

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

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National Association of School Psychologists  
Annual Conference - March 2, 2002  
Chicago, Illinois

## Purpose of Session- "Exploratory" to:

- Describe 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 "school based teams" from literature and our experience; and
- Explore and brainstorm suggestions for improving the effectiveness of school-based teams.

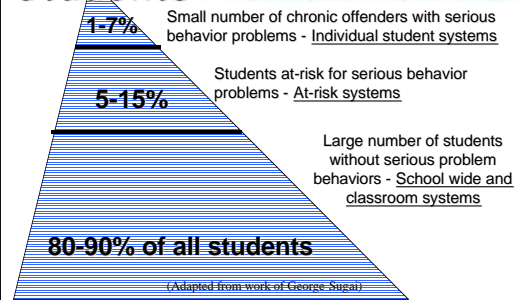
## The Safe & Responsive Schools Project

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.

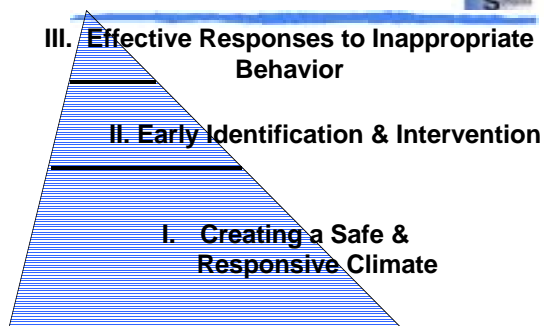
It included:

- Three-tiered model
- Gathering a wide variety of data
- School-based team planning and decision making
- Focus on helping medium/smaller sized schools & districts

## Thinking About Students



## Three Components



## I. Creating a Safe & Responsive Climate

1. Programs to Improve School & Classroom Climate
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 Programs
7. Conflict De-Escalation and Conflict Resolution
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



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

## III. Effective Responses to Inappropriate Behavior



1. Behavior Support/ School Safety/ Student Assistance Teams
2. Increase Effective Discipline Alternatives
3. Involving Students in Decision Making
4. Obtain & Manage Information; Coordinate with Agencies
5. Technology for School Security
6. School Community Resource Officers
7. Develop Educational Alternative Options-
8. Emergency Preparation & Crisis Planning
9. Crisis Response Following a Crisis

## 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?
- ✓ Creating and implementing a plan?

## 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"

(Williams, 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; activities team; etc.
- ✓ 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 & Horner, 2001)
- ✓ Individual Functional Assessment & Behavior Plan Teams (Jones, 2001)
- ✓ Safe and Responsive Schools Planning Teams (Skiba, Peterson, Boone & Fontinni, 2000)

## Review of Literature



- ✓ While many of the most important decisions and recommendations made by school psychologists 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 1887-Current*



Key Words Used	Result of Search
Teams	6086
Teams & Schools	14
Group Dynamics	8657
Group Process	1765
School-Based Teams	17
Collaborative Teams	16
IEP Teams	9
SAT Teams	1
Group Dynamics & Teams	1

## 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 of representative

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

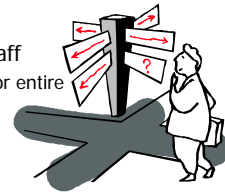


- ✓ Opportunity for every team member to give input
- ✓ Scheduling of meetings
- ✓ Absence of interpersonal conflict
- ✓ Use of meeting time
- ✓ Use of time between meetings
- ✓ Work done outside of meetings

## 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	27	44%
Elementary B	8	24	33%
Elementary C	12	37	32%
Middle School A	9	43	21%
Middle School B	10	68	14.7%
High School A	17	58	29.3%
K-12 School	8	47	17%

## Does Size Really Matter?



How many people are on the largest team?

Mean – 11.51      Range – 4 to 30

How many people are on the smallest team?

Mean – 4.20      Range – 2 to 10

How many people, on average, are typically on teams?

Mean – 6.55      Range – 3 to 11

N = 26

## 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?



**N= 26**

### Component

### Mean of Responses

(5 = very important)

Leadership of team – Attitude	4.76
Support from building admin.	4.72
Clear purpose of team	4.69
Scheduling of meetings	4.67
Leadership of team – Follow-up	4.59
Team commitment	4.59
Members of team representative	4.58
Opportunity for member input	4.58
Use of meeting time	4.56

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



**N= 26**

### Component

### Mean of Responses

(5 = very important)

Leadership of team – Agenda	4.48
Team motivation	4.46
Participation by members	4.45
Team focus	4.44
Delegation of responsibilities	4.39
Absence of interpersonal conflict	4.33
Work done outside of meetings	4.28
Use of time between meetings	4.24

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



**N= 26**

### Component

### Mean of Responses

(5 = very important)

Availability of Resources	
Information	4.36
Time for implementation	4.23
Consultation	4.14
Time for training	4.13
Money for implementation	4.08
Money for training	3.68

## 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 work-load outside of actual meeting?
- Disseminating responsibilities to all members
  - Better utilizing resources within team & accomplishing short & long term goals

## Available Resources

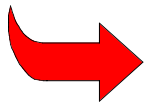
- ✓ At the crux of all teams is the issue of whether or not necessary resources are available to support team
- ✓ Time
- ✓ Administrative support
- ✓ Training
- ✓ Monetary funding



## Team Focus & Motivation- Elements of Success:

- \* 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? (Different from a committee?)
  - Team decisions vs. administrative decisions?
- Choosing a team- what is representative?
- How does a "team" become a "team"?
- Team vision, team function, team outcome?
- Group dynamics?
- Quality in process; Quality in decision making?
  - Provision for and role of dissent in teams?
- Communication between the team & the rest of the school staff?

## Safe and Responsive Schools Project Websites:

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

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



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