

AN EVALUATION OF A PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASS
PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL
DISABILITIES

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DAMIAN PETINO

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APPROVED: _____
Charles Maher, Psy.D.

Lewis Gantwerk, Psy.D.

DEAN: _____
Stanley Messer, Ph.D.

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ABSTRACT

The education of high school students with emotional and behavioral disorders continues to be a challenging endeavor for all school professionals. Frequently, such students are educated in restrictive special education placements, outside of public school settings. In an effort to provide a less restrictive educational and valuable experience for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities, as well as in an attempt to contain educational costs, an increasing number of school districts have designed programs to serve this population within the public school setting. This dissertation documents the process of planning and conducting an evaluation of a special education classroom-based program designed to meet the needs of suburban high school students with emotional and behavioral disorders within the public school setting. The evaluation phase of Maher's program planning and evaluation framework (2000) was utilized as basis for providing evaluative information to the director of special services of the suburban school district in which the program had been implemented. The results of the program evaluation are presented along with the conclusions that were drawn regarding the program's ability to address the needs of its students, the implementation of the program in relation to its design, the reactions of people involved with the program, and academic outcomes for participants. Recommendations for continued program development and improvement are provided, along with suggested areas for further investigation. Reflections on the process of utilizing the program planning and evaluation framework are included as well as the benefits, challenges, and limitations of being a participant-observer in the evaluation process.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to document the process of conducting an evaluation of a special education, classroom-based program designed to serve students with emotional and behavioral disorders in the public school setting. The program, named the Behavior Support Program (or BSP), was evaluated using the evaluation phase of Maher's (2000) program planning and evaluation framework to guide the process. The author/evaluator was employed as a school psychologist and provided counseling services to students in the BSP at the time of the evaluation, thereby making him a participant-observer in the process. This chapter provides a brief overview of the challenges involved in educating students with emotional and behavioral needs and the relevance of the evaluation of special classroom-based programs within the public school context. An overview of the dissertation task is also provided, which outlines the content of each chapter.

Introduction

The education of students classified as "emotionally disturbed" has been a challenging and controversial endeavor for generations of educators and psychologists. Over forty-six years ago, in 1962, Haring and Philips cited the heterogeneity within this

special education category as a primary factor in the difficulties that both researchers and practitioners had encountered in developing effective methods of instruction and intervention to serve this population in the schools. The category of “emotionally disturbed” continues to encompass a variety of psychological and behavioral disorders, each with their own treatment and educational needs. Wiley and colleagues (2008) called the pursuit of evidence-based practice for students with ED a “chimerical endeavor” if researchers do not account for the variability within this special education category.

In examining the literature of the past forty-six years since Haring and Phillips (1962) cited heterogeneity of the population as a problem in the education of emotionally disturbed students, it would appear that little progress has been made. Arguments for inclusion in the general education classroom have yielded recent trends towards educating ED students in the public school setting, yet many of these students are still served by programs outside of the student’s home district, removed from non-disabled peers. One possible explanation for this lack of progress in educating ED students could be that effective programs to serve this population often need to be specific to the context of each school district rather than driven by empirical research that may be generalized to the target population. Odom and colleagues (2005), for example, state that before a researcher can answer a question regarding whether a practice is effective in special education, they must first answer the question “for whom the practice is effective and in what context” (p. 139). With a target population as diverse as emotionally disturbed adolescents, the school context is a crucial factor in program development.

Rather than employing the findings of empirical research to drive the development of a program in the public school setting, another approach is to evaluate a

given program within its school context in order to inform the further development of the program. In this approach, the goal of the evaluation is not to conduct research or generate empirical data, but rather to gather focused and specific information that may be utilized to drive program development (Spaulding, 2008). The dissertation task proposed and completed in this document was to examine a specific classroom-based program within a public school context that serves a small population of students classified as emotionally disturbed.

This dissertation focuses on the process of evaluating the current state of a special education program, called the Behavioral Support Program (BSP), serving approximately sixteen students identified as having emotional and behavioral needs that cannot be met satisfactorily by an inclusive, general education environment. The client served by the evaluation was the Director of Special Services for a regional high school district in Northwestern New Jersey in which the BSP was implemented. The process of evaluation utilized the evaluation phase of the Program Planning and Evaluation Framework (Maher, 2000) as a guide to systematically address the evaluative needs of this client, while implementing the BSP within a public school context. The author/evaluator utilized the twelve steps of the evaluation phase in order to accomplish the following: 1. Develop and implement an organized and systematic evaluation plan. 2. Develop a series of recommendations for the client, who can, in turn make informed decisions regarding the direction of the BSP. 3. Evaluate the program evaluation in terms of its utility, propriety, practicality, and technical defensibility. The writer/evaluator was considered a participant-observer in the evaluation process, as he was involved in the BSP as a provider of counseling and support services at the time of data collection and evaluation.

Relevance of the Evaluation of Special Class Programs Within the Public School Setting

The documentation of the process of evaluating the Behavioral Support Program is relevant beyond the scope of providing information to a local school district setting because the challenges facing this district are not necessarily unique. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, through its latest reauthorization (IDEIA, 2004), continues to mandate the provision of a Free and Appropriate Public Education to students with disabilities, including those with severe emotional and behavioral disabilities that affect their academic performance. School administrators across the country face the challenge of providing an appropriate education to high school students whose behavioral and emotional needs cannot be met in the least restrictive environment of the general education classroom.

Also, while the Director of Special Services was motivated to evaluate the BSP in order to inform programmatic improvements, recent state initiatives provided an extra incentive to conduct the evaluation. At the time of the evaluation, The New Jersey Department of Education was directing school districts to reduce the number of students placed in out-of-district settings, and attempting to consolidate special class programs within the school districts of a given county that may serve similar target populations (NJAC: Title 6A: Chapter 23A). One reason that the client was interested in evaluating the BSP was to determine if it was an effective allocation of resources and, if so, explore the possibility of providing additional resources to the program to create an alternative to sending the target population to out-of-district settings. If the BSP was considered an

alternative placement within the school district, it could satisfy both the needs of its target population and address these state mandates while saving the district money each year in its annual special education budget. This is not a goal that is unique to this particular school district.

Typically, it requires more resources to educate students with significant emotional and or behavioral problems. A 2006 report on the cost of education in the State of New Jersey reported that it cost an additional 45% to educate students who are considered “at-risk” due to emotional/behavioral problems, with approximately 10% of all students with such disabilities attending out-of-district placements (Dupree, 2006). Districts throughout the State of New Jersey continue to seek more effective ways of meeting the needs of this target population of students while still containing the costs necessary to provide them with an appropriate education. While many districts do not contain programs similar to the BSP, the Office of Special Education Programs recently presented an array of supports to Directors of Special Education throughout the State aimed at including more students in the general education environment (NJOSPEP, 2008). Overall, it is becoming increasingly clear that the State of New Jersey Department of Education is aiming to provide increasing supports in the public school setting to students with a variety of disabilities, including those with emotional and behavioral problems.

In addition to State initiatives, the Federal government continues to emphasize accountability and cost-effectiveness in the schools. The No Child Left Behind legislation enacted by President George W. Bush in 2001 called for increased accountability in the schools as a result of programs that were continuously funded without indication regarding their effectiveness or impact on target populations (NCLB,

H.R. I). Programs that are not found to be effective, or at least examine and address issues with their own implementation and design, are more likely to lose funding or support in an era of accountability. As the economic crisis of the past two years has continued to create changes in school budgets and an increased public interest in the appropriation of money collected through taxes, the accountability and monitoring of educational programs in the public schools continues to reside at the forefront of local, state, and federal political agendas.

The dissertation task of evaluating the BSP is not only relevant because of current State and Federal initiatives, but it also provides further documentation regarding the use of the Program Planning and Evaluation Framework (Maher, 2000) and its usefulness in evaluating a school-based program. If utilizing Maher's framework for evaluation is useful within this context, not only could the future development of the BSP benefit, but the documented process could also benefit schools with similar programming needs. While previous dissertations have examined the use of the Program Planning and Evaluation Framework to evaluate early intervention programs for students with behavioral needs (most recently Butler, 2007), the Behavioral Support Program is much smaller in scale, and it is designed for students at the high school level. Also, previous evaluation approaches have been documented in educational literature, and demonstrate some of the challenges presented to the evaluator when evaluating educational programs designed to meet the needs of students with behavioral/emotional needs (DeSouza & Sivewright, 1993, George, 1989, Grosenick, 1990). The evaluation documented in this dissertation would further articulate the challenges, as well as the utility, practicality, propriety, and technical defensibility of such school-based program evaluations.

Dissertation Task

The focus of this dissertation task was to document the program evaluation process in a “real world” setting. The evaluation process followed the framework proposed by Maher (2000) to systematically examine the BSP based upon the needs of the evaluation client. While Maher’s framework (2000) outlines four phases of the program planning and evaluation process: clarification, design, implementation, and evaluation, this dissertation utilizes the evaluation phase. Further explanation of this framework is provided in Chapter 3. In conducting the program evaluation, it was made clear to all participants that the program itself was being evaluated and not the staff involved in the BSP. The information collected from the program evaluation would be organized and analyzed, and the results would provide the basis for conclusions regarding the current iteration of the program and recommendations for further program development.

The first step in the evaluation phase was to identify the client, who in this case was the Director of Special Services. The next step in evaluating the BSP was to determine the client’s needs for program evaluation. Two meetings with the Director of Special Services were scheduled and conducted in order to determine his needs for evaluation. Through collaboration with the Director of Special Services, a list of the following four program evaluation questions was created, and will be addressed in this dissertation:

1. To what extent is the Behavioral Support Program addressing the needs of its students?
2. To what extent is the Behavioral Support Program being implemented according to its design?
3. What are the reactions of the individuals involved in the BSP?
4. How have the students benefited academically from the program?

The BSP had existed in this high school for twelve years, with an original program design document driving its implementation in its first years of development. In the past twelve years, the program has evolved, however, with little documentation regarding its development. Six years ago, a consultant evaluated the program and generated an evaluation report. The original program design from twelve years ago and the evaluation report from six years ago were both utilized to provide this participant-evaluator with both context and perspective on the program's evolution prior to his own involvement in the BSP. Since it was determined that the only existing design document was from twelve years ago, the program needed to be placed into evaluable form by the author. By being directly involved in the BSP as a counselor and case manager, the author was able to place the program into evaluable form with the first-hand knowledge of a participant-observer.

Once the program was placed into an evaluable form and the needs of the Director of Special services were determined, the evaluation questions were used to create specific evaluation protocols, which outlined the procedures for data collection and analysis. The

Superintendent of schools approved the evaluation plan prior to the data collection process.

The remaining chapters of this dissertation will contain documentation of the process of evaluation, the results of the evaluation, recommendations regarding the BSP, and evaluation of the evaluation. Specifically, Chapter 2 will contain a review of the relevant literature in the following areas: program evaluation in the public schools, the education of high school students identified as “emotionally disturbed,” evaluations of high school behavior programs, and the participant observer as a qualitative methodology. In Chapter 3, the program evaluation framework utilized will be described in detail. Chapter 4 will contain a description of the BSP program in evaluable form. In Chapter 5, the program evaluation plan will be delineated. Chapter 6 will contain the results of the data collection procedures. In Chapter 7, an evaluation of the program evaluation will be presented. The final chapter, Chapter 8, will discuss the conclusions and recommendations for further program development, along with commentary on the process of conducting the evaluation, and the effect of being a participant-observer on the process.

Conclusion

This chapter presented an overview of the dissertation task, its relevance, and the format of the preceding chapters. The purpose of this dissertation is to document the process of utilizing the evaluation phase of Maher’s program planning and evaluation framework (2000) to evaluate a special education class program designed to serve high school students with emotional and behavioral disorders in the public school setting. The

author was also considered a participant-observer in the evaluation process.

Documenting the evaluation process is contextually relevant because it will provide information for the further development of the Behavior Support Program. State and Federal initiatives suggest that the evaluation of the BSP is relevant beyond the immediate context of the program itself. In the chapters that follow, the author presents a review of the relevant literature, a description of the program evaluation approach, the evaluable program design, the program evaluation plan, the results of the evaluation, the evaluation of the evaluation, and the conclusions and recommendations for further program development.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Abstract

The literature review provided in this chapter is focused on the dissertation task and includes four sections. The first section provides a brief overview of program evaluation as it relates to the public school setting. Given the increased accountability in the public schools through recent Federal and State initiatives, evaluation is becoming increasingly important in looking at public school programs. This section describes the benefits of systematic and organized program evaluation in the public schools. Also, attention is given to several models of program evaluation and the types of information that they can provide. Reasons for conducting evaluations in the schools are also presented in this section.

The second section presents information regarding the education of emotionally disturbed adolescents. A brief historical context is provided, along with a discussion of the variability found within the population of students classified as “emotionally disturbed,” and its effects on research and practice in the schools. Current issues in the education of students identified as ED are examined, including the use of school-wide positive behavior supports as well as functional behavior analysis in addressing the needs of this population.

In the third section, previous evaluations of high school behavior programs are presented briefly as well as a discussion of the value of examining other evaluation reports for such programs. Finally, the fourth section provides a brief summary of the literature involving participant-observer evaluation as research methodology, its benefits, and limitations.

Program Evaluation in the Public Schools

The evaluation of educational programs in the public school setting continues to be a relevant and important endeavor because it can provide stakeholders such as program personnel, school administrators, and government-funding agencies with valuable information regarding the effectiveness of a wide variety of school programming. The information gained through a systematic program evaluation can inform the decision-making process pertaining to that particular program. This is an important distinction between program evaluation and conducting school-based research. Research is usually intended to further our general understanding of a given topic and to inform practice, whereas a program evaluation seeks to inform the specific decision-making that takes place regarding a given program (Spaulding, 2008). In this context, a program is defined as a configuration of resources, organized to add value to an individual, group, or organization (Maher, 2000). Therefore, it is important to note that the results of a program evaluation, conducted within a given context, is only relevant to that context, and should not be interpreted as research that can be generalized.

In order to deliver effective programs for children with special needs, Maher & Bennett (1984) note that it is important to carefully plan, carry out, and modify these

programs according to the changing conditions and needs of the target population. Program evaluation requires a gathering of information about the various elements of a program so that value judgments can be made about the program (Maher, 2000). Such value judgments include decisions regarding: the need for the program, the appropriateness of its goals, implementation of the program, and the outcomes of the program (Maher & Bennett, 1984, Spaulding, 2008).

While efforts to evaluate programs in the schools can be informal, Maher and Bennett (1984) note that this approach is limiting because it does not often lead to the development of an explicit plan to guide the future efforts of staff. Also, informal approaches are not systematic, often disorganized, and often do not lead to further development of the program.

Several approaches to program evaluation exist. Two approaches, positivist and constructivist, are presented by Dore and Lightburn (2006). Positivist evaluation involves statistically testing a hypothesized causal relationship between program elements and outcomes. Constructivist evaluation focuses on understanding the process of program development and implementation. Dore and Lightburn (2006) discuss similarities between constructivist approaches to program evaluation and a community-based approach to clinical practice. A constructivist evaluation is collaborative and emphasizes context and its impact on program design, implementation, and outcomes. Also, constructivist evaluation involves, and elicits input from, participants in the program. This approach is practical in public school settings because of the importance that is placed on context and the influence it has on the program's development and implementation.

Spaulding (2008) describes four different models or approaches to program evaluation, with emphasis on the method in which the evaluation is conducted. The first method, and most commonly used approach in the school setting, is the objective-based approach. In this model, the evaluation objectives are explicitly determined and facilitate the development of data collection materials and a series of evaluation benchmarks. This provides a systematic framework for conducting the evaluation, as advocated by Maher and Bennett (1984). One limitation of the objective-based evaluation approach is that the evaluator could overlook any unanticipated outcomes or benefits that may occur as a result of the program because he/she could be too focused on the evaluation objectives (Spaulding, 2008). The opposite approach, the goal-free approach, emphasizes a search for unintended outcomes, but is often more descriptive and not systematic enough to be considered valid by funding mechanisms that often want to see outcomes based on explicit objectives.

Another approach to program evaluation discussed in Spaulding (2008) is the expertise-oriented evaluation. In this type of evaluation, a school collects its own evaluation data and submits it to a content expert for review. This content expert acts as a “judge” and often makes determinations regarding the program based on the data received. An example of this process might be when a high school seeks to start an accredited International Baccalaureate program.

The final program evaluation approach described by Spaulding (2008) is the participatory-oriented evaluation. In this model, the evaluator will include participants in the evaluation process including, but not limited to, such activities as the development of instruments, collection of data, analysis of data, and reporting of findings.

There are three reasons to conduct a program evaluation in the public school environment (Dore and Lightburn, 2006, Spaulding, 2008). One is that it helps to develop and implement new services and programs. Also, evaluation can inform and contribute to the improvement of established programs. Finally, it can communicate program results. Three forms of evaluation have been identified to fulfill these objectives in school and community settings.

While Dore and Lightburn (2006) use the terms formative, process, and outcome, to describe these three forms of evaluation, Spaulding (2008) chooses the terms formative, summative, and mixed. Both sources are describing similar forms of evaluation, but from varying perspectives. Formative evaluation, as described by Dore and Lightburn (2006), informs the development of new programs and involves conducting a needs assessment and a pilot study. The evaluation staff is involved in the design and development of the program from its inception. The needs assessment is sometimes used as part of a periodic program review to help identify changes in context that may affect the program. Similarly, Spaulding (2008) describes formative evaluation as providing information that is reported back to the program director or client in a timely manner so that it can directly influence changes made to the program as it is occurring. His model of formative evaluation is not limited to the development of a new program, but describes an ongoing process of program review that informs programmatic change.

Outcome evaluation, as described by Dore and Lightburn (2006), involves making value judgments regarding the program's effectiveness in achieving its goals. This may be time consuming and often requires continuous data collection. Spaulding (2008) uses the term "summative evaluation" to describe this type of evaluation. Typically, a

summative evaluation takes place at the end of a program year or cycle to see if program benchmarks, goals, and/or objectives are reached.

Spaulding (2008) used the term “mixed evaluation” when both summative and formative evaluation activities are taking place at the same time. He also points out that formative evaluation is another characteristic of program evaluation that distinguishes the process from empirical educational research because it can continuously inform the process of program development and change in a timely manner.

The term process evaluation is used to describe a programmatic “snapshot” that is taken once the program is running, and examining the implementation of the program itself. Evaluators conducting a process evaluation must be familiar with the day-to-day practice of the program (Dore & Lightburn, 2006). Process evaluation often elicits qualitative data through interviewing staff and reviewing program records. This type of evaluation is particularly helpful in the schools as the data derived from process evaluations is specific to the program itself and can aide staff in program improvement and staff needs. One limitation to this “snapshot,” however, is the extent to which the evaluation data can be generalized. The data collected may not pertain to other programs of similar design, nor may it be relevant to the evaluated program after a period of time has passed.

Spaulding (2008) does not use the term “process evaluation” presumably because the author immediately differentiates between evaluation and research. The use of program evaluation information to generalize findings outside of the context itself is not the purpose of an evaluation. Some evaluators have expressed a more assertive stance. Patton (1997) suggests that program staff must utilize the results of a program evaluation

to make decisions regarding the program in order to make the evaluation useful and a worthwhile appropriation of resources. In order to conduct useful, practical, proprietary, and technically defensible program evaluations in the schools (Maher, 2000), evaluators suggest training programs for school evaluators to include “real-world” evaluations and a “hands-on” approach to evaluation experiences (Trevisan, 2002).

Education of High School Students Identified as “Emotionally Disturbed”

Before examining the current research on the education of emotionally disturbed high school students, it is important to explore the historical context in which this endeavor takes place. The roots of special education services for students classified as emotionally disturbed are difficult to trace because, although these disorders have long been recognized, it is only relatively recently that systematic special education services for these students have been developed (Kauffman, 2001).

Prior to the 1800’s, children and adolescents with any type of disability were typically treated with abuse, neglect, and unwarranted medical treatment (i.e. bleeding or purging) in part because they were usually considered to be possessed by Satan (Despert, 1965). Youth with behavioral or emotional problems were often criminally prosecuted as adults, and it was not until the American and French revolutionary periods that people began to think differently about this population of young men and women. The work of Phillipe Pinel, Jean Marc Gaspard Itard, and Benjamin Rush were considered revolutionary at the time because they were all physicians who determined that a compassionate, patient, and respectful treatment program could result in positive results and progress with these formerly “deranged” and “idiotic” patients (Kauffman, 2001).

Despite these changes in perspective in the late 18th century, the 19th century is often dismissed as an “unimportant era in the field of emotional or behavioral disorders” because youth with emotional/behavioral problems were often classified as mentally retarded (Kauffman, 2001). This statement could be considered inaccurate though as, by the middle of the century, some students with emotional and behavioral problems were provided with specific, individualized educational programs at asylums often labeled education for “idiots.” While the label of “idiot” is insensitive by today’s standards, some of these programs were based on individual assessment, systematic, highly structured, multi-sensory, and used positive reinforcement to foster daily living skills (Despert, 1965). These early programs were considered “moral therapy” and may be considered condescending by today’s standards, however, they were the first documented attempts at educating students with severe emotional and behavioral problems that used sound and systematic methods and resulted in positive results and optimism for the field. Still, it was not until 1886 that there was a legal separation between “insanity” and “feeble-mindedness” (Kauffman, 2001). This is a relevant historical perspective because, as noted in subsequent paragraphs below, the classification and terminology associated with students with emotional and behavioral disabilities remains a source of debate amongst scholars and practitioners over one hundred years later.

The term “emotionally disturbed” dates back as far as the mid-1950s in educational literature and is used to describe a variety of conditions that may affect student learning. In one early study, Haring and Phillips (1962) compared three different educational environments for teaching students identified as emotionally disturbed. One classroom was a small group, highly structured class with individualized and

differentiated instruction provided to each student. A second group of students were each placed into a regular education classroom with supports provided by the school psychologist and social worker. The third group was placed in a segregated classroom using a traditional educational approach with less structure. The results of this early study suggested that all three environments had benefits. Overall, the students in the first group showed more academic and social growth than the other two groups, however, the second group demonstrated more academic gains than the third group while the third group demonstrated more social gains than the second group. This idea that the inclusion of ED students in general education classes can be successful has been repeatedly discussed in the literature. In 1976, Patricia Page Hosiak wrote that the literature suggested integration of emotionally disturbed students. “Society is not homogeneous and, therefore, education should be received in a milieu which is similarly diversified. The principle should be integration where possible and segregation where educationally relevant (p 55).”

Over thirty-three years later, and with Federal mandates of educating special education students in the “least restrictive environment,” there is still debate regarding the appropriateness of segregated class programs for students identified as “emotionally disturbed.” This debate has its roots in a more fundamental issue than placement. Haring and Phillips, (1962), over forty-six years ago, highlighted a significant problem in conducting research on students with emotional disturbance that currently remains unresolved. The authors simply stated that students identified as “emotionally disturbed” are not a homogeneous group themselves. Recently, Wiley and colleagues (2008) called the pursuit of evidence-based practice for students with ED a “chimerical endeavor” if

researchers do not account for the within-category variability of this special education classification. Furthermore, Odom and colleagues (2005) suggest that before a researcher can answer a question regarding whether a practice is effective in special education, they must first answer the question “for whom the practice is effective and in what context” (p. 139).

The issue of definition is crucial to the study of students with emotional disturbance and critical to the development of effective interventions to serve this target population in the schools. The current definition can be found in NJ Administrative Code Title 6A Chapter 14 Subchapter 3.5:

“Emotionally disturbed” means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a student’s educational performance due to: 1) an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; 2) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; 3) Inappropriate types of behaviors or feelings under normal circumstances; 4) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or 5) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

While this definition is much more specific than the terminology of the late 19th century, it continues to encompass a wide variety of emotional and behavioral conditions and, as a result, issues of placement continue to persist. The lack of a specific definition has a direct and significant impact on practitioners because it affects the conceptualization of the problem, the identification of students in need of intervention, the accurate recording of prevalence rates in the schools, and the determination of appropriate interventions for the student (Kauffman, 2001). Also, as long as the definition of emotional disturbance includes a wide variety of emotional and behavioral

disorders, it will be nearly impossible to generalize intervention research with ED students to all students with ED served in the public schools (Wiley et al, 2008).

While disability law leaves the definition of emotional disturbance to include a variety of conditions, these regulations have specified that a continuum of alternative placements be available for high school students with emotional disabilities since the 1960s (Kauffman, 2001). This continuum ranges from general education classrooms with minimal supports to residential treatment centers and inpatient hospitals. Again, the problem of specifically defining the category of ED makes it difficult to determine the most effective placements for ED students, in general. In a study of ED placements across a sample of public schools with various socioeconomic conditions, Wiley et al. (2008) concluded that schools do not serve a uniform group under the category of ED. Students with ED from different schools demonstrated very different academic and behavioral characteristics, and therefore, were served through various settings across the sample of school districts.

Although the education of high school students classified as emotionally disturbed does not appear to have a definitive roadmap guiding practitioners towards successful interventions and placements, several suggestions have been made for areas of future research and intervention development. In 1999, the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities published a research brief on interventions for students with chronic behavior problems. In this brief, the author (Kupper, 1999) suggested ten guidelines for developing interventions to address chronic behavior problems in the schools. The first guideline was that assessment should be linked to intervention across placement settings. Also, multiple interventions are often necessary

with this population. A third suggestion was that interventions must address not only the problem behavior, but also a series of related behaviors and contributing factors.

Kupper also emphasized the importance of sustained interventions that contain plans for promoting maintenance over time and the generalization of positive behavior. Classroom management strategies that were considered to be effective with emotionally disturbed students combined proactive, corrective, and instructional approaches to behavior. Another guideline suggested from the research brief is that interventions need to be developmentally appropriate and address the strengths and weaknesses of a student in a given environment. Parent education and family components were considered to be essential components of intervention as well. In working with students with chronic behavior problems, policies should emphasize positive intervention, not punitive ones. Also, interventions should be fair, consistent, culturally non-discriminatory, and sensitive to cultural diversity. One final conclusion of this research brief, and possibly the most discouraging for professionals working with ED high school students, is that interventions are most effective when provided early in life (Kupper, 1999).

While it has been demonstrated that behavioral interventions are typically more effective when provided earlier in a child's development, it is seemingly impossible to detect and address all student behavior early in life. For practitioners working with high school students, Bohanon et al. (2007) suggests a three-tiered approach to addressing school behavior through a system called School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS). The first tier of the SWPBS system is used as a primary prevention measure and delivered to the entire student population. It focuses on creating a positive school climate by teaching adaptive skills through the curriculum and using positive

reinforcement throughout the school to encourage the use of these skills. At tier two, group and individual interventions are applied for students who may require more support from staff. Finally, at tier three, individual students who do not respond to intervention at tier two are referred to professional staff for functional behavior assessment and development of individual behavior plans (most often through special education programs). Bohanon et al. (2007) estimate that tier three services would serve approximately one to seven percent of the student population.

Waguespack, Vaccaro, & Continere (2006) also advocate for the use of SWPBS, however, they focus on the current confusion regarding the use of functional behavioral assessment (FBA), or tier three services, in the public school setting. Preliminary evidence suggests that SWPBS can decrease discipline referrals, thereby increasing the time and resources available to serve the students in need of tier two or tier three services. One obstacle to implementing tier three services, or FBA, is that while disability law requires the use of such assessment for students with behavioral difficulties, a uniform procedure or format for FBA does not exist at this time. Waguespack, Vaccaro, & Continere (2006), besides advocating for establishing guidelines for the FBA process, discuss its merits for working with ED high school students, and suggest the following “roadmap” towards future research in providing services to emotionally/behaviorally disordered students in the public high school setting:

- 1) Increasing existing resources through prevention and tiered intervention efforts,
- 2) Shifting the traditional focus on consequent-based interventions to include antecedent interventions,
- 3) Providing training methods that are effective in preparing team members to different skill levels (many with basic skills, some with greater knowledge, and a few with expert level knowledge) to utilize a continuum of assessment options from indirect to direct to functional analysis as needed,
- 4) Tailoring methodological rigor as needed to conduct FBAs that lead to informed decisions about function-based intervention, and
- 5) Addressing the

validity of various measures and expanding the use of technology to simplify data collection procedures.

While this outline of the future direction for research in the area of FBA for students with ED is comprehensive and thorough, the fundamental problem remains that students classified as emotionally disturbed represent a diverse group of adolescents with various behavioral, emotional, and academic needs. When developing educational programs for students with emotional and behavioral needs, the most pertinent issue to resolve remains the specification of the target population of students being served by the program (Maher, 2000, Kauffman, 2001, Wiley et al., 2008).

Evaluation of High School Behavior Programs

The majority of literature addressing the evaluation of high school special education programs serving students with emotional/behavioral disabilities is presented in the form of evaluation reports generated by school districts or government agencies examining the implementation and/or outcomes of a specific program in a given school or district. The results of such evaluation reports cannot be generalized across school settings, but by examining the format of the report, and the process of gathering the evaluation information, an evaluator may obtain a greater understanding of how to proceed with the evaluation of a program with similar characteristics or context (Spaulding, 2008).

An examination of program evaluation reports provided by educational databases did not yield any program evaluations of in-district special education classroom programs for students classified as emotionally disturbed. However, several reports describe the process of evaluating school-based programs that serve the same population of students

in various capacities. In 1977, the Ontario Department of Education published a comprehensive evaluation report on an alternative secondary school experience called “Cool School” in Toronto (Anderson & Ridley, 1977). This comprehensive report provides program materials ranging from design documents to interview protocols used by evaluation staff to gather information regarding the development of the school, phases of the program, staffing, student demographics, buildings/facilities, and the connections between the school and its community. It provides a relatively early example of a systematic evaluation of an educational program designed to serve ED/BD high school students.

Similarly, Enell (1982) evaluated a program for 25 seriously emotionally disturbed students in Carmichael, CA and published the objectives of the program, the program design, the planning process, interviews with staff, and analysis of data regarding student progress. While the outcomes of this program evaluation cannot be generalized to other settings, an examination of the process of planning, designing, and evaluating the program provides another example of how to proceed when evaluating special education programs that serve ED/BD students.

A number of journals in the fields of program evaluation and school psychology, respectively, have published articles pertaining to the evaluation of high school programs that serve students with emotional/behavioral difficulties. For example, a program evaluation of a special education day school for students with conduct problems was conducted by Maher (1981) and subsequently published in a journal to describe the process of evaluating such a program. This program was a day school and not a classroom program in a public school setting.

While empirical studies regarding the evaluation of high school programs for students with behavior problems are scarce due to relatively low sample sizes and considerable variability within the target population, program evaluation data, meta-analysis, and evaluative techniques have been utilized to draw general conclusions regarding the participation of high school students with emotional/behavioral difficulties in public school programs. For example, epidemiological risk analysis conducted using program evaluation data has found significant risk factors, most notably substance abuse and involvement in the Juvenile Justice System, for students with ED/BD who fail to complete high school programs designed to serve them (Carran, 1996).

Program evaluation data has also been utilized to provide a counter-argument for the inclusion of ED students in general education classrooms. For example, Harvey (1996) found that self-contained classrooms serving students with emotional/behavioral disorders can be perceived as superior to inclusion programs in terms of resources, teaching strategies, program components, and parent reactions. Similarly, MacMillan (1996) uses evaluative data to discuss the lack of empirical evidence for the inclusion of emotionally disturbed students in the mainstream and outlines the benefits of a more restrictive environment. While the data collected during a program evaluation does not necessarily produce results that can be generalized outside of the context of the program itself, the aforementioned publications demonstrate the usefulness of documenting the program evaluation process.

The systematic evaluation of programs serving ED/BD students is a worthwhile endeavor because it directly informs the decision making process within the program, can document a process that may be useful for other evaluators to observe, and can provide

data that may be used in future research designs (Spaulding, 2008). Also, efforts are being made to promote the collection of evaluation data within the ED/BD classroom that may also serve to assist with the planning of individualized and classroom-wide interventions (Gunter et al., 2003). In addition to promoting ongoing evaluation data in the classroom, a number of school districts are posting program designs on the internet in order to inform the public of the goals and interventions used in each of their programs serving high school students classified as ED (for example, see <http://www.district287.org>). The dissemination of program design and evaluation information for programs serving ED/BD students in the public high school setting can provide further resources, and valuable learning tools, to evaluators working in public school districts.

Participant Observer as a Qualitative Methodology

The majority of literature on participatory evaluation and participant observer methodologies is found within sociological research. Evaluation scholars have developed rationales for collaborative and participatory research activities. One such rationale is that participatory evaluations, guided by stakeholders in a program, can heighten the probability that the data collected will have an intended impact (Cousins, 1996). Participant-observers or internal evaluators often have greater credibility within the setting, know the context and how to access data, and how to speak the “language” of the group (Spaulding, 2008). Another argument for participatory evaluations, as summarized by Cousins (1996) includes the theory that the validity of research and evaluation knowledge is enhanced when practitioner and participant perspectives directly inform it.

In his study, Cousins found that evaluations conducted in three different settings using a participant observer model all had a lasting impact on the programs evaluated.

Cousins and Whitmore (1998) developed two frameworks for future use in understanding and studying participatory evaluation. The first framework outlines two forms of participatory evaluation based upon the overarching goal of the evaluation. “Practical participatory evaluation” seeks to inform the organizational leadership and immediately affect program decision-making and problem solving. “Transformative participatory evaluation” has greater sociological goals to empower the participants in a program through democratically involving them in the process of evaluation and using their knowledge to drive the process. While both types of evaluation appear to have different foci, both are similar in that the data gathered by practitioners’ perspectives are central to the process of evaluation (King, 2007).

The second framework developed by Cousins and Whitmore (1998) describes three process dimensions, visually represented by a three-dimensional cross. The first dimension is control of the evaluation process. This may vary from research-controlled investigations to practitioner-controlled. A second dimension outlined by Cousins and Whitmore (1998) is stakeholder selection. This may include evaluations where stakeholders are specific to targeted groups within the organization to situations where all groups are included as stakeholders in some capacity. The third process dimension is the depth of participation of the evaluator in the process. Sometimes the evaluator may be used as a facilitator or consultant, while other situations may involve “deep participation.”

The two frameworks developed by Cousins and Whitmore seek to provide structure and methodology to the future study of participatory evaluation. Since the publication of the article, the field has grown quickly to include more specific forms and labels for each type of participatory evaluation. The term practical participatory evaluation has grown to encompass such methods as organizational learning, process use, developmental evaluation, and data-driven decision-making (King, 2007). Also, King (2007) explains that transformative participatory evaluation now includes deliberative democratic evaluation, inclusive evaluation, and values-driven evaluation. Overall, the two frameworks developed by Cousins and Whitmore (1998) not only provide a model for practice of participatory evaluation, but also structure for the future study of the field (King, 2007).

While systematic analysis of the effectiveness of participant observer evaluation is still in its relative infancy, some studies have demonstrated that the participant observer method of program evaluation can lead to successful documentation of the cultural identities involved in a program as well as the essential elements of the program as it is perceived by program staff and participants (Plonski, 2003). Also, evaluation standards are not compromised in the results. Plonski (2003) also concluded that the results of participant-observer evaluation could produce rich and useful information that provided insight into the following: how the program operated at the local level, how it was being implemented, its fidelity to the program goals, individual impressions and feelings about the program, and how individuals were changed by the program. Overall, participant observer evaluation, while having limitations as a research method, has demonstrated

significant value in the field of program evaluation because of its ability to provide valuable information from a perspective within the context of the program itself.

Conclusion

This chapter presented a brief review of the literature relevant to the dissertation task. Program evaluation is considered valuable in the public school setting because it can inform the decision-making process in several ways. Evaluation information, when collected in a systematic and organized manner, can inform the improvement of a given program, provide information regarding new services or programs, and provide information regarding program outcomes. Several forms of evaluation exist, however, the evaluation presented in this dissertation fits into the constructivist and objective-based approach outlined in the literature.

Programs designed to educate students classified as “emotionally disturbed” have existed in various forms for over two hundred years, however, early understanding of this population considered students to be either possessed by Satan or mentally retarded. While mandatory public education has further enhanced the education of ED students throughout the past century, problems still exist regarding the definition of ED and the variability within this group. Our current understanding of emotional and behavioral problems in schools leads towards the development of a three tiered system of prevention with the third tier focused on developing individual behavior intervention plans for each student based on functional behavior analysis. This approach to behavior problems in the schools represents one future direction for the education of ED adolescents.

The evaluation of high school programs specifically designed for students with emotional and behavioral problems is mostly documented in evaluation reports rather than empirical literature. Because programs addressing ED students are context specific, it is difficult, if not impossible, to generalize findings from these evaluation reports. The value of such reports lies in examining the approach to each evaluation and its usefulness with regards to the information it provides to program staff. While evaluation reports were not found that were comparable to the one documented in this dissertation (evaluations of in-district high school ED programs), some school districts in the United States have begun to put the program designs of relevant programs online. Dissemination of information regarding specific evaluation approaches can be useful by providing program staff with a framework for evaluation.

The final area discussed in this review of the relevant literature was the use of the participant-observer as a qualitative methodology. While research is still growing in this field, this methodology has shown potential for documenting the culture and context surrounding a program, increasing the impact that evaluation information may have on a program through involvement of its participants, and in producing evaluations where evaluation standards are often not compromised in the results.

The next chapter describes Maher's (2000) program planning and evaluation framework. This framework is objective-based in that it involves the generation of evaluation questions that drive the process of evaluation. It would also be considered a constructivist approach and it allows for evaluation to be conducted using a participant-observer methodology.

CHAPTER III

DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM EVALUATION APPROACH

Abstract

This chapter provides a description of the program evaluation approach utilized in the evaluation of the Behavioral Support Program. The evaluation phase of Maher's (2000) program planning and evaluation framework provided the basis for conducting the BSP evaluation. This chapter will, therefore, briefly describe the clarification, design, and implementation phases, but will focus primarily on the evaluation phase, as it is relevant to the evaluation of the Behavioral Support Program.

The Program Evaluation Approach

The evaluation of the Behavioral Support Program followed the framework for program planning and evaluation documented by Maher (2000). Program evaluation, as presented in *The Resource Guide for Planning and Evaluating Human Service Programs* (Maher, 2000), is one of four interrelated phases in the planning and evaluation of human service programs. The first three phases of this approach are clarification, design, and implementation. Evaluation is the fourth phase, and the activities of this phase provided the basis for the planning and implementation of the BSP evaluation. The clarification,

design, and implementation phases are described briefly while a more detailed explanation of the evaluation phase is provided.

The clarification phase describes a process in which a client is assisted in obtaining and organizing information related to program need, context, and the target population to be served. The result of the clarification phase is specific information regarding the target population to be served, the needs of that target population, and the relevant context in which those needs are embedded.

The design phase documents the program in terms of its essential elements. The program design is based upon all of the information gathered during the clarification phase, as well as additional information obtained during the design phase. The design document provides details regarding the essential elements of the program including, but not limited to: (1) The purpose, goals, and goal indicators, (2) program components, phases, and activities, (3) personnel, (4) development and implementation schedule, (5) budget, and (6) a program evaluation plan. This design document provides the basis for the implementation and evaluation of the program.

The implementation phase of Maher's framework provides guidelines for ensuring that the program is enacted upon as it is designed. The purpose of this phase is to assure that the program operates as expected, and that program administrators and staff may make necessary modifications over time.

The purpose of the evaluation phase is to allow for sound judgments to be made about the value of a program. This contributes to the development and improvement of the program. In Maher's (2000) approach, the evaluation phase should begin during the design phase, as a design document should contain a plan for program evaluation. The

evaluation phase is important because it provides information regarding the value that a program may add to the target population. Since a human services program requires human, temporal, and financial resources, those that contribute such resources to the program will be interested in the amount of value that the program adds to the target population. Also, a program evaluation contributes to continuous program development and improvement.

Programs, such as the BSP, are implemented over time and, therefore, the context, implementers, and participants may change. Human service programs must remain relevant to the target population, and should be modified in order to continue to meet the needs of this population. Another reason that program evaluation is important is that it may address the specific concerns of outside entities (such as state government, boards of education, or private foundations). Addressing these concerns may ensure the continuation of program funds, increase support within the community, and contribute to its continuous operation. Overall, sound program evaluation ensures that the needs of the target population are met, that the program is adjusted to continually meet those needs, and that the program continues to operate over time.

A program evaluation plan, according to the evaluation phase of Maher's (2000) framework, should meet four criteria. First, the evaluation plan should be practical. In other words, it can be implemented within the organization in a manner that ensures that daily operations and routines are not disrupted. Second, the evaluation plan must be useful. The information generated by the evaluation should allow the client to make more effective decisions about the program and ways in which to improve it. A third criterion is that the evaluation plan must be proprietary in that it adheres to all relevant

ethical and legal standards. Finally, the evaluation should be technically defensible. An evaluation plan must include methods, procedures, and instruments that are reliable, valid, and accurate. Creating a practical, useful, proprietary, and technically defensible program evaluation plan is essential to conducting a sound program evaluation.

The evaluation phase consists of twelve activities that are sequential, interrelated, and reflexive. In other words, while the twelve steps should be followed in sequence, it may be necessary to repeat or revise previously completed steps in order to make adjustments. The twelve steps of the evaluation phase are explained briefly in the remainder of this chapter. For a complete description of these steps, please refer to *The Resource Guide for Planning and Evaluating Human Service Programs* (Maher, 2000).

1. Identify the Client

The first step in evaluating a program is to clearly identify the client in need of the evaluation. When identifying the client, the following questions should be considered: (1) Who is the individual or group within the organization that is directly responsible for assuring that the program is implemented as designed? (2) Who is the individual or group within the organization responsible for overseeing the program while functioning in a larger managerial or administrative capacity? (3) Who is the individual, group, or agency external to the organization that is interested in the design, implementation, and outcomes of the program? By exploring these questions, the primary client will become more clearly identified as well as the relevant stakeholders involved in the program.

2. Determine the Client's Needs for Program Evaluation

Once the client has been clearly identified, the reasons for the program evaluation are discussed, as well as the specific nature and scope of his/her evaluation needs. The client's needs are specified through several tasks. First, discuss what the client wants to know or learn about the program, and identify the specific aspects of the program design that may be in question. Next, discuss why the client wants to obtain this knowledge. Specifically, the evaluation consultant should elicit the reasons for obtaining this information and how it will contribute to the program. Finally, determine the methods in which the client expects this information to be gathered. The client's perceptions of the evaluation process are important, and it is important to discuss his/her expectations of the process. An evaluation consultant will encounter clients with varying degrees of experience in the evaluation process. It is important to determine if a program evaluation is appropriate to address the client's needs.

3. Place the Program to be Evaluated into an "Evaluable" Form

An evaluable program meets three criteria: clarity, compatibility, and developmental status. Clarity is the extent to which a program plan exists that describes program design elements and is able to be understood by the client, consultant, and other relevant stakeholders. Compatibility is the degree to which each program design element appears to be consistent with all other components. Developmental status is the extent to which each program design element appears sufficiently developed for successful implementation or, if the program is implemented, how developed is the program.

Placing the program into evaluable form is important for several reasons. First of all, in order to continually develop and improve a program, its design elements must be

clearly understood. Also, a program's design must be evaluable in order to clearly examine the outcomes of a program as they are seen in relation to the program and its target population. Additionally, it is important to delineate design elements that may be relevant across settings in case the client is interested in replicating the program. Finally, since resources are devoted to a program, and value is expected to be added to the target population, it is important to place the program in evaluable form in order to document the expected returns as those returns can serve as the basis for evaluation.

4. Delineate Program Evaluation Questions

Through this evaluation activity, the program evaluation questions, on which the evaluation will focus, are delineated and agreed upon by the client and the consultant. A program evaluation question is a question about some element of the program's design, implementation, or results that will allow program planning and evaluation actions to be taken. Examples of such actions include: judgments about the value of the program in serving the needs of the target population, judgments about the ability to implement the program as designed, judgments about the program's value to the organization, decisions about the extent to which the program may be implemented in other settings, or decisions about whether elements of the program should be eliminated. In order to delineate program evaluation questions, the evaluator should determine and specify what needs to be known about the program. An initial list of evaluation questions should be generated through collaboration with the client. Then, the most important questions should be selected and placed into SMART form. The SMART acronym stands for questions that are specific, measurable, answerable, relevant, and time-referenced.

5. Specify the Data Collection Variables for each Program Evaluation Question

By taking each program evaluation question as a separate entity, a list of variables within each question is identified. These variables are then operationalized and specifically defined. These definitions help to guide decisions regarding the methods, procedures, and instruments for data collection.

6. Describe the Data Collection Methods, Instruments, and Procedures

Through this activity, it is established how data will be collected on the variables in order to answer each program evaluation question. Unless each question is answered in ways that are agreed to by the client, and that is meaningful to the client, it is unlikely that the client will be able to use the resulting information for program planning actions. It is crucial to target specific variables that are important in answering each program evaluation question. These variables should be discussed with the client in order to ensure that they are important enough to contribute to the answering of each evaluation question.

For each variable, it must be determined which methods and sources will be used for data collection. A method is a particular way in which the data will be collected, and it is determined by the nature of the variable and program evaluation question being examined. Methods may include, but are not limited to, questionnaires, interviews, tests, permanent product reviews, observations, and rating scales. Data sources are the individuals, groups, or records on which data will be generated. Some examples of data sources include the target population, program personnel, and files.

Procedures for data collection are also determined for each variable. In this case, procedures refer to when data will be collected and whether or not a comparison group will be used. The instruments used in data collection are determined based on availability, practicality, usefulness, propriety, and technical defensibility. If practical, useful, proper, and technically defensible instruments are not available, then they may need to be developed.

7. Describe the Methods and Procedures for Data Analysis

Through this activity, it is determined how the data that have been collected will be analyzed in order to answer each program evaluation question. The data provides information that is considered a response to each evaluation question, therefore, the data must be analyzed in a systematic way and interpreted appropriately in order to answer each program evaluation question in a manner that informs the consultant, client, and other stakeholders. If data is not analyzed in a systematic and appropriate manner, then people will not be informed about how to take program planning actions. Also, the extent to which the evaluation can contribute to the program will be limited. In this step, the units of analysis are selected, data is organized and displayed, the frames of reference are identified, and the statistical procedures are determined.

8. Specify Program Evaluation Personnel and Responsibilities

In this step, the people who will be involved in the program evaluation, in some capacity other than as data sources, are identified. The people identified will be the personnel responsible for actually implementing the program evaluation. Also, timelines

and responsibilities for each person are discussed in detail. Without this step, the likelihood that the program evaluation protocols will be carried out as expected will be greatly reduced.

9. Delineate Guidelines for Communication and Use of Program Evaluation Information

Through this evaluation activity, guidelines are provided for the client and other stakeholders in how to communicate the resulting evaluation information as well as how to use such information for program planning. First, the target audience must be identified. Individuals or groups who are affected by the program and may be able to contribute to program development are considered target audiences. Next, it should be determined what information will be communicated and by whom, how, and when. Methods of communication can include, but are not limited to graphs, tables, lists, and a written report. The consultant, program director, or other designated communicator may be the communicator of the resulting information. Also, it will be determined how the target audience will be involved and the program planning actions that will be taken.

10. Construct Program Evaluation Protocols

During this step, the information from the previous steps (1-9) is articulated and documented into program evaluation protocols. Protocols are worksheets, which contain the following headings and serve to document and organize the information determined in steps one through nine of the Evaluation Phase:

- The Program Evaluation Question
- Data Collection Variables

- Data Collection Methods, Instruments, and Procedures
- Methods and Procedures for Data Analysis
- Guidelines for Communication and Use of Evaluation Information

A program evaluation protocol is developed for each evaluation question and then placed into an evaluation plan document. The program evaluation plan (Maher, 2000) consists of the following sections:

- I. Overview of the Program Evaluation
 - a. Client and Information Needs
 - b. Timeframe of the Evaluation
- II. Description of the Program to be Evaluated
- III. List of Program Evaluation Questions
- IV. Program Evaluation Protocols (one protocol for each question)

Appendix A: Copies of Instrumentation as Referenced to Program Evaluation Protocols

Appendix B: Professional Biographical Sketch of Consultant/Program Planning and Evaluation Team (optional but desirable for outside consultants)

11. Implement the Program Evaluation

Through this activity, the program evaluation is actually implemented. At this point, the main concern is that the process of evaluation is carried out in a controlled manner and implemented as planned. As the evaluation progresses, it may be necessary to adjust the process and revise protocols. If this occurs, and changes are made, it is important to provide a clear rationale for each adjustment.

12. Evaluate the Program Evaluation

After the evaluation has been implemented, it is important to “evaluate the evaluation” in order to improve future evaluations by the consultant, client, and key stakeholders. Four questions can be raised to the individuals and groups involved in the program evaluation process as clients, stakeholders, personnel, data sources, and target audiences. Each question addresses one characteristic of a sound program evaluation as follows:

1. To what extent was the program evaluation conducted in a way that allowed for its successful accomplishment? (Practicality)
2. In what ways was the resulting program evaluation information helpful to people? Which people? (Utility)
3. Did the program evaluation occur in a way that adhered to legal restrictions and ethical standards? (Propriety)
4. To what degree can the evaluation be justified with respect to matters of reliability and validity? (Technical Defensibility)

Conclusion

The evaluation of the Behavioral Support Program documented in this dissertation followed the framework documented in *The Resource Guide for Planning and Evaluating Human Service Programs* (Maher, 2000). Maher’s approach consists of four separate, yet interrelated, phases: clarification, design, implementation, and evaluation. Through the clarification phase, the client obtains a greater understanding of the target population to be served by the program, their needs, and the relevant context. In the design phase,

the information gained in the clarification phase is utilized to create and document the essential elements of the program, including: its purpose, goals, components, phases, activities, personnel, schedule, budget, and evaluation plan. The implementation phase provides guidelines for ensuring that the program is enacted upon according to its design.

This chapter focused on the activities involved in the evaluation phase, as these steps provided the basis for the evaluation of the Behavioral Support Program. The evaluation phase consists of twelve activities that guide the evaluator from the beginning of the process (identifying the client and clarifying needs for evaluation) through creating an evaluation plan, implementing the program evaluation plan, and evaluating the program evaluation. A sound program evaluation should be practical, useful, proprietary, and technically defensible (Maher, 2000).

CHAPTER IV

EVALUABLE PROGRAM DESIGN

Abstract

In order to conduct a sound program evaluation, the Behavioral Support Program had to be placed into an evaluable form (Maher, 2000). An evaluable program design meets three criteria: clarity, compatibility, and development status. This chapter documents the design of the Behavioral Support Program, with information taken from an original design document (1996), a previous evaluation of the program (2002), and the author's current knowledge of the program as a staff member. The evaluable program design contains information regarding the purpose, goals, eligibility standards, and components of the Behavioral Support Program.

Placing the BSP into Evaluable Form

The Behavior Support Program was designed, and first implemented, in 1996. A formal procedure for ongoing evaluation was not developed or incorporated into the program design. Consequently, the first evaluation of the program did not occur until 2002. A consultant conducted this evaluation, and it remains the only documented evaluation of the BSP to date. While the essential design elements of the program, as well as the roles and responsibilities of program personnel, were originally drafted for a

grant application in 1996, the program has changed with regard to the students served and scope of services provided. The evaluation that was conducted in 2002 by an evaluation consultant documented a two-paragraph program description of the program goals, which may have changed in the past six years. Since a significant amount of time had passed since its last evaluation, and given the changes to the BSP over the past 12 years, it was important to place the current iteration of the program into an evaluable form.

Maier (2000) describes an evaluable program as one that reflects a program design that meets three criteria: clarity, compatibility, and development status. Clarity is the extent to which written information describing each program element exists in a form that is understood by the evaluator, client, and relevant stakeholders. Compatibility refers to the degree to which each program element is consistent/compatible with all other elements. Development status describes the extent to which each program design element appears sufficiently developed. Maier (2000) also describes several reasons for placing a program into evaluable form. First of all, in order to develop a program further, it must be fully understood in its current form. Also, outcomes cannot be considered as isolated entities, but rather in relation to the program that was implemented, the program that was intended to be implemented, and the target population prior to and during the time of program implementation. Finally, placing the program in evaluable form can assist in making determinations regarding the allocation of resources to the program.

The investigator served as a clinical staff member for the BSP, which provided first-hand knowledge of the daily operations of the program. Once the program was placed into evaluable form, the initial draft of the design document was given to the Director of Special Services and another BSP staff member for a review of content

accuracy. The following description of the Behavior Support Program was developed using the format outlined in *The Resource Guide for Planning and Evaluating Human Services Programs* (Maher, 2000).

Evaluable Program Design

Purpose

The purpose of the Behavioral Support Program (BSP) was to provide an alternative classroom environment for students classified with an emotional or behavioral disability. By providing students with additional supports within the BSP classroom, the school district retained students in a less restrictive environment rather than placing them in an out-of-district school. Also, the BSP provided additional monitoring of students in the mainstream courses in which they are enrolled.

Program Goals

1. To prepare students for mainstream academic and elective classes while providing the necessary supports.
2. To improve communication and socialization in order to succeed in the regular education classroom.

Eligibility Standards

Students are eligible to participate in the program if they are eligible to receive special education and related services. Students participating in the BSP are typically classified as emotionally disturbed, multiply disabled, or autistic (Asperger's Syndrome).

For a non-classified student to be placed in the BSP, they would first have to be evaluated by the Child Study Team and deemed eligible to receive special education and related services in one of the aforementioned categories.

Components

I. Inclusive support model of academic instruction

A. Activities

Teachers provide self-contained academic instruction, which corresponds with the Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS) provided by the New Jersey State Department of Education, in the areas of Mathematics, History, and English. Also, an “in/out-of-class support” period is provided. This period allows BSP teachers to monitor mainstream assignments and provide study skills and organizational skills support.

B. Method

Small group instruction is used in the BSP self-contained classroom. Also, teachers differentiate instruction between two different grade levels. Students are placed in either a ninth/tenth grade class or an eleventh/twelfth grade class for each subject area. For example, students in the same class may be working within an Algebra 1 (9th grade) mainstream curriculum while others may be working within the Geometry curriculum (10th grade).

C. Materials

Teachers utilize mainstream textbooks as well as supplemental texts. Textbook curricula include worksheets and unit tests. Also utilized are novels, movies,

computers, overhead projectors, a data projector, and a “smart board.” The BSP teachers use tracking sheets as well to monitor student progress in mainstream classes (outside of the BSP self-contained classroom).

D. Forms

Each student has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), which delineates both academic and behavioral goals and objectives. The high school’s computer grading system is used to maintain a record of grades along with weekly/bi-monthly tracking forms, which are distributed to mainstream/elective teachers.

E. Equipment

Two computers with DVD drives and internet access are used along with a data projector to display movies, Power Point presentations, and internet resources. Also, an overhead projector, whiteboard, and “SMART board” are used during instruction.

F. Facilities

A single classroom is designated for the BSP throughout the entire school day. The room is used exclusively for the courses and activities of the BSP. All three BSP teachers have desks and workspace in this classroom.

G. Roles, Responsibilities, Relationships

1. One special education teacher provides English instruction offered during two different blocks (grades 9-10 and grades 11-12).
2. Another special education teacher provides Math instruction for one block (grades 11-12), History instruction for one block (grades 10-11), and in/out-of-class support for one block (grades 9-12).

3. The third special education instructor provides Math instruction for one block period (grades 9-10) and in/out-of-class support for one block (grades 9-12).
4. Each special education instructor is assigned a list of BSP students for whom they are responsible for monitoring in the mainstream. The instructor is delegated as the “responsible teacher” for that student and maintains tracking sheets and a record of student performance outside of the BSP classroom.
5. It is important to note that all three teachers have additional teaching duties outside of the BSP. The BSP responsibilities are part of their school-wide teaching duties, which are assigned by the building principal.
6. One paraprofessional is assigned to the BSP classroom for the all academic and in/out-of-class support block periods. The paraprofessional provides one-to-one assistance with coursework, assists with monitoring of student progress in mainstream classes, and assists teachers with clerical support at times.
7. Each student’s case manager on the Child Study Team is responsible for monitoring the student’s progress towards the goals and objectives of the IEP and for making adjustments to the student’s educational program as needed, in collaboration with the IEP team (which includes BSP teaching staff)

II. Technology integration

A. Activities

The original intent of the technology integration component of the BSP in 1996 was to find effective methods of using technology, within the BSP classroom, to deliver instruction and maximize student interest in learning.

B. Method

Teachers are provided materials and opportunities to use computers, internet resources, multimedia, and “SMART Boards” for instructional purposes.

C. Materials/Equipment

Each teacher is provided with a laptop. The classroom is equipped with two desktop computers, a data projector, “SMART board”, and overhead projector.

Also, the high school provides Computers On Wheels (C.O.W.) workstations to any classroom on an as-needed basis when an instructor reserves the mobile laptop workstations.

D. Facilities

The BSP classroom is the primary facility for classroom instruction, however, teachers may utilize a computer lab or library computer room for additional instructional space.

E. Roles, Responsibilities, Relationships

1. BSP teachers are responsible for integration of technology into classroom instruction.
2. The school staff includes a technology facilitator who may be accessed as a consultant/resource for teachers to assist them with the integration of technology into the classroom.
3. A special education instructor within the high school’s department has been trained in assistive technology if any individual students have a technological need that may be based on the nature of his/her disability.

III. Behavior modification program

A. Activities (as outlined in original design document, 1996)

1. Behavior Intervention Plans are developed for each individual student and incorporated into his/her IEP.
2. A general set of classroom rules are determined by the teacher, and a specific set of rules may be developed with the class, at the beginning of the academic year.
3. A token economy system may be in place to include points awarded for positive behavior. The points may be awarded for success in mainstream classes as well as BSP classes and exchanged for rewards.
4. Communication between the BSP teacher and mainstream teachers in order to monitor student progress in both settings. Weekly communication with parents through tracking sheets or email may be provided in order to keep parents up-to-date on student progress. Similarly, frequent communication with the student's case manager is necessary.
5. Weekly group counseling is utilized for a number of activities. For example: weekly goal setting activities, discussing social situations, anger management techniques, and resolving conflicts with teachers, peers, and/or parents.
6. Individual counseling is also provided on an as-needed basis. The frequency of individual counseling sessions is delineated in each student's IEP and varies.

B. Method

1. Behavior Intervention Plans are developed by the IEP team for each individual student and incorporated into his/her IEP. The BIP may be modified through consultation with BSP teachers, clinical support staff, and/or case managers and requires an IEP team meeting to amend the IEP.
2. A general set of classroom rules are developed by the teacher with consideration for the individual needs of the students in the class. Violation of rules may result in removal from the classroom or disciplinary action as determined by the building administration.
3. The token economy system may be in place to include points awarded for positive behavior. The points may be awarded by each individual teacher in the BSP, mainstream teachers, and/or clinical support staff based upon positive behaviors. Goal setting activities may be used to reward the attainment of weekly goals determined by the student, teacher, and clinical staff member.
4. Communication between teachers, parents, clinical staff, and case managers is accomplished via email, telephone, conferences, and consultation.
5. Clinical staff hold weekly group counseling sessions by removing students from the in/out-of-class support period. Each week, counseling may consist of, but is not limited to, student “check-in,” goal setting activities, discussing social situations, anger management techniques, and conflict resolution with teachers, peers, and/or parents.

6. Each student may request individual counseling. The frequency and duration in which the counseling is provided are determined by counselor availability and student need. The focus of individual counseling may vary from discussion of personal goals to crisis intervention. Some students may not participate in the group counseling, but may opt to meet with clinical staff individually based upon preference.

C. Materials

1. Extrinsic rewards may include food items, gift cards, or privileges that are provided within the classroom.
2. Goal-setting worksheets are utilized by both teachers and counseling staff.
3. Behavior tracking sheets and incident reports are also utilized as needed.

D. Forms

As mentioned in the previous section, behavior-tracking sheets, student progress reports, and goal-setting worksheets are all utilized for behavior modification purposes. Case managers/clinical staff also use IEP documents and must keep track of counseling contacts with a monthly counseling calendar.

E. Equipment

Teachers are provided with laptop computers and counseling staff/case managers are given desktop computers to generate tracking forms, maintain counseling records, and email parents and school staff.

F. Facilities

1. The BSP classroom is used for daily instruction and behavioral reinforcement. It provides an in vivo practice facility for modeling appropriate behaviors, reinforcing positive behavior, and attempting to decrease negative behavior.
2. The case manager/clinical staff use their respective offices for individual and/or group counseling.
3. An additional counseling facility is available for group counseling across the hallway from the Child Study Team. This facility offers more privacy and space for group sessions.

G. Roles, Responsibilities, Relationships

1. BSP teachers and the BSP paraprofessional are primarily responsible for direct observation of classroom behaviors and application of behavior modification techniques.
2. Clinical staff (school psychologist or social worker) is responsible for individual and group counseling.
3. Clinical staff, in collaboration with teachers, develops Behavior Intervention Plans and modify the IEP (with case manager, if necessary) based on the student's behavioral needs. Clinical staff, in collaboration with BSP teachers, may also develop individual behavior contracts as part of the student's BIP.
4. BSP teachers and clinical staff may both deliver rewards to students for positive behaviors and/or goal attainment.

5. Both BSP teachers and clinical staff may communicate with parents and mainstream teachers regarding student progress.
6. Clinical staff may act as behavioral specialists at times and provide consultation to BSP teachers and mainstream faculty.
7. The Director of Special Services develops the budget and provides funds to the BSP for rewards, materials, and field trips.
8. Changes to the behavior modification system are achieved through periodic meetings between BSP teachers, clinical staff, and the Director of Special Services.

Conclusion

An evaluable program design meets three criteria: clarity, compatibility, and development status (Maher, 2000). Utilizing information from the original program design document, an evaluation conducted in 2002, and the author/evaluator's firsthand knowledge of the program, the Behavioral Support Program was placed into an evaluable form. The purpose of the BSP was to provide an alternative classroom environment for students classified with an emotional or behavioral disability. Two program goals were identified as the following: (1) To prepare students for mainstream academic and elective classes while providing the necessary supports. (2) To improve communication and socialization in order to succeed in the regular education classroom. In order for a student to be eligible for participation in the BSP, they had to be eligible for special education and related services and were usually referred by a teacher or case manager. The three program components were the inclusive support model of instruction,

technology integration, and the behavior modification program. The activities, methods, materials, forms, equipment, facilities, roles, responsibilities, and relationships involved in each of the three program components were delineated in this chapter.

CHAPTER V

PROGRAM EVALUATION PLAN

Abstract

Using the methods outlined in Chapter III, a program evaluation plan was developed in order to address the needs of the client, in this case the Director of Special Services, and to systematically organize the collection, analysis, and dissemination of evaluation information. This chapter presents the list of program evaluation questions and the protocol developed for each question.

List of Program Evaluation Questions

1. To what extent is the Behavioral Support Program addressing the needs of its students?
2. To what extent is the Behavioral Support Program being implemented according to its design?
3. What are the reactions of the individuals involved in the BSP?
4. How have the students benefited academically from the program?

PROGRAM EVALUATION PROTOCOLS

PROGRAM EVALUATION PROTOCOL 1

PROGRAM EVALUATION QUESTION:

1. To what extent is the Behavioral Support Program addressing the needs of its students?

DATA COLLECTION VARIABLES:

The data collection variables are the Behavioral Support Program and the needs of its students. The Behavioral Support Program is defined as the self-contained, inclusive support classroom program, which is being evaluated. The needs of BSP students are defined as the perceived social, emotional, and academic needs of students participating in the BSP. Students participating in the BSP must be receiving special education services and exhibit behavior that is not appropriate for the general education classroom. The needs of each student are assessed by the IEP team upon placement in the BSP and reviewed at least annually. The IEP team consists of parents, teachers, case managers, counseling staff, and the students themselves. Each individual student's needs are recorded in the goals and objectives delineated in the student's IEP and may also be addressed through the student's Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP).

DATA COLLECTION METHODS, INSTRUMENTS, PROCEDURES

A review of each student's IEP will be conducted to determine if the student has a BIP and/or self-management goals and objectives. Implementation of the BIP and progress towards goals and objectives should be noted in the IEP. Aggregate data from BSP Individualized Educational Plans will be recorded in a data table (Instrument 1.1) Distribution, completion, and collection of three survey instruments (Instruments 2.1, 2.2,

and 2.3) will also be used to obtain information regarding perceptions of the BSP, student needs, and the program's ability to address student needs. Structured interviews with teaching and counseling staff (Instruments 3.1 and 3.2) will also be used to obtain information regarding staff perception of student needs and the program's ability to address those needs.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES FOR DATA ANALYSIS

Data gathered from students' Individualized Education Plans will be analyzed quantitatively, descriptive statistics computed, and will be reported in table and/or graph format. Data collected from surveys will be both quantitative and qualitative in nature. Student, teacher, and parent rating scale data will be analyzed through descriptive statistics and reported in chart format. Perceptions of student's needs will be recorded qualitatively and analyzed thematically.

PROGRAM EVALUATION PERSONNEL AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The evaluator will be responsible for conducting interviews, reviewing IEP and BIP records, distributing surveys, collecting surveys, and data analysis.

GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNICATION AND USE OF PROGRAM EVALUATION INFORMATION

Results will be communicated to the Director of Special Services upon completion of the evaluation. Dissemination of evaluation information to administrators, teachers, students, and parents will be at the discretion of the Director of Special Services.

PROGRAM EVALUATION PROTOCOL 2

PROGRAM EVALUATION QUESTION:

2. To what extent is the Behavioral Support Program being implemented according to its design?

DATA COLLECTION VARIABLES:

The data collection variables are the implementation of the BSP and its design. The implementation of the BSP is defined as the current educational strategies, behavior interventions, and counseling support services being implemented in the BSP. Its design is defined by the evaluable program design delineated in this evaluation plan document.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS, INSTRUMENTS, PROCEDURES

The 3 BSP teacher interviews (Instrument 3.1) contain questions regarding educational and behavioral strategies, as well as the counseling services provided. The social worker interview (Instrument 3.2) also contains questions regarding the frequency, duration, and nature of the counseling services provided. Also, both counseling staff members maintain counseling records via a “Counseling Services Calendar.” This documentation will be used to measure the frequency and duration of counseling services implemented in the past year (Instrument 1.2).

METHODS AND PROCEDURES FOR DATA ANALYSIS

In order to address this question, a combination of staff responses to interview questions and staff documentation of services provided will be utilized. Staff responses will be analyzed qualitatively for thematic content regarding implementation. Staff documentation of counseling services provided will be analyzed quantitatively for frequency and duration of sessions provided. Content, as reported by counseling staff,

will be compared to the Behavior Intervention Plans and goals/objectives of student IEP's as a whole.

PROGRAM EVALUATION PERSONNEL AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The evaluator will be responsible for conducting structured interviews with all three BSP teachers and the school social worker. Also, the evaluator will collect "Counseling Services Calendars" from the Director of Special Services, who requires that CST members submit calendars on a monthly basis. Since the evaluator is also a participant-observer in this process, his own calendar of services provided will be used along with the social worker's calendar.

GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNICATION AND USE OF PROGRAM EVALUATION INFORMATION

Results will be communicated to the Director of Special Services upon completion of the evaluation. Dissemination of evaluation information to administrators, teachers, students, and parents will be at the discretion of the Director of Special Services.

PROGRAM EVALUATION PROTOCOL 3

PROGRAM EVALUATION QUESTION:

3. What are the reactions of the individuals involved in the BSP?

DATA COLLECTION VARIABLES:

The data collection variables are the opinions, feedback, and judgments of BSP students, parents, teachers, counseling support staff, Child Study Team members, and administrators. BSP students are those students currently enrolled in the Behavioral Support Program. Parents are the primary caregivers or legal guardians of the BSP students. Teachers are the 3 special educators involved in direct instruction of BSP students. Counseling support staff includes the investigator and a school social worker responsible for providing counseling and behavior intervention. Administrators are two building vice principals responsible for enforcing school district policies and school disciplinary procedures as well as the lead special education instructor for the building.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS, INSTRUMENTS, PROCEDURES

The data collection methods include structured interviews with the 3 BSP teachers and school social worker (Instruments 3.1 and 3.2) as well as reaction interviews with school administrators, CST members, and students (Instruments 2.1 and 2.2). Also, the Parent Reaction Survey (Instrument 2.3) will contain items to elicit parent reactions to the program.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES FOR DATA ANALYSIS

The units of analysis are the responses of students, parents, teachers, counseling staff, and administrators to survey questions or interview prompts. A number of responses on the Parent Reaction Survey (Instrument 2.3) will be recorded in a

quantitative manner as they consist of numerical values on a five-point rating scale. Numerical responses will be analyzed using descriptive statistics. Other items, including structured interview responses, are qualitative in nature and will be analyzed for thematic content. The data will be organized and reported using tables.

PROGRAM EVALUATION PERSONNEL AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The evaluator will conduct structured interviews with BSP teachers, the school social worker, and two vice-principals. Also, the evaluator will distribute and collect mainstream teacher surveys and parent surveys. The evaluator will also administer the student surveys. Organization and analysis of data will be the evaluator's responsibility.

GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNICATION AND USE OF PROGRAM EVALUATION INFORMATION

Results will be communicated to the Director of Special Services upon completion of the evaluation. Dissemination of evaluation information to administrators, teachers, students, and parents will be at the discretion of the Director of Special Services.

PROGRAM EVALUATION PROTOCOL 4

PROGRAM EVALUATION QUESTION:

4. How have the students benefited academically from the program?

DATA COLLECTION VARIABLES:

Students are defined as individuals who have participated in the BSP program over the past five years. Academic benefit is defined by the student's grades in both BSP and mainstream, regular education classes, ability to meet state and local graduation requirements, and ability to pass the NJ High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA).

DATA COLLECTION METHODS, INSTRUMENTS, PROCEDURES

Student transcripts will be used to compare grades in BSP classes with grades outside of the BSP classroom. Also, a retrospective comparison between student grades prior to BSP enrollment with grades earned after enrollment in the BSP will be performed, when applicable. Since some students are placed in the BSP immediately upon entered the high school, prior academic records may not always be available. HSPA performance will be obtained through school guidance department records. Data will be recorded in aggregate form using Instrument 1.1.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES FOR DATA ANALYSIS

Information regarding student grades and transcripts will be analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics.

PROGRAM EVALUATION PERSONNEL AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The evaluator will collect data related to both student transcripts and state assessment performance from the guidance department.

GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNICATION AND USE OF PROGRAM EVALUATION
INFORMATION

Results will be communicated to the Director of Special Services upon completion of the evaluation. Dissemination of evaluation information to administrators, teachers, students, and parents will be at the discretion of the Director of Special Services.

Conclusion

This chapter documented the program evaluation plan for the evaluation of the BSP, which was developed by following the activities of the evaluation phase of Maher's framework (2000). After two discussions with the Director of Special Services, four program evaluation questions were articulated in order to guide the development of evaluation protocols: (1) To what extent is the Behavioral Support Program addressing the needs of its students? (2) To what extent is the Behavioral Support Program being implemented according to its design? (3) What are the reactions of the individuals involved in the BSP? (4) How have the students benefited academically from the program? An evaluation protocol was developed for each program evaluation question in order to specify the data collection variables, methods for data collection and analysis, personnel and responsibilities, and guidelines for communication and use of program evaluation information.

CHAPTER VI

RESULTS OF PROGRAM EVALUATION

Abstract

Chapter VI contains five sections that convey the results of the program evaluation of the Behavioral Support Program. The program evaluation was conducted by following the program evaluation plan as described in Chapter V. Given that four program evaluation questions were proposed in the evaluation plan, each of the first four sections of this chapter describes a separate program evaluation question, its rationale for inclusion in the evaluation process, how it was answered, and the information collected. The conclusion section of this chapter contains a summary of the results of the four program evaluation questions.

Results of Program Evaluation Question 1

Program Evaluation Question 1: To what extent is the Behavioral Support Program addressing the needs of its students?

The first program evaluation question sought to determine the extent to which the needs of BSP students were being addressed through the activities of the BSP. Specifically, the needs of BSP students were defined as the perceived academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of students participating in the BSP. Since all

BSP students are eligible for, and receiving, special education and related services, the needs of each student are delineated in the goals and objectives section of the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Also, behavioral needs are addressed through a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) that is part of the IEP document.

A review of each BSP student's IEP was conducted in order to determine the nature of the target behaviors that are addressed through each student's BIP. Also, the goals and objectives of the IEP were examined in order to determine whether or not progress was measured or noted in each document. The information collected through this permanent product review was recorded as part of Instrument 1.1. Findings are summarized in Table 1 and Table 2.

Upon examining each student's IEP, it was found that, of the sixteen students participating in the BSP in some capacity during the 2009-10 school year, six students did not have a Behavior Intervention Plan included in his/her IEP. The remaining students' BIPs (N = 10) were reviewed in order to describe the types of target behaviors addressed in the BSP classroom for the 2009-10 school year. Table 1 summarizes the target behaviors found within the ten Behavior Intervention Plans reviewed as part of the evaluation. The target behaviors that were most frequently addressed through a BIP were to complete work in a timely manner (n=8), to follow classroom and school rules (n=8), and to interact appropriately with staff and peers (n=7). In fact, all three of these target behaviors appeared grouped together in seven out of the ten BIPs reviewed. The remaining target behaviors included: to seek extra help from staff when needed (n=2), to seek out support staff when angry to avoid confrontation (n=1), to increase the appropriateness of social interactions within the school setting (n=1), to utilize school

resources to help improve academic performance (n=1), to increase self-advocacy skills (n=1), to remain on task (n=1), and to use appropriate language during class (n=1).

Table 1
Summary of Target Behaviors Addressed in BSP Student Behavior Intervention Plans

n ^a	Target Behavior
8	Complete work in a timely manner
8	Follow classroom and school rules
7	Interact appropriately with staff and peers
2	Seek extra help from staff when needed
1	Seek out support staff when angry to avoid confrontation
1	Increase the appropriateness of social interactions within the school setting
1	Utilize school resources to help improve academic performance
1	Increase self-advocacy skills
1	To remain on task
1	To use appropriate language during class
n ^a = Number of students with this target behavior listed in their BIP out of a total of 10	
NOTE: 6 Students did not have BIPs included in their IEP	

The information reported in Table 1 is reported verbatim from each BIP. Upon examination of each target behavior, some of the less frequently cited behaviors could be seen as more specific subsets of the three most frequently cited behaviors. For example, using appropriate language during class could be seen as following classroom and school rules or appropriately interacting with peers. Therefore, the behavioral needs of students participating in the BSP could be seen as falling into the three broader categories mentioned above: to complete work in a timely manner, follow class and school rules, and to interact appropriately with staff and peers.

The Behavior Intervention Plan contained within each student's IEP outlined target behaviors to be addressed, prior interventions, current interventions/supports, data

collection/management system, conditions under which interventions will be implemented, conditions under which interventions will be terminated, and parental involvement. While data collection methods were outlined in each BIP, the data collected in implementing each BIP was not available for this evaluation. Therefore, the information regarding the current progress that each student is making in addressing the target behaviors outlined in his/her BIP was unavailable.

Another section of the IEP that contained information regarding each student's individual needs was the Goals and Objectives section. Specifically, each student participating in the BSP program, with the exception of one, had goals and objectives in their IEP addressing the area of self-management. Only one student had goals and objectives that addressed the area of counseling. For each short-term objective, progress is recorded in the IEP twice per year, typically in January and June. Progress towards each objective is recorded in the IEP using the following notation: M = Skill has been mastered, P = Skill is progressing, NA = Skill has not been addressed/not attempted at this time, NI = Skill needs improvement. The evaluator reviewed all sixteen IEPs in order to determine the percentage of student objectives that fell into each of the four categories used to measure student progress during the last recorded benchmark period.

The data collected was analyzed in aggregate in order to provide a general summary of student progress towards their individualized objectives. The results, summarized in Table 2, revealed that fifteen students had a total of one hundred eight objectives in their IEPs. Of the one hundred eight objectives, seventy-five percent were listed as P = Skill is progressing (n=81), fourteen and eight-tenths percent were recorded as NI = Skill needs improvement (n=16), six and five-tenths percent were listed as NA =

Skill has not been addressed/not attempted at this time (n=7), and three and seven-tenths percent were recorded as M = Skill has been mastered (n=4). The majority of objectives/benchmarks were rated as skills that were progressing towards their goal.

Table 2
Summary of BSP Student Progress Towards Self-management Objectives/Benchmarks

15 Students had Self-management objectives/benchmarks listed in the IEP Total number of objectives/benchmarks = 108			
<u>M</u> <u>Skill has been</u> <u>mastered</u>	<u>P</u> <u>Skill is progressing</u>	<u>NA</u> <u>Skill has not been</u> <u>addressed/not</u> <u>attempted at this</u> <u>time</u>	<u>NI</u> <u>Skill needs</u> <u>improvement</u>
<u>n^a</u> 4(3.7%)	<u>n^a</u> 81 (75%)	<u>n^a</u> 7 (6.5%)	<u>n^a</u> 16 (14.8%)
n ^a = Numbers and percentages of ratings for each category of student progress			

It is noteworthy that the objectives reviewed in each student's IEP were examined for measures of progress, not for the nature of the specific behaviors addressed because the assumption of the evaluator is that the benchmarks found in the IEP represent the specific needs of each student as determined by the IEP team. Another assumption of this data is that the BSP teacher is accurately rating each student's progress. Given that this data is reported with both assumptions in mind, it appears that the BSP is addressing the majority of the objectives set forth by the IEP team with approximately 78.7% of all objectives considered "mastered" or "progressing."

In addition to the information contained in each student's IEP, questions were posed to students, staff members, and parents regarding their perceptions of the extent to

which the BSP is addressing student needs. Students were interviewed using the protocol delineated in Instrument 2.2. Question 1 asked students for their perception of whether or not their academic needs were being met. Six out of the seven students (86%) who were interviewed responded with “yes.” Sample responses are listed in Table 3 below and provide elaborations on both the “yes” responses as well as the “no” response.

Table 3
Results for BSP Student Reaction Interview Protocol (2.2) Question 1:

How do you feel about the academics in the BSP classroom? Are your academic needs being met?	
<u>Yes-No Responses</u> <u>n^a</u>	<u>Elaborations on the Yes/No Responses</u>
Yes = 6 (86%) No = 1 (14%)	<p>(Yes) It can get challenging when there are many projects to do, but overall it’s easy.</p> <p>(Yes) Yes, it was all good.</p> <p>(Yes) The work is broken down and there is a lot of support from the teachers. They explain things in a very detailed, broken down way.</p> <p>(Yes) There is no homework, which is nice because it keeps my grade up. I am more motivated to do class-work when I have less to do at home. Also, having different teachers allows for multiple perspectives. BSP works just as well as other classes except it’s a more free-flowing environment. That’s better for me. Also, I passed HSPA.</p> <p>(Yes) If I were to change anything it would be more time to work on some of the projects.</p> <p>(Yes) The teachers are always there to help. They give a lot of work, but they allow extra time and provide extra support.</p> <p>(No) I didn’t learn much. It wasn’t like a normal class.</p>
n ^a = Numbers and percentages of responses for each rating value (yes or no)	

Staff members were also interviewed regarding their perceptions of student needs and whether or not they are addressed through the BSP. Five staff members including two administrators, two members of the Child Study Team, and one paraprofessional who worked in the BSP classroom were asked if they felt that student academic needs were being met through the BSP. Their responses were split between three staff members who felt that the program met students' academic needs, and two who felt that the program fell short. Table 4 provides a breakdown of staff responses to Question 2a of the School Personnel Reaction Interview Protocol (Instrument 2.1).

Table 4
 Results for School Personnel Reaction Interview Protocol (2.1) Question 2a:

Do you feel the BSP is meeting the needs of its students in the following areas: a. Academic?	
<u>Yes-No Responses</u> n ^a	<u>Elaborations on the Yes/No Responses</u>
Yes = 3 (60%) No = 2 (40%)	<p>(Yes) As best they can, given the population of students they are serving. Behavioral issues take away from pure academics.</p> <p>(Yes) For the most part their needs are met, but each student's levels, and the teacher's ability to differentiate instruction limit the academics.</p> <p>(Yes) Based on skill level, the students are doing well. The pace could be quicker and some students could be challenged more. For example, homework could be given more to provide opportunities for the students to demonstrate more responsibility.</p> <p>(No) Not so much, the program falls short here.</p> <p>(No) I'm not sure if the levels are appropriate. It's hard to teach Algebra 1 (ST) and Geometry (AC) in the same class period, for example. If you say it's Geometry (AC), then it should be Geometry (AC). I don't think the students have the proficiency in each area.</p>
n ^a = Numbers and percentages of responses for each rating value (yes or no)	

While sixteen parent surveys were distributed, only two parents responded and returned the Behavior Support Program Parent Reaction Survey (Instrument 2.3). Both parents rated themselves as "Very satisfied" when it came to the academic instruction in the BSP. Overall, the perceptions of students, school personnel, and parents suggest that the BSP is meeting the academic needs of its students.

The same instruments were used to gather responses from students, school personnel, and parents regarding the ability of the BSP to meet its students' behavioral needs. Question 2 of the BSP Student Reaction Interview Protocol asked students for their perception of whether or not their behavioral needs were being met. Six out of the seven students (86%) who were interviewed responded with "yes." Sample responses are listed in Table 5 below and provide elaborations on both the "yes" responses as well as the "no" response.

Table 5
Results for BSP Student Reaction Interview Protocol (2.2) Question 2:

<u>Do you feel that your behavior in school has improved since becoming a part of the BSP?</u>	
<u>Yes-No Responses</u> <u>n^a</u>	<u>Elaborations on the Yes/No Responses</u>
Yes = 6 (86%) No = 1 (14%)	<p>(Yes) I'm not sure it's a result of the BSP directly, though. It's a training ground for me to get back into the mainstream. It serves its purpose by alleviating stress and the teachers gently guide me to complete my work.</p> <p>(Yes) I'm not really a behavior problem but the environment was very helpful. They don't try to rush you and there is less pressure in that room.</p> <p>(Yes) They are more lenient than other teachers and they understand when I am having a bad day. They work with you to solve conflicts and disciplinary action is a last resort.</p> <p>(Yes) I go to class now. Freshman year, I did not. That's why I ended up in BSP. The teachers track you more and they know where I am supposed to be at all times. I'm OK with that, but other students don't like it.</p> <p>(Yes) When I first entered high school I would get upset very easily. Now I have shown maturity. I don't get too upset anymore.</p> <p>(Yes) I guess so. I didn't jump up on anyone's desk this year.</p> <p>(No) I think that my behavior has gotten worse because they are too lenient in there.</p>
n ^a = Numbers and percentages of responses for each rating value (yes or no)	

Question 2b of the School Personnel Reaction Interview Protocol (Instrument 2.1) asked school personnel about their perceptions of whether or not student behavioral needs

were being addressed through the BSP. One staff member responded with an “I don’t know” response and the other four respondents gave mixed answers. These responses were not “yes” or “no” but had both positive and negative themes. Table 6 provides a summary of the responses to Question 2b of the School Personnel Reaction Interview Protocol (Instrument 2.1).

Table 6
Results for School Personnel Reaction Interview Protocol (2.1) Question 2b:

Do you feel the BSP is meeting the needs of its students in the following areas: b. Behavioral?	
<u>Responses by Theme</u> <u>n^a</u>	<u>Elaborations on the Themed Responses</u>
Mixed (neither Yes or NO) = 4 (80%) I Don’t Know = 1 (20%)	<p>(Mixed) It could be tightened up a little bit. Too many students wander out of the room too much. I’m not sure there is enough of a system in place.</p> <p>(Mixed) Sometimes it does, sometimes it doesn’t. Depends on the student and if their needs aren’t being met they often end up out-of-district.</p> <p>(Mixed) I think so, but the discipline could be better. Teachers are often upset when they send a student down to the office and they are sent back with a lunch detention. There are such a wide variety of personalities in there to work with.</p> <p>(Mixed) It does well but too many of the students get away with things that other students would not get away with. I’m not sure that meets their needs.</p> <p>(I Don’t Know) I’m not sure if we make them better.</p>
n ^a = Numbers and percentages of responses for each rating value (yes or no)	

The BSP Parent Reaction Survey (Instrument 2.3) asked parents to rate, on a five-point scale from “Not at all addressed” to “Significantly addressed,” to what extent the

BSP has addressed the emotional and/or behavioral difficulties that your child has experienced in school. Both parents who responded circled “Very satisfied.”

Overall, the perceptions of students and parents suggest that the BSP is meeting the behavioral needs of its students by providing a supportive environment as well as patient and flexible teachers. School personnel, however, felt that improvements could be made with regard to addressing the behavioral needs of the students enrolled in the Behavioral Support Program. Three of the five respondents suggested improvements that would provide more structure to the program and accountability for its students.

Information regarding perceptions of the BSP and its ability to meet the social/emotional needs of its students was collected from school staff in question 2c of the School Personnel Reaction Interview Protocol (Instrument 2.1). One staff member responded with “I don’t know.” One staff member did not give a “Yes” or “No” response but rather provided a mixed response while three staff members responded, “Yes.” Table 7 provides a summary of the responses to Question 2c of the School Personnel Reaction Interview Protocol (Instrument 2.1).

Table 7
 Results for School Personnel Reaction Interview Protocol (2.1) Question 2c:

Do you feel the BSP is meeting the needs of its students in the following areas: c. Social/Emotional?	
<u>Yes/No Responses</u> <u>n^a</u>	<u>Elaborations on the Responses</u>
Yes = 3 (60%) Mixed = 1 (20%) I Don't Know = 1 (20%)	(Yes) Very much so. The personnel are great with that population. Each teacher and the counselors are good at providing patience, comfort, and a friendly atmosphere. (Yes) Some of the students are very socially disabled and this environment provides a small scale for them to interact with peers. (Yes) Teachers and counseling staff are kind and nurturing. They also encourage students to challenge themselves. (Mixed) The counseling component is one vehicle to meet student needs, but I feel there needs to be more team-building, field trips, and building a sense of community. (I don't know) I don't know.
n ^a = Numbers and percentages of responses for each rating value (yes or no)	

Students and parents were not directly asked about social/emotional needs because these needs were lumped in with behavioral needs on the BSP Parent Reaction Survey, and the evaluator felt that students may not be aware of their own social/emotional needs whereas they are often made aware of their behavior by others within the school environment. Overall, school personnel responses suggest that the BSP, as it was perceived at the time, is addressing the social emotional needs of its students by providing a supportive and comfortable environment, compassionate teachers, and counseling services.

When the information collected through the examination of student IEPs, and the responses of those involved with the BSP is considered, it appears that student needs are being identified through the behavior intervention plan in the IEP, the goals and objectives of the IEP, and through teacher and counselor perceptions. The extent to which these needs are being met is difficult to determine. The Behavior Intervention Plans contain guidelines for data collection; however, data was not available regarding a student's progress in addressing the target behaviors selected. The target behaviors identified in the BIPs tended to be general classroom or social behaviors and were not measurable. The information collected from student goals and objectives suggests that a majority of students were progressing or mastered the identified benchmarks recorded in their IEPs. An examination of student perceptions suggests that all but one student surveyed felt their needs were being met in the academic and behavioral domains. Only two parent surveys were returned, however, in both surveys, parents disclosed that they were very satisfied with the BSP and its ability to meet the academic, behavioral, and social emotional needs of its students. Staff perceptions were mixed with most respondents suggesting that improvements could be made in meeting students' academic and behavioral needs.

Results of Program Evaluation Question 2

Program Evaluation Question 2: To what extent is the Behavioral Support Program being implemented according to its design?

The second program evaluation question was intended to gain information regarding the day-to-day implementation of the Behavioral Support Program as it relates to the evaluable program design outlined in Chapter IV. Specifically, this second evaluation question examined the implementation of the three components of the BSP: the inclusive support model of academic instruction, technology integration, and behavior modification. Information was collected through in-depth interviews with the three BSP teachers and the school social worker that provides counseling support to the program. Questions covered the topics of academic instruction in the BSP classroom, the use of technology in the classroom, planning for transition of BSP students, behavior modification techniques, and counseling services provided. In addition to the information gathered through the interview process, the counseling logs for both the school social worker and school psychologist (the evaluator) were examined in order to determine the frequency of counseling services provided to BSP students.

The first component of the BSP design, as it is outlined in Chapter IV, is the inclusive support model of academic instruction. This component provides self-contained, individualized, and differentiated instruction in the BSP classroom in the core academic areas of mathematics, English, and history. Also, an out-of-class support period (OCS) is provided to students to allow time for make-up work, homework, or support in completing the requirements of their mainstream coursework. All three BSP teachers were asked in a semi-structured interview (Instrument 3.1, Question 3, 3a, 3b) to

discuss the instructional methods and behavioral modification techniques used in the BSP classroom. Table 8 summarizes BSP teacher responses to the instructional methods portion of Question 3 (Instrument 3.1).

Table 8
Results for BSP Teacher Interview Protocol (3.1) Question 3, 3a:

3. What teaching methods are being used in the classroom to address the needs of students participating in the BSP? 3a. What teaching methods do you find to be effective?	
<u>n^a</u>	<u>Responses by theme</u>
3	The most important factor is not the teaching strategy but teacher personality. Relationship/rapport with the students is key.
3	Multi-modal instruction (Multi-sensory)
2	Differentiated instruction
2	One-to-one instruction
1	Use of technology (Smartboard, PowerPoint, Webquests)
1	Having the students prepare and teach a lesson to classmates
1	Group work and self-directed assignments do NOT work
n ^a = Number of responses for each theme (out of 3 respondents)	

All three BSP teachers highlighted the importance of teacher personality in the BSP classroom and the need for a rapport to be established with each student. Also, all three teachers felt that multi-sensory/multi-modal methods of instruction were most effective with this population of students since very often they do not respond to lecture-based or reading-based learning. Two of the three respondents mentioned the use of differentiated instruction in the BSP classroom as important. This refers to teaching the

same concept to students with varying level of academic ability. A strategy that may be effective for one of the BSP students may not be effective for other students in the room. One-to-one instruction was mentioned by two of the three respondents as an effective strategy that is utilized in the BSP classroom. One respondent emphasized the extensive use of technology in the classroom. Also, one of the BSP teachers has had students teach a basic lesson to the rest of the class on a given topic. Finally, one respondent mentioned two strategies that were perceived as ineffective in the BSP classroom which are often utilized in mainstream coursework. Group work and self-directed assignments were mentioned as strategies that are perceived as ineffective in the BSP classroom. The responses of all three BSP teachers were consistent with the evaluable program design presented in Chapter IV.

In addition to discussing the instructional techniques used in the BSP classroom, teachers were asked about methods that they might like to try or use in the future. Table 9 summarizes BSP teacher responses to Question 3b of the BSP Teacher Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.1).

Table 9
Results for BSP Teacher Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.1) Question 3b:

3b. Are there any teaching methods that you would like to try in the BSP classroom?	
<u>n^a</u>	<u>Responses by theme</u>
1	Oral tests and quizzes
1	Project Adventure course
1	Community service component
1	Checklists/agenda to direct classroom behavior
1	Rewards for work completion/achieving academic goals
n ^a = Number of responses for each theme (out of 3 respondents)	

None of the responses obtained through the BSP Teacher Interview Protocol to Question 3b were shared responses. Each teacher had at least one suggestion regarding teaching methods in the BSP. Two responses suggested a non-academic learning component to take place outside of the classroom with Project Adventure and a community service component to supplement academic learning. One teacher suggested the use of oral tests and quizzes, especially for students with severe reading or writing disabilities. One suggestion included the use of classroom checklists or agendas that listed basic behavioral and academic expectations for the class period. Finally, one teacher suggested offering rewards to students for achieving academic goals both in the BSP classroom and in mainstream classes.

Information obtained from the BSP classroom teachers suggests that the inclusive support model of academic instruction was being implemented according to the evaluable

program design presented in Chapter IV. It is noteworthy, however, that this evaluable program design represents a revised design from the original design document created in 1996. Since the program has evolved through the years, it is important to note that the results may have been different if the original design document had been used as a benchmark for comparison with the current implementation of the program.

The second component outlined in the design of the BSP was technology integration. The intent of this component to the program, as it was originally expressed in 1996, was to find effective methods of using technology in the BSP classroom in order to deliver instruction in a way that maximizes student interest in learning. In order to gain information regarding the use of technology in the BSP classroom, a question was included in the BSP Teacher Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.1) regarding the instructional use of technology. Question 6 and 6a asked the BSP teachers what technology was used in the BSP classroom and what was useful. Table 10 summarizes the teacher responses to this prompt.

Table 10

Results for BSP Teacher Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.1) Questions 6 and 6a:

6. What types of technology do you use in the BSP classroom? 6a. What technology is useful?	
<u>n^a</u>	<u>Responses by theme</u>
3	Desktop computers
3	Laptops
3	Computers On Wheels (C.O.W. or “calf”)
3	SMART board
1	Overhead projector
1	Data projector
1	“Web Quests” through San Diego State University
n ^a = Number of responses for each theme (out of 3 respondents)	

All three teachers discussed the use of two desktops in the classroom, recently acquired laptops (2), borrowing the “C.O.W.” or “Computers on Wheels” cart, and the SMART board. One teacher mentioned the use of the overhead projector, one respondent discussed the use of the data projector for both computer presentations and movies, and one teacher mentioned the use of “Web Quests” that were accessed through the San Diego State University website. Overall, teachers felt that the school was providing them with plenty of opportunities to integrate technology into the BSP classroom. One respondent noted that, having worked in other school districts in the past, that this particular school district emphasized technology and its use. Question 6b asked teachers for suggestions regarding any other types of technology that they would like to use in the

BSP classroom. This question was included at the request of the Director of Special Services in order to provide information regarding future use of technology in the BSP classroom. Table 11 summarizes the responses obtained through question 6b of the BSP Teacher Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.1).

Table 11
Results for BSP Teacher Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.1) Question 6b:

6b. Are there any other types of technology that might be useful in the BSP classroom?	
<u>n^a</u>	<u>Responses by theme</u>
3	New computers (either desktops or a set of laptops)
2	New printer
1	Qwizdom
1	Kurzweil 3000 software
1	More calculators
n ^a = Number of responses for each theme (out of 3 respondents)	

All three teachers suggested that the program could use new computers. The two desktops in the classroom were not perceived as reliable. The type of computer suggested varied with each respondent. One teacher felt that new desktops in the room would be adequate. Another teacher suggested two to three laptops be added to the class, while the third teacher suggested that the class have a set of laptops (a “calf”) for exclusive use in the BSP. Two teachers suggested a new printer for the room. One response was recorded for Qwizdom, a student response tool used in some of the general education classrooms, Kurzweil 3000 software, and more calculators respectively.

Overall, teachers felt that technology was available for frequent use in the BSP classroom, however, updated computers and printers would be useful along with some assistive technology software.

The third component of the BSP, as identified in the evaluable program design outlined in Chapter IV, was the behavior modification program. The behavior modification component consisted of the following activities: the development and implementation of a Behavior Intervention Plan for each student, a general set of classroom rules/expectations, a token economy system, communication between the BSP and mainstream teachers, weekly group counseling, and individual counseling on an as-needed basis. Implementation of each activity was addressed either through first-hand knowledge of the evaluator or through the interview protocols of all three BSP teachers and one of the BSP counselors.

In answering the first program evaluation question, it was found that six students out of sixteen (or 37.5%) did not have a Behavior Intervention Plan included in his/her IEP. The development and implementation of Behavior Intervention Plans was also addressed through questions 4, 4a, 4b, and 4c of the BSP Teacher Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.1) and questions 6, 6a, 6b, and 6c of the BSP Counseling Staff Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.2). Since the questions asked of both teachers and counseling staff were identical, the responses have been combined by theme and summarized in table form. The first question presented to staff asked about their involvement in the process of developing the BIP for each student. The responses to question 4 of Instrument 3.1 and question 6 of Instrument 3.2 are summarized in Table 12.

Table 12
Results for BSP Teacher Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.1) Question 4 and BSP
 Counseling Staff Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.2) Question 6:

How familiar are you with each student's Behavior Intervention Plan? How involved are you in developing the BIP?	
<u>n^a</u>	<u>Responses by theme</u>
4	Identified BIP as an area that needs improvement
2	Only familiar with the BIP if I am involved in writing it.
1	Look at it at the beginning of the year and that's it.
1	I have never really been involved in designing one.
n ^a = Number of responses for each theme (out of 4 respondents)	

All four respondents reacted to this question by expressing a need to improve the Behavior Intervention Plans for students in the BSP. Two of the four respondents expressed some familiarity with the BIPs, but only for those students in which they were involved in the process of developing the plans. One staff member responded that they typically look over each student's BIP at the beginning of the school year, but often forget about the content or strategies outlined in the plan. Another staff member felt that they could use training in this area and have never been involved in the planning or designing of a BIP. Overall, all four staff members interviewed felt that the development and implementation of Behavior Intervention Plans was an area in need of improvement for the program.

One follow-up question addressing the issue of the use of BIPs in the BSP classroom attempted to gain insight into the perceptions of each staff member regarding the value of a BIP. Question 4a of the BSP Teacher Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.1)

and question 6a of the BSP Counseling Staff Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.2) asked each respondent about the value of developing a BIP for each student involved in the program. Their responses are summarized in Table 13.

Table 13
Results for BSP Teacher Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.1) Question 4a and BSP Counseling Staff Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.2) Question 6a:

What is the value of developing a BIP for each student?	
<u>n^a</u>	<u>Responses by theme</u>
4	Provides clarity and sets consistent expectations.
3	Can provide steps/guidelines/procedures for addressing behavior problems in both BSP and regular education classroom.
1	Could be tied into reinforcement/rewards, grades, and progress reporting
n ^a = Number of responses for each theme (out of 4 respondents)	

While Table 12 illustrated the need for more training in the area of developing and implementing Behavior Intervention Plans, Table 13 highlights the perceptions of staff regarding the important role that a BIP can have in the BSP classroom. All four staff members expressed that the value of the BIP for each student is that it provides a consistent set of expectations, with three of the four respondents adding that it can provide a very specific set of steps or guidelines for addressing behavior problems across settings. One staff member also felt that the BIP could be valuable in providing opportunities for positive reinforcement and rewards in the BSP classroom. This staff member also felt that a student's progress towards addressing the behaviors of the BIP could be reported as part of their academic grades through progress reports or weekly

tracking sheets. Unanimously, the staff reported that the value of a BIP is to provide consistent expectations, with the majority of staff suggesting that the BIP can outline specific procedures for addressing individual student behavior.

Since the BIP was identified as an area of implementation that required some improvement, question 4b of the BSP Teacher Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.1) and question 6b of the BSP Counseling Staff Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.2) addressed the obstacles involved in the implementation of behavior plans. Table 14 summarizes the responses and obstacles discussed.

Table 14
Results for BSP Teacher Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.1) Question 4b and BSP Counseling Staff Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.2) Question 6a:

What obstacles exist in the implementation of the BIP for each student?	
<u>n^a</u>	<u>Responses by theme</u>
2	Administrator involvement and support
2	Time to meet as a program to develop and update BIP
1	Consistency across settings and staff
1	Parental involvement and support
1	The influence of other students in the classroom can make it a challenge
n ^a = Number of responses for each theme (out of 4 respondents)	

Two of the four respondents identified both the support of school administration and time constraints as significant obstacles to the implementation of the BIP. Consistent implementation, parental involvement, and peer influence were also identified by at least one respondent as obstacles in the implementation of each student's BIP. Given the list

of obstacles identified in the interview responses, the evaluator also asked each BSP staff member for suggestions to improve the BIP process. Question 4c of the BSP Teacher Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.1) and question 6c of the BSP Counseling Staff Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.2) were asked in order to elicit suggestions for improving this area of implementation. Table 15 summarizes the responses to this interview question.

Table 15
Results for BSP Teacher Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.1) Question 4c and BSP Counseling Staff Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.2) Question 6c:

How can the process of the development and implementation of BIPs be improved?	
<u>n^a</u>	<u>Responses by theme</u>
4	More time for planning, development, and maintenance of the BIP.
3	More staff training in this area
2	Having consistent support from an administrator regarding disciplinary issues.
2	Make the BIP the individual level of intervention within a larger classroom system of intervention. Tie it into rewards/reinforcement in the classroom.
1	Have the BIP available to student and remind them of it
n ^a = Number of responses for each theme (out of 4 respondents)	

All four respondents suggested the idea of a having more time, or a common time, for planning, development, and maintenance of the BIP. Three of the four staff members suggested more training in this area. Two of the four respondents identified the need for the consistent involvement of a building level administrator in order to assist staff with

disciplinary issues. Two respondents felt that the BIP represents an individualized intervention that should be tied into a larger, program-wide behavior modification system (one that is not developed nor implemented at the time of evaluation). Finally, one staff member suggested that Behavior Intervention Plans be kept in the BSP classroom for easy access and so that students may be reminded of their content.

In summation, the Behavior Intervention Plan activities within the behavior modification component of the BSP were not being implemented according to the program's design. All four staff members identified this area as an area in need of attention and improvement with each respondent offering constructive suggestions towards an improvement in the implementation of this program activity.

Another activity involved in the behavior modification component of the BSP design was a general set of classroom rules that is determined by the teacher, with input from the students at the beginning of the academic year. This activity was not addressed formally through the program evaluation process because the evaluator had first hand knowledge and experience that suggested this activity was implemented according to the program's design.

A third activity listed in the behavior modification component of the evaluable program design was a token economy system that involved points awarded for positive behavior in both mainstream and BSP classes. At the time of evaluation, a token economy system was not being implemented in the BSP. While specific interview questions did not address the implementation of a token economy system, question 3 of the BSP Teacher Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.1) and question 4 of the BSP Counseling Staff Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.2) asked about behavior modification

techniques used in the BSP classroom. All four staff members interviewed stated that a classroom behavior modification system was not being consistently implemented at this time. Two of the four staff members suggested that token economies have not worked in the past. Both suggested reasons for abandoning the token economy system. These reasons included the following: it is too time consuming to manage, older students are embarrassed by tokens, the system does not transfer to the outside world, and many students do not wish to participate in a token economy. One staff member also discussed the use of behavior contracts suggesting that contracts are often met with one of two reactions: indifference or manipulation.

While two staff members expressed negative reactions towards token economies, all four staff members were in agreement that some system or set of guidelines for behavior modification should be in place within the program. Two staff members felt that conventional techniques such as rewards and positive reinforcement could be adapted to the BSP classroom while the other two felt that more unconventional or creative approaches should be explored. Overall, the token economy system was not being implemented according to the program's design because of a lack of staff consensus regarding such a system. While all four staff members felt that a behavior modification system should be in place, in some form, consensus may be difficult to reach regarding the type of system that could be implemented in the BSP classroom.

The fourth activity listed in the evaluable program design of the Behavioral Support Program (Chapter IV) was communication between BSP teachers, mainstream teachers, parents, and case managers. This activity was not directly addressed through the evaluation process since the evaluator and Director of Special Services both felt,

through first-hand involvement with the program, that this activity was implemented with consistency and also addressed systematically through the tracking system used for all special education students enrolled at the high school. Students in BSP, like all special education students at the high school, were assigned tracking teachers (one of the three BSP teachers) who regularly communicated with general education teachers, parents, and case managers. This system is monitored through computer-based tracking forms. While communication was not an identified area of concern, BSP teachers did suggest that additional planning time would be helpful in maintaining adequate communication.

The fifth and sixth activities within the behavior modification component of the program design involved the use of counseling services, provided through regularly scheduled group sessions and individual counseling. Information regarding the frequency of counseling services provided, as delineated in the IEP, was collected with the Counseling Services Frequency and Duration Table (Instrument 1.2) and is summarized in Table 16.

Table 16
Frequency of Counseling Services to be Provided as Delineated in IEP (2008-09)

n ^a	Frequency of Counseling Services Required by IEP (2008-09)
6 (37.5%)	2 times per month
4 (25%)	3 times per month
2 (12.5%)	4 times per month
1 (6.25%)	1 time per month
1 (6.25%)	1 time per week
1 (6.25%)	No frequency delineated
1 (6.25%)	No counseling services in IEP
n ^a = Number of students with this frequency listed in their IEP out of a total of 16 NOTE: 75% of IEPs were in compliance based on counseling logs	

Table 16 describes the frequency of counseling received by BSP students throughout the 2008-09 academic year. Counseling logs maintained by both counseling staff members were used to determine whether or not the amount of counseling received by each student was in compliance with each IEP. Twelve out of the fourteen students (75%) received counseling services in compliance with the frequency delineated in his/her IEP. Four students (25%) did not receive counseling services in compliance with the frequency delineated in his/her IEP. It should be noted that the duration of each session and a designation of whether or not the session was group or individual was not recorded with Instrument 1.2 because the counseling logs maintained by both counseling staff members (evaluator included) do not specify this information. Only the date of contact is noted in the counseling log/calendar.

Further information regarding the counseling services provided to BSP students was obtained through a collection of responses to question 7 of the BSP Teacher Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.1) and question 3 of the BSP Counseling Staff Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.2). The first part of this question was aimed at obtaining information on how counseling is typically accessed in the BSP classroom. Table 17 summarizes staff responses to this interview question.

Table 17
Results for BSP Teacher Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.1) Question 7 and BSP
 Counseling Staff Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.2) Question 3:

How are counseling services accessed in the BSP classroom?	
<u>n^a</u>	<u>Responses by theme</u>
4	Through scheduled group sessions (usually an OCS period)
4	Students go down to counselors as needed
n ^a = Number of responses for each theme (out of 4 respondents)	

All four respondents identified two methods for students to access counseling services: scheduled group sessions or seeking out counselors on an as-needed basis. The next set of responses obtained through question 7a of Instrument 3.1 and question 3a of Instrument 3.2 elicited perceptions of the adequacy of counseling services. Table 18 summarizes the responses of BSP teachers and counseling staff to this interview prompt.

Table 18
Results for BSP Teacher Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.1) Question 7a and BSP
 Counseling Staff Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.2) Question 3a:

Do you feel that counseling services are adequate?	
<u>Yes/No Responses</u> <u>n^a</u>	<u>Elaborations on the Response</u>
Yes = 1 (25%)	(Yes) Counselors provide an open door for what students need.
No = 3 (75%)	(No) Not enough group this year and not consistent (No) Group has not been successful because of counselor time constraints. (No) Counselor availability has been more limited this year because of increased caseloads.
n ^a = Numbers and percentages of responses for each rating value (yes or no)	

Three out of the four respondents (75%) felt that the counseling services provided during the 2008-09 academic year were not adequate due to the inconsistency of scheduled group sessions and limited time that was available to counseling staff. While most students received services in compliance with their IEPs, it was felt that group was more frequent and consistent during the previous academic year (2007-08).

Suggestions for improvement of counseling services were elicited from BSP staff using question 7b of the BSP Teacher Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.1) and question 3b of the BSP Counseling Staff Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.2). Table 19 presents a summary of suggestions regarding counseling support.

Table 19
Results for BSP Teacher Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.1) Question 7b and BSP
 Counseling Staff Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.2) Question 3b:

What could be done differently with regard to counseling support?	
<u>n^a</u>	<u>Responses by Theme</u>
3	Design a BSP group “common period” when all BSP staff and students are available.
2	Group could come out of an OCS at a regularly scheduled time each week so everyone knows when it takes place.
1	Include teachers in the group on occasion.
1	Maybe create a period for group and also include “Life Skills” curriculum with teachers for possible Pass/Fail credit.
1	Counselors should have daily contact with students to gauge emotional status and be proactive.
1	Make counseling part of student’s schedule like other related services (ie - Speech or Wilson Reading)
1	Group could take place in the classroom with teachers leaving the room.
n ^a = Number of responses for each theme (out of 4 respondents)	

While the suggestions for improvement of the counseling component of the BSP varied in specific content, all four respondents advocated for the general idea of formalizing the counseling component into regularly scheduled time for group. The responses varied with regard to how this scheduled time should be provided. Three staff members advocated for a “common time” where all teachers have a prep period, students are scheduled for the BSP classroom, and counseling staff is available. Two staff members suggested that group time come out of the already scheduled OCS periods at a

regularly scheduled time. One suggestion included the use of teachers in the group session on occasion while another felt that group could take place in the classroom without teachers present. One respondent suggested that counselors come into the room on a daily basis to gauge student emotional status and attempt to be proactive in addressing student behavior. Also, it was suggested that perhaps counseling could be placed on the student's schedule like speech or other related services. Another suggestion was to create a period in the student's schedule for group as part of a "Life Skills" curriculum that could involve one or more of the BSP teachers and provide students with an opportunity to earn Pass/Fail credits. Overall, while BSP staff members had a variety of suggestions, all of them advocated for a consistently scheduled period of time to be allotted for group counseling.

Results of the second program evaluation question suggest that, of the three primary components of the BSP design document, two were being implemented according to its design. Both the inclusion support model of instruction and technology integration were being implemented in the BSP classroom as outlined by the evaluable program design found in Chapter IV. Only some of the activities involved in the third component, the behavior modification program, were taking place in the day-to-day implementation of the BSP. Specifically, the development and implementation of Behavior Intervention Plans that are individualized for each student in the BSP classroom, the token economy system, and the provision of counseling services were not being provided in the manner in which these three activities were designed. BSP staff provided suggestions for improvement in the implementation of all three activities through the interview protocols used in this evaluation.

Results of Program Evaluation Question 3

Program Evaluation Question 3: What are the reactions of the individuals involved in the BSP?

The third program evaluation question was designed to gain information about the reactions to the BSP from program staff, students, parents, and school personnel who are involved in placing students in the program. Questions were posed in each interview protocol and reaction survey (Instruments 3.1, 3.2, 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3) in order to elicit people's perceptions about the strengths and limitations of the BSP as well as suggestions for changes to the program. All questions were open-ended in nature, allowing respondents to provide as much or as little input as he/she desired. The information obtained through each interview and survey response was compiled, organized, and summarized for presentation in this section.

The BSP Teacher Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.1), BSP Counseling Staff Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.2), School Personnel Reaction Interview Protocol (Instrument 2.1), BSP Student Reaction Interview Protocol (Instrument 2.2), and BSP Parent Reaction Survey (Instrument 2.3) all included a question asking for respondents to discuss the strengths of the program. First, all four BSP staff members were asked to provide insight into the perceived strengths of the program. Table 20 summarizes the responses of BSP teachers and counseling staff to question 10 of Instrument 3.1 and 3.2.

Table 20
Results for BSP Teacher Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.1) Question 10 and BSP
 Counseling Staff Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.2) Question 10:

What are the strengths of the BSP?	
<u>n^a</u>	<u>Responses by Theme</u>
4	The personnel/The personalities of the staff.
3	The nurturing and supportive atmosphere created in the classroom.
2	The support of the Director of Special Services.
1	Small class size.
1	The freedom we are given as staff to try different things.
1	Ability to individualize instruction based on student strengths and weaknesses.
1	Counseling has been more consistent the past two years.
n ^a = Number of responses for each theme (out of 4 respondents)	

All four BSP staff responded that the personalities of the staff were considered a strength of the program. Specifically, the BSP staff felt that teachers were flexible, understanding of each student's difficulties, consistent, and worked well together as a team. Three out of four respondents felt that the nurturing and supportive atmosphere created in the BSP classroom was another strength of the program. Two out of four staff members felt that the support of the Director of Special Services was a strength of the BSP. Other strengths that were mentioned by a single staff member included: the small class size, the freedom to try different things, the ability to individualize instruction based

on the strengths and weaknesses of the students, and counseling being more consistent in the past two years.

School personnel who were involved in referring students to the BSP were also asked to name the strengths of the program. Their responses are summarized in Table 21.

Table 21
Results for School Personnel Reaction Interview Protocol (Instrument 2.1) Question 4:

What are the strengths of the BSP?	
<u>n^a</u>	<u>Responses by Theme</u>
5	The personnel. The personalities of the staff.
2	The flexibility of the program to meet a variety of needs.
2	The nurturing and supportive atmosphere created in the classroom.
1	Early identification of students.
1	Small class size allow for one-on-one instruction.
1	Saves the district money.
n ^a = Number of responses for each theme (out of 5 respondents)	

Once again, all five respondents identified the personnel and personalities of the BSP staff as a strength of the program. Two of the five respondents also mentioned the flexibility of the program and atmosphere created in the classroom, respectively, as strengths. Also discussed were the program's ability to identify students early in their high school careers, the small class size, and the fact that the program saves the district money.

Students were also asked to identify the strengths of the BSP. Each student was asked to identify strengths in question 4 of the BSP Student Reaction Interview Protocol (Instrument 2.2). A number of responses were consistent with both BSP staff and school personnel responses. Table 22 summarizes the responses of students (Instrument 2.2) in identifying the strengths of the BSP.

Table 22
Results for BSP Student Reaction Interview Protocol (Instrument 2.2) Question 4:

What do you like the most about the BSP?	
<u>n^a</u>	<u>Responses by Theme</u>
6	The personnel. The personalities of the staff.
4	The nurturing and supportive atmosphere created in the classroom.
3	Small class size allow for one-on-one instruction.
1	Extended time provided
1	No homework
n ^a = Number of responses for each theme (out of 7 respondents)	

Consistent with both BSP staff reactions and school personnel reactions, the most frequently identified strengths of the program were the personnel involved (six out of seven students) and the nature of the classroom environment created in the program (four out of seven students). Three students also felt that the small class size was a strength, allowing for more individualized instruction. This was also a strength identified in both the BSP staff interviews and school personnel interviews. Finally, extended time and lack of homework were both identified by one student, respectively, as a strength.

Parents were asked to identify strengths using Instrument 2.3, the BSP Parent Reaction Survey. Only two completed surveys were returned, and both parents identified the personnel as strengths. Once again, this is consistent with BSP staff, school personnel, and student responses. Additional single responses included: small group instruction, providing a safe haven for students, and making students feel important. All of these are consistent with the responses provided by BSP staff, school personnel, and students.

Overall, BSP staff, school personnel, students, and parents all identified the personnel involved in the BSP as a major strength of the program. Table 23 summarizes the most frequently cited themes across all four respondent groups surveyed.

Table 23
Most Frequently Cited Strengths by Theme:

What are the strengths of the BSP?	
<u>n^a</u>	<u>Responses by Theme</u>
17	The personnel. The personalities of the staff.
10	The nurturing and supportive atmosphere created in the classroom.
6	Small class size allow for one-on-one instruction.
4	The flexibility of the program to meet a variety of needs.
2	The support of the Director of Special Services.
n ^a = Number of responses for each theme (out of 18 respondents)	

When the responses of BSP staff, school personnel, BSP students, and parents are examined as a whole, the two most frequently cited themes are: the personnel/the

personalities of staff and the nurturing and supportive atmosphere created in the BSP classroom. Seventeen out of eighteen respondents identified personnel as a strength while ten out of eighteen respondents cited the atmosphere of the classroom. Six respondents felt the small class size was an advantage and four felt that the flexibility of the program was a strength. Two respondents (both BSP staff members) felt that the support of the Director of Special Services was a strength.

All four groups of respondents were also asked to identify limitations of the BSP through follow up questions in all survey and interview instruments. BSP personnel was asked to identify limitations of the program through question 10 of both the BSP Teacher Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.1) and the BSP Counseling Staff Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.2). Table 24 summarizes the responses provided by BSP teaching and counseling staff regarding the limitations of the program.

Table 24
Results for BSP Teacher Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.1) Question 10 and BSP
 Counseling Staff Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.2) Question 10:

What are the limitations of the BSP?	
<u>n^a</u>	<u>Responses by Theme</u>
4	Clear and consistent system for disciplinary consequences.
3	Lack of regularly scheduled BSP staff meetings
1	Transition services
1	Lack of parental involvement – sometimes it is assumed that parents are not involved.
1	Limitations of the public school setting (ie scheduling, discipline, politics)
1	Lack of organized incentive system
1	Lack of resources for trips, training, rewards
n ^a = Number of responses for each theme (out of 4 respondents)	

All four respondents identified disciplinary procedures as a limitation for the BSP program. Some staff suggested having an administrator assigned to the program for this purpose. Respondents felt that standard disciplinary measures such as lunch detentions were ineffective with the typical BSP student. Three out of four respondents also felt that a lack of regularly scheduled BSP staff meetings was a limitation of the program. Other areas identified as limitations by single staff members, respectively, included: transition services, lack of parental involvement, the limitations of the public school setting, the lack of an organized incentive system, and a lack of resources for trips and rewards.

School personnel were also asked to identify limitations of the BSP in question 4a of the School Personnel Reaction Interview Protocol (Instrument 2.1). Table 25 summarizes school personnel responses in identifying limitations of the BSP.

Table 25
Results for School Personnel Reaction Interview Protocol (Instrument 2.1) Question 4a:

What are the limitations of the BSP?	
<u>n^a</u>	<u>Responses by Theme</u>
2	Transition services
2	Missing a science and foreign language component
2	Differentiation of academic levels
2	Limitations of the public school setting
1	May be burning out teachers
1	Counselor availability can be limited because of case management duties
1	Lack of input into master schedule
1	Students can lose academic motivation at times
n ^a = Number of responses for each theme (out of 5 respondents)	

School personnel identified eight different themes regarding the limitations of the BSP. Two out of five respondents felt that transition services for BSP students were lacking. Also, two respondents felt that the program failed to address the areas of science and foreign language. Academically, two respondents felt that the program failed to differentiate the appropriate academic levels within each subject area (ie – studies level versus academic level courses). Two responses included the idea that scheduling and

other issues related to being housed within a public school setting limited the program. Single responses were recorded for the following themes: teachers may become burned-out, counselor availability was limited by case management duties, the program had a lack of input into the master schedule, and students placed in the program can lose their academic motivation at times. The themes of transition services and the limitations of the public school setting were both consistent with responses found in the BSP staff interview results.

Students were also asked to identify limitations of the BSP. Seven students responded to question 5 of the BSP Student Reaction Interview Protocol (Instrument 2.2). The results are summarized in Table 26.

Table 26

Results for BSP Student Reaction Interview Protocol (Instrument 2.2) Question 5:

What do you like the least about the BSP?	
<u>n^a</u>	<u>Responses by Theme</u>
4	Not enough discipline with students who act out.
1	Need a science and gym class
1	Need to have more group counseling
1	Good students should get rewarded more often
1	Nothing.
1	The school taking our table away.
n ^a = Number of responses for each theme (out of 7 respondents)	

Four out of the seven students responded that discipline was a limitation with regard to students who act up or cut class. All four felt that there should be consequences

when students misbehave in the classroom. One student identified a lack of science and gym class as a limitation. Another respondent felt the need for more group counseling. One response felt that students who behaved appropriately should get more rewards. Also, one respondent felt that there were no limitations in the program. The BSP had recently removed a large community table from the room in favor of setting up a more traditional classroom environment, which became an issue for one student respondent. The disciplinary and scheduling limitations cited by students are both consistent with BSP staff and school personnel responses.

It is noteworthy that neither parent who returned the BSP Parent Reaction Survey (Instrument 2.3) cited any limitations for the program. When responses from BSP staff, school personnel, and students are examined together, some recurring themes emerge. Table 27 summarizes the most frequently cited limitations across all four groups of respondents.

Table 27
Most Frequently Cited Limitations by Theme:

What are the limitations of the BSP?	
<u>n^a</u>	<u>Responses by Theme</u>
8	Clear and consistent system for disciplinary consequences
3	Transition services
3	Need for additional course offerings
3	Limitations of the public school setting
3	Lack of regularly scheduled BSP staff meetings
3	None
2	Differentiation of academic levels
n ^a = Number of responses for each theme (out of 18 respondents)	

When the most frequently cited limitations are compiled for all four groups of respondents, disciplinary issues are at the forefront. Eight of the eighteen respondents, including eight out of eleven respondents who participate daily in the program as either students or staff, cited a lack of consistent discipline and/or procedures for discipline as a limitation of the program. Three respondents, one BSP staff and two school personnel, identified a lack of transition services as a limitation of the BSP. Three respondents felt that the program should offer additional courses such as science, gym, and/or foreign languages. Also, three people cited the limitations of the public school setting, such as the rotating schedule and school policies, as program limitations. The lack of regularly scheduled meetings was considered a significant limitation by BSP staff. Two parents and one student (three respondents) felt that the program did not have any limitations. In

addition, two respondents, both school personnel, felt that the differentiation of academic levels was a significant limitation of the program.

The final set of reactions collected through the evaluation process pertained to the suggestions or changes that BSP staff members, school personnel, students, and parents had for improving the program. First, all three BSP teachers and the BSP counseling staff were prompted for suggestions to improve the program. Question 11 of the BSP Teacher Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.1) and the BSP Counseling Staff Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.2) asked for suggestions for changes to the BSP. Table 28 summarizes the information collected from BSP staff members.

Table 28
Results for BSP Teacher Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.1) Question 11 and BSP
 Counseling Staff Interview Protocol (Instrument 3.2) Question 11:

In addition to your responses earlier in this interview, are there any other changes that you would like to see to the Behavioral Support Program?	
<u>n^a</u>	<u>Responses by Theme</u>
4	A building administrator assigned to the BSP (or more disciplinary support from building administration)
3	Common Period/More BSP staff meetings
2	BSP Gym Class
1	More of a transition component
1	An in-school suspension room
1	Periodic evaluations of the program – ie: parent interviews, exit interviews with students
1	An explicit budget for BSP
1	Lower caseload for BSP counselors
1	More parental involvement
1	Involvement of the special education lead teacher. Especially since the new lead teacher has experience with this population.
n ^a = Number of responses for each theme (out of 4 respondents)	

All four BSP staff members suggested that the program should have a building administrator responsible for disciplinary issues with BSP students. Three out of four respondents felt that a common period, or at least more frequent meetings, should be scheduled for BSP staff. Two out of the four respondents felt that a BSP Gym class was needed. Other suggestions that were expressed by one of the BSP staff members

respectively included: a transition component, in-school suspension, periodic program evaluations, an explicit budget, lower caseloads for BSP counseling staff, more parental involvement, and the involvement of the special education lead teacher. The special education lead teacher was retiring at the time of this evaluation and the newly appointed lead teacher had experience with the BSP population.

The School Personnel Reaction Interview Protocol (Instrument 2.1) was also used to elicit suggestions for the improvement of the BSP. Question 5 of Instrument 2.1 asked CST members and administrators to list changes that he/she would suggest to improve the BSP. Table 29 summarizes the responses of school personnel.

Table 29
 Results for School Personnel Reaction Interview Protocol (Instrument 2.1) Question 5:

What changes would you suggest to improve the BSP?	
<u>n^a</u>	<u>Responses by Theme</u>
2	Assign an administrator to be in charge of BSP
2	Create measurable behavioral goals and track progress along with student
1	More staff so program could offer more alternative proficiencies
1	Students should be kept in classroom rather than coming to CST/guidance all the time
1	Have a few locations in the building so that students move from class to class and have a more normalized high school experience.
1	Make it more challenging academically
1	Have two certified teachers in a class rather than a teacher and an aide
1	A syllabus for students/checklist of assignments to show where they are in the curriculum
1	Training for the paraprofessional(s) assigned to the BSP
1	Explore creative interventions such as mindfulness/meditation
1	Create a common time for program staff to meet regularly
1	Create a science class and foreign language class
n ^a = Number of responses for each theme (out of 5 respondents)	

Two out of five school personnel suggested that an administrator should be assigned to the program. This is consistent with all four BSP staff responses. Also, two

school personnel suggested the creation of very specific and measurable behavioral goals that are continuously tracked throughout the year. The remaining suggestions in Table 29 were cited by one respondent, respectively, and ranged from adding personnel and courses to the program to exploring alternative intervention such as mindfulness and meditation. Only one of these responses was consistent in theme with the suggestions of BSP staff members. One respondent suggested that teachers and counselors have a common time allotted for periodic staff meetings throughout the year.

In Table 30, student suggestions to improve the BSP are summarized. Students were asked to provide suggestions for changes to the program in question 6 of the BSP Student Reaction Interview Protocol (Instrument 2.2).

Table 30
Results for BSP Student Reaction Interview Protocol (Instrument 2.2) Question 6:

What changes would you suggest to the BSP?	
<u>n^a</u>	<u>Responses by Theme</u>
4	None – “I can’t think of any.”
2	Better discipline
2	Air conditioning in the classroom
2	More field trips
2	BSP Gym Class
1	More help with quizzes, tests, and projects in classes that are outside of the program
1	BSP Science Class
1	A scheduled time for group
n ^a = Number of responses for each theme (out of 7 respondents)	

Four of the seven students interviewed could not think of any suggestions for improving the Behavioral Support Program. Two students suggested better discipline. This is consistent with both BSP staff and school personnel responses to this question as well as an identified limitation of the program. Two respondents suggested air conditioning in the classroom, more field trips, and a BSP Gym class, respectively. One respondent who was mainstreamed for several courses suggested more assistance with studying for tests, quizzes, and projects outside of the BSP classroom. One student suggested a BSP Science class. This is consistent with one of the identified limitations mentioned previously. Finally, one respondent suggested a scheduled time for group counseling. Results of the two responses to the BSP Parent Reaction Survey (Instrument 2.3) yielded no suggestions.

When suggestions were organized and compiled across all three respondent groups (parents were excluded due to lack of responses), several common suggestions are expressed. Table 31 lists the suggestions that were expressed more than once across all three groups of respondents.

Table 31
Most Frequently Cited Suggestions by Theme:

What changes would you suggest to improve the BSP?	
<u>n^a</u>	<u>Responses by Theme</u>
6	Assign a building administrator to BSP
4	Create a BSP Gym Class
4	Common period/Periodic staff meetings
2	Air conditioning in the classroom
2	More field trips
2	Better discipline
2	Create a BSP science class
2	Create measurable behavioral goals and track progress along with student
n ^a = Number of responses for each theme (out of 18 respondents)	

The most frequently suggested improvement to the Behavioral Support Program was that a building administrator be assigned to the program. Six out of the eighteen respondents suggested that a building administrator be assigned to handle disciplinary issues with the program. This was consistent with the identified limitations of the program as well. Four out of eighteen respondents (two students, two BSP staff) suggested that a BSP Gym class be offered to students in the program. Four respondents (three BSP staff, one school personnel) suggested a common period for periodic BSP staff meetings. Two students suggested air conditioning in the classroom, and two students responded that more field trips are needed. In addition, two student respondents

suggested that the program have better discipline. This was also consistent with the limitations identified by students, BSP staff, and school personnel (see Table 27). Two respondents (one school personnel, one student) suggested the creation of a BSP Science class. This was also consistent with the limitations listed in Table 27. Finally, two people (both school personnel respondents) suggested the creation of more measurable behavioral goals that are tracked throughout the year so that a student could see his/her progress.

In general, the reactions of BSP staff, school personnel, students, and parents suggest that the strengths of the BSP could be considered its personnel, the supportive atmosphere that is created in the classroom, the small class instruction, and the flexibility of the program to meet a variety of student needs. The most consistently identified limitation was the lack of a consistent system for dealing with student disciplinary issues. Other limitations cited by multiple respondents included the limitations of the public school setting, the need for transition services, the need for additional course offerings, and a lack of common planning/meeting time for staff. Respondents were also asked for suggestions to improve the BSP. The most frequently cited suggestion was for an administrator to be assigned to the program. Other suggestions by multiple respondents included the following: creating a BSP Gym class, more time for periodic staff meetings, air conditioning in the classroom, more field trips, better discipline, a BSP science class, and the creation of measurable and specific behavioral goals.

It is important to note that although the aforementioned responses represent a summary of the information given by multiple respondents, the single responses provided in answering this evaluation question were still provided because they could potentially

provide valuable information to the current Director of Special Services in determining the next steps in the process of running the BSP. The reader is encouraged to examine all responses rather than simply drawing conclusions from the suggestions cited by multiple respondents.

Results of Program Evaluation Question 4

Program Evaluation Question 4: How have the students benefited academically from the program?

The fourth evaluation question was intended to provide the Director of Special Services with information regarding the academic outcomes of students involved in the Behavioral Support Program. The Director of Special Services expressed an interest in academic outcomes because the district was focused on the State of New Jersey district self-assessment process at the time of evaluation, and one area being emphasized was the performance of special education students on state-mandated assessment. For high school students in the State of New Jersey, the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) is used to gauge student proficiency in the areas of Mathematics and Language Arts Literacy. Regular education students must score within the proficient range (standard score of 200 or above) in both Mathematics and Language Arts Literacy in order to receive a high school diploma. Special education students may not be held to this standard depending on the nature of their disability and the decision of the IEP team to waive this requirement in the IEP document.

Data collected from the high school's guidance department was used in order to determine what percentage of the current students enrolled in the behavior support

program during the 2008-09 school year passed the HSPA. Table 32 presents the students' standard scores in Language Arts Literacy and Mathematics, the average score in each subject area for the program, and the percentage of BSP students with proficient (or higher) scores in each subject area.

Table 32
Behavioral Support Program HSPA Performance Summary:

Student	LAL SS	Proficient?	Math SS	Proficient?
1	196	No	187	No
2	174	No	178	No
3	189	No	196	No
4	204	Yes	173	No
5	202	Yes	187	No
6	244	Yes	241	Yes
7	229	Yes	220	Yes
8	247	Yes	225	Yes
9	192	No	191	No
10	237	Yes	226	Yes
	Mean Score LAL	% Proficient LAL	Mean Score Math	% Proficient Math
	211.4	60%	202.4	40%
Total number of students in BSP having taken the HSPA (both 11 th and 12 th graders) = 10				

Six out of the ten BSP students (60%) who attempted the HSPA Language Arts Literacy sections passed with proficient scores or higher. The mean score for the group was 211.4 (n = 10). Four out of the ten BSP students who attempted the Mathematics portion of the HSPA (40%) passed with proficient scores or higher. The mean score for the Mathematics section was 202.4 (n = 10). More students in the BSP demonstrated proficiency in Language Arts Literacy than in Mathematics. Statistical analysis was performed simply to summarize this data because the primary purpose of reporting HSPA

information in this evaluation was to collect and organize HSPA scores, not to draw conclusions regarding factors affecting student performance or the quality of instruction in the BSP classroom.

This information was not intended to suggest areas of improvement for the program because several student specific and environmental variables could contribute to the distribution of scores within this BSP sample. These variables include, but are not limited to, the following: the number of courses taken by the student within the program, the subject areas in which each student received instruction in the BSP classroom, the presence of a specific learning disability in a given subject area, student academic achievement levels prior to involvement in the BSP, emotional/behavioral factors, and testing accommodations provided through each student's IEP. In other words, conclusions regarding the quality of instruction in the BSP classroom should not be drawn based on the data collected and organized in Table 32 because each individual student referred to the program demonstrates a unique set of skills and deficits and preparing each student for the HSPA is not the primary focus of the program. The original goals of the program were to prepare students for mainstream classes while providing necessary supports and to improve communication and socialization. The Director of Special Services simply wanted to see how students in the BSP were performing on the HSPA.

Because the primary focus of the BSP is to improve the social skills and behaviors necessary to participate in mainstream classes, academic outcomes are not necessarily emphasized. The Director of Special Services, however, was interested in how students were performing once they enter the program. Because data collection procedures for

measuring academic improvement were not set up prior to evaluation, student records were examined retrospectively in order to determine each student's high school grade point average (GPA) for the time period prior to enrollment in the BSP and for the time period after enrollment through the end of the 2008-09 school year. A comparison of student grade point averages is presented in Table 33.

Table 33
Comparison of Student GPA Prior to BSP enrollment vs. GPA Since Enrollment

Student	GPA Pre-BSP	GPA Since BSP	Difference +/-
1	0.95	2.18	+1.23
2	1.86	2.91	+1.05
3	1.79	2.73	+0.94
4	1.04	2.33	+1.29
5	2.93	2.99	+0.06
6	2.04	2.08	+0.04
7	2.77	3.34	+0.57
8	1.92	1.92	0
9	1.72	2.79	+1.07
10	2.47	2.16	-0.31
11	2.57	0.85	-1.72
Mean	2.01	2.39	+0.38
Total number of students with available pre-post data = 11(out of 16)			
NOTE: 4 Students had enrolled in BSP immediately upon entering high school and 1 student had an incomplete student transcript for the 2008-09 school year.			

Table 33 presents the comparison data for eleven of the sixteen students enrolled in the BSP during the 2008-09 academic year. Four students were discarded from this sample because they had been enrolled in the BSP immediately upon entering the high school. One student was discarded because current transcript information was

incomplete, as the student had not completed the requirements of the current academic year. The mean GPA (unweighted) for students prior to enrollment in the BSP was 2.01 while the mean GPA for students after receiving BSP instruction was 2.39 for an overall mean increase of 0.38. Since a specific criterion or measure of comparison was not determined with the Director of Special Services, the information contained in Table 33 is intended to organize information rather than provide the basis for drawing conclusions regarding the academic outcomes of the BSP.

For the purpose of summarizing the information presented in Table 33, students were divided into three categories: students who demonstrated any increase in GPA after enrolling in the BSP, students who demonstrated a decrease in GPA after enrollment in the BSP, and students who did not experience any change in GPA after enrollment in the BSP. Table 34 presents the number of students, and percentages that fell into each category.

Table 34
Change in GPA After Enrollment in the BSP:

11 Students had data available for comparison		
<u>Demonstrated some increase in GPA after enrollment in BSP</u>	<u>Demonstrated some decrease in GPA after enrollment in BSP</u>	<u>GPA did not change after enrollment in BSP</u>
$\frac{n^a}{8 (72.7\%)}$	$\frac{n^a}{2 (18.2\%)}$	$\frac{n^a}{1 (9.1\%)}$
$n^a =$ Numbers and percentages of students for each category of GPA change		

Table 34 illustrates that eight out of the eleven students (72.7%) for which data was available for comparison experienced some increase in grade point average (GPA)

after enrollment in the BSP. Two out of eleven (18.2%) of the students had a decrease in GPA after enrollment in the program while one student (9.1%) did not have a change in GPA. Again, since the definition of what a significant increase or decrease was not able to be determined, this information is intended for examination by the Director of Special Services and caution is to be exercised in drawing any conclusions about the BSP from the information presented.

Similar to the HSPA data presented in Table 32, one cannot draw any conclusions regarding the academic impact of the BSP classroom based solely on the information collected in this evaluation. Many factors can impact the GPA of a student in the BSP. Students may have experienced a change in GPA for many different reasons, and it was impossible to determine, based on the available information, whether or not the instructional activities of the BSP classroom have had a significant academic impact on the students. For future evaluative purposes, it might be valuable for the Director of Special Services to collaborate with BSP staff to set benchmarks for the program that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-referenced in order to provide a basis for the measurement of student progress.

Overall, the examination of both the HSPA performance and high school GPA of each BSP student provided a “snapshot” of student academic achievement for the program in the 2008-09 school year. In gathering the HSPA scores of ten students in the BSP who completed both the Mathematics and Language Arts Literacy portions of the assessment, it was determined that sixty percent of the BSP students passed the Language Arts Literacy portion while forty percent passed the Mathematics section. A comparison of grade point average prior to BSP enrollment versus grade point average since

participation in the program began revealed that eight students (72.7%) experienced some level of increase in GPA, two students (18.2%) experienced some decrease in GPA, and one student (9.1%) did not experience a change in GPA. While these numbers might suggest that students are benefiting from the academic instruction in the BSP classroom, it is impossible to determine to what extent they are benefiting academically from the program based on the information gathered in this evaluation.

Conclusion

The evaluator attempted to answer the four evaluation questions outlined in the evaluation plan document using the data collection variables and procedures for analysis presented in Chapter 5. The extent to which each evaluation question could be answered was dependent on the information available and relevance of the data analysis procedures.

The first evaluation question was intended to determine the extent to which the BSP was addressing the needs of its students. Information was collected from each student's IEP including the nature of the Behavior Intervention Plan being implemented and the types of social/emotional goals and objectives included in each document. Also, students, parents, and staff were interviewed or surveyed in order to collect perceptions of the program's ability to meet student needs. Student needs were being identified through the behavior intervention plan in the IEP, the goals and objectives of the IEP, and through teacher and counselor perceptions. The extent to which these needs are being met was difficult to determine. The Behavior Intervention Plans contained guidelines for data collection; however, data was not available regarding student progress towards

addressing the target behaviors selected. The target behaviors identified in the BIPs tended to be general classroom or social behaviors and were not measurable. The information collected from student goals and objectives suggested that a majority of students were progressing or mastered the identified benchmarks recorded in their IEPs. An examination of student perceptions suggests that all but one student surveyed felt their needs were being met in the academic and behavioral domains. Only two parent surveys were returned, however, in both surveys, parents disclosed that they were very satisfied with the BSP and its ability to meet the academic, behavioral, and social emotional needs of its students. Staff perceptions were mixed with most respondents suggesting that improvements could be made in meeting students' academic and behavioral needs.

The second program evaluation question was included in order to determine the extent to which the BSP was being implemented according to its design. Results suggested that two of the three primary components of the BSP design document were being implemented according to its design. Both the inclusion support model of instruction and the technology integration component were being implemented in the BSP classroom as outlined by the evaluable program design. Some of the activities involved in the third component, the behavior modification program, were taking place in the day-to-day implementation of the BSP, but it was determined that three activities were not being carried out according to the program's design. These three activities were: the development and implementation of Behavior Intervention Plans that were individualized for each student, the token economy system, and the provision of counseling services. BSP staff provided suggestions for improvement in the

implementation of all three activities through the interview protocols used in the evaluation.

The third evaluation question sought to determine the reactions of school personnel, BSP staff, BSP students, and BSP parents regarding the strengths and limitations of the program. In general, the reactions of BSP staff, school personnel, students, and parents suggest that the strengths of the BSP could be considered its personnel, the supportive atmosphere that is created in the classroom, the small class instruction, and the flexibility of the program to meet a variety of student needs. The most consistently identified limitation was the lack of a consistent system for dealing with student disciplinary issues. Other limitations cited by multiple respondents included the limitations of the public school setting, the need for transition services, the need for additional course offerings, and a lack of common planning/meeting time for staff. Respondents were also asked for suggestions to improve the BSP. The most frequently cited suggestion was for an administrator to be assigned to the program. Other suggestions by multiple respondents included the following: creating a BSP Gym class, more time for periodic staff meetings, air conditioning in the classroom, more field trips, better discipline, a BSP science class, and the creation of measurable and specific behavioral goals.

The fourth evaluation question attempted to determine the extent to which students have benefited academically from the program. HSPA performance and high school GPA of each BSP student was examined for the students enrolled in the BSP during the 2008-09 school year. Sixty percent of the BSP students passed the Language Arts Literacy portion of the HSPA while forty percent passed the Mathematics section.

A comparison of grade point average prior to BSP participation versus grade point average since enrollment in the program revealed that eight students (72.7%) experienced some level of increase in GPA, two students (18.2%) experienced some decrease in GPA, and one student (9.1%) did not experience a change in GPA. Overall, however, it was impossible to determine to what extent the students in the BSP are benefiting academically from the program based on the information available through this evaluation. Adjustments to the program data collection procedures, or the creation of a specific set of program benchmarks were suggested in order to make more conclusive determinations about program outcomes possible in the future.

CHAPTER VII

EVALUATION OF PROGRAM EVALUATION

Abstract

Chapter VII contains the author's value judgments regarding the evaluation of the Behavioral Support Program as a participant-observer in the evaluation process. Four meta-evaluation questions are raised and answered in this chapter, each question addressing one of the four qualities of a sound evaluation of a human services program: practicality (feasibility), utility, propriety, and technical defensibility. These four qualities are outlined in Maher (2000) and set forth by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1994). Each meta-evaluation question is answered by addressing the individual program evaluation standards that are relevant to each of the four qualities listed above. The conclusion section of this chapter contains a summary of the participant observer's value judgments on the program evaluation of the BSP.

Introduction

The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation was formed in 1975 from members appointed by the American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education. This committee created a set of program evaluation standards to be used in

the evaluation of educational programs. The application of these standards provides a framework for placing value judgments on educational program evaluations.

In the second edition of *The Program Evaluation Standards*, published in 1994, four qualities of a sound educational program evaluation were identified: feasibility, utility, propriety, and accuracy. These four qualities were also identified and discussed in the *Resource Guide to Planning and Evaluating Human Service Programs* (Maher, 2000). While the nomenclature is slightly different (Maher uses the term practicality instead of feasibility and technical defensibility instead of accuracy), the four qualities are recommended for use in guiding the evaluation of human service program evaluations.

This chapter presents the answers to four meta-evaluation questions, raised by Maher (2000), each addressing one of the qualities of a sound human services program evaluation. Specifically, the four meta-evaluation questions are:

1. Practicality – To what extent was the program evaluation conducted in a way that allowed for its successful accomplishment?
2. Utility – In what ways was the resulting program evaluation information helpful to people? Which people?
3. Propriety – Did the program evaluation occur in a way that adhered to legal strictures and ethical standards?
4. Technical defensibility – To what degree can the evaluation be justified with respect to matters of reliability and validity?

The responses to the meta-evaluation questions represent the value judgments of the evaluator as participant-observer in the evaluation process. Each response was

guided by the specific program evaluation standards identified by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE, 1994), and responses are presented within the specific subheadings for each standard.

Practicality

1. To what extent was the program evaluation conducted in a way that allowed for its successful accomplishment?

According to *The Program Evaluation Standards* (JCSEE, 1994), practicality, or feasibility, refers to the practical procedures of the evaluation, its political viability, and the cost effectiveness of the process. Each of the three standards for practicality of the evaluation is discussed below in greater detail.

Practical procedures of the evaluation

In terms of the practical procedures of the evaluation, the evaluator should ensure that the evaluation plan does not create significant disruptions to the daily routines and accomplishments of the school (JCSEE, 1994). To ensure that the evaluation of the Behavioral Support Program (BSP) did not create a significant disruption to the routines and accomplishments of the school, interviews of BSP staff, school personnel, and students were conducted on a volunteer basis with participants scheduling the session with the evaluator at their convenience. Some disruption of the school day was necessary because the evaluator, BSP staff, school personnel, and students had to provide time during the school day to participate in the interviews. Taking this into consideration, the evaluator attempted to develop concise and efficient interview protocols, allowed

participants to schedule interviews at their convenience, and adapted each interview to the time constraints that may have been expressed by the respondent.

One factor that impacted the practical procedures of the BSP evaluation was the availability of the evaluator and staff members. Teachers and school staff operate on union contracts that specifically delineate the length of the school day as well as the amount of preparation time allotted to each staff member throughout the day. Because some difficulty was encountered in finding enough time to conduct interviews during a typical school day, the lengthier BSP staff interviews, as well as school personnel interviews, were all conducted during the final exam sessions at the conclusion of the 2008-09 school year. During final exam sessions, exams are only given in the morning and many teachers, administrators, and members of the Child Study Team expressed that they had more free time, provided by the district for grading exams and calculating final grades, which could also be utilized for participation in the interview process. Also, the evaluator found that final exam sessions provided a convenient time to conduct the interviews since activity in the Child Study Team offices typically decreases during the final exam sessions.

In contrast, student interviews were conducted earlier in the school year, as student availability was limited during final exam sessions. During a typical school day, the majority of BSP students have a scheduled “out-of-class support” (OCS) time provided for homework completion, counseling, make-up work, and/or social interaction with peers. All student interviews were scheduled and conducted during this OCS time to ensure that the educational process was minimally disrupted during the collection of information from participating students. Also, if a student’s scheduled interview

conflicted with the completion of make-up work or an assignment that he/she was working on, schoolwork was given priority status and the interview was rescheduled.

Meetings with the Director of Special Services were often informal and did not need to be scheduled. One meeting, conducted in January of 2009, was held while the Director ate lunch in the district offices. Again, disruption of school routines was inevitable while conducting the evaluation process, but attempts were made to minimize disruption and the time commitments needed to participate in evaluation activities.

The evaluator completed the collection of data through permanent product review after contracted work hours to ensure that the evaluator was not spending excess time during the school day on the evaluation. This was done to ensure that the evaluator could still fulfill his duties as a school psychologist during the school day. However, it is important to note that considerable time was spent reviewing student Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), guidance records, and transcripts. Future consolidation of records into evaluation worksheets might streamline this process. This would require the district to identify important data collection variables, create collection forms, and maintain student records on each form.

Since a significant amount of time was dedicated to the development of evaluation materials, collection of evaluation data, and analysis/reporting of data, future evaluations might require that the evaluator receive monetary compensation. Staff participants in this evaluation were offered compensation in the form of food or gift cards, however, all faculty refused compensation for participation. If evaluations were more frequent, then participants may be more inclined to accept compensation for the time required for evaluation procedures.

Overall, the evaluation was conducted with some disruption to the daily activities of school personnel, BSP staff, and students; however, evaluative procedures were designed and implemented with the intention of minimizing the disruption of school routines and accomplishments. It is the opinion of this evaluator that shortening the interviews or decreasing the number of participants in the evaluation would have significantly compromised the quantity and depth of the information collected.

Political Viability

A sound program evaluation should ensure that the interests of the school district involved in the evaluation are considered. The evaluation should be planned and conducted with the anticipation of the different positions of various stakeholders in order to ensure their participation and cooperation in the process (JCSEE, 1994). In this evaluation, the client, the Director of Special Services for the district, acted as the primary spokesperson for the interests of the school district, which guided the evaluation process. In retrospect, more feedback should have been provided to the Director of Special Services throughout the data collection process, however, the availability of the Director changed drastically after the announcement of his retirement. Also, the time constraints of the evaluation process made ongoing feedback difficult.

In addition to the Director of Special Services, the Superintendent of the district was presented with a copy of the evaluation plan and a research proposal, in accordance with the district's policy on conducting research in the schools. The Superintendent's approval of the evaluation plan also ensured that the interests of the school district were considered as well.

In order to obtain the cooperation of various stakeholders involved in the BSP, the evaluation attempted to include as many representatives from each stakeholder group as possible. Also, interview and survey prompts that offered participants the opportunity for uncensored feedback were included in order to provide an open forum for expressing each respondents ideas about the BSP.

The evaluation of the BSP was conducted in an amenable context with minimal hostility between stakeholders. The Director of Special Services and Superintendent both had a strong interest in the evaluation because a program like the BSP can save a school district a significant amount of money in out-of-district school tuition. While BSP staff had the most at stake in the evaluation, all participants expressed a genuine interest in improving the BSP and maintaining the program within this public school setting. BSP staff may have attempted to bias the results of the evaluation in favor of a personal agenda, however, the communication of such information is important in order to assess the level of enthusiasm or resistance that program staff and students may have towards any suggested changes to the program.

The evaluator's participant-observer status, as well as the district's participation in the State self-assessment process, may have been another contributor to the lack of hostility and resistance encountered during the evaluation process. An evaluation of the BSP had not been conducted in over six years, and it appeared that most participants and stakeholders involved in the evaluation felt that an evaluation should be conducted more frequently. Also, a number of participants may have perceived the evaluation process as an opportunity to express his/her own commentary on the political climate of the district at the time of the evaluation.

Overall, the Director of Special Services acted as the spokesperson for the political interests of the district in the evaluation process. The Superintendent's approval of the evaluation plan also helped to ensure that the political climate of the district was considered in developing the evaluation procedures. The use of open-ended interview and survey instruments provided stakeholders with an opportunity to express personal views regarding the program, the potential monetary savings for the district, and the evaluator's status as a participant-observer all probably contributed to the amenable political context of the evaluation.

Cost Effectiveness

A program evaluation should be efficient and produce information of sufficient value in order to justify the resources expended during the evaluation process (JCSEE, 1994). The evaluation of the BSP, completed as a graduate dissertation project, did not cost the school district any money, however, it did require the temporal resources of school personnel, administrators, students, parents, and the evaluator (a school psychologist in the district). The average BSP staff interview took approximately eighty minutes to complete. The school personnel interviews took an average of twenty-five minutes, and the student interviews averaged approximately twenty-two minutes. Only two parent surveys were returned, and each with minimal open-ended comments, so very little time was required of the parents involved in the evaluation as well. Given that the completion of this evaluation required minimal time from its participants and no funds from the district, it should be considered a cost effective process regardless of the outcome of the evaluation. Future evaluations may require financial resources, however,

because another evaluator may not be willing to volunteer his/her time unless compensated by the district.

Utility

2. In what ways was the resulting program evaluation information helpful to people?

Which people?

The utility of a program evaluation attempts to describe the usefulness of the evaluation. Evaluation standards for utility include: the identification of stakeholders, the credibility of the evaluator, the scope and selection of information obtained, the definitions of evaluative criteria, the clarity of the report, the timelines and dissemination of report information, and the impact of the evaluation (JCSEE, 1994).

Stakeholder Identification

All persons involved in the evaluation process should be identified in order to address the needs of all stakeholders (JCSEE, 1994). The use of the Program Planning and Evaluation Framework (Maher, 2000) to guide the evaluation process (as described in Chapter III) and to develop the program evaluation plan, (presented in Chapter V) ensured that all relevant stakeholders and persons involved in the evaluation process were identified and considered in the evaluation. This process began by identifying the Director of Special Services as the client in the evaluation. The evaluator, as a participant-observer, was also familiar with the relevant stakeholders from firsthand experience with the BSP. By discussing the historical development of the program with the Director of Special Services, some additional stakeholders were identified to participate in the school personnel interviews.

Evaluator Credibility

The evaluator should be considered both trustworthy and competent to perform the evaluation to ensure that the evaluation findings are received with acceptance and credibility (JCSEE, 1994). It is difficult to determine the participants' perception of the evaluator regarding the level of trustworthiness and competence, however, interview protocols and the parent survey instrument included a clear explanation of how information will be treated by the evaluator in order to protect confidentiality. The evaluator's participant-observer status may have had a positive or negative impact on the level of perceived trust or competence.

In other words, because the evaluator was a staff member at the high school, each interview respondent probably had his/her own perception regarding the level of trustworthiness and competence of the evaluator prior to the evaluation. This level of perceived trustworthiness and competence probably had an impact on the responses obtained by affecting how forthcoming participants may have been in responding to interview prompts. Given the enthusiasm of most participants and their willingness to occasionally speak "off the record," it is the impression of this evaluator that participants perceived the evaluator to possess average to above average competence and trustworthiness given his status and reputation within the school district.

Information Scope and Selection

The information obtained during the evaluation should be broadly selected in order to address relevant questions about the program and be responsive to the needs and interests of clients and other relevant stakeholders (JCSEE, 1994). The use of the Program Planning and Evaluation Framework (Maher, 2000) to guide the evaluation

process ensured that the client's informational needs were addressed through the evaluation. The development of four evaluation questions with the collaboration of the Director of Special Services was an important activity in the process of determining the informational needs of the district. In addition, some interview prompts were included that did not directly relate to the four evaluation questions, but were included because they addressed some specific areas of interest to the Director of Special Services. In retrospect, the BSP staff interview protocols could have been restructured to exclude some of these prompts, reducing the amount of time needed for each interview, and the four evaluation questions would have been addressed to the same extent.

Values Identification

In a sound program evaluation, the perspectives, procedures, and rationale used to draw conclusions from the findings should be described in detail to make the bases for value judgments clear (JCSEE, 1994). Again, the use of Maher's Program Planning and Evaluation Framework requires that the evaluation plan include the following information: the identification of data collection variables, the methods and procedures used to obtain information about these variables, and procedures for the analysis of the data collected (Maher, 2000). The use of Maher's framework to develop the program evaluation plan, and the review of this plan by both the Director of Special Services and the Superintendent of Schools, suggests that this evaluator appropriately described the perspectives, procedures, and rationale used to draw conclusions from the findings of the evaluation of the BSP.

Report Clarity

Report clarity is an important aspect of a program evaluation. The evaluation report generated should clearly describe the program being evaluated, its context, purposes, procedures, and findings of the evaluation so that important information is given and easily understood (JCSEE, 1994). In the context of the BSP evaluation, a specific report has not been generated for the Director of Special Services at the time of the writing of this dissertation for several reasons. First of all, the Director of Special Services who participated in the evaluation process retired prior to the analysis of the data collected and dissemination of the evaluation results. The Director retired in August of 2009 and the replacement Director of Special Services was contacted in September of 2009 in order to arrange for dissemination of evaluation information. It was decided that evaluation information could be communicated to the replacement Director, as well as BSP staff, after the defense of this dissertation in January of 2010, therefore it cannot be judged in this dissertation document.

Report Timelines and Dissemination

According to the *Program Evaluation Standards*, “significant interim findings and evaluation reports should be disseminated to intended users so they can be used in a timely fashion” (JCSEE, 1994). In this regard, the evaluation of the BSP does not meet the standard for a sound program evaluation. Original timelines discussed in March of 2009 called for the dissemination of evaluation results in August of 2009 to allow for the planning of program adjustments prior to the 2009-10 school year. The evaluator was unable to analyze the results of the evaluation in the Summer of 2009, and since the Director of Special Services retired and the replacement Director was acclimating to the

new school district context, it was agreed that the dissemination of evaluation results could be postponed until a later date. Another factor was that in July of 2009, the evaluator accepted another position in a different school district. This complicated matters, as the evaluator no longer had steady or consistent contact with the BSP program, its personnel, or the school district involved in the evaluation. In retrospect, data analysis could have been performed in the weeks immediately following data collection and preliminary results presented to BSP staff for appropriate program adjustments to be considered. The evaluation of the BSP did not meet program evaluation standards with regard to report timelines and dissemination of results.

Propriety

3. Did the program evaluation occur in a way that adhered to legal strictures and ethical standards?

The *Program Evaluation Standards* (JCSEE, 1994) cite eight standards regarding the propriety of a program evaluation. These standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation be conducted in a legal and ethical manner with appropriate regard for the welfare of its participants and those affected by its results. Overall, the evaluation of the BSP was conducted in a legal and ethical manner, and each of the eight evaluation standards is addressed in the paragraphs that follow.

Service Orientation

The service orientation standard is intended to ensure that evaluations are designed to assist the school district in addressing and serving the needs of the target population (JCSEE, 1994). The evaluation of the Behavioral Support Program contained

one evaluation question that was designed to determine the extent to which student needs were being addressed as well as an evaluation question designed to determine how the program was being implemented. While the needs of the target population, BSP students, were addressed in the design of the program evaluation through specific evaluation questions, interview protocols also contained prompts for feedback regarding the needs of teachers (resources, technology, training) and parents (communication needs). This suggests that the evaluation of the BSP met the service orientation standard.

Formal Agreements

This program evaluation standard refers to the formal agreement between parties for the evaluation of the BSP so that all parties adhere to the conditions set forth by the agreement (JCSEE, 1994). The evaluation of the BSP involved a written research proposal developed by the evaluator and approved by the Superintendent of the school district in accordance with the school board policy prior to the collection of data. This document contained the following components: the purpose of the evaluation, personnel and institutions sponsoring the project, the target population, methods for data collection, provisions for informed consent, outline of the evaluation plan, time and plan for dissemination of results, and copies of all instrumentation and consent forms. In retrospect, the evaluator upheld the terms of this agreement with the exception of the timeline for dissemination of results.

Rights of Human Subjects

Following the informed consent procedures outlined by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research at Rutgers University ensured the rights and welfare of the participants of the BSP evaluation. The evaluation plan,

along with participant informed consent documents and data collection protocols, were reviewed by a member of the Rutgers University IRB and approved for use in the school district. Formal IRB review was considered unnecessary due to the nature of the evaluation, and a letter documenting exemption from this process was provided. Also, all consent forms were reviewed and approved by the Superintendent of the participating school district in accordance with school board policy.

Human Interactions

This evaluation standard ensures that participants are not threatened or harmed in the evaluation process. The evaluation of the BSP was granted an exemption from the Rutgers University IRB review process because it was not considered a threatening or harmful endeavor.

Complete and Fair Assessment

A balanced reporting of strengths and weaknesses should take place in an evaluation. The evaluation of the BSP included the reporting of staff, student, and parent perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the program. These responses were analyzed according to theme and presented in Chapter VI. At times during the interview process, it became clear that BSP staff members had strong suggestions regarding the program and expressed a desire for these suggestions to be emphasized in the results. This occurred with two participants in the evaluation, both participants made this proposition in a facetious manner. The participant-observer status of the evaluator was, most likely, a significant factor in these facetious suggestions for emphasis in reporting the results, however, these responses were simply reported in the same manner as all

other responses. The evaluator's opinions and value judgments of the BSP were not recorded nor included in the results of the program evaluation.

Disclosure of Findings

This standard is intended to ensure that only those parties that should have access to the findings of the BSP evaluation have access (JCSEE, 1994). According to the evaluation plan, the results of the evaluation of the BSP were to be discussed with the Director of Special Services. The Director, serving as the client, was designated with the responsibility of determining who will have access to the evaluation results.

Conflict of Interest

The Program Evaluation Standards (JCSEE, 1994) suggest that conflict of interest should be dealt with openly and honestly so that the evaluation process is not compromised. Because the evaluator was a participant-observer in the evaluation process, it was important to discuss this aspect with each person being interviewed. The aspect of the evaluation that was probably the most significantly impacted by the evaluator's relationship to the program was the interview responses regarding people's perceptions of the counseling component of the program. Some respondents may not have discussed the counseling component openly with the evaluator because of his dual relationship as a counselor in the BSP classroom. Also, some respondents may have hesitated to criticize specific aspects of the program because of the evaluator's relationship to the program. In all cases, however, all participants in the evaluation were aware of the evaluator's relationship to the BSP.

Fiscal Responsibility

Fiscal responsibility was not a factor in the evaluation of the Behavioral Support Program because the evaluation process did not require any funding or financial resources. The evaluation was fiscally responsible since it was conducted voluntarily, as part of the evaluator's graduate studies, rather than for financial compensation.

Technical Defensibility

4. To what degree can the evaluation be justified with respect to matters of reliability and validity?

The technical defensibility of a program evaluation refers to the reliability and validity of the information resulting from the evaluation process. The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation developed eleven accuracy standards intended to ensure that evaluations result in technically adequate information about the features of a program that determine its worth or merit (1994). The degree to which the evaluation of the BSP can be justified with respect to matters of technical defensibility is discussed below using each of the eleven standards as a framework for the evaluation of the program evaluation.

Program Documentation

Using the original program design document from 1996, along with the evaluator's working knowledge of the program as it was currently being implemented, a clear and concise description of the BSP was created and documented in Chapter IV. The documentation of the evaluable program design of the BSP was part of the framework for the evaluation process as documented in Maher (2000). While the evaluable program

design provided an organized and systematic basis for the current evaluation, a more accurate program design document could be created using the clarification and design phases of Maher's Program Planning and Evaluation Framework (2000).

Context Analysis

The evaluator analyzed the context of the BSP program through personal experience as a counselor in the program, and as a school psychologist in the high school setting where the BSP was housed. Maher's AVICTORY framework (2000) provided a useful and practical method for analyzing the context of the public high school district where the BSP is implemented.

Described Purposes and Procedures

The purposes and procedures of the BSP evaluation should have been monitored and described in enough detail so they can be identified and assessed (JCSEE, 1994). These purposes and procedures were clearly identified in the evaluation plan described in Chapter V. Four program evaluation questions were developed and evaluation protocols clearly described the evaluation procedures. The evaluation plan, however, assumed that the purposes and procedures would not change during the evaluation. Given that the Director of Special Services announced his retirement during the evaluation process, and timelines for completion of evaluation activities changed, the evaluation plan should have been periodically reviewed and revised accordingly.

Defensible Information Sources

The sources of information in the evaluation of the BSP were described in detail using the program evaluation plan outlined in Chapter V. Improvements could have been made in the description and justification of program evaluation information sources. For

example, the program evaluation of the BSP assumes that student needs are adequately defined through each student's IEP. Additional needs assessment methods may be more accurate in determining the specific needs of BSP students, however this is beyond the scope of the current evaluation.

Valid Information

This program evaluation standard ensures that information gathering procedures are used that can assure interpretations made from the program evaluation information are valid for the intended use (JCSEE, 1994). The validation process used in the evaluation of the BSP included a description of the data collection methods and procedures for data analysis described in the program evaluation plan described in Chapter V. Also, both qualitative and quantitative methods were attempted in this program evaluation. Although data analysis procedures were delineated in the evaluation plan, more detailed descriptions would have been helpful in this process. While qualitative responses were categorized and analyzed by thematic content and quantitative analysis was limited to descriptive statistics, a rationale for such methods was not clearly presented. For a small program evaluation such as the BSP evaluation, the information used to draw conclusions about the program were valid in that they provided the district with information towards answering the four evaluation questions proposed.

Reliable Information

The term reliability, in this case, refers to the consistency of the information obtained from the data collection process. In the evaluation of the BSP, only one evaluator conducted all of the interviews with staff and students, therefore, the evaluator was not monitored to ensure that the interview protocol was followed consistently across

interview sessions. This was not an important aspect of the evaluation, however, as each interview was conducted to collect information in a semi-structured format, allowing for some flexibility in each interview session. All interview protocol questions were addressed in each session, and this can be verified by examining the evaluator's notes from each session. For its intended use, local feedback regarding the BSP, the information gathered through this evaluation was sufficiently reliable.

Systematic Information

Information collected and reported should be systematically reviewed and any errors should be corrected. The evaluator alone systematically reviewed the data collected in the BSP evaluation. This could be problematic in that other staff did not review thematic scoring, grouping of interview responses, or the accuracy of IEP and transcript data obtained from the guidance department. The evaluator could have made clerical, mathematic, or scoring errors throughout the process of analyzing the information collected. Future evaluations might include allowing time for the systematic review of data by stakeholders or the use of multiple evaluators to monitor the use of collected data.

Analysis of Quantitative and Qualitative Information

The analysis of both quantitative and qualitative information collected during the evaluation of the BSP was appropriate given the nature of the data collected.

Quantitative analysis included the calculation and comparison of pre and post BSP grade point averages as well as in examining BSP student performance on the HSPA.

Statistical analysis of both constructs was limited to measures of central tendency because correlation or causation would be almost impossible to determine given the

sample size and multiple variables involved in student academic performance.

Qualitative analysis was useful in collecting and organizing a variety of information regarding the implementation of the BSP, reactions to the program, and its ability to meet the needs of BSP students. Interview protocols may have impacted staff and students by prompting them to contemplate ways to change the BSP. Follow up interviews may have been helpful in obtaining changes in opinions or perceptions that may have occurred after interviews were conducted.

Justified Conclusions

Conclusions reached in an evaluation should be explicitly justified so that stakeholders may assess them (JCSEE, 1994). The results of the BSP evaluation systematically presented the information collected, usually in table format, and offered the evaluator's interpretation of this information. Rather than simply summarizing the interpretation of the information collected, the data was presented in table format in order to provide the stakeholder with the basis for the interpretative statements included in the evaluation. This allows each stakeholder to potentially agree, or disagree, with each conclusion drawn from the information gathered through the evaluation process. Discussion of the findings of BSP evaluation might be useful in order to explore alternative explanations and perspectives on the information collected.

Impartial Reporting

Although the evaluator was involved in the day-to-day activities of the Behavioral Support Program, the inclusion of the evaluation data obtained was as impartial and objective as possible. Protections against impartial reporting were limited by the use of only one evaluator in the process. All responses were recorded and were never discarded

by the evaluator, but may have been affected by personal interpretation. Clarification questions, not included in interview protocols, were often asked in order to minimize the potential for misinterpretation of responses. It is also important to note that none of the parties involved in the evaluation of the BSP should be considered truly neutral or impartial. The goal of this evaluation, however, was not to obtain completely impartial information, but rather to gain multiple perspectives on the program itself. The evaluation did include multiple perspectives including BSP staff, school personnel, students, and parents.

Meta-evaluation

The evaluation of the BSP evaluation was limited to the opinions and value judgments of the evaluator. While those who conduct and carry out the program evaluation often conduct a meta-evaluation, it may have been more helpful to include more perspectives in this meta-evaluation. Because the evaluator is no longer employed in the district where the evaluation was conducted, it was difficult to obtain more formal feedback from participants in the evaluation process. Further meta-evaluation feedback will be informally obtained in January of 2010 when the evaluator presents the results of the evaluation to the current Director of Special Services.

Conclusion

The author discussed value judgments and personal impressions regarding the evaluation of the Behavioral Support Program (BSP) in terms of the four qualities of a sound program evaluation: practicality, utility, propriety, and technical defensibility. Each quality of a sound program evaluation was addressed through an evaluation

question proposed by Maher (2000) and each question was answered utilizing the appropriate program evaluation standards developed by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1994).

In terms of practicality, the evaluation of the Behavioral Support Program presented minimal disruption to the routines and accomplishments of the high school in which the program was evaluated. While the time of BSP staff, school administrators, Child Study Team members, students, and parents, was required, the evaluator attempted to work around participant schedules and minimize the time required for data collection. Permanent product review was conducted by the evaluator and occurred outside of the contracted workday. The evaluation of the BSP was also politically viable, conducted with pre-approval and the support of BSP staff, the Director of Special Services, and the Superintendent of the school district. Also, the evaluation should be considered cost-effective since it did not require any financial resources from the school district.

The utility of the evaluation of the BSP was, for the most part, yet to be determined. The use of Maher's Program Planning and Evaluation Framework (2000) ensured that most evaluation standards for the utility of a human services program were addressed in the evaluation plan prior to implementation, however timelines were not followed as planned and therefore feedback from the replacement Director of Special Services in the school district was pending at the time of the writing of this dissertation. The usefulness of program evaluation findings was not completely determined, but dissemination of results and district feedback was scheduled.

In terms of propriety, the evaluation of the Behavioral Support Program adhered to legal and ethical standards set forth by Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

and the Board of Education for the school district in which the BSP was being implemented. The evaluation plan, interview protocols, and informed consent documents were reviewed and granted exemption status by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research at Rutgers University. Also, in accordance with Board of Education policy, the Superintendent of the school district approved a research proposal containing the evaluation plan, procedures for data collection and analysis, interview protocols, and informed consent documents. Each participant signed the appropriate consent documents after his/her rights as a human subject were reviewed, and the evaluator's status as a participant observer was disclosed.

The technical defensibility of the evaluation of the BSP was discussed in terms of reliability and validity of procedures and evaluation measures. Valid measures were used when the nature and scope of the evaluation task were considered. Reliability of measures could have been improved if the evaluator utilized additional personnel or outside feedback to review the work of the evaluator and check its accuracy. Also, additional meta-evaluation feedback would be useful to corroborate or contradict the opinions and value judgments of the evaluator.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Abstract

This final chapter contains concluding remarks, and recommendations, that are focused on both aspects of the dissertation task: the findings of the evaluation of the Behavioral Support Program and the actual process of using the Program Planning and Evaluation Framework (Maher, 2000) to evaluate a special education class program in the public school setting as a participant-observer. First, the findings of the evaluation of the BSP are discussed. Then, recommendations are suggested for areas of programmatic improvement and areas for further investigation. Finally, reflections on the use of the Program Planning and Evaluation Framework are provided along with comments regarding the author's experience as a participant-observer in the evaluation process.

Conclusions

Program Evaluation Findings

Four evaluation questions were developed in order to address the needs of the Director of Special Services and to guide the evaluation plan. It is important to note that the information collected through the evaluation process represented a "snapshot" of the Behavioral Support Program as it was implemented during the 2008-09 school year,

therefore, the findings of the evaluation, and conclusions discussed, were intended for the BSP as it was implemented during that timeframe. The findings of the program evaluation suggest that several conclusions can be drawn regarding the ability of the BSP to address the needs of its students, the implementation of the program in relation to its design, the reactions of people involved in the BSP, and academic outcomes for students in the program.

Student Needs

In examining the extent to which student needs were being addressed through the BSP, findings first suggested that three primary sources were being utilized to determine student needs. One source, the goals and objectives of each student's IEP, provided an outline for the social/emotional benchmarks that were being measured for each student. Most BSP students had current IEP documents that contained specific goals and objectives along with progress reporting at least once per year. Another method for determining student needs was through the target behavior(s) identified in the Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) in each student's IEP. The third method for determining student needs was the perceptions of teachers and counselors.

The extent to which the identified needs of each student were being met was discussed in three domains: academic needs, behavioral needs, and social emotional needs. The information collected from student goals and objectives suggested that a majority of students were progressing or mastered the identified benchmarks recorded in their IEPs. This would suggest that the program was addressing the self-management goals delineated in the majority of student IEP documents. Unfortunately, by examining Behavior Intervention Plans, it was determined that progress towards addressing

identified target behaviors was not being measured. Also, the target behaviors identified in the BIPs tended to be general classroom or social behaviors and were not measurable. In general, permanent product review suggested that while a majority of students were progressing towards the goals and objectives in their IEPs, more data collection would be useful in determining the extent to which student needs were being met.

An examination of student and parent perceptions suggests that the majority of students felt their academic and behavioral needs were being met. Several students felt that counselor availability had decreased since the previous year, but that the classroom itself provided social/emotional support. School personnel and BSP staff perceptions were mixed with most respondents suggesting that the program addresses student needs in the social/emotional domains while improvements were suggested to more effectively address academic and behavioral concerns. Specifically, several staff expressed concerns about the ability of teachers to effectively differentiate between academic levels within the self-contained classroom. Also, several staff were concerned that the original goal of the program was to prepare students to be mainstreamed into the regular education classroom, however, it appeared that most students remained in the more tolerant environment of the BSP classroom for the remainder of their high school careers. This suggested that a more focused approach to behavior intervention might be warranted.

Implementation

Findings of the program evaluation suggested that two of the three primary components of the BSP design document were being implemented according to its design. Both the inclusion support model of instruction and the technology integration component were being implemented in the BSP classroom as outlined by the evaluable

program design described in Chapter IV. Three activities associated with the third component of the BSP design, the behavior modification program, were not being implemented according to the program's design. These three activities were: the development and implementation of Behavior Intervention Plans that were individualized for each student, the token economy system, and the provision of counseling services. Recommendations regarding the improvement of implementation are provided later in this chapter.

Reactions to the BSP

The reactions of school personnel, BSP staff, BSP students, and BSP parents were collected. Specifically, respondents were asked to provide their impressions of the strengths and limitations of the program. The reactions of BSP staff, school personnel, students, and parents suggested that the strengths of the BSP could be considered its personnel, a supportive atmosphere that is created in the classroom, small class instruction, and the flexibility of the program to meet a variety of student needs. The primary limitation identified through the interview process was the lack of a consistent system for dealing with student disciplinary issues. Other limitations noted during the evaluation process were the location of the program within a public school setting, the need for improved transition services and additional course offerings, and a lack of common planning/meeting time for program staff. Respondents were also asked for suggestions to improve the BSP. The most frequently cited suggestion was for an administrator to be assigned to the program. Other suggestions included expanding the number of courses offered through the program, periodic staff meetings, facility

improvements, and the implementation of measurable and specific target behaviors or behavioral goals.

Academic Outcomes

During the initial meetings with the Director of Special Services, it was discussed that the Director was curious about the performance of BSP students on statewide assessment, and therefore academic outcomes were examined and included in the program evaluation plan. HSPA performance, and high school GPA of each BSP student, was examined for the students enrolled in the BSP during the 2008-09 school year. Sixty percent of the BSP students passed the Language Arts Literacy portion of the HSPA while forty percent passed the Mathematics section. A comparison of grade point average prior to BSP participation versus grade point average since enrollment in the program revealed that eight students (72.7%) experienced some level of increase in GPA, two students (18.2%) experienced some decrease in GPA, and one student (9.1%) did not experience a change in GPA. These numbers should be interpreted with caution, however, because a number of factors that are unrelated to the activities in the BSP classroom could have accounted for the outcomes examined in this evaluation. Suggestions for more pertinent methods of assessing academic outcomes in future evaluation are discussed later in this chapter. For example, program procedures could be developed in order to maintain records of individual student progress in academic domains within the BSP, and in mainstream courses, for more accurate comparison.

Limitations of the Evaluation Findings

Three significant limitations were considered when interpreting the findings of the evaluation of the BSP. One limitation was that all information was collected, analyzed, and interpreted by the evaluator. Also, the evaluator was a school psychologist involved in the BSP as a provider of counseling services and case manager. Another limitation was that the majority of information collected was qualitative in nature, based upon the observations and reactions of people involved with the BSP or indirectly affected by the program.

The author acted as the only member of the evaluation team by collecting, analyzing, and interpreting all of the information obtained throughout the evaluation process. This was a noteworthy limitation because the evaluation progressed without additional feedback or monitoring of the process to ensure that the information collected was accurate and analyses were performed without error. Additional members of the evaluation team would have provided opportunities for multiple perspectives on thematic content of interview responses as well as checking calculations for accuracy.

The findings of this evaluation were also limited by the participant-observer status of the evaluator. The evaluator's role as a school psychologist in the school district, who also provided case management and counseling services to students in the BSP, may have affected the way in which information was collected and utilized in the evaluation.

Although the evaluator did not include his opinions in the evaluation data collected, the interpretation of interview responses and analysis of responses for thematic content could have been affected by personal biases.

Another limitation was the nature of the interview data collected. Since interview data was utilized as a primary source of information, respondent bias could have been a factor in the evaluation. Also, responses could have been affected by each participant's mood, past or present relationships with the program or its staff members, impressions of the evaluator, or the political context within the school district.

Recommendations for Further Development of the BSP

Suggestions for further development of the BSP are provided by the author/evaluator based upon the findings of the program evaluation discussed earlier in this chapter. These recommendations can be divided into two broad categories: areas for programmatic improvement and areas for further investigation.

Areas for Programmatic Improvement

Using Maher's Program Planning and Evaluation Framework (2000) as a guide for the development and evaluation of educational programs, the author/evaluator can highlight three procedural areas for programmatic improvement. Improvements are suggested in the form of more formalized needs assessment procedures, the use of needs assessment information to drive programmatic adjustments or re-designs, and the incorporation of continuous program evaluation practices.

One area in which the BSP can improve is in the use of formal needs assessment data to drive the activities of the program. The methods that were utilized for determining student needs, specifically the student IEP data, included some benchmarks

that could not be measured. Also, the Behavior Intervention Plans, utilized to determine behavioral needs, did not include data collection methods that were being implemented by program staff and/or case managers. Therefore, progress towards improvement in student target behaviors was not being monitored. It is suggested that the BSP clearly define and incorporate formal needs assessment procedures in order to assure that student behavioral, academic, and social/emotional goals are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-referenced.

Maier (2000) describes four phases of the program planning and evaluation process: clarification, design, implementation, and evaluation. Since formal needs assessment procedures were lacking in the Behavioral Support Program, and one major component of the program design (the behavior modification program) was not being implemented according to its design, the evaluator suggests that the high school district carry out the activities of the clarification and design phases of Maier's framework. This may result in a refined definition of the target population, an updated clarification of the needs of the target population, and a revised set of program goals. These activities may lead to a revised program design that is different from the evaluable program design presented in this dissertation.

Another suggestion for programmatic improvement would be the incorporation of program evaluation procedures, including a documented program evaluation plan, in the design of the Behavioral Support Program. Maier (2000) incorporates a program evaluation plan in the design phase of the Program Planning and Evaluation Framework in order to ensure that evaluation activities are delineated. Also, it is suggested that

program evaluation be an ongoing process to continuously inform the development of the BSP.

The Behavioral Support Program has changed significantly in the past twelve years. Changes have occurred in, but are not limited to, the nature of the target population, student needs, program activities, and staff. By incorporating all four phases of Maher's Program Planning and Evaluation Framework (2000) into the procedures of the BSP, changes could be documented and more timely adjustments to the program could be made. Continuous program evaluation would inform these programmatic adjustments and ensure that the Behavioral Support Program meets the clarified needs of its identified target population.

Areas for Further Investigation

The findings of the evaluation of the BSP suggest several areas to be investigated further. These areas include: the use of Behavior Intervention Plans, the token economy component of the program design, the delivery of counseling services, the involvement of building administration in the program, disciplinary procedures, staff meetings, course offerings, and realistic academic outcomes. Not enough information was collected in the evaluation process to provide the basis for specific recommendations regarding each of these concerns, however, further investigation could be helpful in improving the implementation and design of the BSP.

The use of Behavior Intervention Plans, for example, should be examined to determine if improvements could be made to the process of their development and implementation. All four BSP staff members identified the BIP as a source of

information regarding student needs, however, most BSP staff indicated that improvements should be made in developing and implementing the BIP for each student.

Also, a token economy, outlined as a component of the BSP in the original design document, is no longer used in the BSP classroom. Further information should be collected to determine if a token economy would be beneficial, or if a program re-design is warranted. The BSP staff was split in their opinions of token economies. Similar information should be obtained regarding the counseling services provided in the BSP. While a regularly scheduled time for counseling services to be delivered was suggested by most BSP staff, opinions varied on availability of counseling services. Both of these program design elements should be investigated further to determine how the program could be modified to meet the behavioral and counseling needs of its students.

All four BSP staff members and a majority of school personnel suggested that the program have a building administrator assigned to the program. Also, a majority of BSP staff and school personnel respondents suggested that disciplinary procedures needed to be more clearly defined. While specific recommendations regarding disciplinary procedures and administrative involvement cannot be made as a direct result of this program evaluation, it is important that decisions be made in both of these areas.

Regularly scheduled program staff meetings are suggested in order to maintain communication amongst BSP staff, counselors, and administrators. This would allow for planning of group activities, field trips, and consistent behavioral strategies when necessary. Recommendations regarding the specific times and locations of staff meetings cannot be made at this time but should be determined by current program staff and administration.

Several suggestions for additional BSP course offerings were made throughout the interview process. It is recommended that program staff, the Director of Special Services, the Director of Guidance, and at least one building administrator meet to discuss the current course offerings and possibilities for future BSP courses. Another topic to be discussed by this group might be the differentiated academic levels that are taught in the BSP classroom. Some interview data suggested that the course titles and academic levels of classes taught in the BSP classroom might be inaccurate.

One final recommendation for further investigation is the determination of realistic academic outcomes for BSP students. In discussions that occurred throughout the interview process, there appeared to be a discrepancy between the Director of Special Services idea of a successful academic outcome and the BSP staff's perceptions of a successful academic outcome. The Director of Special Service was concerned about HSPA scores, GPA, and transition while BSP staff felt that graduation from high school alone represented a successful outcome. One suggestion is to clarify the academic expectations of the program with district administration and BSP staff. Another might be to further investigate the transition services offered by the BSP and the school district.

Reflections on the Evaluation Process

The Use of the Program Planning and Evaluation Framework

Maher's Program Planning and Evaluation Framework (2000) was an invaluable guide for the entire evaluation process, from initial meetings with the Director of Special Services to the creation of this dissertation document. The process of evaluating the BSP would have been an extremely challenging endeavor without the organized and

methodical structure provided by this framework. As an inexperienced program evaluator, it was essential to utilize a comprehensive method of evaluating a human service program in the public school setting. The Program Planning and Evaluation Framework was comprehensive because it guided the process from the identification of the client to the evaluation of the program evaluation.

Another useful component of the Program Planning and Evaluation Framework was the placement of the BSP into an evaluable form. The original design document for the BSP was over twelve years old and several changes to the program were already known to the author/evaluator. By placing the 2008-09 version of the BSP into an evaluable form, the evaluation proceeded in a more organized and systematic manner. The framework used for this evaluation also accounted for the organizational context, which was especially important for the BSP because it was an alternative educational program that took place within a public high school setting.

Maher's framework was also useful because the evaluation phase is expressed as one of four phases to the process of developing and evaluating human service programs. The four phases are separate yet inter-related. This perspective emphasizes the need for continuous program evaluation and was helpful in understanding how the information gained in this evaluation could be used to improve the BSP.

While the Program Planning and Evaluation Framework provided a useful, user friendly, and systematic method of evaluating the BSP, the author/evaluator encountered a few challenges in applying the framework. One challenge was effectively organizing the information collected from the client during initial evaluation planning discussions. The Director of Special Services had such a strong interest in evaluating and improving

the BSP that it was impossible to include all of his evaluation needs and suggestions in this document. Needs were necessarily prioritized and eliminated in order to allow for the process to be focused and manageable. Another challenge encountered in applying the Program Planning and Evaluation Framework was developing the interview protocols for BSP staff members. Again, the Director of Special Services suggested such a variety of topics for evaluation that including all of them would have probably resulted in tiresome and lengthy interviews. As it was, most of the BSP staff interviews were approximately eighty minutes in length. Overall, the most significant challenge in utilizing the Program Planning and Evaluation Framework to guide the evaluation process was completing the evaluation activities within a reasonable timeframe. Unfortunately, the scope of this evaluation involved a significant amount of time in collecting and analyzing the data, and completion of all evaluation activities took longer than originally anticipated.

Participant-Observer Evaluation

As both a school psychologist on the high school Child Study team and an active part of the BSP counseling staff, the author/evaluator was a participant-observer in the evaluation process. This type of involvement with the BSP brought with it several benefits and challenges.

One benefit to being a participant-observer in the evaluation process was the evaluator's familiarity with the high school and school district context. Being familiar with the context of the school setting made it relatively easy to avoid severe disruptions of school routines or violations of contextual norms. Also, knowing the policies and

procedures of the BSP saved the author a significant amount of time throughout the evaluation process. In conducting interviews with staff and students, a rapport was already established, and familiarity with the evaluator may have resulted in interviews of greater length and depth. One of the most significant benefits to conducting the evaluation of the BSP as a participant-observer was the flexibility to re-schedule and adjust the times and dates of data collection procedures in order to accommodate staff and student schedules. The author detected little or no resistance throughout the evaluation process.

While being a participant-observer in the evaluation process had its benefits, it also posed several challenges. For example, there were some instances where staff members appeared to hesitate when answering interview prompts and expressed some concern about the confidentiality of their responses. In these circumstances, however, the author/evaluator reassured them that responses were being reported in aggregate and individual responses would not be linked to them. This appeared to ease his/her concerns.

While having an already established relationship with staff and students was a benefit in some instances, it could also be considered a challenge. Maintaining objectivity in recording responses could be considered a challenge when the evaluator already has a professional relationship with the staff member or student. Also, each participant presumably had opinions and impressions of the evaluator prior to the interview sessions, which may have influenced the content of each response. Those impressions may have resulted in more earnest and thoughtful response, but they could have also prompted more guarded answers.

Finally, time management was a significant challenge encountered during the evaluation process. It was difficult, on several occasions, to dedicate adequate time to conducting the interviews and permanent product review without neglecting the duties required of a school psychologist in the high school. Also, there were occasions where students, staff, and/or parents were attempting to contact the author/evaluator while an interview was being conducted. While disruptions to the daily routines of the workday were minimized, there were times that the evaluation process created minor interruptions in the performance of the duties of a school psychologist on the high school Child Study Team.

Conclusion

The findings of the evaluation of the Behavioral Support Program were discussed in this chapter along with the author's reflections on the actual process of using the Program Planning and Evaluation Framework (Maher, 2000) to evaluate a special education class program in the public school setting as a participant-observer. The findings of the BSP evaluation represented a "snapshot" of the program during the 2008-09 school year. Several conclusions could be drawn regarding the ability of the BSP to address the needs of its students, the implementation of the program in relation to its design, the reactions of people involved in the BSP, and academic outcomes for students in the program. Limitations that were considered when interpreting the findings of the evaluation of the BSP included the following: all information was collected, analyzed, and interpreted by the evaluator, the evaluator was also a school psychologist involved in

the BSP as a provider of counseling services and case manager, and the majority of information collected was qualitative in nature.

The author offered recommendations in the form of both areas for programmatic improvement and areas for further investigation. Suggestions for programmatic improvement included involvement in the remaining phases of Maher's Program Planning and Evaluation Framework in order to formalize needs assessment procedures, derive programmatic adjustments from the clarification of needs, and the incorporation of continuous program evaluation practices into the BSP design. The following suggestions were made for areas to be investigated further: the use of Behavior Intervention Plans, the token economy component of the program design, the delivery of counseling services, the involvement of building administration in the program, disciplinary procedures, staff meetings, course offerings, and realistic academic outcomes. Specific recommendations were not given in these areas, however, it is suggested that each area be addressed and clarified for purposes of improving the BSP.

This chapter also contained comments on the process of evaluating the BSP within the context of a public high school. The author provided personal reflections on the process of utilizing the Program Planning and Evaluation Framework in the evaluation of the BSP as well as the benefits and challenges of being a participant-observer in the evaluation.

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APPENDIX A: PROGRAM EVALUATION INSTRUMENTATION

Instrument 1.1
Academic Outcome Data Collection Chart

Student Number	BIP Target Behavior(s)	Self Management Goals/Objectives	BSP Course GPA	Main-stream Course GPA	Std. Test Scores
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					

Instrument 1.2
Counseling Services Frequency and Duration Table

Student #	Frequency of Counseling in IEP	In Compliance with IEP?	Number of Group Sessions	Number of Individual Sessions	Avg. Duration of Sessions
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					

Instrument 2.1

School Personnel Reaction Interview Protocol

Title of School Personnel Interviewed: _____

1. What value does the Behavior Support Program contribute to the school district?
2. Do you feel the BSP is meeting the needs of its students in the following areas:
 - a. Academic?
 - b. Behavioral?
 - c. Social/Emotional?
3. In your experience with BSP students, what is considered a successful outcome?
 - a. How is this outcome measured?
 - b. What factors do you feel contribute to successful outcomes?
4. Overall, what do you feel are the strengths of the program?
 - a. What are its limitations?
5. What changes would you suggest to improve the BSP?

Instrument 2.2

BSP Student Reaction Interview Protocol

Grade of Student Interviewed: _____

1. How do you feel about the academics in the BSP classroom? Are your academic needs being met?

2. Do you feel that your behavior in school has improved since becoming a part of the BSP?

3. About how often do you receive counseling in school?
 - a. Does the counseling that you get in the BSP meet your needs?

4. What do you like the most about the BSP?

5. What do you like the least about the program?

6. What changes would you suggest to improve the BSP?

Instrument 2.3
Behavior Support Program Parent Reaction Survey

The following questions ask that you give your thoughts, opinions, and feedback regarding various aspects of the Behavior Support Program. Your responses will be kept anonymous and confidential. The information you provide will be used to help improve the program and the services provided to your child. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Please rate the extent to which you feel involved in the services provided to your child through the Behavior Support Program:

Not at all involved				Very Involved
1	2	3	4	5

How satisfied are you with the academic instruction provided in the BSP classroom?

Not at all satisfied				Very satisfied
1	2	3	4	5

Have you noticed any improvement in your child's grades since he/she has become enrolled in the BSP?

No improvement				Significant improvement
1	2	3	4	5

To what extent has the Behavioral Support Program addressed the emotional and/or behavioral difficulties that your child has experienced in school:

Not at all addressed				Significantly addressed
1	2	3	4	5

How satisfied are you with the counseling services provided to your child through the Behavioral Support Program?

Not at all satisfied				Very satisfied
1	2	3	4	5

Overall, how satisfied are you with the services provided to your child through the Behavioral Support Program?

Not at all satisfied				Very satisfied
1	2	3	4	5

What are the strengths of the Behavior Support Program?

What are the weaknesses/limitations of the Behavior Support Program?

What changes would you like to make to the BSP?

Please provide any additional thoughts or comments on the lines below:

Instrument 3.1

Behavior Support Program Teacher Interview Protocol

1. What information do you receive on a student when they are referred to BSP?
 - a. How is this information presented? Is it helpful?
 - b. What types of information would you like to receive?
2. What methods are being used to assess each student's academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs?
 - a. What methods for assessing needs are useful?
 - b. What methods for assessing needs would be more useful?
3. What teaching methods and behavior strategies are being used in the classroom to address the needs of students participating in the BSP?
 - a. Which teaching methods and behavior strategies do you find to be effective? How often are they utilized?

- b. Are there any teaching methods or behavior strategies that you would like to try in the BSP classroom?
4. How familiar are you with each student's Behavior Intervention Plan? How involved are you in developing the BIP?
 - a. What is the value of developing a BIP for each student?
 - b. What obstacles exist in the implementation of the BIP for each student?
 - c. How can the process of development and implementation of BIPs be improved?
5. How long have you been teaching in the BSP classroom? Since you have been involved in teaching BSP students, what professional development trainings have you attended which pertain to educating the BSP population?
 - a. Which trainings have you found to be useful in the BSP classroom?
 - b. Are there any areas in which you feel you could benefit from more training?
6. What types of technology do you use in the BSP classroom? How often?

- a. What technology is useful?
 - b. Are there any other types of technology that might be useful in the BSP classroom?
7. How are counseling services utilized in the BSP classroom?
- a. Do you feel that counseling services are adequate?
 - b. What could be done differently with regard to counseling support?
8. What transition services are provided for students in the BSP?
- a. What transition services are successful?
 - b. What can be improved in the area of transition services?
9. In your experience with BSP students, what is considered a successful outcome?
- a. How is this outcome measured?
 - b. What factors do you feel contribute to successful outcomes?

10. Overall, what do you feel are the strengths of the program? What are its limitations?

11. In addition to your responses earlier in this interview, are there any other changes that you would like to see to the Behavior Support Program?

Instrument 3.2

Behavior Support Program Counseling Staff Interview Protocol

1. What information do you receive on a student when they are referred to BSP?
 - c. How is this information presented? Is it helpful?
 - d. What types of information would you like to receive?
2. What methods are being used to assess each student's behavioral and social-emotional needs?
 - a. What methods for assessing needs are useful?
 - b. What methods for assessing needs would be more useful?
3. How are counseling services accessed in the BSP classroom?
 - a. Do you feel that counseling services are adequate?
 - b. What could be done differently with regard to counseling support?

4. What counseling methods and behavior strategies are being used with students in the Behavior Support Program?
 - a. Which counseling methods and behavior strategies have you found to be effective? How often are they utilized?
 - b. Are there any counseling methods or behavior strategies that you would like to try in the BSP classroom?
5. In your opinion, does the BSP address the academic needs of its students?
6. How familiar are you with each student's Behavior Intervention Plan? How involved are you in developing the BIP?
 - a. What is the value of developing a BIP for each student?
 - b. What obstacles exist in the implementation of the BIP for each student?
 - c. How can the process of development and implementation of BIPs be improved?
7. How long have you been providing counseling services to BSP students? Since you have been involved with the BSP, what professional development trainings have you attended which pertain to educating the BSP population?

- a. Which trainings have you found to be useful in the BSP classroom?
 - b. Are there any areas in which you feel you could benefit from more training?
8. What transition services are provided for students in the BSP?
- a. What transition services are successful?
 - b. What can be improved in the area of transition services?
9. In your experience with BSP students, what is considered a successful outcome?
- a. How is this outcome measured?
 - b. What factors do you feel contribute to successful outcomes?
10. Overall, what are the strengths of the BSP? What are its limitations?
11. In addition to your responses earlier in this interview, are there any other changes that you would like to see to the Behavior Support Program?