Positive Approach to Student Success: Review of a Program for Reaching Students with Emotional Disturbances

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ABSTRACT--- *A number of schools in the southern portion of Texas, primarily in and around the Houston metropolitan area and Kentucky have started using a program known as Positive Approach to Student Success, or PASS. PASS is a program designed to provide educational services within the mainstream classroom setting for students identified with emotional disturbances and behavior disorders (EBD). The program was founded on the belief that youth benefit behaviorally from educational experiences with their non-handicapped peers and academically from participation in the general curriculum where there is access to a "highly qualified" (NCLB, 2001) instructors (Poole and Caperton-Brown, 2005). The author will begin with an introduction and a brief program description, and conclude with the author's suggestions and concerns regarding this program. This author's primary goal is to review this program in an effort to better understand and explain its goals, objectives, and success.*

Keywords – Positive Approach to Student Success (PASS), behavior disorders, student management, special education
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1. INTRODUCTION

The author investigated the Adaptive Behavior/PASS program within a large, suburban school district which serves students eligible for special education services mandated by federal and state legislation. Students are generally those identified through special education as having behavior problems, either excesses or deficits, which interfere with their ability to complete academic requirements in a general education setting. Before students are placed in the AB/PASS program, every effort is attempted by the district to provide services within general education which would fall under the least restrictive environment (LRE).

James Poole, a former special education teacher designed the program while teaching students identified as having emotional disturbances in 1992. Dr. Hope Caperton-Brown, a psychologist, co-author and his wife, joined him in 1997 in an ongoing improvement and sophistication of the PASS program. The program has grown and expanded since then and is the primary approach to educating student with emotional disturbances in more than 50 school districts in southeast and central Texas and in Kentucky (Poole and Caperton-Brown, 2008).

The works of Albert Bandura (1986) and Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) serve as the theoretical and research basis for inclusive educational settings. Bandura's social cognitive learning theory (1961) and the social-ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner accentuate the environments, such as peer groups, and student behavior (1976). The PASS practice of placing students in inclusive settings is also influenced by research (Dishio, Spracklen, Andrews, and Patterson, 1996) indicating that antisocial groups placed together suffer from an "iatrogenic" effect; that is , these groups tend to become more antisocial when placed in close proximity (Steinberg, 2015).

2. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The program was developed with the hope that it would address the lack of individualization present in many levels system approaches. When programs have protocols that are common to all students, individualization is lost (Scheuermann, Webber, Partin, and Knies, 1994). PASS Program methodology is based on "best practices" in serving youth with Serious Emotional Disturbances (Quinn & McDougal, 1998) and focuses on teaching students to behave appropriately in the general education or resource classrooms with the help of a special education teacher trained as a behavior specialist.

PASS is implemented in three phases whose lengths are determined based on individual student needs and progress. Progression through the phrases stems from a brief period of self-contained instruction where students learn pro-social replacement behaviors to full inclusion with individually determined levels of monitoring and support from the behavior specialist. As the program progresses, students are supported in social skills instruction, counseling as a related service, and ongoing consultation between the behavior specialist, the Licensed Specialist in School Psychology (LSSP), school personnel, and parents.

The PASS program is broken down into three phases – Pre-Placement, Orientation, and Inclusion and Maintenance. Phases vary in duration and intensity based on the needs of the student.

3. PHASE 1: PRE-PLACEMENT

Phase 1 of PASS includes all of the activities that occur prior to student placement in the program. These activities include candidate identification, program referral, formal placement, programming for transferring students, establishment of target behaviors and appropriate interventions, determination of academic and behavior teams, and training of team members.

1. Identification

     Students selected for participation in the PASS program are generally considered "highly at-risk." Their behavioral histories indicate a level of severe behavior that persists despite diligent campus attempts to provide positive behavior supports to remediate the challenging behaviors. In general, these students have been identified as meeting the special education criteria for an Emotional Disturbance (ED). However, it must be noted that not all students identified for ED can be appropriately served within the PASS curriculum or mainstream settings. Some students may require more restrictive settings for their education.

2. Referral

     Referral to the PASS program may come from any number of sources within the student's campus. However, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) committee makes the ultimate decision.

3. Placement

     The student's IEP committee must convene and make the determination to place any student within the PASS program.

4. Programming for Transfer Students

     Transfer students are evaluated, formally or informally, on an individual basis to determine if PASS is an appropriate placement for them. As with non-transfer students, this decision is made by the student's IEP committee.

5. Determination of Target Behaviors and Appropriate Interventions

     Once a student's IEP committee has determined placement in the PASS program is appropriate, two or three target behaviors to be targeted are identified. When selecting which behaviors to focus on, dangerous behaviors are usually chosen first. Extremely disruptive behaviors usually follow. Once the target behaviors have been chosen, replacement behaviors need to be identified.

6. Establishment of Academic and Behavior Teams

     While the authors/creators of the PASS program refer to the convening members as the Academic or Behavior Team, this would prove synonymous with the more common title of the student's IEP team. The function of the IEP team is to facilitate provision of the intervention identified by the student's Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) (Poole and Caperton-Brown, 2005).

7. Training

     Personnel training in the PASS curriculum should occur prior to student placement within the program or the mainstream classroom. Personnel should be trained in the use of the monitoring system, expectations regarding the role of the classroom teacher in managing student behavior, implementation of intervention strategies identified within the student's BIP, crisis response procedures, and any other relevant information necessary for instruction and monitoring of the student's behavioral/emotional status.

4. PHASE 2: ORIENTATION

Orientation to the PASS program, it activities, and lessons occur almost exclusively in the segregated PASS classroom. At this point in the PASS program, emphasis is on behavioral and academic instruction. A primary focus is on facilitating the student's development of appropriate replacement behaviors for the challenging ones that have been interfering with their success in school. Once students understand what is expected of them and the procedures within the PASS program, they are then gradually moved into the general education classrooms.

How quickly students progress through the orientation phase varies as it is an individualized process. Typically, students are resistant to the requirements for behavior change, thus making the first few weeks challenging for both the student and the teacher. However, there are several keys to success during this period: 1) consistency among various adults managing the student's behavior; 2) matter-or-fact, non-emotional approach to the management of student misbehavior; and 3) proactive, educational approach by PASS personnel who maintain their focus on education-in and practice-of the replacement behaviors – not on reacting to misbehavior (Poole and Caperton-Brown, 2005). At this point, the primary goal of the teacher is focused on ascertaining authority and trust.

During the Orientation phase, a schedule of activities should be established and explained to students. Maintaining consistency in following the determined scheduled is critical at this point. It is important for students to have the sense, that regardless of their behavior or the behavior of others, the underlying foundation of the program is sound (Fox,

Benito, & Dunlap, 2002). The goal is to establish a structured and predictable environment within the PASS classroom from the start.

In this phase, the first undertaking is to provide instruction to the students on program expectations for student behavior. Using Randy Sprick's model as delineated in CHAMPs (Sprick, Garrison, & Howard, 1998), the teacher will teach students how expectations regarding their behavior vary depending upon classroom activities as related to when it is permissible to speak, how to request assistance, moving about the room, and what type of student participation is expected and accepted. In addition to the goal of establishing behavioral expectation within the PASS classroom, students also are also taught that every classroom has behavioral expectations and what they are.

The primary goal of the Orientation phase, however, is to provide instruction to the students in pro-social alternative behaviors to those that have interfered with their educational success. The student's BIP will be used as a guide to determine the behaviors targeted for replacement. PASS approaches this instructional process in four steps: 1) working alongside the student to develop a T-chart identifying the positive and negative repercussions of the targeted behavior, 2) the teacher modeling appropriate replacement behaviors, 3) the student role playing the appropriate replacement behavior, and 4) the implementation of a token economy to acknowledge successful displays of the replacement behavior. An example of a T-chart for replacing physically aggressive behavior with appropriate replacement responses is provided below (Poole and Caperton-Brown, 2005). .

Physical Aggression	Alternatives
- hitting, kicking, fighting, or wrestling - biting, scratching, or spitting - throwing things - walking away from arguments	- keep hands and feet to self - walking way from fights - using words instead of action

While individual instruction in appropriate replacement behavior is critical in this segment of the program, group instruction is also key. Teachers should use the Orientation phase in PASS to provide social skills lessons on behaviors of benefit to all PASS students. As a large number of student receiving PASS services have externalizing behaviors, it has been the program creators recommendation that PASS teachers consider *Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum* (Committee for Children, 2002). Second Step is a research based program for the reduction of aggression and promotion of social competence (Committee for Children Homepage, 2012)

While the principle concern of the Orientation phase lies in instruction of replacement behaviors, it is also important that some level of academic instruction is also included. Provision of academic services is a cooperative effort between the student's teacher of record in the general classroom setting and special education teacher facilitating the PASS program. At this point in the program the mainstream teacher's role is to provide modified assignments for the student to complete within the PASS classroom. Assignments are modified in length at this time to accommodate student instruction in behavior. Other modifications would be per each student's IEP. In addition to providing the modified assignments, they should also meet with their assigned students in the PASS classroom. It is important that they begin developing a positive relationship while also discussing behavioral expectations and rules for their respective classes.

5.   PHASE 3: INCLUSION AND MAINTENANCE

The goal of Phase 3, Inclusion and Maintenance is to teach students to progress from frequent external monitoring to self-monitoring. Activities included in phase 3 include and evaluation of student readiness criteria for phase 3, monitoring of student behavior, redirection of inappropriate behaviors, re-orientation, and self-monitoring.

1. Readiness

    Prior to progressing onto phase 3, students must demonstrate a thorough understanding of the PASS procedures. Additionally, students needs to have built a repertoire of replacements behaviors for those previously targeted as unacceptable. These replacement behaviors should assist students in successful inclusion into the mainstream classroom. Affective control needs to be demonstrated at this point.

2. Monitoring Student Behavior

    During this phase, teachers monitor student behavior with tokens utilized in the classroom to identify the 3 levels of acceptable student behavior. The PASS teacher and/or paraprofessional record the level of student behavior with the use of the monitoring tokens at each interval of pre-determined monitoring time.

    - i.e. At what level of acceptable behavior is Gus in his assigned place for each documented 30 minute interval?

Sample Student Data Dec to Jan

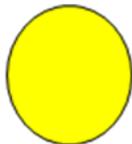| Day / Date	Positive Minutes	Daily Mastery	Weekly Mastery
Week 1			100%
Monday December 27, 2010	N/A	N/A	
Tuesday December 28, 2010	N/A	N/A	
Wednesday December 29, 2010	N/A	N/A	
Thursday December 30, 2010	N/A	N/A	
Friday December 31, 2010	N/A	N/A	
Week 2			96.6%
Monday January 3, 2011	N/A	N/A	
Tuesday January 4, 2011	420	100.0%	
Wednesday January 5, 2011	420	100.0%	
Thursday January 6, 2011	420	100.0%	
Friday January 7, 2011	375	86.3%	
Week 3			96.6%
Monday January 10, 2011	405	93.4%	
Tuesday January 11, 2011	420	100.0%	
Wednesday January 12, 2011	420	100.0%	
Thursday January 13, 2011	420	100.0%	
Friday January 14, 2011	405	90.4%	
Week 4			94.7%
Monday January 17, 2011	N/A	N/A	
Tuesday January 18, 2011	420	100.0%	
Wednesday January 19, 2011	426	98.4%	
Thursday January 20, 2011	363	80.4%	
Friday January 21, 2011	420	100.0%	

(King and Frohoff, 2011)

The data collected will be used to analyze student improvement, trends, and to further functional assessment of the target behaviors. Additionally, the data derived from student monitoring will assist in determining how well a student is making progress towards their IEP goals and objectives. Unacceptable behavior or behavior at the warning level is redirected.
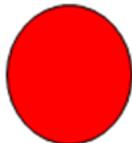
Monitoring Tokens

(green)	Behavior is Acceptable
(yellow)	Warning: Behavior is unacceptable. Student has been given warning and compliance is expected in 1-2
(red)	Behavior is continues to be unacceptable after reasonable period of time to comply.
(blue)	Behavior is continues to be unacceptable after reasonable period of time to comply.

(King & Frohoff, 2011)

It is important to remember the only behaviors monitored are those targeted for intervention in the students BIP. PASS teachers will review student monitoring data weekly to analyze student behavior. Data analysis is then use to guide student reinforcement, intervention, and future monitoring schedules.

3. Redirection of Inappropriate Behaviors.
   - PASS teacher prompts
     o What happened?
       ▪ Then check out the student's story to see how it compares to the teacher's.
     o What were the precursors to the event?
     o How could the student have handled the situation better? What would have been an appropriate replacement behavior?
     o What should/will the student do when they return to the classroom?
     o What will the consequences be for their misbehavior?

4. Re-Orientation
   This portion of Phase 3 is also referred to as the Revolving Door Approach because it occurs when a student is repeatedly displaying an inability to successfully perform their targeted behaviors in a specific setting or they are engaging in a high level of misbehavior that is either a danger to themselves or others (Caperton-Brown & Poole, 2008). At this point the PASS teacher or facilitator will need to provide intensive social n setting. The facilitator must construct structured observations in the problematic setting and then offer specific, constructive feedback while also maintaining academic instruction. The student may return to the inclusive education setting upon successful demonstration of appropriate replacement behaviors and demonstration of affective control.

5. Self-Monitoring
   Upon demonstrating prolonged success on targeted behaviors and with no additional misbehaviors significantly impeding academic success, a student moves into self-monitoring. Prolonged demonstration of success is defined as one semester to one year. At this point the student and PASS facilitator each use monitoring forms to assess progress on the targeted behavior. The student now participates in conducting their own behavior analysis alongside their PASS facilitator. A student will be dismissed from PASS upon demonstration of a prolonged period of success on their targeted BIP behaviors and there are no other misbehaviors identified as notably interfering with their academic success (Caperton-Brown & Poole, 2008).

6. AFTER CARE: PASS OUT

A multi-step model provides for continued support for behavior maintenance for PASS graduates (Caperton-Brown & Poole, 2008). At this stage, successful PASS graduates serve as peer mentors to incoming PASS students, with the PASS facilitator providing supervision.

7. EVALUATION, COMMENTS, AND CONCERN

Upon observing, utilizing, and researching PASS in multiple settings, with different age groups of students, and numerous teachers, one can reasonable draw several conclusions regarding the program's usefulness, appropriateness, and with which level(s) of students the program works most successfully. The most critical element towards ensuring student success centers on tailoring the program to each individual student's specific needs. This should be properly documented in their IEP, BIP, and reevaluated and modified as necessary. PASS is not a one size fits all program, rather it strives to meet each student's distinct needs.

Administrators need to take the time to provide proper training for PASS facilitators and aides responsible for implementing the program, as well as partake in the training they are offered. Founders James Poole and Hope Caperton-Brown personally provide this training in an effort to maintain the integrity of the program. The training was well paced, personalized based on district and student needs, and extremely thorough. Training consisted of one week (the author could not confirm the actual training costs), the thoroughness proved worthwhile in preparing educators for proper implementation of the program. Additionally, both Poole and Caperton-Brown provide consulting services as needed, making themselves personally accessible to districts, administrators, and teachers.

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