Promoting Research to Practice - Schools, Families, Communities (Center for)

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The Center for Promoting Research to Practice seeks to develop practical solutions to real problems for those individuals at risk or who have disabilities. All too often research that is created for these individuals remains at the development level and is not disseminated into best practices. Using an interdisciplinary approach and establishing a living laboratory through partnerships with schools, parent and families, and community service and support providers, the Center aspires to distinguish itself as a leader at state, regional, and national levels in addressing the need for the production of research to reach the users and consumers of research. The mission of the Center for Promoting Research to Practice (CPRP) is to generate new knowledge that will favorably impact the lives of individuals with or at risk for disabilities and promote the use of evidence based best practices by schools, families, and community service providers. The Center emphasizes the conducting of applied research, partnership, and dissemination.

APPLIED RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES
The CPRP focuses on securing research projects that emphasize bringing research findings from the field and moving them into effective practice with evaluation of outcomes. The projects secured by the CPRP faculty focus on individuals who have identified areas of disability or are considered at risk for developing disabilities. Currently, the Center has research projects examining the most effective intervention strategies for improving behavioral and academic outcomes for students with behavior disorders. One project focuses on understanding effective, scientifically based interventions in educating students who present severe challenges to the schools. Included in the Center is a research project that aims to develop and integrate Little Talks, an intervention to bolster language and literacy among low-income infants and toddlers, in home-based early intervention. Additionally, two projects focus on supporting the language and literacy development of preschool children with language impairment, a population of children who are at risk for developing reading disorders in school-age years. A few completed projects include the implementation and evaluation of progress monitoring within a Response to Intervention model of school-wide change in six high need elementary schools in two diverse school districts, evaluation of the Philadelphia home-school visitor model for infants and toddlers, and a project focused on the evaluation of the Early Reading First initiative to improve early literacy in Head Start preschool children.

PARTNERSHIP
The Center forms and maintains partnerships at national, regional, and local levels. Several objectives are established to accomplish this goal. The CPRP assists with the development and implementation of research projects designed in local school districts and intermediate units, as well as early childhood education and intervention providers. Many school districts, particularly small and rural districts, do not have the capacity to engage in widespread research efforts. Yet, these districts often have very significant needs for empirically based decision making. The CPRP provides a cost effective vehicle for these districts to engage in such research efforts. Another level of partnership for the CPRP is interdisciplinary research within the University community. This objective is met through facilitating cross-college and cross-program proposals. Continuous efforts are made to invite colleagues from across departments and colleges in the University to join with faculty in the College of Education in pursuing research interests that are within the mission of the Center. Efforts also continue to conduct research with colleagues across institutions. Projects have included partner institutions such as Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, Ohio University, the Ohio State University, Oregon Research Institution, Temple University, Teachers College, University of Missouri, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, University of Pittsburgh, American Institutes for Research, Utah State University, and Inspired Learning, L.C. in Allentown.

DISSEMINATION
The CPRP is a resource for distilling and bringing research findings to the field. Investigators conducting research have published the outcomes of findings in professional journals and outlets. In addition, the CPRP initiates dissemination to parents, teachers, and other practitioners in a format that more easily affects practice.

The Center’s mission, goals, current accomplishments, as well as its future initiatives are disseminated to groups both on- and off-campus. Included in its objectives are the development of publicity about the Center itself and outcomes of Center projects through varied forms of communication across campus as well as institutions of higher education, local/state educational agencies, community agencies, and parent groups.

For more information, contact Dr. Gary Sasso, Dean, College of Education, Lehigh University, Iacocca Hall, 111 Research Drive, Bethlehem, PA 18015; 610-758-3221 or email gms208@lehigh.edu; Web site: http://coe.lehigh.edu/cprp.