



**The
Access Center**
Improving Outcomes for All Students K-8

District-to-District Information Sharing Community

Meeting Summary and Resources

April 26-28, 2006
Washington, D.C.



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District-to-District Information Sharing Community: Meeting Summary and Resources

Introduction

The Access Center: Improving Outcomes for All Students K–8 is charged with improving educational outcomes for elementary and middle school students with disabilities. The Center is dedicated to building the capacity of Technical Assistance (TA) systems, states, districts, and schools to help students with disabilities learn from the general education curriculum.

To that end, the Access Center has established a mechanism through which states and districts can exchange information and learn about best practices for providing access to the general education curriculum. Through the Access Center’s District-to-District Information Sharing Community (DISC), participating district representatives and district teams share experiences, identify successes and challenges, find topical resources, and problem-solve in a variety of content areas.

The DISC representatives met for the second time on April 26-28, 2006 to continue the sharing process. Participants heard presentations from nationally recognized content specialists and researchers as well as their national district-level colleagues on Multi-Tier Instructional Models, progress monitoring and professional development, and then discussed the most effective ways to implement research-based programs, practices, and tools in these areas. Meeting participants and Access Center staff also shared applicable tools and resources available to assist districts in their efforts to improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities.

To support and maintain the DISC’s collaborative efforts that were initiated at the face-to-face meeting, the Access Center will use distance technology activities to sustain ongoing contact and connection within the community, such as:

- maintaining a listserv and Web-based tools for sharing effective practices;
- coordinating conference calls/webinars among district teams for information sharing, problem solving, and providing mutual support; and
- developing written articles, conference proceedings documents, and case studies of effective efforts to improve access to the general education curriculum for students with disabilities.

This document provides a review of each presentation given during the April meeting, the tools and strategies that districts are using to improve access for students with disabilities, and a list of additional resources that districts can use to establish and refine their effective practices.¹

For more information about the April meeting, or about the DISC in general, contact: Susan Skipper at 202 403-5193 or sskipper@air.org; or Jacki Bootel at 202 403-5512 or jbootel@air.org.

¹The Access Center for Improving Outcomes for All Students K–8 is a national technical assistance center funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Drawing from national legislation such as the NCLB Act and IDEA ’97 and ’04, the Center is designed to connect states and districts with research-based practices, tools, and materials that can help students with disabilities access the general education curriculum. The Center specializes in helping decision-makers use data to improve instruction and services for students with disabilities through a variety of technical assistance strategies, including direct assistance, Web-based services, and an information-sharing community program.



Information Sharing Session
April 26, 2006
Pre-meeting session

Presentation by Dr. Deborah Ziegler, Associate Executive Director, Policy and Communications Services, Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)

Federal Legislation and Policy Updates

In this presentation, Dr. Ziegler of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) provided an update on developments in Washington, DC regarding education policy. The current focus in Washington, DC has been on the regulations to IDEA. The Department of Education is working hard to develop the regulations now that the public comment period has ended. Dr. Ziegler explained that public comments are a way of influencing the regulations, and noted that CEC received over 150 pages of comments, coming from both individuals and families; the Department received significant public comments around RTI and 2% flexibility. Dr. Ziegler stated that the Department of Education reads every single public comment and considers these comments when putting the final regulations together; CEC is hoping the regulations are released prior to the start of this next school year and has expressed its concern that the regulations have not been released.

Dr. Ziegler noted that IDEA is aligned with NCLB, which now leaves no doubt in the field that NCLB applies to special education (the alignment between the two laws is related to highly qualified teacher provision and assessment). She expressed CEC's concern about NCLB's focus on sanctions—CEC endorses a balance between supports and sanctions, and recommends holding schools accountable through methods other than sanctions. CEC also supports using a growth model to measure student progress.

Dr. Ziegler noted that, because paperwork burden is one of the many reasons teachers leave the profession, reducing paperwork is important. She predicted that choosing which states will get to participate in the paperwork reduction pilot and the multi-year IEP pilot project will be political, and she assumes that the states which are represented on the education committee will get to participate (e.g., California, Massachusetts and Wyoming).

Dr. Ziegler also mentioned that the topic of appropriations has also been big this year in Washington. The topic has gotten contentious in the partisan Congress, which went on break without passing the appropriations. The President recommended a 17 percent increase in funding for special education—dramatically different from CEC's recommendation of full funding.

Dr. Ziegler discussed the higher education act and Head Start, which are currently under reauthorization. She stressed the importance of the higher education act containing provisions for

developing college programs for people with disabilities. The bill currently contains loan forgiveness for special education, math and science teachers. There are few changes in the Head Start bill.

The presentation explained that education has not been a top priority in Congress this year because of the challenges of Hurricane Katrina, the war in Iraq, and gas prices, and because representatives are focused on the upcoming midterm elections. Dr. Ziegler stressed that now is the time to talk with incumbents and new candidates about key education issues. Dr. Ziegler also suggested inviting representatives to school board meetings, school events or visits to highlight what is happening in schools. She suggested that this was a key way to build support for education and a way to ensure that politicians see what is happening in public schools.

Dr. Ziegler discussed the fact that NCLB is due for reauthorization in 2007. She said that CEC is now compiling comments and recommendations from the field, and that Congress has announced it will hold hearings and prepare a bill later this year. However, she did not think it was likely that Congress will actually reauthorize the laws while a Republican President is in office—they will want to wait until the next President is in office to reauthorize it. Dr. Ziegler predicted that this bill would be a placeholder that would begin the discussion and would probably be similar to the current law. She stated that there has been a lot of backlash from the education community regarding NCLB. CEC favors accountability for special education, but wants to make sure accountability is balanced. Dr. Ziegler also noted that the Congressional hearings are not open to the public. One way CEC is able to influence this process is by recommending people to testify before the congressional committee; she was not sure if the Department of Education would hold hearings around the reauthorization of NCLB.



District Information Sharing Community Meeting
April 27, 2006
Session 1

Presentation by Dr. Diane Bryant, Project Director, Special Education Research Project (SERP)-Mathematics, University of Texas-Austin

An Emerging Model: Three-Tier Mathematics Intervention Model

Dr. Diane Bryant, from the University of Texas at Austin, presented information about a three-tier mathematics intervention model currently being developed in a large school district outside Austin. The effort towards replicating a three-tier model in mathematics is lagging behind, because research in identification, assessment, and intervention is not as far as it is in reading. Dr. Bryant hopes to show a broader picture of how to implement the three-tier framework within mathematics to guide thinking about how to work with children of differing skills and abilities.

As an overview, Dr. Bryant explained that while most students benefit from initial instruction (Tier 1), a smaller percentage need additional instruction by the general education teacher (Tier 2) to learn educational objectives. An even smaller percentage of students still struggle and require intensive intervention (Tier 3); these students are often identified as having learning disabilities in reading or mathematics.

Dr. Bryant explained that there are common characteristics of students with mathematics disabilities (MD). These include:

1. **Procedural difficulties**, including immature strategies use and errors in math problem execution,
2. **Memory problems**, including poor long-term memory retrieval skills and working memory deficits,
3. **Visual/spatial deficits**, including weak visual/spatial representations, and
4. **Low number sense**, including number magnitude comparison confusion and poor number naming and writing.

Dr. Bryant stated that the core educational problems in the area of mathematics are assessment and intervention. There is currently limited availability of technically adequate measures for identification of students, for monitoring response to mathematic interventions of Tier 2 students in primary grades, and for assessment of early mathematics number, operation, and quantitative reasoning skills and concepts. There is growing support for strong basic skills in number and operation at early grades, as they are the foundation of higher learning skills. There is a need for the development of measures that will predict students who are at risk for mathematical difficulties.

Dr. Bryant then elaborated on the **Three-Tier Mathematics Intervention Model**. It is an assessment and intervention model designed to meet the instructional needs of students in grades K-2 who are identified as struggling with mathematics. This model is a framework (not a commercial program) that provides structure for providing instruction and using assessment data to inform decision-making. It is a response-to-intervention model, which focuses on standards-based intervention.

The components of **Tier 1** include core classroom instruction for all students for 45-60 minutes. Instruction appears to be based on National Science Foundation instructional recommendations, teacher created lessons, basal based instruction, and National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) standards. The focus is on instructional adaptations including content, delivery, materials, and activities.

Tier 2 intervention occurs for approximately 10 to 30 percent of identified students for 15-20 minutes, three to four days per week for 10 to 12 weeks. Instruction includes differentiated instruction in number and operation, including explicit instruction in small, homogeneous groupings.

The instruction in **Tier 3** includes intensive intervention for approximately 5 to 8 percent of identified students, and may include special education students. The instruction generally consists of an additional 20 minutes per day.

Dr. Bryant said that the Three-Tier Mathematics Model has worked towards the development of **assessment** for 1 ½ years. The team is currently working on a group-administered measure that is reliable and valid, which will aid teachers with a time efficient method of pinpointing weaknesses. The hope is to combine a screening and diagnostic instrument that will provide data to guide instruction. Currently, assessment in the 3-Tier mathematics Model includes diagnostic/progress monitoring for all students, bi-weekly progress monitoring of lessons for Tier 2 and weekly for Tier 3. Outcome data is gathered for all students.

She went on to state that there is limited evidenced-based **intervention** in mathematics that demonstrates efficacy for improving mathematics performance in early mathematics skills and concepts. There is a need to develop, refine, and evaluate interventions to teach students in kindergarten, first, and second grade who have been identified as Tier 2 for mathematics difficulties. Number and operations is cited as the most important area of NCTM's (2000) *Principles and Standards for School Mathematics*.

Tier 2 interventions were described as clustered around physical representation, visual representation, and abstract representation, including instruction of the skill, skill building and practice, and fluency building. The mnemonic "*Frozen Peas Make Great ICE Packs*" enables practitioners to remember effective instruction for booster sessions at Tier 2, which include **F**raming the lesson, **P**reviewing, **M**odeling with think-alouds, **G**uided practice, **I**ndependent practice, **C**hecking for understanding, **E**rror correction and feedback, and **P**rogress monitoring. Effective procedures and features of Tier 2 intervention include:

- Homogeneous grouping with 2-4 students per group, with 3 levels within each grade level;
- Duration of 4-5 times per week for 15-20 minutes per session;
- Lesson design that includes sequential, scaffolded, stacked, and scripted lessons incorporating explicit and strategic instruction, "think alouds," and error correction;

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- Specific instructional content;
 - Physical (concrete), visual (pictorial), and abstract (numbers) representations;
 - Materials which include number charts, 5- and 10-frames, counters, cubes, number lines (horizontal and vertical), base-ten materials, and dot cards; and
 - Progress monitoring.

Dr. Bryant provided tips for helping **districts get started** in the implementation of a Three-Tier Mathematics Model. At the Tier 1 level it is important to ensure that core instruction includes effective practices for struggling students. Teachers need help in identifying ways to adapt instruction and to monitor performance. The amount of time required for mathematics instruction needs to be established, with a suggested time of 60+ minutes. Teachers need assistance balancing instruction and examining textbooks for the presence of practices that support struggling students' needs, such as opportunities for practice, scaffolds, and grouping suggestions.

At the Tier 2 and Tier 3 levels, she said that it is important to first identify the standards to be emphasized as part of Tier 2 instruction, such as number and operation. Assessment measures need to be identified that include fluency probes. It is important to then interpret the results appropriately and plan instruction accordingly. Clear decisions need to be made regarding who will provide Tier 2 and 3 instruction, how often this instruction will be offered, and what interventions will be used. Teachers will need support integrating Tier 2 instruction time into their day. Administration needs to elevate the importance of math instruction and provide coaching assistance to teachers.

Six implementation questions were posed:

1. **How do you know if Tier 1 (core) instruction is not working?**
Assess all students three times a year; students not showing appropriate progress may qualify for Tier 2 instruction (a suggested cut score is <16th percentile.)
2. **What should Tier 2 instruction look like?**
This is described in the prior paragraph describing Tier 2 interventions.
3. **How do we know if Tier 2/3 instruction is working (are students responding to instruction)?**
Progress monitor students regularly.
4. **How long is Tier 2 instruction implemented?**
10-12 weeks; reassess, and if there is progress move back to Tier 1; if limited progress conduct another 10-12 weeks of Tier 2; if no progress, consider moving to Tier 3.
5. **How often should we progress monitor students?**
The recommendation is bi-weekly for Tier 2, and weekly for Tier 3.
6. **How do I assess fidelity?**
Use a checklist containing expectations for Tier 2 to decide if intervention practices are being used with fidelity. There are further suggestions in the Instructional Decision Making booklet-administrator's pages, available at the meeting.



District Information Sharing Community Meeting
April 27, 2006
Session 2

**Presentation by Dr. Joyce Bannerot, Principal, Popham Elementary School,
Del Valle ISD, TX**

Three-Tier Reading Project

Dr. Bannerot, principal of Popham Elementary School in Del Valle, Texas, presented information about a three-tier reading project. She indicated that the Del Valle Independent School District has an enrollment of 8,000 students, with the following demographic characteristics:

- African American: 15%
- Hispanic: 72%
- White: 11%
- Other: 2%
- Economically Disadvantaged: 74%
- Limited English Proficient: 23%
- Mobility Rate: 37%

The district is geographically large (174 square miles) and diverse since there are rural, suburban and urban schools. The district has 6 elementary schools, 2 junior high schools, 1 high school, and 1 alternative campus. Because the district is large, some bus routes are 1 hour each way to school.

Dr. Bannerot explained that the University of Texas at Austin and Del Valle ISD have just completed a five-year study to try to reduce the number of students at risk for reading difficulties or not reading on grade level. The district wanted to find a new way of getting help for students, besides referral to special education. Thus, the project targeted reading in kindergarten, with subsequent grade levels being added each year through the third grade. The final results of the project are still to be analyzed, but Dr. Bannerot presented the general findings, implications, and suggestions for other districts interested in implementing multi-tier reading models.

Del Valle ISD did not adopt a new reading program for this project, but continued to use its existing reading program. In addition to the core instruction, other important features of Tier 1 are:

- Progress monitoring of at-risk students
- Ongoing professional development

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- In-class support and mentoring

The core reading program was provided for 90 minutes per day by the classroom teacher for all children. Classroom teachers utilized a variety of grouping formats. Progress monitoring was done through a benchmark assessment at the beginning, middle, and end of the academic year.

In addition, teachers were provided with professional development to learn new strategies to help struggling readers. Dr. Bannerot indicated that it was more challenging for veteran teachers to learn new ideas about teaching reading. In comparison, teachers who had taught for less than five years were more open to learning and using the new techniques. Dr. Bannerot stressed that she expected every teacher in her building to utilize at least one new strategy. She monitored to make sure teachers were using the new strategies. Teachers were also expected to talk and share how they utilized the new strategies. This sharing helped diffuse some of the veteran teachers' resistance. Dr. Bannerot believed that a combination of consultation/coaching after training paired with principal expectation was effective in reinforcing the professional development.

Dr. Bannerot explained that for some students, Tier I services were not sufficient (approximately 20% of students). These students receive Tier II services, which is an extra 25-30 minutes daily of supplemental reading from a specialized, scientifically based reading program emphasizing the five critical elements of reading skills. This specialized instruction was provided in small homogenous groups (1:5) by an interventionist outside the regular classroom. Progress was monitored weekly on target skills to ensure adequate learning.

A small group of students (5-10%) who needed additional intensive, strategic, supplemental instruction were provided with Tier III services. Tier III services included a customized small-group reading instruction that was extended beyond the time allocated for Tier I instruction. Thus, students receiving Tier III instruction were provided with 50 minutes per day in addition to the 90 minutes of core reading instruction. Progress was monitored weekly on target skills to ensure adequate learning. This instruction was provided by an interventionist outside the classroom in small homogenous groups (1:3).

The criteria for selecting students depended upon cut-off scores from Dibels and resources available for interventionists. Interventions were provided by teachers or University of Texas tutors during school or after school.

Dr. Bannerot discussed how Tier II and III differ, which is summarized in the subsequent chart.

	Tier II instruction	Tier III instruction
Daily instruction	Minimum of 30 minutes (+ Tier I)	Minimum of 30 minutes twice a day (+ Tier I)
Duration	10 - 12 weeks (1 or 2 rounds)	10 - 12 weeks (possibly several rounds)
Group size	1:3 to 1:5	1:3
Ongoing progress monitoring	every 2 weeks	every 2 weeks

Dr. Bannerot mentioned that the preliminary results of the multi-tier model have included the following:

- There was a decrease in the number of students referred for special education.
- Scores were higher in schools where the principal regularly participated in the staff development and monitored implementation of best practices for reading.
- Continuous monitoring of progress prevented non-productive use of instructional time
- Students who had newer teachers outscored veteran teachers.
- 92% of third graders passed the state test in Dr. Bannerot’s school (with similar results throughout the district).
- Students’ achievement improved in all grade levels as the project expanded to each of four grade levels.
- Teacher effectiveness for reading improved.
- Teachers became more sophisticated with the use of data to improve instruction.
- There was a decrease in the number of students reading below grade level.

Dr. Bannerot shared some of the challenges in implementing a multi-tier model, which included the following:

- Constantly changing grouping formats because of student mobility
- Keeping the momentum going
- Finding time for added instruction
- Training new teachers when they were hired
- Scheduling refresher training during the summer for returning teachers

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- Adjusting instruction expectations
 - Moving from a developmental model to an academic model for kindergarten
 - Using existing basal reading adoption and adding supplemental materials to cover all areas for reading instruction

Student progress monitoring was successful because teachers knew that the progress of their students would be monitored as a class and as a grade level, but would not be used for teacher evaluations. Thus, the results were used to focus on students and interventions. Dr. Bannerot indicated that the crucial factors for sustainability of a multi-tier model are resources and teacher buy-in. She outlined different scenarios (depending upon resources available) the district will utilize to continue multi-tier models.

Dr. Bannerot mentioned the following reading resources:

- <http://reading.uoregon.edu/appendices/maps.php> (Big Ideas in Beginning Reading, University of Oregon)
- 4 Dimensions of Core Reading Instruction; Implementing Effective Core Reading Instruction; Thea Woodruff, theawoodruff@hotmail.com
- Texas Education Agency: Online Teacher Reading Academy, 2nd grade and 3rd grade (www.texasreading.org)
- Klinger, Vaughn, Dimino, Schumm and Bryant (2001) Collaborative Strategic Reading. Longmont, Colorado: Sopris West.



District Information Sharing Community Meeting
April 27, 2006
Session 3

**Presentation by Dr. Markay L. Winston, Director of Student Services,
Cincinnati Public Schools, OH**

**Using an Integrated Systems Model to Address Reading and Behavior
Challenges**

Dr. Winston, Director of Student Services at Cincinnati Public Schools, shared demographics about the Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS), including comments regarding the declining student population, some students opting for charter schools, and an increasing ELL population with limited qualified teachers for these students. He explained that the **Three-Tier Model for reading and behavior** is an integrated systems approach combining academic systems and behavioral systems: a conical pyramid was created to demonstrate the multifaceted tiers. At the foundation of the pyramid are six components, including collaborative problem-solving, data-based decision-making, academic and behavioral supports for each and all, research-validated practices, explicit instruction of academic and social skills, and culturally responsive practices. Common to all tiers of the pyramid are services and supports that include inclusive planning teams, a system of data collection and management, data-based decision-making, empirical basis for practice, inclusive programs and physical environments, and treatment integrity and assessment reliability.

Further discussion of the Three-Tier model included a more detailed description of each of the three tiers:

Tier 1 maximizes learning for all students while minimizing the number of students in need of interventions. The core curriculum addresses the learning needs of most students, allowing 80-90% of the students to meet performance indicators. Tier 1 instruction is for all students, and provides high quality general education instruction in academic and social competencies in a variety of school settings. This instruction is explicit, systematic, preventative and proactive, and based on concepts of Universal Design for Learning. Several specific examples of academic and behavioral interventions that represent these concepts were shared.

The purpose of **Tier 2 instruction** in this model is to identify students at risk for not reaching academic and/or behavior standards. It provides sufficient and appropriate systematic instruction so that students' performance rapidly reaches and exceeds established standards, thereby preventing school failure. Instruction includes supplemental programs that are scientifically supported as effective. Instruction takes place in flexible, relatively homogeneous academic/behavior small groups. It is more explicit and intensive and student progress is monitored more frequently.

Summer and extended-day instruction is available. Consultation by teachers with related service personnel is encouraged, and there is an effort to move away from a resource room setting towards “academic intervention labs” for use by any student requiring support. A co-teaching model has been used effectively at this tier. As with Tier 1, several specific examples of intervention programs were offered.

Tier 3 instruction is designed to provide continued and sustained support for students who don’t progress with targeted supports, or whose initial assessment data indicate that support is needed at all levels. The data indicate that students at Tier 3 may need ongoing, substantial support to make continued progress. Instruction at Tier 3 is individualized and research based. Consultative as well as direct services are provided by specialists. The problem-solving is collaborative, with parental permission and involvement required. Referrals to community-based, transition, mental health, and medical services are made as needed. There is extensive student progress monitoring (at least twice weekly) at this tier, which is then linked to problem-solving and intervention adaptation and modification.

Dr. Winston explained that data trends are indicating an increase in reading proficiency for students with disabilities in 3rd grade, as well as encouraging behavior data. He stated that the gap is beginning to close, but that there is much work still to be done.



District Information Sharing Community Meeting April 27, 2006 Session 4

District Presentations

Kansas City Public Schools

Dr. Eunice Johnson gave a presentation on a recent restructuring of Kansas City Public Schools. There hadn't been a special education director in the district from August 2004 through February 2005, when Dr. Johnson arrived. She determined that the department needed a total restructuring to increase its efficiency and effectiveness. Over a period of 34 days, a consultant conducted an audit of the entire department, and found evidence of a leadership crisis. There was no staff accountability and no clear department structure, and procedural compliance was a major issue. Dr. Johnson explained that at that point no one trusted anyone else within the department. The department's structure departmentalized teachers by area of status (*itinerant, self-contained, resource*), and special education services were provided based on the ability to find space within the school building, rather than on the student's needs as stated in his/her IEP. The resulting organizational structure was more "adult-centered" than "child-centered."

Dr. Johnson took the consultant's findings and recommendations to heart, and instituted a new department structure. The department's staff remained the same, but they were totally reorganized. The 77 schools within the district were placed into seven regions; within each region, a special education coordinator served as team leader of a Core Team, which consisted of those special education specialists who initiated the assessment process for students with disabilities. The team leader also served as a point of contact and special education consultant to the school principals. The result: greatly improved communication and compliance. Both staff and families felt a greater sense of ownership toward their schools.

Dr. Johnson found that the district's special education teachers had also been lacking updated professional development, particularly in the areas of post-secondary transition issues and early literacy. Parents were expressing concern about what would happen to their children after they graduated from high school. Dr. Johnson applied for and was awarded a State Improvement Grant of \$300,000 to implement appropriate staff development; four veteran staff members implemented the grant.

Special education teachers were also provided the opportunity to participate in an *Academy of Teacher Excellence*, in which they would attend a series of classes over the school year. The teachers were given intensive curriculum development instruction for effective practices in classroom management, decision-making, quality instruction, and effective behavioral interventions.

Next Steps

Beginning this summer, Dr. Johnson is planning to enhance district teachers' professional development by creating a new Innovation Team (in collaboration with the Regional Professional Development Center, the exceptional education department, curriculum and instruction specialists, and administrators) to plan the next phase of staff development activities for the next school year (2006-07). In the fall, the district is also planning to invite Dr. David Koppenhaver to present on "Teaching Reading to Challenging Learners." The goal is to create a regionalized awareness of what assistive technology is available for the challenging learner. In addition, the district will hold regional meetings with school principals, form parent education focus groups, and form regular and special education problem-solving clusters.

Los Angeles Unified School District

In this presentation, Marcee Seegan from the Los Angeles Unified School District provided an overview of what related services look like in the district. These services include adapted physical education, assistive technology, language and speech therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy. The district's related services department is a branch of the Division of Special Education. Under a modified consent decree from the state, the district developed a position paper that described a variety of service delivery models, including collaboration. The district provides related services in support of a student's educational program. There are over 800 qualified providers that are state licensed or certified in the district; all providers receive continuing education designed to enhance their expertise and ability to implement the latest research, technology, and best practices.

The related services department provides prevention and pre-referral services to students who are suspected of having a disability. For example, the district offers a variety of assistive technologies for those students who have difficulty accessing the curriculum in the areas of reading, writing, math, and communication. In attempting to prevent a student from needing special education services, the district has implemented a three-tiered model for pre-referral that includes consultation, screening, and finally, intervention.

Tier 1 – Provider Consultation – the student is not in special education yet. The provider will observe the student in the classroom, consult with the teacher, and provide broad recommendations and professional development. This tier offers an informal opportunity for the related service provider to offer support to a teacher and the student's parent(s).

Tier 2 – Classroom Screening – the student is still not receiving special education services. The provider conducts an in-class screening, reviews the student's records, offers suggestions for accommodations, and offers technical expertise.

Tier 3 – School Intervention – the school brings together a Student Success Team (SST) that identifies the student's needs. The Team specifies the interventions that need to be taken, along with measurable progress indicators, and then monitors and documents the effectiveness of the prescribed intervention(s). Although the student is still not in the special education program at this point, the SST may ultimately determine that a referral for a special education assessment is appropriate.

Once a student has been identified as needing special education and related services, the district does not pull the student out of his/her regular education classroom as a first resort; rather, services are gradually layered on as the student's need intensifies, following three instructional models:

Model 1 – Base Instruction and Intervention – within the student's regular education classroom the teacher will provide the student with appropriate accommodations, and will consult with other teachers and the student's parents to help ensure that new skills are emphasized.

Model 2 – Extended Instruction and Intervention – the student is still in the regular education classroom, but is provided with direct instruction that is non-intensive. This instruction can occur in small group or large group settings.

Model 3 – Intensive Instruction and Intervention – all modifications that were included in Models 1 and 2 are kept at this level, but intensive direct instruction may be added. The student may be pulled out of the classroom for these services, but will return when services are not needed.

How do you know when a child no longer needs special education and related services?

- When his/her area of need no longer impacts educational performance;
- When the student no longer meets the qualification criteria OR the student no longer requires the related service in order to benefit from his/her academic program;
- When the student's needs are better served by an alternative program and/or service;
- When the student reaches age 22; or
- When the student graduates from high school.



District Information Sharing Community Meeting
April 28, 2006
Session 1

Presentation by Dr. John Hintz, Associate Professor, University of Massachusetts at Amherst

Assessment in Support of Instruction: Improving Learning Outcomes Using Progress Monitoring

Dr. John Hintz, from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, gave a presentation on using progress monitoring to improve learning outcomes. He used growth charts of children at varying ages to illustrate how ongoing progress monitoring data can help inform decisions. He explained that these growth charts help compare children's growth patterns and track their progress over time.

The presentation demonstrated how to use ongoing progress monitoring data to inform instructional decisions, with a focus on individual aspects of progress monitoring. In the sessions on multi-tier models the previous day, the community discussed multi-tier models and screening, so Dr. Hintz hoped that his presentation could explain how student progress monitoring can be used at all different levels.

Dr. Hintz explained that we are in the midst of an assessment boom, and at a nexus in educational assessment using large-scale examinations. He argued that we do not know how relevant these large-scale high stakes test are for teacher-led change and instruction.

Dr. Hintz questioned whether the assessments we are using are really formative (i.e., used to inform instruction). He explained that they are actually designed to be summative rather than formative, but may inform policy decisions. He suggested supplementing these summative assessments with more formative assessments and then linking the data from formative assessments to high stakes testing (for example, if a student performs at 50% on formative assessments, he or she is likely to score XX on the summative assessment).

Dr. Hintz emphasized that it is critical that assessment and instruction be connected: research has shown that when we monitor progress and use this to inform instruction, we positively affect student achievement.

Student Progress Monitoring

Dr. Hintz stated that before the National Center on Student Progress Monitoring was established, people would define student progress monitoring as curriculum-based Measurement (CBM). He explained that student progress monitoring (SPM) is the process of measuring current levels of

student performance and using that data to set instructional goals. SPM can be implemented with individual students, classrooms, districts. Dr. Hintz suggests starting with individuals and scaling up over time. Through their use of Reading First, many districts in Massachusetts have gone full scale with implementing SPM.

To conduct SPM, current levels of student performance are determined and goals are identified for learning that will take place over time. A student's current level, established during screening, is used to determine how often you should monitor his or her progress and how quickly you should intervene. Academic progress is measured on a regular basis by comparing expected versus actual rates of learning, and teaching is adjusted based on progress. Continual monitoring helps determine if the adjusted instruction and interventions are effective. The Hartland School District in Iowa, the Pittsville School District in Massachusetts, and other districts have been doing SPM as well as Response to Intervention (RTI).

Benefits of SPM

Dr. Hintz laid out the benefits of SPM as follows:

1. If data is used to determine instruction, students' performance will improve. This is shown in the research done at Vanderbilt by Dr. Lynn Fuchs and Dr. Doug Fuchs. In one study done by the Fuchs, teachers were placed in different groups. In some groups, teachers were shown a graph but were not instructed to do anything. In other groups, teachers were shown a graph and were told, "Here is the student's graph of performance over time. You decide when you want to make instructional modifications. We aren't going to help you, but you should be using this data to inform your instruction." Those teachers who were told to use the data experienced an effect size gain of .75 pertaining to student performance. Those children improved above and beyond the other group by about .75 of a standard deviation. Surprisingly, student improvement resulted despite the lack of support teachers received in modifying their instruction.
2. For not just special education students, but for all students, data is useful for accountability purposes. Goals for students are now linked to data. It is now known from the type of information collected through SPM that it is possible to set meaningful IEP goals and ensure through data collection that these goals are met. From the policy and legal perspective, this is a much more sound way of doing things.
3. The data is more useful to parents. It helps them see how their children are performing without having to decipher the complicated state forms. The graphic form shows exactly how well their child is performing and how the child is performing compared to his or her grade level peers. For example, it allows the teacher and parents to communicate about the extent of the child's reading problem.
4. SPM also helps set reasonable expectations. When working at the University of Connecticut, Dr. Hintz and a team conducted a study that brought him into a school not using SPM. They randomly placed students in grades 2-4 into 3 condition groups. Group One was given a reading assessment, but the students were not given their results. Group Two was given a reading assessment, and then the students were each given a graph of their results and taught how to graph their own results. A goal for each student was set that they would have to work to accomplish over time. Group Three was given a reading assessment, and then each student was given a graph of their results and also taught how to graph their results, but this

group used a dynamic goal line, so students met their goal each time.

Both Groups Two and Three achieved at higher levels than Group One. Group Three performed the highest because achieving their goal each week provided natural reinforcements for the students.

5. SPM leads to improved sensitivity in special education referrals. When SPM is used, teachers can get a better sense of those students who are at risk. Dr. Hintz noted that it will be interesting to see if RTI leads to a purer stream of LD identifications. If it doesn't, the danger is that people might "throw the baby out with the bath water." That is, they might throw out RTI for both identification and as a way to inform instruction. Even if RTI does not work with identification, it is still the best process for shaping instruction.

SPM as Primary Preventative Educational Health Care

Dr. Hintz argued that SPM can be used to monitor progress in much the same way that public health officials monitor vital signs such as blood pressure. A routine collection of reading samples can be used to check oral reading fluency for all students. These samples should be used as dynamic checks (fluency should change over time as a result of time or an intervention). If a reading problem is suspected, a periodic collection of reading information is warranted.

He explained that the SPM tool must be sensitive to small incremental changes over time in student achievement (e.g., reading nine words as opposed to ten words), and emphasized the importance of the tool being affordable to allow performing SPM every day if necessary. The same tool can be used to know when the tool is no longer necessary.

Dr. Hintz mentioned that using SPM but not putting other initiatives in place would not be effective; SPM has to be part of a larger model. Assessment must inform instruction, which informs goal setting, which then informs the type of assessments used. Instructional support teams that are dedicated to the model are necessary, and professional development for these teams is essential. An administrator, preferably a principal, should be on the instructional support team as well as reading teachers, special education teachers, K-3 teachers, and fourth, fifth, and sixth grade teachers. Dr. Hintz also suggested using the SRIM Model, and said that the process of change takes about five years. One day workshops are largely ineffective—schools and the leadership team need ongoing technical assistance and support from an SPM Coach.

SPM as Part of a Three-Tier Intervention Model

Dr. Hintz presented a three-tier model for SPM intervention:

Tier 1 is universal intervention. Students respond to the core curriculum. If students do well, concerns are not raised, and students will not get assessed until the next benchmarking period.

Tier 2 provides supplemental intervention. Students in Tier 2 may need additional instruction to help them access the core curriculum. Five strands from the National Reading Panel are used to assess students' needs. A lot of differentiated instruction is utilized at this level, and teachers may also use a supplemental curriculum. Student progress should be measured at least every two weeks.

Tier 3 provides intensive intervention to select students. Students considered for Tier 3 perform below benchmark standards and have a high risk for continued reading and math difficulty. Some

may already be in special education, and if so, intervention comes from special education teacher. Interventions such as small group instruction are used.

Dr. Hintz explained that data from the SPM assessments are entered into a program such as DIBELS or AIMSweb. These programs automatically generate graphs. AIMSweb offers a pen that stores data written on special paper that will sync with AIMSweb software to avoid the need for data entry. He mentioned that data entry is one of the biggest complaints with SPM.

SPM Cycle

Dr. Hintz explained the SPM cycle: when a student comes out of screening, it is determined whether or not the student is going to be worked with individually. A diagnostic assessment may be given. Teachers then look at all past CBM data, academic history, and records. Next, they give an assessment of general outcome measures (Functional Levels of Educational Performance), and identify scheduling and grouping and SPM methods. SPM is administered and instruction is delivered. Teachers monitor student progress and set long-term goals for student performance levels for the end of a year. Dr. Hintz stressed that evaluation must be ongoing.

Summary

Dr. Hintz's presentation made the case that SPM enables us to define measurable and achievable goals linked to the general education curriculum, demonstrate the effects of scientifically based instruction, show changes in student achievement with data, and place useable data back in the hands of teachers.



District Information Sharing Community Meeting
April 28, 2006
Session 2

Presentation by Dr. Bea Birman, Managing Research Scientist, American Institutes for Research

Designing Professional Development that Works

Dr. Bea Birman gave a presentation on effective professional development. She explained that the recent focus on standards and emphasis on teachers who are highly qualified have raised the bar for teacher performance, making this subject a timely matter.

Dr. Birman asked the participants to think about a particularly effective **professional learning activity** that they had participated in and the factors that made it effective.

Comments that were shared:

Follow-up
Interactive
Knowledgeable presenters
Support
Specific objectives
Measurable objective that drove PD
Provide opportunity to have own questions answered
Take info back to local levels

According to Dr. Birman, the field is beginning to reach consensus on what constitutes quality professional development programs. Some of the attributes that may signify an effective PD strategy include:

- Clear mission anchored in student learning of core discipline and skills
- Analysis of student learning of specific content in specific settings
- Embodies theory of adult learning
- Develops, reinforces and sustains group work
- Active participation of school leaders and staff
- Sustains focus over time—continuous improvement
- Models of effective practice

-
- Uses assessment and evaluation

Although this consensus is reasonable, Dr. Birman explained, there are few empirical studies to back it up. However, those that are available do support the consensus. Existing research shows that the core features of high-quality PD include:

- A focus on content knowledge
- Incorporate active learning
- Coherence – aligning PD with other relevant things that are going on

What we really need, she added, are studies that tie PD to teacher practice and student outcomes.

Dr. Birman argued that there must be an agreement on the type of PD to be supported, whether you plan to follow a traditional format, or you're designing your program based on a newer (reform) format. She explained that a traditional format includes training that is presented at a workshop or conference, while a reform format includes networking with colleagues, follow-up activities, and ongoing embedded PD initiatives. It's generally agreed that many hours must be dedicated to professional development, and it must be sustained over time. It's also beneficial if teachers of the same school or subject or grade participate together in the PD program. However, there is little research to indicate which format is more effective; Dr. Birman felt that we need more feedback from teachers.

Dr. Birman stated that teachers say that very few currently participate in high-quality PD; in fact, most teachers say they have received eight **or fewer** hours of PD over the past year! In addition, 95% of teachers have reported attending traditional PD trainings, compared to 42% reporting participating in mentoring, peer observations or coaching. Few report participating in active learning strategies. In essence, there is great variability in what districts provide, and what teachers experience, for PD.

What shapes the quality of district-sponsored PD activities?

Dr. Birman laid out several components of quality professional development. First, the district needs to build a vision for PD; it needs to align with standards and assessments, and there needs to be coordination with other programs. When implementing PD, there needs to be continuous improvement in the program; the district must look at indicators, conduct needs assessments, evaluate the program, and provide guidance to the school and PD providers. Above all, teachers should participate in the planning of PD.

What data should you look at when designing high-quality PD?

- Information about what students are learning
- Information about what teachers are learning
- Information about what teachers are teaching

Summary

To establish a high-quality PD program in a district, Dr. Birman explained that one should encourage content focus, long duration, opportunities for active learning, and coherence. In addition, one must continue to emphasize alignment of PD content with standards and assessments; encourage co-funding of activities from multiple programs; and establish a continuous improvement process using appropriate data.

In conclusion, Dr. Birman emphasized that:

- Large-scale change in teaching practice would require districts and schools to be more strategic.
- High-quality PD requires substantial district capacity: content knowledge, data systems and understanding data, continuous improvement process, partnerships (with providers and universities), resources (financial and human).
- High-quality professional development may be costly, but is a necessary investment.



District Information Sharing Community Meeting
April 28, 2006
Session 3

**Presentation by Pamela Kazez, Region Director for Student Support Services,
Clarke County School District, NV**

Inclusive Schools Practices: Clarke County School District

Ms. Pamela Kazez is the Clarke County School District director who leads the Inclusive Schools Practices initiatives for student support. She presented information about her district's "Inclusive Schools Practices." She began by explaining that Inclusive Schools Practices (ISP) is more than a program – it is multi-faceted and comprehensive; a philosophy. She mentioned that it also includes many of the elements of a high-quality PD program that Dr. Bea Birman discussed.

Fast Facts

Ms. Kazez stated that Clarke County is the fastest growing district in the country. In order to accommodate its increasing numbers of students, the district is looking to hire as many as 4,000 new highly qualified teachers next year.

She said that the district's goal is to create a unified system of inclusive practices. In order to do that, the district had to go through a systems change process that included a comprehensive professional development component. Within that process, several invested groups collaborated, including district representatives, schools, community members, and families.

The process included dividing the district into five regions, in order to better reach the community and parents. The key was to make sure that the change process is deliberate, planned, and strategic with all entities involved. Professional development was conducted at various levels, including the district, region, and school site. The district received assistance and guidance through the process from several sources, including the Access Center, "Inclusion Step-by-Step" training by Stetson & Associates, and Coaches Training/Resources/Data support by the National Institute for Urban Schools Improvement (NIUSI). The district used a variety of NIUSI professional development modules, such as:

- Building Leadership Teams
- Mining Data
- Inclusive Schools
- Co-Teaching
- Assessment

ISP Program Systems

Ms. Kazez argued that it is possible to bring about systems change in a large district if you're deliberate about what you want to change and have a plan in place to implement that change. You need to provide technical assistance on a regional level, and professional development on the school site level.

Clarke County formed Building Leadership Teams (BLT's) that included site administrators, two coaches, and staff from both general and special education – all came to the table for inclusion step-by-step training three times per year. The teams learned about building leadership practices through the training, which required a three-year commitment: the first year involved laying the foundation; the second year emphasized collaborative practices and differentiation; and the third year 3 focused on transition issues, providing support just through technical assistance and other necessary resources.



Facilitated Discussions

Baltimore City Public Schools

- Has mapped out their three tier models in the areas of reading, math, and behavior.
- Surveyed the schools to see how each school was implementing 3 tier models and found that each Principal was doing something a little different.
- Is in the process of integrating students with disabilities in regular classrooms, since there are many segregated special education classrooms within the district. To assist with this, they are making sure that special education teachers are familiar with the core grade level curriculum and effective instructional strategies.
- Currently piloting a couple of things with SPM components. One of the concerns is the technology issue (i.e., making sure the district is up to speed with computers).
- Using Voyager at the elementary level, which requires significant leadership; the district spends a lot of time going from school to school, hand holding. Many staff members are afraid of technology. However, the district hopes to have teachers within each school next year to provide assistance.

St. Louis Public Schools

- Starting to look at SPM data, see the state moving towards RTI and are trying to act proactively. Barnheart is coming to do in-service on SPM/RTI, starting at the central office level with board members, central office staff, elementary and middle school principals, and principals of small learning communities at the high schools.
- To get buy-in, St. Louis started by going to their superintendent to write up a corrective action plan to address everything going on in the district and made sure that he understood that his signature was on the plan. They then took the plan to all building leaders at each school to make sure that each school was compliant. Principals often did not realize before they saw the plan, laws, and regulations that they were responsible for making a lot of these corrective actions happen in their schools. In other words, they made it a building by building plan for addressing grievances or noncompliant behaviors. After they became compliant, they focused on how to deliver instruction.

Irvington Public Schools

- Getting buy-in from superintendents to make changes to be effective. They are under corrective action for the fifth year. They have a new superintendent who hired a new director of special services and are just starting inclusion in their district.
- They currently have a lot of new staff with alternate certification, so a lot of these teachers do not have the necessary strategies in their toolbox. One strategy they have devised for

dealing with this is to conduct a resource scan to see if any exist in their schools. They will then review them to see what intervention level these resources fit.

Kansas City Public Schools

- Has developed relationships with local institutes of higher education.
- Developed a program which the district pays the university tuition if the teacher agrees to stay in the district for a few years.
- Have been working on systems change. They have truly integrated special and general education resources and the work of both administrators.

Los Angeles Unified School District

- Has implemented three tier models and professional development.
- Uses meetings to build teacher collaborative teams.
- Implemented internal training programs, which are located at schools, making it easier for teachers to attend.
- Worked with local universities to add more special education classes into the general education certification program.
- Implemented a paraprofessional career ladder program. Has found this program an effective way to recruit and retain special education teachers.
- Conducting a lot of assessment and using the data to inform instruction for all students (both in general and special education). If students are working on grade level curriculum, they use Open Court & Edusoft for Math. Every time teachers collect data, they look to see which students they will target and what strategies they will use with those students. The data are helpful to demonstrate which students are doing well and which are struggling. For those students who need additional help, they have small group remediation or extensions.
- Have a Student Success Team (a pull-out model) after a lot of in-class modifications have taken place. This is their fourth year with this type of data analysis. During the first year, they experienced a lot of technology problems. Coaches stepped in and helped walk the teachers through these problems. Teachers saw their colleagues getting results and as conversations began among teachers about what was spurring the student improvement. It takes leadership on the part of the building site administrator to make sure the model is in place.
- Building site administrator started conversations among teachers about SPM strategies that were successful and hope and expect that those teachers that are not showing improvement will listen to these strategies. When teachers recognize that their students are falling behind, they then pick three or four students that need intensive instruction. They develop action steps and strategies to work with those students and ask the teacher to meet with the literacy coach.
- They face two issues for system change: Maintaining a narrow focus and sticking with one thing long enough to see change occur. It is difficult to stay focused when you have a constant change in leadership, because each new leader has an agenda. Teachers need some consistency with a program.

Detroit Public Schools

- Paired special education teachers with a grade level or content area in middle and high school to reduce the number of subjects they teach.

Wichita Public Schools

- Described how they are using three-tier models to integrate children with disabilities into general education classes.
- Has provided targeted technical assistance to schools to implement building plans.



Small Group Discussion

How to deliver instruction in a multi-age/ability group

- Differentiated instruction
- Pre-assessment
- Instruction aligned to general education curriculum often involving multiple grade levels—keep eye on core content
- Use of centers
- Peer instruction
- Focus on teaching students learning strategies (e.g., metacognition)
- Making sure instruction reaches all students, not only the middle
- Keep it structured; understandable goals
- Strong positive behavior system in place
- Teaching curricula at different reading levels
- Moving students out of self-contained settings—have good interventions been used prior to changing settings (what supports are necessary for successful transition)
- Use of technology a means of accelerating instruction
- Progress monitoring
- Be flexible to change
- Using co-teaching, pulling in related service providers
- Keep setting flexible in order to best meet students' needs
- Delivering grade-level instruction with differing access points
- Incorporating elements of universal design
- Paying attention to the indicators that make up each standard to see what students are missing or have missed
- Focusing on good instruction in all classrooms—reduces the need for students to be pulled out.
- RTI
- Careful planning at district level—making sure different models/interventions/programs work together.

Least Restrictive Environment—Suggestions to integrate students with special needs in general education classroom:

- Class within a class or combined service model
- More co-teaching and in-class support
- Professional development for general and special education teachers
- Teachers should use best practices
- Adapt curriculum
- Should recognize a continuum of LRE
- Professional development for general and special education administrators
- Monitor the number of students with special needs placed in general education classroom
- Have special education teachers reinforce general education content
- Planning time for general and special education teachers to collaborate

Inclusion—Best Practices

- Having an inclusion specialist in the district
- Using cooperative learning in classrooms
- Using learning centers in classrooms
- Examining LRE data and setting up improvement targets
- Establishing inclusion action teams
- Training principals to understand and monitor inclusion
- Using Circle of Friends
- Developing curriculum framework which is developed by regular education and special education teachers
- Providing assistive technology
- Principal presence and monitoring in classrooms
- Strong administrator support, who set the tone for inclusion
- Coaches
- Using content enhancement routines established by Kansas University (<http://www.ku-crl.org/sim/ceroutines.html>)
- Providing professional development for both regular and general education teachers
- Co-teaching
- Using assistive technology
- Using differentiated instruction
- Plan time in school to develop collaborative lessons
- Using peer-tutoring or cross-age tutors

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- Sending building teams for professional development related to inclusion
 - Having experienced teachers who take the risk of trying strategies on the fly
 - Positive classroom climate
 - Student-centered classrooms
 - Providing professional development on inclusion
 - Using discovery and inquiry-based learning approaches
 - Progress monitoring

Appendix



District-to-District Information Sharing Community Pre-Meeting

Implications of IDEA Reauthorization Reception

April 26, 2006

At the American Institutes for Research

1000 Thomas Jefferson St. NW, Washington DC

4:00-4:15	Registration
4:15-4:30	Introductions of Access Center Staff and Participants of District Information Sharing Community
4:30-5:30	Federal Legislation and Policy Updates by Deborah Ziegler, Associate Executive Director, Policy and Communication Services, The Council for Exceptional Children
5:30-6:00	District Jeopardy and Networking



District-to-District Information Sharing Community Meeting Agenda, April 27, 2006

At the American Institutes for Research

1000 Thomas Jefferson St. NW, Washington DC

8:00-8:30	Registration & Breakfast
8:30-8:45	Welcome and Introductions by Jane Hauser of OSEP and Judy Shanley of the Access Center
8:45-9:00	Introductions of District Information Sharing Community
9:00-10:00	Research regarding Multi-Tier Instructional Model in Math by Dr. Diane Bryant of University of Texas- Austin
10:00-10:15	Break
10:15-11:15	Implementing Reading Multi-Tier Instructional Model in the Del Valle District by Dr. Joyce Bannerot
11:15-12:15	Facilitated District Sharing regarding Multi-Tier Models
12:15-1:00	Lunch
1:00-2:00	Implementing Reading and Behavior Multi-Tier Model in Cincinnati Public Schools by Dr. Markay Winston
2:00-3:00	District Presentations (LA & Kansas City)
3:00-3:15	Break
3:15-4:15	Facilitated Discussion
4:15-4:30	Wrap-Up



District-to-District Information Sharing Community Meeting Agenda, April 28, 2006

At the American Institutes for Research

1000 Thomas Jefferson St. NW, Washington DC

8:00–8:30	Breakfast
8:30-9:00	Welcome and Overview of Day One by Judy Shanley of the Access Center
9:00-10:30	Progress Monitoring by Dr. John Hintze of University of Massachusetts at Amherst
10:30-10:45	Break
10:45-11:45	Facilitated Discussion of Progress Monitoring
11:45-12:15	Designing Professional Development that Works by Dr. Bea Birman of American Institutes for Research
12:15-1:00	Lunch
1:00-2:00	Professional Development and School Improvement: Experience of Clarke County School District by Pam Kazee
2:00-2:15	Break
2:15-3:15	Facilitated Discussion of Professional Development
3:15-3:30	Discussion of Next Steps and Wrap-Up

The 2nd Annual District Information Sharing Community Meeting

April 26-28, 2006

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The Access Center: Improving Outcomes for All Students K-8

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