“Does Special Education Research Matter:
Impact on Behavior Practice and Student Outcomes”

CEC Congressional Briefing on Special Education Research Funding
Statement Prepared and Presented by

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Main Points (Conclusions)

• Special education researchers have the knowledge, expertise, and experience to engage in rigorous, relevant, and educationally important research related to improving outcomes for children and youth with disabilities and their families.

• Special education researchers have made important contributions toward advancing special education practice, policy, professional development, and research.

• The need for increased funding for special education research is as much, if not more, a priority now than in the past.

Results from Funded Behavior-related Special Education Research

• Special education research funding (i.e., NCSER, Part D IDEA Discretionary Grants) has enabled specification of evidence-based practices for a range of behavior-related areas, for example,
  – Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders (SSBD) and First Step to Success (Hill Walker and Herb Severson - OR)
  – Learning Experiences and Alternative Programs for Preschoolers (LEAP) (Phil Strain - CO)
  – Prevent Teach and Reinforce (Glen Dunlap - FL)
  – General Case Programming (Rob Horner – OR)
  – Function based Behavioral Assessment and Supports (Tim Lewis – MO, Kimberly Ingram – OR)
  – Check In Check Out (Sarah Fairbanks – OR, Leanne Hawken - UT)

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1 The comments and opinions expressed herein are the author’s and do not reflect necessarily the position of the University of Connecticut, U.S. Department of Education, or Council for Exceptional Children, and such endorsements should not be inferred. For information related to this presentation, contact George Sugai at George.sugai@uconn.edu.

2 George Sugai is Professor and Neag Endowed Chair in Behavior Disorders in the Neag School of Education at the University of Connecticut. He co-directs the OSEP funded National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports with Rob Horner and Tim Lewis, and directs the Center for Behavioral Education and Research at the University of Connecticut. His research and practice interests include educating students with behavior disorders, function-based support, school-wide positive behavior supports, implementation of evidence-based practices, school discipline, and classroom and behavior management.
Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) (George Sugai, Rob Horner, Tim Lewis) is an example of the applied impact of special education research:

- In 1998 OSEP funded (Part D) National Technical Assistance Center on PBIS at the University of Oregon
- The purpose of the PBIS Center is to collect, organize and disseminate research-based practices that enhance school’s capacity to improve the social competence of all students, but especially students with behavior disorders
- Since 1996, the PBIS Center has enabled the adoption of evidence-based social behavior practices and systems in more than 17,000 schools across more than 40 states
- In last 12 months, www.pbis.org averaged more than 116,500 visitors per month, producing more than 2.6 million hits
- Implementation efforts by the PBIS Center have stimulated NCSER and OSEP funded special education research in the following areas:
  - Academic-behavior impact (Bob Algozzine - NC, Kent McIntosh - OR, Ron Nelson - NE)
  - High school implementation (Tim Lewis - MO, Lee Kern - PA, Joanne Malloy - NH)
  - Cultural responsiveness (Catherine Bradshaw - MD, Russ Skiba - IN)
  - School-based mental health (Lucille Eber - IL, Catherine Bradshaw - MD, and Krista Kutash - FL)
  - Data-based decision making and teaming (Rob Horner - OR)
  - Intervention implementation fidelity and integrity (Lisa Sanetti - CT)
  - Prevention of bullying behavior (Catherine Bradshaw – MD, Scott Ross – UT)
  - Birth, early childhood, and preschool (Lise Fox – FL, Mary Louise Hemmeter – TN, Mary Beth Bruder – CT)

- Implementation efforts of the PBIS Center has enhanced NCER and OSEP funded special education professional development practices in the following areas:
  - Doctoral leadership preparation
  - Postdoctoral fellowships
  - Special and general education teacher preparation
  - School administration and policy
  - Federal and state initiatives related to response-to-intervention (RtI)
  - Policy and implementation guidelines related to bullying behavior prevention, school climate, safe schools and healthy students, school discipline, racial and disability disproportionality, and restraint/seclusion practices.
• **Examples of Results** from States and Schools Implementing Research-based PBIS Practices and Systems
  
  o A middle school with 550 students in Oregon reduced their office discipline referrals for major rule violations by 48% and sustained that effect for 12 years.
  
  o An elementary school in Connecticut serving 475 students (75% free lunch, 50% Spanish speaking) improved special education referrals to the lowest rate in the district while reversing the downward trajectory of literacy rates to be among the best improved elementary schools.
  
  o A middle school in Illinois had 39% decrease in out of school suspensions for general education students and a 59% decrease for students with IEPs.
  
  o Two middle schools in Illinois experienced 73% and 22% decreases in their office discipline referrals for bullying behaviors.
  
  o 414 schools in Maryland were recognized for implementing SWPBS at or above the highest fidelity criteria.
  
  o Since 2001, 85.5% of Florida schools (906 out of 1059) have been actively implementing PBIS primary prevention (Tier 1).
  
  o Over the last two years in Missouri and compared to students in non-SWPBS schools, students with IEPs in SWPBS schools, on average, had greater attendance, experienced increased time in regular education classes, and outperformed others on state literacy and math assessments, especially, if full continuum of supports was in place.
  
  o Over the last four years, average graduation rates have been higher for all students and students with disabilities in SWPBS high schools in North Carolina, especially, if they have been implementing with the highest fidelity.