To:     House Select Committee on School Safety
From:   Timothy J. Runge, Ph.D., NCSP, Co-Principal Investigator Pennsylvania School-Wide
        Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
Date:   June 3, 2013
Re:     Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

I appreciate the opportunity to submit these written comments related to my upcoming testimony regarding Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and the relationship between PBIS, school safety, and positive school climate.  I would first like to provide a brief synopsis of my credentials before reviewing the critical elements of PBIS, a description of training needed to implement PBIS, and a summary of outcomes associated with high-fidelity PBIS implementation.  I hope that these comments provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate that **PBIS is an essential element of a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to making our schools safe and creating environments that promote student development and success**.  Furthermore, it is my desire that you **include in state legislation strong recommendations that all Pennsylvania schools implement PBIS as part of a comprehensive approach to school safety**.

I am trained as a school psychologist and currently hold the Nationally Certified School Psychologist credential.  I was employed as a school psychologist for nearly a decade in public schools in the Commonwealth.  I had the fortune at that time to work in schools that implemented elements of PBIS, notably universal-level PBIS commonly referred to as School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS).  After working as a practitioner in public education, I served as a technical assistant consultant with the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education, Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN).  While with PaTTAN, I was the lead educational consultant for implementation of SWPBIS in the central region of the Commonwealth.  Presently, I am employed as an assistant professor of educational and school psychology at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP).  Since my hire at IUP in 2008, my colleague Dr. Mark Staszkiewicz and I have served as Co-Principal Investigators of Pennsylvania's SWPBIS project.  Additionally, I am on the State Leadership Team for PBIS.  I have presented numerous workshops and keynotes at regional, state-wide, and national conferences, co-authored eight research summaries, and published studies in peer-reviewed journals all on the topic of SWPBIS.  I believe that these experiences and activities provide me with unique insight regarding how PBIS can improve school safety and create environments that enhance student learning.

Although recent tragic events at Sandy Hook Elementary School refocused our society's priorities to make schools safe places for all students to succeed, I assure you that considerable

work has already been accomplished in many schools

A small percentage of students still fail to respond appropriately to the combined efforts of Tier 1 SWPBIS and strategic Tier 2 interventions.  These students exhibit chronic problematic externalizing and/or internalizing behaviors.  Some

In addition to these outcomes, **emerging evidence is beginning to link high-fidelity SWPBIS implementation with significant increases in academic skills and performance on** state No Child Left Behind **accountability measures**.

**Training and Implementation of PBIS**

Pennsylvania schools interested in implementing PBIS receive training and technical assistance from a network of approved Pennsylvania Positive Behavior Support (PAPBS) Facilitators under the direction of PaTTAN. Initial training to develop the universal SWPBIS framework requires approximately three full-day trainings with follow-up planning time for the core team of educators responsible for facilitating the model. Subsequent to high-fidelity SWPBIS implementation, additional trainings are provided that focus on Tiers 2 and 3 levels of support. Although not necessarily applied to all schools precisely in the same manner, a brief review of training content is offered below:

- Days 1-3: SWPBIS Training
  - Universal principles of SWPBIS
  - Defining school-wide expectations
  - Teaching rules and routines
  - Social and tangible reinforcement system
  - Data-based decision making
  - Office discipline referrals
- Days 4-5: Advanced SWPBIS Training
  - Universal screening
  - Classroom management techniques
  - Pre-correcting problem behavior
  - De-escalation techniques
  - Effective teaming practices
- Days 6-7: Tier 2 Training
  - Behavior Education Program
  - Check-In / Check-Out
  - Functional behavioral assessment
  - Small group instruction
  - Data analysis
- Day 8-9: Tier 3 Training
  - Wrap-around mental health services
  - Person-centered planning
  - Intensive support
  - Positive behavior support plans

Please note that Tiers 2 and 3 training are highly specialized based on the needs of the individual schools. Thus the training indicated above for these tiers is a general outline.

typically occurs within two years of initial training.  A small percentage of schools achieve full implementation status within one year of initial training, although this is often the exception more than the norm.  A still smaller percentage of schools require three to four years to achieve full implementation status.  Lastly, some schools simply never achieve full implementation status after receiving the initial training.  Factors associated with this latter occurrence appear to be related to a combination of issues including lack of administrative support, poor buy-in from staff, and prioritization of other school initiatives (e.g., focus on improving PSSA reading scores).

Once a school achieves full implementation status, sustained implementation is not only likely, but probable.  Longitudinal data from 24 schools indicates that 63% of schools sustain SWPBIS for at least three years.  This percentage is likely an underestimate given incomplete longitudinal data from many other schools.  Only 4% of schools regressed in implementation status after three years.  Reasons for sustained, high-fidelity SWPBIS implementation include administrative support, the strong commitment and expertise of a core team of educators facilitating implementation, annual review of outcomes consistently demonstrating that the framework produces significant effects on students, staff, and the community, and prioritization of SWPBIS as a general operational procedure within a school.

Cross sectional and longitudinal analyses of staff perceptions of how well SWPBIS was implemented were consistent with more objective measures of fidelity.  In other words, staff reported noticeable improvements in implementation of the PBIS framework across multiple years.  We also survey staff annually on their perceptions of risk factors associated with school violence and factors that protect students from potential violence and school failure.  Such risk factors include drug and gang activity, vandalism, truancy, community poverty and crime, and instances of child abuse.  Examples of protective factors include opportunities for students to engage in extracurricular activities, parental involvement, school-community collaboration, acceptance of diversity, and high expectations for student learning and productivity. Theoretically, as SWPBIS is implemented, one would expect that risk factors diminish and protective factors increase, and recent peer-reviewed research apparently supports this

The net effect of reductions in ODRs is a substantial increase in instructional time for teachers, administrative time for principals, and, most importantly, learning opportunities for students. Using longitudinal data from a subgroup of elementary schools, the typical SWPBIS school administrator regained 6.6 hours of time per 100 students each year. This time, previously allocated for dealing with discipline problems and their resultant administrative action, could be refocused on other administrative duties. For elementary teachers, sustained SWPBIS implementation resulted in 6.6 hours of instructional time regained per 100 students in a given academic year. Students in elementary schools implementing SWPBIS were provided

We continue to monitor the efficacy of one manualized Tier 2 intervention called Check-

**Conclusion**

Ultimately, we must implement a multi-faceted, comprehensive plan for promoting school safety and meeting the varied academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs of all students.  PBIS has the empirical support needed to champion its implementation in all schools.  SWPBIS, the universal prevention framework of PBIS, is the evidenced-based practice that will help schools create safe environments in which all students have opportunities to succeed.  It is my hope, and the desire of many dedicated educators, parents, mental health providers, and aligned professionals, that you consider legislation supportive of large-scale implementation of PBIS in all schools in our great Commonwealth.  Thank you for your time and your consideration to this extremely important matter.  Please contact me if you have additional questions (trunge@iup.edu; 724 357-3788).


Respectfully,


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