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Integration of Social, Behavioral, and Academic Initiatives: Part II

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Integration of Social, Behavioral, and Academic Approaches and Processes: Part Two

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In part one of this series we discussed the connections among Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and Response to Intervention (RtI). Specifically, we compared the processes and fidelity components of these approaches. We attempted to highlight the similarities in systems, practices, and data for each approach, with the understanding that nuances could found within the practices of each. The following section provides specific examples of the overlap in these approaches; the integration of systems, practices, and data; and factors related to core instruction.

Example of Overlapping Approaches

We believe providing a discussion of integration of approaches and processes is critical in light of our own experiences as evaluators for statewide projects for technical assistance. For example, in one Midwestern state at least 71 schools reported the use of SEL to improve their overall climate. Data were available for 69 schools. Only 26 schools (38%) reported they were using SEL alone to address their climate goals. Nineteen (28%) of the schools reported using SEL and PBIS. One school (1%) reported implementing SEL and RtI as a part the statewide project. Six schools (9%) were implementing SEL, PBIS, and RtI. As can be seen from these data, the overlap of approaches and processes has already begun. Further, there have been other examples of the integration of approaches and processes in schools related to school-based mental health (Bohanon & Wu, 2011).

Without a common roadmap and a coordinated leadership team it is possible that well meaning implementers for all three approaches may create unnecessary overlap and ineffective organizational structures. For example one school implementing PBIS may have a secondary team that focuses on academic and behavior supports, but this group does not work with the SEL programs at the secondary level aimed at improving students' social competencies. This lack of coordination would mean that resources may not be used in the most effective and efficient way possible to meet the needs of all students.

A Framework for Integration of Processes: Systems, Practices, and Data

One possible way to decide where to start with the implementation of integrated approaches would be to reflect upon the school's core curriculum academically, behaviorally, and socially, and its corresponding outcome data. Making decisions about effective general and remedial instruction and intervention; identifying students early who are at risk; making decisions about needs for further supports; and determining, delivering and evaluating student

level programs, might be considered the focus of all three processes. As indicated by Kurns and

Tilly (2008), guiding questions could be used to support identification of the need for the support

process.

      Question 1: What do we want students to know? For example, question number one of

the RtI Blueprint (Kurns & Tilly, 2008) under action step 3 is to determine if the core program is

sufficient. This question regarding universal support is extremely helpful if there is a defined

core in place. In some instances, a formal core curriculum for social or behavior support may

not exist. Guiding questions based on professional learning communities (Dufour, Dufour,

Eaker, & Karhenek, 2004) could be integrated to the RtI Blueprint (Kurns & Tilly, 2008) to

support defining the core in other areas. The first question could include, "what do we want all

students to know and be able to do by grade level, course, and unit academically, behaviorally,

and socially?" School teams can develop matrices of desired skills sets, based on standards that

define what students should know and be able to do across all areas of learning (social,

behavioral, academic). In terms of alignment, some states have free standing standards

regarding SEL in early childhood education. While only Illinois has approved free standing

standards that are statewide, many states have integrated SEL standards into their academic core.

The CASEL website provides a useful tool to determine the nature of SEL standards on a state

by state basis (http://casel.org/policy-advocacy/sel-in-your-state/).

      Question 2: How will we know if students have acquired knowledge? A second question

for teams to ask would be, "How will we know if all students have acquired the knowledge and

skills, including academic, social, and behavioral learning?" An appropriate response to this

question requires that teams be willing to utilize screening tools that are standardized, reliable,

valid, brief, low cost, and simple to administer, score, and interpret (Kurns & Tilly**,** 2008) across

all three areas of support. Use of CBMs, ODRs, and ratings of social and emotional skills could

be useful at this step. This would allow schools to determine if there are needs based on their

expectations, and if these needs are schoolwide (e.g., less than 80% of students are meeting

expectations), or more targeted (e.g., 15% of students do not feel connected to their classroom

environments).

Question 3: How will we help students who struggle? The third question asks how

schools will respond when students experience initial levels of difficulty to improve their

performance. School team responses for student deficits should be based upon the nature of the

problem. If 80% of the students are receiving 0-1 ODR's, 80% are proficient meeting academic

targets, yet if only 30% of the students feel connected to the school, then it would appear that

that starting with a tool such as the CASEL Rubric would be useful to guide the next steps.

Fortunately, new tools are being developed to address fidelity and outcomes when using

combined models of support (e.g., SEL and PBIS; Bear, Hearn, Baker, Boyer, & Smith, 2012).

Examples of Addressing the Core Curriculum

Table 1 provides an example of how a core curriculum teaching matrix could address

academic, social, and behavioral expectations. This table relates to question one from the

framework mentioned above (i.e., what do we want all students to know and be able to do).

Question 1: What do we want students to know? In this example the school was

implementing PBIS. The school staff began to extend what was expected of students by

addressing social and emotional learning standards as a part of their teaching matrix for expected

behaviors for the instruction of behavior. Typically a team using the PBIS model would select

behaviors to instruct based on ODR variables (Sugai et al., 2010) by type of behavior, time of

day, location, percentage of students in need of the support, and time of the year. If SEL and

academic universal screening data were available, teams could cross walk needs and solutions to increase efficiency of responses. For example, universal data might indicate that students lacked skills in self-management, and core assessments data might indicate that students were not able to effectively summarize important information. An integrated response would include directly teaching Being Productive (PBIS Matrix Behavior) in the classroom through instruction of self-assessment (SEL related behavior) before submitting written products (RtI core assessment of content area).   Certainly some students would require more intensive supports, which relates to question number three of the framework suggested above (i.e., What will we do if students do not respond?).

Table 1

Example of Combined Behavior, Academic, and Social and Emotional Learning Matrix

(List locations and activities in this column)	**Be Productive** (SEL: Goal 1– self-management, Goal 3– decision making skills	**Be Respectful** (SEL: Goal 2- social awareness, Goal 3-decision making skills and responsible behavior)	**Be Responsible** (SEL: Goal 2- social awareness, Goal 3-decision making skills and responsible behavior))	**Be Appropriate** (SEL: Goal 2- social awareness)
Classroom	Stay with your task

SEL/SD: goal setting-breaking down tasks and reviewing steps for task completion, self monitoring-ensuring steps of assignments are completed with checklist before submitting) | Clean up after yourself

SEL/SD: self monitoring one's own behavior to maintain interactions that are appropriate when encountering others and property | Be on-time, follow directions, appropriate remarks, ask for help, think then speak

SEL/SD: set goals for behavior, address with checklist to complete expectation or task (e.g., remembering ID | Positive remarks, raise hands, use inside voice

SEL/SD: : self monitoring one's own behavior to maintain interactions that are appropriate when encountering others and property |

			or uniform)	

Note: The initials SD. stood for self-determination skills that were being added to the basic PBIS matrix to address the social and emotional learning standards.

   Question 2: How will we know if students have acquired knowledge? To prepare a school for question two, external coaches may need to provide non-threatening ways to encourage teams to look at social and emotional needs of students. Encouraging teams to assess SEL related domains may be especially difficult in schools where the majority of students are responding well to the core academic curriculum. One way to encourage this consideration of data is to use a metaphor. With one school, we shared a picture of a building that was in the last stages of demolition. We asked the group where they thought this building was located. Most responded that the building was in an area of the world with terrorism and mass destruction. We then shared a picture of the same building only from a greater distance. What the group could see was that the building was actually set among other buildings that were in good repair, and was only being demolished to be replaced by newer structure.   Sometimes we think things are worse than they really are because of a limited view of the data. Ten students with significant emotional or behavioral problems can make staff feel like the entire school is experiencing difficulty. In reality, the response needs to be more focused at a group or student level.

   Conversely, we shared a picture of what appeared to be the Romanesque picture of the sculpture of a man's face. We asked the group what this picture was portraying. Most said it was a sculpture. We then shared a picture of the same figure only from a distance; it was actually the bottom of a commode. Sometimes we think things are better than they really if we have not looked at the data from a schoolwide perspective. Finally, to encourage that this school might need to collect more formal social and emotional data, we searched for their online reviews. There were certainly more positive than negative examples. But for some posts,

reviewers said that the size of the school made them feel at times lost and not connected. We

then stated to the staff, "We are not saying this is true for your school, but do you know how

many students feel this way? If not, this might be a good reason to consider a schoolwide

screening instrument that would determine if there is a greater problem."

Innovations such as SEL, PBIS, and RTI, may fail or be resistant to going to scale due to

a lack of shared urgency (Kotter, 1995) and taking the time to explore the need (Fixsen & Blasé,

2009). Personnel such as school psychologist must find ways to help staff to consider that nature

of the strengths and problems of a school setting. If asking a school to reflect on their own data

regarding social and emotional issues is too threatening to staff, school psychologists could rely

on techniques such as the example above to increase the engagement of the team (Knight, 2002).

Question 3: How will we help students who struggle? Question three asked how schools

would to respond to students who are struggling. All three approaches have existing resources to

help teams determine supports, based on the determined needs of the students (e.g., Horner,

Sugai, & Anderson, 2010; CASEL, 2003; Kurns & Tilly**,** 2008). These supports should

eventually be guided by a combined self-assessment survey. For example, the National

Implementation Research Network (2011) has developed a self-assessment that addresses the

initial stages of implementation. This assessment is not specific to a type of school reform (e.g.,

RtI, SEL), but looks at systems readiness to change. There is a long term need to develop

decision rules and procedures to guide the selection and integration of supports at each level.

The existence of such a model would promote effective interventions for students, and increase

the willingness of staff to combine their efforts.

Linking assessment and intervention. Assuming schools had developed core

expectations across academic, behavioral, and social domains, decision rules could be developed

to guide interventions. The types of decision rules that would effectively guide integrated intervention approaches would be framed around the problem-solving process (e.g., is there a problem, what is the nature of the problem). Access to universal screening data across all three domains would be helpful to teams in determining if the nature of the problems is at tier one, two, or three. If screening data were not available across all domains, then existing data could potentially be used to identify if a problem exists and the nature of problem. For example, the Early Warning System (EWS) for High Schools (also available for middle schools; Therriault, Heppen, O'Cummings, Fryer, & Johnson, 2010) uses existing data (i.e., students' absences, course failures, grade-point average (GPA), and credit accumulation, by grading period) to identify students who are in need of more support. While General Outcome Measures (GOMs; Christ, Riley-Tillman, Chafouleas & Jaffery, 2011) are typically academic in nature, these variables (e.g., student absences) could perhaps serve GOMs for all three approaches in that they have been linked to outcomes relevant to society (i.e., dropping out of school). Further, while they include academic components, these variables are related to factors associated with school connection and positive classroom environments (McNeely, Nonnemaker & Blum, 2002), important to social and emotional learning (CASEL, 2003).

School connection related behaviors perhaps provide another useful way to frame factors related to all three approaches (SEL, PBIS, and RtI). Specifically, school connection is related to factors such as positive classroom management climates, participation in extracurricular activities, higher grades, attending class, tolerant discipline policies, and self-discipline (autonomy, goal setting). Further, tools such as the EWS provide validated criterion to determine if a students' performance is discrepant (Deno, 2005) with behaviors related to successful completion of school.

For example, if a student has missed more than 10% of instructional time in the last 20-30 days, along with other failure in academic outcomes, they could be in need of more intensive support. Also, teams would have the option of reviewing pre-high school data to identify students who are at risk of dropout. When data are combined, school teams can determine if the issues on these GOMs are universal (e.g., more than 20% of the students are at risk on one or more of the indicators), or more targeted in nature (e.g., less than 20% of the students demonstrate an at risk behavior). As data are reviewed, additional information may be needed to determine the specific nature of the problems (Therriault et al., 2010) and identify possible solutions. As long as data from additional data sets (e.g., discipline, curriculum-based measures) use a common identifier (e.g., student ID), they can be combined using processes such as V-Lookup in Excel to create one source data tables for team review (McIntosh, Bohanon, & Goodman, 2009). A search of YouTube can provide free examples of combining data sets using this process (search for V-Lookup Excel).

Decision rules for school teams for determining the nature of the problem and possible solutions could be addressed first by cross walking the evidence-base for effectiveness for interventions existing interventions in the school and the outcomes they address (e.g., attendance, academic performance). Data would be reviewed using specific guiding questions (e.g., are there behavioral needs associated with attendance for some students, are the students involved in extra-curricular activities, what classes are they failing?) to determine patterns of need.

Team members can then develop working hypotheses about which types of combinations of needs (e.g., academic failure, attendance) would respond best to certain types of interventions (Deno, 2005). For example, students with only attendance issues may only require Check In/Check Out (Sinclair, Christenson, & Thurlow, 2005) to improve attendance. However,

students with academic needs and attendance issues may require the addition of academic study skills training from the Behavior Education Program (Crone, Hawkin, & Horner, 2010) and other remediation programs in order to demonstrate a response to intervention.

Integration of SEL, PBIS, and RTI

These are simply examples of how integrated teams could approach the application of problem solving across all three approaches for their entire school. More research and practical examples are needed to determine which components of each process provide the most value added when combined. Further, while additional intensive supports may require development, we believe teams should remember to address issues of academic, behavioral, and social significance at the core curriculum level to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of their overall intervention approach.

In conclusion, schools should be encouraged to improve their climate through schoolwide initiatives. All three approaches discussed in this article have evidence for directly improving specific components of school climate (e.g., behavior, social, academic). Each process may mediate improved outcomes for students when combined with other efforts. Practitioners, evaluators, and researchers need to develop combined logic models and decision rules to guide the selection of interventions. The inputs (e.g., strategies) of these models should be based on evidence, guided by local data, and integrated through common language.

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Example of Combined Behavioral, Academic, and Social and Emotional Learning Matrix

(List locations and activities in this column)	**Be Productive** (SEL Goal 1– self-management & Goal 3– decision making skills)	**Be Respectful** (SEL Goal 2– social awareness & Goal 3– decision-making skills and responsible behavior)	**Be Responsible** (SEL Goal 2– social awareness & Goal 3– decision-making skills and responsible behavior)	**Be Appropriate** (SEL Goal 2– social awareness)
Classroom	Stay with your task	Clean up after yourself	Be on-time, follow directions, appropriate remarks, ask for help, think then speak	Positive remarks, raise hands, use inside voice
	SEL/SD: goal setting– breaking down tasks and reviewing steps for task completion; self-monitoring– ensuring steps of assignments are completed with checklist before submitting	SEL/SD: self-monitoring one's own behavior to maintain interactions that are appropriate when encountering others and property	SEL/SD set goals for behavior, address with checklist to complete expectation or task (e.g., remembering ID or uniform)	SEL/SD: self-monitoring one's own behavior to maintain interactions that are appropriate when encountering others and property
Note: SD = self-determination skills that were added to the basic PBIS matrix to address the social and emotional learning standards.				