Many children struggle each day with behavioral challenges and difficulty regulating their emotions. They engage in behaviors which can at times be described as explosive. Collaborative and Proactive Solutions, a research based problem solving approach developed by Dr. Ross Greene, is based on the premise that “kids do well if they can.” Challenging behavior is due to delays in the development of cognitive skills including flexibility and adaptability, frustration tolerance, and problem solving. Specifically these children may be lacking executive skills, language processing / communication skills, emotion regulation skills, cognitive flexibility skills and/or social skills. Dr. Greene notes that when the cognitive demands placed on an individual outstrip his capacity to respond adaptive-ly, challenging episodes occur. Although reward systems are also researched based interventions employed to modify behavior in children, Dr. Greene argues that these programs do not teach the child the skills he is lacking.

Early exposure to written material is important to children’s reading ability. The pre-school years is a critical period of children’s brain development in several areas including, but not limited to language, visual, motor, and social skills. During this time period, children’s brains are wired to learn large amounts of information rapidly. Children of preschool age spend most of their time at home, daycare, and preschool, thus they hold the potential to shape their early brain development and learning experiences. Children’s early home literacy environment has previously been found to explain up to 41% of the variance in preschool children’s phonological awareness and letter knowledge (Storch & Whitehurst, 2001). Among all children early exposure to print has led to greater world knowledge, vocabulary, fluency, oral language skills, and concentration. A recent study published in the scientific journal, Pediatrics, confirmed the importance of early exposure to the written and spoken word, and demonstrated the neuro-
The Power of Early Reading Exposure

(Story continued from page 1)

logical differences between children from literacy-rich homes and those from literacy-limited homes (Hutton, et. al, 2015). Results of brain imaging showed activity in the area that is related to understanding language, concepts, and forming memories. However, the more interesting finding was that children from higher literacy-enriched homes had greater levels of brain activity in this area than children from lower literacy-enriched homes, even with control for household income. The findings of this study are important because of its implications for improving the early reading, mental imagery, and comprehension skills of students prior to beginning formal education. It gives us concrete evidence that early experiences with reading at home have the power to build connections in the brain and facilitate later learning opportunities among children.

Literacy exposure can be facilitated by encouraging parents to engage in parent-child interactive storybook reading, to directly teach letters and sounds, and to model reading as an enjoyable/valuable way to spend time. Make local and national book donations. The national nonprofit organization, First Book (http://www.firstbook.org), donates books and accepts donations.

References

Patsy Barrett and Jason Levi have had their proposal accepted for presentation at the North Carolina School Psychologists Fall Conference this October and at the National Association of School Psychologists Convention in February 2016.

October 2015 National Bullying Prevention Month

STAND UP/STEP UP Against Bullying Walk: Saturday, October 10th 8 AM - 12 PM - DASH Stadium – BB&T Ballpark

UNITY DAY October 21st – Wear ORANGE to support violence prevention!
The Khan Academy is a nonprofit whose mission is to provide a “free world-class education for anyone, anywhere.” Its user friendly free online learning site, www.khanacademy.org, offers free tutorials aligned with curriculum and various exercises, particularly for students interested in STEM fields, to supplement existing knowledge and to explore new topics. Access to lessons require no log-ins and there are applications for students, teachers, and parents.

Teachers can set up accounts for each of their students. They can track their students’ progress, monitor skills on which students have worked, and evaluate their level of mastery of the material. For students not working at grade-level, there are many opportunities to work at their instructional level and build prerequisite skills. Additional information is available to teachers on how to help their students be more successful.

For parents, the site helps them to understand the way things are being taught and provides tools to help their child with homework. Subjects are easily accessed by grade-level and then topic. There are short and clear instructional videos that parents and kids can watch together. There are many explanations, and practice with immediate feedback. There is even an "I need a hint" button to click. Parents can set up their own accounts and then add their kids, in order to monitor their progress. Useful tips are available to parents on topics such as helping to motivate their child and how to be a life-long learner. For parents who want to further their own education, many upper level tutorials are available, in a variety of subjects.

For students, the site can be useful for helping to reinforce what is being taught in class, to provide needed extra help, or enrichment for the advanced as well. Videos are easily accessible with patient re-teaching/explanation, opportunities for practice, and helpful hints when students find themselves stuck. For secondary students planning on taking tests required for higher education, college and test prep resources are available, such as free test reviews for the MCAT, the SAT, and the GMAT, with sample tests and demonstration. This is a useful educational website that offers parents, teachers, and students great resources and tools.

Looking for ways to help children who have difficulty understanding spoken language? If so, this is a website you need to explore. Although the title seems to suggest that it is for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), this website could also benefit children with language barriers, non-readers, and countless others. Its numerous downloadable visual tools can assist with communicating expected behaviors and classroom routines. They even provide templates for schedules and reward charts. And if you are trying to support a child with ASD, the website gets even better! It provides guidance on how to support an ASD child with communication, socialization, transitions, and independence. Check it out at www.victoriesnautism.com.
he terms their “lagging skills.”
He has developed a tool called the Assessment of Lagging Skills and Unsolved Problems (ALSUP) to use as a discussion guide to help adults identify the lagging skills and unsolved problems contributing to the child’s difficulties. The model involves three steps:
1. The Empathy Step - gathering information from the child to identify his concerns.
2. The Define Adult Concerns Step - identifying the adult’s concerns which generally involve safety, learning, health and/or how the behavior is affecting oneself or others.
3. The Invitation Step - child and adult brainstorm and agree on “solutions that are realistic and mutually satisfactory.”
Some skills including social skills and communication skills can be taught directly. However, Dr. Greene notes that the lagging skills are taught or trained mostly indirectly through engaging in these steps. Dr. Greene believes that understanding what is getting in a child’s way must come before helping; and understanding is actually the most important part of helping.
Further information on Dr. Ross Greene’s Collaborative and Proactive Solutions approach, including information and resources for schools and parents, is available on his website www.livesinthebalance.org.
Retention is *not* an Intervention

By Liz Williams

In response to our defined district goals, it is important for us to reflect upon our current practices and whether or not they support meeting these goals. With the increasing pressure to meet grade level standards and a call to end social promotion, there has been a renewed emphasis on grade retention as an educational remedy for underachieving children.

Sometimes children are recommended for retention when their academic performance is low, if they fail to meet grade-level performance standards, if they seem socially immature, display behavior problems, or are just beginning to learn English. Occasionally, students who have missed many school days because they were ill or because of frequent moves are recommended for retention. We need to examine whether these retention practices are effective or not.

Research indicates that *neither* grade retention nor social promotion is likely to result in positive outcomes. Having a child repeat a grade that he was not successful at the first time is not likely going to change anything. If something does not work, why would we want to do more of it? The child may (or may not) catch up in the short term, but without additional supports he will likely fall behind in subsequent years, leading to a host of negative academic and social problems.

Pressure to meet academic standards and avoid retention may be increasing children’s stress levels regarding their academic achievement without increasing motivation or performance. Surveys of children’s ratings of twenty stressful life events in the 1980s showed that, by the time they were in 6th grade, children feared retention most after the loss of a parent and going blind. When this study was replicated in 2001, 6th grade students rated grade retention as the single most stressful life event, higher than the loss of a parent or going blind (Anderson, Jimerson, & Whipple, 2002).

Research indicates that retained students experience lower self-esteem and lower rates of school attendance, relative to promoted peers (Jimerson, 2001). Both of these factors are further predictive of dropping out of school. Indirectly, low self-esteem and poor school attendance influence adult outcomes. If we are going to reach a 90% graduation rate and close the achievement gap, we need to ensure that our practices are supportive of these goals.

The real question should not be to retain or not to retain, but rather to identify specific intervention strategies to enhance the cognitive and social development of the child and promote his learning and success at school. Evidence supports that grade retention, when compared with social promotion, is an ineffective and possibly harmful intervention, so what do we do? “Promotion plus” (i.e., combining grade promotion and *effective, evidence-based interventions*) is most likely to benefit children with low achievement or behavior problems.

Adapted from:

http://www.nasponline.org/communications/spawareness/Grade%20Retention.pdf

http://www.nasponline.org/resources/handouts/revisedpdfs/graderetention.pdf

National Association of School Psychologists — www.nasponline.org