PREVENTING SCHOOL-BASED ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIORS WITH SCHOOL-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL SUPPORT

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In an effort to increase schools' capacity to adequately address anti-social behaviors, school districts around the country are implementing zero tolerance policies and strengthening sanctions for rule violations. Although often well intentioned, these reactive responses are largely ineffective and ultimately displace the problem. The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of an alternative approach to more traditional disciplinary practices focusing on School-Wide Positive Behavioral Support.

Antisocial behaviors among school-aged children and youth are a leading concern among both educators and the general public (Dwyer, Osher, & Warger, 1998). In an effort to increase schools' capacity to adequately address anti-social behaviors, school districts around the country are implementing zero tolerance policies and strengthening sanctions for rule violations. Although often well intentioned, these reactive responses are largely ineffective and ultimately displace the problem. In this article we outline some of the theory concerning the development of antisocial behaviors and then offer a broad description of an approach for the prevention of antisocial behaviors through School-Wide Positive Behavioral Support. School-Wide Positive Behavioral Support is a systems change model for delivering effective behavior support for all students. This systemic approach allows schools to collect and monitor formative data to determine the most relevant, efficient, and effective means for intervention and support.

A FOCUS ON PREVENTION

The field of education has been called to reduce the prevalence and incidence of antisocial behaviors by integrating research into practice (Biglan, Mrazek, Carnine, & Flay, 2003; Koop & Lundberg, 1992; Mayer, 1995; Satcher, 2000). However, schools continue to face the formidable challenge to prevent antisocial behaviors from occurring and intervene with those students who have- or are beginning to display the "soft signs" of antisocial behaviors (Patterson, 1982; Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995). There is little consensus among social scientists at large regarding the causes of antisocial behavior, delinquency, and crime. From our perspective, as well as many others, "People are not born with pre-formed repertoires of aggressive behavior; they must learn them" (Bandura, 1978, p. 14). Social environments have a communicative function. People are able to learn and gain information through observing the behaviors modeled by and interacting with others. Beliefs, cognitive processes, values, and behaviors are largely shaped through on-going interactions with the social environment. The forms of social interaction that "teach" children antisocial behaviors are numerous--adult modeling, television, association with antisocial peer groups, dysfunctional parent-child interactions, coercive school environments, to name a few. While acknowledging the broad range of individual differences in intelligence, personality, and innate ability, we believe a science of prevention should primarily focus on the aspects of human behavior that are *learned*, and therefore are malleable to the teaching and educational process. While there are child, family, community, school, and cultural risk factors that increase the likelihood that children and youth will develop antisocial behaviors, there are also protective factors that are associated with decreasing the likelihood that antisocial behaviors will develop (Satcher, 2001; Walker & Shinn, 2003). Education is one of society's most powerful tools for preventing displays of antisocial behavior and intervening with at-risk children and youth. Schools can provide a buffer against many of the maladaptive influences created by society by fostering instructional environments in which children and youth learn socially important values and skills. Children and youth who enter school without the prerequisite social and academic behaviors in their repertoire that would facilitate academic and behavioral success are will require a continuum of effective behavioral support. Therefore, an important focus for schools is to engage in an approach that will prevent antisocial behaviors from occurring and intervene with those children and youth who current display behaviors that violate the social norm (Mayer, 2001).

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Universal prevention focused on primary, school-wide intervention is typically beneficial for approximately 80-90% of students within a school (Mayer, 1999; Mayer, 2001; Taylor-Greene et al., 1997; Walker, et. al, 1996). However, approximately 5-10% of a school's student population is often considered "at-risk" requiring specialized group interventions. A relatively small in number of students (approximately 1-7% of a school's population) will require highly specialized, multi-faceted, and individualized supports across home and school environments. Figure 1 depicts the levels of prevention and intervention used to conceptualize a school-wide approach for providing positive behavior support. To prevent antisocial behaviors from occurring and respond to the behavioral needs of those students who are already exhibiting chronic problems behaviors, schools should (a) engage in early primary prevention and intervention efforts, (b) focus on structuring a school climate and culture that provides multiple opportunities to display and receive positive reinforcement for prosocial behavior, (c) provide a continuum of behavioral strategies and interventions, and (d) restrict their practices to those that are empirically proven programs or promising programs that have evidence of effectiveness (Sugai & Horner, 1999).

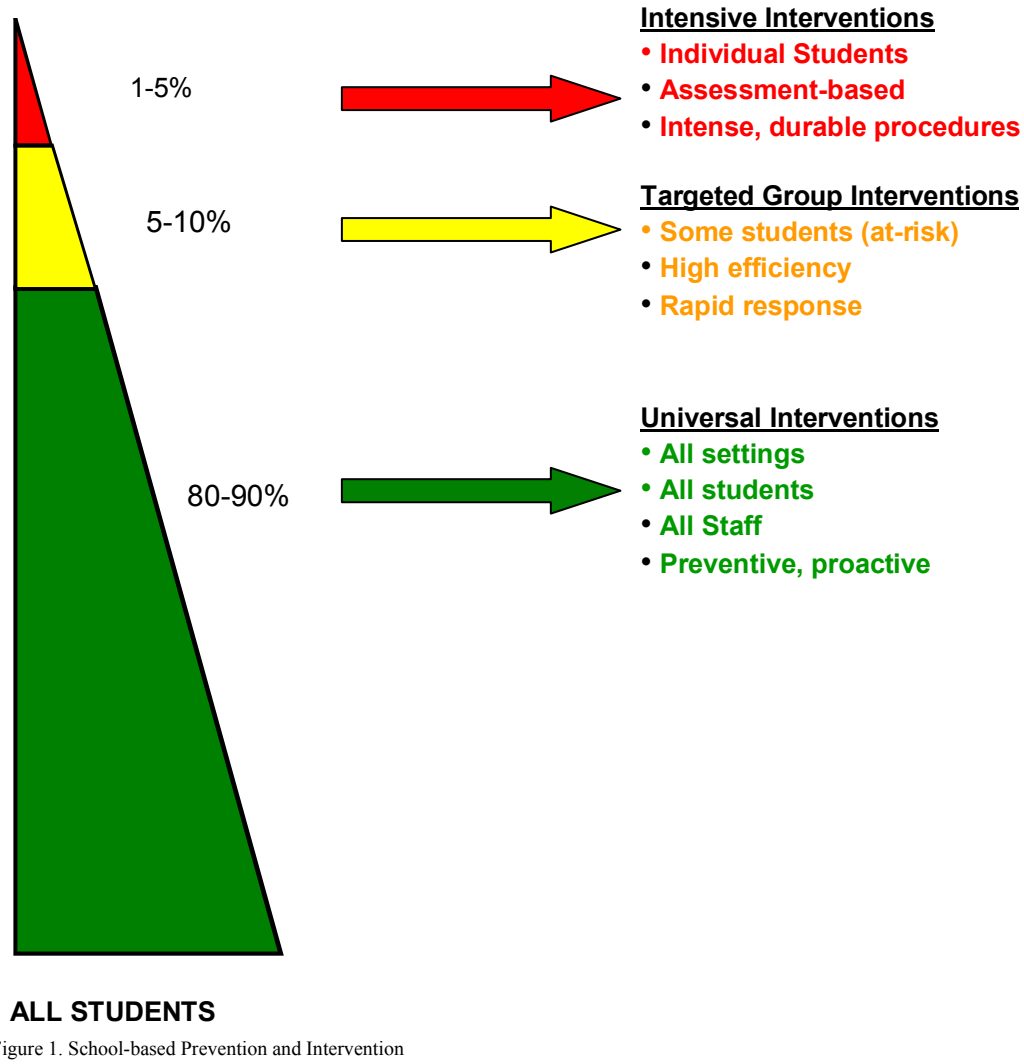

Figure 1. School-based Prevention and Intervention

SCHOOL- WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL SUPPORT

Positive Behavioral Support is an extension of applied behavior analysis and has received much attention recently due to the incorporation of language referencing it the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 [IDEA] (Carr et al., 2002). However, many educators overlook the application of positive behavioral support as a school-based model of prevention and

intervention. The extension of positive behavioral support as a school-wide model of behavioral support is an emerging initiative and represents a process-oriented approach designed to foster productive learning and working environments by proactively establishing a setting to minimize problem behavior while teaching and supporting alterative prosocial behaviors (Horner & Sugai, 2000; Lewis & Sugai 1999). School-wide Positive Behavioral Support (SW-PBS) is not a curriculum focused on a single model or intervention, nor does SW-PBS focus solely on individual students who exhibit antisocial behavior. SW-PBS entails a team-based approach that emphases data-based decision-making and the establishment of a continuum of behavioral interventions to promote a positive school climate.

SW-PBS focuses on four overlapping and interrelated systems (Sugai & Horner, 1999; Todd, Horner, Sugai & Sprague 1999): (a) school-wide, (b) non-classroom, (c) classroom, and (d) individual student (see Figure 2) that are designed to promote prosocial behavior. The purpose of establishing a school-wide system is to address the behavioral needs of the majority of students in a school across settings. These students are likely to have learning histories for which correcting problem behaviors and explicitly teaching rules and procedures for prosocial behaviors will be effective. The non-classroom system focuses on providing behavioral support in non-instructional areas (e.g. cafeteria, bus loading zones, playgrounds, hallways) where problem behaviors frequently occur. Classroom systems of SW- PBS incorporate instruction of behavior expectations and routines, as well as continuums of procedures for encouraging expected behaviors and discouraging rule violations. The individual student system for positive behavioral support focuses on the very small portion of students (1-7% of a school's population) who require individualized interventions and supports.

Positive Behavioral Support System for School-Wide Discipline

The application of positive behavioral support school-wide (which is the emphasis of this article) focuses on universal interventions that target all students, all staff, and all school settings and serves as the foundation for non-classroom, classroom, and individual student systems of positive behavioral support. The adoption of SW-PBS requires (a) a team-based approach to problem solving; (b) active administrator support & participation; (c) a proactive, academic, and instructional approach to managing behaviors; (d) local instructional and behavioral expertise; (e) formative data-based decision making; (f) high priority; and (g) long-term commitment (Colvin & Fernandez, 2000; Colvin, Kame'enui, & Sugai, 1993). The formation of a leadership team to develop a school-wide plan is vital and should include grade-level representation from regular and special education, at least one building administrator (e.g., principal or vice principal in charge of discipline), and representatives from classified staff and parents (Colvin & Sprick, 1999). This diverse membership promotes school-wide collaboration and increases the breadth of perspective on school climate and discipline issues.

Once established, the team first concentrates their efforts on building a school-wide discipline plan centered around (a) a common approach to discipline, (b) a clear set of positively stated behavior expectations (e.g., school rules), (c) procedures for teaching expected behavior, (d) a continuum of procedures for encouraging expected behavior, (e) a continuum of procedures for discouraging inappropriate behavior, (f) procedures for on-going monitoring & evaluation (Colvin, & Fernandez, 2000; Metzler, Biglan, Rusby, & Sprague, 2001; Sugai & Horner, 1999). Coordinating positive behavioral support efforts at a school-wide level requires logistical considerations such as: How often should the group meet? Does the entire group need to be present at every meeting? What role will different partners take (e.g., teachers, administrators, parents)? Guidelines for answering these questions can be elusive because, to a large extent, the planning process is individualized to the situation of the school (Safran & Oswald, 2003). To help sustain change within a school, Colvin et al. (1993) recommended that the SW-PBS team meet frequently enough (i.e., weekly or biweekly) to maintain momentum. In general, beginning to plan for comprehensive SW-PBS will require team members to dedicate more time in the initial stages as they outline the procedures for their school and solicit feedback from the groups they represent. Consider also that the planning process relies on assessment (analysis of office referrals, examination of problem locations in the school) and, as the team begins to identify these issues, additional time will be required to effectively link intervention plans to specific needs. In addition, because the implementation of SW-PBS requires formative data-based decisions, teams will need to meet frequently

enough to evaluate their data and adjust plans accordingly.

Positive Behavioral Support System for Non-Classroom Settings

Non-Classroom systems of behavior support emphasize the design of interventions for non-instructional areas (e.g. lunchroom, playground, certain hallways, buses) (Lewis, Colvin, & Sugai, 2000). Many schools will have high number of problem behaviors predictably occurring in the non-classroom areas and will need to develop interventions and supports specific to these environments. Once a particular non-classroom area is identified, a school should (a) specifically identify the problem behaviors occurring in that location/setting; (b) assess the antecedents and setting events that are occasioning the inappropriate behaviors (e.g. multiple grades changing classes in a small hallway at the same time), (c) plan strategies for teaching appropriate behavior expectations and (d) develop a continuum of reinforcers to encourage appropriate behaviors among the students in the target setting, and (e) ensure that effective strategies for decreasing problem behaviors are applied for persistent rule violations (Lewis & Garrison-Harrell, 1999). For example, Nelson, Martel & Garland (1998) considered various routines that could be established in particular non-classroom settings (e.g. going through the lunch line involves standing in line, picking up trays, self-serving food, paying the cashier) and incorporated task analyses in the explication of appropriate behaviors and the instruction of those behaviors or routines for students. This task analytic approach can be applied to define

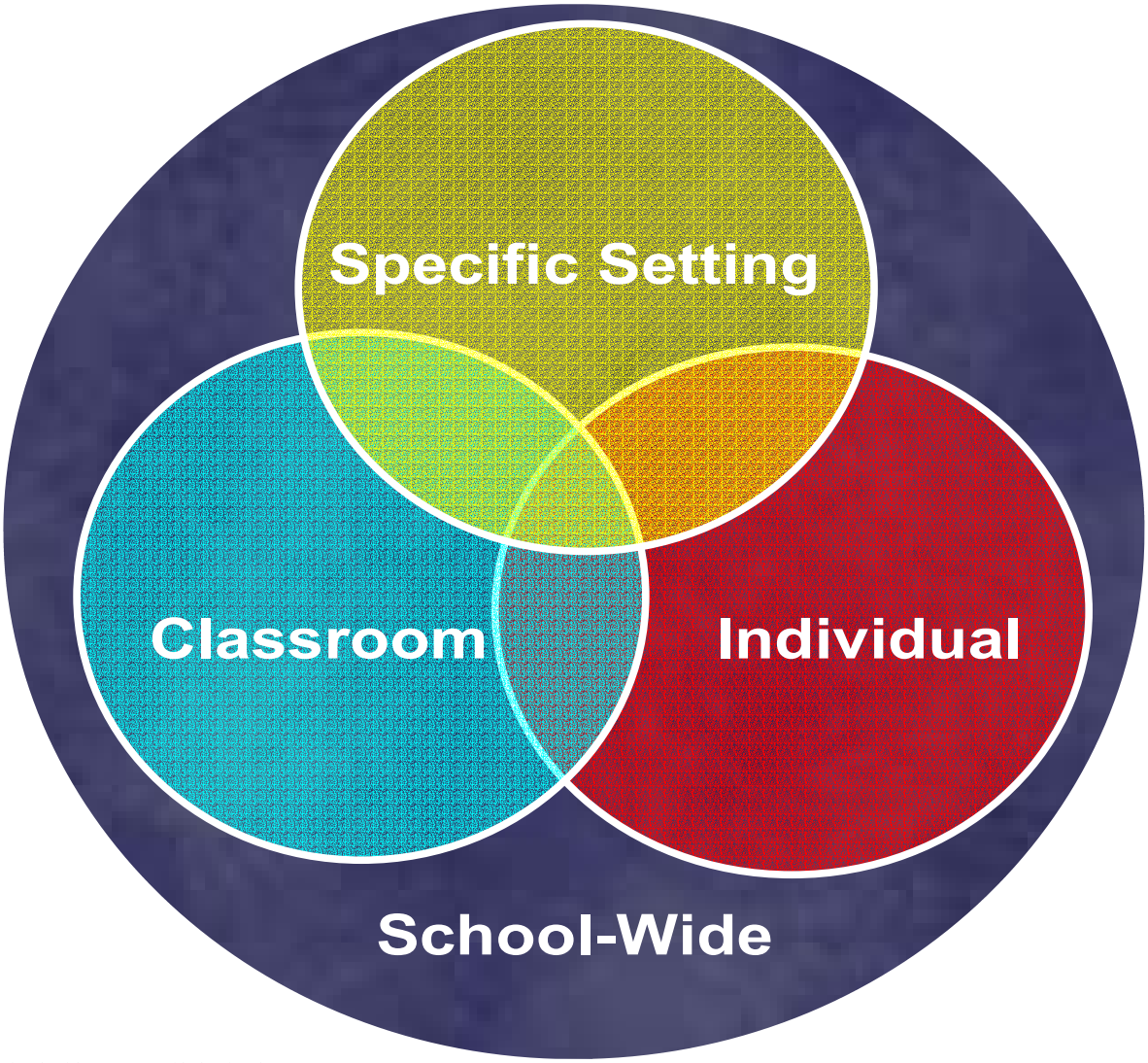

Figure 2. School-wide systems of behavioral support

and teach routines. In a case study of a school experiencing high rates of extremely disruptive hallway behaviors, Kartub, Taylor-Green, March, and Horner (2000) explicitly taught students how and when to be quiet and then made slight alterations in existing antecedents and consequences to effectively reduce hallway noise. Similarly, Todd, Haugen, Anderson, & Spriggs (2002) addressed a setting-specific problem in a school with a large number of discipline referrals during recess. The school had a school-wide program in place utilizing explicitly stated rules and a token economy. Through an analysis of discipline referrals, staff identified the playground as a setting where high rates of problem behavior frequently occurred. Teachers explicitly taught expected playground behaviors, taking each class to the playground to role-play and practicing pro-social behaviors. In addition, they modified their procedures for monitoring students during recess by training the monitors to actively seek and interact with students exhibiting appropriate behaviors and verbally reinforced their prosocial behaviors. The school reported an 80% reduction in office referrals for inappropriate behavior on the playground in the over a one year time period (Todd et al., 2002)..

Positive Behavioral Support System for Classrooms

Today's classrooms contain students who exhibit a broad range of social and academic characteristics. In order to meet the needs of ever-increasing heterogeneous classes, teachers must be able to differentially respond to expected behaviors and problem behaviors. The classroom system of positive behavioral support focuses on explicitly teaching classroom-specific rules, procedures, and routines. The classroom-specific rules should be an extension of the school-wide behavior expectations and, just like the school-wide behavioral expectations, can and must be explicitly taught. Within the classroom, teachers typically have a set of rules to convey their expectations for student behavior. For example, a teacher may have the rule, "Be prepared." Being prepared may include handing in homework before the bell rings, sharpening pencils, sitting quietly, and opening textbooks to a specified page number written on the board. It is imperative that the teacher adopts an instructional approach and demonstrates what the expectation of being prepared "looks like" across the different conditions that the expectation applies. Just as important, the teacher must follow-up with procedures for acknowledging students who meet classroom behavioral expectations and correcting persistent rule violators. Many teachers apply a range of strategies for encouraging expected behaviors. In response to appropriate behavior, they may award praise, stickers, happy notes home, special privileges. In other words, a teacher should implement procedures to differentially reinforce expected behaviors. It is just as important, however, to carefully prepare a continuum of options for responding to problem behaviors. Without a range of planned responses to select from, a teacher may frequently opt to administer an office discipline referral- thereby removing the aversive stimulus (i.e., student/student's behavior) and negating the task of determining a further punishment. Unfortunately, however, this reactive response can backfire, particularly if it is used too often for offenses that may be effectively decreased without removing the student. A referral to the office can quickly loose its desired effect for repeat offenders, particularly those students who do not find the classroom reinforcing. In fact, for some children, administering a referral that results in their immediate removal from the classroom setting may reinforce their problem behaviors. To prevent office discipline referrals from losing their punishing effect, and to prevent some learners from ultimately discovering that problem behaviors are a vehicle for escaping classroom demands via receiving a discipline referral, it is vital that teachers have a continuum responses to inappropriate behaviors at their disposal. Some examples are: (a) delayed access to a preferred activity, (b) temporary change of the student's assigned seat, (c) planned withdrawal of reinforcers (i.e. response cost), (d) temporary removal from a reinforcing activity (i.e., time out from positive reinforcement), and (e) restitution. Of course, the nature and severity of a penalty depends on the actual offense. And the most important thing to remember is that techniques for decreasing problem behaviors are only one aspect of supporting student behavior. A reinforcing environment should be created in which there is a much larger number of interactions in which the student finds positively reinforcing than punishing. Punishment procedures alone will not sustain gains in desired behaviors in the long run, and is most effective when used in conjunction with explicit instruction of expected behaviors and procedures for communicating to students (e.g., acknowledgements, reinforcement) when they meet those behavioral expectations.

Positive Behavioral Support for Individual Students

For some students, school-wide and classroom level supports may be insufficient to meet their behavioral needs. Students with severe and chronic behavior problems often require more intense, focused systems of intervention. The foundation (both educationally and legally) for establishing an individual system of support a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) of the student's problem behavior and the contexts in which it occurs (Sugai, Lewis-Palmer, & Hagan, 1998). Amendments to IDEA specified that behavior support plans for students with behavior problems must be based on information gathered from an FBA. FBA is a process for (a) clearly specifying the problem behavior of concern, (b) gathering data regarding the student and the nature of his/her targeted behaviors, (c) forming an hypothesis regarding the functions of the student's behavior, and (d) confirming the hypothesis. This process assumes that the student's problem behavior serves a purpose (e.g. escaping academic demands/getting social attention from others) and is affected by environmental stimuli. Relying on these assumptions, student behaviors and the environments in which occur are carefully analyzed in order to confirm the hypothesis and proceed with the development of an individualized, function-based intervention plan (Horner, Sugai, Todd, & Lewis-Palmer, 1999-2000; Sugai, Lewis-Palmer, & Hagan-Burke, 1999-2000).

USING POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL SUPPORTS TO DEVELOP A SCHOOL-WIDE DISCIPLINE PLAN

A comprehensive school-wide discipline plan provides the foundation for SW-PBS and each of the classroom, non-classroom, and individual student systems of behavioral support. A comprehensive school-wide discipline plan includes (a) a common approach to discipline, (b) a clear set of expected behaviors, (c) procedures for teaching expected behavior, (d) a continuum of procedures for encouraging expected behavior, (e) a continuum of procedures for discouraging inappropriate behavior, (f) procedures for on-going monitoring & evaluation (Sugai & Horner, 1999).

Common approach to discipline

A common approach to discipline is needed for the consistent implementation of a school-wide discipline plan. Rarely do all staff in a school adopt similar rules, expectations, and routines. Programming for generalization of learned behaviors is not an automatic process and is fundamental in changing behavior (Baer, Wolf, & Risley, 1968; Stokes & Baer, 1977). Coming to agreement regarding the adoption of an instructional approach to discipline is an important initial step to implementing a school-wide discipline plan and promoting generalization of expected behaviors.

A clear set of expected positive behaviors

A critical assumption in the SW-PBS is that social behaviors and skills can be taught much like academic skills. An important feature of school-wide discipline planning is the identification of a small set (3-5) of expected positively stated behavior expectations that are then used as "anchors" for instruction. The set of behaviors should be simple and easy for both staff and students to remember. For example, Taylor-Greene and Kartub (2000) described five behavior expectations developed by the positive behavioral support leadership team of a middle school: (a) Be Respectful, (b) Be Responsible, (c) Follow Directions, (d) Keep Hands and Feet to Self, and (e) Be there-- Be Ready. These expectations provided a common language for both staff and students and served as the basis for teaching specific behaviors associated with them across a range of school settings.

Procedures for teaching expected behaviors

Once the school-wide behavior expectations are established, the next step is to identify procedures for teaching those behavior expectations. Typically, schools have student handbooks filled with rules and regulations that are often sent home for a parent signature at the beginning of the school year. While regulations that govern student behavior are important, it is unlikely that so many rules and corresponding negative consequences contained in such a handbook will be sufficient to communicate behavioral expectations for students. The rules conveyed are typically stated in the negative (i.e., what *not* to do) and do not clearly specify what students must do to successfully meet all of the social behavioral expectations at school.

As soon as school-wide behavioral expectations are established, the leadership team must carefully plan how the staff will explicitly teach those expectations to the general student body. This can be done in a number of ways and should overlap with

efforts in the classroom. For example, Lewis, Sugai, and Colvin (1998) described a school that taught the five school-wide expectations over the course of five weeks. One expectation was taught per week in daily 30-minute instructional blocks. Students were provided with a range of positive and negative examples of the expectation, students role played scenarios involving the rule, and curricular links were made to the rules (e.g. a creative writing assignment in language arts that involves telling a story including the rule of the week).

A continuum of procedures for encouraging expected behaviors

A continuum of procedures to positively reinforce and acknowledge displays of expected student behaviors is a fundamental element of a comprehensive school-wide discipline plan. Reinforcement procedures should be linked to the school-wide expectations and serve to communicate to students when they meet behavioral expectations, Further, they should be implemented school-wide--meaning by all staff with all students. For example, Shady Spring Elementary School in Baltimore County Public Schools, Maryland used paper cutouts of hands to acknowledge students following their school-wide behavioral expectations (Herndon, 2003). The hands were given to students with their names written on them when they were observed meeting school-wide behavior expectations. The "hands" were then posted along the school's hallways (approximately 92,000 so far) as a visual reminder of the number of appropriate behaviors occurring within the school.

A continuum of procedures for discouraging problem behaviors

A continuum of procedures for consistently discouraging problem behaviors is another fundamental element of school-wide discipline. Unfortunately, the procedures schools use to discourage problem behaviors may be ineffective. While most schools have a range of sanctions for problem behavior, they often fail to consistently apply them. For example, a student in one classroom may verbally harass another student and the teacher may decide to ignore it, while in another classroom, a student who does not bring class materials to class may be sent to the office with a discipline referral. Another potential problem that will render intended punishers ineffective is when disciplinary procedures inadvertently reinforce problem behavior. For example, it is common for schools to have an in-school suspension room or time-out area. However, such areas are often not used in a manner that would discourage future occurrences of problem behavior. Consider the assignment of in-school detention for a student who frequently causes classroom disruptions. Once the student "learns" that disruptive behavior results in being removed from the classroom, he may engage in that behavior more frequently if he desires to escape/avoid classroom demands. On the other hand, a in-school detention may be an effective deterrent if the problem behaviors are maintained due to teacher or peer attention or if there is a mechanism to ensure the student must complete or make up work if the function of his/her behavior is escape/avoidance maintained. Making sure that there are consistent, clear, and fair disciplinary consequences that have the functional effect of discouraging future occurrences of problem behavior is an important feature of school-wide discipline (Kame'enui & Darch, 1995).

Procedures for on-going monitoring & evaluation

Procedures for on-going monitoring and evaluation of school-wide efforts should be planned for and implemented. Office disciplinary referrals (ODRs) have been identified as an effective method of monitoring the implementation of a school-wide discipline plan (Sugai, Sprague, Horner, & Walker, 2000). ODRs represent an interaction that has taken place between a teacher, student, and an administrator that can be used for problem-solving and action planning for school-wide discipline. ODRs should be reviewed by the school's leadership team on a bi-monthly basis. Typically, ODRs should be organized by (a) number of referrals per day per month, (b) type of problem behavior, (c) location, (d) time of occurrence, and (e) student. Two main methods are available to schools for organizing their data. The first is using Microsoft Excel or a similar computer program that can generate a spreadsheet. The second is through an on-line program called the School-Wide Information System (SWIS) housed at the University of Oregon (see http://support.swis.org/ for a demonstration of the on-line system). SWIS will warehouse the data for a school and generate the previously mentioned graphs an using user-friendly interface that is ideal for teachers and administrators who may not be as well versed in managing data-sets.

CONCLUSION

This article was written to provide a brief overview of SW-PBS. The purpose was to

communicate the basic features of a school-wide approach to positive behavioral support. Further information on SW-PBS can be accessed at the following website hosted by the *Office of Special Education Program's Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports*: http://www.pbis.org. By focusing on both prevention and intervention, SW-PBS can foster a school environment that reduces the occurrence of antisocial behavior. When students are provided opportunities to learn and practice prosocial behaviors, teachers will ultimately be able to focus more time on academic instruction and less time on traditional reactive discipline. By engaging in this approach, schools establish themselves as a community force affecting change in the dynamics of the development of antisocial behaviors.

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