Obstacles to Implementing Behavior Intervention Plans: Practitioner Perspectives

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Agenda

• Introduction:
  ▪ Previously identified obstacles to implementing BIP
• Our study
  ▪ Methods
  ▪ Participants
  ▪ Quantitative findings
  ▪ Qualitative findings
• Lessons learned
• Conclusions and Q & A

Learner Objectives

• Identify the primary obstacles faced by teachers implementing BIP in the State of PA
• Understand teacher-reported perspectives on these obstacles
• Use this understanding to brainstorm ideas for surmounting those obstacles to increase the effectiveness of BIP

What do we know about Best Practices in BIP?

• BIP based on the results of an individual FBA
• Interventions address function of behavior
• Includes prevention, teaching, and reinforcement strategies
• Measurable goals and a plan to evaluate effectiveness
• Team-based collaborative process
• Parent and student perspectives are valued
• Cultural differences are recognized and respected
• Interventions have good contextual fit
• Plan is implemented consistently and the team monitors the treatment fidelity
• School-wide and class-wide behavioral systems support the use of BIP strategies

What Do We Know About BIP in Schools?

• Critical gaps between “best practice” and what is being used in the schools:
  ▪ Missing or inadequate behavior definition (71%); failure to ID function of behavior (25%)
  ▪ Aversive consequences to problem behavior (79%) and sometimes (46%) ONLY aversives
  ▪ Continued use of unsuccessful interventions (62%)
  ▪ No plan to monitor effectiveness (66%)
  ▪ FBA without BIP and vice versa (55%)
  ▪ Stock-lists of interventions not individualized to the students (79%)

(Van Acker et al., 2003) (Blood & Noel, 2007)

Why gaps between best practice and schools?

• Insufficient time
  ▪ to develop BIP
  ▪ to implement BIP
  ▪ to collaborate on BIP
• School staff knowledge/beliefs not supportive of PBIS
• Insufficient staff training on PBS
• School staff described implementation as more challenging than learning how to conduct FBA and develop BIP
• <Bottom line: BIPs are challenging to implement in school settings; we need to know more about those challenges and how school staff can work around them>

(Bambara, Goh, Kern, & Caskie, 2012; Bambara, Nonnemacher, & Kern, 2009)
The Present Study

- Research questions
  - Across Pennsylvania, what are the primary obstacles school teams face to effectively implementing BIP?
  - How do school teams try to surmount these obstacles?
- Methods
  - Anonymous survey emailed to all special education teachers in PA with students who take alternate assessment in reading or math, asked to forward to other school staff
  - Questions on teacher and school demographics
  - Questions on teacher experiences with 13 different obstacles to BIP implementation based in the literature
  - General questions on implementation and effectiveness of BIP

Obstacles Listed in Survey

- The BIP is not implemented consistently across staff members.
- The BIP, even when implemented correctly, is not effective.
- The BIP is too complicated.
- The BIP is not a good fit for my classroom and/or my teaching practices.
- The BIP was created without my input.
- The BIP is not individualized to the student.
- I and/or the classroom team wasn’t shown how to use the BIP.

Obstacles Listed in Survey, cont.

- I and/or the classroom team doesn’t have the training or background knowledge needed to use the strategies in the BIP.
- No one checks back to see how the BIP is going.
- The cause of the student’s problem behavior is not something that can be addressed through a BIP (such as sensory issues, problematic home life, medical issues, etc.).
- The BIP you are being asked to implement is not necessary.
- I and/or the classroom team have not been provided with adequate resources to implement the plan, such as materials, planning time, training, paraprofessionals.
- The plan is not based on a functional behavior assessment (FBA).

Questions for each obstacle

- Frequency with which they encounter each obstacle
  - Always, Often, Occasionally, Never
- Impact of each obstacle
  - Major (BIP failure), Minor (BIP adaptation), Not an obstacle
- Describe how this issue has or has not been an obstacle for you and your classroom team
  - Open-ended

General questions on implementation

- In general, how often do you encounter any obstacle to implementing BIP?
- Are obstacles you encounter most often major or minor?
- To what degree do you feel your students’ BIPs have been effective in changing behavior?
- To what degree are your BIP implemented as planned?
Participants

- N=602 respondents (approximately 16% response rate)
- School Type:
  - Majority (77%) public; private 13%; charter 4%
- Setting Type
  - Majority (43%) suburban; 31% urban; 27% rural
- Schools relatively diverse in terms of SES (59% average on free and reduced lunch) but less so on race (mean 38% non-Caucasian)
- Teachers were 94% Caucasian
- Experience in current position:
  - 27% had 5-10 years of experience
  - 19% 1-2 years
  - 12% less than 1 year
  - Most (71%) had a Master’s degree

Participants (contd.)

- Position:
  - Majority (94%) special education teachers
- Setting:
  - Majority (72%) self-contained
- Disability types they work with (top 4):
  - ASD (61%)
  - ID (53%)
  - SLD (33%)
  - EBD (29%)
- Grade level:
  - Grades 3-6 (58%)
  - Grades 7-8 (37%)
  - Grades 9-12 (30%)
  - Grades k-2 (26%)

How Frequent Were the Obstacles?

- The BIP is not implemented consistently across staff
  - 51% always/often; 34% major obstacle
- I/classroom team have not been provided adequate resources to implement the plan
  - 54% always/often; 53% major obstacle
- The cause of student problem behavior is not something that can be addressed through the BIP
  - 39% always/often; 63% major obstacle
Teacher Perspectives

On Top Three Obstacles

Teacher Quotes (n=317)

- No consistency so you don’t know if the intervention is to blame or the people.
- Too many random variables. Staff turnover, the number of staff involved, and time constraints interfere with staff training.
- It is difficult for all staff to carry out the same behavior management strategies.
- Team meetings are rarely held to update the team on changes and everyone is running their own version of the BIP.
- Staff members are not on board with strategies used to teach appropriate replacement behaviors and giving rewards.

Overarching Themes

- Consistency is hard to achieve across all staff and all environments. When plan is implemented inconsistently it is difficult for the teacher to know whether the intervention is effective or not.

How Teachers Surmount This Obstacle

- Keeping the plan simple and easy to implement
- Providing training/education to all staff who may be asked to implement the plan
- Developing rapport with implementing staff and including their input when possible into the BIP

How Their Strategies Align with Research

- BIP are implemented more consistently when:
  - When they have good contextual fit
  - BIP are uncomplicated and incorporate more staff input
  - Fidelity of intervention and implementation is monitored
  - Implementers receive timely, detailed feedback on their implementation, both positive and corrective (not just talk)
  - BIP are of higher quality
  - A team including at least the classroom teacher and a behavior specialist collaborate to develop BIP (increases fit and quality)

Moes & Frea, 2002; Flann et al., 2015; Eck et al., 2016
The classroom team have not been provided adequate resources to implement the plan.

Teacher Quotes (n=182)
- I am only one person and cannot be expected to do everything.
- Some students’ needs require much more attention, detail, planning, materials, and staffing than are generally available.
- Little prep time. Little money for resources so most I purchase out of my own wallet (over $2000 a year). Paraprofessionals are not always easy to train. Often we are short of paraprofessionals and either have to go without or have a variety of subs.
- The team members who work directly with the student are often unable to leave the student unattended for a team meeting.

Overarching Themes
- Teachers are often not given the amount of time or resources needed to handle all aspects of BIP effectively.
- In more difficult/challenged settings, staff are not well trained, there is poor communication and collaboration across staff, and the special ed teacher has to complete more tasks (e.g., accompany students to specials, collect all data in all environments, handle crisis situations, and deliver instruction).
- They are not given the time needed to observe the student and better understand their behavior; much less the time to develop, implement, monitor, and effectively revise BIP.

How Teachers Surmount This Obstacle
- Writing BIP to match resources, time, and training levels available (no easy task).
- Advocating with administration for time needed to effectively support behavioral needs of students.
- Monitoring and evaluating BIP in ways that are simple, streamlined, and effective.

How Their Strategies Align with Research
- There are effective, low resource behavior interventions
- Effectively training, managing, and supervising paraeducators saves teacher time and energy
- Being able to adapt BIP to difficult situations and maintaining effectiveness likely takes a high level of skill

The cause of the student’s problem behavior is not something that can be addressed through a BIP (e.g., problems at home, mental health)
Teacher Quotes (n=193)

- As a teacher we cannot change home issues, and those seem to be a lot of the reason students have trouble in school.
- Parents are not complying with behavioral interventions at home.
- Since we cannot control issues at home, we are limited on how we can help the child and shape his/her behaviors.
- These are factors that cannot be worked on and are internally based.

Overarching Themes

- Sometimes child problem behavior stems from things that are happening at home; because we cannot change these things through a BIP, the BIP is not helpful.
- Many teachers also reported internal factors out of their control (medical/pain/mental health/sensory issues) as driving behavior and not influenced by BIP.
- In all of these situations, the lack of progress with BIP or help and communication from parents may frustrate teaching teams and make them feel useless or helpless.

How Teachers Surmount This Obstacle

- Focusing on what they can control instead of what they can’t.
- Concerning themselves less with the home setting and focusing energies on addressing students’ needs in the classroom and teaching new communication and coping skills.
- “Cannot change factors at home but can help support student’s growth and learning and response to all situations.”
- “We cannot change home life. We can help communication. We try to make student comfortable and know this is a safe place where all needs will be addressed.”

How Their Strategies Align with Research

- Immediate environment plays a large role in how a student behaves.
- Students may behave very differently at school than at home.
- Factors within teacher control can have a very powerful effect on student behavior.
- Teachers with a greater sense of self-efficacy and lower burnout may make greater attempts to improve student behavior even if there are complex causes/external factors involved.

General Questions on Implementation and Effectiveness of BIP

- In general, how often do you encounter any obstacle to implementing BIP?
  - 3% every BIP, 10% most BIP, 19% about half of BIP, 56% occasional BIP, 9% never
- Are obstacles you encounter most often major or minor?
  - 22% major, 78% minor
- To what degree do you feel your students’ BIP have been effective in changing behavior?
  - 10% extremely effective, 36% fairly effective, 43% somewhat effective, 11% not effective
- To what degree are your BIP implemented as planned? (0-100%)
  - M = 68.5%, SD = 20.25

Conclusions

- Most respondents had experienced many of these obstacles.
- These obstacles negatively impacted BIP implementation.
- Wide range in how frequently these obstacles were reported by teachers and how severely they impact implementation.
- Many teachers have developed implementation strategies in attempts to surmount these obstacles.
Implications for Research
- Results support previous findings that time, collaboration, and beliefs across school staff are primary obstacles to implementing BIP
- This study adds new information on teacher perspectives and implementation strategies
- Some of these strategies (e.g., developing simple but effective BIP) should be further examined through research
- Need for evidence-based practices addressing teacher beliefs
- Need for integration of BIP with mental health, social work...
- More research is needed investigating how these and other implementation obstacles can be surmounted

Implications for Practice
- Effectively implementing BIP under natural school conditions can be challenging
- It may be helpful to:
  - Become skilled and confident in writing and revising BIP
  - Keep BIP simple, addressing only the most significant problematic behaviors through easy-to-implement strategies
  - Create BIP “cheat sheets”
  - Directly train all staff expected to implement BIP and provide them with feedback on their implementation; modify BIP if needed
  - Make time to collaborate regarding BIP a priority

Limitations and Next Steps
- Limitations:
  - Researcher-developed survey
  - Relying on practitioner self reports
  - Relatively small return rate
- Look at differences in implementation and obstacles across teacher and school demographics
  - E.g., teachers in urban settings significantly more likely to report cause of student problem behavior not able to be addressed by BIP

Questions? Comments?

Thank you!

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