A consideration of positive behavior supports through a preschool lens

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A CONSIDERATION OF POSITIVE BEHAVIOR
SUPPORTS THROUGH A PRESCHOOL LENS

An Abstract of a Thesis
Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Specialist in Education

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ABSTRACT

Positive Behavior Supports is a research-based, systemic approach to supporting positive behaviors and structured responses to negative behaviors. Positive Behavior Supports, or PBS, has been implemented in multiple elementary schools and classrooms. However, PBS in an early childhood or preschool setting lacks a strong evidence base. This paper provides an overview of PBS and the need for its implementation in early childhood settings. Best practice for PBS implementation, current researched approaches, and the measurement techniques available for use are reviewed.
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CHAPTER 1

SCHOOL READINESS AND POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS

School Readiness

School readiness is generally defined by a child’s emotional, behavioral, and cognitive skills in relationship to learning and adjusting successfully to a school environment (Rafoth, Buchenauer, Crissman, & Halko, 2004). Of these, social and behavioral school readiness is more indicative of academic success than even cognitive ability (Hemmeter, Ostrosky, & Fox, 2006; Smith, 2011).

There are many factors identified as considerable areas for deciding when a child is ready for school. Researched factors include “cognitive, social, emotional, and motor development, and most importantly, early home, parental, and preschool experiences” (Rafoth et al., 2004, p. 1). Increasing evidence exists indicating positive social and behavioral skills are most critical in a child’s readiness for kindergarten. Specific social and behavioral skills identified include getting along with others, following directions, identifying/regulating one’s own behavior and emotions, appropriate problem solving skills, task persistence, engagement in social conversation and play, correct interpretation of other’s behavior and emotions, and self-confidence (Hemmeter et al., 2006; Smith, 2011).

In a similar vein, McBryde, Ziviani, and Cuskelley (2004) studied the perceptions of parents and teachers in reference to school readiness. Age, adaptability, social skills, and activity persistence were the factors perceived as most important for school readiness by both parents and teachers.
Preschool programs are perfectly suited to provide support for school readiness. Children at this age are incredibly malleable and rapidly developing. Therefore, the preschool period is critical in promoting positive social skill development. Without such programming, "inadequate social skills and development problems [can] lead to behavioral problems and rejection by peers" (Arslan, Durmusoglu-Saltali, & Yilmaz, 2011, p. 1285).

Despite preschool's suitability for prevention and intervention, behavior prevalence rates in preschool aged children are cause for concern. Evidence suggests anywhere from 10 to 40% of children this age exhibit significant behavioral challenges, with more who may be at risk. Moreover, fewer than 10% of children with behavioral problems at this age receive appropriate intervention (Hemmeter et al., 2006). These behaviors rarely end in preschool. One study found that 30% of kindergarten teachers report that at least half of their students have problems working in a group and following directions. Twenty percent of the kindergarten teachers reported at least half of their students exhibit poor social skills (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, & Cox, 2000 as cited in Smith, 2011). Additionally, teachers and administrators both indicate student behavior as a primary concern in the schools (Cohn, 2010). Clearly, there is a need for promoting positive behavior development in the preschool setting in order to properly prepare children for school.
Positive Behavior Supports

Positive behavior supports, or PBS, is a research-based practice that many schools utilize as a method of addressing behavior problems. As the name implies, PBS frames behaviors in a preventative, positive light. It is also systemic and predictable in nature. As Bambara and Kern (2005) suggest, the primary goal of PBS is to "effect meaningful, long-lasting changes that will result in improvements in individuals' lifestyles" (p. 16). PBS includes the following components: (a) identification of consistent and preventative behavioral management practices, (b) teaching students appropriate behavior, (c) clearly defined and consistent rules and behavioral expectations, (d) systematic acknowledgement of successful student behavior and response to behavioral violations, and (e) methods of ongoing data collection and progress monitoring at the individual and school-wide level to evaluate efforts formatively (Cohn, 2010).

PBS is rooted in behavioral theory. In essence, problem behavior occurs because it is being reinforced, or the student is getting something he or she wants or is escaping something he or she dislikes. To decipher why the behavior occurs, the context must be examined, including what happens before and after the behavior, the time of day, etc. That environment then must be altered to change the undesired behavior and a replacement behavior must be taught. In general, this is the basis of PBS (Cohn, 2010).

PBS can be implemented on three levels, often called Tier 1, the universal level, Tier 2, the targeted, supplemental, or group supports level, and Tier 3, the
intensive, individualized supports level. These terms are often used interchangeably. As Turnbull and colleagues (2002) describe, “universal support is provided to all students, while the next two components are provided to a decreasing number of students” (p. 378). The expectations and skills focused on at each level are explicitly taught, modeled, and practiced by the students. The universal level is critical, as “even students who require the most intensive PBS (i.e., individual support) for some of their problem behaviors still engage in some behaviors that can be adequately addressed through universal support” (Turnbull et al., 2002, p. 380). This examination of PBS will focus mainly upon the universal level of support. Without a strong universal level, the more intensive supports would be futile.

One final, critical component of PBS is the use of data based decision-making. This means that behaviors must be monitored or measured on a continual basis to help make curriculum, teaching, or environmental changes based on the data collected. Proper PBS implementation necessitates this practice. Each program or school’s data collection system may look different depending on their current needs (Safran & Oswald, 2003). Multiple kinds of data sources are also important, including the “use of both indirect measures (e.g., interviews) and direct measures” (e.g., structured observations) as this will bolster the “richness of data” to use for decision making (Fox, Dunlap, & Cushing, 2002, p. 151).

With social and behavioral competency being the basis for school readiness, PBS is more than warranted in the preschool setting. Children should be taught the
social skills needed in order for them to best gain access to the kindergarten curriculum. PBS is perfectly situated to serve as the early intervention that is needed.
CHAPTER 2

THE NEED FOR PBS IN THE PRESCHOOL SETTING

PBS is well supported in elementary schools, but lacks strong research in the preschool setting (Hemmeter et al., 2006). Despite the lack of research, there is definitely not a lack of need. This chapter will delineate the need for further research and implementation of PBS in preschools. Such research is warranted because (a) schools are the best place to begin implementation of such a structure, (b) currently, there are multiple risk factors and behaviors present in the preschool setting, and (c) deleterious, long-term effects occur when there is no early intervention.

Schools as a Powerful Place for Prevention

Early detection and intervention for behavioral problems in preschool children are the most powerful tools to help students who are at risk for developing behavioral problems in the future (Hester et al., 2004). One system that can provide a pathway for early intervention is the school system (Sugai, Horner, & McIntosh, 2008). As DiStephano and Kamphaus (2007) suggest, “For many children and parents, the first opportunity for universal, systematic screening is when children begin school” (p. 94).

Though schools are a perfect place for PBS, they are an underutilized environment (Sugai et al., 2008). As Sugai and colleagues (2008) note, the current educational system has not capitalized on the schools as powerful and important places for intervention. With a great focus on academics, behavior intervention has
moved to the wayside. However, schools have arguably the greatest potential to be our "most powerful change agent" (Sugai et al., p. 765). Students spend much of their lives in school settings, which makes time for early intervention accessible. Moreover, time in school without such supports poses other potentially negative problems.

Preschool settings vary from half days programs to full day programs. Some programs have before and after school daycare as well. In one, 6 hour, 180-day school year, students spend approximately 1,080 hours in the classroom. Additionally, as hours spent in preschool increases, so does the expulsion rate (Gilliam, 2008). According to Gilliam (2008), "in a study of nearly 4,000 state-funded PK classes randomly selected across the nation, 10.4 percent of PK teachers reported at least one expulsion in their classes during the past 12 months" (p. 2). In addition, the rate at which preschool students are suspended is more than three times the average rate of all grades kindergarten through twelfth grade (Gilliam, 2008). What exacerbates this issue is that few preschools have identified expulsion or suspension criteria. With unclear guidelines for responses to behavior, preschool teachers may implement their own personal belief systems, which could be negative for the development of the child.

Preschool teachers with characteristics that include authoritarian beliefs, depression, or high stress are prone to have less tolerance for behaviors and are therefore, more likely to expel preschool students (Gilliam, 2008). When teachers learn the PBS structure, the aforementioned beliefs and responses to problem
behavior look much different. Because PBS not only changes adult behavior but the environment as well, student behaviors are curbed. As Horner (2000) notes, “Effective environments make problem behaviors irrelevant, inefficient, and ineffective” (p. 97). Teachers teaching appropriate behavior using PBS at the earliest point possible – preschool – is a natural and effective way to prevent possible negative behaviors.

**Risk Factors and Behaviors in Preschools Today**

The need for PBS in the preschool setting is also supported due to the high number of identified risk factors and existing behavioral issues that occur in early childhood settings. Qi and Kaiser (2003) completed a meta-analysis of research that examined prevalence rates of behavioral needs in Head Start programs. Reported percentages of externalizing problems varied from 16 to 30 percent of students, and internalizing problems ranged from 7 to 31 percent of students (Qi & Kaiser, 2003).

Identifying the risk factors and prevalence rates of currently identified disorders present in preschool students highlights the need for PBS. In addition, understanding risk factors helps predict the likelihood of behaviors that may persist past a developmentally appropriate age (Spieker, Larson, Lewis, Keller, & Gilchrist, 1999). The risk factors that affect this age group fall into three main categories, which include child characteristics, parent characteristics, and societal demographic characteristics (Qi & Kaiser, 2003).
Attachment. To begin, having an insecure attachment style is one risk factor for behavioral problems in preschool (Qi & Kaiser, 2003; Farrell Erickson, Sroufe, & Egeland, 1985; Davies, 2004). Attachment is generally the relationship style between a child and his or her caregiver. There are four main attachment style categories. These include insecure/avoidant, secure, insecure-ambivalent/resistant, and insecure-disorganized/disoriented. A child with a secure attachment style will most likely have a positive, typical developmental experience. Having a secure attachment means the child can openly express both positive and negative emotions, confident in the responsiveness of the parent (Davies, 2010). Insecure/avoidant children give the “impression of self-reliance, conveying that the attachment [is] not important” (Davies, 2004, p. 14). Oppositely, ambivalent/resistant attachment happens when there is a strong need, but a lack of confidence in the relationship. It typically occurs when mothers’ responses are inconsistent. The primary effect of this particular attachment style is that the child’s exploration is stifled due to his or her preoccupation with creating attachment. Longitudinal studies of these children have been linked to poor social skills and behavioral impulsivity in preschool children (Davies, 2004). Finally, disorganized/disoriented attachment children “show contradictory behavior when reunited with the mother after separation” (Davies, 2004, p. 17). Two developmental occurrences have been tied to this type of attachment style:
unresolved trauma in the parent and direct maltreatment of the child by the parent (Davies, 2004).

Some research points to the conclusion that a disorganized attachment style at 1 year is a predictor for externalizing behavior problems at 5 years. Young children who have a resistant attachment style also did poorly in preschool. The struggles identified included both internal and external behaviors (Farrell Erickson et al., 1985).

Other risk factors in preschool children include a negative temperament, prematurity, low cognitive skills, underdeveloped language, and poor peer interactions or social skills (Qi & Kaiser, 2003; Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1998). Again, many of these can be related to insecure attachment styles. Davies (2004) outlines the overall effects of secure and insecure attachment styles in preschool children. The effect of insecurely attached preschoolers tends to be a moody, depressed, and negative disposition. These children also have trouble regulating behavior (under control of impulses), low frustration tolerance, and higher anxiety. These negative behaviors tend to create overly controlling teachers, which feels like punishment to the child. They have poor social skills, which can cause hostile, aggressive, and coercive relationships with peers and a poor sense of understanding of others' emotions. Finally, the child's sense of self can be incompetent, not valuable, and unlovable with low self-esteem (Davies, 2004). Clearly, preschool children with insecure attachment styles are at heightened risk for behavioral problems.
Psychiatric Disorders. Prevalence rates of diagnosed psychiatric disorders in preschool-aged children support the need for prevention and intervention efforts in early childhood settings. A review of the literature from 1975 until 1996 by Brauner and Stephens (2006) indicates anywhere from 5 to 26 percent of children are affected by a psychiatric disorder. This report more specifically indicates that 9 to 14 percent of children, ages 0 to 5, are affected by a psychiatric disorder.

The most common disorder in preschool children is Oppositional Defiant Disorder, or ODD. According to Lavigne and colleagues (1996), 16.8 percent of children ages 2 to 5 are diagnosed with this disorder. In fact, the age at which the most children are identified is 3 years old. ADHD, or Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder was identified in 2 percent of preschool-aged children. Other, less prevalent disorders diagnosed in less than 1 percent of preschool students that might pose problems in the classroom include Functional Enuresis, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, and Adjustment Disorder with Mixed Disturbance of Emotions and Conduct (Lavigne et al., 1996).

Parental and Societal Risk Factors

There are numerous parental and societal demographic risk factors also present (Qi & Kaiser, 2003; Fox et al., 2002; Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1998). Some of these risk factors that correlate to child problem behaviors include parental stress, but more specifically, mothers' stress. This can be associated with low socioeconomic status or poverty (Qi & Kaiser, 2003; Fox et al., 2002; Webster-
Stratton & Hammond, 1998); for example, stressors related to basic needs (housing, food, etc.).

Maternal depression can also strongly affect the child's behavior (Fox et al., 2002; Klass, 2012; Qi & Kaiser, 2003; Spieker et al., 1999; Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1998). Maternal depression is "perhaps the best-documented risk factor for childhood internalizing difficulties, and more specifically, childhood-onset depression" (Coyne & Thompson, 2011, p. 874). Level of maternal education is also proven to be associated with behaviors in preschool children (Qi & Kaiser, 2003). As level of education increases, behavioral problems tend to decrease.

Parents with harsh discipline routines make addressing behavioral problems at school even more difficult (Fox et al., 2002; Qi & Kaiser, 2003; Spieker et al., 1999). There are studies that have identified harsh parenting practice as a predictor for aggressive behaviors as the students get older (Fox et al., 2002; Nix et al., 1999; Qi & Kaiser, 2003; Spieker et al., 1999; Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1998). Family conflict, family instability, or living in a violent community can also negatively affect how well children are able to function in preschool settings (Fox et al., 2002; Qi & Kaiser, 2003; Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1998).

Risk factors correlated with increased behavior problems in preschool children are strikingly similar to the risk factors identified related to high school drop out. These include poverty, single parent families (indicative of higher stress levels), low levels of parental education, and minority groups (Strom & Boster, 2007). Research indicates preschool risk factors continue throughout school life and
into high school. Although schools cannot address some of the risk factors, PBS can provide a stable, consistent, and positive environment for the students during the school day. Again, students spend nearly 1,080 hours at school in a 180-day year.

Deleterious, Long-Term Effects of Early Childhood Behaviors

There are deleterious long-term effects possible when early intervention to address problem behaviors does not occur. Horner (2000) identified a few of the most general negative life circumstances that can occur when there is a lack of positive behavior supports: “exclusion from general educational settings, community environments, and employment opportunities; increased medical risks; isolation from social relationships; and exposure to highly intrusive forms of treatment” (p. 97). These types of difficulties become ever-present in the student’s life and necessitate intensive support (Dunlap et al., 2006).

One such outcome of displaying negative behaviors in school is suspension. Studies concerning suspension indicate that 30-50% of students suspended will be suspended again (Brownstein, 2010). A report completed in Texas by the Office of Civil Rights showed that “students who were suspended and/or expelled, particularly those who were repeatedly disciplined, were more likely to be held back a grade or to drop out than were students not involved in the disciplinary system” (Fabelo et al., 2011, p. 54). In essence, this is increased proof that reactionary discipline has little value in stopping negative behavior in school.

Specific behaviors that may lead to suspensions are physical aggression, talking back to staff, using obscene language, being late, elopement, possession of
weapons or drugs, and not completing school assignments (Costenbader & Markson, 1998). Also important to note is that "Children with mental and emotional disabilities are much more likely to be suspended, expelled and arrested at school" (Brownstein, 2010, p. 26). As identified in above research, many of these risk factors and behaviors are seen as early as the preschool classroom, and sometimes students are suspended at the preschool level for the same behaviors.

Negative behaviors leading to suspension often cause students to lose instruction time in the classroom, which can be detrimental (Costenbader & Markson, 1998; Dunlap et al., 2006). On a larger scale, "recent research also indicates a negative relationship between the use of school suspension and expulsion and schoolwide academic achievement, even when controlling for demographics such as socioeconomic status" (Brownstein, 2010, p. 25). When students are removed from the classroom they are unable to learn. When students are unable to learn, their skill set and motivation will inherently decrease.

Low academic achievement is a strong predictor for high school drop out (Strom & Boster, 2007), which is correlated with involvement with the juvenile justice system (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). Costenbader and Markson (1998) and Brownstein (2010) both indicate that the more time a student spends in suspension or out of school, the higher the likelihood he or she will be involved in with the legal system. Negative behavior that may cause involvement with the juvenile justice system includes fighting, use of drugs and alcohol, carrying weapons, and risky sexual behavior (Brownstein, 2010).
Conclusion

Clearly, there is a significant population whose needs go beyond academic learning. With schools as a fitting environment for implementation, multiple risk factors present in preschool children, and possible deleterious, long-term effects of negative behaviors, PBS should be in high demand. Early intervention is critical, for “if challenging behavior toward others is not altered by the end of third grade, it appears that it should be treated as a chronic condition, hopefully kept somewhat in check by continuing an ever more costly intervention” (Dodge, 1993, as cited in Dunlap et al., 2006).
CHAPTER 3
EVIDENCE BASED FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTING PBS

Currently there are detailed resources that outline best practice for implementation of Positive Behavior Supports in schools. The US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) created a Blueprint for Positive Behavior Supports (Sugai et al., 2010). This Blueprint is based upon research that supports education and implementation for PBS. It is a resource that delineates what is considered best practice in PBS (Sugai et al, 2010). In addition to the Office of Special Education Programs' Blueprint, Best Practices in School Psychology V has two chapters that outline PBS and its implementation (McKevitt & Braaksma, 2008; Sugai et al., 2008). These chapters describe best practice at the school level and on a much more systemic level. This chapter will describe capacity building for PBS as well as how the implementation of PBS looks once these capacities are built.

Building Capacity for PBS

OSEP's Blueprint (Sugai et al., 2010) as well as the Best Practice resources (McKevitt & Braaksma, 2008) both include similar information about PBS. Reflecting much of what is delineated in OSEP's Blueprint (Sugai et al., 2010), McKevitt and Braaksma (2008) list what they deem as the basic considerations for proper implementation of PBS. In other words, the system needs to build the following capacities in order for PBS to be implemented. These include teaming,
staff buy-in, school policy alignment, staff professional development and training, funding, family and community engagement, and sustainability.

Teaming means "working as a cohesive, integrated, and representative collection of individuals who lead the systems change and implementation process" (McKevitt & Braaksma, 2008; Sugai et al., 2010). The team should consist of individuals who are experts in the topic and have a skillset and interest in behavior. In addition, team members take on certain roles that are clearly defined in order for meetings to run smoothly. For example, teams choose a facilitator, timekeeper, and secretary. Teams should meet on a regular basis to discuss implementation and examine data (McKevitt & Braaksma, 2008).

The second basic consideration is staff buy-in. PBS research shows that a minimum of 80% of the staff should be willing to implement PBS in order to have success. There are many obstacles in creating staff buy-in, but there are ways to combat them. For example, team members may increase buy-in by showing the staff the impact of understanding and appropriately responding to behaviors. Team members can use outcome data from similar schools that implement PBS, direct teachers to websites, or visit PBS schools to increase buy-in. The second important part for developing staff buy-in is having an administrator who is a strong leader and supporter. Finally, clear goals must be set and written into the school's improvement plan in order to help PBS be a mandate in the school rather than an option (McKevitt & Braaksma, 2008).
The third basic consideration is school policy alignment. Having a discipline policy in the school handbook that reflects the theory behind PBS is critical for proper implementation. Schools should create a PBS handbook and focus on PBS when choosing new educators for their district. McKevitt and Braaksma (2008) suggest when “PBS becomes institutionalized, staff competence related to implementation could become part of the staff evaluation process” (p. 738).

The fourth basic consideration of PBS is funding. Though PBS should not require much money to implement, there will be costs up front for professional development time and materials. There also will be some cost in purchasing tokens for reinforcement (tickets, small prizes, etc.). There are grants schools can apply for in order to alleviate some of the monetary burden (McKevitt & Braaksma, 2008).

Engaging families and the community in the implementation of PBS is the fifth basic component suggested by McKevitt and Braaksma (2008). As PBS is implemented, the school could create surveys for the public, meet with other community establishments, and provide information for parents. When these outside groups begin to understand PBS, they may too implement it outside of school, creating consistency for children across settings and clearly communicating shared values. This continuity will only increase PBS’s success during the academic year (McKevitt & Braaksma, 2008).

The final basic consideration of PBS is sustainability. Sustainability should be equivalent to at least 10 years (McKevitt & Braaksma, 2008). Needless to say, sustainability efforts must be carefully considered in order for this to occur. In the
same way that PBS works for students, it can work for sustainability in a system with adults, as well. Incentives for good application of the theory can help teachers better ensure its utility. In addition, data collection, sharing, and scrutiny should be a routine practice. One final piece that can help sustainability is the creation of a PBS handbook, as previously mentioned. This will ensure consistent implementation by providing all staff with the same standards and expectations.

Implementation of PBS with Students

Once the system is set up for PBS’s success, implementation with students may begin. McKevitt and Braaksma (2008) describe the components necessary for this, as supported by OSEP’s 2010 Blueprint (Sugai et al., 2010).

The first part is to establish and define expectations. It is recommended that the school identify three to five expectations that meet the needs of that particular school. These should not be negatively phrased (“do not”), but positively stated (“be respectful”). Acronyms are very useful for enabling memorization for staff and students. In addition, it is imperative to keep them short and posted throughout the building.

The second aspect includes teaching expectations to students. As mentioned above, the behavior expectations stated in the school’s acronym, for example, need to have “specific, observable behaviors for each location within the school” (McKevitt & Braaksma, 2008, p. 740). Utilization of a behavior matrix is best practice. A behavior matrix is a depiction of the chosen and defined behavior expectations with examples of positive behaviors that fit the different settings.
students come in contact with throughout the day. These specific behaviors must then be taught to the students, using both the examples given as well as non-examples. Only the adults should exhibit non-examples; however, students should participate in practicing appropriate and expected behavior. At any grade, the language used to teach the behavioral expectations must match the developmental level of the students. A plan for this instruction also needs to be put into place, addressing all potential levels of need.

Implementing the third portion, acknowledging students for demonstrating desired behavior, includes positive reinforcement. The frequency and type of rewards must be discussed and decided upon by the team. Also, the level at which rewards will be given (individual, group, class, school), needs to be planned (McKevitt & Braaksma, 2008). Moreover, the staff should be taught that the tokens are only a symbol of the positive and specific praise that they should be providing.

The team must also develop the consequence system for the school. Having clear-cut responses to negative behavior is imperative. Rating behaviors with an intensity level score is one way to begin this process. Then, the team can decide how to react to behaviors of different severity. For example, schools may define Level 1, 2, or 3 behaviors. The response to a negative behavior must also include a teaching part. Finally, the team must decide how to document behavioral infractions, as data collection is key in fine-tuning the PBS system (McKevitt & Braaksma, 2008).

The final three aspects of implementation with the students including using data, establishing targeted group interventions, and establishing intensive individual
interventions are all related. Setting up strategic ways to measure performance will also allow staff to identify the students who need additional group or individual interventions. For instance, collecting specific office referral data can help guide staff into deciding targeted and intensive interventions possibly needed. Looking at the types of behaviors happening found in the office referral data can be a screening tool used to form possible targeted group interventions. Going one step further, if an individual student receives six or more office referrals in a year, the team might decide to establish an intensive individual intervention for that student (McKevitt & Braaksma, 2008). This might include functional behavior assessment, or an FBA, to guide the plan’s creation. FBAs gather information about why the behavior is happening, including antecedents, settings, and possible motivating operators, or outside factors that can increase or decrease the likelihood a behavior will occur. In essence, collecting and scrutinizing data will guide these processes.

Summary of Best Practices in Implementing PBS

In implementing PBS, the school should look at the basic considerations necessary for PBS, ensure that their system is set up for success, and finally, plan for implementation with the students. The identified considerations are relevant at all levels. Systems and students both need explicit instruction, time to practice, and rewards for “good” behavior. Ensuring the success and best practice of PBS in the schools will undoubtedly require a great amount of preparation and planning. However, the long-term effects will exceed the up front costs.
CHAPTER 4

PBS IN THE PRESCHOOL SETTING

Positive behavior supports has a rich research background. However, PBS in the early childhood setting has not been examined as extensively. Though few research studies exist that focus on PBS in an early childhood setting, there are some with promising results. According to Fox and colleagues (2002), there are vital components of an effective PBS structure, specifically when discussing the importance of early intervention (early childhood settings). These include an ecological approach to behaviors, interventions in natural environments, and an emphasis on communication-based approaches. The research studies producing positive results thus far include: (a) at the systemic level, structured consultation and a focus on continuity between home and school settings, and (b) at the student level, utilizing developmentally appropriate PBS tools.

Consultation

Through structured consultation and training, PBS can be implemented with positive results in the preschool setting (Benedict, Horner, & Squires, 2007; Duda, Dunlap, Fox, Lentini, & Clarke, 2004; Russell Carter & Van Norman, 2010). Russell Carter and Van Norman (2010) and Benedict and colleagues (2007) examined consultation and PBS at the universal level while Duda and colleagues (2004) studied consultation and PBS at the targeted or arguably, intensive, level. Despite the perceived differences of level, the consultation models were generally the same.
Before the PBS intervention began, baseline data was gathered (Benedict et al., 2007; Russell Carter & Van Norman, 2010). The researchers used the Preschool-wide Evaluation Tool, or the Pre-SET. This assessment generally gives the average implementation percentages on aspects related to universal PBS practices, including expectations defined, behavioral expectations taught, appropriate behavior acknowledged, organized and predictable environment, additional supports, family involvement, monitoring and decision-making, management, and program and district-wide support.

The consultation model involved one longer initial meeting between consultants and teachers as well as shorter follow up meetings. The goal of the initial meeting was for the consultant to share baseline data and provide PBS information. The teacher's role was to develop a plan of action for implementation and set goals. At the initial meeting, the consultant gave the teacher a binder with PBS research-based guidelines. The three areas that were taught and focused on in Russell Carter and Van Norman's study (2010) were creating a positive and predictable environment, implementing effective and efficient transitions, and acknowledging appropriate behavior. In Benedict and colleagues' study (2007), areas of focus were classroom materials, transitions, and classroom routines. Each of these areas had specific guidelines to follow. These guidelines were generally that the teacher must be explicit in her instruction, supports, and feedback. Based on the baseline data gathered by the consultant and the goals of the teacher, an action plan...
could be created and then implemented (Benedict et al., 2007; Russell Carter & Van Norman, 2010).

At the subsequent follow up meetings, data were shared from more observations. In one study, teachers received at least one follow up meeting two weeks after the initial meeting (Russell Carter & Van Norman, 2010). Quantitative data from the classroom were shared in a graphical format. Qualitative data from a standardized consultation notes sheet were also shared (Benedict et al., 2007; Russell Carter & Van Norman, 2010). This form had specific praise for the teacher as well as areas upon which to improve. It also included columns indicating if the plan had been carried out to this point, what was working since the last meeting, and an updated plan for the future (Russell Carter & Van Norman, 2010). In one study, the sessions were approximately 30 minutes (Russell Carter & Van Norman, 2010), but in another, they varied from 10 to 90 minutes (Benedict et al., 2007). In both studies, the teacher chose whether or not the review meetings continued and how frequently meetings occurred.

In practicing this model at the preschool level, "a clear and immediate increase in teachers' implementation of universal PBS practices following consultation" was documented (Russell Carter & Van Norman, 2010, p. 285). Teachers were more effectively implementing classroom rules, feedback, schedules, and transitional supports (Benedict et al., 2007). Academic engagement was maintained or increased (Russell Carter & Van Norman, 2010).
In another study that focused on consultation and PBS (Duda et al., 2004), intervention was intended for more targeted supports. Two preschool girls with problem behaviors were chosen for the subjects in this study. Opening circle time (first activity of the day, usually involved a book or a song, children are seated on the carpet) and planning (a period of brief physical activity, following small group time, children are gathered back at the carpet area) were the areas chosen for intervention implementation.

The first step in this consultation process was creating an appropriate team for intervention. The team included the students' parents, teacher, paraprofessional, preschool director, assistant preschool director, and PBS consultant. Two team meetings occurred to teach the PBS principles, develop goals for the students, and address and define role and function of each member. Following team development, the functional behavior assessment occurred. Multiple data sources were used to complete this. The team collaborated on the aggregation of the data to identify themes for both students. Finally, hypotheses statements were created.

Though the supports identified for these two students were originally individualized, "they were implemented with the entire class because they are recognized as reflecting best practices in the prevention of problem behaviors and the facilitation of learning" (Duda et al., 2004, p. 146). The researchers surmised that the specifics of each student's plan might have even been unnecessary due to the nature of the structural changes that occurred at the universal level in the classroom.
The consultant coached and modeled for the teachers throughout the process, specifically before each class. During the class, consultants did not provide intervention or feedback; this was saved for immediately after or before the next intervention session. These coaching sessions were only about 5 to 10 minutes long. The consultant would review the prevention strategies and model them, using materials or specific techniques. This was also a time for questions from the teachers. The consultant collected data on engagement and problem behaviors of the students. Many sessions were videotaped and coded afterwards. The results of the study showed that the strategies and interventions implemented reduced negative behaviors and increased academic engagement for both students (Duda et al., 2004).

In the studies that examined the effects of consultation models to PBS implementation fidelity, the results were promising. With structured and ongoing support for teachers, this model can have positive outcomes on student behaviors. In addition, the results of the studies showed positive attitudes about PBS from the teachers as well. They viewed the interventions to be feasible, appropriate, and effective (Duda et al., 2004) as well as having an overall positive social impact on the classroom (Benedict et al., 2007; Russell Carter & Van Norman, 2010).

**Continuity Between Home and School**

The success of PBS hinges on an ecological approach (Bambara & Kern, 2005; Dulap et al., 2006; Fox et al., 2002; Powell, Dunlap, & Fox, 2006; Safran & Oswald, 2003). Behavior exists as an interaction between the environment and the child
(Safran & Oswald, 2003). As with behaviors at all levels, there is typically increased success with increased predictability.

Young children's behaviors are largely related to the relationship between the student and the caregiver (Davies, 2004; Farrell Erickson et al., 1985; Powell et al., 2006; Safran & Oswald, 2003). The attachment style of the student is most telling. Students with secure attachments have the least likelihood of behavioral problems (Davies, 2004). A secure attachment can be built naturally, but sometimes, parenting classes can enhance this learning. When early childhood care settings are able to provide parenting classes and supports as well as PBS in the classroom, there should be increased success. For instance, if these parent and/or teacher and child relationships are built, “children become eager to please, become eager for positive attention, and are more readily guided by teachers with whom they are emotionally invested” (Powell et al., 2006, p. 28).

In addition to secure attachment between children and their parents and teachers, there also needs to be a positive relationship between the families and their teachers (Fox et al., 2002; Powell et al., 2006). Generally, when this relationship is positive, there is an increased openness about the child and truthful discussion of behaviors. This can be developed by teachers getting to know the families, having parents come in to watch and participate in school activities, ongoing consultation about the student's interests and routines, and possibly providing home visits for support (Powell et al., 2006). Moreover, families have the
greatest wealth of knowledge about their child, which is critical for individualized program development, if necessary (Fox et al., 2002).

In both home and school settings, there should be a focus on establishing routines, encouraging expression of emotion, and social problem solving. Parents can be guided to seek more support for this from outside health care professionals if the school cannot provide the resources or training. At school, the classroom setup should have clear boundaries of learning and playing centers as well as areas for social interaction in addition to quiet, alone time (Powell et al., 2006).

If the school is able to provide parent and/or family focused education, this may increase the continuity and practice surrounding the child’s behavior. There is a wealth of research supporting programs that increase the parents’ skill base (Dunlap et al., 2006; Fox et al., 2002; Hemmeter, Fox, Jack, & Broyles, 2007). With such education, a shared understanding of behavior can be reached (Fox et al., 2002). The skills included in parent education are akin to teaching aspects practiced in the classroom and include “giving effective instructions; contingent use of attention, praise, and rewards; setting reasonable and consistent limits; and use of logical and natural consequences and mild negative consequences such as time out” (Powell et al., 2006, p. 30). In addition, a focus on family needs and strengths as well as building communication and teaming are critical (Fox et al., 2002). One such program, for example, is Triple-P (Sanders, 1999). The adoption of a program does not have to be costly and can be very beneficial.
Dunlap and colleagues (2006) and Fox and colleagues (2002) corroborate what is outlined above with an additional emphasis on the legality of involving families in the early childhood decision-making process. Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA, necessitates that parents and families must be part of the service delivery model. Supporting the importance of continuity across settings, the law provides a perfect opportunity for early childhood settings to employ resources for parenting skill programs in the efforts to decrease problem behaviors. Not to mention, PBS is a recommended form of behavioral intervention according to the IDEA, 2004, as well.

**Developmentally Appropriate PBS**

Stormont, Covington Smith, and Lewis (2007) discuss PBS practices in a Head Start program as part of a system-wide approach. Thus, their research focuses on the importance of PBS in the early childhood setting as well as some of the differences in application at this level. In addition to these researchers, Hemmeter and colleagues (2007) conducted a study, also in a Head Start program, focusing on PBS in the preschool setting. The above studies have similar themes and outcomes.

Stormont and colleagues’ (2007) research focused on providing precorrection and praise in a preschool setting. Precorrection involves “providing specific behavior prompts that describe what students should do when preparing for any task, transition, or setting” (p. 281). This is basically a booster shot of the teaching component ingrained in PBS. Praise is specific verbal feedback about a positive behavior. Children should receive more positive remarks than negative
remarks in the classroom. Praise for appropriate behaviors is also a method of teaching.

A great deal of data was collected to measure the implementation of PBS in Stormont and colleagues' (2007) study. The first measure used was a Teacher Behavior Observation Form. This form allowed the observer to do a frequency count of teacher behaviors in the categories of specific behavior praise, precorrection, and reprimands. Each category was clearly defined with examples. For instance, specific behavior praise would include, "I like the way you are sitting facing the teacher and hands in your lap" but would not include, "Good job!" Precorrection was coded when a teacher explained a task immediately before an activity. The explanation needed to include things like how to use the work materials appropriately, sharing, and asking for assistance. Finally, reprimand statements included negatively stated remarks about behavior or even snide comments with negative intonation.

The second data collection tool was a Student Observation Form. Data is collected on this form using "frequency counts within intervals on all children during the small group time without regard to specific children" (Stormont et al., 2007, p. 284). Fourteen different observable problem behaviors were listed on this form for coding. These included yelling, spitting, hitting, teasing, whining, telling on another child, taking materials from another child, interrupting lessons by blurting out, chewing on work materials, sticking tongue out at someone, pretending toys were guns, taking a turn prematurely, waiting more than 5 seconds to comply with a teacher directive, and engaging in off-task behavior (Stormont et al., 2007). Data
were collected throughout the school year using the forms described above. After the school year, the teachers also completed social validity forms. All the teachers rated PBS to be positive for their classrooms. In all of the classrooms, problem behavior decreased as praise and precorrection increased.

In Hemmert and colleagues’ (2007) study, PBS was implemented beginning with a two-day workshop before the first year. After this initial training, additional support was given based on a needs assessment for teachers who believed they would need more support up front. During the training, the school established three program-wide expectations. These expectations were taught and defined. In the second year, teachers were provided more supports, including a PBS Tool Kit. In essence, this was a binder with multiple resources related to PBS, both research based and applicable.

After the implementation of PBS in the Head Start setting in the Hemmert et al. study (2007), behaviors decreased. In the first year of implementation, staff reported increased confidence when dealing with challenging behaviors. In addition, referrals to outside agencies decreased dramatically. Teachers also were able to implement a no timeout policy. In the second year of implementation, requests for crisis intervention decreased and teachers teamed with mental health specialists to include social emotional instruction in their curriculum. Another success this second year was that monetary support shifted from 80% intervention and 20% prevention to 16% intervention and 84% prevention. All of these are positive outcomes with the implementation of PBS (Hemmeter et al., 2007).
The studies outlined in this section so far delineate mostly systemic preschool PBS supports. Absent from the literature are the specific, developmental adaptations made when implementing PBS in the early childhood setting. Taking existing knowledge from developmental research and applying it to PBS best practice in implementing with preschool students can bridge this gap, however.

**Establish and Define Expectations**

In the preschool setting, creating a behavior matrix for the classroom and other areas is still important. However, it should be modified. For example, instead of using an acronym as many elementary schools do, pictures might suffice. Teachers can still choose 3 to 5 expectations. They should be related to positive character traits and stated positively, simply, and in appropriate language (e.g., "Be Kind"; Steed & Pomerleau, 2009). Having signs or signals in addition to the verbal prompt would support learning, as well and would be developmentally appropriate. Figure 1 is a version of a behavior matrix with pictures.
In establishing and defining expectations, there should be multiple classroom supports in place. For example, a visual schedule for the classroom supports classroom expectation (Steed & Pomerleau, 2009). Additionally, transition supports should be in place, like using some sort of auditory or visual signal to prepare for transition (e.g., colored card or light) and another to begin transition (e.g., a different colored card or light, sound chimes, or play a song; Steed & Pomerleau, 2009).

**Teaching Expectations to Students**

Teaching practices in the preschool should be explicit with modeling and time for practice, much like PBS in the elementary. However, this process might occur for shorter periods of time during the day. Alternatively, the staff may decide...
to focus on one behavior or environment for a day before moving on to the next. In addition, "it would be appropriate to use puppets to enhance instruction for preschool or primary grade levels" (McKevitt & Braaksma, 2008, p. 741). A song might also be a viable option to help teach and practice the expected behavior.

Figure 2 is an example of a lesson plan for preschool students.
PBIS Lesson Plan

Area of The School: Classroom
Expectation: We are safe

Step 1: Identify and describe expected behavior
To be safe in the classroom

Step 2: Rationale for teaching the rule
Less chance of injury; less money spent on toys

Step 3: Identify a range of examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Examples</th>
<th>Negative Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Walking around classroom calmly; walking around obstacles, moving between areas calmly.</td>
<td>• Running; stepping on toys; bumping into things &amp; people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ask adult for permission to leave classroom.</td>
<td>• Leaving classroom without asking an adult (run out the door w/o asking)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Taking deep breaths; moving slowly; using toys as intended such as cars are for driving, books are for reading, blocks for building etc.</td>
<td>• Running between areas; throwing toys or blocks; using toys not as intended; flailing arms/bouncing around (just being hyper)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 4: Practice / Roll play activities
Stop/Go behavior game for walking feet and calm bodies. Model in & out of the classroom at doorways & practice different ways to ask. Do on playground/gym as well.
Use puppets to model calm bodies and teach calming strategies. (role play altercation then show how they calm down.)

Step 5: Prompt and promote expected behavior
Use acknowledgement system to promote expected behaviors as seen. Use verbal praise as well – really strongly during and after teaching.
Pre-teach at transition times
Circle times “refresher” lessons
Frequent reminders/check-in
   • “Stop”, who has a clam body right now?”
General discussions while down & engaged with kids in classroom.
Always modeling.

Step 6: Assess student progress
Less promptings.
Less challenging behavior instances.
Less Injuries/altercations

Figure 2. Preschool PBS Lesson Plan (Vatland & Van Norman, n. d.)
Acknowledging Students for Demonstrating Desired Behavior

At the preschool level, physical rewards are less important than at the elementary level. The reward could be specific, positive praise, or possibly a reward token that the child picks at that moment. Steed and Pomerleau (2009) indicate that the system should be age appropriate, limit distraction in the classroom, limit competition, and maximize teacher flexibility. Generally, there should be verbal praise paired with a token, the token be placed in a jar, and group acknowledgement and possibly prizes when the goal is met (Steed & Pomerleau, 2009). Important to remember is that the positive and specific praise is of utmost importance in acknowledgment. The rewards are only a visual representation of the number of acknowledgments students have received.

Developing the Consequence System

When consequences are developed, behaviors must be specifically defined and labeled in addition to adult responses outlined. A flow chart for appropriate adult responses to challenging behavior is important (Steed & Pomerleau, 2009; Vatland & Van Norman, n. d.). In a preschool setting, more serious behaviors will still be documented, with the response always tied to the behavior. The documentation should include not only the behavior, but also the antecedent and consequence. Natural consequences and problem solving practices are important at this age. Figure 4 is an example of a flow chart to guide adult response.
Figure 3. A Flow Chart for Adult Response to Challenging Behavior (Vatland & Van Norman, n. d.)
Using data, Establishing Targeted Group or Intensive Individual Intervention

In preschool settings, office referrals are essentially nonexistent. However, a high level behavior should still be documented. Much like office referral data, whatever the infraction, it must be clearly defined. Steed and Pomerleau (2009) note the most important features of using data. A web-based or computer database specifically designed for early childhood programs is helpful. Within the system, ensure that the behaviors, definitions, routines, and responses are clearly defined and preschool-friendly. Finally, a graphing component is imperative. In order to target needs of a small group or at the individual level, numerical values are necessary. Teachers should establish a system of reviewing the data collected and then make instructional decisions.

Summary of PBS in the Preschool

In general, the small amount of existing research supports PBS in the preschool setting. There are some differences with implementation at this level compared to the elementary setting. However, they are very akin to one another. Specifically, the importance of continuity across settings for students cannot be emphasized enough. In promoting continuity, parents in turn must receive training that increases their skills, as well. This practice bears fruit well beyond the year or two a child spends in a preschool setting. With support by trained PBS consultants, PBS can be even more successful. Specific feedback and data reflecting teacher behavior is just as informative as data on student behavior. Finally, ensuring that
PBS reflects developmentally appropriate policies within the research base will support its potentially positive effects.
CHAPTER 5
MEASURING IMPLEMENTATION AND PROGRESS

Positive Behavior Supports cannot be implemented with integrity without proper data collection and analysis. Data collection should occur on both the systems level and the student level. Progress needs to be measured in terms of implementation and behavior. When data is collected, it can be analyzed for progress and areas in need of improvement. This model is consistent with virtually all current educational research. In the area of preschool, there are tools available to examine progress and need on the systemic level; however, assessment at the student level warrants more research attention.

Due to the long-standing support and systemic procedures for implementation of PBS, there are sound measurement tools available for each step in the implementation process. Each data collection tool serves a different purpose. These include the Self Assessment Survey, the Team Implementation Checklist (TIC), the School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET), the School-Wide Implementation Inventory, and Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs). In the preschool setting, the Pre-SET is used in place of the SET and ODRs are essentially unnecessary. These modifications will be elaborated upon within this chapter. Most of the information provided about these tools comes from Iowa's Area Education Agency 267 Training Manual (2012) for positive behavior interventions and supports, which matches guidelines of current research for preparation and implementation.
The Self Assessment Survey is the first data collection tool used in the implementation of PBS. It is used to determine the extent to which PBS practices are already in place at the school, or in this case, preschool, as well as to aid with the planning piece. It analyzes different levels of the system: at the school (or program) wide level, the non-classroom settings (hallways, lunchroom, playground, etc.), the classroom, and the individual student. The Self Assessment Survey gives current information on the school system levels, including how many PBS practices are in place, partially in place, or not in place, and which areas are priority for improvement. Each person who works in the system (administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, etc.) completes this data collection instrument. It is designed to also show progress, since it is filled out and used as baseline data prior to implementation, and then annually each year after. The data from this tool is to be examined by the PBS team and coach. However, this data should also be shared with teachers, other staff, and the community.

The Team Implementation Checklist, or TIC, is the next data collection tool that schools should use in preparation for implementation of PBS. The TIC monitors the implementation process of PBS. It helps schools see if they are adhering to PBS implementation expectations. The TIC is completed monthly during the first year of PBS implementation. In the following years, the TIC should be completed at least quarterly. The TIC not only helps teams understand where they are in the implementation process, but it is intended to also help the teams create action plans after each data collection process occurs. The TIC includes categories about
commitment, teaming, assessment, behavioral definitions, teaching/instruction, reward system, violation system, data reporting systems, and support for functional assessment (Area Education Agency 267, 2012).

The School-Wide Evaluation Tool, or the SET, is used to gather the most quantitative data in the PBS implementation process. For the early childhood setting, the Pre-SET is used instead (Horner, Benedict, & Todd, 2005). This is an adopted version of the SET for preschool or early childhood settings. The Pre-SET is designed to assess the primary components of effective PBS. This instrument has strong research validity and reliability. An outside professional or PBS consultant completes the Pre-SET based on current PBS implementation. This observer then gives the program a report with the results. There is a summary score as well as scores across nine categories, including Expectations Defined, Behavioral Expectations Taught, Appropriate Behavior Acknowledged, Organized and Predictable Environment, Additional Supports, Family Involvement, Monitoring and Decision-Making, Management, and Program and District-Wide Support.

The Pre-SET was modified from the SET in a few ways (Benedict et al., 2007). The Expectations Defined category includes the use of pictures and routine-specific expectations. In addition, Ongoing System for Rewarding Behavioral Expectations and System for Responding to Behavioral Violations were changed to Appropriate Behavior Acknowledged. Specific items within these categories were also changed to meet developmentally appropriate standards. A few categories were also added
to the Pre-Set, including Organized and Predictable Environment, Additional Supports, and Family Involvement.

While the PBS implementation manual (Area Education Agency 267, 2012) for elementary schools uses Office Discipline Referrals, or ODRs, for outcome and progress data, the preschool does not. ODRs are not relevant in the preschool, and instead, a preschool should use a "nonspecific method of documenting children's problem behavior" (Benedict et al., 2007, p. 178). Moreover, the documentation system used for more severe behavior types should be clearly defined. Creating a system that reflects developmentally appropriate behaviors and progress would be prudent.

Due to the lack of evidence-based measurement tools for behavior screening at the preschool level, more research in this area should be conducted. While it is still important that preschool programs utilize a tool appropriate for their needs, evidence-based tools need to be made available. One such tool was developed and researched by DiStephano and Kamphaus (2007). These authors created a short form of the Behavior Assessment Scale for Children (BASC) Teacher Rating Scale (TRS-P short form). The BASC itself is a behavior measurement tool that can be completed by teachers, parents, or the student (depending on the age), which sheds light on the student's internal and external behavioral needs. The TRS-P short form was developed due the lack of other time and cost efficient screening methods for behavioral needs in the preschool setting. This 23-item product shows "initial promise for assessing the behavioral problems of preschoolers with a much shorter
version of the short form while still retaining acceptable scale coverage, reliability, and validity" (DiStephano & Kamphaus, 2007, p. 100). More importantly, these researchers found a correlation between high scores on the TRS-P short form and behavioral readiness for the elementary school environment (DiStephano & Kamphaus, 2007).

Another tool, called the Early Screening Project (Feil, Severson, & Walker, 1995) has proven to be a reliable assessment in screening preschool children for behavioral problems. The Early Screening Project, or ESP, occurs in three steps. Teachers first rank children for externalizing and internalizing behavior problems, choosing the five most concerning children for both types. Second, the teacher then assesses these students using multiple measures, including the Critical Events Index, Aggressive Behavior Scale, Social Interaction Scale, Adaptive Behavior Scale, and Maladaptive Behavior Scale. The final step involves three, structured observations, which measure social/anti-social play in both structured and unstructured settings. The idea behind the ESP is that it does two things. First, behavior rating scale data and observational data are combined in one assessment tool, which significantly increases the diagnostic accuracy as well as treatment outcomes of young children (Feil et al., 1995). Second, the ESP is still time efficient, reportedly at least 16% more efficient than similar tools.

As the OSEP Blueprint (Sugai et al., 2010) describes, the screening data should be collected and then utilized. Next steps include "(a) identifying students who are making adequate progress, (b) at some risk of failure if not provided extra
assistance, or (c) at high risk of failure if not provided specialized supports” (Sugai et al., 2010, p. 47). These students should then be targeted for group or individual interventions. Tracking these behaviors can continue with tools described above, or even by simply using frequency counts of target behaviors with depiction through a graph. Most importantly, this data should be revisited often. Then as the intensiveness of the plan increases, so should the frequency of data analysis.
CHAPTER 6
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

With kindergarten behavioral readiness being the basis for academic learning, PBS in the preschool setting only makes sense. Schools are set up to implement PBS. Children spend over 1000 hours each year in a classroom environment. In addition, the more hours per day children are in a preschool setting, the higher the likelihood they have of being suspended (Gilliam, 2008). With these two factors at play, PBS could be the key to improving this environment. In addition to time and place, there are a high number of risk factors and behaviors currently present in the preschool setting. These include child characteristics such as psychological disorders as well as parental and societal factors like depression and low socioeconomic status. Finally, the potential for deleterious, long-term effects when there is no early intervention is great. Ongoing negative behavior can lead to exclusion from the classroom environment, which is a predictor for low achievement and dropout.

Preschools do not have to entirely recreate the wheel for establishing PBS in their early childhood setting. The biggest obstacle is taking the available PBS resources and making them fit developmentally with very young children. For example, preschool teaching strategies are different than those at the elementary and secondary levels and these differences should be reflected in teaching behavioral expectations. Furthermore, expectations and related vocabulary need to
be developmentally appropriate. With the proper supports and materials, PBS in the preschool setting can be readily realized.

Following proper implementation procedures for PBS is also key to having success. This includes adequate systems and staff preparation as well as the materials and procedures needed to document the process. Future research about the most effective ways to train preschool staff and provide feedback on PBS implementation is needed. Data collection is a critical feature in all aspects of PBS, from measuring staff perception to tracking problem behaviors. Unless this data is collected with frequency and then analyzed, PBS cannot be successful. Although there are research-based tools in existence to support this process, further comprehensive data systems that are consistent with preschool teaching philosophy need to be developed.

PBS research provides foundational concepts upon which to build a developmentally appropriate system for preschools. However, simply adapting current practices will not suffice. These concepts need to be viewed through an early childhood lens.
REFERENCES


