



# Promising Practices for Supporting Youth in BC Schools

## Creating Positive School Cultures in Secondary Schools

Ever wonder whether school-wide positive behaviour support (PBS) works in secondary schools in BC? It does! The same ideas and principles are still effective, but what it looks like is a little different. In this issue, we share all about implementing school-wide PBS in secondary schools and the unique challenges inherent in this process. You will learn about how implementing school-wide PBS is different in secondary than in elementary schools, how to identify and reach at-risk secondary school students, and how to get all students involved in shaping the school's vision.

To access previous issues and sign up for future issues, please visit <http://promisingpractices.research.educ.ubc.ca>

Want a simple and effective way to get students involved?

See page 5 for a Student School Climate Survey!

### Inside this issue:

How is PBS Different in Secondary Schools?	2
A. R. MacNeill Secondary School	3
Student Surveys & Spotlight on BC Research	4
Student School Climate Survey	5
Reaching At-Risk Secondary Students	6
Tips for Tomorrow: Identifying At-Risk Students	7



# HOW IS PBS DIFFERENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS?

Based on research by Flannery, Sugai, and Anderson (2009)

The basic principles of PBS are the same no matter the grade level. But because secondary schools are larger (more students and staff), have more administrators, and a stronger focus on academic achievement and graduation, there are some important differences when it comes to PBS implementation.

## MORE INFORMATION:

To find out how to start implementing PBS in your school, see our previous issues:

<http://promisingpractices.research.educ.ubc.ca/>

and visit the BC PBS website:

<http://bcpbs.wordpress.com/>

## TEAMS:

- At the secondary level, PBS teams (committees) are usually larger, and a representative from each department (e.g., English, Science, Art) is suggested, along with at least one administrator.

## EXPECTATIONS:

- The school-wide expectations can be more relevant to older students with more aspirational standards and expectations that reference core values, with more advanced vocabulary, like *Ownership* or *Perseverance*. In addition, many schools also include academic-focused expectations, such as *Be Ready to Learn*.

## STUDENT INVOLVEMENT:

- Involving students in the PBS process is a key component at the secondary level. Most school teams seek advice from student groups (e.g., student council), enlist students to help teach school expectations (such as through student-made videos and posters), and invite students to be PBS team members. Involving students is a great way to keep them excited about and invested in PBS, as well as learn what matters to them. See the next page to see how a secondary school in BC found a unique way to include their students in the PBS process.

### No-Cost Reinforcement Ideas that Can Work for Secondary Students

Listen to music during work time \* Wear a hat for a day \* One free late pass \* Extra minutes at computer \*  
Reserved parking spot \* Complete an assignment with a friend \* Free pass to school dance

# SPOTLIGHT ON A SECONDARY SCHOOL USING PBS: MacNeill POWER

A.R. MacNeill, a secondary school in Richmond, BC, began full implementation of PBS in 2009. They have valued student input in the process from the beginning and continue to make it a high priority.

## CREATION OF BEHAVIOUR EXPECTATIONS MATRIX

- The matrix was developed through the input of students, parents, and staff
- The five expectations decided on were:

Positive attitude, **O**wnership, **W**e not me, **E**xcellence, **R**espect

## STUDENT INPUT WITH SURVEYS

- Students were each given a map of the school, and were asked to indicate where they saw POWER–ful behaviours happening, where they saw people disrespecting others, where they saw disrespect to the facility, and if there was any other information they felt was important to tell staff.
- Using the data from this survey, the PBS team found that the common areas were the biggest student concern and developed a specific action plan, including increased supervision and a “challenge” to the staff to take more walks through these areas.
- See page 5 for a sample student survey that could be used at your school.

## STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

- A group of 60 students meets monthly to give input on POWER
- At a recent meeting, the students were asked to think of things that staff do that made students feel appreciated. Some examples were:
  - Hangout with us before and after classes
  - Use humor in class
  - Acknowledging positive student behavior with POWER cards
  - Treat everyone as equals
  - Make us feel OK to ask questions

## OUTCOMES

The team added some questions to the annual Student Satisfaction Survey to assess the effect of the POWER program on its students. When asked, “In your opinion, in what ways has POWER made a difference at MacNeill,” the majority of Grade 8 to 12 students reported that it was making a positive difference. Some student quotes:

- √ “POWER ... it encourages students to think of their actions prior to doing something.”
- √ “POWER has made a difference at MacNeill, has changed the culture to be more accepting.”

# STUDENT SURVEYS

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SURVEYS

Gathering input through the use of surveys from those who are most affected by school-wide PBS practices—the students—is important, because it can inform school PBS teams and school personnel, including administrators, about the effectiveness of specific PBS strategies or the system as a whole. The answers can then be used to evaluate current practices and make changes to improve their effectiveness or efficiency. Teams can create their own surveys or add specific questions to the provincial Student Satisfaction Survey for even easier data collection.

### Benefits of Using a Student Survey

- Allows school personnel to know what's working and what's not working about their school-wide PBS implementation (e.g., Are students motivated by the current acknowledgement system? Are teachers using it?)
- Reveals student responsiveness to school-wide PBS practices by grade level (e.g., Do all grades feel equally safe? If not, which grades feel more or less safe?)
- Reveals the effect of the program in students (e.g., Do students think through their actions more? Do they feel that their peers show them respect?)
- Increases students' sense of investment in shaping their school's climate (e.g., Do students feel heard? Can students see how their input is used?)
- Enhances communication between students and teachers
- Creates a shared, communal vision for the school

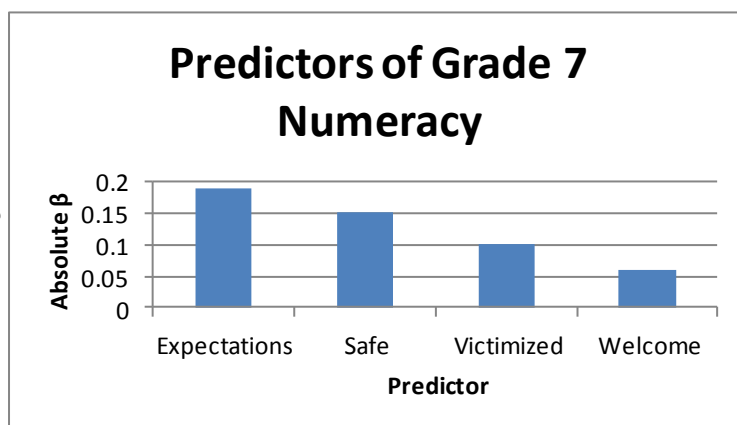
## SPOTLIGHT ON BC RESEARCH

### What Aspects of the School Environment

#### Have the Strongest Impact on Student Achievement in Secondary School?

Carmen Gietz and Kent McIntosh examined predictors of academic achievement for students in all 60 school districts in BC. When accounting for differences among districts and neighbourhood poverty levels, knowing the school's expectations

for behaviour was the strongest predictor of achievement in reading comprehension and numeracy. This effect was stronger than feeling safe, welcome or victimized (and even stronger than the influence of the district or neighbourhood poverty). These results highlight the importance of teaching expectations, even at the secondary level! (from Gietz & McIntosh, under review).



# SAMPLE STUDENT SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEY

## SCHOOL CLIMATE — WE WANT YOUR INPUT

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Please fill out this survey to tell us what you think about behaviour at your school and what may be improved.

Please circle “yes” or “no” for the following statements:

- |          |                                      |
|----------|--------------------------------------|
| YES / NO | I feel safe at school.               |
| YES / NO | I feel safe before school.           |
| YES / NO | I feel safe in the classrooms.       |
| YES / NO | I feel safe during recess and lunch. |
| YES / NO | I feel safe after school.            |

The places in the school I feel the most safe are: \_\_\_\_\_

The places in the school I feel the least safe are: \_\_\_\_\_

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| YES / NO | Students at my school follow the behaviour expectations.     |
| YES / NO | Students at my school treat each other with respect.         |
| YES / NO | Students at my school treat teachers with respect.           |
| YES / NO | Teachers at my school treat students with respect.           |
| YES / NO | Students regularly bully or harass other students at school. |

The biggest problem with behaviour in my school is: \_\_\_\_\_

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| YES / NO | I can tell an adult at my school if I have a problem.                   |
| YES / NO | I feel connected to at least one adult at my school.                    |
| YES / NO | Teachers and staff are clear about what they expect from me.            |
| YES / NO | Teachers and staff acknowledge students for doing things the right way. |

The best part about the school behaviour orientation is was: \_\_\_\_\_

If I could change something about the school behaviour orientation, it would be: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list the behaviour expectations for your school: \_\_\_\_\_

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME! Student School Climate Survey (McIntosh, 2009)

# Reaching At-Risk Secondary Students

To support at-risk students falling behind during the challenging Grade 10 to 11 transition, teachers at **Timberline Secondary** in Campbell River developed the "Top 50" program. The program started in June 2008, when teachers identified 47 Grade 10 students who had failed at least 2 classes and/or missed at least 200 classes that year. The main goal of the program was to re-connect these at-risk students to school and build empathy for them. The program includes five key strategies:

### 1. Connecting with an Adult

Each student is connected with a teacher in the school as a buddy. Teachers make connections with their student buddies to keep them engaged in school and are given \$5 to recognize their buddy in some way (e.g., a small birthday gift, coffee or hot chocolate in the cafeteria, cards home, quick hellos in the hallway).

### 2. Peer Tutoring

Students in the Top 50 receive tutoring from peers after school and during lunch.

### 3. Case Coordination

A Youth Outreach Worker acts as a liaison with parents, students, staff and administration. The Outreach Worker monitors attendance, assignments and missing work, and acts as a "positive nag" to ensure that students are in their classes and completing their work. He also follows up on students in the 45-49% range to work with teachers and counsellors to create a completion package to help students finish key learning outcomes and complete the course.

### 4. Meet and Greet

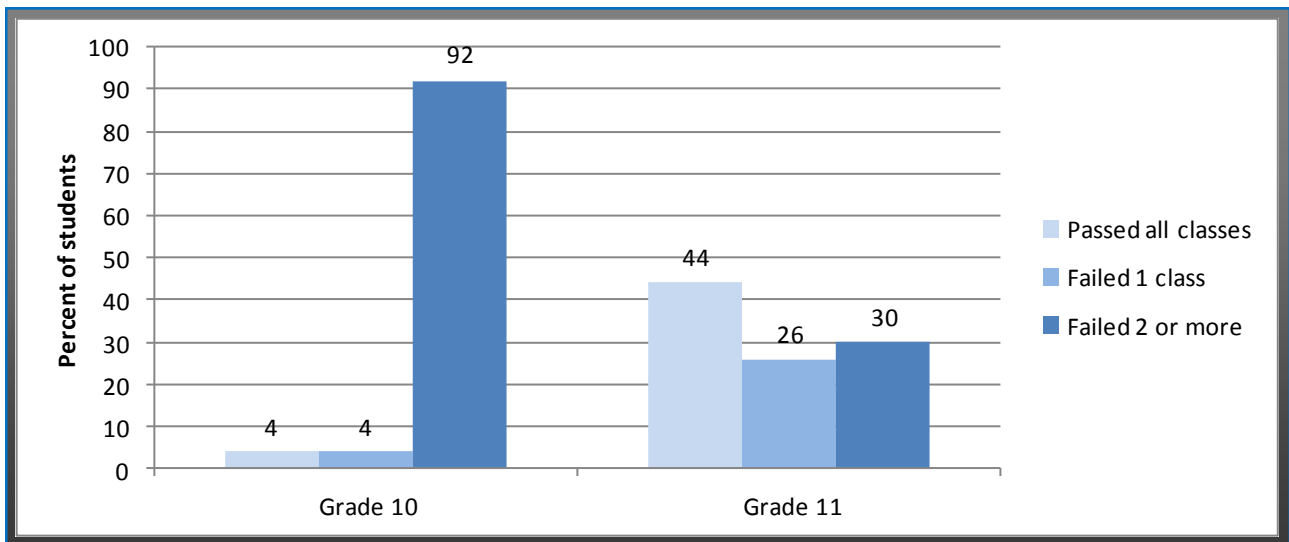
The vision of the *Meet and Greet* is to use a proactive approach to give at risk students a leg up and to help teachers understand the students' challenges and strengths and develop empathy for them. These students carry extra challenges that may make it more difficult for them to have a successful transition to a new learning environment. This change could be a move from one school to another, or as simple as starting a class with a new teacher. It is those first few interactions in the new situation that may help or hinder future success in that class.

### 5. Check in and Connect

*Check in and Connect* tries to improve behavior by connecting students with an adult (or adults) on a daily basis using positive reinforcement. The teacher and student focus on a small number of student behaviours that the student needs to improve in order to be successful in their classes.

### Outcomes

In the first year, the Top 50 students had improved attendance and academic achievement. The graph below shows the academic performance of students when they were selected for the Top 50 program (at the end of Grade 10), and again after a year in the program (at the end of Grade 11). By the end of Grade 11, 70% of the initial group of students would not have met the criteria to qualify for the program! For more information, contact Kevin Harrison or Kim Padington at [timberline@sd72.bc.ca](mailto:timberline@sd72.bc.ca).



## Identifying At-Risk Secondary School Students for Additional Support

With so many teachers and students, sometimes the most challenging aspect of supporting students in secondary schools is finding which students need the most support. Here are two simple strategies for identifying students in need..

### Identify students struggling across classes

Sometimes it can be hard to determine whether a student is simply having difficulties in your class or across a number of classes.

- Step 1: Print a list of all students in the school.
- Step 2: At a staff meeting, each teacher goes through the list and puts a star next to each student for whom they have concerns.
- Step 3: Start conversations about providing more support for students with the most stars.

### Identify students who need connections

One of the strongest predictors of student success in secondary schools is whether

- Step 1: Print a list of all students in the school.
- Step 2: At a staff meeting, each teacher goes through the list and puts a star next to each student with whom they have a connection.
- Step 3: Try to connect students with no stars with an adult mentor. It could be a teacher, counsellor, or custodian—anyone who is available to connect with the student for a short time before and after school.



Volume 2 Issue 2

January 2012

Editors:

Mary Turri, Sophie Ty, Joanna Kelm, and  
Kent McIntosh

The University of British Columbia  
2125 Main Mall  
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z4



**a place of mind**  
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



**Promising Practices** is a publication of the University of British Columbia, with support from the BC Representative for Children and Youth.

Our mission is to provide educators and parents with positive approaches that have been shown to work in creating positive school environments, preventing challenging behaviour and supporting students who are at risk for challenges.

We welcome your comments and ideas for future newsletter articles at:

[promisingpracticesbc@gmail.com](mailto:promisingpracticesbc@gmail.com)

Visit us on the web and sign up for future issues at:

<http://promisingpractices.research.educ.ubc.ca>

To find out more about PBS in BC, including examples from BC schools, free downloadable materials, and info on the Making Connections Conference, visit

<http://bcpbs.wordpress.com/>

## COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

Next time, we will examine research-based strategies to recognize and encourage positive and prosocial behaviour for students, from Kindergarten to Grade 12!