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Research to Practice

The ABCDE Consultation Strategy

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An increasingly important skill for special educators is the ability to effectively consult with a variety of individuals, such as family members, general educators, support staff, community members, paraprofessionals, and administrators. The goal of educational consultation is to resolve issues that affect students' academic, social, behavioral, and adaptive school performance. Many factors contribute to the expansion of special educators' consulting role, including a rise in the number of inclusionary placements for students with disabilities, increased use of co-teaching, a move toward site-based management, an emphasis on Response-to-Intervention (RTI) approaches, and recognition of the critical roles assumed by family members, general educators, and representatives from community agencies in developing individualized programs for students with special needs. Similarly, special educators consult with grade-level, prereferral, RTI, and other problem-solving teams. Special educators may feel unprepared for their roles as consultants, however (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009; Conderman & Stephens, 2000). This article presents a five-step process for supporting effective consultation and offers brief applications of the steps with elementary and secondary examples.

Simply put, as described here, *consultation* is a process in which one person assists others in making decisions and implementing plans that are in the best interest of students (Kampwirth, 2006). Consequently, consultation requires that the consultant communicate effectively and possess expertise in specific evidence-based approaches to improve students' academic and/or social-emotional-behavioral skills. The ABCDE consultation strategy highlights the process of consultation while emphasizing the importance of active listening and the need for using data to verify the effectiveness of the chosen intervention. The letters *ABCDE* serve as a mnemonic for helping teachers remember the order of the steps: **A**ttend, **B**rainstorm, **C**hoose an Intervention, **D**o It, and **E**valuate the Intervention.

Attend

As a first step and throughout the consultation process, consultants must actively **attend** or **listen to the consultee's needs and con-**

cerns. Effective communicators continuously self-monitor by reflecting on their word choices, how they say their words, and how the listener hears and understands those words. Speakers convey information through gestures, movements, facial expressions, body posture, and words (Covey, 2004). Attending consists of a feedback loop in which consultants simultaneously provide information, evaluate the listener's response, and adjust their communication accordingly.

Consultants can convey their attention by using several communication skills. **Minimal encouragers** include nodding, making appropriate eye contact, and using "Uh-huh," "I see," or "I understand" statements. **Paraphrasing** involves restating the speakers' words in your own terms. For example, when a general educator shares that Michael, a student with an Individualized Educational Program (IEP), is struggling with the reading load in a high school history class, the consultant can paraphrase by saying, "Let me make sure I understand. What you are saying is that Michael is getting further behind in class due to the heavy reading load," or "So, the situation is that Michael may not pass United States History 1 unless we can think of ways to help him with the heavy reading load." **Response-to-affect statements** notice, name, and affirm the speaker's feelings, for example, "I would be concerned if I were you," or "I can see you are frustrated." Finally, **open-ended questions** seek additional information and help specify student (and/or) consultee needs. In this situation, the consultant might ask, "What interventions have already been tried with Michael?" "How successful were those interventions?" and "What do you want Michael to be able to do that he is not currently doing?"

(continued on page 2)

In This Issue . . .	
Research to Practice	1
33rd International Conference	4
Twitter/Facebook Announcement	4
CLD Award Nominations	5
2010–2011 CLD Board of Trustees	7
CLD Information Central	8

(ABCDE Strategy, continued from page 1)

Appropriately and sincerely using these attending and communication skills conveys an interest in the situation and a desire to offer support while clarifying the issue so that problem solving may begin. In short, consultation is a problem-solving process that begins with and depends upon effective communication skills (Kampwirth, 2006).

Brainstorm

After the situation has been described and clarified, the team can begin brainstorming possible causes and solutions. In this step, the consultant leads the team or individual through **thinking creatively about any and all possibilities that could support the student**. Friend and Cook (2010) noted that brainstorming involves accepting all ideas without evaluation, proposing solutions freely (even if they seem impractical), assigning a recorder to create a permanent record of ideas, and “playing” with ideas to generate additional ones. Limiting brainstorming to short intervals, such as 2 to 3 minutes, may help avoid fatigue or frustration. In preparation for brainstorming, teams might bring to the meeting materials such as texts, handouts, or printouts from websites (e.g., *interventioncentral.org* for behavioral concerns, or *fcrr.org* and *whatworks.ed.gov* for academic issues). The goal of brainstorming is to list numerous existing evidence-based practices as well as new, creative ideas. Without this step, team members may feel they have not considered all possibilities. Michael’s team might brainstorm ways of including peers, family members, assistive technologies, alternative reading materials, and text supports to provide him with full access to the curriculum in classes with heavy reading loads. Involving individuals from different backgrounds and disciplines in brainstorming contributes to the richness of generated ideas. Other ways to approach brainstorming include **concept mapping**, **role plays**, an **idea checklist**, **metaphors** (Dettmer, Thurston, Knackendoffel, & Dyck, 2009), or **brainwriting** or the **nominal group technique** (Friend & Cook, 2010).

Choose an Intervention

After a few minutes of brainstorming, the consultant facilitates the team’s decisions about the most appropriate intervention(s), given the student’s circumstances and existing resources. The team considers all items from the brainstorming list and realistically narrows the options to a few for further discussion and consideration. While deciding on an intervention, the team may consider the expertise of the consultant, teacher, and others in regards to implementing the intervention; associated costs; evidence of the intervention’s effectiveness; the student’s age, grade, and disability; success and failure of previous interventions with that student; and family members’ views. Similarly, when making curricular or behavioral adaptations for students, Friend and Bursuck (2009) reminded teams to (a) select age-appropriate interventions, (b) choose adaptations agreed upon by the team members and with demonstrated effectiveness, and (c) try the easiest interventions first. The consultant may also offer information such as the typical intensity of the intervention (e.g., three times per week for 30 minutes over one semester). As the team considers interventions, the consultant can foster collaborative partnerships by gently suggesting ideas (e.g., “I wonder if we could use alternative reading materials with Michael?” or “How would you feel about using Kurzweil or other text-to-speech technologies?” or “I

have had success with using visuals as chapter graphic organizers,” rather than demanding or dictating his or her own agenda or ideas).

Do It!

The special educator’s role in consultation does not conclude with the decision to implement a particular intervention; his or her professional obligation extends through the implementation phase. That is, talking about interventions is insufficient; the team must now take action and make a commitment to implement the intervention with fidelity. Implementation presents its own challenges because individuals or teams may not have the training, expertise, skills, or resources to implement the intervention as described in research. For example, many research-based interventions—such as the Orton-Gillingham, Reading Recovery, Direct Instruction, and the Strategy Intervention Model—require specialized training. Therefore, consultants may discuss on-going staff development opportunities with school leaders to ensure that faculty members are equipped with required skills. Other interventions—such as finding a mentor for the student, developing individualized accommodations or modifications, or designing a behavioral contract—are effective and do not require extensive staff development or specialized training.

In this step, teams must attend to details and consider ways to ensure follow-through. A chart or checklist that contains the steps associated with the intervention, each person’s responsibility, and spaces to write initiation and completion dates adds accountability. For example, the consultant might train the teacher on the use of assistive technologies, provide examples of high-interest low-reading texts that cover the history content, or model the use of various visuals. Increasingly, curriculum guides include intervention integrity checklists for teachers to document the accuracy with which they implement a specific instructional approach. Observations by colleagues familiar with the intervention, as well as videotaping or audiotaping, may also provide useful information for assessing intervention fidelity. Furthermore, teams might develop a documentation system, such as a notebook, that serves as a reference tool in tracking various interventions and their success with students.

Evaluate the Intervention

Regardless of the chosen intervention, the team must decide on an evaluation method, which must match the expected outcomes and agreed-upon goals and include a timeline (Dettmer et al., 2009). The team will evaluate the success of the intervention if the identified issue has been resolved. All team members, including the student and family members, should understand the evaluation method. Ongoing monitoring provides frequent data on which to base and justify instructional decisions, such as returning to earlier steps or repeating steps (Kampwirth, 2006). Informal assessments (e.g., 1-minute timings, multiple short classroom observations) provide helpful data without taxing anyone’s time. Frequent charting of these data allows visual inspection of progress and may also motivate the student to reach established goals. Michael could chart the number of pages read per evening and his quiz scores, and his upcoming assignments could be confirmed through parent and teacher signatures. Involving the student in the intervention, data collection procedures, and goal-setting may contribute to the intervention’s success. If the intervention is only minimally successful or unsuccessful, teams will need to reflect upon the reasons for the outcomes, modify the plan, or start a new approach (Kampwirth, 2006).

Table 1 provides two brief hypothetical examples from an elementary and a secondary consultation that illustrate the ABCDE consultation strategy.

Summary

In this age of accountability and collaboration, special educators need to be effective consultants. That is, they need to be able to share their expertise with others to support students in their least restrictive environments. Being an effective consultant requires the use of effective communication skills as well as a working knowledge of effective methods. The ABCDE strategy reminds special educators of five important steps in consultation-based problem solving: Attend, Brainstorm, Choose an Intervention, Do It, and Evaluate the Intervention. This strategy borrows heavily from most accepted problem-solving approaches, with the exception of its emphasis on effective communication skills and the mnemonic to help teachers remember the steps. Using this strategy promotes a spirit of accountability and shared problem solving by recognizing the skills and talents of all team members.

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TABLE 1. Hypothetical Consultations at Elementary and Secondary Levels Using the ABCDE Consultation Model

Consultation Steps	Elementary Example: Myra, a 1st grader scoring below benchmark on the DIBELS Nonsense Word fluency and Letter Naming subtests	Secondary Example: Jubal, a 10th grader performing poorly on content-area tests, in danger of failing two content-area classes
Attend	Consultant displays interest by nodding, asking questions, clarifying, and summarizing	Consultant maintains appropriate eye contact, paraphrases, and takes notes during team meeting
Brainstorm	Team brainstorms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct Instruction for letter-sounds and consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words • Increased time with Wilson Reading program • Increased time reading at home with family • Peer-assisted reading during silent reading time • Participation in Reading Recovery 	Team brainstorms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow student to use notes on tests • Teach specific test-taking strategies • Use guided notes in classes • Modify tests for student • Review w/ study guides • Use peer tutoring • Increase family involvement • Use motivation system
Choose an Intervention	Team chooses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General education guided reading group (Tier 1) • Thirty minutes daily Direct Instruction for letter-sounds & VC words in a small-group setting (Tier 2) 	Team chooses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use guided notes for all students in class • Teach test-taking strategies for all students in class
Do It!	Consultant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathers data required to provide Tier 2 instruction • Contacts parents regarding the change • Discusses schedule w/ general education teacher • Provides materials and video on Direct Instruction • Works w/ student one-on-one to model new reading approach to teacher 	Consultant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides examples of guided notes and models use of the notes in general education class. • Collaborates w/ general education teachers to develop own guided notes for lectures and videos • Suggests that teachers have student partners check guided notes for neatness and accuracy
Evaluate the Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant observes Tier 2 instruction weekly using curriculum guide checklist to evaluate integrity of intervention and provided teacher feedback on fidelity of intervention • Student completes weekly probes of letter-sound fluency and CVC word decoding; scores are compared to benchmarks established by team • By December, student had mastered all letter sounds/ digraphs and had scored at benchmark for Nonsense Word fluency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided notes of student are neat and accurate, as noted by his partner and teacher • Student's content area test scores improved from 58% to 74% during semester

Mark Your Calendars for October 27th & 28th, 2011



Evidence-Based Practices:

How Researchers Develop Evidence-Based Interventions, and How Practitioners Implement Evidence-Based Interventions

**33rd International Conference on Learning Disabilities
AUSTIN, TEXAS**

CLD President-Elect & Program Chair **Monica Lambert** is putting together an outstanding program in the areas of **learning disability research, policy, and evidence-based intervention:**

- ★ *Longer sessions*, with more opportunities for in-depth professional development
- ★ *Interactive Crackerbarrel Sessions* — interactive discussions on Response to Intervention and a number of other timely topics.

Look for more information to be available soon on CLD's Facebook and Twitter social networks, and check for emails about the conference.

Local Arrangements Chairs Judy Voress and **Diane Pedrotty Bryant** are working with the Local Arrangements Committee members to ensure that Texas hospitality will be in full force throughout your visit. **SO, Y'ALL COME!**



Looking Ahead to the

**2011 CLD
Conference**
AUSTIN, TEXAS
OCTOBER 2011



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CLD AWARDS NOMINATIONS

2011 Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award

Each year, the Council for Learning Disabilities recognizes outstanding teachers who are CLD members and who consistently provide quality instruction to students with learning disabilities. These teachers, selected by local chapters, provide direct services to students. They are dedicated to implementing evidence-based instructional practices and collaborating with classroom teachers and other service providers to greatly improve the quality of education for all students who struggle academically.

Awards Benefits

Recipients are guests at the annual international conference and receive a complimentary registration. During the conference-award program, they receive a certificate of recognition and an honorarium. These CLD members are also profiled in *LD Forum* and are given a 1-year membership renewal.

Criteria for Nomination

- Be a member of CLD or join as part of the application process

- Provide direct services to students with learning disabilities
- Implement evidence-based instructional practices that result in significant gains in achievement for children, adolescents, or adults who struggle academically
- Advocate for persons with learning disabilities

Contents of Nomination Packet

- Completed Nomination Form and vita (maximum 2 pages)
- Three (maximum) letters of recommendation (from supervisor, colleague, and/or other professionals)
- Two testimonials from parents or students
- Responses to "Statement of Educational Practices" (submitted in 12-point font and double spaced)
- Submit completed packet to local chapter president

Teacher of the Year Nomination Form

Nominee: _____
Address: _____
City/State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: _____ email: _____
Current job title/Employer: _____
Chapter/Representative submitting nomination: _____
Representative contact information: _____

Statement of Educational Practices

Describe your current teaching responsibilities and explain how your instructional practices and collaborative efforts support district- and building-level goals for meeting the needs of all students within a Response to Intervention model. (500-word maximum)

Deadline: Chapter submission deadline to be determined by individual chapters. Chapter presidents must submit nomination packets to the Leadership Development Committee chairperson by **May 15, 2011**. Candidates not affiliated with a local chapter may be nominated by a CLD member, who will submit the nomination packet to the LDC chairperson. Questions may be submitted to the chairperson (kyle.hughes@yahoo.com).

Leadership Development Committee Chairperson: Kyle Hughes, 1011 S. Cove Way, Denver, CO 80209

CLD AWARDS NOMINATIONS

2011 Floyd G. Hudson Service Award

The Floyd G. Hudson Service Award is presented by the Council for Learning Disabilities for outstanding performance and commitment by a professional who works in the field of learning disabilities in a role outside of the classroom. This CLD member, working in a leadership capacity, enhances the professional learning of others in the field and has an impact on the lives of persons with learning disabilities.

This award is named in memory of Dr. Floyd G. Hudson, a professor at the University of Kansas, who was a leader in the early years of CLD. Floyd was instrumental in formulating early policy to drive federal and state initiatives in the area of learning disabilities. Don Deshler has said of Floyd, "As I visit many schools across Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska, I can really see Floyd's lasting influence. He was a kind, generous, innovative, and collaborative professional. He worked closely with many school districts in solving problems, preparing teachers, and implementing more effective programs. Even today, many people here in the Midwest and around the country tell me about their positive experiences working with Floyd, many of which took place more than 20 years ago."

Award Benefits

The recipient is a guest at the annual international conference and receives a complimentary registration and membership

renewal. During the conference award program, he or she receives a certificate of recognition and an honorarium. The recipient will also be profiled in *LD Forum*.

Criteria for Nomination

- Be a member of CLD or join as part of the application process
- Provide professional development/consulting services or serve in a leadership role working with teachers, other professionals, parents, and students
- Provide exemplary services to the field of learning disabilities for a minimum of 5 years

Contents of Nomination Packet

- Completed nomination form and vitae (maximum of 2 pages)
- Three (maximum) letters of recommendation (from supervisor, colleague, and/or other professionals) Testimonials from parents or students, if applicable
- Responses to questions from Statement of Educational Practices (submitted in 12-point font and double spaced)
- Submit completed packet to the local chapter president

Floyd G. Hudson Outstanding Service Award Nomination

Nominee: _____

Address: _____

City/State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ email: _____

Current job title/Employer: _____

Chapter/Representative submitting nomination: _____

Contact information for representative: _____

Statement of Educational Practices

Describe your role as a professional in the field of special education. How does this role allow you to impact instructional practices and provide support to students with learning disabilities? In addition, describe the most critical issues relevant to delivery of academic support for all students who struggle in school. How do you address these issues in your role as a professional? (750-word maximum)

Deadline: Chapter submission deadline to be determined by individual chapters. Chapter presidents must submit nomination packets to the Leadership Development Committee chairperson by **May 15, 2011**. Questions may be submitted to the chairperson (kyle.hughes@yahoo.com).

Leadership Development Committee Chairperson: Kyle Hughes, 1011 S. Cove Way, Denver, CO 80209
The Leadership Development and Executive Committees of CLD are responsible for the selection of the award recipient.

CLD AWARDS NOMINATIONS

2011 Outstanding Researcher Award

To promote and recognize research, the Council for Learning Disabilities annually presents an award for an outstanding manuscript-length paper on learning disabilities based on a doctoral dissertation that has been completed within the last 5 years.

The winner will receive a plaque to be presented at the **J. Lee Wiederholt Distinguished Lecture**, which will be held during the 33rd International Conference on Learning Disabilities in Austin, Texas, on October 27th and 28th, 2011. In addition, the paper will be considered for publication in *Learning Disability Quarterly*.

Six copies of the paper (maximum 25 pages), which must conform to the style of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, should be submitted to the Council for Learning Disabilities, 11184 Antioch Road, Box #405, Overland Park, Kansas 66210 • 913-491-1011

Deadline for Paper Receipt: May 31st

The winner will be notified by August 15th, 2011.

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CLD Information Central

CLD Mission, Vision, & Goals

Mission Statement: The Council for Learning Disabilities (CLD) is an international organization that promotes evidence-based teaching, collaboration, research, leadership, and advocacy. CLD is composed of professionals who represent diverse disciplines and are committed to enhancing the education and quality of life for individuals with learning disabilities and others who experience challenges in learning.

Vision Statement: Our vision is to include all educators, researchers, administrators, and support personnel to improve the education and quality of life for individuals with learning disabilities and others who experience challenges in learning.

External Goals

1. Promote the use and monitoring of evidence-based interventions for individuals with learning disabilities (LD) and others who experience challenges in learning.
2. Foster collaborative networks with and among professionals who serve individuals with LD and others who experience challenges in learning.
3. Expand our audience to educators, researchers, administrators, and support personnel.
4. Promote high-quality research of importance to individuals with LD and persons who experience challenges in learning.
5. Support leadership development among professionals who serve individuals with LD and others who experience challenges in learning.
6. Advocate for an educational system that respects, supports, and values individual differences.

Internal Goals

1. Ensure efficient, accountable, responsive governance to achieve the CLD mission.
2. Mentor future CLD leaders.
3. Maintain sound fiscal planning and practice.
4. Recruit and retain CLD members.
5. Increase the diversity of our organization.

CLD on the Web

www.cldinternational.org

Visit the CLD website for all the latest updates! Read CLD's Annual Report, position papers, conference news, Infosheets, and much more.

Convenient E-Access to ISC and LDQ

- You can access your complimentary members-only subscription to *Intervention in School and Clinic* through the CLD website. Articles are searchable by keyword, author, or title and are indexed back to 1998. Simply log-in through our Members' Only portal

(<https://www.cldinternational.org/Login/Login.asp>) and then click on the link provided.

- CLD members have free online access to *Learning Disability Quarterly* for issues starting Winter 2007 (Vol. 30, No. 1). To activate your free access, register with IngentaConnect (<http://www.ingentaconnect.com>). Once initial registration is complete, select Personal Subscriptions. Select *Learning Disability Quarterly* and enter your subscription number (your CLD membership number). You will be notified by e-mail once your online access has been activated. For downloadable step-by-step instructions, visit the CLD website. With your free online access, you can receive e-mail alerts and RSS feeds for new issues, interlink between articles to track down other relevant articles, search for topics of interest, and more.

Infosheets

Infosheets provide concise, current information about topics of interest to those in the field of learning disabilities. Current Infosheets are available for viewing and download at

<https://www.cldinternational.org/Infosheets/Infosheets.asp>

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phone: 913-491-1011 • fax: 913-491-1012
Executive Director: Linda Nease

CLD Publications Invite Authors to Submit Manuscripts

Learning Disability Quarterly

The flagship publication of CLD, LDQ is a nationally ranked journal. Author guidelines may be accessed at:

<http://www.cldinternational.org/Publications/LDQAuthors.asp>

Intervention in School and Clinic

ISC, a nationally ranked journal with a historical affiliation to CLD, posts author guidelines at:

<http://www.cldinternational.org/Publications/ISC.asp>

LD Forum

The official newsletter of CLD, *LD Forum* accepts manuscripts for its **Research to Practice** and **5 Ways to...** columns. Author guidelines are available at:

<http://www.cldinternational.org/Articles/RTP-5.pdf>

Infosheets

Research summaries on current, important topics, Infosheets are aligned with CLD's tradition of translating research into practice to make it accessible and useful to practitioners. Author guidelines may be accessed at:

<https://www.cldinternational.org/Infosheets/Infosheets.asp>