

Shifting From Reactive to Proactive Discipline in an Urban School District:

A Change of Focus Through PBIS Implementation



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Abstract: The applied science of positive behavior supports (PBS; Carr et al., 2002) was initially developed as an alternative to aversive interventions for changing self-injurious and aggressive behaviors of individual youth with developmental disabilities (Durand & Carr, 1985). PBS has been recently extended from an approach with individual children to a school-wide intervention for schools (Dwyer & Osher, 2000; Lewis, Sugai, & Colvin, 1998; Scott & Hunter, 2001). The Illinois Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Network is a statewide technical assistance project that is focused on applying the science of PBS at a school-wide level through a systems approach. PBIS in Illinois supports the development of proactive school-wide discipline systems that provide multiple levels of intervention to address the behavior support needs of all students, including those with significant behavior challenges (see the PBIS section of www.ebdnetwork-il.org). This article describes PBIS implementation as experienced by an urban school district in Illinois.

Urban school districts have unique challenges due to factors such as size, high poverty rates, diverse communities, and limited resources. In addition, the absence of effective discipline systems often exacerbates the difficulty of educating large number of students in urban communities. Waukegan School District, an urban unit district in North-eastern Illinois is familiar with these challenges. Waukegan is a district of more than 15,000 students, with 87% of minority status and 57% from low-income households, that has a long history of budget shortfalls and changing demographics. Concerns about discipline problems and safety are widespread. In spite of fiscal struggles, the district has made significant efforts to address the needs of students with, and at risk for, behavior problems. Following participation in a successful wraparound demonstration project funded by the Illinois State Board of Education, the district created both wraparound coordinator and behavior intervention coordinator positions to provide early (and where needed, intense) support for children with behavioral challenges and their families. Congruent with skills acquired during the wraparound demonstration project, the wraparound coordinator implemented a process within

the district for identifying and delivering comprehensive, coordinated services for children and their families via "wraparound plans" (Eber & Nelson, 1997; Eber, Nelson, & Miles, 1997).

In addition, the district agreed to an initiative of incorporating positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS), a systems approach for establishing a continuum of proactive, positive discipline procedures for all students, all staff members, and all settings (Sugai, Horner, et al., 2000; Sugai, Sprague, Horner, & Walker, 2000). PBIS includes universal school-wide strategies intended to facilitate success for 85% to 95% of the students. Targeted small-group or individual interventions are implemented for those students for whom universal strategies aren't successful (5%–15%). For the 1% to 7% of students with chronic and intensive needs across multiple settings, a family-centered wraparound approach, which incorporates PBS and other supports and services, is implemented (Eber, Sugai, Smith, & Scott, 2002). Specific to the Waukegan School District, the behavior intervention coordinator supports individual school buildings in the systemic and procedural implementation of all three levels of PBIS but

defers to the expertise of the wraparound coordinator when actual implementation of wraparound plans for the affected 1% to 7% of the population is needed.

Waukegan School District's involvement with PBIS grew out of both curiosity and necessity. PBIS caught the interest of the newly hired district behavior consultant who saw the potential for systematically matching the intensity of intervention to the intensity of the problem behavior through a continuum of behavioral support (Sugai & Horner, 1999; Sugai, Horner, et al., 2000) presented by individual students or groups of students or occurring at the building level. The district's goal was to reduce incidences of behavior problems that led to detentions, suspensions, expulsions, and a high rate of referrals to special education. The behavior consultant was introduced to the statewide PBIS Initiative in 1999 and recognized that this systemic approach could provide the proactive behavior support needed in schools to accomplish the district's goals of educating a diverse group of learners in the least restrictive settings. Under her leadership, Waukegan embarked on a pilot implementation of PBIS in one elementary school in the 1999–2000 school year. The success of this pilot provided the incentive to expand to 5 more of the district's 24 schools during the 2000–2001 school year and to train the district's wraparound coordinator as a second in-district PBIS coach for the 2001–2002 school year.

This article describes the challenges faced by the pilot school in this urban district, the strategies employed by the PBIS Leadership Team at the school, the support provided by the district and the statewide PBIS Initiative, and the results experienced during 2 years.

The Challenge

The Waukegan School District saw hints of proactive and positive behavior change at the district level for approximately a decade prior to PBIS implementation. Recognizing that different levels of intervention were needed for different students, the district first began building individualized behavioral support for students with the most intense needs (typically 1%–7% of the student population [Sugai & Horner, 1999; Sugai, Horner, et al., 2000]) and then began developing support structures for addressing the needs of those students at risk for behavioral problems (typically 5%–15% of the student population [Sugai & Horner, 1999; Sugai, Horner, et al., 2000]). The district created the wraparound coordinator position to support students with the highest needs in 1996; the wraparound coordinator continues to serve about 25 students/families per year. In 1998, a district behavior consultant, later renamed the behavior intervention coordinator, was hired to help staff provide consultation and intervention assistance for the group of students who were at risk for developing chronic behavior problems. Although the wraparound coordinator and behavior consultant positions were in place,

challenges and the students who were at risk for chronic behavior problems appeared to be more than 5% to 15% of the student population (Scott, 2001; Warren et al., this issue). Following participation in a 1-day PBIS introductory workshop, the behavior consultant and key district staff members determined that select schools in the district lacked a consistent, proactive, and preventative school-wide system of teaching and reinforcing school-wide behavioral expectations. PBIS would provide the district with a systematic process and task-specific structure for developing, implementing, evaluating, and sustaining behavior change in a school.

Characteristic of many districts, yet most particular to those in urban settings, funding for any new program was limited. Resources could only be allocated after careful consideration of the program's potential impact, as well as the logistics and fiscal realities of expansion and sustainability. The district committed to develop a pilot site to (a) demonstrate that the PBIS philosophy was compatible with the belief systems of students, parents, staff members, and administrators in the district and (b) increase the probability of success before investing the already limited time, energy, and resources of other district schools. The focus was to build systems change and subsequent student behavior change within a building from the ground up while expanding on the existing levels of behavior support.

Once PBIS received district-level approval for initial implementation, North Elementary School (NES) was selected as the pilot. Similar to other district schools, NES was experiencing high levels of suspension of its approximately 600 students, 96% of whom held minority status and 68% of whom were eligible for free and reduced lunch. 9.8% of students received at least one suspension over the 1998–1999 academic year, for a total of 117 documented incidents of out-of-school suspension. The backlog of special education referrals plagued a building-based team that primarily focused on determining eligibility for case study evaluations. In addition to suspensions, a small number of other disciplinary actions (e.g., administrative warnings, parent conferences) were sporadically used to respond to behavior problems. There was no precedence for focusing on effective discipline and more important, no procedures were in place to prevent misbehavior. Problem behavior was addressed on a case-by-case and after-the-fact basis, clearly a "putting out fires" approach. A system for proactively teaching expected behavior across all school settings early in the year was not a high priority. To successfully implement PBIS, it was clear that the school's overall philosophy regarding discipline would need to change.

The PBIS Approach at North Elementary

START-UP PROCEDURES

The PBIS Leadership Team, composed of dedicated and

statewide PBIS Initiative, funded by the Illinois State Board of Education. The team included grade-level representation, administration, and support staff. The district behavior consultant joined the statewide PBIS Coaches Network to receive advanced training targeted toward her role of providing hands-on support to the school-based leadership team. Her previous training as a school psychologist specializing in behavioral approaches was considered key to successful skill development of the PBIS Leadership Team, which had limited behavioral capacity. This state-, district-, and building-based support structure made NES an example for PBIS expansion within the district.

Following a 2-day initial PBIS training, which covered the philosophy and processes needed to lay the foundation for PBIS implementation in a building (Sugai & Lewis-Palmer, 2000) and effective teaming and data analysis skills, the team hit the ground running with energy, optimism, and a plan for change. Attending a training session that included teams from other districts and was conducted by experienced PBIS coaches from an area school district provided a point of reference to which NES team members could compare the implementation of their newly acquired skills. The first year of PBIS implementation at NES was focused on educating building staff members about PBIS, stressing three global concepts:

1. matching the level of interventions to the presenting problems following the three-tiered PBIS prevention model (see Figure 1),
2. preventing misbehavior by specifically teaching and reinforcing expected behavior, and
3. using data to acknowledge success and to help the school problem solve areas of concern.

PBIS overviews were provided to the building staff through staff meetings. Staff members' perspectives on which positive behavior policies were currently in place were surveyed using the *School-Wide EBS Survey* (Sugai, Horner, & Todd 2000). The *EBS Survey* provided an opportunity for each staff member to rank the perceived status of various school-wide, nonclassroom, classroom, and individual student systems as "in place," "partial [sic] in place," and "not in place." Each staff member was also asked to indicate his or her own priority level for improvement (i.e., "high," "medium," or "low"). Last, a discipline data baseline was established by reviewing the previous year's suspension data.

During the start-up year, the Leadership Team at NES met about every 3 weeks, defined behavioral expectations in the form of school-wide rules across all school settings, and drafted scripts for teaching the expectations. The team created an office referral form with a continuum of administrative responses to discipline and developed alternatives to suspensions. To acknowledge appropriate behaviors, the team developed "Gotchas" and distributed them to the staff to award both to their own students and to any student seen following the school-wide rules. The names

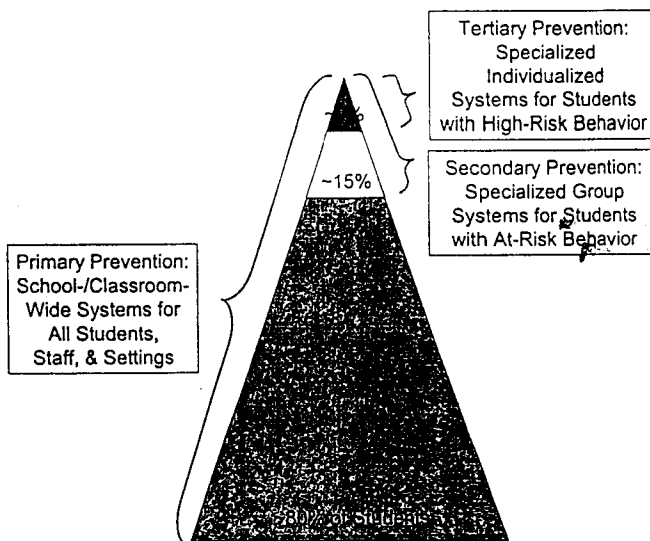


Figure 1. Pyramid of school-wide positive behavior support. *Note.* Adapted from material in "Integrated Approaches to Preventing Antisocial Behavior Patterns Among School-Age Children and Youth," by H. M. Walker, R. H. Horner, G. Sugai, M. Bullis, J. R. Sprague, D. Bricker, and M. J. Kaufman, 1996, *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 4, pp. 194-209.

of the student and the staff member are written on the 4- by 5-inch slip of paper, which is then placed in a lottery box for a weekly prize drawing every Friday. Both the student whose name was drawn and the teacher who gave the Gotcha are recognized.

At the end of the first school year of PBIS, the plan for NES as the district's pilot site was presented to the superintendent and then to the school board, who warmly received and encouraged the approach. In fact, the superintendent and the school board made suggestions for expanding PBIS to other select schools. A Teacher Assistance Team at NES was assembled to assist with at-risk students; training and implementation was set to take place the next fall. The Teacher Assistance Team at NES was to be available to assist teachers in developing prereferral intervention strategies for students who were experiencing academic and/or behavioral difficulties and to provide targeted small-group interventions for students identified as "repeat offenders" via analysis of the school's discipline data.

At the beginning of the next school year, scripts for teaching the school-wide behavioral expectations via a behavior matrix were distributed with an expectation that they would be taught weekly. The action plan included the principal's giving reminders over the intercom that the lessons were to be taught. Alternatives to suspension expanded from administrative warnings and parent conferences to include debriefing logs, indoor recess, and behavior contracts. In addition, the staff was encouraged to routinely remind students of expected behavior. The

first year of PBIS at NES (1999–2000) focused on getting the school-wide, universal interventions in place for the 80% to 90% of the student population, but the second year (2000–2001) was spent on merging the Teacher Assistance Team with the school-wide component.

DEFINING, TEACHING, MONITORING, AND REWARDING BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS

NES's behavioral expectations revolved around three school-wide rules:

1. Respect ourselves.
2. Respect others.
3. Respect property.

These "3 R's" were applied across 10 school-related situations: during class, on assembly/field trips, at the playground, during special classes (art, music, PE), in the cafeteria, in the bathroom, on the bus, in the hallway, during an emergency situation, and in the library (see Table 1).

Instead of using negative statements prefaced with "Don't" and "No," the Leadership Team operationally defined each cross-section of the behavior matrix through positively stated behavioral expectations. For the first year of implementation, the team chose to break the behavior matrix into 12 lessons, each composed of a teaching component, a student activity, and suggestions for how to continuously practice the lesson for the rest of the week.

The first of the 12 lessons taught what it meant to respect something or someone (see Figure 2). The second lesson focused simply on the 3 R's, and the remaining 10 lessons focused on how the three school-wide rules applied to each of the settings. Each lesson typically took 20 to 30 minutes per week to teach and usually involved having the students actually practice the behavior during the designated setting. Follow-up for the remainder of the week typically involved pointing out examples and nonexamples of the target behavior in that week's setting so that student behaviors—both appropriate and inappropriate—became learning opportunities. Appropriate behavior was, and continues to be, rewarded through the "Gotcha" system.

SHIFTING TO A CONTINUUM OF CONSEQUENCES FOR PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

One of the initial goals of PBIS at NES was to change the building's perspective on discipline from reactive to proactive. A gradual shift from an all-or-nothing approach (i.e., suspension vs. sending the student back to the classroom) to a continuum of discipline began to occur. NES administration and staff needed to develop and adopt alternative responses to discipline, including a system for preventing misbehavior. The newly hired assistant to the principal began implementing a wider variety of alterna-

tives to suspension, including incident debriefing conferences, behavior contracts, behavior intervention plans, parent correspondence, and in-door lunch/recess. Although administrators recognized that suspension was still an option and at times even mandatory per district discipline code, they became more aware of and comfortable with choosing alternatives.

The first step in shifting to a more proactive focus was educating building administration and staff about the logic behind the principles of behavior surrounding the use of suspension. If suspension was truly an effective punishment (i.e., if the behavior that was followed by a suspension decreased over time), then why would a student continue to engage in the behavior for which he or she was suspended? Following the basic rules of applied behavior analysis, if suspension and detention were truly punishment for a given student, then his or her inappropriate behavior would decrease (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 1987). This, however, was not the case for the repeat offenders at NES. Suspension may be effective for some students at risk for behavior problems; however, as the term *repeat offenders* implies, repeated suspension was not effective at changing the problem behaviors of those students with the most intense behavior support needs.

The second step of changing to a more proactive approach was to educate everyone from a logistical and time management viewpoint. To make the best use of educators' time and emotional energy, it is best to set students up for success ahead of time instead of merely responding after a problem has occurred. Being proactive does take time out of one's schedule; however, when comparing the amount of time invested in proactive strategies to the amount of time and emotional energy expended to reactively respond to misbehavior, it is clear that the proactive approach can be more time and energy efficient. Following the introduction of this philosophical change, administrators and staff members were periodically reminded of its rationale.

Once the philosophy began to shift, the newly created office referral form was more palatable. The office referral form served not only as a referral but also as a visual prompt for administrators to choose from a continuum of consequences for misbehavior, as opposed to suspension alone. The continuum of consequences included administrator warning, student meeting, debriefing log, behavior contract, correspondence with the parent, parent and teacher meeting, indoor recess, and out-of-school suspension. Having the option of responding to misbehavior through dialogue with students, teachers, and perhaps family members facilitates turning misbehavior into learning opportunities because dialogue facilitates problem solving. In addition, because the classroom teacher can see the response to the misbehavior indicated on the referral form on file in the office, he or she receives feedback and closure about how the student's behavior was dealt with.

Table 1. North Elementary School's Behavior Matrix

School rule	Class	Assembly/ field trips	Playground	Special classes (art, music, P.E.)	Cafeteria	Bathroom	Bus	Hall	Emergency situations	Library
Respect our- selves	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be on task 2. Give your best effort 3. Be prepared 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sit in one spot 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dress appropriately 2. Choose an activity 3. Inform play-ground staff of any problems 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pay attention 2. Be ready 3. Try your best 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Eat all your food 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Respect your privacy 2. Wash Hands 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Watch your step 2. Keep the aisle clear 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Walk 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Listen 2. Follow directions quickly 3. Be safe 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Study, read, or compute
Respect others	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use appropriate language 2. Be kind 3. Keep hands/feet to self 4. Help others/share 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Listen 2. Watch 3. Use appropriate applause 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Play safely 2. Include others 3. Share equipment 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Listen 2. Follow directions 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Practice good table and line manners 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Respect others' privacy 2. Observe time limits 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Follow bus driver's direction 2. Use a quiet voice 3. Stay in your seat 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use normal volume 2. Walk to the right 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be careful 2. Be alert 3. Respect personal space 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Whisper 2. Return books
Respect property	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recycle 2. Clean up after self 3. Put litter in garbage can 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pick up 2. Treat chairs appropriately 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use equipment properly 2. Put litter in garbage can 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Treat books & equipment properly 2. Clean up 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clean up eating area 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Keep bathroom clean 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wipe your feet 2. Sit in your seat while facing forward 3. Pick up litter 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pick up litter 2. Maintain physical space 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be quiet 2. Maintain physical space 3. Only touch your own items 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Push in chairs 2. Treat books & equipment carefully

Lesson 1: Introducing the "North School Stars-Three R's" Matrix

SCRIPT FOR TEACHING I

To be taught on _____ immediately following the announcements.

1. State, "As you know, we have rules for our classroom, and you probably have rules that you follow at home and at other places like when you go to the store or when you go to a relative's house. What are some of the rules you need to follow in all these other places?"
2. Then state, "Well, just like you have rules for home, for going to a relative's house, or for going to the store, everyone at North School now has 3 rules to follow called the "Three R's." These 3 rules are about respect. Respect means to treat people and things the right way; the way they are supposed to be treated." Give some examples of how to treat things properly and examples of not treating something properly (i.e., a basketball, an animal, a person).
3. State, "The 'Three R's' we are going to learn today are to (1) respect ourselves, (2) respect others, and (3) respect property. This means we will learn that we need to treat ourselves, other people, and things the right way. We will learn more about what each rule means next year." Ask various students to repeat back the three rules. Then state something to the effect of, "Students are not the only ones who have to follow the 'Three R's' [state them again]. All of the teachers do, too!" Let them know that the staff members know what these rules are and that all staff members will expect the same behavior from them as expected in class. Also state that adults will be following the rules, too.

KID ACTIVITY (IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE LESSON)

1. Based on the settings included on the behavior matrix, ask students to brainstorm specific places they go throughout their school day where they need to follow rules.
2. Ask the students to brainstorm all the people they interact with throughout the day.
3. After all the brainstorming, simply show them what the behavior matrix looks like & tell them that they will be learning more about it each week from now on.
4. To close the activity, ask the students to write a letter to their parents/draw a picture (depending on the age of the students) stating/depicting one or more of the three school rules they learned that day. Have students go home that evening and tell their parents about the rules. Have parents/guardians sign the letter/picture and have the students return it to school (award a "Gotcha" to each student who returns the letter/picture with a signature).

AFTER THE LESSON (DURING THE DAY AND FOLLOWING WEEKS)

1. Directly and specifically compliment students who are following each of the 3 rules. Use these students as positive peer examples and learning opportunities for others.
2. At the beginning of each day, ask students to state each of the three R's. Then ask them to remember and state other settings throughout the school where they need to remember to follow these rules. Dialogue with students about examples when they followed the rules and when they saw others following the rules.
3. Remember to deliver Gotchas to students in your class and to other students throughout the building.

Figure 2. A scripted lesson plan from the North Elementary School.

With a consistent method for tracking misbehavior in place, the district was able to measure the behavioral and, more important, structural climate of the school. To deal with the majority of the student population (80%–90%), staff relied on teaching the school-wide expectations per the behavior matrix and delivering Gotchas. Five to fifteen percent of the student population, who were at risk for demonstrating intense problem behavior, not only continued to be exposed to the behavior matrix, the scripted lessons, and the Gotchas, but were also able to receive assistance via their teachers' meeting with the Teacher Assistance Team. Fortunately, the district already had a wrap-around coordinator to assist with the students with the most intense needs if other building-level support techniques were found unsuccessful.

COLLECTING AND USING DATA FOR DECISION MAKING

Because there was no consistent office referral system in place prior to PBIS implementation—just a system of storing suspension data in binders—an office referral form was created for NES. The office referral form requires not only the student's name and grade but also the referrer and date and time of referral. The location, problem behavior, whether or not others were involved, and the administrator's disposition are also entered on the referral form. When the office referral forms were first introduced, a staff meeting was held to inform staff members about classroom-managed misbehaviors (e.g., minor disruptions, being unprepared for class) and office-managed misbehaviors (e.g., physical aggression, damage to property) before

they were given the forms to use. They were also reminded to fill out an office referral form for each student sent to the office, rather than merely writing the referral on a piece of paper.

Suspension and office referral data are graphed and examined to show trends in both appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. The graphs show number of suspensions; office referrals by location, time of day, grade, type of misbehavior, and type of administrative disposition; average number of referrals/suspensions per month; and data concerning the behavior patterns of repeat offenders. The Leadership Team focuses its problem-solving activities on the "hot spots" indicated by the data. The data also helps identify students with multiple referrals/suspensions whose needs should be addressed through classroom environment modifications, a phone call home from the social worker, a referral to the Teacher Assistance Team, and/or a referral for wraparound. Efficacy of the interventions is determined by examining pre- and postdata.

At the end of each week, NES's secretary tracks how many Gotchas were given per classroom. The rates of misbehavior (i.e., not following the behavioral expectations) are then analyzed with the help of data and graphs produced from information recorded on the office referral forms.

Results

After just 1 year of teaching school-wide rules, working on classroom management, recognizing and acknowledging appropriate student behavior, and, when discipline was needed, choosing from a menu of more productive responses to misbehavior, NES experienced a 22% reduction in overall suspensions from 1998–1999 to 1999–2000. Office discipline referrals are beginning to decrease as well but at a slower rate because of the novelty of the new office referral procedures. Each suspension and office referral received by a student was, and continues to be, entered by the data manager of the PBIS team into a database from which graphs are created to visually share the information with the NES staff. In addition, the data offers direction for PBIS implementation and pre- and postdata comparisons. Less easily quantifiable changes include increased positive staff and student attitude and overall school climate, a decrease in staff turnover (though turnover still exists), and a feeling of staff investment in implementation of PBIS.

After the first year, the team reviewed and applied pre- and postdata. For example, the team knew in advance to schedule boosters (i.e., increased use of reinforcers) for both students and staff members for the month of March because suspensions were high in that month the year before. The team also found that the most referrals were written from 2:00 p.m. to 2:59 p.m. Therefore, at a staff meeting, everyone was made aware and suggestions were given to (a) make that time more structured and (b) in-

crease the number of reminders and reinforcers for expected behavior. In addition, it was discovered that the most office referrals were written in the classroom and on the playground. Therefore, a voluntary workshop for classroom management, in the form of seven 45-minute before-school meetings with the district's behavior intervention coordinator, was held. Workshop agenda items included enhancing understanding and awareness of variables affecting student behavior from a functional behavioral analytic perspective, identifying and planning for modification of learning variables, encouraging teachers to feel comfortable teaching behavior in the same way they teach academics, and formulating a plan for responding to both appropriate and inappropriate student behavior. A second voluntary workshop was held to address playground issues. During the second voluntary workshop, the boundaries of the playground were redefined, activities were assigned to certain areas within those boundaries, and staff was instructed to rotate groups of students through a structured schedule of these activities, instead of having students go to recess without a pre-established plan. Remarkably high attendance at these voluntary meetings indicates that staff members were willing to make changes as long as they were part of the solution and there was a clear, concrete focus and direction to the plan of action.

With a vision for change secure, the district was hit with more budget restrictions and cuts, turning the popular PBIS motto, "Doing more with less," into "Doing more with even less than you had before." Fortunately, the pilot year at NES provided evidence for the potential of PBIS. Despite budget cuts, continued funding for development and supplies was secured. However, although PBIS efforts are still intact, effects of the budget shortfall are being felt across the district. Staff turnover continues to be high and morale is weak at times. On the positive side, out of the budget restrictions and cuts came resourcefulness, creativity, and frugality. Budget cuts tend to make schools invest only in efforts considered absolutely necessary and demonstrated to work, which adds to the likelihood that this program will be sustained and generalized to other schools in the district.

In October 2000, Illinois's statewide PBIS coordinator provided a 1-day overview on PBIS to all district school social workers and school psychologists, as well as to interested counselors, principals, assistant principals, and teachers. The principal and the leader of the PBIS Leadership Team from NES attended the overview to answer questions as they arose from attendees and, as a whole, NES's implementation served as a point of reference to which to direct other district schools as they organized implementation of PBIS in their own respective schools. The Illinois State Board of Education awarded recertification credit to attending administrators to apply to their required professional development plans as an incentive for attendance and participation. Furthermore, several central

office leaders also participated. Subsequently, five schools expressed interest and organized leadership teams. The teams participated in the same 2-day initial training that NES Leadership Team members originally attended a year before, except this time the training was provided by the district's PBIS coach and the PBIS northern regional coordinator. The number of staff members involved in the PBIS initiative grew from 9 to 60 within the course of one calendar year. Financial backing from the district was secured, and opportunities to write grants emerged. With the district wraparound coordinator also being trained as a PBIS coach, these six schools will be well supported in their implementation of all three levels of PBIS, and additional schools can be brought on board. There is also the potential for principals, teachers, psychologists, and other staff members in these six buildings to provide peer support to additional district schools over time.

Discussion

The following lessons are described as unique experiences of NES; however, these lessons are consistent with recommendations from the leaders of the National Center on PBIS, as described in a series of articles in a special issue of the publication *Beyond Behavior*. Bradley (2001), Sugai and Horner (2001), Lewis (2001), and Scott and Hunter (2001) described the overall administrative, district, and technical assistance features for effective PBIS implementation. Specifically, our experience of PBIS implementation at NES has taught us the following:

1. *Building-level administrative buy-in and follow-through are key.* It is important to the program's success to have the assistant principal on board; however, it is equally if not more important to have the principal on board, too. Although a school may rely on its assistant principals to handle discipline, it is the principal of the building that ultimately serves as a model for staff to follow. Subtleties such as allowing time for PBIS updates at staff meetings, following through with his or her part of the action plan after a PBIS Leadership Team Meeting, making reminder announcements to staff, and keeping an open mind to change make a difference in the level of staff motivation and morale. Actions of the administration tend to speak louder than words. To create a climate for change, *both* the principal and assistant principal need to be aware of their influence on their staff.

2. *Successful implementation of PBIS requires self-evaluation.* Teams must not be afraid to learn from their individual or collective mistakes. Systems change is about self-evaluation and can be a humbling experience. The Leadership Team should feel empowered to keep ideas that work according to the data. However, the team needs to remember to investigate and refine what can be done to make what isn't working better and stronger. It is sometimes not easy for a group of well-intentioned adults to

admit mistakes or acknowledge that what appeared to be a good action plan isn't as effective as anticipated in implementation, especially in a group format. Therefore, continue to support decisions with data and to recognize participation and accomplishments of staff members along the way so that the team can celebrate frequent success and keep their momentum. This applies to all levels of building staff members, parents, and community leaders on the team.

3. *A shared philosophy among staff members within the building needs to be fostered.* Be sure to have systems change emanate from a shared philosophy among not only the Leadership Team members but all adults within the building. Before presenting a plan to the building staff as a whole, the Leadership Team needs to be in agreement. Therefore, take time in the early stages of PBIS implementation to educate your team members (including both the assistant principal and principal) *before* educating the remainder of the building staff members. Try to share the understanding that it takes less energy to prevent misbehavior and promote appropriate behavior than to run around "putting out fires." Changing viewpoints about what maintains both appropriate and inappropriate student behavior is half the battle. The student still makes willful choices, but it is the adults in the environment who guide the choices students make. PBIS is a change of viewpoint for some and an affirmation of years of knowledge and research for others. In an effort to be forthright, acknowledge that a proactive approach does take more time up front but assert that it takes less time in the long run. In districts where time is a valuable commodity, it has been a challenge to persuade teachers to offer that time up front.

4. *In order to sustain PBIS efforts and to maintain results, a long-term commitment from building staff, building administration, and district administration should be secured.* NES needed to look into long-term motivational and financial support in preparation of the initial novelty of PBIS subsiding. The goal at NES, therefore, is to have PBIS activities included in its school improvement plan. This will assist with securing release time, staff development, and other school improvement resources in upcoming years.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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