



Combining School and Family-Centered Interventions: A Pilot Study in Prevention

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Abstract

Although school-wide PBS has been shown to reduce problem behaviors among students, approximately 15-20% of students are still in need of more selective interventions due to disruptive behavior problems. Given that both school (see Reinke & Herman, 2002) and family factors (Banks, et al., 1993) contribute to behavior problems in children, combining interventions that target both the school environment and family context is expected to further improve outcomes for those students. An ecological model combining PBS and the Family Check-up is proposed to prevent and reduce behavior problems in children.

PBS

PBS is a three tiered, school-wide continuum service model whereby all students receive universal prevention support marked by consistent rules and consequences, encouragement, and clear expectations across all school settings (Sugai, Sprague, Horner, & Walker, 2000). At all three levels, PBS focuses on behavior within environmental contexts by targeting multiple systems within the school including classrooms, non-classroom settings, and individual student and adult staff behavior.

The Family Check-Up

The Family Check-up (FCU) is a three-tiered family intervention that provides supports along a service continuum, similar to the PBS model (Dishion & Kavanaugh, 2003; Dishion & Stormshak, 2007). At the universal level, all families are provided basic services and support via a school Family Resource Center. At the selected and indicated levels, at-risk students are identified and families are offered a three session FCU consisting of: (1)Initial intake interview, including questionnaire completion, identification of concerns and goals; (2) Ecological assessment, including gathering information from multiple sources regarding peer relations, family context, and child adjustment; and (3) Feedback and motivation, where results are shared with parents and an intervention menu is presented.

Integration of PBS and FCU

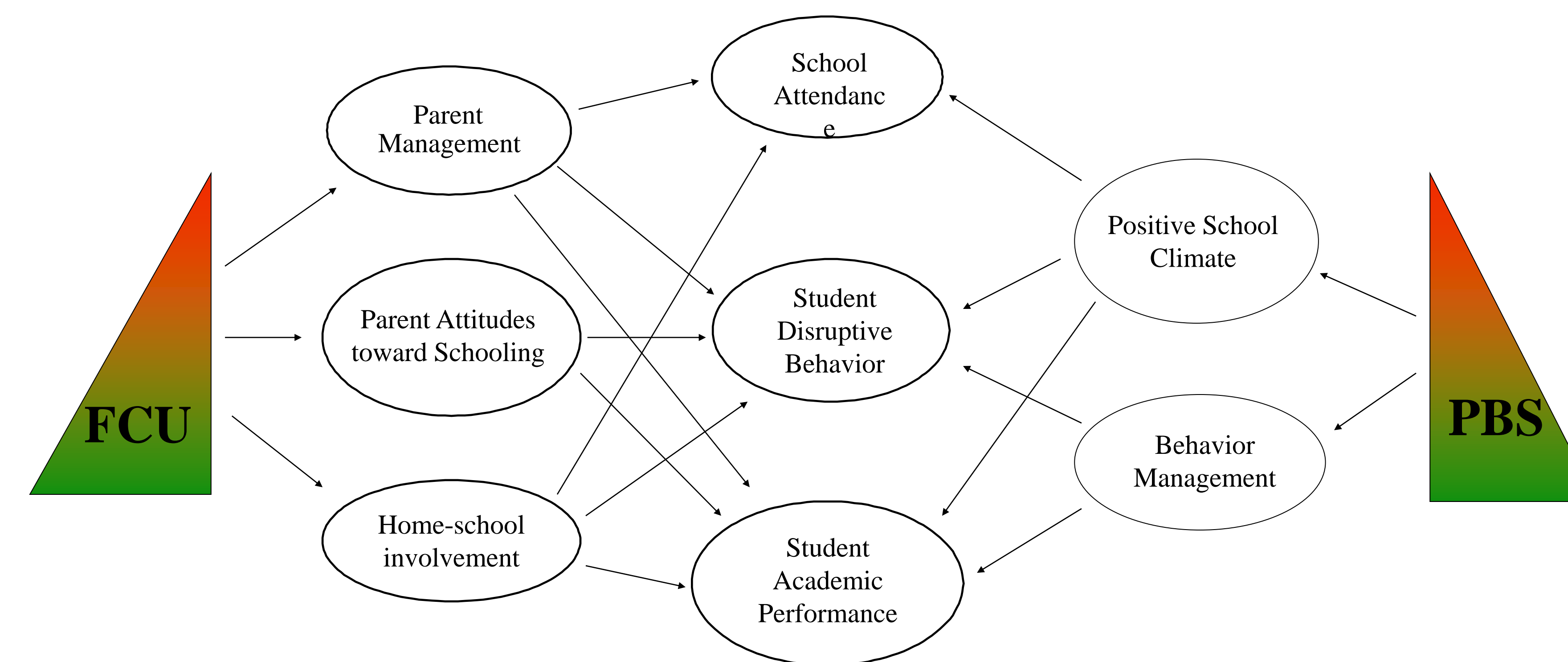
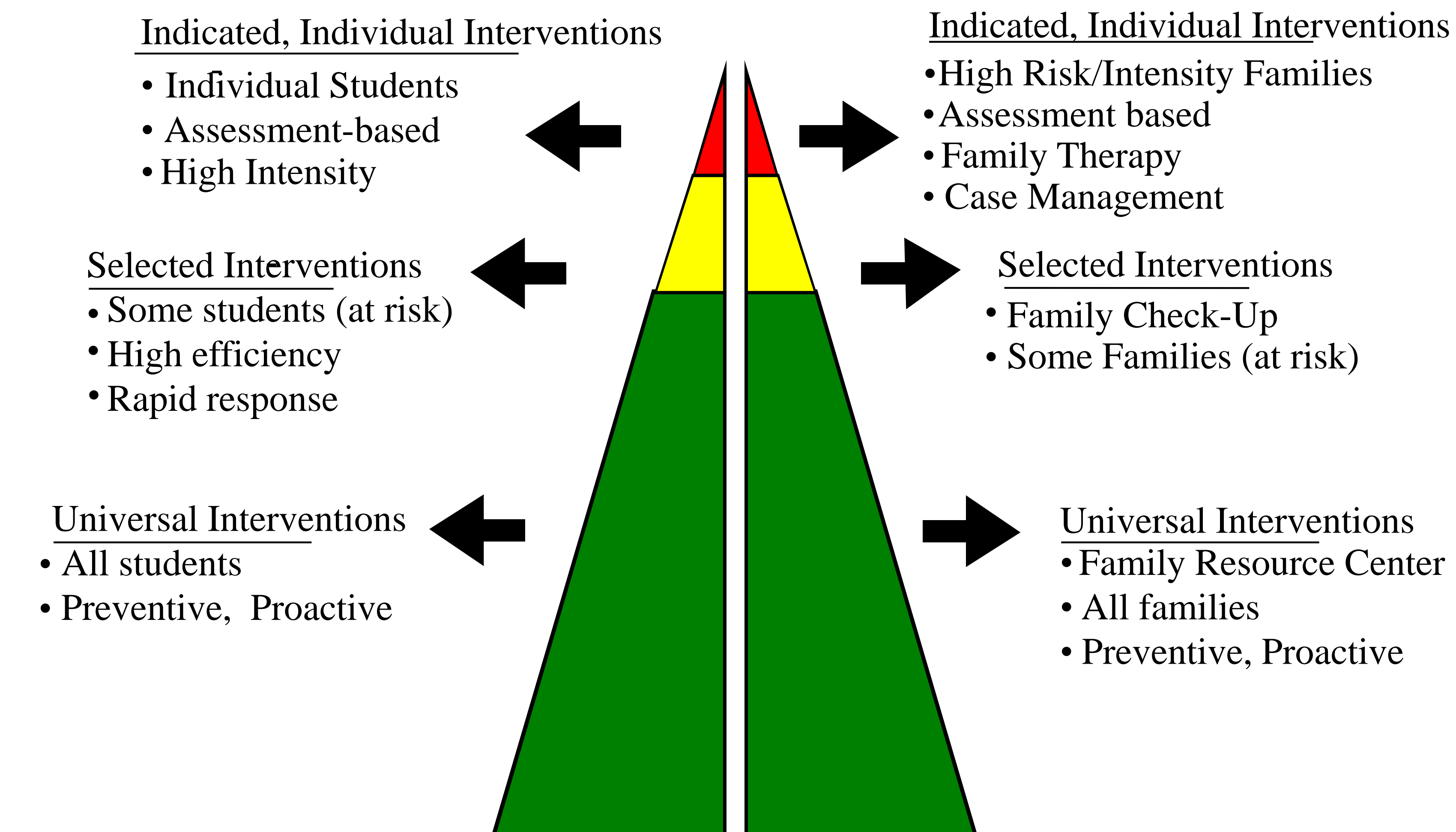
Utilizing the merged model of PBS and FCU (see illustration), a continuum of support to families would be offered via the Family Resource Center such as:

~ *Universal: parenting tips and strategies*

~ *Selective & Indicated: family assessments of both strengths and weaknesses within the family unit; menu of services for family support that can be chosen by the family to meet their specific needs*

Ongoing PBS data collection (e.g., office discipline referrals) would provide information about students who could be possible candidates for the FCU, as well as provide ongoing monitoring to determine the effectiveness of family-based interventions.

Positive Behavior Support



Logistics

Who implements the FCU? School counselor or home-school liaisons could be trained in the FCU. These are natural implementers as they are already part of the school setting who currently work with families.

What training do they need? Training in effective behavior support planning (e.g., FBA's) and effective family therapy would be ideal. Family Consultants would be trained in the FCU and Motivational Interviewing.

What does it cost? Costs include training, materials, and designated time for the Family Consultant to conduct the intervention.

Pilot Site

A pilot site will utilize this model within a school-based Family Resource Center in a small, predominantly Caucasian, rural Missouri town. The school district has a total of 1400 students. The FCU will be implemented in one primary school (K-2) and one elementary school (3-5). Utilizing PBS office discipline data, students will be identified as candidates for the FCU and families will be contacted to discuss student concerns and the FCU intervention. Research faculty and graduate students will implement the FCU and family-centered interventions to identified families. Additionally, they will work directly with the PBS behavior support team to develop school-based interventions, providing comprehensive services across school and home.

Methods & Procedures

Students will be identified as potential participants in receiving additional services through the FCU if they have either 1) received at least two disciplinary referrals over the previous academic year or 2) received a special education referral for behavioral concerns. Families and potential participants who agree to participate will be offered the Family Check-Up. Approximately 20 students and families will be included in the study.

Measures

Pre and post-test measures to assess the intervention's efficacy include:

- ~Students' academic performance, behavior and school attendance
- ~Parent management, attitudes toward schooling, & home-school involvement
- ~Fidelity of PBS and FCU
- ~Feasibility and acceptability of intervention model

Embedded Multiple Baseline Design

Within the larger study, the researchers will follow a subset of 4 students utilizing a time series multiple baseline design and will stagger treatment settings for each of the 4 subset participants over time. While neutral observers will record direct observations of student disruptive behavior daily, each of the four students will either be receiving: (1) school-based supports from the PBS behavior support team without input from the Family Consultant (i.e., treatment as usual), or (2) support from the Family Consultant through the FCU. The daily observation data will be used to analyze variability within and between each phase for changes in trend, level, immediacy of effect, overlap, and similarity of effects in similar conditions rather than only looking at overall effects (Parsonson & Baer, 1978).