

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT (PBIS)

Summary

For far too many children, the path to prison begins in our under-funded schools. Rather than invest in basic educational and social services that will help troubled children succeed, many schools rely on harsh, “zero-tolerance” discipline policies that result in suspensions, drop-outs, and arrest for even minor, non-violent behavior. These policies push students into a juvenile justice system that criminalizes many of them.

Too often, the juvenile justice system writes off misbehavior in affluent school districts as “typical adolescent rebellion” while the same behavior in a poor, minority school district is likely to be viewed as “criminal behavior” that warrants harsh consequences. This misguided approach to school discipline is driving up the dropout rather for both students and teachers. It does little to improve school climates or to make our communities safer. Reversing this trend will require a sea change in the way schools approach discipline.

In Beaufort County, teachers and principals are focusing as much on rewarding good behavior as punishing bad through a new discipline process called Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS). Time is spent in class discussing positive behavior and how to act at school. Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports refer to the use of positive interventions and system changes to achieve appropriate behavioral changes. This initiative has been successfully used in both urban and rural school districts and in districts with high and low concentrations of poverty. PBIS is a school-wide positive approach to school discipline that teaches appropriate behaviors rather than the use of punitive measures. Key elements of PBIS include: the use of data to track progress and identify areas to target for intervention; the use of consistent process and procedures throughout the school; the implementation of school-wide expectations and rules used to teach students appropriate behavior; and the creation of a reward system to encourage and model appropriate behavior and a system of consequences to discourage inappropriate behavior. The District’s goal is to eventually have all schools creating and sustaining school environments that improve lifestyle results for all students, staff, and families.

Demographics

- *Target Settings:* Beaufort County is characterized by isolated small towns, islands, and farming communities. The district currently educates more than 20,000 PK-12 students. Of those students, 44% are white, 34% Black, 18% Hispanic with 365 being Limited English Proficient. Fifty-four percent of our students currently receive free and reduced lunch. The county is one of the fastest growing in South Carolina. The district consists of five high schools, seven middle schools, and 18 elementary schools.
- *Target Groups Served:* All students in Beaufort County School District
- *Districts Served:* Beaufort County Schools

Research and Evaluation

What national or other research was considered during the development of this program/initiative? Describe the evidence that shows the program/initiative works.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) has shown promising results as a culturally responsive set of evidence based interventions designed to achieve socially important behavior change and improve achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). PBIS provides a systematic approach to improving academic and behavioral outcomes for all students. PBIS is a framework for decision-making that guides the selection integration and implementation of evidence-based academic and behavioral practices. PBIS establishes an environment with behavioral supports needed for all children in a school to achieve academic and social success.

PBIS, launched in 2009, is being used throughout the district to assist school personnel in adopting and organizing evidence-based behavioral interventions into a continuum that is utilized school-wide. Nationally, the implementation of PBIS has shown promising results. In the Jefferson Parish, Louisiana school district, the out-of-school suspension rate for special education students was cut in half. Out-of-school suspensions for general education students dropped 24% after the first year.

All 30 schools in the Beaufort County school district have begun the implementation of PBIS. Several schools have led the way with two- to three years of successful implementation yielding positive program outcomes. Robert Smalls Middle, Hilton Head Early Childhood Center, Whale Branch Middle, and Whale Branch Elementary have all received recognition at the state level for implementation with fidelity. The District has seen a 34.5 percent decrease in suspensions over the last three years. Suspensions totaled more than 3,750 during the 2007-2008 school year. During the 2010 – 2011 school year that number was down to 2,468. Additionally, the District's "Persistently Dangerous Schools" offenses were down from 42 in 2009-2010 to 32 in 2010-2011.

Resources

- *Annual Cost:* Beaufort County School District spent approximately \$50,000 implementing PBIS during the 2010-2011 school year.
- *Funding Sources:* General Fund, Title II and At-Risk Funding
- *Staffing Needs:* District PBIS Coordinator
- *Infrastructure/Equipment Needs:* Training Location, LCD Projector, Laptop/Promethean Boards
- *Partner Organizations:* Parent Teacher Associations, Parent Teacher Organizations, School Improvement Councils and Beaufort County Collaborative Organization of Services for Youth

Contact Information

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