

Enhancing Evaluation of Positive Behaviour Support for Students on the Autism Spectrum



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Today's Objectives

Participants will:

1. Learn about the **importance** and **practicality** of modifying evaluation tools for diverse populations with stakeholder input
2. understand the **methodological steps** taken to adapt a tool for students on the autism spectrum
3. be exposed to the **intended use** and future application of the newly adapted tool



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School-Wide PBS

- SW-PBS* aims to embed supports that were developed in PBS for individual students, into the culture and operations of a school system
- A goal is that SW-PBS is inclusive and equitable for all students

*Terminology: Australia uses SW-PBS rather than PBIS



Autism Spectrum Australia

- Australia's largest autism-specific service provider
- Services include education, assessment, therapy, employment and a dedicated research team
- Aspect manages 9 autism-specific schools and 113 satellite classes across Australia (~1185 students)
- Aspect schools aim to provide evidence-informed practice that is person-centred and family-focused, with the ultimate aim of preparing for transition to a mainstream school environment
- Aspect is supported by a dedicated research team

a different brilliant[®]
understanding, engaging & celebrating the
strengths, interests & aspirations
of people on the autism spectrum



*Celebrating the 50th birthday of
Aspect's first school*



*Beautiful campus – Aspect's
Treetop School*



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SW-PBS Practices at Aspect Schools

- History of strength in individual PBS
- Working towards developing and implementing Tier 1 SW-PBS
- The “Schools for All Children” specialist report resulted from an incident in the Australian Capital where a student on the autism spectrum was mistreated:



“[We] recommend that [all schools] endorse School-Wide Positive Behavioural Support, and resource and support schools to implement the program for a minimum of three years and to evaluate its success”

Inclusion of all students into SW-PBS

- Walker and colleagues (2018) reported that participants identified the following barriers for inclusion of students to SW-PBS:
 - Characteristics of students with severe disabilities (e.g., student competency necessary to understand school-wide expectations and reinforcement systems)
 - Negative staff perceptions and low expectations
 - Lack of resources and administrative support
 - Lack of staff competency and training
 - Lack of inclusion
- Students with disabilities are often left out of SW-PBS (e.g. Kurth & Zagona, 2018; Walker et al., 2018) but disability specific strategies help (Loman et al., 2018)

Why adapt the Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI)?

- The TFI (Algozzine et al., 2019) assesses three tiers of SW-PBS
- SW-PBS is often adapted in non-mainstream settings (e.g. Neitzel, 2010)
- The TFI has been adapted for other cohorts of students e.g. with a trauma background (Eber et al., 2020)
- The process we followed was a research-based adaptation process as well to ensure validity and reliability (AERA, APA, NCME, 2014)

Purpose of the Study

Step 1

How is SW-PBS being used or adapted in schools that support students on the autism spectrum?

Step 2

How can we evaluate the extent that schools are implementing core features of SW-PBS?

Original TFI

Australia-Wide Survey

Research team adaptations
(Round 1)

Work group
(Autistic and Stakeholder Input)

Anonymous expert reviews

Targeted expert reviews

Pilot

AS-TFI (Adapted TFI)

Tiered Fidelity Inventory





Australia-Wide Survey ($n = 39$)

Educators responded from:

- Victoria ($n=14$)
- New South Wales ($n=16$)
- South Australia ($n=3$)
- Queensland ($n=2$)
- Tasmania ($n=1$)
- Western Australia ($n=1$)

Participants were from:

- mainstream settings ($n=5$)
- special development settings ($n=10$)
- special school settings ($n=5$)
- autism-specific settings ($n=11$)

We had a range of participants across roles including:

- school leaders ($n=5$)
- teachers ($n=26$)
- therapists ($n=3$)
- educational support staff or teacher's aides ($n=5$)

Original TFI



Australia-Wide Survey



Research team adaptations
(Round 1)



Work group
(Autistic and Stakeholder Input)



Anonymous expert reviews



Targeted expert reviews



Pilot



AS-TFI (Adapted TFI)

We asked participants about the frequency of the following SWPBS-aligned practices that were conducted in their schools. Participants answered "never", "some of the time" or "most of the time."

Do you use school-wide rules that describe positive behaviour?

82%
most of the time

Are the school rules used across all classrooms and contexts?

68%
most of the time

Is there a system for collecting and analysing data about student behaviour?

64%
most of the time

Is the school-wide system for teaching appropriate behaviour to all students used?

56%
most of the time



Is the system for clearly defining behaviours used?

50%
most of the time

Is the system for encouraging behaviour that has been taught (including feedback) used?

50%
most of the time

How do you feel SW-PBS aligned practices benefit students on the autism spectrum?



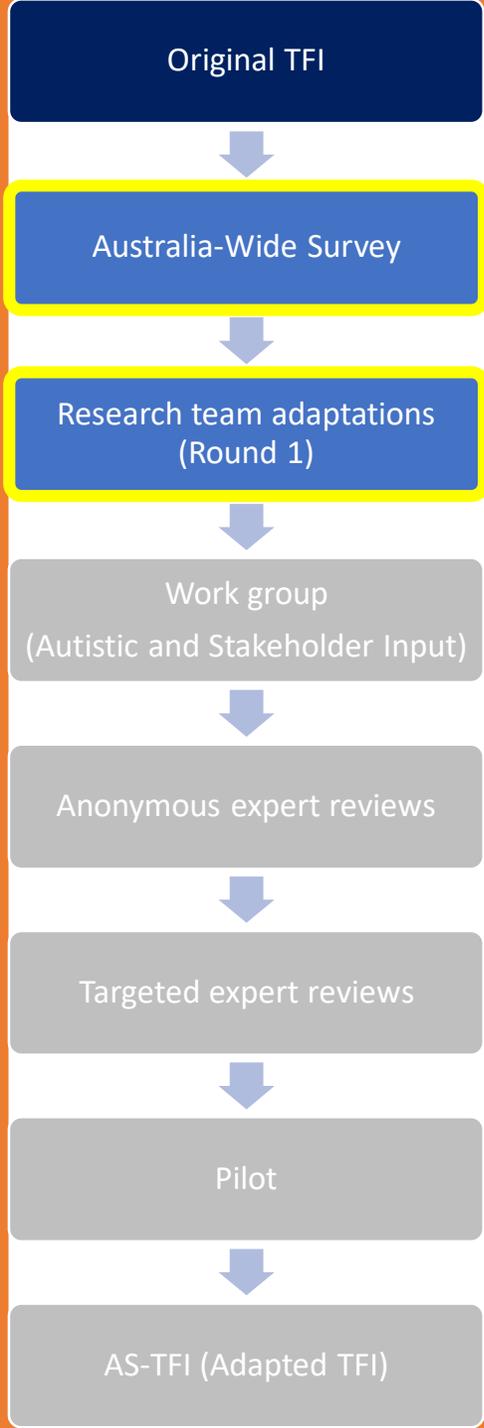
“I think the program supports all the different kinds of learners by not putting blame on the child, and by adapting environmental issues to support them.”

“They are supported - and included - in decision making about what is best for their learning and wellbeing.”

“Staff understanding that behaviour is occurring for a reason - supports students as staff are not seeing a child as being naughty and punishing”



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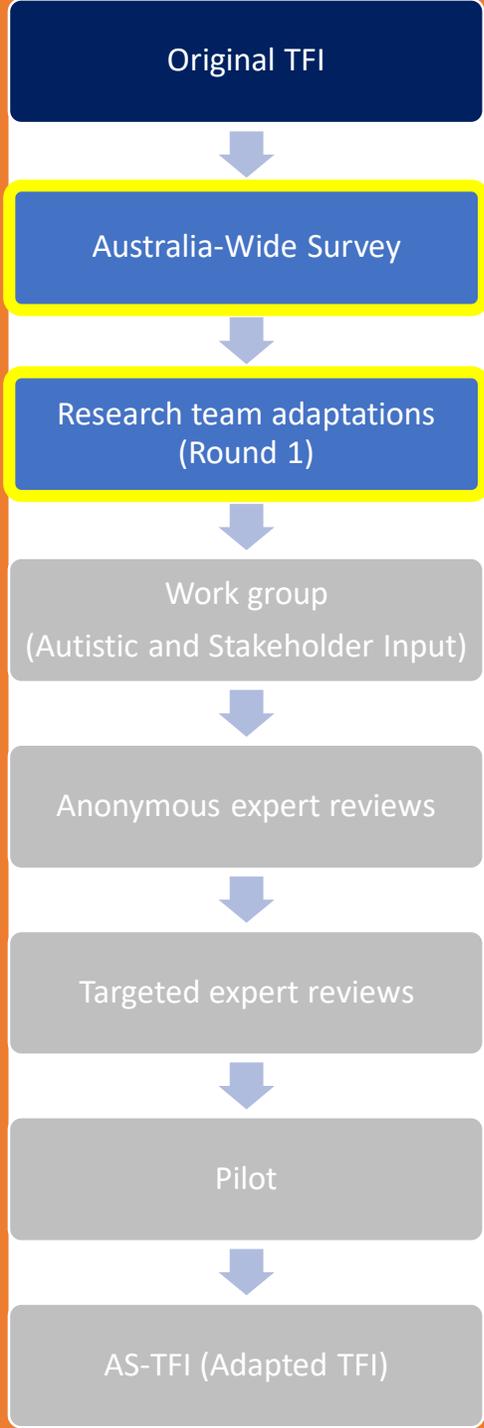
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Then, we asked participants how often these practices were adapted for students on the autism spectrum at their school.

59% ✓ SWPBS-aligned practices are adapted for students on the autism spectrum at their school

41% ✗ SWPBS-aligned practices are not adapted for students on the autism spectrum at their school





Gathering Validity: Work group



Autistic and Non-Autistic Researchers
(*n* = 6)



Principals, teachers, teacher's assistants, therapy staff (*n* = 9)



SWPBS academic experts (*n* = 8)



CO-PRODUCTION



Gathering Validity: Expert Reviews



Autistic and Non-Autistic Researchers
($n = 6$)



Principals, teachers, teacher's assistants, therapy staff ($n = 9$)



SWPBS academic experts ($n = 8$)



CO-PRODUCTION



Gathering Validity: Pilot

Measures:

1. Satisfaction
2. Fidelity
3. Usefulness
4. Association with the SPBD = Staff Perceptions of Behavior & Discipline (Feurborn et al., 2015)

Getting the Measure to Match the Model

- Tier 1 Good autism practice is implemented
- Tier 1 Team has autism and autistic expertise
- Expectations meet the values and preferences of people on the autism spectrum (e.g. re. eye contact)
- Expectations are presented and taught in multiple formats
- Feedback is individualised to meet passions and interests
- Autistic behaviour is not problem behaviour



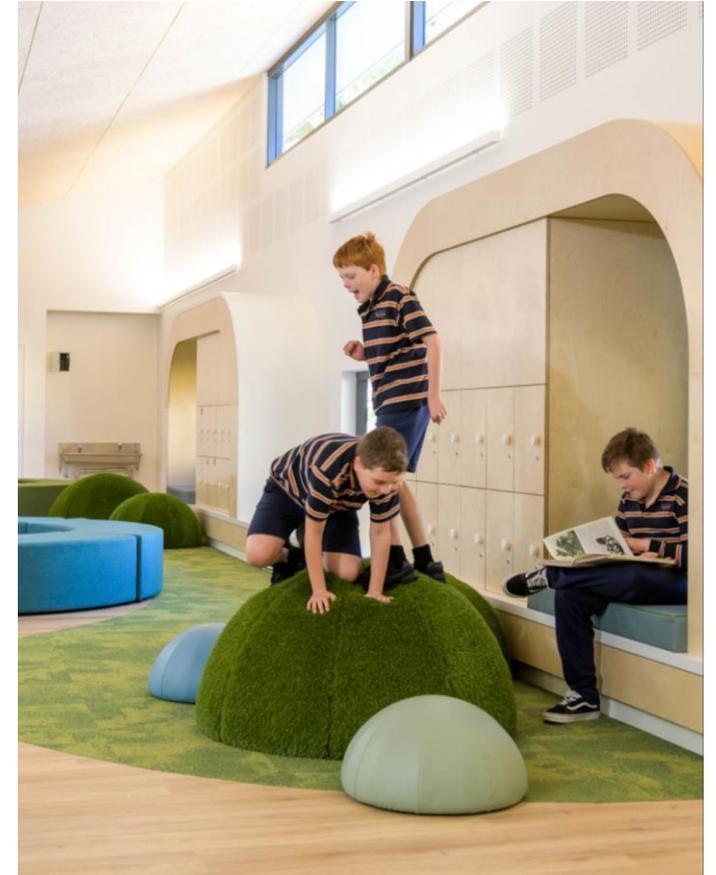
Getting the Measure to Match the Model

- Tier 2 Evidence based autism supports and approaches added e.g. Anxiety, social relating, emotional regulation, communication
- Tier 2 FBA and more individualised support early
- Data can be incident based rather than office referrals
- Small school network means one learning support team for all Tiers of support
- Update the percentage of students with a disability so that students with autism cannot be excluded

Getting the Measure to Match the Model

Walkthrough

- Autistic students use a range of communication modes
- Students may respond differently to non-familiar staff assessing TFI implementation or may be more successful at specific times
- Varied options for student responding – use of familiar staff, “*show me or tell me...*”, video responding option





Implications of this work

- G1: First goal was a tool for Aspect schools (finishing the pilot will finish this goal)
- G2: How does it look for other schools in Australia? (piloting in other settings)
- Tool that can be used for others working within school environments that support students on the autism spectrum
- Aspect schools can implement and monitor SWPBS
- Magnifies the importance of adaptation of SWPBS practices for this population of students
- Allows for measurement and understanding of how SWPBS is used
- Contribution towards literature on measurement and implementation of measures like the TFI

Thank you

Our research team is grateful to the teachers, principals, and staff members who contributed to this study.

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