

## School-Based Teams: What Makes Them Work?

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## Purpose of Session- Exploratory

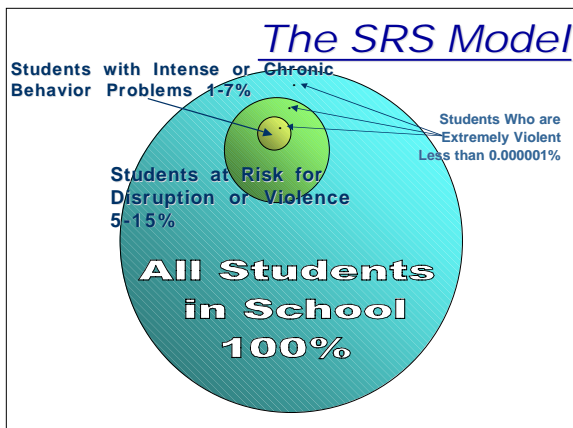
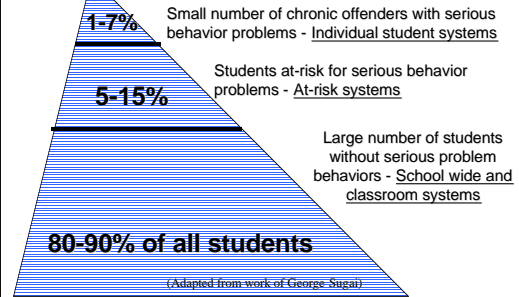
- Describe within the Safe & Responsive Schools Project
- Describe our questions and concerns regarding school-based teams that emerged from this project.
- Explore various underlying factors that may contribute to overall effectiveness of group process from literature and our experience
- Explore suggestions for improving effectiveness of school-based teams

## The Safe & Responsive Schools Project

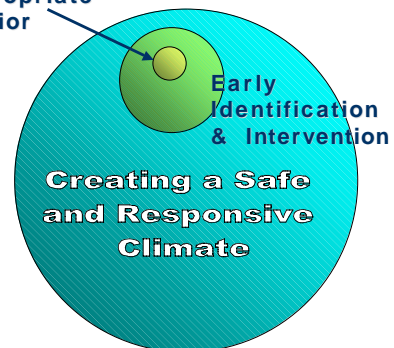
The Safe and Responsive Schools Project was designed to develop a process for schools to implement our best knowledge of school-wide behavior planning in order to reduce the likelihood of school violence, and to diminish problems with inappropriate behavior in school.

- Three tiered model
- Wide variety of data
- Team planning and decision making
- Focus on helping medium and smaller sized schools

## Thinking About Students



## Effective Responses to Inappropriate Behavior



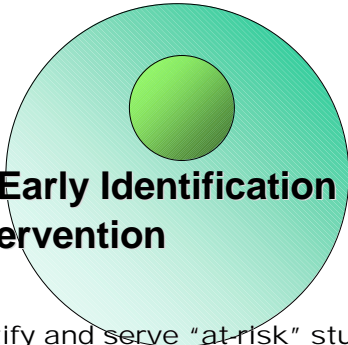


**I. Creating a Safe & Responsive Climate**

Provide foundations for good behavior for all students

**I. Creating a Safe & Responsive Climate**

1. Programs to Improve School & Classroom Climate E.g. Caring & Community in Schools; Cooperative Learning, etc.
2. Smaller Groupings/ More Connections
3. Increased Parent Involvement
4. Improved Classroom Management & School Discipline
5. Character Education/ School Values
6. Social Skills Instruction/ Violence Prevention Curricula
7. Conflict De-Escalation and Conflict Resolution Programs
8. Service Learning Programs
9. Screening and Early Identification
10. Add After-School and Other Community Programs
11. School Security Audits/ Environmental Planning



**II. Early Identification & Intervention**

Identify and serve "at-risk" students

**II. Early Identification & Intervention**

1. Early Identification & Intervention
2. Assess "Dangerousness"
3. FBA & Individual Behavior Plans
4. School-wide Discipline Programs
5. Conflict Resolution and Peer Mediation Programs
6. Anger Management/ Counseling
7. Bullying Intervention Programs
8. Mentoring Programs
9. Academic Support Programs



**III. Effective Responses to Inappropriate Behavior**

Preparation and Response for Serious Behavior Problems

**III. Effective Responses to Serious Inappropriate Behavior**

1. Behavior Support/ School Safety/ Student Assistance Teams
2. Increase Effective Discipline Alternatives
3. Involving Students in Decision Making- E.g. Teen Courts; Student disciplinary boards, etc.
4. Obtain & Manage Information; Coordinate with Agencies
5. Technology for School Security- E.g. cameras, ID badges, metal detectors, etc.
6. School Community Resource Officers; Probation Officers
7. Develop Educational Alternative Options-
8. Emergency Preparation & Crisis Planning
9. Crisis Response Following a Crisis
10. Physical Restraint
11. Wraparound

## Planning Process

- Problem Solving Process
  - Gather information
  - Identify goals or needs
  - Identify possible actions
  - Evaluate potential actions
  - Choose and prioritize actions



## Potential Data for Planning

- Office Referrals
- Absences
- Tardiness
- Grades
- Student Academic Achievement Data
- Climate Surveys
- Safety Surveys
- Focus Groups
- Special Education Referrals

## Planning Process

- Is there an existing school planning process?
- Are long and short range plans created?
- How do behavioral issues fit into the school improvement planning process?
- Is there a school Safety or Security Plan? Is it updated?

## Planning Process



- Who plans?
  - One individual
  - A group or team
- If a group,
  - How does this tie to other plans or planning efforts?
  - How is the group picked?
  - How many?
  - Group dynamics?

## What is a school-based team?

"Number of persons working or playing together as a unit, especially one side in a competitive game or sport"

(Scribner Bantam English Dictionary, p. 934)

"Team" appears to be used for almost any group or meeting within a school

Its usage in schools seems to suggest that it is being simply used as a replacement for words like "committee", "task force", or "work group"

## Types of Teams in Schools

- Various grade level & subject teams
- Curriculum Planning Teams
- School Improvement Teams
- Student Assistance Teams
- Multidisciplinary Teams
- Individual Education Plan (IEP) Teams



## Types of Behavior-Related Teams in Schools



- School Safety Teams (Stephens, 1995)
- Crisis Response Teams (Poland, 1999)
- Bullying Prevention Teams (Olweus, 1999)
- Positive Behavior Support Teams (Sugai, 2000)
- Individual Functional Assessment & Behavior Plan Teams
- Safe and Responsive Schools Planning Teams (Skiba & Peterson, 2000)

## Review of Literature



- While many of the most important decisions and recommendations occur within the context of school-based teams, there has been little research regarding the process of group decision making (Gutkin & Nemeth, 1997)

## Results of Literature Search

PsycINFO Database



Key Words Used	Search Not Limited	Search limited to empirical studies & Journal articles
Teams	6634	2327
Group dynamics	9008	2266
Group process	3843	474
Group dynamics and teams	636	217
Teams and schools	335	89
School-based teams	17	4
Collaborative teams	17	6
IEP teams	11	0
Student assistance teams	1	1
Pre-referral teams	0	0
Problem-solving teams	34	12
Group dynamics and teams in school	1	0
Teams and schools and group dynamics	9	3

## Review of Literature (cont.)



- Extensive literature advocating the use of teams in schools but not addressing social psychological phenomena
- “School-based teams have experienced a number of significant problems involving both process and product elements, probably as a result of their mandated origin” (Pryzwansky, 1981)
- There is only handful of empirical studies on teams – most of current knowledge base is assumptive (Pryzwansky, 1981; Gutkin & Nemeth, 1997)

## Review of Literature (cont.)



- Factors Impacting Decision Making (Gutkin & Nemeth, 1997)
  - Need for criteria for assessing the quality of group decision making
  - Power of the majority
  - Value of minority dissent
  - Group polarization
  - Shared norms

## Possible Factors Underlying the Functioning of Teams



(Observations Based on SRS project)

- Support from building administration / central administration
- Clear purpose of team
- Availability of needed resources
- Team focus, commitment, motivation
- Leadership of team
- Members are representative of staff

## Possible Factors Underlying the Functioning of Teams (cont.)

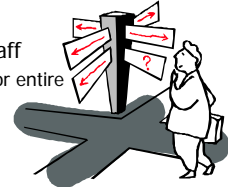


- Opportunity for every team member to give input
- Scheduling of meetings
- Absence of interpersonal conflict
- Use of meeting time
- Use of time between meetings
- Work done outside of meetings

## Team Composition



- Selection for team membership
  - Who picks?
- Leadership
  - Who chairs the team?
- Representative of school staff
  - Is team viewed as working for entire school?
- Size of team
  - How many members?



## Team Membership as a % of Total School Staff



	Number of Members on Team	Total Number of School Staff	Percentage of Team / Staff
Elementary A	12	32	38%
Elementary B	8	39	21%
Elementary C	12	44	27%
Middle School A	9	43	21%
Middle School B	10	71	14%
High School A	17	60	28%
K-12 School	8	47	17%

## Does Size Really Matter?



How many people are on the largest team?  
Mean – 13.00      Range – 4 to 30

How many people are on the smallest team?  
Mean – 3.87      Range – 2 to 10

How many people, on average, are typically on teams?  
Mean – 7.01      Range – 3 to 11

n=41

## Other Team Commitments



	How many other teams currently involved with?	How many hours spent on team activities monthly?
Elementary B	4.0	7.0
Middle School A	4.86	13.4
High School A	3.14	10.38
Mean Response	3.56	9.73

## What do team members view as important components?



<u>Component</u>	<u>Mean of Responses</u> (5 = very important)
Leadership of team – attitude	4.75
Support from building administration	4.68
Opportunity for member input	4.63
Clear purpose of team	4.61
Members of team representative	4.57
Leadership of team – follow-up	4.55
Team commitment	4.54
Participation by members	4.52
Scheduling of meetings	4.51

n=41 of 67 team members in six teams

## What do team members view as important components? (cont.)



<u>Component</u>	<u>Mean of Responses</u> (5 = very important)
Team motivation	4.49
Leadership of team – agenda	4.47
Use of meeting time	4.45
Delegation of responsibilities	4.43
Team focus	4.35
Work done outside of meetings	4.27
Absence of interpersonal conflict	4.25

n=41 of 67 team members in six teams

## What do team members view as important components? (cont.)



<u>Component</u>	<u>Mean of Responses</u> (5 = very important)
<b>Availability of Resources</b>	
Time for implementation	4.32
Information	4.24
Time for training	4.21
Consultation	4.15
Money for implementation	4.10
Money for training	3.94

n=41 of 67 team members in six teams

## Leadership of Team



- Whole team as “leaders”
  - Working for / representing school
- “Leader” of team – chairperson
  - Foster continued sense of team purpose & cohesiveness throughout the process
- Structured versus Unstructured Leadership

## Delegation of Responsibilities



- Who's doing all the work?
- Participation in meeting important but may also be “leg-work” outside of meeting
- One or two members take on majority of workload outside of actual meeting?
- Disseminating responsibilities to all members
  - Better utilizing resources within team & accomplishing short & long term goals

## Available Resources



- At the crux of all teams is the issue of whether or not necessary resources are available to support team
- Time
- Administrative support
- Training
- Monetary funding

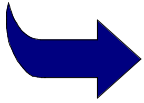


## Team Focus & Motivation



- Clear understanding of purpose of team
- Clear understanding of their role on team
- Keeping enthusiasm alive throughout process
- Motivating team members to “work” outside of meeting times
- Ownership of team process

## Points to Ponder



Coming together is a beginning;  
keeping together is progress;  
working together is success.

- Henry Ford

## Points to Ponder



- Why a team?
- Team decisions vs. administrative decisions?
- Communication between team & rest of school staff?
- Team vision, team function, team outcome?

## Safe and Responsive Schools Project Websites:



[www.unl.edu/srs](http://www.unl.edu/srs)

<http://www.indiana.edu/~safeschl/>

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