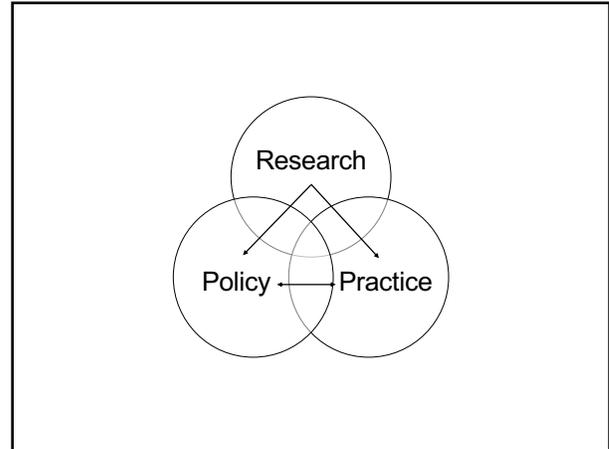


**A Policy and Advocacy
Primer: Special Educators
as Social Change Agents**

Alissa Rausch, EdD

Agenda/Outcomes

Review	Discuss	Hear	Explore	Practice
Review the research to policy gap in special education	Discuss the potential solution of a professional development on advocacy	Hear voices of students who used The Zero to Three Advocacy Toolkit: You Have What It Takes! Possibilities and Opportunities	Explore the role of understanding equity in advocacy	Practice using advocacy skills in a problem of practice (suspension and expulsion).



Teachers in the Classroom

- Focus for special education professionals has been on closing the research to practice gap:
 - Building knowledge of development
 - Building knowledge of effective instruction
 - Building knowledge of appropriate and culturally affirming practices
- Building leadership capacity for the purpose of administrative, director and leadership positions

Teachers in the Profession

Special educators indicate that they have a passion to advocate for quality early childhood education (at classroom, program, organizational, local & national levels).

Special educators indicate that they do not have the knowledge or behaviors about HOW to do this. (Smith & Barton, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2014)

The Remaining Question

- What about the research to policy gap?
- How do we ensure that high quality, equitable practices happen based on policy and that policy supports special education professionals in implementing those practices?
 - e.g.: Teachers who use quality practices in supporting children who engage in challenging behavior are asked to implement those practices AND they are compensated appropriately for using them.

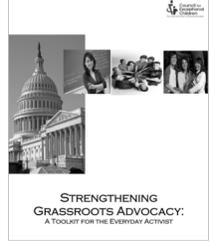
What We Know

- Possibilities:
 - Deliberate collaboration
 - Recognizing leadership and "allyship" potential
 - Taking the first step in a complex process
- Opportunities
 - Support with defining an issue
 - Providing different contexts for use
 - Identifying a more specific skill set
 - Explaining the complexity of problems and thereby solutions

You Have What It Takes- The Zero to Three Advocacy Toolkit



Council for Exceptional Children Strengthening Grassroots Advocacy: A Toolkit for the Everyday Activist



The Inextricable Tie to Equity

- The desire for equity is the "why" of advocacy
- Understanding issues of equity (power, privilege, etc):
 - allows to see new perspectives that cannot be "unseen."
 - Is culturally affirming
 - Is mindful
 - Deconstructs deficit thinking and reconstructs possibility (an essential feature of advocacy)
 - Is "humanizing"
- Growing ability to take different perspectives

Advocacy Connection #1: We Own Our Sociocultural Development

"I recall the particular situation, an early intervention meeting with approximately 4 women and 2 men in which I found myself interrupting the female attendees, all of which were superior in rank to me at the school. I have done my best to remedy my thoughtless interruptions of female colleagues, of any level. In today's atmosphere, I attempt to think before I speak when it comes to anything related to females. I must admit that I as a Latino in the United States, I grew up in atmosphere at home and in society that was not and, in many ways, still is not respectful and equal in respects to women young and old."

Advocacy Connection #2: We Carry Biases

Teacher Testimony

Advocacy Connection #3: It's Complicated

"Unfortunately, I am able sum up the ableist interactions I experienced as a child in short. I believe that we are all well aware that The United States of America is still a very politically divided and ableist place. It is quite a difficult task to contend with, but I simply do my best to surround myself with those aligned with morals and values similar to my own."

Ongoing Wonderings...

- What are the limitations of advocacy?
- What about civility and discourse?
 - How do we explore spaces and circumstances for deep and meaningful conversation?
- How do we teach discourse?
 - Meaningful partnerships
 - Open minds
 - Desirable end result/outcome
- How do we prioritize this in our time with so much to do?
 - If the buck stops with everybody, than who is doing the work?

Let's Try It

In the Public Interest | September 2016

Disparities in preschool suspensions and expulsions

African-American children represent 18 percent of children enrolled in preschool, but they account for nearly half of preschool expulsions.

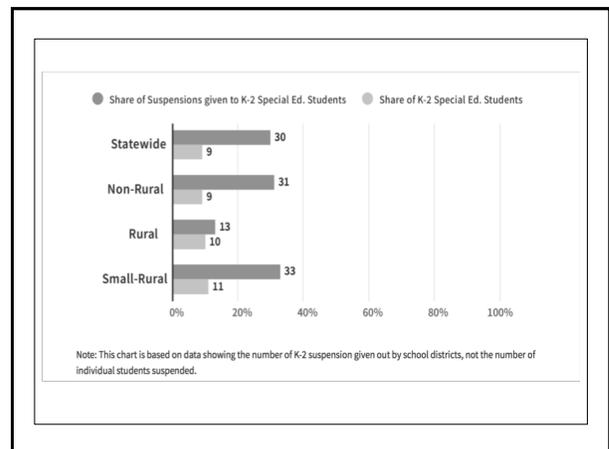
By Lula A. Beatty, PhD

African-American children, mostly boys, account for nearly half of the children expelled from preschool, although they represent only about 18 percent of children enrolled. Remarkably, preschoolers are expelled more than three times as often as children in grades K-12. This disproportionate discipline has serious consequences for their long-term educational and life success. Some scholars have even linked this disparate treatment as a first step in the "school-to-prison pipeline."

At the APA convention in August, a panel of experts in the field discussed reasons for high preschool suspension rates and ways to eliminate them. Rosemarie Allen, EdD, (Metro State University) provided an overview of preschool suspensions; Walter Gilliam, PhD (Yale University), identified his top 10 empirically based reasons why school expulsions must stop; Mary L. Hemmeter, PhD (Vanderbilt University), described the Pyramid Model, a social emotional behavioral intervention to reduce early school suspensions; and Deborah Perry, PhD (Georgetown University), discussed how mental health consultation can address implicit biases leading to expulsion.



A briefing on the issue — "Preschool Suspension, Expulsion and Racial Disparities" — arranged by Allen was held at the Colorado Governor's Mansion the evening before the convention symposium, with the symposium panelists giving remarks. Colorado State Representative Susan Lontine (D) described legislation she has introduced to reduce early childhood expulsions in Colorado.



Part 1: Where Do I Start?

- Issue Definition:
 - What are the “issues?”
 - What are you advocating for?
 - Can the issue be solved with a policy solution?
- Table Talk:
 - Suspension and expulsion is one issue.
 - What are some of the other issues that you see as policy challenges in special education that require advocacy?
 - How clear and specifically can you define these?

Part 2: What Skills Do You Have for Advocacy?

- Skills Assessment:
 - Rate yourself using the scale.
- Table Talk:
 - What is are the skills or dispositions that stand out for you? Those that you might draw on for advocacy?
 - What are potential areas of growth for you?
 - How might you identify allies to help you fill in the gaps?

Rate Your Skills

- Enthusiasm
- Knowledge of Issues
- Persistence and Patience
- Ability to Connect with Others
- Communication- Written
- Communication- Oral
- Organization
- Creativity
- Problem-Solving
- Technology
- Leadership

Part 3: Which Advocacy Strategies Best Match Your Skills?

- Matching Skills to Advocacy Strategies
 - Analyze your results and determine the intersections between your skills/dispositions and the advocacy strategies that have been identified.
- Table Talk:
 - What advocacy strategies do you identify as the best fit for you?
 - What are the collective areas of strengths at your table?
 - What are the collective weakness?
 - What are the ways that you can remedy these weaknesses?

Advocacy Strategy	Enthusiasm	Knowledge of Issues	Persistence and Patience	Ability to Connect with Others	Communication Skills- Oral	Communication Skills- Written	Organizational Skills	Creativity	Problem Solving	Technology	Leadership
<input type="checkbox"/> Build Relationships and Partnerships with Other Advocates											
<input type="checkbox"/> Join a Coalition											
<input type="checkbox"/> Recruit Others to be Advocates for They Young Children											
<input type="checkbox"/> Be a Source of Information for Other Advocates											
<input type="checkbox"/> Communicate (write, call, or meet) with a Local, State, or Federal Policymaker											
<input type="checkbox"/> Write an Editorial or Letter to the Editor											
<input type="checkbox"/> Testify Before Legislation and Other Policymakers											
<input type="checkbox"/> Host a Site Visit for Policymakers											
<input type="checkbox"/> Organize Meetings or a Coalition of Other Advocates											
<input type="checkbox"/> Mobilize Other Advocates in Support of, or in Opposition to, a Policy											

Part 4: What Is Your Action Plan?

- Creating an Action Plan
 - Name 1-3 advocacy strategies in which you might engage.
 - Be clear about the specific ways that you can implement these in your setting and how they connect to the issue that you defined (suspension/expulsion or otherwise).
- Table Talk:
 - Share your action plan with peers at your table and offer feedback to one another about the action plan.
 - Can you identify other action plan ideas?
 - Can you find ways in which you can work with others and build a collaborative plan?

Part 5: What Is the First Step?

- Identify the new ways that you see your role as an advocate today versus 6 months ago.
- Identify the strategies that you can engage in on Monday.
- Identify the strategies that you are not fluent in.
- Discuss resources or supports that could help you build your advocacy capacity.

Discussion and Questions?

Thank you!

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