Professional Capacity Building for School Counselors Through School-wide

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports Implementation

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Abstract

The implementation of school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports (SWPBIS) has been shown to reduce behavioral incidents and lead to more positive school climates. Despite the growing popularity in schools, there lacks clear understanding of the school counselor role in this approach. We present the perspectives of an elementary school counselor and middle school counselor engaged in starting SWPBIS programs. This position paper is focused on how the alignment of school counseling and SWPBIS programs can lead to increased school counselor leadership capacity, resulting in collaborative teaming, the use of data and systemic school change.

Keywords: school counseling; positive behavioral interventions and supports; professional development

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Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports Implementation

School counselors are increasingly called upon to serve as school leaders with the ultimate goal of ensuring social and academic success for all students. By providing proactive leadership for students and staff, school counselors can work to eliminate the achievement gap and serve integral roles in the school reform movement (House & Hayes, 2002). Recent school reform impacting all educators, including school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists (Martens & Andreen, 2013; Sullivan, Long, & Kucera, 2011), includes the integration of multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) within school systems. MTSS is a "whole school prevention-based framework for improving learning outcomes for every student through a layered continuum of evidence-based practices and systems" (Colorado Department of Education, 2013) and includes both response to intervention (RTI) and school-wide positive behavioral intervention and support (SWPBIS). The purpose of this position paper is to demonstrate the leadership capacity building opportunities afforded to both an elementary and a middle school counselor as they implemented SWPBIS.

SWPBIS

Currently there are 22,000 schools in the United States implementing SWPBIS with additional programs being implemented in countries like Australia, Iceland, New Zealand, and Canada (Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2010). This movement has garnered the attention of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). According to ASCA (2014), "professional school counselors are stakeholders in the development and

implementation of MTSS including…culturally responsive positive behavioral interventions and supports (CR PBIS)" (p. 1). SWPBIS is a structure for improving school climate through the creation of a multi-tiered system of delivering contextually relevant behavioral support. Defined as "a framework for enhancing the adoption and implementation of a continuum of evidence-based interventions to achieve academically and behaviorally important outcomes for all students" (Sugai et al., 2000, p. 3) and grounded in the theory of applied behavior analysis (Carr & Sidener, 2002), SWPBIS is the application of positive behavioral systems within schools to change and improve behavior among students (Sugai et al., 2000). Important research has since emerged that link school-wide behavior systems and subsequent student achievement and engagement (Lassen, Steele, & Sailor, 2006; Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, & Feinberg, 2005).

School Counselors and SWPBIS

School counselors have the skills needed to meet the challenge of successfully implementing SWPBIS due to training and expertise focused on leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and innovation (Galassi & Akos, 2012). Further, the recently published *Framework for Safe and Successful Schools* outlines that school counselors:
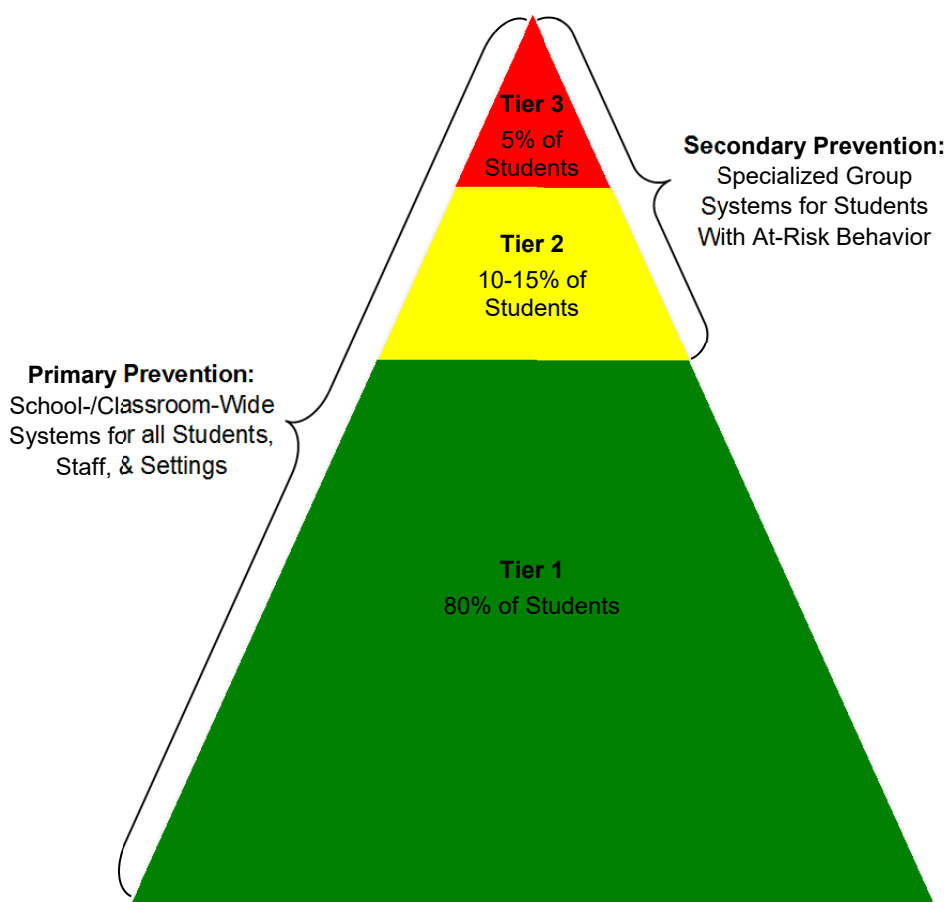
> are generally the first school-employed mental health professional to interact with students as they commonly are involved in the provision of universal learning supports to the whole school population…have specialized knowledge of curriculum and instruction and help screen students for the basic skills needed for successful transition from cradle to college and career. School counselors focus on…designing, implementing, and evaluating a comprehensive school

counseling program that promotes and enhances student success. School

counselors work to promote safe learning environments for all members of the

school community and regularly monitor and respond to behavior issues that

impact school climate. (Cowan, Vaillancourt, Rossen, & Pollitt, 2013, p. 11)

SWPBIS implementation offers an ideal system through which school counselors can

organize the many facets of their roles to better create systemic school change. We

believe that school counselors can align school counseling roles and tasks within the

context of a SWPBIS program. In our experience, SWPBIS training and implementation

has led to increased leadership capacity in the essential areas of data collection,

analysis, and decision making as well planning for school climate improvement efforts

and effective tier two interventions and behavior interventions. Most importantly,

SWPBIS programs offer opportunities for school counselors to serve as collaborative

school leaders who design and implement universal practices and targeted

interventions that foster academic, behavioral, social and emotional growth for all

students.

The primary goals of SWPBIS are to "improve student adjustment, social

behavior, and academic success through methods that increase positive behavior and

make problem behavior irrelevant" (Chaparro, Smolkowski, Baker, Hanson, & Ryan-

Jackson, 2012, p. 467). SWPBIS programs integrate research-based practice within a

three-tier approach, including the universal, secondary, and tertiary tiers of prevention

and intervention, to change policies and procedures within school systems (see Figure

1). At the universal tier, this means establishing preventative systems of support

including forming school-wide expectations and monitoring student behavioral data

(Horner & Sugai, 2000). The secondary tier includes the use of systematic and intensive behavior strategies, including re-teaching skills or providing small-group support, for at-risk students. A third tier provides systems of intensive, often one-on-one support to students with the greatest needs. At all levels of implementation, SWPBIS includes the use of evidence-based behavioral practices and ongoing data-based decision-making within the school (Sugai & Horner, 2006). The PBIS framework allows school-based implementation teams to make purposeful change in the environment in order to facilitate better academic and behavioral outcomes for students (Horner, 2000).

Tier 3
5% of Students

Secondary Prevention:
Specialized Group Systems for Students With At-Risk Behavior

Tier 2
10-15% of Students

Primary Prevention:
School-/Classroom-Wide Systems for all Students, Staff, & Settings

Tier 1
80% of Students

Figure 1. Three-tiered Prevention Continuum of Positive Behavior Support

SWPBIS implementation starts at the primary level, focusing on universal prevention for all students in all school settings. At its core, SWPBIS requires school staff to define school expectations, teach relevant social skills, continuously monitor behavioral data, and create acknowledgement systems to reinforce positive behavior in youth. By providing universal support to all students, SWPBIS interventions should increase the number of students who are successfully engaged in school and decrease the number of students who are disciplined. For example, the implementation of SWPBIS has been associated with decreases in office discipline referrals (Lassen, Steele, & Sailor, 2006; Netzel & Eber, 2003; Sherrod, Getch, & Ziomek-Daigle, 2009); increases in teacher perception of school organizational health including resource influence, staff affiliation, collegial leadership and academic emphasis (Bradshaw, Koth, Bevans, Ialongo, & Leaf, 2008); and school safety (Horner et al., 2009). Further, positive systems change, including reductions of discipline referrals and increases in student learning time, have been outlined in descriptive studies focusing on SWPBIS efforts in a number of states including Iowa (Mass-Galloway, Panyan, Smith, & Wessendorf, 2008) and New Hampshire (Muscott, Mann, & LeBrun, 2008). Recent randomized, controlled studies of SWPBIS implementation in elementary schools demonstrated that the improved use of SWPBIS practices were related to feelings of safety and reading assessment results (Horner et al., 2009) and were more positive and friendly than schools that did not do have training with SWPBIS (Bradshaw, Koth, Thornton, & Leaf, 2009). Finally, SWPBIS programs have been successfully implemented in both urban (e.g., Netzel & Eber, 2003) and rural schools (e.g., Kartub, Taylor-Greene, March, & Horner, 2000).

Recent research has linked the important role that school counselors have in changing school climate through systemic PBIS interventions (Martens & Andreen, 2013) as well as in leadership roles implementing SWPBIS (Goodman-Scott, 2014; Cressey, Whitcomb, McGilvray-Rivet, Morrison, & Shander-Reynolds, 2014). Little research exists that outlines the impact of SWPBIS implementation on the leadership roles of school counselors at different developmental levels. The authors will demonstrate how SWPBIS aligns with school counselors' important role improving school climate in elementary and middle school settings. A descriptive approach will be used to provide examples of SWPBIS implementation at both the elementary and middle school levels. What follows is written principally in first person as the context relates to just of the authors. Implementation occurred in the context of different states in two different parts of the country, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation of SWPBIS.

Sites

The first author worked at an elementary school located in a suburb of a mid-sized Midwestern city. The suburb had a population of approximately 10,000 residents. The school district has approximately 4,900 students drawn from the suburb itself as well as a nearby urban area. This elementary school was one of the six district elementary schools and was the first in the district to implement SWPBIS. There were no district mandates that required this program implementation. The school had an enrollment of approximately 500 students, in grades Kindergarten to grade five. Approximately 40% of youth received free or reduced (F/R) lunch, indicative of students who are from lower SES backgrounds. Sixty-two percent of the student population was

white, 28% Hispanic, 8% African American, and 2% Asian. Approximately 93% of students in the district graduate from high school and 77.9% go on to post-secondary education.

The second author worked at middle school in a small shoreline town in the northeast that served students in grades four to eight. The town had a population of 11,000. The district was home to 1,600 students who attend single elementary, middle, and high schools. Both the middle and high school implemented SWPBIS in an effort to maximize student learning. The population served was largely homogenous, but did experience higher rates of students eligible for free and reduced lunch due to a downturn in the economy. The F/R lunch rate shifted from 5% eligible in 2007 to 11% in 2013. Approximately 99% of students in the district graduate from high school and 75% go on to post-secondary education.

SWPBIS: An Elementary School Counselor's Perspective

The transition to SWPBIS occurred both slowly and dynamically at the school where I worked as an elementary school counselor. Prior to adopting SWPBIS, there had been much focus on how the increasing number of discipline referrals was negatively impacting school climate. For example, during 2006-07, the school had 557 office discipline referrals (ODRs) and a student population of 331. This high number of referrals created an environment in which students were missing class time. Moreover, teachers and administration were frustrated with misbehavior and overall school climate. As a result, the principal created a school improvement goal to decrease the number of referrals through a school discipline committee in 2007-08. The committee, which the principal asked me to lead, introduced a number of universal interventions to

address these concerns. For example, we reviewed past discipline referrals, improved communication with parents of students who received office discipline referrals, and implemented teacher professional development on *Love and Logic* (e.g., Fay & Funk, 1995). These interventions were associated with a 37.5% reduction in discipline referrals to 348 in 2007-08. Additional interventions were implemented the 2008-2009 under the direction of the school discipline committee, which included professional development on Restorative Justice and reinforcement for students demonstrating positive behavior (e.g., positive phone calls home from the principal).

Despite these interventions, the committee members felt that an overarching school-wide focus on positive school climate was missing. The interventions, at times, felt like 'Band-Aid approaches' in that we tried a variety of activities, without a systematic plan, to better student behavior. The lack of consistency and philosophy made it difficult for change to be sustainable. As a result, toward the end of the 2008-09 school year, staff visited an elementary school in a nearby district engaged in SWPBIS implementation. Impressed by the common language, collaborative atmosphere and philosophy, the committee decided to adopt and implement SWPBIS in 2009-2010. The school discipline committee was transformed into the SWPBIS team. A cross section of 25 staff members underwent SWPBIS training from an outside consultant prior to the beginning of the school year and focused on Tier 1/universal approaches. During the training, staff members created four positively stated school expectations, a school-wide behavioral matrix, a t-chart delineating teacher-managed versus office-managed behaviors, and determined how to roll out the SWPBIS plans to staff. Further, this new committee coordinated and organized the many practices that had been attempted

through the prior two years of work. All of the committee's work focused on the goal of improving school climate.

The efforts for the first two years focused on universal strategies, specifically those aimed toward meeting the needs of all students in the school. All staff members, including classroom teachers, educational assistants, administrators, were involved in teaching taught four common expectations, including be safe, be responsible, be kind and respectful, and be a problem solver. The PBIS team created 'Cool Tool' lessons (e.g., social skills lessons taught by classroom teachers) and disseminated them to all staff members on a bimonthly basis. The lessons focused on behaviors essential to school success, including topics like perseverance, respect, and kindness. Each lesson had modifications for our younger and older learners. For example, while students in grades K-2 were encouraged to practice skills through role-plays, students in grades 3-5 created posters for the classroom or school. These lessons were fully integrated into the fabric of the school within community gatherings, announcements, and conversations with students and parents.

In addition, the SWPBIS team implemented an acknowledgement system. Staff members who witnessed students demonstrating positive behaviors gave them a 'thumbs up' ticket. These tickets were collected within each classroom as evidence of the many positive behaviors that occurred in the building. The tickets were also collected at the school level during monthly community gatherings. Students, particularly those in the younger grades, were energized when watching the number of tickets filling the school bucket. The collections resulted in special celebration days (e.g., pajama day, read/write and draw time, school wide pep rallies). To motivate the

oldest learners in fourth and fifth grades, classroom teachers created friendly ticket competitions between classrooms. Further, the teachers hosted weekly drawings during which two students were chosen from those who had received tickets to receive a small token of acknowledgement. These tokens consisted of a tool to help them in their learning (e.g., a pencil) and a treat.

Finally, the implementation of SWPBIS resulted in systemic change surrounding how staff taught, responded to, and intervened with students. First, the integration of SWPBIS resulted in a SWPBIS team who examined data on a monthly basis. This data included office discipline referrals (ODRs) defined by grade level, day of the week, type of behavior, and location. The team also examined overall disproportionality in ODRs based on student ethnicity, special education label and F/R lunch status. The team also engaged in problem solving based on qualitative data and issues brought forth by team members (e.g., lunchroom noise, playground disrespect). While the SWPBIS team tracked universal data to determine school wide actions, the administration and student services team tracked individual students with multiple ODRs to ensure students received interventions (e.g., mentoring, individual counseling, small-group support).

School Counselor Role

As a school counselor, I was involved in this process in a number of ways. I was the leader of the school discipline committee, and thus became the leader and primary coach of the SWPBIS team. I led the collaborative effort and met with the SWPBIS team monthly to plan school-wide Cool Tool/social skills lessons and community gatherings, and to problem solve systemic behavioral issues in the school (e.g., the lunchroom). The integration of SWPBIS highlighted the expertise I received through my school

counseling training. For example, the SWPBIS team members noted the increasing number of students received referrals for aggressive/angry behavior. With my knowledge of social emotional development, I led the SWPBIS team to create a 'Cool Tool' lesson focused on self-calming strategies, which was subsequently taught in the classroom and on the playground. Likewise, the addition of Cool Tools allowed me to align the topics taught through the monthly classroom guidance lessons and the SWPBIS lessons. During the latter half of the first year, I integrated the ASCA student competency standards (ASCA, 2004) into the 'Cool Tool' lessons to ensure that students received adequate social, emotional and academic support.

SWPBIS offered a seamless way to incorporate the use of data in the comprehensive school counseling programming. As a school counselor and SWPBIS leader, I played an integral role in monitoring students who were not responding to universal practices. Along with the other student services staff, I assisted with individual and small group interventions, largely determined by SWPBIS data. Whereas in previous years I had constructed small groups based mainly on teacher or parent nomination, I examined ODRs to identify students in need of support. Students who received more than three office discipline referrals were put in a small group to focus on specific skills. After our first year of SWPBIS implementation, I lead the efforts to pilot a check in/check out (CICO) program. The CICO program pairs students in need of tier 2 support with an adult mentor who 'checks in' with the student on their behavior. At the same time, teachers provide continuous behavioral feedback throughout the school day (e.g., Marteens & Andreen, 2013). Teamwork and systemic change was evident through the changes in universal practices and tiered interventions.

SWPBIS Impact at One Elementary School

The impact of SWPBIS implementation at our elementary school was evident in quantitative and qualitative ways. The total numbers of ODRs and the percentage of students receiving ODRs declined over the course of implementation (Table 1).

Table 1

Total Enrollment and ODR Count by Year at an Elementary School

Year	Enrollment	Total ODRs	Students Referred[a]	Avg ODR Rate[b]
1	323	344	86 (26.6%)	.61
2	346	264	70 (20.2%)	.43
3	473	268	91 (19.2%)	.32
4	498	248	84 (16.9%)	.28=

[b] Refers to the average ODR rate per 100 students per day

Specifically, the range of ODRs per student decreased over the years with a high of 37 for one student in year one to a high of 16 in year four. Analysis of the average number of ODRs per 100 students per day allowed for comparison across years (Figure 2). The averages were computed for each month of each year of the study. Spaulding & Frank (2009) examined a national sample of PBIS schools throughout the country over three years and determined that the mean range for ODR rates in K-6 rural cities (e.g., cities with populations less than 25,000) was .32 (SD = .30) and .36 (SD = .35). Thus, the mean ODR rate in our school decreased to a rate similar to other schools in the country engaged in SWPBIS implementation.

Average Office Discipline Referrals per 100 Students/day
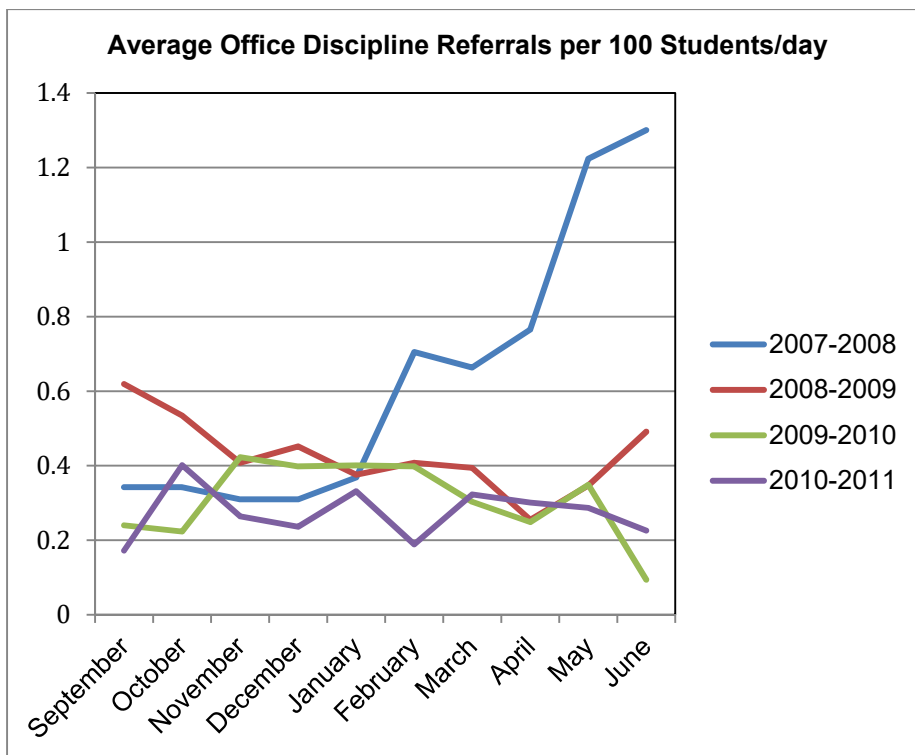
Figure 2. Average rate of office discipline referrals per day per 100 students in one elementary school

In addition to the noticeable decrease in the number of students sent to the office for behavioral incidents, there were changes in how we supported the climate of the school. We created a team to track referrals and plan practices to support the learning of students. We planned successful student and school level acknowledgements, As SWPBIS coach, I was able to lead the school in these changes. Furthermore, SWPBIS allowed for a collection of voices to collaborate regarding student behavior and support. Classroom teachers, playground supervisors, and other staff members were empowered to address problem behavior and acknowledge positive behavior as it occurred. For example, educational assistants who routinely monitored recess were integral in the implementation of the acknowledgement system. Teachers planned community gatherings that focused on our school-wide expectations and reinforced the

positive changes in student behavior through their teaching. Parents appreciated seeing the school and classroom level goals created as a part of our 'Cool Tool' lessons and celebrated the accomplishments with us at the monthly community gatherings. Student voices were included in that teachers asked students to vote for upcoming celebration foci and as school counselor, I led a 5th grade PBIS leadership group to share positive behavior messages to the school.

SWPBIS: A Middle School Counselor's Perspective

The transition to SWPBIS occurred 2007 as our staff began implementing RTI at our 4-8 middle school. It started when we, the student support staff, examined our current means of identification and support for students in need of social, emotional, and behavioral support, which is known as the consult model. Unfortunately there was often little time to design effective targeted interventions after an extensive discussion of the child's presenting concerns. Though well intentioned, the existing structure was not meeting the complex needs of students brought to the team. As a result, we knew we needed to work smarter, not harder, to best serve our students. We needed to assemble teachers, student support team members, and administrators to meet at regular intervals to design, implement, and monitor academic and behavioral interventions for students.

In 2007, we received early intervention program training and SWPBIS training. The SWPBIS training was designed to help all members of the team build capacity in several key areas including behavior support, behavior planning, data collection, and team decision-making. First and foremost, SWPBIS gave both structure and relevance to the behavioral support and planning at the universal level. Specifically, we began

teaching social competencies to students in the same way that our academic staff was already instructing kids to find the main idea within their writing and to use their number sense in math. For example, through guidance lessons that involved classroom teachers, we taught all students how to successfully resolve conflicts. Posters depicting five stages of conflict resolution were designed by school counselors and shared with teachers who posted them in classrooms and hallways. At the beginning and midpoint of each school year, all staff members were involved in teaching students the expected behaviors in each major area of the school (e.g., lunchroom, playground, and hallway). Thus, we provided lessons on safely moving through the halls and successfully navigating our middle school.

An integral part of the systemic process within our newly formed SWPBIS team was tracking student behavioral data. The team collaborated to review relevant approaches to collecting behavior data on students. As such, our SWPBIS team instituted a "passport" system. Students received a passport that listed the three behavioral expectations of our school: be safe, be respectful, and be responsible. Each student received a grid that listed each class period (see Figure 3). At the beginning of the school year, teachers taught students elements in the grid that were specific to their class. For example, safety needs in a science class where chemicals were used was different than the safety concerns taught in a language arts class. Over a month-long period, students received signatures if they did not meet expectations or stamps if they exceeded them (helping others, doing additional assignments, etc.). Students were rewarded in different ways based on the developmental needs associated with their grade level. For example, eighth graders, as the oldest students in the school, were

most interested in working for privileges that earned them extra time with friends or a homework pass. The elementary-age students were rewarded with Friday free time (free-choice activity time), use of electronics during free choice periods, lunch with a teacher or administrator, or the opportunity to be first in line for lunch. Passport data was uploaded into School Wide Information Systems (SWIS), a web-based behavioral information system, and the SWPBIS team identified trends in behavior (time of day, month of year, location, type of behavior, etc.). The analysis of this data helped the team plan supervision of hallways and recess and identify professional development plans. For example, we integrated classroom management into our professional development. In addition, the team shared this data with parents.

	Entering and exiting the classroom	During class discussions or lectures	During group works
Be safe	Select a seat and sit down. Return seat to desk and push it in before exiting.	Sit with all 4 legs of the chair on the floor.	Use materials wisely.
Be respectful	Keep your hands to yourself.	Be attentive to the speaker.	Give everyone an opportunity to contribute.
Be responsible	Select a seat next to students with whom you learn well.	Take notes on pertinent content.	Stick with the task until it is completed.

Figure 3. Sample Behavior Matrix for 6th grade Language Arts Class

A final essential systemic change that we implemented within our SWPBIS work was universal screening. Just as students were tested to derive benchmarks in their literacy and numeracy development, we used testing to identify students who lacked social skills or experienced depression or anxiety. Student services staff implemented a

system of screening all students in grades 3, 6, and 9 using a brief form of the BASC (the BASC-2, Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004). Parents were contacted before and after the administration of the BASC2. The screener helped us identify students who needed support with anxiety, persistent sadness, and social concerns. Our data showed approximately 10% of students at each grade level experienced distress, while school counseling staff was aware of only 5% of these students. Student services staff used this data to create targeted groups for the 6% of students who had not previously received services. Post-assessment data demonstrated that the small group interventions made a positive difference for students in need.

School Counselor Role

As a school counselor, my role in SWPBIS included facilitation of the implementation process. I shared many of these duties with our assistant principal and our implementation team while serving as the contact person for our PBIS technical assistants. I was involved in initial aspects of the process, including writing the grant to secure funding for training, coordinating site visits with our technical assistants, dispensing materials to our team, and analyzing our student data. As our pool of data grew, the assistant principal and I shared data with school staff at grade level team meetings. It was important for us to show staff that their efforts to address behavior systematically were yielding positive results.

My role in SWPBIS also transformed how the counseling team delivered the school counseling program. For example, the middle school counseling program was patterned after the ASCA national model. Specifically, the school counselors designed discrete grade-level curricula aimed at teaching social competencies from the

Connecticut School Counseling Guide. The curricula were grounded in student competencies in the areas of academic achievement, career exploration, and personal and social development (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012) and were shared with parents through evening presentations, emails, and letters home. The lessons were taught on a regular basis to students during a scheduled class called FOCUS (Friendship, Organization, Communication, Understanding and Study Skills). FOCUS is now included in the "specials" rotation along with gym, library, music, art, and computer. Prior to SWPBIS implementation, we chose guidance lessons in a somewhat subjective manner based on counselor interest and a subjective analysis of student needs. The implementation of SWPBIS helped us look at our relevant behavior data prior to planning and ask, "What does this grade level need?" As a result of our SWPBIS efforts, the school counseling team researched evidence-based practices and curricula to use within our universal curriculum and in our Tier 2 intervention groups. By examining the data, we identified three key areas of universal concern: academic achievement, anxiety, and social skills. We integrated student success skills focused on helping students make healthy lifestyle choices that promoted academic achievement while building self-esteem into our grade four and five students through guidance lessons (Webb, Brigman, & Campbell, 2005). We selected the *Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum* (Committee for Children, 2007) to teach preventative lessons on social skills, conflict resolution, and emotional regulation at all grade levels. We regularly shared the strategies we taught with teachers and parents to promote the use of common language and a shared commitment to healthy decision-making, thus solidifying the universal social curriculum. This process of identifying needs, researching

effective evidence-based interventions and curriculums increased my professional capacity as a school counselor through SWPBIS implementation.

The use of SWPBIS data allowed us to reduce the number of students seeking one-on-one support while simultaneously the inclusion of universal screening allowed our school counseling team to identify students needing group support. We used elements of Strong Kids (Merrell, Carrizales, Feuerborn, Gueldner, & Tran, 2007) with these students to address anxiety, depression, and the development of positive relationships. Further, we changed the way our school counseling staff worked. We did the challenging work of reflection that was necessary for change. We asked ourselves, what is working? For whom are we designing interventions? Are our students better off as a result of the student assistance team?" SWPBIS helped us analyze what we did and made our contacts with students at the universal and Tier 2 levels more effective.

SWPBIS Impact at One Middle School

Total numbers of office referrals declined over the course of the study from 108 in year one to 32 (a 30% reduction) in year five while student enrollment decreased from only slightly from 600 to 560 students (Figure 4). Similarly, the percentage of students receiving ODRs decreased during the study years from 20% to 6%. The range of ODRs counts decreased over the years with a high of 18 for one student in year one to a high of six for one student in year five. Our combined disciplinary incidents (in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, bullying, and bus incidents) were reduced 60% from 108 incidents in 2007-08 to just 32 in 2012-13 (Figure 4). Initially there was an increase in incidents, which is typical in SWPBIS implementation due to the heightened awareness and reporting of student behavior among staff. Over

time, students were more engaged in learning and were in the office less. In fact, the
state behavior report was so radically different that state representatives called
administration to inquire about what school staff had done differently. We were happy to
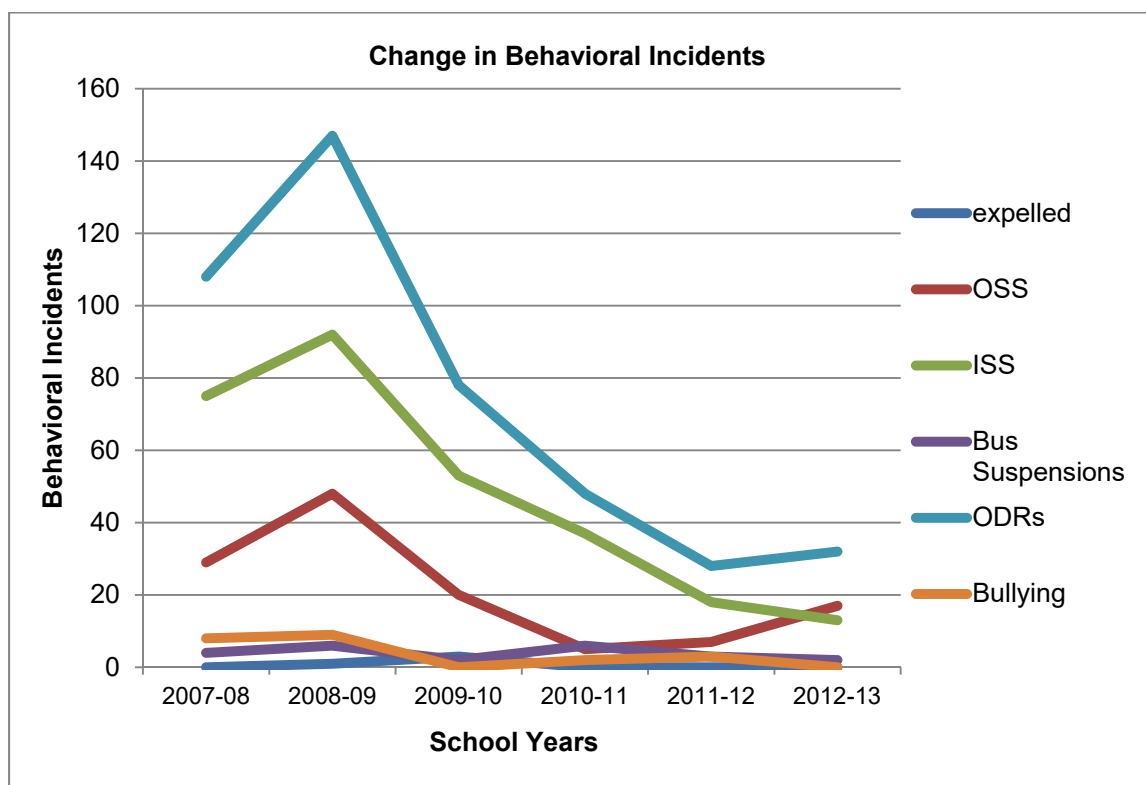report that we had implemented SWPBIS.

Figure 4. Behavioral Incidents in One Middle School

Discussion: Building School Counselor Capacity Through SWPBIS

The schools described in this article experienced positive change and systemic
transformation in climate as a result of collaborative teaming that accompanies the
SWPBIS implementation. At the universal level, each school implemented strong Tier 1
social and behavioral supports that ensured students learned expected behaviors and
received booster lessons throughout the year. In turn, students knew the expectations
(e.g., Be Safe, Be Responsible, and Be Respectful) in all venues of the school

environment. The resulting decrease in ODRs led to a more positive school climate for all.

Similarly, the school counselors experienced increased professional capacity through SWPBIS training and subsequent implementation. As a result, both schools improved the types of Tier 2 supports offered to students and staff. At the middle school described in the study, a highly efficient consultation process was developed including weekly meetings that were run by teachers and documented electronically so data and interventions traveled year to year with the student. The elementary school outlined in this article piloted Tier 2 efforts, including CICO. In the both schools, faculty and staff conversations about kids and with kids became more positive. The positive interactions and the positive environment that fostered positive behavior were noticed by all who entered the buildings.

SWPBIS teams at both schools recognized the need to integrate developmentally appropriate efforts within the context of SWPBIS implementation. In each setting (elementary and middle), students in older grades seemed to demonstrate the greatest resistance to the SWPBIS framework. As such, SWPBIS teams designed teaching methods and acknowledgements with developmental needs in mind. For example, students at younger grades received concrete instruction while students at older grades engaged in higher level activities. In addition, staff differences may be present across developmental levels. For example, elementary teachers may meet less resistance given the developmental stage of students, particularly at the youngest grades. Middle school teachers may need to see the program as developmentally responsive in order to fully buy into the SWPBIS approach. As such, school counselors,

as leaders within this framework, need to explore the possibility of having older students serve as mentors and teachers to younger students as a way of reinforcing expected behaviors throughout the schools.

This article is limited in that the focus is on two schools in diverse areas of the country; thus, the results cannot be generalized to other settings. Similarly, the data collected at each school site is specific in nature and does not capture the fidelity of SWPBIS implementation. Despite this, the experiences described provide a process through which other school counselors can conceptualize their role in organizing SWPBIS programs in their school sites. Given the limited research in this area additional research should focus on how the role of SWPBIS coordinator fits within a comprehensive school counseling program as well as difficulties inherent in taking on additional responsibilities. Further research might focus on leadership skills that lead to school counselor success in SWPBIS implementation.

Implications for School Counselors

Both of the authors experienced increased professional capacity as school counselors through engagement in SWPBIS implementation. Through training and technical assistance provided by PBIS statewide teams, we were able to develop effective programs for our respective schools. We were directed to current research and best practices that helped us look at the unique needs of students in our school communities, specifically in the areas of data collection, behavior management, and whole school systemic change.

Elementary School Counseling and SWPBIS

Through this process, my role as school counselor was transformed. All staff were involved in the creation of a common language surrounding the social and

emotional success of students in the school. The universal intervention work that was focused on a positive school climate had been embraced by our staff, students, and parents. As a school counselor, I was able to teach classroom guidance lessons that were in line with the ASCA model but that differed from those taught through the SWPBIS 'Cool Tools'. The implementation of SWPBIS streamlined my role school counselor and allowed me to increase the tier 2 interventions offered to students while examining data to ensure best practice.

Middle School Counseling and SWPBIS

One of the chief benefits of SWPBIS as a school counselor was taking part in the shared effort implementation required from all staff, administrators, bus drivers, custodians, and cafeteria workers to move toward a more positive environment for everyone. All voices and ideas were valued. All stakeholders were represented on our team. All were welcome to share ideas, voice concerns, and reward students for on-track behavior. In addition, the SWPBIS helped me expand my capacity to understand and address problem behaviors in school. Addressing behavior problems had not been a focus of my school counselor training, but was an essential role for me to maximize my effectiveness at my site. Working in a school with well-designed tiers of support for academic and social/emotional growth made me a more effective school counselor.

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Final Thoughts

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MTSS, and specifically SWPBIS, helped each author create a common language and approach for staff and students and serve as experts in the examination of behavioral data. This allowed school staff, students and parents to have consistent understanding of expected behaviors that lead to school success. Further, the use of

data brought to the forefront the importance of student academic and social/emotional development. At each school, both academic and behavioral expectations were raised and all staff had additional resources and knowledge to help students succeed.

As members of leadership teams for SWPBIS implementation efforts, school counselors have the opportunity to build capacity as systems thinkers. Further, through the integration of SWPBIS and comprehensive school counseling programs, school counselors can:

- Collaborate with school staff to create a coordinated, comprehensive school counseling program through the integration of a common language and set of behavioral expectations.

- Use knowledge of child and adolescent development to plan appropriate universal practices at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

- Facilitate staff knowledge of the link between social/emotional skills and academic success through their use of universal screeners within SWPBIS.

- Act as leaders demonstrating how best to use behavioral data within SWPBIS/Comprehensive school counseling programs (e.g., Hatch, 2014; Kaffenberger & Young, 2013).

- Apply data-based decision making and progress monitoring when constructing small group intervention support.

- Use their unique leadership position to coordinate building-wide efforts surrounding MTSS (e.g., Ockerman, Mason, & Hollenbeck, 2012; Ryan, Kaffenberger, & Gleason Carroll, 2011).

Implementing SWPBIS in both elementary and middle school settings require strong professional alliances and a commitment to improving school climate. Several school counselors revealed that implementing SWPBIS requires a great deal of time in the initial stages (Donohue, 2014). A middle school counselor with 250 students on their caseload is much more available to support SWPBIS implementation than those with 300 or 400 students. Further, it can take from 3-5 years to fully implement universal strategies associated with SWPBIS implementation and school counselors may be charged with juggling multiple responsibilities as implementation is streamlined. Despite this, school counselors are uniquely prepared to lead effective and responsive implementation teams with the proper training and administrative support. Student outcomes suggest that schools implementing SWPBIS are more positive and productive learning environments (Curtis, Van Horne, Robertson, & Karvonen, 2010; Sherrod, Getch, & Ziomek-Daigle, 2009). The shared mission of the SWPBIS framework and comprehensive school counseling programs designed to mirror the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2012) prioritizes data-based decision making, advocacy, leadership, and equitable practices. Working to implement SWPBIS at these elementary and middle school sites allowed the authors to enhance their comprehensive school counseling programs and to better serve their students.

With greater capacity in the areas of leadership, data collection and analysis, collaborative intervention design, and systemic change, school counselors can participate in both universal and tiered interventions in a more meaningful way. Most importantly, when school counselors are active members of a SWPBIS leadership team that shares a vision and enacts a plan to help students reach their highest potential,

everyone benefits. School counselors are trained to assist with the social, emotional and academic development of students and staff. Thus, school counselors are prepared to serve as leaders to develop and implement effective SWPBIS to ensure all students succeed in a positive school environment.

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