Education Policy Brief

Improving School Climate and Student Behavior: A New Paradigm for Indiana Schools

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Broadly conceived, the mission of schools is to provide an environment that promotes students' achievement of academic and social competencies. Educators face many challenges in meeting these expectations, including effective responses to disruptive and anti-social behaviors exhibited by students. Although recent national data suggest that violence and theft in schools are decreasing, disruptive behavior in schools is increasing (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2006). As a result, educators are concerned with student behavior and the effectiveness of their own professional skills to address challenging behavior. Not surprisingly, educators consistently cite student discipline and classroom management as top professional development needs (Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Many educators are dissatisfied with the behavioral climates of their buildings and recent estimates suggest that as many as 43 percent of teachers leave the profession within five years because of student behavior (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2007). School personnel are not alone in identifying discipline as a serious concern. For most of the past three decades, the public has identified school discipline as the biggest problem facing schools today, only recently being replaced by funding or drug use (Rose and Gallup, 38th Annual Phi Delta Kappa Survey, 2007).

The purpose of this Education Policy Brief (EPB) is to present the common discipline practices in schools and discuss current discipline data from Indiana. In addition, the EPB examines school-wide Positive Behavior Support (PBS), an alternative approach to student discipline and its implementation nationally. Finally, the EPB presents possible PBS implementation recommendations for Indiana educators and policymakers to consider as a way to shift the paradigm of school discipline.

SCHOOLS AND DISCIPLINE

Schools struggle to effectively address problem behavior and typically respond to student misconduct with an over-emphasis on punitive and exclusionary practices. Many school discipline codes are entirely structured around a "what do we do when…" approach, relying primarily on the application of "aversive" consequences to change behavior. Research demonstrates, however, that discipline practices relying on punishment, containment, and exclusion do little to solve problems of school violence, disruption, or juvenile crime in the community (Brooks, Schiraldi, & Zeidenberg, 2000; Mendel, 2000). In fact, such practices can be counterproductive by exacerbating problem behavior (Mayer & Leone, 1999). In examining data from over 600 U.S. secondary schools, Johns Hopkins University researchers (Gottfredsen & Gottfredsen, 1989) found the following school characteristics associated with discipline problems:

- Rules were unclear or perceived as unfairly or inconsistently enforced;
- Students did not believe in the rules;
- Teachers and administrators did not know what the rules were or disagreed on the proper responses to student misconduct;
- Teacher-administration cooperation was poor or the administration inactive;
- Teachers tended to have punitive attitudes;
- Misconduct was ignored; and

- Schools were large or lacked adequate resources for teaching.

Policies and actions resulting in removing students from school are understandable, as school staff maintain the "necessity" to immediately eliminate problem behaviors from the school environment. In 1997, over 3 million students were suspended from U.S. schools, mostly for non-criminal and non-violent acts. More recent figures suggest that classroom disruptions lead to nearly 2 million suspensions a year (Macallair, 2005). However, there is little research that suspension and expulsion improve student behavior (Skiba, 2000). Striking evidence illustrates the unintended outcomes and inequity underlying the use of suspension and expulsion:

1. Students who are suspended or expelled once are often suspended again (Commission for Positive Change on Oakland Public Schools [CPCOPS], 1992).
2. Suspension and expulsion lead to dropping out and disengagement (Whelage & Rutter, 1986).
3. Suspension and expulsion interfere with academic achievement (Arica, 2006).
4. Suspension and expulsion are not assigned equitably to racial minorities or students with disabilities (Skiba, 2004).

As schools struggle to address problem behavior, they must move beyond reactive approaches and consider the ways in which school practices and the school environment influence student (and adult) behavior. Basic principles of behavior make clear that context shapes behavior — for better or worse.

STATE OF INDIANA SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION DATA

The Indiana Department of Education Web site reports data regarding the frequency of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions for each school in a given school corporation. In the 2005-06 school year, there were 6,324 expulsions and 313,322 total suspensions. Data for the 2005-06 school year indicate that 600 Indiana schools reported 10 or more suspensions per 100 students. Individual school's rates of suspension within this searchable category vary widely, with some schools reporting as many as 50 or more suspensions per 100 students. Nationally, Indiana in past years has ranked 1st in expulsions (as a percent of enroll-

ment) and 9th in suspensions (NCES, 2003). Many statewide education associations in Indiana contest this ranking due to variations in definitions and policies across states, but there is a general acknowledgement that school discipline is an issue of great significance for classroom teachers.

The Indiana Department of Education database also allows for the search of multiple criteria, including school improvement foci. Surprisingly, of the 600 schools reporting high rates of expulsions and suspensions (>10 per 100 students) only three percent (n = 20) identified "Discipline" as a focus for school improvement. Nine percent (n=51) of those same 600 schools identified "School Climate/Safe Environment" as a focus for school improvement.

Dropout Rates

High rates of suspension and expulsion are correlated with low graduation rates. In 2006, 76.5 percent of eligible Indiana students earned a high school diploma. Of the 23.5 percent of students who did not graduate, 11.2 percent were reported as dropouts (the remaining number were students earning a GED, a special education certificate, a non-diploma course completion, or are still in school). In the 2005-06 school year, 158 schools reported a graduation rate of between 75 and 85 percent and 107 Indiana schools reported a graduation rate of less than 75 percent. Of those 107 schools with the lowest graduation rates, 83 of those schools also reported high rates of suspension/expulsion (>10 per 100 students). Only one school (out of 83) identified "Discipline" as a school improvement focus and an additional eight schools identified "School Climate" as a school improvement focus.

Attendance Rates

Not surprisingly, low attendance rates are also correlated with high rates of suspension and expulsion. During the 2005-06 school year, 96 schools reported an attendance rate of 94 percent or lower (the state average is 95.8 percent). Twenty-two schools reported an attendance rate under 90 percent. A total of 17 out of 22 schools reporting attendance rates of less than 90 percent also reported suspension and expulsion rates of 10 or more per 100 students.

None of these schools reported "Discipline" as a focus for school improvement.

Indiana's Public Law 221

Schools may also struggle to create and sustain effective disciplinary practices because of systems issues (Horner et al., 2005). Multiple initiatives are often not well integrated, resulting in overlap and competition for effort and focus. At the same time, legislative demand for increased academic accountability and achievement with built-in evaluation has resulted in schools adopting a narrow focus on academic outcomes. Indiana's Public Law 221 mandates that schools provide a three-year strategic plan that focuses almost exclusively on raising student achievement as measured by attendance rates, the percentage of students meeting academic standards under the ISTEP+ program, and graduation rates (for secondary schools). Schools are held accountable for improvement in these areas.

Public Law 221 does address issues of discipline and behavior by requiring schools to include in their plan "a provision to maintain a safe and disciplined learning environment for students and teachers" (IC 20-10.2-3-5). However, there is no accounting for progress in these areas and there are no built-in measures. The narrow, academics-intensive focus of Indiana's built-in evaluation measures may explain why so many schools (more than 90 percent) with high rates of suspension and expulsion have identified school improvement foci related to reading, writing, and math achievement while neglecting to identify improved disciplinary practices or improved school climate as explicit goals.

SCHOOL-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT—WHAT IS IT?

School-wide Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is a three-tiered proactive and preventative approach to discipline. It is not a model or a pre-packaged curriculum, but a process to plan and implement a "broad range of systemic and individualized strategies for achieving important social and learning outcomes while preventing problem behavior with all students" (Horner et al., 2005, p.10). The "positive," in Positive Behavior Support, references a profound focus on desired behavior, including: clari-

fying expected behaviors, explicit teaching of those behaviors, and developing procedures that promote student demonstration of those behaviors. Schools are challenged to shift the traditional focus of behavior management away from admonishing students regarding "what not to do" and toward teaching students "what to do." Embracing prevention, PBS planning and implementation focus on removing antecedent or preceding factors that trigger problem behavior and introducing antecedent or preceding factors that trigger desirable behaviors. Likewise, planning and implementation focus on removing or modifying consequences that may reinforce problem behavior and introducing consequences that reinforce desirable behaviors and reduce or eliminate problem behavior. In short, PBS is concerned with designing environments, arranging instruction, and adopting school-wide practices that promote desirable behavior.

The compilation of effective practices, interventions, and systems change strategies that make up the PBS process have a long history of empirical support (Horner & Sugai, 2007). The PBS framework emphasizes four foundational elements so that schools can better integrate scarce resources to successfully adopt and sustain an effective approach to discipline:

1. Operationally defined and valued outcomes;
2. Conceptual principles of behavioral and biomedical sciences;
3. Research validated practices; and
4. Systems change.

Guided by these foundational elements, school-based leadership teams create a plan that meets the needs of their student and staff populations, as suggested by data collected at the school level. The essential components of the initial school-wide plan (Tier 1, or Primary Prevention) include:

1. Statement of Purpose
2. A total of three to five School-wide Expectations (broad social principles that guide the behavior of everyone in the building)
3. Concrete behavioral expectations (examples of the School-wide Expectations) for all locations in the school
4. Plans to teach the School-wide Expectations to all adults and all students
5. An acknowledgement system and proactive strategies (including active adult supervision) to encourage students and staff to meet the expectations
6. Effective responses to violations including a clearly defined office discipline referral process
7. A system to monitor the plan's implementation and progress toward outcomes

Tier 1, or Primary Prevention, focuses on preventing the development of new cases of problem behavior by focusing on all students and staff, across all school settings. Some students and staff require interventions beyond primary-level prevention. Consistent with conceptual principles of behavioral science, PBS includes a continuum of support.

Tier 2, or Secondary Prevention, includes targeted group or setting interventions that can be created and implemented with less effort and time required of individualized behavior support planning. Specific skills instruction (e.g., anger management, impulse control, defusing strategies), academic tutoring, academic restructuring, mentoring programs, check-in/check-out systems, and divorce and substance abuse support groups are some examples of interventions that have been effectively implemented for groups of individuals. Rearranging schedules, modifying or creating new procedures, and increasing active supervision are examples of targeted-setting interventions.

Tier 3, or Tertiary Prevention, involves the creation of individualized behavioral support plans based on the function the behavior serves for the individual. The PBS approach enhances or creates specialized systems (e.g., Function-Based Support Planning, Systems of Care, Wrap-Around, Person-Centered Planning) to provide such planning for students with intense behavioral challenges.

Positive Behavior Support planning and implementation are data-driven. School teams examine data reflecting school-wide patterns of behavior to determine outcomes, develop behavioral expectations that serve as replacement behaviors for problem behaviors, assist with ongoing problem solving for targeting effective and ineffective settings in the school, and monitor implementation of the plans. The process requires that school leadership teams collect and have access to up-to-date discipline referral data that summarize basic information, including average numbers of referrals per day/per month and number of referrals by: behavior, location, time of day, student, staff, ethnicity, and administrative action.

In addition, school leadership teams also use data reflecting attendance and tardy rates; suspension and expulsion rates; passing and failing rates; student, staff and parent satisfaction; climate surveys; and other existing information.

OUTCOMES

Research on school-wide PBS has received a growing amount of attention in the literature (Lassen, Steele, & Sailor, 2006; Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, & Feinberg, 2005; Metzler, Biglan, Rusby, & Sprague, 2001). Results from research suggest that it is an effective approach for reducing problem behavior and developing an overall positive school climate (Colvin & Fernandez, 2000; Horner & Sugai, 2000; Lohrmann-O'Rourke et al., 2000). Most studies in the PBS literature show a significant decrease in the number of office discipline referrals (ODRs) (Lassen, Steele, & Sailor, 2006; McCurdy, Mannella, & Eldridge, 2003; McIntosh, Horner, Chard, Boland, & Good, 2006; Taylor-Greene & Kartub, 2000). In addition to decreases in ODRs, studies show that implementation of PBS can significantly reduce suspensions as well as reduce the occurrence of the most serious offenses, such as student assaults (Lassen, Steele, & Sailor, 2006; McCurdy, Mannella, & Eldridge, 2003). Metzler, Biglan, Rusby, and Sprague (2001) showed that PBS implementation was associated with improved students' perceptions of school safety, including a reduction of students' reports of physical and verbal attacks.

Not only is PBS effective for reducing problematic student behavior and increasing social achievement, it has been correlated with significant increases in standardized math and reading scores (Lassen, Steele, & Sailor, 2006; Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, & Feinberg, 2005; Sailor et al., 2006). The logic is clear — when school environments are efficient and effective at promoting positive student behavior, thereby reducing time spent reacting to problem behavior, time for instruction increases, and achievement follows.

When the number of office discipline referrals decreases, administrators recoup time spent disciplining students that can then be devoted to instructional leadership. It is estimated that each office discipline referral requires, on average, 15 minutes of administrator time. One elementary school in Central Indiana reported 1,863 office discipline referrals prior to implementing PBS. In the first year of PBS implementation, referrals to the office dropped to 1,019. Using the 15 minutes per referral calculation, the building principal recouped 12,660 minutes or 211 hours. This represented a gain of 35 days (6 hours/day) of administrator time.

SUSTAINABILITY

The School-Wide Positive Behavioral Supports process is based on the assumption that school staff adopts and commits to long-term, evidence-based practices, sustained through coordination and school leadership efforts. In most typical efforts to improve behavior, school districts are forced into the "train-and-hope" approach due to factors of time, resources, lack of leadership support, and ongoing pressures to implement the newest initiatives (Sugai & Horner, 2006). The "train-and-hope" model assumes that school staff is adequately equipped with the skills and knowledge to carry out planned interventions and sustain implementation through training sessions with an outside "expert." This type of approach typically results in unsuccessful program implementation because of inadequate efforts focusing on the organization of system supports (i.e., resources, ongoing technical assistance, coaching, and additional training) — supports that are needed to effectively continue the implementation of the practice over a long period of time (OSEP Center on Positive Behavioral Support, 2004).

In response to the issues surrounding sustainability and expansion challenges of school-wide PBS, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) established a National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to:

(a) identify and enhance knowledge about, and practical demonstration of, school-wide PBS practices, systems, and outcomes along the three-tiered continuum (primary, secondary, tertiary); and (b) develop, conduct, and evaluate technical assistance and dissemination efforts that allow evidence-based practices to be implemented on a large scale with high durability and effectiveness (http://www.pbis.org/PBISgoals.htm).

Relying on more than a decade of intensive research, the OSEP Center for PBIS maintains that individual schools cannot be expected to successfully implement and sustain PBS without systemic external support. The authors of the *Implementers' Blueprint* state:

Accomplishing accurate, durable, and adaptable school-wide PBS requires systemic support that extends beyond an individual school. The real consideration is organizing multiple schools (e.g., cluster, complex, district, county, state) so that a common vision, language, and experience are established. By achieving this consistency, the efficiency of resource use, implementation efforts, and organizational management can be improved. An expanded infrastructure also enhances the district and state level support (e.g., policy, resources, competence) that provides a supportive context for implementation at the local level (p. 24).

The goal of district and state organizational structures is to establish a hierarchy of supports that can fully engage local schools in the coordination and management of effective and sustainable PBS practices (Sugai & Horner, 2006). The organizing feature of these larger systems is a statewide or district leadership team, comprised of a range of stakeholders which facilitates action plans, assessments, and the scope of PBS initiatives in the state/district. Table 1 provides an overview of the types of activities fostered by the leadership team.

PBS IN THE UNITED STATES

Currently, 41 states have developed statewide initiatives to support large-scale implementation of school-wide PBS. Many of these states, following recommendations from the OSEP Technical Assistance Center on PBIS, have established state and district leadership teams, created coaches and trainer networks, secured sustainable funding, required evaluation of implementation and outcomes, and created dissemination strategies. State and district coordination has often resulted in the successful integration of related initiatives, such as Bullying Prevention and Response to Intervention. State initiatives typically involve partnerships between State Departments of Education, Mental Health, Juvenile Justice, and universities. Illinois and Maryland, two states with highly developed organizational structures, continue large-scale implementation. Illinois estimates that 50 percent of all public schools will be using the PBS framework by 2010, while Maryland reports that 45 percent of its public schools will be involved by 2009. Table 2 represents a sample of major state implementation efforts.

TABLE 1. School-wide PBS: Organizational Logic

Major Activity	Brief Description
Leadership Team	The diverse group provides guidance, evaluation, and process support.
Coordination	Person(s) with knowledge of SW-PBS who can manage day-to-day implementation of action plans.
Funding	Should be sufficient to ensure at least 3-5 years of action plan implementation.
Visibility	Implementation is made public to provide communication, accountability, funding justification, etc.
Political Support	At local or state level, commitment to improvement of student social behavior is a priority.
Training	Development of fluent, in-district/in-house trainers.
Coaching	Through existing school personnel, SW-PBS is sustained by linking training and implementation of practice.
Demonstrations	Small number of schools will serve as early models for future teams.
Evaluation	Determines integrity and effectiveness of implementation through examination of school-based information systems.

PBS IN INDIANA

Because PBS efforts in Indiana are not coordinated by a statewide initiative, it is difficult to accurately determine the extent of implementation throughout the state. Staff at Indiana University's Center for Education and Lifelong Learning at the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community have been training and facilitating school teams for approximately eight years and have worked directly with over 30 schools from seven school corporations. Recently staff from the Center have supported two corporation-wide initiatives and have trained "district" coaches in four school corporations. The Indiana State Improvement Grant (INSIG), awarded in 2004, includes PBS as one of five goals. Through this grant, 19 school leadership teams from six school corporations have received team training in PBS. Presently, INSIG is preparing to offer team training to interested schools throughout the state. There have also been several examples of single districts that have embraced PBS and provided training to their staffs, including Warsaw Community School Corporation, the Metropolitan School District of Pike Township, and the Metropolitan School District of Lawrence Township. Several schools within Indianapolis Public Schools have also implemented PBS.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Successful discipline, improved school climates, and behavioral competence are integrally related to improving academic outcomes. Given Indiana's existing commitment to improving school climate and student behavior (as evidenced by P.L. 221), a reasonable extension seems to be the provision of resources, training, technical assistance, and accountability frameworks to enable schools to pursue these important goals. Improving school climates, discipline practices, and student social behavior must be established as a priority if schools are to make progress in this area. Goals become priorities when resources are allocated.

Pursuing goals of improved school climate and student behavior involves first determining valued and measurable outcomes. Schools need information (data) systems which enable the efficient and reliable collection and summarization of data that represent school-wide patterns of behavior and disciplinary practices. Corporation-wide data systems are often not structured to allow individual schools to efficiently collect and summarize patterns of behavior at the school level. Indiana school principals and leadership teams must collect data and be able to generate up-to-date basic descriptive reports to guide the planning and ongoing problem solving necessary for school-wide discipline efforts.

Indiana schools are struggling to address problem behavior that interferes with student learning. A statewide initiative to support large-scale implementation of School-wide Positive Behavior Supports would provide the leadership and support to Indiana schools to help them move beyond reactive approaches and toward a preventative and proactive approach to discipline. This initiative could significantly impact school climate and student achievement in Indiana.

As is evident in the research, simply providing PBS training to school leadership teams is inadequate for sustained and expanded implementation. District support through the coordination of related initiatives, funding sources, coaching and technical assistance, and the development of internal behavioral competence is critical to

TABLE 2. A Sample of Major State Implementation Efforts

State	Schools	Partners	Organizational Structure	OSEP Assistance
Alabama	226	AL-DOE	Project Coordinator State Trainers Regional Coaches	Yes
Florida	250	FL-DOE University of South Florida	State Leadership Team District Coordinators Coaches	Yes
Illinois	611	IL-DOE IL Statewide Technical Assistance Center	State Coordinator Regional Coordinator Coaches District Leadership Teams	Yes
Louisiana	285	LA-DOE Louisiana State University	State Coordinator District Coaches	No
Maryland	494	MD-DOE Sheppard Pratt Johns Hopkins	State Leadership Team District Coordinators District Facilitators Coaches	Yes
Michigan	181	MI-DOE	Regional Coordinators	Yes
Missouri	183	MO-DOE	State Advisory Team State Coordinator Regional Consultants Coaches	Yes
New Mexico	130	NM-DOE Region IX Cooperative	State Leadership Team Regional Coordinators State Trainers District Coaches	Yes
New York	322	NY-DOE NYS Office of Mental Health Families Together in NYS	State Leadership Team Regional PBIS Coordinators Regional Family Coordinators District Coaches Building Coaches	Yes
Oregon	229	OR-DOE PBS Statewide Network Lincoln Education Service District	Regional Teams District Coordinators District Coaches	Yes
West Virginia	215	WV-DOE Marshal University WV University WV Dept. of Health and Human Resources	State Cadre District Cadre	Yes

successful and sustained implementation of PBS. For this reason, a statewide leadership team should be established to begin a coordinated statewide initiative of PBS. This team would benefit by following the recommendations of the OSEP Technical Assistance Center on PBIS as put forth in the *Implementers' Blueprint*. The knowledge and framework for supporting schools to improve climates and to enhance behavioral outcomes exist, and Indiana, like other states, should move forward and utilize the information disseminated by the OSEP Technical Assistance Center on PBIS.

Although special education has typically initiated and funded individual school efforts in Indiana, PBS addresses the needs of an entire school, and as such, requires the explicit support and involvement of state and district leadership, including general education. Designing environments, arranging instruction, and adopting school-wide practices that promote desirable behavior in students will require a strong partnership between special and general education.

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Policy Perspective

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAM, FACULTY INVOLVEMENT AND DISTRICT SUPPORT: RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

Jean Creasbaum

Osolo School initiated its School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Plan this August, and although the school has not yet compiled the first month's quantitative data from the district student system, the qualitative data clearly indicate improved student behavior and school climate. After spending most of the first three days of school rotating all of the students through stations where they were taught the expected behaviors for that specific location, feedback from teachers, parents, and students has been very positive. Comments such as "the school is quieter," "expectations are uniform across the board," "the bathrooms are cleaner," and "I know what I'm supposed to do," suggest successful implementation.

This success did not happen because of a one-day workshop (or even a week-long workshop) or because the principal read a book about a new program. It happened because it had the necessary district support of time and administrative involvement, data support, and complimentary systems, and from the beginning it has been, as the name implies, a school-wide effort.

The Elkhart Community Schools had the vision to pilot SW-PBS in three elementary schools using a three-year plan, the first year being just the planning year. It is rare in education that we invest the time (and money to pay for that time) that is critical to the success of any initiative that involves change, but Elkhart did. A small team from each school, including Osolo School, worked for a year under the direction of a consultant, reviewing individual school data, and drafting a plan. Osolo's team included the principal, assistant principal, a kindergarten teacher, first grade teacher, fourth grade teacher, sixth grade teacher, social worker, behavioral consultant, and mental health liaison.

Although neither the principal nor the assistant principal facilitated the team, the administrative involvement was crucial, and this involvement required district support. Two full days were spent in August before the school year began, and then four full days spread throughout the year to use the data and the new learning to develop a positive behavior plan for Osolo. The plan went through many revisions as the team constantly took it back to the staff for input.

The data support that the district was able to provide was another essential component to the successful implementation of SW-PBS at Osolo School. Each month the PBS team received a summary report in numeric and graphic form, reporting infractions by location and time of day, total number of referrals, and referrals per day, in addition to comparing referrals within and by ethnic populations. The data began to show trends, and decisions about systems and environmental factors over which adults in the school have control now could be made based on these data. Bus dismissal went from a chaotic twenty minutes to a relatively calm ten minutes simply by changing one procedure and the amount of adult supervision. As the data became available each month, the PBS team began to become more familiar with them and more inferences were made.

At the same time that the SW-PBS team was in the planning year, Osolo School was also a pilot site for Systems of Care and began to explore Olweus Bullying Prevention. Both of these parallel the thinking of SW-PBS in that they use data and focus on positive adult behaviors that can impact children (and families). All share the belief that the family and community play an integral role and need to be involved if any true change is to take place. The teachers were all trained in Data Teams, which is a process that looks at cause data (what are the adults doing in regards to instruction in the classroom?) and effect data (how did it impact achievement on a particular classroom assessment?).

Although we use this process with our academic data, it is the same focus of thinking: what are the adults doing, and how is what we are doing affecting how the students are behaving/learning/achieving?

Probably the single most effective component of the success of the implementation SW-PBS at Osolo Elementary School is that it is school-wide. A large portion of the planning that the PBS team did in year 1 involved getting everyone on board and making sure that the implementation was as pervasive as possible. The team determined that the best way to achieve this would be a two day retreat, which would include an overview of SW-PBS and teaching (not just distributing) all of the new procedures and forms to all of the staff. All staff would be invited (teachers, paraprofessionals, custodians, secretaries, etc.), and the goal was 80 percent participation. The participation was overwhelming (83 percent overall, 91 percent certified). Although the retreat was at a nice location, it was not the location alone that got everyone to give up two days of summer vacation. I believe it was the year of planning, information and data, and district support that the staff had already seen, and the fact that it was explicitly connected to other current initiatives.

We are anxious to monitor and analyze the data this year, make adjustments to our plan and our systems, and continue to collect qualitative data regarding the climate of Osolo Elementary School. I appreciate the opportunity and support that the district has provided me to lead a school that is implementing a plan of SW-PBS, and I can already see the potential it has not only for improving behavior, but also, because of improved behavior, for improving the learning community.

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Policy Perspective

CREATING AND SUSTAINING A STATEWIDE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT

Anne W. Todd

Schools, Districts, and State Departments of Education are making strides to embed systems of Positive Behavior Support (PBS) in all schools to achieve the goal of creating positive and instructional environments conducive to learning. We can not ignore the fact that PBS has emerged as an evidence-based, team-oriented, and outcome-driven approach to supporting students for academic and social success. PBS provides guidelines for schools, districts, and states to develop, implement, and monitor student success by establishing common expectations, language, goals, vision, and experiences. PBS is grounded by a few big ideas including prevention, instruction, monitoring, evaluation, and sustainability. Schools implementing PBS have experienced positive effects on improving the school climate and on creating positive learning opportunities for students. Sustainability of positive outcomes of initial interventions is critical and requires ongoing resources. Strengthening and expanding the infrastructure of support to schools needs to be strategic and systematic. The infrastructure of support moves in at least two directions, (a) systems support at the district/region and state levels and (b) resources to support the capacity building of schools and staff to support all students.

District/regional and state level systems support refers to the development and implementation of an infrastructure that is guided by a leadership team focusing on policy, funding, and political support. The leadership team also coordinates the evaluation, training, and coaching efforts across the district/state. We need to develop a 'leadership' team at the district and state levels that create and implement a three to five year plan that defines the PBS objectives, outcomes, and necessary data sources. Administrator support at both the school and district level is critical for implementation of the three to five year plan created by the leadership team. Using a tool like the Implementers Blueprint and Self Assessment for School-wide Positive Behavior Support is useful as a guide to define outcomes, activities, evaluation sources and timelines for coaching, training, and evaluation.

Schools and districts need to build capacity to develop and monitor their systems, improve and enhance skills and practices, and improve their use of data for decision-making. Resources to support professional development training and coaching activities as outlined in the three to five year plan need to be defined, funded, scheduled, and evaluated, with coaching support as needed. Along with the training comes the allocation of time to put the training into practice during the school day. Training and coaching activities need to occur at multiple levels that include students, parents, school staff, specialists, administrators, and others. With state and district organization, options increase for sharing training and coaching activities at the district/state level, which is likely to have a positive impact on the efficient use of resources.

We need to strive toward the application of PBS strategies to define systems, practices, and information sources in schools as a common practice that becomes part of the natural planning and implementation schedule and continues to ask 'how is it going, and what do we need to do to maintain or improve?' We need to encourage a PBS policy at the state and district levels that promotes the use of evidence-based practices to create positive and instructional environments that promote positive social and academic behavior.

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