

## **School-wide Systems to Promote Positive Behaviors and Facilitate Instruction**

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### **Abstract**

In this article we focus on school-wide systems to promote positive behaviors and enhance instruction. Part of the appeal of multi-tiered systems of support is that they facilitate collaboration between teachers by clarifying school-wide goals and the means for achieving them. We begin with an overview of multi-tiered systems of support including: (a) a description of each level of prevention: primary (Tier 1, for all), secondary (Tier 2, for some), and tertiary (Tier 3, for a few); (b) information on academic and behavior screening tools, with an emphasis on analyzing these data in tandem to inform instruction; and (c) the importance of looking at the role of the teacher as a starting point to determine how relatively low-intensity, teacher-directed shifts in instruction and management can influence student performance. Next, we provide an overview of research-based strategies teachers can employ beginning with whole-class strategies and conclude with individualized supports for students requiring more intensive assistance. Finally, we offer recommendations for teachers as they support students with behavior challenges in PreK-12 grades to promote academic and social success for all.

Schools are undergoing a profound shift in the way that they address students' academic and behavioral difficulties. Rather than viewing student performance as the province of individual teachers, students, and parents, there is now a focus on using a systems approach to promote student success. The school as an entire organization participates in providing comprehensive and multiple layers of support that increase in intensity as needed. Two major premises underlie this model. One is that the collective and focused energies of teachers, administrators, parents, and other school personnel are more effective than fragmented efforts. The second premise is that academic, behavioral, and social support for students should be proactive and supplemental, not reactive and remedial (Lane, Menzies, Oakes, & Kalberg, 2012). In an environment that places more demands on teachers as they educate diverse student populations – diverse not just in background characteristics, but in ability, motivation, and social

competence – a concerted, collaborative effort on the part of all stakeholders is more likely to gain traction in improving student outcomes.

There are different types of multi-tiered models, each with a distinctive focus. One emphasizes academic performance (response to intervention; RTI; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006), another emphasizes behavior and social performance (positive behavior interventions and supports; PBIS; Sugai & Horner, 2002), and the third combines these models, emphasizing academic, behavioral, and social performance (comprehensive, integrated, three-tiered; CI3T; Lane, Oakes, & Menzies, 2010). Typically, these multi-tiered systems of support include three levels. Primary or Tier 1 supports all students. Secondary or Tier 2 is appropriate for students (10-15%) not responding to primary prevention efforts; this is often provided to students in small groups or featuring low-intensity research-based practices. The final, tertiary or Tier 3, is reserved for those with the greatest needs: students (5%) with multiple risk factors requiring more intensive supports (Lane et al.). These models rely on data-informed decision making, screening all students using academic and behavioral tools to identify those students for whom primary prevention efforts are insufficient. Information from these screening tools is used in conjunction with other extant school-wide data. We will discuss these models further in the following section.

Implementing any new system to improve student outcomes requires an initial investment of time and energy, but a multi-tiered model capitalizes on, and further develops, the essential instructional and classroom management skills teachers already use. The model's power is in building consensus around common expectations and procedures in academic, behavioral, and social domains and then systematizing those elements. When a school's staff members work in concert to identify and apply the strategies and practices they all agree on, they create an opportunity to consciously establish a common school culture. For example, in a CI3T model, school staff members decide together on the behavioral expectations they will teach to *all* students to support positive behavior and facilitate engagement in academic tasks. Equally important, the staff agrees to recognize and reinforce students' efforts to reach those expectations. This is a major shift from the model in which each teacher creates her own set of rules and attends solely to her own students. It is also a shift from noticing when students misbehave and toward actively looking for and commending positive student behavior through the implementation of behavior specific praise. Finally, expecting the entire school staff (e.g., office and custodial personnel, instructional aides, bus drivers) to support behavioral expectations empowers them to participate proactively and positively.

Part of the appeal of multi-tiered systems of support is that they promote both collaboration and efficiency in a school by making clear the school-wide goals as well as the means for achieving them. This is critical, as teachers manage many responsibilities throughout the course of a day and have scarce time available to work collaboratively with their colleagues. Teachers are rightly apprehensive about

requirements that take time from instructional preparation and delivery. For example, nearly 70% of teachers indicated that routine duties and paperwork interfere with their teaching duties (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). Educators rarely have long blocks of uninterrupted time to complete any work other than instructional delivery. Instructional planning, meeting with parents, or collaborating with other professionals is often conducted in 15 to 30-minute periods, and most teachers report working beyond the end of the official workday and during weekends (Adelman, 1998). The need to manage and monitor so many activities, often in short periods of time, creates a unique type of job-related pressure (Brante, 2009). Teachers report feeling rushed every day, and some feel constantly under stress (Michelson & Harvey, 2000). Teachers are also at heightened risk for job burnout, which can be attributed to a number of factors including work load, emotional exhaustion, and the effects of high-stakes accountability reform (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008; Martin, Sass, & Schmitt, 2012). Results from a nationwide survey of 1200 K-12 teachers across the United States paint a similar picture, with the author finding teachers exhausted from their constant mission to meet the needs of their students (Richards, 2012).

Clearly, the nature of a teacher's job makes it difficult to allocate sufficient time to all the areas for which they are responsible, especially considering the majority of their time is spent in active engagement with their students. With limited amounts of time available, any new models must have the capacity to be easily integrated into a teacher's day; however, because multi-tiered models harness many existing practices but streamline and systematize them, they offer the possibility of promoting student success without unduly burdening teachers.

### Purpose

In this article we provide a detailed description of multi-tiered systems of support, describing each level of prevention. After describing the graduated systems of support, we address the importance of (a) accurate detection of students for whom Tier 1 efforts appear to be inadequate to meet their multiple needs, focusing on the importance of incorporating academic and behavior screenings and (b) instructional strategies to support this model, discussing how teachers can evaluate their own practices and examine how they impact students' behavior and academic performance in the classroom. Our intent is to encourage teachers to consider how relatively simple strategies, such as how they respond to and involve students in instruction, can elicit and promote desired student behaviors during the instructional day. Next, we introduce a range of research-based behavioral strategies for teachers to consider implementing during instruction. Some are whole-class strategies, such as behavior specific praise, active supervision and proximity, and high rates of opportunities to respond; whereas, others focus on individualized supports, such as functional assessment-based interventions, antecedent-based strategies, and self-regulation strategies, when more intensive assistance is required. We conclude by offering recommendations for

teachers as they support students with behavior challenges in PreK-12 grades to promote academic and social success for all.

## Overview of Three-Tiered Models of Prevention

### Tiered System of Supports

Many school districts are shifting away from reactive, *wait-to-fail* models and toward collaborative, coordinated systems of support offering (a) efforts at the Tier 1 level to prevent learning and behavior problems from occurring and (b) research-based Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports in an efficient manner to provide students in need with equal access to these supplemental strategies and practices. These additional supports are intended to supplement—not replace—primary prevention efforts according to students' individual needs. The following sections will elaborate on each level of prevention.

**Tier 1: Primary prevention for all.** The intent of Tier 1 efforts is to level the playing field by providing a consistent experience for all learners. For example, in a CI3T model, the primary prevention plan includes academic, social, and behavioral components in order to address the range of skills required for school success. For the academic component, the school or district chooses a validated curriculum in each core content area. The curriculum selection process should be rigorous as the goal is to ensure there is sufficient evidence the adopted curricula will improve academic performance (e.g., students will learn how to read) when it is implemented as intended. This is termed *treatment integrity* (McIntyre, Gresham, DiGennaro, & Reed, 2007).

For the social skills component, a school-site or district-level team may decide to implement a program to develop character (e.g., Positive Action, 2008), teach social skills (e.g., Elliott & Gresham, 2007), or prevent violence (e.g., Committee for Children, 2007). A key consideration here is that the focus of the social component should be appropriately linked to school- or district-specific goals, such as cultivating citizens with character, improving social competencies, or decreasing bullying behaviors. Like the academic component, it is imperative that attention be devoted to selecting a program with sufficient evidence to document the likelihood that the program – if implemented with integrity – will achieve the desired outcome.

Finally, the behavioral component is not a curriculum, but a PBIS *framework* in which school-site or district-level personnel teams establish and define three to five universal expectations for student conduct (e.g., be respectful, be responsible, give best effort). We advocate a data-based approach to establishing and defining these expectations by first surveying all faculty and staff in a building to determine what the school community views as the specific behaviors necessary for students to be successful in all settings in a building (e.g., classrooms, hallways, cafeteria, restrooms). By explicitly teaching behaviors likely to be reinforced by teachers, students will be more successful (Lane, Kalberg, & Menzies, 2009). Students then practice and receive

coaching when learning the expectations, in addition to receiving reinforcement with behavior specific praise statements (BSPS) when they meet the expectations. The emphasis is on being deliberate and proactive in cueing students to engage in the expected behaviors the school community values. Many schools develop a PBIS framework that includes a ticket system in which adults provide students a PBIS ticket paired with BSPS when they demonstrate a given expectation. When the entire school community, including staff, administrators, substitutes, and volunteers, all participate by using PBIS tickets paired with BSPS, it provides students a clear, consistent understanding of the behavioral expectations. In addition, students are frequently reminded of the specific behaviors adults would like to see.

These tickets are exchanged for previously identified reinforcers. Choosing reinforcers that appeal to students is critical. For example, including a wide variety of items like homework passes, gift cards, school supplies, and access to PBIS assemblies ensures that all students will find something they like. Additionally, the reinforcement structure should support students whose behavior is maintained by access to attention, activities, tangibles, and sensory experiences (positive reinforcement), as well as students whose behavior is maintained by avoiding these conditions (negative reinforcement; Umbreit, Ferro, Liaupsin, & Lane, 2007). In other words, reinforcement increases the likelihood of the desired behavior occurring in the future. Allowing students to access (positive reinforcement) or avoid (negative reinforcement) these various stimuli moves them toward pro-social behavior. Eventually, reinforcers are less necessary as students find the new behavior itself is more productive, allowing them to rely less on misbehavior.

The intent of the PBIS framework is to use an instructional approach that assists students in acquiring behaviors that facilitate the teaching and learning process (Lane, Oakes, Menzies, & Germer, in press a). Although this may appear to be a subtle distinction, it is a major reconsideration of traditional behavior management. Teachers are proactive by explaining and encouraging the behaviors they want to see, rather than only applying consequences for unacceptable behavior. By creating a context in which teachers limit the amount of instructional time lost to responding to problem behaviors, they can attend to the business of teaching and learning, ideally spending more time focusing on positive behaviors and experiencing less stress.

By focusing on these three domains as part of primary prevention efforts, all students access these supports just by virtue of attending school (Lane, Robertson, & Graham-Bailey, 2006). Despite the many strengths of the CI3T model, which recognizes the transactional relation between academic, social, and behavioral performance, we would still expect some students to require additional supports (Sugai & Horner, 2006). Ideally, systematic academic and behavioral screening tools would be used to determine which students may benefit from Tier 2 or Tier 3 supports.

**Tier 2: Secondary prevention for some.** Tier 2 supports are offered to students whose academic and behavioral performance as measured on systematic screening tools administered in fall, winter, and spring suggest Tier 1 efforts are insufficient. Nonresponsiveness is expected; approximately 10-15% of the student body may require this level of preventions. The primary plan should not be considered to be failing unless the percentage of students identified as not responsive is substantially greater than this 10-15% range, in which case the Tier 1 program may need to be revisited (a point we will discuss more fully in the section on screening). We strongly emphasize that students should not be viewed as “Tier 2 Students” or “Tier 3 Students” as this additional support is conceptualized as fluid and temporary. It is a means of providing students with the assistance that they need to be successful, in any or all of the domains, and then removing the support when it is no longer necessary.

Tier 2 supports are low- to moderate-intensity supports, but are accompanied by sufficient evidence to suggest that the strategies and practices would achieve the intended outcomes for the selected group of students (Cook & Tankersley, 2013). As a reminder, these supports are additive in nature and are not intended to replace Tier 1 efforts. A school-site team identifies resources a school already has that can be used for Tier 2 supports and adds additional strategies and interventions, if needed. For example, it may be relatively easy to plan for academically focused interventions such as repeated readings to improve oral reading fluency (Chard, Ketterlin-Geller, Baker, Doabler, & Apichatabutra, 2009) or a study skills group for students with organizational difficulties (Kalberg, Lane, & Lambert, 2012); however, a school may also need to consider social skills groups for students with acquisition deficits (Miller, Lane, & Wehby, 2005) or conflict resolution groups to address impulsivity or anger issues. Other Tier 2 supports may include behavioral contracts (Downing, 2002), self-monitoring (Menzies, Lane, & Lee, 2005) interventions, or interventions that combine various Tier 2 supports (e.g., literacy groups with a self-monitoring component; Oakes et al., 2012). Students who are nonresponsive to Tier 2 efforts or those presenting initially with high levels of need should be considered for Tier 3 supports.

**Tier 3: Tertiary prevention for a few.** Tier 3 efforts are reserved for students (5%) with the greatest need, meaning they are for students exposed to multiple risk factors and those who struggle in multiple areas – academically, behaviorally, and/or socially. Tier 3 supports are the most intensive individual strategies and practices. For example, these may include wraparound services (Eber, Breen, Rose, Unizycki, & London, 2008), functional assessment-based interventions (FABI; Kern & Manz, 2004; Umbreit et al., 2007), and intensive familial supports (e.g., Multisystemic Therapy, Schoenwald, Brown, & Henggeler, 2000), some of which are led by agencies or professionals beyond the individual school site. While defining each of these supports is beyond the scope of this article, we refer interested readers to the noted citations for additional information on each support. Due to the costs and time associated with this level of prevention, it is essential that time be invested wisely. We want to ensure that (a) only interventions with adequate evidence be selected for use, (b) they are

monitored closely to ensure fidelity of implementation and accurate measurement of outcome variables, and (c) they are reserved only for students with the most intensive needs.

**Summary.** Such three-tiered models are appealing as they are resource-efficient, foster collaborative efforts between general and special education communities, assist teachers by offering a comprehensive system, and promote equal access to needed supports for all students (Lane, Oakes, Menzies, & Germer, in press b). Yet, the fidelity of this model hinges in large part on (a) treatment integrity of each level of prevention (Lane et al., 2010) and (b) accurate decisions as to which students may require additional supports (Lane et al., 2012). In the following section, we discuss the latter point, with attention to the importance of using data from academic *and* behavioral screening tools to inform decision-making.

### The Importance of Accurate Detection of Students Requiring Additional Supports

For any multi-tiered system of support to work efficiently, there are critical, inter-related components required: (a) implementation of research-based strategies incorporated at each level of prevention (Tier 1, 2, and 3); (b) reliable, valid screening tools to accurately determine which students may need additional academic, behavioral, or social supports; and (c) careful monitoring to ensure that all levels of prevention are implemented with treatment integrity and that reliable data systems and structures are used with procedural fidelity to accurately evaluate intervention outcomes (Lane, Oakes, & Menzies, 2010).

We emphasize the use of screening to detect students who are struggling not just in the elementary years, but across the entire K-12 continuum. Various transitions within and across the elementary, middle, and high school years pose unique challenges. For example, students coming to school in kindergarten may be learning for the first time how to delay their own need for teacher assistance or attention while the teachers focuses on whole group instruction (Hemmeter, Ostrosky, & Fox, 2006). During the elementary years, it is imperative students become proficient readers. If they fail to master this critical skill set by fourth grade, they are likely to struggle academically during the balance of their school years (Fletcher et al., 2002; Juel, 1988). As students move from the elementary to the middle school setting, the structure changes from a single classroom to multiple classes throughout the school day where students must negotiate the often-different expectations held by teachers in each period (Lane, Parks, Kalberg, & Carter, 2007). Navigating this environment is particularly challenging given that the middle school years are often a time of great developmental change and emotional turbulence. When students transition from middle to high school, the content becomes highly focused, and students must develop the self-determined behaviors necessary to successfully negotiate the task demands with limited adult direction (Lane, Kalberg, Parks, & Carter, 2008; Roderick & Camburn, 1999; Seidman, Aber, Allen, & French, 1996).

Conducting screenings across the PreK-12 continuum is a useful mechanism for detecting students who are struggling at the first sign of concern. By incorporating systematic academic and behavior screenings three times each year (fall, winter, spring), teachers, administrators, and other school personnel can avoid overlooking students who might benefit from supplemental supports available within three-tiered models of prevention (Lane et al., 2012). These models hold particular benefit for students with and at-risk for emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) who struggle academically, behaviorally, and socially. While many teachers assume students with EBD will be supported under the auspices of special education, the fact is less than 1% of school-age youth receive special education services for emotional disturbances (ED; Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act [IDEA], 2004) and approximately 12% of students experience moderate-to-severe EBD (Forness, Freeman, Paparella, Kauffman, & Walker, 2012). This means the vast majority of students with emotional or behavioral disorders will be in the general education setting and taught by general education teachers. Given this very important reality, the question is not should we conduct systematic screenings to look for students who are struggling academically and behaviorally, but which screening tools should we employ?

**Academic screenings.** Across the country, many schools have adopted academic screening tools to monitor the extent to which students are achieving the expected rate and level of progress in core academic skills (e.g., reading, math, written expression). There are commercially available tools such as AIMSweb<sup>®</sup> (Pearson Education, 2012) and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS; Good & Kaminski, 2002) designed to benchmark student performance. General educators are familiar with the use of curriculum-based measures as a reliable, valid, and feasible method of identifying and monitoring the progress of students requiring more intensive support than is offered by the primary plan. For example, the AIMSweb<sup>®</sup> Progress Monitoring and RTI System feature brief probes in reading [Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) and MAZE], mathematics (math concepts and applications, computation), and writing (spelling and written expression) for grades K – 8, requiring one to three minutes to complete.

In brief, general education teachers complete benchmarking activities three times a year during specified windows of time to determine if students' academic progress is on par with expected levels of performance. For students falling below benchmark levels, Tier 2 or Tier 3 supports specific to their individual needs are offered and student progress monitored with frequent, repeated assessments (e.g., weekly reading probes). This approach to teaching and evaluating learning affords general education teachers data needed to inform instruction. Formative data are used to shape instructional experiences for students. Fortunately, many teachers are familiar with the importance of academic screenings. Yet, fewer are aware that similar tools are available to monitor behavior performance (Lane et al., 2012).

**Behavior screenings.** Like academic screening tools, the intent of using behavior screening tools is to accurately identify students whose behavior patterns exceed normative criteria at the first sign of concern through regular school-wide screening three times a year (fall, winter, and spring). This approach permits supports to be provided when behavior is most amenable to change (Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2004). Currently, many schools use office discipline referral (ODR) data to look for students who need more support. Guidelines suggest earning zero to one ODRs over the course of an academic year indicates a low level of risk, two to five ODRs indicates moderate risk, six or more indicates high risk (Sugai, Sprague, Horner, & Walker, 2000). Yet, the problem with using ODRs as a screening mechanism is two-fold. First, there are often concerns with reliability. For example, a student may exhibit the same rule infraction in two classrooms (e.g., using profanity in class), but only one teacher may write up an ODR. Thus, the ODR data collected does not accurately represent student performance. Second, ODR data are not likely to provide the information needed to identify and support students with internalizing behaviors, such as anxiety, social withdrawal, and somatic complaints (McIntosh, Campbell, Russell, & Zumbo, 2009). If ODR data were the only mechanism in place for detecting students with internalizing behavior patterns, we would overlook students with this facet of EBD.

Fortunately, there are now a number of validated systematic screening tools available for detecting students with various behavior challenges: (a) Systematic Screener for Behavior Disorders (SSBD; Walker & Severson, 1992); (b) Early Screening Project (ESP; Walker, Severson, & Feil, 1995); (c) Student Risk Screening Scale (SRSS; Drummond, 1994); (d) Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997); (e) Social Skills Improvement System – Performance Screening Guide (SSiS-PSG; Elliott & Gresham, 2007); and (f) BASC-2 Behavioral and Emotional Screening System (BASC-2 BESS, Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2007). While it is beyond the scope of this article to detail each screening tool, we wish to point out that these tools vary on a number of dimensions: the facets of behavior challenges detected; the age ranges appropriate for use; time required to prepare, administer, score, and interpret; and financial cost. For example, the SSBD is a low-cost (\$150) screening tool designed to detect elementary-age students with internalizing and externalizing behavior patterns, requiring approximately 45 minutes of a teacher's time to complete this measure for an entire class. The ESP is a downward extension of this tool available for use with preschool-age students. The SRSS and SDQ are free access tools, but vary on the time required for completion (e.g., 10-15 minutes to rate a class for the SRSS and 45 minutes to rate a class for the SDQ). The SSiS-PSG and BASC-2 BESS are more expensive options, but offer an entire family of tools that can be used to connect students to appropriate Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports.

We emphasize that in contrast to an academic screening system noted previously (e.g., the AIMSweb<sup>®</sup> Progress Monitoring and RTI System), behavior screening tools do not require teachers to administer measures to students. Instead, teachers screen all students three times per year based on their knowledge and

observations of the students: fall, four to six weeks after the start of the year; winter, usually prior to or immediately following winter break; and spring, six weeks prior to the end of the year. These teacher-completed tools require 15 to 75 minutes to assess an entire class (up to 30 students) depending on the screening tool selected (Lane et al., 2012).

**Analyzing multiple sources of data.** After selecting an academic and behavior screening tool to use as part of regular school practices, data from these screening tools can be used in tandem to inform instructional programming. For example, consider an eighth-grader who has been identified as performing in the below average range on the AIMSweb<sup>®</sup> math probe and in the elevated risk category on the BASC-2 BESS. This student might be offered participation in a Tier 2 math intervention to improve computation skills, coupled with a self-monitoring behavioral support to help student engagement during small group instruction.

Rather than considering academic and behavioral supports as separate processes, these intervention efforts are most effective when paired. For example, students identified as reading substantially above grade level may need enrichment in reading and may participate in a Tier 2 book study group coupled with a behavioral contract to promote student engagement and reading completion. Similarly, the student taking AP Calculus who struggles with inattention may need to develop self-determination skills to address concerns regarding work completion or participation during whole class instruction.

In summary, systematic screening tools are exceedingly helpful in making accurate decisions as to *who* and *how* to support within the context of multi-tiered models of prevention. Another benefit of these screening tools is that they can assist teachers in considering their own role in facilitating the instructional process.

## A Look at the Role of the Teacher

Clearly, the job of teaching is inspiring, but also demanding. Teachers are charged with meeting the needs of learners who are diverse in their academic, behavioral, and social competencies. This is especially true given the need to support inclusive programming for students with exceptionalities (IDEA, 2004) as well as the approximately 12% of students with EBD who are not identified for special education services, but who will require more assistance than their peers to achieve school success (Forness et al., 2012).

When implementing multi-tiered models to meet students' multiple needs, an important consideration is reexamining basic strategies and instructional techniques at Tier 1 before focusing on student-centered, research-based Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports (Cook & Tankersley, 2013; Lane et al., 2013; Lane et al., in press b). One of the most powerful influences on student behavior is the manner in which teachers organize their

instruction, both academically and behaviorally. Instructional techniques such as differentiating content, process, and products (Tomlinson, 2005) and classroom management strategies such as incorporating choice and increasing students' opportunities to respond employed by teachers to facilitate engagement and minimize problem behaviors are implicit features of primary prevention efforts (Lane et al., in press b). These methods are often introduced in teacher preparation programs or through professional development, but it is not always made explicit that teacher expertise in these areas can greatly reduce classroom management issues.

As a starting point, teachers can take a data-driven approach to examining student behavior and academic performance. We recommend teachers aggregate the academic and behavior screening data for their students and look at the proportion of students in their classes meeting expectations and those in need. For example, a third-grade teacher might analyze the AIMSweb<sup>®</sup> data and notice 90% of students are at or above benchmark, with only 10% below district proficiency levels. Next, the teacher might aggregate data from the SRSS. As part of this screening tool, she rates students on seven items (steals; lies, cheats, sneaks; behavior problems; peer rejection; low academic achievement; negative attitude; and aggressive behavior), using a four-point Likert-type scale (0 = never, 1 = occasionally, 2 = sometimes, 3 = frequently). Then she totals the seven items for each student placing them into one of three risk categories: low (0-3), moderate (4-8), and high (9-21). In looking at these data, the teacher might learn only 50% of students in her class are scoring in the low-risk group, with an unusually high percentage of students in the moderate-risk (30%) and high-risk (20%) groups. Next, the teacher might examine work completion for students and notice the vast majority are missing several assignments despite having requisite academic skills (e.g., reading skill proficiencies) to complete these tasks. In looking at the magnitude of the behavioral challenges in the class coupled with the low rates of work completion, we suggest first considering what instructional and classroom management changes the teacher can make rather than considering Tier 2 and Tier 3 behaviors supports for such a large number of students. For example, it is important that school-wide data be examined to determine the extent to which students are responding to primary prevention efforts (e.g., Behaviorally, are approximately 80% of my students in the low risk category?). In addition, it is important for teachers to examine their class-level data to examine the percentage of students who score in the low, moderate, and high-risk categories (are more than 30% of students in my class struggling behaviorally?).

If a substantial percentage of students in a given class are demonstrating behavioral risk, the teacher may begin by looking at his or her level of implementation of the primary prevention plan components addressing questions such as: Am I delivering behavior specific praise statements to students who are meeting expectations? Am I motivating students by offering them a range of options for demonstrating what they have learned (e.g., differentiating products; Tomlinson, 2005)? Am I actively engaging students in the learning process by offering high rates of opportunities to respond (Sutherland & Wehby, 2001)?

For some teachers, analyzing these data may be sufficient for identifying simple instructional and behavior management changes that will improve most students' performance. In other instances, teachers may benefit from practice-based professional development incorporating components such as follow up with on-site coaching and performance feedback (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Grossman & McDonald, 2008).

Rather than focusing solely on developing practitioners' knowledge about a single topic, practice-based professional development is broader in scope, while at the same time increasing the understanding and skill of the given educational practice (e.g., increased opportunities to respond). There are several core features of practice-based professional development, including opportunities to engage in active learning and to practice the new skill. Teachers should also be provided with feedback during the learning process and be afforded opportunities to learn these strategies with colleagues from the same school who have comparable learning goals in order to enhance acquisition of the material (Harris et al., 2012). A large-scale national study of professional development found that focusing on content, providing active learning opportunities, and having coherence with other learning activities had a positive effect on teachers' knowledge and practices (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001). While there are a number of challenges associated with conducting high-quality professional development such as scheduling issues, costs for substitutes or negotiations for release time (Sailor et al., 2000), it is well worth the effort to empower teachers with the skills sets necessary to facilitate the instructional process.

Data-informed decision making and access to high quality professional development will assist teachers in evaluating their use of effective practices such as use of praise, increasing students' opportunities to respond, and differentiating instruction and the corresponding impact on students' behavior and academic performance. We encourage teachers to consider how shifts in their practice (e.g., use of strategies and techniques) can impact students' performance in an effective, efficient manner before moving forward with student-centered practices.

### **Research-based Strategies to Consider**

When selecting any practices – whether they be class-wide strategies or individualized student supports - we strongly recommend introducing only those with sufficient evidence to suggest that implementation with integrity will yield the desired outcome. In this section, we offer both class-wide and individualized research-based strategies for teachers to consider.

#### **Class-wide Strategies**

The role of the general education teacher has expanded as more students with disabilities and students at-risk for antisocial behavior are being served in inclusive settings, with or without the support of a special educator. Therefore, teachers need to

develop competency in implementing effective class-wide strategies that are effective for a diverse group of students. Powerful class-wide strategies that are evidence-based include providing students with frequent opportunities to respond, using teacher supervision and proximity to promote success, and delivering behavior specific praise statements for appropriate responding.

**Opportunities to respond.** When working with students with or at risk for EBD, researchers have demonstrated a clear link between academic engagement and decreased disruptive behavior (Gunter & Denny, 1998; Wehby, Symons, Canale, & Go, 1998). One method for increasing engagement is to provide students with increased opportunities to actively respond to academic tasks (Sutherland & Wehby, 2001). Too often only a few students are given a chance to answer questions during the course of a lesson. The opportunities to respond (OTR) format allows all students to answer several questions, and to receive rapid, but unobtrusive, feedback on the accuracy of their response. For example, the teacher might write a math problem on the board and ask students to solve it on their mini-sized personal white boards. When the teacher gives the signal, all students hold up their boards for her to scan. She may then write the correct answer on the board for the students to check their work. OTR can be done orally (i.e., a verbal answer to a teacher's question), in writing (i.e., students respond to a five-minute quick writing prompt), or through the use of manipulatives (i.e., demonstrating an algorithm). Further, OTRs can be delivered on an individual basis (i.e., individual student responding with signals – “thumbs up or down”) or to a whole group (i.e., choral responding).

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC; 1987) guidelines suggests that a rate of four to six OTR per minute with 80% accuracy of student responses is appropriate when presenting new material, and a rate of eight to 12 OTR per minute with 90% accuracy in responding during drill and practice. This high rate of OTR (and the corresponding student response rate) not only increases student engagement, but also provides teachers with information on student progress during a lesson that can be used to make instructional adjustments (CEC, 1987). Despite this fact, research suggests that OTR are presented too slowly to students with and at-risk for EBD, often at a rate of well below one per minute (0.02 to 0.16; Sutherland & Wehby, 2001). Strategies for increasing teacher rates of OTR include having teachers self-monitor their OTR rate (Partin, Robertson, Maggin, Oliver, & Wehby, 2010). In addition, research has demonstrated that a mixed model of providing OTR (i.e., choral responding, individual responding, response cards) produces the highest rates of academic engagement (Haydon, Mancil, & Van Loan, 2009).

**Active supervision and proximity.** Another essential class-wide strategy to promote student success is active supervision of student activities, which involves teacher supervision in close proximity of student activities. Lewis, Colvin, and Sugai (2000) outline four features of active supervision: (1) movement within and around students to serve as a prompt for appropriate behavior, (2) scanning all areas of the

classroom to monitor interactions and assess student performance, (3) engaging students through interactions, conversations, and praise; and (4) providing correction for students not successfully engaged in classroom activities. While teachers are, of course, aware that they must keep a close eye on their students, they sometimes lack what is called *withitness* (Kounin, 1977) or the awareness of what their students are doing and the ability to signal to them whether their behavior is acceptable or not. Skilled teachers do this rapidly and frequently, almost without conscious thought. Following Lewis, Colvin, and Sugai's four recommendations can help develop this skill.

Related to active supervision is proximity (Ervin et al., 2000). Many teachers know proximity is a very effective strategy for keeping students focused on the task at hand or, at the very least, refocusing them. However, here are a few suggestions to keep in mind when using proximity. First, remember that it is most effective as a cueing strategy, not a reprimand. Proximity should not be a punishment as it could lead to a confrontation with the possibility of escalating negative behavior rather than redirecting a student. Second, proximity should be conducted with friendly or neutral comments or body language. This ensures that moving close to the student is not seen as threatening, but as a simple signal to get back to work. It is also an opportunity to check to see if a student needs assistance in completing the task. Finally, proximity can be used just before the teacher thinks a student will become disengaged. This will extend the student's ability to remain on task. When proximity is used as a positive, helping cue, it is extremely effective in redirecting undesirable behavior or supporting positive behavior. Teachers seeking to use active supervision and proximity to promote student engagement should consider a room arrangement that allows the teacher to move easily throughout all areas of the room to use proximity readily during a variety of instructional activities.

**Behavior-specific praise statements (BSPS).** BSPS are statements that immediately follow appropriate responding that is specific to the behavior being displayed (e.g., "Steve, I like how you raised your hand and waited to be called upon"; "Barbie, thanks for entering the classroom quietly and beginning your work after recess"). In studies dating back to 1968, researchers have demonstrated a link between increases in teachers' delivery of BSPS and decreases in disruptive student behavior (Madsen, Becker, & Thomas, 1968). More recently, Sutherland, Wehby, and Copeland (2000) observed a positive correlation between increases in BSPS and increases in students' academic engagement time.

Several methods for increasing teacher use of BSPS have demonstrated effectiveness (Sutherland, Wehby, & Yoder, 2002). To begin, an increase in OTR is highly correlated with increases in BSPS. If students have more opportunities to be successfully engaged in the classroom, teachers have more opportunities to deliver BSPS. Another method for increasing teacher use of BSPS is to obtain baseline rates of BSPS during an instruction period and set goals for improvement using visual performance feedback. For example, Reinke, Lewis-Palmer, and Martin (2007)

graphed teachers' rates of BSPS over the course of baseline and then provided teachers with this visual feedback of their BSPS rates each morning, which resulted in increases in BSPS use across three teachers. Another method for increasing BSPS is video self-modeling. For example, Hawkins and Heflin (2011) saw an increase in the rate of teacher BSPS over baseline when teachers received visual performance feedback at the same time they viewed examples of themselves delivering BSPS to students via clips of videotaped instructional sessions. Finally, Fullerton, Conroy, and Correa (2009) paired teachers with nominated students who displayed problem behaviors that interfered with their classroom engagement. They saw that once teachers were trained to deliver BSPS to particular students, not only did their rates of BSPS go up, but students' appropriate responses increased as well.

### Individualized Interventions

Effective class-wide strategies implemented within the context of three-tiered models of PBIS will result in appropriate responding for the vast majority of students in most settings. However, other students may require more individualized supports to reduce or reverse problem behaviors currently occurring. Some of these supports can include FABI, antecedent-based interventions, and self-monitoring for self-determination.

**Functional Assessment-Based interventions (FABI).** FABI are interventions based on the function of a student's behavior. The function of a student's problem behavior can be divided into categories: positive (to get something) and negative (to get out of something) reinforcement (Umbreit et al., 2007). Students may seek positive reinforcement in the form of attention from adults or peers, preferred activities or items, or sensory stimulation. Students may also seek negative reinforcement (or escape) from attention, task demands or items, or sensory stimulation (Umbreit et al., 2007). The function of a behavior can be assessed using both direct and indirect methods. Direct methods involve conducting direct observations of antecedents, behaviors, and consequences (A-B-C data collection) in natural settings. A-B-C data collection consists of recording instances of the problem behavior and then noting the antecedents that occurred immediately before and the consequences that occurred after each behavior (Bijou, Peterson, & Ault, 1968). Indirect methods include structured teacher/student/parent interviews (e.g., Functional Assessment Checklist for Teachers and Staff: March et al., 2000; Student Functional Behavioral Assessment Interview: Crone & Horner, 2003), record reviews (e.g., the School Archival Record Search: Walker, Block-Pedago, Todis, & Severson, 1991) and rating scales (e.g., the Social Skills Intervention System Rating Scales; Gresham & Elliott, 2008).

Once the function of a student's behavior has been determined using the methods described above, interdisciplinary-team members can develop a FABI that (a) teaches the student a replacement behavior, (b) modifies the environment to meet best

practices, and (c) withholds reinforcement for displays of the problem behavior and provides reinforcement for performing the replacement behavior (Umbreit et al., 2007).

**Antecedent-based interventions.** Antecedent-based interventions adjust environmental contingencies so that they represent best practices for individual students not responding to class-wide strategies. Even though the classroom arrangement, procedures, and routines result in appropriate responding for majority of students, there may be changes that can be made to better meet the needs of individual students with and at-risk for antisocial behavior. Antecedent-based interventions can be designed as a part of FABI or can be implemented prior to conducting a functional behavioral assessment.

Pre-correction is an antecedent-based strategy that can be readily implemented within the context of three-tiered models (Ennis, Schwab, & Jolivette, in press). Pre-correction involves teachers and/or interdisciplinary team members identifying activities, locations, and times when problem behaviors are more likely to occur for one or more students. Once these have been identified, teachers can modify the context to promote success, provide prompts for appropriate responding, and provide opportunities for behavioral rehearsal (Lewis et al., 2000).

**Self-regulation interventions.** An additional individual intervention that can be implemented within the context of PBIS to promote student engagement and school success are self-regulatory interventions. For example, self-monitoring has proven utility with students with and at-risk for behavior challenges (Mooney, Ryan, Uhing, Reid, & Epstein, 2005). Self-monitoring involves having students observe their own behavior and record whether or not they completed a target behavior or a series of target behaviors. In addition, teachers and students can decide on a reinforcer to be delivered for completing an agreed upon number of target behaviors or a series of behaviors (Menziez et al., 2009). Interventions such as these are intended to develop students' ability to think about their own behavior and take responsibility for their own actions. Self-monitoring strategies can be used to monitor both academic and social behaviors. In addition, having students graph their completed behaviors over time can enhance motivation and engagement and allows students to evaluate their own progress (Hirsch, Ennis, & McDaniel, in press).

## Summary

In this article we focused on school-wide systems to promote positive behaviors and facilitate instruction. We began with an overview of multi-tiered systems of support, including (a) a description of each level of prevention: primary (Tier 1, for all), secondary (Tier 2, for some), and tertiary (Tier 3, for a few); (b) information on academic and behavior screening tools, with an emphasis on analyzing these data in tandem to inform instructions; and (c) the importance of looking at the role of the teacher as a starting point to determine how relatively low-intensity, teacher-directed shifts in instruction and

management can influence student performance. Next, we provided an overview of research-based strategies that teachers can employ, beginning with whole-class strategies (e.g., behavior specific praise, active supervision and proximity, and high rates of opportunities to respond) and concluding with individualized supports (functional assessment-based interventions, antecedent based strategies, and self-regulation strategies) for students requiring more intensive assistance.

We conclude by offering three recommendations for teachers as they support students with behavior challenges in PreK-12 grades to promote academic and social success for all. As we have discussed, tiered models of support offer a system level structure that holds promise for teachers and students alike. For teachers, it offers a data-informed method of ensuring students equal access to available supports, particularly when the model includes reliable and valid screening tools to accurately (and feasibly) determine responsiveness. Teachers are not trained as school psychologists, behavior specialists, or social workers. Yet, teachers are privy to information available to very few adults – including parents – as teachers spend seven-and-a-half hours per day with students seeing how they respond to challenging (and sometimes mundane) tasks, interact with peers, and manage multiple responsibilities (academically and socially). This information is highly useful in determining the extent to which students are on track in meeting academic, social, and behavioral competencies. Such coordinated systems of support are especially important in effectively and efficiently meeting the multiple needs of students with EBD (Walker et al., 2004).

In considering how to move forward regarding the issues discussed in this article, we offer the following recommendations:

1. Design, implement, and evaluate multi-tiered systems of support according to school-site and/or district-level needs, if such models are not yet in place with fidelity.
2. Review, adopt, and implement academic and behavioral screening tools, with a focus on using data from multiple sources to connect students with needed supports and evaluate students' progress as they access these supplemental strategies and practices.
3. Seek practice-based professional development opportunities to learn, implement, and evaluate one or more of the whole-class or individualized supports mentioned in this article.

Teaching is clearly a formidable – and noble – profession. Developing a multi-tiered system of support requires time, and we are acutely aware that time is something few teachers have to give. However, we firmly contend that time invested in developing, modifying, and sustaining these systems is time well-spent, as it enables teachers to spend more time attending to the business of teaching and learning and less time responding to problem behaviors.

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