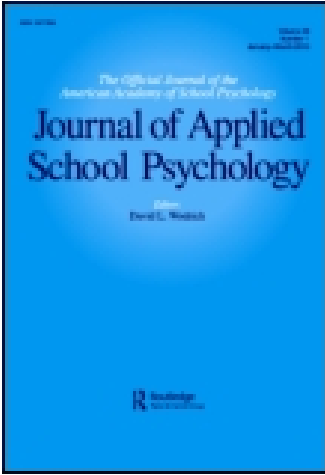


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### Implementing Tier 2 Social Behavioral Interventions: Current Issues, Challenges, and Promising Approaches

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## GUEST INTRODUCTION

# Implementing Tier 2 Social Behavioral Interventions: Current Issues, Challenges, and Promising Approaches

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*Often, social behavior problems in children can be prevented or ameliorated with systematic efforts. One such system that is increasing across the United States is Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support, a tiered system that implements a response-to-intervention approach informed by data-driven decisions and teams that tailor key elements to their particular school context. Extensive research has been conducted on the universal, Tier 1 level of support and the effect of these efforts on student academic and social outcomes. Similarly, the most individualized level of support, Tier 3 social behavior supports have research to support their effectiveness, although not necessarily as delivered within a continuum of supports. There is a need for more research on social behavior Tier 2 intervention for the 10–15% of students who require these supports. The purpose of this special issue is to address current issues, challenges, and promising approaches for providing Tier 2 behavioral interventions in school settings. Articles solicited for this issue address gaps in the literature and implementation needs and challenges specifically for Tier 2.*

**KEYWORDS** *Tier 2, social behavior problems, prevention*

## INTRODUCTION

Students with behavior problems need systematic and early intervention to improve their likelihood of successful outcomes (Walker, 2004). Schools are

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increasingly making use of three-tiered models to guide prevention efforts for social behavior problems (Kalberg, Lane, & Menzies, 2010; Stormont, Reinke, Herman, & Lembke, 2012). Tiered models have a foundation in public health and make use of systematic implementation of levels of support driven by data and responsiveness to intervention (Nakasato, 2000; Sugai, 2011). The first level of support, Tier 1 or universal, includes the foundational supports that are provided to all students; the majority of students (80–85%) respond to this level of support. With the foundational supports in place, schools can determine who has not benefited from evidence-based universal approaches to teaching and need more intensive Tier 2 supports. Approximately 10–15% of students will require more than universal support but do not necessarily require intensive, individualized, and multisystem supports that are referred to as Tier 3 supports. In a fully functioning tiered system approach, approximately 5% of student are expected to need Tier 3 intensive supports. Schoolwide Positive Behavior Interventions and Support is a tiered model that has been used extensively to prevent behavior problems and increase academic success (Stormont et al., 2012).

Research has been conducted to support the effectiveness of Schoolwide Positive Behavior Interventions and Support as an overall approach to prevention and has emphasized the systematic use of the universal components and improved outcomes (for a review of research to support each tier, visit <http://www.pbis.org>) Similarly, there is an abundance of research to support the use of specific strategies for students at the Tier 3 level of support. However, less research has been conducted on social behavior Tier 2 interventions. Furthermore, the alignment of the tiers of support and the decision rules that most effectively determine who needs Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports has not been adequately addressed in the literature. Research has documented that schools may rush to provide Tiers 2 and 3 prematurely; that is, they may provide them before Tier 1 supports have been implemented with integrity (McIntosh, Reinke, & Herman, 2010). In addition, schools often have difficulty providing additional interventions for 10–15% of their students in need of Tier 2 supports (Stormont et al., 2012). This has often resulted in a blanket one-size-fits-all approach, which is problematic for many reasons addressed in this special issue. Schools struggle with existing resources and the importance of reorganizing systems to support implementation of new practices is a critical component of change (Stormont, Lewis, Beckner, & Johnson, 2008). This special issue also addresses the need for ensuring systems are ready for Tier 2 implementation including having solid universals in place, systematic screening procedures, appropriate interventions available for different students' needs, and procedures for progress monitoring to determine whether students are responsive. Novel approaches to supporting the infrastructure needed to change adult behavior in schools are also addressed in this special issue.

Overall, the purpose of this special issue is to address current issues, challenges, and promising approaches for providing Tier 2 social behavioral interventions in school settings. Topics specifically related to school psychologists are targeted. Articles solicited for this issue were chosen based on gaps in the literature and implementation needs and challenges specifically for Tier 2. In this opening introduction, we briefly describe the importance of this topic and will introduce the other articles.

In the first article, "Essential Systems for Sustainable Implementation of Tier 2 Supports," Lori L. Newcomer, Rachel Freeman, and Susan Barrett present important considerations for schools in their selection, preparation, and implementation of Tier 2 supports. This article addresses the critical need to build systems to support the identification and delivery of Tier 2 supports. Information on how to identify practices, assess readiness for implementation, prepare systems to support efforts, and evaluate progress are presented. In the second article, "Differentiating Tier 2 Social Behavioral Interventions According to Function of Behavior," Wendy M. Reinke, Melissa Stormont, Ann Clare, Tracey Latimore, and Keith C. Herman address another vital need when implementing Tier 2 supports: attending to function of behavior. As discussed in the first two articles, schools that implement tiered supports for social behavior need to be systematic and thoughtful about moving to the next tier. However, schools often use resources they have and apply them in a blanket fashion for children who demonstrate behavior problems. This practice is problematic, and there is a clear need for increased efforts to plan and be more careful about choosing specific interventions for children who are not responding to universal supports. The purpose of this article is to discuss the importance of determining the function for behavior problems before intervention selection. The article presents an overview of what professionals need to do to match interventions to function. Data from a study on the use of the Check-in Check-out program are presented to further illustrate the importance of determining function for behavior. Without this important step, children who are at risk are not appropriately supported and valuable resources are expended without successful outcomes.

In the third article, "Addressing Instructional Avoidance With Tier II Supports," Cynthia M. Anderson, Jessica Turtura, and Michael Parry describe another important and timely issue, which is responding to children with escape maintained behavior. Few interventions in the literature have specifically targeted implementation of specific interventions within a tiered prevention model (Mitchell, Stormont, & Gage, 2011) or potential interventions for children with escape maintained behavior (Stormont et al., 2012). This article addresses these two areas and provides a framework for identifying and implementing Tier 2 interventions specifically for students with behavior maintained by their desire to escape or avoid specific contexts.

The final two articles are also very timely and provide important information to guide implementation of Tier 2 social behavior supports in underrepresented areas in the literature. In the article “Transporting Motivational Interviewing to School Settings to Improve the Engagement and Fidelity of Tier 2 Interventions,” Andy J. Frey, Jon Lee, Jason W. Small, John R. Seeley, Hill M. Walker, and Edward G. Feil discuss the importance of treatment integrity and the challenges implementing evidence-based practices in applied settings. The bidirectionality of the research-to-practice gap has been underscored in the literature and is important to address in school-based research to support effective implementation of practices as intended. The authors describe how professionals can support the use of evidence-based practices using motivational interviewing. This article also provides information on how motivational interviewing can be adapted for school settings. Another important contribution to the literature in this article is the provision of an example of how the use of motivational interviewing supported the home and school components of the evidence-based program First Steps to Success (Walker et al., 2009).

The final article addresses another area with a dearth of research and provides a structure to guide professionals interested in supporting prevention efforts at Tier 2 for high school students. In “Working Within the Context of Three-Tiered Models of Prevention: Using Schoolwide Data to Identify High School Students for Targeted Supports,” Kathleen Lane, Wendy Oakes, Holly Menzies, Juli Oyer, and Abbie Jenkins discuss how screening tools can be used in high school settings to identify youth who are in need of Tier 2 social behavior interventions. The authors also provide a framework for matching interventions to support specific needs of students. Addressing how systems can apply data-driven screening efforts and then address specific and diverse needs of adolescents with behavior challenges within a tiered model is an important contribution to the literature.

This special issue is focused on the current issues, challenges, and promising approaches for providing Tier 2 social behavioral interventions in school settings. School psychologists are integral to supporting schools in the effective implementation of effective Tier 2 social behavior interventions. This issue addresses gaps in the literature and implementation needs and challenges specifically for Tier 2 in an effort to push the field forward toward maximizing the capacity of schools toward meeting the needs of students in U.S. schools.

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