

Anchors Away! Implementing Program-Wide Positive Behavior Supports at the Visiting Nurses Association Child Care and Family Resource Center

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Early childhood programs are growing increasingly concerned about the number of preschoolers exhibiting challenging behavior. This case study describes how educators at the Visiting Nurses Association Child Care and Family Resource Center program addressed this concern by implementing the systems, data, and practices of Program-Wide Positive Behavior Support (PWPBS) as part of the statewide initiative called Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports-New Hampshire. Features of PWPBS and examples from the "Be a Star at the VNA" program are described within the context of training and technical assistance. Descriptive data indicate that the program was implemented with fidelity and associated with increases in leadership, team functioning, and consistency in data collection. These results were associated with increases in the percentage of children who responded to primary prevention and decreases in the frequency of challenging behavior. Limitations are discussed.

Keywords: behavior problems, preschool curriculum, child mental health, childcare/daycare

Early childhood educators across the country are increasingly concerned about the number of children entering school with challenging behavior (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, & Cox, 2000). Predictably, responses to challenging behavior in many early childhood programs tend to be reactive, punitive, rarely individualized, and typically overreliant on aversive consequences, including expulsion (Dale, 2002; Gilliam, 2005; Muscott, Baker, Lechtenberger, & Pullis, 1997). This is particularly disturbing because the use of such negative yet commonplace responses is not supported by the available evidence. Although traditional punishment and exclusion may provide a temporary reprieve from behavior problems, research has shown these strategies to be ineffective in the long term, particularly when dealing with students whose behavior problems are chronic (Gottfredson, 1997; Skiba, 2002). Moreover, the use of traditional punishment to suppress

challenging behavior does not have the effect of teaching young children prosocial behaviors or building the social competence needed for success in school and life.

One encouraging systematic approach to addressing challenging behavior in early childhood programs is Program-Wide Positive Behavior Support (PWPBS; Fox, Dunlap, & Cushing, 2002; Muscott, Mann, Pomerleau, & Lane, 2005; Stormont, Lewis, & Beckner, 2006), an adaptation of School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports (SWPBS). Both SWPBS and PWPBS involve the creation of a set of universal behavior support features for proactively and systematically (a) identifying, teaching, and reinforcing valued social behaviors and (b) identifying and responding effectively to challenging behaviors (Lewis, Beckner, & Stormont, 2009/this issue; Sugai & Horner, 1999). Initial data from program evaluations suggests that PWPBS results in positive outcomes for children, families, and early childhood programs (Dunlap, Fox, & Hemmeter, 2004; Fox, Jack, & Broyles, 2005; Frey, Faith, Elliott, & Royer, 2006; Muscott, Mann, & LeBrun, 2008; Stormont, Covington-Smith, & Lewis, 2007). PWPBS appears to be a promising endeavor for Head Start programs and programs with similar student and staff characteristics (Frey, Boyce, & Banks Tarullo, 2009).

The purpose of this article is to present a case study of how the Visiting Nurses Association Child Care and Family Resource Center (VNA) responded to the increase in preschoolers' challenging behaviors by implementing PWPBS with fidelity over a 3-year period. The article begins with a discussion of the VNA and how they obtained the necessary commitments to apply for training and technical assistance to implement PWPBS as part of the statewide initiative called Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports-NH (PBIS-NH). Next, features of PWPBS and examples from the VNA are described within the context of training and technical assistance provided by the New Hampshire Center for Effective Behavioral Interventions and Supports (NH CEBIS) at the Southeastern Regional Education Resource Center (SERESC). A discussion of barriers and breakthroughs follows. The article concludes with program evaluation data on fidelity of implementation and the effects of the "Be a Star at the VNA" program on the frequency of challenging behavior exhibited by preschoolers over a 3-year period.

THE VISITING NURSES ASSOCIATION CHILD CARE AND FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER (VNA)

The VNA is a private, corporate-sponsored early childhood program, located in an urban section of Manchester, New Hampshire. The VNA is administered by a program director who reports to an executive board. The program is licensed to serve 211 children and operates 12 classrooms, offering full-day childcare and preschool for families from low- to moderate-income levels. The teacher-child ratio for preschoolers is 12 children per teacher in each classroom (12:1). Sixty-three percent of the children are White, 16% African American, 14% Hispanic, and 6% other. Sixty percent of children receive free lunch, 13% reduced lunch, and 27% are full pay. The VNA accepts tuition scholarships from the state of New Hampshire based on families' income levels, including foster child placements. Tuition for 81% of the children comes from state assistance programs including the NH Division of Child, Youth and Family Services, whereas only 19% are private pay. The VNA works in collaboration with Early Intervention and Child Find to provide special education services for preschool children ages 3-5 with a disability who attend each year.

The VNA employs 45 staff, including an education coordinator, a family resource coordinator, a nurse, and a dental hygienist. Lead teachers have a minimum of 12 credits in early childhood education, which is in accordance with regulations set forth by the NH Child Care Licensing Bureau (<http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/BCCL/LAWS-RULES-POLICIES/default.htm>).

FINDING THEIR BEARINGS: DETERMINING INTEREST AND OBTAINING COMMITMENTS FOR ESTABLISHING A PRIMARY PREVENTION SYSTEM OF PROGRAM-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT

In the fall of 2003, the NH CEBIS at SERESC launched a second statewide recruitment effort aimed at generating interest in PWPBS among early childhood programs as part of the PBIS-NH initiative that began a year earlier (see Muscott, Pomerleau, & Szczesiul, 2009/*this issue*). Under PBIS-NH, the NH CEBIS provides 3 years of training and technical assistance free of charge to early childhood programs and schools with the express purpose of designing and implementing a system of behavior support that leads to fewer incidents of challenging behavior, increased time for learning, and ultimately student achievement. Interested programs and schools must assert that positive behavior support, with its emphasis on positive and preventative strategies, multitiered behavior support, shared leadership through a universal team, and data-based decision making is (a) one of the top three school initiatives, (b) aligned with the program or school action plan, and (c) a good philosophical match for the needs of the program or school. Specific readiness criteria also include a commitment to (a) the support and active involvement of the lead administrator or building principal, (b) support from the executive director or school superintendent, (c) an 80% or better (70% in high schools) faculty vote to implement, (d) the construction of a universal leadership team to oversee design and implementation, (e) the identification of at least one behavior coach, (f) 3 years of professional development for teams, and (g) participation in evaluation activities. An application packet with all the readiness requirements can be found at http://www.nhcebis.seresc.net/document/filename/72/Agreement_for_Full_Support.doc.

In the fall of 2003, the administration of the VNA showed interest in adopting PWPBS to address the increase in challenging behavior in their students and the need for training in positive behavior supports for their faculty. The family resource coordinator contacted NH CEBIS because she believed the program would have a positive impact on staff, children, and families. NH CEBIS scheduled a presentation to the staff to explain the initiative, necessary commitments, and the application process. This included an explanation of the requirement that 80% or more of the staff had to vote to adopt PWPBS. Upon obtaining the necessary staff vote, the program director completed the application packet and began assembling a universal leadership team. As a result, NH CEBIS accepted VNA into Cohort 2 along with two Head Start programs and 24 public schools, with initial training scheduled to begin in January 2004.

DETERMINING THE CAPTAIN AND CREW: CONSTRUCTING A UNIVERSAL LEADERSHIP TEAM AND IDENTIFYING BEHAVIOR SUPPORT COACHES

One of the essential features of PWPBS is the creation of a representative and influential program-wide leadership team that takes responsibility for the design, implementation, and evaluation of

primary prevention efforts. The leadership team at the VNA consisted of the center director, the education coordinator, the family resource coordinator, the school nurse, five members of the teaching staff, an external PBIS-NH facilitator with early childhood experience, and a family member. The family member was selected based on interest, desire, willingness, and ability to participate. Due to the difficulty associated with recruiting working family members for participation in team meetings that occur during the workday, the VNA universal team operated with one family member, which met the minimum recommendation of NH CEBIS for family representation. It was then determined that the program nurse and family resource coordinator, as co-coaches, would lead the initiative for the program. Like all of the leadership teams in the cohort, VNA was expected to meet regularly, at least twice per month, for approximately 1 hr per meeting. The team agreed to have biweekly, 1- 1½-hr meetings beginning in February 2004. The goal was to design the features of the program and prepare staff to introduce the program to students at the beginning of the next school year.

CHARTING THE COURSE: PROCESS ASSESSMENT, TRAINING, AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

One of the first action items for PWPBS leadership teams is the completion of process assessments in the form of checklists. These checklists serve as criterion-based assessments, providing baseline data on the extent to which individual features are in place. They also serve as action planning tools, helping teams to chart the course of implementation by indicating what tasks need to be prioritized and accomplished, by whom, and by when. The first assessment the VNA leadership team completed was the Collaborative Team Process Checklist (CTPC; Mann & Muscott, 2004), a 14-item tool designed to assess team processes and functioning. Items include features such as (a) team membership and member commitment is established; (b) the meeting roles have been defined (e.g., facilitator, decision/notekeeper, timekeeper, etc.); (c) the process for reaching a team decision (i.e., consensus, majority vote) has been defined and adopted; (d) team mission is established that clarifies the function and assignment of the team; and (e) "ground rules" for expected meeting behavior have been agreed to, recorded, and adopted. Each item on the checklist is rated *In Place*, *Partially in Place*, or *Not in Place* and assigned a high, medium, or low priority for action planning. Teams are instructed to rate items and assign priorities by consensus. The VNA team completed an initial CTPC in the winter of 2004 after 2 days of training. Scores of 71% *In Place* and 29% *Partially in Place* showed that the leadership team was making significant progress in team functioning. The spring 2004 administration showed continued progress as 100% of the features were rated *In Place*.

The team attended 4 days of off-site training with the other Cohort 2 early childhood programs and schools, beginning with an initial 2-day statewide summit in late January, followed by 1-day trainings after 6 weeks and again at the end of the school year. Training activities varied and included the delivery of content as well as time for teams to work with external facilitators on assessment, design, skill building, action planning, and other activities. The content of professional development for VNA was designed to address the systems, data, and practices of developmentally appropriate universal behavior support. Systems features included in training were (a) building a representative leadership team, (b) developing group processes and norms, (c) engaging faculty and families, and (d) the continuous collection and use of data for decision making. Trainings

also addressed the development of the essential discipline features of PWPBS including (a) a statement of purpose, (b) clearly defined behavioral expectations, (c) procedures for teaching the behavioral expectations, (d) procedures for encouraging expected behaviors, and (e) procedures for discouraging challenging behaviors.

Approximately 1 day per month of technical assistance was provided to the leadership team, administrators, and coaches at the VNA by an experienced early childhood consultant working as an external facilitator for the NH CEBIS. The external facilitator attended trainings with the team; participated in team meetings; and provided on-site coaching and technical assistance to the team, program director, and faculty.

NAVIGATING ROUGH WATERS: CHALLENGES TO DESIGNING PROGRAM-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS

The VNA leadership team experienced some immediate challenges as they began to work on designing the program. The first challenge involved administrative leadership as the program director resigned soon after the training period had begun. The importance of the administrator's role in creating program cultures that are organized to support problem-solving based on cooperation, collaboration, and shared leadership has been well established (Ehmore, 2004; Wagner, 2001). It was therefore no surprise that the resignation was a major setback to the team's emerging development and functioning. The results of the fall 2004 administration of the CTPC supports the backsliding in team functioning as only 43% of items were rated as being *In Place*, down from 100% only months earlier, and 14% *Partially in Place*.

In response, the executive board of the VNA showed leadership by requiring that applicants for the director's position have a program philosophy that was consistent with positive behavior supports. A breakthrough occurred when the newly hired director for the program readily embraced the integration of PWPBS into the center's practices and honorably supported the VNA's commitment for PWPBS. Soon after taking the position, the new director scheduled individual meetings with each staff person at the center. During these meetings, she established clear expectations for continued participation in PWPBS and indicated her willingness to continue system supports already in place as well as to provide additional resources as needed. As a result, the staff that remained was committed to achieving better outcomes for students and families using PWPBS, and the new director had begun to establish her leadership. These barrier breakthroughs in leadership and the additional investment in professional development that took place during winter 2005 appeared to recommit the team to action. Team processes gradually improved over time and the score of 100% *In Place* on the CTPC completed in the spring of 2005 offers support for that conclusion.

Tangible evidence of improvement in team functioning included the development of a number of important group processes and norms including the establishment of team roles, a procedure for placing items on the agenda, the adoption of a consensus-based decision-making model, and the use of a decision log to document meeting outcomes. The team also developed the following mission statement to guide their work: The mission of the VNA leadership team is to implement a developmentally appropriate behavior support system that encourages children and families in developing safety, respect, and responsibility. Scores of 93% *In Place* and 7% *Partially in Place* on the spring 2006 administration of the CTPC indicates that the team sustained fidelity for an additional year.

SMOOTH SAILING: IDENTIFYING, TEACHING, AND ACKNOWLEDGING STUDENTS FOR EXHIBITING PROGRAM-WIDE BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS

The VNA began building the primary system of behavior support by identifying three program-wide expectations that were easily embedded into the VNA acronym: Be Very Safe, Be Nice, and Be A Helper. The slogan "Be a Star at the VNA" was established and a matrix of positive social skills was developed for each program routine (See Figure 1). Once the behavioral expectations were established, the leadership team produced a lesson plan for each skill on the matrix, essentially creating a program-wide social skills curriculum. Each lesson was designed to include the following features of effective instruction: (a) why the skill is important to learn; (b) multiple positive demonstrations of the skill in the form of teaching examples; (c) opportunities for guided practice in the form of activities, role plays, and teacher feedback; and (d) follow-up activities designed to acknowledge students for exhibiting the expected behaviors. Teachers were coached to teach the lessons in the context of the routine they were created for. Sample teaching plans can be found on the NH CEBIS at SERESC Web site: http://www.nhcebis.seresc.net/prevention_at_the_schoolwide_level.

ON THE LOOKOUT: IDENTIFYING, RESPONDING TO, AND MONITORING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR

The leadership team then turned their attention to creating developmentally appropriate responses to challenging behavior, procedures for continuous collection of data, and the identification of a relevant data management system. Specific features included developing (a) common definitions for challenging behavior; (b) procedures for consistent and systematic teacher responses to challenging behavior, including differentiation between *acceptable* versus *unacceptable* teacher responses; (c) a form to track incidents of challenging behavior; and (d) adaptations to the School-Wide Information System (SWIS) to manage the data for decision making. SWIS is a Web-based information system for gathering, entering, summarizing, reporting, and using office discipline referral information; it is commonly utilized in public schools implementing SWPBS. The three key purposes of SWIS include (a) behavioral data collection, (b) use of a Web-based computer application that is continuously available and secure to aggregate behavioral information through graphs and charts, and (c) decision making (May et al., 2007). SWIS includes 24 different behavior categories.

The VNA leadership team was supported in making three adaptations to the procedures generally used with SWPBS. First, the number of challenging behaviors that were defined and included for documentation on the behavior incident report was limited to the following 10: fighting/physical aggression, abusive language, defiance/disrespect, property damage, harassment, lying, leaving the area without permission, tardy, disruption, and a place for other. Second, the behaviors had to be redefined, or, in some cases, completely altered, in order to be relevant to early childhood and consistent with developmental norms for children ages 3–5. For example, *abusive language* was redefined as "any verbal message that includes swearing, name-calling, or use of words in an inappropriate way for the developmental age of the child and continues after the initial request and two prompts to stop." *Defiance/disrespect* was redefined as "refusal

	Be Very Safe	Be Nice	Be A Helper
Classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use walking feet • Feet on the floor • Gentle hands • Use our things carefully • Stay in area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share & Care • Use kind words • Use your words • Use inside voices • Take turns • Be a friend 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow directions/Use listening ears • Make happy choices • Get involved • Clean up • Do your best
Mealtime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash your hands • Take small bites & chew slowly • Stay seated • Pass carefully 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use good manners • Use inside voices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up • Clean up
Playground/ Out of Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dress for the weather • Follow directions • Use listening ears • Stay with your class • Use sand carefully • Play carefully with our things 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take turns • Be aware • Include everyone • Work it out with words • Share & care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep the gate closed • Clean up • Keep sand in the sand area
Bathroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash hands • Feet on the floor • Keep water in the sink 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take turns • Knock before entering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flush the toilet • Clean up • Turn off water & lights
Van/Bus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buckle up • Face front • Use inside voices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep hands & feet to self • Listen to the bus driver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pick up your things • Feet on the floor
Hallways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use walking feet • Leave space for others • Hold the railing • 1 stair at a time • Face forward • Stay with a grown-up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use inside voices • Follow directions • Use listening ears 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow the line • Hold the door

FIGURE 1 Be a Star at the Visiting Nurses Association Child Care and Family Resource Center behavior matrix.

to follow directions and talking back, with or without profanity, after the initial request and two prompts to stop.” The definition of *fighting/physical aggression* was adapted as “actions involving serious, intentional physical contact where injury may occur (e.g., hitting, punching, hitting with an object, kicking, hair pulling, scratching, pinching, etc.)”

Third, because staff also wanted to collect data on behaviors that were not tracked by SWIS, they were forced to utilize existing SWIS categories with an inappropriate label. For example, in order to track the behavior *leaving the area without permission*, they entered instances of such

behavior under the *truancy* category. This resulted in the time-consuming chore of having to relabel printouts of these behaviors for review, analysis, interpretation, and presentations to staff and families.

Full Speed Ahead: Introducing the Program to Children

Following the development of the primary prevention system, a high-profile rollout rally to introduce the program to students and families was held in January 2005. The children marched into the rally location adorned in star-studded costumes and singing the VNA song that was created. They were met with applause from members of NH CEBIS, the city mayor, board members of the Elliot Hospital, and media representatives. Family members were invited to attend and participate; however, because the event was scheduled during the workday when children were present, few family members attended. Information about the program was also sent home to families via announcements, newsletters, and the revised program handbook.

The children participated in the VNA's first program-wide teaching activity designed to support hallway behavior, using "walking feet," and received star stickers and star cookies from the mayor. Classroom staff followed up with a schedule to reteach and acknowledge the specific skills from the behavioral matrix. Various teaching rollouts were initiated throughout the year to address all areas of the matrix and follow up on areas where data showed that problems were increasing. The lessons included developmentally appropriate activities integrated across the curriculum. Children who were absent were acclimated to the program through inclusion in individual classroom follow-up activities embedded into the daily routines and schedules of each classroom, such as reviewing the expectations during circle time, singing the VNA song after each classroom celebration, and acknowledgments for demonstrating expected behaviors. Following the rollout, the staff began implementing the acknowledgment system. The acknowledgment program focused on creating a sense of community within each classroom. When students exhibited prosocial behaviors, they were given a star sticker paired with verbal praise and a pom-pom. The students wore the sticker for the day and were coached to put the pom-pom in a jar that was visible to the entire class. When the jars were filled with pom-poms, the classroom held a "We did it, we are stars!" celebration. Celebrations included activities such as classroom pajama parties, pizza or ice cream parties, and special movie or silly hat days. In order to encourage staff participation, the VNA also conducted teacher raffles. Staff members were asked to nominate a fellow employee who was observed implementing the "Be a Star at the VNA" program on a "Caught You Being a Star Employee" slip. The slips resulted in a monthly drawing for a donated gift card to various locations of interest (e.g., restaurant, grocery/teaching stores, and/or gas cards). The staff incentive was well received and highlighted the value and importance associated with their active implementation.

WEATHERING THE STORM: CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTATION AND BARRIER BREAKTHROUGHS

After the program was introduced, VNA's leadership team anticipated that high rates of teaching and acknowledging behavioral expectations along with reductions in punishment as a response

to challenging behavior would be sufficiently forthcoming. However, it quickly became apparent that many staff members were struggling with overall implementation, either unable or unwilling to implement various aspects of the program such as acknowledging students for exhibiting the expected behavior, responding to behavioral violations with the recommended responses, and recording those incidents faithfully. Moreover, it was clear that many staff members had ambiguous feelings about the use of data for decision making. The inability or unwillingness of many staff members to accurately distinguish and record incidents of challenging behavior resulted in a failure to produce accurate data for decision making.

One of the reasons the initial design and implementation of the program was more difficult and time consuming than anticipated was the staff's lack of knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices, classroom management, effective instruction, and data collection. These gaps in knowledge and skills were partially attributed to the fact that the majority of the teaching staff had taken only the minimum 12 credits of teacher preparation required by the state of New Hampshire Child Care Licensing Bureau.

An important breakthrough occurred when VNA's leadership team asked for more supports from the NH CEBIS in the form of additional individualized training and technical assistance from the external facilitator to address these identified barriers to early implementation. This request was granted and the external NH CEBIS facilitator met with the program director to review the SWIS data by classroom and other information, including classroom observations, in order to determine the extent to which the challenging behavior the children were exhibiting was more prevalent in some classrooms than others. It was determined that some teachers' lack of developmentally appropriate skills and training was exacerbating the problem and an action plan was developed.

The NH CEBIS facilitator began offering multiple on-site, small-group training sessions addressing gaps in background knowledge such as child development, developmentally appropriate practices, classroom management, and data recording and management. Fortunately, the provision of additional and continuous staff training, particularly in regard to challenging behavior versus developmentally appropriate behavior, increased overall fidelity of implementation and the accuracy of staff responding and reporting in particular. As a result of the additional time spent in training and development, reliable data collection began in 2005–2006 and has continued for 3 years. Despite the increased effectiveness of data collection during 2005–2006, the faculty expressed efficiency concerns about documenting 10 challenging behaviors. Responding to those concerns, the leadership team further simplified the process for the 2007–2008 school year by limiting data collection to the 3 most prevalent behaviors over the initial 2-year period, namely, fighting/physical aggression; defiance/disrespect; abusive language; and a fourth behavior, leaving the area without permission, because it created a safety risk.

A related challenge to early implementation occurred when the VNA began experiencing staff turnover and shortages. However, the problems of staff turnover provided an opportunity to address qualifications and training. The leadership team took advantage of the opportunity by including the PWPBS program and philosophy in the interviewing, hiring, and orientation practices of staff at the center. In addition, the administration changed the hiring policy further by elevating the minimal qualifications for the position of lead teacher to at least an associate's degree in early childhood education. Although staff turnover was initially high, the program was fortunate that members of the PWPBS teams were highly qualified, credentialed, and experienced teachers and that membership remained relatively stable over the course of the 3-year cycle. Moreover, the

co-coaches were skilled and invested in the outcomes. Their leadership provided much needed direction and guidance for the program.

A final breakthrough occurred when administration, in order to address staff accountability and increase fidelity of implementation, revised the position of education coordinator to include training; supervision; monitoring; and compliance with program policies, curriculum, and PWPBIS implementation. The education coordinator's job was expanded to include regular staff and classroom observations and the provision of supportive feedback and recommendations to improve practice, data collection, and analysis. The revision of the job description to include supervision served as a means for continuing classroom implementation through direct monitoring and mentorship of staff.

CALIBRATING THE COMPASS: QUESTIONS AND MEASURES

The VNA and the NH CEBIS were interested in answering four program evaluation questions. First, was the "Be a Star at the VNA" program implemented with fidelity? Second, did the program support the prosocial behavior of most of the preschoolers? Third, what were the most prevalent challenging behaviors exhibited by children? Fourth, has implementation of the program resulted in reductions in the frequency of challenging behavior exhibited by children?

Three measures were used to assess fidelity of implementation: The Universal Team Checklist (UTC; Sugai, Horner, & Lewis-Palmer, 2002), the Effective Behavior Support Survey (EBS; Sugai, Horner, & Todd, 2000), and the School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET; Horner et al., 2004). The UTC is a 23-item self-assessment that measures the extent to which the universal features of behavior support are in place and measures the need for improvement. Items include features such as (a) team has met at least monthly; (b) team summarizes existing school discipline data; (c) audit is completed for efficient integration of team with other teams/initiatives addressing behavior support; (d) discipline data are gathered, summarized, and reported; and (e) team has given status report to faculty at least monthly. A score of 80% or better of items rated *In Place* indicates a self-reported fidelity of implementation. The leadership team completed the UTC checklist twice a year, in the winter and spring of 2004 and 2005 and then a year later in spring 2006.

The EBS is a 43-item self-assessment survey used by school staff for initial and annual assessment of effective behavior support systems in their school. The EBS measures the status and need for improvement in the following four dimensions of positive behavior support: (a) school-wide discipline, (b) nonclassroom management systems, (c) classroom management systems, and (d) systems for students engaging in chronic problem behaviors (Sugai et al., 2000). A score of 50% or better of items rated *In Place* indicates a self-reported fidelity of implementation for each system. The faculty at VNA completed the EBS self-assessment survey each spring for 3 years.

The SET is a research-validated instrument that is designed to evaluate critical features of effective behavior support on a yearly basis. The feature areas include (a) expectations defined, (b) behavioral expectations taught, (c) ongoing system for rewarding expectations, (d) system for responding to behavior violations, (e) monitoring and decision making, (f) management, and (g) district-level support (Todd, et al., 2003). Programs with SET scores of 80% or better on the *Average of Features* score and 80% or better on the *Expectations Taught Feature* are considered

implementing an effective school-wide discipline system (Horner et al., 2004). The *Average of Features* score represents the combined score derived from all features measured on the SET instrument; the *Expectations Taught* score reflects the program-wide percentage attained for only *Feature B* of the SET. *Feature B, Expectations Taught*, is scored separately in order to elevate the status and emphasize the importance associated with the teaching component of SWPBS. SET data were collected every spring during the 3-year cycle and for a fourth time during the spring of 2008. Trained SET evaluators with experience in early childhood from NH CEBIS completed the evaluations.

SWIS data compiled from recordable incidents of challenging behavior were used to answer the three remaining program evaluation questions. According to the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services Center on Positive Behavior Supports at the University of Oregon, an effective primary prevention system of discipline should support the behavior of 80–90% of the students in the school or program, leaving 5–15% of students in need of more targeted supports and another 3–5% who need individualized supports. According to SWIS, students who exhibit either zero or no more than one incident of major problem behavior during an entire school year are considered benefiting from the system and in the “green zone.” Students with two to five incidents in a year are considered at risk for developing behavior problems and in the “yellow zone,” and six or more incidents indicates a student with a chronic problem who is in the “red zone.” The SWIS produces year-end reports with tables and graphs indicating the percentage of students in each category. Triangle data from year-end reports for school years 2005–2006 through 2007–2008 were used to measure whether most of the students at the VNA were supported by primary prevention.

In order to determine which challenging behaviors exhibited by children at the VNA were most prevalent and whether the program resulted in fewer incidents of challenging behavior, SWIS data reports indicating the frequency of reportable incidents by problem behavior were produced for the period of July 1 through June 30 for school years 2005–2006, 2006–2007, and 2007–2008.

LAND HO: RESULTS FROM IMPLEMENTATION

Was the “Be a Star at the VNA” program implemented with fidelity? The VNA leadership team completed a baseline UTC in the winter of 2004. Results indicated that only 24% of the total features had been addressed at all, with only 18% of the features rated *In Place* and a mere 6% more rated as *Partially in Place*. A second assessment conducted after the completion of 4 days of training in the fall of 2004 indicated improvement but not readiness to implement, as 57% of the items were rated by the team as *In Place* and 17% *Partially in Place*. These scores supported the strategic data-based decision of the team not to introduce the program to the children and families until January of 2005 due to readiness concerns. Scores from the spring 2006 administration of the UTC, 1 year after implementation, indicated that the program was being implemented with fidelity, as 100% of the features were rated as being *In Place*.

EBS baseline scores from 2005–2006 indicate that none of the four systems was perceived by the faculty as being implemented with fidelity (see Table 1). One year later, the faculty rated all four systems as being implemented with fidelity (School-wide 66%, Classroom 70%, Nonclassroom 65%, Individual 54%) and that fidelity was sustained for another year with continued improvement

TABLE 1
 Percentages of Systems Features of Behavior Support Rated by Faculty at the Visiting Nurses Association Child Care and Family Resource Center Program as *In Place*, *Partially in Place*, and *Not in Place* on the Effective Behavioral Supports Self-Assessment Survey for School Years 2003–2004 to 2005–2006

System of Support	2003–04			2004–05			2005–06		
	In Place	Partially in Place	Not in Place	In Place	Partially in Place	Not in Place	In Place	Partially in Place	Not in Place
School-wide	26	41	33	66	20	14	77	19	2
Nonclassroom	32	43	27	70	23	7	86	10	4
Classroom	37	44	19	65	26	9	72	21	0
Individual	31	40	29	54	29	17	57	25	18

Note. Scores of 50% or better on the EBS indicate fidelity of implementation for that system.

in each area (School-wide 77%, Classroom 86%, Nonclassroom 72%, Individual 57%). Somewhat expectedly given the focus of professional development, School-Wide Systems improved the most from baseline (60%), with Classroom Systems (40%) showing the second highest improvement over 2 years.

Results from the SET evaluations, the third measure of fidelity, can be found in Table 2. Baseline scores of 0% for *Taught* and 38% for *Average of Features* from the spring 2004 administration indicate the VNA did not have a primary prevention system of positive behavior support in place when they starting receiving training and technical assistance. Consistent with the finding from the self-assessments of the leadership team and full faculty, scores of 90% for *Taught* and 88% for *Average of Features* from the spring 2005 administration showed significant improvement over baseline and confirmed fidelity. Follow-up SET scores from 2006 (90% for *Taught* and 84% for *Average of Features*) and 2008 (100% for *Taught* and 86% for *Average of Features*) show the VNA has been able to sustain fidelity even after training and technical assistance ended. A closer examination of the data reveals the VNA, like many early childhood programs, was most successful in implementing the positive preventative features like defining, teaching, and acknowledging expectations. They experienced less success, and needed more professional development, with the response to challenging behavior and data collection for decision-making features.

Can the program support the prosocial behavior of most of the young children in the program? Triangle data from year-end reports produced by the SWIS is presented in Figure 2. Results from 2005–2006 indicated that only 63% of the children had zero or one reportable instance of challenging behavior during the entire year. This result indicates that the “Be a Star at the VNA” program fell short of the 80–90% goal for primary prevention in Year 1 of implementation. This is not a surprising result given the at-risk population served and the challenges faced in early implementation. Data from 2006–2007 indicated improvement as 78% of the children exhibited zero or one incident of challenging behavior all year. This result was just slightly less than the national standard of 80% and represented a 15% increase in children who responded to primary prevention in the 2nd year. Improvements continued in 2007–2008, as 92% of the children exhibited zero or no more than one incident. There were no suspensions or

TABLE 2
 Feature and Average of Feature Scores on the School-Wide Evaluation Tool for the Visiting Nurses Association Child Care and Family
 Resource Center Program for School Years 2004-2005 to 2007-2008

Feature	A. Expectations Defined (%)	B. Behavioral Expectations Taught (%)	C. System for Rewarding Expectations (%)	D. System for Responding to Behavior Violations (%)	E. Monitoring & Decision Making (%)	F. Management (%)	G. District-Level Support (%)	Average of Features Score (%)
2004 Baseline	50	0	0	50	0	69	100	38
2005 Year 2	100	90	100	75	75	75	100	88
2006 Year 3	75	90	100	75	75	75	100	84
2008 Year 4	50	100	100	100	75	75	100	86

Note. Scores of 80% or better on Feature B, Behavioral Expectations Taught and Average of Features Score indicate fidelity of implementation of the primary prevention system of Program-Wide Positive Behavior Support.

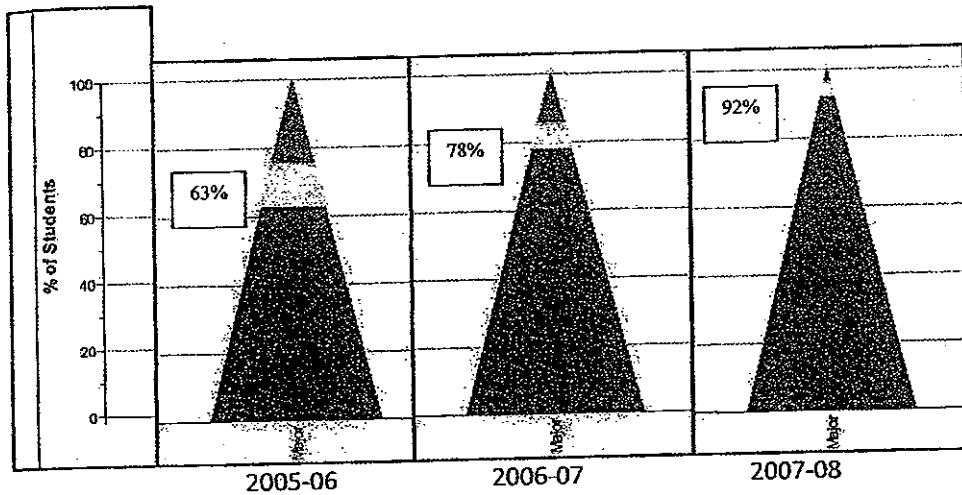


FIGURE 2 Triangle data from the School-Wide Information System indicating percentage of students at the Visiting Nurses Association Child Care and Family Resource Center who exhibited no or at most one instance of challenging behavior per year for school years 2005–2006 to 2007–2008. *Note.* Green Zone = Children with 0–1 incident of challenging behavior in a year. Yellow Zone = Children with 2–5 incidents of challenging behavior in a year. Red Zone = Children with 6 or more incidents of challenging behavior in a year. Eighty percent or better of students in the Green Zone indicates an effective system of primary prevention.

expulsions reported during the 3-year period, a factor consistent with program policy. This is a notable accomplishment for an early childhood program servicing an at-risk student population similar to that of a Head Start program.

What were the most prevalent challenging behaviors exhibited by children at the VNA over the past 3 years? SWIS data showing the types and frequencies of challenging behavior exhibited by preschoolers at the VNA is presented in Table 3. All told, 10 different challenging behaviors accounted for 1,511 reportable incidents in 2005–2006 and 817 in 2006–2007. The most prevalent challenging behavior each year was fighting/physical aggression, followed in order by defiance/disrespect and abusive language. These 3 behaviors accounted for 73% of all incidents in 2005–2006 and 89% in 2006–2007. The faculty's request for efficiency in data collection and the data itself resulted in the leadership team's strategic decision to document the 3 most prevalent behaviors (fighting/physical aggression, defiance/disrespect, and abusive language) and one additional behavior that presented a major safety concern (leaving the area without permission) in 2007–2008. Data from 2005–2006 indicate that there were 608 incidents of fighting/physical aggression, 326 incidents of defiance/disrespect, 165 incidents of abusive language, and 98 incidents of leaving the area without permission. In 2006–2007, there were 508 incidents of fighting/physical aggression, 144 instances of defiance/disrespect, 75 incidents of abusive language, and 23 incidents of leaving the area. The frequency of incidents of fighting/physical aggression, defiance/disrespect, abusive language, and leaving the area in 2007–2008 were 94, 34, 17, and 1, respectively.

TABLE 3
 Type and Frequency of Challenging Behavior Incidents Exhibited by Preschoolers at the
 Visiting Nurses Association Child Care and Family Resource Center Program for School
 Years 2005–2006 Through 2007–2008

Type of Challenging Behavior	School Year 2005–06	School Year 2006–07	Number and % Change 05–06 vs. 06–07	School Year 2007–08	Number and % Change 06–07 vs. 07–08	Number and % Change 05–06 vs. 07–08
Fighting/Physical aggression	608	508	–100 (–16%)	94	–414 (–81%)	–514 (–85%)
Defiance/Disrespect	326	144	–182 (–56%)	34	–110 (–76%)	–292 (–90%)
Abusive language	165	75	–90 (–55%)	17	–58 (–77%)	–148 (–90%)
Totals for top three	1,099	727	–372 (–34%)	145	–582 (–80%)	–954 (–87%)
Disruption	153	39	–114 (–75%)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Property damage	138	23	–115 (–83%)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Leaving the area	98	16	–82 (–84%)	1	–15 (–94%)	–97 (–99%)
Harassment	20	12	–8 (–40%)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Lying	1	0	–1 (100%)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Tardy	1	0	–1 (100%)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Other	1	0	–1 (100%)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Totals for others	412	90	–322 (88%)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Totals for all	1,511	817	–694 (46%)	n/a	n/a	n/a

Note. School year data is provided for July 1 through June 30 each year. n/a = no data collected on these behaviors.

Has implementation of the “Be a Star at the VNA” program resulted in reductions in challenging behavior? One important reason the VNA committed to implementation of PWPBS was to reduce the frequency of challenging behavior exhibited by their preschoolers. The data show the VNA achieved that goal as significant reductions of challenging behavior occurred as a result of implementation. SWIS data from 2005–2006, the initial year of data collection, indicated there were 618 behavioral incidents per 100 children. The rate dropped by 33% to 411 incidents per 100 children in 2006–2007. Moreover, comparisons of SWIS data from 2005–2006 and 2006–2007 show that the “Be a Star at the VNA” program significantly reduced challenging behavior from Year 1 of implementation to Year 2. The 817 reportable incidents in 2006–2007 represented 694 fewer than the previous year, a 46% reduction overall. The three most prevalent challenging behaviors showed a 34% reduction from 1,099 to 727 incidents. Defiance/disrespect was reduced by 56%, abusive language by 55%, and fighting/physical aggression by 16%. There were also significant reductions in the frequency of incidents of the seven other reportable behaviors, which reduced by 89% from 434 to only 90. Leaving the area without permission was reduced by 84%, property damage by 83%, and disruption by 75%.

Reductions in the number of challenging behaviors recorded in 2007–2008 from 10 to 4 preclude comparisons. However, an examination of the data for the most prevalent challenging behaviors indicates significant reductions for all 3. Over the 2-year period between 2005–2006 and 2007–2008, incidents of fighting/physical aggression fell by 85% from 608 to 94, incidents of defiance/disrespect were reduced by 90% from 326 to 34, and incidents of abusive language dropped by 89% from 165 to 17. The frequency of the 3 most prevalent types of challenging behavior exhibited by the preschoolers collectively fell by 372 or 34% from Year 1 to Year 2

and another 582 or 80% from Year 2 to Year 3. Over the 2-year period, there were 954 fewer incidents of these behaviors resulting in an 87% reduction. Significant reductions were also found for the challenging behavior of *leaving the area without permission*, which occurred 98 times in 2005–2006 and fell by 82 or 84% in 2006–2007 and another 15 or 94% in 2007–2008.

BACK IN PORT: REFLECTING ON THE JOURNEY

Four years after beginning PWPBS training, the VNA continues to engage in program-wide teaching and acknowledgment activities as well as data collection for decision-making purposes. The struggles experienced with the response to challenging behavior features, particularly data collection and analysis, further exemplifies the difficulty associated with implementing PWPBS with fidelity in early childhood. Simply put, effective implementation of PWPBS cannot take place without the consistent collection of accurate data for decision making.

The VNA's persistence and commitment to overcoming these challenges is commendable. The results of program evaluation indicate that the VNA has achieved effective team functioning and fidelity of implementation of the primary prevention program and that those results have supported the behavior of the majority of preschoolers. Navigating rough waters and stormy weather, the captains and crew of the leadership team have managed to chart a course and keep the "Be a Star at the VNA" program sailing toward a common destination by engaging faculty and families and making developmentally appropriate course corrections. Overall, the program has maintained many original features while undergoing a number of important adaptations in the response to challenging behavior and data collection features. Using data and teacher input, the program has been refined to better meet the needs of the children and staff. Our work in the PBIS-NH initiative suggests these adaptations have relevance to many other early childhood programs (see Muscott et al., 2009/*this issue*). As one staff member remarked, "As a program, we have seen that positive behavior supports can work in a preschool setting and realize that teaching children the basics of behavior at a young age can have a positive impact on young children's social-emotional development."

AHOY MATES: LIMITATIONS OF THE CURRENT PROGRAM EVALUATION

It is important to note the limitations of the current program evaluation. First, the evaluation was conducted by NH CEBIS personnel rather than an independent, impartial evaluator. Second, although multiple measures were used to measure fidelity, there were no direct measures of the extent to which teachers consistently (a) taught the required expectations based on the program-wide teaching plan and (b) conformed to the definitions of challenging behavior when documenting incidents of challenging behavior. Third, although reducing the number of documentable behaviors was prudent in terms of maintaining teacher commitment and efficiency, it presented a limitation in terms of consistency of data over time. These limitations notwithstanding, the data suggest that the "Be a Star at the VNA" program has achieved the express goal of successfully supporting teachers and children in addressing challenging behavior. Fourth, for the sake of efficiency, no data on prosocial behavior was collected. Finally, no data was collected

to determine if the program increased time for learning and whether that increased time led to improvements in learning.

CHARTING THE NEXT VOYAGE: IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAM-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The voyage at the VNA has implications for other early childhood programs interested in designing systems of positive behavior support. These implications are consistent with our work in other early childhood programs in New Hampshire (see Muscott et al., 2009/this issue) as well as the work of our colleagues across the country (Frey, 2009/this issue; Lewis et al., 2009/this issue). First, successful implementation and sustainability requires that teachers and administrators show readiness by formally committing to adopt a positive, preventative, and teaching approach to behavior support prior to implementation. Second, a commitment from program administrators to (a) shared leadership, (b) team-based decision making, (c) data-based decision making, and (d) high-quality professional development activities for staff is crucial for success. Third, limiting the data collection to a small number of behaviors and using an efficient early-childhood-friendly data management system would be prudent to overcome barriers to data collection and analysis. The Behavior Incident Reporting System-New Hampshire (NH CEBIS, 2008) holds promise as a Web-based relational data management system specifically designed for early childhood. Finally, the use of an external facilitator for training and coaching support may be helpful to support the administration and staff as they initially design, implement, and evaluate the program. This would be especially important for the majority of early childhood programs that do not have specialized staff and expertise in this area. In programs such as Head Start, the more likely implication would involve redefining the roles of the existing support staff to support the program.

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