School Program Evaluation: Staff Practice Exercise

Source: The Governor's Prevention Partnership (shared with permission).

NOTE: This exercise accompanies the EducationWorld article "Jump-Start Your School's Program Evaluation Part 2," found at http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/school-program-evaluation-exercise.shtml. For more evaluation tips, see Part 1 of the article, found at http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/school-program-evaluation-basics.shtml.

Following are some best practices to follow when creating your school's program evaluation plan. After reading and discussing these recommendations, complete the exercise on page 2. Suggested answers for the exercise appear on page 3.

1. Plan the evaluation in advance and measure at the right time to "catch" good effects. If possible, conduct one or more "baseline" (pretest) measurements as well as several posttest measurements spaced over time.

2. Make it feasible (someone has the time to collect necessary data on an ongoing basis; school data team is in place to help plan and analyze).

3. Measure at multiple levels (individual, small-group, class, grade and population/school levels). Measure at the group level to evaluate efforts that reach smaller groups; measure at the population level to evaluate efforts that reach the entire school. (Measurements at the population level tend to be done less frequently [e.g., annually or every other year] compared to measurements at other levels.)

4. Use multiple informants (students, parents and teachers).

5. Use multiple formal and informal data collection tools (e.g., observation, record review, survey, interview).

6. Track process indicators (reflect upon how implementation is going) so that corrections can be made early in the process.

7. Track both short-term and long-term outcome indicators (assess what immediate and longer-term effects efforts are having on students).

8. Collect subjective, self-reported and qualitative outcome data as well as objective, observable, quantitative outcome data, using instruments with established reliability and validity.

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Here is an example of how a program evaluation (focusing on social-emotional strategies and practices) might look in a school. Keeping in mind the best practices you just read about, use a separate piece of paper to indicate how the school could have improved its efforts—in terms of what was implemented and the way in which these efforts were evaluated. Suggested answers appear on page 3.

Central City High School is experiencing high rates of student infractions, suspensions and bullying. The school plans to implement school-wide behavior management training for staff in January 2012. They also plan to implement school-wide student rules in April 2012.

Given this timing, the school's climate committee made sure to take several baseline (pretest) measures in December 2011 to get a sense of student social-emotional and behavioral well-being:

1. Focus groups that include students from various cliques and levels of social status as well as students representing different grades, genders and races/ethnicities;

2. A school-wide student survey regarding perceptions of school safety, climate and bullying;

3. The rates (for the preceding quarter Sept.-Nov. 2011) of student disciplinary infractions, in-school and out-of-school suspensions and student- or staff-reported bullying incidents by grade;

4. The rate (for the preceding quarter Sept.-Nov. 2011) of student office referrals by teacher name; and

5. The rate (for the preceding quarter Sept.-Nov. 2011) of office referrals by student name.

After December 2011, the school climate committee plans to take further measurements at the following time points in order to assess short-term and long-term outcomes:

1. Student focus groups: June 2012, Dec. 2012 (quarterly or semi-annually if needed thereafter)

2. School-wide survey (Dec 2012 and annually thereafter)

3. Grade-level rates of infractions/suspensions/bullying incidents (January 2012 [still part of baseline] and monthly thereafter through December 2012; monthly or quarterly if needed thereafter)

4. Rates of office referrals by teacher name and rates of office referrals by student name (at the end of each of the following quarters: Jan-Mar 2012 [still part of baseline], April-June 2012, Sept-Nov 2012; quarterly if needed thereafter)

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Suggested Answers

What else could Central City High School have done in terms of implementation to supplement the teacher training and school-wide rules?

- Tier-1 (school-wide, universal) social-emotional curricula to help students increase empathy, resolve conflicts peacefully and embrace diversity.
- Tier-1 implementation of practices to encourage student connectedness and emotional health (e.g., student advisory groups, an informal staff mentor for every student, staff greeting students entering building, peer "clique mixing" opportunities, etc.).
- Tier-1 implementation of student training to encourage "upstander" behavior (support for targets of bullying).
- Provide extra behavior-management implementation support for teachers identified with higher-than-average rates of office referrals.
- Train staff in bullying-specific, "on-the-spot" student intervention.
- Update reporting and investigation mechanisms for bullying; raise awareness of these mechanisms throughout the school community.
- Update / enhance Tier-2 (for moderate-risk students) insight groups and Tier-3 (for higher-risk students) intervention / counseling plans for students identified as having higher-than-average rates of office referrals, infractions, suspensions, and/or bullying incidents.
- Implement new "connectedness-enhancing" protocol for what students are expected to do during detentions or in-school suspensions (self-reflection, spending quality time with a staff member who acts as mentor, restorative justice, community service, etc.).
- Offer student leadership opportunities in terms of helping to set school-wide rules, administer the school-wide survey, train peers on upstander behavior, etc.

What else could the school have done in terms of evaluation?

- Use a teacher training evaluation form at the conclusion of training day(s) to assess teachers' perceived gain in knowledge from the training and their readiness to implement techniques.
- Do informal teacher surveys two months or so following training to assess whether behavior management techniques have been used, and if so, how often they have been used and whether they resulted in success.
- Conduct classroom observations to assess fidelity (sticking to the implementation plan) in terms of behavior management techniques, particularly among teachers identified as having higher-than-average rates of office referrals.
- Gather formal or informal teacher and parent input at baseline (identifying challenges within the school community) and at posttest (what has changed in the school?).
- Informally gather student perspectives regarding awareness of school-wide rules and consistency in enforcement of those rules.