

RSE-TASC REPORTER

LOWER HUDSON REGIONAL SPECIAL EDUCATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT CENTER

Implementation Science: From Dangerous Canyons to Fields of Dreams

By Andrew J. Ecker, Special Education School Improvement Specialist



I recently travelled to San Francisco to hear Dean Fixsen, founder of the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN), deliver a keynote address on Implementation Science. During my flight there I had a birds-eye view to our country's diversely beautiful landscape -- green fields blooming with this season's crops and brown canyons that reminded me of those that Evel Knievel attempted to jump on his motorcycle. As I listened to Fixsen I reflected on how that landscape was a perfect metaphor for the importance of paying attention to implementation drivers during school improvement.

Fixsen noted the last 50 years of national educational reform efforts have had an effect size of zero on student outcomes. He attributed this to both the ineffective implementation of effective practices and the effective implementation of ineffective practices. Fixsen discussed how a research-to-practice gap plagues special education and assured us that we have lots of knowledge. We have the *research* and know what works. We also know the evidence-based *practices* (EBPs), that is, what to do. The gap is the *to* -- we're not getting to implementation. In fact, we are not facing an implementation gap but a chasm with sharp peaks and overwhelming depths.

Until we apply the same intentionality to implementation that we assign to conducting research and identifying practice, Fixsen said, we will continue
(cont. on pg. 3)

Inside this issue:

Implementation Science	1
RSE-TASC Workshops	2
Community Events	3
School Tool	3
Bright Spot	4
Contact Information	4

RSE-TASC REPORTER

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What's Coming Up in Spring & Summer 2016? Lower Hudson RSE-TASC Regional Trainings *What Works for Students with Disabilities*



Mark Your Calendar

School-Wide Systems Transition

May

- Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Commencement Credential, 5/3
- The Forum: Adult Agencies that Serve Individuals with Multiple Disabilities, 5/12 ***WAIT LIST***

June

- CAN*DO (CDOS Association of Networking Districts and Organizations) Consortium—Career Exploration for Students with Disabilities, 6/8

July

- Preparing Students for Employment, 7/12

August

- Graduation Options, 8/16

Behavior & Discipline Supports

May

- PBIS Booster: Data-Based Decision Making, 5/3
- PBIS Regional Forum—Restorative Relationships with Students Who Display Challenging Behavior, 5/17 ***WAIT LIST***
- PBIS Coaches' Forum, 5/24



Individualized Educational Planning and the CSE Process

May

- New CPSE/CSE Chairperson Training (3-Day workshop), 5/2, 5/9 and 5/16 ***WAIT LIST***
- Developing Quality IEPs that Improve Outcomes for Students with Disabilities (2-Day), 5/23 and 6/6 ***WAIT LIST***

June

- Development and Measurement of Effective IEP Goals (2-Day), 6/10 and 6/15 ***WAIT LIST***

August

- Developing Quality IEPs that Improve Outcomes for Students

with Disabilities (2-Day), 8/23 & 24

Leadership

May

- Special Education for Principals, 5/17

July

- Developing Core Instructional and Behavior Supports—For Administrators, 7/13

Instructional Practices

May

- Literacy for English Language Learners: What's Different?, 5/4
- Literacy for English Language Learners: What's Different?, 5/20 ***WAIT LIST***

July

- Explicit Instruction: Providing Access to Curriculum for Struggling Students (3-Day), 7/12, 13 & 14

August

- Specially Designed Instruction for ELLs (3-Day), 8/16, 17 & 18
- Language Acquisition vs. Learning Disability, 8/24
- Literacy for English Language



To Register for our Regional Workshops

Please go to www.pnwboces.org/catalog to register online. Click on the down arrow next to the box that says "Click one or more options...", then select RSE-TASC and click "Search". Scroll down the webpage until you see the workshop in which you are interested and then click on its name to see details and enroll.

Community Events

- **Managing Student Anxiety— Building Grit and Resiliency**; 5/2/16, Curriculum Center at PNW BOCES, www.pnwboces.org/catalog
- **Addressing Disproportionate Suspension Rates: Taking Action to Support our Students**; 5/3/16, TAC-D at NYU, rw81@nyu.edu or visit their [website](#).
- **Foundations Level 3**; 5/4/16, The Hudson River Teacher Center at PNW BOCES, www.pnwboces.org/catalog
- **An Overview of Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) Skills and Strategies Conference**; 5/5/16, Rockland County Department of Mental Health, (845) 364-2382
- **Foundations Level 2**; 5/5/16, The Hudson River Teacher Center at PNW BOCES, www.pnwboces.org/catalog
- **WRS Introductory Workshop**; begins 5/10/16, The Hudson River Teacher Center at PNW BOCES, www.pnwboces.org/catalog
- **Scaffolds for Complex Text Grades 6-8, presented by Patricia Krizan**; 5/12, Rockland BOCES, www.rocklandboces.org
- **Planning for your Student's Transition: Understanding Diploma Requirements, Options and Exiting Credentials**; 5/17/16, HVSEPC, email lbencosme@wihd.org
- **Wilson Just Words**; begins 5/17/16, The Hudson River Teacher Center at PNW BOCES, www.pnwboces.org/catalog
- **Transition Planning for Families— Preparing for Life after High School**; 5/17/16, WIHD, email info@wihd.org
- **Skills Training for Emotional Problem Solving for Adolescents (STEPS-A)**; begins 5/18/16, Guidance & Child Study Center at PNW BOCES, www.pnwboces.org/catalog
- **Making Language Learning Essential and Effective: Instructional Strategies to Meet the Needs of All Learners**; 5/20/16, SW BOCES, www.swboces.org
- **NYSABE 2016 Conference— Changing Policies, New Directions: Bilingual Education Paving the Way to Every Student's Success**; 5/21/16, NYC, www.nysabe.net
- **The Art of the Literary Response in Grades 2-5**; 5/26/16, Rockland BOCES, www.rocklandboces.org

School Tool: Sugai's Law

George Sugai, Co-Director of the National Center on PBIS, discussed starting an implementation process at the RSE-TASC *Interconnected Systems* conference last June. Sugai outlined three early steps:

1. identify one practice you will do tomorrow that you have not done before;
2. identify one practice you are currently doing that you will consider *not* doing tomorrow; and



**For every
new
initiative,
stop two current
ones!**

3. identify one enhancement you can make in your teaching environment to increase the likelihood of doing the above. Implementation of a new practice requires such focus that we must remove one or two items from our plate – regardless of its effectiveness. Fixsen (2016) called this logic, *Sugai's Law*.

(cont. from pg. 1)

to experience the same outcomes. Failure to address implementation as we work to improve student outcomes is tantamount to hoping Evel Knievel would land his motorcycle on the other side of the canyon, and instead watching him fall back off the ledge. We must no longer hurl research about practices across the canyon but strategically build the structures to

support implementation of those practices and improved student outcomes.

One example of effective implementation is PBIS (Positive Behavioral and Intervention Supports). Since 1997, PBIS implementation has increased nationally from 1,000 schools to approximately 21,000 schools. Fixsen and Blase (2008) deem PBIS the most scaled-up EBP in

the human services field (Fixsen & Blase, 2008). They attribute this to three factors: 1) PBIS implementation has consistently improved student academic, behavioral, and social-emotional outcomes; 2) the school-wide PBIS framework includes specific implementation processes; and 3) PBIS is generalizable for all students

(cont. on pg. 4)

RSE-TASC REPORTER

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(cont. from pg. 3)

and all settings. PBIS has not flourished by chance, it has flourished because it privileges implementation structures.

You and your team might be thinking about newly implementing an EBP next school year. Start with Sugai's Law (see School Tool on page 3) and read *Implementation Research: A Synthesis of the Literature* (Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005). If we focus on implementation

we will build the bridge, and stop jumping motorcycles across the canyons. Instead we will strategically walk over vibrant fields to improve our students' outcomes and realize their dreams. *If we build it, they will come.*

References

- Fixsen, D. L. (2016, March). *Evidence-based implementation of evidence-based innovation: Scaling positive outcomes in human services systems*. Paper presented at the 13th International Conference on Positive Behavior Support, San Francisco, CA.
- Fixsen, D. L. & Blase, K. A. (2008, March). *Implementation: The secret to using science in human service settings*. Paper presented at the

- Fifth International Conference on Positive Behavior Support, Chicago, IL.
- Fixsen, D. L., Naoom, S. F., Blase, K. A., Friedman, R. M., & Wallace, F. (2005). *Implementation research: A synthesis of the literature*. Tampa, FL: University of South Florida, Retrieved from <http://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/sites/nirn.fpg.unc.edu/files/resources/NIRN-MonographFull-01-2005.pdf>.
- Sugai, G. (2015, June). *How are PBIS and ISF related to emotional wellness?* Paper presented at Interconnected Systems: Bringing Together School and Community to Improve Outcomes for all Students, White Plains, NY. Retrieved from <http://www.pbis.org/Common/Cms/files/pbisresources/Overview%20ISF%209%20Jun%202015%20HAND.pdf>

Bright Spot!

Our Bright Spot this month comes from teachers at Graham Elementary school in Mount Vernon who are implementing a district initiative on differentiating through small group Literacy Workstations with support from RSE-TASC Special Education School Improvement Specialist Denise Jaffe.

What did the students achieve? Here's what their teachers report:

- ⇒ Students are definitely using higher level thinking, collaborating and asking each other for advice. I have seen major growth with student independence as I see them thinking about, "what do I do next?" Denise Grant, grade 3
- ⇒ Changed the mindset of my students, especially in writing, to "I can do it". They see value being in school and learning and are able to make better choices for themselves, especially with strategies to help them with reading. Glenda Sanchez, grade 5
- ⇒ Huge growth with fluency and my students are completing their homework. Cassandra Carbone, grade 4
- ⇒ The most progress I've seen my students make. Andrea Gelling, grade 6

What instructional practice or systemic change supported this student success?

Here are some of the critical elements teachers identified:

- ◇ The relationships I was able to establish with all students with small groups every day. Implementing choices for homework was very motivating for my students.
- ◇ The consistent established routines have helped students focus and eliminate many of the behavior issues.
- ◇ I am meeting my students where they are.

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