Creating Safe, Positive, Inclusive School Environments: The Three-tiered Paradigm[1]

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INTRODUCTION

- **Educating students in today's schools is an ever-increasing challenge** (Waasdorp, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2012).
- Possible factors include growing inclusion of students with diverse (mild to severe) learning and behavioural needs in general education classrooms.
- Teachers react to persistent learning and behavioural problems with referrals for special education and/or counseling services and thus remove these students from classroom instruction.
- When students' challenging behaviour becomes chronic and severe, schools tend to react with stringent and restrictive measures. Thus, **students face school failure, and early school leaving.**
- **Emphasis has shifted towards** creating schools as positive learning communities by promoting a constellation of evidence-based interventions, practices and processes for achieving an inclusive social culture for all students. This school-wide framework has been widely known as **_Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports (PBIS)_** (Sugai & Horner, 2008).

PURPOSE

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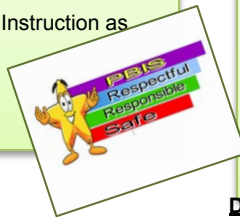
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. To what extent are _content and procedures_ AND _student outcomes_ of the ongoing school-wide PBIS approach at exemplar/model elementary schools consistent with prior research outcomes?
2. To what extent is _community and family involvement_, as presented in a school-wide PBIS program at exemplar/model elementary schools, consistent with recommended best practices in the research literature?

METHOD

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

RESEARCH DESIGN
A qualitative case study (Creswell, 2011)

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

DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS
Field note-taking, focus group and individual interviews, school archival records, state integrity implementation data, participant observations. Computer software (ATLAS.ti) for qualitative data analysis.
Descriptive statistical analysis for quantitative data using SPSS

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

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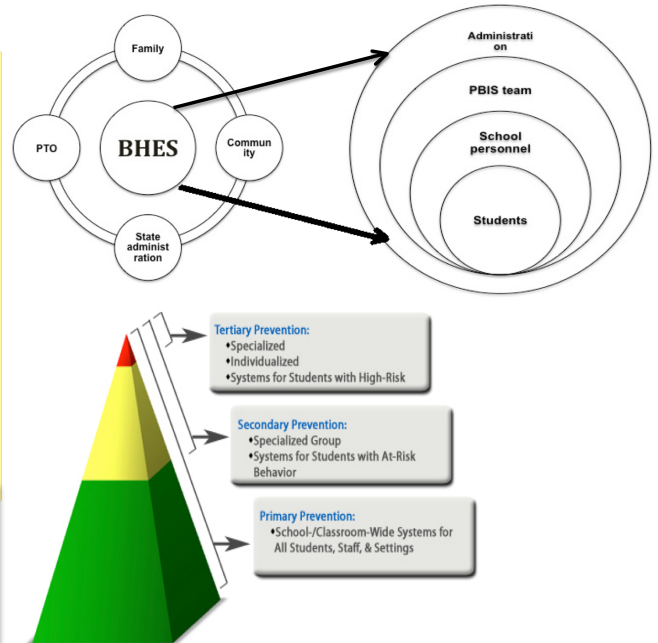

Fig.1. Positive Behaviour Support 3-tiered Intervention Model

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