School Improvement Programs

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School Improvement Programs
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Introduction
Teachers face a growing number of behavior challenges that effect the delivery of classroom instruction (Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice, n.d.). This affects how the teacher teaches and how the other students learn. Disruptions in the classroom force teachers to direct their attention to that student resulting in less time teaching. School wide programs help school staff develop expectations for behavior and allows for a common language amongst all staff and students.

There are many school wide programs that claim to make behaviors decrease. It can be very cumbersome and time consuming for schools to go through all of them and select a program that will meet all of their needs. In addition to being time consuming the programs are often very expensive. The purpose of this project is to review and recommend an appropriate intervention for Roosevelt Elementary School using needs identified by the school principal and teachers report. Roosevelt Elementary School determined that a program must be implemented in order to deal with the behaviors in the classroom. The classrooms are large and it becomes increasingly difficult to manage classroom behavior. Not only are there concerns with classrooms but also hallways, playground and lunchroom behavior has been a source of misbehavior.

Roosevelt Elementary School is undergoing implementation of Response to Intervention. This is a three tier program that accommodates children’s needs and identifies interventions that will help children succeed academically and behaviorally. The principal and social worker discussed the continued need for programming that addresses behavior issues in the school. They discussed that having a common language and school wide expectations were two criteria that would be beneficial when looking for a program. We also wanted a program that would be included social skills. Another important component was that it needed to align with RtI. This was important because teachers were already undergoing a transition with RtI and it was important for the program to helpful and not burdensome to school staff.

Research Question
What components makes an effective school wide program? What is the best evidenced-based program that should be implemented in our rural elementary school that will give the best results?

Methods
According to Casel website, there are six steps that should be followed when going through the selection process, Step 1: Principal commits to school wide initiative, Step 2: Principal engages key stakeholders, Step 3: Develop and Articulate Shared Vision, Step 4: Conduct a school wide needs and Resources Assessment, Step 5: Develop Action Plan for Implementation, Step 6: Review and Select Evidence-Based Programs/Strategies (as well). At Roosevelt Elementary School the principal was committed to having a school wide program. He also had a continuous school improvement team that expressed interest in having a program. The next step was to establish funding. We discovered a grant that would fit our needs so we recruited our afterschool program coordinator. The principal, the afterschool coordinator and myself discussed our needs and what we wanted to be included in our program (criteria listed on chart). In addition to criteria on the chart, we wanted results that would improve attendance, behaviors and academic. Based on this criteria is how the listed programs were selected.

A literature review was then conducted to research effectiveness of programs that addressed school wide improvement. This was used to develop the results chart and the results were shared with the principal. I notified the developer of the program with some implementation question which shared with the principal. As the school social worker, I selected a program to be recommended and it was given to the principal. The principal and myself discussed the supporting evidence and the principal agreed to the recommendation. We then notified the coordinator to make the purchase.

Literature Review
A literature review was completed and included the review of five programs that were thought to be effective in meeting the needs of the school. Four of the five programs included in this research were model programs with the National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP.samhsa.gov). A program is considered Effective if it is science-based and have positive consistent results for intended population. A program will be considered Model if the NREPP review team appointed your program as an effective program, and agency agrees to participate in dissemination efforts. The program also provides training and technical assistance to practitioners (NREPP.samhsa.gov).

Incredible Years targets 2 to 12 year old children, their parents and teachers. It is designed to promote emotional and social competence. It also aims to promote academic and social skills (NREPP.samhsa.gov). Incredible Years According to National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP.samhsa.gov), is complicated and some users may have a hard time understanding the program.

Second Step program targets 4 to 14 year olds and is a classroom based social skills program. This program teaches social emotional skills to reduce impulsivity and aggression. It teaches children to identify and understand emotions. NREPP reports that Second Step claimed to be effective for diverse cultures but could not find evidence to support that claim (NREPP.samhsa.gov). The results of the impact of culture and socioeconomic status is unclear (NREPP.samhsa.gov).

Responsive Classroom was developed by Northeast Foundation for Children, using language strategies that enable elementary teachers to help students succeed academically and socially. Strategies range from asking open-ended questions to redirecting students (Denton, P., 2008). This program affects students’ sense of identity, helps students understand how they work and play, and influences teacher relationships with students (Denton, P., 2008). There was not a lot of information giving study results for Responsive Classroom. It is hard to determine if this would be a successful program given the lack of research.

The research that was reviewed for Lions Quest all focused on grades 6-8. Lions Quest is a school-based comprehensive youth development program designed to support the development life and citizenship-skills. The program involves educators, parents, and community members (Promisingpractice.net). According to Promising Practice, it has not evaluated this program but does suggest that a preliminary review suggests that it would be effective at achieving program goals (promisingpractice.net).

Project ACHIEVE Project ACHIEVE is a school-based program, it focuses on the academic, school safety and positive climate, and parent involvement. emphasis on social skills and social-emotional-behavioral development(NREPP.samhsa.gov).

Findings
Although many of the programs met many of the required criteria and had a lot of the same components, following review of all the programs, Project ACHIEVE is the only program that met all the selection criteria.

Research of literature appeared to show Project ACHIEVE as a program that sets positive results in the area of academics and behavior. This program is a three year implementation process. The program results showed improvement in math and reading in most studies. It also shows that schools saw reductions in special education referrals.

The strengths in this literature was that it is very thorough. Many of the references have extensively studied many programs and were very clear and easy to read. Many had the same information and had similar results so there was not contradictory information. The research also gave results to many implementation and program tools. The research was laid out in a way that was very relevant to the research in the way that it walked the reader through methods, findings and outcomes.

This program is a good fit for our rural community. It helps bring school and families together to work on a common goal of student achievement. It helps develop relationships with the parents allowing them to be involved in the process. In addition this program will help the students increase their academic and social skills and that is our goal, to have school community that helps our children succeed.

Limitations/Barriers
There are still gaps in the study concerning long term outcomes. Research lacks information as it relates to graduation rates and if the students carry over skills to high school environments and if the results would be positive. Another gap is culture, although some studies addressed African Americans and Native Americans as students that benefit, it does not conclude that it would be successful with all cultures.

It appears that the schools that implement any school wide program must be organized and have the resources to provide time, money and dedication to this process.

Further studies need to be completed to show the evidence of effectiveness of school wide programs. There have not been extensive studies to show long term effects. Many of these programs are costly and time consuming both of which schools lack.

Recommendations
I am proposing Project ACHIEVE as the school wide improvement program. This program focuses on academic achievement and positive school climate. The program has a family component that will help the student achieve success in both settings. The program provides common language that will be used by all school staff, parents and students. The goal of the program is to increase student performance in social skills, problem solving, self-management, and improve academic achievement.

Implementing these programs are very time consuming. Teachers have a lot of programs added to their already hectic schedule and it is difficult to get in the required curriculum and additional testing. If the program is not used as intended the fidelity of the program will be sacrificed and could hinder results.

References
References are available from the author upon request.

Data/ Results

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Comparison of School wide program