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Positive Behavior Support and Student Response to the Behavior Education Program

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POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT AND STUDENT RESPONSE TO THE

BEHAVIOR EDUCATION PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

School-wide positive behavior supports (SWPBS) is an evidence-based systematic approach that views problem behaviors in a positive, preventative manner. Once a school-wide discipline system is in place, an intermediate-level intervention can be implemented to support the 5% to 15% of students who are at-risk of engaging in more severe behavior. Students who do not respond to universal behavioral approaches and need extra support can benefit from a targeted group intervention like the Behavior Education Program (BEP), which is based on a daily check-in check-out system providing students with immediate feedback on their behavior. This research study described the effectiveness of the Behavior Education Program on student problem behavior with seven elementary-aged school students. The findings confirmed that the BEP resulted in an improvement in behavior, and a reduction in the number of office discipline referrals for the majority of students who received the intervention. Limitations of the study were presented, as well as implications for school social work practice.

I. **Introduction**

A) Problem Formulation

      1) Schools face a growing challenge in meeting both the instructional and behavioral needs of all students.

      2) School discipline and behavior problems can threaten student achievement.

      3) Students who do not respond to a school-wide continuum of positive behavior support (PBS) may benefit from a behavior education program (BEP).

      4) The Behavior Education is designed to help the 10-15% of students who fail to meet school-wide disciplinary expectations but do not require the highest level of behavior support.

B) Types of Behavior Problems

      1) Disruptive behaviors can be a challenge for educators.

      2) Understanding the causes/development of behavioral problems will help educators/parents intervene more effectively with difficult students.

      3) Externalizing behaviors: highly observable, directed toward others, and distracting to teachers: noncompliance, arguing, excessive talking, fighting, and tantrums

      4) Internalizing behaviors: inner-directed and usually don't impact students: inattention and poor concentration, social withdrawal, feelings of sadness, and fears

      5) Most teachers can identify students in their class with social problems, off-task behaviors, poor work completion, and difficulty learning

      6) In special education classrooms, the incidence of disruptive behaviors, attention problems, and social problems may be higher.

C) Risk Factors for Behavior Problems

      1) Research shows that disruptive behavior problems early in life usually continue to later school years, resulting in antisocial behavior, lower grades, and poor school performance.

      2) A number of factors that contribute to development and maintenance of behavior problems: child temperament, family characteristics, parent-child interactions, and school structure/teaching styles

D) Problem Justification

      1) Schools are obligated to create and maintain a safe learning environment that promotes positive behavior in all students.

      2) Due to the limited amount of resources available in schools, schools need to adapt and implement a time-and cost-effective intervention, like the BEP to reduce problem behavior.

       3) Important to examine the BEP's effectiveness in reducing problem behavior with at-risk elementary school students.

II.   Main Points

A) There are three levels of behavioral need
       1) All students must be taught the school-wide rules and expectations
       2) At-risk students must have a system for reducing the risk that behavior will become worse over time.
       3) Students with serious problem behavior must receive intensive, individualized behavior support.
       4) Those students who receive three or more discipline referrals can benefit from a targeted intervention, like the BEP.

B) The BEP addresses the second level of behavioral need
       1) Targets students who demonstrate continual, but not dangerous problem behavior
       2) These students do not require comprehensive, individualized interventions; rather they find adult attention reinforcing
       3) Provides daily support and monitoring for students who are at-risk for develop serious problem behavior
       4) Based on a daily check-in/check-out system that provides students feedback on their daily behavior
       5) BEP links behavioral and academic support
       6) A typical BEP student in elementary school may have difficulty taking his turn, refuse to share materials, difficulty focusing and completing tasks, or be aggressive toward peers.

C) The BEP is efficient and cost-effective intervention.
       1) It can be implemented within three days of identifying a problem, and typically requires no more than 5-10 minutes per teacher per day.
       2) Used by all school staff/very low effort by staff to implement
       3) About 20-30 students can be supported on system at same time
       4) Students receiving the BEP do not have to undergo an extensive assessment process.

D) Main Features of the BEP
       1) Each morning, every student on the BEP begins and ends each day with a positive interaction with a teacher or mentor.
       2) Managed by a BEP coordinator and Behavior Support Team
       3) All faculty in school participate too
       4) Student is identified by teacher or family member to enter the BEP.

5) The Behavior Support Team holds a weekly meeting to review the number of points earned by each student, and to make any changes to the system of support.

E) The BEP process
1) The BEP involves a daily and weekly cycle
2) Each morning, the student arrives at school and checks in with the BEP coordinator.
3) At this check-in, the student receives his or her Daily Progress Report.
4) Student carries the DPR throughout the day and hands it back to teacher after activities to get feedback on his or her behavior.
5) At end of day, student returns the DPR to the BEP coordinator, receives a reward for good behavior, and sends a copy of the report home, where family members recognize their child's success and sign the form.
6) BEP coordinator should enter the data into a database daily
7) Process starts all over again

III. Opposing Points

A) Not all students who are referred for the BEP will be appropriate for it.
1) Some students will have mildly inappropriate behavior that can be addressed with minor modifications in the classroom routine.
2) Some students will experience problem behavior in only a couple of settings, in which they may behave more effectively from making a change in the specific setting, rather than be a part of the BEP, which monitors his behavior throughout the day.
3) Some students have behavior problems that are too severe to be monitored by the BEP. They need more individualized support.
4) Students who do not find adult attention valuable will be least likely to benefit from the BEP.
B) Only schools that implement an effective school-wide positive behavior support (PBS) should consider adopting the BEP.
1) If there are fewer than 10 students who engage in problem behavior, it is not worth investing in the BEP. Rather, these students should have individualized behavior support interventions.
C) The most popular universal intervention involves implementing a school-wide approach to discipline.
1) Universal interventions are implemented in all settings for all students.
2) 80% of students, compared to 15% who are targeted for the BEP, benefits from universal interventions

D) Many teachers lack the time/commitment to fill out the Daily Progress Reports.
   1) The BEP needs adequate personnel to run the program
   2) The BEP requires the teacher/coordinator to continually provide feedback regarding students' behavior, offering positive support/reinforcement to a student throughout the day.
   3) Elementary-aged students may need more time to practice and learn the routine of the BEP process.
   4) Students may not always remember to get their card in the morning or receive feedback from teachers during transitions between activities.
   5) Requires collaboration/partnership among all school personnel

E) Once a BEP system has been tried and failed, it is difficult to persuade teachers and staff to give it another chance.
   1) Prior to the implementation of the BEP, the administrator, teachers, and other school personnel must be adequately trained on this intervention.
   2) In order to be successful, all staff members need to know how to appropriately participate in and support the BEP.
   3) If the system is implemented incorrectly, adopting the BEP is more likely to fail.
   4) Some teachers may need additional training to reinforce the positive nature of the program
   5) Difficult to provide prompts for positive feedback and to keep the teachers invested in the system
F) Commitment to too many projects at the same time is a threat to successful implementation of the BEP.
   1) Lack of time, energy, and effort to build and sustain an effective BEP system.
   2) Data can easily pile up and become disorganized: The DPRs and data must be entered on a daily basis to monitor student progress, make data-based intervention decisions, and evaluate outcomes

IV. **Hypothesis**
   A) Whether the implementation of the Behavior Education Program proves to reduce problem behavior with at-risk elementary school students.

V. **Methodology**
   A) Sample : Seven elementary-aged students with a BEP, from urban elementary School
   B) Data gathering
   C) Data analysis
   D) Findings

VI. **Conclusion**
- A) The Behavior Education Program was an effective intervention for reducing problem behavior with at-risk elementary school students.
    1) Findings supported hypothesis
- B) Implications for Social Work
    1) Practice, Research, Policy

Introduction

Schools increasingly face a challenge in meeting both the academic and behavioral needs of all students (Crone, D.A., Horner, R.H., & Hawkin, L.S., 2004, p. 6). School discipline and behavior problems can threaten student achievement (Cotton, 1990). Students who do not respond to a school-wide continuum of positive behavior support (PBS) may benefit from the Behavior Education Program (BEP). Thus, it may be possible to address disruptive behavior, and to evaluate the effects of the BEP in reducing the incidence of problem behaviors with elementary-aged school students.

In an attempt to address problem behavior in schools, researchers and educators have implemented a school-wide continuum of positive behavior support (Crone, D.A., Horner, R.H., & Hawkin, L.S., 2004, p. 6). School-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) is a systems-level approach focused on building an effective learning environment for all students (Todd, A.W., Campbell, A.L., Meyer, G.G., & Horner, R.H., 2008, p. 46). "This approach has become a significant public school reform movement in the past eight years, and is being implemented in approximately 39 states and in more than 5,300 schools" (Frey, A.J., Lingo, A., & Nelson, C.M., 2008, p. 5).

The majority of students who do not respond to primary prevention will respond to more individualized secondary prevention efforts, including small group strategies, behavioral contracting, academic support, mentoring, and social-skill development (Hawkin, L.S., MacLeod, K. S., & Rawlings, L., 2007, p. 94). One type of targeted intervention is the Behavior Education Program (BEP), which is a modified check-in, check-out intervention implemented with students who are at risk for more severe problem behaviors (Hawkin, L.S., MacLeod, K. S., & Rawlings, L., 2007, p. 94). Its

primary goal is to reduce current cases of problem behavior, including disruptive behaviors, noncompliance, disrespect, tardiness, aggression, and inappropriate language (Todd, A.W., Campbell, A.L., Meyer, G.G., & Horner, R.H., 2008, p. 46). Adopting and implementing the BEP can moderate a child's problem behavior and prevent more serious issues, such as harassment and physical altercations (Todd, A.W., Campbell, A.L., Meyer, G.G., & Horner, R.H., 2008, p. 46). Research has shown that "targeted interventions can be implemented by typical school personnel, with positive effects on up to 67% of referred students" (Hawkin, L.S., MacLeod, K. S., & Rawlings, L., 2007, p. 95).

Due to the limited amount of resources available in schools, schools need to adapt and implement cost-efficient and effective secondary-level interventions, like the BEP, to reduce problem behavior (Hawkin, L.S., MacLeod, K. S., & Rawlings, L., 2007, p. 100). Most research has focused on the implementation of the BEP in middle schools (Hawkin, L.S., MacLeod, K. S., & Rawlings, L., 2007, p. 95) Therefore, it is important to examine the BEP's effectiveness in reducing problem behavior with at-risk elementary school students.

This problem is important to social work practice and research because schools are obligated to create and maintain a safe learning environment that promotes positive behavior in all students. "There is approximately 140 school social workers employed in Rhode Island, and it is estimated that 153,417 children are enrolled in Rhode Island public schools" (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). For the behavior education program to be effective, it is important that school social workers are involved in its design, implementation, and assessment (Frey, A.J., Lingo, A, & Nelson, C.M., 2008,

12). The BEP is managed by a BEP coordinator and a behavior support team (Crone, D.A., Horner, R.H., & Hawkin, L.S., 2004, p. 13). The BEP improves the school environment by increasing communication and stability among teachers, administrators, and social workers (Crone, D.A., Horner, R.H., & Hawkin, L.S., 2004, p. 8). As the team leader, school social workers collaborate with other school personnel and families to make BEP referrals, identify students' needs, and monitor problem behavior for decision making (Frey, A.J., Lingo, A, & Nelson, C.M., 2008, p.12).

Students with Behavior Problems

Students with behavior problems present a significant challenge to educators in preschool, elementary, and secondary classrooms across the United States (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 27). All students exhibit occasional behavior problems that are considered normal for their developmental level, including arguing, tantrums, excessive talking, and refusal to follow directions or complete tasks (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 27). However, students who exhibit persistent behavior problems can place a tremendous demand on teachers (Abebe, S. & Assegedech, H., 2007, p. 3). This is an important concern for many schools because the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2001) reports that "the number of students with aggressive, acting out, and/or antisocial behavior is steadily increasing" (Tidwell, Flannery, & Lewis-Palmer, 2003, p. 18). The increase in problem behavior contributes to a reactive learning environment that threatens student achievement (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 2). Educators must be able to skillfully deal with these problems, as well as understand the nature of discipline problems and their causes.

Prevalence of Behavior Problems

In the United States, approximately "5 to 16% of children are identified with a specific behavior or mental disorder" (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 28). Most of the behavioral problems that children exhibit remain undiagnosed (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 28). For example, many children exhibit externalizing behaviors in the classroom, which are highly observable behaviors that are directed toward others and are distressing to teachers (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 28). Externalizing behaviors, such as noncompliance, arguing, tantrums, and excessive talking, are highly disruptive and interrupt normal classroom routine (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 28). Research shows that there is a relationship between behavior problems and poor academic achievement (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 28). Students who struggle with academic material often avoid completing assignments, disrupt the classroom, or refuse to listen to the teacher (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 28). Typically, students with antisocial behavior exhibit academic difficulties and poor teacher relations, resulting in an increase of office discipline referrals (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 30). Due to the prevalence of student problem behavior, teachers are spending more time on classroom management than on instruction, which compromises learning for both the student with behavioral problems and the rest of the class (Abebe, S. & Assegedech, H., 2007, p. 3).

Contributing Factors for Behavior Problems

There are a number of factors that contribute to the development and maintenance of behavior problems in children, as well as poor classroom management. Some of these factors include child temperament, family interactions, school characteristics, and the

implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 30). Understanding how these factors put children at risk for developing problem behavior can help educators develop effective school-based interventions to meet their academic and social needs (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 30).

Child Temperament

Children's temperament, or intrinsic nature, can influence their behavior and the way they react to the world (Chess, Thomas, & Cameron, 1976, p. 24). Research suggests that parental interactions during the infant's first year of life can be linked with later behavior problems (Chess, Thomas, & Cameron, 1976, p. 24). Therefore, specific temperamental characteristics in infancy, such as colic and excessive crying, may be important to examine (Stormont, 2002, p. 128). Chess and Thomas (1976) conducted a longitudinal study on basic temperament characteristics found in infants. Their findings proved that "seventy percent of children identified as 'difficult' later developed behavior disorders, while eighteen percent of children identified as 'easy' later developed behavior disorders" (Chess, Thomas, & Cameron, 1976, p. 25). Other researchers have also found that more difficult preschool temperaments, including inflexibility, irritability, and low adaptability have been associated with children with externalizing behavior problems (Stormont, 2002, p. 128). Children with difficult temperaments are more challenging to manage, possibly contributing to negative parent-child interactions and teacher-student interactions (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 30). Therefore, behavior problems may be more likely to occur if a student's temperament does not coincide with a teaching style or disciplinary style of an adult (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 31).

Parent-Child Interactions and Family Characteristics

Ineffective parenting practices play a significant role in the severity and prevalence of problem behaviors (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 32). Researchers have studied parent-child interactions, and have found that some parenting behaviors can contribute to the development of aggressive child behavior and noncompliance (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 32). Research has found that negative and controlling types of parenting place children at risk of developing or maintaining behavior problems (Stormont, 2002, p. 130). This research confirms that antisocial behavior learned within the family may be generalized to other social situations, including school and peer relations (Stormont, 2002, p. 130).

In addition to parenting styles, family stressors may disrupt effective parenting styles and contribute to student problem behavior (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 32). Longitudinal research conducted with preschoolers found that specific family factors are important predictors of behavior problems in children, including marital conflict, maternal depression, family stress, and lower educational levels (Stormont, 2002, p. 129). Furthermore, poverty, substance abuse problems, and sexual/emotional/physical abuse can contribute to children's behavior (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 32).

School Characteristics

Students who begin school with noncompliant behavior patterns have a greater risk of developing severe behavior problems (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 33). "Punitive disciplinary strategies, unclear rules and expectations, and failure to consider individual differences lead to increasing rates of problematic behavior and poor academic achievement" (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 33). Studies have been conducted on

children with behavior problems and their interactions with teachers (Stormont, 2002, p. 130). Specifically, "teachers spent more than 20% of the time in negative interactions with students with behavior problems, and less than 5% of the time engaged in positive interactions with such students" (Stormont, 2002, p. 131). Due to these low rates of positive interactions with teachers, it is important that teachers learn to support and respond to students in a manner that reinforces positive behavior and decreases inappropriate behavior (Stormont, 2002, p. 131). Therefore, it is beneficial for schools to implement the positive behavior support (PBS) system because it creates a supportive learning environment for all students. Schools that have full staff support, collaborate with parents, identify behavior problems early on, and consistently monitor interventions can help maximize student academic and social achievement (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 33).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The 1997 and 2004 reauthorizations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) resulted in significant changes to the discipline of children with disabilities (Chitiyo & Wheeler, 2009, p. 58). The law emphasized the use of positive behavior supports and functional behavior assessments (FBA) as an approach to manage problem behavior (Chitiyo & Wheeler, 2009, p. 58). Positive behavior supports "look beyond the behavior itself and emphasizes positive incentives and strategies to encourage and teach new behaviors rather than reacting to inappropriate behaviors (McKinney, Campbell-Whatley, & Kea, 2005, p. 16). Functional behavior assessments are designed to understand the relationship between the behavior being assessed and the function it serves in the environment (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 33). During a functional

behavior assessment, the student's desired behaviors are identified and measured, and specific behavioral objectives are determined (McKinney, Campbell-Whatley, & Kea, 2005, p. 16). The IDEA requires that schools use positive behavior supports not only for students receiving special education services, but also for students whose problem behavior puts them at risk for special education placement (McKinney, Campbell-Whatley, & Kea, 2005, p. 17). The PBS model uses a wide range of evidence-based practices to manage disruptive behavior and to create safe and effective learning environments (Chitiyo & Wheeler, 2009, p. 58).
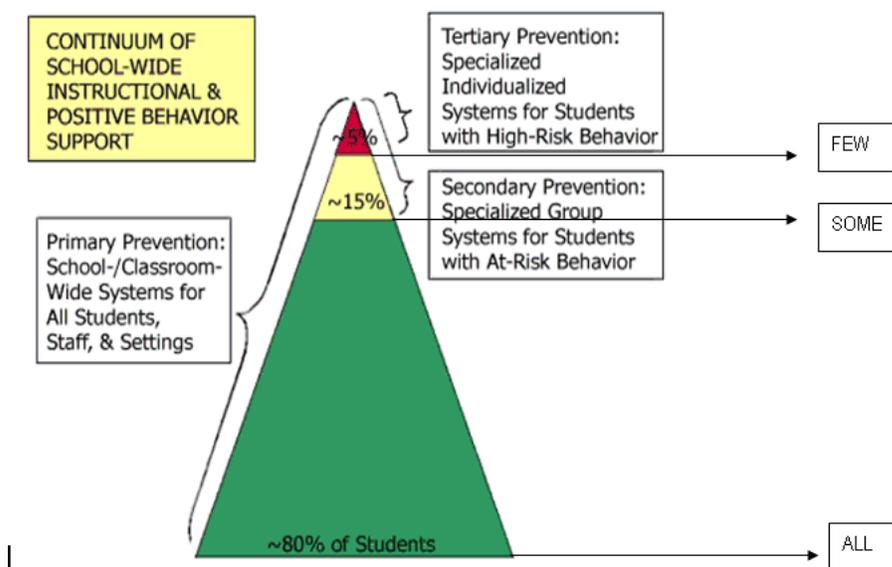
Positive Behavior Supports

In an attempt to address problem behavior in schools, administrators, educators, and school social workers have implemented a school-wide continuum of positive behavior support (Crone, D.A., Horner, R.H., & Hawkin, L.S., 2004, p. 6). School-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) is a systems-level approach focused on building an effective learning environment for all students (Todd, A.W., Campbell, A.L., Meyer, G.G., & Horner, R.H., 2008, p. 46). In doing so, PBS creates a supportive learning environment that prevents the occurrence of problem behaviors and promotes the success of all students:

> Based on the work of public health and prevention science, PBS focuses on addressing systemic issues in schools to positively address the areas of discipline, academic performance, and social/emotional development (Walker, Cheney, Stage, & Blum, 2005, p. 194).

The PBS model is based on a three-tiered model of prevention and intervention; with universal behavior support systems for all students, targeted interventions for students at risk, and individualized interventions for students engaging in severe problem behavior (Todd, Campbell, Meyer, & Horner, 2008, p. 46). A major element of the PBS

model is that students have three levels of need, which corresponds with a school's continuum of interventions (Walker, Cheney, Stage, & Blum, 2005, p. 194). The continuum of positive behavior support is detailed in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Continuum of School-Wide Instructional & Positive Behavior Support

CONTINUUM OF SCHOOL-WIDE INSTRUCTIONAL & POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT

Tertiary Prevention: Specialized Individualized Systems for Students with High-Risk Behavior

Secondary Prevention: Specialized Group Systems for Students with At-Risk Behavior

Primary Prevention: School-/Classroom-Wide Systems for All Students, Staff, & Settings

~5%

~15%

~80% of Students

FEW

SOME

ALL

Continuum of School-wide Positive Behavior Support

The triangle in Figure 1 represents all students in the school, and is divided into three levels of intervention: primary, secondary, and tertiary. Primary prevention is the first level of supports that is designed to meet the needs of all students across all school settings (Sugai & Horner, 2006, p. 247). The bottom part of the triangle represents the approximately 80% of students who will benefit from primary preventions alone (Sugai & Horner, 2006, p. 247). Research shows that these students generally follow school-wide rules and expectations and are not problematic (Sugai & Horner, 2006, p. 247). These students do not need additional interventions when systems at this level are "positive, consistent, and well-established" (Walker, Cheney, Stage, & Blum, 2005, p. 194).

The middle section of the triangle represents 15% of the student body who will benefit from secondary interventions (Sugai & Horner, 2006, p. 247). These students are at-risk of developing more serious problem behavior and need increased adult attention and monitoring (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 29). Targeted interventions, such as social skills groups, school counseling programs, and peer tutoring are provided for students at the secondary level (Walker, Cheney, Stage, & Blum, 2005, p. 194).

The top part of the triangle represents the 5% of students who exhibit chronic and intense behavior problems (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 29). Students at the tertiary level are unresponsive to primary and secondary interventions, requiring specialized individual interventions and long-term monitoring (Sugai & Horner, 2006, p. 247). Functional behavioral assessments and Individualized Education Programs are common supports at this level (Walker, Cheney, Stage, & Blum, 2005, p. 195).

School-wide Discipline Plan

Research shows that schools with effective school-wide discipline plans have experienced reductions in problem behavior and improvements in overall school climate (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Scott (2001) conducted a school-wide study in an inner city elementary school in central Kentucky. His findings demonstrated that the school's system of positive behavior support was associated with a decrease in student problem behavior (Scott, 2001, p. 91). As the implementation of PBS has become more common in public schools, the process of identifying and supporting students who are at-risk of severe problem behavior has become increasingly critical (Walker, Cheney, Stage, & Blum, 2005, p. 194). Office discipline referrals, for example, are used to monitor the effectiveness of school-wide practices and identify individuals in need of more behavior

support (Walker, Cheney, Stage, & Blum, 2005, p. 195). Tracking student behavior and identifying at-risk students early in the school year can help reduce the number of students referred to more intensive interventions later on (Walker, Cheney, Stage, & Blum, 2005, p. 203).

Secondary Prevention

Some students require more intensive and structured support than the discipline plans provided by universal interventions. Students who do not respond well to school-wide behavior support interventions may benefit from secondary level interventions (Hawken, MacLeod, & Rawlings, 2007, p. 94). These interventions are designed to provide efficient behavior support for the "5% to 15% of students who are at risk of developing more severe problem behavior" (Todd, Campbell, Meyer, & Horner, 2008, p. 46). These students may require more practice in learning school-wide expectations due to poor social skills, academic deficits, or stressful family environments" (Hawken, MacLeod, & Rawlings, 2007, p. 94). One type of targeted intervention is a modified check-in, check-out system called the Behavior Education Program (BEP), in which students receive feedback about their behavior throughout the day (Hawken, MacLeod, & Rawlings, 2007, p. 94).

Effectiveness of the Behavior Education Program

Due to the limited amount of resources available in schools, schools need to adapt and implement cost-efficient and effective secondary-level interventions, like the BEP, to reduce problem behavior (Hawkin, L.S., MacLeod, K. S., & Rawlings, L., 2007, p. 100). The BEP is a relatively new system of positive behavior support (Hawken, MacLeod, & Rawlings, 2007, p. 95). However, research shows that the BEP appears to be an efficient

method of intervention for "60-75% of at-risk students" (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 10). Researchers conducted a study that evaluated the effects of the BEP on problem behavior with twelve elementary-aged students (Hawken, MacLeod, and Rawlings, 2007, p. 94). Although not all students improved, the majority of students demonstrated decreased rates of office discipline referrals (Hawken, MacLeod, and Rawlings, 2007, p. 98). Another study examined the connection between the implementation of the Check-in-Check-Out Program (CICO) and a reduction in problem behaviors (Todd, Campbell, Meyer, & Horner, 2008, p. 46). Those who participated in the CICO displayed an estimated 17.5% decrease in the level and variability of problem behaviors (Todd, Campbell, Meyer, & Horner, 2008, p. 51). The results of these studies support previous research that the BEP can be implemented in a regular school setting with high fidelity, resulting in a decrease in office discipline referrals (Hawken, MacLeod, and Rawlings, 2007, p. 98).

Features of the BEP

The BEP addresses the second level of behavioral need by providing daily support for students who are at risk for developing serious or chronic problem behavior (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 2). Schools that have implemented a universal intervention and still have ten or more students needing extra support may benefit from the BEP (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 3). These are students who have failed to respond to school-wide expectations, and have acquired several disciplinary referrals throughout the year (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 2). Unlike tertiary level interventions, students receiving the BEP do not have to undergo an extensive assessment process (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 2).

The BEP is both efficient and cost-effective because the intervention is "continuously available, can be implemented within three days of identifying a problem, and usually requires about 5-10 minutes per teacher per day" (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 2). This is important for school officials and educators because the BEP can be used by all school personnel, with low time demands and little effort by staff and parents to implement (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 3). Approximately, 20-30 students can be supported on the system at the same time (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 3).

Three Behavioral Principles

The BEP is based on three behavioral principles. The first principle states that "at-risk students benefit from clearly defined expectations, consistent feedback, and positive reinforcement that is contingent on meeting goals" (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 12). For example, teachers who mentor students in the BEP are responsible for greeting students positively, providing feedback on students' progress throughout the day, and encouraging students to improve behavior when inappropriate (Hawken, 2006, p. 93). The second behavioral principle states that there is an association between problem behavior and academic success (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 12). For some students, use of the BEP is related to increased levels of academic achievement (Hawken, 2006, p. 95). The third principle states that students in the BEP benefit from positive adult reinforcement (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 12). Students who are not motivated by adult attention would not benefit from the BEP (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 35). The goal of the BEP is to catch students early on who are acting out, and to provide them with the necessary supports to prevent future problem behavior (Hawken, 2006, p. 95).

The BEP Process

Before a student can be placed on the Behavior Education Program, the student must be referred by a teacher, parent, or member of the BEP team (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 15). Once a referral is received, the BEP coordinator will decide if a student should be placed on the BEP (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 15). Not all students who are referred for the BEP will benefit from the intervention. The decision to add a student to the BEP is based upon specific criteria (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 15). A student who is a good candidate for the BEP engages in a repeated pattern of problem behavior in more than one setting, or with more than one teacher/staff member (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 15). Students who are placed on the BEP usually have attention-motivated problem behavior and thus benefit from adult attention (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 15). Once a referral is received, the BEP team will decide if a student should be placed on the BEP (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 15). The BEP is adequate for students who frequently disrupt the class, come to school unprepared, or talk back to the teacher (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 35). Although their behavior is not dangerous, it disrupts instruction and interferes with their own learning and achievement (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 35). The BEP is not appropriate for the group of students who accounts for "5-7% of the population that requires intensive individualized interventions" (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 35).

Daily Features of the BEP

After a student has been referred and recommended to be placed on the Behavior Education Program, the daily and weekly features of the process begin (Hawken, 2006, p. 93). The daily features of the BEP involve the day-to-day management and monitoring of

the intervention (Hawken & Horner, 2003, p. 226). Students on the BEP begin and end

each day with a positive contact with an adult in the school (Hawken & Horner, 2003, p.

226). In the morning, students check in with their BEP coordinator, who makes sure they

are prepared for the day and reminds them to follow the school rules and classroom

expectations (Hawken & Horner, 2003, p. 227). At the beginning of each class transition,

students receive a prompt to remind them to behave properly during class time (Hawken

& Horner, 2003, p. 227).

     The BEP coordinator is usually an educational assistant who has ten to fifteen

hours a week dedicated to maintaining the BEP (Hawken, 2006, p. 93). This individual

should have a good rapport with the students because he or she is responsible for

checking them in and out daily (Hawken, 2006, p. 93). At the check-in, the BEP

coordinator asks the students if they have the materials they need to be prepared for the

day, such as pencils, paper, and homework (Hawken, 2006, p. 93). Then the students

receive a Daily Progress Report (DPR) and hand it to the teacher in the morning. The

DPR lists behavioral expectations for students to follow, and a place for teachers to rank

how well the students followed their behavioral goals (Hawken, 2006, p. 93). Students

continuously check in with the teacher, who uses the DPR to rate their behavior after

each class period or activity (Crone, Horner, & Hawkin, 2004, p. 15).

     The morning check-in allows students to begin the day with a positive attitude. It

should not last more than a half an hour and should end before their first class begins

(Crone, Horner, & Hawkin, 2004, p. 15). At the end of the day, students return the DPR

to the BEP coordinator, and bring a copy of the DPR home for their parents to review and

sign (Crone, Horner, & Hawkin, 2004, p. 15). Afternoon-checkouts are shorter (10-15

minutes) because students only have a few minutes to spare before their bus leaves.

Students who meet their daily point goals can receive an award for following

expectations and exhibiting positive behavior. Students then return the DPR to the BEP

coordinator the next morning, and the daily process begins again (Crone, Horner, &

Hawkin, 2004, p. 15).

BEP Team Meetings

The BEP coordinator leads BEP team meetings. Usually, "the BEP team meets

once a week for about 30-45 minutes" (Crone, Horner, & Hawkin, 2004, p. 26). Once

each student's data has been entered, the BEP team creates graphs that demonstrate how

well the student is doing on the BEP (Crone, Horner, & Hawkin, 2004, p. 25). At the

meeting, the BEP coordinator can quickly review the graphs. In doing so, the BEP team

uses the data to determine if a student's BEP should be continued, modified, or ended

(Crone, Horner, & Hawkin, 2004, p. 25).

Prior to the meeting, the BEP team should prioritize three to five students for

discussion (Crone, Horner, & Hawkin, 2004, p. 44). "Students who are not consistently

meeting their behavioral goals, or who have recently demonstrated an abrupt, negative

change in their BEP performance are good candidates" (Crone, Horner, & Hawkin, 2004,

p. 26). At the meeting, the BEP team uses the data to make decisions regarding the

student's status on the BEP and his or her behavioral support needs (Crone, Horner, &

Hawkin, 2004, p. 26). Examining the students' daily data for patterns of behavioral

success or struggle is a critical feature of the BEP process (Hawken & Horner, 2003, p.

227). "If the student is not succeeding on the BEP, the team may decide to remove the

student from the BEP, provide additional behavior supports, or conduct a functional

behavior assessment" (Crone, Horner, & Hawkin, 2004, p. 45). To maintain the interest

and involvement of teachers and students and their families, the BEP team provides

feedback on how well the BEP system is running, its impact on individual student

behavior, and its effect on overall school climate (Hawken & Horner, 2003, p. 227).

The mission of schools is to create safe learning environments that maximize

students' academic and behavioral needs. Educators, however, claim that student

management and classroom discipline represent major challenges to achieving this goal

(Muscott et al., 2004, p. 453). Research indicates that schools can successfully reduce

problem behavior by implementing a positive behavior support system (Muscott et al.,

2004, p. 453). As schools continue to implement school-wide discipline systems, targeted

interventions, like the BEP will be an important and effective component in preventing

severe problem behavior and supporting prosocial skills (Hawken & Horner, 2003, p.

238).

Behavior Interventions

Effective school disciplinary practices are essential for creating a safe learning

environment for all students. Recently, nearly 5,000 schools in more than 30 states have

adopted the school-wide positive behavior support system (Lohrmann, Forman, Martin,

& Palmieri, 2008, p. 257). The 1997 and 2004 reauthorizations of the Individuals with

Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) instructed educators to use positive

behavior supports to address student problem behaviors (Chitiyo & Wheeler, 2008, p. 2).

Positive behavior supports (PBS) differ from the traditional behavioral management

strategies, in that it looks at the conditions and circumstances impacting the target

behavior rather than relying on deterrence, control, and punishment to maintain order

(Chitiyo & Wheeler, 2008, p. 2). Although research has supported the effectiveness of PBS, school personnel are resistant to adopting positive behavior supports at the universal level (Lohrmann, Forman, Martin, & Palmieri, 2008, p. 256). Compared to reactive interventions, positive behavior management requires teachers to invest more effort and time in implementing school-wide expectations and rules (Korinek, 1993, p. 264).

Case Example of School-wide PBS System

A study was conducted in New Hampshire to evaluate the PBS system in twenty-eight schools. The results showed that only fifteen out of the twenty-eight schools (54%) successfully met the standard for implementing PBS (Chitiyo & Wheeler, 2008, p. 2). The other twenty-eight schools were not successful in their implementation due to the lack of collaboration and planning among all school personnel, and the inconsistent methods of data collection used (Chitiyo & Wheeler, 2008, p. 2). This study supports the claim that the implementation of school-wide PBS requires sufficient time, commitment, and cooperation among school administration and staff members (Chitiyo & Wheeler, 2008, p. 2).

Challenges Inhibiting the Implementation of PBS

Research shows that educators lack the training and knowledge to effectively implement PBS within their school system (Chitiyo & Wheeler, 2008, p. 3). Consistent commitment and leadership from school administrators are required for the success of PBS (Lohrmann, Forman, Martin, & Palmieri, 2008, p. 257). Many times, administrators have other priorities and are not present to provide teachers with visible support (Lohrmann, Forman, Martin, & Palmieri, 2008, p. 263).

There are several factors that contribute to school personnel's resistance to implement new positive behavior interventions (Lohrmann, Forman, Martin, & Palmieri, 2008, p. 261). One factor that influences implementation is the pressure administrators feel from their district about improving student scores on standardized tests (Lohrmann, Forman, Martin, & Palmieri, 2008, p. 257). In many districts, raising test scores has become the most significant indicator of academic success (Lohrmann, Forman, Martin, & Palmieri, 2008, p. 257). As a result, administrators feel enormous pressure to ensure that student test scores improve. Without administrative involvement in process planning, teachers lack the motivation and time to implement new behavioral strategies (Lohrmann, Forman, Martin, & Palmieri, 2008, p. 261).

A second factor that interferes with the successful implementation of PBS is the different attitudes that teachers have toward the new support system (Lohrmann, Forman, Martin, & Palmieri, 2008, p. 257). For example, teachers need to believe that the intervention will reduce problem behavior and improve student learning (Lohrmann, Forman, Martin, & Palmieri, 2008, p. 258). Furthermore, the climate of the school can affect the success of the intervention, "with higher levels of implementation occurring in schools where staff feel safe and are not overly stressed, and where staff feel they are part of the decision-making process" (Lohrmann, Forman, Martin, & Palmieri, 2008, p. 258). In urban schools, educators are pressured to address students' diverse academic needs, and feel that implementing a new behavioral intervention requires too much effort on their part (Lohrmann, Forman, Martin, & Palmieri, 2008, p. 263). Moreover, some teachers do not understand the connection between academic achievement and problem behavior (Lohrmann, Forman, Martin, & Palmieri, 2008, p. 263). Teachers believe that

improving student performance is more important than addressing student behavioral and emotional needs (Lohrmann, Forman, Martin, & Palmieri, 2008, p. 263).

School personnel not only lack the time, energy, and effort to build and maintain an effective PBS system, but their personal beliefs regarding school discipline also interfere with problem behavior (Lohrmann, Forman, Martin, & Palmieri, 2008, p. 264). Staff members lack the understanding that preventative activities are important and valuable (Lohrmann, Forman, Martin, & Palmieri, 2008, p. 262). Despite the fact that research supports preventative interventions, some educators still believe that punitive consequences are an effective response to problem behavior (Lohrmann, Forman, Martin, & Palmieri, 2008, p. 264). For example, teachers found that students who require the most intensive behavior support respond better to conventional measures, such as punishment, exclusion, and suspension (Lohrmann, Forman, Martin, & Palmieri, 2008, p. 264).

Reactive Discipline Methods

Conventional approaches to behavior management are reactive and consequence-based (Bambara & Kern, 2005, p. 11). Much of what we know about behavior modification is due to the work of B.F. Skinner (Edwards, 2004, p. 46). Skinner and other behaviorists studied how behavior can be reinforced if a reward is given following the appropriate behavior (Edwards, 2004, p. 47). Most school discipline methods are consequence-based, and used for students with and without disabilities (Bambara & Kern, 2005, p. 11). The goal of reactive interventions is to stop the problem behavior quickly, or to get it under control (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 8). One way to modify behavior is to use positive or negative reinforcement. Both positive and negative reinforcement involve

increasing or maintaining a desired behavior (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 8).

Positive reinforcement includes words of praise, a tangible object, or an activity (Bowen,

Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 8). Unlike positive reinforcement which occurs when a

stimulus is present, negative reinforcement involves students avoiding an unpleasant

stimulus (Edwards, 2004, p. 48).

Interventions for Behavior Problems

It is important to understand that no intervention is completely effective in

changing behavior (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 9). Schools may need to combine

several behavior modification methods to reduce problem behavior (Bowen, Jenson, &

Clark, 2004, p. 9). Some researchers question the overall effectiveness of rewards-based

interventions (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 16). Although rewards help increase

student achievement and reduce problem behavior, behavior modification can represent

bribery to some teachers (Edwards, 2004, p. 57). The more teachers reward students for

positive behavior, the more rewards seem to be needed (Edwards, 2004, p. 58). As a

result, students may not perform as expected when a reward system ends (Edwards, 2004,

p. 58). In other words, extrinsic rewards replace intrinsic motivation (Edwards, 2004, p.

58). "Intrinsically motivated people pursue optimal challenges, display greater

innovativeness, and tend to perform better under challenging conditions" (Edwards,

2004, p. 58). However, once rewards are used, students may lose interest in learning,

which reduces the quality of their work (Edwards, 2004, p. 58). Overall, the use of

extrinsic rewards does not teach students to become independent and responsible

individuals who can act appropriately without supervision and monitoring (Edwards,

2004, p. 59).

Award Reinforcers

Students on the Behavior Education Program (BEP) can receive awards when they meet their daily behavioral goals (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 29). Students have a daily point goal set for them that helps determine rewards earned (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 29). A reward system recognizes the student's improvement and helps the student maintain positive behavior throughout the year (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 29).

BEP Placement Decision

Implementing the BEP system does not replace the school's need for intensive, individualized interventions (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 3). For students who need more individualized support, a functional behavioral assessment should be conducted to develop an individualized behavior support plan (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 3). Furthermore, not all students who are referred for the BEP will be appropriate for it (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 34). The BEP is most effective for students at-risk of developing more severe problem behavior (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 34). Some students will have slightly inappropriate behavior that can be addressed by making small changes to the classroom schedule or environment (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 35). For example, a student may experience problem behavior in only a couple of settings, such as yelling in the cafeteria (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 35). In this situation, addressing the behavior by modifying the setting would be more appropriate than implementing the BEP (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 36).

Staff and Student Commitment

In order to implement an effective BEP system, schools must be committed and well-organized (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 38). It is important to implement new interventions at the right time: "Implementing new interventions when the school is undergoing too much change is likely to fail" (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 39). Prior to implementation of the BEP, there are specific requirements that must be put in place (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 39). First, schools that have already implemented a system of PBS, and still have about ten students needing extra interventions should consider adopting the BEP (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 3). Second, the administrator and staff need to be motivated and willing to put forth the effort to build and maintain an effective Behavior Education Program (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 39). Third, teachers need to believe that the BEP is a valuable intervention to address the second level of behavioral need (Lohrmann, Forman, Martin, & Palmieri, 2008, p. 258). Lastly, the BEP system needs trained personnel to run the program (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 41). Both the BEP team and BEP coordinator need to monitor students' progress, provide feedback to students, as well as make necessary improvements to the system (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 39).

The BEP requires students' mentors to provide feedback on their behavior by offering positive support and reinforcement to the student throughout the day (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 50). However, students may not always remember to get their card in the morning or receive feedback from teachers during transitions between activities (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 50). Since it is difficult to provide prompts for positive feedback and to keep the teachers invested in the system, additional staff

training may be necessary to reinforce the positive nature of the program (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 51). Furthermore, many teachers lack the time and commitment to fill out the Daily Progress Reports (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 50). Data can easily pile up and become disorganized when teachers do not input student data regularly (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 43). Keeping well-organized files and entering data on a daily basis is necessary for the BEP system to run smoothly (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 43). Consistently monitoring students' behavior will help the BEP team make better informed decisions on whether students meet their behavioral goals and are benefiting from the BEP (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 43).

Interventions are effective ways to create a safe learning environment for all students. Students' interest in the intervention is an essential component to its success (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 25). In order for the BEP to make changes in students' behavior, all students must understand the nature of the BEP system (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 51). By creating a positive school culture, the management of the BEP will run more efficiently for all school personnel (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 51).

Hypothesis

Traditionally, school-wide discipline methods have mainly focused on reacting to specific student problem behavior. Research has shown that the implementation of reactive interventions, such as reprimands, loss of privileges, office referrals, suspensions, and expulsions has only temporarily reduced problem behavior (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2004, p. 8). As a result, more than 4,000 schools across the United States have implemented a proactive approach to discipline that teaches school-wide

expectations and rewards positive behavior (Cohen, Kincaid, & Childs, 2007, p. 203). Findings indicate that the implementation of school-wide PBS requires sufficient time, commitment, and cooperation among school administration and staff members (Chitiyo & Wheeler, 2008, p. 2). Due to the limited amount of resources available in schools, schools need to adapt and implement cost-efficient and effective secondary-level interventions, like the Behavior Education Program (BEP), to reduce problem behavior and increase learning across the school environment (Hawkin, MacLeod, & Rawlings, 2007, p. 100).

Therefore, more information is needed about the effectiveness of reducing problem behavior with at-risk elementary school students. The following research investigates the correlation between the Behavior Education Program and the rate of student problem behavior.

Methodology

Setting and Participants

The study took place at an urban elementary school located in Providence, Rhode Island. This school has approximately 450 students in Grades 2 through 6. The ethnic makeup of the school is diverse and includes American Indian (1%), Asian (6%), Hispanic (80%), African American (12%), and Caucasian (2%). "Eighty-five percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, and fifteen percent receive special education services" (SALT Report, 2006). There are ten regular education classrooms, five bilingual classrooms, two Anglo full inclusion classrooms, one bilingual full inclusion classroom, and one self-contained bilingual classroom.

The Providence School District has implemented the PBIS model into 15 of its most academically challenged schools (RIDE, 2006). This particular elementary school currently has a school-wide system of positive behavior support in place. Students, who fail to respond to school-wide and classroom expectations and acquire several disciplinary referrals per month, may benefit from a targeted intervention like the Behavior Education Program (BEP). This descriptive study examines the impact of the Behavior Education Program on the reduction in problem behaviors and office discipline referrals of at-risk elementary school students.

Candidates for BEP are identified through the office referral system utilizing the SWIS data system. Students with three to five referrals may be selected to participate in this program, as well as through the Teacher Support Team. Once students are identified, the teacher, parent, and BEP team determine whether the intervention is appropriate, or whether an alternative intervention is a better fit for their behavioral needs.

The sample of convenience consists of seven male students who need additional positive behavior support, and do not respond well to school-wide behavioral expectations. More specifically, this sample includes two male fourth graders and one male second grader who have been on the BEP since September 2008, three fourth grade male students who have participated in the program since January 2009, and one male fourth grade student who received the intervention for the month of November. These students were referred to the BEP because they received at least four minor and three major office discipline referrals for inappropriate behavior. Some of their typical problem behaviors included disrespect/defiance, inappropriate language, property misuse, physical contact/physical aggression, and disruption. The seven participants are an appropriate

sample for determining whether BEP effectively provides the school with a preventative response to chronic behavior.

Data Gathering

  Data-based decision making is a pivotal component of the Behavior Education Program. School personnel utilize data as a means of monitoring student progress on the BEP, as well as identifying at-risk students who could benefit from a targeted intervention. At the end of each month, the students' Daily Progress Reports were collected from their teacher mentor. The Daily Progress Report (DPR) is a form used in the Behavior Education Program to track a student's daily progress towards meeting his or her behavioral goal. The DPR is quick and easy to compute; it has four goals for the student in each section for each period in the day: be respectful, be safe, be responsible, and be ready to learn. Teachers record how well the student behaves in following the school-wide rules and individual goals. The numbers 0, 1, and 2 represent the points the student has earned for each behavioral expectation. A copy of the DPR is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Sample of Daily Progress Report

	Be Respectful of Yourself of Others of Your School - Interact with Others in a Caring Way, Use a Positive Tone of Voice & Body Language	**Ask for help** Raise your hand, ask teacher or other students if you don't understand assignments or work, seek out assistance if you are having a problem	**Be prepared** Be There on time and attentive Make Good Choices, have pencils, books etc. Carry and use a Student Planner Complete Class work & Homework Study	
0 = No 1= Good 2= Excellent	Be Respectful Follow Rules	Positive Attitude	On Time Materials On Task	
Check In	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	
Period 1	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	
Period 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	
Period 3	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	
Period 4	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	
Period 5	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	
Period 6	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	
lunchroom	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	
Check Out	0 1 2			**Total**
Office Referral	Yes No -20 points	100% = 66 points (3 rewards) 90% = 60 points (2 rewards) 80% = 50 points (1 reward)		
Total Points = Points Possible = 66		Today _____%	Goal _____%	

STUDENT _____   DATE: _____

Today your child earned _____% of possible points. Their goal is _____%

Parent's signature_____

Check-in/Check-out System

Four teachers were responsible for checking in with each of the seven students daily. These teachers were initially responsible for explaining the BEP process to students. The students became familiar with the expectations of the program. Each morning, the students were expected to check-in with their BEP mentor and pick up a Daily Progress Report. In the beginning of each class period, the students brought their DPR to their teacher to score during class. At the end of class, teachers were expected to take a few minutes to show the students their scores, and to give them specific feedback on their behavior during class. The students took their DPRs with them when they left class, and returned the forms at the end of the day (about 2:00 p.m.) to their teacher mentor. During check-out, the mentors reviewed the students' day by providing positive feedback for good behavior, offering alternatives to inappropriate behavior, and calculating their percentage of points earned. The students who met their goal of 80% of possible points received small rewards, such as a sticker, snack, or school supply. The students took a section of the DPR home for a parent signature.

Summarizing Data

After the data was collected on a monthly basis, the researcher entered the percentage of points earned by each student into a BEP database. To determine whether students met their goal of 80% of possible points, the students' points were totaled for each day, and then divided by the total number of points possible. The answer was multiplied by 100 to get a percentage. Completed Daily Progress Reports were entered as a separate subject in the database with a corresponding line of data. For each day, the percentage of points earned by the student was entered in the cell that matches the new

date with the student's name. In order to visualize the students' progress, data was entered into Microsoft Excel and graphed. Microsoft Excel was an efficient program for organizing data and creating weekly graphs. After the DPRs were entered into the database and graphed, the data were filed separately into each student's folder to protect student confidentiality.

In addition to the BEP database, the school uses the SWIS database (School-wide Information System) to monitor student behavior. The SWIS database organizes and summarizes office discipline referrals by frequency, problem behavior, student, and location of problem behavior events. The researcher examined standardized SWIS reports and graphs to find whether the number of office discipline referrals decreased for the students on BEP.

Variables

The independent variable is the BEP intervention. The percentage of points earned each day served as a dependent measure (number of points earned divided by the total number of points possible). A second dependent variable was the total number of office discipline referrals per student. To evaluate the effectiveness of BEP, the number of office discipline referrals per student was examined both prior to and following BEP implementation.

Data Analysis

The percentage of points earned each day served as the primary dependent measure. This measure compared student behavior on a daily basis. The graphs illustrate a summary of the percentage of total points earned on students' Daily Progress Reports. Students are held to a goal criterion of 80% of total points. Students' progress on the BEP

was evaluated by examining the Daily Progress Reports and reviewing the Excel graphs to determine if the students met their behavioral goal of 80% of possible points. The dashed line at the 80% point indicates the goal criterion level. Data points at or above the 80% line indicate that the students have met their goal for that day. Data points below that 80% line indicate that their goal was not met. The researcher examined each graph to determine whether or not the students have consistently participated in the BEP and have met their behavioral goals.

Using the SWIS database, the number of office discipline referrals (Pre-BEP, On-BEP) was examined by studying each student's behavior report and graphs, which summarize the rates of office discipline referrals for the whole school, individual classrooms, and/or students. The researcher conducted a paired sample T-test to determine the whether the difference between the number of office discipline referrals Pre-BEP and the number of office discipline referrals On-BEP is significant.

Findings

Percentage of Points

The findings determined whether the Behavior Education Program was an effective intervention for at-risk elementary school students. The results confirmed that the behavior of the majority of participants improved on BEP, as evident in reaching their behavioral goal of 80%. The mean score of DPR data for each student was calculated, as demonstrated in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: Mean Score of Percentage of Points earned by Students on the BEP**

Participants	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5	Student 6	Student 7
Mean of Percentage of Points	93.1	93.6	96.2	94.1	92.0	92.0	79.8

The mean score of percentage of points earned by students on the Behavior Education Program proved that six out of the seven students (Student 1 through Student 6) met their behavioral goal of 80%. The graphs show that the percentage of daily points earned for Student 1 through Student 6 were high (at or above 80%) for most of the intervention's duration (See Figure 4).

Figure 4: BEP Graphs for Student 1 through Student 6

Student 3's BEP Data

Student 4's BEP Data

Student 5's BEP Data
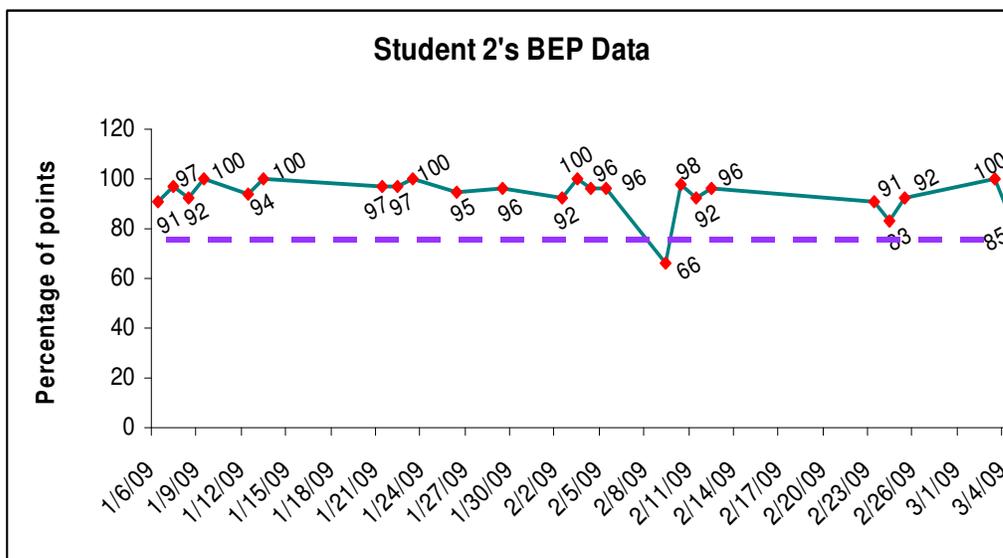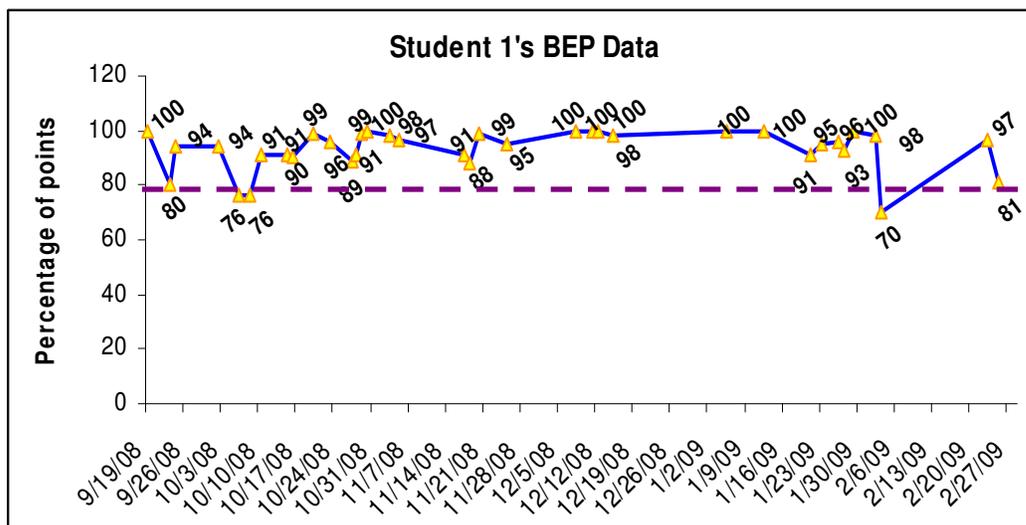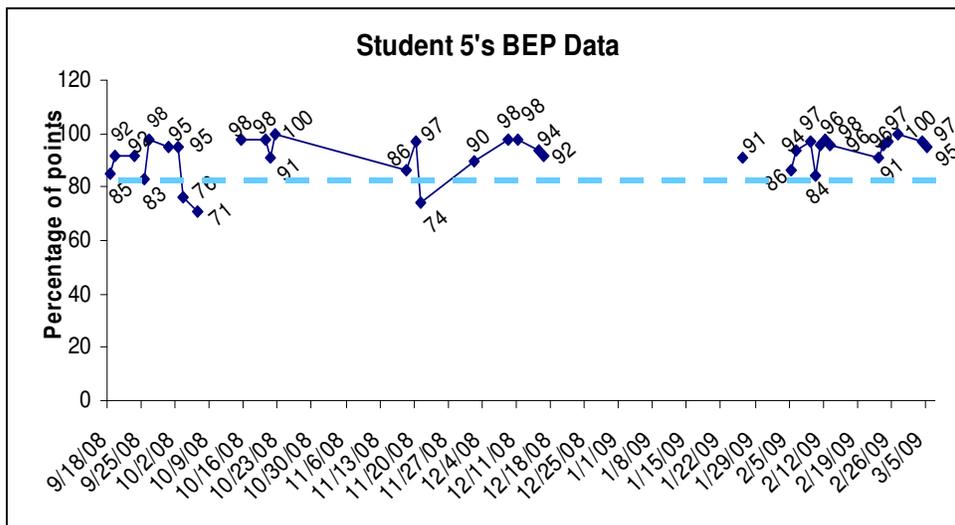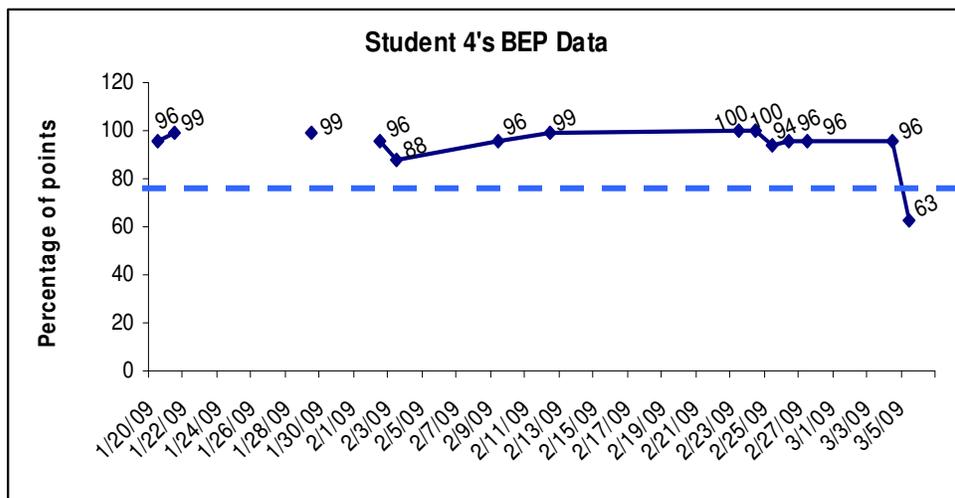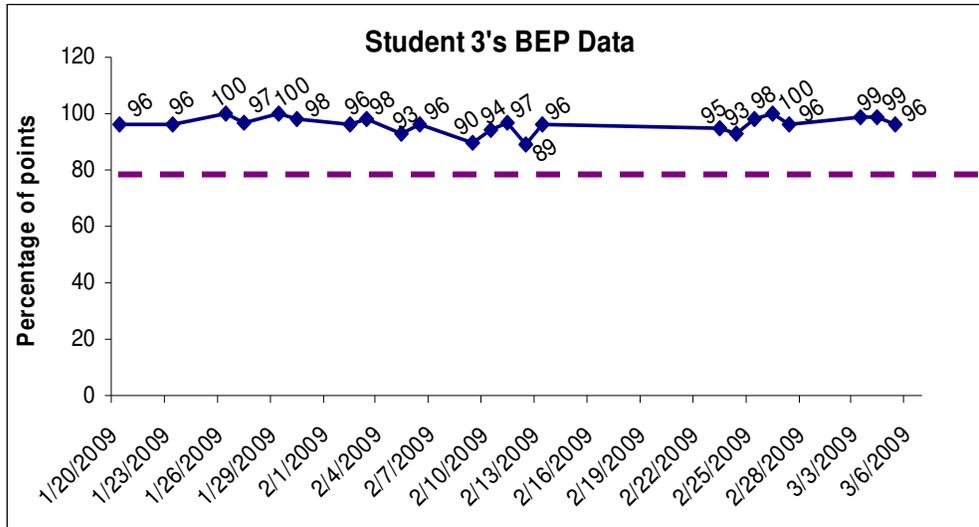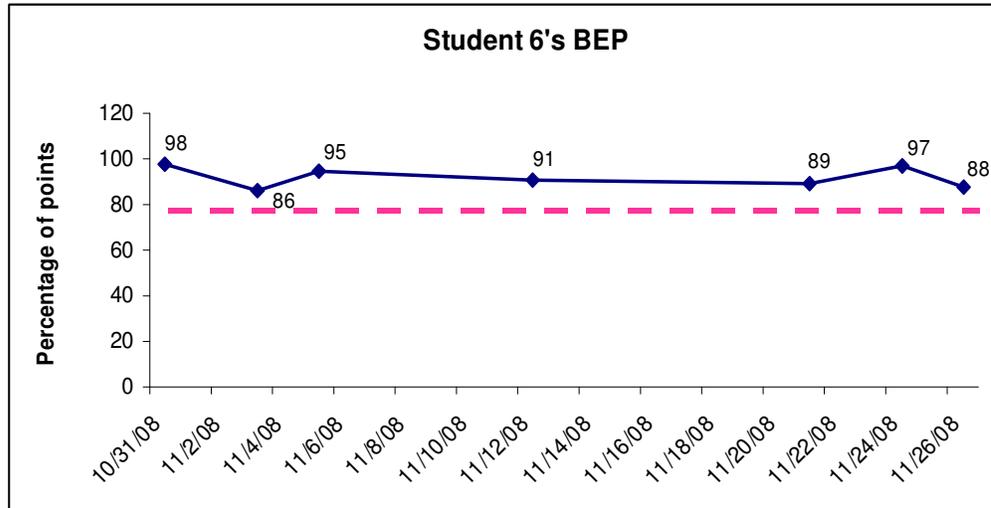
Student 6's BEP

Student 1, Student 2, Student 3, Student 4, and Student 5 were on the BEP for at least two months, regularly participating in the check-in/check-out system. Student 6 started the intervention in October 2008 and stopped using the BEP at the end of November 2008. Although Student 6 met his behavioral goal for the limited time on the BEP, his classroom teacher preferred that none of her students were on the BEP. It was easier for her to monitor the behavior of students using her own behavior management system. Therefore, Student 6's data cannot be used to make informed, valid decisions about the impact of the Behavior Education Program on student problem behavior.

For Student 7, the average percentage of points earned was slightly below his behavioral goal of 80%; he earned a mean score of 79.8 (See Figure 3). In the first month, Student 7's behavior was unpredictable. For the next few months, Student 7 met his behavioral goal of 80%, as illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Student 7's BEP Graph
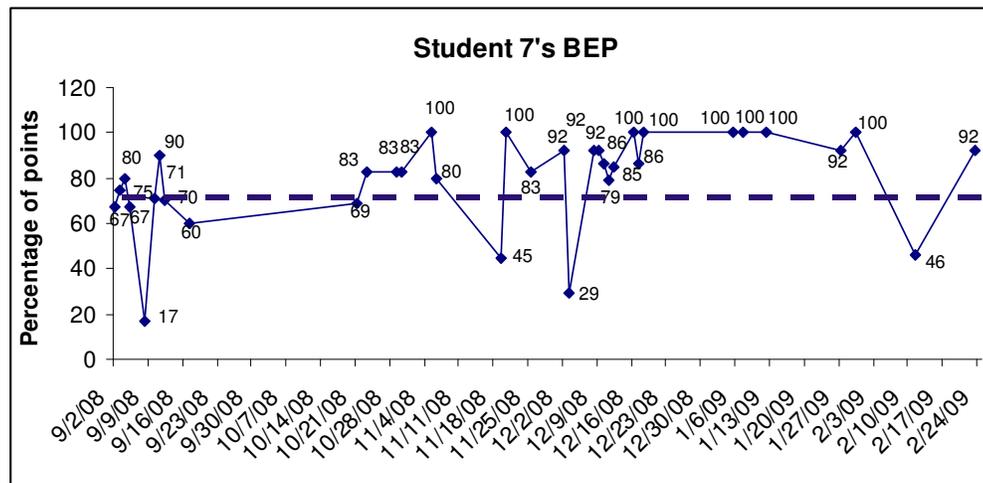
Although Student 7 showed signs of improvement, there appears to be a couple of days where his behavior drastically declined, falling short of earning 80% of possible points or higher. Despite this variability, Student 7's behavior continued to improve showing that he was doing moderately well on the BEP.

Office Discipline Referrals

For each individual student, the researcher evaluated the graphs taken from the SWIS database and created a table illustrating the number of office discipline referrals pre-BEP and on-BEP (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Number of Office Discipline Referrals Pre-BEP and On-BEP

	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5	Student 6	Student 7
Pre-BEP	50	7	N/A	3	11	N/A	7
On-BEP	14	5	N/A	1	0	12	5

By reviewing Student 1's individual student report, the number of office discipline referrals decreased from pre-BEP (50 referrals) to On-BEP (14 referrals). Since being on the BEP, Student 2 acquired five office discipline referrals compared to seven

referrals pre-BEP. Student 2 was on the BEP for a limited time, and thus he did not show significant changes in the reduction of office discipline referrals. Student 4 received only one discipline referral since he started the BEP in January; compared to the three referrals he obtained pre-BEP. Student 5 began the BEP at the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year. Student 5 did extremely well on the BEP; he received zero office discipline referrals since placed on BEP, compared to the eleven referrals he acquired pre-BEP.

For the 2008-2009 school year, Student 6 has received thirty two office discipline referrals thus far. Student 6 had a fewer number of referrals while he was on BEP compared to the number of referrals he obtained pre-BEP (7 referrals) and off of BEP (20 referrals). During the month of November, Student 6 was on BEP and had a total of five referrals. In December, Student 6 ended BEP and the number of office discipline referrals has dramatically increased since then, as evident in the table.

Student 6: Office Discipline Referrals

	Pre-BEP	**On BEP**	**Off BEP**
Student 6	7	5	20

Without the targeted intervention, Student 6's behavior drastically worsened resulting in a total of twenty discipline referrals. As evident in the Daily Progress Reports, Student 6 was not consistently participating in the check-in/check-out system. He received four discipline referrals on days that he did not check-in and check-out. Thus, it is impossible to determine if Student 6 made his behavioral goal for those particular days. Out of the five discipline referrals Student 6 obtained in November, only one referral was documented with daily check-in and check-out data.

Student 7 received a total of twelve office discipline referrals for the 2008-2009 school year, receiving ten office discipline referrals in November alone. The SWIS database indicated that Student 7's behavior improved shortly after November, acquiring only two referrals since then. Personal observations from classroom teachers, as well as from the school psychologist and school social worker accounted for this change in the student's behavior. Student 7 received a reduced number of office discipline referrals after his three-day suspension in November.

In examining the office discipline referrals, the Behavior Education Program led to a decrease in the number of office discipline referrals for the majority of participants (See Figure 6). A paired sample T-test was performed to calculate the mean of office discipline referrals. Since there is on only five paired samples with both pre-BEP and post-BEP data (Figure 6), the mean was only calculated for Student 1, Student 2, Student 4, Student 5, and Student 7. For these particular students, the mean score of office discipline referrals greatly decreased from Pre-BEP to On-BEP, as evident in Figure 7 (Pre-BEP mean =**15.60;** On-BEP mean =**5.00**). The results indicate that students had fewer office discipline referrals when participating in the program than before participation in the program. By examining the mean score, the researcher can infer that participation in the intervention is associated with a reduction in the number of office discipline referrals. However, since there were only five paired samples, the difference was not statistically significant $t(4)= 1.61$, $p = .183$.

Figure 7: Mean of Office Discipline Referrals: Pre-BEP, On-BEP

Figure 7: Mean of Office Discipline Referrals: Pre-BEP, On-BEP
Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N
Pair 1	PRE-BEP	15.6000	5
	On-BEP	5.0000	5

Paired Sample T-test:

	Paired Differences		
Pair 1	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-BEP – On-BEP	1.610	4	.183

*The above is with the 5 paired samples: Student 1, Student 2, Student 4, Student 5, and Student 7.
*Significance is at the 0.05 level: p<.05

Limitations

This study has limitations that influence the interpretation of its findings. First, the small number of participants in the study indicates that the BEP can influence positive behavior changes, but it may not be effective for all students. Second, the results are limited due to the short length of the intervention for some students. Many times, the Daily Progress Reports are incomplete or nonexistent because the teachers fail to consistently document students' behavior throughout the day. Also, students may forget to check-in and check-out with their teacher mentor. Due to the lack of daily teacher and student participation, as well as the inconsistent management of the intervention, sufficient data-based decisions regarding the effectiveness of BEP cannot be made. Furthermore, the general number of office discipline referrals on the Individual Student Reports does not provide significant representative data of changes in student problem behavior. For example, there was no SWIS data available on Student 3, and thus the

researcher was unable to determine whether the number of office discipline referrals decreased since being on the intervention. More research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of BEP on the reduction of student problem behavior.

Conclusion

Overall, the seven students enrolled in the BEP found adult attention rewarding, as evident in the consistent positive interaction between the students and teachers during daily check-ins and check-outs. The findings support the hypothesis that students who are at-risk of developing serious behavior problems and need additional behavior support may respond successfully to the Behavior Education Program. In examining Figures 3 through 6, it is clear that the majority of students' behavior improved while on the intervention. The results from this study and previous research (Hawkin, MacLeod, & Rawlings, 2007) indicate that the BEP can lead to a decrease in office discipline referrals and a reduction in problem behaviors.

Unlike intensive, individualized interventions, the students received support shortly after they were identified and referred to the program. For an urban school with large numbers of children at-risk for severe problem behavior, the BEP appears to be an effective secondary intervention. For students who need more support than BEP can provide, the implementation of intensive individualized interventions may be necessary.

The BEP can be implemented with little cost and effort in a typical school setting that has a school-wide system of positive behavior support already in place. Prior to the implementation of the BEP, the school personnel were adequately trained on this intervention. In order for the intervention to be successful, all staff members and students need to know how to appropriately participate in and support the BEP.

Keeping well-organized files and entering data on a daily basis are necessary for the BEP system to run smoothly. Consistently monitoring students' behavior will help the BEP team make better informed decisions on whether the student met his behavioral goals and is doing well on the BEP. If students are successful on the intervention, the BEP may be continued to be implemented as originally planned. However, if students have serious behavior problems and fail to make progress, the BEP team should determine if additional supports or modifications are necessary.

To obtain further results, the school of study should continue to effectively match children who have not responded to school-wide behavioral supports to targeted interventions like the BEP, increasing the likelihood of positive student behavior.

Implications

Currently, schools are in need of behavioral support systems that are efficient, cost-effective, and focus on prevention. School social workers need to have the knowledge and training to work with students who engage in a range of problem behaviors (Hawken, 2006, p. 107). The BEP is one type of secondary level intervention that school social workers can help develop and implement within their school system. As school social workers begin to take on their role as "systems change agents," they need to continue their education on evidence-based school-wide prevention programs (Hawken, 2006, p. 107).

The Behavior Education Program is important to social work practice and research because school social workers serve as leaders in designing behavioral interventions to meet the needs of all students (Hawken, 2006, p. 98). As a representative of the school, social workers are knowledgeable about school-wide positive behavior

supports and interventions. School social workers help facilitate the implementation of

the BEP by developing a referral process and system for managing daily data (Hawken,

2006, p. 98). In order for the BEP system to be effective, school social workers should

collaborate with the BEP team in assessing students' needs and monitoring problem

behavior for decision making (Frey, A.J., Lingo, A, & Nelson, C.M., 2008, 12). The

commitment and participation of all school personnel, students and their families are

critical to the success of the intervention.

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