Sustaining SWPBIS for Inclusive Behavior Instruction

Andreau, T. E., McIntosh, K., Ross, S. W., & Kahn, J. D. (2015). Critical incidents in sustaining school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports. *The Journal of Special Education, 49*(3), 157-167.

SWIFT Feature in Research

Inclusive Behavior Instruction features universal or schoolwide positive behavior interventions and supports in a multi-tiered system of support. Many schools use School-wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (SWPBIS; Horner et al., 2009) for this purpose. Andreau, McIntosh, Ross, and Kahn (2015) describe 13 characteristics of sustainability found in a district using SWPBIS for more than 15 years.

Research Summary

What

SWPBIS is an effective, efficient, socially valid framework that supports students' positive behavior. Built on the development of expectations that are explicitly taught to all students, **SWPBIS** systematically rewards positive behavior and uses a structured system of data collection to help teams identify where and when students require additional behavioral support. Earlier research on SWPBIS shows it to be an effective framework, and this study extends knowledge about what can help and hinder sustainability of **SWPBIS** Tier I, or universal support.

Who

Seventeen school and district personnel in British Columbia who used **SWPBIS** for an average of 9 years participated in the study. The group included educators, current and former administrators, district consultants, special education teachers, and general education teachers.

How

Researchers used the Critical Incident Technique, which involves face-to-face interviews to identify specific occurrences, labeled as Critical Incidents (CIs). Transcripts of these interviews were the basis for researchers to identify persistent ideas, patterns, and categories with a particular focus on events perceived as helping or hindering SWPBIS implementation. The research team conducted multiple steps to assess and secure the trustworthiness of the findings, including member checks.

Major Findings

The research identified the following 13 categories of CIs directly affecting the implementation of **SWPBIS**: continuous teaching, positive reinforcement, **SWPBIS** team effectiveness, staff ownership, adaptation, community of practice, involving new personnel, use of data, access to external expertise, maintaining priority, school administrator involvement, staff turnover, and conflict of personal beliefs.

They determined that events in CIs were often synergistic, as CIs in some categories increased the importance or salience of other categories as well. For example, by *continuously teaching* the **SWPBIS** expectations through *prosocial behavior* (behaviors that promote the expectations), staff were adding to the continuous regeneration of the practice. They also linked *positive reinforcement* to sustained implementation. *Positive reinforcement* as well as *use of data* demonstrated the importance of self-sustained feedback loops. The importance of networking through *access to external expertise* established a common mission, strengthening commitment. In addition, *involving new personnel* helped mitigate the category reported as the most hindering, *conflict of personal beliefs*. New staff participating in team activities established immersion in the **SWPBIS** culture.

Conclusion

SWPBIS is one of the practices that can lead to Inclusive Behavior Instruction. This study illustrates that sustaining a SWPBIS "among a sea of competing initiatives requires foresight, flexibility, and creativity" (p. 165). By considering the 13 categories identified by the researchers, school teams can step into sustained ownership and address threats to SWPBIS implementation.

Reference

Horner, R. H., Sugai, G., Smolkowski, K., Eber, L., Nakasato, J., Todd, A. W., & Esperanza, J. (2009). A randomized, wait-list controlled effectiveness trial assessing school-wide positive behavior support in elementary schools. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 11*, 133–144.

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