

Preface

COMPASS—the Collaborative Model for Promoting Competence and Success of Persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder—is a consultation framework for helping individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) achieve optimal outcomes. The model represents an accumulation of more than 80 years of combined experience of the authors in collaboration with parents, teachers, administrators, and other personnel in the field. Developed and refined over 20 years, COMPASS is an excellent vehicle to systematically develop, implement, and monitor programs for students with ASD and remains one of the few experimentally tested consultation approaches associated with student progress. COMPASS is based on educational research that shows that the only empirically validated professional development model resulting in sustainable changes in teacher behavior and instruction is support that occurs within the teacher’s own instructional setting.

The model described in this book was adapted originally from the work of August, Anderson, and Bloomquist and published in 1992 as the Minnesota Competence Enhancement Program. From 1978 until 1992, with both state and federal funding and under the leadership of the second author (Nancy Dalrymple) at the Indiana University (Bloomington) University Affiliated Program, the model was utilized within the UAP-based residential programs for children and youth with autism and subsequently as part of a state-wide training initiative. Over these years, as extensive data gathering continued, the model was changed as the concept of balancing risk factors with protective factors to address challenges and encourage competency was added. That concept was a key to the publication of “An Alternative View of Outcome” (Ruble & Dalrymple, 1996), which advocated for new and different ways to measure outcome by focusing on the development of competence and quality of life as central outcomes and linking these to accommodations and social and family support networks. This work helped to reaffirm the evolving model’s emphasis on collaboration and building supports rather than emphasizing deficits.

Extensive field testing has continued from 1992 to the present time. In 1996 the model was used as the basis of the Autism Technical Assistance Manual for Kentucky Schools, which Lisa and Nancy authored. School systems throughout Kentucky had the opportunity to be trained with the manual, and the Kentucky

Western Education Cooperative took the lead in incorporating the model in extensive training of all their school systems over several years. This training was always specific to individual students with autism. The model was used for planning purposes, to address specific behavioral problems, and to help with transitions. Then, in 1998, the model served as the consultation framework for TRIAD at Vanderbilt University in the state of Tennessee and was renamed the Collaborative Model for Promoting Competence and Success of Persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder (COMPASS).

Since 2004, federal funding from the National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Mental Health and more recently from the NIH Challenge Grants has enabled the authors, along with current co-investigators Michael Toland, Lee Ann Jung, and Jennifer Grisham Brown from the University of Kentucky, to continue to evaluate the effectiveness of COMPASS, and to study its effectiveness via web-based technology.

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Collaborative Model for Promoting Competence and
Success for Students with ASD

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2012, XXVII, 273 p. 32 illus., Softcover

ISBN: 978-1-4614-2331-7