Position Statement

Texas Association of School Psychologists
A partner on the path to student success
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APPROPRIATE BEHAVIORAL, SOCIAL, AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORTS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) supports the use of multitiered problem-solving strategies to address the behavioral, social, emotional, and academic needs of all students. Problem-solving models provide needed supports to all students in inclusive environments when problems are first identified. When supports are provided in the general education environment, students have continued exposure to science-based core instruction.

In multitiered problem-solving models, interventions are linked to the social, emotional, or behavior *needs* of students. Approximately 17% of school-aged students require mental health services. However, only 1% of these students receive such services in special education (Merrell & Walker, 2004). A multitiered problem-solving model allows for early support before problems develop or worsen. Services provided through a multitiered model range from system-wide, preventative services that provide support for all students, to intensive, individualized supports for severely struggling students. To effectively implement problem-solving, multitiered, approaches it is important to consider both the culture and context of the specific needs of students, as well as the schools they attend. Culturally competent practices and culturally responsive school-wide and classroom management should also be considered (Weinstein, Curran, & Tomlinson-Clarke, 2003). Providing a multitiered continuum of prevention and intervention services that are empirically based, data-driven, and culturally competent is consistent with NASP's Strategic Plan (NASP, 2007). Multitiered problem solving models have the following common features:

- They are evidence-based. Intervention strategies are selected according to their proven effectiveness, implemented with fidelity, and student progress is monitored through objective and validated measures.
- They use a systemic multitiered problem solving and data-based decision-making approach to support the needs of all students.
- There is a focus on prevention strategies that lead to positive behavior and social–emotional learning and high academic achievement.
- They are culturally responsive across the continuum.

In multitiered models, students with behavioral, social, emotional, and academic concerns are exposed to evidence-based practices at levels of increasingly intensive support. Following is one example of a multitiered model.

Tier 1: Universal Support. At the school-wide level, universal interventions are provided. All students are taught expected behaviors and reinforced for practicing them. Consistent with social–

emotional learning (SEL) concepts, all students are also taught skills related to self-management, responsible decision making, empathy toward others, establishing positive interpersonal relationships, and determining positive goals (Greenberg et al., 2003). Students can be screened using the latest population-based assessment strategies (Doll & Cummings, 2008). Such data, often generated through already existing school-wide information (e.g., office disciplinary referrals) or through universal social–emotional and behavior screening (e.g., teacher rating scales), provides information indicating which students are at the greatest risk for social and/or emotional difficulties. At this level, population-based data would be used to identify school-wide needs and to directly teach positive social, emotional, or behavior skills. Typically, 80–85% of students in a building are successfully supported at this level.

Tier 2: Targeted Support. At the targeted level, groups of students are identified from Tier 1 screenings who struggle behaviorally, socially, or emotionally, despite systematic and evidence-based school-wide interventions that are implemented with fidelity. Teams review data to identify students and select appropriate targeted interventions to deliver in addition to Tier 1 strategies. In addition, staff select procedures to objectively and frequently monitor student progress. Approximately, an additional 10–15% of students are successful in school when Tier 2 group level supports are provided in addition to Tier 1 supports.

Tier 3: Intensive Support. Students who continue to struggle behaviorally, socially, or emotionally despite high quality Tier 1 and 2 interventions require the most intensive and, sometimes, individualized intervention and progress monitoring. A problem-solving team typically determines the need for more intensive supports, based on a variety of assessments and a lack of prior responsiveness to less intensive science-based interventions delivered with fidelity. Tier 3 interventions involve more intensive supports and may require services from specialized personnel. For example, at Tier 3, services may include functional analyses of behavior, behavior intervention planning, and multisystemic interventions (Weisz, Jensen-Doss, & Hawley, 2006). Additionally, students who require such intensive behavioral, social, and emotional support may need wraparound planning in which a collaborative child service team, including school and community service providers, plans and carries out an integrated program of behavioral, social, or emotional interventions.

Students who require the most intensive intervention and progress monitoring may also qualify for special education services. The amount and intensity of special education and related services are determined by the problem-solving team's ongoing evaluation of students' needs. Such evaluations, when conducted by a multidisciplinary team, meet the requirements of the recently reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004).

RATIONALE AND SUPPORT FOR A THREE-TIER MODEL

A significant body of literature over the last decade has evaluated the effectiveness of multitier problem-solving implementation. Results have included improved academic performance, reductions in office discipline referrals, and more positive attitudes toward school. Studies using single-cases methodologies and quasi-experimental methods have shown links to improved student behavior, social–emotional learning, and academic outcomes. Using problem-solving multitiered

models to meet the behavioral, social, and emotional needs of students is consistent with recent federal and state legislation. IDEA 2004 requires schools to consider positive behavioral supports when disciplining all students, including those with behavioral needs who are not in special education. The U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has funded a National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS; www.pbis.org).

ROLE OF THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST

School psychologists play a critical role at all levels of support for students with behavioral, social, and emotional concerns.

- Their training in data-based decision making allows school psychologists to facilitate school teams' reviews of data at all tiers, evaluation of research-based findings, and design of evidence-based interventions. School psychologists can serve as facilitators of problem-solving teams and assist in the evaluation of student responses to intervention through program evaluation efforts.
- School psychologists collaborate with a range of individuals who impact the lives of youth with behavioral, social, and emotional challenges. By coordinating and delivering services to families with the most complex challenges, school psychologists can prevent the fragmentation of services that often impact children with the greatest need for intensive support.
- School psychologists assist in designing and delivering academic interventions and curricular modifications within multitier models of problem solving. The school psychologist can also help design methods of evaluating student progress and participating in implementing interventions at multiple tiers.
- School psychologists advocate for the mental health needs of all students by leading efforts at all tiers of problem-solving, including universal screening, the design and delivery of targeted interventions, and the implementation of intensive interventions for individual students.
- School psychologists advocate for evidence-based and culturally competent practices for all students and help schools reform practices that result in inequitable and ineffective outcomes. Too often, the behavioral challenges of students of color are handled with exclusionary discipline through suspension and expulsion, ultimately placing students with behavioral, social, and emotional challenges at risk for dropping out and entering the juvenile justice system (Skiba & Rausch, 2006).

SUMMARY

NASP believes that effective education for all students, including those with behavioral, social, or emotional problems, can be accomplished when using a multitiered problem-solving system that incorporates evidence-based interventions. School psychologists play important roles in implementing these models, including leading school teams and facilitating the design and delivery of a multitiered, problem solving system of behavioral and mental health support for all students and families.

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