



Video

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

The Importance of a Schoolwide Approach

Sarup Mathur, Ph.D. • May 2009

Topic: Reducing Behavior Problems

Practice: Schoolwide Approach

Highlights

- Dr. Sarup Mathur, a member of the IES Expert Panel that authored the Practice Guide “Reducing Behavior Problems in the Elementary School Classroom,” describes the essentials of using a schoolwide approach to promote positive behavior.
- A schoolwide approach involves all staff on campus—administrators, teachers, para-professional, counsellors, and other staff in contact with students.
- An effective schoolwide approach is data-driven; data can guide both the initial implementation and ongoing monitoring of implementation.
- Schoolwide approaches benefit from having a schoolwide leadership team in place, to guide implementation and provide monitoring and guidance.

About the Interviewee

Sarup R. Mathur is Clinical Professor in Special Education in College of Teacher Education and Leadership at Arizona State University. She has extensive experience in teaching, researching, and programming for students who

demonstrate significant behavioral challenges. She is an expert in the practice of applied behavior analysis (ABA), functional behavioral assessments, and behavioral intervention plans. Her experience combines clinical and technical expertise for developing effective programs for service delivery for students with special needs. Since completing her PhD, Dr. Mathur has joined the faculty at ASU and taught behavior analytic courses; supervised master's theses and doctoral dissertations that employed ABA interventions and methodology; and published numerous handbooks, book chapters, and experimental articles in peer reviewed journals that incorporated behavioral analytic procedures. She has served on several technical/advisory committees for the Arizona State Department of Education and is a member of the Professional Development of Leadership Academy for the State of Arizona. At the national level, she served as the secretary and president of the Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders and the president of Teacher Educators for Children with Behavioral Disorders. These leadership roles, scholarly activities, and multi-agency collaborations have provided her opportunities for working with diverse groups of professionals.

Full Transcript

My name is Sarup Mathur. I am a Clinical Professor in the Division of Curriculum and Instruction at Arizona State University.

The schoolwide approaches are comprehensive in nature, and they target not only the academics but also behavioral components for all students. That means that if there is a need for the classroom teacher to target upon social-emotional aspects of behavior—social skills, social problem solving, self-control—that they are able to provide that instruction within their classrooms.

The idea is that the supports are aligned starting from the school level, moving on to the classroom level, and then to an individual who may need those supports. At the systemwide level, there might be some schoolwide, building-related rules and expectations that might be targeted. At the classroom level, the teacher might be reviewing those schoolwide types of rules and then also focusing upon the need of the classroom. And then at the individual level, that must be very targeted type of support that that particular individual needs. The success of this model depends upon that there is leaderships commitment and that they provide capacity-building efforts for teachers and other professionals to provide services and supports to these students and that they actually develop policies surrounding these supports that are needed for these children.

It is extremely important to conduct a need assessment prior to implementing the schoolwide approaches. That's when we get an idea about the relevance of the target behaviors. Are they important to be addressed? How many times this behavior actually occurs. Across the context, across different classrooms, cafeteria, bus, library, media center, how often do we see these problems are happening? We need to look at the policies surrounding that particular behavior, and that may also emerge through the need assessment. If we need more policies of supervision in some of these areas so that there are certain hotspots that can be

identified, and then we can target the relevant behaviors that need to be addressed.

As far as the tracking, ongoing tracking and monitoring of these behaviors, is concerned, we need to be constantly looking at how we are improving at these directions, if disruptive behaviors are reducing. And when we look at office referral data, do we find that these incidents of behaviors have reduced significantly after implementing the schoolwide approaches? So, it becomes very important for the leadership team to be looking at both aspects, the need assessment and also ongoing tracking of student behavior.

The establishment of a schoolwide intervention team is almost essential in delivering services at the school level, and there might be representatives from different disciplines. We may have psychologists, counselors, social workers, teachers, general educators, principals, paraprofessionals, parents involved in providing some feedback to this process. Otherwise, we might be missing some of the important information that we need to have from various stakeholders who are interested in the education of all children within that school.

Once we have a schoolwide level of support accessible to all students, the chances are that the students within the classroom level would be needing less support because they already are supported at the schoolwide level for some of these behaviors because these behavioral supports exist at a broader level and at a broader context. The schoolwide approaches, once they are implemented successfully, have great benefit for all these students. Once these procedures are implemented by trained personnel and we have systemic approaches to these interventions, we find that these students really benefit from these approaches. We stay away from being fragmented in our approaches. Everybody has this common good in mind for these students. The students are successful in their academics. They have less behavioral problems, and we find that these comprehensive approaches then tend to yield better results for these students.