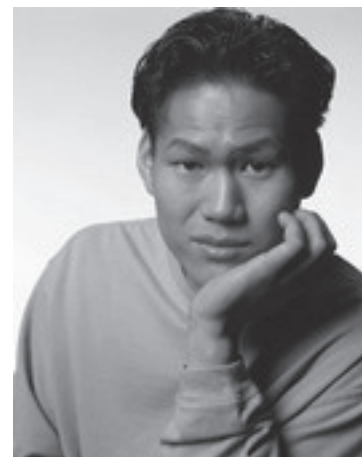




NEWSLETTER

Intercepting the Dropout Trajectory

STUDENTS WHO DROP OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL TYPICALLY DO SO AT THE END OF A LONG PERIOD OF DISENGAGEMENT FROM THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS, OFTEN ASSOCIATED WITH FREQUENT MOBILITY, TRUANCY, LEARNING CHALLENGES, GRADE RETENTION, AND NEGATIVE SCHOOL EXPERIENCES. A GATES FOUNDATION STUDY (*THE SILENT EPIDEMIC*) SHOWED THAT STUDENTS DROP OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL, IN PART, BECAUSE THEY “FEEL DISENGAGED” FROM THE LEARNING PROCESS, “AND NO ONE CARES IF I AM IN SCHOOL.” KNOWING WHO IS AT RISK AND WHAT THEIR NEEDS ARE CAN INTERCEPT THE DROPOUT OR FAILURE TRAJECTORY FOR MANY AT-RISK STUDENTS. MUCH OF THE EXPENSE OF INDIVIDUALIZED SERVICES OR PLACEMENT CAN BE AVOIDED IF THE SCHOOL PUTS INTO PLACE A SYSTEM THAT INCLUDES EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF AT-RISK STUDENTS, POSITIVELY-BASED RESPONSES TO STUDENT BEHAVIOR, AND EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS THAT ARE MATCHED TO STUDENT NEED.



School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, or SW-PBIS, offers just such a framework or system, enabling educators to increase their capacity to adopt, use, and sustain effective behavioral practices and processes for all students. The PBIS model is based on a three-tiered continuum of supports that is tailored to student need, including: (1) the development of a positive, consistent, and preventive discipline system for all students (the universal level of supports); (2) the development of a targeted detection, screening, and set of intervention mechanisms in order to support students with challenging behaviors (the secondary level of supports); and (3) an intensive set of supports that includes student-centered planning, individualized team supports, and case management for children and youth who display significant emotional and behavioral challenges.

Given that one of the major goals of positive behavioral supports is to create a predictable environment that establishes and maintains positive relationships between the adults and students through consistent teaching, reinforcement, and recognition of pro-social behaviors, it is logical to conclude that the development and

implementation of PBIS will result in better engagement of students in the educational process and increase high school completion rates of students who may otherwise “fall through the cracks,” including students with emotional and behavioral disorders. Student participation, performance, and graduation rates should increase in high schools that intentionally engage students, connect at-risk students to caring adults, and provide individualized, functional supports to students with the most significant behavioral and emotional challenges.

A dropout prevention initiative in New Hampshire uses PBIS and its evidence-based theories of human behavior and learning, shared leadership, collaborative teaming, and data-based decision making to support schools in a positive preventative approach to school discipline. PBIS offers the schools a roadmap for making the shift from a punishment-only response to a more balanced approach that fosters encouragement for every child, even the children who are difficult to engage. Schools that have adopted PBIS have fewer behavior problems, suspensions and expulsions, more consistent discipline systems, and increased time for teaching and learning.

While a majority of the PBIS implementation nationally has been in elementary and middle schools, New Hampshire’s APEX I and II projects (Achievement in Prevention and Excellence), and several projects in Illinois and Oregon have been working with PBIS in high schools and measuring the impact on behavioral and educational outcomes of students. The initial outcomes, while not scientific, indicate that high schools experienced a marked improvement in school climate, culture, and school completion rates.

This newsletter describes the work of the APEX II project, which has been funded by the U.S. Department of Education as part of its NCLB Dropout Prevention Initiative. We have included the stories from two high schools, which are part of the APEX II project in New Hampshire—Somersworth High School and Berlin High School. Overall, the seven APEX II project schools that have incorporated PBIS have reduced their dropout rates by an average of 48%. The newsletter also shares information about publications and other resources that can be explored to learn more about Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports.

—JoAnne Malloy, Guest Editor
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The NH APEX Dropout Prevention Model

The New Hampshire APEX dropout prevention model was developed in 2002 in response to the research and based on the philosophy that school organizational and cultural factors can contribute to lowering dropout rates, and that all students should have the individualized supports necessary to succeed. The New Hampshire Department of Education was awarded the first dropout prevention grant in 2002 from the U.S. Department of Education, called APEX (Achievement in Dropout Prevention and Excellence). This project was implemented in two low-performing high schools and demonstrated the promise of strategically combining three powerful school improvement components to reduce dropouts, improve individual student

success, and to improve overall school climate. The second grant, APEX II, was begun in 2005 (this project will end in September 2009), and has been implemented in 10 high schools with higher-than-average annual dropout rates in New Hampshire. Collectively, the schools have reduced their dropout rates by 38%.

Targeted Level: A Targeted Team of specialists and administrators focus on those students who exhibit challenging behaviors and who are at risk for school failure due to academic, social, or behavioral issues. The goal of this team is to design interventions for the student or group of students based on a functional and contextual assessment or Functional Behavioral Analysis (FBA). These “function-based” interventions have been proven highly effective in the reduction of problem behaviors and the associated negative consequences.

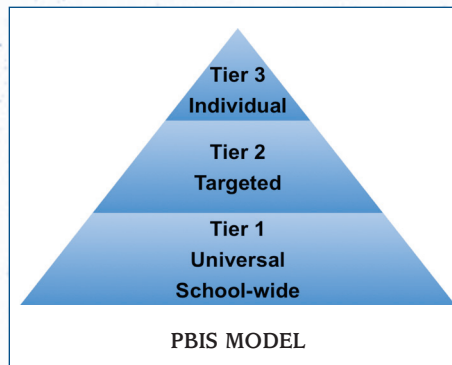
Individual Level: A trained facilitator identifies individual students who are struggling to complete their program or who have already dropped out of school. An Adult Team is formed for each student and they are trained to develop individualized, student-directed school-to-career plans using the RENEW model (see page 7), to help students earn credit toward graduation through appropriate alternative means.

PBIS is not a program. It is effective as a systems change model because it is a comprehensive framework and organizational model that allows school staff to work smarter. PBIS includes three components, each with its own features.

The first component requires that the schools engage in systems development work, including that staff work in teams using a democratic, data-based decision-making framework. The systems work may result in schedule changes and comprehensive professional development activities.

Second, the data component requires the schools teams and administrators to put into place relevant, efficient, and comprehensive data collection and analysis processes so that the teams can have the information they need to effectively identify and respond to students’ needs.

Finally, the schools are challenged to put into place practices that have been proven effective in research and experiences, to eliminate practices and programs that are not effective, and to match interventions to student need.



The APEX II model incorporates PBIS in order to effect school-wide changes in discipline and culture. PBIS is a systemic, data-driven, behavioral support and improvement process that consists of three elements, each specifically designed to address a specific population of students with different needs:

Schoolwide Level: A school-wide leadership team called a Universal Team is formed in each APEX school. The Universal Team consists of approximately 10-12 teachers, administrators, special educators, and students. An APEX staff member guides the Universal Team in its work which is to evaluate and redesign their discipline systems using the PBIS model; to assess the school’s current behavior profile, to redesign the school’s behavioral expectations, to sharpen the school’s data collection and retrieval systems, and to design and implement schoolwide interventions that will benefit all students in the school. Universal Team initiatives and efforts are designed to successfully address the needs of the majority of the student body who have the fewest social, behavioral, or academic problems.



National
Dropout Prevention
Center/Network

NEWSLETTER

The *National Dropout Prevention Newsletter* is published quarterly by the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network. Your comments are always welcome. Please address mail to:

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Network Notes

Our Guest Editor

■ JoAnne M. Malloy received a master's degree in Social Work Administration and Planning from the University of Tennessee in 1981. She joined the staff of the University



of New Hampshire's Institute on Disability (NH's University Center for Excellence in Disability) in 1991 where she has directed several state and federally-funded employment and dropout prevention projects.

Ms. Malloy is currently directing the second of two major dropout prevention projects funded by the U.S. Department of Education, using a school-to-career and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports model to reduce dropout rates in New Hampshire high schools. Ms. Malloy has published numerous articles and book chapters on employment for youth with emotional disorders and adults with mental illnesses, and is currently working on her dissertation for her doctorate degree in Education at UNH.

New Editors

■ *The International Journal on School Disaffection* will begin its seventh year with new leadership. Our founding editor, Reva Klein, will be retiring from this role and has passed the torch to two educators from Scotland, Dr. Gwynedd Lloyd and Dr. Gillean McCluskey of the University of Edinburgh, both of whom work in the areas of disaffection, disruption, and general issues of marginalization. This journal has a strong following, and its eclectic presentation of stories and research related to dropout prevention and disaffected youth is providing a very usable forum for educators from all over the world to share solutions to our common problems. We are grateful to Reva for providing the leadership and direction over these first six years, even as we anticipate the future with our new co-editors.

Solutions Begins a New Year

■ The highly successful *Solutions to the Dropout Crisis* monthly radio webcast is entering its third year of production, with a growing archive of professional development resources accessible on our Web site. Sponsored by Penn Foster, the new programs this fall include Graduation Coaches, Adolescent Literacy, Relationship Building, and Advanced Technological Education. Each month, listeners are gathering staff to tune into the program, while others find it accessible in the office setting. Schools are using these programs for in-service days, and the hour length is conducive to a workshop style setting.

Solutions to the Dropout Crisis

Share your thoughts! If you have any ideas for future programs, write to us at ndpc@clemsun.edu.

Come to the FORUM

■ Mark your calendar for the 22nd Annual At-Risk Youth National FORUM, to be held in Myrtle Beach, SC, February 14-17, 2010. The theme this year is *Empowering Students to Communicate, Accelerate, Participate, and Graduate*. The FORUM is inviting innovative, skilled presenters who have excellent ideas, proven programs, and research to share in the areas of (1) workforce preparation, (2) literacy (helping struggling readers), (3) attendance/truancy, (4) teen pregnancy prevention, (5) afterschool programs, (6) students with disabilities, (7) resiliency, (8) service-learning, and (9) urban education. The Call for Proposals/Registration flier is included in this mailing, and you can also submit proposals and register online.



Spotlight on Our Authors

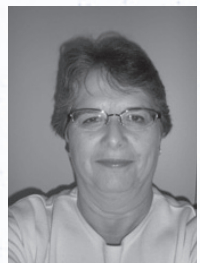
■ This mailing includes our latest publication from the Effective Strategies for School Improvement series, *Improving Reading for Academic Success: Strategies for Enhancing Adolescent Literacy* by Pat O'Connor, Bill Bintz, and Renee Murray.

Dr. O'Connor coordinates the teacher education programs in Career-Technical Education at Kent State University, Kent, OH.



Dr. Bintz is an Associate Professor in the Department of Teaching, Leadership, and Curriculum Studies at Kent State University.

Ms. Murray is a School Improvement Consultant specializing in adolescent literacy with the Southern Regional Education Board.



The three authors will be presenting a pre-conference workshop on Sunday, February 14, at the 2010 Annual At-risk Youth National FORUM.

Model Programs Database

■ One of the most popular web pages at www.dropoutprevention.org is the new Model Programs Database. As you search for ways to incorporate the 15 effective strategies to increase your graduation rate, the first stop should be this new resource. There are more than 200 model programs in this searchable database.

How PBIS Can Lead to School Improvement

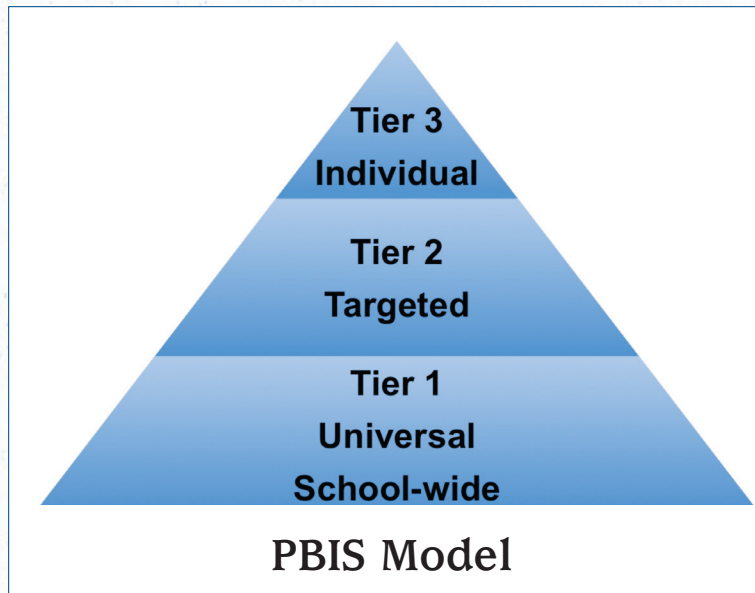
by Julie King and JoAnne Malloy

Of the 10 high schools enrolled in the APEX II project, seven schools created Universal PBIS Teams, six schools implemented the RENEW intensive model, and six schools put into place student leadership teams. Three schools were not able to participate because of teacher or school district issues (contract disputes, competing initiatives, among others). The seven schools that did implement features of PBIS showed a collective average 52% reduction in their annual dropout rates over the grant period and substantial reductions in behavioral problems. The experiences of two schools that have implemented the features of PBIS are highlighted in this article.

Somersworth High School

Somersworth High School showed the greatest level of implementation of PBIS of any of the APEX II participating schools, as defined by the PBIS Fidelity of Implementation scale. A medium-sized school with an enrollment that fluctuates between 670-700 students, Somersworth's dropout rate was 8.2% in 2004-05, and has been reduced to 2.8% in 2007-08 (the most recent year for which we have data). The

Somersworth community is rapidly changing, with an increased number of families from diverse backgrounds, and a durable, if small, number of poor families. By implementing the comprehensive PBIS/APEX model at all three tiers, the school has been able to (1) create a more consistent and effective discipline system, resulting in reductions in behaviors such as disrespect in the classroom or skipping classes; (2) put into place a behavioral data reporting and analysis system that allows staff to look at "real time" data and assess the effectiveness of their interventions; (3) put into place a system of behavioral support plans that allows teachers to keep students with behavioral problems engaged; and, (4) create the capacity within their school to provide the RENEW individualized intervention model to the most at-risk students and to those who have already dropped



out. This has resulted in improved school culture and climate, improved graduation rates, and an improvement in many of the school's academic indicators. All this has been accomplished without adding positions to the existing administration and faculty.

There are two aspects of Somersworth's experiences that have demonstrated that the needs of students with the most significant emotional and behavioral disorders can be addressed in the typical high school system and without the creation of separate learning environments. First, the Targeted (Tier 2) Team worked with students and teachers to develop Functional Behavioral Assessments and support plans for 30 students who had been referred for behavioral problems during the 2008-09 school year. The team used data to design the interventions and conducted progress monitoring to measure the level of

student response. As a result, most students increased their participation, passed their classes, and reduced their behavioral infractions. All of these results happened without the need for alternative programming.

Additionally, five teachers acted as RENEW intensive service mentors for six youth with most significant behavior problems and students who were significantly behind in credits toward

graduation. The teachers met weekly with the students and helped them to develop personal future plans, set up school-based support systems, and develop pathways to graduation. A majority of the students increased the number of credits earned, and two graduated on time with plans to attend a community college. All of these results occurred without additional staff members and through the redirection of staff time and other school resources. In addition to improved graduation rates and school climate, Somersworth High School experienced an increase in the numbers of students passing their courses, indicating that more students will remain "on track" for graduation.

For more information about Somersworth High School, contact Sharon Lampros, Principal, at slampros@sau56.org.

How PBIS Can Lead to School Improvement *(Continued)*

Berlin High School

Located in northern New Hampshire, Berlin High School (BHS) became part of the APEX II project in 2006, and, during the 2007-2008 school year, began to implement Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS) with the goal of creating a positive climate. Since joining the APEX II project, BHS has reduced its dropout rate by over 3%, and the number of discipline problems has been substantially reduced.

Berlin High School had been identified as a School In Need of Improvement (SINI) for the previous three years, and so the BHS administration and faculty decided to use a "PBIS" approach during the 2008-09 school year towards improving school test-taking participation and results, by teaching students about test taking, reinforcing good test-taking behavior, and monitoring the results. Given that New Hampshire's standardized tests are not mandatory, students often skipped school on test days, and the faculty believed that the test scores did not accurately assess the students' level of knowledge, discounting the importance of the testing as a result. The goal was to raise performance levels and to also increase the reliability of test data used by teachers for curriculum adjustments.

Since motivation is a behavior, the PBIS model was applicable to:

1. Define behavioral expectations
2. Teach the behaviors
3. Positively reinforce appropriate behaviors



Berlin High school juniors and staff members enjoy a special breakfast to kick off NECAP testing week. Juniors were seated with their small test groups and two faculty proctors to allow time for relationship building.

The expectations were that every student would attend the testing, arrive on time, and put forth a maximum effort. The Universal Team taught the reasons for state assessments, the importance of student effort, how results are used and possible implications for poor performance. Time was also dedicated for teaching test-taking strategies.

Test week included scheduling changes in order to emphasize the importance of testing and to allow all staff members to proctor tests. Only juniors were in the building for the first two hours of the test day. Test

groups were hand-chosen with six to eight juniors placed with two teachers, at least one that had served as the student's teacher previously. Test week began with a breakfast where the groups sat together and were served by their proctors. All punctual students were entered into a daily raffle for gift cards. Those with perfect attendance all week were eligible to win the \$100 cash raffle prize.

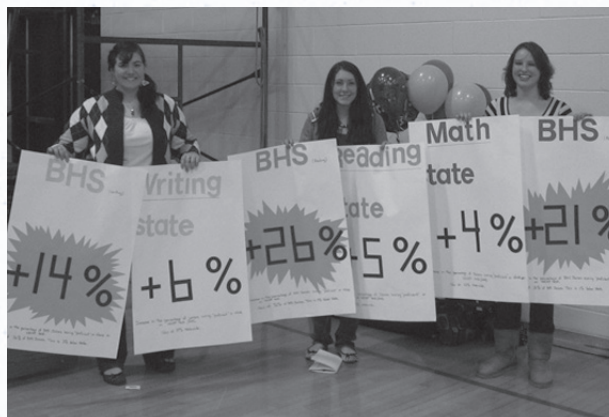
To celebrate meeting the goal of increasing the percentage of students scoring in the proficient ranges for each of the test areas, juniors were treated to a barbecue/field day with early release.

The results were significant. Berlin High School scores reported in January 2009 showed an increase in percentage of BHS students scoring proficient or above when compared to the increase in percentage made by all state testers. In math, BHS had a 21% increase in the number of students scoring proficient or above (level 3 & 4) over the previous year. In reading, BHS increased the number of students scoring proficient or above by 26% (state-wide, there was only a 5% increase). It is important to note that all of these improvements were

made with no changes in instruction or curriculum!

The school can now build on this by adding focus to curriculum changes that will provide further improvements in academic performance.

For more information about Berlin High School, contact Gary Bisson, Principal, at gbisson@sau3.org, or Julie King at jking@sau3.org.



Berlin High School students display posters during a schoolwide assembly to announce state test results. The posters show the percentage increase (over last year) of juniors scoring in the proficient and above ranges at BHS vs. the state of NH as a whole.

Book Review

Handbook of Positive Behavior Support, 2009. Wayne Sailor, Glen Dunlap, George Sugai, and Rob Horner (Eds.). Springer, New York. [ISBN 978-0-387-09631-5]

The *Handbook of Positive Behavior Support* is a comprehensive primer on the theory and application of positive behavior support (PBS), including its context and history as it emerged in the early 1980s as an important approach for working with students with significant behavior problems. The book is organized into four sections: (a) the underpinnings of PBS; (b) early childhood, family, and community supports; (c) three-tiered approach to intervention; and (d) future directions. The chapters were developed by practitioners and leading researchers in the field of PBS.

The editors define PBS as, “an applied science of human behavior” which includes the analysis of the purpose of the student’s behavior, person-centered values, and an emphasis on teaching of replacement skills (rather than suppressing behaviors). The reader will have an increased understanding of PBS’s theory and benefits for students at risk of failure—from the entire school to the individual student. This book does not, however, provide a set of predefined interventions or specifics on how to implement the model. What this book does provide is a discussion of the systems components (e.g., leadership team development) of PBS that are necessary for effective implementation and sustainability. There is one chapter that focuses on high school PBS and, while not specifically devoted to dropout prevention, the concepts of preventative intervention described have been substantiated through ongoing research. The reader will find some useful applications for high schools.

The handbook provides access to a broad range of information to guide the adoption and application of PBS. Practitioners and researchers alike will find a wealth of information about theory and practice and some practical case studies. Without additional training and coaching support, however, this text does not provide enough information to guide implementation. With these limitations in mind, the *Handbook of Positive Behavior Support* provides a wonderful resource for anyone interested in adopting PBS as a framework for intervention. The publisher also allows the option to purchase individual chapters.

—Hank Bohanon, Ph.D.
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Resources

Association of Positive Behavioral Support

The Association for Positive Behavior Support (APBS) is an international organization dedicated to promoting research-based strategies that combine applied behavior analysis and biomedical science with person-centered values and systems change to increase quality of life and decrease problem behaviors.
www.apbs.org

Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

The TA Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports has been established by the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education, to give schools capacity-building information and technical assistance for identifying, adapting, and sustaining effective school-wide disciplinary practices.
www.pbis.org

Institute on Disability (IOD)

The IOD, a University Center for Excellence on Disability (UCED), works with students and faculty, conducts statewide training, participates in grant-funded model demonstration projects, conducts research, and engages in collaborative partnerships with other statewide organizations that are committed to improving the lives of persons with disabilities and their families.
www.iod.unh.edu

NH-Center for Effective Behavioral Interventions and Supports

The New Hampshire Center for Effective Behavioral Interventions and Supports (NH CEBIS) is a professional development, research, and resource center for educators and families.
www.nhcebis.seresc.net

Main Street Academix

Main Street Academix is an innovative educational consulting firm specializing in school climate improvement and respectful schools research and evaluation. They help schools evaluate and improve school safety, prevent bullying, reduce dropouts, and promote student engagement in leadership and learning.
www.msanh.com/

Events

Feb. 14-17, 2010 Myrtle Beach, SC
22nd Annual At-Risk Youth National FORUM—Empowering Students to Communicate, Accelerate, Participate, and Graduate
www.dropoutprevention.org

March 24-27, 2010 San Jose, CA
21st Annual National Service-Learning Conference, National Youth Leadership Council—Inspire. Innovate!
www.nylc.org

April 18-21, 2010 Phoenix, AZ
2nd Annual National Forum on Dropout Prevention Strategies for Native and Tribal Communities
www.dropoutprevention.org

RENEW: An Individualized Intervention

Many of the same people at the Institute on Disability (IOD) at UNH who developed the APEX II project were involved in the development of an individualized, student-driven intervention called RENEW (Rehabilitation and Empowerment for Natural Supports, Education and Work) in 1996. Developed as part of a research and demonstration project, RENEW has a history of positive outcomes for youth with serious emotional and behavioral challenges.

Six of the APEX II high schools have embraced the RENEW model as an intervention for the students with emotional and behavioral disorders who are far behind in credits towards graduation. The RENEW model is developed on a foundation of five principles, and is based upon the philosophy that all youth can succeed with the proper supports, treatments, and services. The RENEW principles to guide the practice are:

1. *Self-determination.* Self-determined behavior includes choice making, decision making, problem solving, self-management, and self-advocacy—the skills to state one’s preferences and hopes, knowing one’s limitations and support needs, and defining the



best pathway toward reaching one’s goals. This becomes an integral part of the RENEW process.

2. *Community Inclusion* is steeped in the belief that the best and most reliable services and supports are those that are provided naturally in one’s own chosen community. The RENEW facilitator works toward building, supporting, and filling in gaps in order for those natural supports to be effective.
3. *Unconditional Care* means that no specific behavioral criteria are required of the young person in order to qualify for and receive RENEW services. Students learn that people will stay connected with them regardless of their actions and behaviors, and that they will receive support during the RENEW process to take responsibility for their actions.
4. *Strengths-based* planning and service provision allows for a focus on what the young person can do, as opposed to a focus on what he or she fails to do well. The work centers on skills, preferences, likes, dislikes, and gaps, in order to build efficacy and a positive concept of self. “Success breeds success.”
5. *Flexible Resource* planning and development means that the RENEW facilitator helps the young person identify exactly what he or she needs for supports; how to ask for help; and requires an extensive knowledge of natural community, agency, and community resource rules and regulations. The agencies are asked to provide support in a way that suits the young person’s needs, as opposed to an emphasis on the young person meeting the criteria of the agency to obtain supports.

Over 90 young people have received RENEW services as part of the APEX II project. There have been many stories of success. For example,

one young man we will call Pedro was experiencing difficulty in school—he was in his second year of high school, had obtained only 1.5 credits, was having conflicts with teachers, and had been suspended seven times in his first year. He was referred for RENEW and, in November 2008, he began to meet weekly with a teacher-mentor and the APEX II staff. He talked about his history—his father had left his mom and moved to start another family; his brother was murdered in a gang conflict in 2002; his father blamed Pedro for the murder; he began to steal cars and abused drugs when he was 13; he was in juvenile detention in 2006; he violated probation and has been in a group home for the past two years. . . .

He also described his accomplishments and his likes and dislikes: He likes rap music, dancing, art, karate, and wants to be a barber! His team began to work with him to set up a weekly class assignment and homework check-in system, and his mentor set up a paid internship for him at a local barbershop. Pedro earned 7.5 credits during the 2008-09 school year and has presented at two statewide conferences on transition and the RENEW process, sharing his personal story and discussing how the self-determination focus has helped him create a focus in his life.

Another young woman who graduated in June, 2009, with help from the RENEW process, stated, “I didn’t think anyone cared about me, but then all of these people were doing things for me . . . Thank you for believing in me.”

Although there will always be a need for dropout recovery and intensive interventions for a small proportion of youth, we know that it works if we give those youth mentoring and guidance with a focus on helping them to develop self-determination skills, develop their dreams and goals, and make meaningful connections to their communities.

—JoAnne Malloy
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National Dropout Prevention Center/Network

NEWSLETTER

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Viewpoint

The field of positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) had its genesis in the area of special education as a practice to address the very real and difficult challenges posed by problem behaviors. However, in the past decade, the PBIS model has been discovered to have the conceptual and practical components necessary to bring about major school reform. Traditionally seen as an elementary or middle school intervention strategy, there is a growing body of evidence that the PBIS model is just as effective at the high school level as with the lower grades.

I have observed firsthand the impact and power the model has to transform failing schools into schools that are now considered to be exemplary. Schools where all stakeholders feel empowered to help bring about a more positive learning environment through a sustainable foundation that is built on trust and personal responsibility.

How do schools succeed using a model that is often considered to

be cumbersome, labor-intensive, “messy,” and requiring a “groundswell” of buy-in before becoming effective? Whereas the PBIS model has some essential components and activities that are absolutely essential to successful implementation, the flourishing schools find ways to implement the essential components of PBIS using varying strategies and methodologies that don’t always have the label of PBIS associated with them. For reasons not quite understood, particularly at the secondary level, the PBIS model has been associated with “coddling” children with negative behaviors and using incentives to basically bribe them into being good. Therefore, much work needs to be done up front through increased PBIS awareness and understanding before steps should be taken to implement the model. It is very important to note that the PBIS model, just like any other major school reform initiative, will be “dead in the water” without the support and enthusiasm of the

school administrators. That buy-in must be secured before any PBIS activities are initiated. Likewise, the student leadership component must be ingrained within the decision-making structure of the school. Furthermore, all decisions must be data driven through a robust discovery and analysis process by the faculty.

PBIS has the capacity to transform the mindset of the entire faculty and staff at low-performing schools and to create conditions for reform that would never have been possible before its implementation. Perhaps more importantly, I have seen the power of PBIS to transform countless students who had otherwise given up on completing high school, to either return to high school after dropping out or to go on and complete their high school requirements and graduate.

—Terry Cash, Ph.D., Assistant Director
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