

Strategies to Increase Staff Implementation of Effective Behavioral Approaches



As you work to increase staff implementation of effective behavioral practices, consider what barriers are occurring. How can you design supports within your system to overcome those barriers? Consider something like running. What if someone has always aspired to be a runner, but has had many false starts and has never been able to meet that goal despite wanting to and knowing it would be good for them? What are the barriers that might be hindering success? What would be necessary and helpful to overcome those obstacles and reach the goal?

Activity Responses: What are some of the barriers that might keep someone from doing something even if they want to and know it is good for them?

Time, energy, lack of resources (Carolyn, Joel), unsure how to start (Kelly), time/energy (Jordan, Jacob, Justin, Gillian, Shannon), too hard (Patty), procrastination—there's always something more appealing (Ann), not fully knowledgeable about it (Patricia), lack of background knowledge (Julie), not knowing how (Kevin), lack of skills (Natela), not enjoyable (Tim), not taking things in small steps (Elena), comparing yourself to others (Jacob), quitting if it's immediately difficult (Brandi), scared to try and fail (Angela), lack of preparation (Madison), lack of belief (Leisha)

Activity Responses: What would be absolutely necessary to help someone do the thing? What might be helpful depending on the person or situation?

Buy-in (Mayra), follow-through, mindset (Day), encouragement and grace from a coach (Julie), training and modeling (Joel), commitment (Patty), practice (Angela), having the right tools (Gillian), seeing progress (Jacob), small wins (Julie), I would have to start with the little things (Stephanie), the tools/background (Kelly), encouragement, support, and being a person for someone to lean on (Erin), a partner and resources and the okay to make mistakes (Carolyn), scaffolds and supports (Madison), knowing how to do the thing effectively and safely (Ann), clear plan and coach support (Natela), scheduled accountability check-ins by a mentor/friend/coach (Courtney), necessary—ability and helpful—desire to do so (Kevin)

Critical Stages of Implementation

Your support model will differ somewhat depending on which stage of implementation your staff members are currently in. Consider what stage the majority of teachers and staff are currently in as well as how to help any staff members in different places. How can you help staff get the skills and support they need, or maintain their enthusiasm and engagement if they are at a higher stage of implementation?

1. Building awareness/readiness, creating the urgency to make change happen
2. Getting started—learning and application
3. Skill and fluency building
4. Maintenance and deepening application

1) Building Awareness/Readiness

Both an effective skill set and appropriate mindset are necessary in order for staff to implement positive and proactive behavioral practices. Some staff may have the skill set but not the mindset to create change. Others may wholeheartedly believe in the importance of this work but don't have the skill set. Many of your staff may fall somewhere in between.

At the outset of any work to address changing staff behavioral practices, consider what mindsets may hamper implementation. Some examples include:

- “If we would just punish them more” or “if we would just out-of-school suspend these kids,” it would solve all behavioral issues
- “It’s not my job to . . .” use the management toolkit, work toward continuous improvement with behavior, provide behavior support, etc.
- “If only the family would . . .” or “if only they had a different family . . .”
- Low expectations based on family history, demographic, etc.

If any staff are holding on to these or other negative mindsets that will hamper their interest and ability to work on the skill set of effective management, consider what activities you may need to do to begin encouraging a different viewpoint.

Example: Addressing an Overreliance on Out-of-School Suspension

- Provide data—school-to-prison pipeline, research on negative outcomes associated with OSS such as poor academic growth and loss of instructional time, increased negative attitudes toward school and eventual dropout, and disproportionality (Black boys make up 8% of the K–12 population but account for 22% of students receiving one or more out-of-school suspensions.
- Conduct activities to help staff question the efficacy of OSS for many students. For example, have staff brainstorm answers to “What conditions must be in place for OSS to work in changing behavior?”
- Help staff understand the important concept that whether something is punitive or reinforcing can only be known by the student’s response to the consequence. If the behavior decreases, the consequence was punitive. If the behavior remains the same or increases, the student didn’t have the skills to make the change or the consequence was in some way reinforcing. If this consequence is used repeatedly, we can anticipate that the behavior will remain the same or get worse.

- Help staff build the knowledge and skills for what can be done instead of OSS. This includes classroom and common area prevention procedures, corrective consequence alternatives in the classroom or common area, and administrator-assigned alternatives to suspension.

FOLLOW-UP TASK

List mindsets that you will need to work to address (and with which staff). List a few ideas for things you could do to address each mindset.

2) Getting Started—Learning and Initial Application

When staff are learning a new skill set, there are critical components to address as you think about how to help staff apply their newly learned skills. For most staff, professional development is not enough. New teachers or staff are just getting their feet wet and need support. Veteran staff who perhaps have never needed or attempted to use the skills will be working to undo previously used skills and habits, so many of them will also need support. Consider:

- What needs to be in place prior to starting—what materials are needed? How are you going to plan for the scheduling of any training, monitoring, and support activities? How will you ensure there is time for those who are implementing to learn and reflect on their practice?
- What amount and type of instruction will your staff need to learn the skill set?
- How will you help gradually build the skill set with reasonable steps that are taught, encouraged, monitored, and supported? For example, select one to three manageable skills that will be the primary focus of professional development, coaching, and accountability efforts at the start.
- How will you and others provide meaningful positive and corrective feedback throughout the initial learning and application stages?
- What accountability strategies will be put in place to monitor implementation and progress?
- What support strategies will be put in place for staff members who may be uncertain about how to put practices in action?

Classroom Management Example

Schools were given a two-day CHAMPS professional development in the summer with approximately 12 different skill sets they would be working to hone across time, such as teaching expectations for activities and transitions, increasing positive interactions and improving ratios of positive to corrective interactions,

procedures for beginning and ending routines, how to deliver fluent corrections, attention signal, and classroom rules and Guidelines for Success.

One school selected Attention Signal as one of their main priorities to start with because they felt it would be a manageable and important skill that all teachers could work to hone at the start of the school year. Their rollout included:

- Staff provided mini PD reviewing the critical components for effective attention signals.
- Administration shared the goal that each class would respond with full attention to their teacher's attention signal 100% of the time within 5 seconds.
- Staff shared ideas for signals with each other, selected the signal they would use, and put it in writing.
- During the first few weeks, administrators, interventionists, and coaches did walk-throughs coding responses to attention signals (de-identified so that data were not specific to a person). At staff meetings and grade-level meetings, they shared the data and had staff share and problem solve together.
- With staff, administrators celebrated small improvements in the data, and when staff met the data target, they held a surprise party to celebrate the staff's efforts.

Within 6 weeks, every teacher had their classes meeting the target! The school engaged the staff to select their next target to focus on, and staff were excited to tackle the next thing because they saw the difference their efforts made in their classrooms.

FOLLOW-UP TASK

List behavior management and support skills that staff will need in early stages of learning and applying. Consider how to sequence them logically across time. Identify resources, instruction, accountability, coaching and support, and positive and corrective feedback mechanisms.

3) Skill and Fluency Building

When staff begin getting comfortable and gaining fluency with particular skills, less of their cognitive energy will go into applying the skill. The staff member may be able to begin applying knowledge to other contexts (generalizing) and/or begin working to integrate newly learned skills into broader practices. However, if other things become overwhelming, the skill may fall away without support.

- Staff still need periodic reminders and positive and corrective feedback.
- Accountability and coaching should still be in place, but may be more intermittent or less targeted to just the specific skill. It may also be part of more general efforts to monitor student behavior and staff implementation of effective behavioral practices.

Examples of Strategies to Support Ongoing Skill Development and Fluency

- Memos/newsletter reminders or specific examples of the skill in action
- A.M. or P.M. announcements with a mini skill example
- Record a staff member applying the skill and share, or interview a staff member about their use of a skill or when they have seen a colleague effectively use the skill
- “Caught you . . .” acknowledgments provided to staff or read out in a staff meeting
- Staff intermittent reinforcement when your data indicates they are working toward implementing the skill
- Structured reinforcement during a predictably difficult time of year

FOLLOW-UP TASK

For skill(s) your staff are focusing on, identify ways that you will continue providing distributed accountability, reminders about and examples of ways to extend the skill, celebrations of success and exemplars, and course corrections when needed.

4) Maintenance and Deepening Application

Once staff have mastered a skill set, the biggest threats are loss of urgency and excitement, which can lead to gradual slippage across time, and any major change in your school.

Ways to maintain across time:

- Enlist those staff in this stage to mentor and support others.
- Continue celebrating and bringing awareness to the positive practices—for example, celebrate fires that didn't start!
- Have staff reflect on problems of practice and applying previously learned skills (even if they don't currently need them).
- Monitor other gains and tie them to specific skills staff are using.
- Enlist staff to be part of helping address a challenge where their skill may be an asset (e.g., mentoring a specific student, helping observe and come up with ideas for a difficult common area, etc.).

FOLLOW-UP TASK

When staff are at the maintenance/deepening application stage, how will you keep them enthusiastic about their implementation and help them not lose skills across time? How will you monitor implementation so you can provide additional training, accountability, and support if behavioral data begins to show concerns with implementation?