

# Developing Safe, Supportive, and Effective Schools

## Facilitating Student Success to Reduce School Violence

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### **Abstract**

A safe and effective school framework aligns school safety, student support, and academic achievement across individual, classroom, school, and ideally, community levels. The risk and protective factors for academic, social, and behavioral problems are often intertwined; thus, interventions that target one domain frequently impact other domains. This chapter describes a comprehensive three-level approach to align student support, school safety, and academic achievement. The first section provides an overview of the connections between and among student support, school safety, and academic achievement. The second section provides the conceptual underpinnings for implementing and a comprehensive approach. The final section provides a brief description of how to apply this model to students and schools that have different needs and strengths. Creating safe, supportive, and effective schools will reduce school violence.

### **Aligning Safety, Support, and Achievement**

Although student support, school safety, and academic achievement are often discussed independently, they are interactive and often interdependent. For example, school safety is one correlate of attendance and academic achievement (Barton, 2003; Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2009; Osher & Kendziora, 2010) and the school environment plays an important role in preventing childhood depression (Herman, Reinke, Parkin, Traylor, & Agarwal, 2009). Analyses of data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) suggest

that youth who are failing, skipping, and doing poorly in school or feel disconnected from school, are at higher risk of early health risk behavior (Blum, 2001). The Add Health data also show that teenagers report substantially stronger feelings of connectedness when they get along with each other, pay attention, and hand in assignments on time (Blum, 2001).

While some school safety approaches focus on threat assessment or physical safety, a comprehensive approach emphasizes and addresses the social and emotional as well as the physical aspects of safety. For example, students may miss school due to fears for their physical safety and of emotional ridicule or threat (Garbarino & deLara, 2002), including being bullied or harassed by students and staff for their gender, sexual orientation, appearance, and/or disability. Social and emotional threats appear to be far more common than physical attacks (Bear, Webster-Stratton, Furlong, & Rhee, 2000). Feeling emotionally safe, which often depends on whether students ask for help and acknowledge mistakes (Lee, Smith, Perry, & Smylie, 1999), is critical to learning (Osher & Kendziora, 2010; Osher et al., 2008). This climate of safety can contribute to students seeking help for themselves and others, and in doing so, reducing the risk of violence (Osher & Dwyer, 2005).

Effective schools foster and support high academic and behavioral standards making achievement within these schools both a collective and individual phenomena. Collective components of achievement involve the characteristics of the school community, including its culture, structure, human resources, and student members. These factors vary considerably across schools. Individual components comprise both student and adult characteristics. Adult characteristics include the knowledge, skills, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of school-based staff. Beliefs and attitudes include adults' sense of their role (e.g., Does a teacher view student support as part of their role), as well as teacher beliefs and attitudes towards students and each other (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Osher et al., 2008). Capacity to meet the many challenges that adults face requires ongoing training and support of skills and practices. Training should be focused, support skill mastery and necessary attitudinal change, and be delivered in a manner that develops or enhances the capacity of school staff and families to collaborate and employ effective strategies and approaches. Adults should be prepared to be both interpersonally and culturally competent. Administrative support is vital, including the moral, logistical, and technical support needed to implement these approaches effectively (e.g., principal leadership, monitoring, and coaching).

Student characteristics consist of academic and social-emotional skills as well as behavioral and psychological characteristics. Behavioral characteristics include preparedness, attendance, attentiveness, and school engagement (e.g., time on task; Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994). Psychological characteristics include motivation, psychological engagement, and perseverance, the absence of which has been related to dropping out (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, Friedel, & Paris, 2005). Bryk and Thum's (1989) analysis of the effects of high school organization on dropping out found that absenteeism was higher in schools with more discipline problems and where principals reported teacher problems. In addition, the number of students dropping out is lower when they feel safe, academic emphasis is greater, faculty are interested in and engaged with students, students feel that discipline policies are fair, and there is less internal differentiation among students.

These adult and student factors both contribute to school climate, which contributes to behavioral and academic outcomes. For example, research examining the effects of high school organization on dropping out has shown that school dropout rates are lower when students perceive themselves as having more positive relationships with their teachers (Lee & Burkam, 2003).

Because students need appropriate support to facilitate learning and address the barriers to learning, successful schools often have high levels of academic emphasis in combination with student support (Adelman & Taylor, 2000). This may be true in schools that serve students

challenged by multiple risk factors (Ancess, 2003; Pianta & Walsh, 1996; Shouse, 1996). Academic emphasis includes instructional leadership, effective pedagogy, well-trained teachers, and an explicit focus on teaching and learning. Student support includes (a) connecting positively with adults, (b) supporting prosocial student interactions in an inclusive school community, (c) teaching and supporting the development and use of social emotional learning (SEL) skills, (d) employing positive behavioral supports, and (e) providing students with effective opportunities to learn. Successful schools provide students and staff with the support necessary to promote high achievement and the intensity of support is varied to address student and school needs. Connecting resources maximizes the chances for success by aligning school and community student support resources.

### **Conceptual Basis for a Three-Level Approach to Align Safety, Support, and Achievement**

The conceptual roots of a comprehensive approach are grounded in a variety of disciplines, frameworks, and fields related to children's learning and behavior, which are described in Table 3.1. Although the models that come out of the described knowledge areas are distinct, the models and empirical data that ground them can be aligned (e.g., Dryfoos, 1990). For example, school-related transactions take place in nested environments (e.g., home, community, school, and classroom), and change over the life span as does the importance of social fields. Developmental epidemiological approaches can study the impact of interventions among populations over time (Kellam, Rebok, Wilson, & Mayer, 1994). Similarly, a public health model can integrate both promotion of positive youth development and prevention of problems (Davis, 2002).

Research suggests that risk and protective factors underlying problem behavior predict positive youth development, suggesting that an approach that reduces risk and enhances protection is likely to enhance youth wellness, while reducing future problem behaviors (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004; Catalano, Hawkins, Berglund, Pollard, & Arthur, 2002). Further, although the intellectual foundations of work in positive youth development is not necessarily based in behavioral theory, the behavioral principles of reinforcement and social learning can be aligned with youth development approaches (Bandura, 1995). This does not mean that a hodgepodge approach be taken; the nuances and specifics of each framework must be addressed. For example, a focus on risk factors alone does not produce high quality outcomes (Pittman, 1991), but research on risk and protection suggests that an exclusive focus on developmental assets will not eliminate the impact of risk factors (Pollard, Hawkins, & Arthur, 1999). Further syntheses of research from different paradigms will help coordinate problem solving and help schools better predict and prevent individual and system failures.

In addition to the above considerations, there are a number of relevant fields of inquiry. They include research on school effectiveness, which examines school effects, improvement, reform, and size (Teddle & Reynolds, 2000); school safety, discipline, and violence prevention (Gottfredson et al., 2000; Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010; U.S. Public Health Service, 2000); and research on instruction, curriculum, and assessment, identifying effective approaches to working with students (Marzano, 2003). Other fields include research on consultation and team problem solving, where interventions are implemented through training, modeling, and ongoing coaching (Kratochwill & Bergan, 1990), as well as research on cultural competence, culturally responsive teaching, and multicultural education. This latter research examines the nature of disparities among youth of diverse cultural backgrounds and identifies what works in the education of children of color (Osher, Cartledge, Oswald, Artiles, & Coutinho, 2004; U.S. Public Health Service, 2001). There is a good deal of convergence across these areas on five matters:

Table 3.1 Disciplines, Frameworks, and Fields Related to Children's Learning and Behavior

<i>Field</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Research</i>
Public Health	Focus on population-based approaches to problems, prevention, and includes early and intensive interventions.	Davis, 2002; World Health Organization, 2002
Prevention and Developmental Science	Identifies risks and protective factors, including those that mediate and moderate outcomes.	Kendziora & Osher, 2004
Positive Youth Development and Social Emotional Learning	Includes research on social competence, and highlights the importance of promoting resilience, social and emotional learning, and developmental assets.	Catalano et al., 2004; Cicchetti, Rappaport, Sandler, & Weissberg, 2000; Greenberg et al., 2003
Behavioral Research in Special Education and Psychology	Contributes to the development of positive behavior supports, functional behavior analysis, and classroom management techniques.	Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995
Mental Health Services and Treatment Research	Identifies effective approaches and therapeutic interventions for mental health disorders.	Burns & Hoagwood, 2002
Life Course/Social Field Theory	Highlights the key role of social fields, natural raters, and how each of these changes throughout people's life course.	Kellam & Rebok, 1992
Ecological Theory	Emphasizes the importance of focusing on multiple-person systems of interactions, which may include an immediate setting (e.g., school), interrelations among major settings (e.g., home-school), other social structures that influence what goes on in these settings (e.g., presence of a system of care), and overarching institutional patterns (e.g., community resources).	Bronfenbrenner, 1977
Transactional Analysis	Indicates that developmental outcomes are the result of ongoing dynamic interplay among child behavior, adult responses, and environmental variables that may influence both the child and those who interact with him.	Sutherland, 2000; Sutherland, Wehby & Yoder, 2002

1. Numerous school factors matter, which include the following: (a) teacher beliefs and expectations, (b) relationships with students, (c) leadership; (d) collaboration and coordination, (e) academic press, and (f) a commitment to doing what is necessary to help students succeed (e.g., Ancess, 2003; Osher, Woodruff, & Sims, 2002).
2. Students benefit from and need high-quality teaching and effective social support that engages them in the learning process. Effective instruction includes the ability to connect with students, manage the classroom, engage students at the zone of proximal development, and help them regulate their behavior (Ancess, 2003; Osher, Sandler, & Nelson, 2001; Osher et al., 2010).
3. Rigid and inflexible approaches to discipline do not work and disproportionately harm students of color and students with disabilities, and positive and relational approaches to discipline do the opposite (APA, 2006, 2008; Osher et al., 2001; Sugai et al., 2000; U.S. Public Health Service, 2000).
4. Culture matters and must and can be addressed (Allen & Boykin, 1992; U.S. Public Health Service, 2001).

5. Change is hard, takes time, and requires facilitation, trust, and support (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

This convergence of literature supports the comprehensive framework, which is presented in the next section.

Student support is key for a comprehensive approach of student safety and achievement. This support can be understood from both a risk and asset-based perspective. From a risk perspective, student support addresses barriers to learning as well as factors that set the stage for or reinforce behavioral problems (e.g., alienating environments, bullying, punitive discipline, and inappropriate pedagogy). From an asset-based perspective, student support provides youth with the personal resources and social capital needed to help them succeed in school, handle problematic situations, meet the schools' behavioral expectations, and learn. Some interventions focus on risk and protection and aim at decreasing problem behaviors, and others focus on development of assets that provide building blocks for health development; however, they can be aligned. Prevention efforts that target risks are most successful when they are coordinated with explicit attempts to enhance children's competence, connection to others, and ability to contribute to their community (Greenwood, Terry, Utley, Montagna, & Walker 1993; Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem, & Ferber, 2001). For example, Durlak and Wells' (1997) meta-analysis of 177 primary behavioral and social prevention programs among youth under age 18 showed improved assertiveness, communication skills, self-confidence, and academic performance as well as reduced internalizing and externalizing problems. Moreover, Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, and Schellinger's (2011) analysis of 207 SEL programs found positive effects on SEL skills, behaviors, attitudes, and academic achievement.

## **A Comprehensive Framework for Student Support, Safety, and Achievement**

Supportive schools as conceptualized in this chapter provide students with social, behavioral, and mental health support that facilitate achievement and address barriers to learning (Osher, Dwyer, & Jackson, 2004). Student support can be conceptualized as having four dimensions, each of which involves a cluster of attributes: (a) connection within caring schools, (b) social-emotional learning, (c) positive behavioral supports, and (d) engaging and appropriate learning opportunities (Osher et al., 2004, 2008). These four dimensions are interactive and interdependent.

There is some overlap between and among dimensions, both in terms of what each dimension includes, as well as the impact of some interventions across multiple dimensions. For example, there is a connection between helping students regulate their behavior (dimension 2) and teaching them the skills necessary to meet the schools' behavioral demands (dimension 3); however, there are differences. The second dimension explicitly targets SEL and focuses on internalization, application, and generalization of SEL skills. Skill instruction under the positive behavioral supports dimension, on the other hand, focuses on meeting the schools' behavioral demands. SEL, when taught and reinforced at school and home, is far more likely to be generalized and internalized than behavior modifications requiring token reinforcements (Greenwood et al., 1993; McConnell, Missall, Silberglitt, & McEvoy, 2002). Effective interventions may cross multiple dimensions or combine interventions that cross multiple dimension. For example, the Child Development Project involves the first, second, and fourth dimensions (Solomon, Battistich, Watson, Schaps, & Lewis, 2000), and BEST combines Second Step (second dimension) with EBS (Effective Behavioral Support; third dimension; Sprague et al., 2001).

This section explores the four dimensions, illustrating how they can be addressed for all students, some students who are at a greater level of risk, and for a smaller number of students who are at an even greater level of need.

## *The Four Dimensions of Violence Prevention–Intervention*

### *Dimension 1: Belonging, Connection, and Care*

The first dimension involves feelings of belonging at school, connection to students and adults, and caring school environments. Resnick and his colleagues (1997) called this phenomenon “connectedness,” and included within it an adolescent’s perception of safety, belonging, respect, and feeling cared for at school. Other researchers have pointed to the importance of bonding to the school (Hawkins & Weis, 1985), sense of community (Battistich & Horn, 1997), and school membership (Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, & Fernandez, 1989) and linked them both to positive as well as negative academic and behavioral outcomes (McNeely & Falci, 2004; McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002; Metz, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999).

Schools, particularly large ones, can be alienating places, which students, particularly those who are socially disadvantaged or are not doing well, experience as uncaring (e.g., Page, 1991). Successful schools are often places of connection and engagement for all students (e.g., Bensman, 2000; Jimerson, Campos, & Greif, 2003; Maeroff, 1999; National Research Council, 2004). Osterman’s (2000) review of research on student belongingness found that it influences achievement through its effects on engagement. Resnick, Harris, and Blum’s (1993) multivariate analyses of data on 36,000 seventh to twelfth graders found that school connectedness was the most salient protective factor for both boys and girls against the acting out behaviors and was second in importance after family connectedness for internalizing behaviors (e.g., withdrawal, despondence, and panic, that are frequently associated with depression and anxiety disorders). Further analyses of the Add Health data (Blum, 2001) suggest that adolescents who feel connected to adults at school are less likely to use alcohol or other substances, experience less emotional distress, attempt suicide less, and engage in less deviant and violent behaviors. School connectedness was the only school-related variable that was protective for every single outcome measured (Resnick et al., 1993).

Research suggests that students who believe that they are cared for put more effort into their schooling, which, in turn, positively affects their learning (Smerdon, 1999). In a meta-analysis of over 100 studies Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003), found that the quality of teacher-student relationships drove other aspects of classroom management. Teachers who had high quality relationships with their students had 31% fewer discipline problems, rule violations, and related problems over a year’s time than did teachers who lacked high quality relationships with their students. This finding is supported by a set of studies that range from preschool through high school. They suggest that supportive relationships between teachers and students promote student engagement, positive attitudes, and a sense of belonging toward school, motivation, and academic achievement (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Connell, Halpern-Felsher, Clifford, Crichlow, & Usinger, 1995; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; National Research Council, 2004; Sinclair, Christenson, Lehr, & Anderson, 2003; Wentzel, 1997, 1998; Wentzel & Wigfield, 1998).

### *Dimension 2: Social Emotional Learning (SEL)*

The second dimension involves support for students’ ability to regulate their emotions, as well as their social and academic behavior by developing their social and emotional skills. Effective SEL programming helps students develop skills that enable them to recognize and manage their emotions, understand and appreciate others’ perspectives, establish positive goals, make responsible decisions, and handle interpersonal situations effectively (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2003; Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000). Wilson, Gottfredson, and Najaka’s (2001) meta-analysis of 165 studies of school-based prevention found that self-control or social competency programming that employed cognitive-behavioral and behavioral instructional

methods consistently was effective in reducing dropout, nonattendance, conduct problems, and substance use. Analyses by Zins, Weissberg, Wang, and Walberg (2004) suggest that that SEL positively contributes to school related attitudes, behavior, and performance:

1. attitudes include: (a) stronger sense of community (bonding), (b) more academic motivation and higher aspirations, and (c) positive attitudes toward school;
2. behavior includes: (a) understanding the consequences of behavior, (b) coping effectively with middle school stressors, (c) more prosocial behavior, (d) fewer or reduced absences, (e) more classroom participation, (f) greater effort to achieve, (g) reduction in aggression and disruptions, (h) lower rate of conduct problems, (i) fewer hostile negotiations and better conflict resolution skills, (j) fewer suspensions, (k) better transition to middle school, and (l) increased student engagement at school; and
3. performance includes: (a) increased grades and achievement, (b) more students on track to graduate, and (c) fewer dropouts.

These relations are supported by Durlak et al.'s (2011) meta-analysis, which found modest effect sizes on academic related attitudes, prosocial behavior (and reduction of antisocial behavior), and academic achievement.

### *Dimension 3: Positive Behavioral Approaches*

The third dimension involves reducing inappropriate use of punitive responses and the use of positive behavioral supports. Schools sometimes emphasize punitive measures to manage student behavior, and teachers may use disapproval more frequently than approval as a consequence for student behavior (Mayer & Sulzer-Azaroff, 1991). Educators may respond to student behavioral problems in a reactive, negative, and harsh manner, which includes hostile adult responses, disciplinary referrals, punishment, segregation, and removal from the school environments (Mayer, 2001; Noguera, 2003). These responses are often disproportionately applied to students of color and students with emotional and behavioral disabilities (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2000). These negative responses can also affect the learning process; students with behavioral problems are provided with lower levels of instruction, praised less, and called upon less frequently than other students (Gunter & Denny, 1998; Sutherland, Wehby, & Yoder, 2002; Van Acker, Grant, & Henry, 1996).

In fact, what Gunter and his colleagues have conceptualized as a negative-reinforcement cycle (Gunter, Denny, Jack, Shores, & Nelson, 1993) reduces a student's opportunity to learn (Gunter & Coutinho, 1997; Osher, Morrison, & Bailey, 2003), which is dependent on instructional time and task engagement (Greenwood, Seals, & Kamps, 2010). These ongoing transactions contribute to a self-sustaining cycle of classroom disruption and negative consequences (Dumas, Prinz, Smith, & Laughlin, 1999; Farmer, Quinn, Hussey, & Holohan, 2001; Osher et al., 2002) that includes academic failure and forced segregation with antisocial peers, which may reinforce problem behavior (Dishion, McCord, & Poullin, 1999; Maag, 2001; Murphy, Beck, Crawford, Hodges, & McGaughy, 2002; Powell, Farrar, & Cohen, 1985).

Positive Behavioral Supports (PBS) can be employed at a schoolwide level. For instance, PBS as a universal intervention may include: clearly identifying a limited number of schoolwide behavioral rules, stating them positively, displaying them visibly, and structuring the school environment so that students meet behavioral expectations. PBS as a more intensive intervention may be in the form of functional behavioral assessment or school-based wraparound services. Positive supports also include the physical structure of the school (e.g., its size, layout, and lighting), as well as administrative practices.

This dimension is based upon research grounded in applied behavioral analysis and environmental design that demonstrates: (a) how teacher and schools can proactively reduce the incidence of problem behavior and respond in a proactive manner, (b) the ineffectiveness of punishment as an intervention, (c) the impact of environment, and (d) how schools can successfully use alternatives to punishment. For example, results of a study by Sutherland, Alder, and Gunter (2003), which examined the impact of an intervention aimed at increasing the opportunity to respond (OTR) for fourth graders with EBD, suggest that increased rates of OTR contributed to increased rates of students' correct responses, increased task engagement, and decreased disruptive behavior. This research has demonstrated inefficiencies of inconsistent and punitive school and classroom management systems including: (a) punitive and inconsistent school and classroom behavior management practices, unclear, invisible, or unachievable rules and expectations regarding appropriate behavior; (b) lack of adequate supervision and monitoring of student behavior; (c) failure to effectively correct rule violations and reward adherence to them; and (d) failure to individualize consequences (Colvin, Kameenui, & Sugai, 1993; Hawkins, Catalano, Kosterman, Abbott, & Hill, 1999; Mayer & Sulzer-Azaroff, 1991; Osher et al., 2010; Walker et al., 1996).

#### *Dimension 4: Academic Engagement and Support*

The fourth dimension includes what schools do academically to ensure that every child succeeds. This dimension can be conceptualized as having technical, cultural-structural, student-specific, and contextual dimensions. These dimensions interact with each other as well as with the other three dimensions. For example, in schools that lack community and positive behavioral supports, it is more likely that the enacted curriculum will be a curriculum of control (Knitzer, Steinberg, & Fleisch, 1990) or teaching for order (what some call defensive teaching), where teachers lower the academic press and accept disengagement as long as it is not disruptive (Murphy et al., 2002).

#### ***Three Additional Factors to Promoting Student Success***

##### *Technical Factors*

Some students may learn regardless of the quality of the academic opportunities, whereas others require effective instruction or additional academic supports. Technical issues consist of the quality of organization, sequencing, presentation, and pacing of the curriculum as well as the manner in which learning is regularly assessed and feedback is provided. This includes the management of instructional time (Greenwood et al., 2010), and the extent to which students are actively involved in learning (Murphy et al., 2002; Osher et al., 2010). Technical issues also include the efficient and appropriate use of effective instructional strategies such as advance organizers, mastery learning approaches, homework and practice, direct instruction, peer tutoring, curriculum based assessment, and cooperative learning.

##### *School Cultural and Structural Factors*

Successful schools are ones in which: (a) there is a teacher community that focuses on learning, (b) individual teachers have high expectations for all students and believe that all students can learn and that they as teachers can teach them, and (c) teachers as a group believe that they are collectively accountable for student success (Lee, Smith, & Croninger, 1995; Murphy et al., 2002; Stewart, 2008). Teachers in these schools do not blame students or their families, for student failure. To facilitate student success, educational professionals must provide a supportive context and there needs to be a culture of problem solving rather than blame or avoidance,



and principal leadership that supports a supportive school culture (Murphy et al., 2002; Quinn, Osher, Hoffman, & Hanley, 1998). For example, it is harder for teachers to maintain high standards for every student, have community among themselves, and feel collective responsibility for learning in large schools and in schools that track students (Metz, 1997). Structural factors also include efficient school and community systems that connect students and families to prevention and treatment resources (Blechman, Fishman, Fishman, & Lewis, 2004; Osher, 2002; Rappaport et al., 2002).

### *Student-Specific Factors*

For learning to take place, teachers must engage and connect with students (National Research Council, 2004). Students learn best when learning is active, aligns with their experiences and goals, and builds upon their strengths. This includes using multiple modalities for learning, and scaffolding the learning process so that there is an appropriate balance between challenge and support (Moll & Greenberg, 1990). Effective instruction and assessment requires cultural competency, both in content and delivery, to successfully address student epistemology, student language proficiency, cultural world views, cultural communication and socialization styles, and student life context and values (Solano-Flores & Nelson-Barber, 2001).

### **Addressing Different Levels of Student Needs**

Effective intervention should address the nature and intensity of student needs, and a three-level public health approach provides a way for organizing supportive resources. Because student needs are related to environmental factors that place them at risk, as well as the presence of protective factors and assets in the community, the percent of students in a school who require early or intensive interventions will vary (Scales & Leffert, 1999). The three levels of intervention are interactive. Universal approaches and interventions create a schoolwide foundation. When a strong foundation is in place, it is easier to identify students who require early intervention, making it more likely that these interventions will be effective. Similarly, universal interventions reduce the incidence of problem behavior in the school population. This means that fewer students will be available to tease or harass other students, induce their participation in problematic activities, or reinforce students who act in an antisocial manner (Espelage & Swearer, 2004; Patterson, Reid, & Dishion, 1992). Further, a reduction in problematic behaviors at a universal level will free adults to teach and connect with students, while reducing the likelihood that they will respond to students in a counter-aggressive manner, which would reinforce inappropriate behaviors.

All children require connection, need self-regulation, and benefit from effective, engaging instruction and positive behavioral support. However, what is done to support individual students—both the intensity and type of intervention—differs as a function of student strengths, assets, and needs. The following paragraphs illustrate how these supports can be implemented.

There are some common characteristics of interventions at each level. Universal interventions include both promotion efforts that build assets and protective factors (e.g., connection to adults in the school) and risk targeted interventions that address risk factors (e.g., behavioral problems in the classroom). As in the case of adding fluoride to water to prevent tooth decay, universal interventions or primary prevention efforts, are provided to everyone in a population whether it is a grade or the school—even though everyone may not require them. This is important because no matter how effective screening for risk factors is, there will always be false negatives (Derzon, 2001), and the purpose of primary prevention is to reduce the incidence of a problem (e.g., tooth

decay) in a population. However, universal interventions will be insufficient to protect all children, hence the need for early and intensive intervention.

Early interventions include both selective and indicated interventions. Selective interventions are for individuals who, although they are not displaying early warning signs, are members of a population that research suggests are at higher risk for a particular problem (e.g., a child who was exposed to violence). Indicated interventions address the needs of students whose behavior indicates that they are at higher risk than other children (e.g., a child who exhibits early warning signs). Early interventions are often provided within group contexts, focusing on one ecological domain (e.g., the school) or one dimension (e.g., reading). Compared to intensive interventions, early interventions are less time consuming. Because early interventions should take place before an intensive problem manifests itself, it is important to intervene in a nonstigmatizing manner, build upon strengths, and avoid self-fulfilling prophecies, where teachers, staff, students, or parents confound information about a risk of a bad outcome happening (or a label) with a belief in its inevitability, and act on that belief (Weinstein, 2002). This is particularly the case for selective interventions, where there are no or insufficient data to definitively support conclusion that a youth may develop a serious problem.

Intensive interventions should be individualized and focus on multiple ecological domains (e.g., family and school) as well as dimensions (e.g., academics, self-regulation, and behavior). To be effective, they must be strength-based, capacity building, address multiple risk factors, linguistically and culturally competent, child and family driven, monitored in an ongoing manner, and intensive and sustained.

### *Caring and Connection*

While social connection is a universal need, some students may find it harder to connect with others due to temperament, learning or behavioral disabilities that affect their thought processing, cultural differences, and prior attachment issues. Some students are also more vulnerable to teasing or harassment due to such individual characteristics. Small classes where teachers have more opportunity to connect with individual students and small schools where every adult is expected to connect with and follow some of the students provide a platform to support social connections. Programs like the Child Development Program, which intentionally builds a school community, extend this connection at a classroom level. However, some students could still require more intensive efforts at connection; for example, to help their transition into high school or to prevent their dropping out of school (Felner, Ginter, & Primavera, 1982; Osher et al., 2003). The more students experience risks in their lives, the more it is important to engage families in a family-driven, respectful, and culturally competent manner (Osher, 2000; Osher & Osher 2002; Osher et al., 2004). Families and Schools Together (FAST) exemplifies such an approach for families (McDonald & Sayger, 1998).

### *Self-Regulation and SEL Skills*

All students require self-regulation and SEL skills, but some students require additional support in developing these skills. Just as most students need to learn how to read in school, they must also learn how to interact appropriately with peers and adults and how to address academic challenges (e.g., frustration) and interpersonal conflicts (e.g., teasing). Effective SEL programs are developmentally appropriate and cover all age ranges. They aim at developing five core competencies: self-awareness, interpersonal and social awareness, self-regulation and management, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. There are many good programs that address universal needs in a developmentally appropriate way and they can be found in *Safe and Sound*:

*An Educators Guide to Social and Emotional Learning Programs* (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2003). However, some students require more intensive interventions; for example, those who have experienced trauma or struggle with depression or ADHD. In other instances, students may have an inability to control anger when provoked, cannot express their feelings, or have particularly tough times handling failure or group pressure. A good example of an early intervention is Aggression Replacement Therapy, which is provided in a group context and includes skill streaming, anger control training, and moral reasoning training (Feindler & Gerber, this volume; Goldstein & Glick, 2010). Some students, such as those experiencing an anxiety disorder or depression, may need more support than group counseling can provide. Some may benefit from cognitive-behavioral treatments where they learn to deal with fears by modifying the way they think and behave, others may require medication, and some may require both types of treatment (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2005). Schools are rarely solely involved with medication management, hence, cross-agency collaboration and coordination is very important.

### *Positive Behavioral Supports*

All students can benefit from schoolwide systems and school-community members that support a positive and proactive approach to discipline. This strategy is likely to include the articulation of positive behavioral expectations, teaching students desired behaviors, and providing procedures to encourage appropriate behavior and discourage inappropriate behaviors. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Effective Behavioral Support (EBS), and Achieve are models that provide schoolwide strategies (Knoff & Batsche, 1995; Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Quinn et al., 1998; Sugai et al., 2000). However, some students (sometimes estimated as less than 15 to 20%; Sugai et al., 2000) require more intensive support, which is provided in small groups (e.g., a planning center) or individually (e.g., functional assessment) (Quinn et al., 1998; Scott & Eber, 2003). Like universal approaches, these approaches are useful because adults use data to identify and respond to what they may be doing to create or reinforce student behavior problems, as well as what supports can be put in place to address problems (Gable, Quinn, Rutherford, & Howell, 1998; Osher et al., 2004). An even smaller number of students require very intensive support, such as school-based wraparound, which might include a classroom aide (Scott & Eber, 2003). Wraparound and other effective intensive behavioral interventions must be youth and family driven, implemented in a culturally competent manner, and when school-based, address the concerns and training needs of school staff (Poduska, Kendziora, & Osher, 2008; Quinn & Lee, 2007; Woodruff et al., 1999).

### *Providing Effective Academic Support*

All students require opportunities to learn. They learn best when schools provide them with effective, well-designed learning tasks that are presented in a meaningful manner and actively engage them. Effective teachers commonly draw upon the following technique to enhance their instruction: (a) set and communicate explicit learning goals; (b) connect learning to student experiences; (c) present new content multiple times and through a variety of modalities; (d) provide opportunities for practice, and additional challenges after students master content; (e) employ a quick pace; monitor student progress; (f) provide ongoing feedback to students; and (g) recognize efforts and celebrate progress (Howell & Nolet, 2000; McTighe & O'Connor, 2005). Effective interventions that facilitate this process include Class-wide Peer Tutoring (Greenwood et al., 1993) and Success For All (Slavin & Madden, 2001), which enable children to practice new skills and experience meaningful academic success. Although all students can benefit from

effective instruction, some students will require group support that targets their linguistic background, and others may require individualized supports that address their specific learning disabilities or problems. Interventions will be most effective when they leverage student strengths and assets (e.g., interests and parental support) and align with the student's experiences and goals. Traditional approaches to addressing the needs of students (and teachers) involve tracking, pull-out, and separate classes. Research (Brunello & Checchi, 2007; Oakes & Lipton, 1994) suggests that such approaches are counterproductive, and techniques that bring needed support into the classroom include: teaming special and regular educators, employing assistive technology, and leveraging service learning to scaffold learning and engage students (Muscott, 2000; Quinn et al., 1998).

Given the numerous demands on educators, it is important to recognize that challenges are likely in aligning, safety, support, and achievement. Among the most salient is the disproportionate emphasis of school evaluation on test scores. Within the context of high-stakes testing, too often, resources are only invested in those programs that purport to directly impact student achievement. Thus, many factors related to school safety and student support are ignored. Limited resources must be invested wisely. As discussed previously in this chapter, safety and student support are essential features in facilitating student achievement. Table 3.2 briefly delineates important implications for implementing comprehensive plans to promote student safety, support, and achievement.

Each school and community has unique values, needs, and strengths, which will affect how schools move forward. For some schools the starting point may be universal youth development,

*Table 3.2 Implications for Practice: Comprehensive Plans to Promote Student Safety, Support, and Achievement*

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1. Understand that student safety and student support are essential features in facilitating student achievement.
  2. Implement strategies and programs that promote student support.
  3. Utilize efficient and appropriate use of effective instructional strategies such as advance organizers, mastery learning approaches, homework and practice, direct instruction, peer tutoring, and cooperative learning.
  4. Carefully consider the quality of organization, sequencing, presentation, and pacing of the curriculum as well as the manner in which learning is regularly assessed and feedback is provided.
  5. Promote a school community that has high expectations for all students and is collectively accountable for student success.
  6. Develop a school context where learning is active, aligns with student experiences and goals, and builds upon their strengths.
  7. Implement effective intervention to address the nature and intensity of student needs.
  8. Establish a school culture that reflects caring and connectedness to promote school engagement and active participation among students.
  9. Provide programs that help students learn how to interact appropriately with peers and adults and how to solve academic problems and interpersonal conflicts, including: self-awareness, interpersonal and social awareness, self-regulation and management, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.
  10. Organize schoolwide systems and school-community members that support a positive and proactive approach to discipline.
  11. Apply effective, well-designed learning tasks that are presented in a meaningful manner and actively engage students.
  12. Recognize that some students will require group support that targets their linguistic background, and others may require individualized supports that address their specific learning needs.
-

or others, comprehensive behavioral approaches, and still for others intensive mental health support. Thus, no single strategy or program can be systematically implemented in all schools. This presents challenges for administrators and school personnel in determining appropriate strategies that align appropriately. Selection criteria can be found in *Safe, Supportive, and Successful Schools Step by Step* (Osher et al., 2004). This chapter provides a conceptual foundation for educators to build upon in promoting safety, support, and achievement at school.

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