Why Positive Behaviour for Learning:
The How's and Why's of Translating a US Model
for Local Sustainable Education

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Abstract

Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) is an initiative of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training Western Sydney Region (NSW DET WSR) that has been progressively introduced into schools. In adapting the US model of Positive Behaviour Interventions and Support (PBIS) program, DET WSR changed more than the name of the Australian model of the intervention The original model was extended beyond behaviour management to emphasise the facilitation of learning outcomes. As a result of local adaptations, various changes occurred at both the school level and regional level. From fieldwork data comprising focus group discussions and individual interviews with stakeholders, the reasons for these changes and their effects, expected or unexpected, provided rich information that may facilitate further improvement of the intervention. Distinctive features of the WSR schools' adaptation of PBL were observed in terms of cultural and contextual factors.

The implications of student behaviour for learning are becoming an increasingly major concern of teachers, parents and policy makers in Australia. Disruptive student behaviour not only impedes learning outcomes for students but also impacts negatively on teacher efficacy and wellbeing (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001; Lewis, 1999). Poor student behaviour, low student engagement and motivation can overwhelm teachers who often become less effective in the classroom, experience less satisfaction and are more likely to resign their positions, leading to an exacerbation of poor educational outcomes and associated behavioural problems and contributing to the problem of 'hard-to-staff' schools (Howard & Johnson, 2002). A recent study of primary teachers in Western Sydney found that even teachers who felt confident about their teaching abilities expressed concern about student disobedience, distractability and disruption of others, as well as less frequent but more challenging behaviours such as physical aggression and bullying (Stephenson, Linfoot & Martin, 2000). In the New South Wales Department of Education and Training Western Sydney Region (NSW DET WSR) there had been dissatisfaction with the ways that behaviour problems in schools were being managed.

The NSW DET recently revised its discipline policy guidelines to emphasise that 'quality learning environments' should provide 'an environment free from disruption, intimidation, harassment and discrimination. To achieve this, all schools are expected to maintain high standards of discipline' (NSW DET, 2006a). In some cases, managing problems at the school level frequently led to an escalation of conflict. This is consistent with research findings that show that coercive discipline aggravates problem behaviour (Lewis, 2001).

As well, the DET WSR noted disparities across the Region in the capacities of different schools to deal effectively with student behaviours. As a result, DET WSR emphasised that schools and teachers should employ more effective behaviour management programs by adopting a consistent region-wide initiative for managing student behaviour (NSW DET, 2006b). This initiative is derived from the Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports (PBIS) process that was developed in the United States and renamed as Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL). This strategic initiative of DET WSR has been progressively introduced into schools across the region since November 2005. Despite the apparent success of PBL in improving student behaviour and school-wide behaviour management practices in the short period of PBL implementation, it was unclear how the implementation of this initiative, adapted from another culture, could accommodate features that are specific to the local Australian school environment. Consequently, research was conducted by the University of Western Sydney during 2007 with a cross-section of WSR schools that had implemented the PBL process. The purpose of the research was to examine the reasons for changes and their effects, whether expected or unexpected when adapting PBIS from the USA to suit specific school needs in Western Sydney.

From PBIS to PBL

Impressed by the adaptability and whole school focus of the PBIS initiative in the USA, DET WSR introduce the USA model to local principals from primary and secondary schools across the region. The program was renamed from PBIS to PBL after the first group of 13 schools met in the first PBL training conference. WSR's uptake as PBL reflects the regional priority on improving not only students' behaviour but also their learning outcomes in particular. Since then, the model has been progressively adopted for government schools across the region.

Targeting positive behaviour in the USA, the PBIS approach is consistent with established, evidence-based methods of behaviour management that aim to identify, explicitly teach and reinforce identified target behaviours and minimise the use of punishment (Sulzer-Azaroff & Mayer, 1994). "Teaching behavioural expectations and rewarding students for following them is a much more positive approach than waiting for misbehavior to occur before responding. The purpose of school-wide PBIS is to establish a climate in which appropriate behavior is the norm" (OSEP Center on PBIS, 2006). Thus, the PBIS model encourages schools to use data to inform the adoption of systems and practices that apply sound behavioural principles in their approach to managing student behaviour. It aims to equip schools to identify and teach behaviours that they have determined are appropriate for their students.

A key feature of the PBIS model, which was attractive to WSR, is its systemic focus. The central emphasis of the PBL process is on establishing strong systems that support both staff and students and to implement evidenced-based practices that support student behaviour and learning. Critical to this process is the gathering of observational data to inform decision-making around systems and practices and on evaluating specific outcomes on the basis of the data collected (Newcomer, 2005). An advantage of an evidence-based approach is its capacity to challenge perceptions based on prior assumptions a school may have that are often inaccurate or unhelpful. Teacher (mis)judgments and false assumptions are more easily debunked when behaviours are analysed in terms of what, actually, has occurred, in what circumstances and to what effect.

The efficacy of the PBIS (and hence PBL) model is evident in the longitudinal research on how the use of behavioural data based on observing patterns of behaviour in a range of school settings, for example, school-wide (school expectations for all), non-classroom (routines, procedures, playground, hallway assemblies, cafeteria), classroom (classroom management systems and learning environment and pedagogy) and individuals (small proportion of the student population whose behaviours have a disproportionately high impact on school-wide, non-classroom and classroom systems) (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). These data are analysed by a team of school staff and are used to inform decisions about making changes to systems and/or practices so that the smallest change has the biggest impact on behaviour and learning. Furthermore, the PBIS model promotes an explicit, structured, team-based, problem solving process for developing schools' capacities to assess and address behaviour issues (OSEP Center on PBIS, 2004). The PBIS process is conceptualised in terms of four key interrelated elements within the circle that will impact on features external to the circle. These are:

- Research-based practices for supporting positive student behaviours
- Collecting and analysing data as the basis for decision-making
- Systemic change in staff behaviour
- Academic and social outcomes (OSEP Center on PBIS, 2004).

Research on classroom management across Australia has found that teachers frequently revert to coercive and ineffective forms of discipline when they are challenged with difficult behaviour (Lewis, 1997). Consequently, the establishment of workable, positive and sustainable processes for dealing productively with student behaviour issues remains an educational challenge for this Region and across the state.

The Present Study

This study responds to one of four research questions: What changes are made to the PBIS model at a school and regional level as part of implementing PBL? For what reasons and to what effect? The purposes was to investigate what changes were made to the Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports (PBIS) model at a school and regional level as part of implementing Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL). The reasons for these changes and their effects, expected or unexpected, also inform the inquiry. Distinctive features of the adaptation of PBL during the Western Sydney Region's (WSR) systemic PBL implementation of whole school universal prevention of inappropriate social behaviours and learning support are analysed in terms of cultural and contextual factors. This analysis draws on fieldwork with the Regional PBL Leadership Team and three DET WSR schools. In addition, the PBIS document, *School-wide Positive Behaviour Support implementers' blueprint and self-assessment* (OSEP, 2004), minutes of regional and school leadership meetings and planning materials were examined.

Method

Participants

The DET Western Sydney Regional PBL Leadership Team and its Chair, Regional Director Lindsay Wasson, consented to be involved in qualitative fieldwork component of a mix-methods project. This paper reports

on the fieldwork analysis of one of the research questions inquiring about the transfer of the United States PBIS model to New South Wales. Another volunteer participant was the Regional coach, Tim Lewis, from the University of Missouri. Students and staff from three volunteer DET WSR schools who had been trained to implement PBL also participated in providing material for the research question. In these schools the PBL leadership team, staff, students from Years 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11, these students' parents and the PBL coach of each school participated in the fieldwork. The breakdown of parents and DET staff, Leadership Team and coaches who participated in the research is shown in Table 1. Table 2 presents details of the student participants.

Table 1. *Staff, Parents, Leadership Team, and Coaches' Fieldwork Sample* (*N* = 55)

	Staff		**Parents**		**Leadership team**		**Coaches**	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Number	2	18	0	2	9	21	1	2
Percentage	10%	90%	0%	100%	30%	70%	33.3%	66.6%
Total	20		2		30		3	

Table 2. *Student Fieldwork Sample* (*N* = 32)

	Year 3		**Year 5**		**Year 7**		**Year 9**		**Year 11**	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Number	4	6	4	6	3	1	3	1	3	1
Percentage	40%	60%	40%	60%	75%	25%	75%	25%	75%	25%
Total	10		10		4		4		4	

The students, their parents and staff also received invitations to participate in a survey component of the project. The number of students involved in the survey component of this project was 2723.

Procedure

Research procedures were conducted according to the approval conditions set by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Western Sydney. Approval to conduct the research in the WSR schools was requested through the State Education Research Approvals Process (SERAP). On advice of the SERAP office, the application was assessed and approved through the regional research approval process. The schools remain anonymous and are identified as a number in this paper, for example, the two Phase 1 schools (i.e., they started the program from the beginning of the school year) are identified as Phase 1.1 and Phase 1.2 and Phase 3.1 refers to the primary Phase 3 school (i.e., this school started the program near the middle of the year). Of these three schools two were primary schools and the other was a high school.

The fieldwork design followed a range of enquiry methods with a broad cross-section of people involved in PBL implementation in the DET WSR at both Regional and school levels. We conducted interviews and focus group discussions which were audio recorded with permission from the interviewees, observed Leadership Team meetings, attended school events and collected relevant artefacts and documents. A range of questions elicited contextualised responses about the changes in the school learning environment since the introduction of the PBL process. The following questions provide an example of the fieldwork approach:

- What changes have you noticed in your school's approach to student discipline and welfare?
- What impacts has PBL had so far on learning and teaching?
- What has happened at your school to get people interested in PBL?
- How well has PBL engaged different cultural groups at your school?
- How have parents responded to the PBL initiative at your school?
- How have teachers helped students understand what behaviours they expect (since starting PBL)?
- What is the role of parents in planning for PBL?

Transcribed interviews and focus group sessions were analysed along with observation notes for key themes.

Findings and Discussion

Changing Terminology: PBIS to PBL

Arguably the most significant change in adapting the PBIS model has been its change of title to PBL. This was initiated at the regional level as a means of engaging schools. The Regional Coordinator explained: "The purpose of the name change was to want schools to own it, to take it on." It was a pragmatic move as well as an effort to contextualise PBL in relation to regional strategic goals. Previous practice of 'intensive behaviour

support' had been localised, frequently offered unsystematically, and focussed on individual students and classrooms. It lacked a systemic approach that would engage the whole school and had been found to be unsustainable. Pragmatically, therefore, it was felt to be important to differentiate the PBIS approach from this previous practice.

A significant initial decision when translating PBIS to PBL concerned the make-up of the school-based leadership teams. A member of the Regional PBL Leadership Team recounts:

> When we were originally planning to establish leadership teams in schools to look at PBL we had a discussion as to whether it should be a learning support team or a PBL team. … we did encourage schools to develop a PBL team because the conceptual battle to get schools from how they perceived a learning support team to how we wanted a PBL team to function was so different.

A principal member of the Regional Leadership Team emphasised that, "Changing the name to PBL … symbolised contextualisation." The emphasis on learning was significant not only to the regional strategic plan, but also to the highly regarded Quality Teaching model (NSW DET, 2003) that seeks to promote teachers' professional expertise. The focus on the Quality Teaching was clearly uppermost at two of the fieldwork schools. Having invested a great deal of time and effort in professional development, team-building and ongoing mentoring of staff to build their teaching and learning focus, the principals along with their staff teams claimed that any approach to behaviour must be in service of their orientation to learning. It was on this basis that Phase 1.2 School proceeded with PBL and has subsequently become a flagship school for the initiative.

Translating PBL. Despite its insistence on prioritising learning in its initial delivery of PBL at the universal level of school-wide and non-classroom settings, DET WSR did little to modify the approach and emphasis presented in PBIS. In terms of classroom learning, teachers in the fieldwork schools applied their school's PBL expectations as a way of developing quality learning environments in which students and teachers could feel respected and safe. To determine whether the students in the classroom also flourish academically as a result of these heightened PBL practices will require further longitudinal evidence.

When first establishing PBL in its schools, DET WSR used material from the USA PBIS flyers with no identifiable difference in the espoused aims. The prevailing view at the regional level is that there has been no significant change to the PBIS model. The Regional Director was of the opinion that any changes were merely cosmetic:

> PBIS in the US, PBL in WSR. Cultural artefacts had to be modified to sit comfortably, for example, the terminology. This is cosmetic. Research in the US meant that the core of it did not have to be changed, only the margins changed.

In terms of what is implemented as PBL and how it is implemented this appears to be demonstrably the case. The DET WSR team has been scrupulous in their efforts to follow the blueprint outlined for PBIS.

Examples of language amendments in response to Australian schools' culture are minor such as from the USA 'administrator' to the Australian 'principal'; from 'playground supervisor' to 'teacher'; from 'office referrals' to 'referrals to supervisors'; 'bathroom' to 'toilet'; and from 'hallways' to 'corridors'. In some cases the need to contextualise had meant changing terms used in the SET surveys, or in data collection programs. Changes to language were not reported as a challenge to PBL implementation in WSR.

Language and functional changes to the US-managed School Wide Information Systems (SWIS) database are being negotiated by WSR to adapt the database to Australian conditions. SWIS, when tested and put into production in the Region, will help PBL schools in their collection of student behavioural data and its analysis. Examples of negotiated modifications to the USA database are adjusting the school year to begin in January, replacing 'district' with 'region', inserting a provision for a WSR school to list up to five expectations, which can then be linked to referrals and the additional field of 'Learning Support Team referral'. These and other modifications provide a functional capture and measurement tool translated for the WSR schools' context.

Though these adaptations of language appear to be simple matters of translation, at the school level, the adoption of distinctive language for each individual school aids in developing ownership of the initiative as well as in its implementation. For example, PBL is identified at one school as '<school name> Pride'; at another it is 'CARS' – Citizenship, Achievement, Respect, Safety. Much enthusiasm across the school community was generated by an art competition for the CARS logo, which enhanced participation and cohesiveness across the school community. CARS was negotiated to be very similar to a nearby PBL partner high school. Emphasis on academic achievement was also evident at Phase 1.1 School in its PBL expectations, which were: Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be a Learner. At another school, the PBL school-wide expectations posters titled Safe, Responsible, Respectful were mounted in sponsored durable coverings to survive the conditions of its many outdoor locations. Within the school context, the different language of PBL expectations demonstrate the flexibility inherent in this systems process where schools are expected to customise the ways they integrate behavioural and academic success for all their students.

On the surface, these amendments appear minimal, and oriented mainly to minor adjustments of language. However, the extent to which schools have been able not only to find a common language, but to define the meaning and intention they give to PBL has helped to shape a different emphasis in PBL, where positive behaviour is explicitly framed as being in service of learning, by comparison with PBIS where the emphasis rests on behaviour in its own right.

Contextualising PBL

The capacity for individual contextualisation of the PBL process is built into the original PBIS framework. This flexibility is part of its attraction at both the regional and school levels, as underscored in assertions by PBL leadership that it is a *process* rather than a program. Viewed from this perspective, it may appear that there is little that needs to be changed to effect cultural transfer. Since adaptability of the model is inbuilt, individualisation to suit each school is to be expected. However, such assumptions regarding PBL's universal application risk masking crucial interactions between the PBL approach and local contexts that impact on its implementation.

It was evident through our fieldwork, for example, that the close attention to the Quality Teaching (QT) model at the two Phase 1 schools had a positive impact on the way PBL was implemented. These schools recognised and encouraged social support and student self-regulation within the QT pedagogical dimension of a quality learning environment as relevant, if not foundational, to the implementation of PBL. The principal at Phase 1.2 School had worked:

> A lot with Quality Teaching and integrated curriculum. There was a change in staff culture by
> reframing our thinking to be more student-centred. We put a lot of emphasis on student welfare
> and on pedagogy. … Our management planning is focused around the school's priorities of
> Quality Teaching, integrating technology and PBL.

While the learning impacts of the PBIS model are associated with teaching positive behaviours and decreasing disruptive behaviours, this is only one element of creating a positive learning environment. Sugai and Horner (2007), two of the originators of PBIS, acknowledge that addressing behaviour through PBIS is one part of an effective whole school approach; learning also needs to be effectively and directly addressed.

Throughout 2007, in parallel with implementing PBL across WSR, professional learning was conducted to re-envise the function of Learning Support Teams. Emerging from this process, there has been an emphasis at a functional level on the connection between the two priorities of learning support and PBL. In positioning WSR's strategic principle of 'a relentless focus on learning', the converging of these two team-based initiatives is evidence of valuing and sustaining the priority on the relationship between behavioural and cognitive learning in the classroom. Further evidence will emerge when Phase 1 schools progress from PBL's universal school-wide emphasis to the stage when classroom learning is addressed.

On a recent visit to the USA the WSR PBL Coordinator noted there was particular interest in the ways in which student learning was being addressed in WSR schools in conjunction with PBL. She observed that this interest in approaching learning coincided with an emphasis in the USA on the behavioural aspects of PBIS. This clearly suggests that the change from PBIS to PBL has the potential to be more substantive than a mere cosmetic change of name.

Developing the learning component will become increasingly important as PBL implementation moves into the classroom. For these reasons it is important to develop a conceptual structure for the PBL model that effectively and proactively integrates Quality Teaching methods rather than expecting indirectly (as in PBIS) that improving behaviour and reducing office referrals is sufficient to increase all children's learning.

Regional impacts of contextualising PBL. A feature distinctive in Australia is WSR's commitment to, and thoroughness in, systemic region-wide implementation. Tim Lewis explained in interview that experience with the PBIS model had shown the superiority of region or district-based implementation over a model in which no provisions are made for ongoing structured support. WSR's planned strategy of region-wide implementation distinguishes its approach within Australia.

In WSR the Regional Director recognised the critical lesson from the USA on the need 'to establish a supportive infrastructure for the Region-wide rollout'. He agreed to strategically support PBL as 'a model for the entire Region with a target for a broad take-up by the end of 2009'. At the outset, the Regional Director instigated two positions for a regional coordinator and officer within existing resources, whose roles have been to lead and manage the momentum, consistency and sustainability of PBL in its phased introduction across the Region. This infrastructure has changed the approach to both behaviour support and learning, and stimulated the development of proactive, region-wide ways of building and supporting schools' capacities for effective management of behaviours and learning.

The triangular PBIS model for prevention and intervention (Sugai & Horner, 2007) distinguishes percentages of students who benefit from universal intervention alone (80% according to PBIS) from those who require more targeted (15%) or intensive support (5%). This model distinguishes academic and behavioural systems across the triangle as a means of supporting student success at school. Similar to international and

Australian models for school-based mental health promotion (e.g., *MindMatters*, Commonwealth of Australia 2000 and *KidsMatte*r, Commonwealth of Australia 2007, see also Auseinet, 2007), this three-tiered approach indicates that a different kind of intervention is required at each of the three levels. This model has been very influential in WSR for garnering whole school support for the PBL approach. A member of the Regional Leadership Team notes that at the region level:

> We've been having a lot of discussion [to] strengthen the three-tiered approach to academic
> and behavioural support.

Transfer of PBIS to the Australian context may be expected to be significantly more complex for targeted group interventions (i.e., tier 2, middle section in the PBIS model) and intensive individualised interventions (tier 3 in the PBIS model) than it has proved so far for tier 1. While involving whole schools, tier 1 interventions are effectively managed by teaching staff. For tier 2 and tier 3 interventions specialist staff support is required. Structures differ for offering such support in Australia and the USA. For example, it is common in the USA for specialist support staff to be available in schools to guide behavioural interventions and for Functional Behaviour Analysis to be mandated as a treatment for children with behaviour problems. Australian approaches to school mental health issues follow different practices.

Accordingly, thorough consideration will need to be given to identifying the kinds of systemic support required at regional and institutional levels for schools to implement tier 2, targeted group interventions and tier 3, intensive individualised interventions. Further contextualisation and adaptation of the PBIS model are very likely to be necessary for WSR to enable effective implementation. Cultivating the interface with other compatible Australian schools' initiatives will be a crucial part of effective contextualisation. For example, the Australian Primary Schools Mental Health Initiative, KidsMatter (now in pilot), has identified a range of Australian evidence-based programs and resources relevant to all three tiers in the PBIS model (Commonwealth of Australia, 2007).

School impacts of contextualising PBL. One of the reasons for the enthusiastic uptake of PBL by schools in WSR has been its capacity to build cohesion amongst teaching staff around communicating clear behavioural expectations. By insisting on the use of data-informed practices it establishes transparent decision-making, thereby also encouraging staff to observe and reflect on children's behaviours and the contexts in which they occur. It assists with shifting staff perceptions towards proactive responses to children's behaviour.

> This leads to a facilitation of learning because everyone knows what's expected. It's about behaviour but it
> affects learning (Regional Leadership Team member).

Interestingly, while this emphasis on changing staff attitudes was regarded as a major strength by principals interviewed for this study, this research found no differences in teacher efficacy between PBL and control group schools. As discussed earlier, this might suggest the possibility that the influence of PBL has as yet not moved sufficiently from school-wide and non-classroom settings to classroom settings, or that teachers themselves do not see PBL as related to their instructional capacity. Since efficacy scores were fairly high for both groups it would appear that, currently at least, teachers assess their own teaching competence with a view to other dimensions of teaching rather than to practices associated with PBL. However, this may change over time, given that PBL implementation at this stage has only just begun addressing classroom level practices that would be expected to have the most direct effects on teacher efficacy.

One of the effects of school-based contextualisation of PBL is that its dual emphasis on behaviour and learning can be interpreted differentially. Whereas two of the fieldwork schools clearly showed very effective ways of using PBL to enhance their already strong orientation to the Quality Teaching framework (NSW DET, 2003) and student-centred learning, one teacher reflected:

> We've honed in on the Quality Teaching (QT) components though we haven't fully aligned
> PBL with QT. We're implementing them together so the way we pose and phrase questions,
> QT has come out.

And another teacher from the same school indicated that teachers now:

> Take into consideration the style of how a child learns. In the past we would just verabised it,
> but now [we're] in demonstrating it.

Another school opted to interpret the 'positive' in PBL in terms of much narrower teacher-directed behaviours. In comparison with the learner-centred emphasis of constructivist teaching methods, this instructional emphasis is a limitation of behaviourist models of learning. Thus it seems that school-based contextualising of the behavioural elements of PBL in relation to the Quality Teaching framework has been a major feature in the cultural transfer from PBIS to PBL, and one that seems very likely to have enhanced its benefits. Placing explicit emphasis on the integration of PBL and the Quality Teaching model, using case study schools as examples, may be a beneficial further development to enhance effective contextualisation of PBL. This has implications for developing PBL training at the regional level.

Effects of translating PBIS to PBL

School responses to PBL, and to regional support for its implementation, have been extremely positive overall. This enthusiasm is apparent despite, as its originators acknowledge, there being nothing new in its approach to student behaviour (Lewis interview 2007; Sulzer, Azaroff & Mayer, 1994). Standard advice on effective discipline practices, informed by research and practice, indicates the benefits for young people's behaviour and social development when a small number of clearly stated positive expectations are taught and effectively reinforced (e.g., Rogers, 1995).

What is new with PBL is a process whereby whole school staff teams can come to agree on what those expectations should be and on how to implement them positively and consistently. This capacity to produce systemic organisational change is the great strength of the PBIS model, with outcomes shown in more effective and distributed leadership, improved learning environments and supportive structures. Though it is too early for such clear outcomes to be measured for WSR implementation of PBL, indications that PBL is on track to show similar results were nonetheless evident in the high degree of satisfaction found amongst staff, students and parents and in fieldwork observations and responses.

Having achieved these benefits through PBL's system-wide approach, it has become apparent within WSR that this model can provide a mechanism to support other initiatives including curriculum development and learning programs. As a member of the Regional Leadership Team said:

> It's [PBL] in the middle of everything, ... it's an umbrella. It's about what happens in a school.
> It's not just behaviour, but about behaviour and learning.

It appears that the essential components of PBL can be maintained and implemented while living alongside or in conjunction with the Quality Teaching framework or as part of other student wellbeing initiatives such as Friendly Schools and Families (ECU, 2008), a bullying-reduction program, which was operating concurrently with PBL in Phase 3.1 School. In fact, when PBL is viewed as a systemic process facilitating school-wide cultural change based on evidence and evaluations it can exert an influence on the attitudes of staff, students and parents towards behaviour and learning and the relationship between them.

> One of the things we've strengthened in our training is the whole understanding of how the
> leadership team operates and that it is a critical systems piece within the school. If you can get
> schools to see the leadership team as a systems piece, then get them to recognise the value of
> that team, their implementation of PBL will be more powerful.

Fidelity and Adaptation

While recognising the value of PBL as a flexible process, the Regional Leadership Team and coaches have at the same time been committed to ensuring that their approach to implementation maintains the integrity of the model outlined in the PBIS implementation blueprint. A member of the implementation team indicated:

> We've been very passionate about maintaining the integrity of the process itself and supporting
> schools to adapt PBL.

Accordingly, each stage of the PBL process has been implemented with the guidance and involvement of the US PBIS team, Tim Lewis and Lori Newcomer and University of Missouri, St Louis. This has included their evaluation of the training delivery by WSR staff. In addition, two members of the WSR PBL Regional Leadership Team have visited the US to observe schools' and systems' practices in supporting positive student behaviours and methods of data collection.

The WSR approach to PBL mirrors the key aspects of the PBIS blueprint document (OSEP, 2004) including expansion of the process and visibility at school and regional levels. In recognition of the fidelity with which WSR has worked to implement the PBIS model, one of the US PBIS team was reported to have described 'Western Sydney's implementation of PBL [as] exemplary, excellent coordination, a structured and highly coordinated roll-out' (Regional Leadership Team minutes). In interview, Tim Lewis acknowledged that PBL implementation in the Western Sydney Region is staying true to the PBIS blueprint.

An emphasis on process in PBL implementation suggests a seamless balance between fidelity and flexibility. This perspective emerges as a key dimension of the PBL coordinator's enthusiasm for the initiative.

> The process is the same in each school but schools can adapt it to their unique settings. I love
> the differences between them all – how they've gone about it. ... We say to them, "If you get
> this piece right, get your leadership team understanding the processes, then whatever you create
> will be terrific". ... success often depends on the ability of the principal to facilitate teams - to
> lead, but also step back when appropriate. The telling part is when schools realise that, "Okay,
> if we run our committees using this PBL process we might have more of an impact". That, to
> me, is when you really start to get into it.

Tim Lewis sees the PBIS model as a process or framework for changing schools' culture of discipline. Because it is a process, not a program, he regards it as flexible and open enough to integrate with other initiatives related to mental health, character education or social and emotional learning (Tim Lewis interview, October 2007).

While this kind of integration may be the ideal, analysis of PBIS documentation reveals a degree of tension between its emphasis on fidelity of implementation and the capacity to measure the impact of other approaches. This is apparent in the use of the SET evaluation tool (Horner et al., 2004), which seeks very specific measurement of criteria relating to schools' compliance with the existing model. The process for assessing the effects on learning and school culture of other models or approaches that may be embedded with PBL is not clearly articulated. It is important not to discount these effects and to recognise associated school achievements

Sustainability with Other Initiatives

Sustainability is cited as a key motive in the development of PBIS' systemic process. To effect sustainability of positive behaviour support PBIS emphasises a team-led, data-driven approach that provides structural support for collaborative data analysis and decision-making. Clearly, PBL shares this approach to whole school change.

The WSR effort to ensure sustainability of the PBL system has responded to issues associated with staff turnover by developing and implementing a retraining strategy for the school leadership teams and coaches. Initial and ongoing twice-per-term training for the schools' PBL coaches is also significant to the sustainability of PBL as an impetus for systemic school change.

Sustainability of regional support is an issue of concern as the PBL training currently resides with two staff, the PBL coordinator and officer. As PBL expands to a wider range of schools across the region, the training capacity should not be restricted. Strengthening the recruitment strategies for more trainers and coaches could in turn enhance the capacity of coaches. The Region might consider establishing a network of PBL consultants (across all three tiers as described in the PBIS model (Sugai & Horner, 2007) to provide systemic assistance in the roll-out of PBL.

Effective implementation is premised on a common school vision, experience and language (OSEP, 2004). This suggests the importance for WSR of continuing to develop a coherent articulation, supported by evidence, of the interaction between the methodologies adopted in PBL and effective teaching and learning practices.

The language and practices of the Quality Teaching model, in particular, were evident in the fieldwork schools and in the way that PBL dovetailed into these existing practices. Ensuring that the kinds of data collected as part of PBL primarily serves the needs and aims of schools in WSR, therefore appears important to sustaining schools' enthusiasm and commitment over time.

Continuing to develop the interface between PBL and other Australian education initiatives, for example in anti-bullying, values education and mental health, is also likely to aid sustainability and coherence of the initiative. In addition, as indicated above, detailed consideration of how specialised support can/will be provided to resource the roll-out of tier 2, targeted-group interventions, and tier 3, intensive individualised interventions, is necessary.

As acknowledged by Tim Lewis, the systemic framework developed for PBL can/should engage with a range of initiatives for providing academic and social support to students. WSR is already exploring, at a regional level and with particular schools, how PBL and other initiatives can complement each other. An important direction for WSR is therefore to continue to identify which initiatives the region and its schools could connect to enable a robust outcome for PBL, but more importantly, for the success of students' learning. As part of this process, the region is encouraged to continue in its effort to establish effective information systems that will provide, for its planning processes, data about the range of schools' initiatives across the region. It is recognised that the School-wide Information System (SWIS) will be made available to WSR schools sometime in 2008, which will provide a standardised data collection system and electronic infrastructure to support schools and the Region, however the technical and training infrastructure to support the implementation of such a system must be established. To provide data for the evaluation of implementation efforts in schools, there is a need to establish a standardised data collection system that measures demographic, academic, behavioural indicators.

Though an admirable emphasis on fidelity to the PBIS model has been central in DET WSR's implementation of PBL, it is apparent that the change of name to PBL has entailed more than merely wording. While it is clear that the PBIS systems model, underpinned by data-based decision making has had a significant impact on thinking and practices within WSR, it is also evident that the emphasis in WSR on supporting learning has influenced implementation of the PBL model. Further work to articulate and incorporate this conceptual underpinning and to consider the interface between PBL and other related school initiatives will enhance the process of contextualising the PBL initiative to meet the needs of schools in this region and support students' positive behaviour and learning.

Summary

Though an admirable emphasis on fidelity to the PBIS model has been central in DET WSR's implementation of PBL, it is apparent that the change of name to PBL has entailed a strategic emphasis on the connections between

behavioural support and learning outcomes. While it is clear that the PBIS systems model, underpinned by data-based decision making has had a significant impact on teaching and cultural practices within WSR, it is also evident that the emphasis in WSR on supporting learning has influenced implementation of the PBL model. Further work to articulate and incorporate this conceptual underpinning and to consider the interface between PBL and other related school initiatives will enhance the process of contextualising the PBL initiative to meet the needs of schools in this region and support students' positive behaviour and learning.

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