Creating Safe, Positive, Inclusive School Environments: The Three-tiered Paradigm

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INTRODUCTION

• Educating students in today’s schools is an ever-increasing challenge (Waasdorp, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2012).
• Possible factors include growing inclusion of students with diverse (mild to severe) learning and behavioral needs in general education classrooms.
• Teachers react to persistent learning and behavioral problems with referrals for special education and/or counseling services and thus remove these students from classroom instruction.
• When students’ challenging behaviour becomes chronic and severe, schools tend to react with stringent and restrictive measures. Thus, students face school failure, and early school leaving.
• Emphasis has shifted towards creating schools as positive learning communities by promoting a constellation of evidence-based interventions, practices and processes for achieving an inclusive social culture for all students. This school-wide framework has been widely known as Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports (PBIS) (Sugai & Horner, 2005).

PURPOSE

This is a 2-year qualitative case study purported in exploring the implementation of the PBIS framework in two American schools categorized by the State Department of Public Instruction as examplar and/or model schools.

METHOD

SAMPLE

Two elementary schools meeting exemplary/model status based on the PBIS implementation criteria set by the State of North Carolina, USA

RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative case study (Creswell, 2011)

MEASURES

PBIS implementation scores, school reading and math test scores, student referral data, administration/family/teacher/student views

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

• Examplar school adopted a common language of school-wide student expectations and values and a common approach of prompting and redirecting student behavior (e.g., 2 Questions – 1 Statement)
• Strong leadership support was evident thru teacher in-service training and problem-solving team-based meetings
• Data-based decisions were taken after reviewing student office referrals
• Strong reinforcement system was adopted focusing on individuals (students, teachers) and whole group (classroom-wide)
• Schoolwide celebrations and social acknowledgments of student efforts were taking place on a monthly basis
• Parent and community volunteers were actively involved in the school activities (school assemblies, proctoring)
• Teacher satisfaction and working conditions survey data showed high ratings
• Student data evidenced improvement in standardized assessments

CONCLUSIONS

Promoting a positive and productive culture among students, teachers, administration, parents and community partners requires strong commitment and consistent implementation of the school-wide PBIS framework. Change can be evident in 2-3 years of school PBIS investment.

REFERENCES


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