Using Local Data to Evaluate Educational Outcomes

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System of Care in Fort Worth, Texas “Community Solutions”

• Inter-agency effort led by city’s Public Health department
• Phase IV community
• School-based program
  — Fort Worth Independent School District (FWISD)
  — Approximately 150 schools
  — 4 Family Resource Centers – primary referral source

Academic Outcomes

• School district had a strong interest in academic outcomes
• Although the national longitudinal study includes caregiver-report data such as the Education Questionnaire, the school district wanted richer data from students’ actual academic records.
• In principle, academic data was available in the district’s centralized student database.
  — However, gaining access to such information is not always straightforward.

Barriers to Obtaining Academic Records

• Cooperation of district or individual schools
• Privacy / confidentiality issues
• Bureaucracy / institutional inertia
• Logistical procedures / workflow / individual relationships

Confidentiality – Release of Information

• A signed release of information form gives caregiver’s permission (and youth if 11 or older) for school to share academic data with researchers.
• Incorporated into consent form for participation in the longitudinal study.
  — Last 2 pages of consent form includes list of local agencies (including school district) from which evaluators might like to obtain records
  — Caregivers/youths may give permission for individual agencies or may give blanket approval for all agencies
Case Study of Fort Worth’s Efforts to Obtain Academic Records

- The first 2 years of the program, evaluators were unsuccessful at navigating the bureaucracy and actually obtaining academic records.
- In the meantime, we relied on caregiver-report data of their children’s academic outcomes.
  - Indicated robust improvement in grades after involvement with system of care.
  - Strong gender interaction, with girls showing more improvement than boys.

Children with Failing Grades (as reported by caregivers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Intake</th>
<th>6 months</th>
<th>12 months</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Children</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
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Children Making A’s and B’s (as reported by caregivers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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Next, we tried to obtain copies of children’s report cards from families.
- Not very successful approach.
  - Parents often did not have report cards or had misplaced them.
  - Resulted in sporadic data with problematic gaps.

Finally, after 2 1/2 years, succeeded in obtaining data from school district’s central database.
- Key factors leading to success:
  - Patience and persistence.
  - Finding the right individuals to work with.
  - Cultivating personal relationships.

Delivered a box full of signed releases to school district along with a password-protected database of children’s identifying information to match with school records.
- School district staff manually pulled electronic records for each child and extracted requested data fields.
Grades Data Provided by FWISD

- Grade percentages in core subjects
  - English
  - Social Studies
  - Math
  - Science
- Three school years
  - 2002-2003 (Cycles 1-6)
  - 2003-2004 (Cycles 1-6)
  - 2004-2005 (Cycles 1-6)
- N = 212 children

Academic Timeline

<table>
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<tbody>
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<td>Cycle 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cycle 2</td>
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<td>Cycle 3</td>
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<td>Cycle 4</td>
<td>Cycle 4</td>
<td>Cycle 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jimmy begins Community Solutions</td>
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Children were eliminated from this analysis if:
- they had missing data in any of these cycles (e.g., transfer students)
- data not yet available (e.g., data from 2006-2007 school year were needed)
- schools did not give letter grades
- student had not been in wraparound through 3 grading cycles after their baseline cycle

This left N=76 children in the analysis

Mean Grades (N=76)

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<tbody>
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<td>English</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
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<td>Math</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science</td>
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Comparison Between Caregiver Reports and Actual Grades

- The lack of change in grades was surprising, given the caregiver reports of robust improvements.
- In order to shed light on the discrepancy between caregiver reports and school records, additional analyses were run to compare directly these two sources.

Comparison of Caregiver Report & Actual Grades

- Estimated each child’s overall grade average by averaging grades across the 4 core subjects
  - English
  - Social Studies
  - Math
  - Science
- Converted grade average to 6-point scale in order to compare to grade average as reported by caregivers
  - Intake interview
  - 6-month follow-up interview
- Used most recent report card caregivers would have seen prior to interview
Conclusions

- Caregivers report that their children’s grades are improving, especially for girls.

- In reality, there is no evidence that grades are improving or deteriorating. Instead, grades remained stable for both boys and girls.

- At intake, caregivers tend to underestimate their children’s grades. At follow-up, it appears that boys (but not girls) continue to be underestimated.