



Developing Students' Character: The Impact of SW-PBIS

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Abstract

School-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports (SW-PBIS) have focused schools on a proactive approach to student behavior. Meanwhile, character educators encourage the instruction of cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes for the development of character. This study investigates if teachers' approach to SW-PBIS and teachers' content area impact their self-efficacy for character education. Results provide important considerations for the developmental and consultative role that school psychologists may take within SW-PBIS programs.

Literature Review

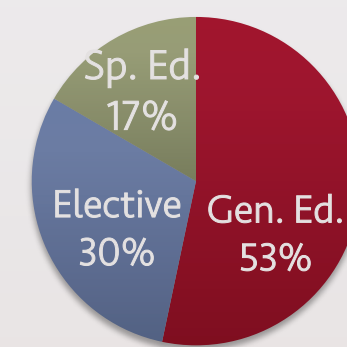
- The movement towards SW-PBIS has introduced new strategies in schools that promote and support appropriate behaviors for all students (McKevitt & Fynnardt, 2014).
- SW-PBIS involves systematic change using evidence-based behavioral strategies including (but not limited to): explicitly naming preferred behaviors, frequently acknowledging positive behaviors, and integrated behavioral interventions (Sugai & Horner, 2006).
- Character education is the process of developing students' understanding of, commitment, and tendency to behave in accordance with ethical values (Milson & Mehlig, 2002).
- The American public has advocated for shifts in educator practice by incorporating a focus on accountability for supporting students' "skills for success" and more positive school climates (Tooley & Bornfreund, 2015).
- Differences in teachers' personal self-efficacy as character educators may exist. Ledford (2011) found that differences in the type of character education training (university, non-university, no training) impacted ratings of self-efficacy for teaching character education.
- Universal programming such as PBIS & Social Emotional Learning (SEL) show positive results when implemented together (Cook et al., 2015).

Methods

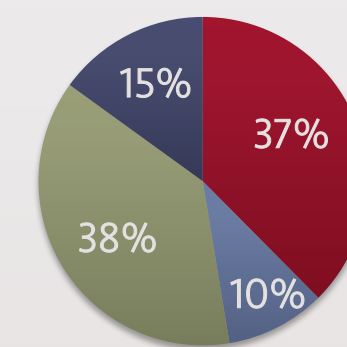
Participants

- 112 middle school teachers from suburban communities in Wisconsin.
- Majority of the teachers identified as Caucasian.
- 67% of teachers were female, 32% were male.
- Experience at the present school site ranged from 0-32 years.
- 70% of respondents held a master's degree.
- On average, teachers reported moderate broad knowledge and familiarity in implementing PBIS.

Respondents



School Sites



Materials

- To understand PBIS implementation and individual teacher's approach towards PBIS, participants responded to the Teacher Approach Rating Scale (McArdle, 2011).
- Ratings of personal teaching efficacy for character education was obtained using the Personal Teaching Efficacy subscale from the Character Education Efficacy Belief Index (Milson & Mehlig, 2002).
- Participants responded to qualitative questions about SW-PBIS and the instruction of character.

Analysis

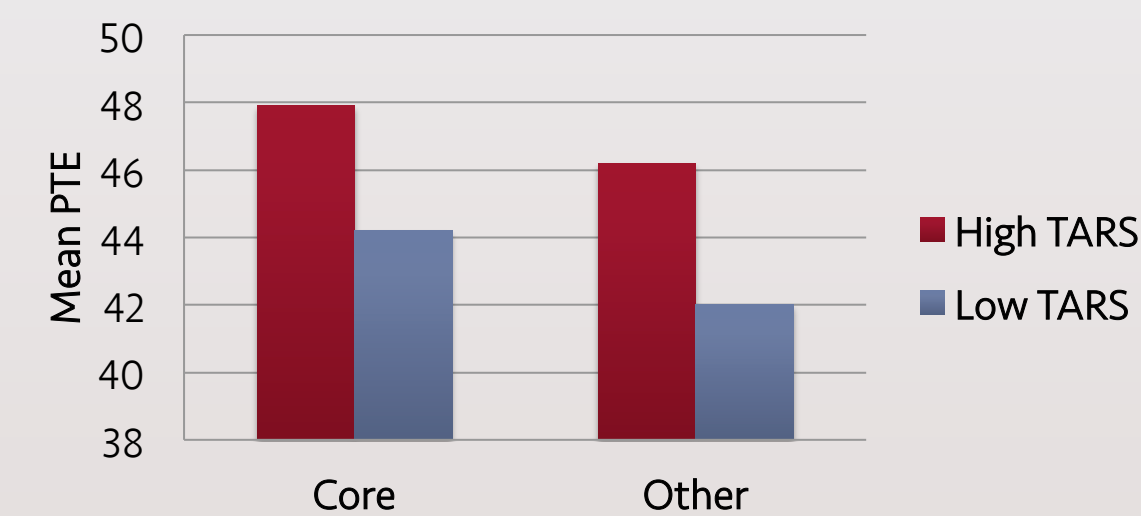
Measure	Mean	SD	Min	Max	α
CEEBI-PTE	45.67	4.50	34	56	.77
TARS Total	156.04	19.41	59	195	.86

- An ANOVA was computed using independent variables of: core versus other (elective & special education) teachers and high Teacher Approach Rating Scale (TARS) score versus low TARS score, using a median-split; the dependent variable was Personal Teaching Efficacy (PTE).

Results

- The ANOVA revealed a significant main effect, with small to moderate effect size of the Teacher Approach and Personal Teaching Efficacy ratings: $F(1,82) = 19.39, p < .05, \eta = .19$
- Additionally, a significant main effect, with minimal effect size of teacher type and Personal Teaching Efficacy was also found: $F(1,82) = 4.78, p < .05, \eta = .06$
- There was no interaction between the Teacher Approach Rating and the teacher type on Personal Teaching Efficacy ratings: $F(1,82) = .07, p > .05, \eta = .06$

Personal Teaching Efficacy for Character Education



Qualitative Top Responses

What do you feel the role of PBIS is in your school?

- To help, support, or teach positive behaviors (N=37)
- To acknowledge or reward positive behavior (N=29)
- To create positive school culture/climate (N=18)

How should schools handle the teaching of non-academic content?

- Like academic content (N=36)
- Integrated into academic content or taught when time allows (N=22)
- Through daily modeling or teachable moments (N=20)

How effective can a school's instruction of character be?

- Very effective or very effective with correct implementation/staff commitment (N=45)
- Effective if... teacher/student commitment, support from community/parents (N=19)
- Somewhat Effective (N=8)

In what ways are you an educator of character?

- Lead by example or through modeling (N=56)
- Teaching (deliberate) of character qualities (N=26)
- Establish and maintain classroom expectations (N=19)
- Recognize, encourage, converse about character (N=15)

Discussion

Teachers endorsing PBIS reported higher ratings of personal efficacy of character instruction. This difference suggests that there is an important link between using a comprehensive system of clear behavioral expectations with character education. SW-PBIS systems may enhance teachers' character education efficacy and impact students' character development. If teachers are expected to teach qualities related to character (e.g. grit, perseverance), a SW-PBIS system may be an important foundation.

Core teachers also showed higher efficacy for character education. In the middle school setting, lessons from core teachers may be some of the best opportunities for character growth at school.

If character education is desired, efforts to achieve this may begin with establishing a system-wide behavior program like SW-PBIS.

Implications for School Psychologists

The NASP Practice Model (2015), domain 4, emphasizes that school psychologists should promote SW-practices that maintain effective and supportive learning environments. If teachers are expected to develop more and more non-academic skills, school psychologists' best efforts may be in developing and supporting SW-PBIS systems. Additionally, School psychologists should ensure that expected character qualities are translated and incorporated into behavioral expectations.

Selected References

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