

Secondary School for Journalism

FINAL REPORT



New York City Department of Education External School Curriculum Audit | August 2011

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Introduction

About This Report

This final report is the result of an external school curriculum audit (ESCA) of Secondary School for Journalism by Learning Point Associates, an affiliate of American Institutes for Research. This audit was conducted in response to the school being identified as in need of improvement under the New York State Education Department differentiated accountability plan, pursuant to the accountability requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act. The utilized ESCA process was developed for and carried out under the auspices of the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) Office of School Development, within the Division of Portfolio Planning.

About Secondary School for Journalism

Located in Brooklyn, Secondary School for Journalism (K463) is a secondary school with 442 students from Grade 6 through Grade 12. The school is co-located on the campus with at least two other high schools, each with its own primary floor and shared common spaces like auditoriums, libraries, gymnasiums, and cafeterias. The school population comprises 46 percent Hispanic, 43 percent black, 6 percent Asian students, and 4 percent white.¹ The student body includes 16 percent English language learners and 16 percent special education students.² The average attendance rate for the 2009–10 school year is 85 percent. Seventy-one percent of the student population is eligible for free lunch, and 10 percent of students are eligible for reduced-price lunch.³

The mission statement for Secondary School for Journalism is as follows:

We envision our school as a community of learners where all constituencies, students, staff and parents are actively engaged in the process of learning. We strive to achieve academic excellence for our diverse population of active learners. The mission of Secondary School for Journalism is to provide a comprehensive college preparatory and career exploration program for all students in a nurturing environment. Students will take ownership and responsibility for the learning process through inquiry into a broad spectrum of educational strategies emphasizing hands-on discovery and interdisciplinary project-based learning experiences through the multi-faceted aspects of journalism.

Audit Process at Secondary School for Journalism

The ESCA approach utilized at the secondary school level examines six topic areas: student engagement, academic interventions and supports, support for incoming students, classroom instruction, professional development, and courses and extracurriculars. Data were collected at the school level via teacher surveys, administrator interviews, classroom observations, and

¹<https://www.nystart.gov/publicweb-rc/2010/97/AOR-2010-331500011463.pdf>. Accessed on March 3, 2011

²http://schools.nyc.gov/documents/teachandlearn/sesdr/2010-11/sesdr_K463.pdf. Accessed on August 5, 2011

³<https://www.nystart.gov/publicweb-rc/2010/97/AOR-2010-331500011463.pdf>. Accessed on March 3, 2011

an analysis of documents submitted by Secondary School for Journalism. From these data, Learning Point Associates prepared a series of data sets (or reports) for the school's use.

These reports were presented to the school during a co-interpretationSM meeting, held on June 9, 2011. During this meeting, 37 stakeholders from the Secondary School for Journalism community read the reports, and through a facilitated and collaborative group process, identified individual findings, then developed and prioritized key findings that emerged from information in the reports.

The remainder of this report presents the key findings that emerged from the co-interpretation process and the actionable recommendations that Learning Point Associates has developed in response. Please note that there is not necessarily a one-to-one connection between key findings and recommendations; rather, the key findings are considered as a group, and those strategies recommended that we believe are most likely to have the greatest positive impact on student performance.

Key Findings

After considerable thought and discussion, co-interpretation participants determined a set of key findings. These key findings are detailed in this section. Each key finding statement was crafted by co-interpretation participants, and they are presented here in the participants' own words.

Critical Key Findings

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 1:

Sixty-three percent of teachers do not feel the principal delivers a clear vision of the school.

Critical Key Finding 1 is based on information from the teacher survey. During the co-interpretation session, comments from participants corroborated this finding. Participants selected this key finding as their top priority. While some teachers expressed confidence in the principal's ability to lead, there was a notable degree of dissent. Data shows that the majority of teachers feel they have minimal influence over hiring and funding decisions, and a number of staff report receiving feedback on instruction only once during the school year.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 2:

Teachers seem confused about whether there is or is not a universal discipline/behavior plan.

Critical Key Finding 2 is based on information from the teacher survey. Fifty-three percent of respondents agreed that the school has a behavior plan in place and that the behavior management strategies they use are consistent with those used in classrooms throughout the school; however, only 37 percent agreed that the strategies they use for managing behavior are consistent with those used in classrooms throughout the school. In addition, 90 percent of teachers indicated that they have developed and implemented their own strategies for managing behavior in their classrooms and that those strategies are not necessarily consistent with what other teachers in the school use.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 3:

The observation comments on classrooms receiving midrange ratings reflect that some teachers are inconsistent in their questioning, examples, and scaffolding.

Critical Key Finding 3 is based on information from classroom observations. There are a high percentage of student-teacher exchanges that do not reach satisfactory outcomes or evidence of student understanding. Additionally, observers noted that "teachers used scaffolding inconsistently, additional information was *sometimes* [emphasis added] provided, and some teachers encouraged persistence." In the area of content understanding, one third of classes were in the rated in the midrange. This rating was indicative of an absence of "varied examples or contrasting non-examples." Observers also noted inconsistent and limited opportunity for higher-level thinking skills.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 4:

According to observations, an area of emphasis for improvement of classroom environments is consideration of adolescent perspective, particularly providing opportunities for student autonomy.

Critical Key Finding 4 is based on classroom observation data and teacher survey data. The majority (71 percent of classrooms) were rated in the mid range for regard for adolescent perspective. Classrooms receiving this rating are characterized by limited student choice and responsibility for decision making and/or leadership, inconsistent connections between instructional material and student lives, occasional opportunity for student opinion to be integrated with instruction, some meaningful peer interaction, and teachers managing the classrooms in a somewhat controlled manner with regard to student movement and placement. Additionally, the majority of teachers reported that they never or almost never had students participate in field work, and half of teachers report giving textbook or worksheet assignments at least once a week.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 5:

Teachers are able to recognize struggling students but are unfamiliar with the formal process of identifying and receiving appropriate academic support/intervention for students.

Based on results from teacher surveys, there is a significant discrepancy between the majority of teachers (91 percent) sharing concerns about struggling students with other teachers and the pointed lack of consensus regarding identification and immediate support for struggling students. This is supported by a general lack of consensus regarding the formal and systematic identification of specific academic support for students in need. In addition, there is a general lack of consistency regarding how quickly students receive the needed and appropriate academic support once identified. Likewise, 56 percent of surveyed teachers disagreed that ELL and general education teachers routinely use common planning.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 6:

Teacher survey results indicated that 35 percent of teachers believe that professional development (PD) is not connected to the school goals and is ineffective in its use.

Supported by survey data, Critical Key Finding 6 points to inconsistent perceptions around the efficacy of professional learning opportunities and the connection those opportunities make to the schools goals and students' needs.

Recommendations

Overview of Recommendations

During the Secondary School for Journalism co-interpretation, the school team identified issues concerning leadership, behavior management plans, quality of instruction, academic intervention services, and professional development. Co-interpretation participants from the school also noted several positive key findings that present starting points for plans to address issues related to these areas, and the auditors noted that although the school already has plans and programs in place to address these issues, it is important for the school to maintain a disposition of continuous improvement to best serve the students.

THE SIX RECOMMENDATIONS

With these issues and strengths in mind, Learning Point Associates auditors developed the following six recommendations:

1. Revisit the school's vision to ensure that it articulates a vivid picture of the organization's future that is so compelling that a school's staff will be motivated to work together to make it a reality (Dufour & Eaker, 1998)
 - a. Work with staff and community to build a collective educational vision that is clear, compelling, and connected to teaching and learning (Peterson, 1995)
 - b. Work with staff and community to develop a process to communicate and articulate the vision regularly and consistently (Peterson, 1995).
2. Review the existing Secondary School for Journalism behavior plan to ensure that it contains clearly established standards for safety, discipline, and respect. The policy and related system should include concise social expectations and a continuum of supports, interventions, incentives/rewards, and consequences—including a clear delineation of activities and programs that students are entitled to versus those that are privileges.
3. Implement instructional strategies that increase opportunities for higher-order thinking, analysis and problem solving, and deeper content understanding.
4. Develop and implement specific strategies for incorporating appropriate student voice, choice, and opportunities for autonomy and leadership in the classroom.
5. Develop and implement a schoolwide system to identify at-risk students using assessment data, provide multitiered academic interventions, and employ ongoing progress monitoring to address student needs.
6. Develop and implement a professional development plan that is aligned to school goals and focused on subject-area content.

These recommendations are discussed on the following pages. Each recommendation provides a review of research, specific actions the school may wish to take during its implementation process, examples of real-life schools that have successfully implemented strategies, and online resources for additional information. All works cited, as well as suggestions for further reading, appear in the References section at the end of this report.

Please note that the order in which these recommendations are presented does not reflect a ranking or prioritization of the recommendations.

**QUICK LINKS:
Online Sources
for More Information**

How High Schools Become Exemplary: Ways That Leadership Raises Achievement and Narrows Gaps by Improving Instruction in 15 Public High Schools

<http://agi.harvard.edu/events/2009Conference/2009AGIConferenceReport6-30-2010web.pdf>

Education for the 21st Century: Developing a Shared Vision

<http://educationforthe21stcentury.org/2011/06/developing-a-shared-vision-2/>

IES Practice Guide: Turning Around Chronically Low-Performing Schools

http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/Turnaround_pg_04181.pdf

School Turnaround Success Strategies

<http://www.publicimpact.com/school-turnaround-success-strategies>

What Works Clearinghouse

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

Recommendation 1: Leadership of the Principal

Revisit the school's vision to ensure that it articulates a vivid picture of the organization's future that is so compelling that a school's staff will be motivated to work together to make it a reality (Dufour & Eaker, 1998)

- **Work with staff and community to build a collective educational vision that is clear, compelling, and connected to teaching and learning (Peterson, 1995)**
- **Work with staff and community to develop a process to communicate and articulate the vision regularly and consistently (Peterson, 1995).**

Every group of people working together anchors their existence in a unifying vision that orients the group's work and channels behaviors (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Without such an anchor or target that beckons (Bennis & Nanus, 1985) the organization moves aimlessly, taking any path that looks interesting and changing course randomly as internal and external initiatives are tried unsuccessfully or with minimal implementation. People's efforts become fragmented, often resulting in the development of a toxic culture, decline in student achievement, subgroups that become informal leaders within the building, and high staff turnover. Fullan (2007) states that the blueprint/road map for the school community is created by developing, and articulating a compelling shared vision of what the school aspires to become. Once this process has taken place and been communicated, every individual involved with the education of students, from teachers to custodians, begins to move with a sense of purpose and unity. A consistently communicated shared vision guides the daily work of the school, drives school improvement initiatives, and provides coherence to the school staff and community. A vision is the path to the future which will lead the school into being able to sustain improvements, adjust for any changes on the horizon such as demographics, and continue momentum through a leadership succession.

LINK TO RESEARCH

Creating a Shared Vision

You cannot have a learning organization without a shared vision....as stated by Senge (1990), a shared vision provides a compass to keep learning on course when the stress of implementation threatens to thwart positive outcomes. What drives and inspires organizations is the capacity to hold a shared picture of the future that they want to create. Senge states that leaders may hold personal visions that never get translated or undergo a process of being developed into a shared vision – a shared vision which has the power to motivate a staff to build momentum for change. The practice of shared vision involves the skills of unearthing shared 'pictures of the future' that foster genuine commitment and enrollment rather than compliance. In mastering this discipline, leaders learn the counter-productiveness of trying to dictate a vision, no matter how heartfelt (Senge, 1990).

Underestimating the power of vision has been identified by Kotter (1996) as one of the most common mistakes leaders make. Leaders who do not have a vision to align, direct and inspire members of the organization leave them to do their own thing. Kotter (1996) also points out that this leaves members to be constantly checking in with supervisors or managers about every decision and or to debate every issue that arises. Kotter (1996) identifies developing a vision and strategy as one of his key eight steps for leading change, as follows:

1. Establish a sense of urgency.
 - a. Examine the market and competitive realities.
 - b. Identify and discuss crises, potential crises or major opportunities.
2. Create a guiding coalition.
 - a. Assemble a group with enough power to lead the change effort.
 - b. Encourage the group to work as a team.
3. Develop a vision and strategy.
 - a. Create a vision to help direct the change effort.
 - b. Develop strategies for achieving that vision.
4. Communicate the change vision.
 - a. Use every vehicle possible to communicate the new vision and strategy.
 - b. Teach new behaviors by the example of the Guiding Coalition.
5. Empower broad-based action.
 - a. Remove obstacles to change.
 - b. Change systems or structure that seriously undermine the vision.
 - c. Encourage the risk-taking and nontraditional ideas, activities, and actions.
6. Generate short-term wins.
 - a. Plan for visible performance improvements.
 - b. Create those improvements.
 - c. Recognize and reward employees involved in the improvements.
7. Never let up.
 - a. Use increase credibility to change systems, structures, policies that don't fit the vision.
 - b. Hire, promote, and develop employees who can implement the vision.
 - c. Reinvigorate the process with new projects, themes, and change agents.
8. Incorporate changes into the culture.
 - a. Articulate the connections between the new behaviors and organizational success.
 - b. Develop the means to ensure leadership development and succession.

Bamburg (1994) states that schools that have clarity of purpose built on shared values and beliefs have been the most successful in addressing and raising student achievement. The Principal isn't the only one who has developed the vision or who believes in the vision. The entire staff is involved in the process and shares in making the vision come to life.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Fixsen et al. (2005) writes, “During the initial stage of implementation the compelling forces of fear of change, inertia, and investment in the status quo combine with the inherently difficult and complex work of implementing something new” (p. 16). The unwavering support of leaders is crucial at this stage as it is at this point that practitioners can become overwhelmed with new expectations layered on top of existing demands and cease their attempts at implementation. It is at this point that a Leader must be able to use a well defined vision to provide the direction for the school and rally the staff to want to be a part the change process to create a different future for the students.

Before embarking on the development of a shared vision, it is critical that research on what we know about effective schools and school improvement processes be explored to build common knowledge and understanding for all stakeholders. Blankstein (2010) recommends that the design of the vision statement be built on a platform and understanding of most current effective school research and reflect the school’s history and existing culture. Information that should be gathered in preparation for developing a vision statement would include:

- **Relevant information about the school or district.** Data on parent and student perceptions, student success, and teacher performance, copies of prior vision statements, internal and external factors affecting the school, findings from previous audits or accreditations visits, longitudinal achievement data, and community surveys.
- **Research on school culture**
- **Research on characteristics of high-performing schools and districts**
- **Needs assessment of the current conditions in the school or district**

Blankstein (2010) advocates a process where stakeholders begin by making a list of things that are important to a good school. Then stakeholders form groups of 8–10 combining their lists until they can agree on their top 10. The School Improvement Team takes the lists from all the groups and clusters the statements by common theme. The School Improvement Team then divides themselves into smaller groups with each group taking one of the themes to write a paragraph that captures all the statements in that theme. This same process can be used with sticky notes that can be moved and sorted until themes or vision categories have been established and agreed upon.

Once a vision statement has been crafted by key stakeholders, Spence (2009) suggests that the leader then bring the vision to life by displaying the vision statement on the website, posters, plaques, banners, mouse pads, screen savers, newsletters, etc and discussing during regular staff and community meetings whenever possible. Making the vision statement public brings it front and center to remind staff about why they are working to make improvements at the school. School vision statements are reviewed and revised every three to five years to reflect changes in the school or when goals have been accomplished.

Growing a vision is the process that Barth (2001) recommends. This is a process whereby members of the school community devise a process for examining their school, then create together a vision that provides a profound sense of purpose for each of its members. The collective vision emerges from the personal visions of each member. Barth (2001) contends that vision statements that are inherited, inflicted from another person or outside office, or

constantly changing encourage a compliance attitude or a band aid approach never reaching the goal of building a committed, collaborative, purpose driven school organization.

In the Critical Issue *Building a Collective Vision* (Peterson, 1995), it is recommended to establish teams, featuring members of all major groups in the school, to work on a shared vision for the school. The process of developing and implementing a vision should include the following actions:

- Study the importance of vision and planning in the success of organizations.
- Contact organizations that help schools develop a vision through staff development, conferences, and workshops.
- Learn about the components of a vision by observing leaders as they develop vision and mission statements with staff.
- Review examples of vision statements from other schools to find out how they communicate the school's ideas, values, and dreams, and how they target student learning. Then, work together to write a vision statement can be displayed prominently in every classroom.
- Listen to leaders talk about their vision—e.g., through videotapes on organizational leadership.
- Observe how another organization's team responds to a shared vision—e.g., what the team sets out to accomplish, how it brings in new members, and how it celebrates success and recognizes team members' contributions.

Qualities of a Vision Statement

A vision statement should be vetted against established criteria or a rubric to ensure that it stands up to the intended purpose. Kotter (1996) recommends the following for vision statements:

Imaginable: They convey a picture of what the future will look like.

Desirable: They appeal to the long-term interest of stakeholders.

Feasible: They compromise realistic, attainable goals.

Focused: They are clear enough to provide guidance in decision making.

Flexible: They are general enough to allow for individual initiative and changing responses in light of changing conditions.

Communicable: They are easy to communicate and explain.

Bright Star High School

The principal's vision and mission have been the foundation of this high school's success.

Bright Star High School [not the school's actual name] is a successful, at-risk high school. It is identified as successful because: it is fully accredited by the Commonwealth of Virginia; it has met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) for the past three years; 40 percent of their students are enrolled in International Baccalaureate (IB) courses; the school's Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) results have risen more than 100 points over the past five years; the graduation rate is 97 percent; the college admissions rate is 93 percent; and, it has received numerous awards from various organizations (the International Center for Leadership in Education, NASSP, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation). All of this has been achieved despite the fact that Bright Star has a student body that is 70 percent minority, 37 percent Limited English Proficient (LEP), and 50 percent on free or reduced lunch. In addition its population has a 22 percent mobility rate.

The Bright Star faculty and staff have a clear "understanding of and commitment to specific instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability" (Association for Effective Schools, 1996). They know the reason for their presence at Bright Star. They are there for the kids. They know the kids have to pass a certain number of courses and their corresponding state Standards of Learning (SOLs) tests in order to graduate. The teachers firmly believe their responsibility is to help all students who enter Bright Star learn, achieve, and graduate.

The faculty and staff expressed the belief that, given time, support, and engaging instruction, all of their students will achieve and graduate. They have made learning the constant and time the variable. They have a common set of goals and values. They work hard to communicate those goals and values to all newcomers.

When teachers were asked about the school's vision and mission, they responded without hesitation. Teacher 5 supplied, "Everybody realizes that the mission of the school is to get as many students to graduate from high school with as good an education as possible" (Teacher 5, Focus Group 1, November 1, 2006). One teacher with fewer than three years of experience stated, "I'd say it's definitely a school that's focused on student engagement and the learning focused on ...instruction" (Teacher 1, Focus Group 1, November 1, 2006).

A school-based administrator said, "I think the reason we have been able to have that achievement in our students even though we may have a high rate of free and reduced lunch or the language issues is because our staff really set the high bar even though they work very hard and they meet the students where they are at in terms of their knowledge and their skills I think collectively the staff has a philosophy that they are not going to let our students fail" (Administrator 2 Interview, October 2, 2006). A central office administrator who worked directly with the school described the Bright Star mission as, "Learning. And they take it seriously" (District Administrator Interview, June 30, 2006). All who work at Bright Star appear to know their role and they work hard at making the Bright Star vision and mission come alive.

At Bright Star, the school's vision and mission are communicated in a multitude of ways:

- the principals' memos and letters to faculty;
- the PTSA newsletters and the student newspapers;
- and, most importantly, the decisions and actions taken by the faculty and staff.

The person who communicated these messages most frequently and most clearly over the last ten years was Principal 2. Between 2003 and 2005, he wrote eleven articles for his weekly newsletter directly related to the school's vision and mission. He also wrote similar articles for the student newspaper and for the PTSA newsletter. Throughout his articles, he remained focused on getting his message out to all of the stakeholders: teachers, parents, and students.

Excerpted from Goodman, E. (2007). *A case study of a successful, at-risk high school*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Virginia Polytechnic University. Retrieved July 25, 2011, <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/available/etd-11102007-155156/unrestricted/CaseStudyUpload4.pdf>

Recommendation 2: Schoolwide Behavior Management System

Review the existing Secondary School for Journalism behavior plan to ensure that it contains clearly established standards for safety, discipline, and respect. The policy and related system should include concise social expectations and a continuum of supports, interventions, incentives/rewards, and consequences—including a clear delineation of activities and programs that students are entitled to versus those that are privileges.

While data collected as part of the ESCA and contextual evidence from the school indicate that a behavior plan exists, ESCA data also show that knowledge and use of the plan are inconsistent among staff. Effective behavior plans should include content that meets standards outlined by current research and best practice, and outline realistic expectations for teacher implementation. The ideas, strategies, and practices included below share this focus.

A focused effort by the school to effectively implement a schoolwide behavior plan should include the following steps:

- A review of the current behavior plan to ensure it meets the following standards:
 - Clearly established standards for safety, discipline, and respect
 - Concise social expectations, and a continuum of supports, interventions, incentives/rewards, and consequences
 - Clear delineation of activities and programs that students are entitled to versus those that are privileges
- Needs-sensing activities to gauge teacher awareness of the content of the existing plan and rationale behind following or failing to follow the plan as part of classroom management
- Professional learning opportunities, based on the data provided by the needs-sensing activities to build staff capacity to revise/implement the existing plan
- Clearly articulated and enforced administrative expectations regarding staff responsibilities for adhering to the established behavior plan and related policies

LINK TO RESEARCH

One of the greatest obstacles within urban schools is the large number of students whose behavior interferes with their achievement or the achievement of others. Often, these students have behaved in a manner that disrupts the educational climate of the classroom and the school. One key element for changing this pattern is ensuring consistent implementation of a schoolwide behavior program that is developed with the input and support of parents and staff and establishes schoolwide expectations for how students should behave and for how staff should both support positive behavior and intervene with disruptive behavior.

Effective schoolwide behavior programs have clearly established standards for safety, discipline, and respect. Students need a secure, orderly environment that promotes their personal well being and supports learning. Rules should also be fair and stress the student's responsibility to the school community, their parents, and themselves. All students in the

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

These videos show School-Wide Positive Behavior Support in action:

Alcott Middle School Behavior Expectations and Related Teaching Materials (Video)

http://www.pbis.org/swpbs_videos/alcott_mid.aspx

Discovering School-Wide PBS: Moving Towards a Positive Future (from Florida's Positive Behavior Support Project) (Video)

http://www.pbis.org/swpbs_videos/pbs_video-discovering_swpbs.aspx

Washington Elementary School Example (Video)

http://www.pbis.org/swpbs_videos/wash._elem.aspx

school need to be aware of the rules, the reasons for the rules, and the consequences for breaking the rules. Effective discipline programs are based on praise and encouragement for positive behavior and clear, consistent consequences for misbehavior (Chicago Public Schools, Office of Specialized Services, 1998).

Effective schools build and maintain a positive “social culture.” Successful students are safe (don’t hurt themselves or others), respectful (follow adult requests and get along with their peers), and responsible (arrive to class on time and complete assignments). These foundational skills are essential for a safe and orderly school environment. In addition, members of a positive social culture use “higher-order” skills, such as (1) impulse control, (2) anger management, (3) conflict resolution, (4) empathy, and (5) drug and alcohol use resistance and prevention. Research studies consistently show that schools that establish a positive social culture also achieve the best academic gains (California Services for Technical Assistance and Training [CalSTAT], 2011).

Positive behavior interventions, used correctly by teachers, administrators, and parents, encourage or strengthen desirable behavior and reduce inappropriate behavior. Positive interventions have a greater likelihood of enabling a student to change his or her behavior in a way that does not interrupt learning. Effective interventions encourage praise and recognition of positive behavior and demand clear and consistent responses to misbehavior. Children and youth tend to respond to positive techniques. In some cases, however, more restrictive interventions may be necessary to control and change extremely inappropriate and aggressive behavior (Chicago Public Schools, Office of Specialized Services, 1998).

School-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) is based on the research-based application of lessons learned from more than 7,000 schools currently implementing successful changes in their school environments. SWPBS evolved from valid research in the field of special education. SWPBS is not a curriculum, intervention, or practice but a decision-making framework that guides selection, integration, and implementation of the best evidence-based behavioral practices for improving important academic outcomes for all students (Office of Special Education Programs Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2011).

Researchers have only recently begun to study the effects of schoolwide behavioral management systems and what it takes to implement these systems effectively. While it is too early to offer “recipes for success,” the work of key researchers and their school-based colleagues are providing some encouraging developments. There are different variations of schoolwide systems of behavioral support, yet most have certain features in common. The emphasis is on consistency—both throughout the building and across classrooms. The entire school staff is expected to adopt strategies that will be uniformly implemented. As a result, approaches necessitate professional development and long-term commitment by the school leadership for this innovation to take hold. The school-based models featured in the Quick Links on the previous page have been selected to show how different features of a schoolwide behavioral management system can apply across urban, suburban, and rural locations. These schools understand that change is incremental and are approaching implementation of their schoolwide systems slowly and over an extended time period.

Common Features of Schoolwide Behavioral Management Systems

- Total staff commitment to managing behavior, whatever approach is taken
- Clearly defined and communicated expectations and rules
- Consequences and clearly stated procedures for correcting rule-breaking behaviors
- An instructional component for teaching students self-control and/or social skill strategies

(Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice, 1997)

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

1. Incorporate key guiding principles of student behavior management.

The Office of Special Education Programs Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (2011) has established the following SWPBS guiding principles:

- **Develop a continuum of scientifically based behavior and academic interventions and supports.**

If not already established, a well-articulated schoolwide behavior policy/student code inclusive of positive expectations, and minor and major infractions, must first be in place. Clarity about expectations for staff's handling of in-class behaviors is important. Authentic faculty feedback and participation are important throughout the policy and system development processes.

- **Use data to make decisions and solve problems.**

Data on both minor and major behavior incidents should be collected, tracked, analyzed, and utilized in decision making by the team and faculty on a monthly basis at minimum. Data should be presented in a user-friendly format.

- **Arrange the environment to prevent the development and occurrence of problem behavior.**

Post three to five positively stated overarching schoolwide social expectations around the school, particularly in problem areas.

- **Teach and encourage prosocial skills and behaviors.**

Students should be introduced/taught the schoolwide expectations, rules for specific settings, reward/consequence system, and related interventions/supports. Staff should be trained on how to present expectations to students. Ongoing communication and collaboration with families and the community are very important.

- **Implement evidence-based behavioral practices with fidelity and accountability.**

Interventions should be multitiered, increasing in levels of intensity, and inclusive of evidence-based programs or strategies. The primary level (all students) is the overall behavior management plan. The secondary level (some students) is for a targeted group or focused on individual plans for those who did not respond to the first level. The tertiary level (few students) includes highly individualized plans for students who did not respond to the first two levels.

- **Screen universally, and monitor student performance and progress continuously.**

There should be a plan for collecting data to evaluate positive behavior support (PBS) outcomes in which data are collected as scheduled and used to evaluate their effectiveness for future adjustments.

2. Build a team.

Florida's Positive Behavior Support Project (2005) outlines an SWPBS process that can provide a systematic structure and formalized procedures that can be implemented during the summer months. The initial requirement is to ensure consistent adoption and philosophical alignment among school staff. The suggestion is not to develop another group but to fold SWPBS into the roles and responsibilities of an already established team. Members of the team should include administrators (i.e., principal, assistant principal, or dean), counselors, social workers, general education teachers, special education teachers, a behavior specialist and/or teacher with demonstrated behavior management skills, and a coach/district representative. It is vital for administration to support the process, take an active role along with the rest of the team, and/or attend most meetings.

3. Determine school capacity.

Other important implementation consideration points center around gauging and developing the school's individual and collective capacities to implement a comprehensive program. Related initial key questions include:

- What are the schoolwide social expectations and routines?
- Who at the schoolwide level has the unique disposition necessary to both firmly hold students accountable and support them as they attempt to adjust with fidelity?
- What are the procedural expectations of teachers for managing in-class behaviors?
- What manageable recourse do teachers have for patterns of and/or extremely disruptive and disrespectful instances of behavior "in the moment" (i.e., immediate referrals to a dean/counselor/administration, in-school "time-out room," etc.) and criteria for reentry?
- What is the specific, realistic, and manageable continuum of interventions and supports?
- What is the specific, realistic, and manageable continuum of consequences for patterns of disruptive in-class behavior?
- How will the efficacy of chosen interventions and supports be intermittently monitored and adjusted as needed in a data-driven manner? Who is responsible for this?
- What are the mechanisms for notifying and collaborating with students' parents/guardians in the process early and often? Who is responsible for this (i.e., teachers, counselors, social workers, deans, and administrators)?
- What are the thresholds for more severe consequences/privilege losses for patterns or disruptive behaviors?

- What outside resources are available to support students and families struggling with issues that are affecting students' behavior but are well outside of the school's capacity to address?
- What privileges and incentives (i.e., extracurricular activities, athletics, field trips, and social activities) are currently in place that can serve as points of leverage? Do more need to be identified or developed?
- How are students who actively exhibit established desirable social behaviors formally recognized? Perhaps most important, how are those actively attempting to make sustained social adjustments formally recognized and supported (without stigmatizing)?

Positive Behavior Support in the Classroom

- Arrange classroom to minimize crowding and distraction.
- Establish explicit classroom routines and directions that are linked to schoolwide routines and directions.
- Post three to five positively stated expectations and teach and reinforce them.
- Provide frequent acknowledgment of appropriate behaviors.
- Give students multiple opportunities to respond and participate during instruction.
- Actively supervise the class during instruction.
- Ignore or provide quick, direct, explicit reprimands/redirections in response to inappropriate behavior.
- Implement multiple strategies to acknowledge appropriate behavior (points, praise) linked to schoolwide strategies.
- Give specific feedback in response to social and academic errors and correct responses.

(Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, & Sugai, 2006)

Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support in an Urban High School: A Case Study

A study to examine the impact of SWPBS was conducted by Chicago Public Schools over three years, with the implementation high school serving an estimated 1,800 students during the first year of the study. The school served a diverse student body, with the following racial and ethnic makeup: 36 percent African American, 36 percent Hispanic, 16 percent Asian American, 8 percent Caucasian, 2 percent Native American, and 2 percent Other, with 21 percent demonstrating limited English proficiency (LEP). In addition, 89 percent qualified for free or reduced-price lunch, and 20 percent were identified as students with disabilities.

The results of the study revealed that it took approximately two years for the school to fully implement all components of the SWPBS plan. However, by the third year, the average rate of daily discipline referrals had been reduced by 20 percent. Successful implementation strategies cited by the school included the following:

- Convening a PBS team with various stakeholders from the school (i.e., administrator, educator, parents, and students) for a day of training and to develop an action plan.
- Conducting a summer trial intervention with about 100 students during a summer activity to test teaching systems using positive behavior expectations.
- Providing teachers with key products such as sample copies of social skills lesson plans, posters reflecting schoolwide behavior expectations, and sample syllabi.
- Conducting grade-level assemblies to introduce rationales for the expected behavior and provide opportunities to practice positive and negative examples of specific behaviors (e.g., respectful walking in the hallway).
- A system of rewards, including redeemable “acknowledgement” tickets that could be awarded to individual students for exhibiting positive behavior.
- Holding schoolwide celebrations that were contingent on the overall reduction of disciplinary referrals.

(Bohanon et al., 2006)

Recommendation 3: Instructional Rigor

Implement instructional strategies that increase opportunities for higher-order thinking, analysis and problem solving, and deeper content understanding.

LINK TO RESEARCH

Instruction that pushes students to engage in higher-level thinking leads to deeper learning for students (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001; Newmann, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 2001; Pashler et al., 2007). Too often, particularly in schools where students are struggling, instruction focuses on lower-level thinking skills, basic content, and test preparation. Teachers of struggling student groups or tracks usually offer students “less exciting instruction, less emphasis on meaning and conceptualization, and more rote drill and practice activities” than do teachers of high-performing or heterogeneous groups and classes (Cotton, 1989, p. 8). Yet this focus on basic skills does not necessarily improve student achievement.

Several research studies were completed from 1990 to 2003 “which demonstrated that students who experienced higher levels of authentic instruction and assessment showed higher achievement than students who experienced lower levels of authentic instruction and assessment” (Newmann, King, & Carmichael, 2007, p. vii). These results included higher achievement on standardized tests (Newmann et al., 2001). It is also important to note that these results “were consistent for Grades 3–12, across different subject areas (mathematics, social studies, language arts, science), and for different students regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic status” (Newmann et al., 2007, p. vii).

Teachers need to provide structured opportunities and time for students to take on higher-level cognitive work (Tomlinson, 2003). In discussing the *gradual release of responsibility model*, Fisher and Frey (2008) state that “the cognitive load should shift slowly and purposefully from teacher-as-model, to joint responsibility, to independent practice and application by the learner” (p. 2). This process allows students to become what Graves and Fitzgerald (2003) call “competent, independent learners” (p. 98).

There are several steps to ensure that students are being asked to complete this type of intellectually challenging work, which increases test scores and improves performance on authentic assessment measures as well. Newmann et al. (2001) define *authentically challenging intellectual work* as the “construction of knowledge, through the use of disciplined inquiry, to produce discourse, products, or performances that have value beyond school” (p. 14).

Daggett (2005) agrees, stating that all students should be pushed “to achieve academic excellence, which ultimately boils down to applying rigorous knowledge to unpredictable, real-world situations, such as those that drive our rapidly changing world” (p. 5). Disciplined inquiry, which occurs in the classroom, requires that students “(1) use a prior knowledge base; (2) strive for in-depth understanding rather than superficial awareness; and (3) express their ideas and findings with elaborated communication” (Newmann et al., 2001, p. 15).

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Doing What Works: Providing Research-Based Education Practices Online (Website)

<http://dww.ed.gov/>

Organizing Instruction and Study to Improve Learning (Publication)

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/20072004.pdf>

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

1. Cultivate schoolwide high expectations for students.

- Align instruction with the New York State P–12 Common Core Learning Standards. According to NYCDOE (2011), schools in New York City are set to have fully adopted the P–12 Common Core Learning Standards for students to take aligned assessments during the 2014–15 school year. These standards are internationally benchmarked and rigorous; they clearly explain what students at each grade level are expected to know and be able to do. Some schools were involved in pilot programs in 2010–11.
- Develop a shared understanding of instructional rigor through collaborative curriculum planning, design, and/or redesign. When developing or revising curriculum maps, identify opportunities for formative assessment tasks that encourage higher-level thinking for each unit of study.
- Through teacher collaboration, develop common student assignments that ask students to perform rigorous and authentic tasks.
- Through teacher collaboration, develop common student assessments that include rigorous and authentic summative assessment tasks.
- Monitor implementation of expectations through classroom observations, lesson plan review, and student achievement results on common formative assessments.

2. Provide professional development for teachers on instructional strategies that push students to engage in higher-order thinking.

- Provide ongoing professional development for teachers that describes the importance of pushing students to do higher-level thinking and provides strategies for how to do so. This training may be provided through ongoing professional development sessions and/or support of an instructional coach.
- Create clear expectations regarding how teachers should implement this professional development in the classroom (e.g., one strategy utilized each day as reflected in lesson plans and authentic assessments at the end of each unit).
- Identify how this professional development can be incorporated into scheduled teacher collaboration sessions.
- Monitor implementation of professional development through classroom observations, lesson plan review, and student achievement results on common formative assessments.

3. Develop examples of authentic intellectual work.

The following example can be used to help school leaders and teachers understand what authentic intellectual work might look like.

Examples of High-Scoring and Low-Scoring Measures of Authentic Intellectual Work

The research report *Improving Chicago's Schools: Authentic Intellectual Work and Standardized Tests: Conflict or Coexistence?* provides examples of two sixth-grade writing assignments: one that scored high and one that scored low on measures of authentic intellectual work. The authors conclude each example with a commentary of why the assignment received the score that it did.

High Scoring Writing Assignment

Write a paper persuading someone to do something. Pick any topic that you feel strongly about, convince the reader to agree with your belief, and convince the reader to take a specific action on this belief.

Commentary

In this high scoring assignment, demands for construction of knowledge are evident because students have to select information and organize it into convincing arguments. By asking students to convince others to believe and act in a certain way, the task entails strong demands that the students support their views with reasons or other evidence, which calls for elaborated written communication. Finally, the intellectual challenge is connected to students' lives because they are to write on something they consider to be personally important.

Low Scoring Writing Assignment

Identify the parts of speech of each underlined word below. All eight parts of speech—nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections—are included in this exercise.

1. My room is arranged for comfort and efficiency.
2. As you enter, you will find a wooden table on the left.
3. I write and type.
4. There is a book shelf near the table.
5. On this book shelf, I keep both my pencils and paper supplies.
6. I spend many hours in this room.
7. I often read or write there during the evening..

Commentary

This assignment requires no construction of knowledge or elaborated communication, and does not pose a question or problem clearly connected to students' lives. Instead it asks students to recall one-word responses, based on memorization or definitions of parts of speech.

Reprinted from page 24 of *Improving Chicago's Schools: Authentic Intellectual Work and Standardized Tests: Conflict or Coexistence?* by Fred M. Newmann, Anthony S. Bryk, and Jenny K. Nagaoka. Available online at <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/p0a02.pdf>. Copyright © 2001 Consortium on Chicago School Research. Reprinted with permission.

Further examples of authentic intellectual instruction, teachers' assignments, and student work can be found in Newmann et al. (2007).

Newmann, F. M., King, M. B., & Carmichael, D. L. (2007). *Authentic instruction and assessment: Common standards for rigor and relevance in teaching academic subjects*. Des Moines, IA: Iowa Department of Education. Retrieved July 25, 2011, from <http://centerforaiw.com/sites/centerforaiw.com/files/Authentic-Instruction-Assessment-BlueBook.pdf>

Perrysburg High School

Perrysburg High School in Perrysburg, Ohio, serves students in Grades 9–12. Perrysburg is a suburb of Toledo.

Perrysburg is the sole high school in the Perrysburg Exempted Village District in Wood County. Nate Ash teaches physics to eleventh and twelfth graders. Ash has taught professional development programs at the Northwest Ohio Center of Excellence in Science and Mathematics Education, and at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. He acts as a mentor to new science teachers.

Ash teaches physics using an inquiry approach. Students do lab activities and solve problems together to understand key concepts in physics. In each lesson he poses higher- order questions to help his students build explanations: How do you know that? What would happen if we changed this variable? How is this similar or different? Ash uses whiteboards in a number of ways: for group problem solving, representing a phenomenon with pictures, and student presentations.

Each new unit/topic is introduced with a hands-on activity. Ash presents a physical situation to students, has them manipulate the variables, and then narrows down their list of variables to design an experiment. Every experiment is introduced with an open-ended question (What would happen if...? What happens when...?). Students work in small groups to describe what happens with graphs, pictures, mathematical equations, and written expression. When they are finished, students present their work to the class in “whiteboard sessions.”

Ash explains how the whiteboard sessions give important insights into student thinking: “We can really see if the students understand on every different level how that problem works or how that situation works. And if there is a disjoint between any of those representations, that gives us someplace to go, that gives us something to talk about, something to work through.”

Students appreciate being in charge of their own learning, having the opportunity to challenge their peers, and develop critical thinking skills as they explain their ideas in front of a group. As Ash says, “Students really like this approach because, instead of just giving them the answer, it gives them a chance to explain to each other what’s going on. And I like it because all the times that I have done physics problems on the board and gone through the answers, I got pretty good at doing physics problems but my students never got any better at all.” Ash has found that with this approach his students are no longer trying to find equations that fit the problems, but working to develop a deep understanding of the underlying concepts.

Description excerpted from the Doing What Works Website at http://dww.ed.gov/media/CL/OIS/TopicLevel/case_perrysburg_52708rev.pdf.

This information is in the public domain.

Suggestions for Further Reading

Herman, R., Dawson, P., Dee, T., Greene, J., Maynard, R., Redding, S., & Darwin, M. (2008). *Turning around chronically low-performing schools: A practice guide* (NCEE #2008-4020). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved July 25, 2011, from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/Turnaround_pg_04181.pdf

Recommendation 4: Student Voice, Choice, Autonomy, and Leadership

Develop and implement specific strategies for incorporating appropriate student voice, choice, and opportunities for autonomy and leadership in the classroom.

LINK TO RESEARCH

Empirical research has demonstrated that supporting student choice, autonomy, and leadership in the classroom can train students to regulate their own learning and deepen their cognitive process to improve academic achievement. Efforts to foster supportive autonomy consist of establishing a link between a student's classroom behavior and the resources that motivate the student to succeed, such as personal interests, goals, and values (Reeve, 2010). This approach inherently involves students in their own learning process by creating a direct link between their personal motivations and classroom activities.

Autonomy-supportive instructional strategies have been shown to improve student engagement, conceptual understanding, academic achievement, and persistence in the classroom (Young, 2005). The goal of these strategies is to encourage students to engage in self-regulated learning, which involves students interpreting learning tasks, determining goals, and implementing strategies to meet goals (Young, 2005). Creating an autonomy-supportive classroom environment requires teachers to incorporate students' preferences, choices, curiosity, and challenges into lessons (Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Barch, & Jeon, 2004). Additional approaches include allocating time in a way that allows students to work in their own way, scaffolding student learning, engaging in feedback loops with students, and offering praise and encouragement to students (Young, 2005).

Enhancing student autonomy through autonomy-supportive strategies and lesson content that has relevance to adolescent lives allows students to align their inner motivational resources, classroom behavior, and academic achievement (Assor, Kaplan, & Roth, 2002; Stefanou, Perencevich, DiCintio, & Turner, 2004; Young, 2005). This strategy encourages students to understand schoolwork in the context of their own interests and goals, which has the potential to help students to develop self-regulation skills and learning strategies to facilitate their academic and professional success.

Adolescence represents a critical period during which youths struggle to take on new responsibilities and learn decision-making skills while concurrently establishing a sense of self and identity. This period also marks a stage where adolescents are learning to regulate their behavior and cognitive abilities, which can be facilitated by incorporating autonomy-supportive strategies in the classroom (Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins, 2003).

The key to developing and implementing an autonomy-supportive classroom is to become familiar with the strategies that either encourage or inhibit student voice, choice, autonomy, and leadership. Table 1 provides an overview of the features and aspects that characterize an autonomy-supportive motivating instructional style versus a controlling motivating style.

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Collaborative for Academic,
Social and Emotional
Learning (Website)

<http://casel.org/>

Self Determination Theory
(Website)

<http://www.sustainengagement.com/>

*Classroom Observation:
Student Autonomy* (Online
video)

http://www1.teachertube.com/viewVideo.php?title=Classroom_Observation__Student_Autonomy&video_id=185325

Table 1. Defining Features of Two Types of Motivating Styles: Autonomy Supportive and Controlling

Autonomy Supportive Motivating Style	Controlling Motivating Style
<p>Definition: A teaching style that involves understanding and valuing the student's perspective during instruction</p>	<p>Definition: A teaching style that involves a teacher-centered approach to developing a class agenda and encouraging student compliance with the agenda</p>
<p><i>Key Features</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Encourages a student's personal motivational resources ■ Incorporates noncontrolling instructional language ■ Promotes worth ■ Acknowledges and accepts negative expressions and attitude 	<p><i>Key Features</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dependent on external motivational sources ■ Utilizes language that is more controlling and pressuring ■ Assertive
<p><small>Adapted from <i>Anatomy Support</i> by Johnmarshall Reeve (n.d.), available online at http://www.education.com/reference/article/autonomy-support/.</small></p>	

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Specifically, teachers can take the following actions to promote student autonomy in the classroom:

1. Foster relevance.

Teachers should make an overt effort to incorporate their students' interests, values, and goals into the learning process by learning about student concerns through informal and classroom dialogue (Learning Point Associates, 2005). Examples include communicating with the students regarding their feedback about classroom tasks and trying to help students understand how a task contributes to their personal objectives (Assor et al., 2002). Research has indicated that students are more likely to be cognitively engaged and use higher-order thinking skills when they find the subject matter interesting (Young, 2005).

2. Make learning authentic.

Instructional practice should build upon students' foundational knowledge (i.e., background, ideas, skills, and attitudes), challenge students, and also connect content to value beyond the classroom (Donovan & Bransford, 2005; Newmann, Marks, & Gamoran, 1995). Teachers should give assignments that have public or personal value to students (such as oral history projects or writing editorials for the local newspaper) and also are academically rigorous (Newmann et al., 1995).

3. Provide choice.

Teacher behavior should enable students to choose classroom activities and tasks that are consistent with their interests and goals. Providing students with the opportunity to understand how schoolwork can contribute to their personal goals increases their ability to work more autonomously (Assor et al., 2002). In addition, asking students for input on classroom activities allows teachers to become more aware of students' psychological needs and to incorporate those needs into the lesson (Reeve, 2010).

4. Promote independent thinking and permit student criticism.

Encouraging students to engage in independent thinking and criticizing lessons that they do not find interesting can provide teachers with opportunities to foster more in-depth conversations about classroom activities. These discussions may allow the teacher to make adjustments to lessons to increase student interest or engage in a dialogue with students about the importance of the task to make them value the assignment (Young, 2005). The overall goal of this strategy would be to increase the opportunities for student voice in the classroom and promote mutual communication between teachers and students regarding lesson content.

5. Be aware of how teacher behaviors can *inhibit* student voice, choice, leadership, and autonomy. Work to eliminate the following behaviors:

- **Micromanaging student work and behavior.** Teachers should avoid unnecessary intrusions related to how students approach their work. Such intrusions inhibit student expression. Students should have the opportunity to discover their natural working patterns in the context of classroom activities (Young, 2005).
- **Assigning tasks that lack relevance and interest to adolescents.** Students are less likely to be responsive to tasks that they do not find interesting or important. Thus, teachers should make an effort to communicate the importance of tasks that they assign and incorporate elements that are relevant to adolescent lives (Reeve, 2009; Young, 2005).
- **Forbidding student criticism and stifling independent thinking.** Teacher behavior that undermines student voice has the potential to inhibit students' ability to conduct self-regulated learning and self-expression. Inhibiting students' ability to express their opinions can be frustrating and interferes with their ability to make connections between classroom activities and their personal interests and goals.

Autonomy-Inducing and Autonomy-Suppressing Teacher Behaviors

Autonomy-Inducing Teacher Behaviors:

- Listening
- Integrating independent work sessions
- Facilitating peer-to-peer conversations
- Praising and encouraging evidence of improvement or mastery
- Scaffolding
- Creating a responsive environment that supports student questions and comments
- Incorporating student perspective and experiences

Autonomy-Suppressing Teacher Behaviors:

- Dominating learning materials
- Solving problems or answering questions before students have had a chance to work on them independently
- Directive rather than reciprocal feedback
- Interrupting student comments

Seacrest High School

Seacrest High teachers and administrators decided that a critical step in understanding why students were not successful was to ask the failing students themselves. Students who had received failing grades in three or more subjects were invited to participate in a focus group, led by a senior teacher of the school. The students were encouraged to speak openly and honestly about how teachers could make schools a better place to learn. In addition to working with students, the students' teachers were asked to complete a survey about why they believed the students were failing. Following the initial focus group, Seacrest High continued to supply opportunities for students to have a voice by holding eight more focus groups during the year of the project.

OUTCOMES

The major outcome of the Seacrest High School project was the clarity it provided for teachers with regard to what was affecting student success. Students taking part in the focus groups spoke about different learning styles, the need for additional counseling and tutoring, and having a sense of mutual respect between teachers and students. Teachers talked about the students' lack of motivation (30 percent) and attendance (16.5 percent).

Students of all backgrounds and academic abilities were able to point to aspects of school structure and teaching that they believed contributed to their, or their classmates', failure, while teachers indicated that the students were to blame for their own failure. Looking at the problem from different perspectives shifted the focus from teachers and students blaming each other to teachers and students working together to improve teaching and learning. At the conclusion of the project, students reported an increased sense of engagement with their school and teachers were provided with specific issues to target in the upcoming year.

From "Student Voice: A Historical Perspective and New Directions." Available online at http://ed-web3.educ.msu.edu/outreach/k12out/pdf/2010/Student_Voice_report.pdf

Recommendation 5: Systemic Academic Interventions

Develop and implement a schoolwide system to identify at-risk students using assessment data, provide multitiered academic interventions, and employ ongoing progress monitoring to address student needs.

LINK TO RESEARCH

Academic intervention services is defined by New York State Education Department (2008) as “additional instruction which supplements the instruction provided in the general curriculum” for “students who are at risk of not achieving the state learning standards in English language arts, mathematics, social studies and/or science, or who are at risk of not gaining the knowledge and skills needed to meet or exceed designated performance levels on state assessments.” Across the state of New York, school leaders are searching for ways to enhance the current AIS programs in their schools to be able to identify students earlier, provide services to all students who require them, and measure student outcomes (Killeen & Sipple, 2004). Many schools begin to implement a response to intervention (RTI) after determining that their current structures and processes were not meeting their students’ academic needs.

The incorporation of an RTI model into established interventions has been found to improve student academic progress; specifically, it has been found to increase the number of children who demonstrate proficiency on state accountability tests (Heartland Area Education Agency 11, 2004).

According to the National Center on Response to Intervention (Prewitt & Mellard, 2010), RTI is a model of academic supports that “integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavioral problems.” These goals are accomplished through the identification of students at risk for poor learning outcomes, provision of evidence-based interventions, regular monitoring of student progress, and regularly adjusting the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student’s responsiveness.

In a national study conducted by the National Center on Response to Intervention (Prewitt & Mellard, 2010), middle schools across 28 states, including New York, participated in a study to identify current RTI practices, identify key factors of successful implementation, and identify RTI practices linked to positive student learning outcomes. Schools involved in the study chose RTI to (1) close the student achievement gaps, (2) meet AYP every year with every subgroup, or (3) address undesirable and disruptive student behaviors.

According to Prewitt and Mellard (2010), models of a responsive academic intervention program include a data-driven decision-making model that includes:

- The use of a schoolwide (universal) screening assessment to identify students at-risk for poor learning outcomes;
- Multitiered intervention programs and strategies that increase in levels of intensity;
- Frequent and ongoing progress monitoring to determine student progress and determine program efficacy;

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Doing What Works: Providing Research-Based Education Practices Online (Website)

<http://dww.ed.gov/>

National Center on Response to Intervention: *What Is RTI?* (Web page)

<http://www.rti4success.org/whatisrti/>

National Research Center on Learning Disabilities: Tiered Service-Delivery Model (Web page)

http://www.nrclid.org/rti_practices/tiers.html

New York State Response To Intervention Technical Assistance Center (Website)

<http://www.nysrti.org>

- A team structure to organize and analyze student performance using progress monitoring data.

Although research indicates minimum components for successful implementation of responsive intervention programs, no specific model of RTI, intervention program or strategy, or progress monitoring tool is endorsed by Learning Point Associates. Instead, schools are encouraged to consider these research-based recommendations to make specific decisions regarding the structure and design of intervention programs that will best meet the needs of their situation.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Schools face a number of challenges when selecting a strategy for implementing academic interventions. Local regulations, contracts, and resources such as time, funding, and personnel all play a major role. Schools must make the determination, based on individualized circumstances, of what will ultimately work best. The most effective programs are those that are launched with clear leadership, built from careful planning, and supported with schoolwide awareness and professional development prior to full implementation.

1. Identify a team of school staff members who will lead the “rollout” of the intervention.

This leadership team may vary according to the school’s demographics. Some schools choose to include teachers who work with subpopulations (e.g., English language learners and students with disabilities), and other schools include teachers who teach in the content areas in which RTI is being implemented (e.g., ELA teachers from each grade, literacy coach, and reading specialist). Network resources and coaches also should be considered.

2. Conduct careful planning to ensure the success of the rollout.

School leadership defines the intervention infrastructure, scheduling, resources, funding, staffing, screening and progress monitoring assessments, intervention programs, tools, and strategies. This process includes developing explicit plans, processes, and procedures prior to implementation. Following is a checklist of topics to cover:

Data-Based Decision Making

- Establish a team structure, routines, and procedures for making decisions.
- Set explicit decision rules to decide when students will move in, out, or within interventions.
- Develop record-keeping systems that communicate student progress to stakeholders (e.g., student, parent, teachers, and AIS coordinator).

Assessments and Screenings

- Establish a yearly, schoolwide schedule for assessments and screening procedures (e.g., three times each year).
- Identify screening instrument(s) that will be used to identify students for interventions. Screening instruments should be valid and reliable and aligned with grade-level curriculum based on learning standards (e.g., state assessments, Acuity

predictive assessments, or instructionally targeted assessments) or subject-specific and researched-based assessments (e.g., Woodcock-Johnson III Diagnostic Reading Battery, Qualitative Reading Inventory, and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills).

- Establish participation criteria, select benchmarks or cutpoints at which risk is determined, and identify students who fail to meet benchmarks or fall below specified cutpoints.
- Create multitiered “entry points,” and establish multiple benchmarks to “slice the pie,” allowing students to receive targeted interventions that vary in levels of intensity (e.g., students 0 percent to 40 percent and 41 percent to 65 percent, or Level 1 and Level 2 on state assessments).

Tiered Intervention Programs

- Select evidence-based intervention programs and/or strategies to use with students who fall in various ranges based on the screening tool used.
- Determine the method for delivery of service (e.g., pull-out small-group instruction, afterschool instruction, and Saturday program) and duration and frequency of service.
- Ensure that services and programs are “tiered” and increase in levels of intensity, which match the increasing needs of students.

Progress Monitoring

- Determine assessments to be used. Assessments can be both formal (e.g., AIMSweb, Acuity predictive assessments, or instructionally targeted assessments) and informal (e.g., checklist and running records).
- Establish a benchmark for performance (e.g., >40 percent and >65 percent). These benchmarks determine when students will move within, through, and out of tiers of interventions.
- Establish a timeline for progress monitoring. Monitoring may occur as frequently as every two weeks.

3. Create an awareness of the intervention, and provide adequate professional development to ensure that everyone is on board.

Many schools follow a “train the trainers” model in which selected staff members attend training and turnkey that training to other staff. Depending on which teachers and staff will be providing interventions, training also may be schoolwide. A critical component of the RTI implementation process is to ensure that stakeholders are clear about what is being implemented and why it is being implemented. School leaders must establish and communicate the goals and expected outcomes of adopting an RTI model while providing ongoing training and sufficient time for staff to fully understand the components and structures of a new intervention model. Successful implementation relies heavily on the ability of teachers and school leaders to implement RTI with fidelity.

Opportunities for AIS-related professional development should be embedded into the school’s annual professional development plan. Careful planning is essential when rolling out professional learning opportunities in the area of AIS.

4. Put the intervention plan into action.

Recommendations for implementation include “start small.” (See “Starting Small.”) This approach might include starting in one grade, one content area, or one classroom; or it could begin by focusing on one or two components of RTI. This decision should be what makes the most sense for the school based on existing resources, tools, and structures. At this phase, adjustments and adaptations are an ongoing part of the process.

Starting Small

Two approaches for “starting small” with an academic intervention program are to start with one essential component or to start with one small group.

Starting With One Essential Component: Build a model with a focus on one component at a time (e.g., screening, then data-based decision making, then progress monitoring, then intervention levels). Create a timeline for the implementation of each component, and align training for school staff with each phase of implementation.

Example: *A middle school in the Midwest began the implementation of its RTI program by first focusing on reading programs and strategies for students identified as being at risk. A second tier of interventions and progress monitoring was rolled out later in the year.*

Starting With One Small Group: Implement the intervention program with a small pilot group. With this approach, it is best to investigate which components worked well and which need to be refined before scaling up to other classes, grades, or content areas.

Example: *A Pennsylvania school implemented RTI in a small number of classrooms during the first year to determine what worked and what did not work. The school’s interventions team focused on creating a balance between moving too slowly (which they felt would minimize the impact of RTI and decrease staff buy-in) and moving too quickly (which might overwhelm teachers and students).*

Adapted from *Response to Intervention Practices in Middle Schools*, a 2011 presentation by Daryl F. Mellard and Sarah L. Prewett, available online at http://www.rti4success.org/ppt/WBnr_April2011.ppt. This document was produced by the National Center on Response to Intervention and is in the public domain.

School A's Intervention Plan

Example Drawn from *Meeting the Needs of Significantly Struggling Learners in High School: A Look at Approaches to Tiered Intervention.*

In California, schools are not permitted to use IQ-Achievement testing as a criterion for determining eligibility for special education services. The Long Beach Unified School District in California employs regular assessments and tiered interventions as part of both the prereferral process and as best practice for serving the needs of all students. The district has responded to their high school students' literacy needs using a multitiered approach that incorporates a battery of eighth-grade assessments that are used to determine the needs of incoming ninth graders. In the spring, all eighth-grade students participate in a screening series, which is an examination of multiple measures of student achievement that includes the CA standards test, course grades and an assessment that is part of the *Language!* curriculum the district has adopted.

All incoming ninth-grade students receive core literacy instruction. Based on a review of assessment data, students entering high school half a year to two years behind receive the core literacy instructional program as well as an additional literacy workshop course that provides them with support materials that scaffold the core literacy program. Entering high school students who are more than two years below grade level are enrolled in a double block of language arts that consists of an intensive English language arts program or an after-school reading program. For their language arts curriculum, Long Beach has adopted the *Language!* and Lindamood-Bell curricula for intensive instructional programs in literacy. Lindamood-Bell focuses on developing phonemic skills for students having serious difficulties with text. Typically, students spend a semester in that intensive intervention and then transition into *Language!* Student progress is monitored throughout the school year using "cluster tests" taken primarily from the Lindamood-Bell and *Language!* curricula.

In addition to the systematic supports for students, the Long Beach model includes monthly support meetings for teachers, summer institutes, and coaches that provide professional learning opportunities for teachers. While the Long Beach approach to instruction and tiered intervention shares its key characteristics with RTI, they do not call this practice RTI, but simply call it "best practice for all students." They ask, "What do the data say about how students are performing and what instructional programs are necessary to support student growth?" Another important aspect of the Long Beach system, according to Office of Special Education Assistant Superintendent Judy Elliott, is that they do not base their decisions on a single data point. Multiple sources of data are examined to determine student needs. Long Beach views its practice as a systems approach to good instruction for all students rather than just a process to diagnose students with learning disabilities. They had such success with the practice at the high school level that they have recently applied it to their middle schools. Roughly 7 percent of students in Long Beach have IEPs as opposed to an average of 12-14 percent nationally (Elliott, 2006).

From Duffy, H. (2007). *Meeting the needs of significantly struggling learners in high school: A look at approaches to tiered intervention.* Washington, DC: National High School Center. Available online from http://www.betterhighschools.org/docs/NHSC_RTIBrief_08-02-07.pdf

Recommendation 6: Professional Development

Develop and implement a professional development plan that is aligned to school goals and focused on subject-area content.

LINK TO RESEARCH

Research has found that professional development for teachers is most effective and boosts student achievement when it is embedded in their daily work and sustained, as opposed to a one-time workshop model (National Staff Development Council, 2001; Steiner, 2004; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). Effective professional development also provides teachers with opportunities for collaboration, coaching, and peer observation, which allows them to be actively involved in their own development and more frequently practice learned skills (The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2006; Joyce & Showers, 2002). In addition, professional development is most effective when it is directly connected to teacher practice and focuses on content (National Staff Development Council, 2001; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). Content areas should align with school improvement needs and goals to target improvement to those areas.

By refining the process by which professional development is offered; ensuring that it is embedded, sustained, and allows for active teacher participation; and by focusing the development on teacher practice and content, schools can improve teacher practice and student achievement (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007).

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Creating a professional development plan that addresses both student learning and teacher learning can be a complex task. Professional learning activities should be designed with student achievement as both the impetus and outcome. School improvement goals should be directly related to a review of student achievement data. Subsequently, teacher learning activities should be directly related to the goal of improving student outcomes. At minimum, successful schoolwide professional development plans include the following sequential steps:

1. Analyze student data and/or conduct a needs assessment.

Review student learning data by using an item analysis of state test results, interim assessment results, school quality review, or ESCA report. Identify areas of low proficiency, slow learning progress, drops in proficiency between grades, and subgroup and gender differences.

2. Select goals for student learning.

Identify specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-sensitive (SMART) learning goals for students.

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality: *High-Quality Professional Development for All Teachers* (Publication)

<http://www.tqsource.org/publications/HighQualityProfessionalDevelopment.pdf>

Public Impact – Professional Development for Educators (Website)

<http://www.publicimpact.com/teachers-leaders/professional-development-for-educators>

3. Select professional development goals for teacher learning.

Identify specific and measurable teacher learning goals, directly related to student learning goals.

4. Select professional development activities to meet goals.

Determine what activities will best meet teachers learning needs (e.g., workshops, coaching, collaborative inquiry, and intervisitation). Consider available resources (time, money, materials) and a range of professional development activities and match with the needs of adult learners.

5. Implement the professional development activities.

Ensure that teachers have time and resources (e.g., research, articles, video clips, coaches, and opportunities to observe master teachers) for professional development. Provide teachers with clear expectations for integration into their pedagogical practice, structures and protocols for activities, and opportunities for reflection.

6. Evaluate the impact of professional development.

Develop an evaluation plan. Identify what to measure, how to measure it, and when to measure it. Create a frequent and ongoing schedule of evaluation.

7. Modify the professional development plan.

Determine the impact of the professional development activity. If the activity achieves or fails to achieve its desired results, modify the plan accordingly.

For practical applications, refer to the “Sample Professional Development Plan” on the following page.

Sample Professional Development Plan

Following is a sample professional development plan adapted from *Apply What You Know: Designing Effective Professional Development* (Steiner, 2009). It indicates the specific actions taken by the district, which show alignment to school goals and a focus on subject-area content.

Analysis of Data. Data analysis revealed a “significant drop in math proficiency between 4th and 5th grade.” Further review of test item analysis indicated that students did not demonstrate proficiency in fractions.

Student Learning Goals. The district determined the following goal for students: “At the end of the third quarter of fifth grade, 75% of all students will pass an end-of-unit test on fractions.”

Professional Development Goals for Teachers. The district determined the following goal for teachers: “At the end of the spring semester, all fifth grade teachers will demonstrate an improved ability to teach fractions as measured by their implementation of new instructional strategies and improved student learning.”

Professional Development Activities. The district determined the following professional development activities to meet its goals: “In the fall, before teachers begin the fractions unit, 5th grade math teachers at each school will meet twice a month to discuss and share new curriculum materials related to fractions and design joint interim assessments to measure student progress. Teachers will have ongoing assistance of a math instructional coach. In the summer, [the district will] review schedules to make sure fifth grade teachers have common planning time to meet. [The district will] provide lead teachers and/or principals with curriculum materials and the assistance of an instructional coach to guide implementation.”

Evaluating Impact: Measures of evaluation included “(1) percentage of students meeting objectives” as measured by “student test scores on end of unit assessment” and “(2) staff knowledge” and pedagogy, measured by regular and ongoing observations conducted by the school’s instructional leaders.

DOING WHAT WORKS: Examples From Real Schools

Designing a Long-Term Professional Development Plan

When designing and implementing long-term professional development plans, professional learning activities and goals should be rolled out throughout the school year. Below is a sample professional development plan for Paradise Valley Middle School. Based on a needs assessment conducted by the school, the percentage of black students who met or exceeded proficiency in math was as much as 20 percent below white students. In reading, that percentage grew to as much as 30 percent. This information was excerpted from *A Tool Kit for Quality Professional Development in Arkansas* (Ozarks Unlimited Resources Educational Services Cooperative, 2009).

Goal 1: Close the achievement gap between black and white students in reading and mathematics.

Objectives: 6th-, 7th- and 8th-grade students' achievement gap in reading and mathematics will be reduced by 5% as measured by district formative assessments.

Teacher Objective: All teachers will be able to plan and implement research-based instruction in their content area as measured by principal and school improvement team classroom walk-throughs conducted in the spring.

Target 1: All teachers will plan research-based instruction in their content area

Strategies/actions	Person Responsible	Measurement of Accomplishment	Resources Needed	Due Date
Daily interdisciplinary team meetings devote at least two days a week to jointly planning research-based instruction lesson plans or units	Team leader creates agendas to include significant time for this work.	Each team generates and submits at least four lessons or one unit each grading period.	Leveled reading materials, project-based materials, access to computer lab	Dec & June
Content-area teachers meet twice a week to study TIMSS, analyze test data to determine which mathematics objectives had not been met by a majority of students.	Team leader creates agendas and requests materials from district staff development or curriculum department	Presentation about TIMSS and research-based instruction to other teachers during PD time. Analysis of student learning results and lists of difficult objectives.	Disaggregated mathematics scores by objective TIMSS book and study TIMSS videotapes	Jan: Analysis of tests Apr: for presentation

Objective 2: All teachers will implement research-based lessons in their classrooms.

Strategies/Actions	Person Responsible	Measurement of Accomplishment	Resources Needed	Due Date
Each team sets an implementation timeline	Team Individual Teacher	Team members submit written debriefing of lessons Classroom walk-through data and analysis	Debriefing protocols	

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