist Framework, no one is an island! More students are served at their individual needs level than ever before.

The role of the general education teacher is to provide Universal (Tier 1) and Tier 2 supports as determined by the Student Support Team (SST). These may range from testing accommodations differentiated small groups.
Blending Services at Hodgkins

**Student Support Team (SST):**

*Who:* All interventionists, including SPED, Mental Health, ELD, Title I, Speech, and Administration

*When:* Weekly meetings with PLC’s of teachers based on SST submission process

*What:*
  - Discuss individual students and their performance (data-driven)
  - Determine next steps based on formative assessment data collected during 6 week period
  - Determine service provider based on scheduling, specific need, and progression
  - Key information tracked on Google Form
Professional Development for ALL

It’s critical that all staff understand the Interventionist process. No one washes his/her hands of their responsibility to educate all our kids.

PD completed for ALL staff:

• Co-Teaching
• GAP Analysis
• Flexible Grouping
• Executive Functioning 1 & 2
• Overall of Student Support Team Process
• Analyzing time-on-task
• Intervention Tools and Recording supports
Everybody’s an Interventionist!

With over half our students performing below grade level, the notion that Special Educators, ELD and Title I Interventionists will pull them out and fix them is archaic and impractical.

Co-Teaching

• Allows Interventionists to model best instructional practices
• Fosters collaboration
• Provides regular job-embedded PD
• Removes the stigma of pull-out practices
Successful Students at SCMS

My experience with co-teaching has made me a more effective teacher. I learned new ways to differentiate and deliver instruction from my co-teacher during our time together in the class and most importantly, our collaborative plan time. Co-teaching provided me with the opportunity to share my knowledge of history and my tool box of instructional strategies and pair that with my co-teacher’s knowledge of ELD learners and strategies. This pairing resulted in a classroom full of successful students.

-Amy Murray, Social Studies Teacher
Our lessons and aha’s...

• Articulate *vision* at the onset
• Strive for fidelity, not consistency (loose vs. tight)
• “First, best instruction” is where most eggs should go
• Demystify techniques and focus on practices that work
• “What *ain’t* inspected, *ain’t* respected”
• Don’t fear flexibility to “blend” or “braid” funds
• No one does this alone... work collaboratively with key players
• Siloed-thinking educators at all levels *need not apply*
Thank you... the pleasure was ours!

Questions?
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Required Reading from *Education Week*:

**Spotlight on Leaders in Technology and Innovation**
FREE! Across the country, schools are crafting innovative solutions to 21st century challenges. In this Spotlight, meet leaders who are using technology and innovation to enhance instruction and prepare students for a changing world.

**Bringing the District Back In: The Role of the Central Office in Instruction and Achievement**
This resource examines the role of the central office in improving instruction and therefore improving student achievement. Mac Iver and Farley-Ripple provide a comprehensive review of the available research (since the 1970s) on the role of the central office in student achievement.