

The Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders and Pre-referral Intervention Plans

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Background

Early prevention advocates Walker, Ramsey, and Colvin (2004) have stated “a number of effective early interventions have emerged that have the potential to divert at-risk children from a trajectory leading to long-term negative development” (p. 10). The Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders (SSBD) is an assessment that provides data to make early decisions about problematic behavioral decisions.

Research Question

Were teacher’s initial student ratings of potential externalizing (E) or internalizing (I) behaviors as defined by the SSBD similar to the student researchers’ findings? Were the student researchers’ able to build effective individualized pre-referral behavior intervention plans based on SSBD data?

Participants

Small rural northwestern Wisconsin community elementary school, grades 1-5

2008-2009 school year

485 Total population K-12

37.9% Eligible for subsidized lunch

18.4% With disabilities

96.7% White; 1.9% Hispanic; 1.0% Black; 0.4% Asian

17 teacher participants

Number of students:

Stage 1: 332 students

Stage 2: 26 students

Stage 3: 4 students

Note: One 3rd grade teacher did not participate in study.

Methods

Training: Student researchers read the SSBD material and completed an observation training to ensure interobserver reliability.

Teacher Screening: Teacher selected the 3 highest pupils on externalizing and internalizing behavior criteria.

Stage 1: Teachers completed the Critical Events Index and Combined Frequency Index.

Stage 2: Direct Observation of pupils were completed in classroom (AET) and on playground (Neg., A., PLP).

Stage 3: Student researchers completed stage 3 decision rules worksheet and developed interventions.

Results

These charts indicate which students advanced to Stage 2 and 3 of the process. Data shows behavior observations as Academic engaged time (AET), Negative recess behavior (Neg), parallel play (PLP), and alone play (A). Students were identified as either being an externalizer (E) or an internalizer (I).. Those students who are highlighted in purple advanced to Stage 3 based on observational data. Based on the data, behavioral interventions were identified.

| SSBD Stage 2 and 3 Results | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|----------|---------|---------|----------|---------|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Grades | First | | | Second | | | | | | | | Third | | |
| Numbers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| Total % AET | 76.4 | 50.6 | 85.3 | 87.6 | 98.2 | 89.3 | 56.9 | 96.6 | 76.4 | 51.3 | 76.8 | 79.8 | 74.9 | 65.1 |
| Ext. Total % Neg. | 0 | 1.5 | 0 | | 0 | | 8 | 16.5 | 0 | 2.5 | | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| Int. Total % A & PLP | | | | 46 | | 65.5 | | | | | 6.5 | | | |
| Refer Stage 3 Yes/No; I/E | No E* | No E | No E | Yes I | No E | Yes I | No E | No I | No E | No E | No I | No E | No E | No E |

| SSBD Stage 2 and 3 Results | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|---------|---------|---------|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------|---------|----------|
| Grades | Fourth | | | | | Fifth | | | | | | |
| Numbers | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| Total % AET | 91.3 | 48.8 | 45.2 | 58.8 | 60.3 | 61.2 | 46.7 | 91.9 | 70.4 | 80.9 | 76.9 | 100 |
| Ext. Total % Neg. | | 5.5 | No Data | 0 | 9 | 1 | No Data | 0 | 0 | 25 | | |
| Int. Total % A & PLP | 9.5 | | | | | | | | | | 0 | 81 |
| Refer Stage 3 Yes/No; I/E | No I | No E | No Data | No E* | No E | No E | No Data | No E | No E | Yes E | No I | Yes I |

Behavior Interventions

Student 4; Grade 2

- Perform a social skills assessment to identify social skills that may need to be taught.
- Increase opportunities for peer interactions
 - opportunities for play at recess using a buddy system
 - opportunities for group work in the general education classroom

Student 6; Grade 2

- Work simultaneously on aggression and peer interactions.
- Teach anger management skills specifically in the areas of how to deal with situations and emotions without the use of physical aggression..
- Increase opportunities for peer interactions
 - opportunities for play at recess with an assigned “buddy”
 - opportunities for playing games in the classroom and at recess with a “safe” individual or small group of peers

Student 24; Grade 5

- Social skills assessment and training
 - teach skills related to listening to peers
 - teach how to calmly state opinion when overly excited

Student 26; Grade 5

- Perform a social skills assessment to identify any social skills that may need to be taught.
- Teach how to initiate peer interactions.
- Provide opportunities for initiating peer interactions.

Discussion

- Even though SSBD provided constructs for internalizing and externalizing behavior teacher judgment still played a large role in identification
- The system does not allow for external selection of students to be observed.
- Going through the results of stage 2, it was found through observational data that several students labeled as externalizers could have been referred for a behavior intervention plan as internalizers
- The limited number of observations (two during a class time and two during recess) made it difficult to get an accurate picture of student behavior.
- There were scheduling conflicts that did not allow for student researchers to observe at ideal instructional times.
- Because the study was completed at the end of the school year behavior intervention plans were not implemented.
- The SSBD does not provide for direct observational comparison to peers. For example, a fifth grade student was referred for a behavior intervention plan. His behavior was considered as problematic behavior according to the SSBD, but his behavior was not that different than some of his peers.

Conclusion

- Behavior doesn’t occur in a vacuum; therefore, teachers must do extensive data collection in different environments in order to determine the existence of a problematic behavior.
- A student’s behavior can either increase or decrease based upon the teacher’s expectations, tolerance, and accommodations.
- If a student is in a supportive environment, problematic behaviors are readily dealt with in a positive manner. While this is desirable, replacement behaviors still need to be addressed for other less supportive environments that the students may encounter.
- Every behavior has a function, so it is not enough just to identify what a behavior looks like, but they must understand why the behavior occurred before an intervention will be successful.

