

# Essentials for Implementation: Six years of School Wide Positive Behaviour Support in NZ

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Achievement, engagement and learning require skilled and strategic behaviour management in classrooms. New Zealand schools are about to undergo a major shift in the management of disruptive behaviour in the education system (Ministry of Education, 2010a). As part of the Positive Behaviour for Learning policy the Ministry of Education aims to implement School Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) in 400 schools by 2015. Several schools in New Zealand have operated within a SWPBS framework for the past five years. This paper presents five key themes that the participants ( $n=11$ ) from two of these schools believe contributed to successful implementation. Interviews and document analysis revealed that key to success were schools' readiness, student empowerment, community input, professional learning, and evidence-based decision making. Implications of these themes are provided.

Effective behaviour management is dependent on teacher skill, positive and preventative school and classroom interventions, clear expectations, and a consistent systems-wide approach. Managing student behaviour in schools has become a priority for the Ministry of Education (MOE) as it seeks to address the increasing rates of suspension, stand-down, and exclusion (MOE, 2010b). To address this priority, the MOE has introduced a comprehensive plan called Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L), a strategy which encompasses amongst other things a nationwide implementation in up to 400 schools of Positive Behaviour Support which they have termed Positive Behaviour for Learning-School-wide (PB4L-SW).

The MOE has provided national PB4L-SW trainers for schools to establish Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) frameworks, with the aim of implementing PB4L-SW in 400 schools by 2014/2015. PBS is not a new initiative in New Zealand; several schools have implemented this framework for the past

six years as part of an initiative between Special Education and local schools across the central south area in the North Island. The present study focuses on two of these schools. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the themes that emerged relating specifically to the implementation of PBS in the school.

## Background

Traditionally, behaviour systems in New Zealand tend to be punitive, with the focus on disciplining students after the behaviour has occurred. For instance, when students misbehave, it is common that their name will be written on the board and then ticked after each subsequent offence. Upon receiving three ticks, they are removed from the classroom and depending on the severity of the behaviour, experience some consequence for their behaviour. With increasing concerns about behaviour in schools and increased rates of stand-down and suspension, this approach does not seem to foster sustainable

long-term positive behaviour change in schools. Thus, change is needed in the way many New Zealand schools respond to behaviour.

This punitive approach to behaviour management is generally ineffective in facilitating desired student behaviour or teaching students appropriate ways of behaving (Nelson, Martella, & Marchand-Martella, 2002). Consider, for example, a child learning to read at school. If the student was having difficulty, the child would not be disciplined or punished. This would not make sense. Rather the child would receive reading instruction with an increase in the expectation and the introduction of new skills as the child progressed. Similarly when a child behaves inappropriately at school, the student may not have learned appropriate social skills to interact in a positive way. As such, the student should be taught new and more acceptable ways to behave, rather than be disciplined or punished. Positive behavioural support takes the view that behaving in a socially appropriate way is a skill learnt like any other skill in our schools.

Over the past 10 years public schools in the United States have moved from using reactive punishment, as the primary response to problem behaviours, to a proactive and positive approach that addresses the needs of the entire school, as well as individual students (Mayer, 1995). The goal of PBS is to promote a pro-social positive climate that increases positive behaviour and academic achievement (Horner & Sugai, 2000). School staff

who implement PBS regularly teach, review and reinforce agreed upon expectations for all students, rather than focus on the punishment of students who do not comply with school rules. The following section provides a brief overview of PBS.

### Whole School Positive Behaviour Support

PBS is a framework which enables schools to design and implement a whole school approach that focuses on teaching positive behaviour, communicating clear behavioural expectations, and creating a whole school culture which supports responsibility for behaviour. PBS programmes in schools are generally characterised by several key features: agreed upon descriptions of behaviour, levels of interventions, reinforcement of positive behaviours, the active teaching of social skills, a data support system to track student behaviour and ongoing evaluation of behaviour and programmes within schools. SWPBS in particular, emphasises the adoption of effective systematic and individualised behavioural interventions for achieving important social and learning outcomes while preventing problem behaviours (Sugai & Horner, 2006).

PBS originates from Applied Behaviour Analysis, an approach which applies behaviour principles to behaviours which are of high social importance or concern. PBS has expanded these behaviour analytic principles to include the larger social, familial and interpersonal contexts for children and adults with significant problem behaviours. PBS emphasises contextual fit, person-centred planning, and systems of care (i.e., individualised planning and intervention). It is a proactive approach to managing challenging behaviour that emphasises the readjustment of environments, teaching of replacement behaviours, and manipulations of consequences to reduce or eliminate the targeted behaviours (Spaulding et al., 2010).

PBS consists of three levels of prevention: primary, secondary and tertiary (Flannery, Sugai, & Anderson, 2009; Sugai & Horner, 1999). Primary level interventions are designed for all students in the school. Just by attending school the students access

these interventions, which include: teaching of behavioural expectations, reinforcement of expectations, and opportunities to participate in the programme implementation. For secondary level interventions, which pertain to approximately 15% of the students, the focus is on small group social skills training, targeted behavioural expectations, and individual agreed reinforcement, amongst others. For tertiary level interventions, which pertain to approximately 5% of the school roll, students have individualised specialised behaviour interventions.

The process of implementing SWPBS takes place in three stages: pre-implementation, implementation, and maintenance. Prior to implementation, time is spent creating an action team, consulting and collaborating with the community, naming the framework, establishing expectations, agreeing on minor and major instances of behaviour, planning an incentive system, and training teachers in positive and proactive strategies. During the implementation phase a data system is installed, a review team established, teaching behaviour expectations to students begins, and processes for whole school input are established. Once the framework is implemented effort is put into maintaining the programme within the school, reviewing the data, continuing training for new staff, and achieving ongoing input from the community (Chitiyo & Wheeler, 2009).

Research in the United States which has examined the effectiveness of SWPBS has offered promising results, such as decreases in office discipline referrals and suspensions (Lassen, Steele & Sailor, 2006; McCurdy, Manella, & Elridge, 2003; Nelson, Martella & Marchand-Martella, 2002; Scott & Barrett 2004; Taylor-Greene et al., 1997; Taylor-Greene & Kartub, 2000) and increases in student instructional time and attendance (Curtis, Van Horne, Roberston & Karvonen, 2010; Scott & Barrett, 2004). For example, McCurdy et al. (2003) found a 46% decrease in office discipline referrals at an American urban primary school after two years of implementation of SWPBS. Further, they noted improvements in social behaviours and a significant decrease in suspensions.

It is important to note that the New Zealand education system has a history of looking toward overseas packages to address behavioural challenges in schools. In the early 1990s Lee Canter's Assertive Discipline (Canter & Canter, 1992) was adopted widely in New Zealand schools to address classroom behaviour, followed by Gary LaVigna's Applied Behavioural Analysis (LaVigna & Donnellan, 1986), implemented by the Specialist Education Services (now MOE Special Education) in the late 1990s to address more severe behaviour. Both initiatives were costly and over time considered ineffective, the La Vigna model being described as "unrealistic and inflexible" (Wylie, 2000, p.58). The introduction of another 'package' type programme should be met with some scepticism by New Zealand educators, particularly as there is no evidence supporting implementation in a New Zealand context.

This study does not intend to claim effectiveness of SWPBS; the scope of the research was intended as a pilot study and a precursor to a wider evaluation of the programme in schools that varied in stages of implementation. The focus of this study was on the implementation phase of the programme design. It is important to note that these schools implemented PBS prior to the MOE PB4L-SW initiative; they have not been part of the nationwide rollout and therefore have not received the training or funding support under the new initiative. In 2003 the psychologist, special education advisor and school implemented PBS as they worked toward finding a solution to increasingly challenging behaviour in the school.

### Method

*Participants and setting.* This research took place in two schools in late 2009. Both schools had implemented school-wide PBS within the last six years. The first school is a decile 5<sup>1</sup> full primary town school comprising 15 teachers. Fifteen percent of the school roll identifies as Māori. This school began full implementation of SWPBS in 2004 and was in its sixth year of implementation at the time of this research. The second school is a decile 2, year 1 to 6 primary comprising nine teachers with 82 % of the roll identifying as Māori. SWPBS was implemented in

2007; the school was in its third year of implementation. The participants from each school and outside agencies were invited to participate based on their experience implementing SWPBS in the two schools. The 11 participants included both principals, both deputy principals, two teachers, one support staff, the two local Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (RTLB), a Special Education adviser and an educational psychologist.

The primary researcher visited the schools in late November 2009, consent was gained from the principal, and participants were invited to be interviewed. Interviews were semi-structured and varied in length from 17 minutes to 1 hour. For the purpose of this paper, the analysis of the data focused on the pre-implementation and implementation stages of the process of the PBS framework.

*Data analysis.* All interviews were transcribed verbatim with each line of the transcript numbered consecutively. To develop an initial set of codes, Strauss and Corbin's (1990) open coding method was applied to the transcripts. The primary coder (first author) read through the set of transcripts and identified themes, and the themes were coded using a paraphrase that captured the meaning of the text. These paraphrases were then sorted according to similarity, and codes were assigned to sets of paraphrases. Codes were condensed and collapsed to generate key themes in the data. Following the coding, an individual summary was created for each participant that summarised the key themes discussed in their interviews. This enabled the authors to generate meaning across the whole data set as well as interpret and generate meaning across the participant description of their experiences.

### Limitations

This study was intended as a pilot study. The focus on teacher development, implementation and the scope of the programme within the schools was intended to inform the development of a larger evaluation project. As a result, the findings rely heavily on interview data gathered from school personnel and specialists, and may not be generalised across school settings nationally.

### Results

All the participants were extremely positive about the impact of the SWPBS on behaviour. At one school the school-wide data information system was provided as evidence of disciplinary reduction. The data demonstrated a reduction of 290 incidences of total referrals for behaviour from 2004 ( $n=452$ ) to 2007 ( $n=162$ ). Significantly, in Term 1 2004 the highest number of behavioural incidents occurred amongst the Year 7 and 8 students ( $n=66$ ); by term 1 2007 this had reduced to six incidents of behaviour for senior students. Since implementation in 2004, two students had been suspended from this school. Participants discussed qualitative evidence of reduced disciplinary procedures, a reduction in the requirement for specialist interventions and increased reports of staff job satisfaction as positive outcomes of the SWPBS implementation.

For this analysis five themes were identified that will be discussed in more detail below. These themes were: school readiness for implementation, student empowerment, community input/contextual fit, professional learning, and using data to inform practice.

### School Readiness

School reform requires investment and commitment from school staff to ensure that change takes place. It is the individuals within institutions who ultimately limit or advance the success of any school reform initiative (Fullan, 2007). SWPBS is no different and clearly requires significant commitment and effort from the staff prior to and during implementation, and a commitment to sustain once embedded in the school. Lohrmann, Forman, Martin and Palmieri (2008) contend that schools need to build a case for change using strategies that include assessing staff readiness, sharing information and evidence, presenting a logical rationale, connecting to things they already have in place, and using school data to support (p. 263). The participants in this research conveyed that having staff on board prior to implementation was a critical part of introducing and implementing the programme. In both schools, the entire staff including the teaching staff, the support staff, the

office administrators and the caretaker participated in the implementation:

*One of the other major key things would be whole-staff involvement; I think that never starts off where everybody's 100% enthusiastic, with any change, and that's fine; that's how we all are as a team, I think some that were really enthusiastic have become more enthusiastic, and more leaders in it; some who were less enthusiastic have come up to taking it more on board, (Support Staff)*

Both schools had different journeys towards implementation; however, the need for change driving both schools was the impending sense that they were not managing challenging behaviour successfully. An escalation of stand-downs, difficulty employing relievers, tagging and vandalism in the schools were noted by the participants as indicators that the behaviour of the students in the school was not being contained within the current discipline programmes. In one school there was a series of attempts at creating and sustaining a programme designed within the school by the staff. As this participant described, it was part of the journey towards accepting SWPBS within the school:

*The thing with it was that we had just one plan, which was in the form of a steps system. We found it not to be working, so as a staff we decided to actually create our own discipline plan and the staff was the controlling factor. The staff identified what our expectation was; zero tolerance. We tried all that, but it was made up and directed by the teachers, implemented by the teacher; and for term one it worked. After that it just fell apart, we were having 40 kids on detention at lunchtimes, so at the zero tolerance at the end of it, it was hard to manage, because the teachers were managing it, not the children. After many discussions said we need help; (the facilitator)*



*came in once and stood up in front of us and explained the PBS system; the staff voted and they voted no, and then we had another go at creating our own discipline plan, and failed.. She came back a second time – and we had 100% buy-in by the staff. You must have that 100%, the school must be ready to take on board, because it is a lot of hard work. We had 100% buy-in from the teachers. (Deputy Principal)*

Successful implementation may be dependent on the perceived need for PBS by the teacher, a willingness to learn new skills, and a preparedness to implement these strategies in the classroom. Teacher beliefs prior to implementation of PBS systems in schools have been found to impede the initiative (Felner, Favazza, Shim, Brand & Gu, 2001). Brownell and colleagues (2006) found that teachers who did not believe that teachers were responsible for changing student behaviour did not implement suggested classroom techniques that differed with their belief; they avoided actively teaching behaviour and peer learning strategies.

In this research participants described the process of supporting teachers to change from a punishment orientation to a positive support model and the huge shift required in fundamental understandings about behaviour. As part of the implementation teachers were challenged to change their views regarding rewards, punishment, discipline, and even teacher positioning in the classroom. The participants contended that unless teachers believed in the effectiveness of the programme they would not change their classroom practice, reverting back to old strategies despite the whole school systems surrounding them. Therefore participants saw teacher belief in the programme as the key to their willingness to change and invest in supporting change.

### Student Empowerment

The goal of any behaviour programme should eventually be that students are able to independently manage their own behaviours in ways that allow them to learn and develop positive social relationships. It has long

been recognised that to do this students may need to learn new skills and to have opportunities to practise them. Central to this is providing opportunities for students in schools; opportunities to be recognised for positive behaviours, to model those behaviours to others and to lead others. In providing these opportunities teachers need to allow students the 'space' to learn and practise new more appropriate behaviours in the setting. In SWPBS students are required to participate, to own and to contribute to the process resulting in developing responsibility. In these schools, significant time was spent prior to implementation consulting students and electing students onto the leadership team. Both schools now have formalised student leadership roles that relate directly to the PBS programme:

*The first thing we had to do was identify the important people within the school community, so that's why we created (student) leaders. They were nominated by the children then voted by the children, and they became leaders. I think we had about 12 leaders for the first year. (Teacher)*

This participation continued throughout implementation as students were encouraged to participate in the construction of the framework, suggesting ideas for the key word, describing the kind of environment and behaviour they wanted in their school (by students and staff):

*We spent a whole year of community consultation; consulting with children, finding out what they wanted in the classroom. What would you like to happen in the classroom? What kind of atmosphere do you want in the classroom? And they said, we want an atmosphere where teachers don't raise their voice at us, and we won't raise our voice at the teachers. They wanted times where they can work with buddies, work with juniors, so they come to Kotahitanga<sup>2</sup>, older brothers and sisters, sibling kind of thing; all came from the kids. (Teacher)*

Opportunities for leadership became an essential component in sustaining the programme after implementation. Students were given opportunities to look at the school-wide data, to problem solve with the leadership team and create strategies for addressing the behaviour in different areas in the school. As an example, one school described their playground squad, which had been initiated by the students after the data demonstrated a series of minor incidences in the playground. As a response the students decided that misbehaviour often occurred because students had nothing to do. They developed a playground squad to include playground leaders, and a rotating supply of senior students who provide equipment, set up games and mediate in the playground. Initially a staff member taught all the students playground games and mediation skills. This has now evolved, at the request of the students, into the leaders being trained by staff, and they in-turn train the squad:

*Staff generating ideas from staff, kids generating ideas for staff even better and they're so good at it you know...The way we set it up, we wanted to empower the children to make changes within the school. (Deputy Principal)*

### Community Input-Contextual Fit

Community involvement in both schools was considered essential to the successful implementation, development and continued sustainability of SWPBS. A significant aspect of SWPBS is the active teaching of behavioural expectations and social skills. Each school must design and consult with the community to ensure that the values and expectations of behaviour reflect those valued within the community. In essence, the expectations of the community should inform the school expectations. Meyer and Evans (2006) note that it is essential that there be involvement and collaboration with whānau whānui<sup>3</sup>, respectful of the mana<sup>4</sup> and contributions of community to intervention design. Further, that the evidence is promising that "the

incorporation of culturally appropriate principles and practices will have a positive impact on child and family outcomes" (p.10). There was a sense from the participants that they had to 'open up' their school to the community, to sit back and listen and be ready to enter into a partnership with the community and the students:

*The thing is, we had to sit back and listen, and we had to disempower ourselves, and empower the children and the community, and let them tell us what they wanted. (Deputy Principal)*

Like many schools in New Zealand, parents were reluctant to come into the school. In one school significant effort went into creating accessible meeting times and providing childcare and food. This school felt that parents were critical to the success of the programme in particular for those students who had struggled under the old systems. Community involvement was not only considered essential in developing expected social skills and behavioural expectations but as part of the ongoing core implementation group:

*Because the parents had buy-in, we got the parents there who felt empowered, especially with the children who had those behaviour issues or learning difficulties... You want to target those parents, because when they start coming they don't feel so ashamed about coming to school. Whatever parents you get, your kaumatua<sup>5</sup> within the community bring them on, because then they feel like they own part of the school. (Principal)*

SWPBS is a framework that on implementation is individualised to fit the philosophy of the school. During this process it is important that the stated expectations of behaviour are congruent with a community. In one school with a predominantly Māori community the word representing the framework was generated by the community and reflected the expectations of the community:

*Then we finally came up with the word MANA, and all of a sudden that word really kicked in, because it's a pretty powerful word – 80% Māori at a school, the community... Māori tanga<sup>6</sup> within the community is quite staunch, and so that 'Mana' really stuck. ... all our kids can relate to Mana, they're born and bred with the word Mana – have big mana, strong mana, don't let anybody steal your mana; so mana is used, and the kids have a fair understanding of its use. (Deputy Principal)*

Participants at this school believed that the community ownership had changed the place of the school within the community; school staff reported a significant reduction in vandalism and tagging, they talked about how students were proud to attend the school, and whānau took an active role in caring for the school. This school in particular felt that the success of SWPBS within the school was due to the community support and participation:

*When we got the community in, another thing I think, the tagging stopped. We had parents coming out of their houses at midnight telling these kids to 'get off our bloody courts and stop smashing bottles'; before that, everybody would lock up in the house, it's not my problem. Don't try and do it without the community. If you haven't got the community backing, you're setting yourself up to fail. (Teacher)*

## Professional Learning

A required part of the implementation is the professional learning programme that involves a training series which reviews key concepts about student development, discipline, and the PBS theoretical approach to changing behaviour, improving school climate and facilitating system effectiveness (Handler, et al., 2007). Aside from learning about the features of the framework there was significant evidence from all participants in this

research that teachers were required to shift their often long held beliefs about behaviour. It appears that the shift from a model of power and punitive discipline to a responsibility model is challenging for most teachers, and requires significant input in the form of professional learning, reading, observations and feedback.

*I believe in strong leadership at the beginning, and somebody that's consistent, somebody that understands the programme for the benefits of the children, and can portray that to the staff, that it is about the kids; it's not about discipline, and it's not about punishment, it's about what are we doing to help these kids? Why are they behaving this way, and what can we do as a whole school to turn it around into a positive? (Support Staff)*

For many this paradigm shift required a significant movement in their understandings of behaviour, the way in which they managed their classrooms and dealt with students. Furthermore, evidence suggested that this changing orientation had impacted on the way in which teachers taught in the classroom and the nature of relationships in the classroom. These comments came from participants in various positions and reflected how the change was evidenced from different perspectives.

*I used to be a stand up at the front of the class, blah blah blah, I'm the boss and this is what you do; I don't do that any more. (Teacher)*

*It's changed the way in which teachers perceive their jobs. Teachers are more proficient, I believe, at handling certain issues themselves; there is less escalation because of the way in which they're being handled. (Principal)*

*The biggest thing I think first of all is that teachers changed their mindset, and changed their behaviour, and changed the way*

*they spoke to children. (Support Staff)*

Schools discussed the importance of continuing professional learning within the school, particularly as some staff tended to revert to old ways of managing behaviour and new staff entered the school:

*We're not into power and we've had some teachers and we've still got them that have come from the systems of where you've got ticks on the board and their names on the board and they're (the students) wrong you know ... We had a new one in here at half year, he put the names up and put the ticks up and we said "Gosh they must have been good heaps of times right?" (laughs) - It's a whole switch you know it's a real switch. (Deputy Principal)*

The school that was in the sixth year of SWPBS implementation discussed ways in which they kept the emphasis on the programme, upskilling new staff and sustaining positive and preventative strategies in the school. Professional learning had not ceased within the school but the school had taken ownership of their own learning needs. All participants believed that outside expertise was essential during the initial training, consultation and implementation but once the programme was embedded it required commitment from the staff to continue to support and lead professional learning in the school.

### **Evidenced-Based Decision Making**

Accompanying the SWPBS framework in both schools is a data collection programme, the School Wide Information System (SWIS). The purpose of SWIS is to track behaviour in the schools. The database is able to identify students, where the incidents occur, when and what type of behaviour as agreed by the school and community; defined as either a minor or major incident. These data are then used to identify where interventions are needed

both school wide and at an individual student level. There was continued evidence throughout the interviews that the staff value the data as evidence of success, enabling the schools to tailor their programmes to meet the needs of the students. Participants reported the importance of the behaviour data in providing evidence that the programme is effective; furthermore, it appears that this evidence supports changing teacher beliefs and actions:

*People are now realising because of the data that this is working. You can't argue with the data, so therefore I think some that might have been fighting it and can't see how this can work, they are seeing it working and it's like we're making a difference. I think that's helped those people to be much more team players, and much more working for the kids. (Support Staff)*

*(Data are important) for me, because I think in the world today, it's data-driven, plain and simple. But the data also gives us our next steps teaching; I think in any academic (area), you need the data to plan your next steps teaching. (Teacher)*

The data provided the evidence that teachers needed to ensure that they were able to articulate why they had made decisions regarding behaviour, and to justify interventions. Furthermore, there was evidence from this research that viewing the data depersonalised the behaviour, allowing the staff to look at the behaviours objectively without making judgments about the individual. This meant that they were able to look at behaviour in a rational and less emotional way.

Data were considered essential in developing meaning from the behaviour. Both schools described interventions designed specifically from the evidence collected through the SWIS programme. The numbers of students in this top tier had reduced dramatically over the years in both schools. Staff in one particular school meets weekly with RTLB to examine the data. RTLB interviews

indicate that the data gathering has meant that the RTLB service has improved in the school as they are more able to be responsive to the needs of the school. They become familiar with the student before they are on the roll; they have knowledge of previous interventions implemented by the school, and agree with the schools when referral should be made. The SWPBS in this school improved the seamlessness of service between the RTLB and the schools.

### **Discussion**

The MOE aims to have 400 schools working within PB4L-SW framework by 2015. Evidence suggests that implementing and sustaining SWPBS in secondary schools is significantly more challenging and has been less successful than in primary schools (Flannery et al., 2009). Secondary schools are much more complex in their design, teachers have significantly less time with students and maintaining consistency in such a large context has proved challenging for many schools (Flannery et al., 2009). Local evidence supporting the significant investment in PBS has not been established. Prior to national implementation PBS has been implemented on a case by case basis predominantly in primary schools. The data from the local implementation have not been collated or distributed to inform the nationwide implementation.

There are several key issues that are raised from this pilot study that may assist schools, Special Education and the MOE during the planned implementation of PB4L-SW. In particular, this research emphasises the importance of community and whānau involvement, ongoing professional learning and data collection to provide an evidence base.

### **Whānau, Culture and Community**

Implementing and sustaining a PBS framework within a school requires collaboration with whānau to ensure that the school reflects the expectations and beliefs of the community. SWPBS is not an intervention in itself (Frey, Lingo & Nelson, 2008) but rather a framework. The success of positive behaviour support within a school is highly dependent not only on the



implementation but also the strategies and interventions that generate the substance within the framework. In each school positive behaviour support is highly variable as schools, students and communities create systems and strategies that fit their school and community culture.

Educational expectations, practices and policies reflect the values of the individuals who create them; as a consequence, judgments about student disruption are infused with cultural norms (Savage, 2009). Furthermore, decisions concerning behavioural expectations and interactions are created within a culturally specific frame (Munroe, 2005). When teachers and students are not of the same culture, as is often the case in New Zealand, cultural discontinuity in schools is likely to occur. Teachers can misperceive their students' culturally specific behaviours, and likewise students may not understand the behavioural expectations of the teacher and school (Cartledge, Singh, & Gibson, 2008). Culturally sensitive and appropriate interventions require adaptations demonstrating "contextual fit" with Māori culture as well as for specific communities (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai, & Richardson, 2003; Glynn & Berryman, 2005; Wearmouth, Glynn, & Berryman, 2005). Meyer and Evans (2006) observe that while the literature has not yet explicitly addressed what might be termed "cultural fit" as an overarching principle, such considerations are conceptually consistent with the systematic investigations of contextual fit that have characterised the PBS literature in particular (cf. Feldman, Condillac, Tough, Hunt & Griffiths, 2002; Schindler & Horner, 2005).

In teaching behavioural expectations and social skills it is essential in our system where inequality is evident that these reflect the needs of the community and don't serve to further alienate youth from our schools. Therefore significant time and attention should be given to authentic consultation that includes the community and focuses on student opportunity and responsibility. Early indications from this research demonstrate that Māori were able to articulate expectations and beliefs through the programme, particularly

within one school where the Māori presence in the community and school was significant. Future research will be needed to examine the extent to which these expectations are communicated to whānau, students and teachers. The MOE intends that the initial roll-out of PB4L-SW will be in decile 1-3 schools (MOE, 2010a). Given the high percentage of Māori in these schools it will be important to examine the part culture and contextual fit will play in the implementation and design of programmes within schools.

### **Professional Learning**

The participants in this research agreed that a significant shift needed to take place in teacher positioning in the classroom and their understandings of behaviour and classroom management. Given that teacher behaviour can be challenging to change, the professional learning programmes supporting the PB4L-SW initiative will need to be carefully thought through. Researchers have found that professional development that is most likely to have an impact on teaching is sustained over time, focuses on specific instructional strategies or content areas, involves teachers collectively rather than individually, is coherent, and uses active learning (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman & Yoon, 2001; Snow-Runner & Lauer 2005).

The evidence in this research suggests that after the initial professional development, capability within the schools, particularly over the six year period, had developed sufficiently to where schools were able to generate their own professional development, meet the needs of new teachers, and continue to address the needs of teachers within the school. School leaders might consider ways in which they are able to formalise this relationship to ensure that staff continue to support one another. This may be particularly important when implemented in secondary schools where there are large numbers of staff who are segmented into various curriculum areas. Peer coaching in the classroom is emerging as an important facet of teacher professional development that is linked with improved student learning (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Neufield & Roper, 2003). Opportunities to mentor

new teachers, to establish critical friendships within schools could be investigated so that positive behaviour support continues to have an impact long after initial implementation.

### **Future Research and Evidence**

Tracking behaviour with a data management system is seen as essential in the two schools that participated in this research. Implementing a data system with the PB4L-SW would accomplish two aims. Firstly schools would have the information to make evidence-based decisions concerning behaviour, and would be able to identify and intervene with students in the secondary and tertiary levels in an objective and meaningful way. Furthermore, schools need to demonstrate that they are purposeful in their intervention and that this intervention meets the needs of the students in the classrooms. Several participants in this research, including support staff, were able to describe the process of prescribing meaning from the data and creating interventions that matched the needs of the students.

Secondly, by embedding a data system along with the philosophical and pedagogical aspects of the framework the Ministry will be able to demonstrate that schools are able to meet the needs of the students by collecting these data. The MOE claims that the implementation of PB4L-SW will result in "better learning environments for all students and staff, improved teacher ability to support children's behaviour and emotional needs, improved engagement in learning, a lift in achievement for students an increase in teacher confidence and satisfaction" (MOE, 2010a, p. 3). Data demonstrating these key indicators could potentially be collected across the implementing schools, not only evidencing success but demonstrating aspects of the framework which may be adapted to fit a New Zealand context.

### **Conclusion**

SWPBS is currently being implemented as part of the PB4L initiative in New Zealand schools. International evidence claims the effectiveness of SWPBS programmes varies amongst schools but most research to date indicates decreases in behavioural

problems and suspension rates (Curtis et al., 2010). Implementation of overseas behavioural packages without local evidence in New Zealand has in the past resulted in previous lost investment in the system. The literature suggests that PBS is heavily reliant on contextual fit and the success of the implementation may rely on the ability of schools and MOE to include community expectations and beliefs during implementation. This pilot study describes the essential components of implementation in two New Zealand primary schools.

Teachers and schools need to be ready to take on new learning and put effort into establishing systems in the school. Students require opportunities to learn and practise new skills, in particular opportunities for leadership and responsibility. During implementation the schools in this research worked to ensure community input; one school in particular reflected the predominantly Māori community expectations in the programme and in social skills teaching. Evidence from this research demonstrated the importance of professional learning as teachers were required to shift long held perceptions about behaviour and learn new skills and strategies. The final theme from this research described the importance of evidence-based decision making throughout implementation and the continuing sustainability of the framework within the school.

A significant opportunity has arisen from the MOE PB4L-SW initiative as 400 schools over the next five years implement the framework. Research is needed in these schools to provide evidence of effectiveness and examine what is required to make the shift to a preventative proactive orientation, the extent to which this is embedded and sustained in schools, the impact of this on student behaviour, and finally the way in which schools reflect Māori and community beliefs and expectations in the framework.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> A school's Decile rating indicates the extent to which it draws its students from low socio-economic communities. Decile 1 schools are the 10% of schools with the highest proportion

of students from low socio-economic communities. Decile 10 schools are the 10% of schools with the lowest proportion of these students ([www.minedu.govt.nz](http://www.minedu.govt.nz))

<sup>2</sup>Unity

<sup>3</sup>Extended family and Community

<sup>4</sup>Prestige, pride, status, spiritual power

<sup>5</sup>Elders

<sup>6</sup>Māori culture practices and beliefs

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