Factors Involved in the Successful and Sustained Implementation of School-wide PBIS
Yunsoo Park, Kirby Chow, & Carl Sumi, SRI International
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Overview

- The use of a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework is prevalent, but information is limited regarding approaches used to monitor implementation and outcomes.
- This study is part of a larger randomized controlled trial (RCT) of the Foundations program, a positive and proactive approach to school-wide discipline that employs PBIS strategies.
- This study was designed to gain a deeper understanding of facilitators and barriers for effective and sustained implementation of a PBIS approach.

Participant & Methods

- Participants included Foundations leadership team members from 3 middle schools in a large urban school district in Southern California. These schools were randomized to the treatment condition (i.e., implementing Foundations) in the larger RCT.
- We conducted in-person focus groups with Foundations leadership teams at 2 schools and follow-up phone interviews with 8 individual team members who volunteered across 3 schools.
- Two researchers analyzed the data using consensus coding, and a third senior analyst reviewed the coded data and key takeaways.
- We analyzed focus group and interview notes by applying etic codes that we developed to align with key interview constructs.
- We also documented any emic codes, themes that teams or individual members voiced in conversations.

School Context

- All three schools showed improvement from baseline (2017) on the School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET) (Sugai, Lewis-Palmer, Todd, & Horner, 2001), a measure of implementation fidelity that assesses the degree to which core features of school-wide behavior support exist.

Findings

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<th>Theme</th>
<th>Key Takeaways</th>
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<td>1. Integration of Foundations with existing initiatives</td>
<td>Type of initiative • Restorative justice (RJ) and Schoolwide PBIS (SWPBIS) Integration methods or approaches • Similar practices: Foundations and RJ both focus on positive practices and relationships. • Overlap in leaders: Having RJ and PBIS leaders on the Foundations team supported integration of initiatives. • Integration strategies: Sharing planning and meeting times, co-hosting assemblies, using a social-emotional learning curricula that combined Foundations with either SWPBIS or RJ teachings, and using a common language across initiatives.</td>
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2. Facilitators and barriers to successful implementation of Foundations

- Leadership team composition
  - Diverse: Range of skills, perspectives, roles, departments, cultures/ethnicities, experiences with different student populations, and tenure
  - United: Common goals to improve school culture
  - Relationship and communication skills: Respected and positive relationships with students and other staff, listening skills, compromise and conflict-management skills, generosity with positive reinforcement, and humor.

- Dedicated time
  - Regular meeting times for the leadership team to
    - Surface problems, brainstorm solutions, and devise plans to implement solutions.
    - Share out periodically with staff and students through professional development, meetings, and school-wide assemblies.

- Staff/student ownership
  - Opportunities for building staff and student ownership through involvement in decision making
  - Students can have a say in school rules and policies (such as consequences for being tardy)
  - All school staff can help to prioritize program areas of focus (by voting on a school map).

- Recognition and incentives
  - Regular rewards and recognitions for implementing program practices
  - Recognition can range from simple "shout outs" at meetings/assemblies to formal awards provided on a monthly basis.

- Consistency
  - Consistency in expectations for students and regular reminders to staff and students about these expectations.
  - Consistency in the reinforcement they provide for positive behavior, as well as the consequences for misbehavior.

- Leadership support
  - Principal and/or Assistant Principal involvement on the leadership team
  - Support the collective decision-making process and enact principles and strategies of the program.
  - Turnover in school leadership can impact the maintenance, momentum, and success of the program.

3. Strategies to support sustainability of Foundations

- Refresher and reminders
  - Reminders might take the form of videos at assemblies, email reminders, PA announcements, and large posters.

- Documentation
  - Documenting processes, progress, and successes can help sustain the program despite staff turnover by allowing someone to step into the work rather than start from scratch.

- Assess and revise
  - Having a continuous improvement process in place
  - Examine relevant data and feedback, assess practices in place, and consider modifications to improve success.

Areas for Growth & Consideration

- Cultural/racial sensitivity and bias
  - Staff from all 3 schools recognized the importance of considering students’ racial and ethnic backgrounds and issues of inequity.
  - One school was mindful of integrating English Learners more fully into the school culture.
  - Another school made intentional efforts to build stronger relationships with African American students by affirming positive behaviors and leadership potential.

- Parent involvement and engagement
  - Staff from all three schools voiced a desire to improve parent engagement.
  - Ideas including informing and engaging parents in the Foundations program before the start of the school year (at orientation) and involving parents in Foundations activities and leadership teams.

Conclusions

- When integrating with existing initiatives at the school, it is helpful to streamline those with similar goals as the program (McIntosh et al., 2013).
- Buy-in and support from everyone, including administrative leadership (George et al., 2018), staff (Coffey & Horner, 2012), and students, is crucial. An important way to achieve this is by helping people feel ownership of the program, especially through collective decision-making and recognitions.
- Documenting and keeping stakeholders aware of program activities and successes can support sustained implementation (Sugai & Horner, 2006).
- Areas for future research include: investigating the most effective types of support and resources at the district and state levels; examination of the potentially evolving roles of different facilitators and barriers across stages of implementation; and identification of strategies to create and sustain culturally responsive practices.