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School wide positive behavioral and intervention supports : the effectiveness of Tier 1 strategies

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SCHOOL WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL AND INTERVENTION SUPPORTS:

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TIER 1 STRATEGIES

An Abstract of a Thesis

Submitted

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirement for the Degree

Educational Specialist

Gregory James Halsor

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May 2013

ABSTRACT

This literature review critically examines the effectiveness of Tier 1 Positive Behavioral and Intervention Supports (SWPBIS). Managing problem behavior in the school setting has been a major focus of educators, with the goal of lowering classroom disruptions and increasing the effectiveness of learning.

Over the years, school wide behavior management programs have not been consistent or widespread leading educators to identify disruptive behavior as a primary concern in their classrooms. SWPBIS emphasizes the integration of measurable outcomes, data-based decision making, and evidence based interventions. Research on the implementation of SWPBIS in schools has displayed positive effects related to decreasing the frequency of problem behavior, increasing academic achievement among students, and promoting a positive school culture.

SWPBIS has been proven to be effective in the early to middle grades; however, more research is needed to determine effect size at preschool and high school levels. Some research examining SWPBIS contend it is more of a system to manage behavior rather than to teach children behaviors needed to successfully function in society. The purpose of this literature review is to describe SWPBIS, its documented effectiveness at the Tier 1 level, how it impacts diverse student populations, and to present the point of view of those who oppose the program's claim of effectiveness.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A need to document effective behavior management strategies in schools and how these strategies may impact academic achievement has consistently been examined in the literature (Freiberg, Huzinec & Templeton, 2009). Despite individual differences in the home environments of students, schools are ultimately responsible for developing and sustaining academic and behavioral gains in all students; however, achieving this outcome has become increasingly difficult over the past few years (Barrett, Bradshaw & Lewis-Palmer, 2008). Educators are increasingly finding three types of children in their classrooms: those who arrive ready for schooling with an emerging social competence; those lacking social-emotional skills, such as peer communication and sharing; and those who enter programs exhibiting challenging behavior and/or social deficits. Further, children who are unaware of social expectations and lacking social skills often become socially inept and may exhibit challenging behavior, creating disruptions within the school environment (Muscott, Pomerleau & Szczesiul, 2009).

Increasing student learning has always been the primary concern of teachers and education personnel. However, a majority of teachers report a considerable concern of the profession to be managing behaviors within the classroom. Classroom disruptions consume valuable teaching and learning time, which directly impacts student academic performance at both the classroom and individual levels (Frieberg et al., 2009). Distracting behaviors, such as physical and verbal disruptions, can create environments where teachers are reluctant to incorporate active large group learning methods,

cooperative peer learning, and independent work time. It is often difficult for teachers to manage student behavior and provide direct instruction; if there is a choice between the two, managing student behavior generally becomes the primary focus (Freiberg et al., 2009; Lassen, Steele & Sailor, 2006).

In a national survey of middle and high school teachers (Public Agenda, 2004), 76% of teachers indicated they would be better able to provide quality instruction if discipline problems were not so prevalent. Further, over a third of teachers reported having seriously considered quitting the teaching profession because behavior and ensuing discipline was such a problem. Researchers have also found correlations between behavior difficulties in the classroom and teacher stress ($R=.46$). Specifically, studies have consistently indicated that a lack of classroom discipline can lead to higher stress and teacher burnout (Little & Akin-Little, 2008).

Antisocial behavior, academic underachievement, and poor development of social skills among students attending our nation's schools remain a concern for educators, parents, and the general public. Violence, vandalism, bullying, and similar behaviors can create unsafe learning environments, decrease the amount of instructional time, and pose a threat to the school population (Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, & Feinberg, 2005; Metzler, Biglan, Rusby & Sprague, 2001). Although there has been a decrease in youth homicide, the rate of less violent, antisocial crimes within schools continue to escalate (Barrett et al., 2008). The number of students with aggressive, disruptive, and/or antisocial behavior in the schools is steadily increasing; therefore, intensifying the need for effective disciplinary practices (Metzler et al., 2001).

Children identified with behavior disorders and disabilities are impacted by discipline issues to a greater extent than their typically developing peers. Specifically, children with behavioral disorders regularly experience poor academic outcomes associated with their problem behaviors (Lewis, Jones, Horner & Sugai, 2010). Approximations suggest half of the students diagnosed with a behavior disorder drop out of school, the highest rate among all disability categories. Of those remaining in school, only 42% will graduate with a diploma while producing lower grades than any other group of students with disabilities. Twenty percent of students with behavior disorders are arrested at least once before they leave school, over half are arrested within a few years of finishing their education, and 70% of students identified with behavior disorders that drop out have been arrested (Lewis et al., 2010).

Appropriate methods for dealing with these behaviors have been widely debated, leading to one of the predominate questions in the field, "What types of programs can assist school staff in adequately managing behavior while continuing to provide rigorous instruction of the curriculum?" Traditionally, schools have responded to disruptive behaviors with such disciplinary procedures as detentions, office disciplinary referrals (ODR), corporal punishment, suspensions, and expulsions. At least 48% of public schools took serious disciplinary action against one of their students during 2005-2006 (Osher, Bear, Sprague & Doyle, 2010). Among these actions, 74% were suspensions lasting five days or more, 5% were expulsions, and 20% were transfers to specialized schools. Such practices may only create a short term solution for chronic and long-term problems. Punitive school environments, unclear rules and expectations, and inconsistent

application of consequences have been shown to contribute to increased levels of student antisocial behavior, truancy, and acts of vandalism against the school (Metzler et al., 2001). Overall, little evidence supports the punitive and exclusionary disciplinary procedures that are traditionally used within school settings (Metzler et al., 2001; Osher et al., 2010).

In addition to research suggesting the ineffectiveness of punitive and exclusionary discipline on student's future behavior, evidence that suggests a relationship between the use of exclusionary methods and decreased academic performance in schools also exists. Students referred out of the classroom for disciplinary reasons are more likely to have less exposure to instruction, resulting in decreased performance in school and on statewide exams when compared to students who were not removed for disciplinary reasons (Sailor, Stowe, Turnbull & Kleinhammer-Tramill, 2007).

<u>Need for Behavioral Management Strategies</u>

A greater legislative emphasis through such laws as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA; 2004) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB; 2002) that mandate the creation of safe and orderly learning environments, has increased the use of school-based prevention programs (Bradshaw, Koth, Thorton & Leaf, 2009). Concerns related to student discipline have produced many intervention and prevention-focused programs designed to improve character, promote social skills, reduce antisocial behaviors, and strengthen academic performance (Horner, Sugai & Anderson, 2010). Unfortunately, many of these programs have logistical limitations such as curriculum cost and time dedicated to teaching the curriculum. Further, despite having

the best intentions, many of these programs display minimal to no positive effects when evaluated using randomized controlled research designs (Sugai & Horner, 2006; Luiselli et al., 2005). Because of such limitations, teachers and other school personnel have been encouraged by NCLB to employ management strategies that are backed by peer-reviewed research and evidence rather than choosing programs based on anecdotal evidence and hearsay (Horner et al., 2010).

Traditionally, classroom techniques focusing on behavior have consisted of a number of methods and procedures designed to help teachers better manage their classrooms. Overarching goals have focused on developing systems to assist teachers in maintaining order and creating both proactive and reactive procedures to enhance the learning environment (Little & Akin-Little, 2008).

Research examining widely used behavior management strategies, such as token economies and self-management strategies, has yielded insufficient support for these models/strategies, while consistently failing to demonstrate methodological rigor (Briesch & Chafoulas, 2009; Maggin, Chafouleas, Goddard & Johnson, 2011). As the educational field adapts to using evidence-based practices, using data to determine an intervention's effectiveness is imperative. The need for evidence based, empirically proven behavior management programs has led to the development of a school-wide preventative program entitled School Wide Positive Behavior and Intervention Supports (SWPBIS; Horner et al., 2010). SWPBIS aims to address the growing need for preventative, school-wide behavioral interventions.

SWPBIS emphasizes the application of evidence-based and behavioral instruction in the classroom, school, and district. In SWPBIS, the goal is to improve behavior and social skills through the use of preventative measures, instruction, evidence-based practice, and systems implementation (Sugai & Horner, 2006). Findings corroborate that teachers who approach classroom management as a process of establishing and maintaining effective learning environments, tend to be more successful with managing behavior than teachers who emphasize their role as disciplinarians (Brophy, 2010). However, the question, "Does delivering school wide, universal behavioral interventions to all students reduce problem behavior in schools and within the classroom, by providing base level support," still remains (McIntosh, Horner, Chard, Bola & Good, 2006, p. 276).

This literature review will explore the following questions: First, what is SWPBIS and what methods are used within its program? Second, how and where is SWPBIS applied to promote positive behavior within the school setting? Third, what evidence exists that supports the use of SWPBIS for behaviors, its effect on special populations, its impact on academic performance, and its social validity? Fourth, what are the difficulties identified with implementing SWPBIS and what limitations have been raised by opponents? Finally, if effective, what implications does SWPBIS have for educators, support staff, and the entire school? To explore these topics, this review will examine studies addressing the theories, benefits, and detriments that the implementation of SWPBIS may have on student behavior in school wide settings.

CHAPTER 2

SWPBIS

Program Development and Description

SWPBIS incorporates key elements of effective behavior management programs, defined through the literature as the inclusion of teaching appropriate social behavior, increasing reinforcement, communication of a small number of rules, consistent enforcement for rule violations, ongoing data collection, and monitoring of student outcomes (Metzler et al., 2001). George Sugai, Robert Horner, and colleagues at the University of Oregon were among the first to apply many of the defining components of school-wide, positive behavioral supports in school settings calling their system SWPBIS (Warren et al., 2006).

SWPBIS is a set of intervention practices and organizational systems used to provide social skills, education, and individual behavior supports needed to achieve academic and social success for all students (Horner et al., 2009). SWPBIS differs from other behavioral programs in that it is not a formal curriculum. Rather, it is a two to three-year process of implementation with goals of reaching self-sustaining, continual, year-to-year behavior management stability. These procedures include leadership team training used to establish effective and preventative behavioral interventions, high implementation integrity, continued use of data for decision-making, professional development, and coaching (Sailor et al., 2007).

The core features of SWPBIS were developed from several decades of systematic research in education, mental health, and behavioral analysis (Horner et al., 2010).

SWPBIS consists of three tiers of interventions, which are based on the medical model of preventative care. All students receive basic preventative support and move up the tiers only when increasingly intensive intervention is required to match the level of support needed by the student (Horner et al., 2009). The three tiers within SWPBIS are primary prevention (Tier 1), secondary prevention (Tier 2), and tertiary prevention (Tier 3), with a majority of focus and effort placed upon the first tier (Horner et al., 2010).

The primary prevention tier of SWPBIS involves defining, teaching, monitoring, and rewarding a small set of behavioral expectations for all students across non-classroom and classroom settings (Horner et al., 2009). The goal of primary prevention is to establish a culture where students expect and support appropriate behavior so all can experience school as a predictable, consistent, and safe environment with clearly defined and consistently implemented consequences and supports for problem behaviors established by the school. An important task to be completed in Tier 1 is the creation of a process for measuring the social behavior of students and using such data for decision-making by designated school staff.

The implementation of SWPBIS begins by forming a team of school staff, administrators, and parents to provide representative input from those affected by the school's discipline policies (Sugai & Horner, 2006; Warren et al., 2006). At middle school through high school levels, representatives of the student body may also be included. Regular meetings and communication among team members during this initial stage contribute to identifying school needs, coordinating primary interventions, and identifying barriers which could potentially occur. Examples of this cooperative planning

may consist of mapping areas of frequent conflict and identifying particular times of the day when negative behavior among students is most frequent (Sugai & Horner, 2006; Warren et al., 2006).

The training stage holds primary importance for schools implementing SWPBIS. During this stage, staff is trained to be fluent with key SWPBIS concepts, features, practices, and systems. This would include consistent behavior instruction among staff, concrete definition of behavior violations to insure consistent enforcement, and when and where these techniques will be used (Metzler et al., 2001)

Following the training stage, input is gathered from teachers, students, and support staff to develop a clear and positively stated list of behavioral expectations that are based on commonly occurring problems within the school (Warren et al., 2006). This list of expectations is stated in positive, observable terms, and consists of no more than three to five brief statements. Not only do these statements serve as the school's behavioral mission, but also represent replacement behaviors for those behaviors identified as unacceptable within the school setting. For example, a common set of expectations may be described as, "be respectful, be responsible, and be safe" (Sugai & Horner, 2006; Warren et al., 2006). Once the rules are developed, they are displayed in common areas such as hallways and the cafeteria, and within in each classroom (Lassen et al., 2006)

Once behavioral expectations have been defined, they must be taught effectively to students. The teaching of behavioral expectations includes classroom instruction that describes the expectations, demonstration of appropriate behavior and social skills, and

opportunities for students to practice these skills through role-plays in different settings within the school (Sugai & Horner, 2006; Warren et al., 2006). These skills can be maintained throughout the year by having the instructor frequently engage students, to remind them about behavioral expectations, while also addressing expectations to students prior to school activities. These techniques are used as part of the daily instruction of classroom teachers (De Pry & Sugai, 2002).

However, instruction alone will not ensure the maintenance of expected behaviors among all students. Because of this, reinforcing positive behaviors becomes an essential part of the SWPBIS structure (Sugai & Horner, 2006). In addition to praise and acknowledgment of positive behaviors by school staff, commonly used reinforcement techniques include prize coupons, good behavior tickets, raffles, and school stores. When rewarding a positive behavior, it is imperative to verbally associate the reward to the positive behavior so as to specifically reinforce what the student did correctly (Sugai & Horner, 2006; Warren et al., 2006).

Finally, data on the behavioral performance of students in the school is collected to inform and guide the intervention (Warren et al., 2006). This could include examining frequency of ODR, the school's prescribed intensity of these referrals, and times or locations where inappropriate student behaviors occur most frequently though the use of a school wide data collection program. These data can be analyzed to create additional supports, instruction targeting specific areas of concern, and to monitor the progress of the program (Warren et al., 2006).

Studies comparing schools that use rigorous training and planning when implementing SWPBIS with schools that implement SWPBIS without staff trainings and logistical planning in place, found that the trained schools outperformed non-trained schools in program fidelity on a majority of the School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET) treatment scales (Sugai, Lewis-Palmer, Todd & Horner, 2001).

The developers of SWPBIS created the SET as a measure of the degree to which schools are implementing the primary features of SWPBIS. The SET is completed annually by a trained, external observer who assesses areas of implementation such as the definition of expectations, the method in which behavioral expectations are taught, rewarding behavioral expectations, response to behavioral violations, and monitoring progress. Successful implementation is considered to be achieved once the school reaches an average score of 80% across the subscales and is able to maintain or improve scores yearly (Bradshaw, Reinke, Brown, Bevans & Leaf, 2008).

<u>Support for Tier 1 SWPBIS</u>

Research has addressed the nature of SWPBIS benefits in several different ways. A majority of studies have suggested improved student behavior performance within schools utilizing the SWPBIS program (Muscott et al., 2009), yet few of these studies have examined its effects on academics, its impact on early childhood programs, how it may impact schools with high minority populations, and perceptions of social validity.

This paper will first address studies that examine the relationship between SWPBIS and student behavior. Next, studies addressing how SWPBIS affects academic performance within participating schools will be discussed. Third, studies inspecting the

benefit that SWPBIS may have on early childhood environments will be addressed, followed by a description of studies examining schools with large minority populations that implement SWPBIS. Fifth and finally, research will be reviewed relating to perceptions of social validity and its impact on school climate.

Behavior

Teachers often spend significant amounts of time responding to minor behavioral incidents that disrupt or interfere with instructional activities. A majority of these behaviors lack the severity to involve an office referral (De Pry & Sugai, 2002). SWPBIS can be used to proactively manage minor behavioral incidents in the classroom instead of utilizing more reactive, punishment-based interventions.

In a study comparing two middle schools implementing SWPBIS, Metzler and colleagues (2001) examined the effects of SWPBIS on positive reinforcement, discipline referrals, perceptions of safety, and bullying. School A had implemented SWPBIS over the course of two years while School B continued to utilize previously established behavioral procedures consisting of few positive, preventative strategies such as conflict management instruction and individual point systems for good behavior. These strategies were explained to students and staff at the beginning of the year, but they were not reviewed again.

By year two, School A had significantly increased the frequency and amount of student praise by 27% and reduced ODR by 41%. Further, a student survey suggested an increase in perceptions of safety by 27%, and decreased reports of student bullying by 35% when compared to the year prior to implementation (Metzler et al., 2001). In

contrast, School B decreased both in rates of student praise by 10% and in reports of "feeling safe" by 11% over the two years examined (Metzler et al., 2001). Interestingly, data from School B also indicate a reduction in student bullying when compared with the year prior to this study. These data also suggest that reports of decreased student bullying across both schools may not have been due to the SWPBIS program. Unfortunately, School B did not keep disciplinary records for ODR so data was not available for comparison.

Increasing rates of suspensions and expulsions present growing concerns among schools nationwide (Osher et al., 2010). SWPBIS has been associated with a reduction in suspension rates in as little as one year. In a study examining statewide suspensions of elementary and middle school students in Maryland, suspension rates were reported to decrease by a mean of 7% after one year in those schools implementing SWPBIS, suggesting effective prevention of major infractions associated with its implementation (Barrett et al., 2008).

Evidence from the literature suggests that program effectiveness is reliant upon techniques utilized within the system. If techniques used to manage behavior are not easily generalizable to real life situations, the chances for intervention success and sustainability of gains are hindered (Metzler et al., 2001). This theory was tested in a study examining SWPBIS and the effects that positive, preventive techniques, such as active supervision and pre-correction, have on behavior at the classroom level (De Pry & Sugai, 2002).

Active supervision is defined as the teacher circulating around the classroom, scanning the classroom, interacting with students, and reinforcing positive academic and social behaviors as part of instruction (De Pry & Sugai, 2002). Pre-correction is defined as presenting an instructional prompt prior to situations where problem behavior is likely to occur. These techniques are designed to focus students on desired or expected behaviors followed by reinforcement once the desired behaviors occur. Results from this study conducted by De Pry and Sugai (2002) suggest the use of active supervision and pre-correction are not only easily practiced, but significantly associated with decreasing behavior such as blurting out and non-compliance by 61% when compared to baseline levels over the course of the school year.

Academics

Researchers examining approaches to creating a positive learning environment have emphasized the importance of socializing students into communities that share values and procedures to support academic gains. This involves teaching students how to pay attention, work independently, and participate in collaborative activities. Management systems that encourage student passivity and compliance with rigid rules, hinders the potential effects of an instructional system designed to encourage active learning, higher order thinking, and the social construction of knowledge (Brophy, 2010). By reducing student discipline problems, all students should increase their exposure to classroom instruction, which facilitates skill acquisition (Luiselli et al., 2005). However, the question remains whether the implementation of SWPBIS can create an environment

of safe, responsible, and respectful learning in order to positively impact student achievement in all academic areas.

In a study examining the effects of SWPBIS on school-wide academic achievement in an urban school consisting of 90% minority students, Luiselli et al. (2005) not only found significant decreases in ODRs and suspensions over a three-year period, but also improvement in average academic performance among all students. For example, when comparing scores on the Metropolitan Achievement Test-Seventh Edition (MAT-7; Harcourt Educational Measurement, 1998), reading comprehension scores improved by 18% and mathematics scores improved by 25% compared to the pre-intervention year. These findings are especially relevant when considering the school was located in an urban setting. A comparison of the percentages of students with problem behavior in mainly Caucasian suburban schools to urban schools, with higher percentages of minority students, indicates that challenging behavior is not only more frequent in the urban schools, but often occurs in more severe forms (Lassen et al., 2006).

The previous findings were duplicated in a randomized control study conducted by Horner et al. (2009). In this study, researchers compared the behavioral and academic effects of using SWPBIS in 30 elementary schools to another 30 elementary schools not implementing the program. Horner and colleagues (2009) identified a significant increase in the number of students meeting or exceeding the state reading standard over a two-year period in the 30 schools implementing SWPBIS when compared to the control group. Interestingly, once the control group began implementing SWPBIS, students

meeting or exceeding state reading standards significantly improved from 38% to 44%, closely mirroring the treatment group's results.

Separate researchers examined the relationship between reading performance and behavior among 894 elementary students attending SWPBIS schools when compared to 584 elementary students in schools not implementing SWPBIS (McIntosh et al., 2006). Results suggested significantly decreased disruptive behavior rates in schools implementing SWPBIS, paired with significantly improved reading performance on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS; Good & Kaminski, 2002) when compared to schools not implementing SWPBIS. Although primary findings indicate a relationship between behavior and reading skills, the authors cautioned that this relationship may not be causal as high reading performance may hold a predictive nature to low rates of problem behavior. Unfortunately, baseline reading and behavioral data for the SWPBIS schools was not presented by the authors, which would be important when examining the results of this study, and for future research.

Early Childhood

Teaching young children has been identified as a particularly stressful career (Muscott et al., 2009). Factors such as behavior problems, a lack of administrative support, and full days in the Early Childhood classroom have been found to increase stress in.both children and teachers. These stressors contribute to high turnover rates, averaging 41% per year within both the childcare and preschool teaching profession. Such high turnover impacts the ability to create consistent environments for children (Muscott et al., 2009).

Although considerable research examining the efficacy of SWPBIS programs with school-age populations has been conducted, questions regarding its implementation within preschool environments remain. Few studies have looked at how to implement SWPBIS in Early Childhood settings, or the effects of the program when implemented by early childhood care providers and teachers (Duda, Dunlap, Fox, Lentini & Clarke, 2004).

In a study conducted by Duda et al. (2004), SWPBIS was implemented within a preschool classroom that included several children identified as having behavioral concerns such as blurting out, arguing with the teacher, and not following directions. Techniques used for intervention included active supervision, explaining behavioral expectations prior to instruction, teaching of social skills, and strategic seating placement of students identified with behavioral concerns. Using an ABAB design, findings suggested the implementation of SWPBIS created higher rates of engagement and lower rates of problem behaviors among those students identified with behavioral concerns when compared to baseline. Because no control group was used for this study, concerns related to how typical social development may have influenced these children's behaviors needs to be considered.

The effect of the preventative interventions was further reinforced the next year when the students moved into a kindergarten classroom where the teacher regularly used positive preventative strategies (Duda et al., 2004). Although the targeted students had been identified at the beginning of the year as having behavioral concerns by their preschool instructor, their kindergarten teacher did not perceive the children as having

significant concerns. Although initial results have been promising, further research is needed in the area of Early Childhood to collect a greater breadth of data and determine how the program is best implemented within the Early Childhood setting.

Minorities

Problematic student behavior has been reported explicitly to be a significant issue in urban schools with high minority populations. Specifically, a comparison of students identified as having behavior concerns in suburban and urban middle schools across the nation indicate that challenging behavior is more frequent in urban schools and often occurs in more severe forms, including theft and violence (Lassen et al., 2006). Increasing evidence has also identified disproportionate numbers of disciplinary referrals given to minority students across all educational settings. Minority students also tend to receive more severe consequences for behavioral violations such as suspensions and expulsions (Vincent, Swain-Bradway, Tobin & May, 2011).

Specifically, one study indicated a median of 55% of all African Americans have at least one ODR compared to a median rate of 33% for Caucasian students across three years in 81 non-SWPBIS schools (Vincent et al., 2011). Although interventions incorporating the principles of SWPBIS have proved effective in a number of settings, early studies were limited primarily to middle-class schools without high proportions of minority students (Warren et al., 2006). Several studies have since emerged examining the positive effect of SWPIBS in schools with high minority populations.

For example, when researching an inner-city school consisting of 76% minorities, Warren et al. (2006) examined whether the implementation of SWPBIS resulted in

decreased disciplinary referrals and suspensions within the school setting. This school was located in a community characterized by poverty, crime, and limited social resources. SWPBIS was implemented over the course of three years. As no formal records had been kept, identifying a baseline of ODRs was not possible. From year one to year two of the program, however, results showed ODRs to significantly decrease by 20%, and short term suspensions to significantly decrease by 57%. The authors suggested that these findings reinforced the positive impact of the implementation of SWPBIS on school-wide positive behaviors in general.

The previous studies' findings were duplicated in another study examining disciplinary referrals for minority students. Research conducted in high percentage minority schools showed lower overall ODR rates per 100 students in schools implementing SWPBIS when compared to non-implementing schools (Vincent et al., 2011). These authors reported 31% of African-American students in SWPBIS schools had at least one ODR when compared to 56% in non-SWPBIS schools. The authors also found data suggesting SWPBIS decreased the gap in ODRs between African-American and Caucasian students. Although a higher number of African-American students continued to receive ODRs when compared to Caucasian students in schools implementing SWPBIS and those not implementing SWPBIS, ODR's for African American students were significantly lower in the SWPBIS schools.

Over a 3 year period, Lassen et al. (2006) examined the effect SWPBIS had on both the number of ODRs and academic achievement in an urban middle school where 70% of the students were identified as minorities. Prior to the implementation of

SWPBIS, the mean number of ODRs per student in the school was 5.22; by year three, the mean had significantly dropped to 3.7. Although the researchers hypothesized that a decrease in ODRs would impact academic scores by providing students more time in the classroom, no significant effects were identified.

Social Validity

Social validity can be defined as the extent to which teachers, students, and administration view a practice as addressing socially significant goals, as having acceptable treatment procedures, and resulting in important intervention outcomes (Lane et al., 2009; Miramontes, Marchent, Heath & Fischer, 2011). If stakeholders participating in a program do not consider it meaningful, easy to implement, or feel that it includes unrealistic outcomes, it is likely the intervention will not be implemented with fidelity or sustained over time (Lane et al., 2009). As a result of the importance of developing social validity when implementing SWPBIS, this section will explore how social validity relates to program implementation and to its effects on school climate.

A study examining teacher perception of the effectiveness of SWPBIS was conducted in an urban middle school with a population of 667 students (Luiselli et al., 2005). Results indicated over 90% teacher satisfaction with the SWPBIS program, which corresponded with a 64% decrease of ODR's and improved students' MAT-7 percentile ranks from 38 to 55 in reading and 30 to 55 on math. These teacher satisfaction scores were doubled when compared to the pre-intervention year level of 45% satisfaction with current disciplinary programs. Teachers specifically cited that the formation of a behavior support team to provide instruction and consultation was instrumental in

improving both perceptions of commitment to the program as well as its perceived effectiveness (Luiselli et al., 2005). This evidence suggests the initial phase of effective planning for SWPBIS implementation is crucial for teachers with regards to its positive impact on the provision of instruction and creation of greater commitment to the program.

Similarly, a study conducted by Bradshaw et al. (2009) examined the effects of SWPBIS on the organizational health of the school over a four-year period. Organizational health was defined as possessing high commitment to areas such as academic achievement, positive relationships among staff, administrative leadership, and respect for all members of the school environment. Findings identified a significant increase in organizational health from year one to year four, of SWPBIS implementation. In contrast, comparison schools not utilizing the SWPBIS program did not significantly realize improvements in organizational health.

Lane et al. (2009) reported a significant, positive relationship in a study examining social validity and its effect on SWPBIS implementation. Further, when given an assessment measuring levels of social validity, these findings suggest that higher social validity scores of SWPBIS methods in general is predictive of a higher level of treatment fidelity compared to lower scoring schools. These findings reinforce the importance of gathering social validity data before implementing SWPBIS so as to predict the consistency of program implementation and to address stakeholder concerns.

Along with the benefit of social validity, research suggests training in SWPBIS significantly creates perceptions of a more friendly, positive, and collaborative work

environment for school staff (Bradshaw, Koth, Bevans, Ialongo & Leaf, 2008). Although not statistically significant, several studies showed that staff in schools implementing SWPBIS reported an increase in the amount of time spent in academic instruction in place of dealing with problem behaviors. The additional time provided more opportunity to focus on teaching as well as a greater emphasis on positive behaviors (Bradshaw, Koth et al., 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2009).

By addressing stakeholder concerns through informational meetings and trainings, perceptions can change, positively impacting views of social validity and fostering improved implementation. Accurate planning and explaining of SWPIBS initiatives prior to implementation is of great importance. The more accurately that SWPBIS is presented, the more stakeholders perceive these initiatives as positively impacting their school (Miramontes et al., 2011).

Summary of Support for SWPBIS

Overall, the literature indicates that SWPBIS, when implemented with integrity, can decrease behavior issues among all students, minorities, and in the early childhood setting by increasing emphasis on and rewarding positive behaviors. Resulting factors of increased positive behavior includes a decrease in the proportion of ODRs and students receiving out of school suspension (Horner et al., 2010). Academically, an inverse relationship has been found between problem behavior and academic performance, with improved social behavior leading to more time spent on instruction and greater academic engagement (Horner et al., 2010). SWPBIS has also been found to impact social validity by increasing faculty perceptions of organizational health (Bradshaw et al., 2009) and

addressing socially significant goals, acceptable treatment procedures, and important intervention outcomes (Luselli et al., 2005). Although current SWPBIS research has been promising, further investigation may be needed to examine the effectiveness of SWPBIS in relation to other behavior related interventions, effectiveness at the high school level, factors hindering the implementation of SWPBIS, along with increased study on the effects of SWPBIS in the early childhood setting.

CHAPTER 3

ISSUES FACING SWPBIS

SWPBIS is currently being implemented in over 10,000 schools nationwide

(Horner et al., 2010). However, there are several issues regarding the implementation of

SWPBIS that need to be addressed (Bear, 2010). Further, opponents of the program have

hypothesized that SWPBIS is simply composed of recognized preventative practices that

are presented as an attractive bundle and marketed to educational systems (Bear, 2010;

Duda et al., 2004). Further, the availability of teacher time to develop skills needed for

application, acceptance and perception of the importance of implementation, and

teachers' perception of their competence and ability to manage classroom behavior

contribute to issues facing the implementation of SWPBIS with integrity (Metzler et al.,

2001). This section will address issues related to both the implementation of SWPBIS as

well as research disputing SWPBIS effectiveness.

<div align="center">Implementation Issues</div>

Cost

Several factors have been shown to impede the adoption and implementation of

SWPBIS in schools. One of these factors is program cost (Horner et al., 2010),

Implementing SWPBIS contains both initial costs and ongoing operation costs related to

professional development, consultation services, back-up reinforcers, and the

maintenance of data collection instruments. Cost-benefit analysis of SWPBIS has proven

difficult for policymakers to determine due to the use of subjective methods of

measurement. Although the methodology for conducting cost-benefit analyses is well-

developed within a business context, benefits can be difficult to prove within the context of educational practices (Horner et al., 2010; Luiselli et al., 2005).

Professional Development, Skill Building, and Integrity

For SWPBIS to be effectively implemented, a great deal of time and resources must be devoted to professional development and skill building for the involved educators. At times, these activities are ineffective and inefficient because they are often presented only once or twice as opposed to being included as part of ongoing professional training (Sugai & Horner, 2009). Issues such as a lack of teacher buy in and failure to implement SWPBIS with integrity can arise when professional development focuses only on information and material presentation rather than on building the skills needed to effectively provide the intervention (Bradshaw, Koth et al., 2008).

School districts can also mistakenly assume that school staff is adhering to the procedures necessary for accurate implementation of the SWPBIS program and that formal assessment of intervention integrity is not needed. This can lead to waning participation in the program along with increased use of consequence and punishment orientated strategies (Sugai & Horner, 2006). Further, SWPBIS can be rendered ineffective without frequent support, coaching, monitoring, and teacher reinforcement. These strategies effectively bolster teacher confidence in the program along with consistent implementation (Sugai & Horner, 2006).

Because SWPBIS techniques are based upon commonly understood behavioral, social skill, and organizational principles, it is possible that schools may feel competent with implementing SWPBIS prior to receiving formal training though professional

development or system level instruction in the actual procedures. Researchers examining 37 different public schools implementing SWPBIS, however, found that those schools that had been formally trained in SWPBIS procedures had significantly lower rates of problem student behaviors when compared to schools that had not received formal training (Bradshaw, Koth et al., 2008).

Occasionally, administrative teams make assumptions that staff members will be independently motivated to adhere to SWPBIS procedures, implement them with integrity, and sustain the program indefinitely (Sugai & Horner, 2006). This assumption may lead to program failure as it could result in few system-level supports needed to produce intervention integrity such as continued coaching, program evaluation, as well as a less frequent use of the practice over time.

Researchers have indicated that teachers within SWPBIS schools report properly using the program, including positively stated rules, positive reinforcement, and antecedent procedures. However, observations suggest that teachers often continue to respond to behavioral infractions with large amounts of attention, which may act as a positive reinforcer for misbehavior (Sugai et al., 2001).

Implementation at Younger and Older Age Levels

Implementing SWPBIS within high schools has also proven to be difficult. In 2009, nearly 1000 high schools in the United States reported efforts to adopt SWPBIS, but studies have consistently found that these high schools have experienced greater difficulty in achieving high fidelity during implementation, and did not experience such

benefits as lower rates of ODR or increased academic performance from the program when compared to middle and elementary grade levels (Horner et al., 2010).

Implementation problems have also been found at the Early Childhood level. Since SWPBIS is heavily dependent on data based decision-making, systems to collect these data are imperative for program success. Early childhood education centers have not typically possessed the resources or systems necessary to collect behavior data. Also, staff at these centers traditionally have not been trained on the use of data analysis for decision-making.

A study examining 16 different preschool programs utilizing SWPBIS reported a considerable lack of effectiveness related to difficulties with applying the program (Muscott et al., 2009). Only two programs were able to show significant reductions in the number of incidents of challenging behavior following implementation. Instead, a majority of the programs displayed significant difficulty in responding to challenging behaviors, data collection, and use of the data management system (Muscott et al., 2009). This study suggests that SWPBIS can be effective when implemented with integrity within the preschool setting; however, widespread application within Early Childhood settings is lacking in research, suggesting further investigation is needed to address effective implementation (Muscott et al., 2009).

Opposing Views Regarding SWPBIS

Although SWPBIS has become a popular choice for behavior management within thousands of schools, it is not without its detractors. Bear (2010) purports that SWPBIS erroneously attributes negative behavior the school environment, particularly the actions

of teachers, as being the primary causes of behavior problems in the school. Opponents of the SWPBIS program state that the focus is on students following the rules to gain a reward or to avoid punishment as opposed to teaching behavior in a manner that positively impacts personal values leading to a school environment focused on making the right moral choice.

Researchers have indicated that skills gained through reinforcement and punishments are less likely to generalize to other situations, such as when adults are not present (Landrum & Kauffman, 2006). In a study examining the use of moral reasoning when compared to positive reinforcement and punishment systems, results suggested that children who tend to focus primarily on earning rewards and avoiding punishment rather than on the impact of their behaviors on others are most likely to violate school rules (Bear, Manning & Shiomi, 2006).

By attributing student misbehavior to unsupportive school climates and ineffective teacher classroom management, variance among individual students is ignored. Results from a study conducted by Bierman et al. (2007) indicated that 75% of aggressive and disruptive behavior was attributable to individual factors such as aggression and attention problems stemming from problems experienced within the home environment compared to only 19% of such school level factors as teacher-student relationships, rules, expectations, and classroom disruptions. Because of these individualized factors, opponents argue SWPBIS merely manages behavior as opposed to teaching new behaviors that can be generalized across settings.

This viewpoint was evidenced in a meta-analysis comparing SWPBIS to cognitive behavioral programs used with school aged students focusing on the development of individual qualities, strengths, and positive mental health (Osher et al., 2010). Results showed only short-term behavioral improvements in schools implementing SWPBIS measured by coding results in the areas of anti-social behavior, social skills, and social cognitive skills. Although both programs displayed the same effect sizes (.39) at the end of the intervention, the SWPBIS programs demonstrated a decrease in effect size, from .39 to .17 the following year whereas the effect size for the cognitive behavioral programs only decreased to .37 (Osher et al., 2010). This finding suggests that the implementation of SWPBIS may effectively manage behavior, but it does not include instruction in the social skills needed to function independently without supports.

Koth, Bradshaw, and Leaf (2008) found a lack of positive effects following the application of SWPBIS. Using a randomized control group design, these researchers examined behaviors and school climate in both SWPBIS and non-SWPBIS schools, and found no differences in student behavior or school climate after one year of implementation. The authors suggest SWPBIS programs may be contingent upon characteristics of the examined schools and students.

There is also focus on the high level of exposure that SWPBIS has received through funding and promotion from the US Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) compared to similar approaches which are less known and adopted by fewer schools. With much less funding and visibility, other approaches to school wide behavior management programs, regardless of outcome research, have been

adopted by educational systems due to the promotion of SWPBIS. Because of this, alternative programs may not have the chance to be implemented within schools (Bear, 2010).

<div align="center">Summary of SWPBIS Issues</div>

Issues with SWPBIS implementation and questions related to its effectiveness in teaching new behaviors may need to be examined further before definite conclusions can be made. This is especially true since there is relatively little research directly comparing SWPBIS to other behavioral management systems or juxtaposing the effects of SWPBIS to cognitive behavioral programs. Although there is a large body of evidence supporting the effectiveness of prevention based strategies (Muscott et al., 2009), the argument positing that SWPBIS merely manages behaviors while neglecting cognitive behavioral techniques that addresses changing the thought process to produce lasting behavior change cannot be ignored.

It is quite possible that high levels of structure and greater organization within the classroom may be responsible for the positive effects claimed by SWPBIS. It is also conceivable that school-wide behavior improvement can be attributed to greater communication between staff, as well as general preventative practices such as clear scheduling, relationship building, and staff perception of compliant students (Duda et al., 2004). Continued research is possibly needed to explore how to combine SWPBIS and cognitive behavioral therapy techniques such as building problem solving, building strengths, and positive mental health to create greater levels of behavioral instruction and improving the overall effectiveness of SWPBIS.

CHAPTER 4

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

School-wide accountability for behavioral management curricula has raised

concerns that implementing these programs will hinder the individualized instruction of

students (Bear, 2010; Sailor et al., 2007). These concerns may raise the question among

educators that if the monitoring of behaviors is primarily done using school-wide data,

will individual students continue to receive extra support and attention for personal

behavioral needs?

Although the primary function of SWPBIS is the use of preventative techniques to

address school-wide behavior, it appears from the research that SWPBIS has the potential

to reduce widespread behavioral problems outside of the educational environment

(Barrett et al., 2008; De Pry & Sugai, 2002; Metzler et al., 2001). Such a reduction may

allow school-based teams more time, energy, and resources to address the needs of

individual students. Furthermore, as SWPBIS promotes clear and consistent expectations

and strategies throughout the school, students with behavioral challenges have a better

opportunity to understand exactly what is expected of them and to respond appropriately

across all settings (Hieneman, Dunlap & Kincade, 2005).

Further, while not detailed in this literature review, the supplemental (Tier 2) and

intensive (Tier 3) strategies, such as Check in/Check out and Check and Connect are

included in SWPBIS to address the needs of individual students through the use of a

series of prescribed, evidenced-based interventions that focus on instruction and the

reward of appropriate behaviors. These second and third tiers of the SWPBIS program

allow for interventions to be tailored to meet individual needs and build upon a student's inherent strengths (Horner et al., 2010).

Within the educational environment, teachers can employ preventative strategies that encourage positive behavior when engaging in academic activities. By recognizing times and areas where problem behaviors are most frequently displayed, teachers are able to increase both supervision and social instruction in order to decrease the likelihood of these behaviors occurring (De Pry & Sugai, 2002). This also demonstrates the practical use of SWPBIS, as the program can be implemented with ease and fidelity by all school staff, without the need for additional interventions or resources beyond those specifically prescribed by the SWPBIS program (Duda et al., 2004).

Since the SWPBIS model requires an implementation team, support staff such as school psychologists are likely to be involved with the implementation process. Responsibilities may include providing leadership within the school during the implementation of SWPBIS, assisting with the selection of targeted interventions, rule development, and coaching of staff (Barrett et al., 2008). Because school psychologists have expertise in data interpretation, they may be heavily involved with the review of data summaries, patterns, and trends focusing on behavior, logistics, time, and maintaining SWPBIS efforts. This role is important due to the heavy load that the implementation of SWPBIS places on school teams in terms of data based decision-making (Barrett et al., 2008).

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Every day, more than 100,000 schools in the United States provide education and services to our nation's youth (Horner et al., 2009). These schools have the unique responsibility of preparing generations to become productive citizens, which will benefit the population as a whole. Because of this, schools have a need for calm, productive, active, and engaging learning environments.

Though current legislation, such as IDEA and NCLB, emphasizes academic assessment in particular content areas, it does not examine the factors contributing to student achievement. Researchers have recently provided more evidence demonstrating that the school-wide environment plays a significant role in creating positive and supportive conditions for teaching and learning (Freiberg et al., 2009).

The purpose of this literature review was to illustrate issues and concerns related to problem behaviors in a school-wide setting, and to discuss the effects that implementation of SWPBIS can have on these behaviors. SWPBIS is primarily a preventative intervention utilizing positive behavioral support strategies that are implemented as a result of school-wide collaboration and data based decision-making. Research suggests that the effectiveness of SWPBIS is in both decreasing problematic student behavior and increasing academic performance, while maintaining high levels of social validity among school staff within a diverse range of environments and cultures.

The findings in this literature review suggest that SWPBIS holds significant potential for improving school-wide behaviors by positively impacting the social culture

of the school. By utilizing SWPBIS, schools have the opportunity to improve the social skills of their students, increase the amount of time and resources available for behavior problems, and increase academic performance.

The applicability of SWPBIS has been demonstrated with some children across different backgrounds including those with behavior disorders. Some studies have been conducted with both elementary and secondary school-age participants; however, there is limited research that examines effects of SWPBIS on preschool and high school students (Duda et al., 2004; Horner et al., 2010).

Issues surrounding SWPBIS include cost, problems with maintaining implementation consistently, continued adherence to the program across time, lack of proper training, concerns related to independent behavioral performance without supports, and its applicability in preschool and high school environments. Although the use of SWPBIS can be time consuming, especially during initial implementation, maintenance can allow teachers to devote increased attention to instruction and less attention to problematic behaviors, perhaps increasing job satisfaction.

Although research on components making up the program is sound, SWPBIS continues to need additional validation and refinement with future research focusing on which aspects of SWPBIS actually account for observed improvements in intervention adaptation and sustainability (Sugai & Horner, 2006). Future research is also needed to further examine the impact SWPBIS has in the early childhood and high school environments since there have been few studies examining these areas along with how to increase the effects in these settings. Lastly, studies could possibly be conducted on how

to incorporate aspects of cognitive behavioral systems with SWPBIS to teach behavior in a manner that positively impacts personal values leading to a school environment focused on making the right moral choice. This combination of approaches may increase the chance to produce lasting behavioral changes across school and community settings.

As schools adhere to standards set by IDEA and NCLB, challenges relating to safety, narrowing the achievement gap, and accommodating the increasingly culturally and economically diverse populations remain. Meeting these challenges can be better accomplished by creating school environments that are predictable, respectful, consistent and safe for all students, regardless of background. The use of SWPBIS has a foundation of research supporting its use and its numerous social benefits, which could potentially have positive and lasting implications for years to come

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