THE ROLE OF A POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL SUPPORT SYSTEM

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INTRODUCTION

In a society where the number of children that exhibit disruptive behavior is growing, schools have started looking into different methods of dealing with behavior. Implementing a Positive Behavioral Support System (PBSS) program is a way to handle these behaviors in a way that can help provide social, emotional, and academic success for the majority of students within a school. "Feeling safe- socially, emotionally, intellectually, and physically- is a fundamental human need. Students who do not feel safe on all levels cannot perform to their highest potential" (Cobb, 2014, p. 14). Implementing a PBSS program schoolwide can be beneficial to the school because it helps the principal and teachers establish a safe and supportive learning environment, its influence can reach within the classroom, and it is a way to prevent the bad behavior from happening in the first place.

THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE

Being a school principal is a great responsibility, and one that should not be taken lightly. A principal is tasked with creating their schools' climate. "School 'climate' is related to the collective perceptions, mood, and morale of the staff and students (Miller Lieber, and Tissiere, 2015, p. 47). Cobb (2014) stated that the principals drive the direction of the school climate. They act as the role models for the attitudes and behaviors they wish to see from both teachers and students (p. 16) The principal will lead the way in creating a positive and trusting school environment.

MAINTAINING A SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

In addition to creating the school climate and being a role model, a principal also has to make sure their school is safe and supportive for students and teachers. "Over the years, concept of safe school or safety school has evolved which refers to the provision of an atmosphere that facilitates the emotional, physical and over all well-being of the students" (Sindhi, 2013). Implementation of a PBSS program can put the procedures and support in place where it is needed. " Positive Behavioral Support Systems create and sustain positive classroom climates and safe school settings. They facilitate the social, emotional, and behavioral development of all students" (Knoff, 2019a).

A PBSS program can help maximize a student's academic achievement by creating a positive environment for students and teachers.

SCHOOL WIDE CRISIS PLAN

Part of maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment means being prepared for a crisis. A principal can't wait for a crisis to occur and then make a plan. A crisis plan must be in place before hand to potentially prevent injury, save people, and minimize any other damages that may occur. " An effective school safety program focuses on prevention, intervention, and emergency response" (Cummings, 2014, para. 8). One of the most important aspects of prevention is practicing emergency responses regularly. Cummings (2014) states that schools should have regular emergency drills and be able to respond quickly to reports of unsafe conditions or emergency incidents. All staff members should feel confident in their ability to deal with multiple forms of emergencies (para. 10). Students should also be instructed in proper response to multiple forms of emergencies. By having regular drills parts of the plan that may not be working can be fine-tuned and practiced again.

PBSS CLASSROOM INFLUENCE

Managing a classroom can challenging. An effective classroom environment needs to be a positive one. Each student should experience "five positive interactions for every negative interaction" (Knoff, 2019b). This applies to every student within the classroom, and it included interactions with their peer group as well as teachers. Gallagher (2016) stresses the importance of a teacher being open, flexible, and approachable, but also fair. The teacher should ensure that there is a safe and secure working atmosphere in which learning can take place (p. 22). The teacher can accomplish this by teaching and enforcing the skill, holding the students accountable, enforcing their expectations with consistency, and handling the special situations as they occur.

SKILL

A successful classroom will have a teacher who makes sure they incorporate the schoolwide PBSS expectations into their classroom and use those expectations to guide their classroom expectations. The skills and expectations the teacher wants in their classroom must be explicitly taught, modeled, and reinforced for them to stick with the student. By modeling, practicing, and giving feedback the students will develop "an internal language that

guides them" (Knoff 2019b).

ACCOUNTABILITY

A teacher will take accountability for their classroom and the behaviors that happen within. The teacher will have explicitly taught the expected behaviors and routines to their class. Their class will also be taught about what will happen if they follow the expectations and if they don't follow the expectations. This will usually be taught through the use of a behavioral matrix. The behavioral matrix defines appropriate and inappropriate behaviors, as well as incentives to behave and laid out consequences for when they behavior is inappropriate. The students will understand the different intensity levels of the behavioral matrix and what they consequences may be if they move up the intensity levels. Knoff said numerous times that "if you consequate you must educate" (Knoff,

2019c). The behavior matrix is a way to hold the students accountable for their behavior by teaching them what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior and using the incentives and consequences to motivate them to make the right choices.

CONSISTENCY

When it comes to classroom management the most important factor is consistency. One can teach the skills, reinforce them, and hold the students accountable. However, if it is not with consistency every time then it undermines the entire process. Skills, accountability, and consistency are the basis of a PBSS program and they apply to all students to hopefully prevent the inappropriate in the first place.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS

Special situations are designed to focus on the students with whom the preventive measure of a PBSS program do not work. Knoff (2019d) explains that the prevention if it is successful, will address ninety percent of the students. Seven percent of students need strategic interventions, and three percent of students are the intensive need students. The teacher will work with a team to help identify supports and interventions for the students who need them. A PBSS system offers the help and guidance to try to help impact each students' behavior.

PBSS AS A PREVENTATIVE APPROACH

The entire goal of a PBSS program is to prevent the inappropriate behaviors from occurring in the first place. "An effective discipline and student support model focuses more time and effort on promotion and prevention measure than it does on reactive responses to discipline incidents" (Miller Leiber and Tissiere, 2015, p. 50). After years of schools using punitive strategies for discipline, even though they were ineffective, the shift to a schoolwide PBSS "represents an important means of organizing the school environment to prevent challenging behavior, while at the same time helping to promote pro-social development" (Kant and March, 2004, p. 5). By focusing on teaching the skills and holding students accountable with consistency many schools will be able to prevent a lot of the inappropriate behavior from the general student population.

CONCLUSION

When implemented with fidelity PBSS is a great way to facilitate a positive school and learning environment where the students know and understand what is expected of them behaviorally. Hanna (1998) states that PBSS also facilitates a positive school climate which "affects how teachers act, how they treat each other and their students, and it also affects the level at which students achieve (as cited in Ali, and Siddiqui, 2016, p. 105). Implementing a PBSS program schoolwide can be a valuable tool to improve the school climate, keep it safe, aid in classroom management by teaching the skills, holding the students accountable with consistency, and providing intervention and supports for the students who need them, as well as prevent the undesired behavior for the majority of the students. PBSS will help support academic and social achievement for all.

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