



Big IDEAs

Dropout
Prevention
Strategies

Big IDEA—EXTENDING SCHOOL-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT BEYOND SCHOOL WALLS THROUGH YOUTH, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT FOSTERS SKILLS THAT PREVENT DROPOUT AMONG STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The Iowa Approach for School-Wide Positive Behavioral Supports for Family, Youth, and Community Involvement

By Suana Wessendorf, Consultant, Iowa Department of Education and Deb Thomas, Training Coordinator, Iowa Behavioral Alliance, Drake University

In 2002 the Iowa Department of Education developed a five-year RFP, the *Iowa Behavioral Supports for Children and Youth*. The focus was to provide support and technical assistance to the original 14 schools implementing School-Wide Positive Behaviour Supports (SW-PBS), to identify model sites with effective dropout prevention programs, and to promote the development of the wrap-around planning process for students with significant behavioral or mental health needs. In January 2003, a contract was awarded to Drake University and their partners, RISE (Research Institute for Special Education) at Iowa State University, Iowa State Extension Service, and Iowa Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health. The contract between the Iowa Department of Education and the Drake collaboration created the Iowa Behavioral Alliance. The Alliance began work on three project elements of positive behavioral supports, dropout prevention, and school-based children’s mental health (wrap-around).

The Iowa Behavioral Alliance is a statewide partnership that:

- Changes how we think about discipline/behavior in schools
- Fosters respectful relationships among youth and adults

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2006 NATIONAL STATE EDUCATION AGENCY FORUM

The National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD) was pleased to sponsor the “National SEA Forum: Building Statewide Initiatives for Students with Disabilities.” This first-ever event was held at Clemson University’s lakefront Madren Center on May 7–9, 2006. Teams from 20 states attended the Forum, totaling over 100 participants.

The purposes of the Forum were to address capacity building in the area of dropout prevention for students with disabilities and

“The conference was very beneficial. It was an affirmation for some initiatives already begun and thought provoking for expansion or implementation of other programs. I look forward to attending other conferences.”
(Alabama)

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- Addresses all levels of student need, including mental health and dropout concerns
- Brings school staff, youth, families, and community together to work at the local level

The work of the Iowa Behavioral Alliance involves the blending of positive behavioral supports and dropout prevention. When PBS and dropout prevention strategies are aligned, schools have better discipline and academic organization. SW-PBS has flexible individualized programs, which have more positive student outcomes. Unfortunately, exclusion and punishment are the most common responses to conduct disorders in schools, (Lane & Murakami, 1987; Rose, 1988; Nieto, 1999; and Sprick, Borgmeier, & Nolet, 2002).

Schools still face many challenges. Exposure to exclusionary discipline has been shown not to improve school outcomes, but in fact, to be associated with higher rates of school dropout (Skiba, Peterson & Williams, 1997; Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, & Rock, 1986; Wehlage & Rutter, 1986; and Sprick, Borgmeier, Nolet, 2002).

School-wide positive behavior support is a set of systemic and individualized strategies for achieving social and learning outcomes while preventing problem behavior. The four core elements for SW-PBS are **clearly defined outcomes, research-validated practices, supportive administrative systems** and **use of information for problem solving**. Schools that have developed a culture that is caring and have an emphasis on connecting with students have lower dropout rates. Having common rules and expectations that are positively reinforced builds a culture of competence.

In addition to building this culture of competence through SW-PBS, Iowa has emphasized two other components: a focus on family involvement and a focus on youth/community involvement.

» Iowa PBS Family Involvement

Students with involved parents are likely to:

- Earn higher grades and test scores
- Be promoted, pass their classes, and earn credits
- Attend school regularly
- Have better social skills and improved behavior
- Graduate and go on to postsecondary education (Henderson & Mapp, *A New Wave of Evidence*, 2002)

Schools should consider that “understanding that family involvement may mean different things to different people can help both teachers and family members avoid misunderstandings and negative stereotyped assumptions” (Bothel, 2003).

From the project’s inception, family voice has been a significant component of the Iowa Behavioral Alliance SW-PBS work. During the second year, an Alliance Family Team was convened. The family team is composed of individuals who represent family professional agencies and organizations. Additionally, a non-staff family member is required on school-based PBS Leadership Teams.

The team’s primary purpose is to represent the needs of families as they relate to work with PBS. A major focus for the Family Team this past year has been on making connections with the family representatives on school-based leadership teams. The emphasis has been on building communication lines with those family representatives through information dissemination and support.

The Alliance has provided training and support for teams regarding meaningful family involvement. Three one-hour modules on family involvement have been developed and presented at each of the regional trainings. This past year a Family Involvement Consultant was hired to work with school-based PBS leadership teams. The Family Consultant has worked with teams to assist them to identify family members to participate on the local leadership team, identify activities to promote family involvement, and provide a family voice from a state perspective. The Family Consultant has also provided onsite technical assistance to teams.

» Iowa PBS Youth and Community Involvement

Another feature unique to PBS in Iowa is the focus on youth and community involvement. “It is important to give kids opportunities to learn decision-making skills in a safe environment while they are young so that when they become adults they have the ability to look at situations and make sound judgments,” states 4H Youth Development Specialist Ann Torbert. According to 4H Youth Development Specialist Annette Brown, “Expanding PBS strate-

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to provide states with tools and strategies for analyzing their data, determining needs, and identifying potential solutions to their dropout issues. Participants gained an in-depth understanding of dropout among students with disabilities and related issues.

As a part of the Forum activities, each team began devel-

oping an implementation plan for activities to address dropout and related indicators in their state.

To this end, each state brought its State Performance Plan, which served as a starting point in brainstorming about desired outcomes and potential resources that could be leveraged to achieve those outcomes.

Forum presentations and activities were structured as working sessions in

"Information provided will assist us in selecting the types of initiatives to pilot on a statewide basis. Resources and materials are shared with member districts in helping them select local programs for implementation. Shared state information provides contacts for follow-up resources."
(Pennsylvania)

"This meeting was well organized and well planned, including timely information and quality presenters and materials. NDPC-SD staff were outstanding. They facilitated sessions with skill and were responsive to participants. The 'tone' set for the meeting struck a balance of being professional while allowing adults to process at their own rates. Attention to adult learning principles was evident." *(Iowa)*

Transition Technical Assistance Center, Ms. Jane Falls of the Post School Outcomes Center, Dr. Albert Cortez

and Josie Cortez from the Intercultural Development Research Association, and Drs. Sandra Smith, Matt Klare, and Paul Riccomini from NDPC-SD.

Thanks to the enthusiastic participation of all the state teams, the Forum was a great success. Everyone's cooperation and collaboration led to a wonderful sharing of knowledge, experiences, and ideas. All of the hard work was evident, and we congratulate the participants on a job well done!



and move forward to effectively address dropout prevention for students with disabilities in your state.

The presentations and other materials from the 2006 National State Education Agency Forum are now available on our website (www.ndpc-sd.org). Please visit our site and follow the link from our Highlights page to see more information about the Forum. As you review the information and the website, please feel free to contact NDPC-SD if we can provide any additional technical assistance. ♦

"The cross-referencing between graduation and dropout prevention was important. It seemed that states wanted to be in the same boat regarding understanding calculations for those two groups of students."
(Massachusetts)

Now that the Forum is over, NDPC-SD is ready and willing to continue supporting you as you refine and implement your plans

"Thank you for the high-quality service you have embarked upon and the determination to assist states in providing leadership to keep eligible students engaged in the schooling process. I do hope that we will continue to examine these benefits for students with disabilities in the context of inclusive education and leveraging these expectations for students with disabilities to foster reduced dropouts in the student population as a whole. Again, thank you." *(Connecticut)*

gies beyond the school walls is important because youth do not live in an isolated environment of the school building. Many other people influence young people beyond the school hours. Youth need to exhibit socially acceptable behavior wherever they are. Positive youth development experiences now will develop skills that will benefit youth into adulthood.”

Within the Iowa PBS framework, the Iowa State University 4-H Extension Outreach engages youth in planning, implementation, and evaluation roles through the development of PBS Youth Leadership Teams. Youth focus groups have been conducted to identify needs specific to youth. Ways in which youth have been involved in PBS in Iowa include development of youth leadership teams, identifying behavioral expectations, identifying reinforcers, and teaching behavioral expectations to other youth.

Continued expansion of Iowa PBS work will include increased awareness of searchable databases of schools implementing research-based dropout prevention practices, the beginning of wrap-around training, and the 2nd Annual Statewide PBS Conference. For more information contact:

- Suana Wessendorf, Consultant, Iowa Department of Education
515-281-5447
Suana.Wessendorf@iowa.gov or
- Deb Thomas, Training Coordinator, Iowa Behavioral Alliance, Drake University
515-281-1823
Debra.Thomas@drake.edu

Also, see: www.educ.drake.edu/rc/alliance.html

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GET YOUR MONEY'S WORTH FROM YOUR DATA!

By Matthew Klare, Ph.D., Research Associate,
National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities, Clemson University

Every year school districts, states, and the federal government invest huge amounts of time, effort, and money in collecting and analyzing educational data. The resulting wealth of information could be used to help identify critical needs at the system and even student levels or to inform the selection of programs and interventions. In more cases than not, however, these data are greatly underutilized. They are collected and used only for the originally intended purposes—usually program evaluation and reporting.

The final report of the Study of State and Local Implementation and Impact of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (SLIIDEA)—a study commissioned by OSEP to determine the extent to which states, districts, and schools have implemented the 1997 Amendments to IDEA—dramatically illustrates the extent to which educators do not take advantage of existing data (www.abt.sliidea.org). According to this report, when data were available to districts and schools, they were more likely to be used for program evaluation, rather than in planning professional development or other activities. An example provided in the report shows that 83 percent of districts and 88 percent of schools used data on academic performance for program evaluation. Fewer districts (53 percent) and schools (49 percent) used the data for planning professional development.

Another illustration of data underutilization can be found in districts' and schools' use (or lack thereof) of dropout and graduation data. The study showed that 85 percent of districts and 86 percent of schools employed graduation or dropout data for the purposes of program evaluation. However, only 30 percent of districts and schools incorporated this information into professional development activi-

ties. Additionally, 42 percent of districts and schools incorporated data about parental involvement in program evaluation; however, only 16 percent of the districts and schools factored what the data showed into professional development planning or implementation.

Since the data collections are already mandatory, states and districts might as well as reap as much from the investment of time and money as possible and put the data to work for more than just program evaluation! In order to gain a clearer picture of the factors underlying dropout among students with disabilities, educators need to pool existing information and examine data from multiple sources. Data about some of the OSEP monitoring indicators (e.g., graduation, dropout, transition, and post-school outcomes) combined with information about other risk factors correlated with dropout, such as attendance and academic performance, can help SEAs identify districts' needs and can help inform policy decisions at the state level.

At the LEA level, in-depth examination of additional data on academic performance, behavioral supports, governance and infrastructure, parental involvement, and transition planning can help districts and schools identify both systemic and student-level needs. Additionally, these data can be leveraged when planning professional development, selecting or targeting evidence-based programs and interventions, and developing technical-assistance strategies.

For additional information about collecting and using data, look for our coming Practice Brief on data. Additional resources about data can be found on the NDPC-SD website www.ndpc-sd.org/. ♦

WEB SEMINAR

Dropout Prevention and Youth with Disabilities: What the Research Says Really Works!



Presenter: Dr. Brian Cobb
Professor in the School of Education & Associate Dean for Research for the College of Applied Human Sciences at Colorado State University

On May 25, 2006, NDPC-SD sponsored its first Web Seminar titled, “Dropout Prevention and Youth with Disabilities: What

the Research Says Really Works!” In the 1½ hour Web and audio conference, Dr. Brian Cobb, Professor in the School of Education & Associate Dean for Research for the College of Applied Human Sciences at Colorado State University, presented the audience with insights from the past five years of research synthesis, examining instructional interventions that help prevent secondary-aged youth with disabilities from dropping out of school or engaging in activities that correlate highly with dropping out.

Dr. Cobb has used rigorous standards for scientifically-based research written over the past two decades in the United States and other English-speaking countries around the world to separate the “wheat from the chaff” on this topic. Dr. Cobb is principal investigator of a \$1.8 million U.S. Department of Education funded, evidence-based research synthesis grant titled “What Works in Transition for Secondary Youth with Disabilities.” He is also Campus Research Coordinator on a \$10 million National Science Foundation funded “Centers for Learning and Teaching” grant, and Lead Evaluator on a \$12 million National Science Foundation funded “Math-Science Partnership” grant. In this Web Seminar, Dr. Cobb also presented the results of his work in examining reliable evidence-based practices and ways to implement them.

The teleconference attracted 160 registered participants, 90 of whom attended the seminar from school districts, state departments of education, and organizations in 32 states across the U.S. This 56 percent “show” rate is above average, as only 30–50 percent of all Web Seminar registrants normally show up (Raindance, 2006).

Participants gave the program very high ratings on their evaluations. Seventy-three percent of the evaluation respondents rated the content and the Web Seminar as a whole as “excellent,” “very good,” or “good,” and 100 percent of the respondents stated that they would participate in another Web Seminar. Sixty-five percent of the participants agreed that the content of the Web Seminar was relevant to improving results for students with disabilities, and 43 percent agreed that the content was useful to their organization in planning their dropout prevention program.

Participants also thought Dr. Cobb’s presentation provided useful information, ideas, and strategies for improving results for students with disabilities. For example, one person wrote, “This seminar provided good and basic information for screening intervention programs that we would consider implementing.” Another participant agreed stating, “We will share the results of this work with states as they identify SPP/APR improvement strategies. It’s good to know the ABA and Check and Connect are effective.”

Lastly, participants really liked the Web Seminar format, which was a first for some people. One participant wrote, “My first program of this type. Dr. Cobb and staff are to be commended for their work and this presentation. The background of strong research standards and research practices was enlightening. We will look into Check and Connect as a worthwhile program.” Another participant commented, “Being a visual learner, I liked the visual component to the presentation. We also like that the audience members could type in their questions and the moderator could repeat the questions if needed.” Another participant agreed, “Web seminars are a great way to get information out there without travel expenses. [I] Liked the opportunity for questions and answers. Great job!!”

In addition, we provided a follow-up online discussion for two weeks for those who wished to continue the discussion with Dr. Cobb and share ideas with colleagues from across the country or who missed the Web Seminar and wanted an opportunity to ask Dr. Cobb questions.

For those who missed the Web Seminar, a Podcast and complete transcript of the program are available on NDPC-SD’s website www.ndpc-sd.org/. ♦

UPCOMING EVENTS

» OSEP Leadership Conference

August 28–30, 2006: Washington, DC

Information:

www.rrfcnetwork.org/content/view/251/356/

* * *

» 1st National Conference on Mentoring for Youth with Disabilities

September 13–15, 2006: Boston, MA

Information:

regonline.com/eventinfo.asp?eventid=94889

* * *

» National Accountability Conference on Special Education and Early Intervention (formerly the National Monitoring Conference)

September 18–19, 2006

Information:

www.rrfcnetwork.org/component/option,com_mosforms/act,viewform/mosform,23?mosadmin=10c3ab5163b93b8f9aead84ad7d9f110

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» DEC's 22nd Annual International Conference on Young Children with Special Needs and their Families

October 19–22, 2006: Little Rock, AR

Information:

www.dec-sped.org/conference_05/about_the_conference.html

* * *

» 18th Annual National Dropout Prevention Network Conference

October 21–25, 2006: San Antonio, TX

Information:

www.ndpc-sd.org/conferen/conferen.htm#ndpn_conf

* * *

» DLD Conference

November 3–4, 2006: San Francisco, CA

Information:

www.teachingld.org/conferences/san_fran_06.htm

HISPANIC MOTHER DAUGHTER PROGRAM

By Josie Danini Cortez, M.A., Design and Development Coordinator,
Intercultural Development Research Association

The Hispanic Mother Daughter Program was first launched in 1984 at Arizona State University. The program begins working with girls in the eighth grade to help them stay in school and complete a four-year college degree. In the 2000–01 school year, 750 participants from 41 schools in the East Valley School District and Phoenix Union School District were enrolled.

The program involves mothers directly in their daughters' educational process through a support network of school counselors, community leaders, and professional role models. The students' academic and personal progress is monitored from eighth grade through the completion of their bachelor's degree. Tutoring is also provided in the math and science program at Arizona State University and Phoenix Union School District high schools. Eligibility criteria

include that the students attend one of the targeted schools in the Phoenix or East Valley districts; be a potential first-generation college-bound student; presently be enrolled in the seventh grade and also be at the seventh grade level in reading and mathematics; have at least a 2.75 GPA; be proficient in the English language (daughter only); and make a firm commitment to attend all of the required workshops.

Evaluations show that 85 percent to 95 percent of the girls who remain in the program graduate from high school. The number of Hispanic women enrolled at Arizona State University has doubled over the past decade and the number of first-time Hispanic women who graduate within six years has also increased, from 37.4 percent in 1987 to 47.2 percent in 1991.

More information is available online at: community.uui.asu.edu/Detail.asp?s=b&programID=294 ♦



U.S. Office of Special
Education Programs

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) (www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/index.html) is committed to positive results for children with disabilities. **The National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (www.ndpc-sd.org/)** is an **IDEAs that Work** project (www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/Policy/IDEA/regs.html). Project Officer: Dr. Selete Avoke.

For additional information visit our website at www.ndpc-sd.org or e-mail us at NDPCSD-L@clemson.edu.

» **Regístrese a nuestro boletín de noticias, Grandes Ideas: Estrategias Para Prevenir La Deserción Escolar.** <http://www2.edc.org/ndpc-sd/signup.asp?lang=esp>

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» **Contact Us** The National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD)
209 Martin Street, Clemson, SC 29631-1555
Toll Free: 866-745-5641 | TDD: 866-212-2775 • Fax: 864-656-0136
E-mail: NDPCSD-L@clemson.edu • www.ndpc-sd.org

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www.ndpc-sd.org | ndpsd-l@clemson.edu

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