


## Building School District Capacity for the Provision of Early Intensive Behavioral Intervention for Students with Autism: District-Wide Support via Model EIBI Classrooms

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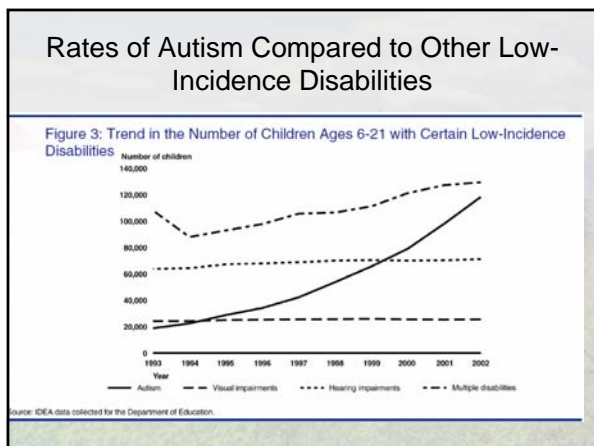
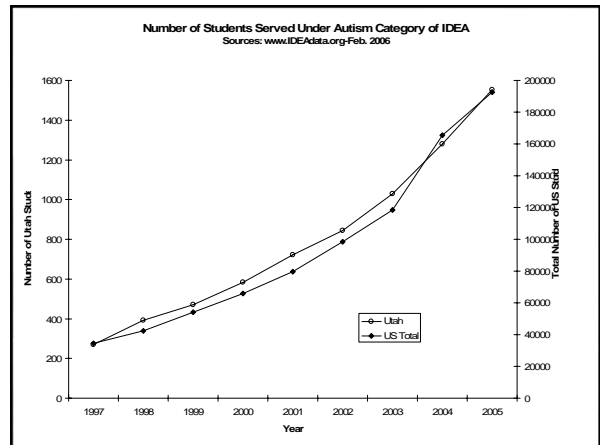

### What is ASSERT?

- The Autism Support Services: Education, Research, and Training (ASSERT) program is a collaborative effort between the Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation and the Center for Persons with Disabilities at Utah State University that was founded in 2003 to address the needs of students with ASD in Utah and the surrounding region.
- ASSERT staff:
  - Provide effective educational and behavioral early intervention to children with autism;
  - Conduct research to improve educational and behavioral interventions for children with autism;
  - Operate a model training classroom for education professionals throughout the intermountain region.

### Autism: Still The Fastest Growing Disability Category in the U.S.

- Autism is a severe developmental disability, marked by impairments of communication and social/emotional functioning that is often accompanied by significant behavior problems and restricted patterns of interest
- Prevalence:
  - 3.4 per 1000 births (the CDC report released yesterday put the number at 6.6 per 1000, or 1 in 152)
  - <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/>
  - equally distributed across races
  - 4:1 ratio of males to females

*Source: Journal of the American Medical Association, January 2003*



### Autism: Prevalence

- There is considerable disagreement between researchers about whether the increase in the number of children diagnosed with autism represents a true "epidemic" of autism or whether improvements in diagnostic procedures and public awareness can account for the observed change in the numbers
- It is probable that the answer lies somewhere between the two extremes
- Irregardless of the answer to this question, the fact remains that more students with autistic characteristics are entering the public school system

### Research on Early Intensive ABA

- A large body of research exists documenting the effectiveness of ABA and early intervention programs with children with autism
- Over 550 studies published from 1960-1995 (Matson et al., 1996) document the effectiveness of ABA techniques for building skills in individuals with autism
- Multiple partial and systematic replications of Lovaas model have taken place since 1993 (Sallows et al. 2005, Cohen & Amerine-Dickens, 2006)
- Howard et al. (2005) documented effectiveness of EIBI in comparison to eclectic and traditional special education programs
- Most recently, Butter et al. (2006) documented 8 case studies in which children previously diagnosed with ASD and mental retardation no longer met behavioral criteria for mental retardation or PDD after participating in EIBI treatment

### Why create EIBI programs in public schools?

- There are more of them than there are of us: more students with autism than there are EIBI programs
- Serve the needs of students with autism living in rural environments who are unable to attend specialized private programs
- School districts have the primary responsibility for providing these students with a free and appropriate public education, not parents or third-party providers
- Operating EIBI programs within the school district will be less expensive than contracting with third-party providers to provide these services

### Why create EIBI programs in public schools?

- While EIBI programs are significantly more expensive than traditional SPED preschool programs, this additional expense could be recouped if students exiting the EIBI program require less intense educational services Pay now or pay later
- For almost three years, we have been working with two districts in Utah to establish EIBI programs
- The EIBI preschool program could serve as a model training site for other teachers/paras working with students with autism in the district
- As a result, districts have expanded their vision beyond the initial EIBI classrooms to include transitional support and district wide training

### Local efforts with public school educators: the first two years

- Experience has shown us intensive training conducted with individual teachers is not sufficient to produce significant positive outcomes for students with autism
- A faulty service-delivery model can prevent even the best teachers with extensive behavioral training from being effective
- System-wide intervention with administrative support is necessary to improve outcomes for students with autism

### Expanding our influence

- We initially asked the question: Can school district personnel successfully operate an EIBI preschool program and produce comparable student progress to what would be seen in a private EIBI program?
- Now that we know the answer is affirmative, we are asking the following secondary questions:
  1. After participation in the EIBI program, what level of transitional support is needed for students?
  2. Can school district personnel expand their current roles to provide support to other personnel and educators within the district?

### ASSERT Training Model for Collaborative School District Programs

- On-site district autism coordinator has primary oversight of the classroom and is the primary liaison with ASSERT staff
- A doctoral student from ASSERT is designated as the project consultant and, under the direction of the ASSERT Director, provides support to the district program



### ASSERT Training Model for Collaborative School District Programs

- Site visits by ASSERT consultant 4 days per month to provide ongoing staff training and curriculum support
- Site visits by ASSERT director 4 times per year to evaluate program, provide ongoing staff training, and meet with district Special Ed. Director and site coordinator to ensure that all parties involved are satisfied with the current status of the program
- Communication between ASSERT consultant and district site coordinator is frequent and ongoing (email, phone calls, videoconferencing)

### Training: Initial and ongoing

- Staff participate in initial training, and ASSERT director and consultant provide ongoing trainings throughout the year
- Kindergarten teachers receiving students from the EIBI program now participate as well
- Topics covered: Basic DTT training, data collection, assessment and curriculum, stimulus preference assessment, token economies, prompting strategies, shaping and fading, teaching play skills, dealing with challenging behaviors, incidental teaching, and activity schedules
- Training includes: didactic instruction, role playing, as well as supervised teaching with coaching and immediate feedback

### ASSERT Collaborative School District Program Description

- 30 hour/week program: 6 hours/day, 5 days/week
- Regular academic year plus an 8-week summer session
- Staffing: 1 teacher plus enough paraprofessionals to make the core ratio 1:1
- Classroom set up with individual work areas for each student, a small group instruction area, and play areas

### Instructional Methodologies

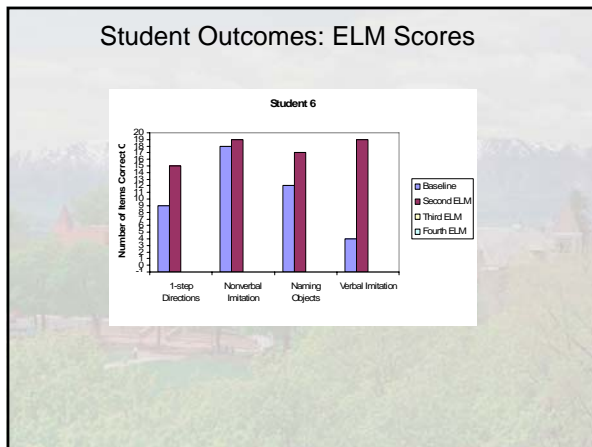
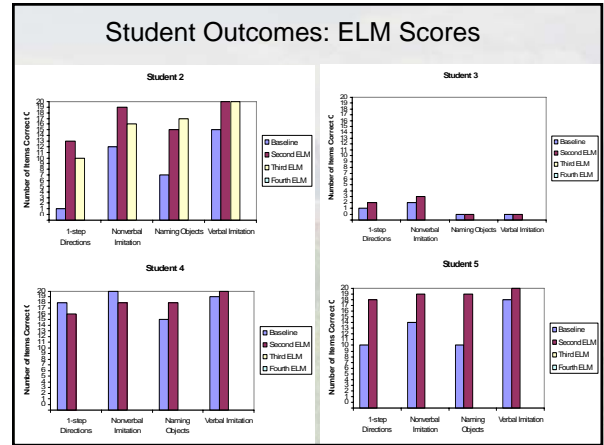
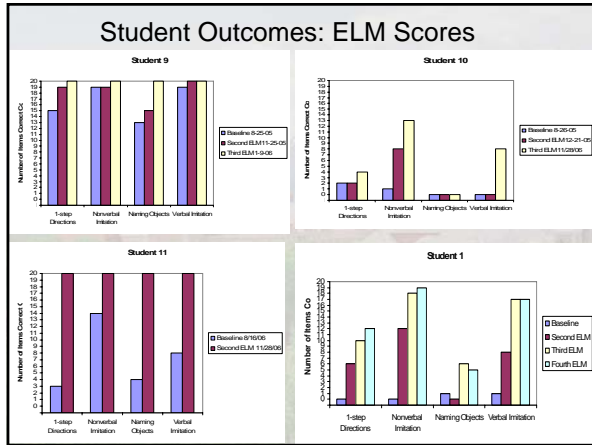
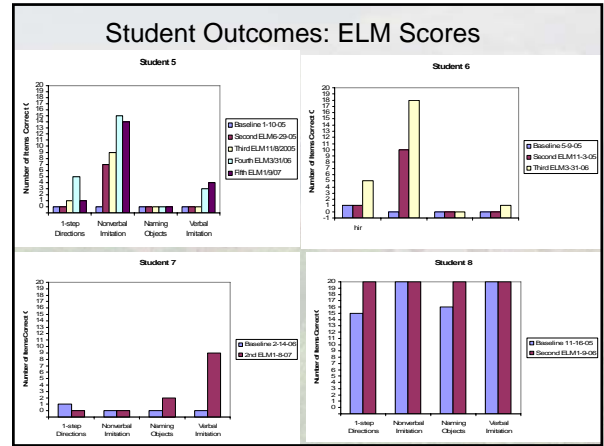
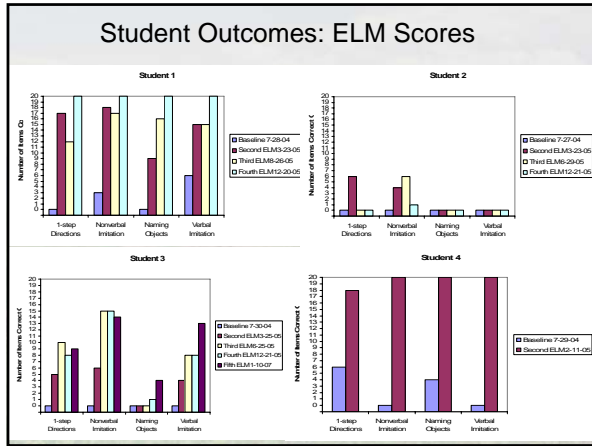
- We employ a variety of research-based behavior analytic teaching techniques including: discrete trial teaching, incidental teaching, activity schedules, scripting/script fading, video modeling
- Individual and small-group instruction depending on needs of each child
- Comprehensive approach that focuses on core features of autism including: verbal behavior, social/play behavior, and challenging behavior

### ASSERT Collaborative School District Program Description: Parent Participation

- Parent training seminars are held at least once per month on strategies that parents can use at home to support things that the students are learning at school
- Parents are strongly encouraged to spend 2 hours per month in the classroom observing their child and interacting with and receiving instruction from classroom staff
- Home visits are initially conducted by the doctoral student with the EIBI teacher to assist with behavioral challenges in the home

### Parent Training Topics

- Introduction to Autism and Behavior Analysis
- Communication
- Dealing with Challenging Behavior
- Community Outings
- Teaching self-help skills
- Teaching Independent Play Using Activity Schedules
- Teaching Play Skills



### Student Outcomes

- All children participating in the EIBI programs have made significant progress
- Significant decreases in challenging behaviors and increases in positive behaviors have been observed

Site	Average % Change on 6 month ELM	Number of Students
Washington Co. SD	33%	6
Weber Co. SD	36%	4
USU-On-Campus Program	35%	15

### Students who have transitioned out from the EIBI program: Placement Outcomes

- Of 13 children who have transitioned from our EIBI programs:
  - 5 attend or attended regular kindergarten without assistance
  - 3 attend or attended alternative kindergarten (smaller class with lower staff/student ratio) without assistance
  - 1 attends regular kindergarten with paraprofessional support
  - 4 attend or attended a self-contained classroom

### Family and School District Outcomes

- Family outcomes:
  - Parent satisfaction surveys indicate that, overall, parents continue to be very pleased with the services their children are receiving and the progress that they are making
- School District outcomes:
  - Satisfaction surveys with school district personnel also indicate that they continue to be pleased with the program
  - Both school district programs have been expanded to accommodate additional students
  - Students receiving less intense services will ultimately result in cost savings for district

### Kindergarten Transition

- Receiving teachers attended intensive initial training for basic behavioral content before students arrive
- Paraprofessionals from the EIBI program provide short and long-term support to kindergarten teachers depending on the needs of the student
- Some students return to the EIBI classroom for ½ day of instruction in addition to kindergarten
- Others receive additional 1:1 instruction at their neighborhood schools (provided by EIBI paras)

### Expanding the influence of the initial training and services: various models

- Washington County has been receiving support for 3 years
- Currently serve 9 preschoolers and 4 kindergarteners with ASD
- Weber County has been receiving support for 2 years
- Currently serve 6 preschoolers and 3 kindergarteners with ASD

### Washington County: A district wide influence

- Currently, paras provide support for students who have transitioned to kindergarten and rotate every 2 months back to the EIBI classroom to receive feedback and gain more practice
- Next year, Washington Co. will implement a district wide training program for all preschool paraprofessionals.
- In May, all special education preschool paras and receiving teachers will participate in a 1 week EIBI training

### Washington Co. continued

- During the school year, all preschool paras will rotate, spending approximately 2 months in an EIBI classroom. They will gain practice and receive feedback, then move on to another classroom in the district.
- Those paras who need more feedback and practice will stay longer, until the consultative team decides they are ready to move on.
- This will continue throughout the year, until all district preschool paras have been trained in behavioral instruction strategies



### **Weber County: An outreach model**

- 3 paras in the EIBI classroom started the school year providing 1:1 support to other children in the district, then came back to work in the EIBI classroom
- The EIBI teacher and autism specialist continue to provide support to teachers throughout the district serving students with ASD through district inservice training and through individual consultation with teachers
- Depending on the success of the paraprofessional training program in Washington Co, Weber Co. may also implement this program

### **What have we learned?**

- Yes, EIBI programs can operate effectively in public school districts using district staff
- Ongoing consultation and support is necessary for success
- Initial and ongoing administrative support is critical
- Ongoing communication with district administration is necessary to maintain this support and adapt the program to meet the needs of the district
- The model EIBI program can be used to train additional teachers/paras within the district (check back later for more data!)

### **What do we still need to learn?**

- Continued development of the support model
  - What exactly will the support fading program look like? We have not yet faded support from either district, just expanded the range of support we have provided
  - Continued support of school district personnel to provide their own district-wide training and evaluation of the effectiveness of various support/training models
  - Measurement issues: How to measure the long-term progress of students, parents and staff?

### **Future Directions**

- Assist other districts in establishing EIBI programs
- Continue to systematize curriculum and training procedures
- Analyze district-wide training of paraprofessionals through feedback and support
- Increase support of receiving teachers through training

### **For more information...**

Download the handout for this presentation from the ASSERT Website (by Monday afternoon):

<http://sped.usu.edu/ASSERT/announce.html>

Questions?:

Email: [tom.higbee@usu.edu](mailto:tom.higbee@usu.edu)