

School-wide Positive Behavior Supports as a Strategy to Improve Outcomes for Children

Overview: School-wide Positive Behavior Supports (SWPBS) has great potential to decrease the number of children and youth referred to the office, suspended or expelled from school. SWPBS utilizes data to identify and address challenging behaviors, creates a consistent, safe, positive school environment and teaches behavioral expectations in the same manner as any core curriculum subject. SWPBS is currently being implemented in the Campbell Union School District and the San Jose Unified School District.

Every child safe, healthy, successful in learning, successful in life.

The Santa Clara County Children's Agenda is a focused, integrated initiative that utilizes data and research to inform decision-making, guide program improvement, and drive results. The Children's Agenda has identified community goals for our children and thirteen data outcomes to track our progress in achieving those goals. The Children's Agenda provides basis for action, and allows our stakeholders to develop powerful strategies for change. It provides a framework to build meaningful and deep partnerships, provides a common language that helps us to align public and private investments, assess and improve quality, seek and allocate resources, and increase reach and impact across sectors. The thirteen indicators of the Children's Agenda are:

- Routine Access to Health Care
- Healthy Lifestyle
- Early Social Emotional Health
- Developmental Assets
- Readiness for Kindergarten
- Third Grade Reading Scores
- Eighth Grade Math Scores
- High School Graduation Rates
- Children Fluent in at Least Two Languages
- Child Abuse and Neglect
- Childhood Hunger
- Juvenile Arrests
- Youth Feel Valued by the Community

For more information on the Children's Agenda and to read previous Issue Briefs go to:
www.kidsincommon.org

What is School-wide Positive Behavior Supports?

Too often, we as a society, are less likely to reward positive behavior than we are to punish bad behavior. This can be seen in our school suspension rates. In 2008-09, there were 20,160 suspensions in Santa Clara County Schools. Of those suspensions, 9,518 were for violence or drugs¹ resulting in 52.8% of the suspensions being for behaviors at school that are challenging but that do not necessarily present a safety issue. When children and youth are suspended from school they are not in the classroom learning and the paperwork that must be completed when students are suspended robs teachers of valuable time that could be spent on supporting teaching activities.

Harsh punishment and zero tolerance policies have not been effective at improving behavioral climate in schools or preventing students with problem behaviors from entering the juvenile justice system.² After three years, almost 70% of the youth who have been excluded from school are arrested.³ Problem behavior is the single most common reason students are removed from classes and 20% of the students enrolled in school can account for more than 50% of the behavioral incidents.⁴ Teachers and schools need a different set of tools in order to deal with challenging behavior. **School-wide Positive Behavior Supports (SWPBS)**, implemented in Campbell Union School District and more recently in San Jose Unified School District, can provide those tools.

School-wide Positive Behavior Supports is a systems approach for establishing the **social culture** and individualized behavioral supports needed for schools to achieve both social and academic success for all students.⁵ Empirically validated and implemented in nearly 8,000 schools across the country, SWPBS eliminates challenging behaviors and replaces them with pro-social skills and decreases the need for more intrusive or aversive interventions.⁶

Ongoing collection and use of data for decision-making is an important feature of SWPBS. Positive Behavior Supports is based on behavioral theory - the reason problem behavior continues to occur is because it is consistently followed by the child getting something positive or escaping something negative. By analyzing the contexts and the outcomes of challenging behaviors, strategies can be devised so the behaviors can be extinguished. SWPBS supports this analysis.⁷ SWPBS combined with Academic Indicators and school climate indicators provide the major components for continuous improvement and education reform.

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Nuts and Bolts – Implementing School-wide Positive Behavior Supports:

School-wide Positive Behavior Supports, refers to a systems and culture change process for an entire school or district and has been shown to be effective in schools across the country. It does so because it creates a school environment that is predictable with a common language, common vision (understanding of expectations) and common experience (everyone knows what is expected.) SWPBS creates an environment that is positive – there is regular recognition for positive behavior. It creates a school environment that is safe – violent and disruptive behavior is not tolerated. Last, it creates a school environment that is consistent.⁸

The underlying theme of SWPBS is teaching behavioral expectations in the same manner as any core curriculum subject. Rather than assuming all students enter school with the knowledge and skills needed to function appropriately in the classroom, educators are directly teaching and acknowledging the behavioral expectations that lead to school success.

To begin implementation of SWPBS, a team of 5 – 10 representatives (School PBS Team) comprised of administrators, classified staff, regular and special education teachers attend a two or three day training in order to understand the principles of SWPBS and start the planning for their district or school.⁹ After the training, the SWPBS team will determine the 3 – 5 behavioral expectations that suit the needs of their school. These expectations are simply stated and easy to remember and positive. The statements of expectations tell the students what the preferred behaviors are as opposed to telling the students what not to do. Below are some examples of these statements of behavior expectations:

- R³ - Respect Yourself, Respect Others, and Respect Property
- The Three B's - Be Safe, Be Responsible, Be Respectful¹⁰

Once the behavioral expectations are determined, the SWPBS team takes these statements back to the staff to ensure at least 80% of the staff buy into the chosen expectations. This helps insure consistency from class to class and adult to adult and is very important for successful implementation of SWPBS. Next a matrix of examples of what these expectations look, sound and feel like are developed for every area of the school (For example "Respecting Property" means returning equipment to the proper area on the playground and putting paper towels in the trashcan in the bathroom.) Lesson plans are developed in order to teach the expectations to the students. The School PBS Team then defines "major" and "minor" discipline. The team decides what behaviors will be taken care of in the classroom and what behaviors are an instant trip to the office. Consistency is important from class to class, if it is not permissible to use a cell phone in art class, it also must not be permissible to use it in math class.¹¹

SWPBS builds a school-wide, consistent, social culture resulting in safer and more effective learning environments. When implemented effectively, approximately 80% of the students respond to the universal interventions. It also includes a system of secondary supports for students who need a small increase in structure, feedback (5-10%) and prompting and tertiary supports for students with more intense behavior support needs, mental health needs and wrap around support needs (1-5%). What many schools find after implementing PBS school-wide is that the number and percentage of students with secondary and tertiary needs decreases.¹²

The cost of the initial training and implementation support of SWPBS is \$15,000 to \$20,000 per district and some of the training costs can be shared by more than one district. The cost of purchasing the SWIS (see box below) program is approximately \$500 per school.

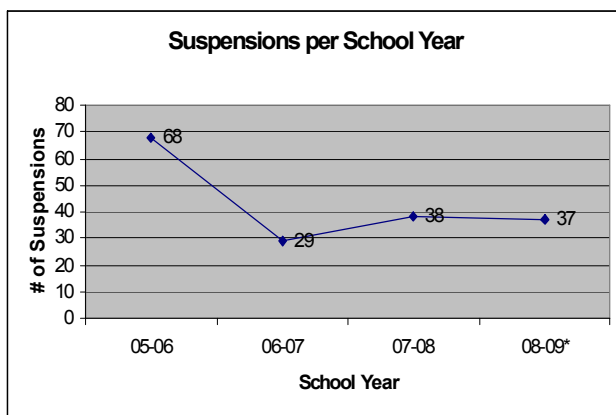
The Importance of Using Behavior Data to Drive SWPBS - Collecting data on where and when behaviors that lead to office referrals occur is another important aspect of SWPBS. By having this information, schools are able to identify and address problem times of the day or areas. For example if there is a cluster of referrals that happen at the end of the lunch period for a specific group of students, an alternative can be developed for that time of the day – for example, a game room with chess and checkers and other board games can be opened for those students who are getting bored on the playground. Many schools choose to use School-wide Information System (SWIS), a web-based information system designed to help school personnel use office referral data to design school wide and individual student interventions. The graphing program provides many other options. For more information on SWIS, please visit www.swis.org¹³

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Implementation of SWPBS in Santa Clara County

SWPBS has been implemented in the Campbell Union School District with positive results.

Campbell Union School District found itself struggling with behavior issues that took time away from instruction and a high number of office referrals and that their responses were not working. Seeking a positive, measurable approach that integrated well with Response to Intervention (RtI) and Project Cornerstone, the district implemented Positive Behavior Supports in the 2006-07 school year. The graph below demonstrate their School Suspension results:



* 08-09 data is through 3/31/09

This chart demonstrates how suspensions decreased by 43% after the introduction of SWPBS. This decrease means that there is less administrative time lost (approximately 1.5 hours is spent on each suspension), less instructional time is lost and ADA funding is not lost for those students suspended. The number of office referrals also decreased from 550 to 400 in the 05-06 to 06-07 school years. Staff estimate that an office referral averages 30 minutes of teaching and administrative time. **150 fewer office referrals equals 4500 minutes or 75 hours gained by staff.**

The introduction of SWPBS in Campbell Union School District has been viewed as a success with fewer referrals overall, responses to behavior issues becoming more specific and an increase in well-behaved students. In Campbell, only 4.4% of the students (in many schools this is 15%) required secondary behavior intervention support and .2% of students required more intense, tertiary support (In many schools this is 5%).¹⁴

Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) in Other Settings

Child Care and Preschool Settings

There is a growing body of research that social competence is critical to later school success. Learning is a social process and young children who are disruptive, have difficulty following directions, do not get along with other children and have difficulty controlling their emotions are less likely to be successful in school. The Southeast Kansas Community Action Program (SEK-CAP) was successful in implementing Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) on a program-wide level including policy, administrative practices, allocation of resources, relationships with community partners, staff support, classroom practices and partnerships with Families. The implementation of PBS led to reduced referrals to outside experts, elimination of time-out as a practice, improvement in overall program quality, increased use of comprehensive strategies and team planning, changes in individual intervention, a 50% reduction in staff turnover and improved staff satisfaction.¹⁵

California is adopting CSEFEL (Center for Social Emotional Foundations for Learning) as a strategy to support early care and education. This professional development program will support and enhance the social emotional skills of all children in the early years in order to eliminate the need for expulsion, and support children to be ready for school. This will support the continuum of PBS from Birth through High School.

Juvenile Justice

In Illinois, in a medium-to-maximum security facility for approximately 400 boys, zero fights were reported in the school program for a two-year period following the implementation of PBS. Additionally, for a one-month period before and after the implementation of PBS, there was an 89 percent reduction in major behavior incidents and a 95 percent reduction in minor incidents. These examples, demonstrate the potential for PBS to improve behavior in juvenile justice settings. PBS and the data tracking system have the potential to increase the efficiency and consistency of behavior management systems across staff, programs, and settings and for strengthening the pro-social skills of youth for their reentry into the community.¹⁶

Community Based Organizations

PBS can also improve community based programs that serve children and youth. EMQ FamiliesFirst has implemented PBS in their residential treatment programs in Santa Clara County and in six school-based mental health programs also achieving good results.

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Notes and Resources:

1. **California Department of Education, Santa Clara County Suspension & Expulsion Information**, <http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/Expulsion/ExpReports/CountyExp.aspx?cCounty=43,SANTA,CLARA&cYear=2008-09&cChoice=CoEpx1&Pageno=1> retrieved 11/22/09.
2. Cohn, Andrea, **NASP Fact Sheet – Positive Behavior Supports Information for Educators**. http://nasponline.org/resources/factsheets/pbs_fs.aspx. Retrieved 11/04/09
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Horner, R, Sugai, G, **School-wide Positive Behavior Support**, Powerpoint presentation <http://www.pbis.org/common/pbisresources/presentations/robinintro.ppt> . Retrieved 11/22/09
6. Cohn, Andrea, **NASP Fact Sheet – Positive Behavior Supports Information for Educators**. http://nasponline.org/resources/factsheets/pbs_fs.asp , retrieved 11/04/09
7. Ibid.
8. Horner, R, Sugai, G, **School-wide Positive Behavior Support**, Powerpoint presentation <http://www.pbis.org/common/pbisresources/presentations/robinintro.ppt> Retrieved 11/22/09
9. **SWPBS for Beginners** http://www.pbis.org/school/swpbs_for_beginners.aspx
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. **PBIS – Implementing Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports, Campbell Union School District**. Powerpoint presentation at the May Institute's First Annual Forum on Positive Behavior Supports, March 31, 2009.
15. **Program-Wide Positive Behavior Support: Supporting Young Children's Social-Emotional Development and Addressing Challenging Behavior**. Retrieved 11/30/09 at: http://www.challengingbehavior.org//do/resources/documents/sek_cap_booklet.pdf
16. Nelson, M.C., Sugai, G., Smith, C., **Positive Behavior Support Offered in Juvenile Corrections** retrieved 11/30/09 at http://www.apbs.org/new_apbs/files/PBSinJJS.pdf

The Children's Agenda is being led by Kids in Common, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Kids in Common advocates for policies, partnerships and investments that improve children's lives in Santa Clara County.

Children need a strong public voice – a voice that promotes and protects their best interests. Kids in Common is that voice and challenges leaders and decision-makers in our community to act on behalf of children.

Every day, our elected officials make policy and fiscal decisions that impact the more than 450,000 children who live in Santa Clara County. Kids in Common is the only organization that focuses on systemic change to improve children's lives in Santa Clara County. We advocate for effective investment and policies for children and support the mobilization of public and private resources to meet children's needs. We inform decision makers on best practices and champion local implementation. We convene agencies that care about children's well-being to address systems issues and speak out for needed change. Kids in Common is steadfast in speaking and acting on behalf of children and brings a uniquely qualified perspective that is grounded in research and data. Because we don't receive government funding, we do not have to worry about being perceived as acting in our own self-interest. **Policymakers know our only agenda is children.**



For the most current data on how Santa Clara County children are faring, go to:

www.kidsdata.org