

*The Behavior Intervention Support
Team (BIST) 2010 Middle School
Implementation Evaluation Report*

Prepared for
Ozanam



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Behavior Intervention Support Team (BIST) 2010 Middle School Implementation Evaluation Report

INTRODUCTION

The Resource Development Institute (RDI) analyzed evaluation data from a public middle school (grades 6-8) which had implemented the Behavior Intervention Support Team (BIST) program on a school-wide basis. The evaluation data from this middle school is presented in this report along with a comparison to the results of other evaluations of middle and schools elementary which have also implemented school-wide BIST programs.

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).

Two elements of the BIST model make it innovative and unique; and distinguish it from other proactive discipline approaches. Traditional proactive discipline models concentrate much of their focus on providing universal elements with secondary attention paid to the high-need students who require additional intervention (secondary and tertiary levels of need). BIST teaches universal elements like the traditional models, but concentrate much of their focus on providing teachers and administrators with enhanced skills and tools to work with the secondary and tertiary level needs of students in the multi-level approach. These skills match, through an array of progressively intense levels of assessment and interventions, exhibited skill deficits and identified needs for high-risk, high-need students who do not respond to universal elements such as “reward” or “praise” alone (thus requiring more teaching and practice to develop social / behavioral skills). In addition, because the BIST model is typically implemented on a school-wide basis, it requires teachers and administrators to have the skills necessary to engage issues at all levels, in multiple modalities, and in a collaborative way (Gutierrez, Yeakly, & Ortega, 2000).

A second innovative and foundational element of BIST distinguishing it from other proactive discipline plans is the establishment of an ongoing partnership between school

teachers, administrators and BIST consultant specialists who meet regularly with school personnel in a collaborative problem-solving capacity, in support of ongoing professional development. This ongoing consultation and coaching allows teachers and administrators to practice their new skills as they make the often-required paradigm shift from a punishment-based philosophy of discipline to the teaching and protecting philosophy of BIST (Boulden, 2010).

Teaching and protecting must be learned through on-going professional development centered on a philosophy of G.R.A.C.E. - Giving Responsibility and Accountability (Osterhaus & Lowe, 1997). It requires overt leadership, vision, and adult willingness to be coachable. Continual coaching and collaboration are essential to a successful philosophical change from punishment to teaching and protecting. This philosophical change is a cultural shift within both the individual and the school and cannot be achieved by merely a few days of professional development (Osterhaus & Lowe, 1997).

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).

METHODOLOGY

A secondary analysis of office referral data collected prior to, and during the evaluation period was conducted. In addition, the evaluator conducted interviews with school administration, and BIST consultants.

Participants

The evaluation included a public middle school (grades 6-8) located in a Midwestern city having a population of less than 250,000. The participants included the entire student, teacher, and administrative population of the school. Since all teachers and administrators received the BIST training, and the entire student body was involved in the implementation of the BIST program, a comparison group of students, teachers, and administrators from the year prior to implementation was used as a comparison group for the school.

The participating school implemented the BIST Model in the 2006-2007 academic year. The overall enrollment of the school averaged slightly more than 246 students during each year in the evaluation period. The school is a Title 1 school with 81.53% of their students qualifying for free/reduced lunch. Only 2.6% of the students are English Language Learners (see Table 1).

Table 1: Student Participants by Academic Year

| | 2006-2007 | 2007-2008 | 2008-2009 | 2009-2010 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------|
| White, non-Hispanic | 422 (71.6%) | 380 (69.0%) | 393 (61.5%) | NA |
| Black, non-Hispanic | 82 (13.9%) | 90 (16.3%) | 93 (21.0%) | NA |
| Hispanic | 45 (7.6%) | 49 (8.9%) | 53 (7.0%) | NA |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 29 (4.9%) | 22 (4.0%) | 19 (4.3%) | NA |
| American Indian /Alaska Native | 11 (1.9%) | 10 (1.8%) | 11 (1.9%) | NA |
| Free and Reduced Lunch | 258 (43.80%) | 275 (49.91%) | 299 (52.55%) | NA |
| English Language Learners | 0 (0.0%) | 79 (14.34%) | 41 (7.21%) | NA |
| Total | 589 | 551 | 569 | NA |

Dependent Measures

The primary dependent measure for the evaluation was the number of office discipline referrals (ODR's) issued each academic year. Office discipline referrals were issued by teachers for disruptive behaviors which rose to the level of being a safety issue or included threats or

violence. Research has shown that natural resources such as the number of office discipline referrals is 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).

IMPLEMENTATION

The BIST program was initiated at the request of teachers and administrators who were concerned about improving student discipline, setting policies that would become standard practice within the school community, and using strategies that had a positive focus. The primary objective was to reduce the number of school discipline referrals by creating a positive learning environment that encouraged and reinforced academic participation, adherence to school rules, and display of pro-social skills among the student population.

During the 2006-2007 academic year school administration adopted a school-wide student discipline plan using the BIST model. Faculty and administration were trained in the BIST model, and attended a week-long workshop during the summer prior to implementation. Through the course of the evaluation period, all new administration and faculty/staff members also completed the BIST training which was provided in subsequent years either during the summer, or during the first weeks of the fall semester (when someone was hired after the summer workshops had been completed). Administration and faculty members who had previously attended a BIST workshop were also given the opportunity to attend ongoing workshops to enhance their understanding and skills in the implementation of the BIST model.

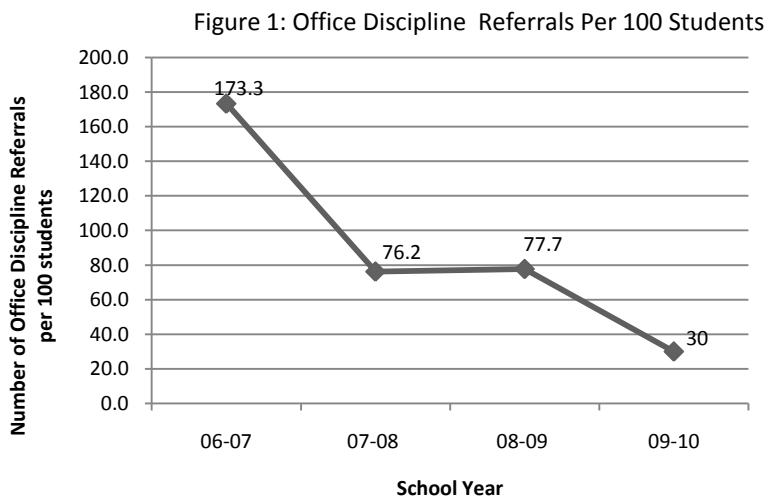
Faculty and administration used a variety of program tracking data to determine when a student reached the threshold calling for an individual plan, monitor the student's progress in

developing the identified deficit skills, and develop solutions for situations requiring more intensive interventions. Faculty and administration met once a month with an outside BIST consultant as part of the professional development in the use of the BIST methodologies and to further ensure adherence to fidelity to the program. See appendix A for a copy of the fidelity measures BIST consultants used in their discussions with faculty and administration.

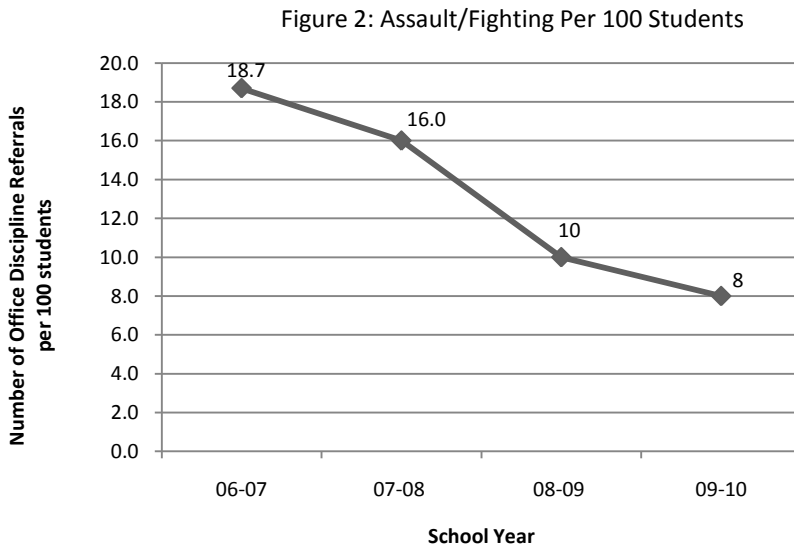
RESULTS

Office Discipline Referrals

Raw numbers for office discipline referrals (ODR's) were converted to number per one hundred students in preparing results to accommodate for fluctuating student enrollment from year to year. Figure 1 presents the numbers of ODR's recorded (per 100 students) for the comparison group (the year prior to the implementation of the BIST program), and the three academic years of program implementation. The data document a decrease in ODR's in each of the three years that the school-wide program was in effect.

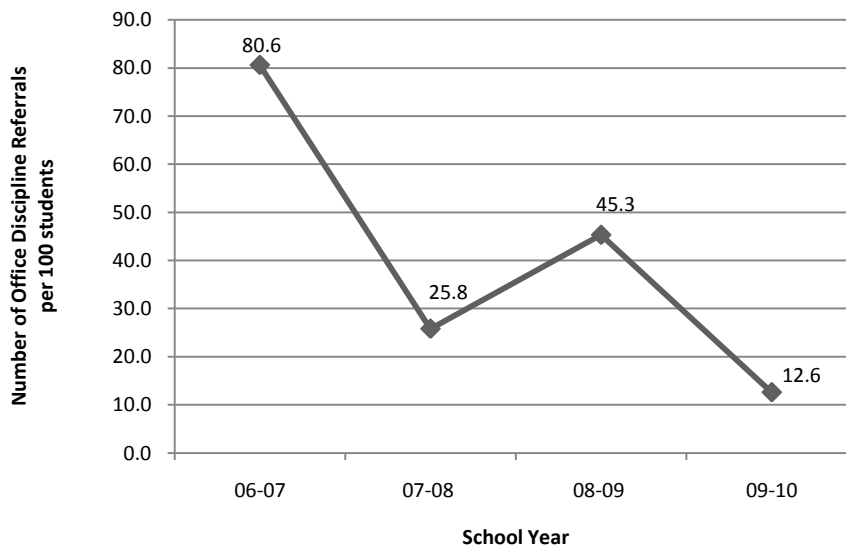


The number of ODR's in the first year of implementation was 56.0% lower than the comparison group (the year prior to implementing the model). The ODR's increased slightly (2.0%) between the first year of implementation and the second year, but dropped 61.4% between the second and third year of implementation. The number of ODR's in the third year of using the BIST model was down to 17.3% of the comparison group (year prior to implementation) which represented a 82.7% reduction in ODR's between the comparison year and third year of implementation.



The number of assaults and fighting decreased each year of the evaluation. The number of assaults and fights in the third year of using the BIST model was less than half (42.8%) of the comparison group (year prior to implementation) which represented a 57.2% reduction in assaults and fights between the comparison year and third year of implementation.

Figure 3: Number Classroom Incidents Per 100 Students



The number of classroom incidents in the first year of implementation was 68.0% lower than the comparison group (the year prior to implementing the model). Classroom incidents increased 75.6% between the first year of implementation and the second year, before decreasing 72.8% between the second and third year of implementation. The number of classroom incidents in the third year of using the BIST model was down to 15.6% of the comparison group (year prior to implementation) which represented a 84.4% reduction in classroom incidents between the comparison year and third year of implementation.

Comparison to previous evaluation

The results of this evaluation mirror the results of other evaluations of middle and elementary schools which have also implemented school-wide BIST programs. See Table 2 for a summary of evaluation results.

Table 2: Comparison 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 |
|-----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Middle School (6-8) | Less than 250,000 | 3 | 173 | 30 | -82.7% |
| Middle School 1 (6-8) | Less than 250,000 | 5 | 216 | 72 | - 66.6% |
| Elementary 1 (K-5) | Less than 250,000 | 4 | 48 | 1 | -97.9% |
| Elementary 2 (K-5) | Less than 250,000 | 4 | 113 | 11 | - 90.3% |
| Elementary 3 (K-5) | Less than 250,000 | 2 | 96 | 14 | - 85.4% |
| Elementary 4 (K-5) | Less than 450,000 | 7 | 111 | 12 | - 89.2% |

The results of the evaluation of another middle school (grades 6-8) showed a 66.6% reduction in ODR's in a 5-year evaluation (Boulden & Twillman, 2008). The results of the evaluations of the elementary schools (grades K-5) included: a 97.9% reduction in ODR's in a 4-year evaluation (Boulden, 2010); a 90.3% reduction in ODR's in a 4-year evaluation (Boulden, 2009a); an 85.4% reduction in ODR's in a 2-year evaluation (Boulden, 2009a); and an 89.2% reduction in ODR's in a 7-year evaluation (Boulden, 2009b).

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. The evaluation described in this report involved a three-year period of implementation at a public middle school (grades 6-8); located in a Midwestern city having a population of less than 250,000.

The evaluation revealed a substantial reduction in office discipline referrals (ODR's). 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 this evaluation 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, provided ample data from the comparison group for the evaluation.

No data was collected or analyzed in this evaluation that would support any causal relationship between implementing the BIST model and the subsequent academic performance of the school's students. But, qualitative data from a previous evaluation indicated that the BIST program had contributed to an atmosphere that supported student learning and the academic success of the students (Boulden & Twillman, 2008). While academic performance is dependent on a multitude of factors and was not the focus of this evaluation, it can be noted that the core principles of the BIST model compliment the Professional Learning Community model which the school implemented simultaneously with the BIST model. Figure 4 and Table 3 below present the Overall Performance Percentages for all students— meeting or exceeding Federal standards in 8th grade in reading, writing, and math during the academic years of the evaluation.

Figure 4: Performance % for all students– Meeting or exceeding standards in 8th grade.

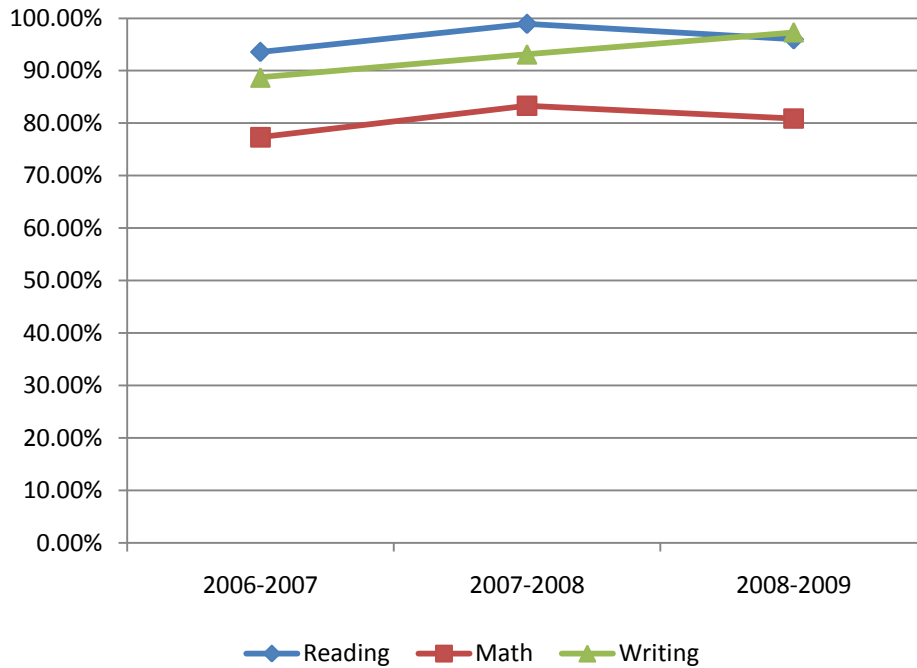


Table 3: Performance % for all students– Meeting or exceeding standards in 8th grade

| | 2006-2007 | 2007-2008 | 2008-2009 | Change |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------|
| 8 th Grade Reading | 93.56% | 98.92% | 95.98% | + 2.42 |
| 8 th Grade Math | 77.32% | 83.33% | 80.90% | + 3.58 |
| 8 th Grade Writing | 88.72% | 93.12% | 97.31% | + 8.59 |
| 2008-2009 State of the Schools Report | | | | |

While no causal relationship can be implied between BIST and the improvement in academic performance results, it is worth noting that these performance trends have been duplicated in other settings where BIST is implemented (see Table 4 below).

Table 4: Impact of BIST in other settings

| 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 | Change in % of students meeting or exceeding Reading standards in 8 th Grade | Change in % of students meeting or exceeding Math standards in 8 th Grade | Change in % of students meeting or exceeding Writing standards in 8 th Grade |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------|--|--|--|---|--|
| Middle School (6-8) | Less than 250,000 | 3 | 173 | 30 | -82.7% | +2.42 | +3.58 | +8.59 |
| Middle School 1 (6-8) | Less than 250,000 | 5 | 216 | 72 | - 66.6% | +25.04% | +5.01% | +24.37% |
| | | | | | | Reading 3rd Grade | Math 3rd Grade | Writing 4th Grade |
| Elementary 1 (K-5) | Less than 250,000 | 4 | 113 | 11 | - 90.3% | +5.25% | +26.64% | +19.86% |
| Elementary 2 (K-5) | Less than 250,000 | 2 | 96 | 14 | - 85.4% | +5.65% | +12.74% | +9.68% |
| | | | | | | Reading 4th Grade | Math 4th Grade | Writing 4th Grade |
| Elementary 3 (K-5) | Less than 250,000 | 4 | 48 | 1 | -97.9% | +17.37 | +18.18 | +15.34 |
| | | | | | | Communication arts 3rd Grade | Math 4th Grade | |
| Elementary 4 (K-5) | Less than 450,000 | 7 | 111 | 12 | - 89.2% | +19.8% | +33.6% | |

Limitations

Using ODR's as a primary measure 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. It should also be noted that the reliability of recording student office discipline referrals and the procedural fidelity of teachers implementing the behavior support program were not systematically assessed beyond being one of the routine topics discussed during meeting with BIST consultants. These shortcomings stemmed from this evaluation being conducted retrospectively.

Another limitation on the evaluation 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 additional evaluations of the BIST program 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 a 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. | | | | | |