



TARGETING INTERVENTIONS

“There is no greater inequality than the equal treatment of unequals”

—Felix Frankfurter
Former U. S. Supreme Court Justice



As part of the Center’s mission, we work with schools to address a variety of school improvement domains. A local elementary school recently asked us to help them present a series of social skills lessons to their students. We began by collecting baseline data to determine the extent these skills were already present at the school. Given that this school served a low-risk and homogeneous population, it was not surprising to see that these students as a whole already had excellent social skills. And after conducting the lessons,

behavior change was certainly not noticeable. Well, would you notice if the new fence were whitewashed?

This is a circumstance common to many schools. Faced with NCLB, they are driven to conduct school improvement efforts. But too often, they provide interventions to circumstances that do not require them. In the case of our local school, the faculty knew that social skills training was important, and that some students were causing them concern, but they decided

to intervene with the entire school. What they really needed, as do many schools like them, was a targeted effort. By identifying a subset of students with social skills needs, and targeting them, the school could get the greatest reward for the effort expended. This doesn’t mean that the larger student body can be ignored, but it does mean that schools already functioning well can have noticeable improvement if they target some of their school improvement strategies.

The Center for The School of the Future (CSF) is a research center in the College of Education and Human Services dedicated to improving the quality and effectiveness of education through identifying, researching, and developing proven educational practices and supporting their dissemination and adoption in local circumstances

Prevention Plus

The Prevention Plus Social Skills program was developed and refined from 1980 to 1994. The program was part of a collaborative effort in the College of Education and Human Services at Utah State University, between Dr. Richard P. West (currently Executive Director of the Center for the School of the Future at Utah State University) and Dr. K. Richard Young (currently Dean of the McKay School of Education at Brigham Young University). Research has shown that the risk of youth developing patterns of various types of antisocial behavior such as, aggression, violence, and gang activity, can be decreased by developing social and self-management skills, academic proficiency, and improved relationships with family and school personnel. The Prevention Plus program is designed to help students achieve success through the development of critical skills.

Research on earlier versions of the Prevention Plus program in an ethnically diverse urban Utah middle school showed the following improvements:

- Fights and suspensions were reduced by 69%
- Safe school violations were reduced by 77%
- Court referrals were reduced by 84%
- Gang-related activities were reduced by 81%

see **Prevention Plus** (from page 1)

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CSF staff recently began updating the Prevention Plus program. The new version of the program includes a revised version of the Program Guides, as well as the addition of an Implementation Manual, activity cards set, Teaching Methods Desk Reference, and poster template CD. The new materials make the program easier to use and more appealing to students and teachers. To get more information about the Prevention Plus program visit us on our website at www.csf.usu.edu.

ELEMENTS OF QUALITY INSTRUCTION

Previous CSF newsletters have provided background regarding the four elements of quality instruction: providing clear behavioral expectations, creating positive relationships between students and teachers, building skills by maximizing opportunities to practice, and providing rewards and recognition for acceptable behaviors. If you weren't convinced of their importance before, check this out.

Recent research conducted at the Center demonstrates the role these elements play in the school learning environment. ISQ surveyed thousands of elementary school students about whether or not each of these elements was found at their school. The data were then used to disaggregate students into those with all four elements, and those with three, two, one, or none of the elements. Students who perceived the presence of all these elements rated their school as exemplary and superior. For those students who perceived the absence of these elements, the ratings dropped to typical and improvement needed.

These analyses were repeated with low risk schools only, high risk schools only,

and a mix of schools in varied circumstances. The results were the same. It didn't matter if the school was in a high risk urban setting or in the swankiest part of town. From the perspective of the student, when these elements were not present, school was not a pleasant experience.

	4	3	2	1	0
Parent Support	●	●	●	●	●
Teacher Excellence	●	●	●	●	●
Student Commitment	●	●	●	●	●
School Leadership	●	●	●	●	●
Instructional Quality	●	●	●	●	●
Resource Management	●	●	●	●	●
School Safety	●	●	●	●	●

Figure 1 – Perceptions of the School Environment by Instructional Quality

For further information contact CSF at:
1-800-303-7363

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www.csf.usu.edu/newsletter

or write to us at:

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DID YOU KNOW?

The State Education Reforms database, updated and administered by the National Center for Education Statistics, reports that 26% of schools across the nation did not meet AYP expectations. In addition, the database disaggregates AYP performance by state. Among the top 10 states, ranked by highest performance on AYP standards, are Montana, Texas, and Utah.

When these rankings are compared with data compiled by the National Education Association there appears to be no relationship between AYP performance and state spending per student. Additionally, AYP performance is not related to the student-teacher ratio. Although these data represent only the most recent reports released, they challenge widely-held assumptions about the variables that influence academic achievement.

TOP ISQ SCHOOLS

Each year, CSF recognizes the schools that made the greatest improvements as determined by their ISQ data, or distinguished themselves in comparison to similar schools.

The schools showing the most improvement last year were (district, state, and principal are included): Cascades Academy (Bend La Pine SD, OR – *Wendy May*), South Rich Elem (Rich SD, UT – *Dale Lamborn*), Madeleine Choir School (UT – *Bill Hambleton*), Central Middle (Ogden SD, UT – *Mark Peterson*), W Russell Todd Elem (Uintah SD, UT – *Debbie Chatham*), Gramercy Elem (Ogden SD, UT – *Sandy Coroles*), Barnett Elem (Nebo SD, UT – *Ryan Pitcher*), Spanish Oaks Elem (Nebo SD, UT – *Rashel Tingey*), Polk Elem (Ogden SD, UT – *Jeanne Clifton*), and Rich High (Rich SD, UT – *Rick Larsen*).

In addition to schools showing progress, many schools distinguished themselves in comparison to their peers. These schools were: Rich Middle (Rich SD, UT – *Kip Motta*), Rich High (Rich SD, UT – *Rick Larsen*), Success Academy (UT – *Vickie Wilson*), Madeleine Choir School (UT – *Bill Hambleton*), J E Cosgriff Memorial (UT – *Betsy Hunt*), South Fremont High (Fremont, ID – *Larry Bennett*), Mountain View Elementary (Ogden SD, UT – *Misti Young*), Mullan High (Mullan SD, ID – *Tom Durbin*), Kamiah Middle (Kamiah SD, ID – *Carrie Nygaard*), and Midwest Academy (IA – *Layani Trane*).

Congratulations! Improving a school's learning environment is a significant accomplishment. We wish these schools continued success.

PURPLE PRACTICES

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is an approach to teaching and sustaining appropriate student behavior. Most PBS programs are based on a three-tiered, risk-based model similar to the one presented by R.H. Horner and his colleagues (2001). Intervention levels include 1) universal, for all students, 2) group, for small groups of students, and 3) individual, for high-risk individuals.

