

Findings from the first phase of the evaluation of PB4L School-Wide

This summary outlines key findings from the first phase of an evaluation of Positive Behaviour for Learning School-Wide (PB4L-SW). This evaluation is being conducted over 2013-2015 by NZCER for the Ministry of Education.

What is PB4L School-Wide?

SW began in New Zealand in 2010. Each year around 100 schools from the primary and secondary sector join SW. SW has three tiers. During Tier 1 schools put in place a core set of behaviour support systems and practices designed to be used consistently by all to encourage positive behaviour (see box below). Each school forms a team to implement SW in a way that is collaborative, data-driven, and problem-solving.

The core features of PB4L School-Wide Tier 1*

1. **The school principal provides support and promotes participation and ownership.** The principal works to get at least 80% buy-in from staff before joining SW. A representative team which includes a school coach and team leader, and parent and community members, is formed to lead consultation, decision making, and implementation.
2. **A common purpose and approach to discipline** is developed in collaboration with the school community.
3. **A set of three to five whole-school positive behaviour expectations**, and a matrix which defines what these behaviours look like in different settings, are collaboratively developed and agreed on with staff, students, parents, and whānau.
4. **Behaviour expectations are actively taught** and staff and students promote these behaviours to their peers.
5. **Positive behaviour is reinforced** by systems such as positive teacher attention, praise, and rewards.
6. **Consistent consequences are developed to discourage unwanted behaviour.** Behaviour incidents are classified as minor (addressed by all staff) and major (addressed by senior staff). Behaviour incidents are addressed consistently and fairly and documented through an Office Discipline Referral (ODR) process.
7. **Schools develop data-based decision-making systems** to enable staff to identify and address problem behaviour and contexts. Data are shared with the school community and used to evaluate the effectiveness of SW.

* Adapted from the School-Wide implementation guidelines

Once the core elements of Tier 1 are in place schools can move to Tier 2 (developing targeted interventions for small groups of vulnerable students) and Tier 3 (developing specialised interventions for individuals who need additional support).

To implement the key features of SW, school staff are offered a package of support which includes training days, cluster meetings with local schools, and access to regionally-based SW Practitioners who work with schools.

What did phase 1 of the evaluation involve?

The evaluation of SW focuses on Tier 1 only and involves the 408 schools that joined the initiative from 2010 to 2013. The questions explored in Phase 1 of the evaluation were:

- Are core SW practices being implemented as intended?
- What short-term shifts is SW supporting for students, teachers, schools, and parents and whānau?
- What factors enable or hinder the shifts in schools?
- What does effective support for SW schools look like in a New Zealand context?

Phase 1 of the evaluation mostly took place in Terms 3–4 of 2013.

Sources of data used to inform this summary

Information from SW schools

- Online surveys from 191 school coaches (89 from 2010/11 schools and 102 from 2012/13)
- Online surveys from 181 English and mathematics curriculum leaders (74 from 2010/11 schools and 107 from 2012/13)
- School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET) data from 169 SW schools (SET documents the extent to which seven essential features of SW are in place in a school and consistently understood and used)

Student data

- National data on stand-down, suspension, expulsion, and exclusion rates from SW and non-SW schools
- Office Discipline Referral (ODR) data from 87 SW schools

Information from Ministry of Education personnel: Surveys and interviews with SW Practitioners and Ministry of Education SW practice leaders and managers

A note on data interpretation

This summary mostly focuses on data from schools that joined SW in 2010 or 2011 and therefore had been part of the initiative 2 to 3 years at the time the Phase 1 data was collected. Given this length of time we would expect that staff at these schools would be noticing changes related to SW. Schools that joined SW in 2012 and 2013 were new to the initiative. Therefore data were collected from these schools in order to provide information on schools' initial experiences of implementing SW with the current model of practice, and a baseline for comparison.

There was a relatively high non-response rate to some of the questions in the school coach and curriculum leader surveys, particularly questions at the end of the surveys. One impact of high non-response rates is that the percentages given in this summary are likely to be under-reported. For example, 75% of coaches may have agreed with a statement. Of the remainder, 10% could have disagreed and 15% could be missing data. Given the overall positive trend in most survey responses it is likely that many of the non-respondents might have also agreed with the statement.

Support for SW

The overall picture which emerges from the school surveys is that SW is valued by many schools. Most school coaches (81%) and curriculum leaders (77%) from 2010/11 schools reported that staff supported SW. They thought SW focused on areas important to their school and was flexible enough to fit with their school culture. Most staff from 2012/13 schools also showed relatively high levels of support for the initiative. In general, support for an initiative is one important predictor of its longer-term sustainability.

Is SW being implemented as intended?

Coaches from schools that joined SW in 2010/11 reported that many of the key features of SW were in place at their schools. Data from the curriculum leader survey and the School-Wide Evaluation Tool showed a similar picture. As to be expected, schools that had joined SW in 2012/13 had fewer key features in place. This suggests that SW is following an expected pattern of implementation and change.

The key features of SW that were in place in 2010/11 schools included:

- an actively involved principal
- an effective problem-solving SW school team
- behaviour expectations and consequences that were well-known by students and staff
- an easy and consistently used system for acknowledging and rewarding positive behaviour
- clarity around minor and major behaviour incidents
- an easy and consistently used system for reporting, and processes for using school data to improve school systems and practices.

Practices that were less embedded in 2010/11 schools included:

- processes for including parents and whānau as key partners in SW
- processes for considering SW in relation to priority learners and exploring outcomes for these groups (i.e., Māori students, Pasifika students, and students with special education needs)
- processes to support teachers to teach behaviour expectations
- reporting of data summaries to staff, students, parents, and whānau
- a process for inducting new staff or relievers into SW practices.

What short-term shifts is SW supporting?

The majority of coaches and curriculum leaders from 2010/11 schools thought SW was supporting a wide range of positive changes for their school, and for students and teachers. Coaches tended to describe shifts as a major change, and curriculum leaders, a minor change. Coaches from secondary or intermediate schools tended to report more change to student behaviour, and coaches from primary schools, to school culture and systems.

A snapshot of the main changes for schools

The majority of staff from schools that joined SW in 2010/11 reported that SW had contributed to:

- a more respectful and inclusive school culture (84% of coaches and 62% of curriculum leaders)
- improved approaches to addressing behaviour incidents (83% of coaches and 64% of curriculum leaders)
- improved school safety for staff and students (80% of coaches and 64% of curriculum leaders).

One theme that stood out was improved consistency of practice. For example, most 2010/11 coaches considered SW had supported their school to improve systems for data collection, reporting, and use.

Please describe the three main things that have changed at your school as a result of PB4L-SW
Consistency—in the way we teach social skills, the way we report issues/problems, the way we reinforce positive values. (coach survey)

Expectations of behaviour embedded into everyday conversations. Collection of worthwhile behaviour data and how it can be used leading to next steps. Whole staff awareness of the programme and common language for behaviour. (coach survey)

A snapshot of the main changes for students

The majority of school staff from 2010/11 schools reported that SW had contributed to:

- a decrease behaviour referrals for major incidents (74% of coaches)
- an increase in students' awareness of behaviour expectations (83% of coaches and 74% of curriculum leaders)
- an increase in the value students placed on staff acknowledging and praising positive behaviour (83% of coaches and 70% of curriculum leaders)
- students' ability to self-reflect and manage their behaviour (80% of coaches and 62% of curriculum leaders)
- on-task behaviour and engagement in class (81% of coaches and 61% of curriculum leaders).

Changes for students were more evident in reports from school staff than in student data. Most (68%) secondary/intermediate coaches and 45–55% of primary coaches reported that SW was having a positive impact on the number of stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions, or expulsions at their school. The national data we collected mostly showed a small downward trend or no change in each rate. These trends were happening at both SW and non-SW schools. For a number of

reasons these patterns need to be interpreted with caution. For example, these changes may reflect year by year fluctuations. Further years of data collection are likely to result in more definitive patterns.

Please describe the three main things that have changed at your school as a result of PB4L-SW
Numbers of incidents have decreased. No children outside principal's office/less detentions (coach survey)
Less behaviour problems. Students taking responsibility. Students acting as role models for others by showing positive behaviour. (curriculum leader survey)

A snapshot of the main changes for teachers

We asked the curriculum leaders from 2010/11 schools whether SW had contributed to any changes in their approaches to student behaviour. Those who responded to the survey were in leadership roles in their schools. Therefore we would expect that many would be confident managing student behaviour. Most reported this was the case. However, around half or more reported that SW had increased their confidence in managing behaviour in (59%) and outside (57%) the classroom.

The majority of curriculum leaders also agreed that SW had:

- supported them to see that new behaviours can be taught (78%)
- enabled them to spend less time managing behaviour and more time focused on teaching and learning (62%).

Only relatively small proportions of 2010/11 curriculum leaders did not think SW had resulted in any changes to their approaches to behaviour (15%) or did not support their school's approach to SW (11%).

Curriculum leaders' responses to the survey suggested that some teaching practices were less embedded in schools and less likely to have changed. Staff may require more support in these areas. Examples included making space for Māori or Pasifika students, or students with special education needs, to share their worldviews and perspectives when discussing behaviour.

Please describe the three main things that have changed at your school as a result of PB4L-SW
Staff spend less time focused on behaviour management in the classroom and more time on teaching and learning. Behaviour expectations and processes are much more consistently applied school-wide. (curriculum leader survey)

A snapshot of school approaches to working with parents and whānau

In general, making connections with parents and whānau relating to SW is an area of practice where coaches reported fewer changes. About half of 2010/11 SW schools consulted parent and whānau about joining SW (53%) or saw them as key partners in developing SW approaches (45%). Coaches' responses to questions suggest that SW is encouraging some schools to work more collaboratively, however practices vary between schools. These data suggest that developing ways to actively involve parents and whānau in approaches to behaviour is an area for which schools could benefit from more support.

Sustainability and continued support

Most 2010/11 coaches (76%) and curriculum leaders (68%) thought that SW was now embedded in the way their school worked. Half of the coaches thought their school had the structures and processes in place to keep developing Tier 1 of SW in the longer term. However, to maintain momentum with Tier 1, more than half of the coaches wanted continued contact with SW Practitioners, and one-third, other schools.

A different journey for some schools

There was variation between schools in terms of how long it took to put the key features of SW in place, whether staff considered there was consistency of practice across the school, and the types of changes reported.

Analysis of the School-Wide Evaluation Tool data showed that SW was faster to implement in higher decile schools than lower decile schools. However, although deciles 1–2 schools took longer to implement SW, coaches in these schools reported using more consultative approaches with staff and greater shifts in student outcomes. They also were more likely to consider that SW was embedded in their school.

The SW implementation journey was more complex for secondary and large intermediate schools, and SW was less embedded in these schools. There was a wider gap between SW and existing practices in secondary and intermediate schools compared with primary. Secondary and intermediate schools were less likely to work collaboratively with their community, have practices that supported consistency, and data systems that enabled them to use data to make changes to school systems or practices.

However, a number of secondary and intermediate schools had effectively implemented SW and were reporting shifts in practice and student outcomes. This suggests models of good practice exist and could be shared. These findings also suggest that secondary and intermediate schools could benefit from a tailored support model that reflects the complexities of managing a whole-school cultural shift in a large school.

How could PB4L-SW be improved?

More strategies on how it could work within big multicultural high schools. (coach survey)

Key messages for schools about success factors and enablers

Some practices and processes that schools had in place were more strongly connected with reports of positive change to school and student outcomes. This suggests that these practices could be used by schools to self-review. Schools which reported more change tended to:

- **prioritise working collaboratively** and have realistic timelines for change. Schools that spent time working collaboratively with the whole community (staff, students, and parents and whānau) at the start of the SW journey reported more consistency of practice later on
- **have a SW team with core members who stayed the same over time** and had the needed skills. Key people included the **principal** and a **person who represented the interests of Māori students**. Effective teams were well organised, had administrative support, and made connections with other teams in the school
- **prioritise staff learning** relating to SW by offering staff a range of supports to build consistent practice, e.g., frequent professional learning and consultation sessions, training on school systems, support for teachers to teach behaviour expectations, and a planned process that integrated the teaching of behaviour expectations within classroom programmes
- **make connections between the approaches to behaviour** developed through SW and **approaches to learning**
- **work with other schools** to share ideas and find solutions to challenges, e.g., through cluster meetings
- **have an effective data management system** that gave staff the reports they needed
- **use data** to make changes to school systems and practices
- **frequently reported data summaries** to all members of their school community (staff, students, and parents and whānau)
- **frequently celebrate progress** with SW.

Examples of comments about enablers

As one staff member asked when it was announced we were having a PB4L team meeting: "Aren't we all on that team?" In regular staff meetings the staff is always involved in making decisions about implementation of PB4L strategies both covering non-classroom and classroom settings. Staff or teams have developed their own lesson plans and have shared ideas at meetings. All staff meetings focus on staff making decisions on where to next for PB4L. (coach survey)

School-wide planning, PB4L alive and discussed at staff meetings, school-wide review and analysis of behaviour trends. (curriculum leader survey)

What does effective support look like?

The 2013 SW support model appeared to be effective for the schools that had been part of SW since 2010/11, as well as newer schools that joined in 2012/13. The majority of school coaches agreed they had access to:

- effective professional learning about SW, and useful tools and resources they could adapt
- effective support and communications from SW Practitioners and one-on-one sessions if needed
- useful ideas from school cluster sessions and connections with other schools that assisted in developing approaches.

The findings suggest that SW is assisting schools to develop a problem-solving culture, in their own school and with others in their SW cluster group. External assistance to work through challenges was also important. Schools that had had the same SW Practitioner over time were more likely to report the key features of SW were in place at their school, and positive changes to school practices and student behaviours. One challenge the evaluation identified was that many schools had two or more changes of SW Practitioner since joining SW.

SW was providing SW Practitioners and other Ministry of Education staff with tools and processes that enabled them to work in a data driven and problem-solving way. SW Practitioners reported using a range of problem-solving strategies to support individual schools and particularly large secondary and intermediate schools that had difficulty putting in place some of the core features of SW. Many of these strategies involved working actively alongside school staff to find solutions to the particular challenges experienced by the school.

A shift to regional delivery of SW had assisted regions to build localised problem-solving teams to assist schools to work through any challenges with implementing SW and offer support that was tailored to the schools in a region. One example of tailoring was the development of booster sessions or workshops for groups of schools on areas of challenge such as making effective use of Student Management Systems to collect and report student behaviour data.

Key messages about next steps in maintaining an effective support model

Although the shift to regional delivery had better enabled Ministry of Education staff to provide tailored support to schools, this shift had also created concerns about “drift” or difference in practices between regions and a need for stronger networks between regions. To ensure the workforce could provide the support schools required, national and regional Ministry of Education staff identified the need to:

- strengthen the workforce model so that it retained skilled SW Practitioners and included roles that matched different types of expertise
- ensure the training and support offered to SW Practitioners built capacity and fitted with international good practice
- develop processes to moderate practice between regions and identify and share examples of good practice in working with schools.

Key messages about next steps in supporting schools

To provide a stronger support model for schools, national and regional Ministry of Education staff identified the need to:

- better align school training sessions with good practice professional learning and development approaches and existing New Zealand-based knowledge about effective pedagogy
- maintain some form of support for existing SW schools as new schools came on board
- make stronger connections with other people working in schools to support coherence
- increase the focus on identifying and sharing examples of good practice from schools.

The information collected through Phase 1 of this evaluation identified a number of areas in which existing knowledge in the system could be drawn on to strengthen practice for schools and support positive outcomes to be more consistently reported. These areas include building a stronger focus on:

- system-wide and local ways to support schools with data reporting and use
- support models specifically tailored to secondary and large intermediate schools
- models that show schools effective ways of working collaboratively with students and parents and whānau
- approaches to supporting teachers to teach and model behaviour expectations
- approaches that include the perspectives and needs of priority learners within SW
- approaches which align SW and decision-making processes for stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions, and expulsions in ways that keep students at school.

Final comments

These initial findings from Phase 1 of the evaluation of SW suggest the initiative is well-regarded and is supporting the participating schools to strengthen their approaches in ways that are leading to positive change. A number of short-term changes are evident for schools that joined SW in 2010 or 2011. The initial time frame suggested for these changes was 1 to 2 years. The data suggest that 1 to 4 years might be more realistic. This gives schools time to work collaboratively and put in place processes that embed change. Extended time frames are likely to be particularly important for large secondary and intermediate schools, where the challenges of creating change are more complex.

The findings also suggest that many of the school and system challenges that have been identified could be addressed by building on the successes, knowledge, and expertise already developed through SW.

These initial findings have suggested trends that will be further explored in the next round of data collection in the second half of 2014.

For more information about the findings from Phase 1 of the evaluation see the full report at: www.educationcounts.govt.nz

Phase 2 of the evaluation is planned for Term 3 and 4 of 2014. For more information about the evaluation of PB4L-SW see: <http://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/pb4l-school-wide-eval>