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PBIS in Georgia Schools: Comparing the Discipline Data of School Systems

In order to address the high rates of exclusionary disciplinary practices used in Georgia K–12 schools, including the disproportionate rates of suspension of students with disabilities, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), Division for Special Education Services, established the Positive Behavior Support Unit in 2007. This unit offered professional learning and technical assistance in tiered behavioral supports. In the first year, most professional development and technical support was on assisting adult Student Support Teams (SST) in offering interventions for students with behavioral issues. The PBIS unit immediately learned that many schools lacked a continuum of behavioral interventions and defined procedures for data review or analysis to detect or resolve issues before they escalated to the point where they required punitive measures like punishment.

A State Leadership Team was established, and a state action plan was created. Dr. Sugai taught employees of the GaDOE Positive Behavior Support Unit to meet the requirements of a PBIS. Forty-seven school teams were trained over the summer of 2008, including all of the Lee County and Emanuel County schools that volunteered to act as the pilot districts. Districts and their participating schools gradually increased their voluntary participation over time until it became clear that the coaching network in place at the time was not enough to expand support to those requesting it while still maintaining fidelity among the implementing schools.

This study was created to indicate if those Georgia counties that were utilizing PBIS would provide significant discipline data from those Georgia counties that were not using PBIS. Data collection was done through the website “Governor’s Office of Student Achievement”. The website allows users to search out discipline for counties and schools in Georgia.

Discipline data from each Georgia county was accessed from 2018. This data was derived by the PBIS map from 2019 which indicated the counties that were using PBIS and those counties that were not. The data was broken down into three categories ISS, OSS, or expulsion. The data provided included all the district's discipline data for ISS, OSS, or expulsion. The study’s findings were used to conclude whether there was a difference in the amount of ISS, OSS, or expulsion.

The FY19 Active PBIS Districts Map identified Georgia counties for this study. Systems and schools that were identified outside of the county map were not included in the study. There were 124 counties utilizing PBIS and 58 counties that were not. Of the counties that were using PBIS there were 1,461,093 students and 254,188 students in counties that were not using PBIS enrolled in these counties.

Methods

A t-test was utilized for this study. It measured the association between two groups. The first group (active) are those counties using PBIS in schools. The second group are those counties (never participated, inactive, or projected) that were not using PBIS at the time.

This data analyzed existing data within the website “Governor’s Office of Student Achievement” K-12 Student Discipline Dashboard.

The discipline data collected were total incidents, percentage of incidents resulting in out of school suspension (OSS), in school suspension (ISS), and percentage of incidents resulting in school expulsion between the two groups, establishing which, if any, group had a higher percentage of ISS, OSS or expulsion.

Results

Overall, the results from the data indicate there is no significant difference between those Georgia counties using PBIS and those counties that are not.

In School Suspension

The t -value was 0.98712. The p -value was .368915. The result is *not* significant at $p < .05$.

Out of School Suspension

The t -value was 1.14496. The p -value was .304057. The result is *not* significant at $p < .05$.

Expulsion

The t -value was 0.19739. The p -value was .851299. The result is *not* significant at $p < .05$.

Conclusion

While there is no significant difference regarding the use of PBIS in the areas of ISS, OSS, and expulsion for students in each of these Georgia counties further research could be conducted by drilling down on gender, race, and students with disabilities within these three areas to find if there is a significant difference in the areas of ISS, OSS, and expulsion.