



reclaiming

children and youth

Positive
Behavioral Strategies

Volume 19, Issue 1, Spring 2010

reclaiming

children and youth

Positive Behavioral Strategies

spring 2010



- 3 **BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT AND BEHAVIORAL CHANGE: HOW CAN WE TELL THEM APART?**
Edna Olive
- 7 **HOW TO FIX AN AZ-BURGER**
Jonathan J. Smith
- 12 **“PEER PRESSURE” AND THE GROUP PROCESS: BUILDING CULTURES OF CONCERN**
Thomas F. Tate & Randall L. Copas
- 17 **THE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION SUPPORT TEAM (BIST) PROGRAM**
Walter T. Boulden
- 22 **ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGE OF DISENFRANCHISEMENT OF YOUTH**
Carolyn Hughes, Reginald Newkirk, & Pamela H. Stenhjem
- 27 **WHAT TOUGH KIDS NEED FROM US**
Allen Mendler & Brian Mendler
- 32 **FLEXIBLE AS A DANCER, MORE RESILIENT BECAUSE OF IT**
Martin Mitchell & Dana Jacob
- 35 **MOTIVATING URBAN YOUTH**
Richard L. Curwin
- 40 **SHIFTING GEARS: FROM COERCION TO RESPECT IN RESIDENTIAL CARE**
Leslie T. Dunn
- 45 **KING OF COOL**
Mark Freado & Steve Van Bockern
- 50 **DEVELOPING EMOTIONAL LITERACY**
Leonard Fleischer
- 54 **KIDS WHE CARRY IN PROBLEMS FROM HOME**
Ramsey Binnington & Mitchell Beck
- 58 **TEENS WHO INTIMIDATE ADULTS: UNDERSTANDING SYMPTOM ESTRANGEMENT**
Gerrit De Moor



The Behavior Intervention Support Team (BIST) Program: Underlying Theories

Walter T. Boulden

BIST is a proactive school-wide behavior management plan for all students, emphasizing schools partnering with students and parents through caring relationships and high expectations. The BIST program is well-grounded in behavioral theory and combines strength-based and resiliency principles within the context of the ecological, person-in-environment model.

Decades of research supports the importance of classroom management and sheds light on the dynamics of effective classroom management (Marzano & Marzano, 2003). It has demonstrated that disruptive behaviors divert both the teacher's and the students' attention away from instruction, causing excess time to be spent engaged in disciplinary action (Clunies-Ross, Little, & Kienhuis, 2008; Little 2003); compete with student learning time; and negatively impact the academic achievements of the whole class, not just the child who is being disruptive (Little, 2003; Luiselli, Putnam, & Sutherland, 2002).

A major study combining the findings from 135 separate meta-analyses, involving 228 variables affecting student achievement, found that of all the variables, classroom management had the largest effect on student achievement (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993). Additional research indicated that teachers' actions in their classrooms had twice the impact on student achievement as school policies concerning curriculum, assessment, staff collegiality, and community involvement (Marzano, 2003a). Seminal research of the 1980s (Emmer, 1984; Evertson & Emmer, 1982) points to the importance of establishing rules and procedures for general

classroom behavior. Research has emphasized the need for classroom management strategies with well-designed and clearly communicated rules and procedures, accompanied by acknowledgement of students' behavior, reinforcement of acceptable behavior, and provision of consequences for unacceptable behavior (Marzano & Marzano, 2003).

Classroom management strategies generally fall into the categories of reactive and proactive (Wilks, 1996). Reactive strategies follow a student's inappropriate behavior, provide consequences (Little, Hudson, & Wilks, 2000), and are basically remedial in nature. Proactive strategies are conceptualized as being preventative with strong antecedent-based components intended to reduce the likelihood of a student demonstrating inappropriate behavior (Clunies-Ross, Little, & Kienhuis, 2008).

The Behavior Intervention Support Team (BIST) program is a proactive school-wide behavior management plan for all students, emphasizing schools partnering with students and parents through caring relationships and high expectations. The BIST model provides teachers, counselors, and administrators with strategies to respond to students who exhibit disruptive behaviors by assessing and providing what they need (proactive), rather than what the teacher may think they deserve (reactive). Developed in 1990 by the counseling staff at the Ozanam treatment facility for troubled youth

in Kansas City, Missouri, BIST's mission is to help teachers, administrators, parents, and students learn techniques to effect positive change and create a healthy learning environment for all. The primary goals of the BIST program are to: prevent the development of inappropriate behavior, reduce ongoing patterns of disruptive and hurtful behavior, teach skills that will lead to school and life success, and enhance the likelihood of improved academic performance for all students through increased time for teaching and learning when inappropriate behaviors are reduced. This is accomplished through G.R.A.C.E.—Giving Responsibility and Accountability to Children in Education (Osterhaus & Lowe, 1997).

Research has found that poor social and behavioral skills are risk factors for both disruptive behaviors (Henderson & Hollin, 1986) and academic underachievement (Hughes & Sullivan, 1988). The literature emphasizes the importance of neutralizing or eliminating student risk factors while enhancing protective factors to prevent or reduce the occurrence and prevalence of problem behaviors and increase students' academic gains (Hawkins, Catalano, Kosterman, Abbott, & Hill, 1999). BIST, like other intervention approaches which include training elements to enhance the social and behavioral skills of students, is based on the assumption that certain students lack the requisite behavioral skills to engage in adequate interaction with others (Goldstein, 1973; Lazarus, 1971) and strives to address the socio-developmental needs of these students (Beelman, Pflugsten, & Lösel, 1994).

The BIST program provides a multi-level approach which parallels several other multi-tier proactive discipline models (Sugai, Sprague, Horner, & Walker, 2000). The complete multi-level BIST discipline plan was conceived as a school-wide model, but the strategies can be implemented within single or multiple classroom settings, when the school-wide approach is infeasible at the time of introduction. The BIST model involves clarifying expectations for faculty members, establishing clear and consistent rules, teaching expectations to all students, enhancing student social and problem-solving skills, affording students the opportunity to practice expectations, reinforcing appropriate behavior through an array of progressively intense levels of assessment for students who need more teaching and practice to develop social and behavioral skills, and increasing levels of intervention matched to the types of skill deficits exhibited and needs identified.



BIST trains teachers to intervene at the moment an unacceptable behavior occurs. Early intervention provides the structure and consistency that offers security to all students. These early stages of intervention are implemented in the classroom in the form of progressive levels of inclusion/separation from reinforcing elements of the environment, while encouraging students to evaluate their feelings and behaviors and make more appropriate behavior choices without missing out on academic instruction.

Additional secondary prevention strategies may include increased supervision, restrictive class environments, and a recovery room system for students who need time away from the situation to consider their actions and to change the behaviors that are unacceptable. With the adult involved, a student sent to recovery processes the situation and the choices made which precipitated being sent to recovery. This is a time for the student and teacher to develop a partnership that permits the student to accept responsibility for his or her actions and to develop a plan of action in case problems occur in the future.

A tertiary level of intervention may be needed with some students and would involve the development of a protective plan for the student, as well as a classroom and/or building-wide plan of action. That plan may include a triage process which provides teachers with a scheduled time to check with students before they begin as well as throughout the school day. This interaction is used to determine if the student is capable of continuing with his or her school routine, or if a break is needed to allow time for him or her to regain composure.

BIST is grounded in behavioral theory (Anderson & Kincaid, 2005), which emphasizes the interplay between physiology and environment, and the ability to affect behavior through environmental manipulations (Alberto & Troutman, 1995). The BIST approach combines strength-based and resiliency principles such as the provision of caring relationships, high expectations, and opportunities to participate and contribute (Benard, 2004) within the context of the ecological, person-in-environment model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Both classroom management and academic achievement depend

on the joint efforts and abilities of teachers, students, parents, and administrators, and on the ways these efforts interact and complement each other (Becker & Baumol, 1996). BIST encourages and offers a framework for communication with

parents and guardians so they understand and support the BIST process of teaching their children appropriate social and behavioral skills.

Resiliency theory helps to identify which areas to address in an intervention effort to increase the likelihood of improving children's

development over time. Resiliency-based programming can help focus prevention and intervention on specific areas that would lead to increasing skills or creating environments protective of children's development by reducing children's risks (Middlemiss, 2005). Schools and teachers who implement the BIST model provide a caring, structured learning environment with consistent, clear standards that encourage students to accept responsibility for their feelings and ultimately their behaviors.

Research indicates that in order to be effective, resiliency-based programming must provide information in a manner that is salient and acceptable to the children, families, and communities it serves (Dumka, Roosa, Michaels, & Suh, 1995). A 2003 meta-analysis of more than 100 studies found that the quality of teacher-student relationships is the keystone for all other aspects of classroom management (Marzano, 2003b). When students feel they are respected, believe that the teacher's positive feelings towards them is not dependent on their perfect fulfillment of all the teacher's expectations (Fox, 1993), and know that the students have a role in the decisions effecting their behavior and learning, they are more likely to accept the responsibility for those behaviors (Gatongi, 2007). Additional research indicates that working within a safe and respectful environment and establishing specific learning (academic and/or behavioral) agreed upon by both teacher and student provides a means of focusing students' learning efforts (Locke & Latham, 2002). Conversely, if students do not believe they have the teacher's respect, they are unlikely to take the necessary risks for learning new and difficult skills (Snyder & Lopez, 2006).

BIST's mission is to help teachers, administrators, parents, and students learn techniques to effect positive change and create a healthy learning environment for all.

The BIST model is designed to assist students in learning to separate feelings and behaviors in order to develop problem-solving skills which will enhance their ability to make choices that will keep them safe, out of trouble, and focused on learning. This person-centered approach provides a way of understanding and developing strategies to address behavior problems in the classroom and school (Gatongi, 2007). Based on the core conditions of congruence, empathy, and unconditional positive regard, the person-centered approach involves expressing respect with no judgment and separating the student from the behavior (Rogers, 1986).

BIST focuses on allowing students the time necessary to recognize the feelings that motivated their choice of behavior and planning how to react appropriately the next time they feel that way. Through modeling and instruction, teachers help students learn to separate their feelings from their disruptive behavior, and learn problem-solving skills, focusing on the cognitive process of behavioral change and practicing those problem-solving skills (Kendall & Hollon, 1979). Research supports this BIST approach of behavioral skill development through directed covert thinking processes (Urbain & Kendall, 1980). Students are taught skills related to alternative solution thinking, means-end thinking, consequential thinking, causal thinking, and sensitivity to interpersonal problems (Spivack, Platt, & Shure, 1976).

The BIST program simultaneously engages school administrators, teachers, parents, and students in a proactive/preventative, problem-solving school discipline plan, designed to teach social and behavioral skills and enhancing the academic and social growth of students. This ecological approach requires the skills necessary to engage issues at all levels, in multiple modalities, and in a collaborative way (Gutierrez, Yeakly, & Ortega, 2000).

A primary feature distinguishing the BIST program from other proactive discipline plans is that BIST does not just provide teacher training workshops. A key element of the model is the establishment of an ongoing partnership between school personnel and BIST consultants who meet monthly with school personnel in a collaborative problem-solving capacity in support of their ongoing professional development. BIST also provides ongoing phone and email support as well as personal consulting if a teacher feels a student is in crisis. As part of that professional development, staff members are also taught how to collect and utilize data on an ongoing basis for effective decision-making regarding

the social skills and behavior instruction in their classroom and school. The importance of this element of the BIST discipline plan was emphasized in a recent longitudinal evaluation of the impact of the school-wide implementation of the BIST program at a public middle school (Boulden, 2009).

Conclusion

The Behavior Intervention Support Team (BIST) program is well-grounded in behavioral theory (Anderson & Kincaid, 2005) and combines strength-based and resiliency principles (Benard, 2004) within the context of the ecological, person-in-environment model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). BIST strategies are person-centered and based on the core conditions of congruence, empathy, and unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1986).

This strong theoretical basis with evaluations that have demonstrated success in reducing disruptive behaviors in the classroom (Boulden, 2009; Osterhaus & Lowe, 1997) positions BIST as a promising, evidence-based, proactive classroom management and school-wide discipline plan. It is recommended that additional evaluations of the BIST program be conducted across multiple sites to facilitate comparative analyses and further explore the impact of BIST's emphasis on ongoing technical assistance as part of teacher professional development.

Walter T. Boulden, PhD, is executive director of Resource Development Institute in Kansas City, Missouri. He can be reached by email at bouldenw@rdikc.org

References

- Alberto, P. A., & Troutman, A. C. (1995). *Applied behavior analysis for teachers* (4th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Merrill/Prentice-Hall.
- Anderson, C. M., & Kincaid, D. (2005). Applying behavior analysis to school violence and discipline problems: Schoolwide positive behavior support. *Behavior Analyst, 28*, 49-63.
- Becker, W., & Baumol, W. (1996). *Assessing educational practices: The contribution of economics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Beelman, A., Pflingsten, U., & Losel, E. (1994). Effects of training social competence in children: A meta-analysis of recent evaluation studies. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 23*, 260-271.
- Benard, B. (2004). *Resiliency: What have we learned?* Oakland, CA: WestEd Publishing.

- Boulden, W. T. (2009). *Evaluation of the school-wide implementation of BIST: A five-year longitudinal study*. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Clunies-Ross, P., Little, E., & Kienhuis, M. (2008). Self-reported and actual use of proactive and reactive classroom management strategies and their relationship with teacher stress and student behavior. *Educational Psychology, 28*(6), 693-710.
- Dumka, L. E., Roosa, M. W., Michaels, M. L., & Suh, K. (1995). Using research and theory to develop prevention programs for high-risk families. *Family Relations, 44*, 78-86.
- Emmer, E. T. (1984). *Classroom management: Research and implications*. (R & D Report No. 6178). Austin, TX: Research and Development Center for Teacher Education, University of Texas. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED251448)
- Evertson, C. M., & Emmer, E. T. (1982). Preventive classroom management. In D. Duke (Ed.), *Helping teachers manage classrooms* (pp. 2-31). Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Fox, M. (1993). *Psychological perspectives in education*. London, England: Cassell Education Limited.
- Gatongi, F. (2007). Person-centred approach in schools: Is it the answer to disruptive behavior in our classrooms? *Counseling Psychology Quarterly, 20*(2), 205-211.
- Goldstein, A. (1973). *Structured learning therapy*. New York, NY: Academic.
- Gutierrez, L., Yeakly, A., & Ortega, R. (2000). Educating students for social work with Latinos: Issues for the new millennium. *Journal of Social Work Education, 36*, 541-557.
- Hawkins, J. D., Catalano, R. F., Kosterman, R., Abbott, R., & Hill, K. G. (1999). Preventing adolescent health-risk behaviors by strengthening protection during childhood. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, 153*, 226-234.
- Henderson, M., & Hollin, C. R. (1986). Social skills training and delinquency. In C. R. Hollin & P. Trower (Eds.), *Handbook of social skills training: Applications across the life span* (pp. 79-101). Elmsford, NY: Pergamon.
- Hughes, J. N., & Sullivan, K. A. (1988). Outcome assessment in social skills training with children. *Journal of School Psychology, 26*, 167-183.
- Kendall, P. C., & Hollon, S. D. (1979). Cognitive-behavioral interventions: Overview and current status. In P. C. Kendall & S. D. Hollon (Eds.), *Cognitive-behavioral interventions: Theory, research and procedures* (pp. 1-9). New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Lazarus, R. S. (1971). *Personality* (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Little, E. (2003). *Kids behaving badly: Teacher strategies for classroom behaviour*. Frenchs Forest, Australia: Pearson Education.
- Little, E., Hudson, A., & Wilks, R. (2000). Conduct problems and treatment across home and school. *Behaviour Change, 17*, 1-9.
- Locke, E., & Latham, G. P. (2002). Building a practically useful theory of goal setting and task motivation: A 35-year odyssey. *American Psychologist, 57*, 705-717.
- Luiselli, K. L., Putnam, R. F., & Sutherland, M. (2002). Longitudinal evaluation of behavior support intervention in a public middle school. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 4*(3), 182-188.
- Marzano, R. J. (2003a). *What works in schools*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Marzano, R. J. (with Marzano, J. S., & Pickering, D. J.). (2003b). *Classroom management that works*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Marzano, R. J., & Marzano, J. S. (2003). The key to classroom management. *Educational Leadership, 61*(1), 6-13.
- Middlemiss, W. (2005). Prevention and intervention: Using resiliency-based multi-setting approaches & a process-orientation. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal, 22*(1), 85-103.
- Osterhaus, N., & Lowe, D. (1997). Helping schools say "yes" to children who say "no." *Reclaiming Children and Youth, 6*(3), 189-190.
- Rogers, C. R. (1986). Reflections of feelings. *Person-Centered Review, 1*, 375-377.
- Snyder, C. R., & Lopez, S. J. (2006). *Positive psychology: The scientific and practical explorations of human strengths*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.
- Spivack, G., Platt, J. J., & Shure, M. G. (1976). *The problem-solving approach to adjustment*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Sugai, G., Sprague, J. R., Horner, R. H., & Walker, H. M. (2000). Preventing school violence: The use of office discipline referrals to assess and monitor school-wide discipline interventions. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 8*, 94-101.
- Urbain, E. S., & Kendall, P. C. (1980). Review of social-cognitive problem-solving with children. *Psychological Bulletin, 88*, 105-143.
- Wang, M. C., Haertel, G. D., & Walberg, H. J. (1993). Toward a knowledge base for school learning. *Review of Educational Research, 63*(3), 249-294.
- Wilks, R. (1996). Classroom management in primary schools: A review of the literature. *Behaviour Change, 13*, 20-32.