

Leveraging Learning Technology

PBS and Safe and Supportive School Environments

Information From Ripple Effects Inc.

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The Need: promote positive climate, prevent anti-social behavior

Bullying, angry acting out, bias activity and other anti-social behavior have been identified as factors that must be addressed to provide a safe and supportive school. Aggressive, biased and anti-social behaviors not only affect school climate, they affect academic performance. The loss of instruction time to solving behavior problems translates into poorer school performance, not only for the offending students, but for many students in the middle. A "C" can easily become a "D" when these pressures are present.

Part of the Answer: Positive Behavior Supports (PBS)

Avoiding school failure and staying off drugs and out of fights does not, and never will, equal personal and professional success. Effective prevention and a range of intervention approaches are needed for youth to succeed in school and life. Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, as developed by Sprague and Walker, represents a research based approach that can help build success in youth.

Preventing high-risk behaviors. . . is not the same as preparation for the future. Indeed, an adolescent who attends school, obeys laws, and avoids drugs, is not necessarily equipped to meet the difficult demands of adulthood. Problem-free does not mean fully prepared. There must be an equal commitment to helping young people understand life's challenges and responsibilities and to developing the necessary skills to succeed as adults. What is needed is a massive conceptual shift — from thinking that youth problems are merely the principal barrier to youth development, to thinking that youth development serves as the most effective strategy for the prevention of youth problems (Pittman,1991).

In an effort to use technology to provide effective prevention AND intervention and build success in youth Ripple Effects has synthesized research from many fields: education, psychology, sociology, anthropology, learning, technology design and business. It adapts for delivery on the computer, strategies that have been proven effective in settings with live instruction and *draws particularly from work being done in four related fields.*

Promotion of positive youth development

This approach focuses on building strengths, such as resilience, self-efficacy and social emotional competence in all kids. It recognizes that the absence of addiction or school failure is not the same as fulfillment of potential, and emphasizes increasing protective factors, over focusing on deficits and risk.

Comprehensive prevention

This approach recognizes that school failure, discipline problems and unhealthy behavior, are interrelated issues. They share a common set of risk factors that are present in multiple domains. Since it's not possible to address every issue that might be a problem for every student, it makes sense to focus on reducing the risk and increasing the protective factors that affect multiple problems, from school failure, to gun violence, to HIV rates.

Individualized, positive behavioral intervention

This approach recognizes that some students need individualized intervention, in response to particular behavior or demonstration of need on their part. When negative behavior prompts the response, they need both skill building, precisely targeted to deal with the immediate problem, and general asset building to enhance protection and reduce risk.

Learning theory

This includes social learning research, which points to the importance of modeling, rehearsal, interactivity, affective education, and cognitive-behavioral training in developing social-emotional abilities. It also includes research about universal learning design, which focuses on maximizing accessibility to students with diverse learning styles, abilities, disabilities, attention spans, languages and cultural orientations.

Applied research

Ripple Effects software is an example of applied research. It makes hundreds of research proven strategies accessible to people who don't need to personally know all the research, in order to benefit from it. As part of your planning for Individualized Positive Behavioral Supports, you can draw from all five of these sources.

Ripple Effects for PBS

In PBS implementations, attention is focused on creating and sustaining primary (school-wide), secondary (at-risk groups), and tertiary (individual) systems of support that improve lifestyle results (personal, health, social, family, work, recreation) for youth by making problem behavior less effective, efficient, and relevant, and desired behavior more functional. Ripple Effects student and staff training programs provide computer based training that enables

successful and sustainable implementation of PBS on the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of intervention. Ripple Effects training and interventions:

- are easily individualized to each student,
- maintain 100% fidelity to proven instructional methods (the expertise is in the computer),
- are designed to supplement existing successful print based curricula that may be in use, and
- are proven effective in the three levels of intervention
- are culturally competent.

The setting and intervention capabilities of Ripple Effects programs are summarized in the following chart and paragraphs.

Three Levels of Intervention for Students

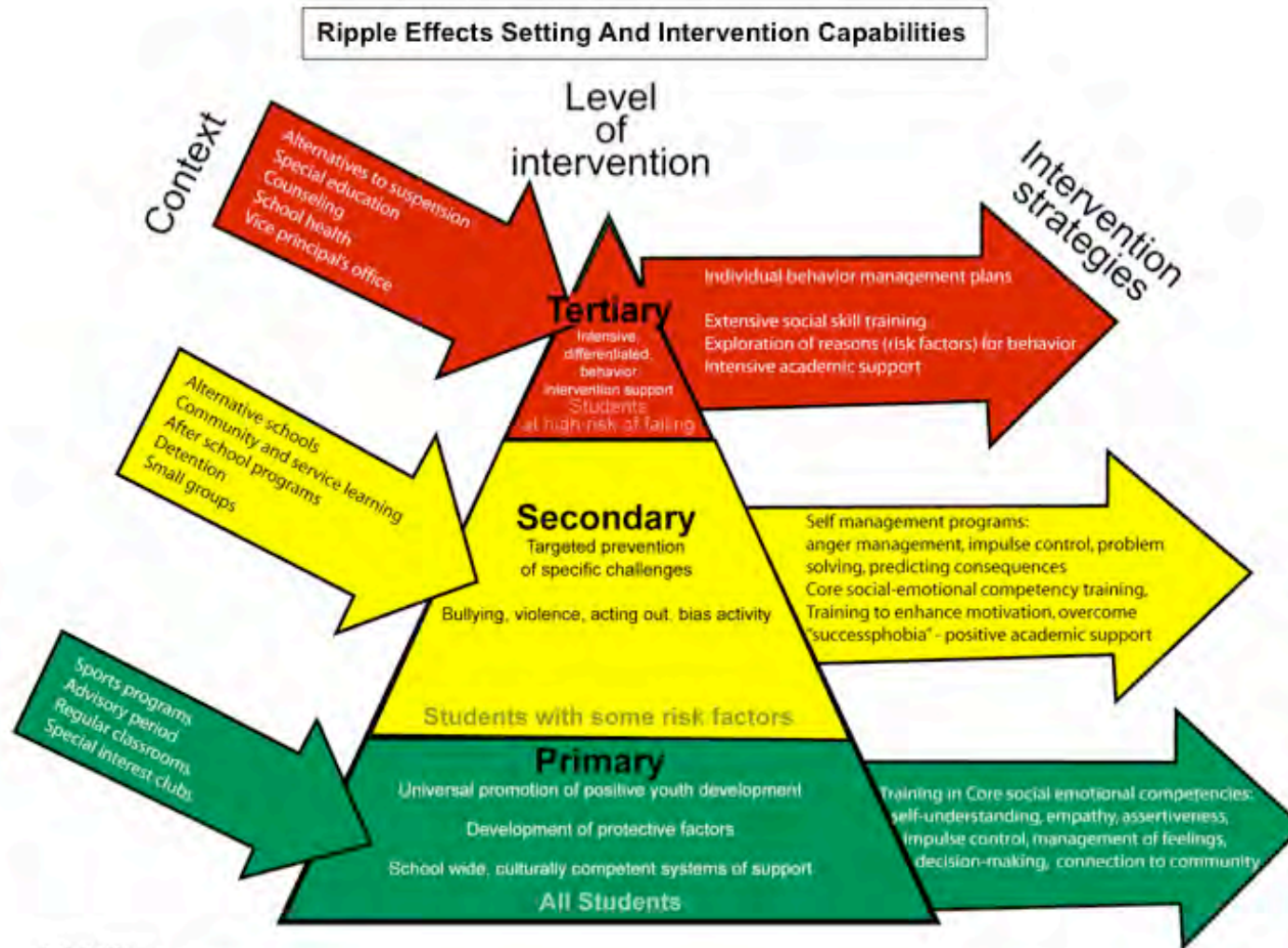
Primary prevention, also called "asset building," "universal promotion," "positive youth development," and "character education" is designed to reach every student/parent/teacher in a developmentally appropriate way. It focuses on building core social-emotional abilities and pro-social values that are positively correlated with safe and supportive school environments. The core abilities (personal strengths that Ripple Effects calls "Seven keys") include self-efficacy (self-understanding + assertiveness), empathy, management of emotions, problem solving, impulse control, and skills and values for connecting to community. The skills are personal communication and group participation skills; the values are those needed for a diverse and democratic society to flourish: honesty, fairness, responsibility, respect, etc.

These abilities are protective for all students. In fact, they are protective for all people of all ages. Though culturally mediated, they are important across cultures. They can often preempt and protect against negative behavior before it arises. They enable a resilient response when unexpected trauma occurs. They are also positively correlated with success in the classroom - for teachers as well as students.

Secondary prevention targets students with known risk factors. This level of prevention focuses on specific attitudes and skills that have been shown to reduce the risk of becoming either perpetrator or victim of specific unsafe, unhealthy or unlawful behavior, like bullying, fighting, or bias activity. For example, perspective taking is a specific ability linked to appreciating diversity. Identifying with others is the basis for bystanders' feelings of solidarity with the victim in bullying situations. Assertiveness is what enables them to act on those feelings. The ability to put together an "if/then" sentence is essential to predicting consequences, which in turn is needed as part of a behavior management program for students who tend toward impulsivity.

This targeted prevention also addresses specific attitudes and behavior that disproportionately affect social groups who share the same risk factors. For instance, ambivalence about academic success is more often an issue for African American, urban boys than Asian American, suburban girls. So the "success-phobia" tutorial might be in order for the first group. "Discrimination" is more likely to be a real world experience of poor children of color,

than for wealthy, Anglo children. Thus the tutorial with practical strategies for dealing with discrimination will have more relevance to the former group than the latter one.



Adapted from:
Sprague & Walker, 2004

Note: Scientific studies show Ripple Effects is proven effective for all three levels of intervention

Tertiary prevention, also called "individualized intervention", "RTI" (Response to Intervention), or "early intervening services," targets students with high risk of failing. This differentiated intervention is designed for students whose behavior has brought them into discipline settings or required their labeling as having "Special needs". It comes into play after something in a student's behavior has brought that student to the attention of authorities: an act of defiance, a racially-charged taunt, bullying a weaker classmate, or being chronically bullied. Ripple Effects training is an efficient way to get quality, targeted training, aligned with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) to students with special needs.

For tertiary intervention to be successful, it needs to be differentiated, matched to the learning style of the student, address the underlying reason behind the unsafe or disrespectful behavior, and teach (including model) effective, positive alternatives that can also meet underlying needs.

Three levels for staff as well

In addition to direct services to students, *Ripple Effects for Staff* delivers three levels of professional development for school staff, designed to build their capacity to reinforce, sustain and expand student learning.

Primary prevention for staff promotes the social-emotional abilities that comprise effective leadership. Personal leadership, especially that of principals, but to some degree for all teachers, is the single factor that most affects school climate and students' behavioral outcomes. Not surprisingly, these are the same qualities that predict success in students. In Ripple Effects' program, the training module, entitled "*Strengthening your Leadership*" is comprised of interactive tutorials, that have been accredited by LIU 's educational technology department and will form the "textbook" for an on-line course on Educational Leadership through Teacher's College at Columbia University.

Secondary prevention for staff might target first and second year teachers, who are least likely to have developed the skills needed for effective behavior management in the classroom. It may target staff whose social-cultural background is very unlike that of their students. The training modules most useful for these educators, as well as to their paraprofessionals would be in the second module, '*Managing Diverse Learners.*' This includes training in understanding cultural, social and economic differences, identifying learning problems, doing first-pass screening for attention disorder, and tailoring instruction to varying learning styles, abilities and disabilities, as well as strategies for preventing specific behavior problems, including bullying, fighting, and bias activity.

Tertiary prevention for staff consists of providing "just in time, as you need it" embedded training to help teachers respond to problems as they come up, including student behavior-problem, like insubordination, defiance, disruption, and attention-seeking behavior. It also provides a way for teachers to constructively respond to accusations of discriminatory behavior or expectations. Individualized tutoring in the context of a personal development plan provides teachers positive, differentiated, behavior-changing support in a private, non-judging environment.

Rationale: Evidence supports this approach

Prevention practitioners, researchers and educators increasingly recognize that fragmented, piecemeal prevention programs—even proven effective ones—for an ever expanding list of health and social issues are not a viable option for public schools (Elias et al., 1997; Gottfredson, 2001; Sarason, 1996; Wilson et al., 2001; Elias et al., 1997). There are too many to fit into the available school day. They must compete with assessed academic programs for instruction time—and most often lose. They are at the mercy of political decisions and social fads, which change from season to season. They require specialized training for a work force that turns over frequently. They are often short-term, one shot efforts, when long term repeated programs have been proven more effective (Greenberg et al., 2001).

Thus ***the trend is toward comprehensive prevention programs that address health, behavioral and academic issues in a coordinated way, integrated into the academic mission of schools*** (Elias et al., 1997; Zins et al., 2004). The most effective of such programs enhance protective factors both at the level of the individual and of the environment (Hawkins et al., 1999; Learning First Alliance, 2001; Eccles & Wells, 2002; Weissberg & Greenberg, 1998; Marzek). They affect attitudes, behavior and academic performance. They focus on skill training in core social-emotional abilities that are broadly applicable to academic, as well as social and health challenges (Zins, et al., 2004; Elias, Gara, Schuyler, Brenden-Muller, & Scyette, 1991).

They allow three tiers of use: universal promotion, targeted prevention and individualized intervention. They combine strengths-based "generic" asset development with concrete problem-solving strategies for specific academic, health and behavioral challenges (Catalano, 2004). They include proven, cognitive-behavioral strategies for reducing risk and enhancing protective factors at the level of the individual. They also target the learning environment as a major protective - or risk -factor for students (Solomon et al., 2000; Hawkins, Catalano, Kosterman, Abott, & Hill, 1999; Reynolds, Temple, Robertson, & Mann, 2001). The most effective comprehensive programs not only reach students but also reach their peers, teachers, families and communities (Catalano, Catalano, 1997; Osher, 2002; Weissberg & Elias, 1993).

Chief among the constraints limiting successful implementation of prevention programs is time. Compared to a generation ago, Educators have to fit more standards-based instruction, for more students, with more diverse social backgrounds, into fewer hours than at any time in history. This leaves less classroom instruction time for prevention. On the other hand educators report from 20% to as much as 80% of all instruction time goes toward dealing with behavior problems instead of academic issues. Investment of some of that time in programs designed to improve students' social behavior could potentially result in a net gain in available instruction time.

Practitioners also decry the fact that **too often they are forced to choose between programs that are proven effective but boring or culturally insensitive, and programs that are fun and/or culturally sensitive but have not demonstrated effectiveness.** They note that many programs provide instructions for teachers to make programs more interesting. However that requires extra preparation time and requires teachers to be more adept at handling group

interaction than many teachers are.

Even adaptable, effective programs with well-trained instructors do not have an easy way to accommodate student differences in learning styles, English language proficiency, and attention span capacity. None can be self-directed and self-paced by users based on their learning styles and preferences.

Finally, **programs that depend on live instruction cannot ensure fidelity** to core components of program design and content. They do not automatically keep track of dosage or implementation rates and do not have an automated, culturally unbiased way to measure student progress or outcomes (Backer, 2000, 2001).

Summary

Schools urgently need affordable, culturally inclusive and sensitive, comprehensive PBS and prevention programs that address behavior, academic and health issues concurrently, while taking into account individual learning differences. They need programs that affect both individual competency and organizational climate. They need an integrated suite of programs, not one-offs, to reach students from early childhood through high school, with parallel programs for teachers, parents and other adults who work with students. They need them not to be boring. They need these programs to fit into the bits' and pieces of time that educators can glean from already full schedules. They need them to lighten the burden on teachers. They need programs that enable local people to maintain control of decisions about content that affect their communities without compromising fidelity to science-based methods or accurate information. They need easy to use standardized ways to measure student progress and program effectiveness.

Ripple Effects' integrated set of software and services meet all these criteria.

Appendix A: Ripple Effects Program descriptions

Ripple Effects software-based training programs for students and adults are evidence-based, culturally competent, developmentally appropriate and provide comprehensive prevention and behavior training. The staff training also includes capacity building for making the student programs (and other existing programs) work. The set of three programs also includes about 500 additional tutorials to enable more comprehensive strength building, and more differentiated intervention with specific behavior problems, including addressing risk and protective factors in six domains: individual, peer, school, family, community, and social structures. All of the programs can be used proactively to build strengths, or reactively for individualized guidance to solve problems and address their underlying reasons. They can be used for individualized intervention/guidance on behavior problems (bullying, talking back, lying, fighting), health (obesity, tobacco) and mental health issues (sad, shy, lonely, divorce etc.).

There are many right ways to use the programs: systematic training, targeted intervention, individualized guidance, or simply to fill-in a lesson missed due to absence, or to provide extra practice for students who have been exposed to the same concepts in another curriculum, but need extra support for it to take hold. The program can be used reactively, to deal with specific issues in a few minutes, and proactively, over time, to boost academic achievement, change behavior, reduce substance use, and promote healthy choices. It's designed to be used how users need it, when they need it, throughout the school and in the community.

A built-in management system tracks student progress and allows implementers to delete topics they consider inappropriate, solving a problem that has long vexed print publishers.

1. *Ripple Effects for Kids* is designed for students in grades 2- 5. It may also be appropriate for certain older children with developmental delays. 140 engaging, interactive, reading-independent tutorials address non-academic issues that get in the way of school success. As is developmentally appropriate for this age, it provides concrete instruction on behavior that contributes to school success, such as following instructions, keeping hands and feet to self, avoiding blurting out, as well as the anger management, bully prevention and conflict resolution training. It also provides a comprehensive scope and sequence for building key social-emotional abilities that are more connected to school success than IQ. Self-understanding, empathy, impulse control, management of feelings, assertiveness, decision-making and connection to community are the core skills that are broken down into component parts, in a Lego® like system that can be reassembled in a multitude of ways.

2. *Ripple Effects for Teens* is a comprehensive software prevention and behavior training program for students in grades 6 -12. It includes 390 multi-media tutorials. Each provides individualized guidance and enables students to address the particular risk and protective factors that affect their behavior, motivation, learning and commitment to school. Interactive games and exercises help them understand the reasons behind their actions and learn proven effective strategies for changing behavior. It includes, but is not limited to: bullying, anger management, diversity appreciation, conflict resolution, violence prevention, substance abuse prevention, HIV/AIDS/STD prevention, character education and behavior management.

3. *Ripple Effects for Staff* provides “just in time” staff training for teachers, counselors and/or other school personnel. More than 1600 multi-media screens comprise 160 multi-media tutorials, which include Video True stories from dozens of successful teachers. The lessons can be accessed on a “need to know,” time critical basis, or can be completed in sequence. Certification is available from Ripple Effects for completion. The program has also been accredited by Long Island University, and is currently being reviewed by Teacher’s College, as the core of Dr. Robin Stern’s on-line course on Educational Leadership through Social-Emotional Competence. It can be completed for graduate credit, upon payment of additional fees. Resources offered include disk-based, rich media content, plus web-based access to additional resources, from class room posters to individual treatment plans.

The staff training software program is broken down into 3 modules:

Making Programs Work covers the nuts and bolts of successful implementation - from getting buy-in, to monitoring compliance. Developed at the request of large districts using Ripple Effects’ elementary and adolescent skill training software, *Coach* can also be an effective supplement for training implementers in other evidence-based programs, whether promotion, prevention, or intervention. It includes 56 multimedia interactive tutorials for 14 contact hours. A minimum of 2 contact hours, completed on the participant’s most convenient schedule, is recommended to become a proficient line-implementer of Ripple Effects student programs.

Managing Diverse Learners takes implementer training to the next level, enabling educators to tease out learning issues, form behavior issues, from cultural issues, from health issues, and to address each of them with a combination of technical skill and emotional intelligence. This is the module that provides training in appreciating diversity. It explicitly provides training in deconstructing racist attitudes. It also provides coaching in handling specific behavior issues, like defiance or disruption. This module promotes a deeper and more nuanced appreciation of every student, something vitally important not only for effective social programming, but for effective teaching at every level, in every discipline. It includes 24 multimedia interactive tutorials, 6 contact hours.

Strengthening Your Leadership, the third module, promotes leadership through personal transformation. Personal leadership of implementers has been identified time and again as a critically important factor in program success. It is more important to teacher success than IQ and content expertise combined. Leadership is part vision, and part skill. The program addresses both, with a focus on key social-emotional abilities that underpin the ability to bond with students from a variety of backgrounds, to command the respect of rebellious youth, to maintain an orderly yet engaging classroom, and to manage feelings of frustration, anger, and disappointment, without burning out - or acting out. It includes 51 multimedia interactive tutorials, 13 contact hours.