

Intervention Case Study 18

This intervention involves introducing school-wide positive behavior support at a middle school.

Introduction

Phoenix Middle School is a school in a rural area with approximately 530 students in grades 6-8. The middle school has staff and administrators committed to introducing schoolwide positive behavior support to their school.

Measurement

Researchers looked at the Office Discipline Referrals (ODR) for the school. Students received ODRs when they displayed problem behavior that could not be immediately dealt with by a teacher. Problem behaviors resulting in ODRs include tardiness, profanity, theft, vandalism, fighting, harassment, ditching, disruption of class, noncompliance, possession or use of drugs or a weapon, and repeated minor problem behaviors. The ODR included the problem behavior, student, date, and consequence. Staff looked at the ODRs to identify when and where problem behaviors were most likely.

Researchers collaborated with staff and administrators at the middle school. The team met weekly during the school year and conducted two hour long workshops with the entire staff of the middle school. The team decided that they needed a plan for the first day of school to teach students what was expected of them as well as a way to remind students of expectations throughout the school year.

Intervention

The team decided on five expectations for students: 1-be respectful 2-be responsible 3-be there and be ready 4-follow directions and 5-hands and feet to self. The team also identified how each expectation might look in different school contexts. For example, being respectful in the classroom might include listening to other students and being respectful in the cafeteria might include not cutting in line. Every student attended training at the start of the year to learn the expectations. They received the training in groups of 30 to 60 and spent 30 minutes in six main areas of the school (e.g. cafeteria, gym, classroom). At each area, students learned what appropriate and inappropriate behaviors were for that region, asked to display the appropriate behavior, and rewarded if they did display the appropriate behavior. Rewards consisted of tickets they could trade in for food. Trainers concentrated more on appropriate rather than inappropriate behavior.

Throughout the school year the team also put in place a plan that would remind students of the expectations. This involved asking students about the expectations while transitioning from one area of the school to another or reminding them of the expectations while they transitioned. Students received tickets they could exchange for treats when they displayed appropriate behavior and when given the ticket, staff identified what the student was doing right. If the student displayed inappropriate behavior they received a warning, detention, or an ODR. The team trained staff to be as consistent as possible in reminding, rewarding, and correcting students. During peak times of problem behavior (such as right before breaks), staff offered new rewards to students. The school also began a class especially for students with emotional and behavioral problems to provide those students with additional support.

Results

Before the intervention, an average of 15 students received an ODR a day. After the intervention, an average of 9 students received an ODR each day. A comparison of ODRs a month pre and post intervention showed that ODRs were less every month after the intervention except for one, in which they were equal.

Taylor-Greene, S., Brown, D., Nelson, L., Longton, J., Gassman, T., Cohen, J., Swartz, J., Horner, R.H., Sugai, G., & Hall, S. (1997). School-wide behavioral support: Starting the year off right. *Journal of Behavioral Education*, 7, 99-112.