

**Minority Disproportionality
in Special Education
and the Achievement Gap:
*Common Issues, Shared Solutions***

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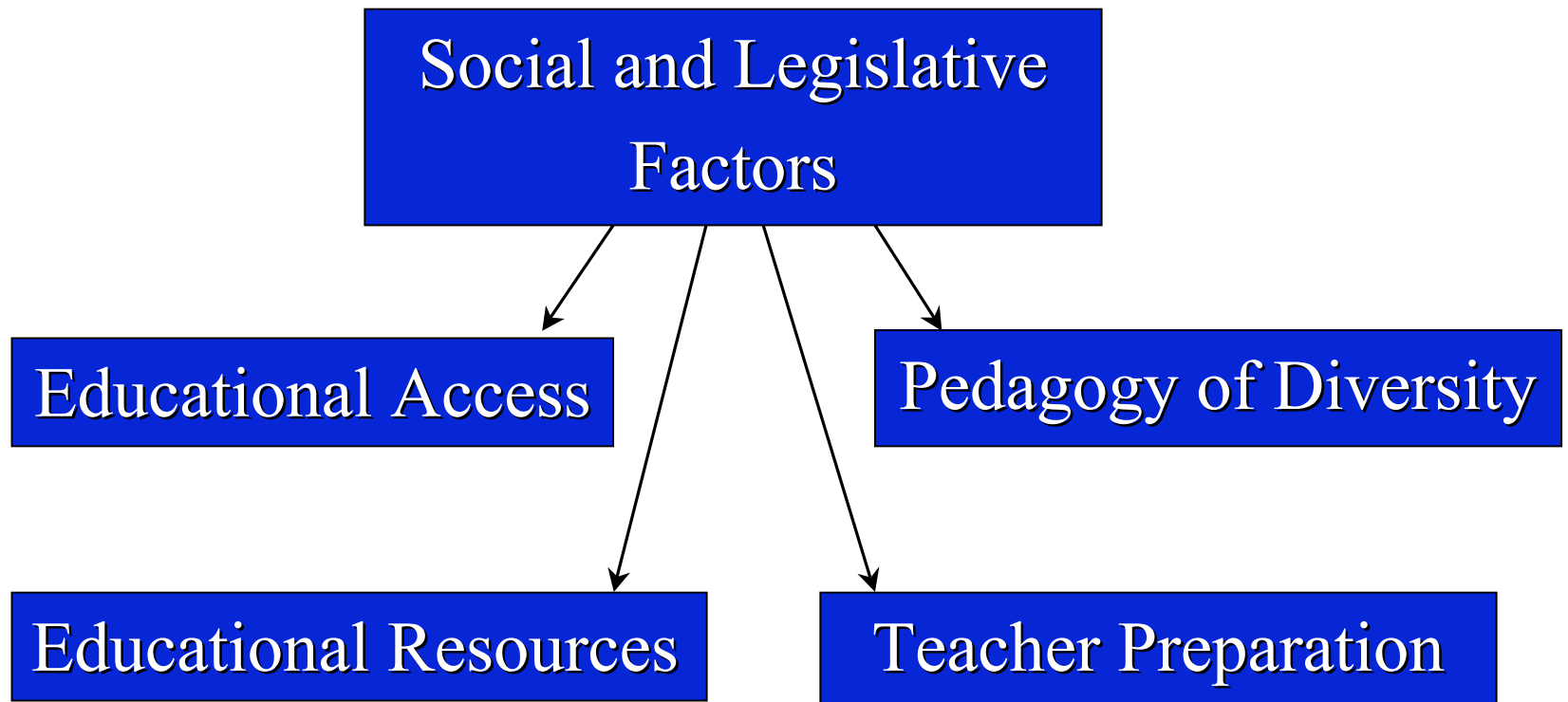
Expanding the Context

- Examine connections between achievement and disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse children
- Explore alternate paths to meaningful data concerning the interaction between school factors and students placed at risk for school failure
- Provide recommendations for staff development activities aimed at building consensus, capacity and shared accountability

Common Issues

- Historical Contexts
- Longitudinal Outcome Data
- Minority Disproportionality
- Poverty/ Social Economic Status

Educational Impact



Report to the National Research Council

Minority Disproportionality is a Problem when:

- Children are inappropriately placed in special programs for MR students.
- Placement results from receiving poor quality regular education services.
- Academic relevance and the special education instructional quality impede educational progress or the return to the regular classrooms.

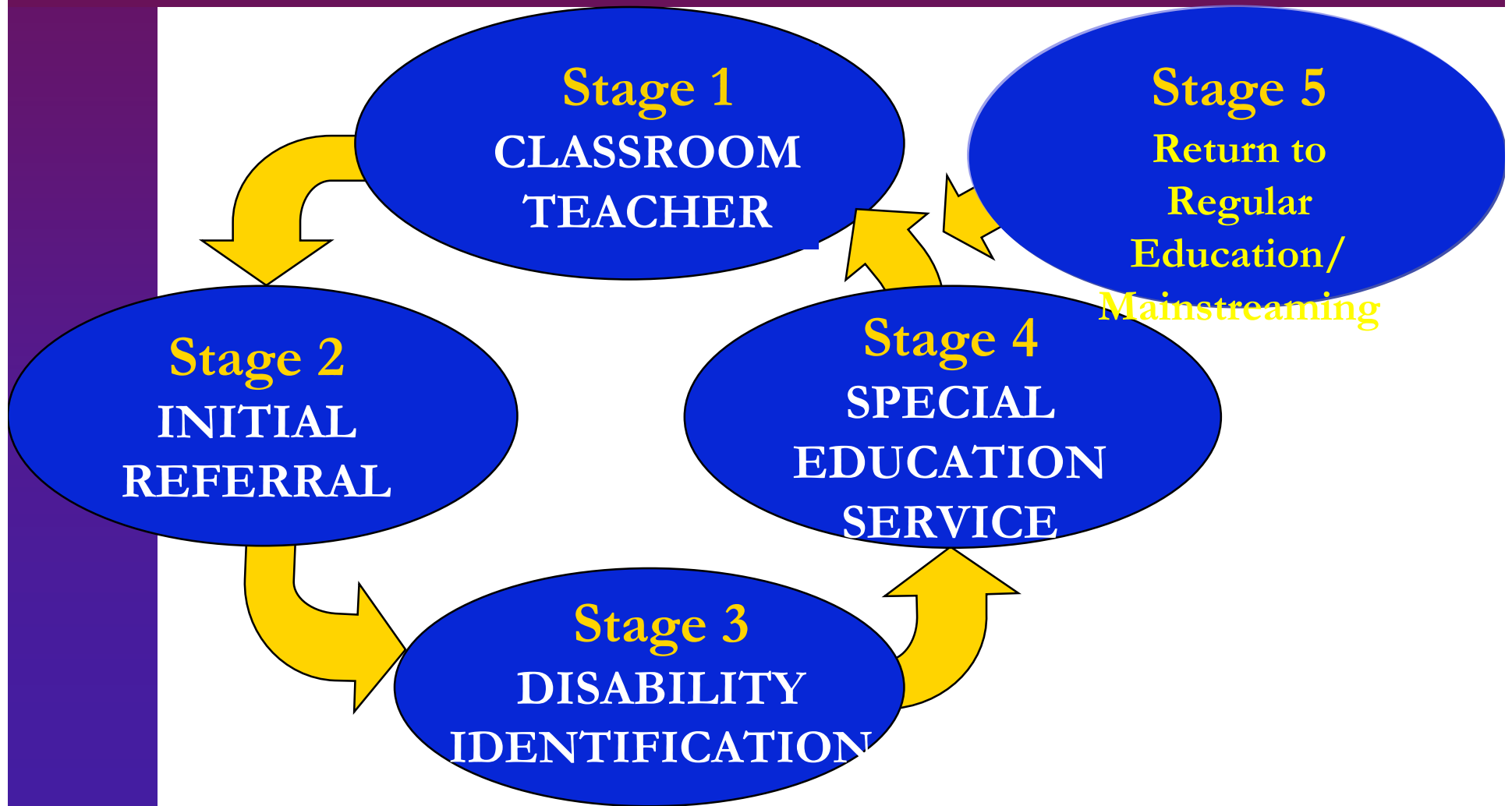
National Academy of Sciences. (Heller et al., 1982)

Six Potential Causes of Disproportion in EMR Programs

1. Legal and Administrative Requirements
2. Student Characteristics
3. Instructional Quality
4. Possible Assessment Process Biases
5. Home and Family Characteristics
6. Broader Historical and Cultural Contexts

National Academy of Sciences. (Heller et al., 1982)

Stages of the General-to-Special Education Continuum of Service



Possible Factors Related to Racial Disproportionality

Stage 1

TEACHER/CLASSROOM

- Interventions
- Teacher Perceptions
- Cultural Competencies

Stage 2

REFERRAL

- Learning Paradigms
- Tolerance

Stage 4

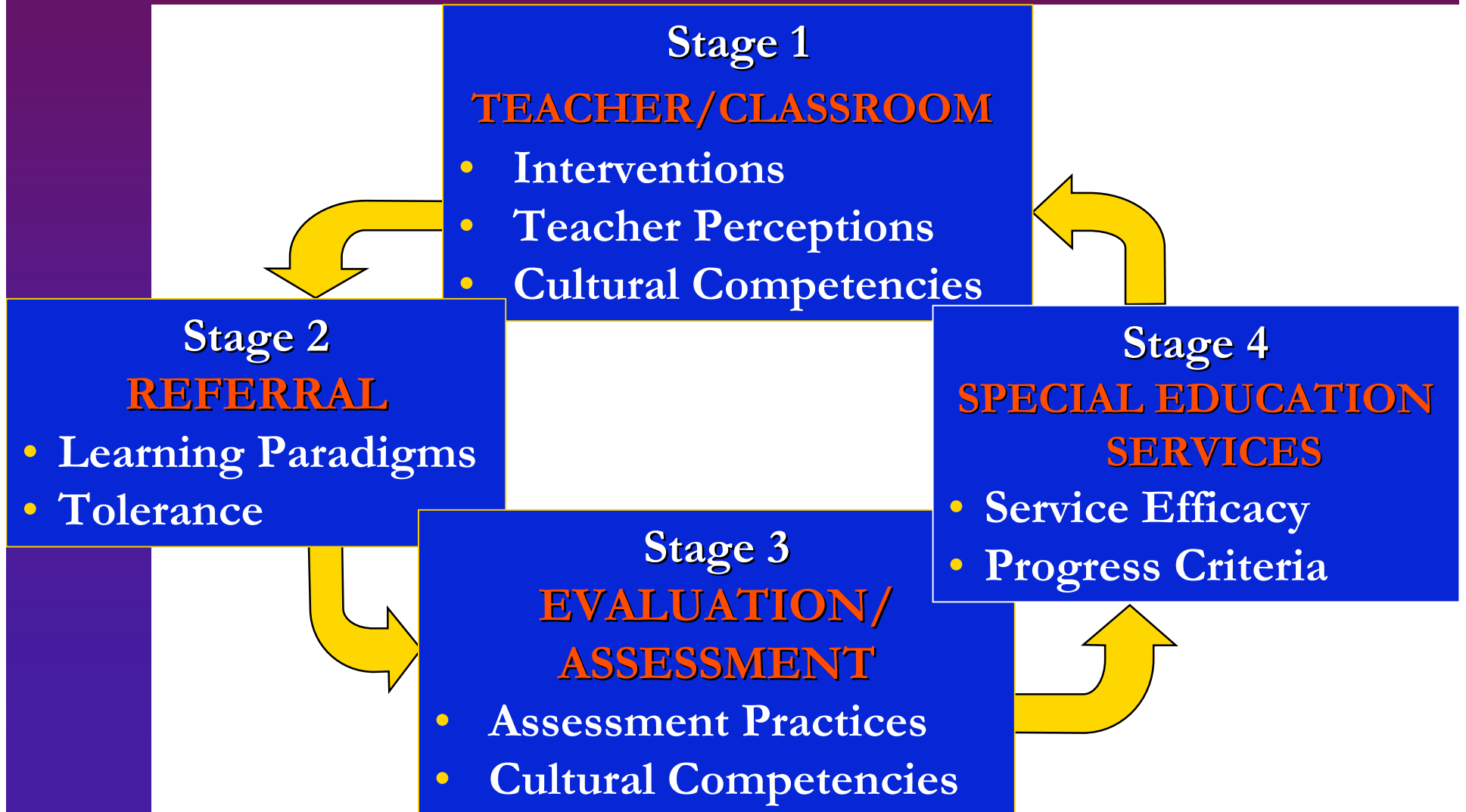
SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

- Service Efficacy
- Progress Criteria

Stage 3

EVALUATION/ ASSESSMENT

- Assessment Practices
- Cultural Competencies



LEA Profile Questions

Student, School, and Procedural

- How do student and educational service profile characteristics differ?
- How do precipitating educational events differ?
- What are the similarities and differences in the educational profiles of low versus medium to high-SES students classified as

_____?

LEA Profile Questions

Student, School, and Procedural

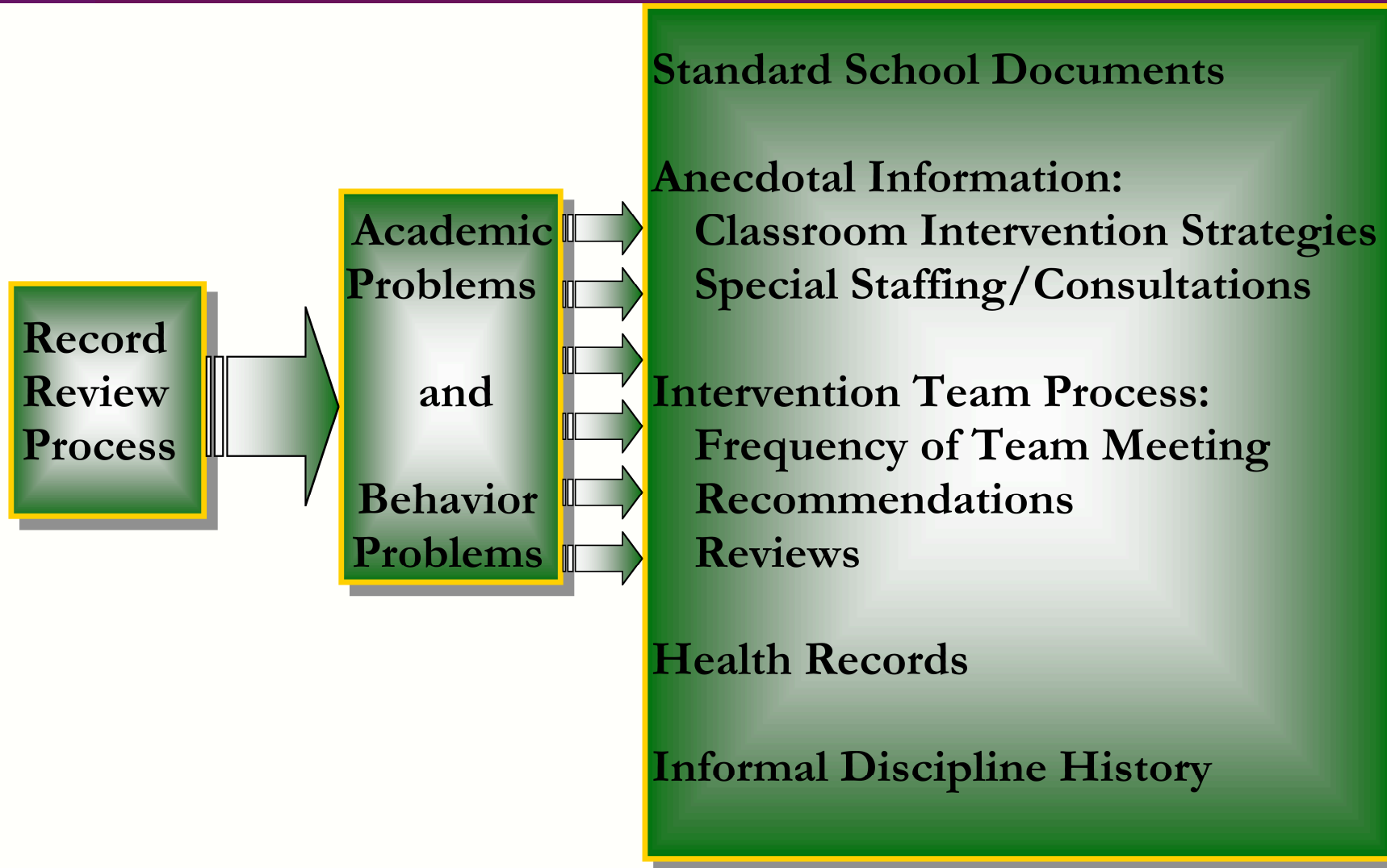
- Do schools with disproportionate suspension rates for African American students have similarly high rates for African American students receiving special education services for learning and behavior problems?

Group Profile Differences: Classification & Movement

General student profile characteristics and their interactions with race group membership:

- Changes in Service Intensity
- Free and Reduced Meals
- Grade Levels
- Intensity of Service
- Previously Classified
- Years Receiving _____ Services.
- Years in Special Education

Using “Untapped” Data



Data Collection - Interventions

Instructional strategies - Changes to the method, context, or program made in response to a specific academic need evidenced by the student.

Behavioral strategies - Behavioral accommodations implemented or initiated by the classroom teacher to address behavioral difficulties.

Administrative strategies - Accommodations provided to the student by an administrator (i.e., principal or assistant principal) outside of the classroom setting.

Intervention Clusters

Instructional Strategy Cluster

- Assignment monitoring sheet
- Adapted resource room service curricula
- Adapted non-disabled materials
- Varied instructional groups
- Individual instruction

Intervention Clusters

Behavioral Strategy Cluster

- Behavior management
- Student-teacher contract
- Classroom/teacher change

Administrative Strategy Cluster

- Student conference
- Refer student to counselor
- Refer student to school psychologist
- Refer student/family to outside (external) agency

Initial Referral Process Characteristics

Finding

- Overall number of EMT meetings engaged for both African American and White students in the study district was extremely *low*.

Implication

- Pervasive void of documentation or the use of team planning processes to develop comprehensive interventions for students experiencing behavioral difficulties, *irrespective of race*.

Time Interval for Team Intervention Processes

Finding

- African American students experienced *substantially longer* periods of time between EMT interventions than White students, with the exception of those recommended prior to referral for special education (SED) screening.

Implication

- Relatively *rapid* transition to decisions to formally refer African Americans for SED services, whereas the process is *delayed* for White students.

Time Interval for Team Intervention Processes

Implication

- Results in fewer opportunities extended for comprehensive intervention for students thus, teachers are *less likely to observe positive changes* in problem behaviors.

Group Profile Differences

Finding

- African American students are *newly* classified at almost twice rate of their White peers and roughly twice the rate of newly classified SED students in the school system overall.
- Race, SES status and grade level uniquely influence the length of time students receive SED

African American high school students received longer periods of SED service than poor White students, while the length of service rates in elementary and middle school are more similar among poor and non-poor students.

Differential Special Education Experiences

Finding

- African Americans were classified at *higher intensities* of SED services
- If regular education represents the point of origin of the special education continuum, then African American students classified farther along the continuum than White students will need longer periods of time to make the transition back to regular education programs.

Differential Special Education experiences

Implication

African American students placed in more intensive special education settings are subject to *diminished opportunities* for mainstream educational experiences

Program Implications

Systematic monitoring of multidisciplinary intervention processes

- Provides important evaluative information to schools to inform staff development needs
- Provides information on the efficacy of intervention practices within **general** education prior to determining the appropriateness of special education referral

Poverty and Minority Achievement

Facts:

Persistent Variable

Higher incidence in urban and rural settings

Exacerbates other risk factors

Correlates with low academic achievement

Poverty and Minority Achievement

School Implications

Under-resourced schools

High mobility

Teacher/program quality issues

School readiness skill needs

Parental and Community Implications

Lower levels of parental educational attainment

Marginalized school experiences

Family & social stressors

Challenges

- "A Full Plate"
- Incorporating new Knowledge/Strategies
 - The Change Process
- Organizational Challenges
- Personnel Preparation

Nurturing Achievement:

Create Access & Opportunity

Professional development experiences which enhance educator's abilities to promote achievement through:

- **Developing Academic Skills**
- **Fostering Academic Esteem**
- **Developing Talent**
- **Enhancing Social Skills**
- **Nurturing Academic Motivation**

Shared Solutions: Comprehensive School Reform

- Effective research-based methods and strategies
- Comprehensive design with aligned components
- Professional development
- Measurable goals and benchmarks
- Supports within the schools
- Parental and community involvement
- External technical supports and assistance
- Evaluation strategies
- Coordination of resources

Shared Solutions: Building Capacity

- Focus professional development (sustained and supportive) to produce instructional problem-solvers and shared accountability for student success;
- Implement intensive two-tiered educational interventions to improve foundation and analytic skills;
- Invest in parent training to develop “educational liaisons”; and
- Facilitate community partnerships to reinforce high achievement

