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THE FIRST STEP TO SCHOOL-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOURAL SUPPORT IN A QUEENSLAND HIGH SCHOOL: LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR PARTICIPATION

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ABSTRACT

University researchers, district personnel, and administrators of a high school in a low socioeconomic district collaborated to explore school-wide application of positive behaviour support (PBS). The partners were exploring this school-wide approach as an alternative to traditional approaches to managing the diverse range and intensity of problem behaviour that typically fail to deliver sustainable outcomes. This project aimed to identify the structures, processes, and procedures that needed to be put into place in order to provide comprehensive and inclusive support systems for all students and staff in the local school community. In particular, administrators provided critical leadership to gain staff

endorsement to change school practices. Starting points for this project were the model of school-wide supports for inclusive education proposed by Anderson (2003) and the Prevent-Act-Resolve comprehensive behaviour management model (Rosenberg & Jackman, 2003). Six conditional aspects of a foundation for the school community to participate in this project were identified.

Problem behaviour in Australian schools

The conditions for introducing school-wide practices in order to deal with problem behaviour in Australian schools have emerged over the last 10 years. Increased concerns about disturbing and dangerous behaviour among the general school

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population and increased dissemination of behavioural technology to deal positively with challenging behaviour have fostered these conditions. A systems approach (Rosenberg & Jackman, 2003; Turnbull et al., 2002) provides an alternative to the traditional focus on an individual student by an individual teacher. This systems approach involves active participation of all members of the school community who share an agreed vision for the management of behaviour, a team-based approach to intervention, a data-driven approach to problem solving, and a commitment to behaviour change over time (Dunlap et al., 2000; Rogers, 2000; Safran & Oswald, 2003). Laying down a foundation for the introduction of a systems approach, therefore, is a major challenge in its own right for the local educational community.

The continuum of problem behaviour in Australian schools warrants a continuum of school-wide positive behavioural support (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004). There is broad agreement that an estimated 80% of students need only everyday class-wide practices of primary prevention for minor but irritatingly persistent misbehaviours, such as off-task chatter (Sidman, 1999; Wheldall & Merrett, with Houghton, 1989). Another 15% of students need ongoing secondary preventive support for chronically at-risk behaviour. Such behaviour can arise from problems of socialisation, mental health, and disability

that find expression in serious and ongoing behavioural difficulties (e.g., aggressive, impulsive, anxious). It includes a suite of sociodevelopmental and learning disorders (Rogers, 2004) that have been ever-present in regular schools but have remained poorly understood and under-resourced. A final 5% accounts for an extremely small number of students displaying high-risk and occasionally dangerous behaviours that require a tertiary preventive level of individualised support (Crone & Horner, 2003; Walker & Shinn, 2002).

When primary and secondary prevention enriches classroom supports for the learning of these students, then school-wide capacity to address the needs of a few students with highly challenging behaviour should expand. This inclusionary approach to classroom practice, therefore, embeds the tertiary level of intervention within the broader base of systematically positive support for all students in a school. A preventive approach to school-wide practice is aimed, initially, to improve the whole social environment for learning, to use positive practices to minimise the occurrence of trivial chatter and other minor behaviours that distract students from learning, and to avert escalation of this trivial behaviour into more serious problems. Second, it is aimed to maximise learning opportunities for students at behavioural risk and to provide more positive interactions to replace teacher–student friction about behavioural

issues. Although secondary risk associated with sociodevelopmental difficulties has attracted little eligibility for special education services, teachers in regular schools have tended to believe that these students require support from outside the classroom and, often, from outside the school.

Teacher interactions with students across this continuum of problem behaviour have been punitive and coercive. Policy-level expectations of regular teachers have exceeded their individual capacity to deliver classroom practices across the continuum of student behaviour. For example, a large longitudinal Australian study of the disciplinary practices of 8,000 teachers failed to show reductions in student misbehaviour and improvements in on-task behaviour. Lewis (2001) recommended a whole-school commitment to a teacher code of responsive and proactive teacher behaviour, with extensive preparatory review of the negative impact of punitive and reactive strategies on the school culture, involvement of teachers in rule setting, and provision of a mandatory system of recognition of responsible student behaviour. "Teachers should be trying to make less responsible students more responsible through increasing their use of rewards, hints, discussion, and involvement in rule-setting" (Lewis, 2001, p. 317). Collegial support and assistance for stressed colleagues who might not otherwise seek support could be provided

within a commitment to change a school's culture of discipline and its climate of behaviour management.

General Australian climate of individual teacher practice

Efforts to introduce a professional framework of disciplinary practice in managing behaviour in regular Australian school settings (e.g., Rogers, 1992) have been built over many approaches implemented across diverse populations, variations in local contexts, and mixtures of teacher beliefs about behaviour. This heterogeneous base has provided a rather weak foundation for a continuum of support. Historically, there has been little preparation of individual teachers to practice as part of a school-wide support system for appropriate behaviour. Instead, when individual teachers seeking to reduce classroom disruption have exhausted strategies within their valued-based classroom plans, they have quickly progressed from preventative strategies to corrective, socially exclusionary, academically competitive, coercive, and punitive practices (Edwards & Watts, 2004). Increased disruption in classrooms has emphasised aspects of plans dealing with crisis management and exiting procedures as part of everyday operations. In a quirky way, this emphasis, in turn, has fostered some interest in school-level support for and ownership of behavioural issues as more negative information has accumulated and flowed through levels of educational administration.

Historically, the majority of Australian classroom teachers have been taught to assemble and validate a discipline plan in terms of personal acceptability rather than in terms of professional accountability (e.g., positive impact on child behaviour and observable outcomes for learning). Implicit recognition that a teacher working alone in an “egg-crate” classroom (Lortie, 2002) who believes in management strategies is likely to use them has guided conventional methods of preservice teacher instruction about the nature and function of disciplinary practices. Teachers’ beliefs, attitudinal predisposition to action organised around a cluster of beliefs, and values (evaluative aspect of beliefs) have framed an idiosyncratic climate of disciplinary practice (Pajares, 1992). The prevailing view is that each individual teacher should create a personally meaningful model and should choose personally valued practices, in order to ensure compatibility between the teachers’ educational philosophy, their personal theory of discipline, and their classroom actions (Edwards & Watts, 2004).

Preservice teachers have been typically introduced to a large number of alternative conceptualisations of discipline, which have been proposed at different times during the twentieth century to meet changing sociohistorical conditions (Edwards & Watts, 2004). These approaches have included (a) use of a single model of management in most situations, such as

the Canter and Canter (1992) model of assertive discipline; (b) an eclectic selection of appealing strategies synthesised from several theoretical models within and across classrooms to provide flexibility (Charles, 1996); (c) a shifting approach employing key useful elements from various theories according to changing classroom circumstances (Edwards & Watts, 2004); and (d) some other personal suite of disciplinary techniques that has lacked, for whatever reason, commitment to this traditional theoretical process of choosing and creating a discipline model for one’s own practice (Froyen & Iverson, 1999).

Effective practice, however, is incompatible with some optimistic preservice beliefs. Pedagogy framed around self-selected disciplinary values and preferences that motivate a particular teacher might be expected to reinforce naïve conceptions about how a teacher should manage the behavioural environment for learning (Joram & Gabriele, 1998). Preservice teachers have tended to bring reproductive beliefs from their own personal history and schooling experiences to their beginning practice, leaving them passively resistant to ideas of change in themselves, in the nature of professional knowledge about behavioural support, and in their approach to practice (Pajares, 1992). “They believe that problems faced by classroom teachers will not be faced by them, and the vast majority predicts that they will be better teachers than their peers” (Pajares, 1992, p. 323).

Some emotionally based beliefs have maintained the status quo over generations of teaching, making teachers' tasks more difficult and precluding many effective strategies suited to many children's developmental needs. Landrum, Tankersley, and Kauffman (2003) questioned the apparently inverse relationship between research support for contingent positive teacher attention for student compliance and classroom implementation of this teacher practice, although positive reinforcement is "the most powerful teaching tool we have" (Sidman, 1999, p. 86). Formative teacher judgments about behavioural approaches to discipline have shown some susceptibility to emotionally loaded and broadly framed assumptions about control and responsibility in the classroom and about how teachers and students manage choices and consequences. For example, Strain and Joseph (2004) strongly challenged widespread beliefs among some teachers that positive reinforcement is bad for children. Strain and Joseph criticised the negative, evaluative language of arguments that it manipulates children, creates praise junkies, steals their pleasure by taking credit for child accomplishment, refocuses their attention on rewards rather than on the task, and reduces intrinsic achievement orientation. They condemned these misrepresentations of powerful evidence-based practice and unvalidated alternative proposals as a pernicious attack on teachers' capacity to attract emotional and instrumental support for their actual practice.

Queensland context of discipline and behaviour management

The discipline policy environment in Education Queensland—and probably across Australian state education systems—is one of broad policy on problem behaviour with multiple documents, segmentation of problem behaviour into resourced and nonresourced categories of students with problem behaviour, and wide gaps between policy idealism and practice realities. Every school has been required to develop a behaviour management plan that documents, for example, steps in assessment, procedures for intervention (e.g., least intrusive to most intrusive), and conditions for school disciplinary absences (e.g., suspension, exclusion, and cancellation). Schools have been required as part of their responsibilities through an Education Queensland (n.d.) policy (SM-06: Managing Behaviour In a Supportive School Environment) to develop a whole school approach in their school behaviour management plan, based on "shared values and expectations" (4.4). General policy guidance about school behaviour management plans has provided room for positive practices, but the lack of integration of various informing policies and the lack of operational guidelines continues to leave classroom practitioners vulnerable to many disciplinary stressors and to leave students with problem behaviour vulnerable to formal and informal exclusionary procedures.

What teachers believe about their capacity to provide appropriate support for this continuum of problem behaviour has been critical to their classroom practice. Howard (2004) found that Queensland teachers generally viewed suspension as a measure of last resort. However, specific beliefs interfered with this principled judgment. Those teachers who considered that they had few alternatives and supports for problem behaviour accepted the practical need for suspension. Moreover, they tended to place high value on the rights of the student majority and to emphasise teaching rather than behaviour-managing aspects of the teacher's role. They valued the school's reputation and the privileged nature of education. They believed that child-and-family risks contributed to suspension, that behavioural improvement after the early primary school years was unlikely, and that particular kinds of behaviour, irrespective of context, warranted suspension. Finally, their beliefs about expulsion could extend to the view that it provided an opportunity for a "fresh start" for the disciplined student and a warning to all other students about the adverse outcomes of detrimental behavioural choices.

Queensland teachers have been extensively exposed to the cognitively oriented approach developed by Glasser (1990, 2000), who has articulated a vision of learning quality and success for all students. The broad focus in some primary and secondary

schools that have adopted this disciplinary model is to encourage children to develop self-regulatory skills through choice theory (Edwards & Watts, 2004). This emphasis on development of personal responsibility and problem-solving skills may contribute to the widespread support for this reasoning-based approach in an individualistic culture. However, talk-based interventions for children with problem behaviour, which are valued by many teachers, may sometimes provide an inappropriate strategy to deal with the child's problems. For example, four high-profile aspects of Australian parental management that contributed significantly, positively or negatively, to the developmental trajectory leading to adolescent conduct-disordered behaviour were warmth, power assertion, physical punishment, and behaviour monitoring (Letcher et al., 2004) but not inductive reasoning.

Certified training across levels of knowledge and practice has enabled individual administrators, teachers, counsellors, and others to establish "Glasser" schools. However, it is clear that Glasser practices have been implemented selectively rather than consistently. Despite widespread use in Queensland schools, only a handful of these schools (e.g., Stanthorpe primary state school) have demonstrated a commitment to practice documentation and to collection of evaluative data. Moreover, no Glasser school has reported successful outcomes for students with special needs.

Regular schools in Queensland and in other states have been relatively unaware of the possibilities of school-wide PBS interventions and of the concept of an integrated continuum of positive behavioural support. Primary and secondary teacher education has provided limited access to specialised PBS training. Some efforts have been made to explore ways to deploy relatively scarce staff with technical competence in behavioural assessment and intervention more broadly across the school system. For example, Stephenson (1997) outlined a school-based consultancy model for supporting behavioural interventions within NSW schools, in which “a teacher within a school takes responsibility for carrying out functional assessments in collaboration with classroom teachers, and then works with teachers to design, implement and monitor interventions” (Stephenson, 1997, p. 72).

PBS in Queensland special schools

Regular and special schools in Queensland have tended to diverge in their most commonly used school-wide approaches to problem behaviour. In special schools, the comparatively narrower range of students and more intensive context for teacher practice has focused attention on consistency of practice across the school. Special education teachers, moreover, have often acquired considerable technical competence in skill building not only to replace inappropriate behaviour but also to improve learning and socially effective behaviour.

It is clear that there is enormous practice variation among special schools and their staff in terms of formal training in behavioural support, certification of training as relevant to the special needs population, and school support for use of this training to improve life quality. Nonetheless, a proactive, prosocial, and positive skill building profile of consistency and technical competence has been represented for many years in preservice and inservice training programs for special education teachers, particularly those specialising in intellectual impairment, pervasive developmental disorders, and early childhood intervention. Consequently, co-teaching arrangements between regular and special teachers in implementation of inclusion policy have tended to allocate individual teaching tasks to the specialist-trained teacher. Expertise in applied behaviour analysis underlying such specialised practice has remained concentrated in some special education teachers working with some individual students with extremely high needs.

Most special schools have adopted behaviourally oriented approaches related to positive behavioural support (specifically, versions of the model of LaVigna & Willis, 1995). Elements typical of behavioural interventions have been undertaken in Queensland since the late 1980s. For a decade, formal training in competency-based PBS courses in Griffith University’s special education program has enabled

individual special education teachers to become competent coordinators of the intervention process for individual children in small units attached to regular schools or in separate settings with a low staff-student ratio. This work has been concentrated at the high-risk end of the continuum of student behaviour (Crone & Horner, 2003). Few specialist technical resources have been invested into school-based interventions for students at secondary risk from untreated escalation of their existing problems and into students at no identified risk of problem behaviour. That is, primary prevention of problem behaviour in all students, across all settings, through all school staff, has been piecemeal rather than systematic.

Going to scale with school-wide PBS

In general, PBS approaches have articulated a vision of quality schooling, with lifestyle outcomes for all students. These approaches aim to capitalise on the “links between research-validated practices and the environments in which teaching and learning occurs” (Facilitator’s Guide for Positive Behavior Support, 2003, p. 6). Within a brief period of approximately two decades, American PBS researchers have developed a new, powerful, integrative technology for education. Individual casework to develop the technology by a small cadre of dedicated researchers in the 1980s (e.g., Evans & Meyer, 1985; Horner et al., 1990; LaVigna & Donnellan, 1986) flowed into federal legislation and large-

scale funding in the 1990s. It has been claimed that all effective teaching practice incorporates PBS principles and techniques (Peshak George & Kincaid, 2003).

The USA-driven movement has increasingly sought to scale up research-based PBS practices from specialist teacher practice in special education to regular education (Crone & Horner, 2003; Crone et al., 2004). Sugai and Horner (2001) outlined the argument for going to scale with a systematic school-wide PBS approach to the behavioural challenges in American education:

Schools have increased their use of punishment-based and exclusionary policies and strategies. The assumption is that this “get-tough” approach will communicate to students that (a) deviant behavior will not be tolerated and (b) punishment will teach and promote more prosocial skills. Ironically, alone these responses have resulted in the creation of more negative, adversarial, and hostile school environments... The issue isn’t that schools don’t care or that they don’t have access to viable solutions. The real issue is that schools lack the capacity to adopt and sustain their use of effective solutions. (Sugai & Horner, 2001, pp. 1–2)

The process of scaling up has generated and disseminated a new array of protocols and procedures to engage a system. For example, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) in the US Department

of Education has established a website for the National Technical Assistance Center on the Positive Behavioural Intervention and Supports. This centre (at <http://www.pbis.org>) has published lists of prerequisite steps for school-wide structures and processes and lists of key components of comprehensive systems, a suite of tools for monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the school-wide processes, and many models and examples of PBS curriculum (http://www.pbis.org/english/Schoolwide_PBS.html).

This centre also provides schools with capacity-building information and technical assistance for identifying, adapting, and sustaining effective school-wide disciplinary practices. The twofold agenda of this centre is (a) dissemination to schools, families, and communities about a technology of school-wide positive behavioral interventions and support, and (b) demonstrations that school-wide positive behavioral interventions and support are feasible and effective at the level of individual students, schools, districts, and states. The school-wide approach is established in many states of the USA.

In Queensland, inclusive education researchers at Griffith University have progressively examined some aspects of the PBS phenomenon of “going to scale.” First, Beamish, Bryer, and Wilson (2000) examined the processes involved in intensive individualised PBS and

recommended a 3-T approach to make PBS workable for one child with high behavioural support needs. That is, they argued that effective implementation requires time allocated to the PBS process, teaming of stakeholders surrounding the child, and training of the team members in the PBS approach. Subsequently, Bryer, Beamish, Hawke, Kitching, and Wilson (2003) examined processes that supported positive behavioural behaviour change at the school level and promoted a 3-V argument to manage change. That is, PBS provided a school Vision large in scope but detailed in action, Values for educators that are positive and affirming, and a data-driven Vehicle for implementing school-wide change. They examined the change processes used by some PBS-trained Griffith graduates in two schools (one primary, one special) to build some limited school-wide capacity for positive behavioural support (Bryer et al., 2003). Specifically, these schools used mini-teams to provide increased support for individual students across their respective school communities.

A key element in setting up and maintaining these teams was proactive administrative support for this intensive application of school resources to individual students. A special school for adolescent students led by a PBS-trained principal deployed several PBS-trained teachers over several years to develop comprehensive plans for more individual students each year.

In a less formal fashion, the principal in a primary school allowed a PBS-trained teacher, who was head of special education services (HOSES) in the school's special education unit, to design PBS interventions for individual students included in regular classes. Thus, regular classroom teachers worked with the HOSES to implement and adapt a plan to support a student in the classroom.

PBS in a school-wide system

More ambitious efforts to extend PBS into regular schools require the building of a community of practice with "groups of teachers, district personnel, and university professors who come together to plan and conduct applied research" (Jackson & Panyan, 2002, p. 201). Comprehensive behaviour management systems, such as that of Rosenberg and Jackman (2003), are among a suite of school-wide approaches consistent with PBS (Jackson & Panyan, 2002). These approaches include (a) democratic schools that develop values for living together and belonging to the school community and that employ inquiry processes of "judicious discipline" to understand challenging behaviour; (b) caring schools that practise principled social interactions and that use cooperative processes of "developmental discipline" to build a classroom community that values all individuals; and (c) conflict resolution schools that aim for safe, orderly, and peaceful schools and that teach solution-

focused negotiation skills to build positive and nonviolent relationships among all students (Jackson & Panyan, 2002). Many of the features associated with the Glasser approach, moreover, can be identified in these positive approaches.

In the school-wide behaviour management systems, the emphasis is on development of clear expectations for appropriate behaviour throughout the school and development of support structures for students and staff to meet these expectations. School management processes at the primary, universal, school-wide level are addressed to rules, procedures, consequences, and positive behavioural supports that are applied to every student (Rosenberg & Jackman, 2003). Participants throughout the school review and redesign day-to-day organisational, scheduling, and routine ecologies to plan for an emotionally positive, socially responsive, and behaviourally predictable environment for the prevention of problems. Consensus on school-wide rules and expectations is obtained, and teachers operationalise the meaning of rules in their class, the teaching of rules, and the supports available in the classroom (e.g., materials and prompts). Teachers develop and practise explicit procedures to make instructional adaptations in order to improve student success in meeting expectations and to enable teachers to deliver positive consequences.

Community-based assumptions guiding this comprehensive approach to school discipline are community awareness of the incremental nature of a school-wide change process and community commitment to the process (Safran & Oswald, 2003). With a consensus building process to assure full commitment of the school community to participation, the school can develop a comprehensive plan for investment of school resources, empowerment of school staff to apply best practices to create and maintain a positive learning environment, and active recognition of expected student behaviour. Each school must also operate within its actual, usually limited, resources and must respond to issues within its unique social context. Therefore, implementation of a systems approach requires participatory processes (Rosenberg & Jackman, 2003), within which it is relevant, if ambitious, to establish a university-district/school partnership model based on participatory action research.

A distinctive advantage of the comprehensive behaviour management approach is that this total system approach has published various implementation protocols, training manuals and materials, and a multiplicity of evaluation and measurement tools (e.g., Crone & Horner, 2003; Horner et al., 2004; Rosenberg & Jackman, 2003; Sugai et al., 2000). In the United States of America, research literature and systemic school-wide training in this approach is extremely rich and flourishing (Anderson, Russo, Dunlap, &

Albion, 1996). Outcomes-based assessment of effectiveness has documented value adding in schools (Sugai & Horner, 2003). This work has provided guiding principles for universal, school-wide interventions using “collaborative team problem-solving, research-based interventions, multiple data sources for planning and evaluation, and positive strategies to reduce punitive disciplinary practices” (Safran & Oswald, 2003, p. 370). There is room, however, for further investigation of contextual implementation issues, documentation of leadership and consensus building processes and decision-making practices, and flow-on effects from primary prevention to secondary and tertiary intervention.

The present PBS project in a high school is focused on building inclusive practice for all students. That is, the direction of the intervention “spotlight” is reversed in order to focus on the low-risk general population in inclusive school settings. The defining feature of a universal model of PBS is that it broadens the focus of intervention to prioritise school-wide supports for all students. Within this universal approach, the school can expect to reduce behaviour referrals, suspensions, and other typical structural indicators of problem behaviour. Moreover, time and resources can then be allocated to develop targeted supports for students with persistent problem behaviours and intensive wraparound and multiagency interventions for high-need students.

The project school

The project school was a fairly typical example of a large state high school in a disadvantaged community. The school has provided a range of innovative curricular accommodations for all students. In a 2003 school review, teachers held a positive view of school behaviour policy and practice in behaviour management. However, they were concerned about increasing numbers of students with very difficult behaviours upon whom existing practices seemed to have little impact. This present inquiry sought to document the process by which this secondary school community collaboratively reached the decision to engage in a school-wide systems approach to positive behavioural support.

The project school was located on the southwestern outskirts of the metropolitan area in South East Queensland. The school staff consisted of a principal, three deputy principals, 12 heads of department (HODs), 68 teachers, a head of special educational services (HOSES) for the Special Education Unit (SEU) that is integrated into the school, and 1.6 guidance counsellors. In addition to a number of teacher-aides and administrative support workers, a police officer and a nurse were based at the school, and there was a community education counsellor (working with Aboriginal families), a Samoan Liaison worker, and two social workers (shared with other high schools in the district).

Approximately 1,176 students were attending the school in 2004, with 786 enrolled in the junior course (Years 8 to 10) and 390 in the senior course (Years 11 and 12). The school's population was characterised by features typical of a low socioeconomic area on the fringes of an Australian city. There are high levels of population mobility and migration, in this case chiefly from the South Pacific Islands and New Zealand, relatively high levels of unemployment and welfare reliance among families, and students and parents facing the social problems arising out of poverty. A higher than average number of students entering the school at approximately 12 years of age were experiencing difficulties in literacy and numeracy learning, as indicated by the outcomes of state-wide and school-based testing. In addition, some students in the school are recognised to have a disability, predominantly in the categories of intellectual impairment (II) and autistic spectrum disorders (ASD), and there was a large increase in the 2004 intake of students with ASD from feeder schools.

Conditions for participation in this school-wide project

In the early months of 2004, several conditions for establishing a participatory school-wide project were met. The first condition was the identification of a likely school as the prime site for the project. It was noted that the organisational structure of a secondary school makes challenging

demands on leadership, team decision-making processes, and development of staff consensus, when compared to that of primary schools. It was further noted that student behaviour was a general concern for the school but not an overwhelming source of stress. Related conditions favouring this school were that a school review in 2003 and a district review in 2002 had identified behaviour issues as management priorities. Moreover, this school did not have a previous commitment to Glasser-based disciplinary practices.

A second condition was the formation of an organising project team, through various networking activities and complex communications between participants. Participants from university, senior staff from the school's educational district, and senior staff in the school held meetings at university, district, and school locations to establish the project. A major stimulus to team formation was a keynote presentation on school-wide supports by Professor Jacki Anderson (2003) to a Griffith University conference on research into educational practice. She visited the school before the conference, school and district staff attended her keynote and workshop on positive inclusive practice, and a postconference meeting of the team at Griffith University discussed the school-wide project and viewed a video of school-wide practice in American schools (Horner, 2001) that demonstrated the "ordinariness" of the changes.

Another condition that facilitated this project was that the university researchers involved in this community of practice were actively interested in participatory action research, in PBS, and in school-wide inclusive practice. A previously established university-school partnership had developed around PBS assessment and intervention for a youngster with special needs (Beamish et al., 2000). Because the school-based partner subsequently became principal education officer for students with special needs in the district including the project school, she provided a bridge between university and district-and-school partners.

Several perspectives within the educational district converged to provide favourable conditions for a comprehensive school-wide system for all students in a regular high school. First, the Principal Education Officer-Student Services, who coordinated the district's practice interest in educational placement for students with disabilities and additional support for those with severe problem behaviour, wanted to explore whether school-wide PBS could proactively improve inclusion experiences for this group of students and also benefit other students. Second, the Senior Guidance Officer in the district wanted to increase alternative skills and supports for students with particularly challenging behaviours in mainstream settings. A 2002 district review of intervention in problem behaviour indicated a patchwork of staffing

for behaviour issues (e.g., visiting low incidence teachers for high-need students and behaviour management teachers for district schools) and a patchwork of Glasser-based interventions in many schools. Recommendations from that review called for additional behavioural training for general teachers and for specialist behaviour management teachers. Some training in early 2004 was based on the LaVigna and Willis (1995) model: the district guidance officer was willing to take part in a total systems project. Finally, a deputy principal of the school wanted to address the school's 2003 review recommendations for ongoing professional development, in order to construct a cohesive behaviour management approach for the whole school.

There were several important conditions for school involvement. The project had the support of the new principal and of the district, the school executive team wanted to provide decisive leadership on problem behaviour to the school community, and one deputy principal and the HOSSES were "tasked" to explore a whole-school system with the school community. As the school became involved, two important conditions for school involvement were that the school had a "critical friend" in the university advisers and that the project fostered reflective practice. The critical friends from university team members provided knowledge and skills to assist and guide

the school leadership and staff, and their participatory action research methodology helped to foster the kind of reflective practice in the school that is regarded as an essential element in developing a more inclusive curriculum.

Another condition was a 6-step process followed by administration to establish school-wide consensus to proceed with the project. Over a period of 6 weeks, the deputy principal organised a series of meetings to (a) introduce the project to the school executive team; (b) conduct a structured discussion using a "pluses, minuses, interesting" (PMI) framework with the larger school leadership team; (c) make a whole-school presentation on a pupil-free day and answer clarifying questions; (d) run department-level discussion groups, with PMI feedback and collation of results for the leadership team; (e) discuss department-level feedback in the leadership team; and (f) form a steering committee to manage the project and commence an audit of current practices.

This 6-step process, therefore, engaged the various structures and groups within the school in a discussion process that cycled from the executive through the leadership team, the school community, and the curriculum teams, and then cycled these discussions back up through the leadership team into an executive approved steering committee to the project. This process tapped into routine school leadership

processes and used leadership support and enthusiasm to obtain general agreement to participate in the project.

At the first step, the deputy principal circulated a page of rationale to the executive team. First, he outlined the case for a whole school project in PBS. This presentation referred to the 2003 review, its call for professional development and a framework for professional learning, and its identification of staff tensions about behavioural issues. The review was consistent with the school leadership focus on teaching and learning and with the role of behaviour in pedagogy. Preliminary staff investigations of PBS indicated that, “in many ways, this model fits in well with what many of us already do and puts it into a clear framework that can be used to help us clarify our approaches and improve”. The deputy also aligned PBS with inclusion. He acknowledged staff satisfaction with much behavioural practice noted in the 2003 review, but commented that their current practices were not successful in changing disturbing behaviour. The opportunity to partner with a university team was considered timely.

At the second step, the deputy principal put the whole-of-school approach onto the meeting agenda for the 22-member leadership team; asked team members to review the rationale and make notes before the meeting; held a 20-minute discussion of pluses, minuses,

and interesting (unexpected, secondary) outcomes; and obtained a formal motion to proceed with the project and to take it forward to all staff at a pupil-free day.

At the third step, a list of critical “pluses” emerged. Staff identified five stakeholder-driven advantages:

1. Teaching rules is important; you forget that not everyone understands the rules.
2. This approach provides continuity and consistency.
3. This approach supports an inclusive framework.
4. It is based on good teaching and parenting principles.
5. It has potential for passing on strategies to families and the broader community.

At the fourth step, staff raised a series of pertinent questions:

1. How will new staff and students be trained in the approach?
2. How will data be collected in a user-friendly manner, to ensure validity and accuracy?
3. How will students be trained at the school in a way appropriate to different age groups?
4. How does pastoral care fit in with this approach?
5. Does this model address consequences?
6. What long-term support is Education Queensland offering to this process (e.g., resources, time, support for teachers, professional development)?

7. Will professional development be consistent, and how will staff be supported?

The deputy principal, with the support of the administration team, responded to these questions. The principal also made significant comments to support the deputy's answers. District partners commented on the consistency and impressiveness of the administration team approach.

Future direction

This project is pioneering work on Australian practice in school-wide PBS, which has been derived from American research. This first step to establish the project was a slow process, consistent with both the characteristics of participatory action research and with the collaborative assumptions underlying comprehensive systems change to prevent troubling behaviour, to respond consistently to appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, and to recognise students who are meeting behavioural expectations and to resolve behavioural issues through positive supports (Rosenberg & Jackman, 2003). In comparison with American school-wide projects, it was very slow because each step involved communicative exchanges among the partners and ongoing efforts to "feel the way forward". It is important that the next step progresses more quickly to retain school engagement and to plan

ahead for the start of the next school year. A series of school-district-university meetings has been scheduled.

In terms of participatory action research, school leaders, who provided project leadership to establish the project at the school, have already obtained a baseline of the school's current practices using a suite of tools. The university advisers have provided assistance in using published tools to conduct a process of school-wide evaluation (Horner et al., 2004; Rosenberg & Jackman, 2003; Sugai et al., 2000) that completes the initial phase of the project. The project team now intends to explore availability of data management tools to assess behavioural changes in school performance (e.g., school climate, safety, and social culture; staff and student turnover; and changes in state performance test data). It is anticipated that the implementation process will take 3 to 5 years.

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