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Positive Behavior Supports

Michelle Miley
St. John Fisher College

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Abstract

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is being implemented in an increasing number of schools across the nation. Positive Behavior Support is a positive and preventative systems approach to addressing discipline problems with a goal of improving behavior and academic outcomes. This study researched the degree of implementation fidelity in two suburban high schools. It investigated the effects of implementing with fidelity and the unique challenges to implementing at the secondary level. An Effective Behavior Survey was used to measure the status of current implementation. A two item questionnaire was used to identify the impact of implementation and the challenges at a high school level. The results of the case study showed that one school was implementing with a higher fidelity. This school had more positive outcomes from implementation. Both schools recognized challenges in their school that impact implementation. The findings indicate that high schools face specific challenges to implementing PBS, but implementation results in positive outcomes. The greater the rate of implementation demonstrated by a school, the greater rate of positive outcomes experienced in the school.

Document Type

Thesis

Degree Name

MS in Special Education

Department

Education

Subject Categories

Education

Positive Behavior Supports

By

Michelle Miley

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
M.S. Special Education

Supervised by

Dr. David Rostetter
Sr. Susan M. Schultz

School of Education
St John Fisher College

April 2010

Abstract

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is being implemented in an increasing number of schools across the nation. Positive Behavior Support is a positive and preventative systems approach to addressing discipline problems with a goal of improving behavior and academic outcomes. This study researched the degree of implementation fidelity in two suburban high schools. It investigated the effects of implementing with fidelity and the unique challenges to implementing at the secondary level. An Effective Behavior Survey was used to measure the status of current implementation. A two item questionnaire was used to identify the impact of implementation and the challenges at a high school level. The results of the case study showed that one school was implementing with a higher fidelity. This school had more positive outcomes from implementation. Both schools recognized challenges in their school that impact implementation. The findings indicate that high schools face specific challenges to implementing PBS, but implementation results in positive outcomes. The greater the rate of implementation demonstrated by a school, the greater rate of positive outcomes experienced in the school.

Student behavior has become a significant issue in today's schools. Schools are experiencing an increasing amount of disruptive behavior by its students which adversely effects learning. The reaction to misbehavior by teachers and administrators is often reactive and punitive. These negative and aversive methods have proven to be ineffective and the problem behavior often reoccurs. Behavior and academic outcomes have increased the need of schools and teachers to implement an effective method of dealing with undesirable behavior.

The most effective strategy for reducing misbehavior is to prevent it from happening. Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) is a positive, proactive, and systematic approach of implementing evidence based practices for ensuring the best behavior and academic outcomes for all students. This approach includes integration of evidence based practices and interventions of increasing intensity to address the needs of all students. It provides schools with an effective means of collecting data and using the information for future decision making.

Constant assessment is vital to the success of PBS in schools. The desired outcome of PBS is for the number of misbehavior and office referrals to decrease. However, you cannot measure the outcomes of a system unless the system itself is effectively in place. In addition to tracking the referral rate, it is also pertinent to assess if PBS is being implemented according to its original design. Implementing PBS with fidelity has a direct relationship to its outcomes.

The secondary level poses unique challenges in behavior management. Secondary schools usually have a larger number of students, teachers are organized by content area, teachers feel pressure for improving academic performance, high stakes

assessments occur, and many teachers hold the belief that students should already know and understand expectations at this age. There are more discipline issues at the secondary level however; it is also more challenging to address these issues on a school-wide level. Although there are many challenges to implementing PBS at the secondary level, doing so has positive effects on school climate and staff response to misbehavior.

Literature Review

Why is disruptive behavior a problem in school?

Effective behavior management is a crucial aspect of creating a productive teaching and learning environment (Sebag, 2010, p. 22). Behavior management is a central concern for schools, administrators, teachers, and parents. Teachers are challenged on a daily basis to create and maintain positive and productive classrooms. Many teachers are not receiving the pre service training in basic methods of behavior management (Thompson & Webber, 2010, p. 71). New teachers are not confident in their behavior management skills and feel unprepared in this area (Allen, 2010, p. 1). All teachers frequently identify behavior management as an area they would like to receive more training in (Thompson & Webber, 2010, p. 71) In a 2004 study done by Public Agenda, 77 percent of teacher acknowledged that student misbehavior negatively impacts their ability to teach effectively (Sebag, 2010, p. 22). Disruptive behavior distracts teachers from academics and the rest of the class. In a survey of 805 members of the American Federation of Teachers union, 17% of the teachers reported that they lose four hours of teaching time every week due to disruptive behavior from students. Another 19% reported losing two to three hours of instructional time (Finn, Fish, & Scott., 2008,

p. 259). Misbehavior has also been shown to negatively impact teachers' attitudes.

Disruptive behavior has been shown to negatively effects teacher energy, cause teacher

stress, and increase teacher burnout (Thompson & Webber, 2010, p. 71). Misbehavior is

also a factor in novice teachers leaving the profession completely (Allen, 2010, p. 1).

Dealing with problem behavior can also a source of stress and distraction for

administrators. Administrators also spend time disciplining students, recording, and

reporting student behavior (Finn et al., 2008, p. 259).

　　　　Student misbehavior negatively affects the students' ability and opportunities to

learn. Misbehavior can be particularly harmful if it prevents students from graduating or

achieving post secondary goals. Students who continually engage in disruptive behavior

become at risk for school failure. Research has shown that misbehavior is associated

with low grades and dropping out (Finn et al., 2008, p. 259).

　　　　Finn at al. (2008) completed a study using data from the National Education

Longitudinal Study of 1988. With a total sample size of 24,599, students were followed

from 8th grade through high school. The results of the study showed "multiple

misbehaviors often occur in the same individuals and that early forms of misbehavior can

persist over time and affect the educational accomplishments in later years (Finn et al,

2008, p. 271). In the study, students who exhibited more misbehavior also had lower

grades and test scores. Students with higher rates of serious misbehavior were more

likely to drop out. The study also found a relationship between misbehavior and post

secondary schooling. Misbehavior was related to entering, persisting in, and completing

post secondary schooling (Finn et al., 2008, p. 271).   Students, teachers, and

administrators are all negatively affected by misbehavior. Teachers need the tools,

strategies, and skills to deal with misbehavior effectively and to feel confident in doing so.

What are the familiar methods of discipline used in schools?

Green (2009) defines discipline as the steps or actions taken by teachers, administration, parents, and students to enhance student academic and social success (p. 458). According to Utley et al. (2002) statistics are showing an increase in aggressive and violent behavior by students in US schools. The increased numbers of aggressive, violent, and delinquent behavior has also increased the need for educators to respond more effectively. The response to these concerns have been "get tough" methods, increased surveillance, zero tolerance policies, and exclusionary and alternative placements (Safran & Oswald, 2003; Sugai & Horner, 2002). Familiar responses to misbehavior are most often punitive and reactive. These responses include detention, suspension, expulsion, and other forms of punishment. These methods are often exclusionary and they disproportionately penalize minority students (Thompson and Webber, 2010, p. 71).

These punitive methods of discipline are ineffective. Although immediate reduction in misbehavior may be experienced the problem behavior is likely to return (Sugai & Horner, 2002, pg. 130).   According to Safran & Oswald (2003) "punitive and reactive disciplinary methods may actually heighten the incidence and severity of the behaviors they are designed to reduce" (p. 361).   If suspension was truly an effective deterrent for unwanted behavior then we would see the behavior decrease. However, we often see repeat offenders in suspension which demonstrates that suspensions were not effective in deterring problem behavior (Netzel & Eber, 2003, p. 74).   Students who

engage in disruptive behavior need effective support strategies to increase academic behavior and time on task and decrease the occurrence of misbehavior (Brooks et al., 2003, p. 144).

What are best practices for behavior management?

The most effective and ethical approaches for behavior are positive, proactive, and preventative approaches. According to Weiss & Knoster (2008), positive approaches enhance a person's life. They are characterized by collaboration and not control. A positive approach focuses on the understanding of the meaning and purpose of the behavior from a student's point of view (p. 72). The ultimate goal of behavior management should be to prevent problem behaviors from occurring. When preventive approaches are used less time is spent responding to misbehavior and more time is spent on academics and learning. Netzel & Eber (2003) stated, "it is best to set students up for success ahead of time instead of merely responding after a problem has occurred" (p. 74). When comparing the amount of time taken to for proactive strategies to the time and energy put into reactive strategies, it is clear that proactive strategies are more time and energy efficient (Netzel & Eber, 2003, p. 74).   Strategies such as positive behavior supports, maintaining an organized classroom environment, and the use of effective instruction all work to prevent problem behaviors from occurring in a positive way for both students and teachers.

Positive Behavior Supports

In 1997, amendments for the Individuals with Disabilities Act identified positive behavior support as an intervention strategy to use for students with problem behavior. According to IDEA, "in the case of a child whose behavior impedes the child's learning

or that of others, consider the use of positive behavioral interventions and supports, and

other strategies, to address that behavior" (20 U.S.C. § 1414 (d)(3)(B)(i) (1999).   The

reauthorization also formally required a behavior intervention plan based on a functional

behavior assessment for students with disabilities whose behavior impedes their success

at school (Killu et al, 2006, 195).

       Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) is rooted in behavioral science, specifically

applied behavior analysis. The approach was originally developed and used for

individuals with severe developmental disabilities or problem behaviors (Sugai &

Horner, 2002, p. 130). However, violence, disruptive behavior, lack of discipline and pro

social behavior has been an increasing problem in schools. These problems have

received national attention and increased the pressure on districts and schools to alleviate

these problems. As aversive approaches were implemented "strong recommendations for

a shift toward and emphasis on more preventative and positive approaches for addressing

problem behavior have been made by numerous educators and researchers (Sugai &

Horner, 2002, p. 130).   The PBS approach has been expanded to students with and

without disabilities and to different settings including school, home and the community.

The approach of PBS has also broadened from individual case management to whole

system implementation, especially for schools as a whole.

       According to Carr et al. (2002), "positive behavior includes all those skills that

increase the likelihood of success and personal satisfaction in normative academic, work,

school, recreational, community, and family settings. Support encompasses all those

educational methods that can be used to teach, strengthen, and expand positive behavior

and all those systems change methods that can be used to increase opportunities for the

display of positive behavior" (p. 4-5). According to Sugai & Horner (2002), the five key

features to PBS include: a prevention-focused continuum of support, proactive

approaches to teaching and improving behavior, evidence based practices, systems

change to support effective practices, and data based decision making (pg. 131).

Positive behavior supports include a three tier approach that provides a continuum

of interventions and practices. The three tiers of PBS first consider interventions for all

students. The intensity and individualization of intervention then increases for students

who do not respond to the universal approaches (Sugai & Horner, 2009, p. 229).

Different levels of intervention are needed for different students. The level and intensity

of the intervention must match the presenting behavior (Netzel & Eber, 2003, p. 72).

The first tier or primary prevention includes universal prevention strategies, for all

students, staff, and family. In this tier the focus is on decreasing the number of new

incidents of problem behaviors. "School-wide discipline, classroom-wide behavior

management, and instructional practices and systems are emphasized (Sugai & Horner,

2002, p. 131).

The second tier of intervention is for students who are unresponsive to the

intervention in the primary tier. This tier usually consists of approximately five to fifteen

percent of students. Additional instruction and support are provided to students that are

at risk of school failure. These students need more specialized support than the

interventions provided in the primary tier (Sugai & Horner, 2002, p. 131).

The tertiary tier focuses on students who are not responsive to the primary or

secondary tier of intervention (Sugai & Horner, 2009, p. 229). These are students with

existing cases or complex, severe, and long standing behavior problems and are at risk for

emotional, behavioral, and school failure (Sugai & Horner, 2002, p. 131). This tier consists of one to seven percent of the student population (Frey et al. 2008, p. 7). Tools and strategies that are often used in Special Education are considered in the secondary and tertiary preventions. These include: Individualized Education Plans, person-centered planning, and function based support planning (Sugai & Horner, 2002, p. 131). The interventions and strategies used in both tiers are intensive, team-derived, and individualized and customized for the students (Sugai & Horner, 2002, p. 131).

Data-based decision making is another defining feature of PBS. Data should be used to decide upon and create interventions for areas of concern, evaluate the impact of interventions of practices implemented, and guide long term goals (Sugai & Horner, 2002, p. 133). Sugai & Horner (2002) described different data that can be utilized in PBS across different levels. At a school level, standardized achievement scores, office referrals, academic grades, and attendance and tardy records can be used. At the classroom level relevant data includes: curriculum based measurements and behavior incident reports (Sugai & Horner, 2002, p. 131). IEP goals and objectives and functional behavior assessments are data used at an individual level. In order for effective data-driven planning and evaluation to occur it requires "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" (Sugai & Horner, 2002, p. 131).

Functional Behavior Assessment in a PBS system

Two aspects of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) that are included in PBS are: Functional behavior assessments and behavior intervention plans. Functional behavior

assessment (FBA) is a systematic method of "generating information on the events preceding and following behavior in an attempt to determine which antecedents and consequences are reliably associated with the occurrence of the behavior" (Scott & Caron, 2005, p. 13). The purpose of FBA is to identify the relationship between an occurring behavior and the environment. The FBA is used in creating effective intervention plans for the behavior. FBA is a critical component in all levels of intervention in PBS (Scott & Caron, 2005, p. 13). "Whether at the larger school level (primary) or with individual students (secondary and tertiary), FBA involves identification of the predictors of failure and provision of a full range of positive and proactive supports to increase the probability of socially important behavior change (Scott & Caron, 2005, p. 14).

Scott & Caron (2005) identify the effective use of assessment and intervention at all levels of PBS school wide. Although FBA is typically thought of being used in the secondary and tertiary tiers of intervention for individual students, the concept of assessing where problem behavior are likely to occur, determined why they exist in those contexts, and using the information to develop prevention plans school wide in PBS uses similar concepts and procedures of FBA. On a school wide level the assessment usually begins with locations, then looks at the problem behaviors that may occur at those locations, the times and contexts the problems occur, particular students or groups that are likely to exhibit the problem behaviors, and why those problems occur in that particular location (Scott & Caron, 2005, p. 15-16). All staff familiar with the school system should be included in assessing and developing interventions at the primary level. Within a school they may identify five to eight locations to assess. In this level the team

"collaboratively generate, discuss, and come to consensus on teachable expectations, routines, and physical arrangements that will be consistently taught, encouraged, and enforced across the school (Scott & Caron, 2005, p.16). The interventions served to prevent predictable problem behaviors from occurring.

On the secondary level of intervention the expected number of students identified may be up to 10% of the students. Assessment and intervention at this level must begin with the most simple and realistic strategies to achieve successful intervention. The interventions in the secondary tier range form simple and easy to implement to complex and time consuming. Due to the variance in interventions in this tier Scott & Caron (2005) broke it into simple problem behaviors and complex problem behaviors (p. 17). Simple behavior problems are everyday problems. These problem behaviors are not serious or dangerous, but were not sufficiently addressed in the primary prevention. A small student centered team conducts assessment through talking with staff that know the student and collecting information on the behavior and circumstances when the behavior does and does not occur. The assessment may include: formal and informal interviews, questionnaires, and a review of existing data. The hypothesis for the function of the behavior is simple and generally validated by intervention. The interventions for simple behavior problems include additional instruction of appropriate behavior in a one on one or small group setting and simple routine or physical arrangements structure changes (Scott & Caron, 2005, p. 17). An example described by Scott & Caron (2005) involves a student who displays non compliant behavior in math class. The behavior does not occur in other classes and the behavior occurred in math the previous year. The team hypothesized that the student misbehaved to avoid embarrassment in from of peers. The

interventions for this student included math tutoring and creating a routine for when the teacher would call on the student in class. The interventions were successful for the student (Scott & Caron, 2005, p. 17).

Complex behavior problems are problems that occur repeatedly on a daily basis. For these behaviors simple assessment and intervention were unsuccessful or the behavior problem was serious enough to need immediate attention. Additional team members will be involved for increased support in collecting information, conducting assessment, and implementing interventions. A more complex and detailed hypothesis will be formed (Scott & Caron, 2005, p. 17). Both direct and indirect assessment of the behavior will take place. These assessments can include indirect assessment information such as interviewing and rating scales. Descriptive analyses such as observing or collecting data, reviewing existing records, conducting formal interviews or questionnaires, and distributing checklists can also be used for assessment at their tier. The interventions at this level will also be more individualized, complex, and involve more staff (Scott & Caron, 2005, p. 18). "Complex interventions as secondary prevention typically include direct instruction of specific skills in concert with student-specific routine and physical arrangements that are calculated and implemented to prevent predictable failures and provide prompts to facilitate successful responding (Scott & Caron, 2005, p. 18). After a problem behavior is deemed too complex for simple interventions school personnel may decide to include more staff, require more in depth involvement from staff, and include a wider range of individualized interventions eventually moving into the tertiary tier (Scott & Caron, 2005, p. 17).

The tertiary tier of prevention is utilized when complex problem behaviors have not been responsive at the secondary level, are seen as dangerous, or are in need of immediate and intensive attention (Scott & Caron, 2005, p. 18). The need for tertiary prevention is decided on a case by case basis and based on the criteria set by the team. In this tier the members of the team are extended outside of school to include parents, family, medical professional, and peers. Assessment and interventions in this tier may include community agencies, mental health services, family counseling, and drug and alcohol treatment. Multiple forms of direct observations and any additional data will be used as assessment in this tier. Team based analysis lead to "the development of a hypothesis of function that will then be formally tested by controlled manipulation of hypothesized variables" (Scott & Caron, 2005, p. 18). When students have reached this level it is most likely because they have failed repeatedly. These students need thorough and effective interventions to avoid school failure. An intervention plan must be created that will produce student success and do so in the least restrictive environment (Scott & Caron, 2005, p. 17).

Self Management

Self Management, according to Brooks, Todd, Tofflemoyer, & Horner (2003), include the procedures of self monitoring, self-evaluation, self-delivered prompts, and self-delivered rewards as effective strategies for students to improve their behavior and competence (p. 144). Self management is an instructional strategy that can be used in the tertiary tier of prevention of PBS and designing individualized support for students in managing their behavior (Brook et al., 2003, p. 144). According to Brooks et al. (2003), "Self management is the process by which the person who performs a target (undesirable)

behavior uses self-managed behaviors to increase desirable behaviors" (p. 144). When

students learn to use self management strategies across different contexts the results can

be used in school, the classroom, and beyond. Using more than one self management

strategy increases resilient behavior and create durable interventions (Brook et al., 2003,

p. 144). The goal of self management is the independent use of strategies across

contexts, people, and materials.

Brook et al. (2003) conducted a study to determine the effectiveness of self

management strategies (p. 145). More specifically the study determined if self

management interventions based on functional behavior assessment will increase the

rates of on task behavior and assignment completion. A fourth grade student, Hannah, has

been diagnosed with Down syndrome and a mild cognitive disability. Hannah displays

high rates of misbehavior that include making faces at or talking to peers, drawing

pictures during work time, playing with objects, and refusing to do work (Brooks et al,

2003, p. 145). The behavioral goals for Hannah were arriving to class on time, being

prepared with necessary materials, following directions the first time, participating in

classroom activities, using appropriate voice volume, initiating and remaining on task,

and interacting appropriately with peers (Brooks et al, 2003, p. 145). The schools action

team, which included her teacher, special education teacher, mother, and behavior

specialist, conducted and reviewed the results of a FBA. The action team used the

hypothesis statement to develop a competing behavior pathway, defined the positive

alternative behaviors, developed a behavior support plan and instructional plans,

allocated instructional time, and met regularly to monitor and discuss progress. The self

management skills to be taught to Hannah were self monitoring and self recruited teacher

attention, and teaching the concept of being on task (Brooks et al, 2003, p. 145).

Independent work, group instruction with two or more peers, unsupervised transitions

from one location to another, and recess were stimulus conditions for off task behavior.

According to the functional behavior assessment the hypothesis for Hannah's off-task

behaviors were maintained by peer and adult attention (Brooks et al, 2003, p. 145).

Hannah learned skills and routines during specifically designed instruction.

Hannah listened to headphones with a cassette with nothing on it except the audible

prompt "now" at the end of random intervals (Brooks et al., 2003, p. 147). She was also

given a self monitoring card where she would rate herself a + or 0 for whether or not she

was engaged at the end of each interval. Accuracy was randomly checked and Hannah

received praise for accurate ratings instead of being reprimanded for off task behavior.

On her self monitoring sheet was a hand icon at every sixth interval. Hannah learned to

raise her hand to get teacher attention when she saw this icon. When Hannah raised her

hand the teacher gave a variety of responses such as giving thumbs up or pat on the back.

At the end of every class period Hannah was given the opportunity to share her work and

talk with peers. Through these strategies Hannah was able to access teacher and peer

attention (Brooks et al., 2003, p. 147).

The results of the study were positive. The use of self management skills resulted

in increased rates of academic engagement and work completion. During the two phases

of implementation Hannah was academically engaged 77% of the time (Brooks et al.,

2003, pg. 147). The behaviors taught for seat work generalized across all settings.

However, Hannah did not generalize skills for group work. She did not use any self

management system during group instruction (Brooks et al., 2003, pg. 147). Self

management is an effective strategy for dealing with challenging behaviors displayed by students.

Multicultural Approach to PBS

Utley, Kozleski, Smith, & Draper (2002), described the need for a multicultural understanding and approach to PBS in schools. Social behaviors of at risk African Americans and Hispanic/Latino youth are culturally influenced therefore "it is critical that PBS and multicultural perspectives are infused to increase school success and life choices, academically, and socially, for these students" (p. 197). National trends show that suspensions are occurring at a disproportionate rate for African American and Hispanic and Latino students. African Americans, especially boys, are disciplined more severely than any other minority (Utley et al., 2002, pg. 197). Twenty five percent of all African Americans boys were suspended at least once over a four year period. National data on rates of school discipline also show that African American boys are two to three times more likely than white students to be suspended more than once (Utley et al., 2002, p. 198).

According to Utely et al. (2002), "urban multicultural students at risk for school failure are influenced by many social factors including poverty, racism, sexism, family dysfunction, crime, and violence, and substance abuse" (p. 198). These conditions influence the following six areas of social development: a history of poor adult-child relationships, lack a sense of personal efficacy or power, focus on external factors that influence their behavior, low self-esteem, poorly developed sense of social cognition, inability to understand others feelings or points of view, and poor problem solving skills (Utley et al., 2002, p. 198). Problems may arise when educators fail to understand the

role of culture and the experiences that students bring to school. "Cultural diversity

cannot be ignored in the behavioral assessment of urban students because the school

context of learning and the attitudes, values, and behaviors of the family, peer group, and

community profoundly influence the student's emotional, behavioral, moral, and

cognitive development" (Utley et al., 2002, p. 198).   Many educators do not understand

the school behaviors of these students. Therefore, the behavior is misinterpreted, seen as

deviant, and treated punitively (Utley et al., 2002, p. 198). In order to teach effectively

the impact of culture on students' behavior must be understood.

        Cultural competence is a major aspect in implementing multicultural principles

into PBS. School staff must have the knowledge and ability to respond to the needs of

students whose culture is different from the mainstream norms. The essential factors of a

culturally competent system include: valuing diversity, having the capacity for cultural

self-assessment, recognizing the dynamics inherent in cross-cultural interactions, having

cultural knowledge and developing adaptation to interventions, and service delivery

options that reflect an understanding of cultural diversity (Utley et al., 2002, p. 201).

         Utley et al. (2002) proposed that the PBS model must be: characterized by

change for the 21st century, grounded in effective, respectful, supportive teacher

relationships, and intergraded in multicultural educations systems and approaches (pg.

201). "Aggregated student information can be reviewed frequently to (a) uncover

potential biases in teaching, (b) discuss antisocial student behavior, and (c) remediate

poor academic performance" (Utley et al., 2002, p. 201). Through continued collection

of information on student behavior schools can hold themselves responsible for reaching

the goals of engaged citizenship for all students.

One important step to implementing a multicultural approach to PBS begins with developing the expectations for acceptable school wide behavior with students, families, teachers, and administrators (Utley et al., 2002, p. 201). Examples of students performance should be shown, such as video clips, to open a dialogue about on what constitutes as acceptable and inacceptable behavior. Members of the school community that represent a wide rage of cultures, experiences, backgrounds, and ethnicities should be included (Utley et al., 2002, p. 203). This form of dialogue must also be conducted at the classroom level allowing student and teachers to use examples to create a consensus on what comprises good citizenship in the classroom. These discussions will create democratic classroom where students and teachers have their views heard (Utley et al., 2002, p. 203).

It is critical for schools and teachers to understand the impact of culture on students' social behavior. Although student behavior is influenced by factors outside of school, teacher and schools have a major impact on how students behave and learn and how they feel about themselves (Utley et al., 2002, p. 198). Schools must be culturally competent in order to fully understand their students and their behavior. By instituting a PBS program that is culturally aware the outcomes will impact the learning, behavior, and instructional practices.

Implementation Fidelity

In implementing Positive Behavior Supports schools document rates of referrals. There has been a lack in the evaluation of treatment fidelity (Cohen, Kincaid, Childs, 2007, p. 203). Documenting and assessing the implementation of PBS is also important. The program should be evaluated to inform to what extent the program is implemented

according to its original design. Evaluations determine if the core features are in place

and what strengths and weaknesses exist in the program (Algozzine, Horner, Sugai,

Barrett, Dickey, Eber, Kincaid, Lewis, & Tobin, 2010, p. 12).

There are several assessments used to evaluate PBIS implementation. The Self-

Assessment Survey is completed by schools staff. It measures the current levels of

implementation on the school-wide system, non-classroom systems, classroom support

systems, and individual support systems. School-wide Evaluation Tool is a 2-3 hour

review of systems outcomes that is conducted by an outside evaluator. Multiple sources

are used to complete the evaluation including observations and students and staff

interviews (p. 13). The Benchmarks of Quality is a 53 item self-assessment measure and

ass the universal tier of intervention. A score greater than or equal to 70% reaches

benchmark (p.16). The Team Implementation checklist is a 22 item self assessment.

Scoring an 80% is meeting criterion (p. 17). The Individual Student Systems Evaluation

Tool assesses secondary and tertiary tiers. It is a 35 item assessment divided into three

parts: foundations, targeted, and intensive. The questions are about implementation,

monitoring and evaluation (p. 20). The benchmarks for Advanced Tiers is a self

assessment of Tier two and three to be completed by the PBS team and coach (p. 23).

According to Algozzine et al (2010), "outcome evaluation should not be attempted until

well after quality and participation have been maximized and documented in a process

evaluation. Although outcome data can determine the effectiveness of a program,

process data determine whether a program exists in the first place" (p. 22).

A study aimed at identifying the barriers and facilitators to the successful

implementation of PBS in school implementing at high and low levels of fidelity

(Kincaid, Childs, Blase, & Wallace, 2007, p. 174). The study was completed in schools

in Florida who had PBS implemented for at least one year. The study is the Benchmarks

of quality to determine if the schools participating were a high or low implementing

school. Once divided into groups two open-ended questions were used to facilitate

discussion 1. What have been the barriers to implementing school wide positive behavior

support in your school or district? 2. What had facilitated the implementation of school

wide positive behavior support at your school or in your district? A modified nominal

group process was used to facilitate the discussion of the questions (p. 176).

The results of the study found that staff buy in was a critical barrier to

implementation to both high and low implementing schools (p.178).   Staff buy-in was

identified as a barrier twice as much as any other single item. Other barriers included use

of data, inconsistent implementation, reward system, implementation issues, and time.

Kincaid et al. (2007) stated "Most of the thirteen themes identified as both barriers and

facilitators reflect core components for initiating and maintaining SWPBS, including

obtaining administrative and district support, developing a reward system for students

and staff, obtaining staff buy-in, using data, working as a team, and involving families

and the community. Reflection of these core components in both questions reinforces the

importance in both questions reinforces the importance of these components for

implementing SWPBS with fidelity" (p. 180).

Effectiveness of PBS in Schools

Urban school districts can face many challenges including poverty, diverse

populations, larger size, and limited resources. One study on PBS was conducted in the

urban school district in north eastern Illinois. The Waukegan School District consists of

more than 15,000 students, 87% are minorities, and 57% come from low-income households (Netzel & Eber, 2003, p. 71). The district's goal was to reduce disruptive behavior that led to detentions, suspensions, expulsions, and a high rate of referrals to special education (Netzel & Eber, 2003, p. 72) In order to do this the school recognized the need to change the schools discipline philosophy from reactive to proactive (Netzel & Eber, 2003, p. 74). North Elementary School was set as the pilot school for a PBIS program. The school has previously practiced a reactive form of discipline on a case-by case basis. There were no proactive or preventative practices in place. The school set up a leadership team consisted of volunteers from the school that included teacher, administration and support staff (Netzel & Eber, 2003, p. 72). The team received training from the statewide PBIS initiative. The first year of PBIS implementation at the school was dedicated to training school staff on PBIS.

In this first year the school focused teaching three major concepts: matching student need to intervention, preventing misbehavior by teaching and reinforcing appropriate behavior, and using data to identify and solve problems. In the startup year the school defined the behavioral expectations across different schools settings. Scripts were created for the purpose of teaching students the expectations for behaviors with the expectation they would be taught weekly. A standard office referral form was created and provided a continuum of consequences to behavior other than suspension (Netzel & Eber, 2003, p. 73). These consequences included: administrative warning, student meeting, debriefing log, behavior contract, correspondence with parent, parent and teacher meeting, indoor recess, and out-of-school suspension. The new office referral form and procedure allowed there to be different options of responding to student

behavior. By including responses to misbehavior that include dialogue with students,

teachers, administrators, and family problem solving is facilitated and misbehavior can be

turned into a learning opportunity (Netzel & Eber, 2003, p. 74).   The number of office

referrals and suspensions are recorded and graphed to show trends in behaviors,

locations, times, grade level, and per month referrals (Netzel & Eber, 2003, p. 77).

For positive reinforcement, the school chose to acknowledge appropriate behavior

with "Gotchas." The "Gotcha" is a four by five slip of paper that is given to staff to give

to their own students or other students seen following the school wide rules. Both the

student's and teacher name are written on the paper and entered into a lottery box for a

weekly drawing (Netzel & Eber, 2003, p. 73).

The study yielded very positive results. North Elementary School experienced a

22% reduction in suspension from 1998-1999 to 1999-2000. Office referrals were also

reduced in number. Data was used for future planning. For example, the school would

schedule boosters in March for students and staff due to the high number of referrals

received in that month. A higher number of referrals were also recorded from 2:00 pm to

2:59 pm. Staff discussed solution at a staff meeting and implemented changes such as

increased structure and increased number of reminders and reinforcement.

This study followed a school in their mission of implementing PBS school wide.

The benefits of taking on a PBS framework not only decreased suspensions and office

referrals, but also created an organized and efficient way of collecting and using data,

responding to misbehavior from a continuum of different and more productive responses,

and recognizing appropriate behaviors (Netzel & Eber, 2003, p. 77). Netzel and Eber

(2003) emphasized the necessity of staff buy in and creating a common philosophy

among all staff. The principal and assistant principal of schools have a great deal of

influence on staff therefore, they must be on board. All staff needs to share a philosophy

for a proactive approach aimed at preventing misbehavior. This may be a departure from

years of practice for some teachers (Netzel & Eber, 2003, p. 78). Staff needs to be

educated and willing to participate in PBIS in order for it to work and have promising

results.

In another study, the implementation and results of PBS in a suburban

Midwestern school district was looked at. The study viewed pre-kindergarten through

eighth grade and consisted of 2500 students (Green, 2008, p. 458).   The district created a

district wide plan for positive behavior supports. In the past consequences were the

primary responses to misbehavior. It was their goal to move from a system of control

and punishment to modeling appropriate behavior to students. Positive Behavior

Supports was a two year process of planning and implementation for the district (Green,

2009, p. 460). A planning team was created. The team consisted of teachers, social

workers, principals, vice principals, co chair of district discipline committee,

superintendent, assistant superintendent, technology director, and counselors (Green,

2009, pg. 462).   The planning team created expectation and lessons to teach the

expectations to students. Posters of the expectations were created and displayed

throughout the school. A consistent discipline referral was designed and used for all the

schools in the district (Green, 2009, p. 463). The data collected from referrals were used

to make reports and charts based on location, setting, expectation, and behavior. The data

was used to make future decisions such as when to have boosters. Communication was

another aspect of this district implementation of PBS. Many different form of

communication were used to inform parents about the discipline plan before and during planning and to encourage parent involvement (Green, 2009, p. 464). Tickets were used an acknowledgement of appropriate behaviors being displayed. The tickets were placed in a weekly drawing (Green, 2009, p. 466).

Overall, the district saw positive results after the implementation of a district wide PBS system. Schools saw a decrease number of discipline referrals ranging from 21% to 44% . Some other accomplishments of the district include: common language used, unified approach, decrease in referrals, teachers more present in hallways, decrease in problem behavior, increase in educational time, standardized referral form, comparison data, increase in staff's acknowledgement of students, school wide information system, and increased communication with parents (Green, 2009, p. 466).

Frey, Lingo, & Nelson (2008) reported that in general schools reported a 20 to 60 percent decrease in office referrals and suspension after implementation (p. 9). After the second year of implementation the results of SWPBS were sustained. School-wide Positive Behavioral Support approach emphasizes systems and organizational changed and therefore produces long term and durable results. In Elmira, Oregon SWPBS has been in place since 1995. In the first year the schools saw a 40% decrease in discipline referrals. A 65% decrease in of referrals was sustained over a seven year period (Frey et al., 2008, p. 9).

Frey, Lingo and Nelson (2008) studied the effect of PBS on behavior and academics in a K-12 and early childhood setting. Research showed that when combined with effective academic instruction can improve academics. Kelman (2001) examined the effects of SWPBS on reading achievement (Frey et al., 2008, p. 10). When evidence

based reading interventions were implemented in chaotic classrooms it did not yield improved reading outcomes. However, when the same interventions were used in school using SWPBS, the results were significant gains in academics (Frey et al., 2008, p. 10). In Oregon School District all elementary schools implemented a phonics based program. In the district, thirteen elementary schools had a SWPBS in place and six schools did not. The percentage of third graders who met the state standard was significantly higher in schools where SWPBS was implemented (Frey et al., 2008, pg. 10). School Wide Positive Behavioral Supports are not only an effective system for decreasing problem behavior, but when in place increases learning and academic achievement.

Challenges at the Secondary Level

Positive Behavior Supports have been successfully implemented and documented at the elementary level. There are not many studies that research PBIS implementation at the secondary level. Implementing PBIS with adolescents brings distinctive challenges. Bohanon, Fenning, Carney, Minnis-Kim, Anderson-Herriss, Moroz, Hicks, Kasper, Culos, Sailor, & Pigott (2006) stated two factors that are specific to PBIS in secondary schools. Discipline problems are positively correlated with school size. The larger the size of the population within a school the greater the likelihood of problem behaviors being reported (p. 132). Another consideration at the high school level is the pressure to increase academic outcomes, increase the graduation rate, and prepare students for college and the work force (p. 133). Bahanon et al. completed a study of PBS in an urban high school. The study was completed in one of Chicago's high schools over a three year period. The study was intended to discover what aspects of PBS need modifications for an urban high school setting and to evaluate the impact of high school PBS model on

school wide discipline outcomes (p. 138).   The researcher gathered information through

interviews, document reviews, and comprehensive field notes, the School Evaluation

Tool, and Effective Behavior Support survey.

      The results of the study showed that the school had not reached full

implementation (Bohanaon et al., 2006, p. 139). The school had reached implementation

state of 80% on the SET in five domains: expectations defined, acknowledgement,

system for responding, monitoring and decision making, and management. However, did

not reach 80% implementation status in the domains in behavioral expectations taught

and district level support (p. 139). This study found further considerations and

challenges at the secondary level. It is more challenging to get student buy in of the

acknowledgement system at the secondary level. In this study Bohanon et al. (2006)

observed that although students did make comments about the "babyish" nature of the

tickets used as reinforcement, however the number of tickets used by students to gain

admittance to major school events was evidence of the effectiveness of the tickets and

reinforcement (p. 141).

      The most difficult component was encouraging staff to teach behavior

expectations. Behaviors were not consistently taught or prompted, but when desired

behaviors were exhibited they were enforced. According to Bohanaon et al (2006), "This

approach would benefit students who had expected behaviors in their repertoire, but not

those with a skill deficit" (p. 142).

      As previously discussed implementing PBS in a large school proved to have

challenges. The size of high school combined with the school culture of independent

activity of staff in their content areas made school wide implementation made the process

unique to high schools. Initial implementation may take longer and require more energy

(p. 142). With a large number of staff the school that participated in this study found that

the leadership team had to put thought and effort into finding personnel to operate the

school store, obtain prizes and items for the store, maintaining efficacy and consistency

in using tickets for reinforcement, and facilitating communication.

Enacting consistent policies in high school is another difficult task in

implementing PBS. Due to the number of staff and students in a high school, agreeing

upon consistent policies for dealing with issues will take increased efforts. When an

issue is identified it may take considerable time before the staff will come together, agree

upon a solution, and enact that solution (Bohanon et al., 2006, p. 143).

Finally, another challenge found at the site of the study was implementing a

modified office referral form. The staff chose to add the time and location of the referral

to the form. It also included considerations for the possible function or motivation of the

behavior. The form was not put into used until a year later. The staff was not able to

implement the new form until the old forms were all used (p.143).

Methodology

Setting and Participants

The research was conducted in a large suburban school district in western New

York. The district is one of the top ten largest districts in New York State. The district

serves a total of 11,877 students. There are a total of twenty schools: three high schools,

one sixth to twelfth grade school, three middle schools, and thirteen elementary schools.

The study was completed in the two largest high schools in the district, School A and

School B. Each school had made a committee of five to six staff members and sent them

to PBIS training. Both schools are in their fourth year of implementation. The survey

was given to two teachers and one administrator from each school for completion.

However, one teacher from School A did not complete the survey.

Measurement Tool

        The Effective Behavior Support (EBS) Survey was used in this study. See

Appendix A.   The EBS survey is a self assessment used to determine levels of

implementation and priority for improvement over the four systems of PBS. These

systems include: school wide, non-classroom, classroom, and individual support systems.

The participant assessed the status of each behavior support as in place, partially in place,

or not in place. For each feature rated partially in place or not in place the participant

rated the feature rated the priority for improvement as high, medium, or low. At the end

of the survey two open ended questions were posed: 1. How has PBIS changed your

teaching and your school as a whole? 2. What are the challenges to implementing at the

secondary level?

Results

        The survey results demonstrated that School B was implementing with higher

fidelity in all systems of PBIS. When assessing the status of schoolwide behaviors

School A reported there were 36.1% of the features in place, 50% partially in place, 8.%

not in place. Respondents answered I don't know for 6% of the features. School B had

57 % of schoolwide features in place, 32% partially in place, and 11.1% not in place. For

non-classroom systems, School A had 22% of features in place, 39% partially in place

and 33.3% not in place. Respondents listed I don't know for 6% of the features on this

system. School B responded 52% of features were in place at the non-classroom system,

22% were partially in place, and 26% were not in place. In the classroom systems category, Schools A had 32% of features in place, 59% partially in place, and 9% not in place. School B had 40% in place, 55% partially in place, and 6% not in place. Finally in the Individual Support System School A had 13% of features in place, 38% partially in place, and 50% not in place. School B had 42% in place, 50% partially in place, and 8.3% not in place. Appendix B is a series of graphs demonstrating the percentages of features in each status and system.

In the question portion of the survey School B responded with more positive responses about the impact of PBS in their teaching and school. Sixty seven percent of respondents listed staff buy in as a challenge to implementing PBS at the secondary level. Thirty three percent listed time, 33% listed money, 17% named staff knowledge, 17% listed lack of systematic and universal implementation. The responses to the two questions posed at the end of the survey can be found in Appendix C.

Discussion

This case study compared two schools implementing PBS in the same district with the same training who yielded very different results in implementation fidelity. School B had higher rates of implementations of features in all systems. From the question responses it was clear that School B had more positive responses on the effects PBS has had on their school.

The results of this case study are consistent with other studies completed. The challenges identified in this study are consistent with those identified in by Kincaid et al. (2007). Further the response identified most as a barrier to implementation was staff buy in. Time and inconsistent implementation were also listed in both studies. Bohanon et al

(2006) also listed challenges in implementation specifically at the secondary level. Like this study, getting teachers to teach expectations and inconsistent implementation were identified as challenges to implementing PBS. From this study and previous studies it is evident that there are challenges to implementing PBS and many challenges are specific to the high school level. In order to implement PBS with the greatest fidelity all staff must be trained in PBS. Staff must have a clear and consistent view of what PBS is and their responsibilities in aided in implementation. Modifications may need to be made in order to achieve the best results at the high school level. Many lessons that have previously been developed for PBS are aimed at the secondary level. A rewards system that secondary students buy into must be developed. Modifications may increase staff and student buy in and increase the implementation and outcomes of PBS.

When rating each status the staff member was also asked to rate the priority for improvement for features partially in place or not in place. The majority of staff members rated the priority for improvement for all features. Due to the inconsistency in the way the survey was completed the priority for improvement aspect was disregarded and not included in the results.

The office referral rate is not included in this study. The district had just bought the School Wide Information System (SWIS) to collect data and have been inputting data for only four months. The currents rates of referrals show that School B has a higher rate of referrals despite their higher level of implementation. However, without data collected over time we cannot see if PBS has improved their referral rate. The responses to the end questions from School B indicate positive outcomes in the school due to PBS implementation. These outcomes include a more positive school climate, attempts to

identify the functions of behavior, looking for positive solutions, and teaching behavior expectations. The staff from school A noted no changes to their teaching or whole school. This is likely due to the lack of features of PBS implemented.

Neither school has reached a high level of implementation. Algozzine et al (2010) recommended that evaluation of disciplinary outcomes not be attempted until a process evaluation is completed and yields successful results. Therefore, it would not be useful to base the effectiveness of PBS on the school's current referral rate.

Despite the moderate level of implementation the results are encouraging. School B has 39% to 58% of features in place in all systems. Even though the school has not reached high implementation status it has seen positive results. The staff in school B commented they have seen a positive change in school climate, teaching of expectations, positive solutions to problem behavior, and recognizes and reinforcing positive behavior. The study indicates the higher rate of implementation fidelity, the more positive outcomes the school will experience.

Limitations

On major limitation of the current study was the small sample size. In order to ensure responses the EBS survey was given to three staff members at each school. This included two teachers and one administrator. The study was further limited as only one teacher from School A completed the survey. A more complete and comprehensive study would include EBS surveys completed by the entire school staff.

Another limitation was the evaluation tool and rater bias since the EBS survey is a self assessment. Staff completing the survey may not have exposure to all components of

PBS implementation. The survey also did not include students in the evaluation or any

on site observations.

Future Study

Future studies would benefit from tracking PBS implementation and outcomes

over a longer time frame. Are the current features in place sustained? Is there any

improvement in the implementation of the features that are only partially in place or not

in place? Over a longer period of time and with higher levels of implementation referral

and discipline outcomes can be reviewed and compared. Finally, in a district where both

schools received the same training and are in the same year of implementation it would

be insightful to further study why one school is implementing with higher fidelity.

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