DOINGWHATW⟳RKS

Presentation

Using a Schoolwide Approach to Reduce Behavior Problems in the Classroom

August 2009

Topic: Reducing Behavior Problems
Practice: Schoolwide Approach

Highlights

- The way schools handle disruptive and aggressive behavior sets a tone for all students and deeply impacts the school climate.
- Before implementing a schoolwide behavior approach, the school will need to conduct a needs assessment to identify common behavior problems, their locations, and resources available for intervention.
- School leadership teams are often useful for identifying needs, monitoring implementation, and assessing progress.
- Principals—and school leadership teams—may choose to develop a schoolwide system for themselves, or may implement a packaged program.

Full Transcript

Slide 1: Welcome

Welcome to the overview on Using a Schoolwide Approach to Reduce Behavior Problems in the Classroom.

Slide 2: The overpopulated office

Washington Elementary teachers knew what to do when students acted out; they sent them to the office. Every day the principal and vice principal had a long line of students waiting to see them. So many, in fact, that they didn't have any time to focus on why students were actually misbehaving. Matters were complicated since different teachers responded to student outbreaks differently, and students were constantly pushing their boundaries to see what they could get away with in each class. The school was in a constant state of crisis.

Slide 3: Who benefits?

All schools, including Washington Elementary, can benefit from a schoolwide approach to reducing disruptive and aggressive student behavior.

Many schools already use a number of practices, programs, or policies to deal with disciplinary infractions, but with careful planning and involvement of all staff, these can be coordinated in a way that better supports each staff member and promotes stronger student outcomes.

Using a schoolwide approach, a principal can provide programs to all students on campus in addition to a subset of students who have persistent behavior difficulties. Such a comprehensive approach can have many benefits, including improved social climate and better integration of students with emotional and behavioral disabilities in the regular education classroom.

Slide 4: Discipline policies

One element of a schoolwide approach is having positively stated behavior rules and maintaining consistency in referring to those rules. It is vitally important that discipline is not seen as being arbitrary or biased. Using the same rules in all classrooms and in all other locations on campus can reduce student confusion and help them remember and practice appropriate behavior.

Slide 5: Positive versus punitive

When all school staff consistently model caring and respectful behavior, students feel more motivated to be

respectful and caring as well. A school climate that only builds on a punitive approach may lead to negative outcomes, such as a lack of understanding of what positive communication looks like, and can reinforce persistent patterns of disruptive student behavior.

Slide 6: Needs assessment

Before implementing a schoolwide behavior approach, the school will need to conduct a needs assessment. This assessment should take into consideration existing policies, programs, and resources, and the exact nature of the challenges the school is facing, such as identifying "hot spots" where problems frequently occur. The use of standardized reporting forms to be filled out by teachers, aides, students, and others can help staff better intervene to address prevalent problems across classrooms or grade levels.

Slide 7: Leadership

School leadership teams are often useful for identifying needs, monitoring implementation, and assessing progress. These teams may involve administrators, teachers, behavior experts, and parents. The teams also can help to motivate ambivalent staff to support the effort. Research suggests that at least 80% of school staff need to be actively committed to a schoolwide approach in order for it to be successful.

Slide 8: Developing programs

Principals and school leadership teams may choose to develop their own schoolwide system or may decide to implement a packaged program. If the school opts for a packaged program, staff should carefully examine it by asking questions such as: Do the program goals match our school's needs? Can we afford the cost and time required? Principals should pose the same questions they would ask if they were developing their own program.

Slide 9: Monitoring

Any action plan should include a way to monitor the quality of implementation and student outcomes. Change can be gradual, and without a meaningful data system in place, stakeholders may not be able to see the progress that has been made. Exactly what data are gathered should be based on the challenges and goals identified by the needs assessment. These data should be compiled and reported back to staff, informing them about any gradual progress, remaining challenges, and recommendations on where and how to refine the plan's implementation.

Slide 10: District support

School districts can support all aspects of schoolwide efforts. For example, they can provide guidance and expertise in using data systems, information about relevant programs and funding sources, and training for leadership teams. In addition, school districts can facilitate collaboration of principals and leadership teams across the district in order to promote knowledge sharing.

Slide 11: Washington's team

The principal of Washington Elementary gathered together a team of teachers, parents, district specialists, and staff to look at what was going on across the school. Patterns quickly became evident and the team began meeting regularly to talk about ways to reorganize the school in order to deal with the issues they had identified. It took a year and a lot of hard work, but there is an excitement among the staff about what the school is doing. For the first time, everyone is on the same page and ready to teach.

Slide 12: Learn more

To learn more about Using a Schoolwide Approach to Reduce Behavior Problems in the Classroom, please explore the additional resources on the Doing What Works website.