

Eye on Evaluation



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POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT IN THE WAKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM: A FOLLOW-UP EVALUATION

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ABSTRACT

As a follow-up to the initial evaluation of Positive Behavior Support (PBS) in the Wake County Public School System, this study uses mixed methods to further investigate inconsistencies in desired outcomes and a lack of difference in results among PBS schools and similar non-PBS schools. Case study results supported the original findings in that additional measures of success were not identified. School staff articulated the use of schoolwide behavioral practices as an important outcome of PBS rather than as a strategy to improve climate, behavior, and achievement. Schools using the START on Time strategy to reduce tardies during class transitions achieved significant improvement after one year. Implementation evaluation results suggest that non-PBS schools have not implemented schoolwide behavioral practices to any great extent.

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is a national initiative to reform the learning environments of schools by establishing expectations, reducing behavioral problems, and supporting academic performance. Within the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS), 102 schools (65% of schools in the district) were identified as PBS schools in the 2008-09 school year. The PBS model offers various strategies to schools that need assistance in dealing with challenging and disruptive student behavior and/or desire to use a positive and schoolwide approach to improve their behavioral support systems. Some WCPSS schools adopted PBS when they opened as new schools to proactively set a positive climate.

Key Topics

Case Study Narratives.....	5
Tardy	
Investigation.....	17
Implementation Analysis	

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The Evaluation & Research (E&R) Department recently conducted an evaluation of the PBS initiative within WCPSS to investigate the implementation efforts of PBS schools and examine their level of goal attainment in fostering a positive school climate, reducing problem student behavior, and improving the academic performance of students (Rhea, 2009). The primary focus of that study centered on PBS schools in Cohort 1, with limited analysis conducted on schools in Cohorts 2 and 3. Unlike most published PBS evaluations, this study established a comparison group for empirical examination.

The quantitative and qualitative analyses conducted for the initial PBS evaluation yielded mixed results. Implementation evaluations showed that most elementary and middle schools had successfully implemented schoolwide behavior practices; however, there was less evidence of PBS schools' success in producing positive and consistent changes in climate, behavioral, and academic outcomes. Although some positive impacts were apparent, no PBS school was successful in achieving all desired outcomes, and in many instances, there was little to no difference in outcomes over time between PBS and comparison schools. When a significant positive change in climate, behavior, or academic achievement did occur, it was more likely to happen at the comparison schools that had not implemented the PBS model.

Since the PBS initiative has a favorable reputation in WCPSS and nationally, the inconsistent and unremarkable results found among PBS schools led to other inquiries. Three research questions generated from the original findings are addressed in this follow-up study. A summary of the methodology used to investigate each question and the results obtained are presented here. Finally, recommendations are enumerated.

Question 1: How do PBS elementary and middle schools define and measure the success of PBS at their schools? Do these measures differ from those investigated in the initial evaluation? What are the specific drivers and restrainers for meeting the desired outcomes?

Quantitative data analyzed in the initial PBS evaluation revealed some positive impact of the initiative on promoting desired outcomes in climate, behavior, and achievement among PBS schools when compared to themselves over time, and limited impact when compared to similar non-PBS schools. Case studies of a representative sample of Cohort 1 PBS schools were conducted in this study to investigate whether the desired outcomes measured in the initial study are the same or different from the outcomes PBS schools claim as measures of success. Each case study included an interview with the school's principal and a focus group discussion with the school's PBS team. Schools were asked to bring experienced teachers as well. These research activities provided school personnel with the opportunity to reflect on the empirical evidence of their school's outcomes that might be attributed to the PBS initiative and to describe any external factors that may have affected PBS implementation and its impact on the desired outcomes.

In the initial evaluation, improvements in student behavior and student achievement were two of the studied outcomes, and universal expectations and behavioral interventions were operationalized as PBS strategies to effect outcomes. The measures of success identified by school personnel at these seven PBS schools were similar, and included improvements in student behavior and academic gains, such as increased instructional time or student achievement. Case

study results also indicate that school staff perceive expectations and interventions to be important outcomes in and of themselves, rather than tools that facilitate desired changes in student outcomes.

The application of schoolwide expectations, use of positive reinforcements, sharing of office referral data, and hiring a new principal are the primary drivers of successful outcomes reported in case study narratives. Restrainers of success were also identified. Staff turnover was a restrainer, often leading to an increased need for refresher training to maintain consistency. Variable staff buy-in of the PBS model was considered a restrainer that often contributed to poor fidelity of implementation. Some schools also mentioned a shift in the composition of their student population due to neighborhood transitions or student assignment that brought in greater numbers of students at risk for behavioral and/or academic support. It is important to note that although personnel changes were often identified as a restrainer, some schools viewed this event as a driver of success. PBS seems to be staff dependent in terms of buy-in, implementation, and long-term consistency of impact.

Question 2: How effective is the START on Time strategy at reducing student tardiness within PBS middle and high schools?

Qualitative information gathered in the first evaluation showed that improving tardy rates was viewed as important to secondary schools. Several middle and high school administrators from PBS schools in Cohorts 1 and 2 cited the START on Time strategy, which encourages early and on-time arrival to school and classes, as an extremely effective PBS strategy for reducing tardy rates at their schools. To empirically examine the effectiveness of this strategy, descriptive and statistical analyses of pre- and post-implementation tardy data were conducted for secondary-level PBS schools that collect and report period attendance and tardy data (Ligon Middle, Broughton High School, and Fuquay-Varina High School).

Given the empirical results of this analysis, it appears that the practice was effective at the three schools. The trend in tardies at Ligon provides a good example of results a school would expect to see from implementation of the START on Time strategy. Ligon experienced a statistical decline in tardy rates the first year of implementation, with continued declines into the second year. Tardy rates at Broughton and Fuquay-Varina prior to implementation of the strategy were higher than the high school district rates, yet each school experienced a significant decline in its average number of tardies the first year of implementation (2006-07), dropping the rates below systemwide levels. Broughton's average tardies remained low into the second implementation year, although Fuquay-Varina experienced a slight increase.

Question 3: To what extent are non-PBS elementary and middle schools implementing schoolwide positive behavior support?

Finally, this study evaluates the presence of behavioral expectation setting within schools that have not implemented PBS. The PBS initiative, when fully implemented, provides schools with a schoolwide model and process for establishing schoolwide expectations, consequences, and positive behavior support practices that will facilitate the accumulation of desired behavioral and academic outcomes. The assumption is that these practices are not evident or at least not codified in non-PBS schools. Given the findings of the initial PBS study (which showed little to

no difference in climate, behavior, and achievement outcomes between PBS and matched comparison schools), further investigation was needed to study whether the similarities among outcome patterns could be attributable to non-PBS schools informally adopting PBS practices or the degree to which PBS represents common practice.

The Schoolwide Evaluation Tool (SET), although designed for PBS schools, was conducted in an amended manner at several comparison schools to examine the extent to which they practice schoolwide behavioral expectation setting and support. Eleven elementary and middle schools that were not participating in the WCPSS PBS initiative during the 2008-09 school year were selected to receive SET evaluations. Four of the schools were identified as comparison schools in the initial evaluation of PBS. Seven of the comparison schools joined the fifth PBS cohort in 2008-09; therefore, new comparison schools were selected for this follow-up study.

Evaluation results show that the implementation of schoolwide positive behavior practices were much less evident among comparison schools than for PBS schools. All non-PBS schools had some type of violations system and some level of decision-making practice in place, whereas only a few had operating systems of expectations and rewards, which is the crux of the PBS initiative. None of the schools achieved the desired SET summary score of 80%.

Comparatively, all but one of the matched PBS schools achieved at least an 80% summary score on the 2007-08 SET evaluation. Thus, the similar patterns of outcomes between PBS and comparison schools do not appear to be attributable to comparison schools informally adopting the PBS philosophy and associated practices. In sum, the findings suggest that PBS practices may not have a measureable impact on the desired climate, behavioral, and achievement outcomes.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made for the PBS initiative within WCPSS:

1. PBS staff are encouraged to help schools understand the district logic model for PBS. This will help ensure that the appropriate programs or strategies are implemented, based on the needs of each school. School staff also need to look beyond initial implementation to long-term outcomes. In addition, PBS staff could emphasize ways to use school data to document success beyond what is measured in the SET.
2. Fidelity of implementation of PBS practices appears to be rather tenuous and staff/leadership- dependent. Instructional leadership and staff buy-in are essential to sustain initiative efforts and reap desired outcomes. Staff turnover, especially in key positions, can greatly impact the success of the initiative. PBS staff and schools should look for ways to make the effort more sustainable and independent of personnel changes both initially and over time.
3. Due to the large number of PBS schools in the district, often coupled with elevated rates of staff turnover, PBS staff are encouraged to revisit the level of support available to schools and encourage schools to become more independent. It is recommended that PBS staff expand universal systems of support through the development of online PBS training and

incorporation of more established measures and methods to document the effects on student and staff outcomes.

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT IN THE WAKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM: A FOLLOW-UP EVALUATION

CASE STUDY NARRATIVES

Fourteen schools composed the first cohort of schools to implement the Positive Behavior Support (PBS) initiative in the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) in 2005-06. The schools began their fourth year of PBS implementation during the 2008-09 school year. Because of their extensive involvement in the PBS initiative, Cohort 1 schools offer the most comprehensive basis for examination of the effectiveness of schoolwide positive behavior support. The initial PBS evaluation (Rhea, 2009) presented evidence indicating that some of the PBS schools in Cohort 1 experienced a significant or a positive change in one or more of the outcome measures at some point since implementation. A few schools made improvements on several of the indicators measuring climate, behavior, and achievement. No PBS school was successful in achieving the desired result within each area.

One purpose of this follow-up evaluation is to understand how PBS schools measure their success and whether the measures differ from those used in the first study. Case studies of five elementary schools and two middle schools from Cohort 1 were conducted in March and April 2009 by an Evaluation and Research (E&R) Department contractor to identify any additional indicators of success not previously captured. The seven schools are representative of the first PBS cohort as they reflect diverse levels of successful outcomes.

Methodology

Each case study consisted of an interview with the school's principal and a focus-group discussion with the school's PBS team. The E&R contractor also requested that principals invite a few teachers—who had worked at the school for at least two years—to participate in the focus group to help place the school's PBS experience in historical context. Four of the seven schools included such participants. The principal interviews included seven questions and lasted about 30 minutes (see Attachment A). Six standard questions were posed for all focus groups (see Attachment B); however, due to the different outcomes experienced by each school, school-specific questions were also asked of each PBS team. These research activities gave school personnel the opportunity to reflect on the empirical evidence of their school's outcomes that might be attributed to the PBS initiative and to describe any external changes that may have affected PBS implementation within their school.

Case Study Results

Preceding each school's case study narrative is a brief summary of the original findings. Climate, behavior, and achievement data as measured in the first study were shared with school teams to serve as context for discussing PBS implementation and successful outcomes. In general, staff perceptions and empirical data offer similar stories of the effects of the PBS initiative; exceptions are noted. Although the narratives offer important insight, the school-specific findings do not represent a monolithic PBS experience and should not be generalized to other participating schools. Schools are not identified by name in the presentation of results.

School 1

Original Longitudinal Findings:

- Student climate at this school increased, whereas teacher climate decreased.
- The third year of implementation showed an increase in suspensions and referrals.
- School-level achievement was down, yet student academic growth tended to be more positive than the matched comparison school.

According to case study narratives, this school was considering the implementation of a schoolwide behavior management plan prior to their knowledge of the PBS initiative. After learning about this strategy and the opportunity to participate, the principal presented the idea to the staff. The initiative's positive focus, involvement of all teachers and staff, and the promise of schoolwide training piqued the staff's interest in joining the first cohort of participating schools.

Since implementation in 2005-06, the school has established a set of positive guidelines and developed a common language for communicating expectations. All staff—including teacher assistants, bus drivers, and custodians—are involved in development of positive behavior expectations for students, and all students are held accountable for their behavior. The rules are posted throughout the school and are taught each year by the principal and custodians during the first week of classes. Staff also facilitate student knowledge of the expectations through the use of songs, dance, and reading material. Respondents reported that PBS encourages interaction among staff members and between student groups, which in turn promotes relationships throughout the school. These relationships have been vital for creating trusting relationships with parents. In turn, parents have been very supportive of the initiative and many assist with implementation or serve on the PBS team.

The PBS team believes that PBS has positively impacted teachers' attitudes, although teacher climate, as measured in the initial study, was shown to have declined over the years. Teachers are more cognizant about the relationship between student motivation and behavior. An enhanced understanding of the motives behind a student's behavior allows the teachers to better assess the situation, apply appropriate consequences, and positively affect future behavior. Positive reinforcements appear to motivate students. Members of the PBS team said that "students will do just about anything for a compliment card," which is a public recognition of exemplary behavior. School personnel monitor behavioral referrals via the Schoolwide Information System (SWIS). Data are collected and entered into SWIS and reports are disseminated to the PBS team, staff, and the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) each month. Staff members can use the database to generate reports that show the type of behavioral referrals and the location and time of day of the incidents. This information was reported as highly valuable to school personnel.

During the 2007-08 school year, the school experienced a decline in school climate and an increase in referrals and suspensions. Case study participants attributed these changes to an influx of students with severe behavioral difficulties from neighborhoods that had shifted to more transient populations. School personnel were able to identify that many of the behavioral incidents were occurring on the bus. As such, appropriate bus-riding interventions were implemented, as well as classroom behavior contracts and assistance from the Student Support Team (SST) at the school. Additionally, interventions such as functional behavior assessments, working with teachers, and collaboration with parents early in the year are in place to help

students with severe discipline issues. Overall, PBS team members believe that PBS has helped and will continue to help improve student achievement by creating more positive student behavior, reducing the time teachers devote to discipline, and promoting more classroom instructional time. One respondent cited the following example to describe how behavior, achievement, and PBS are connected.

A student transferred in from another school where he tested at Achievement Level I. Teachers and staff made an effort to support this student and build a relationship with him. By the end of the year, this student moved to Achievement Level III. The student said the teachers at his previous school were mean and they did not like him, which is why he couldn't succeed. The improvement in his school climate helped to improve his achievement, which is the goal of PBS.

School 2

Original Longitudinal Findings:

- This school experienced positive changes in student and teacher climate, office referrals, and suspensions.
- Reading and mathematics proficiency increased since pre-implementation; however, fewer students were making growth in both subjects.

Administrators and PBS team members concur that the PBS initiative was well received at this elementary school. Teachers felt supported by the administration and were recognized for their own positive behavior. Staff buy-in was reported to be 100% by the principal, although knowledge of program processes varied. This high level of support may be the result of compliance more than concurrence. The message sent from administrators to staff is that PBS practices are not optional and should be observed at all times. However, the administration also ensures that assistance is available to any teacher who needs help teaching or implementing the schoolwide behavior expectations.

According to respondents, the PBS model for establishing and enforcing schoolwide expectations has helped to create a common language and consistency throughout the school. Likewise the initiative has been effective in providing more structured daily procedures, has offered stability when the school converted to a year-round calendar, and is useful during student and staff orientations. The proactive PBS philosophy has also contributed to a positive shift in the school's culture. Respondents reported that students like the established reward system and have internalized the schoolwide expectations, which has led to a "calmer environment." More teachers understand that their behavior, "doing and putting things in a positive way," reinforces this calmer atmosphere. In effect, staff put more energy into focusing on positive rather than negative behavior, and refresher PBS training is requested from the district to maintain this positive energy throughout the school year.

The school received a new principal in 2007. She reinforced implementation efforts by adding PBS items to every staff meeting agenda and posting the school's expectations in every classroom. The PBS team has developed a formal process for teaching the schoolwide expectations, and teachers instruct students two times a year on what the expectations are in each area of the school. The posters complement the ongoing reinforcement of the expectations in the

classrooms. The PBS team looks at SWIS data once per quarter to identify general trends of misconduct in the school, and they share the findings with the entire staff once or twice a year.

Respondents reported that office referrals tend to decline when PBS is discussed at staff meetings and when SWIS data are presented and analyzed regularly. Staff use the database to study current data and then set goals to reduce referrals (by a certain percentage) within the next year. The administrators also reported that SWIS has helped staff identify those students who may benefit from established interventions, such as a buddy system, behavior contracts, parental involvement, and Behavior Intervention Plans completed by the school psychologist.

PBS practices are viewed as positive influencers of academic achievement. PBS has facilitated more time at this school for engaged teaching and learning and reduced the time needed to deal with behavioral issues. One staff member reported that PBS has impacted students' self-esteem because "teachers are speaking in a positive way while having academic pull-outs leading to more academic success. Furthermore, lower referrals continue as a result of having more time to deal with academic struggles." However, the school is still working to raise the percentage of students making academic growth. An influx of students from transient families has lowered overall test scores and increased the need for additional English as a Second Language and Title I staff. Parental collaboration and support are seen as paramount in helping to improve attendance rates and increase student growth at this school.

School 3

Original Longitudinal Findings:

- Declines in student and teacher climate were apparent at this school. Teacher turnover was also high in 2005-06 and 2007-08.
- Office referrals increased, but suspensions fluctuated and were generally lower since pre-implementation.
- Achievement outcomes in mathematics improved, although declines were apparent in reading.

PBS team respondents at this elementary schools said that "there was no resistance" to the implementation of PBS in 2005-06; staff were told "we're going to do it, and everyone got on board." According to participant accounts, the initial implementation of PBS occurred due to an administrative directive with limited personal and ideological investment from the staff. The PBS team never flourished, nor was the PBS philosophy fully adopted. The goal of the first implementation year was to modify grade-level behavior plans in a more positive direction. Participants perceive that PBS "was not needed" at the school during the first two years of implementation.

By 2007-08, the school had experienced staff turnover, a shift in its student population, and a change in leadership. At this time, attention was turned to PBS as something that was actually needed, and the new principal decided to renew the school's commitment to the initiative. The first steps in this renewal were to empower staff to take ownership of the initiative and to establish an active PBS team. Change has been deliberate and teachers have been reticent to volunteer time as the PBS chair, although a PBS team has been established.

According to respondents, behavior matrices are posted throughout the school, making schoolwide expectations visible to students and staff. Teachers are also expected to incorporate the matrices and expectations into their individual lesson plans to ensure that their students are taught the expectations at the beginning of the year. The current principal reported that staff motivation to consistently enforce expectations dwindles throughout the school year. In addition, the school has worked with a different PBS coach each year, resulting in a feeling of inconsistency among the staff. The school has established processes of re-teaching PBS practices to remind staff and students of the importance of the initiative. Despite certain shortcomings, respondents say that the schoolwide expectations do provide a shared focus and that PBS has made students and staff more aware of having a positive mindset when dealing with discipline issues.

The SWIS database's presentation of behavioral referrals and suspensions has helped staff identify a small number of students with severe behavior issues. Interventions such as individual behavior plans and behavior contracts in class are available for these students. Mentoring has been attempted, but staff generally believe that it has not been a beneficial intervention. The current principal views SWIS data, but overall results are only discussed every few months in PBS team meetings and are not typically presented to the staff.

According to one respondent, the recent influx of students who were "more inner-city than our traditional rural population" resulted in "culture shock" at the school. This shift in student population was attributed to students coming from other schools that did not make Adequate Yearly Progress and to transfer students from discontented families of year-round base schools. One PBS team member reported that there is no "correlation between achievement and PBS—since the population continues to change we can't tell what helps and what doesn't since students aren't here long enough to compare interventions." Staff do not believe that making improvements in student behavior will necessarily lead to higher achievement.

PBS team respondents conceptualized the 2008-09 school year as their second year of PBS implementation, rather than their fourth, and they continue to make adjustments. The PBS team currently meets at least one time per month in an effort to discuss ways to adjust to its population changes and improve climate and student behavior. The team is planning to discuss the discipline referral process with the staff to flesh out differences between minor and major referrals, with the expectation that more consistent definitions will lead to more standardized reporting across teachers. Staff are generating ideas to establish a formal method of sharing data and address minor and major behavior infractions throughout the school.

School 4

Original Longitudinal Findings:

- This school experienced a significant and positive change in student and teacher climate. Teacher turnover was high prior to PBS implementation and has been lower since, with a slight increase in 2007-08.
- Office behavior referrals declined considerably, whereas suspension rates increased each year until a decline occurred in 2007-08.
- Achievement in mathematics improved; although the matched comparison school experienced more favorable changes in both reading and mathematics.

Although this elementary school is part of the first cohort of schools to implement PBS in 2005-06, respondents said that the initiative was not introduced until January of that year with much of the spring semester devoted to training and establishing procedures. Formal implementation began during the 2006-07 school year. Prior to PBS implementation, focus-group respondents described the school as having severe problems with student behavior, attendance issues, and inconsistent teacher expectations. In 2006-07, the school experienced a change in leadership. According to the current principal, she was not aware upon being hired that the school was a PBS school. She perceived buy-in to be non-existent; however, PBS team members who were present during the 2005-06 school year recall enthusiasm and support of program.

School personnel observe a variety of implementation practices, which were assembled after the change in leadership. There is a formal process for teaching schoolwide expectations. Part of the process incorporates posting the expectations in every classroom, conducting school-based “field trips” in September, January, and April to explain and model expectations at each location in the school, creating and using lesson plans associated with each expectation, and reciting the school’s expectation motto during morning announcements. Teachers also have morning duty stations to monitor and redirect student behavior. Additionally, SWIS data are pulled every 4-6 weeks and shared at staff meetings.

Under the leadership of a new principal, PBS practices offering proactive and positive responses to discipline issues replaced more traditional punitive actions. For example, an in-school suspension room was converted to a celebration room, and three “tantrum rooms” are no longer used for this purpose. PBS team members also attribute the cultural shift in their school (from a hostile environment to one in which students and staff feel loved and valued) to the creation and enforcement of schoolwide expectations. Student and teacher climate is also reported to have become more positive over the past three years. Teachers feel supported by their colleagues and receive acknowledgement and rewards from the principal. Similarly, students are recognized through individual rewards, class recognitions, and monthly grade-level celebrations.

The student population at the school is described as “highly transient,” with new students receiving a disproportionate number of suspensions due to the amount of time needed to adjust to the school’s expectations. Regardless, suspensions have declined since 2006-07. Staff attributed this change to the implementation of PBS-based interventions, such as mentoring programs, behavior charts, and intrinsic and tangible rewards. Other changes not attributed to PBS have occurred at the school, such as a decline in student enrollment that has resulted in smaller class size and improvements in teacher turnover. Additionally, the school has implemented various

practices that have helped to increase student success schoolwide, including morning tutoring with teachers, after-school Title I tutoring services, monthly parent nights offering dinner and information on an academic skill or a behavior program, a buddy system between teachers and students, and a renewal of the school building and grounds. Additionally, staff have invested energy and resources into expanding parental involvement at the school to create a family climate and generate support at home for behaviorally challenged students.

Respondents reported dramatic changes in student behavior compared to two or three years ago. One respondent states that “my kids know there are procedures for behavior—they know it and follow it.” Respondents also pinpoint teacher accountability and responsibility as influencers of fewer referrals, and this accountability and resultant consistency makes “children feel loved and valued. They have teachers and a principal who believe in them.” Teachers attribute the decreases in problem behavior to improved achievement. For instance, students are not losing instructional time due to being sent to the office for misbehavior, and teachers spend less time correcting behavior. As one respondent stated, “of course behavior is connected to achievement—our scores are up!”

School 5

Original Longitudinal Findings:

- Student climate has remained high between 2005-06 and 2007-08, and teacher climate has been fairly stable as well. Teacher turnover increased considerably in 2006-07 and 2007-08.
- After improvements in suspension rates in the first two years, suspensions rose considerably in 2007-08. Average discipline referrals increased over time.
- Reading proficiency improved slightly in 2006-07, but fewer students were making growth.

This elementary school’s third year of PBS implementation (2007-08) is characterized by one PBS team member as “our third-year slump.” This downturn was attributed to personnel turnover, which led to subsequent challenges. In 2007-08, the school received a new principal, many new teachers, and a new PBS chair. That year several teachers left the school—which, according to staff participants, negatively impacted school climate—and the PBS chair was changed from the assistant principal to another staff person. As a result of these changes, respondents said that PBS and behavioral data were no longer priority topics at staff meetings, communication waned, some behavior consequences were dropped, and teacher climate declined.

Structural factors also contributed to fewer positive changes in desired PBS outcomes in 2007-08. The school underwent major construction, which physically divided the campus and personnel. This division negatively impacted collaboration, behavior management, and academic engagement. Staff also felt frustration with the inconsistency of district support; they have worked with a different PBS coach each year.

PBS team members mentioned schoolwide PBS practices, such as establishing a discipline system that rewards positive behaviors and creating a common language of procedures, as paramount to the effectiveness of the initiative. The schoolwide expectations are posted throughout the school and recited daily, and staff constantly observe and redirect students. Respondents were excited at their success in improving and maintaining a positive student climate throughout the PBS implementation process. Positive office referrals are seen as

particularly effective in creating a student environment of positive versus negative reinforcement. The principal stated that she “doesn’t focus on the punitive, but instead puts a responsibility on correcting behavior back on the child.” She also makes an effort to attend PBS team meetings, monitors SWIS data and shares it with staff a couple of times a year, and reviews new strategies before introducing them to staff. According to staff, office referral and suspension data dropped during the first two years of PBS implementation but rose considerably in the third year. However, original findings showed increases in office referrals over time. The assistant principal did report that staff may have been insufficiently trained on the new discipline referral and reporting process. PBS coaches have worked with staff to implement interventions, such as a buddy system to promote student-teacher relationships, for students with severe behavioral issues.

The school chose to implement PBS to gain a discipline plan that would help students achieve schoolwide. The assistant principal believes strongly that PBS helped bring the school out of school improvement. This association between PBS and achievement stems from the perception that the students are happier because they know the expectations and see them modeled by teachers. Consequently, teachers are able to spend more time teaching and less time redirecting problem behavior.

Despite the transitions, the school’s commitment to the PBS philosophy has not diminished and there is an overall perception that the school would be less successful without it. Students and staff are no longer physically separated and the renovated building has re-established the school community. The assistant principal has resumed a place on the PBS team. Finally, lesson plans for teaching expectations in each area of the school are being developed for staff to use in the 2009-10 school year.

School 6

Original Longitudinal Findings:

- This school experienced improvements in both student and teacher climate.
- Trends in behavior outcomes were positive, especially the statistically significant decrease in suspensions that have occurred since PBS implementation.
- Positive change in achievement was less evident, with more favorable outcomes at the matched comparison school.

Prior to PBS implementation in 2005-06, this middle school used a “strike system” to deal with discipline issues. Students who consistently followed teachers’ expectations received little to no acknowledgement. Since PBS implementation, the school’s culture has shifted from a focus on “infractions and consequences to expectations and celebrations.” The principal, assistant principal, and PBS team members reported that recognizing and celebrating the positive behavior of students is one of the most important changes that has occurred as a result of their participation in the PBS initiative. Other changes that have occurred as a result of PBS include establishing schoolwide consistency in expectations, terminology, and rewards and consequences; staff use of SWIS data to determine areas of need; and students’ keeping records of their behavior and taking ownership of their actions.

During its first year, the PBS team focused on implementing strategies and mediating teacher

feedback to counteract a perceived backlash at having “another program” that would replace practices in use at that time (the principal mentioned that the school was using another approach, which she preferred to PBS). The PBS team also focused on creating a behavioral matrix with the intent to implement a schoolwide expectation system at the beginning of the second implementation year. Lesson plans were also created to explicitly teach the expectations at the beginning of the school year and as needed.

The assistant principal and PBS team agreed that staff buy-in increased during the third year of implementation. Staff were given read-only access to SWIS data and began to see the positive effect of PBS on discipline issues. Consequently, staff started using SWIS data to track and address problem areas. If data indicated that a specific behavior occurred repeatedly, perhaps at a certain time or place, teachers were expected to re-teach expectations. Teachers also reported using the data to address student needs, design behavioral contracts, and initiate discussions with parents.

Respondents identified restrainers—such as tertiary-level challenges, the amount of paperwork associated with entering referral data into SWIS, and the disparity of achievement levels among entering students—that have reduced their success in meeting desired outcomes. Administrators and PBS team members concur that having schoolwide expectations has positively affected most students, but those top 5% continue to be a challenge and comprise the majority of referrals and suspensions, even when they receive behavior support from teachers.

The assistant principal connected the school’s increased academic success to PBS, although this perception is not supported by entirely supported by the school’s data. She stated that “PBS has allowed a feeling of student safety and comfort towards their teachers, classmates, and school, which is translated towards testing and a resulting higher level of achievement.” Doing well academically has become a more “socially acceptable” behavior in the school’s culture because students may get recognized for their success. Additionally, reduced behavior problems have translated into fewer students missing instructional time and students spending more time learning. Respondents stated that the common language of expectations created through PBS is the key to schoolwide consistency. A current goal is for that consistency to grow throughout the school and into the community. As one focus group member stated, “Expectations are extremely high at this school. We aren't going to give up on a behavior; we expect students to follow our expectations and will step in to ensure that it happens.”

School 7

Original Longitudinal Findings:

- Student climate declined in 2006-07 and then rose in 2007-08. Teacher climate and turnover have been unfavorable since 2004-05.
- Office referral and suspension rates initially improved, but rose again in 2007-08.
- Academic success was less evident, especially compared to the matched non-PBS school.

Respondents at this middle school described their first implementation year of PBS as one with a great deal of momentum and “everyone buying in.” Since that time, teachers have not seen the “immediate” results they expected and implementation efforts have faltered. Staff turnover, the amount of paperwork perceived as necessary for completing office referrals, and confusion in

distinguishing major behavioral infractions from minor ones have also contributed to less support.

This school's culture is very diverse, and PBS is implemented, taught, and monitored differently throughout the school. Behavior has improved among those students whose teachers consistently teach expectations and enforce them with rewards and consequences. Consistency is not the norm; however, due to variations in teacher's implementation plans and knowledge about the initiative. The principal mentioned that teachers have to be reminded that PBS includes teaching and re-teaching expectations. Contrary to the perception of inconsistency, respondents believe that students know the schoolwide expectations. In order to improve consistency between teachers and across grade levels, the PBS team and the leadership team created a consequence matrix, based on the understanding that it should apply to positive behaviors as well as negative.

PBS team members reported that PBS had an initial negative impact on teacher morale because it was not working in the time frame or in the manner they expected. This disenchantment caused some teachers to request school transfers. On the other hand, new teachers have come in with high expectations because of their knowledge or previous positive experiences with PBS, and many of the tenured teachers are happy with the initiative. A common goal mentioned by the principal and PBS team members is to improve teacher climate. The principal made reference to Governor Easley's Teacher Working Conditions Survey and acknowledged that teachers have not "been happy." The school has experienced a high rate of teacher turnover the past two years, but rates have recently stabilized. PBS team members believe that teachers, who are pulled in many directions, can become overwhelmed with the problems of specific students. Student achievement is lower and "teachers are not giving students opportunity through positive strategies to correct, calm down, and get back to instruction." It was suggested that teachers could benefit from training on student behavior management and applicable techniques to manage their own behavior and become positive role models.

SWIS data are infrequently shared at staff meetings, and staff mentioned that data are often not up to date because of the large number of referrals that need to be entered into SWIS. The school started using the Student Assistance Module (SAM), in addition to SWIS, to track and process referrals. SAM does not communicate with SWIS, so the issue of accessing current information to share with each other and parents remains a challenge for teachers. A goal for 2009-10 is to regularly update data to share with staff in a timely manner.

In spite of respondents' references to a lack of current data, they reported that overall referrals have declined. When referrals do occur, they tend to be more severe and to result in suspensions. Nevertheless, there has been a reduction in the proportion of students with severe behavioral issues. One respondent reported that "when we started PBS, the top 5% (tertiary level) was more like 12%. Now it is around the 5% level." Interventions such as a mentoring program, assistance from SST, counselor group work and classroom-based behavior contracts are available to these students. Other non-PBS generated activities available to all students include Paideia seminars, Manning tutorials after-school academic programs, student support from surrounding churches, and other mentoring and tutoring initiatives. In 2008-09, the school also began a student-teacher advisory team to complement rather than compete with PBS, and this has resulted in enhanced relationships between students and staff.

Respondents expressed a need to start the PBS implementation process again, primarily because so many new staff members have joined the school since 2005-06. The principal is working with the PBS coach to realign goals for re-implementation. One goal is to increase parental involvement and building relationships that support both behavior and academic success. As the assistant principal stated “We have got to go backwards before we can forward – so that everyone (especially the new teachers) is on the same page with the same vision.”

Case Study Findings Summary

A summary of the perceptions and impressions reported by case study participants at each school, organized by measures of success, drivers, and restrainers of outcomes, is presented in Table 1. There are several common measures of success that principals and PBS team members from the first cohort of schools attribute to PBS implementation. They include establishment of universal schoolwide expectations, improved student behavior and better alignment of interventions for students identified with severe behavioral problems, and academic gains, such as increased instructional time or student achievement. Common drivers of successful outcomes were also apparent in the case study narratives.

1. The consistent application of schoolwide expectations was mentioned in almost all the case studies as a driver for improved student behavior, which was often perceived to result in more instructional time and improved student achievement.
2. Four of the seven schools indicated that use of positive reinforcements was important for enforcing schoolwide expectations and promoting positive student behavior. At these schools, expecting appropriate behavior and rewarding students accordingly were viewed as more influential for improving student behavior than simply reprimanding students for behavioral infractions.
3. Use of the SWIS database and frequent presentation of results to school staff was commonly mentioned in the case studies as contributing to the alignment of behavioral interventions to the needs of students. The SWIS database facilitates the identification of students with severe and/or persistent behavioral problems who may then be targeted to receive appropriate interventions to curb problem behavior. Regular examination of trends in office referrals can also alert staff to any problem areas in the school or provide evidence of improvement that calls for a celebration of success.
4. Six of the seven schools received a new principal between the 2005-06 and 2007-08 school years. Information collected in the case studies at two of the schools described the new principal as an agent of positive change in PBS implementation. The principal, with his or her leadership, support, and vision for the school, was the driving force for these schools to make the necessary implementation adjustments to promote successful outcomes.

Restrainers of success were also identified in the case studies. Staff turnover was a restrainer, often leading to an increased need for refresher training to maintain consistency, as well as variable staff buy-in of the PBS model, which might contribute to poor fidelity of implementation. Four schools mentioned a shift in the composition of their student population due to neighborhood transitions or student assignment, which brought in greater numbers of students at risk for behavioral and/or academic support. Individual schools discussed other external factors that hindered the success of the PBS initiative, such as building construction or a

break in continuity of district support because of frequent changes in PBS coach assignments.

Table 1
Case Study Findings for Cohort 1 PBS Schools

	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4	School 5	School 6	School 7
Measures of Success							
1. Establishment of universal schoolwide expectations	√	√	√	√	√	√	
2. Improved student behavior	√	√		√	√		√
3. Better alignment of behavioral interventions	√	√	√		√		√
4. Academic gains (instructional time or student achievement)	√	√		√	√	√	
Drivers of Successful Outcomes							
1. Application of schoolwide expectations	√	√	√	√	√	√	
2. Focus on and use of positive reinforcements	√			√	√	√	
3. Use and sharing of SWIS data	√	√	√	√		√	
4. Change in principal		√		√			
Restrainers of Successful Outcomes							
1. Staff turnover			√		√		√
2. Variable staff endorsement		√	√			√	√
3. Shift in student population	√	√	√	√			

Note: √ indicates the perception or belief reported by study respondents at each school.

No unique measures of success were identified within the case studies, supporting the results of the original study. Improvements in student behavior and academics, two of the studied outcomes in the first evaluation, were also mentioned in this study. Sometimes the specific indicators matched exactly (e.g., fewer office referrals and suspensions) and sometimes they did not (e.g., a more positive student attitude toward school or following schoolwide behavior expectations as indicators of improved student behavior). Staff often did not distinguish student behavioral changes from student climate changes. These student-level indicators were often discussed synonymously. Although many schools analyze behavioral infraction data using SWIS, staff did not typically mention other methods used to monitor outcomes changes. Overall, the initial study presented more empirical data than schools tended to mention. Academic gains were more loosely defined when compared to the first study’s focus on reading and mathematics growth and proficiency. Focus group participants discussed perceived increases in instructional time and general improvements in student achievement.

TARDY INVESTIGATION: THE START ON TIME STRATEGY

Background

Dr. Randall Sprick, an educator and trainer, founded his company *Safe & Civil Schools* more than 30 years ago. *Safe & Civil Schools* (see Web site www.safeandcivilschools.com) is committed to improving school climate and culture by offering a variety of programs, services, and materials that schools and districts can use to implement PBS strategies. In a recent article by Sprick and Daniels (2007), teachers report a waste of four to eight minutes of instructional time at the beginning of class due to students coming in late. Students may be tardy for a variety of reasons; their desire to socialize, coupled with few positive incentives for getting to class on time and no immediate consequences for being late, can lead to tardiness. Other factors that can contribute to students' lateness for class are structural barriers and organizational patterns within a school that obstruct traffic flow. In addition to reducing instructional time and impacting the learning environment of students, tardiness can negatively affect the climate of a school.

When students are unsupervised in hallways and restrooms after the tardy bell rings—whether at the beginning of school or during passing periods—there is ample opportunity for fighting, bullying, and other misconduct. This misbehavior can carry over into the classroom, thus wasting even more instructional time (Sprick and Daniels, 2007).

To help create Safe Transitions and Reduce Tardies (START) in middle and high schools, Dr. Sprick designed the “START on Time” strategy. This strategy offers a schoolwide system for reducing tardiness and improving instructional delivery during each class period in the school day. PBS schools nationwide use this practice, and PBS coaches within WCPSS present it at annual trainings on universal strategies that can positively impact school climate and student behavior.

The START on Time strategy is a collaborative effort of administrators, teachers, and other staff, each of whom plays a vital role in effectively implementing the strategy. Tardy sweeps are the key to preventing late students from interrupting teaching time. Members of the positive sweep team (i.e., teachers with a planning period who become the sweepers) circulate through their designated zones in hallways, restrooms, and other common areas, greeting students and providing positive supervision. They also “sweep up” misbehaving students and students who have not made it to class on time and escort them to a “sweep” room, where the students receive immediate consequences. Positive sweep team members then escort tardy students to their classrooms, ensuring that the students do not disrupt instruction when they enter. When all students have been escorted to their classroom or the office, the sweepers may resume their planning period tasks. After the strategy has been successfully implemented, the sweeps should take approximately five to ten minutes to complete each period. At least one administrator, counselor, or security person is also expected to be present in the hallways. This person assists positive sweep team members during passing periods and the first five minutes of class by escorting students with severe behavioral issues to the office and following up with any necessary paperwork. This process is repeated during each transition period in the school day.

Sprick and Daniels (2007) suggest that to give the strategy an optimum chance for success,

schools should identify a need for the strategy, staff should be oriented to the strategy and understand how implementation will occur at their school, and student expectations should be established prior to implementation. It is common for administrators and/or staff to perceive that their school has issues with student safety and/or has an extreme tardy problem; however, an empirical need for the START on Time strategy should be identified prior to implementation. Estimating or keeping records of the amount of instructional time that teachers lose to handling tardies and reviewing historical and current tardy data are important steps in establishing a need for the START of Time strategy. These data will also become the baseline on which to compare post-implementation data. After the strategy is implemented, monthly or quarterly records of tardiness should be maintained, as well as a record of behavior referrals, incident reports, and suspensions.

Successful implementation of the strategy requires that staff members understand the START on Time process and how it will be implemented at their school. Effective implementation is more likely if a school creates a team that consists of administrators, teachers, and perhaps parents and students who plan and spearhead the implementation process. Ideally, the PBS team established at each PBS school will accept these responsibilities. Team members should also ensure that all staff members understand their responsibilities in implementing the strategy. The team should identify a progressive sequence of consequences for tardiness and determine ways to offer positive feedback to students who arrive on time. A school must ascribe a consequence to each tardy: for example, a first tardy may result in a note home with the student, the consequence for a second tardy may be a note home and school-based public service, and so on. Positive feedback can be in any form. It may consist of a lottery with daily/ weekly/monthly drawings for teacher-made prizes (homework pass, computer time, etc.) or school-made prizes (dance or athletic event tickets, public recognition, etc.).

Finally, prior to implementation, the team must identify student expectations for passing periods and design lessons to teach these expectations. They should also determine when the expectations will be presented to students: at the start of a new school year, during the first week or in the middle of school year, or several days before the procedures begin. It is also important for the team to prepare a parent letter to send home with students emphasizing the importance of starting class on time and detailing the consequences of being tardy.

According to Sprick and Daniels (2007), START on Time works well for several reasons.

- Escorting students to class removes the socialization aspect of tardiness by reducing the amount of attention tardy students receive when they enter the classroom.
- Teachers and students get the message that uninterrupted class time is valuable and the consequences for interruptions due to tardies are consistent and immediate.
- A large number of adults are visible and present in the hallways to assist in traffic flow and supervision of students.
- Non-teaching staff and teachers with planning periods handle the behavior issues for their colleagues, thereby eliminating the need for classroom teachers to handle tardies.

When consistently implemented and practiced, this strategy is designed to significantly reduce

tardies in a relatively short amount of time, as well as reduce office referrals and suspensions, increase instructional time by eliminating the interruptions of dealing with tardy students, improve school climate and safety, and align with positive behavior support systems of expectations and rewards (Sprick and Daniels, 2007).

Methodology

Another purpose of this follow-up study is to empirically examine the effectiveness of the START on Time strategy within participating WCPSS schools. Improvement in tardy rates was not analyzed in the initial PBS evaluation but was viewed as important to secondary schools based on qualitative interview results. Several middle and high school administrators from PBS schools in Cohorts 1 and 2 cited the START on Time practice as an extremely effective PBS strategy for reducing tardy rates at their schools.

PBS coaches reported that 11 PBS middle and high schools in WCPSS were using the START on Time strategy as of the 2008-09 school year (see Attachment C). Ligon Middle School, Broughton High School and Fuquay-Varina High School, the first schools in the district to implement this tardy-reducing strategy in 2006-07, collect and report tardy data per class period. The number of class periods a student is enrolled in during the year determines the maximum amount of times that students may be counted as tardy. The volume of potential tardies that students may accumulate at these schools creates the ideal environment for the implementation of effective tardy-reducing strategies. Because the number of possible class periods in a school year and the procedures for reporting tardies varies somewhat across schools, data are examined and compared across school years within a school rather than between schools. This decision does not dismiss the possibility that the accuracy of data reporting may vary by teacher and may be inconsistent across school years; nevertheless, it is assumed that this variation is random.

Descriptive and statistical analyses were conducted on the number of tardies reported per class period at Ligon Middle and Broughton and Fuquay-Varina High Schools during school years 2004-05, 2005-06, 2006-07, and 2007-08. This range of dates allowed for comparisons to be made between pre- and post-implementation of the START on Time strategy. A statistical test of significance was performed at the school level to determine whether the change in the average number of tardies per student between the last year of pre-implementation and the first year of implementation significantly decreased. It should be noted that Ligon and Fuquay-Varina did not officially begin implementation of START on Time until midway through the first year of implementation. It was not possible to analyze the impact of START on Time at the other schools because either post-implementation data were not yet available or tardy data were only available centrally on a daily basis.

Tardy Results

As shown in Table 2, Ligon, Broughton, and Fuquay-Varina have experienced very modest changes in student membership; however, the number of tardies reported per period at each school has notably diminished since implementation of the START on Time strategy. Figure 1 shows the general tardy trend among the schools that indicates a decline in the average number of tardies per student over four years (2004-05 through 2007-08). Each of the schools experienced a statistically significant decline in the average number of tardies in the first year

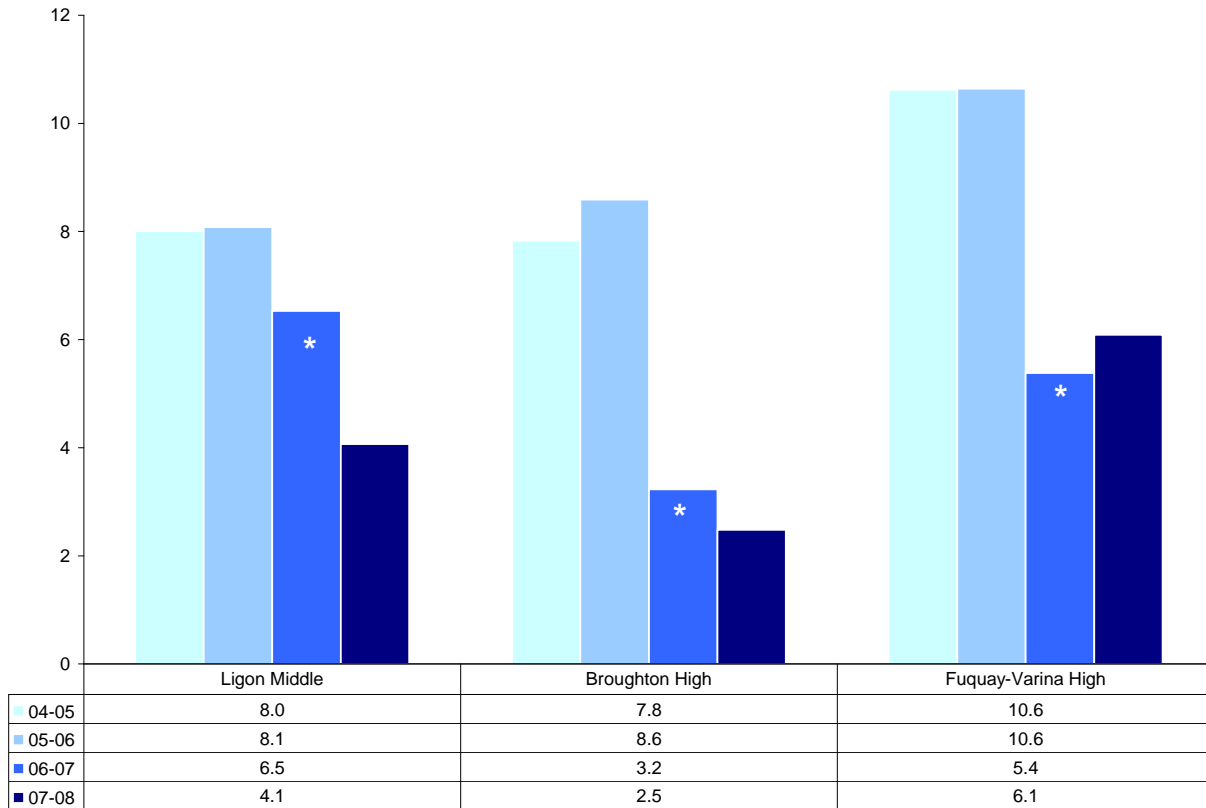
that they implemented the START on Time strategy.

- Ligon Middle School reduced its tardies by half between pre-implementation years (~8,400) and the last year of post-implementation (4,431). Since implementation of the strategy in January of 2006, Ligon’s tardy rate has declined.
- The number of tardies at Broughton High School dropped by more than half during its first year of implementation in 2006-07 and continued to drop in 2007-08. Between 2005-06 and 2007-08, there was a 70% decline in tardies. Broughton has experienced sizable annual reductions in average tardies per student since implementation.
- Compared to its pre-implementation years, Fuquay-Varina High School experienced about a 50% reduction in its reported number of tardies in 2006-07, despite the fact that implementation did not begin until more than halfway through the school year. It also had a considerable rate reduction in 2006-07. The average number of tardies started to rise in 2007-08, yet remained considerably below pre-implementation levels.

Table 2
Period Tardy Data for START on Time Schools, 2004-05 to 2007-08

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
All WCPSS High Schools				
Total number of reported tardies	234,339	260,430	276,750	289,771
Total number of students	30,947	32,765	34,708	36,220
Average number of tardies	7.57	7.95	7.97	8.00
Ligon Middle School	<i>Pre-implementation</i>		<i>Post-implementation</i>	
Total number of reported tardies	8,424	8,448	7,027	4,431
Total number of students	1,052	1,045	1,076	1,088
Range of tardies per student	0-67	0-86	0-70	0-57
% students with zero tardies	12%	14%	15%	22%
Broughton High School	<i>Pre-implementation</i>		<i>Post-implementation</i>	
Total number of reported tardies	16,054	6,781	6,781	5,127
Total number of students	2,051	2,097	2,097	2,070
Range of tardies per student	0-150	0-38	0-38	0-48
% students with zero tardies	19%	29%	29%	36%
Fuquay-Varina High School	<i>Pre-implementation</i>		<i>Post-implementation</i>	
Total number of reported tardies	15,841	17,191	8,626	10,141
Total number of students	1,492	1,616	1,602	1,664
Range of tardies per student	0-80	0-103	0-64	0-66
% students with zero tardies	11%	10%	22%	19%

Figure 1
Average Number of Tardies Reported per Student, 2004-05 to 2007-08



Note: * = a statistically significant change in the average number of tardies per student between the last year of pre-implementation and the first year of implementation. T-test results are significant at the $p < 0.01$ level. Implementation at Ligon was in January 2007 and in March of the same year at Fuquay-Varina.

Summary of Tardy Results

Given the empirical examination of pre- and post-implementation tardy rates, it appears that the START on Time practice was effective at the three participating schools that collect and report period attendance and tardy data. The trend in tardies at Ligon provides an example of results a school would expect to see from implementation of this tardy-reducing strategy. This school experienced a statistical decline in tardy rates the first year of implementation with continual declines into the second year. The tardy rates at Broughton and Fuquay-Varina high schools prior to implementation of the strategy were higher than the high school district rates. Each school experienced a significant decline in its average number of tardies the first year of implementation (2006-07), a decline that dropped the rates below high schools systemwide. Broughton’s average tardies have remained low into the second implementation year, although Fuquay-Varina experienced a slight increase.

IMPLEMENTATION ANALYSIS

Background

The Schoolwide Evaluation Tool (SET) is a research instrument developed by the National Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions Center to assist evaluators in determining the extent to which a school is implementing schoolwide positive behavior support. The SET results can be used by schools to determine annual goals for schoolwide effective behavior support, to evaluate ongoing efforts toward schoolwide behavior support, to design and revise procedures as needed, and to compare annual accomplishments toward schoolwide effective behavior support.

The SET evaluates a total of 28 research questions across seven schoolwide PBS practices, including expectations defined, behavioral expectations taught, acknowledgement procedures, correction procedures, monitoring and evaluation, management, and district level support. Each evaluation consists of a review of the school's permanent products, including the discipline handbook, school improvement plans for safety related goals, instructional materials, and meeting minutes; school observations; and staff and student interviews. It is conducted by two evaluators who use a scoring guide to assess the level of implementation on each of the 28 research questions. Using each question's established criteria for scoring, seven subscale scores and a mean summary score are calculated. The range for each subscale and summary score is 0% to 100%. A summary score of at least 80% indicates full implementation.

When fully implemented, the PBS initiative supports a schoolwide model and process for establishing and teaching schoolwide expectations, consequences, and positive behavior support practices that will facilitate the accumulation of desired behavioral and academic outcomes. As such, the PBS model codifies practices that may or may not be evident in non-PBS schools. Given the findings of the initial PBS study, which showed little to no difference in climate, behavior, and achievement outcomes between PBS and matched comparison schools, further investigation was needed to study whether the similarities among outcome patterns is attributable to non-PBS schools informally adopting PBS practices or, alternatively, the degree to which PBS represents common practice. Eleven schools that were not participating in the WCPSS PBS initiative as of the 2008-09 school year were selected to receive SET evaluations to determine the extent to which they had implemented schoolwide behavior practices.

Methodology

In the first PBS evaluation, cluster analysis (a classification technique for constructing homogeneous groups within complex data sets) was employed to match the PBS schools to similar schools that had not implemented the PBS program as of 2007-08. Several of the comparison schools initiated their first year of PBS implementation in 2008-09. This necessitated the selection of some new comparison schools for this follow-up study (see Table 3). Seven new comparison schools were matched to seven PBS schools based on their percentages of free or reduced-price lunch (FRL) students and student population size in 2007-08 and 2008-09.

Table 3
Comparison Groups for the PBS Follow-Up Study

Elementary		Middle	
<i>PBS Schools</i>	<i>Comparison Schools</i>	<i>PBS Schools</i>	<i>Comparison Schools</i>
Apex	<i>Harris Creek</i>	Centennial	Leesville Road
Brentwood	<i>Knightdale</i>	East Millbrook	<i>West Cary</i>
Fuller	<i>Yates Mill</i>	Moore Square	<i>Martin</i>
Hodge Road	Forestville Road	North Garner	<i>Holly Ridge</i>
Lynn Road	Joyner		
Reedy Creek	<i>Hilburn Drive</i>		
Rolesville	Fuquay-Varina		

Note: Italics indicate schools that were newly selected for the follow-up study.

The SET evaluations were conducted at each of the comparison schools by an E&R contractor with the assistance of a WCPSS PBS coach during the month of February 2009. Each visit consisted of a 20-30-minute interview with the school principal (or, in a few cases, an assistant principal), followed by a tour of the school to question a few randomly selected teachers and students. Some of the SET interview questions were modified slightly to make them relevant to non-PBS schools. The modifications included replacing any references to PBS with “positive behavior program” or “schoolwide behavior support program.” The interview questions are provided in Attachment D. Additional prompts were used when necessary. Similar to traditional SET evaluations, the principals' interview responses were compared to those of the teachers and students, and a number of school documents were examined (when available), in order to generate the SET summary scores (see Attachment E for a SET scoring guide).

SET Observation Results

The presentation of the school-level SET results does not identify the non-PBS schools by name. To maintain anonymity, schools are identified as School A through School G for elementary schools and as School H through School K for middle schools. Table 4 presents the SET observation results, disaggregated by subscale, for each comparison school. Only two elementary schools (Schools A and B), including one that is planning to implement PBS in the 2009-10 school year, earned scores on each subscale.

- All non-PBS schools had some level of violation and decision-making practices in place, whereas only a few had operating systems of schoolwide expectations and rewards, which is the crux of the PBS initiative.
- The highest subscale scores occurred within the violations system. Six of the eleven schools scored over 80% on this subscale, including two elementary schools and three middle schools that scored 100%. No school scored below 62.5% on this subscale.
- Most schools had not implemented systems for defining and teaching expectations and rewarding students for adhering to those expectations.

Table 4
SET Subscale Scores for Comparison Schools not Implementing PBS, 2008-09

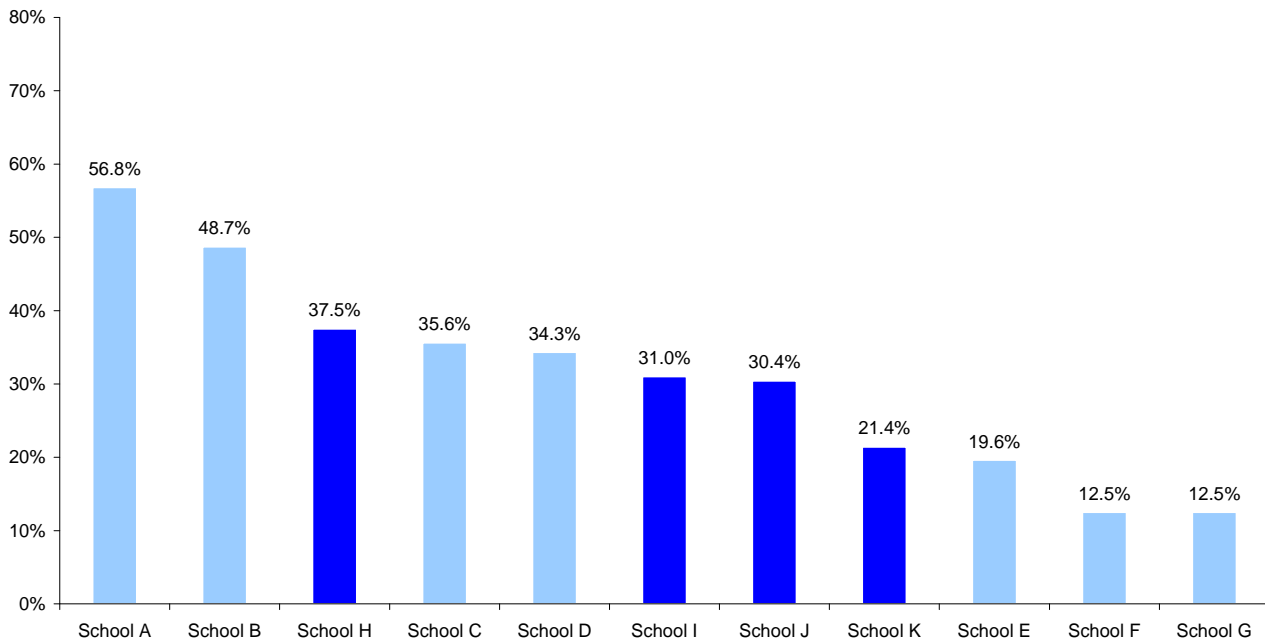
	A Expectations Defined	B Expectations Taught	C Reward System	D Violations System	E Decision Making	F Management	G District Support
Elementary							
School A	50.0	10.0	50.0	100.0	75.0	62.5	50.0
School B*	75.0	20.0	83.3	87.5	12.5	12.5	50.0
School C	0	20.0	66.7	75.0	50.0	37.5	0
School D	75.0	40.0	0	100.0	12.5	12.5	0
School E*	0	0	0	62.5	25.0	0	50.0
School F	0	0	0	62.5	25.0	0	0
School G	0	0	0	62.5	25.0	0	0
Middle							
School H*	0	0	0	100.0	62.5	50.0	50.0
School I	0	0	16.7	100.0	37.5	12.5	50.0
School J	0	0	0	75.0	75.0	12.5	50.0
School K*	0	0	0	100.0	37.5	12.5	0

Note: subscale scores are in percentages; * indicates schools that decided to implement PBS in 2009-10.

Figure 2 shows the SET summary scores for elementary and middle comparison schools. None of the schools achieved a summary score of 80%. In fact, most (9 out of 11) of the schools received a summary score of less than 40% on the SET evaluation. Comparatively, findings from the initial study show that all but one of the matched PBS schools achieved at least an 80% summary score on the 2007-08 SET evaluation.

- The range of overall summary scores was wider for the elementary schools than for the middle schools. The elementary schools' summary scores ranged from a low of 12.5% to a high of 56.8%, while the middle schools' summary scores ranged from 21.4% to 37.5%.
- School A had the highest summary score (56.8%), followed by School B (48.7%).

Figure 2
SET Summary Results for Comparison Schools, 2008-09



Note: Light blue bars represent elementary schools; dark blue bars represent middle schools.

Implementation Evaluation Summary of Results

Although all comparison schools had some type of violations system and some level of decision-making practice in place, only a few had operating systems of expectations and rewards. None of the schools achieved a SET summary score indicating full implementation of schoolwide behavior practices. Successful implementation of the PBS initiative depends heavily on establishing schoolwide expectations, and each school's level of implementation of this practice is assessed accordingly in the SET evaluation. SET evaluators expressed difficulty in obtaining information about schoolwide behavior expectations at the selected comparison schools for this study. The principals, teachers, and students seemed unaccustomed to thinking about "schoolwide" behavior expectations or programs. Furthermore, every school had implemented some form of schoolwide character education program, which many administrators, teachers, and students assumed was the same as a schoolwide behavior program.

According to the SET observation results obtained for this study, three elementary schools had common schoolwide expectations, although they were not fully defined or taught. At two of these schools, there was also limited evidence that the established expectations had been communicated clearly to staff and students. In many instances, teachers and students could not name them when questioned by the evaluators. Conversely, at School B (which is slated to join PBS Cohort 5 in 2009-10), three clearly articulated expectations were prominently displayed in five out of ten assessed locations and several teachers and students could recite them.

Whereas eight of the 11 comparison schools did not have schoolwide expectations, several of the principals specified that behavior expectations were set by each teacher for his or her classroom. Additionally, most of these schools had at least one set of rules for behavior in particular areas or situations (e.g., bus rules, hall rules, talking rules, etc.), as well as other student recognition programs, some of which included awards such as stickers or certificates. These expectations, however, were not captured in the SET evaluation and, therefore, reduced each school's summary score.

Each of the 11 comparison schools had some type of violations system that was used to record office referrals. Six schools used a paper form, four used the School Assistant Module (SAM), a Web-based tool that helps middle and high schools complete school management tasks more efficiently using student data, and one used a combination of paper forms and an Excel file. One contingency to receiving a score indicating full implementation (at least 80%) of a violations system was that the school have a written procedure describing what constituted a valid referral offense, how to fill out the form, and other such information. More than half of the comparison schools (three elementary schools and three middle schools) earned scores higher than 80% on the evaluation of their violations systems. The five remaining schools earned scores reflecting partial implementation of this practice. Based on the SET results, the establishment of a violations system with corresponding documented procedures is not unique to PBS schools. Considering that all schools are responsible for the safety and well-being of students during school hours, it is not surprising that non-PBS schools use organized discipline systems to redirect student behavior. An apparent divergence is that non-PBS schools appear to be less likely than PBS schools to have established schoolwide behavioral expectations and a reward system that reinforces positive behavior and helps foster an affirmative school climate, which are two important components of the PBS model.

PBS schools are not only expected to record office referral data but are expected to share this information with other school staff on a regular basis. Some of the comparison schools did summarize and share discipline data, although staff admitted that they did so infrequently to a limited audience. Only two schools shared schoolwide referral data summaries with the entire teaching staff; one did so quarterly, and one did so only at the beginning of each school year. As such, comparison schools received a range of scores on the practice of using data to make decisions.

Infrequent summarizing and sharing of discipline data may be due to the fact that few schools had a clearly defined team that addressed schoolwide behavior issues. Another expectation of PBS participation is that schools will form a PBS team, which is a designated group of people who regularly address and manage schoolwide behavior issues. The existence of a similar group within the comparison schools was less consistent. Most of the schools did have some type of team that addressed discipline-related issues (e.g., the Discipline Committee, the School Climate Committee, or the School Improvement Planning Committee). Nevertheless, it was sometimes difficult for SET evaluators to determine whether this team actually addressed schoolwide behavior issues, as opposed to addressing discipline issues using a more case-by-case approach, especially when the language of schoolwide behavior was often tenuous. At two schools, the principal provided the names of teachers who were supposedly on the team that addressed schoolwide behavior to the evaluators, yet when questioned, some of those teachers claimed to not be a member of that team.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In general, no unique measures of success were identified within the case studies. In alignment with PBS research literature, universal expectations and behavioral interventions were operationalized in the initial study as PBS strategies to affect outcomes. Contrary to the PBS philosophy and model, case study results indicate that school staff perceive expectations and interventions to be important outcomes in and of themselves, rather than tools that facilitate desired changes in student outcomes. School staff rarely cited empirical data when they described the success of the initiative, although most perceptions were on target with the findings presented in the initial PBS evaluation. In some cases, the reported impressions and beliefs contradicted the data.

The analysis of tardy data among the three analyzed schools produced positive results of the START on Time strategy's effectiveness in reducing class-period tardies. Ligon Middle and Broughton and Fuquay-Varina High schools experienced significant declines during the first year of implementation. As previously stated, when consistently implemented and practiced, this strategy is designed to significantly reduce tardies in a relatively short amount of time (Sprick and Daniels, 2007). The research is unclear as to what defines "a relatively short amount of time". However, both Ligon and Fuquay-Varina implemented the practice midyear in 2007, and both schools experienced significant reductions in period tardy rates compared to the previous year. While other strategies may also be effective, START on Time appeared to have positive results at these schools.

Some of the schools identified as using the START on Time strategy do not keep records of period attendance and tardies in NCWise. It is possible that schools keep records in SAM, SWIS, or another system. Keeping records seems to be critical if impact is to be measured. This study did not evaluate the fidelity of implementation of this practice at the participating schools. It is possible that the level and method of implementation varied by school. It is also unclear how the practice is implemented at schools in which on-time arrival to school is more of a focus than timely period transitions.

Although the short-term goal of the START on Time strategy is to help schools reduce their tardy rates, the long-term goal is that this reduction will positively impact instructional time in the classroom. If implemented correctly, teachers are relieved from dealing with late-coming students at the beginning of each period and instruction is not disrupted, thereby creating a more positive learning environment for all students. This long-term academic goal is very important, yet there is limited empirical evidence showing this positive association between tardy reduction and increased instructional time. This relationship was not examined in this study.

Given the findings of the initial PBS study—which showed little to no difference in climate, behavior, and achievement outcomes between PBS and matched comparison schools—one might expect to find that PBS and non-PBS schools have similar levels of implementation of schoolwide behavior practices. Results from the SET evaluations conducted of matched comparison schools yield evidence to the contrary. The implementation of processes for establishing and teaching schoolwide expectations, consequences, and positive behavior support practices was less evident among comparison schools than for PBS schools. As such, the similarity among patterns of outcomes between PBS and comparison schools may not be attributable to comparison schools informally adopting the PBS philosophy, which focuses on schoolwide expectations and positive reinforcements. PBS appears to represent some common practices. Although rewards systems are atypical practices, there are behavioral expectations at WCPSS schools. It appears that these expectations, which might include not running in the hallways, not eating or drinking in the classrooms, not bullying other students, and showing teachers respect, are so profoundly internalized that staff are unable to articulate them.

This study's findings offer little explanation for why PBS schools do not have more positive outcomes than comparison schools, except to suggest that PBS practices do not have a measureable impact on the outcomes studied. Of course, there are a variety of programs available to schools within the district that offer services to support behavioral and academic outcomes. It is difficult, however, to isolate the effects of PBS practices on outcomes independent of other influences. It may be that PBS is more effective when combined with other approaches. Considering the findings of this study, E&R makes the following recommendations.

- PBS staff are encouraged to help schools understand the district logic model for PBS. This will help ensure that the appropriate programs or strategies are implemented based on the needs of each school. After implementation, staff should review expected outcome data, at least quarterly, to track the progression of goal attainment. Frequent discussions about the data are also important for staff to better understand the relationship between practice processes and the outcomes. This transparency will allow staff to make any process adjustments in a more timely manner. School staff also need to look beyond initial implementation to long-term outcomes. Training could include ways to link increased

instructional time with long-term goals, especially achievement. In addition, PBS staff could emphasize ways to use school data to document success beyond what is measured in the SET.

- Fidelity of implementation of PBS practices appears to be rather tenuous and staff/leadership- dependent. Instructional leadership and staff buy-in are essential to sustain initiative efforts and reap desired outcomes. Staff turnover, especially in key positions, can greatly impact the success of the initiative. PBS staff and schools should look for ways to make the effort more sustainable and independent of personnel changes both initially and over time. When schools initially come on board with PBS, administrators are asked to obtain at least an 80% commitment from staff. PBS staff may require a formal staff vote in favor of adopting PBS to increase the likelihood of its success and sustainability. School staff might also work to increase the establishment of personnel who are fluent with the practices and process of PBS and who focus efforts on accuracy of implementation, capacity building, and systematic methods to monitor progress.
- Due to the large number of PBS schools in the district, often coupled with elevated rates of staff turnover, PBS staff are encouraged to revisit the level of support available to schools and encourage schools to become more independent. It is recommended that PBS staff expand universal systems of support through the development of online PBS training and incorporation of more established measures and methods to document the effects on student and staff outcomes. For instance, a training video could be produced. Although the assistance of coaches is both needed and desired by newly established PBS schools, reducing school staff dependency on training and assistance through the use of broader support systems may result in a sustainable schoolwide PBS infrastructure and scaffolding for other schoolwide prevention efforts.

REFERENCES

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ATTACHMENT A

Case Study: PBS Principal Interview Script

On behalf of the Wake County Public School System Evaluation and Research Department; I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate in this PBS Focus Group. I am Teresa Caswell; I will be recording and taking notes during our discussion.

You were invited to participate in this interview because your data has provided interesting information on how and where PBS has made a difference at your school. There are seven main questions that I will be asking you, for which we have allocated half an hour. Your input will provide valuable feedback on the effectiveness of Positive Behavior Support on a schools' climate, behavior, and student achievement.

Most questions will ask you to think retrospectively, however, your current impressions of _____ [name of school] and PBS will wrap up our conversation.

All input gathered today will be summarized and included in our report. Your school may be cited, but individual names will not be included.

- 1) You became principal at _____ [name of school's] in what year? Did you know it was a PBS school and if so, what did you do to prepare? Did you make any changes (to the program?) What training have you had since?
- 2) What has changed because of PBS in your school – what did it “straighten out?”
- 3) What else is going on at your school that has contributed to or hindered your success?
- 4) Do you monitor PBS in the school and if so, how?
 - a. Probe: How about using or monitoring data?
- 5) What is the level of buy-in at your school? What impact has this had on implementation?
- 6) Is there a formal process for teaching rules and expectations in the school? What are other ways is consistency sought with regards to PBS?
- 7) Looking now at the current school year, what goals did you set in terms of climate, behavior and student achievement and what outcomes do you expect?

ATTACHMENT B

Case Study: PBS Team Focus Group Questions

1. As you think back before this year, do you think PBS has made a difference at your school?
 - a. Prompts to ferret out signs of success based on school-specific questions and show graphs where appropriate.
 - i. How in terms of school climate?
 1. Student
 2. Teacher
 - ii. How in terms of behavior?
 1. Referrals – major v. minor probe
 2. Suspensions
 - iii. How in terms of achievement?
2. What else is going on at your school that has contributed to or hindered your success?
3. How is PBS monitored in the school and by whom? (specifics beyond the SET)
 - b. Ask about specifics not mentioned:
 - i. Students
 - ii. Teacher implementation and consistency
 - iii. Data
 - iv. PBS team
4. What is the level of buy-in of PBS at your school? What impact has this had on implementation?
5. Is there a formal process for teaching rules and expectations in the school? What are other ways is consistency sought with regards to PBS?
6. Looking now at the current school year, what goals did you set in terms of climate, behavior and student achievement and what outcomes do you expect?
 - a. To what extent do you monitor individual student behavior progress and do you have a success story to share?
 - i. Probe: Utilizing SWIS
 - b. ***Middle school only***: earlier interviews indicated that finding appropriate incentives for the middle school level could be difficult. Has this been an issue at _____ [name of school]? What are you currently doing?

Wrap-up:

Are there any final comments or questions?
 Thank you again for participation. Your input has been invaluable.

ATTACHMENT C

PBS Schools using the START on Time Strategy

School Year and Date of Strategy Implementation		School Name	PBS Cohort (Implementation Year)
2006-07	September 2006	1. Broughton Magnet High	Cohort 2 (2006-07)
	January 2007	2. Ligon Magnet Middle	Cohort 2 (2006-07)
	March 2007	3. Fuquay-Varina High	Cohort 2 (2006-07)
2007-08	August 2007	4. Carroll Middle	Cohort 2 (2006-07)
	October 2007	5. North Garner Year-Round Middle	Cohort 1 (2005-06)
	October 2007	6. Carnage Magnet Middle	Cohort 3 (2007-08)
	January 2008	7. Daniels Magnet Middle	Cohort 3 (2007-08)
	January 2008	8. Wake Forest–Rolesville Middle	Cohort 3 (2007-08)
2008-09	September 2008	9. Wakefield High	Cohort 4 (2008-09)
	October 2008	10. Southeast Raleigh Magnet High	Cohort 4 (2008-09)
	March 2008	11. Athens Drive High	Cohort 3 (2007-08)

ATTACHMENT D

Schoolwide Evaluation Tool (SET) Interview Questions for Non-PBS Schools

Let’s talk about your discipline system

1. Do you collect and summarize office discipline referral information? Yes No (If no, skip to #4)
2. What system do you use for collecting and summarizing office discipline referrals? (E2)
 - a. What data do you collect?
 - b. Who collects and enters the data?
3. What do you do with the office discipline referral information? (E2)
 - a. Who looks at the data?
 - b. How often do you share it with other staff?
4. What type of problems do you expect teachers to refer to the office rather than handling in the classroom/ specific setting? (D2)
5. What is the procedure for handling extreme emergencies in the building (i.e. stranger with a gun)? (D4)

Let’s talk about your school-wide [behavior] expectations

6. Do you have 3-5 common schoolwide behavior expectations? Yes No (If no, skip to #10).
7. How many are there?
8. What are they called? (B4, B5)
9. What are they? (B4, B5)
10. Do you acknowledge/reinforce students for doing well socially? Yes No (If no, skip to # 12.)
11. What are the ways you acknowledge/reinforce students and how often are they given? (activities/ student of month, positive referral, letter home, stickers, high 5's)? (C2, C3)
12. How would the students refer to the reinforcers/acknowledgements that are given most frequently?

Do you have a team that addresses school-wide behavior? Yes No (If no, skip to # 19)

13. Has the team taught/reviewed the schoolwide [behavior support] program with staff this year? (B3) Yes No If yes, when?
14. Is your schoolwide team representative of your school staff? (F3) Yes No
15. Are you on the team? (F5) Yes No
16. How often does the team meet? (F6) _____
17. Do you attend team meetings consistently? (F5) Yes No
18. Who is your team leader/facilitator/chairperson? (F4) _____
19. Does the team provide updates to faculty on activities & data summaries? (E3, F7) Yes No If yes, how often? _____
20. Do you have someone at the district level who assists with schoolwide behavior support? Yes/No If so, who? _____ (G2)
21. Does the school improvement plan contain goals about improving or sustaining Positive Behavior Support Systems in the school? (F1)
22. Does the school have a way to financially support positive behavior programs that is sustainable over time? (G1) Yes No

ATTACHMENT E

Schoolwide Evaluation Tool (SET) Scoring Guide

Practice	Evaluation Question	Data Source	Score: 0- 2
A. Expectations Defined	1. Is there documentation that staff has agreed to 5 or fewer positively stated school rules/ behavioral expectations? (0=no; 1= too many/negatively focused; 2 = yes)	Discipline handbook, Instructional materials Other _____	
	2. Are the agreed upon rules & expectations publicly posted in 8 of 10 locations? (See interview & observation form for selection of locations). (0= 0-4; 1= 5-7; 2= 8-10)	Wall posters Other _____	
B. Behavioral Expectations Taught	1. Is there a documented system for teaching behavioral expectations to students on an annual basis? (0= no; 1 = states that teaching will occur; 2= yes)	Lesson plan books, Instructional materials Other _____	
	2. Do 90% of the staff asked state that teaching of behavioral expectations to students has occurred this year? (0= 0-50%; 1= 51-89%; 2=90%-100%)	Interviews Other _____	
	3. Do 90% of team members asked state that the school-wide program has been taught/reviewed with staff on an annual basis? (0= 0-50%; 1= 51-89%; 2=90%-100%)	Interviews Other _____	
	4. Can at least 70% of 15 or more students state 67% of the school rules? (0= 0-50%; 1= 51-69%; 2= 70-100%)	Interviews Other _____	
	5. Can 90% or more of the staff asked list 67% of the school rules? (0= 0-50%; 1= 51-89%; 2=90%-100%)	Interviews Other _____	
C. On-going System for Rewarding Behavioral Expectations	1. Is there a documented system for rewarding student behavior? (0= no; 1= states to acknowledge, but not how; 2= yes)	Instructional materials, Lesson Plans, Interviews Other _____	
	2. Do 50% or more students asked indicate they have received a reward (other than verbal praise) for expected behaviors over the past two months? (0= 0-25%; 1= 26-49%; 2= 50-100%)	Interviews Other _____	
	3. Do 90% of staff asked indicate they have delivered a reward (other than verbal praise) to students for expected behavior over the past two months? (0= 0-50%; 1= 51-89%; 2= 90-100%)	Interviews Other _____	
D. System for Responding to Behavioral Violations	1. Is there a documented system for dealing with and reporting specific behavioral violations? (0= no; 1= states to document; but not how; 2 = yes)	Discipline handbook, Instructional materials Other _____	
	2. Do 90% of staff asked agree with administration on what problems are office-managed and what problems are classroom-managed? (0= 0-50%; 1= 51-89%; 2= 90-100%)	Interviews Other _____	
	3. Is the documented crisis plan for responding to extreme dangerous situations posted in 6 of 7 locations? (0= 0-3; 1= 4-5; 2= 6-7)	Walls Other _____	
	4. Do 90% of staff asked agree with administration on the procedure for handling extreme emergencies (stranger in building with a weapon)? (0= 0-50%; 1= 51-89%; 2= 90-100%)	Interviews Other _____	
E. Monitoring & Decision-Making	1. Does the discipline referral form list (a) student/grade, (b) date, (c) time, (d) referring staff, (e) problem behavior, (f) location, (g) persons involved, (h) probable motivation, & (i) administrative decision? (0=0-3 items; 1= 4-6 items; 2= 7-9 items)	Referral form (circle items present on the referral form)	
	2. Can the administrator clearly define a system for collecting & summarizing discipline referrals (computer software, data entry time)? (0=no; 1= referrals are collected; 2= yes)	Interview Other _____	
	3. Does the administrator report that the team provides discipline data summary reports to the staff at least three times/year? (0= no; 1= 1-2 times/yr.; 2= 3 or more times/yr)	Interview Other _____	

Practice	Evaluation Question	Data Source	Score: 0- 2		
	4. Do 90% of team members asked report that discipline data is used for making decisions in designing, implementing, and revising school-wide effective behavior support efforts? (0= 0-50%; 1= 51-89%; 2= 90-100%)	Interviews Other _____			
F. Management	1. Does the school improvement plan list improving behavior support systems as one of the top 3 school improvement plan goals? (0= no; 1= 4 th or lower priority; 2 = 1 st - 3 rd priority)	School Improvement Plan, Interview Other _____			
	2. Can 90% of staff asked report that there is a school-wide team established to address behavior support systems in the school? (0= 0-50%; 1= 51-89%; 2= 90-100%)	Interviews Other _____			
	3. Does the administrator report that team membership includes representation of all staff? (0= no; 2= yes)	Interview Other _____			
	4. Can 90% of team members asked identify the team leader? (0= 0-50%; 1= 51-89%; 2= 90-100%)	Interviews Other _____			
	5. Is the administrator an active member of the school-wide behavior support team? (0= no; 1= yes, but not consistently; 2 = yes)	Interview Other _____			
	6. Does the administrator report that team meetings occur at least monthly? (0=no team meeting; 1=less often than monthly; 2= at least monthly)	Interview Other _____			
	7. Does the administrator report that the team reports progress to the staff at least four times per year? (0=no; 1= less than 4 times per year; 2= yes)	Interview Other _____			
	8. Does the team have an action plan with specific goals that is less than one year old? (0=no; 2=yes)	Annual Plan, calendar Other _____			
G. District-Level Support	1. Does the school budget contain an allocated amount of money for building and maintaining school-wide behavioral support? (0= no; 2= yes)	Interview Other _____			
	2. Can the administrator identify an out-of-school liaison in the district or state? (0= no; 2=yes)	Interview Other _____			
Summary Scores	A = /4	B = /10	C = /6	D = /8	E = /8
	F = /16	G = /4	Mean = /7		