



Audio

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

State Support of Schoolwide Change Efforts

Peggy O'Reilly and Perkie B. Cannon • July 2009

Topic: Reducing Behavior Problems

Practice: Schoolwide Approach

Highlights

- The New Jersey Department of Education Office of Special Education recruits and supports schools in the implementation of positive behavior supports for all students.
- The goal is to develop supportive and knowledgeable personnel who will be responsive to the needs of students in special education within the general education setting.
- The department is purposeful in its recruitment of schools to ensure they understand the level of commitment required from the school and the opportunities for training and technical assistance that will be provided.
- School-based teams received training to facilitate the work of the school in establishing the positive behavior supports.

Full Transcript

Peggy O’Reilly: My name is Peggy O’Reilly. I am the Manager of the Bureau of Program Development within the Office of Special Education Programs at the New Jersey Department of Education in Trenton.

Perkie Cannon: My name is Perkie Cannon. I am the Special Education Consultant from the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, the Learning Resource Center, Morris Plains, New Jersey.

O’Reilly: We are working with some of the toughest schools in the state, some of the most challenged schools in the state by design, and most challenged in terms of their ability to include students with disabilities. Our goal then is to create schools with supportive, responsive, personnel who are able to be proactive and educative in including students with disabilities within general education programs and settings. A related goal is to reduce suspension and expulsion of students with disabilities in schools that have those challenges. We have a very purposeful, systematic way in which we recruit schools and to ensure that school leaders understand the commitments that they need to make, as well as the opportunities that we’re providing for training and technical assistance. And we are very purposeful in outlining the kind of school-based teams who receive the training and then facilitate the work of their schools.

Cannon: Our school-based teams are recruited by the school leader, who is the one who completes the application. So, the requirements consist of a school administrator, a person who functions as a coach—and we recommend that two people take on that role because it is very intensive in terms of they’re the people to help organize and lead the different work groups that occur within a school-base team for implementing school-wide positive behavior supports. We also recommend at least one general education teacher, a special education teacher, and require a parent. There are also guidance counselors who are often on the school team, and we often have school nurses. We have had security monitors that are on the hallway. The most effective way for a school district or a state, if they’re considering introducing positive behavior supports, would be through a small cohort where you begin to select some groups of schools that are looking at enhancing their capacity to address behavior needs and include students with disabilities in general ed settings, and working through with that group to see how they could expand this and start. We found that working initially, we had a very small group of schools that we started, as we were learning ourselves how this functioned in the school-wide setting to change a system and understand how the ideas actually worked in getting administrative support, school support across all personnel, including the support staff—we find that that’s often a very important element to consider—such as hallway monitors or cafeteria aids, playground monitors. Those people have a lot of contact with our students in those unsupervised settings that often are problematic for our students, all students including students with disabilities, where their rules are not as explicitly stated, especially in a positive way.