



Improving Student Outcomes and Educator Collaboration in Lexington District One

Introduction

Lexington District One is a large district in South Carolina that enrolls more than 26,000 students across 31 schools. In 2022, the South Carolina Department of Education identified 11 schools in the district as needing additional targeted support and improvement based on the performance of students with disabilities. District leaders selected [data-based individualization](#) (DBI) as the evidence-based innovation to improve the learning and behavior outcomes of students with disabilities and partnered with the [National Center on Intensive Intervention](#) (NCII) to build the capacity of special education staff to implement DBI. During the 2023–24 schoolyear, NCII delivered DBI training for 127 special educators in the target schools and provided coaching for district and school leaders to support effective implementation of DBI. To better understand the impacts of this partnership, NCII interviewed four district staff members to hear their perspectives on the impacts of DBI implementation and NCII technical assistance.

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Our schools may not be aware of the technical assistance that’s available to us. So as school administrators and as district administrators, we need to make sure that our folks have access to those resources.

—District Leader

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Impacts of DBI Implementation in Lexington District One

Improved Student Achievement and Engagement

Each interview participant discussed the academic and behavioral growth they saw among students who received DBI. Notably, the district conducted a study comparing the performance of fourth- and eighth-grade students with disabilities who received DBI with

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In that group [of students receiving DBI] we saw statewide assessment growth that had statistical significance. They grew by 15 points more than their non-DBI peers.

District Leader

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a matched comparison group and found statistically significant gains among the DBI group on the statewide mathematics assessment. Students who were far below grade level began to close the gap with their same-grade peers. Even though many students receiving DBI were not yet at grade level, their rate of progress increased significantly after receiving DBI.

Some of the largest impacts on student achievement occurred in middle school and high school. In one middle school, students with disabilities in resource classrooms made substantial academic gains in mathematics and reading, gaining foundational skills and moving closer to grade level. In one high school, educators focused their implementation efforts on impacting behavior outcomes. They saw large improvements among students with disabilities in academic and behavioral engagement including improved attendance and increased participation in class. The positive impact of DBI in these settings is noteworthy given that educators often report challenges with implementing DBI in secondary settings.

The improved academic and behavior performance of students with disabilities was in some of the lowest performing schools in the district. Several of these schools had previously been identified as not meeting expectations for the academic performance of students with disabilities and are now meeting expectations on this indicator

Improved Collaboration and Parent Satisfaction

In addition to the impacts on student performance, implementing DBI has had positive impacts on educators and family members of students with disabilities. DBI team meetings provided an opportunity for improved collaboration among special educators, administrators, and general educators. In one case, a middle school principal described how his

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We had one of our middle schools that was very, very underperforming, that had some huge academic gap closing . . . just the kids growing over time, again, not on grade level per se, but just the amount of growth they made was phenomenal.

District Leader

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So not only was it high school, that is typically tough to implement DBI, but it was also behavior, which can also be tough with DBI. And they did some wonderful, wonderful things.

District Leader

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On our special education team and [in] our department, the morale has boosted quite a lot . . . the teamwork has had to be there. We have to trust each other.

Special Education Teacher

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. . . before DBI, it was very rare for me to have all the special education teachers in a room . . . I think it helps . . . having that connection with the principal.

Middle School Principal

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connection with the special education team and active participation in team meetings was a key to success. This collaboration and support from administration has led to improved morale and camaraderie among the special education team in that school.

Participants also shared that this collaboration led to improvements in student individualized education programs (IEPs) and IEP team meetings. As students in resource classrooms made academic gains, teachers had more frequent conversations about moving students to co-taught settings and adjusting the students' IEPs. Educators also shared student progress data with families, which resulted in increased parent satisfaction. The middle school principal commented that more frequent communication with families about student progress and outcome data helped parents see the value of instruction in self-contained settings.

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Our IEPs started to get better because we started up [more frequent] conversations about, ‘Hey, this kid’s doing well, maybe they don’t need resource now. Maybe we should be looking at them in a co-taught [setting]’ . . . And so, by doing the DBI process and meeting regularly, it really helped that avenue to work as well.

Middle School Principal

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Conclusion

This impact story highlights the work that Lexington District One did to implement DBI with the support of NCII. Within just 1 year of implementation, the district saw several positive impacts resulting from this work, including improved student outcomes and engagement, enhanced collaboration and engagement among educators, and increased parent satisfaction with special education services. NCII continues to provide technical assistance and coaching to staff in the district as more schools implement DBI during the 2024–25 school year.

To learn more about DBI implementation in Lexington District One and view the four video interviews with district and school staff, visit the NCII website: <https://intensiveintervention.org/voices-from-the-field/lexington-one-dbi-implementation>



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