Imagine experiencing a 42 percent drop in office referrals in one year's time! That's what happened at Fern Ridge Middle School in Elmira, Oregon, when Principal Susan Taylor-Greene and her staff implemented Horner's and Sugai's PBS approach. They emphasized:

- Defining and teaching expected behaviors.
- A structured process for rewarding appropriate social behaviors throughout the school year.
- Office referral for inappropriate behaviors.

"The staff and I began with a belief that we could make significant changes, but we found that change had to start with us." Taylor-Greene points out that "if you want to approach students from a proactive perspective, then the staff must work as a team-which means being consistent in their expectations and reactions to students' behaviors."

Staff at Fern Ridge put the three levels of PBS recommended by Horner and Sugai into place. The first level is preventive and, according to Taylor-Greene, provides the necessary supports to 80 percent to 90 percent of the student population. After doing an analysis of the school environment, the staff defined their expectations for student behavior-called "High Five." At the beginning of the year, staff directly taught the skills underlying these expectations (a training manual is available for purchase from the school). Students then practiced the appropriate behaviors with reinforcement and feedback.

"To support the students, we have a schoolwide token economy which reinforces youngsters for appropriate behaviors throughout the year," Taylor-Greene notes, and adds that the High Five expectations are posted in every classroom.

While this level is very effective, some students need more structure to help them solve problems and set goals. These students attend daily morning check-in and afternoon check-out sessions with counseling staff. Students carry a point card on which teachers can award points when the youngster demonstrates the High Five expectations. The card is brought to the counselor at the end of each day and sent home to families. An individualized behavioral education plan (BEP) is also developed for these students. "Even with this additional structure, some kids still aren't making it," Taylor-Greene confides. To support these students, a more intensive BEP is developed.
Responding with Support: The Think Time Strategy

According to Arizona State University researcher Ron Nelson, the consistent, systematic interpersonal response to disruptive behavior is also critical in providing PBS and goes hand-in-hand with a schoolwide discipline policy. "We found that despite the implementation of proactive strategies, some students still exhibited disruptive behaviors," Nelson explains. "With these students, typical classroom management approaches that rely on repeated warnings are problematic for three reasons: they often reinforce the disruptive behavior; they do not help the student distinguish the appropriate behavior from the inappropriate one; and they can result in power struggles between teachers and students."

With OSEP support, Nelson developed and researched the Think Time Strategy, a cognitive-behavioral time-out strategy designed to:

- Enable the teacher and student to stop a negative social exchange.
- Provide the student feedback and an opportunity to plan.

The Think Time Strategy requires teamwork between two or more teachers and the establishment of a Think Time area in each teacher's classroom. Teachers teach all students the strategy, using these steps:

- **Teacher catches the disruptive behavior early.** In a calm manner, the teacher requests or prompts the youngster to adjust the behavior. If the student does not comply, the teacher directs the student to the Think Time area in the cooperating teacher's classroom. The student moves to the designated Think Time area. Routines are put into place to support students in moving appropriately to the area in the other classroom.

- **The teacher in charge of the Think Time area debriefs with the student.** After the student has thought about the behavior and gained self-control, the teacher asks the student to describe the behavior. If the student complies, then the he or she is given a debriefing form to complete (e.g., identify the inappropriate behavior; identify appropriate behavior). If the student does not comply, then the teacher calmly responds with, "I'll be back to you." The teacher returns later and resumes the process.

- **The teacher in charge of the Think Time area checks student's debriefing responses.** If correct, the student goes back to the classroom; if incorrect, the teacher responds with, "I'll be back to you." The teacher returns later and resumes the process.

- **Student rejoins the class.** The teacher reviews the behavioral debriefing form. If it is correct, the student joins the classroom. If it is incorrect, the student returns to the Think Time area.

"We studied the effects of the Think Time strategy on 25 students over the course of a year," Nelson reports. "The results showed significant changes in the youngsters' academic performance, school survival, and social adjustment." Additionally, Nelson found that office referrals for disruptive behavior decreased from over 700 annually to 71 in one year.
Suzanne Schmick, Principal of Endicott Elementary-St. John Middle School in rural Washington, attests to the usefulness of the approach. "In conjunction with our schoolwide discipline plan, the Think Time strategy helps us reduce problem behaviors and prevent those that do occur from escalating." Schmick and her staff introduced the strategy to students during the first few weeks of September and reinforced it throughout the year. Teachers directly taught the steps and routines to students. "It is important to be very clear and consistent about expectations," Schmick points out. "This means that the staff must have conversations about the approach throughout the year. "To support teachers, Schmick recommends the following:

- Make sure staff agree philosophically with the approach and see a real need for it.
- Provide sufficient time for training and follow-up support.
- Limit other initiatives so that teachers can become proficient.
- Encourage sharing with teachers in other districts who are using the strategy.
- Provide incentives.
DEBRIEFING FORM

Name: ___________________________ Date: ______________________

Teacher: _________________________ Grade: ___________________

Arrival Time: ___________ Departure Time: ___________

1. What was your behavior?

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

2. What behavior do you need to display when you go back to your classroom?

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

3. Will you be able to do it? ____ Yes ____ No ____ I need to see the teacher
Behavior Debriefing Form

Name ___________________________ Grade ___________________________ Date ___________________________

Sending Teacher ___________________________ Debriefing Teacher ___________________________

Arrival Time ___________________________ Departure Time ___________________________

What was your behavior?

- Physical Aggression
- Not Working
- Disrespectful
- Inappropriate language
- Not Following Directions

What do you need to do?

- Get Along With Others
- Do My Work
- Be Respectful
- Use Good Language
- Follow Directions

Can you do it?

- Yes
- No

Comments:

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________