12-17-2013

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Bullying Prevention in Schoolwide Positive Behavior Supports: A Review of the Literature

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Abstract

The literature has suggested that problem behavior in the schools is an ongoing problem (Sugai et al., 2000). This is a major concern for schools that want to provide a safe learning environment that promotes positive behaviors and academic learning. Such problem requires a systematic response, thus, School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) was created to target and prevent problem behaviors. Another form of problem behaviors in schools is bullying, and within the framework of SWPBIS, there is limited research on targeting bullying.

The current review examines and evaluates current research of SWPBIS, and its application to bullying. Searches of relevant databases were conducted and of the 23 studies that were identified, 14 were included in the inclusion criteria. The research suggested there are limitations within SWPBIS and its applicability for also preventing bullying behaviors too. The review will discuss implications for practice and potential avenues for future research.

Method

1. Does School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) generally reduce problem behaviors?
2. How are reductions in problem behaviors measured?
3. Within SWPBIS do bullying behaviors decrease?
4. How are reductions of bullying behaviors measured?
5. Within SWPBIS do certain types of bullying decrease?
6. What principles of SWPBIS are responsible for reducing specific types of bullying behaviors?

Results

Research Questions 1-2
- Six studies found SWPBIS to promote positive outcomes by reducing problem behaviors.
- One study found SWPBIS has been shown to increase perceived school safety

Research Questions 3-6
- Two studies found bullying behaviors decrease in schools that were implementing SWPBIS.
- Bullying behaviors were measured using teacher rating scales (Waasdorp et al., 2012) and direct observations (Ross & Horner, 2009).
- The bullying behaviors that were reduced were overt forms of bullying.
- In Ross and Hommer (2009) the principle of SWPBIS that may be responsible for reducing bullying was using extinction of positive reinforcement.
- In Waasdorp et al. (2012) the researchers did not identify any specific principle

Conclusions

- There is a limited amount of research on bullying prevention in a SWPBIS framework.
- Two studies were examined thoroughly for methods, conclusions, and limitations

Future Research

- Seek if there are other principles of behavior that might reduce bullying behaviors.
- Measure bullying behaviors with using rating scales in combination with direct observations
- Determine whether social-peer attention (Ross & Hommer, 2009) maintains a different form of bullying behavior
- Conduct observations in other settings than lunch recess (Ross & Hommer, 2009)
- Examine how bullying prevention could target each of the three tiers in SWPBIS, Swearer, Wang, Collins, Strawn, and Fluks (2014)