




SPR 18th Annual Meeting

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ID# 84

Location: Mt. Columbia (Grand Hyatt/3rd Floor)

Time of Presentation: Jun 02 1:15 PM - 2:45 PM

Category/Theme: Effectiveness Trials

Using Findings from Randomized Trials To Inform the Integration of School-wide PBS with Social-Emotional Learning

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Consistent with the public health model of prevention, Positive Behavior Support (PBS; Horner & Sugai, 2002) is a 3-tiered school-based prevention model which aims to prevent student behavior problems. Two randomized controlled trials have been conducted of PBS in Maryland, the first of which tested the universal school-wide PBS model in 37 elementary schools. The second trial is examining the combination of the universal system of school-wide PBS with a secondary support system in 45 elementary schools. More recently, there has been an effort to integrate the universal school-wide PBS model with 2 evidence-based prevention programs: the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum and the PAX/Good Behavior Game (GBG). The rationale for integrating PATHS with PBS is to provide explicit training to students in SEL. The integration of PAX/GBG with PBS is intended to enhance the classroom environment and help students develop skills at inhibiting impulsive and disruptive behaviors. We also expect that integrating PATHS and PAX/GBG with PBS will help students generalize the skills developed through the classroom-based programs to non-classroom environments. Furthermore, the enhanced organizational structure provided through PBS is expected to optimize the fidelity of PATHS and PAX/GBG.

In this presentation, we will provide a brief overview of the findings from the 2 randomized trials of PBS, which include a total of 82 elementary schools. We will describe the social-emotional and behavioral characteristics of children who do not respond adequately to school-wide PBS, and summarize how those findings informed our decision to integrate PBS with PATHS and PAX/GBG. We also will describe the pilot study which is testing the integrated programs in 2 urban elementary schools.

Results of the randomized trial indicate reductions in office discipline referrals and suspensions, and improvements in the schools' organizational health. While the overall impacts of the universal school-wide PBS model are promising, students with greater social-emotional problems are less responsive to the universal system of PBS. Preliminary findings from the pilot testing the combined impact of the 3 programs will be presented.

The results of this study have significant implications for the over 9,000 schools across the US implementing school-wide PBS. These findings highlight the need for integrating PBS with SEL curricula, and suggest promising results of the integration of PBS with SEL and classroom-management programs. Lessons learned from the process of integrating programs will also be discussed.