Climate Initiatives in SDP: School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) and Restorative Practices (RP)

This brief summarizes the findings of a study conducted by the Office of Research & Evaluation (ORE) that reported on two initiatives in the District designed to enhance school climate: School-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) and Restorative Practices (RP). The full report is available upon request.

Study Overview

ORE conducted an evaluation of SWPBIS in 31 District schools and RP in 14 District schools that focused on fidelity of implementation as well as student outcomes.

Fidelity of implementation was assessed using the School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET). The SET assesses the following seven areas: (a) expectations defined, (b) behavioral expectations taught, (c) acknowledgement procedures, (d) correction procedures, (e) monitoring and evaluation, (f) management, and (g) district-level support. Fidelity of implementation is met when a school scores at least 80% on the future behavioral expectations taught, as well as an overall mean score of 80%. Student outcomes reported included attendance, suspensions, office disciplinary referrals, district-wide survey results, and PSSA achievement levels.

Why is this study important to SDP?

The District has undertaken a variety of school-level and District-wide initiatives to develop and maintain positive school climate. Collectively, these are characterized by a move away from punitive, one-size-fits-all disciplinary practices (e.g., zero-tolerance suspension policies), and towards practices designed to address behavioral problems on an individualized basis.

Important student outcomes that are conceptually related to strong implementation of SWPBIS and RP include:

- ➢ **Possible increase in student attendance**
- ➢ **Decrease in suspension rate**
- ➢ **Decrease in the number of expulsions**
- ➢ **Decrease in the number of office disciplinary referrals**
- ➢ **Improved perception of school climate**
- ➢ **Possible gains in achievement**

What are SWPBIS and RP?

- School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) is a framework designed to enhance students' understanding of expectations of student behavior in all aspects of school.

- Restorative Practices (RP) is a framework that focuses on repairing relationships and making people accountable for their actions, rather than assigning blame and punishment. It allows the voices of students and teachers to be heard, and for those harmed to express themselves.

- The goals of both initiatives include a decrease in problem behaviors, a decrease in office disciplinary referrals and suspensions, increased student engagement (including increased student attendance), and increased student perception of school safety.

Selected Findings

- **Increases in Fidelity of Implementation and Positive Outcomes**
  - ➢ By the end of 2015-2016, more SWBPIS schools met the fidelity of implementation requirements as compared to the 2014-2015 school year. Data indicate that most schools implemented with fidelity after one year of full implementation.
  - ➢ Most schools across both SWPBIS and RP programs had an increase in student attendance.
  - ➢ For schools implementing SWPBIS, more schools in the 2015-2016 school year experienced a decrease in their suspension rates compared to the previous year
  - ➢ District-wide survey results indicated that teachers in SWPBIS schools reported improvements in bullying from 2014-2015 to 2015-2016, compared with non-SWPBIS schools, indicating that SWPBIS may influence perception of school climate.

- **Factors Supporting Fidelity of Implementation**
  - ➢ As part of the study, District Staff have identified factors that may support robust implementation of SWPBIS. These include strong implementation teams, principal support, and data-driven decision making.
  - ➢ Fidelity of implementation data suggest a difference in the types of coaching (District vs. external coaches). District coaches who spend more time in the schools may be better able to establish relationships that are more suitable for strong, sustained program implementation.

- **Continued Challenges from 2014-2015 to 2015-2016 School Year**
  - ➢ Qualitative study data revealed inconsistent principal buy-in across SWPBIS and RP schools. In addition, several changes of leadership, particularly in the schools implementing RP, have contributed to lack of consistency with program implementation.
  - ➢ Inconsistency with fidelity measures also continues to be a challenge. There is not an established fidelity measure for RP.