A common misconception about PBIS is that it is an intervention *program* (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012). Sugai and Simonsen (2012) emphasize that PBIS is not a program but rather an *approach or framework.* This is an important distinction. PBIS provides a wide complement of evidence-based behavioral practices and interventions, each with varying levels of intensity for educators to choose from, based on the desired behavioral and academic outcomes and on the specific needs of their students (Spaulding, Horner, May, & Vincent, 2008; Sugai & Simonsen, 2012). In a report by Spaulding et al. (2008), 47 states had some level of PBIS implementation. The report concluded that, based on the number of schools that had started or completed a PBIS training sequence, PBIS has broad appeal. Part of the appeal is due to an increase in the level of problem behaviors in elementary and middle schools. PBIS is a prevention model approach that lends itself to whole school or school-wide implementation, which also widens its appeal (Spaulding et al., 2008).

PBIS can support homeless children and youth. As Murphy and Tobin (2011) suggest, homeless children and youth benefit from the same interventions and supports as their peers. They also suggest that homeless children may have a greater need than their peers for best practice interventions. Specifically, clear and specific expectations of appropriate class and school behavior, positive and consistent classroom management practices, frequent positive interactions with teachers and staff members, and an intensity of support benefit all students and provide the assistance that many at-risk and homeless students need (Murphy & Tobin, 2011; Read & Lampron, 2012; Sugai & Horner, 2008).

Simonsen, Sugai, & Negron (2008) described how PBIS helped at-risk students improve their behavior in an urban middle school. Once the staff completed PBIS training and created lesson plans to introduce clear, concise behavioral expectations, the school then developed a two-part reinforcement system designed to further encourage students to follow the rules. The school printed the behavioral expectations, referred to as the "Keys to Success" on tickets. Staff members gave students they observed following the school rules (behavior expectations) tickets indicating which of the Keys the students were demonstrating. Teachers also used the tickets as a kind of passport system. A student could get their passport stamped for exhibiting positive behaviors during class activities or field trips. In addition, school staff developed a hierarchy of colored cards (i.e. silver or gold) that students who demonstrated social and academic competencies could collect. Students could trade in these behavioral currency cards in exchange for certain school and community privileges and rewards. In this school, the privileges and rewards included free time to spend with a friend during the school day, donated items from local businesses such as coupons for a hamburger and pizza, and access to free or discounted recreational venues. The establishment of defined routines with clear social and behavioral expectations that recognize both positive behavior and academic achievement help provide homeless students with the structure and predictability they need to be successful in school (Murphy & Tobin, 2011; Sugai & Horner, 2008). The U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) offers The Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports to assist states, Local Education Agencies (LEAs), and schools with integration of support PBIS. The Center provides resources, examples of best

practice, research, and evaluation tools. For additional information, visit the OSEP Technical Assistance Center on PBIS. Website: http://www.pbis.org.

Responsive Classroom (RC). RC, developed at Northeast Foundation for Children, centers around the belief that a nurturing classroom environment that integrates social and emotional support with academic intervention leads to increased student learning (Rimm-Kaufam & Chiu, 2007). Put simply, this means that teachers are responsive to the diverse educational, social, and emotional backgrounds and needs of their students and are able to draw upon a wide variety of resources and instructional practices to meet those needs (Rimm-Kaufam & Chiu, 2007; Sobel & Taylor, 2006). Through a commitment to the practice of RC, teachers strive to create a supportive, respectful, and inclusive learning environment that instills a strong sense of values in students (Sobel & Taylor, 2006). Kern and Clemens (2007) point to the relationship between the classroom environment and students' behavior. They recommend teachers focus on the classroom environment and the events within the classroom that immediately precede problematic behavior and put in place intervention strategies to short-circuit disruptive behaviors.

General behavior intervention strategies are intended to be quick acting, address the needs of most students, prevent problem behaviors from occurring, and provide a method of identifying the students in need of more individualized targeted behavioral interventions (Kern & Clemens, 2007). The positive social interactions between students and teachers identified in RC are intended to lead to positive instructional interactions (Kern & Clemens, 2007; Ottmar, Rimm-Kaufman, Berry & Larsen, 2013). A study conducted by Wentzel (2003) found that students who believe their teachers care about them are more likely to work towards behavioral and educational goals. Recent studies have linked school engagement to positive educational outcomes (Wang & Eccles, 2011). Rimm-Kaufman and Chiu (2007) state that RC is built around the following seven principles intended to build a positive and nurturing classroom environment.

1. Academic and social emphases are considered equal.
2. The focus is on *what* children learn and *how* they learn.
3. Cooperation, responsibility, empathy, and self-control are emphasized as critical skills.
4. Social interaction is connected to cognitive learning.
5. Emphasis is on teacher's knowledge of each student's individual, cultural, and developmental characteristics.
6. Focus is on the family.
7. There are prominent positive adult relationships in the school.

One of the assumptions of RC is that a student's behavioral and or social competencies are associated with classroom organization and academic achievement (Ottmar, et al., 2013; Rimm-Kaufman & Chiu, 2007). Murphy and Tobin (2011) concur and report that school success for homeless students is dependent on not only the provision of strong academic supports and services but also contingent on a caring and stable classroom that provides an environment conducive to learning. Rimm-Kaufman and Chiu (2007) conducted one of the first exploratory

studies examining the impact of RC in three schools over a 2-year period. The study focused on the implementation of RC in the classroom and the impact on social growth and academic achievement. Teachers reported that students demonstrated an increase in positive social behaviors and assertiveness in the classroom (Rimm-Kaufman & Chiu, 2007). Although researchers attributed only a small increase in reading performance to RC, teachers reported an enhanced closeness with their students and an improved capacity to work with challenging students (Rimm-Kaufman & Chiu, 2007).

RC can support homeless students. Growing evidence supports the connection of a nurturing classroom environment and academic achievement (Kronenberg & Strahan, 2010; Murphy & Tobin, 2011; Wentzel, 2003). Bridgeland (as cited in Ford, 2008) reports that students who dropped out of school rank poor relationships with teachers and irrelevant curriculum as the top reasons for school disengagement. Ford (2008) offers the following recommendations for teachers to better connect with students and build positive relationships as part of developing a responsive classroom.

- Survey students or hold discussions to learn about their prior experiences and what is important to them (talents, interests, what music they like, etc.). This information can inform assignments and activities.
- Be aware of the diversity of perspectives and experiences students bring to the classroom, including socio-economic status, family structure, and community attributes.
- Teach students to be critical readers and consumers. Help them explore different perspectives.
- Develop lessons and activities by considering what students need to learn about themselves, classmates, community, and society.
- Adopt student-centered methods.
- Use a variety of assessment methods to ensure students have opportunities to demonstrate what they know and can do.
- Encourage interdependence and cooperative learning with flexible grouping based on students' skills and interests.

Some students are resistant to classroom norms and expectations initially or do not share the same social or educational goals of their teacher. If they experience a nurturing classroom environment and perceive their teacher as someone who cares about them, they are more likely to work toward teacher expectations and goals (Loukas, Roalson, & Herrera, 2010; Wentzel, 2003). The RC construct builds classrooms that provide a positive and caring environment and honors the diversity of all students. For additional information and related resources on RC, the reader may wish to visit www.responsiveclassroom.org.
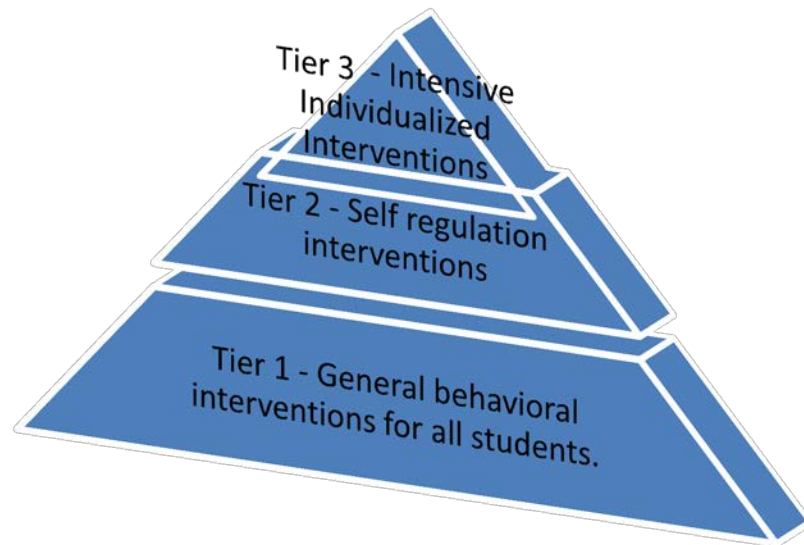
Response to Intervention (RTI).
RTI is a systemic three-tiered model of prevention and support used in many schools to identify students at risk and provide academic and behavioral supports in diverse classrooms (Fairbanks, Sugai, & Guardino, 2007; Harn, Chard, & Kame'enui, 2011; Kalberg, Lane, & Menzies, 2010). Tier 1 is intended to meet the educational needs of approximately 80% of the school population. Tier 2 serves students (approximately

15% of school population) requiring additional instruction and targeted support beyond what is provided to the general population. Tier 3 provides extensive and sustained interventions intended to meet the high level of needs of the remaining (approximately 5%) students (Fairbanks et al., 2007; Finch, 2012; Harn et al., 2011; Kalberg et al., 2010). Finch (2012) reports that socioeconomic status should be considered as part of the diversity equation and Tier 1 interventions must address the achievement gap of economically disadvantaged students. Highly mobile students, such as students living in homelessness, often face interrupted educational experiences and fall behind their peers academically (Murphy & Tobin, 2011; Finch, 2012). Integrating positive behavior supports as part of the RTI model may help reduce the disruptive behavior. Such a reduction would also lessen the number of suspensions and expulsions and ultimately provide more instructional time (Finch, 2012).

RTI can support homeless students. Students experiencing homelessness often have special social, emotional, and behavior needs as well as gaps in academic achievement (ICPH, 2013; Murphy & Tobin, 2011; Swick, 2005). In light of increasing demands on educators to more quickly identify and serve students in need of academic interventions, Fairbanks et al. (2007) studied the application of the RTI logic to address behavioral concerns as well as academic needs. A significant factor identified through review of RTI models in schools is that RTI models are often developed and implemented *without* addressing students' behavioral or social needs (Fairbanks et al., 2007). Kalberg and team (2010) studied the implementation results of a three-tiered model in one elementary school that combined features of RTI and PBIS to address both reading and behavioral challenges. Evidence suggests that students with learning deficits *and* social/behavioral needs require supports in both domains in order to be successful (Fairbanks et al., 2007; Finch, 2012; Kalberg et al., 2010). Kalberg et al. (2010) report that behavior problems can short circuit well intended educational supports.

> In conversations with researchers and practitioners who are implementing RTI models separate from positive behavior support, we have often heard concerns to the effect that some students are not responding. It is quite possible that some of these students may indeed need special education services according to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004). Another possibility is that some students have not responded because they have interfering behavior problems that have impeded their ability to access supports available in the form of secondary (Tier 2) or tertiary (Tier 3) supports. (p. 576)

Kalberg et al. (2010) assert that the self-regulation strategies that are taught to students as part of the RTI model are part of a successful intervention practice for students with academic or behavior challenges. Menzies and Lane (2011) describe secondary level (Tier 2) interventions as those specifically designed to meet the needs of students who continue to have difficulties after implementation of RTI primary interventions (Tier 1). Self-regulation, the ability to think before action, is critical for success in school, report Menzies and Lane (2011). Intervention strategies for self-regulation difficulties (Tier 2) focus on self-monitoring, self-instruction, and goal-setting (Menzies & Lane, 2011; Todd et al., 2008). Students with self-regulation difficulties often lack sufficient skills to read social clues or monitor self-behavior (Menzies & Lane, 2011; Todd, Campbell, Meyer, & Horner, 2008). See the following sample RTI model.

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Tier 3 - Intensive Individualized Interventions

Tier 2 - Self regulation interventions

Tier 1 - General behavioral interventions for all students.

Self-monitoring. One strategy that Menzies & Lane (2011) found to help students improve self-monitoring of attention to task involved providing students with a recording sheet and a specific prompt, such as a musical note, series of sounds, or other type of signal. After the prompt, the student noted on their sheet whether he or she was on or off task. Teachers reinforced on-task behavior with praise and rewards such as stickers or markers. As on-task behavior improved, teachers phased out prompts and recording sheets. Baseline data showed on task behavior at approximately 24%, while post intervention data showed on task behavior at greater than 90% (Menzies & Lane, 2011).
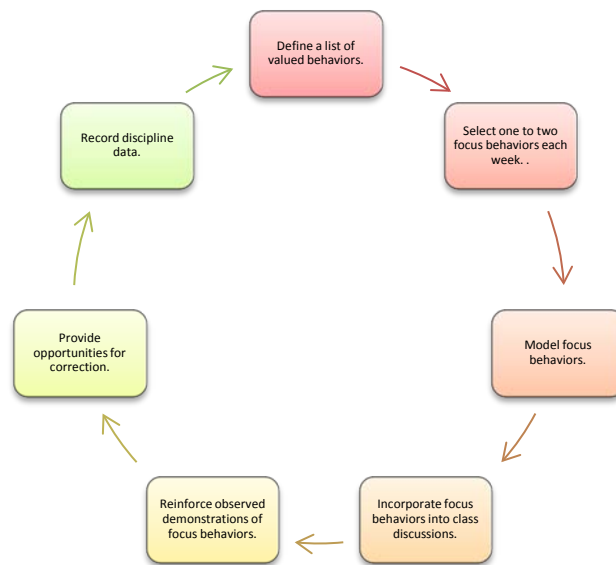
Self-instruction. Menzies and Lane (2011) describe self-instruction as self-talk: the use of language to regulate one's behavior. Students learn the three stages of coping: 1) assess the situation, 2) manage negative impulses, and 3) reinforce constructive responses. Then they mentally rehearse the steps they will use to complete a task, handle difficult situations, manage stress, and congratulate or praise themselves when successful (Menzies & Lane, 2011). Menzies and Lane (2011) share the following self-instruction strategy. Teachers give students cards listing the stages of coping. They then give students another card with samples of self-statements that they can use for each coping strategy. For example, to assess a task, the student asks the self-statement, "What is it that I have to do?" (Menzies & Lane, 2011, p.185). They respond (on their card) or check the second card for coping suggestions such as, "Look over the task and think about it" (Menzies & Lane, 2011, p. 185). To recognize and control negative thoughts, the student then states a positive solution. "I'm saying things that don't help me...I can stop and think more helpful thoughts" (Menzies & Lane, 2011, p. 185). Finally, students self-reinforce, "I did really well in not letting this get the best of me" (Menzies & Lane, 2011, p. 185).

Goal-Setting. Setting a goal to improve social skills can help students feel more in control and become more motivated to set and achieve other goals (Menzies & Lane, 2011). Menzies and Lane identify three basic steps for student goal-setting. First, the student decides on the goal. The goal should be attainable, but not too easy. Second, the student and teacher work together

to define steps to achieve the goal and determine when the student will complete the task. For younger children, shorter term goals are best. For older students, more long-term goals are acceptable, but teachers should help students "chunk" tasks into manageable segments to help ensure success. Finally, the teacher monitors the student's progress toward the goal. "A student cannot be expected to simply set a goal and then reach it. Instruction, support, and coaching are necessary in helping students learn how to set and achieve goals" (Menzies & Lane, 2011, p. 186). With practice and coaching, students gradually learn how to self-regulate their behavior (Menzies & Lane, 2011).

RTI may serve as a universal behavioral prevention and intervention model that fits within the framework of PBIS (Kalberg et al. 2010; Fairbanks et al. 2007). Fairbanks et al. (2007) found the RTI model helpful in identifying students in need of more intensive behavioral supports when they did not successfully respond to universal interventions found in Tier 1 and Tier 2. When RTI and PBIS are incorporated concurrently for differentiated social, behavioral, and academic support, such practice provides prevention and intervention opportunities that meet the needs of most students and may more quickly identify students in need of individualized support (Bayat, Mindes, & Covitt, 2010; Fairbanks et al. 2007; Harn et al., 2011; Todd et al., 2008). To find additional RTI strategies and resources, the reader may wish to visit the website of the Center on Response to Intervention at American Institutes for Research at www.rti4success.org.

Character Education (CE).
Many schools have incorporated CE since the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Skaggs & Bodenhorn, 2006). Researchers and educators generally describe CE as a program or approach to discipline and behavior intended to infuse the principles of respect for others, individual and group responsibilities, and fairness, with the intent of having students become more caring and accepting of others (Skaggs & Bodenhorn, 2006). Skaggs and Bodenhorn (2006) state that, although CE programs are generally similar in content, they are also unique to the schools or districts because of differences in administration practices. One aspect that appears to be standard is an emphasis on similarities rather than differences among people (Bulach, 2002; Skaggs & Bodenhorn, 2006).   Bulach (2002) reports that a CE program can only be successful if it is systematic across the school and includes parents and the community. He warns that focusing on CE in isolation by using programs such as the "character trait of the week" can be ineffective and often become overwhelming if there is a long list of character traits or if the definitions of the desired traits are not clear, concise, and embraced by the entire school community. Bulach (2002) offers three key CE implementation recommendations. First, the school identifies the behaviors it determines are important and develops a list of those behaviors in positive terms. Second, one or two behaviors are selected for focus during each week. Focusing on only one or two behaviors provides an opportunity for everyone to know what to look for in order to provide immediate reinforcement and/or correction opportunities.   Third, the entire school staff models the desired behaviors. Teachers lead class discussions to reinforce behaviors and provide an opportunity for students to practice using the desired behaviors. Data on progress are recorded and used to inform the next weekly focus behaviors. See sample diagram of the CE feedback loop offered below.

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Bulach (2002) goes on to say that CE programs that operate only from a 'curriculum guide' where teachers present certain aspects on a particular day or introduce a desired character trait and then move onto the next lesson without sustained practice and evidence of change are ineffective. For any change to occur, the school must infuse the curriculum with the valued behaviors every day, during the entire day, in every area of the school (Bulach, 2002). If the program is effective, the rate of inappropriate behavior, such as bullying or violence, will decrease, and desired behaviors, such as tolerance, kindness, and compassion for others, will increase (Bulach, 2002).

CE can support homeless children and youth. At-risk children and youth living in poverty and homeless situations benefit from concurrent school-based strategies, such as CE, that address behavior, moral reasoning, and mental health concerns (Masten et al. 2008; Nabors, Proescher, & DeSilva, 2001; Scaggs & Bodenhorn, 2006). While there is great diversity of need among homeless children, activities that focus on mental health and self-regulation in young children lead to better educational outcomes (Nabors, 2001; Masten et al., 2008; Goodwin & Miller, 2013). Nabors (2001) states that schools can use CE as a delivery system for mental health intervention activities to enhance self-regulation and build positive behavior attributes. Nabors (2001) found that at-risk children who participated in CE development using small group discussions and activities that integrated positive character development and included mental health intervention activities reported that they liked the experience and were better able to talk about what they had discussed and learned.

A study conducted by Parker, Nelson, and Burns (2010) found that schools with high numbers of students receiving free and reduced lunch that included a researched based CE curriculum reported higher positive behavior outcomes. Providing opportunities for at-risk students to practice and talk about self-regulation and positive behavior in small safe environments led to the integration of those positive attributes in the classroom and school (Nabors, 2001; Parker et

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al., 2010). CE programs support students in becoming accepting and supportive of others and foster a school community of caring and respect (Nabors, 2001; Parker et al., 2010). For additional information and resources on CE, the reader may with to visit the U.S. Department of Education at www2.ed.gov/teachers/how/character/list.jhtml.

Role of Teachers

One of the primary educational concerns that teachers express is poor student behavior (Capizzi, 2009). In establishing a classroom environment that meets the needs of all students, teachers must consider a wide range of student academic, behavioral, social, and emotional abilities (Capizzi, 2009; Kabler & Weinstein, 2009; Warshof & Rappaport, 2013). Students who have experienced homelessness often live in chaos and come to school weighed down by many burdens (Murphy & Tobin, 2011; Wong et al., 2009). Social stigma, lack of appropriate clothing, sleep deprivation, hunger, fearfulness, anxiety, and anger are some of the burdens homeless children and youth bear. These students enter school each day already stressed and distracted, but are expected to be ready to learn (Wong et al., 2009). Many homeless students have experienced trauma or violence and do not have the skills to appropriately navigate social interactions or deal with their negative or anxious feelings in an acceptable way (Kabler & Weinstein, 2009; Warshof & Rappaport, 2013).

Teachers can have a strong impact on the success of homeless children by cultivating a nurturing and caring relationship in the classroom (Powers-Costello & Swick, 2008;Warshof & Rappaport, 2013). Warshof and Rappaport (2013) describe the positive impact teachers can have on troubled children through the development of positive teacher-student relationships. A culturally responsive classroom and positive teacher-student relationships are mutually inclusive (Dupper et al., 2009). For example, attributes of teachers who are likely to be successful with at-risk children include having the ability to adapt their interactions depending on the emotional needs of their students, having the ability to provide a stable, predictable learning environment, and finally, being aware of students' shifts in mood, demeanor or presentation of non-verbal clues (i.e. facial expressions or body language) and modifying responses and interactions with students according to those changes (Warshof and Rappaport, 2013).

Teacher perceptions about homelessness may act as a barrier to developing positive relationships with students and fostering appropriate social, emotional, and behavioral connectedness to school. To better understand the needs of homeless students in order to cultivate a caring environment that supports learning, Powers-Costello and Swick (2008) recommend that school systems provide teachers with opportunities for professional development through social justice frameworks to increase awareness and understanding of homeless children and families. A service-learning approach that includes programs at local shelters or time for educators to do volunteer work at food pantries and local service agencies helps teachers have a better understanding of the challenges that homeless students and their families face (Powers-Costello & Swick, 2008). Warshof and Rappaport (2013) confirm that,

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while teachers cannot control or change the hardships of homelessness, they are able to create a nurturing and culturally responsive classroom (Ford & Kea, 2009) and change their responses to children to construct a classroom environment that helps homeless children and youth develop coping and social skills that allow them to experience success in school.

Bennett (2008) states that students living in poverty must deal with numerous challenges and responsibilities outside of the classroom. "I must remember to encourage every student. My classroom might be the bright spot in a student's day" (Bennett, 2008, p. 251). Additionally, these students may not have access to resources such as computers, school supplies, or a place to study and complete homework. Ensuring a quiet place to study, access to needed school supplies, allowing extra time for assignments, and providing tutoring to address achievement gaps or offering enrichment activities help level the playing field (Bennett, 2008).   Parents may be non-communicative or hard to reach, not because they do not care, but because they must devote their energies to meeting their family's basic needs. Education and on-going professional development for teachers about the culture of poverty will help teachers connect academic content to their students' lives and help diminish misbehavior in school (Bennett, 2008; Powers, Costello & Swick 2008; Stracuzzi & Mills, 2008).

"Culture is the social and intergenerational glue that defines, connects, sustains, and enriches the members of successful communities – including schools and classrooms" (Major, 2009, p. 24). Major (2009) urges teachers to help at-risk students develop a belief in themselves. Major describes one way that teachers can accomplish this task by building a cycle of success for students. A cycle of success includes steps in which students learn the connection between effort and success. Teachers may need to modify lessons to make them more meaningful to the student (Major, 2009). Educators should recognize that the classroom is not a homogenous group; some students need teachers to present them material in a way they can relate to and in a way that allows them to achieve incremental success (Bennett, 2009).

Culturally responsive teachers are more reflective and responsive; they recognize the differences between themselves and their students and adjust their approaches to build upon their students' experiences and strengths in order to that ensure all students feel a sense of belonging and value (Ford & Kea, 2009). In a study of middle school students, Anderman (2003) found that when students felt more connected to school they were more likely to engage appropriately. School engagement increased and misconduct decreased when teachers practiced an adaptive approach to education and social interactions in the classroom (Anderman, 2003). In a similar study, Walker (2009) found that students' perceptions of their teachers as "mean" and/or "distant" affected whether students viewed their schoolwork as forced or meaningless. Conversely, youth that described good relationships with their teachers were far more likely to be engaged in the classroom and identify their lessons as fun and important to them (Walker, 2009). In classrooms where teachers work to develop positive relationships with students and provide opportunities for collaborative learning where peers hold each other accountable for standards of conduct, even strong negative peer influences can be greatly diminished (Wentzel, 2003). Students who feel supported by their teachers are more likely to have a sense of belonging in school (Murphy & Tobin, 2011; Stracuzzi & Mills, 2010).

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Scholars link perceptions of belonging to positive classroom behavior and increased academic achievement (Murphy & Tobin, 2011; Warshof & Rappaport, 2013).

Discussion to this point has focused on teacher-student relationships, students' sense of belonging, and the importance of culturally sensitive learning environments that foster positive classroom behavior and school citizenship. However, the classroom is only part of the education equation. Best practice lies not in the fragmentation of proactive and positive behavioral supports and interventions, but in meaningful and on-going collaboration across the entire school system. If the teacher and classroom are the spokes in the school community wheel, the school administrator is at its hub.

Role of School Administrators

Like teachers, administrators have expressed alarm over increasing discipline problems in schools. Concerns over truancy, drug use, school violence, bullying, and student victimization are not new, and have been at the forefront of educational concerns for many years (Sugai & Horner, 2002; Rimm-Kaufman & Chiu, 2007). The impact of problem behaviors is evident. If educational energies become unbalanced towards maintaining order and addressing discipline problems, academic learning opportunities decrease (Sugai & Horner, 2002; Sugai & Simonsen, 2012).

As described above, PBIS provides a framework of positive behavior supports. When this framework is implemented across the whole school, researchers and educators refer to it as "school wide positive behavior support" or SWPBS (Caldarella, 2011). The intent of a school wide approach is to create a positive school climate through a system of consistent behavioral interventions and supports that extend beyond the classroom to all aspects of the school community, including recess, lunch, extra-curricular activities, etc. (Caldarella, 2011). Studies show that when PBIS is implemented school wide, it is effective in improving school climate and student academic performance (Mitchell, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2010; Todd et al., 2008). SWPBIS may also reduce student tardiness and absences (Caldarella, 2011; Mitchell, et al., 2010).

The most important element in SWPBS success and sustainability is school leadership (Coffey & Horner, 2012). Second is teacher commitment (Coffey & Horner, 2012). Administrators and school staff must be committed to the process; including initial training, ongoing professional development, and data-driven decision making (Coffey & Horner, 2012; Mitchell et al., 2010). Mitchell et al. (2010) describe six critical elements in successful SWPBS implementation: a common school vision; school-wide expectations identified in observable or behavioral terms; formal procedures for teaching behavioral expectations; a variety of practices for recognizing appropriate student behaviors; a continuum of consequences for students who violate expectations; and a system for collecting, reviewing and analyzing data. Only with strong leadership, dedication of the entire school staff, and fidelity to the essential elements of a SWPBS will the desired outcomes of greater student connectedness, improved disciplinary climate, increased time for instruction, improved achievement, and greater family and community relations, be attainable (Simonsen et al. 2008).

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Out of School Discipline Practices

Simonsen et al. (2008) point out that, generally, the first approach to mitigate problematic behavior is to reign in, ratchet down, or set authoritarian rules with severe consequences for students who do not conform. Unfortunately, this hard line approach usually fails and has little or no effect on improving student behavior. It may also may further alienate the most at-risk students (Parker et al., 2010; Simonsen et al., 2008;). Unconstrained disruptive behavior can lead to extreme consequences such as out of school suspension or expulsion. (CITE)

As states grapple with increasing student suspensions and expulsions, more studies on the ineffectiveness of these practices have emerged. Evidence suggests that suspensions and expulsions prevent the most at-risk and vulnerable students from getting one of the things they need most: an education. In April 2012, the Center for Civil Rights Remedies, Civil Justice Project at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) released *Suspended Education in California*, a report on out of school suspensions in California. Results show disturbing rates of suspensions in some student groups, specifically students with disabilities and students living in poverty (Losen, Martinez, & Gillespie, 2012). Furthermore, Losen and team (2012) challenge the concept of suspensions as a tool to manage disruptive behavior stating frequent use of such practices may actually increase errant behavior rather than curb it. "Not only is it counterintuitive to punish a disengaged student by giving them the day off school, but research also suggests that such suspensions do not even act as a deterrent to future misbehavior" (Losen et al., 2012, p.6). Skiba (2014) points out that there appears to be a connection with the increased use of out of school suspension discipline practice and increasing numbers of youth moving into the juvenile justice system.

> A large proportion of these school arrests or referrals are for misdemeanor offenses or disorderly conduct. This has resulted in complaints by judges who worry about clogging up the juvenile justice system and courts with behaviors that could have been managed in the classroom or at school." (Skibba, 2014, p.29)

California schools are not unique in their use of out of school punishment for school misbehavior. In 2009, the Carsey Institute of the University of New Hampshire (UNH) published its analysis of student discipline, *Student Discipline in New Hampshire Schools*. The Carsey Institute report concurs with the UCLA report warning that time out of the classroom, especially children living in poverty or from low-income homes, is education lost and may result in long-term detrimental consequences (Wauchope, 2009). In fact, Wauchope (2009) found that school enrollment size was not a factor in the rate of suspensions, but the number of students on free and reduced lunch was a positive indicator. In an article examining New Hampshire school discipline practices, Chamberlain (2013) acknowledges that in certain cases where a child's behavior is a threat to the safety and wellbeing of others removal from school on a case-by-case basis may be appropriate. However, he goes on to caution policymakers and educators that removing children from school for lesser offences such as being rude or disorderly negatively influences a child's academic progress. Skiba (2014) reports that there are no data that link the practice of out of school suspension and expulsion and improved school climate or reduced instances of disruptive behavior. Furthermore, unnecessary out of school discipline

practices even more profoundly affect disadvantaged and low-income students and students with special education needs (Chamberlain, 2013; Skiba, 2014; Wauchope, 2009). Chamberlain (2013) urges school leaders to re-examine the practice of excluding children from school. "We must keep in mind that we compel children to attend school for their benefit and ours. If a child is unsuccessful in school, we, the child's community, will most certainly suffer for it. To protect their interests, communities need to learn how many children are being suspended from their schools, why they must be suspended school, and whether there are better, smarter, more effective and fairer disciplinary alternatives" (Chamberlain, 2013, p. 29).

Federal Response

Teachers are involved in and shape how interventions are designed and delivered, but in order for systemic interventions to be successful, teachers need the support and resources to create and sustain change. School administrators are charged to provide leadership, reinforce the work of teachers, and ensure the fiscal commitment necessary to support the change process. However, schools do not bear sole responsibility to meet the educational, emotional, social, and behavioral needs of students living in homeless situations. The most promising strategies to support homeless children, youth, and their families are those that include collaboration and integrated services with service providers, agencies, community groups, and advocates (Murphy & Tobin, 2011). Similar levels of collaboration, shared initiatives, resource development, and technical assistance efforts are required at the federal level.

In a joint effort to improve school discipline and reduce out of school suspension practices, the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice collaborated on a special project. The intent of the *Supportive School Initiative* is to bring together research, best practice, and recommendations on student behavior management practices to reduce discipline practices that result in lost school days and may lead to involvement with the juvenile justice system (U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, 2011). It focuses on four guiding strategies: consensus building; research and data collection; disseminating guidance; and building awareness, capacity, and leadership (U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, 2011). Additionally, the *Supportive School Initiative* emphasizes the need for schools to examine and remediate the disparity of out of school discipline practices concerning students with disabilities and students of color. The *Initiative* includes numerous examples of research, federally funded projects and grants, policy and legal guidance documents, webinars, and budget requests proposing new programs and federal collaborative opportunities (U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, 2011). The complete *Supportive School Initiative* document and supplementary information is available online at: www.ed.gov/school-discipline.

In January 2014, the U.S. Department of Education released *Guiding Principles, A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline* (Resource Guide). In the Resource Guide, U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Dunkin acknowledges the high rate of out of school disciplinary practices and warns of the deleterious effects on education and learning and the negative impacts on the relationships between students, teachers, and the community. He

urges the educational community to re-tool its discipline practices to create learning environments that support students through positive behavioral practices (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The intent of the *Resource Guide* is to provide a broad based reserve of research based practices and strategies to assist the education community. Specifically, it emphasizes three guiding principles: creating a positive school climate that focuses on the prevention of disruptive behaviors, identifying clear and appropriate expectations and related consequences to address disruptive behavior, and ensuring equality and fairness (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). "By prioritizing positive climates, prevention, and targeted interventions to support students, schools will be able to not only develop safe and protective learning environments, but also keep all students in school and engaged in instruction to the greatest extent possible" (U.S. Department of Education, 2014, p. 4). The *Resource Guide* provides detailed descriptions and supporting research for each of the guiding principles and includes recommendations for implementation and accompanying action steps. It includes a substantive listing of additional reading and research resources for each of the guiding principles. The complete guide and resources are available on the U.S. Department of Education website: www.ed.gov/school-discipline.

Discussion and Recommendations

A positive school climate that includes constructive, incremental behavioral, social, and emotional interventions creates an environment that provides students with a sense of school connectedness or belonging. When students have a sense of belonging, experience success, and value self-respect, disruptive behaviors decrease (Xin, 2003). Research supports the inter-dependence of academics and personal and social needs (Walker, 2009; Dupper, Theriot & Craun, 2009). Walker (2009) points to increasing drop-out rates across the country and states that the reasons students drop out of school are not about academics alone. Students disengage from school because they feel isolated, frustrated, and disconnected from their teachers and peers (Walker, 2009; Stracuzzi & Mills, 2010).

Research consistently affirms that children and youth living in homeless situations often suffer from many emotional and mental health issues, especially low self-esteem (Wong et al. 2009; Murphy & Tobin, 2011; Warshof & Rapaport, 2013). Diminished self-esteem makes it difficult to participate in school activities, develop positive social relationships and as such, presents a barrier to a sense of belonging (Xin, 2003). Individual well-being and belief that academic content is relevant in their current lives and future goals help students in unstable living situations gain the basic securities necessary to be successful academically. Homeless students benefit greatly from a school environment that is safe and nurturing, provides an opportunity to develop positive relationships with staff and other students, and builds a sense of belonging and connectedness (Warshof & Rapaport, 2013; Murphy & Tobin, 2011).

Students living in homeless situations do not leave their worries, anxieties, and fears as they enter the school doors. Homeless children and youth may not have the skills or experiences to be able to make the transition from life outside the schoolyard to the classroom.
Even if the transition appears to be smooth, the student may be periodically distracted by

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concerns about where he will sleep that night, if he will get to eat, and if he will have clean clothes for the next day. The most stable, normalizing, and safe part of a homeless student's day may be the time spent in school. Yet, school may also present great challenges. The homeless student may want to be in school, but may not have the skills to know *how* to be a member of the school community.

The behaviors necessary for survival in homelessness are generally not the behaviors expected or permitted in the classroom. Acting out, withdrawal, inattentiveness, mistrust, and poor social skills could be the result of living in fear, trauma, or in constant chaos whereby lack of sleep, limited food, and needing to be constantly "on guard" may rule the day. The struggles and hardships homeless students face are often not far from the surface. Although these struggles are not always immediately evident, they may lie in wait for a trigger, such as feeling like an outsider, feeling unsafe, or being unsure of expectations. Homeless children and youth are a diverse population. While no framework, model, or intervention guarantees success in dealing with challenging behaviors, there are practices and interventions that have emerged in numerous studies that hold promise when applied consistently, clearly, compassionately, and equitably. Educators cannot control what happens outside of the classroom. Nevertheless, they can control many things within the classroom and school. Schools and classrooms that are student-centered, welcoming and respectful, and provide clear, concise behavioral and academic expectations, will help ensure students develop a sense of belonging. Students who feel connected to the school and have positive relationships with peers and adults are less likely to engage in misbehavior and more likely to focus on education and learning.

Research supports the use of positive and proactive behavioral support systems and behavioral interventions for at-risk students in order to meet their needs while also creating an environment conducive to learning. As a group, homeless children and youth may benefit greatly from the proactive behavior and mental health strategies that are part of tiered interventions such as Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) and Response to Intervention (RTI). Responsive Classroom (RC) and Character Education (CE) provide opportunities to build positive relationships and learn social and disciplinary skills, which can be particularly supportive of homeless and other disadvantaged students who lack appropriate social, behavioral, or emotional skills, or feel disconnected from their peers because of their life situation.

The models and strategies presented in this review are already implemented at some level in many schools. The approaches selected are not intended as an add-on or recommended for implementation to meet the specific needs of only one group of students. Instead, they offer opportunities for the reader to reflect on how practices and educational support systems already in place can be transformed or amended to encompass the behavioral, emotional, and social needs of homeless children and youth. Positive intervention and support strategies are most successful when woven into the fabric of a school culture that is, by design, nurturing and accepting of all students. When schools embrace these practices, *all* students benefit. The frameworks, models, and suggested strategies in this review are presented as examples that, if part of an educational toolbox of positive social and behavioral and social-emotional

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intervention strategies, may be highly successful in supporting children and youth living in homelessness.

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About the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE)

Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) serves as an information clearinghouse for people seeking to remove or overcome educational barriers and to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for children and youth experiencing homelessness. The Center also supports educators and service providers through producing training and awareness materials and providing training at regional and national conferences and events.

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