Can School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Be an Evidence-Based Practice?

K. Richard Young
Richard_Young@byu.edu

Paul Caldarella
Paul_Caldarella@byu.edu

Lynnette Christensen
lynette_christensen@byu.edu

Tyler Renshaw

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/facpub

Part of the Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation
Young, K. Richard; Caldarella, Paul; Christensen, Lynnette; and Renshaw, Tyler, "Can School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Be an Evidence-Based Practice?" (2008). Faculty Publications. 1260.
https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/facpub/1260

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
Can School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Be an Evidence-Based Practice?

by Tyler L. Renshaw, K. Richard Young, Paul Caldarella, & Lynnette Christensen
Preface

Format
- Present foundational ideas (25 min.)
- Discussion (25 min.)

Presentation Outline
- The Original Question
- A Possible Problem
- Two Underlying Assumptions
- Our New Question
- A Possible Solution
- Our Conclusions
The Original Question

“Is SWPBS an evidence-based practice (EBP)?”
(e.g., Horner & Sugai, 2007)

Why ask This?

• Scientific evidence increasingly drives policy and practice (e.g., Feurer, Town, & Shavelson, 2002)
• EBP status could influence the funding and adoption of SWPBS—both nationally and internationally!
The Original Question

“Is SWPBS an Evidence-Based Practice?”

Thus . . .
• It's important
• It's logical
• It's convenient

However . . .
• This doesn't mean it's infallible
• There are underlying assumptions that need to be examined
A Possible Problem

We've yet to consider the *assumptions* underlying the question.

**At Least Two Assumptions**
- *SWPBS is a “practice”*
- *As such, it fits within the EBP paradigm*

**Chronologically Appropriate Questions**
- *Is SWPBS a “practice”?*
- *Does SWPBS fit within the EBP Paradigm?*
- *Is SWPBS an EBP yet?*
- *What's needed to get SWPBS to EBP status?*
Two Underlying Assumptions

#1: SWPBS is a “practice.”

What's a “Practice”? 

• There's no authoritative definition in the literature
• Dictionary: *n.* “The actual application or use of an idea, belief, or method as opposed to theories about such [use]”

Implications

• SWPBS is an application of theories, ideas, and methods
• So, yes, it can be termed a “practice”!
Two Underlying Assumptions

#2: As a practice, SWPBS fits within the EBP Paradigm.

What it Take to Be an EBP

• First, meet macro-criteria—to ensure replicability
  – Specificity and consistency across 5 domains: (1) procedures, (2) settings, (3) personnel, (4) populations of interest, and (5) expected outcomes (e.g., Sugai & Horner, 2007)

• Second, meet micro-criteria—to ensure empirical rigor
  – Clinical/counseling psychology (e.g., Chamberless & Hollon, 1998)
  – School psychology (e.g., Kratochwill & Shernoff, 2004)
  – Education (e.g., Odom et al., 2005; What Works Clearinghouse)
Our New Question

Can SWPBS be an EBP?

Necessary Analysis

• Step #1: Breakdown SWPBS into it's fundamental parts
• Step #2: Check congruency of parts with macro-criteria
• If the parts are congruent, then SWPBS can be and EBP (but this doesn't mean it will or must be)

Step #1: Fundamental Parts of SWPBS

• “Guiding elements” (e.g., Sugai & Horner, 2006)
• 3-tiered continuum of support (e.g., Turnbull et al, 2002)
• “Core elements” (Sugai & Horner, 2007)
Our New Question

Can SWPBS be an EBP?

Step #2: Congruency Check With Macro-Criteria

- Procedures—No
- Settings—Yes
- Personnel—Maybe
- Populations—Yes
- Outcomes—No

Implication

- 2 Yes + 2 No + 1 Maybe = SWPBS is not yet an EBP
A Possible Solution

Reconceptualize SWPBS (outside of the EBP Paradigm).

But First, What about Revamping SWPBS to Make it Fit?
- It's fundamental parts are incompatible with the criteria
- Changing the fundamental parts changes the function
- We don't want to change the function!

How Could it be Reconceptualized?
- As more than a practice: a “student-support framework”
- Dictionary: n. “A skeletal structure designed to support or enclose something.”
A Possible Solution

Reconceptualize SWPBS (outside of the EBP Paradigm).

Why's “Student-Support Framework” a Good Fit?

- Contextually flexible—allowing for school differences
- Focuses on *processes over intervention procedures*
- *It isn't the means itself; it's the structure supporting the means*
- *Dictates how EBPs and other practices are used*

- *It employs the EBP paradigm (and thus encompasses it)*
A Possible Solution

Reconceptualize SWPBS (outside of the EBP Paradigm).

Real-Life Implications (Beyond Semantics)

• Possible Setbacks
  – Negating previous literature and current research programs
  – Hampering the funding and adoption of SWPBS

• Possible Benefits
  – Allows for a conceptual focus on improving the framework itself
  – Saves time in the long-run (impossibility of empirical validation)
  – Allows for research to focus on social validity and fidelity
  – Allows for research to focus on validating particular intervention and prevention efforts (potential EBPs) to be used in this framework
Our Conclusions

• SWPBS is not yet an EBP

• SWPBS can be reconceptualized (outside of the EBP paradigm) as a “student-support framework”

• As a framework, it can employ the EBP paradigm

• This reconceptualization may have real-life implications: setbacks and benefits
Discussion

So, what do you think?
POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT INITIATIVE

Tyler Renshaw: trenshaw@education.ucsb.edu
Richard Young: richard_young@byu.edu
Paul Caldarella: paul_caldarella@byu.edu
Lynnette Christensen: lynnette_christensen@byu.edu

236 S 700 E
Provo, UT 84606
(801) 377-0560
Fax (801) 377-0597
byu.pbsi@gmail.com

http://education.byu.edu/pbsi/