

What Every Administrator Needs to Know About. . .

THE KEY TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONSISTENT SCHOOL WIDE EXPECTATIONS: SCHOOL- WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT

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Description of the Challenge:

Professional, ethical, and legal mandate to maximize opportunities for **all** students to achieve competence in academic skills, social skills, and lifestyle skills while accommodating “students with significant learning and behavioral problems, teaching in communities that are unable to support the school, and working under conditions that are often counterproductive to teaching and learning..” (Lewis & Sugai, 1999, p.1)

Typical Responses:

“By their very nature, schools are reactive organizations because of their structure and the myriad and often conflicting pressures to which they must respond.” (Walker & Horner, 1996, p. 3) School personnel do not have the training nor do they hold efficacious beliefs about their ability to effectively work with students who are at risk of developing antisocial behaviors (Glasser, 1992). Many students today become discouraged about education very early because of failure to develop a sense of mastery. Deficiencies are highlighted and treated, therefore, they are not permitted a sense of contribution. They feel disconnected to school personnel and to the system at large. As the only “organized social institution” outside the home that impacts the lives of all children, the school must implement effective reforms for at-risk student populations (Sartain, 1989).

The application of general or indirect approaches (e.g., counseling, social skills training, etc.) to problems most often results in failure to achieve stated outcomes (Walker & Horner, 1996). These approaches are based on the assumption that the problems lie within the individual student and, therefore, given the right treatment (i.e., behavior modification, remediation, or rehabilitation) the student can be *fixed*. When these approaches do not work, the school most often employs punishment and exclusion from the school setting, “Increasing student suspensions and expulsions . . . spending more

time and energy in implementing punitive rather than positive or preventive measures.”
(Sprick, Borgmeier, & Nolet, 2002)

The preservation of order requires that guidelines be established and honored, however, when we rely primarily on punishment, and exclusionary policies such as zero tolerance strategies to preserve the safety of our schools, we are accepting a model of schooling in which the preservation of order demands the suspension of individual rights and liberties (Skiba and Peterson, 1999). As more children are excluded from school, and mediation of conflict is thwarted, we increase the likelihood that more children will be entering the juvenile justice system rather than staying in the public education system. Punishing problem behaviors (without a proactive support system) is associated with **increases** in (a) aggression, (b) vandalism, (c) truancy, and (d) dropping out (Mayer, 1995; Skiba & Peterson, 1999).

Effective Response:

- Examine all practices in light of their impact on learning.
- Cultivate a collaborative culture through the development of high performing teams.
- Seek relevant data and information and use that information to promote continuous improvement (DuFour, 2004).
- Invest in evidence-based and research-based practices
 - Focus on Prevention and Intervention
 - Adopt a schoolwide management system (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 1996; Lewis & Sugai, 1999)

Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support (SW-PBS) is an evidence-based schoolwide management system (Sugai & Horner, 2007).

SW-PBS Principles:

Proactive systems approach to schoolwide discipline (*not a curriculum or program*)

Focus on prevention

Focus on instruction-behaviors are taught

Best practice in professional development and system change (HQPD)

Use of assessment information to guide intervention and management decisions

Long-term commitment to systems change

Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support: Key Features

- Proactive systems approach to schoolwide discipline
 - Secure administrative leadership and participation
 - Team-based implementation
- Focus on prevention and instruction – behaviors are taught
 - **Define a clear set of positive expectations and behaviors**
 - Teach expected behavior
 - Acknowledge/reward/encourage expected behaviors
 - Monitor and correct behavior (learning) errors
- Use of assessment information to guide intervention and management decisions

Developing Consistent Classroom Expectations – Define a clear set of positive expectations and behaviors.

- 1) Identify common purpose – “Every school should have a statement that describes its purpose and approach to teaching and learning, and that serves as the foundation or mission statement for its activities, decisions, and way of doing business.” (Sugai & Lewis, 1999, p. 7) Our purpose directs our actions toward others. It will determine what we do when someone else is having difficulty. It determines our attitude toward the children with whom we work and all the other decisions we make about how we think, move, and speak.
- 2) Identify problem behaviors – Review and analyze care room referrals, school discipline referrals, and suspension data to identify common problem behaviors occurring in your school.
- 3) Identify replacement behaviors – Ask the following question about each problem identified in step 2, “What do we want the child to do instead of exhibiting the

- problem behavior?” For example, if many students in your school are speaking disrespectfully to adults and peers, the replacement behavior might be stated, “Use positive language with peers and adults.”
- 4) “Once the list of replacement behaviors is generated, behaviors should be grouped to form a set of three to five succinct school-wide rules or expectations that will serve as a common means of communications across the school.” (Sugai & Lewis, 1999) For example, an urban high school in Missouri organized its school-wide PBS expectations around some of the character traits presented in character education: be respectful, be responsible, and be ready to learn.
 - 5) Identify specific behaviors for each expectation in each school setting.
 - Positively stated and structured - Describe what each person must do to exhibit behavior that reflects the global expectations. For example, identify the specific behaviors that one must exhibit to “be respectful.”
 - Use familiar language
 - Few in number
 - 6) Develop a behavior matrix. Place the global expectations and specific behaviors identified for each expectation in a matrix. (See Figure 1.)

Benefits of Developing Consistent School-wide Expectations through SW-PBS:

- ◆ Decrease in Office Discipline Referrals
- ◆ Increase in student and staff attendance
- ◆ Decrease in referrals to special education
- ◆ Increase in effectiveness of targeted and individual intensive interventions
- ◆ Increase in student perception of school safety
- ◆ Improved academic performance
- ◆ Improved faculty/staff retention

(Sprague & Horner, 2006)