Success For All? The Role of the School Counselor in Creating and Sustaining Culturally Responsive Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports Programs

Jennifer Betters-Bubon, Todd Brunner, Avery Kansteiner

Successful implementation of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) programs should include culturally responsive practices to reduce disproportionality in school discipline referrals and create effective learning environments for all students. Sustaining culturally responsive PBIS programs requires attention to student demographics and the cultural context of a particular school. Recent PBIS research has lacked focus on sustainability and cultural responsiveness within implementation. This case study examines how one school team (principal, school counselors, school psychologist and teachers) infused culturally responsive practices within the PBIS program to meet student social, behavioral and emotional needs in a diverse elementary school. The examination of sustaining the PBIS program over a 5-year period focuses on data sources and interventions that build socially just practices and supports, as well as the role the school counselor plays in the process. Suggestions for school counseling practice also are provided.

Keywords: **school counselor, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), culturally responsive practices, case study, in-school discipline**

In 1957, Horace Mann stated, "Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is a great equalizer of conditions of men" (p. 87). Public education was designed to bridge the inequalities of society such that experiences in schools could ensure all individuals have the opportunity to excel in school and in life. This tenet has been challenged in recent years as the achievement and opportunity gaps in our schools continue to grow. A disproportionate number of youth from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are not succeeding and may be excluded from public school (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). In 2012, for example, African American students were 3.5 times more likely than their Caucasian peers to be suspended (U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2014). African American, Latino, and Native American students receive harsher punishments for more subjective reasons such as disrespect, insubordination or excessive noise (Losen & Gillespie, 2012). Further, data from the National Center on Educational Statistics show that while the gap is narrowing slightly, African American youth lag behind their Caucasian peers an average of 23–26 points in math and 21–26 points in reading assessments (Vanneman, Hamilton, Baldwin Anderson, & Rahman, 2009).

To close these achievement gaps and disparities in discipline practices, important research has linked schoolwide behavior programs and student achievement and engagement outcomes (Lassen, Steele, & Sailor, 2006; Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, & Feinberg, 2005). A recent focus has included schoolwide behavior programs that are multi-tiered in nature, including Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) programs. PBIS programs integrate research-based practice within a three-tier approach, including those at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of prevention and intervention. This multi-tiered system of supports has been supported by the American School Coun-

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selor Association (ASCA; 2014) and cited as evidence-based practices that have potential in closing the achievement gap (Benner, Kutash, Nelson, & Fisher, 2013). Recent research has focused on how to implement PBIS in culturally responsive ways (Bal, Kozleski, Schrader, Rodriguez, & Pelton, 2014; Greflund, McIntosh, Mercer, & May, 2014) to better impact disproportionality in discipline outcomes that exist in schools today.

School counselors with extensive training in data-informed student intervention and school-level systemic change can play integral roles in PBIS implementation and can serve as leaders in the process (Cressey, Whitcomb, McGilvray-Rivet, Morrison, & Shander-Reynolds, 2014; Goodman-Scott, 2014). Goodman-Scott, Betters-Bubon, and Donohue (2015) noted that PBIS programs can be integrated with comprehensive school counseling programs to enhance the role of the school counselor and better improve student outcomes. With knowledge of cultural diversity (Schulz, Hurt, & Lindo, 2014) and data-focused interventions to close the achievement gap (Hatch, 2013), school counselors are poised to ensure that these programs are implemented in ways that combat disproportionality. While literature exists on culturally responsive PBIS (Fallon, O'Keeffe, & Sugai, 2012) and the school counselor's role in PBIS (Goodman-Scott, 2014), there does not exist research examining the school counselor's role implementing culturally responsive PBIS programs, despite their role as multiculturally competent advocates for student equity. This article extends existing research on culturally responsive PBIS by examining longitudinal data from one elementary school that intentionally engaged in culturally responsive practices within PBIS implementation, highlighting the leadership role of the school counselor. To better understand these potential relationships, we will first provide an overview of PBIS. Second, we will provide an overview of research linking PBIS to culturally responsive practice, focusing on how PBIS can combat disproportionality. Finally, we describe the case study in light of Vincent, Randall, Cartledge, Tobin and Swain-Bradway's (2011) paper that outlines the main tenets of effective culturally responsive PBIS implementation.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

PBIS is an educational program initiative that has great promise in helping schools promote positive behavior and engaged students. Grounded in the theory of applied behavior analysis, PBIS includes the application of a tiered system of support to change and improve behavior among students (Sugai & Horner, 2006). At the primary level (Tier 1) is the establishment of preventative systems of support, including the formation of schoolwide expectations and monitoring student behavioral data. The secondary level (Tier 2) includes the use of systematic and intensive behavior strategies for at-risk students, while the tertiary level (Tier 3) incorporates wraparound interventions for youth and families in crisis. At all levels of implementation, PBIS includes the use of evidence-based behavioral practices and formal and ongoing data-based decision making within schools (Sugai & Horner, 2006).

Next, PBIS includes a focus on four key elements: outcomes, practices, systems and data use (Horner, Sugai, Todd, & Lewis-Palmer, 2005). Student outcomes are at the foundation of any PBIS program, including behavior and academic success for students within a safe school environment. Practices include the use of evidence-based curricula, instructional practices, rewards, and contingencies that ultimately impact both teacher instruction and student behavior. Systems include an emphasis on sustained school change, including staffing, policy and training that impact how and what is done in any given school. Finally, data focuses on the continued use of school data to monitor program effectiveness. Data often used within PBIS studies includes academic achievement, school safety and behavioral indicators. Members of the PBIS team regularly analyze this data, which also is used to make subsequent decisions regarding both system and practice change.

In theory and practice, PBIS should facilitate a school environment that is more likely to promote feelings of safety and positive relationships as well as more effective teaching and learning. Recent randomized, controlled studies of PBIS implementation in elementary schools demonstrated the improved use of PBIS practices were related to feelings of safety and reading assessment results (Horner et al., 2009). In addition, schools that undertook specific schoolwide trainings were more positive and friendly than schools that did not (Bradshaw, Koth, Thornton, & Leaf, 2009). At the same time, the overall success of PBIS programs has come into question with the continued problem of disproportionality and perceived lack of cultural relevance.

Culturally Responsive Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

Disproportionality

The question remains how and whether PBIS programs provide the same level of success for students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Recent researchers examined the relationship between PBIS implementation and disproportionality in discipline referrals that resulted in school removal of students. In an examination of a national sample of 364 elementary and middle schools engaged in PBIS implementation for one year, Skiba et al. (2011) noted that in comparison to Caucasian peers, African American students were overrepresented in referrals to the office and Hispanic students were underrepresented in elementary and overrepresented in middle schools. In addition, both groups of students were more likely to be suspended for offenses than their Caucasian peers. Other researchers have noted PBIS may reduce overall problem behavior as measured by the total number of office discipline referrals (ODRs), but disparities in discipline for students from minority cultures continue (Kaufman et al., 2010). Vincent, Swain-Bradway, Tobin, and May (2011) noted that the discipline gaps between Caucasian and African American students were smaller in schools implementing PBIS than those not implementing PBIS.

Integrating Culture in PBIS Programs

Recent articles have focused on further defining the nature of culture within PBIS systems. According to Fallon et al. (2012), "*culturally and contextually relevant* is used to describe and consider the unique variables, characteristics, and learning histories of students, educators, families, and community members involved in the implementation of PBIS" (p. 210). Sugai, O'Keeffe, and Fallon (2011) examined this definition in the context of behavioral analytic theory, positing that cultural miscommunications can occur when the behavior of one person (e.g., a teacher) serves as an antecedent for the behavior of another (e.g., a student). Individuals with different cultural learning histories may interpret the same behavior in different ways. For example, staff members may perceive walking as either strolling or strutting, which may be considered inappropriate in different classroom contexts. Fraczek (2010) found that without proper consideration of culture, PBIS programs could take a *White* approach, with teachers treating cultural differences among students as deficiencies rather than assets.

Culture and context, then, must be considered when planning, developing and teaching important PBIS concepts. Sugai et al. (2011) provided specific suggestions across different elements in implementation (e.g., provide opportunities for faculty to learn about cultural norms, develop lessons that are appropriate across cultural groups). Utley, Kozleski, Smith, and Draper (2002) recommended examining social behaviors from a cultural perspective (e.g., communication styles, interactional styles with adults, peers) within PBIS. Additional multicultural practices include the intentional engagement of families in the policies and expectations, particularly with diverse, urban youth. Bal, Thorius, and Kozleski (2012) extended these ideas with culturally responsive PBIS *learning labs* that include ongoing discussions of culture with a variety of school stakeholders (e.g., parents, staff, administration, students).

The few studies that have examined outcomes of culturally responsive PBIS programs demonstrate potential positive outcomes. Greflund et al. (2014) found no disproportionality for Aboriginal students in a diverse sample of K–8 students from British Columbia, due in part to the incorporation of Aboriginal values, language and voice in PBIS implementation (McIntosh, Moniz, Craft, Golby, & Steinwand-Deschambeault, 2014). Citing data from a number of schools in Illinois, Eber, Upreti, and Rose (2010) noted that engaging in difficult conversations and building relationships between students and staff, along with integrating data-based decision-making into the fabric of school discipline, led to positive outcomes for ethnic minority youth.

Vincent, Randall, et al. (2011) situate the integration of cultural responsiveness within key features of PBIS implementation, including data, practices, systems and outcomes (Figure 1). Only through culturally responsive practices and conversations can PBIS achieve intended outcomes. For example, while PBIS proposes that behavioral expectations are taught in an effort to increase behavioral success for all students, in a diverse school setting, these expectations would need to be taught in ways reflective of the cultural backgrounds of students. This case study will explore ways in which PBIS programs can include intentional integration of culturally responsive practices.

Case Study

Due to the lack of research in culturally responsive PBIS, this case study provides a model of culturally responsive practices within PBIS implementation. It situates PBIS implementation within the conceptual model of Vincent, Randall, et al. (2011), who suggest culturally responsive approaches serve as mediators between PBIS programs and desired outcomes (Figure 1). Specifically, culturally relevant PBIS programs will include systems emphasizing staff cultural knowledge and self-awareness, outcomes focusing on cultural equity, and data use that supports culturally valid decision making along with practices grounded in cultural validation and support (Figure 1). For example, to support culturally relevant staff behavior, schools must provide opportunities for staff to explore their own cultural awareness. Likewise, use of evidence-based practices must be grounded in knowledge and understanding of student cultural identities. Following a brief overview of the general PBIS implementation process, we outline specific culturally responsive practices as outlined by Vincent, Randall, et al. (2011).

Setting and Participants

This case study focuses on one elementary school (grades K–5) located in a suburb of a mid-sized Midwestern town from 2009–2014. The suburb had a population of approximately 10,000 residents. Median household income in 2009 was $75,000. The school district had approximately 4,900 students drawn from the suburb itself and a suburb located 10 miles away. The target school, one of 11 in the district, had an enrollment of approximately 500 students. A substantial shift in student population occurred during the first year of implementation due to redistricting. A population of approximately 130 Spanish-speaking bilingual students was transferred to the school in 2008, shifting the student demographics to 60% Caucasian, 28% Hispanic, 9% African American and 2% Asian American. Approximately 40% of students received free and reduced lunch at the time of observance.

Procedures

Given that the first author was engaged in PBIS implementation first as a school counselor and later as a consultant while the other authors are currently engaged in PBIS implementation, this article uses a participatory action research framework (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Action research includes a planning and reflective process that is linked to action, all of which are influenced by an understand-
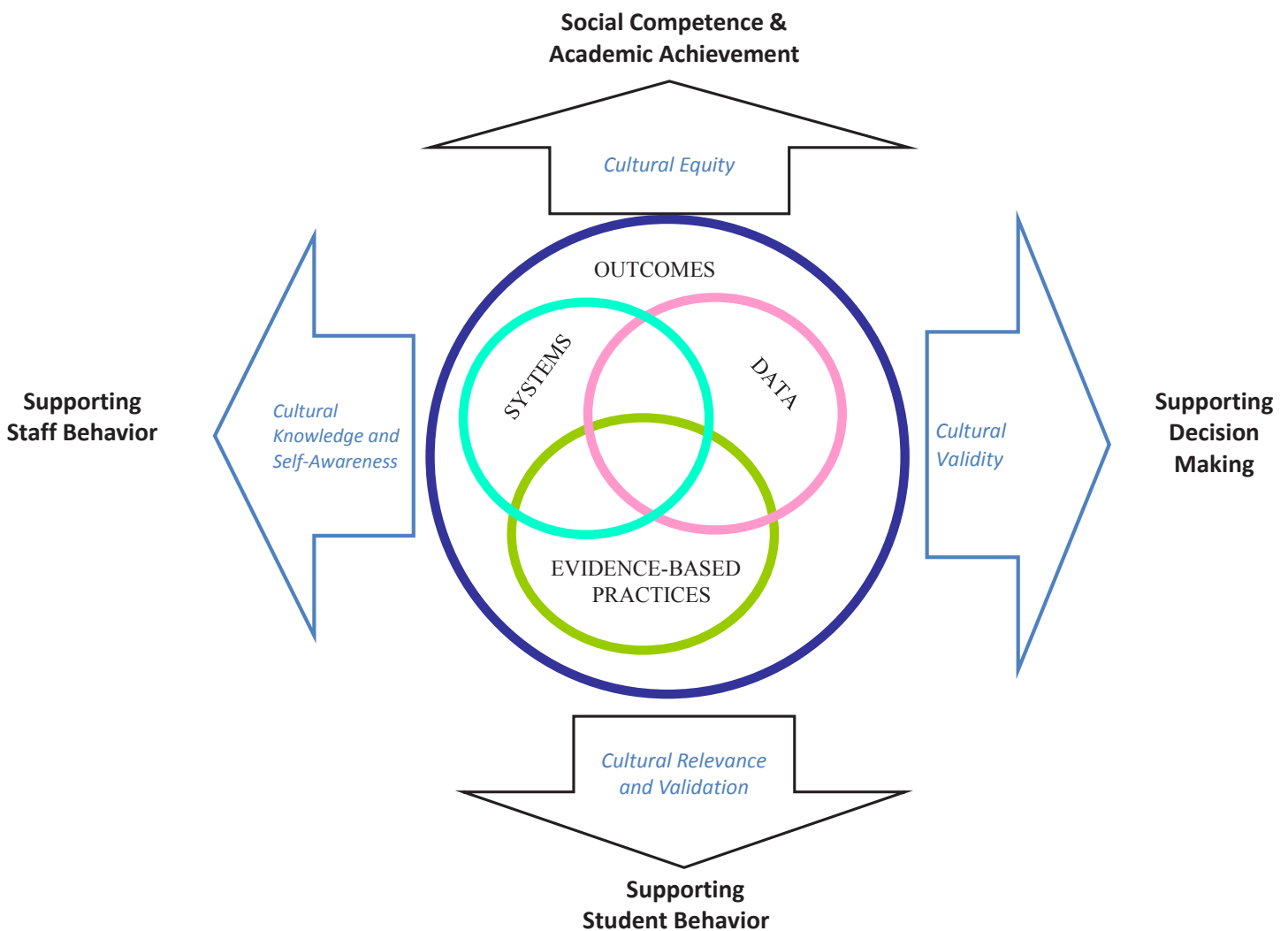
Figure 1. Integrating Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support and Culturally Responsive Practices. Reprinted from "Toward a Conceptual Integration of Cultural Responsiveness and Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support," by C. G. Vincent, C. Randall,, G. Cartledge, T. J. Tobin, and J. Swain-Bradway, 2011, *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, *13*, 219–229. Copyright 2011 by Sage Publishing. Reprinted with permission.

ing of history, culture and local context (Baum, MacDougall, & Smith, 2006). Thus, the article includes a description of PBIS planning and action stages along with the reflective process that was involved in culturally responsive PBIS implementation.

Within the action research framework, data were used, including ODRs as a fidelity measure of PBIS. ODRs are a reliable and valid indicator of overall school climate levels (Irvin et al., 2006) and are commonly used in PBIS analysis. The PBIS Self-Assessment Survey (SAS) was used for initial and annual assessment of implementation quality of behavior support systems in the school. This online survey, completed by a cross-section of school staff, examines the "current status" and "need for improvement" of four behavior support systems: (a) schoolwide discipline systems, (b) non-classroom management systems (e.g., cafeteria, hallway, playground), (c) classroom management systems, and (d) systems for individual students engaging in chronic problem behaviors. Results give an overall implementation level as it pertains to PBIS, with 80% indicating full implementation (Sugai, Horner, Lewis-Palmer, & Todd, 2005).

Planning: PBIS Implementation

PBIS within this school grew out of immediate concerns regarding the number of ODRs. For example, during 2006–2007, the school had 573 discipline referrals and an enrollment of 314 students. As a result of this situation, during 2007–2008 and 2008–2009 the school implemented a schoolwide goal that included the creation and implementation of a multi-component plan for integrating new students with a goal of a 50% reduction in discipline referrals. Two additional school goals focused on math and reading development. All certified staff were required to attend monthly meetings focusing on one of the goals, and results were communicated yearly to the site council, the governing body of the school and the school board.

The PBIS team formed in 2009–2010 as a way to coordinate and organize the many interventions that were attempted through the prior 2 years of work. The school counselor organized and led a summer PBIS training that included a cross-section of 25 staff members prior to the beginning of the school year.

Action: PBIS Implementation

Leadership team. At the core of the PBIS implementation process was the leadership team. The school counselor led the team along with coaches who focused on core areas of PBIS (e.g., systems, acknowledgements). The team varied in number between 15 and 25 and included a representative group of the school staff, such as classroom teachers, special teachers (e.g., music), educational assistants, special education teachers, student support staff (e.g., psychologist, social worker) and the principal. The team met on a monthly basis to discuss data, student behavior and acknowledgement. Because PBIS had not been adopted district-wide, the school hired a PBIS consultant to train and meet with the team coaches to ensure fidelity.

Behavioral expectations. The leadership team spent a considerable amount of time determining four behavioral expectations for the school at a summer workshop. The discussion included the meaning of such words as "respect" as well as the types of behaviors that would be universally expected by parents and teachers from different backgrounds. The four expectations: Be Safe, Be Kind & Respectful, Be a Problem-Solver and Be Responsible became the cornerstone behavioral expectations for the school. The team planned teacher training regarding the newly developed expectations as well as community gatherings to teach the expectations to students and families. Within this process, the school counselor played an integral role, organizing the gatherings and using expertise in social and emotional development to write the behavioral lessons known as *Cool Tools*. In subsequent years, the school counselor provided trainings to all new staff on PBIS.

Defining procedures. Along with expectations, the team delineated behaviors that would be handled in the classroom versus in the office (e.g., a t-chart delineating the discipline infractions that office and teaching staff respond to on a day-to-day basis). Not only were the processes outlined on paper, they were discussed in monthly staff meetings and meetings with student services staff and administration and educational assistants. For example, student services staff, including the school counselor, met with grade-level teachers each month to discuss student needs. This served as a way to reinforce key PBIS procedures. Similarly, the educational assistants who supervise students in the lunchroom, at recess and in the hallways were included as important team members through monthly meetings. These meetings, along with the monthly PBIS meeting, allowed for continuous conversation around student behavior and adult response.

Acknowledgements. Typically, PBIS programs provide a tangible, positive reinforcement system

to promote appropriate behavior. These systems should include immediate feedback systems, such as verbal praise or tickets given to students demonstrating school expectations that can be turned in for prizes (e.g., pencils), as well as long-term feedback systems (e.g., quarterly schoolwide celebrations). Many staff members expressed concern about implementing an extrinsically focused ticket system, noting that this may lead to decreased intrinsic motivation. As such, a formal acknowledgement system was not immediately integrated into the PBIS program in year one. In January, the counselor had conversations with educational assistants about piloting a positive reinforcement ticket program on the playground in response to data showing an increase in ODRs. The success, measured by teacher and educational assistant perception and ODR referrals on the playground, was almost immediate. This led to staff interest in using this ticket system as a form of acknowledgement and reinforcement. Conversations at staff meetings along with printed materials, describing in detail the purpose of acknowledgements, helped the school move forward with a formal "thumbs up" ticket plan that transcended the playground to include all areas of the school. The PBIS team included student voices in the acknowledgements and leadership of PBIS, with a team of fifth-grade students assisting in the development of PBIS acknowledgement ideas in year two and beyond.

Data analysis. Data on ODRs had been collected at this school for many years. The principal sent out monthly updates on the number of discipline referrals, including referrals broken down by ethnicity. The integration of PBIS meant that the data analysis became a focus of the monthly meetings. The school counselor became actively involved in data analysis, sharing monthly updates with staff members. School staff examined types of areas of problem behavior and created plans to respond. While this data often focused on ODRs, more qualitative data also was discussed. For example, the lunchroom became an area of focus when teachers and staff shared concerns about behavior and noise. The leadership team took the qualitative data and created strategies to increase positive behavior (e.g., re-teaching, positive acknowledgement plan, community assemblies).

Family outreach. From the start, the PBIS team informed parents of the purpose of PBIS and later more fully integrated the voices of parents in the planning processes. The school counselor wrote monthly newsletters while teachers encouraged students to share their acknowledgement tickets with parents so as to share the positives happening in the school. Additionally, the team created a home behavior matrix and a Web site where parents and families could obtain additional information on PBIS at the school.

Reflection: Culturally Responsive PBIS Integration

As the team engaged in PBIS implementation, multiple situations emerged that brought culture to the forefront. Table 1 outlines several ways in which the team intentionally integrated culturally responsive practices into the PBIS program, and additional examples are illustrated below.

Systems built on cultural knowledge and awareness. From the onset of PBIS implementation, the leadership team integrated aspects of culture and cultural responsiveness into the systems. First, the PBIS team was diverse and included many different voices (e.g., bus drivers, educational assistants, bilingual and monolingual classroom teachers, special education staff). The redistricting in the first year of PBIS and the resulting change in student population led to the PBIS team having intentional discussion of important topics involving whether the expectations were culturally relevant to all students, including the Spanish-speaking students.

Further, the leadership team engaged in conversations about their own cultural biases and knowledge to inform the practices implemented within PBIS. When a team member suggested staff

Table 1

CR-PBIS Elements by Category

Culturally Responsive Practices Support Student Behavior	Systems Supporting Culturally Responsive Staff Behavior
• All PBIS materials translated • Cool Tools based on beliefs (e.g., holidays) and include SIOP strategies; situated within a "culture of learning" • Mentoring relationship with Brothers United, a high school group of African American males, for students needing Tier 2 and 3 support • Culturally responsive acknowledgement system focused on community • Parent included on PBIS team; PBIS information shared via tweets and outreach at parent events • Student voice included in discussion on school climate and bus climate; included in problem solving process	• Local high school equity student group presented to our students and staff • Equity Committee expanded; led daylong diversity workshop for all staff • Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Team met monthly to review de-escalation strategies • Equity Team met monthly with three parents actively involved • PBIS team met with bus drivers, cafeteria staff for further training (e.g., PBIS, Nurtured Heat)
Data Supporting Culturally Valid Decision Making	**Culturally Equitable Student Outcomes**
• Examine disaggregated data monthly • Disaggregate data in new ways (e.g., SES) • Bus committee formed to discuss additional supports • Examine perception data through surveys of parents, staff and students regularly	• Emphasize interventions and teaching of expectations for new students • Added a bus route based on data • Multiple family outreach events offered (e.g., community connections fair, summer opportunities resource fair, Dia de Los Muertos event and Friendship Dance)

should teach the *top 10 manners* (e.g., table manners, eye contact) as part of the PBIS expectations, the team engaged in intentional conversation about whether the manners would be relevant to all students and parents. Ultimately, this team abandoned this idea due to the potential lack of cultural relevance. For example, the team discussed how eye contact during conversation may not be applicable to all families and students in the school. The principal encouraged staff learning and self-awareness that went beyond these conversations and scheduled subsequent trainings in the following years.

The team helped to create systems by which parents were informed and included in the PBIS process. For example, all information was sent to parents in multiple ways (e.g., translated) and parent voices were sought whenever possible. By year four, the leadership team included parents on the team and in year five, one of the school counselors started a Latino parent group.

The school counselor's role changed as a result of PBIS and resource allocation was specifically addressed through the budget process at site council in the spring. Because the counselor was charged with leading the school's PBIS efforts, the school increased the counselor full-time equivalent

(FTE) from .60 to 1.20 to support this goal, thus adding a part-time bilingual counselor early in the first year of implementation.

Practices grounded in cultural validation and support. The change in school population led to more intentional conversations of culture in teaching and learning, validating the backgrounds of students and families. First and foremost, the universal practices that staff engaged in focused on community and acceptance. For example, the school principal left time in the master schedule for all classroom teachers to implement *morning meetings*, as recommended by the *Responsive Classroom©* Approach (Kriete, 2002). Daily class meetings are in line with culturally relevant practice as they lead to teachers and students knowing each other in the creation of a classroom community (Bondy, Ross, Gallingane, & Hambacher, 2007).

As the team implemented culturally responsive PBIS, the school counselor, in consultation with bilingual teaching staff, integrated Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) strategies (Short, Fidelman, & Louguit, 2012) in the behavioral lessons. SIOP includes strategies in lessons that ensure that English language learners have the necessary background information to learn the material presented. As such, the team ensured that expectations were taught in culturally relevant ways. In addition, the teaching of expectations included recognition of the different backgrounds of students. For example, one of the behavioral lessons given to teachers close to winter break involved discussion of different student and staff beliefs that might be practiced over the break. *Being respectful* in this case transcended outside of traditional definitions of respect to include knowledge of others' beliefs. Further, discussions among the leadership team in year three acknowledged the lack of overarching student understanding of the school expectations. For example, staff was not engaging in larger discussions about why respect can lead to success in life. As such, the team integrated the all-encompassing theme "Be A Learner" and situated the teaching of all expectations under this framework. In this way, staff, students and families could discuss how this is relevant in school and life, thus reflecting the perspectives of students and families (Swain-Bradway, Loman, & Vincent, 2014).

The PBIS team, along with school staff, discussed the inclusion of an acknowledgement system with intention. Because of the aforementioned concern about extrinsic reinforcement in the form of tickets, acknowledgement tickets were often given to groups and classrooms of students. The PBIS team placed more value on group gathering of tickets than individual. For example, each classroom had a bucket in which to collect tickets. They would bring their tickets to community gatherings to meet schoolwide goals, which would result in schoolwide celebrations focused on learning and community. For example, students would be encouraged to take part in a pajama day or be given 20 minutes on a specific day to engage in a fun activity, such as Drop Everything and Draw. These activities served to reinforce the positive behavior displayed by students.

Data that led to culturally valid decision making. The leadership team regularly used data to inform the practices taught and reinforced in the school. Total ODR data was collected each year and demonstrated decreases in overall number of referrals despite increasing enrollment (see Table 2). In addition, the school counselor regularly broke down data by grade level, socioeconomic status, race and location. This data was then discussed monthly at grade level meetings during which general problem solving could take place, whether focused on a specific student or group of students. Additionally, the data guided decisions at monthly PBIS leadership team meetings. The team regularly examined program fidelity. The SAS implementation average rose over the years, reaching fidelity of 84% in year three (see Table 3). Moreover, the PBIS leadership team used the SAS subscales to de-

termine program strengths and weaknesses. Subscales included how well school expectations were taught and defined, and presence of a reward (or acknowledgment) system, as well as a defined way of addressing student behavior violations and infractions. In addition, the SAS included items that measured how well the team monitored areas in the building, managed the team processes and were supported at the district level. All subscales increased over the years of implementation.

Table 2

Enrollment and ODRs by Year

Year	Enrollment	Total ODRs
08–09	346	264
09–10	473	268
10–11	498	248
11–12	495	300
12–13	509	371
13–14	523	380

Table 3

Self-Assessment Survey (SAS) Results by Year

Year	Expectations Defined	Expectations Taught	Reward System	Violations System	Monitoring	Management	District Support	Implementation Average
2009–10	98%	91%	63%	77%	90%	69%	79%	79%
2010–11	98%	91%	90%	75%	85%	71%	72%	78%
2011–12	97%	89%	84%	74%	92%	87%	85%	84%
2012–13	100%	91%	91%	75%	91%	84%	86%	84%
2013–14	100%	97%	94%	81%	93%	86%	86%	88%

ODR data comparing percentage enrollment to percentage of total ODRs demonstrated variability across the years (see Figure 2). ODR trends for Hispanic students shifted from over-representation to under-representation, whereas the gap for African American students went from 14% enrollment and 55% of total ODRs to a narrower gap of 7% enrollment and 31% of total ODRs. In meetings, the leadership team went beyond examination of percentages to determine which students were having difficulty. For example, during year five the team noted that students who had moved to the school in the previous year received a high percentage of total ODRs and accounted for many of the students needing Tier 2 and 3 supports. The team integrated interventions and behavioral teaching opportunities to assist new students in that transition.

In year four, a district focus on data led to the mandated formation of school equity teams at each school site. At this school, the team was comprised of 16 staff members and four parent and community members, and focused on school climate equity and parent and community outreach. This team met monthly, and in doing so disseminated climate surveys to students and staff, examined district-wide assessments to ensure cultural fairness and planned culture nights and parent orientation nights in the community.

Outcomes that demonstrate cultural equity. The more intentional focus on data disaggregation led to the ability of the PBIS leadership team to make equitable decisions. An example occurred in
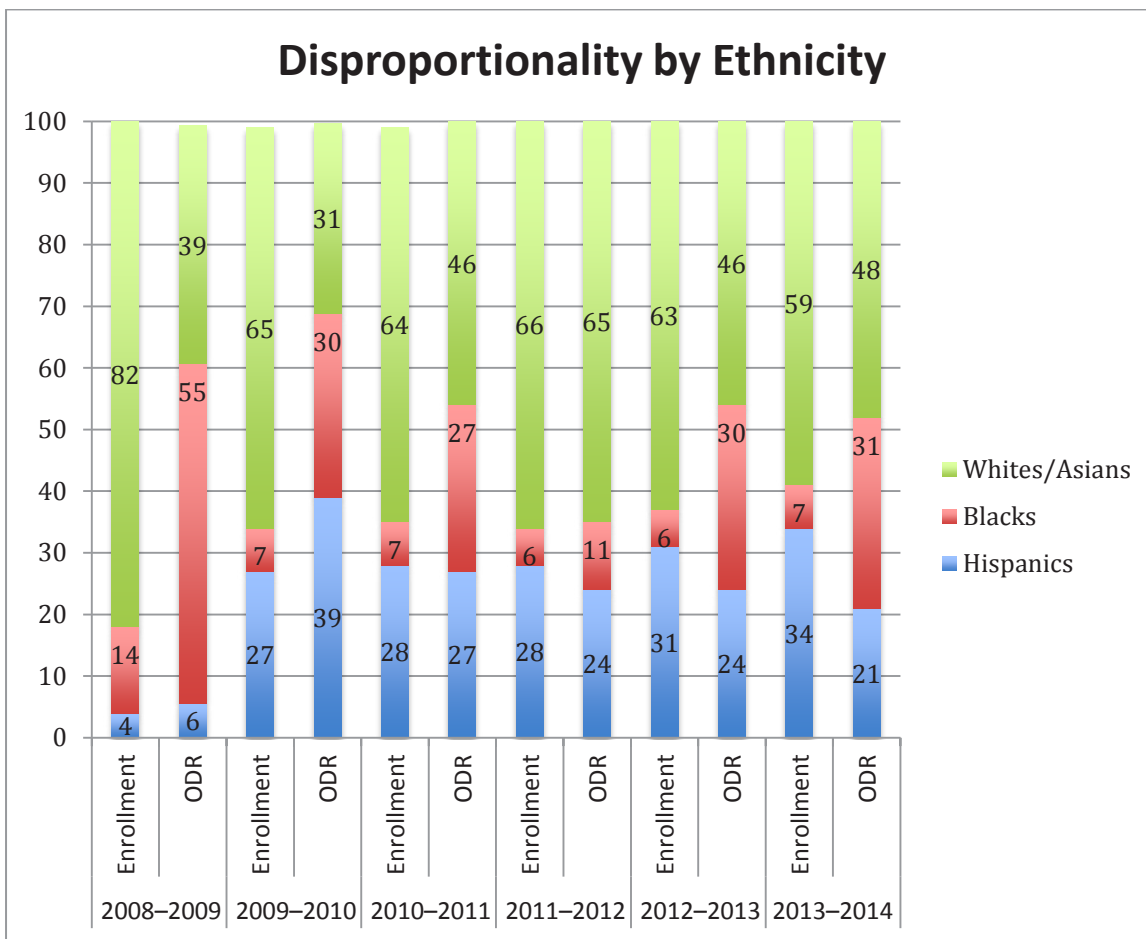
Figure 2. ODR by Ethnicity

the first year of PBIS implementation. At the start of 2009, the leadership team became concerned about behavior reported on one of the school buses. The contracted school bus driver was reporting, through written bus reports to the administration, a number of behavioral infractions on the rides to and from school. This bus included many students who received free and reduced lunch and were in racial and ethnic minority groups, traveling to and from an inner city neighborhood 10 miles away from the school. The principal worked with the general manager of the bus company and put interventions in place as part of PBIS, including meetings with the driver, principal, and translator in the cafeteria, and student–bus driver meetings, as well as letters to parents. It became apparent the problem was less about student behavior and more about equity—the bus was overcrowded. The principal shared concerns with the superintendent and the superintendent engaged in conversations with the bus company. Because the school as a whole had embraced PBIS and documenting data and steps to problem-solve, leaders at the district level were motivated to intervene. The district had funds and added a new bus route for students; bus referrals went down immediately.

Discussion

Research shows that PBIS is best implemented when considering the specific context of the school and needs of students and families (Fallon et al., 2012). The school in this case study demonstrated the intentional work that was needed to implement PBIS that was culturally responsive. The implementation of culturally responsive practices led to fewer behavioral reports for students from Hispanic backgrounds. Unfortunately, a disproportionate number of African American students received ODRs even after the implementation of culturally responsive PBIS, which is in line with previous

research (Skiba et al., 2011). Thus, the intentional integration of culturally responsive PBIS practices should go beyond the examination of disaggregated data to include conversations around equity, access and success for all. The PBIS team in this school started these conversations to determine why students might not be succeeding. Because of the systems in place, staff integrated additional teaching and learning opportunities for students who were new to the school. There is still more for the team to do to reduce disproportionate representation of African American students in ODR. To that end, the leadership team recently went through PBIS Tier 2 training and the school counselors are implementing check-in/check-out, a targeted intervention program for individual students (Todd, Campbell, Meyer, & Horner, 2008) and data-driven small groups. Future research should examine whether these approaches have an impact on overall ODR data and on the continued equity conversations happening among key stakeholders in the school.

Because the results of this action research case study focus on one school's efforts to engage in culturally responsive practice, the results should be interpreted with caution. The study is descriptive in nature and connections between the integration of culturally responsive PBIS elements and outcomes were not tested empirically. Future research should examine the relationship between intentional integration of culturally responsive PBIS components on school and student outcomes, to include outcomes beyond discipline referrals. Important work in this area is emerging and it will be imperative for school counselors to remain at the forefront of these initiatives to ensure PBIS practices take all students into consideration.

Currently, PBIS is implemented in thousands of schools in over 40 states. PBIS systems emphasize a shift from responding to problem behavior with exclusionary discipline to the use of instructional responses to problem behavior and corrective procedures to help students to identify and practice acceptable behavior instead of removing them from the classroom (McIntosh, Filter, Bennett, Ryan, & Sugai, 2010). While PBIS is an evidence-based intervention that should address disproportionality within discipline systems (Eber et al., 2010), this study and others have demonstrated that this is not always the case. As such, culture and context must be considered when planning, developing and implementing PBIS programs to make them more culturally responsive. In doing this important work, Swain-Bradway et al. (2014) recommended

> that school leaders systematically integrate the range of student cultural perspectives along with teacher cultural perspectives in creating disciplinary policies and practices that are non-discriminatory. The cultural mismatch between individual teachers and students may be mitigated by the systematic implementation of school-wide systems supporting culturally responsive practices within schools. (p. 4)

Equity can only be achieved when all students and student backgrounds are considered within systemic programs implemented in a school environment and when all possible reasons for the gaps in success, including the ever increasing needs of students, disproportionate access to resources and opportunities, and mandates made on the educational system as a whole, are considered.

Conclusion and Implications

With much at stake at the national, district, school and individual levels, school counselors can play a critical role in ensuring PBIS programs are implemented with fidelity and in culturally responsive ways. School counselors can use their knowledge and recommendations (McIntosh, Girvan, Horner, Smolkowski, & Sugai, 2014) to reduce this very real problem of disproportionality in discipline practices, including implementing culturally responsive PBIS, disaggregating data and imple-

menting accountability policies focused on discipline equity (Green et al., 2015; McIntosh, Barnes, Eliason, & Morris, 2014). Further, school counselors can use their expansive knowledge of data to extend the focus beyond just ODRs. Perception surveys focused on process rather than outcome data might be better at capturing change across time. For example, interviews with staff, parents and students examining school climate and social behavior can and should be examined within culturally responsive PBIS implementation. In that way, a clearer picture of student behavior, school climate, family perception and staff support might emerge. A recent national survey found school personnel to be supportive of the implementation of culturally and contextually responsive elements of PBIS (Fallon, O'Keeffe, Gage, & Sugai, 2015). School counselors can be champions in the process of encouraging culturally responsive practices within PBIS program implementation.

Schools play a privileged and strategic role in influencing social, emotional and academic outcomes for youth (Herman, Reinke, Parkin, Traylor, & Agarwal, 2009). School counselors can serve as leaders in conversations about equity and social justice as it pertains to student behavior and success in schools. Through continued conversations, intentional understanding of self and others, and targeted family involvement, school staff can ensure that education indeed continues to be the great equalizer for all.

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