

Research Developments

Improving Schools With Positive Behavior Support

Schools across the country are searching for ways to improve academic achievement and enhance the level of behavioral support available to students. Improving school-wide discipline procedures, classroom management practices, and individual behavior support plans results in safer schools, more positive school climates, increased academic outcomes, and higher parent and community satisfaction.

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is a comprehensive, systemic, and individualized continuum of supports designed to provide opportunities for all students, including those with challenging behavior, to achieve social and academic success. PBS uses a systems approach to enhance the capacity of schools, districts, and states to adopt and sustain effective behavior support practices.

May Institute is a partner in the National Technical Assistance Center for PBIS, funded by the U.S. Department of Education through a grant received by the University of Oregon. The Institute and nine other grant recipients are developing and implementing PBS strategies in schools across the country.

This issue of *Research Developments* explores the results of classroom-wide, school-wide, and district-wide PBS implementation in three districts in the Northeast and the Mid-Atlantic.

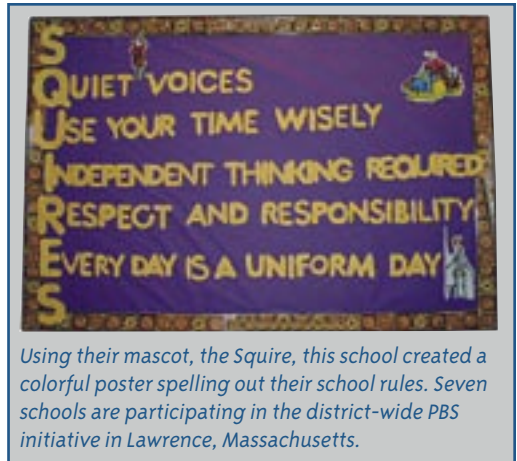
District-Wide PBS in Lawrence, Massachusetts

Recognizing the impact that an effective positive behavior support program could have on the learning environment in their schools, District Administration at Lawrence Public Schools contracted with May Institute in early 2006 to begin the process of implementing PBS in multiple schools across the district.

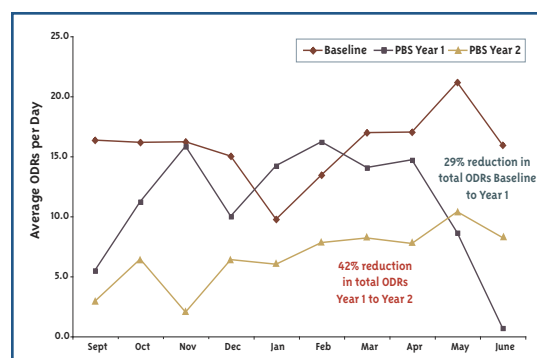
With the leadership and active support of the Superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent for Operations and Support Services, a district PBS team was formed and trained early in 2006. This team identified seven schools in the district that met "readiness criteria" to move forward with PBS implementation. Two PBS coaches from each of these schools received intensive training that prepared them to provide support during the development of PBS in their schools. These coaches will continue to receive specialized training during the 2006-2007 school year in order to support their schools during the implementation and evaluation of PBS.

In the spring of 2006, the seven schools participated in comprehensive assessments of their school practices. The assessments included observations, interviews, reviews

—continued on reverse



Using their mascot, the Squire, this school created a colorful poster spelling out their school rules. Seven schools are participating in the district-wide PBS initiative in Lawrence, Massachusetts.



The graph above shows a substantial decrease in Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) over a three-year period. (PBS implementation occurred in Year 1. Baseline data shows the year prior to PBS implementation.)

A PBS Success Story in Meriden, Connecticut

School-wide PBS was implemented at Washington Middle School in Meriden, Conn., in 2005 to create a more positive climate that included predictable and preventative practices to support student behavior. After two years of PBS implementation, there was a 40% decrease in the number of academic failures within the school.

Recent Publications

- Luiselli, J.K., Putnam, R.F., Handler, M.W., & Feinberg, A. (2005). Whole-school positive behavior support: Effects on student discipline problems and academic performance. *Educational Psychology, 25*, 183-198.
- Putnam, R.F., Handler, M.W., Ramirez-Platt, C.M., & Luiselli, J.K. Improving student bus riding behavior through a whole-school intervention. (2004). *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 36*, 583-590.
- Putnam, R.F., Luiselli, J.K., Handler, M.W., & Jefferson, G.L. (2003). Evaluating student discipline practices in a public school through behavioral assessment of office referrals. *Behavior Modification, 27*, 505-523.
- Putnam, R.F., Luiselli, J.K. & Sunderland, M. (2002). Longitudinal evaluation of behavior support intervention in a public middle school. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 4*, 182-188.
- Putnam, R.F., Luiselli, J.K., Sennett, K., & Malonson, J. (2002). Cost-efficacy analysis of out-of-district special education placements: An evaluative measure of behavior support intervention in public schools. *Journal of Special Education Leadership, 15*, 17-24.
- Luiselli, J.K., Putnam, R.F., & Handler, M.W. (2001). Improving discipline practices in public schools: Description of a whole-school and district-wide model of behavior analysis consultation. *The Behavior Analyst Today, 2*, 18-26.

PBS IN LAWRENCE, MA... continued from front

of school materials, surveys with staff, and discipline data analyses. At the end of the school year, the school-based and district-based PBS team members participated in the PBS School Leadership Training, during which they learned about the conceptual foundation and key components of PBS, and began developing their school-wide behavior support

plans. Dedicated staff continued to meet during the summer in order to have their plans completed and launched in all seven schools at the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year.

Early feedback indicates strong enthusiasm for the initiative and high expectations for a more positive behavioral climate.

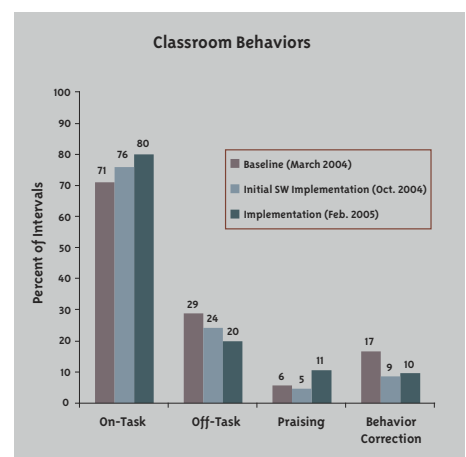
PBS Improves Classroom Experience in Trenton, New Jersey

Implementing school-wide PBS usually results in improvements in student on-task engagement and teacher instructional and behavior support practices. Reinforcing school-wide PBS with classroom-wide practices can lead to even greater success.

At Columbus Elementary School in Trenton, New Jersey, a baseline assessment of randomly selected classrooms revealed moderate levels of on-task student engagement (71%) and a ratio of teacher praise statements to behavior corrections at 6% to 17% (see graph).

Research shows that praise and other forms of positive reinforcement are much more effective than negative feedback (behavior corrections or reprimands) when teachers are responding to student behavior. One measure of successful PBS implementation is a high ratio of praise statements to behavior corrections.

With implementation of school-wide PBS practices at Columbus Elementary, there was an increase in on-task engagement



(76%) and improvement in the ratio of praise statements (5%) to behavior corrections (9%). Furthermore, following teacher training in classroom PBS practices and implementation of both school-wide and classroom-wide PBS, classroom observations revealed higher student on-task engagement (80%) and a 1:1 ratio of praise statements (11%) to behavior corrections (10%). Such changes in teacher-student interactions and student engagement can clearly influence school climate.

ABOUT MAY INSTITUTE

May Institute is a private, nonprofit organization committed to providing the highest standard of behavioral healthcare, educational, and rehabilitative services. Featured in the book "In Search of America's Best Nonprofits" (Jossey-Bass, 1997), May Institute has nearly 200 service locations nationwide, serving more than 25,000 individuals and families each year. An active center of research and training, we maintain affiliations with over 40 universities, hospitals, and agencies worldwide, and have a Professional Advisory Board comprised of leading authorities in the field.

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