***DE-PBS, Bullying Prevention, and School Climate***

***Q&A***

***What is Delaware’s approach to School-Wide Positive Behavioral Supports?***

Although similar to the SWPBS approach found in many other states (see [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)), Delaware’s approach (DE-PBS) places much greater emphasis on integrating common features of SWPBS with those of the Social and Emotional Learning approach (SEL; see www.CASEL.org). In integrating these two popular approaches, the primary goal of DE-PBS is to create safe and caring learning environments that promote the social-emotional and academic development of all children. A combination of teacher-centered and student-centered strategies and techniques found in the SWPBIS and SEL approaches are used to prevent behavior problems, *including bullying*, to correct behavior problems (combining positive and punitive techniques, with emphasis on the former), and to develop self-discipline. Those strategies and techniques are applied at the universal level with all students. Schools also are to apply such strategies and techniques more intensively and comprehensively with students who are currently demonstrating significant behavior problems, or who are at the greatest risk for such.

***What are the Delaware School Climate Surveys?***

Consisting of Student, Teacher/Staff, and Home versions, the Delaware School Climate surveys are completed by approximately 75% of schools in Delaware. Guided by theory and research on school climate and school discipline, they were designed to assess aspects of school climate targeted for improvement in the DE-SWPBS approach. Those aspects of school climate are measured in Part I and include:

Teacher-Student Relationships Student-Student Relationships,

Respect for Diversity Teacher-Home Communications

School Safety Clarity of Expectations

Fairness of Rules Student Engagement

Parent Satisfaction (Home survey) Teacher/Staff Relations (Teacher survey)

Schoolwide Bullying (Student and Teacher/Staff surveys)

Part II Students and Teachers/Staff also include:

Use of Positive Behavioral Techniques

Use of Punitive Techniques

Use of Social Emotional Learning Techniques.

Both the Student and Home surveys also include a separate section that measures bullying victimization.

Research supporting the validity and reliability of the Delaware School Climate Surveys have been published in several peer-reviewed journals, appears in a Technical Manual, and has been presented at several national conferences (see references below).

***Is bullying measured by the Delaware School Climate Surveys?***

Yes. The Student and Parent versions contain 12 items and 3 subscales: Physical Bullying, Verbal Bullying, and Relational/Social Bullying. The Student version also contains 5 items assessing cyberbullying victimization. Students respond by reporting the extent to which they have been victims of bullying during the school year, and parents/guardians report the extent to which their children are victims of bullying. In addition, the Student and Teacher versions include a Schoolwide Bullying subscale in which respondents report the extent to which bullying occurs in their school.

Together, the School Climate Surveys include a total of 10 subscales measuring bullying.

***How are school climate and bullying related?***

The two are reciprocally related: bullying creates a negative climate, and a positive school climate helps prevent bullying. Research on the Delaware School Climate Surveys has found correlations between total school climate scores and student reports of bullying to range from
-.42 to -.50 (depending on grade level and type of bullying). Thus, by reducing bullying, one creates a more positive school climate and by improving school climate one reduces bullying.

The Delaware School Climate Surveys are designed to assess those aspects of school climate targeted in DE-SWPBS and that have been shown in research to prevent behavior problems, including bullying (Waasdorp, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2012).

***Can the strategies and techniques used in DE-PBS and measured by the Delaware School Climate Surveys prevent bullying?***

Yes, but only when a combination of behavioral and SEL strategies and techniques are implemented with fidelity. Ample research shows that the behavioral techniques commonly found in the SWPBS approach can reduce office disciplinary referrals and school suspensions (e.g., Horner et al., 2009). A recent study found that the approach also can reduce bullying behaviors (Waasdorp, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2012). Likewise, research shows that the SEL approach can produce a variety of favorable outcomes, including reduced behavior problems and bullying (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). In addition, a wealth of research on the specific strategies and techniques found in the two approaches, such as clarity of expectations, supportive teacher-student relations, and teaching empathy and other social, emotional, and behavioral competencies, are effective in preventing behavior problems, developing self-discipline, and fostering academic achievement. This includes preventing bullying.

Fidelity of implementation is important, however. As with other approaches, the DE-SWPBS approach is unlikely to be effective unless its combination of evidence-based strategies and techniques is implemented consistently, over time, and in a strategic and wise manner.

***Do schools differ in school climate and in what strategies and techniques are most needed for preventing bullying? If so, shouldn’t a prevention program be based on the individual needs of a school?***

Yes. In our research we have found great differences between Delaware schools in school climate, bullying, and the extent to which they are implementing DE-SWPBS. Many schools have a positive school climate, are implementing the strategies and techniques recommended in DE-SWPBS, and have little bullying. However, some schools are lacking in each of those areas. It is highly recommended that each school conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to determine the areas in which they might devote the greatest resources including staff training.

Data from the Delaware School Climate Surveys are useful for this purpose, especially when combined with other data, such as office disciplinary referrals and school suspensions. To assist schools with needs assessment, the Delaware SWPBS project has developed two other tools for schools to use:

The *Delaware Assessment of Strengths and Needs for PBS* (DASNPBS) is a tool designed to help schools assess their strengths and needs in the four major components of schoolwide discipline: Prevention: Implementing Schoolwide and Classroom Systems, Developing Self-Discipline, Correcting Behavior Problems, and Providing Targeted and Intensive Behavioral Supports. Part A of this tool focuses on Tier 1 elements as well as explores program development and evaluation. The survey is administered to all staff and data is collected with the purpose of self and schoolwide assessment and reflection, action planning, and professional development plans.

The *DE-PBS Key Feature Evaluation* is an external evaluation tool used to provide feedback to schools through a detailed report based on their School-wide PBS (SW-PBS) program and implementation. The structure of this evaluation mirrors the DASNPBS components. Information is gathered through interviews with building administration, SWPBS team leader, students, and staff. Team documents, products, and data related to SWPBS implementation in a school are also reviewed.

References and Resources

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