

INTRODUCTION

School safety is a large and critical component of the Federal legislation; *No Child Left Behind Act of 2002*. Under the Act, states must implement programs that protect students and teachers, encourage discipline and personal responsibility, and combat illegal drug use. Goal 3 of USDE's 2002-2007 strategic plan is to "establish safe, disciplined, and drug-free educational environments that foster the development of good character and strong citizenship." Therefore, all schools are called upon to meet the learning, behavioral, and emotional needs of all students. Schools must meet the challenge when specific needs directly affect the capacity to learn.

The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2002*, also holds all public schools to standards to ensure that all students receive a quality education. While this Act mandates sweeping reforms in all aspects of public education, it expands the options and choices for parents whose children are in schools that are failing or are being labeled as persistently dangerous.

School reform has always focused on student achievement. Many reform efforts failed, however, to make the link between achievement and behavior. In some instances resources were directed to instruction with very little emphasis on support systems for students who were having behavioral problems or schools whose climate may have impeded the learning processes.

In the development of programs, services, and strategies to help students and families, certain tenets need to be addressed. All stakeholders must recognize that the educational development of our students is a *process* not a *program*. Therefore, student educational development is an ongoing process. This means that there is a need to focus on helping to meet students' developmental needs and competencies in some way every day of the students' lives. Before schools attempt to meet the educational development of students, it is vital to understand what qualities those students who are successful possess and how those qualities are developed.

Research has identified four qualities of resilient youth, i.e., those children who, regardless of multiple stresses, are successful. First is the quality of social competence, which is the ability to interact and relate positively with peers, family, and other adults. Second is the skill of problem solving, which requires thoughtful analysis of situations, identification of potential problems, and the development of a plan. Third, a sense of autonomy is crucial. This quality enables children to have a belief in their own ability to control their lives and a sense of their own identity of self-worth. Fourth and finally, a sense of purpose and future provides students with high personal expectations, a healthy outlook toward the future, and a desire to achieve and be successful. *Benard, B., 1991, "Fostering resiliency in kids: Protective factors in the family, school, and community", Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.*

Although students may have qualities of resiliency, there are protective factors that schools, families, and communities must provide as the web of support for all students. These factors include caring and supportive relationships, which include significant adult role models; clear

and consistent high expectations, such as high achievement, behavior standards, personal responsibility; and opportunities for all students to participate as valued contributors, such as service learning and membership in teams, clubs, and groups. These protective factors must be incorporated into the programs, practices, procedures, and policies of the schools if we are to help make students the most productive and best citizens that they can become. *Benard, B., 1991, "Fostering resiliency in kids: Protective factors in the family, school, and community", Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.*

Along with the research that identifies those personal qualities and protective factors, which lead to student success, other available research highlights six areas of concern, which school systems need to address in order to assist all students in making the most of their educational environment. The six areas are: (1) enhancing classroom teachers' capacity for addressing problems and for fostering social, emotional, intellectual and behavioral development; (2) enhancing school capacity to handle transition concerns confronting students and their families; (3) responding to, minimizing impact of, and preventing crises; (4) enhancing home involvement; (5) outreaching to the community to build linkages, and collaborations; and (6) providing special assistance to students and their families. *UCLA, Mental Health in Schools Training and Technical Assistance, Summit on New Directions for Student Support, November 2002.*

Based on the recognition of what makes students successful, the Baltimore County Public Schools identifies three core goals:

1. *To improve achievement for all students;*
2. *To maintain a safe and orderly learning environment in every school; and*
3. *To use resources effectively and efficiently.*

These goals support the Baltimore County Public Schools' mission statement, which is to "provide a quality education for all students, one that develops the content knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will enable all students to reach their maximum potential as responsible, life-long learners and productive citizens."

To further cement its commitment to the success of all students, the Baltimore County Public Schools' *Blueprint for Progress, Focused on Quality: Committed to Excellence* serves as the framework for the school system's *Master Plan* for meeting its mission and clearly delineates the school system's performance goals. Performance Goal 4 of the *Blueprint for Progress*, "All students will be educated in school environments that are safe and conducive to learning," is a commitment toward meeting the expectations of all stakeholders in the realm of student behavior and a positive learning environment. These expectations are defined in the context of the following performance indicators:

1. *All schools and communities will maintain safe, orderly, and nurturing environments;*
2. *All schools will have published expectations of student behavior and parental responsibility and involvement;*
3. *Staff, students, parents, and community members will be provided opportunities to express satisfaction with the learning environment, school climate, and school facilities.*

In addition, Performance Goal 6, “Engage parents/guardians, business, and community members in the educational process,” is recognition that in order to provide a quality education for all students in a safe learning environment, schools must have partners to assist in this area. A diagram of the Safe Schools Pyramid graphically shows the connected linkage of school, parent/guardian, interagency partners, business, and community in meeting the needs of all students to ensure that all students will be educated in safe and orderly learning environments.

Based on Federal mandates, State regulations, and Baltimore County Public Schools policies, positive behavior planning and management is crucial to the successful functioning of a school in providing a quality education. This school system’s policies and rules further the commitment to a safe and orderly learning environment, an environment in which learning is not jeopardized by disruptive behavior.

The Baltimore County Public Schools publishes and revises annually its *Student Handbook*. Each student and his/her parent/guardian receives a copy of this handbook, which is designed to inform all students and their families of behavior expectations in accordance with law, policies, and procedures. The *Student Handbook* summarizes integral aspects of a positive learning environment, character education, students’ rights and responsibilities, the school system’s discipline code, and preventative interventions. These are just some of the salient aspects of the valuable information found in this document each school year.

To further ensure that at all times all stakeholders are aware of behavioral expectations, Baltimore County Public Schools has developed the *Critical Incident Response and School Emergency Management Guide*. The purpose of this guide is to make certain that schools and offices use standard and consistent protocols for crisis response situations to quickly and adequately restore the school climate to a safe and orderly environment conducive to positive learning experiences. This guide will be reviewed and updated annually.

The Baltimore County Public Schools also publishes and revises its character education handbook, entitled *How to Establish A Character Education Program in Your School: A Handbook for School Administrators*. Each school based administrator receives a copy of this handbook, which is designed to be used to assist school personnel in teaching values and good character traits directly through the curriculum and indirectly by practice throughout the school. It is expected that the process of teaching values and good character traits be infused in all education.

In addition to establishing the parameters of student behavior, the school system has in place support systems to address the needs of students and their families. Each school has a Student Support Team (SST) as part of the coordinated program of student services referenced in *The Code of Maryland Regulations, Programs of Pupil Services, 13A.05.05*. The mission of this team is to assist all students toward optimal health, as well as personal, interpersonal, academic, and career development in order that students may graduate from high school and become contributing members of the home, the world of work, and the community.

Student Support Team members include, but are not limited to, an assistant principal, school counselor, school nurse, school psychologist, pupil personnel worker, and school social worker. The purpose for the team is to deal effectively with complex problems that interfere with the educational progress of individual students. These problems may be academic, physical, behavioral, social and/or emotional. The team also works together to assist the school's staff in solving a variety of school climate and group educational problems that are preventive and/or remedial in nature. For example, the team may work together to address those students who are continually being referred to the guidance or administrative offices for behavioral reasons. The Student Support Team considers cases and schoolwide issues that require more intensive interdisciplinary consideration and that do not appear to have the need for special education services. A diagram depicting the wide realm of support provided by the Student Support Team is included in this guide.

As an adjunct to the Student Support Team, each school has a copy of the *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Guidelines Manual*. The guidelines found in this manual offer a process and strategies to assist school personnel in working with students effectively who may be diagnosed with ADHD or who have inattentive, impulsive, or hyperactive behaviors which may interfere with the learning process.

School staffs are further supported by the school system in keeping schools safe and orderly by offering professional development and training in various venues. Each year all school-based administrators are expected to attend the Safe Schools Conference. The purpose for the conference is to emphasize processes, programs, procedures, and protocols which may be used by schools in developing and implementing positive behavior and school safety plans.

The first purpose of this *Positive Behavior Planning Guide* is to provide for school-based administrators and school stakeholders "how-to" steps needed to develop and implement effective positive behavior plans to ensure that student achievement will continue to improve in safe and orderly learning environments. The second purpose of this guide is to delineate resource information pertaining to relevant issues, programs, and strategies that can be used in the behavior planning and management process within the schools to address barriers to learning and enhance competent development. The third and final purpose for this guide is to consolidate information regarding positive behavior planning to provide easy access to all stakeholders.

It is recommended that this guide is read and thoroughly discussed before the school's Positive Behavior Planning Committee begins to develop and implement the schoolwide positive behavior plan.