REPORT TO THE HOUSE AND SENATE COMMITTEES ON EDUCATION OF THE LOUISIANA LEGISLATURE

Response to Senate Resolution 130

of the 2015 Regular Session

FROM THE STATE BOARD OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Prepared by the Louisiana Department of Education

OVERVIEW OF THE RESOLUTION

Senate Resolution 130 of the 2015 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature requested the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and the state Department of Education to study the effectiveness of the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in Louisiana public schools and to submit a written report of their findings and conclusions to the House and Senate Committees on Education not later than sixty days prior to the 2016 Regular Session of the Legislature.

BACKGROUND

Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS)

Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS) is a proactive, team-based framework for creating and sustaining safe and effective schools. Emphasis is placed on prevention of problem behavior, development of pro-social skills, and the use of data-based problem solving for addressing existing behavior concerns. School-wide PBIS increases the capacity of schools to educate all students utilizing research-based, school-wide, classroom, and individualized interventions.

PBIS Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) combines universal, secondary, and tertiary intervention in a systematic manner so that school climate is positive, prevention is in place for all students, and those children who are at risk receive specialized interventions (Sugai, et al, 2005).

Research supports that changing the climate, behavior, and social emotional learning can result in up to a 10-percentage point gain in academic test scores (Goldman, 2013; Edutopia, 2015). In fact, the PBIS framework is a process that infuses both the academic and behavioral sides, recognizing the need to work on both in order to produce optimal results. PBIS is a three-tiered system of prevention and intervention. At the universal (Tier I) level, all students are exposed to school wide practices that are designed to prevent problem behaviors from occurring. And depending on the age level, universal prevention is effective for 75 to 85 percent of all school children. Secondary (Tier II) interventions are designed to support students who require additional behavioral or social/emotional needs at school. Students who exhibit both internalizing and externalizing characteristics such as depression, anxiety, difficulty organizing tasks, etc., which are at a lower level of need regarding interventions, usually benefit from additional supports at the secondary tier. Based on research conducted over 25 years, tier II is effective for 10 to 15 percent of school students.

Additional research, especially with the trauma children face today, suggests that 20 to 30 percent of all students need additional support at tiers II and III. Approximately 12 to 18 percent of all students respond positively to tiered interventions (March and Horner, 2002; Sugai, et al, 2000). Students who need additional intensive supports, which may be between 1 to 5 percent of the school population, are placed in Tier III intervention. Many of these students have numerous referrals and may skew school data when duplicated counts are used to measure infractions. Often they exhibit many symptoms that may be a part of a larger mental health issue. At this level, wrap around or coordinated system of care services are usually necessary and often include intensive school intervention, family support plans, Positive Behavior Support Plans (PBISP), Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA), medical management, and coordination with outside service providers. In short, these services are typically implemented across multiple life domains (Eber, Sugai, Smith, and Scott, 2002).

According to Horner (2015), PBIS is rapidly becoming the fabric of the educational culture. PBIS is actively being implemented in over 21,000 schools in the United Stated (2014-2015) which impacts over 10 million children. Currently, 13 states have over 40 percent of their schools implementing PBIS with fidelity. Once a state has a large-scale implementation, it is vital to support the instruction through training and supporting PBIS coaches (Horner, 2015). The multi-tiered system of support creates a more coherent school culture and is designed to change adult behavior and change the way students work with each other.

In order to be effective, PBIS must be implemented with fidelity. When implemented well, PBIS is associated with positive effects on outcomes such as lower rates of office discipline referrals (ODRs) and suspensions/expulsions; higher attendance rates; fewer externalizing/disruptive behaviors; higher academic performance; more positive school climate; staff collegiality and leadership; and organizational health. However, implementation of PBIS is complex and requires significant capacity to implement with fidelity – capacity that many schools and districts lack.

When implemented well, PBIS can result in the following positive outcomes:

- lower levels of disproportionality (Horner, 2015);
- improved attendance rates (Wells, Mallory, Cormier, 2006);
- decreased student tardiness to class (Tyre, Feuerborn, Pierce, 2011);
- improved quality curriculum instruction (Horner, 2015; Scott Barret, 2004);
- reduced antisocial behavior on school campuses (McCordy, Mannella, Eldridge, 2003);
- reduced out-of-school suspensions (Muscott, Mann, & LeBrun, 2008);
- reduced problematic and dangerous behaviors during recess and other unstructured settings (Franzen & Karps, 2008);
- enhanced self-efficiency for educators as instructors (Ross & Horner, 2007);

- substantial gains in academic skills (NCLB, 2002) accountability measures (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Eber et al., 2010; Runge, Staszkiewicz, McFall & Hunter, 2012; and Horner, 2015).

Some common elements at multiple levels that lead to effective implementation include:

- Leadership: funding and resources, visibility, political support, and policy; and
- District/School Implementation: readiness, training, coaching, implementation fidelity, continuous evaluation, and sustainability planning.

Many schools implement PBIS without monitoring its effectiveness on a frequent and consistent basis. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation can save time and resources from implementing ineffective practices/programs; reduce or eliminate ineffective and inefficient aspects of systems; and improve effectiveness and efficiency of existing practices/processes.

Measuring Program Effectiveness

Determining PBIS effectiveness, that is, the extent to which the program accomplished its intended outcomes, would involve attempting to understand the logic of causes and effects as it is applied to PBIS. It would involve constructing ways to provide defensible information as to whether and how the program accomplished its intended outcomes. Most importantly, measuring effectiveness involves the use of randomized experiments (randomized controlled trials or RCTs) in which some people were randomly assigned to a group that received a PBIS interventions and others having been randomly assigned to a control group that did not receive the program. Comparisons of the two groups are usually intended to estimate the incremental effects of programs.

This report will look at fidelity of implementation and discipline outcome data over time as the measurement of PBIS effectiveness in Louisiana schools.

The intent of implementing PBIS in Louisiana is to create a system of change that would impact discipline in all Louisiana schools. The evaluation of PBIS, since its inception, has not involved the use of randomized and control groups. The program contractors and evaluators did not have the resources, time, or control over program design or implementation situations to conduct experiments. There was no real way to create control groups and no baseline (preprogram) data to construct before–after comparisons.

The focus of PBIS evaluation in Louisiana has been on evaluating the fidelity of implementation. Fidelity, also referred to as adherence, integrity, and quality of implementation, is the extent to which the delivery of an intervention adheres to the protocol or program model as intended by the developers of the intervention.

FINDINGS

Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports in Louisiana

Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) was introduced in Louisiana in 1993 to help individual students with severe behavior issues. PBIS creates training and technical assistance for school districts in the development and implementation of positive behavioral supports at the school, classroom, targeted group, and individual student levels. In particular, PBIS seeks to create an environment where appropriate behavior happens naturally so that optimal learning can occur. Interventions are the focus for creating and sustaining primary (or universal) level preventions, secondary level preventions and interventions, and tertiary level interventions that improve school and community life for all children and youth by making problem behavior less effective, efficient, and relevant, and appropriate behavior more functional and rewarding (OSEP Technical Assistance Center for Positive Behavior Implementations and Supports, 2006a).

In 2001, school-wide PBIS awareness workshops were conducted throughout the state. Training for implementation of school-wide PBIS began in 2002.

In 2003-2004, the Juvenile Justice Reform Act (Act 1225) was enacted as a response to the exceptionally high numbers of suspensions and expulsions in schools across the state, the low attendance rates, the high dropout rate, and overall issues with discrepancy and disproportionality. Compared to other states, prior to this initiative, Louisiana was still employing a traditional punitive, reactive discipline model to stop undesirable behavior rather than focusing on a systems perspective to identify needs. The goals of PBIS were to teach replacement skills, alter the school environment, utilize teaching and instruction, employ reinforcement procedures, use alternatives to suspension, and make decisions based on data.

Types of Training

In order to ensure the effective implementation of PBIS in Louisiana, the LDOE entered into a contract with the Louisiana State University (LSU) Positive Behavior Support Center in 2007 to provide a system of PBIS support for school staff including training, technical assistance and coaching. LSU established eight regional coalitions in Louisiana that would allow for more training and technical assistance to occur and to develop a support structure for the sustainability of PBIS. Each regional coalition covered the same geographic area as an Educational Service Region.

LSU developed and trained public schools and districts across the state on Positive Behavior Support. In May 31, 2009, 1,022 schools received training in universal level PBIS

implementation. 939 of universal trained schools were implementing universal level PBIS. 133 received secondary training and eight schools received training in tertiary level PBIS implementation. LSU also participated in routine conference calls with the team of PBIS facilitators and LDOE staff to plan on-going training activities and advised ways to integrate PBIS systems with other LDOE initiatives. In addition, LSU offered other types of training to schools, districts, and regions. These included team training, facilitator training, technical assistance training, School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET) training, and SET reliability training.

School PBIS Leadership Teams

In order to be efficient, the PBIS framework used a leadership team approach in the initial implementation stages. School leadership teams typically were comprised of 3-5 staff representing broad operational areas where PBIS was used across school districts. Teams from each school received PBIS training. Teams then held a series of orientation meetings with all school staff, supported by external PBIS coaches, to introduce PBIS concepts. Orientations encouraged staff participation in school-wide dialogues about common behavioral expectations in specific settings at each school. School leadership teams met regularly to hone such expectations and garner input from campus personnel to design an Expectations Matrix for each school that indicated positive behavioral skills needed in different school locations, beginning in the school.

As expectations for each setting were specified, leadership teams helped design lesson plans to proactively teach the desired behavioral skills, and scheduled regular times to deliver them. In addition, teams created rules posters and designed other reminders to reinforce expectations for each setting. General acknowledgment systems to reinforce desired outcomes were also essential. However, the consultant team also advised that schools should develop reinforcement systems that could be contained and delivered within the school during the day. Refinement of reinforcement systems internal to schools continues to evolve.

Validated Measurement of Systemic Positive Behavioral Support Interventions

LSU and the LDOE PBIS staff considered a number of instruments (with some variations) that could be used in public schools to monitor stages and fidelity of PBIS implementation. These included the Benchmarks of Quality (BOQ) and the School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET). Of these instruments, the SET proved most amenable to training and use within schools. SET results are used to assess features of PBIS in place, determine annual goals, evaluate on-going efforts, design and revise procedures as needed, and compare year to year efforts toward effective implementation.

In order to support schools with implementing PBIS with fidelity (effectiveness measure) and to expand the number that were implementing with high levels of fidelity, LSU's Positive Behavior Support Center, in collaboration with DOE, defined three school levels of PBIS implementation.

1. PBIS Demonstration School: one that scored 80 percent or better on the overall SET score as well as the Expectations Taught subtest of the SET.

2. PBIS Implementing School: one that submitted a Benchmark of Quality (BOQ) or School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET) to the PBIS Center in the previous academic year. Thus all demonstration sites were by definition PBIS implementing schools.

3. PBIS Non-implementing School provided neither a BOQ nor SET in the previous academic year. A PBIS non-implementing school may be implementing some or even all PBIS components, but simply did not submit a BOQ or SET and therefore could not be considered a PBIS implementing school. Figure 1 below shows the locations of PBIS implementing and non-implementing schools.

Data Collection and Analysis

LSU conducted an evaluation of all schools during the 2008-2009 school year to determine whether PBIS was being implemented statewide and whether PBIS was being implemented with fidelity. In 2008-2009 the state of Louisiana had approximately 1,429 public schools.

Table 1: PBIS breakdown at state and regional levels (2008-2009)

	Total Number of Schools	Number of PBIS Schools	Number of Non-PBIS Schools	Number of Demonstration Sites	Overall Set Average	Overall BOQ Average
State	1,429	939 (66%)	490 (34%)	326 (23%)	82	78
Region 1	208	127 (61%)	81 (39%)	61 (29%)	81	75
Region 2	300	167 (56%)	133 (44%)	31 (10%)	88	80
Region 3	156	107 (69%)	49 (31%)	25 (16%)	87	76
Region 4	186	139 (75%)	47 (25%)	91 (49%)	88	86
Region 5	101	97 (96%)	4 (4%)	22 (22%)	85	80
Region 6	142	105 (74%)	37 (26%)	19 (13%)	77	73
Region 7	167	124 (74%)	43 (26%)	62 (37%)	87	77
Region 8	169	73 (43%)	96 (57%)	15 (9%)	81	73

Implementation:

- 939 or 66 percent of public schools were PBIS implementing schools.
- 326 or 23 percent of the implementing schools of were PBIS demonstration site schools.
- 490 or 34 percent of public schools were classified as PBIS non-implementing schools.

Training:

- 1,022 or 72 percent of the 1,429 schools received universal level PBIS training.
- 133 or 9 percent received secondary level PBIS training
- 8 or 1 percent received tertiary level PBIS training.

The 2008-2009 data (see Table 2) showed that PBIS implementing and demonstration site schools performed better on all variables than non-implementing schools. The only exception occurred with in-school suspensions, where non-implementing schools had the lowest rates of all. However, PBIS non-implementing schools had higher out of school suspension and dropout rates, and lower ELA and Math passage rates when compared to demonstration sites and PBIS implementing schools. Demonstration sites also had higher attendance, ELA and Math passage rates and lower dropout and suspension rates when compared to the state. It is possible that implementing schools were more reluctant to suspend out of school, thus their ISS rates are higher, while the opposite occurs in non-implementing schools. Overall, schools that were implementing universal PBIS at a high level (demonstration status) achieve better academic and behavioral outcomes when compared to PBIS implementing, non-implementing and state outcomes.

Table 2: Comparison of Schools by PBIS Type on Behavior Characteristics (2008-2009)

	Attendance	ISS	OSS	Dropout 07-08	ELA (Passage)	Math (Passage)
State Average	93.6	11.5	11.3	5.8	64.8	64.4
Demonstration Sites	94.4	11.1	9.9	4.7	69.5	67.4
PBIS Implementing	93.5	12.5	11.7	5.5	68.6	65.4
Non Implementing	93.3	9.8	12.1	6.9	67.3	65.3

Interventions:

Despite the paucity of schools receiving secondary level and tertiary level training, many districts reported implementing a variety of interventions at both levels. Some secondary level examples included check-in/check-out procedures and behavior contracts. Tertiary level examples were individual counseling and behavior contracts.

Data Collection:

A majority of surveyed school districts (58.4 percent) reported using a data collection system to determine secondary level interventions for students. However, most surveyed districts (60.6 percent) did not use a data collection system to monitor student progress with secondary level interventions. No secondary data was provided for analysis by the schools, thus the PBIS program could only be evaluated at the universal level.

Measuring PBIS Effectiveness in 2015

Funding of PBIS through a contract with LSU ended in 2010. Since that time, the LDOE PBIS Supervisor has been responsible for managing the PBIS program and supporting participating school districts. Eight regional consortium facilitators have been responsible for monitoring

statewide PBIS programs and providing training, coaching, and providing technical assistance for new PBIS school staff.

School teams have continued to look at office discipline referral data, behavior incident data, and academic outcomes to make decisions about the types of interventions needed to increase student success. Data is used to help school and district teams formulate prioritized goals for the schools. Schools are also continuing the practice of setting expectations and providing incentives to encourage positive student behaviors.

Limited funds at the state and district levels have reduced the ability to conduct BOQs and SET assessments. Without BOQ data, it is very difficult to measure program effectiveness. However, regular monitoring and evaluation do help to prevent ineffective practices from wasting time and resources, improve the efficiency and effectiveness of current procedures, eliminate elements of the system that are ineffective or inefficient, and make modifications before problem behavior patterns become too durable and unmodifiable.

Where Are We Now?

Below is a summary of discipline data in Louisiana public schools from the 2012-2013, 2013-2014, and 2014-2015 school years.

Statewide

- Since 2012-2013, there has been an increase in total suspensions (from 18.5 percent to 19.5 percent) and total expulsions (from 0.7 percent to 1.8 percent) statewide.
- Examining the suspension types shows the increase was in the In-School Suspension category.
    - The 2014-2015 In-School Suspension rate is 11.2 percent, an increase of one percentage point since 2012-2013.
    - The 2014-2015 Out-of-School Suspension rate remained the same at 8.3 percent.
- Examining the expulsion types shows the increase was in the In-School expulsion category.
    - The 2014-2015 In-School Expulsion rate is 1.2 percent, an increase of 0.6 percentage points since 2012-2013.
    - The 2014-2015 Out-of-School Expulsion rate remained the same at 0.1 percent.

By District

- There are 39 districts have equal to or lower suspension rates than the state average; conversely 30 districts with higher suspension rates of 19.5% than the state average.
- There are 55 districts have equal to or lower expulsion rates than the state average; conversely 14 districts with higher expulsion rates of 1.8% than the state average.

- Forty-six districts decreased their overall suspension rates from 2012-2013 to 2014-2015 at a rate higher than the state change of 1.0 percentage points. Twenty-three districts increased their overall suspension rates from 2012-2013 to 2014-2015 at a rate higher than the state change.
- Fifty-eight districts decreased their overall expulsion rates from 2012-2013 to 2014-2015 at a rate higher than the state change of 1.1 percentage points. Eleven districts increased their overall suspension rates from 2012-2013 to 2014-2015 at a rate higher than the state change.
- Examining the suspension types shows that districts overall decreased their out-of-school suspension rates. From 2012-2013 to 2014-2015, 42 districts decreased their out-of-school suspension rates while 27 districts showed an increase. From 2012-2013 to 2014-2015, 30 districts decreased their in-school suspension rates and 38 showed an increase; one district showed no change.
- Examining the expulsion types shows that districts overall increased their in-school expulsion rates. From 2012-2013 to 2014-2015, 46 districts increased their in-school expulsion rates while 16 districts showed an increase; 7 districts remained the same. From 2012-2013 to 2014-2015, 12 districts decreased their out-of-school suspension rates and 20 showed an increase; 37 districts show no change.

CONCLUSIONS

Studying and evaluating the effectiveness of Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) in Louisiana public schools will require more in-depth research by independent consultants, both at the state level and local level. In order to conduct such studies, researchers and other evaluators will need greater access to data, including student-level data, and data on school and district policies and practices.

Systemic and anecdotal data suggests that PBIS has been effective in curtailing an upward trend of problematic behaviors in Louisiana schools, and in promoting a continuum of pro-social behavior that has improved academic performance of students.

Is school-wide PBIS effective? Yes, especially if there is collaboration and dedication from all key players. Educators, administrators, and other school staff should have a shared goal of applying the recommended procedures in order to improve the school environment. School-wide implementation also allows for focus on the most important elements targeted by PBIS: Practices, Outcomes, Systems, and Data.

School-wide PBIS systems have been demonstrated to be highly effective for creating a positive school-wide culture, improving learning outcomes, and decreasing problem behavior. Each school should consistently monitor and assess the effectiveness of its own PBIS system to know how to maximize results, and a data-centric PBIS software tool will be invaluable for doing that. Over time, as schools continue to monitor, staff will see which practices in particular are ineffective and are taking up unnecessary time and resources, and which are contributing to positive change. This way, a school-wide PBIS system will become both more efficient and effective over time.

Effective implementation of PBIS requires teamwork and consistent involvement from schools administrators and teachers. The primary benefit of PBIS is that it provides much-needed support for student learning, while equipping educators with evidence-based practices that lead to positive results.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ONGOING SUPPORT

The Board and the Department of Education appreciate the Legislature's desire to ensure that all students and schools have safe and supportive schools through the PBIS process by teaching replacement skills for unacceptable behavior, altering the school environment, utilizing teaching and instruction that is student-centered, employing reinforcement procedures to encourage positive behaviors, using proactive alternatives to suspension, and making decisions based on data.

To that end, we offer the following considerations for ongoing support of local school districts implementing PBIS and those desiring to establish or enhance such programs:

- Analyze available funding streams to identify additional funds that can be used to support PBIS.

- Develop a PBIS sustainability plan which includes orientation and on-going training for students and staff, a robust data management system for continued team-based decision making, quality and timely interventions, and continued partnerships with institutions of higher education for guidance and implementation fidelity.

- As funding is available, offer state-level training and technical assistance to all public schools in Louisiana in all three levels of school-wide Positive Behavior Support, and develop standards for measuring a school's or district's program effectiveness at each PBIS level.

- Highlight for all school staff the strong relationship between PBIS and improved academic outcomes and promote integrated implementation to maximize student achievement and social development.

These efforts will ensure that school will be a positive and safe climate for students and educators on every Louisiana school campus.

This report was prepared by the Louisiana Department of Education Healthy Communities staff with assistance and support from the LDOE Student Information System (SIS) staff, LSU and the 8 Regional PBIS Consortium Facilitators and their support staff.

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