

# *The Behavior Intervention Support Team (BIST) 2010 Elementary Teacher Survey*

Prepared for  
Ozanam



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# Behavior Intervention Support Team (BIST) 2010 Elementary Teacher Survey

## INTRODUCTION

The Resource Development Institute (RDI) conducted an on-line survey of teachers from elementary schools which had implemented the Behavior Intervention Support Team (BIST) program on a school-wide basis for at least two years. The evaluation data from that elementary teacher survey is presented in this report along with comparison results from several evaluations of the impact of implementing BIST on schools' office disciplinary referral numbers.

## PROGRAM

In traditional school punishment-based discipline models, educators unintentionally and systemically withdraw relationships from students and families via office referrals and suspensions. The experience of handling discipline with punishment practices often creates adversarial relationships and mistrust that linger well beyond a particular incident (Scott & Kolbe, 2010). Traditional punishment models of school discipline historically suspend and exclude disproportionate numbers of culturally, ethnically, linguistically, and socio-economically diverse students (Drakeford, 2004), exacerbating the achievement gap and changing the life trajectory of these students. For these and other high-need students, it is difficult to have access to the promise of education when the message of traditional discipline is mistrust.

In addition, this common practice reinforces traditional hierarchies of authority. An unintended message is that teachers need to give up their power to the administration to "fix" a student. BIST professional development counters these traditional hierarchies of authority through the transformation of the school culture to shared responsibility for student behavior.

Through shared responsibility (the student, the teacher, the administrator, and the family) the polarization that typifies traditional school discipline dissipates. BIST teaches the power of partnership to change student behavior (Scott & Kolbe, 2010).

Programs directed at positively altering the school and classroom environment seek to reduce or eliminate problem behaviors by changing the overall context in which they occur. Such programs are closely linked to social organization theory, and work from the premise that all aspects of school life can affect violence and substance abuse (Sherman et al., 1998). According to Gottfredson (1998), programs aimed at clarifying and communicating norms about behaviors are effective ways to reduce crime, delinquency, and substance abuse. Instructional approaches that combine social and thinking skills have been shown to be effective in enhancing students' abilities, attitudes, and behaviors inconsistent with substance abuse and other kinds of delinquent behavior (Northeast Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies, 1999). Programs directed at classroom organization, management, and instructional strategies attempt to enhance the protective factors that promote opportunities for active participation in learning, skills to establish positive social relationships, and bonding to school and pro-social peers (OJJDP, 2008).

The Behavior Intervention Support Team (BIST) program is well-grounded in behavioral theory (Anderson & Kincaid, 2005) and combines strengths-based and resiliency principles (Benard, 2004) within the context of the ecological, person-in-environment model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). BIST strategies are person-centered (Rogers, 1986) and based on the core conditions of congruence, empathy and unconditional positive regard (Boulden, 2010).

The Behavior Intervention Support Team (BIST) model simultaneously engages school administrators, teachers, parents, and students in a proactive/preventative, multi-level, problem-solving school discipline plan designed to teach social and behavioral skills, enhancing student

academic and social growth (Boulden, 2010). BIST parallels other proactive discipline models by establishing universal prevention elements such as: clarifying expectations for faculty members, establishing clear and consistent rules, teaching expectations to all students, enhancing all students' social and problem-solving skills, affording them the opportunity to practice expectations, and reinforcing appropriate behavior (Sugai, Sprague, Horner, and Walker, 2000).

BIST teachers understand that teaching behavioral life skills is a simultaneous act with teaching academic content and skills. The dualistic thinking of academic before behavior or behavior before academic limits the growth of teachers and students. Effective educators use the synergistic relationship between academics and behavior to empower themselves and their students to surpass minimal standards (Scott & Kolbe, 2010).

## EVALUATION

Multiple evaluations have been conducted on implementing the BIST program on a school-wide basis using the number of office discipline referrals (ODR's) issued each academic year as the primary dependent measure for the evaluation. These evaluations were based on early research which indicated that natural resources such as the number of office discipline referrals were an efficient evaluation measure of school climate and the functioning of the school-wide discipline system (Irvin, Horner, Ingram, Todd, Sugai, Sampson, & Boland, 2006; Irvin, Tobin, Sprague, Sugai, & Vincent, 2004). See Table 1 below for a summary of evaluation results, where the number of ODR's in the final year of each evaluation is compared to the number of ODR's in the year prior to implementation in four elementary schools that implemented BIST on a school-wide basis.

**Table 1: Summary of Evaluation Results**

Grade Level	City Size	Number Yrs Evaluated	ODR's per 100 students Prior to BIST	ODR's per 100 students last year of Evaluation	Percent Change in ODR's per 100 students from prior to BIST to last year of Evaluation
<b>Elementary 1 (K-5)</b>	<b>Less than 250,000</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-97.9%</b>
<b>Elementary 2 (K-5)</b>	<b>Less than 250,000</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>- 90.3%</b>
<b>Elementary 3 (K-5)</b>	<b>Less than 250,000</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>- 85.4%</b>
<b>Elementary 4 (K-5)</b>	<b>Less than 450,000</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>- 89.2%</b>
<b>Elementary 5 (K-5)</b>	<b>Less than 450,000</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>- 88.3%</b>

The results of these evaluations have revealed consistent and substantial reductions in the number of ODR's in elementary schools situated in a variety of different cities and states. The overall results suggest that the positive effects on the school climate from implementing the BIST model on a school-wide basis appear to be cumulative and sustained over multiple academic years (Boulden, 2009a, 2009b, 2010a, 2010b).

A common limitation of these evaluations is that measuring ODR's has been recognized as an appropriate measure of school climate and the overall functioning of a school-wide discipline system, but does not provide specific evidence distinguishing whether the change is reflected in teacher behavior, student behavior, or both. Using ODR's as a primary measure is not as precise as data generated from direct classroom observations and alone cannot be considered a thoroughly valid measure for problem student behavior. Thus, the reduction in ODR's may reflect a change in the way teachers manage their classrooms and/or a change in the actual behavior of students.

In response to the limitations of the evaluations above, this evaluation focused on collecting teachers perceptions, based on their direct classroom observations, of how implementing the BIST program had impacted both student behavior and their own behavior as

teachers. Teacher perceptions have been used as a measure of student behavior in multiple studies over the years (i.e., Liljequist & Renk, 2007; Marsh, Williams, & McGee, 2009; Mitchell, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2010; Thompson & Webber, 2010). Research has also shown that teacher self-reports are valid measures of their own practice in the classroom (Clunies-Ross, Little, & Kienhuis, 2008).

## METHODOLOGY

RDI evaluators worked with Ozanam BIST staff to develop an online survey to collect the teacher perceptions on how implementing the BIST program on a school-wide basis has impacted both student behavior, and teacher behavior. Sixty-one (61) teachers completed the online survey, representing eleven (11) elementary schools, in three states, with school-wide BIST programs which had been implemented for at least two years.

## RESULTS

### Change in Teacher Behavior:

*Provide more orderly instructional environment to students:*

Teachers were asked to rate the statement “*With the incorporation of the BIST model, I am able to provide a more orderly instructional environment to my students*” on a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree ... 5 = Strongly Agree). A summary of their responses is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Provide a more orderly instructional environment**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Number Mean
With the incorporation of the BIST model, I am able to provide a more orderly instructional environment to my students.	-	5 (8.5%)	6 (10.2%)	19 (32.2%)	29 (49.2%)	59 4.22
Mean calculated on a 5-point scale (1=Strongly disagree ... 5=Strongly Agree)						

A full 81.4% of the teachers indicated that with the incorporation of the BIST model, they are able to provide a more orderly instructional environment to their students, 10.2% were unsure, and 8.5% disagreed; with an overall mean of 4.22 on a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree ... 5 = Strongly Agree).

*Develop relationships with parents/students:*

Teachers were asked to rate the statement “*The BIST model has positively impacted the way I develop relationships with parents/students*” on a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree ... 5 = Strongly Agree). A summary of their responses is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Teacher relationships with parents/students**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Number Mean
The BIST model has positively impacted the way I develop relationships with parents/students.	1 (1.7%)	2 (3.4%)	8 (13.6%)	12 (20.3%)	36 (61.0%)	59 4.36
Mean calculated on a 5-point scale (1=Strongly disagree ... 5=Strongly Agree)						

A full 81.4% of the teachers indicated that the BIST model has positively impacted the way they develop relationships with parents/students, 13.6% were unsure, and 1.7% disagreed; with an overall mean of 4.36 on a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree ... 5 = Strongly Agree).

## Change in Student Behavior:

### *Reduction of student disruptions in the classroom:*

Teachers were asked to rate the statement “*Utilizing the BIST model has reduced the number of student disruptions in the classroom*” on a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree ... 5 = Strongly Agree). A summary of their responses is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Reduction of student disruptions in the classroom**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Number Mean
Utilizing the BIST model has reduced the number of student disruptions in the classroom.	-	7 (11.9%)	9 (15.3%)	15 (25.4%)	28 (47.5%)	59 4.08
Mean calculated on a 5-point scale (1=Strongly disagree ... 5=Strongly Agree)						

Just under three fourths (72.9%) of the teachers indicated that utilizing the BIST model had reduced the number of student disruptions in their classroom, 15.3 % were unsure, and 11.9% disagreed; with an overall mean of 4.08 on a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree ... 5 = Strongly Agree).

### *Reduction in the amount of time spent dealing with student discipline in the classroom:*

Respondent teachers were also asked to rate the statement “*The BIST model has reduced the amount of time spent dealing with student discipline in the classroom*” on a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree ... 5 = Strongly Agree). A summary of their responses is presented in Table 5.

**Table 5: Reduction in time spent dealing with student discipline in the classroom**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Number Mean
The BIST model has reduced the amount of time spent dealing with student discipline in the classroom.	1 (1.7%)	10 (16.7%)	10 (16.7%)	15 (25.0%)	20 (40.0%)	60 3.85
Mean calculated on a 5-point scale (1=Strongly disagree ... 5=Strongly Agree)						

Just under two thirds (65.0%) of the teachers indicated that utilizing the BIST model has reduced the amount of time spent dealing with student discipline in their classroom, 16.7 % were unsure, and 18.4% disagreed; with an overall mean of 3.85 on a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree ... 5 = Strongly Agree).

### Students with difficult problems make positive changes:

Teachers were asked to rate the statement *“With the incorporation of the BIST model by the entire school, I am able to see students with difficult problems make positive changes”* on a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree ... 5 = Strongly Agree). A summary of their responses is presented in Table 6.

**Table 6: Students with difficult problems make positive changes**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Number Mean
With the incorporation of the BIST model by the entire school, I am able to see students with difficult problems make positive changes.	-	5 (8.5%)	14 (23.7%)	22 (37.3%)	18 (30.5%)	59 3.90
Mean calculated on a 5-point scale (1=Strongly disagree ... 5=Strongly Agree)						

Just over two thirds (67.8%) of the teachers indicated they were able to see students with difficult problems make positive changes with the incorporation of the BIST model by the entire school, 23.7 % were unsure, and 8.5% disagreed; with an overall mean of 3.90 on a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree ... 5 = Strongly Agree).

### Correlations between Teacher Behavior and Student Behavior:

#### *Providing a more orderly instructional environment:*

Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated for the relationship between providing a more orderly instructional environment and reduced amount of time spent dealing with student

discipline in the classroom; reduced number of student disruptions in the classroom; and students with difficult problems making positive changes. A summary of the results is presented in Table 8.

**Table 8: Correlation between Providing a more orderly instructional environment and Impact**

Impact	df	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Reduced the amount of time spent dealing with student discipline in the classroom	53	.766	< 0.01
Reduced the number of student disruptions in the classroom	53	.806	< 0.01
Students with difficult problems make positive changes	53	.799	< 0.01

A strong positive correlation was found in each case, indicating a significant linear relationship (at the 99% confidence level) between providing a more orderly instructional environment and each of the student behavior variables.

*Develop relationships with parents/students:*

Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated for the relationship between developing relationships with parents/students and reduced amount of time spent dealing with student discipline in the classroom; reduced number of student disruptions in the classroom; and students with difficult problems making positive changes. A summary of the results is presented in Table 9.

**Table 9: Correlation between Developing relationships with parents/students and Impact**

Impact	df	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Reduced the amount of time spent dealing with student discipline in the classroom	52	.717	< 0.01
Reduced the number of student disruptions in the classroom	52	.747	< 0.01
Students with difficult problems make positive changes	52	.575	< 0.01

A strong positive correlation was found with the first two variables and a moderate correlation was found with the third variable, indicating a significant linear relationship (at the 99% confidence level) between developing relationships with parents/students and each of the student behavior variables.

These results parallel the findings of a meta-analysis which found that positive teacher-student relationships were directly linked to be fewer discipline problems, and were a foundation for all other aspects of classroom management (Marzano, 2003).

## Perceptions of Fidelity and Impact:

### Perceptions of Fidelity:

In addition to the questions described above, respondent teachers were asked to rate the statement “*Faculty/staff consistently utilize each step of the BIST Continuum when responding to student discipline issues*” on a 5-point scale (1 = Almost Never ... 5 = Almost Always). A summary of their responses is presented in Table 7.

**Table 7: Utilize each step of the BIST Continuum**

	Almost Never	About 25% of Time	About 50% of Time	About 75% of Time	Almost Always	Number Mean
Faculty/staff consistently utilize each step of the BIST Continuum when responding to student discipline issues.	1 (1.7%)	3 (5.0%)	13 (21.7%)	25 (41.7%)	18 (30.0%)	60 73.33
Mean calculated on a 5-point scale (1=Strongly disagree ... 5=Strongly Agree)						

Over two thirds (71.7%) of the teachers indicated they felt faculty and staff consistently utilize each step of the BIST Continuum when responding to student discipline issues 75% of the time or more, 21.7 % indicated about 50% of the time, and 6.7% indicated 25% of the time or less; with an overall mean of 73.33% of the time on a 5-point scale (1 = Almost Never ... 5 = Almost Always).

### Correlations between Fidelity and Impact:

Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated for the relationship between the respondents’ perception of the fidelity of utilizing each step of the BIST model and their

perceptions of each of the impact areas described above. A summary of the results is presented in Table 10.

**Table 10: Correlation between Utilizing each step of the BIST Continuum and Impact**

<b>Impact</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>r</b>	<b>p</b>
Provide a more orderly instructional environment to students in classroom	57	.450	< 0.01
Develop relationships with parents/students	56	.431	< 0.01
Reduced the number of student disruptions in the classroom	57	.567	< 0.01
Reduced the amount of time spent dealing with student discipline in the classroom	58	.468	< 0.01
Students with difficult problems make positive changes	57	.461	< 0.01

A moderate positive correlation was found in each case, indicating a significant linear relationship (at the 99% confidence level) between fidelity to using each step of the BIST continuum and each of the variables.

## DISCUSSION

The implementation of effective student discipline practices is a dominant concern of public administrators and educational personnel. Once school-wide behavior support programs have been established, it is critical that their efficacy be demonstrated and maintained long-term. Pat evaluations have revealed a substantial reduction in office discipline referrals (ODR's), indicating that disruptive behaviors were dealt with by the teachers in the classroom resulting in students staying in the learning environment of the classroom more often after implementation of the BIST program compared to the control groups. Serious rule violations which threatened the safety of students or included threats continued to be referred to the office. The overall results suggest that the positive effects from implementing the BIST model on a school-wide scale appear to be cumulative and can be sustained over multiple academic years.

The primary data for those evaluations were the number of student office discipline referrals (ODR's) issued at all grade levels. This measure, of course, is not as precise as data generated from direct classroom observations but reflects the incorporation of natural sources as an index to evaluate the usefulness of school discipline programs. The recording of ODR's in the year prior to the whole-school implementation of the BIST program, did provide ample data from a comparison group for the evaluation.

In response to the limitations of the previous evaluations, this evaluation focused on collecting teachers perceptions, based on their direct classroom observations, of how implementing the BIST program had impacted both student behavior and their own behavior as teachers. The Resource Development Institute (RDI) conducted an on-line survey of teachers from elementary schools which had implemented the Behavior Intervention Support Team (BIST) program on a school-wide basis for at least two years.

The survey data revealed that incorporating the BIST model, impacted teachers ability to provide a more orderly instructional environment to their students. Teachers also indicated that implementing the BIST model had positively impacted the way they develop relationships with both parents and students. Teachers also indicated that utilizing the BIST model had reduced both the number of student disruptions in the classroom; and the amount of time teachers spent dealing with student discipline in the classroom. Finally, teachers indicated that with the incorporation of the BIST model by the entire school, they were able to observe students with difficult problems making positive changes.

While the survey results demonstrated significant correlations at the 99% confidence level between perceptions that teachers in their school utilized each step of the BIST model and the reduced number of student disruptions in the classroom; and the amount of time teachers

spent dealing with student discipline in the classroom; and students with difficult problems making positive changes; but the correlations were considered moderate. Similarly, the correlation between increased ability to develop relationships with parents/students and students with difficult problems making positive changes was significant at the moderate level.

However, there were also significant correlations at the 99% confidence level between teachers providing a more orderly instructional environment to their students and the reduced number of student disruptions in the classroom; and the amount of time teachers spent dealing with student discipline in the classroom; and students with difficult problems making positive changes; and these were strong correlations. The significant correlations between increased ability to develop relationships with parents/students and reduced amount of time spent dealing with student discipline in the classroom; and reduced number of student disruptions in the classroom; were also strong correlations.

The difference in level of correlations may reflect more confidence in the teachers' perceptions of how implementation of the BIST program impacted their own behavior, and any subsequent impact on their students than in their assessment of how well all teachers in their school adhered to the fidelity of the program and the subsequent impact on students. Even with the difference in the level of correlation, both sets of correlations were significant at the 99% confidence level.

### *Limitations*

A limitation of previous evaluation efforts that also exists in this survey is that the aggregate data do not differentiate students who had infrequent discipline problems from those with more high-rate and chronic difficulties. Neither did it differentiate students who were

members of identified at-risk groups based on race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English language proficiency, or disability.

### *Future Evaluations*

It is recommended that evaluations of the BIST program be continue to be conducted in other school districts at the elementary and middle school levels to further determine whether or not similar results will occur in different settings. It is also recommended that additional evaluations be designed and conducted that would facilitate comparative analyses based on at-risk status and chronic versus infrequent discipline problems.

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# Appendix A

## BIST Fidelity Checklist

School name: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

	Almost Never	About 25% of the time	About 50% of the time	About 75% of the time	Almost always
Faculty/staff consistently utilize each step of the BIST Continuum when responding to student discipline issues.					
When processing with the student, faculty/staff consistently connect events to the missing skill and building standard.					
Following a classroom observation, the BIST consultant is able to provide immediate feedback to the classroom teachers.					
Student plans are reviewed regularly and altered if the impact has decreased.					
Faculty/staff utilize early intervention through daily triage and providing one redirect.					
Students are sent home consistently when unable to partner and meet the standard in the office.					
Teacher support team is utilized in a productive manner by staff (i.e.: CARE, SST, etc.)					
Faculty/staff process and hold students accountable by asking students questions instead of telling them the problem.					
Faculty/staff are prevention-based with students (build in visits for exercise, triage, and consider the impact of triage, etc.)					
When there is a problem, staff is able to talk about it in a productive and effective manner.					
Faculty/staff engage in effective communication to facilitate consistent maintenance of the building standard.					
Faculty/staff utilize effective time management to resolve problems and issues.					
Faculty/staff receive adequate support to manage problems and issues.					