School-wide Positive Behavior Support Programs in Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT

Behavior problems continue to be an issue for teachers and parents to address. Studies have shown that challenging behaviors in early childhood are linked to problems in the areas of academics and socialization in adolescence and adulthood. Most schools use a reactive, consequence-based approach to behavior management. With school violence and behavior incidents on the rise, it seems there is a need to look at alternative ways of addressing these problems.

School-wide positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) is a concept that creates an inclusive school environment, addressing all students' behavioral challenges on a continuum of need. Students are taught social skills and appropriate behaviors, and reinforced for exhibiting those behaviors by staff and teachers consistently.

For the past ten years, researchers have been looking at the effects of PBS and have found that it has been successful in improving learning environments, reducing problem behaviors, and even improving academic achievement. The purpose of this literature review is to learn more about school-wide behavior programs at the elementary school level and the key elements that make them successful. If these programs do, in fact, improve learning outcomes for students, then what are the implications for future educational practice and school reform?

INTRODUCTION

In my experience as a beginning teacher, I felt as if I spent too much time managing difficult behavior in the classroom, which took away from instructional time. I had a challenging class my first year, 31 fourth graders and no instructional aide. In addition, the other fourth grade class was a combination class, which meant the higher-achieving, independent workers were there, while I had a wide realm of students, including several with behavior "issues." I was enthusiastic and had many great ideas, but found that my lessons were too often interrupted by a few disruptive students. I became frustrated because it seemed unfair to the students who were engaged and interested in learning. I had a good relationship with my students, but lacked an effective behavior management system in my class. As teachers, we were on our own to come up with expectations and consequences for behavior in our classrooms and there was not much continuity throughout the school. There were school rules, but most of them focused on what students were *not* allowed to do, rather than what behaviors were expected.

Seeking advice from colleagues and mentors, I tried many different strategies and implemented new systems in an attempt to improve the situation. I attended a seminar about behavior management and found some success with methods I learned there. When I did more reading and research about behavior and reinforcement theory, I realized that the children needed more constant positive feedback, and they need to be taught the behaviors we want them to exhibit. Children act out for different reasons, but looking at their behaviors, we should ask what is motivating them, what is reinforcing students for their actions? Are they getting attention (even if it is negative) or avoiding doing work or

participating in an activity? Often, it was the students who were struggling academically who were disruptive during lessons or other academic tasks. As I reflected on my teaching and my students, I realized that, in fact, some of the things I was doing were actually reinforcing them for their disruptive behavior. When I focused on positive reinforcement, giving more positive feedback to the students who were on task, rather than giving students attention for their disruptions, I noticed a decrease in the behavior problems. My lessons went much more smoothly and I had more time to teach or work with students individually or in groups. I also spent more time teaching social skills, such as conflict resolution. The students who had been struggling and acting out in class became more productive members of our learning community and the overall stress levels in the classroom (mine and the students') decreased. Seeing the value of these behavioral interventions first hand, I was interested to learn more and became excited when I learned that there were school-wide and district-wide programs being implemented and organizations working to create better, more positive learning environments in our schools.

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is defined by the U. S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) as "the application of behavior analysis to achieve socially important behavior change" (OSEP Technical Assistance Center, 2007). The goals of PBS are to "prevent the development and intensifying of problem behaviors and maximize academic success for all students" (OSEP-PBS Brochure, p. 2). If these goals are achieved, then perhaps improvements will be seen in our school environments as well as student achievement.

I believe it is our duty as teachers to not only teach academics, but to be positive role models for our students, and to teach them social skills and values that help them to function productively and cooperatively as human beings. We are preparing them for their lives as adults in an ever-changing world and must teach them how to resolve conflicts, problem solve and think critically. With so many schools struggling to raise test scores and teachers getting burned out on "teaching to the test," it seems apparent that there is a need for systemic change that will be sustainable and consider what is best for children. Could school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) be a solution to many of the current dilemmas we face in education?

Statement of Problem

Managing problem behaviors in schools is a major concern of educators. "It has become widely understood that persistent, challenging behaviors in early childhood are associated with subsequent problems in socialization, school adjustment, and academic performance, and that these problems can continue to affect adaptation in adolescence and adulthood" (Dunlap, Lewis, and McCart, p. 1). Since it is our responsibility as teachers to prepare our children to become responsible adults, it is imperative we find ways to manage problem behaviors early and teach social skills that will help them function successfully in our schools and beyond.

Traditionally, schools have used reactive, punitive strategies in an attempt to deter students from unwanted behaviors. These consequence based behavior systems have been proven ineffective. The Families and Advocates Partnership for Education states that

"according to over 500 research studies, punishment is one of the least effective responses to problem behaviors. School-wide policies that punish students for negative behaviors but that don't reward positive behaviors actually increased aggression, vandalism, truancy, tardiness, and dropping out of school" (FAPE Research Brief, p. 1).

The alternative is to focus on teaching and reinforcing the behaviors that will help children become productive members of our schools and society. This begins with creating a consistent, safe school environment where students are supported in learning social skills. We need to think more about our students and teach them how to behave and learn, within a system that is positive and collaborative. "What is needed is a systemic, proactive approach that seeks to prevent challenging behaviors from developing while comprehensively addressing the needs of *all* children on the continuum of risk for challenging behaviors" (Dunlap, Lewis, & McCart, p. 1).

Some states, such as Illinois, Maryland and Michigan have implemented SWPBS and have allocated funding to allow more schools to utilize these resources. In some cases, this is made possible due to partnership between educational and mental health organizations. California has only begun to apply these practices in a few areas locally due to a lack of funding. Meanwhile, California is ranked very poorly in terms of academic achievement in our schools. Nationwide, California is below average in most areas, 44th or below in reading and math achievement on national assessments, 49th in teacher/student ratios, and 29th in terms of per pupil spending (Edsource, 2005).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this paper is to study the effectiveness of school-wide positive behavior support programs at the elementary school level. The PBS model seems to be very successful and I am interested to know it works, on what theories it is based, and what key elements make it effective. In reviewing the literature, I would like to find out what research has been done and what outcomes have been associated with school-wide PBS in elementary schools.

Studies have shown that there are "relationships between academic performance and problem behavior across grade levels" (Putnam et al 2008, p. 1). If positive correlations can be found between SWPBS and academics, maybe more states such as California will value the importance of funding such projects.

Research Question

What is the relationship between School-wide Positive Behavior Support and academic achievement at the elementary school level? What have researchers found about the academic outcomes in schools using this model?

THEORETICAL RATIONALE

Positive Behavior Support is based on behavioral theory. It is "an application of a behaviorally-based systems approach to enhance the capacity of schools, families and communities to design effective environments" (OSEP, ND, p. 1).

In 1911 Thorndike developed the *law of effect*, "which basically states that, all other things being equal, responses to stimuli that are followed by satisfaction will be strengthened, but responses that are followed by discomfort will be weakened" (Barnett, 2006, p. 1). Watson, known as "the father of American behaviorism," introduced the idea that psychology is the science of behavior. "Large numbers of psychologists continue to take the prediction and control of behavior as their paramount goal, using 'behavior modification' techniques to influence the responses of disturbed children or adults" (Fancher, p. 337).

Skinner "sought a behavioristic method of studying the way intact and normally functioning organisms *actively* operate on the environment, learn to manipulate it, and, to a certain degree, control it" (Fancher, p. 360). He introduced this concept of operant conditioning, as well as reinforcement, punishment and extinction of behaviors. His contributions still impact the application of reinforcement theory in which "a combination of rewards and/or punishments is used to reinforce desired behavior or extinguish unwanted behavior" (Barnett, 2006, p. 1).

Background and Need

Over the last ten years, researchers have been looking at the effects of positive behavior interventions. The concept of positive behavior support was originally used in special education settings as an alternative to more aversive techniques used for students with severe behavioral issues. Researchers George Sugai and Rob Horner from Oregon, funded by the U. S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) have formed a collaborative including universities and educational agencies with the goal to "assist states in large-scale implementation of School-wide Positive Behavior Support to achieve both reduction in problem behavior and enhanced learning environment" (OSEP Brochure, p. 1). In 2007, OSEP published a research summary, containing studies that have been published as well as research that is currently being proposed or conducted.

One study, by Bradshaw, Leaf and Debnam (2007)

documents a randomized control trial conducted in Maryland in which

implementation of SWPBS was demonstrated to occur with fidelity,

and to be linked to

- improved organizational health,
- improved academic outcomes
- reductions in office discipline referrals. (Horner & Sugai, 2007, p. 8)

The final results of this study are due to be published in the next year.

School-wide positive behavior support is currently being implemented in over 30 states, but it seems concentrated in some areas more than others. Some states, such as

Maryland, Illinois and Michigan, have state funded grants that make the programs more widespread. California's schools have not received funding from the state for PBS, but have started using the model at a local level, in areas such as Orange County, and are beginning to branch out to other areas.

In recent years, researchers have started examining the academic outcomes associated with SWPBS. This study proposes to review the literature and analyze the findings with regards to SWPBS and academic achievement at the elementary school level. If evidence supports a relationship between the implementation of SWPBS and improved academic performance, then I believe more schools, districts and states will consider allocating funds to these programs.

Assumptions

I believe that there is a need for change in how we manage behavior in our schools. Both teachers and students would be happier and more successful if school was a more positive, caring environment, with a sense of community and safety, and less behavior problems. I feel that implementing school-wide positive behavior interventions and support benefits the people involved and, ultimately, the society at large. Teaching values, social skills and inspiring an intrinsic desire for lifelong learning are as important as teaching academics.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As I review the current literature, I determine the key elements of SWPBS that make it successful. What have researchers found about the effectiveness of SWPBS and what outcomes have been seen in elementary schools? What relationship, if any, has been seen between SWPBS and academic achievement?

In the first section, I provide definitions and background of PBS. Next, I outline the key elements that make up the SWPBS model. The next section examines the research about the effectiveness of PBS thus far in elementary schools. The legislation section discusses relevant laws and proposed bills that advocate for the use of SWPBS and initiatives from states that have implemented these programs in their schools. I also address the important relationship between SWPBS and the mental health of our students. Finally, I discuss the relationship between behavior and academic achievement and the implications for future educational practice.

Definitions/ Background of PBS

SWPBS can be defined as "a systems approach for establishing the social culture and behavioral supports needed for a school to be an effective learning environment for all students" (Sugai, 2008, presentation slide 9). SWPBS is a more positive and preventative alternative to reactive, punitive behavior management procedures used in most schools. Administrators, teachers, and staff work collaboratively to improve the school climate by teaching behavioral expectations and social skills for all settings within the learning community. Positive reinforcement is used heavily to acknowledge students who are exhibiting the expected behaviors. Educators use behavioral data to regularly

assess their progress and make decisions about problem solving and future planning. For students who are not responding to the given expectations, there is a continuum of interventions designed to fit the needs of the individual.

SWPBS has its roots in behaviorism and applied behavior analysis. These concepts were first used in special education settings. "PBS was developed initially as an alternative to aversive interventions that were used with students with severe disabilities who engaged in extreme forms of self-injury and aggression" (OSEP, ND, p. 1). More recently, this approach has been successful in regular education settings as well.

Key Elements of PBS

The main elements of the PBS model include "a prevention-focused continuum of support, proactive instructional approaches to teaching and improving social behaviors, conceptually sound and empirically validated practices, systems change to support effective practices, and data-based decision making" (Sugai & Horner, 2002, p. 2).

Prevention

There are three levels of prevention used in SWPBS. "Primary prevention focuses on decreasing the number of new cases of a problem behavior or situations by ensuring and maintaining the use of the most effective practices for all students" (p. 2). This level of prevention is used with all students, school-wide in all settings, including the classroom, hallways, lunch room, playground, etc. Students are taught behavioral expectations and social skills to be utilized in all areas of the school. Positive

reinforcement is used by teachers and staff to acknowledge those students who are behaving according to these expectations.

> The goal of secondary prevention is to reduce the number of existing problem behavior cases or situations by providing additional instructional and behavioral supports for the relatively smaller number of students who are at risk of significant school failure and who need more specialized supports than those provided by primary prevention efforts. (Sugai & Horner, 2002, p. 2)

In these cases, interventions are used to support individuals described as "non-responders" or small groups of students in following the behavioral expectations established in the school.

The final type of prevention, "tertiary prevention focuses on reducing the number of existing cases of complex, intractable, and long-standing problem behaviors displayed by students who are at high risk for significant emotional, behavioral and social failure" (Sugai & Horner, 2002, p. 2) These students require more individualized and intensive interventions, including the use of functional behavioral analysis and other data collection to determine the best way to support them in being successful members of the learning community.

Proactive Approach

The second key element of PBS is that the approach taken by the teachers and staff is proactive rather than reactive. At the beginning of the year or at the start of a new

activity, behavior guidelines are taught explicitly and reinforced so that all students know what is expected of them in various situations and settings. "

> This approach is characterized by a careful consideration of instructional
> practices, structures and processes for (a) maximizing academic outcomes;
> (b) selecting and teaching school-wide and classroom-wide expectations,
> rules and routines; and (c) practicing and encouraging the use of academic
> skills and behavioral expectations across multiple relevant settings and
> contexts (Sugai & Horner, 2002, pp. 2-3).

Students are taught social skills and given strategies for dealing with other students, such as conflict resolution and how to respond to being harassed or bullied. It is also made clear to students when they should seek assistance from an adult in a given situation.

Conceptually and Empirically Sound Practices

Many of the components of PBS come from the practice of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), which has been "refined, tested, and replicated to form an important disciplinary approach for addressing socially important concerns in education, especially improving behavioral outcomes for individual students" (Sugai & Horner, 2002, p. 3). PBS focuses on two specific methods used in ABA: functional behavioral assessment and behavior intervention plans. Functional behavioral assessments are used to collect data about the variables associated with problem behaviors, such as "setting, antecedent, and consequences." This information is used to create behavior intervention plans, which

"focus on the strengths and important social contexts of the student and family and make problem behavior ineffective, inefficient, and irrelevant so that more desirable or adaptable behaviors can be encouraged" (Sugai & Horner, 2002, p. 3).

Systems Perspective

A large part of the PBS approach is the fact that it is used school-wide. Having the systems set up throughout the school settings is crucial to the successful implementation of these practices. This involves ongoing training and coaching of teachers and staff to ensure that there is consistency throughout the school. "Systems supports must be in place to support the accurate, efficient, and sustained use of evidence-based practices and data management systems" (Sugai & Horner, 2002, p. 4).

Data-based Decision Making

The PBS team at each school is actively involved in problem solving and developing the program that will be successful and sustainable for their students. To help them in this process, they analyze the data collected in the functional behavior assessments as well as other measures such as test scores, grades, office discipline referrals, attendance records, and IEP goals.

> The PBS approach stresses that good decisions require that relevant data
> be identified, accurate data collection methods be used, efficient data
> summarization and presentation procedures be available, clear decision
> rules be in place to guide data analysis, and structures and mechanisms for
> data-based action planning be in operation (Sugai & Horner, 2002, p. 4).

Steps for Implementation

Establishing the team

The implementation of PBS in a school involves several steps. First, the leadership team is established. "With input from all staff, teams determine which features they will target first, how progress will be monitored, and what the behavioral expectations will be, when and how to teach the behavior expectations, and the type of data that will be used to inform decisions" (Dunlap, Lewis, & McCart, p. 2).

Defining behavior expectations

Next, the team defines the behavioral expectations for the students. For school-aged children, there are usually about five guidelines used throughout the school. These are posted throughout the various educational settings, using language students can easily understand and relate to or using pictures or icons. (Dunlap, Lewis, & McCart, p. 2)

Teaching behavioral expectations

Once the school-wide behavior expectations have been determined, they must be taught to the students. "Expectations can be taught with a range of strategies that include modeling, practice, role playing, and feedback in context, and a variety of materials can be used to help the teaching process (e.g. books, games, puppets, social stories)" (Dunlap, Lewis, &McCart, p. 2). Children are taught social skills as well as strategies for conflict resolution. There is also discussion about appropriate behaviors for different settings within the learning community, such as the classroom, the hallways, the lunch room, and the playground. It is important that the teaching of these expectations is clear and

consistent and that the students are aware of the consequences for not complying with the guidelines.

Reinforcing student behavior

After students have been taught the behavior expectations, the next step is to use constant positive reinforcement to acknowledge those students who exhibit the desired behaviors. Giving the children this feedback lets them know when they are on the right track and also shows other students that they will be noticed if they make the right choices. "Acknowledgement of desired behaviors is such a vital feature of PBS that often the leadership team needs to arrange special monitoring strategies to help prompt staff to 'catch the children being good' with a high enough frequency" (Dunlap, Lewis, & McCart, p. 3).

Using data for decision making

As discussed in the previous section, data is used to help the PBS team to solve problems and make decisions regarding the actions taken to implement the program successfully throughout the school. The team meets to decide what types of data they will collect to monitor the effectiveness of the systems at different levels: school-wide, within each classroom, and with individual students.

One commonly used measure to assess the school-wide program is to look at the number of office discipline referrals (ODRs). Many schools also use behavior incident forms which "document occurrences of targeted challenging behaviors, and note the type of problem behavior, the setting in which it occurred, the type of activity and any other potential triggers to the behavior, the people involved in the activity and the

consequences (if any) that were provided following the behavioral incident" (Dunlap,

Lewis, & McCart, p. 3). This data is collected and analyzed regularly by members of the

team in their decision making.

Supporting at-risk students

Students who do not respond to the behavioral expectations set forth for the

learning community are provided with additional interventions, as decided by the PBS

team. "Data from behavior incident forms can help teams determine which children and

classrooms need support and what supports are appropriate" (Dunlap, Lewis & McCart,

p. 3).

<div align="center">Effectiveness of PBS</div>

One study, by Dr. Beth Falls, evaluated the St. Lucie County School District's

implementation and results of PBS in their schools. The goals of the study were to

"determine the level of implementation and fidelity of the PBS Project in St. Lucie

County and to assess the overall effectiveness of the program in schools adopting the

PBS Project" (Falls, 2005, p. 2).

Dr. Falls used a number of measures in her study, including:

1. Reports from the St. Lucie County Positive Behavior Support Project District

Committee Meetings;

2. Personal communication between the evaluator and district and school

personnel;

3. The Savanna Ridge Elementary School Staff Survey (a survey of a

representative school with full implementation and fidelity);

4. The School-Wide Evaluation Tool (compiled from interviews between the PBS

Project District Coordinator and a school principal and randomly selected staff

and students);

5. An email survey of faculty and staff (district-wide); and

6. Discipline referral data" (Falls, 2005, p. 5).

Of the forty schools in the district, 21 were participating in the PBS Project. Of

these schools, "five schools were at the level of Full Implementation and were deemed to

be following the program with fidelity" (Falls, 2005, p. 6). Falls examined discipline

referral data from the five schools, comparing total referrals for the year with the data

from the year before. The reduction in total referrals was then figured into "reduction in

referral rate," the number of referrals divided by the number of students to account for

changes in enrollment. Several limitations are noted, such as technology problems,

inconsistency in referrals, and coding inconsistency.

"All five of the PBS schools saw a significant reduction in total referrals as

compared to the previous academic year. The decline in discipline referrals was seen in

all grades, all ethnic groups, and in both male and female students" (Falls, 2005, p. 7-8).

Although the author does not comment on statistical significance in this study, the

results do show a definite drop in discipline referrals with the implementation of PBS for

one year. It is also important that these declines are seen at all five schools and across

different categories. If one of the goals of PBS is to reduce problem behaviors, and if

discipline referrals are a good measure of this, the study shows the PBS Project is successful in this particular school district. The study also does not address whether these results would be generalizable to other schools in different areas.

Lewis, Sugai, and Colvin (1998) conducted a study which looked at the incidences of problem behaviors in specific settings within a K-5 school. Before their implementation of a school wide behavior support program, the school was seeing an increasing trend in problem behaviors throughout the school. A team was established to determine the behaviors that were problematic and to create and teach positive replacement behaviors. "Social skill lessons incorporating each of the positive examples for each school rule were developed for each setting and direct intervention strategies tailored to each setting were developed and implemented following social skill instruction" (Lewis, Sugai, & Colvin, 1998, p. 4). The data showed a "moderate" decrease in problem behavior across three settings, which were maintained three months later upon follow up. This "study provides additional support for the systematic investigation of larger, school-wide effective behavioral support systems. Data indicate that educators can implement instructional strategies which results in reductions of problematic behavior" (p. 8).

Many other studies have shown similar results, including reductions in behavior incidents, office discipline referrals (ODRs) and suspension rates. "Recent research indicates that school-wide positive behavior is associated with decreased exclusionary, reactive and punitive discipline practices, increased student satisfaction, and improved perceptions of school safety" (Putnam, Horner, & Algazzine, 2006, p. 1). Teachers report

having more time for instruction in the classroom because there are less behavioral distractions. There are more positive interactions between students and staff, which creates a better environment for everyone.

Legislation

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was originally passed as our nation's special education law in 1975. Its purpose is to ensure that students with disabilities had an equal chance to have "a free appropriate public education, just like other children" (http://www.nichcy.org/idea.htm para 2). The act has been revised and amended many times, and was most recently reauthorized by Congress in 2004, with results published in 2006. The new act, IDEIA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act), states that "school administrators continue to have legislative support for their use of functional behavioral assessment and positive behavioral interventions and strategies for supporting children with disabilities who exhibit problem behaviors" (IDEIA, 2004, p. 2).The IDEIA provides more flexibility in funding, allowing schools to use a percentage of their funds toward implementing PBS. It is also proposed that these interventions be used school-wide, to create an inclusive learning community for all students.

Congress is currently preparing to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, known as "No Child Left Behind." It appears that "policymakers have begun to acknowledge that there are many *non-academic* factors that affect students' school success" (Mandlawitz, 2007, p. 1). In her recent publication, Myrna Mandlawitz describes two bills that have been introduced, the *Reducing Barriers to Learning Act of*

2007 and the *Positive Behavior for Effective Schools Act.* Both of these involve the use of school-wide positive behavior support.

In August, 2007, the "Positive Behavior for Effective Schools Act" (H.R. 3407) was introduced. The objective of the bill is to "amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to allow State and local educational agencies and schools to make greater use of early intervening services, particularly school wide positive behavior supports" (H.R. 3407, 2007, p. 1). The bill was first referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor, then to the subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education.

The bill states that "educators and the general public cite disciplinary issues as the leading challenge facing schools" and "there is significant evidence that zero tolerance and other get-tough approaches to school discipline are ineffective and even counter-productive" (H.R.3407, 2007, p. 1). The link between behavior and learning are addressed and the concept of positive behavior supports is introduced as a way to prevent behavior problems and improve learning. "In particular, the use of positive behavior supports leads to greater academic achievement, significantly fewer disciplinary problems, lower suspension and expulsion rates, greater inclusion, more time for instruction, and increased opportunities for all students to achieve" (H.R.3407, 2007, p. 2).

The goal of this bill is to see more implementation of positive behavior supports "in order to systematically create a school climate that is highly conducive to learning, reduce discipline referrals, and improve academic outcome" (H.R.3407, 2007, p. 2). They

also propose more flexibility in the use of Title I funds for School-wide Positive Behavior Supports to make it more accessible to all schools.

SWPBS and Academics

Behavior and academics are connected in many ways. Students with behavior problems early in their lives are at risk for social difficulties and other issues as adolescents and adults. "Several studies have found relationships between academic performance and problem behavior across grade levels" (Putnam, Horner & Algazzine, 2006, p. 1). "Other research has demonstrated that students with severe problem behavior experienced large academic deficits as compared to typical peers. In most areas these deficits remained stable over time" (p. 2).

In many cases, behavior problems arise because a student is trying to avoid an academic task. If a child is weak in a certain area or is struggling with a task, he or she may act out as an escape. For example, if a "student's literacy skills do not keep pace with those of peers, academic tasks become more aversive, and problem behaviors that lead to escape from these tasks become more likely" (Putnam, Horner & Algazzine, 2006, p. 1). It is important as teachers that we learn what is reinforcing our students for their behaviors and look at what the function of the behavior is.

Researchers have recently begun to examine the relationship between SWPBS and academic achievement. With less time and energy going to managing problem behaviors, teachers have more time available for instruction in the classroom. "Research has consistently shown that the amount of time that instruction is provided is highly correlated with student achievement" (Putnam, Horner, & Algazzine, 2006, p. 2).

Some studies have also shown increased time on task and academic engagement in schools and classrooms using PBS. "Student academic engagement has been found to be correlated with improved academic achievement…In a study of six classrooms that implemented behavior support plans, on-task behavior increased by 24 % over baseline levels" (Putnam, Horner, & Algazzine, 2006, p. 2).

Research is also beginning to show that implementation of SWPBS is associated with improved test scores. "There is increasing evidence that school-wide positive behavior support interventions improve standardized test results" (p. 3).

One study currently under review (Horner, Sugai, Smolkowski, Todd, Nakasato, & Esperanza, unpublished) found that

(a) typical states were successful in implementing SWPBS practices,

(b) that these practices were experimentally linked to improved perception of school safety and

(c) implementation was associated preliminarily with improved proportion of students at 3rd grade who met the state reading standard. (Horner & Sugai, 2007, p. 8)

DISCUSSION

Summary of Major Findings

SWPBS is currently being utilized in at least 7,000 schools across the United States. Using a proactive, preventative approach to discipline, educators work as a team to create a positive and safe school environment. Social skills instruction is implemented and students are reinforced heavily for appropriate behavior across school settings. Children with more severe behavior problems are given additional support and interventions, using data to determine the most effective plan for each individual.

Positive results have been seen in many studies, illustrating that SWPBS is effective and produces an improved school environment. SWPBS has been associated with reductions in behavior incidents and office discipline referrals, as well as increases in academic engagement and instruction time in the classroom. Research is currently being done about SWPBS and its relationship to academic achievement, and some have shown improved test scores.

Limitations/Gaps in the Literature

There appears to be a need for more research regarding the academic effects of SWPBS. I was able to find some articles, but many of them were still under review or not yet published. As the programs are implemented, it takes time to study and determine the results. If we want to know if the results are sustainable, it can take years to complete the study. It is also difficult to study SWPBS in a controlled experiment because there are so

many variable factors in a school setting. "It is clear that additional research on the impact of school-wide behavior support on academic achievement is needed. Most of these studies feature pre-post comparison or are descriptive in nature. Accordingly, research that employs more rigorous experimental control is necessary" (Putnam, Horner, & Algazzine, 2006, p. 4).

Implications for Future Research

Clearly, there is room for more research to be conducted on SWPBS, particularly with regards to academic achievement. It seems important to look at standardized test scores as well as literacy levels and future educational success. When followed through their academic careers, how do PBS students succeed? Would a movement toward PBS help the problem of increasing school violence and the mental health of our children?

Overall Significance of the Literature

SWPBS seems to have almost universally positive results. The research supports it as an effective model and teachers and students have given great feedback. The academic piece is important because at the administrative and government level, the numbers on the standardized test scores seem to be a primary concern. If a stronger connection can be made between SWPBS and improved test scores, maybe those in charge of funding will see its potential and support its expansion. For those of us who are

in the education field to make a difference in the lives of young people, SWPBS is ideal because it is based on what is best for children.

PILOT STUDY-INTERVIEW

Methodology / Sample and Site

As a pilot study for my project, I decided to conduct an interview to find out more about SWPBS from an expert on the subject. The person I chose as a subject has been a psychologist and educator for more than 30 years, working mainly in the area of special education. He has been working with the PBIS project for the past ten years and now serves as a coordinator for the PBIS organization at the state level and a Behavior Support Consultant for a local county Department of Education in Southern California. Initially, I contacted him by phone to explain my interest and give him some background about my thesis topic. He agreed to take part in the interview and we planned to talk later about the logistics of the project.

Access and Permissions

Once the IRB form was approved, we proceeded with the interview via email. I emailed him the consent form and explained that he could call me if he had any questions. I let him know that his name would not be used in the final report and his information would be kept confidential.

Data Gathering Strategies

I wrote 10 interview questions to gather data about SWPBS. I aimed to find out about his experience of schools that have implemented SWPBS and how teachers, staff,

and students have responded, as well as what results have been seen. Some of the questions were designed to obtain general information such as description, background and effectiveness of the programs. Other questions looked at the issues around implementing the programs and allocating funding at the state level. I also inquired about the goals of PBIS over the next 5 years at the state and national levels.

Data Analysis Approach

I read all the responses which were in email form. Responses were categorized according to the interview questions.

Main Differences Between SWPBS and Traditional Methods

State Funding

State Allocation in Partnership with Mental Health

Ethical Standards

This study conforms to all ethical standards of research as determined by the American Psychological Association. This project was reviewed by the Dominican University of California Institutional Review Board and assigned IRB Approval # 6060.

Findings

Conducting the interview gave me a better overall understanding of SWPBS. I learned about the specific differences between SWPBS and other methods currently used in schools. SWPBS focuses more on prevention and uses positive behavioral

interventions rather than reactive and punitive strategies. The discussion includes quotes taken from the interview. "A major component of the PBIS philosophy is the belief that the most effective form of behavioral support is to teach behavioral expectations across school settings and reinforce compliance with those expectations." Also, these programs involve the "ongoing use of behavioral data for decision making." The entire staff of the school is involved in the development and implementation of PBIS, which gives the program more consistency and continuity. "One of the most important characteristics of a PBIS school is that the behavioral support programs developed by the school staff are sustainable."

One of the interview questions asked about the feedback from teachers and staff who are involved with PBIS at their schools. "Feedback from educators implementing the PBIS program is almost universally positive. Teachers and staff clearly like moving from reactive discipline strategies to proactive and preventative approaches…I have heard many teachers indicate that the PBIS approach resonates with the reasons they originally went into education."

A positive impact on the students is also seen with the implementation of PBIS. "Students clearly know what is expected of them and approximately 80% of the students behave in ways consistent with what they have been taught. One will also see that students have successful strategies to deal with harassment and bullying and know when to seek adult assistance." Students also enjoy being positively acknowledged by teachers and staff for exhibiting appropriate behavior. "In general, what one sees is increased rule following behavior, happier students and a more positive school culture."

It is clear that there is a relationship between student behavior and academic performance. "Extensive data suggests that the implementation of PBIS significantly reduces Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) as well as minor behavioral incidents coming from the classrooms. While a reduction in behavioral incidents does not ensure improved academic performance, such a reduction increases time available for instruction."

Some states, such as Illinois, Maryland, Michigan and Colorado, have allocated funds to the development of PBIS programs in their schools. "Other states such as California have yet to identify PBIS as a priority worthy of significant financial support in spite of a great deal of data suggesting the program's effectiveness." One reason for this may be that the states have competing priorities, such as the focus on academic performance. "It is probable that state leaders have not seen the connection between highly effective school-wide behavior programs and improved academic performance." Also, in some cases, the support has come from the state level as a result of "interagency efforts involving education and mental health." Such collaboration could make more financial support available by allowing existing funds to be allocated for PBIS statewide.

There are a number of goals for PBIS at the national level over the next five years. The first goal is to "expand the number of schools and states involved in PBIS. To date, there are approximately 7,000 schools involved in PBIS and well over half of the states have some type of PBIS effort." An important part of this goal is that the programs are being implemented with fidelity to the PBIS model. Another goal of PBIS involves ongoing research and data collection. "The accumulation of additional data regarding the

impact of PBIS on academic performance will be very beneficial to the future of PBIS and increase the likelihood of funding for PBIS efforts."

In conclusion, "PBIS is far more than a program that reduces office discipline referrals. In my professional opinion as an educator and psychologist, PBIS improves the behavior of school staff, creates a more positive school culture, and goes a long way to address school violence. Further, PBIS creates additional time for academic instruction along with student academic gains."

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