The collaboration between schools and community mental health agencies has been an ongoing effort that has been supported by a variety of initiatives, from both the education and mental health systems. One of the current initiatives that has been fine-tuned over the years is the School-Based Behavioral Health performance grant project.

These grants are from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), Bureau of Special Education and began in the 2006-2007 school year. Since then, the amounts of the grants and the focus have changed to meet the ever-changing needs of students.

The purpose of this year’s School-Based Behavioral Health grants is to support the development of a continuum of School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) that focus on universal prevention, strategic intervention (secondary intervention), and/or intensive service delivery or crisis management needs of school-aged students (tertiary intervention).

The grants also support bringing together educational, clinical, protective and correctional services in a conceptually integrated system of practice that uses a continuum of services.

For the 2011-2012 school year, grant proposals were requested from Local Education Agencies interested in establishing programming efforts for SWPBIS. Schools were also asked to agree to be formally linked, or demonstrate that they will link their services, to the Pennsylvania Positive Behavior Support Network (PAPBS) and/or community behavioral health care agencies in their geographically-defined service delivery area.

This year, two specific grants were available: 1) to establish a SWPBIS program, and 2) maintain and/or expand an already-existing program. Up to $42,000 was available to each successful grant applicant for the 2011-2012 school year.

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A Teacher’s Journey
by Dawn Jones

In Spring 2009, Frances Willard Elementary School in Scranton started its journey toward implementing all three tiers of PBIS. We were introduced to the School-Based Behavioral Health (SBBH) team model of mental health services for children. I was thrilled to hear about this, having previously had extensive experience with the case manager, therapeutic staff support, mobile therapy, and behavioral specialist models. Imagine having mental health professionals in the school who are able to respond immediately to a crisis so that the teacher can continue to teach the other students. What a concept, that almost seemed too good to be true! During the 2009-2010 school year, the SBBH team was up and running and making a positive difference in the lives of the students and families.

In Spring 2010 the school staff completed the Self–Assessment Survey and we received our first Tier 1 training. I became a member of the core team and started on a journey that has been life-changing personally and professionally. In June, four of us and our principal went to Harrisburg to hear Lucille Eber speak on Tiers 2 and 3, data, systems and practices, and tertiary systems and network planning. These words alone were enough to make our heads spin. We were completely overwhelmed, took notes furiously, and passed notes frequently. Dr. Eber was great and I wanted to hear more. Back in Scranton with our eyes glazed over, we continued our Tier 1 training and work sessions during the summer. Each member of the team took a job and mine was to analyze the Self-Assessment Survey and come up with three goals for the year.

Tier 1 Universal Intervention started at the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year. Normally it would take longer for a school to be ready for this, but we are Type As and no one can tell us we can’t do something. Our mantra, “Be Ready, Be Responsible, Be Respectful,” along with PAW stickers were a big hit with the students. The job of the Tier 1 team was to get the school staff on board and be as excited about it as we were. We had a very busy year with monthly meetings and planning blowouts. I was the notetaker and also wrote the letter to the school staff to keep them informed and get their input.

In the spring, we asked about the Check in/Check out (CICO) part of Tier 2 since it was clear that we had students who needed it and others we all felt would benefit from a connection to a caring adult. We received the training and guidance to help us get started. I left the Tier 1 team and became the meeting notetaker for Tier 2. Each member of the team worked with a different grade level. I had second grade and started out with 20 students, which was too many. Students who only needed attention were dropped from having a CICO sheet. This intervention (from the classroom teacher and me) was very effective.

In May 2011, three of us attended the Implementers’ Forum in Harrisburg. We were very excited to hear George Sugai, Rob Horner and others, and were surprised at all we had accomplished in less than one year. Instead of being overwhelmed, we were telling Willard’s story to anyone who would listen. We met other schools that had implemented Tier 1, listened to their stories, and stole lots of ideas to take back to our school. I have to admit we felt a bit superior since we already had Tier 3 and a partial implementation of Tier 2. This forum not only validated all we believed in, but helped us appreciate the leadership of our principal, the work of our teams, and the positive impact we were having on our students.

All this was great, but the highlight of my journey and career was attending the 8th National Community Building Forum – IDEA Partnership and the 16th Annual Conference on Advancing School Mental Health in Charleston, South Carolina. I took the place of a district administrator and was scared about being just a special education teacher at such a big event. It was thrilling to be a temporary member of the PA team and spending time with the “big” people from other states and the national level. I was accepted as a valued member of the PA team and much to my surprise everyone wanted to hear Willard’s story. I attended keynote addresses, breakout and practice group sessions, and met people from all over the country. The second most exciting thing that happened was sitting on the same side of the table as Lucille Eber (my hero). I talked to her and she listened to me! The most exciting thing was presenting a session with Carlyn Fontini, Scranton Counseling Center, and Kelly Perales, a member of the State Leadership Team from Community Care Behavioral Health (and my mentor) entitled, “Building an Interconnected Systems Framework: A Tertiary Demonstration Project.” I told Willard’s story again.

I’m pleased to report that Willard received 98 percent on the SET in May 2011, 98.24 percent in November 2011. We’ll be recognized at the Implementers’ Forum in May 2012. We will also participate in a session that will be co-facilitated by Lucille Eber. Ans so my exciting journey continues.

Third Annual Evaluation
by Timothy Runge

The research team at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) conducts annual evaluations of School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports in Pennsylvania. The third annual review was completed in late summer 2011. Thank you to the schools, staff, SWPBIS facilitators, and PaTTAN consultations for submitting comprehensive data to our team. Moreover, congratulations to the schools, staff, students, and communities that are observing substantial benefits for their labor.

Since 2007, a total of 199 schools across the Commonwealth have been trained in the universal SWPBIS framework. These schools represent urban, suburban, and rural districts of all different sizes and demographic constitutions, educating more than 118,000 students in Pennsylvania. Although the majority of schools trained in universal SWPBIS are elementary schools (69 percent), an increasing number of middle and high schools are being trained in this framework. Most recently, a small number of preschool programs have been trained to implement Program-Wide PBIS. These developments are certainly very exciting.

As of Spring 2011, 45 schools achieved full implementation status.
Data from these schools indicate that full implementation is typically achieved within two years of initial training, although a small number of schools require three to four years to fully implement SWPBIS.

Staff perceptions of school risk and protective factors are directly related to the quality of SWPBIS implementation. Schools that fully implement SWPBIS reported fewer risk factors (e.g., drug and gang activity, vandalism, truancy, community poverty and crime, instances of child abuse) across multiple years. Moreover, staff from fully implementing schools reported an increasing trend of protective factors (e.g., opportunities for students to engage in extracurricular activities, parental involvement, school-community collaboration, acceptance of diversity, high expectations for student learning and productivity). These results suggest that SWPBIS fosters a school environment that prevents students from falling victim to personal, familial, or community risks by building on the strengths of the students, families, and the school and local communities.

Consistent with national trends in office discipline referrals (ODRs), schools that fully implemented SWPBIS reported a substantial decrease in ODRs in the first year of implementation. These lower ODR rates were generally sustained over multiple years of SWPBIS implementation. As a result of this decrease in ODRs, more time is available for students to learn and teachers to teach and less time is needed to address disciplinary issues with students.

Closer analysis of ODR trends in fully implementing schools sheds light on the percentages of students who commit the majority of disciplinary infractions within an academic year. Approximately 95 percent of all elementary students receive one or no ODRs in an academic year. Four percent of elementary students receive two to five ODRs, and one percent receives six or more ODRs in a year. At the middle and high school grades, 82 percent of all students receive one or no ODRs in an academic year. Eleven percent of secondary students receive two to five ODRs, and seven percent of secondary students chronically disrupt the learning environment, receiving six or more ODRs in a year. These data indicate that a very small percentage of students are predominantly responsible for the majority of behavioral violations in schools.

Longitudinal data from a subset of schools suggests that high-fidelity SWPBIS implementation has an effect on the number of students who are able to be served in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Schools that fully implement SWPBIS placed significantly higher proportions of students with disabilities in the LRE compared to schools that did not implement SWPBIS. These results suggest that SWPBIS may promote a general education setting that better supports inclusive practices for students with disabilities.

Probably the most encouraging finding obtained from the third annual evaluation is the effect of SWPBIS on academic achievement. Prior to implementing SWPBIS, schools involved in the PAPBS Network were performing below state averages on Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) Reading and Math. Four years after initial implementation, however, fully implementing schools actually reversed their standing compared to the state average. That is, after four years of SWPBIS implementation, schools performed significantly better than state averages on PSSA reading and math. Although a causal relationship cannot be established, clearly these data indicate that high-fidelity SWPBIS is associated with striking improvements in academic skills.

The overall results of the third annual evaluation of the PAPBS Network’s SWPBIS initiative are quite exciting. We continue to encourage PAPBS Network schools to collect and monitor a variety of outcomes including those reported to the statewide evaluators. Best practice in SWPBIS indicates schools should review multiple data sources to evaluate efficacy of practices and plan for improvement and sustainability. The research team is thankful to all schools for submitting their data and hope that these aggregated results will continue to provide compelling empirical evidence for the sustained support of SWPBIS at the local, regional, and state levels.

For more information about the evaluation, join the webinar on January 31, 2012, “SWPBIS Annual Program Evaluation: Implementation and Effects on Outcomes.” Register at http://tinyurl.com/cjqkk5a

Timothy Runge, Ph.D. is co-principal investigator for Pennsylvania SWPBIS and teaches at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

School-Wide Information System

The School-Wide Information System (SWIS) is a web-based information system designed to help school personnel use office referral data to design school-wide and individual student interventions. The three primary elements of SWIS are: 1) an efficient system for gathering information, 2) a web-based computer application for data entry and report generation, and 3) a practical process for using information for decision making.

These three elements enable school personnel to evaluate individual student behavior, the behavior of groups of students, behaviors in specific settings, and behaviors during specific times of the school day. SWIS reports indicate times and/or locations prone to elicit problem behaviors. SWIS also allows teachers and administrators to shape school-wide environments to maximize students’ academic and social achievements.

On September 13-15, 2011, participants from across the Commonwealth attended 2½ days of training on the SWIS. Training participants became part of a network of facilitators who can assist schools to use the SWIS to monitor the effectiveness of the school’s School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) implementation. Schools may only access SWIS through a certified SWIS facilitator.

The trainers were Tina Lawson, Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network, and Susannah Everett, University of Connecticut. Both are now certified national SWIS facilitator trainers. Celeste Dickey, University of Oregon, was the lead trainer. The University of Oregon has oversight of the SWIS system. Pennsylvania and Connecticut are now able to host state trainings for SWIS facilitators. There are only 30 SWIS facilitator trainers nationally and internationally.

A complete list of SWIS facilitators in Pennsylvania is at www.swis.org, or contact Tina M. Lawson, Ed.D. at 610-265-7321, x7254 or tlawson@pattan.net.
2012 Implementers’ Forum

The Pennsylvania Positive Behavior Support (PAPBS) Implementers’ Forum, “Going to Scale: Three-Tiered Logic,” will be held May 23-24, 2012 at the Hershey Lodge and Convention Center in Hershey.

The forum is sponsored by the Bureau of Special Education, Pennsylvania Department of Education, with support from the member agencies of Pennsylvania’s State Leadership Team for School Based Behavioral Health. The forum is designed as a venue for stakeholders who are interested in advancing supports for all students, including students with disabilities, in the implementation of School or Program-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). It provides participants with information about establishing, maintaining and expanding PBIS through a three-tiered decision-making framework that guides the selection, integration and implementation of evidence-based practices for improving behavior outcomes for learners.

The Implementers’ Forum will address five specialized program strands at the early childhood, elementary, middle and high school levels: Universal Supports for Students (Tier 1), Secondary Supports and Interventions (Tier 2), Tertiary Supports and Interventions (Tier 3), Community and Family Partnerships, and Coaching.

The Implementers’ Forum will feature strategies for scaling-up school and program-wide PBIS; national presentations by Dr. Lucille Eber, Dr. Scott Ross, Dr. Laura Riffel, Dr. George Sugai, and Dr. Mary Louise Hemmeter; and 35 breakout sessions, differentiated to support the needs of both novice and experienced implementers.

Registration will be available online at www.pattan.net in February 2012.

SWPBIS Independent Facilitators

The PAPBS Network is proud to acknowledge the following individuals who have become independent facilitator for SWPBIS. Two years ago, 70 individuals were asked to serve as SWPBIS facilitators. They have gone through numerous trainings and individually worked on completing the tasks required to move to independent status. The requirements for this included shadowing an independent facilitator who was delivering training for school teams and implementing various components of a school-wide program. The list continues to grow as the remaining provisional facilitators complete their requirements.

Tier 1 Independent Facilitators

- Curt Davis, Alternative Community Resource Program (Western)
- Adriana Gonzalez-Lopez, Christina Ager, Teri Wiedeman-Rouse, Priscilla Jeter-Isles, Kimberly Dean, all from Arcadia University (Eastern)
- Leanna Lawson and Carrie Frohnapfel, IU 3 (Western)
- Susan Black, Beth Glew, Lindsay McGough, Curt Springer, Rhett Fertig, IU 4 (Western)
- Annette Eccles, IU 5 (Western)
- Tina Howes (Retired), IU 8 (Central)
- Jessica Shuman, IU 16 (Central)
- Brenda Roberts and Kelly Swartwood, IU 17 (Central)
- Elaine Geroulo and Ellen Cummings, IU 19 (Eastern)
- Donna Halpin, IU 20 (Eastern)
- Sarah DiMarino, IU 22 (Eastern)
- Patti Bogart and Charlie Robey, IU 24 (Eastern)
- Stephanie Szczepkowski, IU 25 (Eastern)

Early Childhood Update

Program-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PWPBIS) for early childhood programs continues to be implemented successfully in multiple sites across Pennsylvania. This year PBIS is being implemented in both early childhood classrooms and in a new home-based model. Preliminary feedback from the home-based PBIS model is very positive. The home-based model focuses on providing coaching to Early Interventionists who provide supports and services to infants and toddlers with developmental disabilities and their families. An online course is in production to offer additional training on how to provide PBIS supports to infants and toddlers based on resources from the Center for Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) and the Technical Assistance Center for Social and Emotional Intervention (TACSEI).

New this year to PWPBIS is a cohort of trained facilitators. Applications to be a program-wide facilitator have been received from both early childhood programs and early intervention programs. In addition to the programs that these facilitators are currently supporting, plans are being developed to effectively use the facilitators in new programs seeking support. PWPBIS has several sessions scheduled for the 2012 Implementers’ Forum. Dr. Mary Louise Hemmeter from Vanderbilt University will be a keynote speaker and will share strategies for linking early childhood and school age PBIS as well as a session on the impact of coaching in the Pyramid Model.
Implementing PBIS in a Secondary School: Doing What Is Best for Kids

by Joe Peacock
(Special Supplement: originally written for the December 2011 PA CASSP Newsletter)

It takes four satellites to control the global positioning system (GPS) in a car: three to determine the car’s precise location while the fourth determines the car’s path. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) works the same way. Students continually send “signals” in terms of attendance, grades and behaviors which indicate where a student is positioned in our student population. Compiling a student’s “signals” within the PBIS framework helps us to see a student’s current and/or possible paths. PBIS is the school-wide version of Behavioral Support Plans (BSP) that places emphasis on teaching, modeling, and rewarding desired behaviors rather than focusing on disruptive behaviors.

In Pennsylvania, the SWPBIS program was primarily seen as an effective elementary or middle school initiative. The challenges of implementing this program at the secondary level are numerous and include issues with team planning, token rewards, teacher and student perceptions, and demanding curricular concerns.

For these reasons, even though district-wide expectations were posted, the program began in the middle school during the 2007 school year with the expectation that it would travel with the students as they progressed through the grades. Our first goal was to improve student behavior during lunch. The desired expectations and procedures were taught to the students through teacher-designed skits and posted behavioral reminders. All of the lessons aligned with our school-wide expectations: Respect Yourself and Others, Respect Learning, and Respect Our School Environment. Students exhibiting proper behaviors were rewarded verbal praise in addition to receiving a token reward – a “Torch Ticket.” Torch Tickets could be redeemed for various items ranging from school-related items to movie passes. This process showed profound results and reduced cafeteria incidents in the middle school drastically.

Building from the success in the cafeteria, the use of Torch Tickets became more prevalent in middle school classrooms during the 2008 school year as students actively sought to earn them. Using data collected by the School-Wide Information System (SWIS) to drive our focus, we began a school-wide initiative to reduce tardiness in grades 7-12. To reinforce the expectation of timeliness, videos produced by students were shown to the student body. Rather than giving high school students Torch Tickets, we kept track of the students’ tardies and offered a raffle every three weeks for students who were not tardy during that time. Once again, we saw positive results as the school year moved forward, and we continued to use this method of using student videos to teach our focus items.

The Northgate School District is comprised of nearly 1,300 students, with approximately 600 of the students evenly dispersed over grades 7-12. We are a small walking district that includes the boroughs of Avalon and Bellevue, covering an area slightly less than two square miles on the northern border of the City of Pittsburgh. During the 2006 school year, our district was awarded a behavioral safety grant that provided the resources and support to implement the School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports program (SWPBIS) in all three schools in our district.
carry the Torch Tickets to ninth grade classes as part of our plan to spiral the program as the students progressed. In the middle school, we began to recognize individual students for improvement or achievement as classroom stars. Students were presented with a certificate, a star with their name written on it was hung outside the teacher’s classroom, and the assistant principal called home commending each student’s achievement.

As we entered the fourth year, 2010, the culture changes which resulted from the previous three years were discussed among the students and faculty. I had the opportunity to visit two high schools in Maryland – Thomas Stone and Fort Meade – to see how they implemented PBIS. Both schools were impressive, but Fort Meade caught my attention because they were using Meade Mustang Bucks in a similar manner as we were using Torch Tickets. As we toured the school of nearly 1,800 students, we were sure that we were on the right track. When I returned, I brought this concept to the core team, a group of teachers, counselors, and administration, and we reignited the concept of Torch Tickets throughout all grades.

In 2011, we offered Torch Tickets school-wide and added a weekly raffle for both students and teachers. The data for this year pointed towards our need to reduce disrespectful behaviors so we initiated grade level competitions based on behavioral, academic, and attendance goals for each grading period.

We began the high school Student of the Quarter award to recognize a specific character trait in alignment with school expectations. We built on the previous years of “doing what is expected” to include “polite conversations” in order to reduce disrespectful behaviors and “dress for success” to address the school dress code. As a result of these efforts, we have seen significant decreases in our office discipline referral data in each targeted area. Over the past three years, data have shown a decrease in total office referrals by 24 percent and a reduction of incidents resulting in out-of-school and in-school suspensions, as well as the number of students who receive them.

As we enter our third year of full implementation at the high school level we are seeing increased student ownership and involvement in the program. At the end of last school year, we had individually recognized or awarded hundreds of students and 27 teachers and aides on a very meager budget. We were able to do this with a great deal of effort from a very dedicated core team and faculty that wants, as our Principal Bryan Kyle says, “what is best for kids.”

Joe Peacock is assistant principal of the Northgate Middle/Senior High School, Allegheny County.

To read more stories from programs and school districts implementing Positive Behavioral Supports and Interventions, check out the December 2011 edition of the PA CASSP Newsletter at http://tinyurl.com/87fp2ya