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ABSTRACT

When students increasingly exhibited disruptive behavior at a particular school, a comprehensive multilevel discipline program was developed to respond to the students' behavior. The conceptual model and key intervention approaches used in this multilevel discipline program are described in this paper. Previous experience convinced school personnel that the school-wide discipline program must be based on the view that disruptive behavior is primarily a socialization problem rather than a sickness. Therefore, the discipline program emphasized direct intervention approaches within and across all school settings and it relied on teaching students acceptable social norms. The interventions are universal because all students are exposed in the same way at the same level. Outlined here are the school-wide discipline plan, ecological arrangements, behavioral guidelines, supervision, and classroom management strategy, also called think time. The latter emphasizes catching disruptive behavior early, designating a specific classroom for think time, monitoring students moving to and entering a designated think-time classroom, performing a think-time debriefing process, checking students' debriefing responses, watching students rejoin the class, employing the use of other consequences, and instituting guidelines governing the use of the think-time strategy. Also discussed are targeted interventions and some intensive comprehensive interventions. The program not only effectively reduced the level of disruptive behavior, but also enhanced the academic performance and school survival skills of at-risk and target students. Additionally, the program enabled teachers to shift their focus from discipline problems toward instructional matters. (RJM)

Designing Schools to Enhance the Academic and Social Outcomes of All Students

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Abstract

An empirically validated multilevel disciplinary program for addressing the disruptive behavior of all students is described. The program includes three levels of intervention approaches (i.e., universal, targeted, and intensive comprehensive intervention approaches) which are directly linked and coordinated to maximize their effectiveness. The three levels of intervention approaches that preventative and remedial in nature. General conclusions are discussed.

Designing Schools to Enhance the Academic and Social Outcomes of All Students

Disruptive forms of behavior seemed to increasingly characterize the students who populated our school. Such behavior has become one of the most pressing issues facing the schools of today. For example, the National School Safety Center has reported that students and school staff alike do not feel completely safe in schools (Stephens, 1995). The 26th annual Phi Delta Kappan Gallup poll of the public's attitudes toward the public schools mirrors the concerns of educators about the safety of schools and the rates of disruptive behavior occurring in schools (Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1994).

There was little question that we needed to address the increasing level of disruptive behavior in our school if we were to meet the academic and social needs of all students including those with disabilities. Although addressing the growing level of disruptive behavior is a subordinate objective of the broader academic goals of our school, we believed that doing so was a necessary condition for achieving academic excellence. We also believed a comprehensive multilevel discipline program would be necessary if we were to respond effectively to the fundamental social changes occurring in our society which are increasingly reflected in our students' school behavior. The conceptual model and key intervention approaches we utilized in our comprehensive multilevel discipline program are described below.

Conceptual Model

Previous experience convinced us that the conceptual model for our schoolwide discipline program must be based on the view that disruptive behavior is primarily a socialization problem rather than a sickness. Over the years our attempts to remediate disruptive behavior as a sickness led us to rely heavily on indirect intervention approaches (e.g., counseling, improving self-esteem) which were not powerful enough to solve the intractable disruptive behavior that concerned us most. Because there was some evidence that interventions that focused on socializing students are effective (e.g., Patterson, Reid, & Dishion, 1992), we believed that a majority of our students would behave according to social norms if we took the trouble to teach students the social norms and supervise them in a consistent manner. Thus, the conceptual model for our comprehensive multilevel discipline program emphasizes direct intervention approaches within and across all school settings and relies on teaching students acceptable social norms.

This conceptual model includes intervention approaches that are preventative (i.e., ensure that disruptive behavior does not commence or become entrenched as a result of the practices of the

school) and remedial (i.e., must change life course persistent disruptive behavior) in nature. Additionally, we focus more heavily on schoolwide or universal intervention approaches because we believe that they not only provide the greatest impact for all students but also provide the foundation with which to implement more targeted and individualized intervention approaches.

Table 1 depicts our comprehensive multilevel discipline program. The figure identifies three types of students, ordered on a continuum, who need increasingly powerful preventative and remedial interventions: (a) **typical** students who are not at risk for problems; (b) **at-risk** students who are at risk of developing or are exhibiting disruptive behavior patterns; and (c) **target** students who exhibit life course disruptive behavior patterns. The figure also identifies the primary intervention approaches associated with each type of student. We have found that intervention approaches that encompass all three of these prevention and remediation levels are needed to meet the needs of all students. The intervention approaches are also directly linked to and coordinated with each other to maximize their effectiveness. This is accomplished through the use of a committee made up of a wide array of professionals (i.e., administrator, counselor, teachers, and paraprofessionals)

Insert Table 1 about here

Schoolwide Intervention Approaches

Schoolwide intervention approaches are designed to prevent disruptive behavior from developing or becoming entrenched as a result of the practices of the school. The interventions are universal because all students are exposed in the same way at the same level. The schoolwide intervention approaches play a large role in preventing and diverting students at risk for developing disruptive behavior patterns.

Schoolwide Discipline Plan

Because we believe that addressing disruptive behavior and achieving academic excellence are directly connected, the foundation for our schoolwide discipline plan is a lively engaging curriculum and effective teaching practices. The framework for our schoolwide discipline plan has three interrelated components. The three components center on: (a) the ecological arrangements of the common areas of the school (e.g., hallways, cafeteria, restrooms, playground); (b) establishing clear and consistent behavioral guidelines or expectations for common area routines; and (c) the

supervision of the common area routines to prevent disruptive behavior from occurring and to respond effectively when it does occur.

Ecological arrangements. We made adjustments in the ecological arrangements of our school by eliminating or adjusting unsafe physical arrangements. For example, our bus loading area was often in direct conflict with traffic flow or created conflict and congestion with automobile parking areas. These zones also were in direct conflict with the flow of students leaving the school grounds or entering for extra-curricular activities. Congestion created by traffic and student flow which provided the occasion for disruptive behavior and raised safety concerns was eliminated or adjusted.

We also made improvements in our scheduling and use of space. For example, it not only took longer to get groups through the lunch line because of congestion, but it also provided the occasion for more physical and undesirable social interactions between students and school staff and among students. Staggering the start and end of the lunch period helped facilitate movement in and out of the area. The following were guidelines for improving the scheduling and use of our space: (a) the density of students was reduced by using all entrances and exits to a given area, the space between groups/lines/classes was increased, and the age spread of students was increased as the density of students increased; (b) wait time was kept at a minimum; and (c) travel time and distance was decreased as much as possible.

Behavioral guidelines. We established and directly taught students the behavioral guidelines or expectations for the common area routines of the school. Determining what the students were to accomplish in a given common area was the first step in establishing behavioral guidelines for the common area routines of the school. A task analysis of the routines was then used to specify, in a precise manner, the behavior required by students. These discrete, sequential, and observable behaviors were outlined for each common area of the school. Finally, students are directly taught the common area routines at the beginning of the year. Booster sessions are conducted when needed throughout the remainder of the year.

Supervision. The school staff actively supervise students to maintain the behavioral expectations and to respond to disruptive behavior in a timely and effective manner (supervision is conducted primarily by uncertified school staff with the support of certified school staff). Established patterns of supervision enable staff to provide a more complete and balanced coverage of the

common areas. Staff also understand which disruptive behaviors warrant an office referral and which behaviors they needed to manage themselves.

Schoolwide Classroom Management Strategy (Think Time)

We found that one of the greatest challenges to working effectively with students who exhibited disruptive behavior was that many of the classroom management systems or strategies used by teachers for disruptive behavior were ineffective. It was not uncommon for teachers to respond to disruptive behavior by ignoring it until they could no longer do so or by using elaborate warning systems such as checks after a name or pulling different-colored cards. Teachers' responses to disruptive behavior not only appeared to result in more persistent chronic disruptive behavior but also lead to escalating severe challenging behavior. Additionally, the varying responses of the school staff were especially problematic for at-risk and target students because these students often work with several professionals throughout the course of the day, each with a different type of response to disruptive behavior.

The Think Time strategy was designed to: (a) enable the teacher and student to cut off a negative social exchange or power struggle over disruptive behavior and to initiate a positive social exchange; and (b) provide the student feedback and an opportunity to plan for future performance. The framework for the Think Time strategy was based on a precision request, quiet-time, and debriefing. The Think Time strategy required teamwork between two or more teachers--the homeroom teacher and a cooperating teacher(s) who provided the designated Think Time area. Teachers prepared their class for the implementation of the schoolwide classroom intervention by actively teaching the students the intervention. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to describe all of the subtle details necessary to implement Think Time effectively, the primary steps in Think Time included:

1. Catching disruptive behavior early. It is critical that teachers catch disruptive behavior early. It is also critical that teachers reduce (in the case of minor problem behavior) and eliminate (in the case of more serious disruptive behavior) threats and ultimatums as well as warnings. In the case of minor behavior (e.g., off-task), the student is reinforced by the teacher if the student complies with a request or prompt to adjust his/her behavior. If the student does not comply, the teacher directs the student to a designated classroom for Think Time. In the case of more serious disruptive behavior

(e.g., profanity), the teacher simply directs the student to a designated classroom for Think Time. The communication by the teacher in both cases is limited, unemotional, and matter-of-fact.

2. Moving to and entering the designated Think Time classroom. Students typically move independently to the designated Think Time classroom. In the case of those students who are most problematic (this is a rare event), teachers use a variety of strategies (e.g., track the amount of time the student takes to arrive at the designated classroom, send the student with an escort) to ensure that the student moves quickly to the designated Think Time classroom. Once the student arrives at the designated classroom, the student stands by the door of the designated classroom and waits until the cooperating teacher directs the student to the designated Think Time desk. The desk is located in an area that is free from distractions and limits the ability of the student to engage the teacher or other students.

3. Think Time/debriefing process. After the teacher has observed the student sitting in a calm manner, the student is approached by the cooperating teacher who initiates the de-briefing process. The de-briefing is conducted at the convenience of the cooperating teacher and ideally after allowing the misbehaving student a minimum of 5 to 10 minutes to "think about" their behavior and to gain "self-control." Think Time is behavior-dependent (not time-dependent). Teachers initially ask students to describe their behavior objectively prior to providing them the de-briefing form to complete independently. If the student is responsive to the opening question regarding their behavior, the student is asked to complete the de-briefing form. If not, the teacher responds by saying, "I'll be back to you" and returns to his or her regular duties until another appropriate break arrives (and the student is sitting in a calm manner). Throughout this process the teacher does not cajole or is not drawn into a discussion with the student. Behavioral debriefing (for older students) includes the following questions in sequential steps: (a) identify their inappropriate behavior; (b) identify what they wanted (e.g., revenge, attention, to avoid schoolwork); (c) indicate whether or not they got what they wanted; (d) identify what they need to do (replacement behavior) when they go back to work in their classroom (e.g., follow directions if they did not follow directions); and (e) indicate whether or not they think they can do the new action(s). A shortened de-briefing sequence (a, d, and e) and associated pictorial de-briefing form is used with younger students and in some individual cases in which parents do not want their children to be asked "what they wanted." Again, the interaction is limited, unemotional, and matter-of-fact.

4. Checking students' de-briefing responses. After the student has completed the behavioral de-briefing form, the student waits for the teacher to check if the de-briefing form has been completed correctly (behaviors are stated in objective terms, the de-briefing teacher does not know which disruptive behavior the student has actually exhibited at this point). If correct, the student is directed to go back to the classroom with the completed form. If incorrect, the student remains in Think Time. The teacher responds by saying, "I'll be back to you," and returns to his or her regular duties until another appropriate break arrives (and the student is sitting in a calm manner).

5. Rejoining the class. When the student reenters their classroom, the student stands by the door and waits until he or she is acknowledged by their teacher. The teacher then assesses the accuracy of the completed behavioral de-briefing form. If accurate, the teacher (in a positive manner) directs the student to join the class. Teachers use a variety of reentry procedures (e.g., peer assistance, assignment sheet) to ensure that the student is able to make up the work they missed. If the de-briefing form is inaccurate, the student is directed to return to the designated classroom to repeat Think Time.

6. Use of other consequences. The use of Think Time is not the only response to disruptive behavior. It is used flexibly with other classroom strategies (e.g., proximity, eye contact, and consequences). Think Time in itself is a powerful enough response to most minor disruptive behaviors. However, additional contingencies such as parent contacts and response cost are established in the case of chronic disruptive behavior or challenging behavior (e.g., profanity and physical aggression).

7. Guidelines governing the use of the Think Time strategy. In cases of extensive Think Time use in a given week, or for extended periods of time, support staff and teachers should work together to develop a comprehensive behavioral plan to decrease the use of Think Time. Possible components of a behavioral plan include: (a) ecological factors (i.e., physical, interpersonal, and programmatic factors that provide a better fit with the student's characteristics and needs such as the physical arrangement of desks in the classroom, the orderliness of the room, positioning of the student, interpersonal interactions between teacher and student, and interventions to address the specific needs of the student); (b) longitudinal programming (i.e., teaching the student fundamental skills and competencies to facilitate behavioral change for the purpose of long-term academic and social outcomes such as social skills training, anger management/conflict resolution, counseling services

(individual, group, and family), intensive academic skills instruction, and medical intervention when necessary; and (c) focused programming (i.e., interventions designed to help the student build replacement behaviors.

Targeted Interventions

Targeted interventions are aimed at students who are at risk of developing or are exhibiting disruptive behavior patterns. This group of students includes both those with and without disabilities. The interventions are considered to be targeted because they are designed for those students who do not respond to the universal interventions. Targeted interventions differ from universal interventions in that they are more intense in nature. In other words, targeted interventions essentially enhance the effects of the universal interventions.

Identifying students who do not respond to the universal interventions is the first step in implementing the targeted interventions. At-risk and target students need intensive direct instruction of school and life skills (e.g., anger management, conflict resolution). At-risk and target students also need to be taught more directly how to discriminate which behaviors to use and not use under a variety of social and educational contexts because we have found that, in many instances, the problem for these students is not "knowing how do it" but "doing it when it is required." Finally, at-risk and target students are provided a range of individualized interventions such as self-management behavioral contracting, counseling, mentoring, and academic tutoring.

Intensive Comprehensive Interventions

Intensive wraparound interventions are aimed at students who exhibit severe, intractable lifecourse-persistent disruptive behavior patterns. The intervention approaches at this level are designed to involve multiple aspects of the student's life. These intervention approaches are collaborative in nature, involving peers, teachers, social agency personnel, and caregivers. The intervention approaches are based on comprehensive assessments of the problem that result in specially designed individualized, comprehensive interventions involving a range of concerned individuals who are committed to establishing a comprehensive system of support for the student.

The multidisciplinary team plays a primary role in the implementation of the intensive wraparound interventions. This is not to say that the multidisciplinary team is solely responsible for developing the individualized, comprehensive interventions. Rather, the multidisciplinary team is responsible for coordinating and interfacing with key individuals in the student's life to maximize the

effectiveness of the intensive comprehensive interventions. Additionally, the multidisciplinary team needs to work with a range of other social agencies to set up the organizational and coordinating structures necessary to deliver the intensive comprehensive interventions.

Conclusion

We have learned a number of things since the implementation of our multilevel comprehensive disciplinary program. First, the program not only has effectively reduced the level of disruptive behavior in our schools but also enhanced the academic performance and school survival skills of at-risk and target students (see Nelson, 1996). Additionally, the program has enabled teachers to shift their focus from discipline problems toward instructional matters. This shift has resulted in an over 20 percentile increase in the overall academic performance of our students on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills this past year. These results confirm our belief that a school's discipline plan plays a critical role in achieving academic excellence, and that direct intervention approaches are effective.

Second, it is critical that schools develop multilevel comprehensive intervention approaches to address disruptive behavior. We believe that the effectiveness of the program is maximized when the intervention approaches are directly linked to and coordinated with each other. The maintenance and coordination of a schoolwide discipline program is best achieved through a continual review of the program by a committee devoted to disciplinary matters.

Third, universal intervention approaches offer the greatest impact because they have both a preventive and remedial effect. The universal intervention approaches are preventative in that they prevent disruptive behavior from commencing as the result of the practices of the schools. The universal intervention approaches are remedial in that they are relatively effective for reducing disruptive behavior. Additionally, universal intervention approaches are more sustainable because school staff report these interventions as being more palatable, addressing the needs of all children.

Finally, staff development regarding disciplinary matters should be aimed at helping staff to implement the intervention approaches within a school's multilevel discipline program. Focusing on the implementation of the discipline program specific to the school not only helps to maintain the program, but also enhances staff's consistency in implementing the program.

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Table 1

Prevention and Remediation Levels to Meet the Needs of All Children

STUDENT TYPE	INTERVENTION APPROACH
Typical	**Schoolwide Interventions** (Preventative and Remedial)) • Effective teaching practices • Schoolwide discipline plan • Schoolwide classroom management strategy (The Think Time Strategy)
At-Risk (Developing or exhibiting disruptive behavior patterns)	**Targeted Interventions** (Preventative and Remedial) • Identification of at-risk children • Intensive instruction/counseling in skills for school and life success (e.g., anger management, self-control, conflict resolution) • Consultant based 1-to-1 interventions • Intensive academic interventions (if applicable)
Target (Exhibit life course disruptive behavior patterns)	**Intensive Comprehensive Interventions** (Remedial) • Connection of children and caregivers to community-based social service agencies • Coordination of school services with social service agencies

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