The Relevance of Race and Culture in Implementing RTI

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Potential of RTI...

- Prevent the disproportionate academic failure of racial/ethnic minority students
- Prevent the disproportionate referral, classification and placement of racial/ethnic minority students
- However.....
  - Prior to implementing RTI, we must address the socio-cultural context of districts and schools in order for RTI to be effective.
School Context
(instruction, teachers, Social interactions, leadership, Resources, home-school connection, etc.)

Referral Process

Special Education Outcomes
Disproportionality Overview
Defining Disproportionality?
Disproportionality Is:

- The over-representation of specific groups in special education programs in relation to their representation in the overall enrollment, and/or the under-representation of specific groups in accessing intervention services, resources, programs, rigorous curriculum and instruction.

How Do We Measure It?
Relative Risk Ratio

- Calculates the risk of students being identified into particular disabilities in comparison to other groups of students.
- For instance, Black students are 2.40 more likely that White students to be identified with MR.
National and New York State Trends
United States
Likelihood of Minority Students Being identified with certain cognitive Disabilities Compared to White Students

Risk Ratio of High Incidence Disabilities (ED, LD, MR) in New York

Black: 1.57
White: 0.82
Hispanic: 1.06
Native American: 1.74
Asian: 0.3

High Incidence Disabilities
Black, Hispanic, and White under representation and overrepresentation by gifted, mental retardation, and suspensions

Likelihood of Placement in a Correctional Institution for Blacks and Hispanics with disabilities compared to Whites

USDOE: Office of Special Education Programs 2001
What has contributed to these outcomes?

More importantly, what is the relevance of race and culture?
Instruction

- Situating of “poverty-induced traits” as expressions of learning or emotional disability.
- Marginalization of the developmental expressions and competencies of low-income and minority students (O’Connor & Fernandez, 2006)
  - For example, African American Vernacular English (AAVE)
Cultural dissonance between school and home cultures

- Teacher beliefs and behaviors regarding schooling are at times incompatible with racial/ethnic minority students beliefs and behaviors regarding schooling (Cooper, 2003; Ferguson, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1999)
  - “urban behavior”
  - “anti-intellectual behavior”

- Ghosts in the classroom (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2004)
  - “lack of education priorities”
Discipline

- Inconsistent practices
- Lack of alternative to suspensions
- Zero tolerance practices (Skiba, 2002)
What are cultural considerations with RTI models?
Response to Intervention Model...

- Part of the special education identification process that includes instructional practices and interventions based on research that works with students.

- “Holds promise for preventing academic failure by providing support for culturally and linguistically diverse students who are underachieving” (Klingner & Edwards, 2006)
Cultural Considerations in an RTI Model

- Culturally and linguistically diverse students are participants in the research on what works best for them.

- There is an ongoing assessment of what’s happening in the classrooms.
  - What does instruction look like?
  - What is the strength of teacher-student relationships?
  - How are students supported?
Cultural Considerations in an RTI Model

School Contexts are examined for support of diverse learners. Which includes the presence of culturally responsive and diverse stakeholders in the referral process:

- General education teachers
- School psychologists
- Reading and math specialists
- Speech pathologists
- Parents
- Various health professionals
Cultural Considerations in an RTI Model

- Teachers have access to appropriate, evidence-based instructional approaches to help them determine if their intervention is working.

- Preservice and Inservice teachers learn what it means to be culturally responsive, and are prepared to teach diverse learners.
Administrators consult resources for creating culturally responsive schooling and an RTI model for culturally and linguistically diverse learners:

- Research on Culturally Responsive Teaching (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995)

- Research on Culturally Responsive the culturally responsive RTI model (Klingner, Artiles, Kozleski Harry, et al, 2005)
Cultural Considerations in an RTI Model

- Administrators consult resources for creating culturally responsive schooling and an RTI model for culturally and linguistically diverse learners:
  - Garcia & Ortiz (1988) Flowchart and questions to guide practitioners through the referral decision-making process.
A Case Study of a New York City School District Engaging Disproportionality: The prep-work for implementing RTI
Re-conceptualizing thought regarding RTI...

- RTI provides the opportunity for schools to systematically evidence the inputs of schooling, however within this evidentiary process, how should schools also systemically address the socio-cultural meaning of race and culture in the school process?
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