A Case Study of the Adoption and Implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Tier 2 in Two Elementary Schools

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This study was designed to explore four primary research questions. Why do schools and districts adopt PBIS? Which stakeholders were included in the decision-making process to adopt PBIS? Do these adoption dynamics influence PBIS Tier 2 implementation? With PBIS Tier 2 implementation fidelity as a desirable outcome, what are the relevant facilitators, constraints, and obstacles?

These main research questions and additional sub-questions derived from a gap in the literature. Five related priorities have not received sufficient attention: (a) PBIS adoption dynamics in schools and districts, (b) Roles and responsibilities of teachers and pupil personnel professionals such as school psychologist, (c) District office and the roles of district leaders as units of analysis, (d) PBIS Tier 2 implementation benchmarks for schools, and (d) Relevant knowledge about PBIS’ institutionalization and sustainability.

Guided by a conceptual framework for organizational readiness (AVICTORY model) this study proceeded with a multi-site case study design, using multiple methods. A purpose sample was employed, involving two elementary schools in one school district. This study included three units of analysis: Two elementary schools and district office.

This study’s comparative results yielded multiple analytic generalizations such as: (a) Implementation phases directly or indirectly influence the other phases. (b) Adoption and implementation hinge on organizational capacity and individual/team competence. (b) Leaders’ diffusion of PBIS is necessary, but insufficient to achieve implementation fidelity for both PBIS Tiers. (c) Short-term PBIS Tier 1 implementation fidelity does not guarantee long-term institutionalization. (d) Implementation fidelity and institutionalization depend on workforce competency and stability. Future research should improve this study’s AVICTORY Tier 2 surveys with particular reference to an important need. Do the survey results provide formative data to facilitate PBIS Tier 2 implementation fidelity? Finally, future research should include observational studies of how PBIS is interpreted and operationalized in all settings, especially by teachers in classroom settings.