



What's in a Label? Developmental Delay vs Categorical Eligibility and Racial Equity

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Agenda

- Explain how using Developmental Delay as a category is a key systemic practice in creating more equitable and inclusive educational practices.
- Describe the benefits of Developmental Delay as a special education eligibility category in early childhood.



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Introductions

- Name, where you work, your role
- Why did you choose this session?

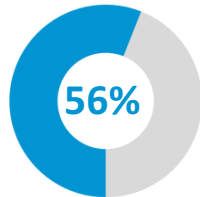


Early Learning in Saint Paul Public Schools

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)



- Asian (33%)
- Black (29%)
- White (31%)
- Hispanic (16%)
- American Indian (2%)



Free and Reduced Lunch

Districtwide:
35% EL
70% FRL
125 languages

1050+ Students

- Birth-3: 360
- 3-5 Inclusion: 330
- 3-5 Self Contained: 120
- PreK-4: 225

Age 3-5 Fed Settings

- 54% with peers
- 18% separate special ed setting

ECSE 3-5 Eval Team

- 1080 Referrals

Birth-3

- 1050 Referrals

33 SPPS schools

- 8 Head Starts
- 9 ECFE Sites
- 40 + private preschool and Childcare Sites
- 100s of Homes

200 Staff



SPPS Systems Change Story

2011-2012 Council of Great City Schools review of Special Education:

- Black Students/English Learners overrepresented in SpEd.
- Students of color excluded from general education at a higher rate than White students.

2013 St. Paul School Board adopts Racial Equity Policy

2013-2014 Early Childhood Special Education identified as source of:

- Racial disproportionality in eligibility decisions at initial evaluation
- Exclusionary practices in preschool & K placement decisions



SPPS Systems Change Timeline

2013-2014 Changes in location and practices

- Separate ECSE sites closed, ECSE classes moved to elementary schools
- **Use Developmental Delay rather than categorical disabilities in eligibility decisions as directed by the Assistant Superintendent for Special Services.**
- Use extreme caution when determining secondary Speech/Language Impairment eligibility as the label persists beyond age 7.
- All SPPS staff attend Racial Equity training
- ECSE Coaches work with teams on placement decisions



Addressing Inequities in SPPS



Early Childhood is an onramp to the pipeline to prison.



Undoing systemic racism

- Segregation - separate schools, classrooms
- Exclusion - child care through high school
- **Racial predictability in special education categories**
- Generational experiences of over identification for special education, exclusion
- Mass incarceration



SPAN Video -- Minneapolis

What are student perspectives about exclusionary practices in education?

[SPAN program](#)



Reaction to High School students

How do you feel after watching the video?

PACIFIC EDUCATIONAL GROUP

COURAGEOUS CONVERSATION

Four Agreements

- Stay ENGAGED
- Experience DISCOMFORT
- Speak your TRUTH
- Expect / Accept NON-CLOSURE

Six Conditions

1. Focus on PERSONAL, local and immediate
2. ISOLATE race
3. Normalize SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION & multiple perspectives
4. Monitor agreements, conditions and ESTABLISH PARAMETERS
5. Use a "WORKING DEFINITION" for race
6. Examine the presence and role of "WHITENESS"

Courageous Conversation is utilizing the four agreements, six conditions, and compass in order to engage, sustain, deepen interracial dialogue about race!

20 YEARS



MinnPost Article - Parent Perspective

- How do you think this parent’s advocacy changed his children’s educational path?

PACIFIC EDUCATIONAL GROUP

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Federal and State Guidance on Developmental Delay



Minnesota Criteria for Special Education Eligibility: Ages 3-6

Preschool students may meet criteria for:

One of the 12 categorical disabilities:

ASD, SLD, DCD, SMI, OHD, EBD,
SLI, VI, DHH, DB, PI, TBI.

OR

Developmental Delay



What is Developmental Delay? Minnesota Criteria for ages 3 to 6

A diagnosed physical or mental condition or disorder that has a high probability of resulting in developmental delay.

OR

A delay of 1.5 standard deviations or more below the mean in two or more developmental areas:

- Cognitive
- Physical Development (including vision and hearing)
- Communication
- Social or Emotional Development
- Adaptive Development



Special Education Evaluation

- Must be sufficiently comprehensive to identify all of the child's special education and related service needs, whether or not commonly linked to the category in which the child has been classified. 34 C.F.R.
- Child's identified needs determine special education services (not categorical label).



Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children

“DEC believes that the categories used for older school-aged children are often inappropriate for young children. The identification of children by disability categories in the early years can result in a premature categorization or miscategorization of children and consequently inappropriate services” (Developmental Delay as an Eligibility Category, DEC Concept Paper, 2009).

Individuals with Disability Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004) States allowed to use Developmental Delay for ages 3 through 9. In Minnesota, DD is allowed for ages 3 through 6 years, 11 months.



Why Developmental Delay?

- ★ DD provides access to special education services early when children are showing needs. Categories such as Specific Learning Disability cannot be applied before academic learning takes place.
- ★ DD uses a developmental framework to look at strengths and learning needs.
- ★ DD expires at age 7, creating an opportunity to exit from special ed or determine appropriate eligibility based on several years of educational progress data and a re-evaluation.



Caution for using EBD, DCD, ASD, etc, eligibility categories in preschool

- Lack of appropriate standardized assessments for young children
- Lack of standardized tools for culturally & linguistically diverse children
- Pressure to keep the label from age 3 until age 21.
- Pressure to place in separate class or track by disability.
- Racial predictability in categories (EBD vs. ASD)
- Potentially negative impact on racial identity development in children
- Parents less likely to accept special education services when label is assigned in preschool.



Potential factors in miscategorization in preschool

- Children may lack experience with play
- Children with limited access to peers or group settings
- Children learning multiple languages and cultures
- Complexity of co-occurring medical diagnoses
- Impact of screen time on development and behavior
- Impact of trauma on development and behavior
- Sleep deprivation, nutrition
- Health concerns



Autism Spectrum Disorder

- Key features of ASD:
 - Repetitive Behaviors
 - Atypical Social Communication and Interaction
- Many other conditions or environmental factors can cause these same behaviors in children.
 - Sleep deprivation
 - Recreational Screen Dependence
 - Other???

-- George



ASD: Challenges with accurate diagnosis

- 67% to 71% of persons with ASD meet criteria for another psychiatric diagnosis including:
 - anxiety, depression, ADD, ADHD, sensory processing disorder, OCD, bacterial infections (PANS, PANDA), bipolar disorder
- Difficult for teams and families to change a label as a child develops and may not fit the category. ASD identity is developed early.



Developmental Delay & IEP services

- Carefully describe needs in the evaluation process
- Goals, objectives and services are based on individual needs
- Ongoing review of progress and needs
- Apply specialized instruction based on needs
 - E.g., Speech/language as a related service
- Be honest and realistic with families about child's needs and progress



Concerns about using DD

- Does DD mask the true nature of the disability for families?
- Does DD limit access to county resources?
- Will children get the specialized instruction they need?
- At age 7, children won't get services.
- If children are exited from SpEd at age 7, then will just appear later with a different label.



What happens at Age 7 and later?

- 27% did not meet any eligibility and exit from SpEd
- Of those who qualified, eligibility is:
 - 45% Speech/Language
 - 19% OHD
 - 14% EBD
 - 11% ASD
 - 11% SLD
- Of those who exit, about 3% return to special education within 3 years.



Sustaining using DD eligibility

- Commitment from special education leadership
- Elementary School leadership commitment
- Developmental Delay coaches on IEPs and involved in age 7 eligibility decisions for Kindergarten, 1st Grade
- ECSE coaches on child study teams guiding eligibility and placement decisions
- Continued collective and personal equity work



Mindset - shifting beliefs of leaders and staff

- Inclusion in Preschool
- Inclusion in Kindergarten - all students have a spot in Kindergarten.
- Planning for student support when most students have a label of DD.
- Label does not tell what services will be.



The Power of Meaningful Inclusion

What is your role in promoting meaningful inclusion for all students?

[Meaningful Inclusion Video](#)



Questions?



References

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