



The SAPR-PBIS™ and How It Supports School Improvement

In 1998, we were funded by the U.S. Department of Education OSEP to evaluate a model demonstration project known as the Behavior, Emotional, and Academic Curriculum on the Needs of Students, or BEACONS, at four schools in Washington State (Cheney, 1998). One of the major goals of BEACONS was to evaluate the use of PBIS practices across the three-tiered model. In 2003, the BEACONS Project was awarded a second federal grant (Cheney, 2003) to expand the implementation of this project throughout the state, in an effort to increase the capacity of local school districts to establish and sustain PBIS programs. The focus of this project was to support schools in developing comprehensive SWPBIS systems to meet the needs of all students in the school, including those with or at risk of developing E/BPs. The project emphasized systematic school improvement efforts across all three levels of the PBIS model. In its first year, the BEACONS Outreach Project worked with 13 elementary schools in 7 school districts throughout Washington State. In the second year of the project, participating schools increased to 23 schools in 10 school districts. After the grant ended in 2008, a network of trainers in PBIS was established as the Washington PBIS network and has continued in more than 200 schools throughout the state.

BEACONS focused on using the PE process discussed in Chapter 1 to identify activities for schools as they addressed three training goals, which corresponded to the three-level model of PBIS. The first training goal focused on the foundations of PBIS and helped schools develop and enhance their schoolwide systems (Horner, Sugai, Todd, & Lewis-Palmer, 2004; Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Sugai et al., 2010). It included the development of a leadership team that was representative of the school community to guide the school through the process, establish the various features of PBIS, and introduce schools to using PBIS tools to inform their decision making. The second training goal focused on developing systematic supports for students at-risk of academic failure due to behavioral problems. The emphasis of this training goal was to expand the school's capacity to provide targeted interventions for students with behavioral problems (Hawken & Horner, 2003; Hawken et al., 2008; Walker, Cheney, Stage, & Blum, 2005). The third training goal focused on helping school teams learn how to effectively complete an FBA and use that information to develop a behavior intervention plan (BIP) for students with intensive or chronic behavior problems. These strategies help schools learn to understand the function of a child's behavior and to develop a system of supports and interventions that builds the child's prosocial skills and promotes social and behavioral success (Crone & Horner, 2003; O'Neill et al., 1997; Quinn, Gable, Rutherford, Nelson, & Howell, 1998).

Leadership teams at each of the schools also enhanced their approaches for supporting teachers, monitoring student progress, and involving parents more effectively in the school improvement process. Project staff met monthly with school leadership teams and faculty to provide coaching and technical assistance as the schools began to implement new strategies and systems supports. BEACONS emphasized systemic changes and strategies that were sustainable long after the project ended (Scott & Martinek, 2006). Participating school teams also had site visits with one another to observe and share strategies, approaches, and ideas for the implementation of PBIS.

To provide schools with a practical measure for assessing their progress in implementing evidence-based practices that are relevant to all three levels of PBIS supports, the BEACONS Project developed and piloted a self-assessment survey called the SAPR-PBIS™ evaluation tool (Cheney, Blum, & Walker, 2004). The SAPR-PBIS provides a tool for PBIS leadership teams to assess their progress on evidence-based practices that support the universal, secondary, and tertiary levels of the PBIS model. The evidence-based practices included in the SAPR-PBIS emphasize prevention and early intervention systems and supports for students with or at risk of developing E/BPs. Members of the school's leadership team completed the SAPR-PBIS annually or semiannually to provide a progress measure in areas that had been identified by each school's leadership team as priorities for improvement as part of its PBIS initiative. The leadership team was chosen as the focus for the process because it was capable of using the PE process to guide and implement critical PBIS school reform (Adelman & Taylor, 2001, 2007; Dwyer, 2002; Handler et al., 2007; Knoff, 2002; Sugai, Horner, & Gresham, 2002; Sugai et al., 2010).

It is important to note that, since 2000, a number of tools have been developed in the area of PBIS that integrate these principles of effective organizational learning with systematic feedback to schools, specifically with a PBIS focus. Three of these tools were developed by the National Technical Assistance Center on PBIS and were involved in the standardization process of the SAPR-PBIS. These tools include the School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET; Sugai, Lewis-Palmer, Todd, & Horner, 2001), which measures schools' progress across seven SWPBIS features at the universal level; the School-Wide Information System (SWIS; May et al., 2000), a web-based data collection and analysis system for tracking office discipline referrals; and the EBS Survey (Sugai, Horner, & Todd, 2003), which assists schools in annually evaluating their behavior support systems across four dimensions: schoolwide, nonclassroom, classroom, and individual student. Initially, the EBS Survey only addressed the schoolwide or primary dimension. Over subsequent years, features across the other dimensions of secondary and tertiary were added. The EBS Survey is given to each staff member, who reviews the items, then rates whether he or she feels the feature is either *in place*, *partially in place*, or *not in place* in the school. Staff also indicate what they believe the priority for improvement is for each feature. The leadership team then reviews the results and sets its action plan based on this feedback. Studies have been underway to establish its reliability and validity (Hagan-Burke et al., 2005; Safran, 2006). In addition, the Team Implementation Checklist (TIC; Sugai, Horner, & Lewis-Palmer, 2002) was developed to help leadership teams track their progress, on a quarterly basis, in implementing key aspects of universal SWPBIS. Specific steps related to the implementation of SWPBIS are outlined, and teams rate a practice as *achieved*, *in progress*, or *not*

started. Space is provided for teams to set specific timelines and goals as part of ongoing action planning. The TIC has gone through three versions of development since 2001. It focuses primarily on Tier 1 universal implementation of SWPBIS but also includes some information regarding Tiers 2 and 3 (Sugai et al., 2001; Sugai, Horner, Lewis-Palmer, & Rossetto Dickey, 2011; Tobin, 2006). The TIC is useful for progress monitoring and formative evaluation of PBIS in schools and is intended to help school leadership teams make effective decisions that can influence all school staff to cooperate with their action plans.

More recently developed, the Benchmarks of Quality (BOQ; Kincaid, Childs, & George, 2005) was also created for school teams to assess the level of implementation of schoolwide or primary-level practices. Designed as an alternative to the SET, which requires an external rater and several hours of training and time to administer, BOQ was developed for schools to complete themselves. It includes three components, a Coach Scoring Form, a Scoring Guide, and a Team Member Rating Form. The coach and members of the leadership team use the scale of *not in place*, *needs improvement*, or *in place* to rate their level of implementation of universal practices, and compare ratings and results until a final comprehensive rating is established. The BOQ has been found to have good reliability and validity, and serves as an effective alternative to the SET (Cohen, Kincaid, & Childs, 2007).

The Implementation Phases Inventory (IPI; Bradshaw, Barrett, & McKenna, 2008) was developed by PBIS Maryland to help track schools' progress in implementing 44 key practices across the three levels of SWPBIS. The tool is organized across four categories: preparation, initiation, implementation, and maintenance. Twice yearly, schools rate themselves using a three-point scale of *not in place*, *partially in place*, and *fully in place* for each practice. Every fall, teams rate their overall implementation along a seven-point scale that ranges from *preparation to maintenance of practices*.

KEY FEATURES OF THE SAPR-PBIS PROCESS

The SAPR-PBIS is unlike many assessments of school progress in PBIS described previously, such as the EBS (Sugai, Horner, & Todd, 2003), which have staff members vote on items and then prioritize actions based on the majority of votes, or simply track progress toward the implementation of established practices or benchmarks over time. The SAPR-PBIS process is more like that of the BOQ, as it emphasizes the importance of discussion between a coach and team members about how 53 SWPBIS items are rated and decisions are made on priorities for schoolwide improvement. Not only does the SAPR-PBIS provide a tool to measure school improvement efforts over time using the principles of PE, but it also provides a structure for building and strengthening the leadership team itself, improving its capacity for facilitating and sustaining improved practices over time. When the leadership team has a team score as data, it provides them a reference point from year to year so that they can evaluate progress. Reviewing yearly data points has been used effectively in several studies that have targeted the improvement of school climate ratings (Griffith, 2000; Lindell & Brandt, 2000; Van Horn, 2003).

This team-based self-assessment approach has been well established for many years. In their discussion of the validity of self and team ratings when clinical psychologists rated their progress, Kelly and Fiske, as described in a classic article on the assessment validation process by Campbell and Fiske (1959), found what they called “a distinct trend for the staff-teammate block to show the greatest agreement. Both represent the external point of view. Both are averaged over three judges, minimizing individual biases and undoubtedly increasing reliabilities” (1959, p. 99). Kelly and Fiske concluded that self and teammate ratings “represent entirely separate methods and can be given the major emphasis in evaluating the data to be presented” (p. 95). James agreed that a rating built first from the perspective of its individual members, then by a meeting to establish a team rating, is an effective measure of organizational functioning, stating, “perceptual agreement implies a shared assignment of psychological meaning, from which it follows that an aggregate (mean) climate score provides the opportunity to describe the environment in psychological terms” (1982, p. 221). Of course, it is critical that team members consistently review data related to various aspects of the PBIS initiative so that their perspectives are also anchored in the daily reality of the school (Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Sugai et al., 2010).

Analysis of SAPR-PBIS data indicates that membership on a school team is a better predictor of the final team self-assessment results than any individual’s professional role (Walker, Cheney, & Stage, 2009). This suggests that the group self-assessment ratings accurately represent a “shared psychological meaning” for the leadership teams in each of the schools. Therefore, the team scores can be considered accurate measures of organizational function.

Pilot testing occurred in 23 schools. In each school, a leadership team managed the completion of the SAPR-PBIS. Teams typically included the school administrator, special educator, school counselor or psychologist, general educators from both the primary and intermediate grade levels, as well as paraprofessionals. A total of 23 school leadership teams participated in the study, with 150 individual staff members. The average leadership team in this study included seven members.

The individual and team ratings process has three steps. First, individuals are given a copy of the SAPR-PBIS Individual Form. They look at all items that are organized under 10 evidence-based practices and individually rate the related indicators. For example, one practice that is important in the PBIS approach is the development of behavioral expectations. In the SAPR-PBIS, an individual would therefore rate how well the school is doing on defining and teaching behavioral expectations. He or she would rate items in this evidence-based practice on a five-point Likert scale, as shown in Figure 2.1. The ratings range from an item being *not in place* (1) to *fully in place* (5), and after rating all indicators, a total score is computed for the evidence-based practice.

After individuals rate all of the indicators representing the 10 practices, the next major step is for the team to meet and discuss its ratings. One member of the team, such as the School PBIS Coordinator, serves as the facilitator for the meeting. The facilitator asks the members for their scores and records the final ratings of the team on the SAPR-PBIS Team Meeting Form, along with relevant comments and questions for each evidence-based practice and/or indicator. For each practice, the facilitator asks each team member to share his or her total

Behavioral expectations are written and posted in classroom and nonclassroom settings.	1	2	3	4	5
Behavioral expectations are taught, monitored, and reinforced systematically in classroom and nonclassroom settings.	1	2	3	4	5

Figure 2.1. Example of two items in an evidence-based practice rated on a five-point Likert scale. (From Walker, B., & Cheney, D. [2012]. *The Self-Assessment and Program Review for Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports [SAPR-PBIS™]*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co. Copyright © 2012 by University of Washington; adapted by permission.)

score and records that along the scoring bar located under each item. The team then determines an overall score for each of the 10 practices.

The final major step is for the team to identify schoolwide priorities for improvement. The team reviews its results and identifies at least three evidence-based practices to work on during the next school year. The practices and their related indicators are recorded as measurable objectives for improvement, and activities are generated to address each one. Throughout the year, the leadership team should revisit these objectives to determine the progress being made toward achieving them. This process is described in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4.

THE TEN EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES IN THE SAPR-PBIS

Ten practices serve as the major domains for the SAPR-PBIS process. These practices were identified through a literature review, pilot testing in schools, and feedback from national leaders in the PBIS approach. Staff working on the BEACONS Project conducted an extensive literature review that included reviewing the tables of contents from journals that report on research related to school improvement, special education, prevention and early intervention, and behavioral issues. Journals reviewed included *Behavior Disorders*, *Prevention Science*, *Journal of Positive Behavior Supports*, *Exceptional Children*, *Journal of Emotional and Behavior Disorders*, and *Journal of School Psychology* between the years of 1997 and 2006. Once relevant articles were identified, staff reviewed their reference lists to locate other articles. In addition, a search of computer databases such as ERIC or PsychINFO under search terms such as *school improvement*, *positive behavior supports*, *school discipline*, *effective interventions*, and *school failure* resulted in identifying other relevant literature. These articles were reviewed, and key practices were identified for inclusion in the SAPR-PBIS. The literature review also included a content analysis of established school climate surveys as well as the existing PBIS evaluation tools, such as SET (Sugai, Lewis-Palmer, et al., 2001), the Positive Behavior Support Implementation and Planning Self-Assessment (Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2002) and the EBS Survey (Sugai et al., 2003).

The results of this literature review were distilled into the content of the SAPR-PBIS. Because many of the identified practices permeate or support effective practices across the three levels of the PBIS model, the structure of the SAPR-PBIS was built on 10 core practices that

Table 2.1. Self-Assessment and Program Review for Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SAPR-PBIS™) subscales

1. Policies and procedures
 2. Prevention and screening
 3. Staff development
 4. Behavioral expectations
 5. Response to discipline referrals
 6. Academic and social supports provided
 7. Functional behavioral assessment as needed
 8. Data collected and analyzed
 9. Families as partners
 10. Comprehensive plans for intensive needs
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could be applied throughout the school improvement process rather than specifically organized around the three levels of the PBIS model. These 10 evidence-based practices formed the structure for what then became 10 subscales, which are referred to as *practices* throughout this manual. These subscales include what are referred to as *indicators*, which can provide benchmarks toward the implementation of the broader practice. The subscales also serve as a scaffold for schools to reference and use for planning throughout their PBIS work. Table 2.1 lists the names of the 10 evidence-based practices, or subscales, of the SAPR-PBIS.

Forty national leaders were included as participants in investigating the content validity of the SAPR-PBIS. Of the 40 who were identified, 21 individuals agreed to participate and 18 completed and returned surveys. The mean years of experience with PBIS was 10, with a range from 2 to 25 years. A descriptive analysis of levels of education found that half the respondents were at the Ph.D. level, slightly less than half at the master's level, and one at the bachelor's level.

Chapter 5 describes each of these practices in depth along with the related indicators that suggest at what level the practice is actually being implemented in the school. The information in Chapter 5 is intended to provide the empirical basis for each practice so that schools can be confident they are using evidence-based practices while they improve their SWPBIS methods.