

What Works Clearinghouse

Reducing Behavior Problems in the Elementary School Classroom

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Jill Constantine

Good afternoon everyone. My name is Jill Constantine. I'm an Associate Director of Research at Mathematica Policy Research, and I'm a Deputy Director of the What Works Clearinghouse. Mathematica runs the What Works Clearinghouse for the U.S. Department of Education. I want to thank you for joining today's webinar to discuss the Clearinghouse's practice guide *Reducing Behavior Problems in the Classroom*. I'm going to provide a brief introduction to the Clearinghouse, its products, and particularly talk a little bit about the process for our practice guide. And then we're going to hear from two of our panelists for this practice guide. Dr. Michael Epstein, Professor at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln. He served as the chair for this panel. And Robin Weaver, Principal at Harmony Hills Elementary School in Montgomery County, Maryland. Following their remarks we'll open the discussion to any questions you may have. If you would like to submit a question at any point for the panelists or for me, you can go ahead and type it in that same Q&A box that you heard about in the announcement for the webinar. It's in the lower, right-hand corner of your screen.

Okay. The What Works Clearinghouse was established in 2002 to provide educators, policy makers, researchers, and the public with a central and trusted source of scientific evidence for what works in education. The way we implement the mission of the Clearinghouse, the way we implement that mission is based on three core principles. First, we set standards for education research. Specifically, we designate which particular studies, which particular research on programs or curriculum, services, anything that you're trying out in your schools, we designate which of those studies are

designed in such a way that you can be confident that the findings are there, that the services examined in that study really will improve outcomes for your students.

Second, we conduct an extensive and systematic review of all the research on a particular topic in an area. So we make sure we're not just relying on one researcher or one journal or one developer's input on research. We search the area broadly across lots of sources so we can be confident that our summary is comprehensive. Those are the two core principles we use to make sure you can trust the findings from a WWC Practice Guide or other kind of review.

Finally, we make all of our different products – intervention reports, practice guides – we make them publicly available on our website, and you can access them all and download them for free. That's what makes us fulfill our mission. A full list of all the clearinghouse products, as well as a handbook detailing all our standards and procedures, are found at the What Works website, and that's WhatWorks.ed.gov. You can find a copy of this practice guide there and download it. You can also take a new online tour that shows you all the features and the different particular points in the What Works webpage.

So, I'm going to say just a few words about our practice guides and how we bring them together. They're one of our most popular products in the Clearinghouse. Practice guides are a series of research-based recommendations and strategies for what you might do in your classrooms and schools, and they're in all kinds of areas of interest to educators. The recommendations are designed to inform approaches for addressing educational challenges, such as the one we're going to be talking about today, which is *Reducing Behavior Problems in the Classroom*. To produce a guide on a topic, the

Clearinghouse brings together a set of panelists that includes researchers and educators. They come together with their recommendations, with the research they're aware of. We also conduct a systematic review of all the research out there, and they pull together a series of recommendations, as well as a rating of the evidence supporting that recommendation: How strong is the research evidence behind it? And that rating is based on the quality of the research, the amount of research conducted on that particular recommendation, and the number of different contexts and settings that that approach has been tried. The panel will also provide concrete steps for how educators can implement the recommendation. And that includes common roadblocks to try and implement that recommendation and also possible solutions to that roadblock.

For every recommendation, we have three categories for rating the strength of the research evidence to find that recommendation, that's behind that recommendation. Our top category is strong. If the recommendation is based on a strong level of evidence, it means that the panel found several well-designed studies, they've been conducted in a variety of places and contexts. This means the panel is confident that that recommendation will work for you.

The next level of evidence supporting a recommendation is moderate. What this means is the panel found some evidence that the recommendation, in the research that the recommendation is effective. The reason it's not as high as the top category is that it was either the case that there weren't as many high-quality, well-designed studies, or there were well-designed studies, but they didn't take place as in many settings and contexts to allow it to be a strong recommendation. So, the panel is confident that that recommendation will work in some places.

And the last category is low, and that simply means the recommendation is not currently supported by a strong research base, and that can sometimes generate confusion. To be clear, it doesn't mean the recommendation won't work. It just means there's not a strong, well-designed research case supporting it yet, but the panel is still making a recommendation. They think it's important, but they either had to rely on extrapolation from some studies or inferences across studies as opposed to solid, well-designed studies directly supporting the recommendation.

Again, all our practice guides can be found at WhatWorks.ed.gov, and if you go to that web page and click on publications and products, which you'll see, you'll come to the practice guide page, and here's a snapshot of the practice guide page that highlights what you can find there, which includes the tour to learn more about the WWC website, a link where you can suggest topics for practice guides. We get lots of ideas from our users. And you can also search for a particular practice guide by a keyword, but we also have all the practice guides listed.

And what you see here is just a screenshot of an example of a recommendation and the evidence supporting it. Some of you may have seen the practice guide already, but if you haven't, this is a good example of what will be there. So, what you see in this example of one recommendation identifies the specifics of the problem behavior and the conditions that prompt and reinforce it. And then there's a little more detail about exactly what the panel means by that, and then you'll see the level of evidence that supported that specific recommendation. So, with that, I'm going to turn it over to the chair of the panel, Mike Epstein, and he's going to talk about the recommendations in more detail.

Michael Epstein

Thank you very much, Jill, for that introduction, and I would also like to welcome people for attending this webinar that I'm very excited about. Today the topic is *Reducing Behavior Problems in the Elementary School Classroom*. And before we get into the actual practice guide and the recommendations, I think a good starting point is: Why a practice guide on behavior? And there are several very compelling reasons for that. The first has to do with the Gallop Poll results. Every year for the past 40 or 50 years, the Gallop Organization has polled citizens in the United States on the matter of education and have asked, what are the most compelling issues? And the one topic that has come up in the top three or four issues identified each year is the topic of discipline and managing behavior in schools. So this is clearly an important topic to people in the United States.

A second is what research tells us about the number of children now that we're talking about. Studies done over the last 30 years have been pretty consistent and have found that about, at any point in time, 20% of school-aged children are at risk of behavior problems. Research also has indicated over the years that at any point in time 10% of school-aged children are identified as having mental illness problems. And that's not a small number of children. That's about five million children. And we also know that 1% of school-aged children are school-identified as being emotionally disturbed and in need of special education services. And that's about a half-a-million children. So the number of children that we're talking about is quite extensive.

Research also has been informative in identifying the relationship between behavior and academic performance. And the findings have been consistent and,

simply stated, indicate that children who demonstrate appropriate behavior and social skills do quite well academically. Conversely, research has shown us that children who have behavior and social challenges do quite poorly in school. And this is a relationship that has been found year after year after year.

We also know that principals, when they're surveyed, believe that 70% of teachers enter the workforce ill-prepared to manage the behavior of students in their classroom. We also know that of the dollars spent on staff development by school districts, only 15% of it goes to behavior management issues, which is a real disconnect between the need that research has underscored and what principals tell us and how little time is spent on this topic in staff development. So, clearly, a practice guide on this topic is very timely.

Our practice guide has five recommendations. The first three speak to what the teacher can do in the classroom by him or herself with minimal support. The fourth one speaks to the issue of collaborating with colleagues outside of the classroom. And then the last one, recommendation five, speaks to schoolwide practices that can enhance behavior in the school.

The first recommendation identifies specifics of problem behavior and the conditions that prompt and reinforce that. And whenever I think of that, it kind of reminds me of when I was at graduate school at the University of Virginia, and my advisor, Jim Kaufman always would impress upon us as graduate students the idea '*In God We Trust*, in all others it's, show me the data.' And recommendation speaks to the need for teachers and school staff to collect data on behavioral issues. The level of evidence there is moderate. And then we have three implementation guidelines. The first is the

need to speak and describe the behavior concretely. And so there in the practice guide we speak to the need of operationally defining behaviors like aggression, depression, anxiety, and take those constructs and operationally define them so they're observable and measurable. Because in implementation, step two, we talk about the need to record the frequency of behavior, and then the context, the setting, the time in which the behavior occurred. And the third implementation step here is to identify what prompts and reinforces the troublesome behavior. Basically, describe what occurs in the setting before and after the troublesome behavior.

Okay. Then with each of the recommendations we would identify some potential roadblocks that were discussed in the literature and then we identify one or more solutions. And I'm not going to go over each of the roadblocks and solutions, but I'll just highlight them. In fact, the first one is 'Cannot collect data and teach at the same time.' And that's obvious. If all the teacher was doing was collecting data, you wouldn't have time to teach. And so the solution there is: Keep it simple. Children who present challenging behaviors present a whole host of behaviors. So, our recommendation is, focus on one. Keep it simple. These behaviors tend to occur throughout the day. So our recommendation is pick one time of the day, maybe after recess. So, and then count the frequency of that one behavior. But your point, the point here is we don't want teachers to be data collectors. We want you to be teachers. And so keep the data collection, try to keep it as simple as possible.

Recommendation two – Modify the classroom learning environment to decrease problem behavior. There the level of evidence is strong. And the reason, as Jill mentioned, is there is a lot of scientific evidence for that. And by “scientific evidence”

we're talking about several randomized clinical trials, which are the gold standard of science. And so, with recommendation two, it's a strong body of research. And so here we identified three implementation steps. The first has to do with classroom expectations. And all of us, whether we're brand new teachers, mid-career, or senior teachers, know of how important it is to be clear and concise with the students with respect to expectations. What are the expectations in the classroom? And that has a real preventative way of dealing with behavior.

The second implementation step is to modify the classroom environment. And so there we recommend the teachers think through the physical layout and the temporal layout of the classroom. By physical layout, we speak to how the students' desks are laid out, how the teacher's desk is laid out, where are the quiet areas located, where the reading center is located, and how traffic – student and adult traffic – will move through that classroom. So, it's important to plan and think through those. We also speak to the need for the temporal layout, the time, how you schedule the day and, if possible, put the harder-core classes, like reading and math, earlier in the day. And, if that's not possible, at least schedule them not right after high activity periods, like physical education and recess.

And then the third implementation step here is to increase opportunities to learn, because research is pretty clear here, and it speaks to the importance of pacing the material. The quicker the pacing of the material, typically the fewer behavior problems in the classroom. We also looked at the research on opportunities to respond, and the more opportunities that children have to respond, the fewer the behavior problems. So, we encourage teachers to ask as many questions as they can in a given class period.

Okay. So here there are, as with the others, certain roadblocks, and then solutions that come from the literature. One roadblock is that teachers say they do not have time to rethink the classroom, and that's true. If you're in your classroom March 3rd, 2010, and you've got behavior challenges in your classroom, you can't rethink the whole classroom, so we recognize that. And so, we encourage teachers to make one change in one setting with one child with one behavior. Start there, and then from that point look, at the data and then move forward.

Recommendation three – Teach and reinforce new skills to increase appropriate behavior and preserve a positive classroom climate. There the level of evidence is strong again because there were several randomized clinical trials that had been done that included the implementation guidelines. So there's a lot of science behind this recommendation.

The three implementation steps. The first is the need for explicit instruction, and so we speak to teachers and we say, view social behavior as if it was an academic skill that needed to be taught. And so there, as you would explicitly teach reading, writing, and arithmetic, explicitly teach the student or students the behaviors you want them to learn.

And that gets to the second implementation guideline. Research is quite clear on teaching behaviors, academic skills to students. And so we recommend that teachers follow the same model. And that model is, when you're teaching an academic skill or you're teaching a social skill, provide a reason for that skill. Then, model the behavior or provide an example of that skill. Then, provide guided practice for the student with corrective feedback. Then, provide independent practice for that student with more

corrective feedback. Then, start to reinforce and shape that behavior, and then slowly fade out the reinforcement. Things that you would do to teach any academic skill.

And then the third guideline there is to reward those behaviors that are appropriate and ignore those that are not appropriate. The roadblocks here are listed and I'll speak to the one about fear that teachers have that extrinsic rewards undermine student motivation. And we've heard this for 30 or 40 years from teachers and surveys and, interestingly enough, there's no data to support this fear. And I've listed two references here: Akin-Little, and Cameron et al. And they did two very, very large meta-analyses, which are summaries of the available research. And their findings are consistent and quite clear. And they say that there is no research to support the idea that extrinsic rewards minimize student motivation or attitudes and, in fact, quite the contrary – that students' motivation and attitudes toward learning are enhanced under certain and appropriate reinforcement schedules.

So these first three recommendations the panel didn't see as linear. That is, that they would occur one step after the other, after the other. We see them as being very integrated and co-occurring and being quite fluid. And my colleague Robin Weaver, when she starts talking about her school, Harmony Hills, will kind of speak to the issue of how important it is to keep this as a, that it's a very fluid process.

The fourth issue is, at times teachers need to reach out and begin to collaborate with others when behavior challenges reach a certain point. And we're not going to minimize the issue of collaboration. As a colleague of mine said, 'Collaboration is an unnatural act between two non-consenting adults.' So, it's not something that we took lightly or we believe that is easy to pull off. Nonetheless, in managing behavior at times

it's critical that teachers begin to collaborate with others. And so the three implementation guidelines talk to different people to begin the collaboration process with. The first implementation guideline is, we encourage teachers to seek out professionals, colleagues of yours in your building who are masters at managing behavior. And this can be on a grade level team, or it can be somebody within your school. The second is to reach out to behavior specialists that are housed in many school districts in the country or may be in community mental health organizations. And so we encourage that. The third implementation guideline is, we encourage teachers to work with parents and caregivers of children who are as important, if not more important, than any other possible collaborator.

Okay, so, along, so there are some roadblocks here that have been cited in the literature. One is faculty meetings can be a waste of teachers' time. And trust me, I understand that. I've been in higher education for 35 years and cannot really remember maybe more than five or ten meetings that were of value. But, nonetheless, in managing behavior, working with your colleagues and collaborators are important. And so, we need to be smarter and more efficient in the meetings we hold. And so, there we talk, we speak to teachers and we say when you go to meetings, come prepared, have the behavior identified, operationally define that behavior. We also say it's important to have collected some data on the occurrence or duration of the behavior. We also speak to the importance of recording what have, what you have tried, what has not worked in the past. So, when you come to these meetings, you and your colleagues can very quickly come up to speed with what the issues are and then develop a plan that can be successful.

Recommendation five talks to school-wide discipline programs and is somewhat similar to a very popular movement these days on popular behavior supports. There the level of evidence is moderate, although it is growing very quickly because people are keenly interested in it. And here, we identified four implementation steps. The starting point is working with a school improvement team or assembling one. A second is the need to collect data, information, on the hot spots – where are problems currently happening? Are they occurring at recess, coming in and out of school, etc.? The third part is come up with a plan, implement it, and collect data on it, and then you'll be able to know if it's succeeding or if it needs to be modified. And then, the fourth point is that there are packaged interventions that are available, and we encourage people to, schools to consider those.

Potential roadblocks, nothing will work in our school, and that's the case if many people in the school building hold that view. So, we often recommend before somebody implements a school-wide plan is secure 80% of the teachers and staff.

There were basic principles that guided our work, and the three of those are listed and they talk about the need for trusting and supportive relationships. Teacher-to-teacher, administrator-to-teacher, and teacher-to-student, and student-to-student. And the more positive and supportive the relations, the more learning that will occur in that school. We also recognize the issue of cultural competence and for schools and teachers to become much more aware and skilled and knowledgeable in this area. And then the third principle is the need to collect, monitor, and react to the data.

And so with that, I'd like to turn it over to my colleague Robin Weaver, the principal of Harmony Hills, one of the most successful elementary schools in this country.

Robin Weaver

Hello. Thank you, Mike. I want to thank everyone for participating today, and I'm going to go through my slides quickly. You will be able to see them on the website in a week or so. And in order to get to your questions, we're going to move rather quickly through this component.

Let me tell you a little bit about our school. We are in Montgomery County, Maryland, and we are an urban/suburban school. We have a home school model for our special education students right within the mainstream. You can see the demographics on your screen, and the story there is that our level of poverty, the FARM's rate, has increased over 15% in the last three years. So, it's really a dramatic increase, and students who receive ESL services, that's part of the story. The other part is that many of our children, about 80% of them, live in homes where English is not the first language. We are a Title I school. We have a schoolwide model, and we use our funds to support the salaries of teachers and paraprofessionals and professional development, family learning nights, and technology. We're very proud of some of our Title 1 programs. We have worked with our staff to learn practices with the three new R's – Relationships, Rigor, and Relevance. And if our expectations are high for all of our students, and they know that there's someone there to count on, that they can count on, we're going to see those behavior issues reduced and our academics increased. In our school district we are taking a look at rigor, and you can see those Seven Keys to

College Readiness, and the three keys on the bottom are for elementary school. We can talk about that at another time. We also look to recruit highly qualified staff – diverse, as well as folks who can speak other languages.

Now, connecting to the practice guide. My guide, my role on the panel was to be the practitioner – the in-house practitioner, and to keep the reality testing there. As Mike said, recommendations one, two, and three are very fluid. The first one is really the purview of the classroom teacher. And in order to learn the skills needed to adapt, the teachers have to have some training on how to collect data. And part of what we want to do is make sure that they have both skills that are done quickly and easily.

For recommendations two and three, that's when you begin to look at the classroom itself and the time of day and anticipate when that behavior will occur. And part of what we want to make sure our kids know is that we will continue to give them the three key messages: This is hard work. We know you can do it. And we won't give up on you.

Recommendation four is focused on gathering the support for, from outside the classroom. And here's when you begin to meet with your team. And it's the principal's role to carve out the time so that collaboration can occur. And working on the master schedule is a key element of that. This is just a quick view of what the weekly schedule looks like, and in that weekly, those are all collaboration meetings, and that's where we would be talking about students and how to improve their achievement.

Connecting to the roadblocks. These are really important. When you hear a teacher, and I'm sure some of you have heard them saying, 'Meeting together is just a waste of time.' So, we have to make sure that those meetings are meaningful and

focused. We set ground rules and we honor teachers' time, and we start and begin on time. We set an agenda, and the agenda goes out in advance for people to consider the topics and be prepared when they come to the meeting. And at the end of the meeting we gather feedback from the participants.

Here at Harmony Hills, we use a system that we call the Collaborative Action Process or CAP. And there are three levels of the CAP process. One is with the individual teacher in the classroom, and that's with recommendations one, two, and three. And this is where you begin to include the parent as well. And then, we move it to the grade level CAP meetings, and we meet twice a month for 45 minutes, each grade level team – kindergarten through grade 5 – and it's facilitated by a general education teacher who sits on that team. And then, we also have school-level meetings, where we're talking about students' behavioral issues and how that's impacting the academic component of their day. The school CAP meetings are facilitated by administrators.

This is the; just taking a quick little look at the process that we use, whether it's at the grade level or the school level. We have a four-step process and, once again, those are organic steps and we sort of move from one to the next, but we really are very focused on keeping it simple and monitoring it over time, four to six weeks for a strategy to be in place.

Recommendation four is involving families and outside experts. We're very fortunate here in Montgomery County to have a high interest from our families, and they do come in and work with us to make sure that their children are getting the very best education. We have great school system support, a school psychologist, a social worker, as well as any other supports that we may need with individual students or

groups of students. We also have Montgomery County partners. I'm very fortunate to have a partnership here at Harmony Hills with a school-based health center, mental health therapy, as well as social services.

And the last recommendation is recommendation five – School-Wide Strategies. And we have incentive programs. We have class meetings, classroom meetings once a week, and we have town meetings by grade level once a month. And we give students strategies in all of the, on how to solve problems on their own.

And we've been successful. So what have we gotten, what results have we gotten? We've met adequate yearly progress for the last six years. Our suspension rate has been reduced from six to And, knock on wood, we've had none so far this year. Our discipline referrals during the instructional part of the day have been reduced to one to two per week, and the only area that we still have some difficulty is in our lunch, recess, and the bus riding, but we're working on that. And our special education screenings have also been reduced in number.

So, I thank you. I'll turn it over to you, Jill.

[33:11]

Question & Answer Session

JC: Okay. Thank you, Robin. As we said at the beginning, you may submit questions now. Some people have submitted questions already, so we do have a few for the panelists. A few common questions I'll take care of quickly. The webinar itself will be available for download on the What Works Clearinghouse website in a few weeks.

Also, there were a few questions on what Robin meant by the FARM's demographic. I assume that means, Robin, Free...

RW: Free and Reduced Priced Meals, and it's the level of poverty rate in the state of Maryland.

JC: Right. So, these days we call it meals. Right? We don't just call it lunch, because it's different.

RW: That's right. It's breakfast and lunch.

JC: So, moving on to some questions from participants. The first question, I think this is both for Mike and Robin: How can administrators help teachers coordinate the in-class strategies related to recommendation number two?

RW: This is Robin, and one of the roles that the principal has in working with the leadership team is carving out the time to support the teacher in the classroom. Making sure that the classroom teacher has the tools, the data collection tools that are easy to implement and that can be done over time with the support of the school-based staff.

ME: I think in, this is Mike, in the practice guide we speak to the role of the school principal and other administrators, so I would encourage people to obtain a copy of the practice guide. If you look at the five recommendations, recommendation five speaks to the issue of school-wide discipline. And school-wide discipline programs, I would think the success of those depends to a great extent on the principal being actively involved, and if not actively involved, being very supportive. Because the school-wide piece involves collection of data, whether it's office referrals, attendance, etc., doing it at a school level. And so the principal or leadership, school leadership

needs to play a significant role there. And then in just implementing a school-wide program, the principal or leadership plays a very significant role. So.

JC: Okay. Thank you. Another question. Robin, I think this was to you. There were a couple of questions on: Who is on your CAP team?

RW: That's a great question. On the grade level CAP meetings, there's the CAP coach who has, meeting once a month with the other CAP coaches for training purposes, and it's all of the grade level, general education teachers plus an ESL teacher for ESL who serves on that team regularly anyway, and a special education teacher. So the teams are about six professionals. And at the school level, when we are talking about behavior issues and not special education, it's our reading specialist, our school counselor, an administrator, and the classroom teachers. So, we meet twice a month for the school-level CAP team, and we meet, the grade levels meet 45 minutes twice a month.

JC: Okay, thank you. There have been a couple of questions for Robin or for Mike. Can you provide examples of positive reinforcers used for positive behavior?

RW: Well, one of the things that we do is we have designed with our leadership team and our parents a school pledge. And when children demonstrate that they are using the school pledge concepts, they can be given a blue slip. And it has our Husky on it, and the announcement is read over the public address system every morning for those children who earn the blue slips. And it's incredibly motivating. The kids want to hear their name, and then they get their blue slip. So that's just like a simple thing and it takes us about 60 seconds on the morning announcements to read the blue slips.

ME: I would encourage people to go into the practice guide, because there, we do spend some time speaking to types of reinforcers and then pointing out that you need to take the school context into consideration and the developmental level of the children. And then, in the practice guide, we discuss a whole range of reinforcers, from social reinforcers, praise, to edible reinforcers, tangible reinforcers, and a whole array of those. But much of it depends on the age, the developmental level of the child, and also the school context.

JC: Thank you. Here's a question that's going to be for both of you, but I'm going to start with you Mike, because I think I remember the panel – for both of you – I think I remember the panel grappling with this. How do you address behavior challenges for students with IEPs in the context of the whole school environment, the general education environment?

ME: Well, school-wide discipline programs, they are a school effort involving the leadership team, teachers, related school staff, and parents and caregivers, as well as students. So, it's to address the whole school. For individual students it gets to what is written in the IEP. And IEPs for students identified with special needs need to be monitored. And so, the success or failure of a schoolwide discipline program for an identified student will become known when data are collected and monitored. And if changes need to be made in that particular child's individual plan, then the IEP team, with the parents and caregivers and the student, can make that adjustment.

RW: At Harmony Hills, we have our IEP students in the mainstream, and many of them have more than 15 hours of services. We've learned in the very short elementary school day, we can use a great deal of our time wisely if we plug our special

education resources right within the classroom, as well as our ESL. All of our professionals work within the general education classroom; the children are not pulled out. So, if you walk into a room as the special education teacher to work with one of the students who has an IEP with a behavior problem or a motivation problem, you can pull over to the table that you're working with that one IEP student two or three other children who don't have IEPs and they're working with their peers, and there's a real element of we're working in this community together. So, we found that our home-school model or having our special needs students, particularly those with behavior issues, it really helps to be with their peers rather than pulled out, especially as they get older.

JC: Thank you both. Another question, first of all for you Robin, we'll start with you as principal. Do you know of any good strategies specifically for making time for teachers to collaborate and to develop strategies for dealing with students with behavior problems?

RW: There are 500 ways that are creative and stay within contracts. And one resource that we've used over the years is to go to the National Staff Development Council Professional Development Organization to learn how other schools use time. It isn't easy, especially if the teams are large. And we put general education, ESL teachers, and special ed; every grade level has a special ed voice and an ESL teacher voice on the fourth grade team, for example. So, when you're trying to make sure you're finding 45 minutes for six people, you really have to carve that time out carefully in August, and then, you know, tinker with it as you go. So, finding the time is really the job

of the leadership team. We start our master scheduling in May and June, and it's tinkered with in July and then put into place in August.

ME: I think – this may be just a very simple suggestion – but if you don't schedule things, they do not occur. And I think this has to be; you know, working with colleagues has to be scheduled just as any other event that was to occur in a school. Related to that, you know, particularly with young student, young teachers, I think you need to have a sound, effective, comprehensive mentoring system for incoming teachers and teachers in the first two or three years is pairing them up with more established, successful teachers, particularly teachers who are successful managing behavior. And if you need to reach out beyond that school and pull in expertise, like behavior specialists in the district, to have those people do the mentoring, then I would encourage that as well. But for these programs to be effective is they need to be planned, scheduled, and then mentoring needs to be built in as well.

JC: Thank you. I'm going to ask a related question, then we'll go on to; there's a couple specific questions about something that somebody mentioned on the slide. A few audience members have asked about discussing; a few have mentioned just what you, the point you just made, Mike, about bringing in other professionals – the mental health professionals, the behavior specialists. One or two audience members have asked about: Can you talk a little bit more, do you know school funding possibilities to be able to bring those additional staff and therapists, or other people who can come right into the classroom and support behavior reinforcement?

RW: I do not

ME: the year 2010, given our economic situation that money was no object, everybody would know that that would be way off the mark. I mean, with funding issues as they are, people need to be creative. And so, what I would encourage people to do is, if you are within a reasonable distance of a university, think about establishing a relationship with a special education program, with a school psychology program, with a clinical psychology program, or a social work program. I'm located in Lincoln, Nebraska. We have a very strong relationship with Boys Town, which is one hour down the road, and our students are working in the school at Boys Town implementing school-wide programs. Another would be to reach out into the community to community mental health organizations, community social work organizations. Some states have funded some school-wide mental health programs out of Medicaid dollars. And those monies are available. Florida does a lot of that. Maryland does a lot of that. Tennessee does a lot of that. Nebraska, and I'm sure there are other states as well. And then, if this is a need that is at a building level, then make it an issue at a district level. You know, instead of having school psychologists doing nothing but assessments and identification, they're skilled to provide services, behavior services, to children in schools, and so it's redirecting the services that you have. So, I think if you're creative and directive, you can get mental health services, social work services, delivered at the schoolhouse door. I mean, interestingly enough, the portal where the majority of mental health services are provided are at the schoolhouse door. Seventy percent of children receiving mental health services receive them in schools. So, it is being done and it's just finding that funding stream.

JC: Thank you. Robin, for you we've had a couple of questions about the debugging strategy.

RW: That's a tool that our school counselor has made sure that every 4-, 5-, 6-, 7-, 8-, 9-, 10-year-old knows. And this is for solving problems with their peers. There's a five-step process. The first thing, you ignore if somebody's bothering you. The second thing you do is you move away. The third thing you would do is you'd say, you'd speak friendly, 'Please stop that. I don't like what you're doing.' And the fourth one would be talk firmly. 'Please stop that. I don't like it.' And the fifth strategy is to get an adult. So, if the child comes up to the teacher in the middle of the guided reading group and says so and so's bothering me, that's step five. You can say, well, why don't you go back and talk friendly and go back through the steps. All of our kids know those five debugging steps, and we are often feeding it back to them so that they're practicing all the time and trying to solve their own problem. Of course, get an adult if you can't solve it.

JC: Thank you. We have had, again, a couple versions of the same question. It's a very good question. This is going to be for both of you. I'll start with you, Mike, and then on to you, Robin. Can you give examples of ways in which teachers can encourage parents and other family members to participate in reinforcing appropriate behavior? I've seen three or four of these questions now, so it's definitely on peoples' minds.

ME: That's an excellent question. I think one response is to be preventive here. And oftentimes what teachers do is they wait till a problem occurs, a serious problem, and then they make contact with the family. And the family just shuts down the communication or does not engage with the teacher. And so what we recommend in the

practice guide is to be proactive here. Make communications early and often to parents, particularly at the beginning of the year. When the year starts, send an e-mail or a letter to every parent of a child in your class and speak to how excited you are about the school year. Call them up on occasion. Invite them in to your classroom. And so, if you are proactive, then when an issue occurs with a child, a parent is going to be a lot more amenable to engaging with you and engaging with the school. The second thing is this whole issue of engagement is a critical issue, because parents and caregivers of children with serious emotional problems have not always engaged with schools or mental health providers, because professionals aren't real skilled at the art of facilitating engagement. And now, fortunately, over the last several years, researchers have begun to look at this whole area of how can we enhance the engagement of families. And so, we don't have time on this webinar, but I would encourage people to look at some really good work and common-sense ideas that people like Kimberly Hoagwood at Columbia University, and Kathleen Hoover at Vanderbilt, and Krista Kutash at the University of South Florida are doing. And with our work with Boys Town, we're beginning to work with parents much more and trying to learn better how to enhance this engagement piece.

RW: And I would just echo what Mike has said and add one more overlay. As the demographics in our country evolve, the cross-cultural communication challenges need to be a focus of the professional development. How do you welcome families from cultures that are different from your own? And at our school, we've used a wonderful guide. It's called *Beyond the Bake Sale*. It's the essential guide for family-school partnerships, particularly where there are cultural differences between staff and the

community members. And I highly recommend it. Over the last two years, we've worked very hard to establish welcoming for our parents. We don't have the traditional Back to School Night. It's more like a party. Get to know the teacher and get to know what we want for your child and what you want for your child.

JC: Great, thank you. *Beyond the Bake Sale*. You always like titles that are going to stay with you. Another question for both of you I think, and this may be our last question. Robin, what screeners do you recommend for teachers to use, specific examples, to help identify problem behaviors? And how exactly do they use them, if you can provide a couple of examples?

RW: Jill, you mean what tools are used? What tools to collect data?

JC: using I think they're suggesting how do you identify the behavior, how do you, what tools; I guess that is a fine line.

RW: Tools. Well, again, Mike said early on, a teacher would not be able to use it if it wasn't quick and easy. And one of the ones that we use very effectively is we ask a teacher to put paperclips in one pocket, if you have two pockets on your pants, and you start thinking, okay, it's 9:20, the instruction has begun and I see the behavior. I just move one paperclip to the other pocket. And I don't have to write down anything, I'm just moving a paperclip back and forth. And when I finish with my mass introduction at 9:20, I might find that there are four paperclips that have been moved from my cluster in one. And I know that that child has interrupted me four times. So, then, later in the day I can go and mark it down so I have it to check for any change over time.

ME: With respect to the screeners, with the practice guide, you know, it wasn't in our preview to recommend any particular test or curriculum or program, so I don't

want to list, you know, get that specific. But there are a number of reliable, valid instruments that can screen and identify children, and they run a range of being very simple to implement to very complex and time consuming. And so going along with what Robin is saying and what we kept saying a lot in the practice guide is, you know, select instruments or programs that are time-efficient. And the nice thing about screening and identification, the best screeners and identifiers are dependent on teacher input, teacher ratings. And so teachers, within a very quick, you know, just a small amount of time, can screen children in their classrooms, separate out children who are going to be challenging from children who likely are not going to be challenging. And so oftentimes it comes down to teacher ratings and teacher judgment, yet they're very valid and very reliable.

JC: Thanks. We have I think a related resource question. As Mike indicated, the panel wasn't out to put forward any particular commercial products, but can you recommend a website where people might be able to find out more about best practices on behavior logs and reports and things like that?

ME: There's a Center for School-Based Mental Health Services at the University of Maryland, Baltimore campus. There is the Center on Positive Behavioral Supports at the University of Oregon. And so I would suggest people go to those two sites and see what they have available there, information on, you know, assessment tools, screening, identification tools, progress monitoring tools, and then programs and intervention strategies.

JC: Thank you Mike. And there was one other reference question for you Robin. You made a reference to the national panel that people can see best practices of

other schools. Can you provide a little more information where people can find information on that?

RW: I'm not clear. I don't think I did. So.

JC: I'm sorry. Okay.

RW: But they're more than welcome to come to our website or call us. We'll share what we know.

JC: Okay. Thank you very much. I see we're coming up to 4 o'clock, so I've gone to our last slide that's to remind people where they can go for some information. Of course, the What Works Clearinghouse. www.whatworks.ed.gov. This practice guide, *Reducing Behavior Problems in Elementary School*, is available right now to download, and again, we'll have this webinar available in a few weeks. Mathematica's webpage, you can also access the Clearinghouse through Mathematica's webpage, and then the webpage for Robin's delightful elementary school, Harmony Hills Elementary School. Thank you so much for joining us this afternoon.

END OF WEBINAR