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Article Summary: Factors that May Influence a Principal's Support of School-wide PBIS

This document provides a summary of an article by McIntosh, Kelm & Delabra (2016) in which 10 school administrators were interviewed who initially were opposed or not supportive of SWPBIS became supporters. The specifics of what helped the principals experience a change in their support of SWPBIS as well as implications for early experiences that may have encouraged the principals to support SWPBIS from the beginning are included in the summary of the article.

Background:

The article was published in the Journal of Positive Behavioral Interventions in 2016. In the study, the authors conducted in-depth interviews with ten administrators who self-identified as initially opposed to or not supportive of School-wide PBIS but eventually became strong supports. From the results of the interviews, the researchers identified eight helping and three hindering categories of experiences in the administrators change in support of SWPBIS. In addition, the article identifies three specific mechanisms that could change administrator support for SWPBIS.

Categories of Experiences

Helping Incidents

Helping incidents are those experiences that the principals identified as assisting them in moving from opposition or lack of support for PBIS to a positive impression of and active support for SWPBIS. The following categories of experience were identified as helping incidents in this study:

1. Learning from others
    a. Networking with implementing schools
    b. Talking with other administrators
2. Learning how PBIS aligns with personal values
3. Experiencing its effectiveness first hand
4. Observing a need for PBIS
5. Attending informative PBIS trainings
6. Seeing staff share support for PBIS

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7. Connecting to a coach

8. Attending PBIS team meetings

Hindering Incidents

Hindering incidents are incidents that hindered the administrator's positive impression of and/or active support for SWPBIS. The hindering incidents categories included:

1. Disagreement with the philosophy of PBIS from the principal (e.g., use of rewards)

2. Witnessing unsupportive staff

3. Negative reaction to time commitment

Administrators Wish List

The administrators in this study were also asked to identify anything that early on would have helped made it easier for the administrator to build a positive impression of and actively support SWPBIS. Two categories of suggestions were identified:

1. Learning about PBIS earlier

    a. Learning from more experienced administrators or other schools

    b. Attending a conference or training earlier on

2. Planning for Implementation

Mechanisms for Change in Administrator Support

The article wraps up by identifying three possible mechanisms for change in administrator support. These mechanisms can be leveraged by school level coaches from the early stages of installation of SWPBIS to support administrative buy-in and support of SWPBIS. The three mechanisms for change in administrator support are:

1. Formal and informal channels of information: simply learning about SWPBIS can influence an administrator's support of SWPBIS. This can be accomplished through both formal and informal means of learning about SWPBIS.

2. Philosophical alignment: attending to an administrator's personal beliefs and how PBIS may align with his or her personal values in previously unknown ways has the potential of being an important variable for administrator buy-in and support of SWPBIS. This can be accomplished by addressing common misconceptions around SWPBIS (e.g., use of acknowledgement system) and supporting administrators to have positive experiences with implementation.

3. Visible staff support: when administrators see support from teams and staff, either from things like votes or informal conversations about SWPBIS, the administrator is more likely to view PBIS as a positive in his/her school.

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Reference

McIntosh, K., Kelm, J.L., & Delabra, A.C. (2016). In search of how principals change: A qualitative study of events that help and hinder administrator support for school-wide PBIS. *Journal of Positive Behavioral Interventions*, *18* (2), 101-110.