

Effects of Team-Initiated Problem Solving on Decision Making by Schoolwide Behavior Support Teams

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The authors examined the problem-solving practices of school teams engaged in implementing and improving schoolwide behavior support implementation. A multiple baseline design across 4 elementary school teams was used to assess the effects of the Team-Initiated Problem Solving (TIPS) training program (1 day of team training plus 2 coached meetings). A direct observation data collection protocol—Decision Observation, Recording, and Analysis—was used to index if teams followed “meeting foundations” practices for effective problem solving (e.g., predictable agenda, stable participants, clear roles for facilitator, minute taker, data analyst) and “thorough problem solving” practices for building interventions (e.g., problem definition, use of data, solution development, action planning). Direct observation results indicate that 3 of the 4 teams demonstrated improved meeting foundations and problem-solving skills after TIPS training. The fourth team also performed well, but documented baseline patterns that were either at optimum levels (meeting foundations) or with an increasing trend (problem solving) that prevented demonstration of an intervention effect.

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Team members perceived their meetings after TIPS training as resulting in more effective problem solving. Collectively, the results are interpreted as demonstrating a functional relation between TIPS training and improved problem solving practices by school teams. Implications address how to improve team-based consultation and problem solving in schools.

KEYWORDS *school teams, consultation, problem solving, data-based decision making, problem-solving teams*

Data-based decision making and problem solving are continuous and central activities in schools. Decisions are made not just about individual students and their instruction, but also about the organization of schoolwide educational systems and resources. Nearly every school in the country has teams meeting regularly to make decisions concerning administrative, academic, and social support issues. The assumption is that the involvement of multiple individuals on a team will provide a more inclusive system of problem solving and decision making in which collective experiences, knowledge, skills, language, and vision contribute to improving the core features of schooling and outcomes for children. The ubiquitous and central role of school psychologist as leaders in school-based decision making and on problem-solving teams (cf. Conoley, Conoley, & Reese, 2009; Cowan & Cohn, 2009; Donovan & Cross, 2002; Gelzheiser, 2009; Gilman & Medway, 2007; Graczyk, Domitrovich, Small, & Zins, 2006; Newell, 2010; Shriberg, 2007; Ysseldyke et al., 2006; Ysseldyke, Burns, & Rosenfield, 2009) highlights a need for improved understanding of how collaborative problem-solving teams operate and how to assist individuals on them to effectively address educational concerns common in U.S. schools.

An impressive literature exists with guidance and recommendations about the need for and the process of team-based problem solving (Bransford & Stein, 1984; Carroll & Johnson, 1990; D'Zurilla, Nezu, & Maydeu-Olivares, 2004; Gilbert, 1978; Huber, 1980; Jorgensen, Scheier, & Fautsko, 1981; Newton, Horner, Algozzine, Todd, & Algozzine, 2009; Tropman, 1996; Tysinger, Tysinger, & Diamanduros, 2009; Ysseldyke et al., 2006). In addition, detailed recommendations are available for how data may be used to improve team-based problem solving (Alonzo, Ketterlin-Geller, & Tindal, 2007; Deno, 1985, 1989, 2005; White, 1985). Two messages from this literature are (a) the steps for data-based problem solving remain consistent across time, context, and authors; and (b) there is evidence that current problem-solving practices in schools leave room for improvement.

As a field, education is not using best practice for data-based problem solving. A program of scholarship focused on team-based problem solving in schools is needed, and will be expected to (a) establish a clear conceptual

foundation, (b) demonstrate that practical training procedures can be used to improve the data-based problem solving practices of school teams, (c) offer a valid and reliable measure of team-based problem solving, and (d) document that the improved problem solving practices of school teams are related to improved outcomes for students. In this research, we initiate research address the first three of these expectations.

Conceptual Foundation

Deno (1989, 2005) described an approach to data-based problem solving that integrates guidance from multiple sources. Decisions are based on (a) operational identification and definition of problems; (b) identification of solution options; (c) selection of a solution; and (d) development of an action plan that not only has a high probability to produce a desired outcome, but procedurally fits the resources, values and culture of the local context. The five steps Deno recommended are as follows:

1. Problem identification. Measure student performance; decide whether a problem exists by comparing actual status with desired status.
2. Problem definition. Measure degree of discrepancy between desired student performance and actual student performance; decide whether the problem is important enough to address.
3. Design intervention plan. Generate alternative hypotheses for why the problem persists and solutions regarding the problem; decide which hypothesis/solution appears to be effective, feasible, and contextually appropriate.
4. Implement intervention. Initiate selected solution, measure fidelity of implementation, collect student performance data; decide whether solution is being implemented as intended and is beginning to reduce discrepancy.
5. Problem solution. Use collected data to continue measuring possible discrepancy; decide whether the solution has solved the problem; adapt solution in response to new information.

Deno's problem solving processes link measurement and decision making, and highlight the central role of data for effective and efficient problem solving. Deno advocated use of this model within curriculum-based measurement, an exemplar of a data-based problem solving (e.g., Alonzo et al., 2007; Deno, 1985, 2005; Shinn, 1989).

Training Team-Based Problem Solving

The present study examined Deno's (1985, 2005) approach to team-based problem solving within the context of schoolwide positive behavior support.

The independent variable was implementation of Team-Initiated Problem Solving (TIPS; Newton et al., 2009) training that involved a 1-day (6-hr) workshop for the schoolwide behavior support team, coupled with two on-site meetings with a TIPS coach (cf. Fixsen, Naoom, Blasé, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005; Joyce & Showers, 2002, for role of coaching in implementation efforts). The training emphasizes (a) procedures to be conducted before a meeting (agenda defined, roles defined, time frame of meeting defined, advanced data review, stable team membership), (b) procedures for conducting a meeting (use of agenda, review of old business, review of current data on outcomes and implementation fidelity, identify and define problems with precision, use data to identify intervention options, select solutions/interventions with proven effect, feasibility and contextual fit, build action plan for implementation), and (c) procedures following meetings (distribute minutes, share data and decisions with all staff/faculty, perform actions in action plan). Coaching is provided by district staff and/or TIPS trainers, and involves premeeting prompts, guidance-as-needed during the meeting, and postmeeting review of meeting effectiveness.

The TIPS training emphasizes use of multiple examples to teach using data to define *problems* and build *solutions*. A social or academic problem is defined with sufficient precision when the team can not only describe the behavior of concern, but where, when, who, and why the behavior occurs. Teams are taught to use student data (e.g., office discipline referral data) to refine global problem statements into more precise statements that allow active problem solving. Teams also are taught to use data about patterns of occurrence and nonoccurrence of student problems to identify where students not only are likely to engage in problem behavior, but likely to succeed. Contexts where student success are likely are then used to help guide selection of intervention content. Newton, Todd, Algozzine, Horner, and Algozzine (2009) provided a manual detailing TIPS content, and this manual is available from the authors.

Measuring Team-Meeting Practices

The primary measure of team problem solving practices was the Decision Observation, Recording, and Analysis (DORA; Newton, Todd, Algozzine, Horner, & Algozzine, 2009; Todd, Newton, Horner, Algozzine, & Algozzine, 2009) direct observation measure introduced by Newton, Horner, Todd, Algozzine, and Algozzine (under review). The use of DORA has been demonstrated to provide a reliable index of (a) the meeting foundational practices of teams, and (b) the thoroughness with which teams use data to define problems, build solutions and organize action plans (Newton et al., under review; Algozzine, Newton, Horner, Todd, & Algozzine, in preparation). DORA was developed to address the need for a direct observation index of

team problem-solving practices. Observable decision-making behaviors were identified from the literature and field tested with school teams in Oregon and North Carolina. Modifications to the instrument were made in response to the field test, and a revised version of the instrument was then used in this study.

METHOD

The research question was if there is a functional relation between TIPS training and problem solving behaviors. We focused on changes in the (a) meeting foundations and (b) problem solving thoroughness practices of schoolwide positive behavior support teams.

Participants and Settings

Behavior support team members from four Title I elementary schools (K-5 or K-8) using schoolwide positive behavior support (Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Sugai, Horner & Lewis, 2010) participated in the study. Each team was composed of 3 to 10 individuals responsible for monitoring, and implementing schoolwide positive behavior support efforts in their school (cf. Table 1 for demographic information about schools and team members). A building administrator (principal or assistant principal), a school psychologist, representative faculty (e.g., general and special education teachers) and other professionals (e.g., school social worker, parent) were included in the membership of each team. Participating educators had an average of 11.6 years experience (range = 1

TABLE 1 Team Member Demographics

Team roles	Number of years of experience				Number of years on schoolwide team			
	School				School			
	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
Admin	20	26	6	31	3	7	3	7
Counselor	1	1			1	1		
Special Ed	4	37		7	4	14		5
Title I	11	22, 4			1	2, 1		
Specialist				15				6
Ed Assist.				5				1
Kindergarten			2	6			1	1
1st grade	8	21		6	4	14		1
2nd grade				19				6
3rd grade	15			3	5			2
4th grade				3				1
5th grade		19		6		10		2
7th grade			6				1	
<i>M</i>	9.8	18.5	4.6	10.1	2.8	6.7	1.6	3.2

to 31) and an average of 6.7 years of experience on their school behavior support team (range = 1 to 14).

Schools were selected for participation in the study on the basis of the following: (a) active implementation of schoolwide positive behavior support (e.g., a score of 80% or higher on the Schoolwide Evaluation Tool; Horner et al., 2004; Sugai, Lewis-Palmer, Todd, & Horner, 2001; Todd et al., 2005); (b) use of the Schoolwide Information System (Irvin et al., 2006; May et al., 2003) to monitor office discipline referrals; (c) an active schoolwide positive behavior support team that met at least twice a month; (d) access to technical resources that allowed use of the internet with an LCD projector during team meetings; and (e) consent to participate from the district, school, and team members. The use of the Schoolwide Information System by each participating school ensured that the team had Web-based access to current information about student office discipline referral patterns (rate, location, type of problem behavior, time of day, and students involved).

Schools A and B had one team of individuals that met once a month to address schoolwide behavior support issues, and a second time each month to address individual student interventions. Given that the facilitator, minute taker, data analyst, and team members (other than guests) were constant across the two meetings, we included all meetings from these schools in the analysis, but separated data presentation to identify meeting focus for comparison.

Measurement

DORA

The primary dependent variable was performance of team-meeting practices as assessed by the DORA instrument (Newton et al., 2009; Todd et al., 2009). DORA is a direct observation measure of team practices collected by an observer using paper-pencil records of team operations. DORA generates a meeting foundations score composed of the percentage of the following meeting practices that are implemented: (a) meeting starts on time; (b) members present; (c) previous meeting minutes available; (d) agenda available; (e) meeting roles are defined for facilitator, minute taker, and data analyst; (f) summary data are presented and reviewed; (g) next meeting is scheduled; and (h) meeting ends on time with members still present. DORA also generates a thoroughness percentage score for a meeting by examining each identified problem and determining the following: (a) the precision of problem definition, (b) the use of data for identification and clarification of a problem, (c) the development of solution options, and (d) the development of an action plan for the selected solution (see Todd et al., 2009, for DORA scoring rubric).

DORA data were collected at twice-monthly team meetings focused on whole-school behavior support considerations (all four schools) or individual student intervention considerations (for Schools A and B). The observer monitored team practices immediately before a meeting beginning until the end of the meeting, or 70 min, whichever came first. During 20 (40.6%) meetings (30% of baseline data points and 70% of TIPS data points) a second observer obtained independent DORA data. The percentage of agreement between observers was calculated by comparing per item meeting foundation element scores, and per item thoroughness scores. Interobserver agreement for meeting foundation scores averaged 94% (range = 72% to 100%) and interobserver agreement for thoroughness scores averaged 88% (range = 50% to 100%). Eleven problems were identified during baseline, and 93 problems were identified during the coaching and TIPS-trained phases. Observers agreed on identification of problems 96% of the time.

TIPS FEEDBACK FORM

To assess the social validity of DORA scores each member of each school team anonymously completed TIPS Feedback Form during the last month of the study (2–5 months after TIPS training). The TIPS Feedback Form was developed for this study and provided 12 statements about team meeting organization, use of data, and satisfaction with effectiveness of meetings (cf. Table 2). Each team member rated each statement on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) regarding team meeting practices during baseline and post TIPS training.

Design and Data Analysis

We used a multiple-baseline-across-teams design to examine the effects of TIPS training on team problem solving. Schools A and B were yoked in the design, and Schools C and D received the intervention in a conventional, staggered multiple baseline schedule. The design used three phases: baseline, coaching, TIPS trained.

BASELINE

During the baseline phase, teams conducted their regularly scheduled meetings using typical procedures, schedules, and methods. Data were collected by an observer (or two observers when interobserver agreement data were collected) sitting to one side of the meeting, but with visual and auditory contact. Observers did not interact with team members during or after the meeting.

TABLE 2 Team Members Rating Feedback Statements as "Very High Agreement" or "High Agreement"

TIPS Feedback Form statement Team...	Team A		Team B		Team C		Team D	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
...used data for school-level problems	50%	100%	60%	80%	0%	100%	0%	100%
...used data for group-level problems	33%	100%	20%	80%	NA	NA	0%	100%
...used data for individual student problems	50%	100%	60%	100%	NA	NA	20%	90%
...used data to build hypotheses	17%	100%	0%	100%	50%	100%	0%	80%
...discussed possible solutions	50%	100%	100%	100%	50%	100%	50%	100%
...implemented solutions	0%	100%	100%	100%	0%	100%	50%	90%
...used data to monitor implementation	0%	100%	40%	80%	0%	100%	0%	90%
...used data to monitor impact	0%	67%	0%	80%	0%	0%	0%	60%
...meetings were organized	0%	67%	20%	100%	0%	100%	0%	80%
...meetings were efficient	0%	83%	20%	100%	0%	100%	10%	90%
...satisfaction with process	17%	100%	0%	80%	0%	100%	0%	100%
...satisfaction with results	17%	100%	20%	100%	NA	NA	0%	80%

Note. Team C only had two respondents, and they did not respond to three of the questions (NA). TIPS = Team Initiated Problem Solving.

COACHING

The coaching phase began with one 6-hr day of training in which the team met with a TIPS trainer or trainers (one or both of first two authors), and team members were introduced to TIPS procedures (Newton et al., 2009) for the following: (a) premeeting practices, (b) during the meeting practices, and (c) postmeeting practices. The training day ended with the team simulating a meeting using TIPS practices and the Schoolwide Information System data from their school. Teams were taught to use the TIPS meeting minute form (which provides prompts for meeting foundations and problem-solving practices), to access their discipline data online, and to record decisions using a computer and projector with Internet access. The next two regularly scheduled team meetings at the school were conducted with TIPS coaching. For each of these meetings, the coach contacted the facilitator and data analyst before the meeting to review the agenda and ensure that data would be summarized and available. The coach also attended the team meeting and provided prompts as needed for the facilitator, minute taker, and/or data analyst. In all cases, the prompts from the coach were limited to recommendations for implementing TIPS procedures (not suggestions for solutions). After a coached meeting, the TIPS coach would follow up to make sure that the minutes for the meeting were accurate and distributed. In the TIPS training model, coaching is designed to be provided by district personnel (cf. Newton et al., 2009). For purposes of this study, coaching was provided

by the first author. In addition to the coach, observers were present and collected DORA data during the two coached meetings.

TIPS TRAINED

The TIPS Trained phase replicated procedures from baseline. No coaching assistance was provided, and observers were present but not consulted or involved in providing support.

RESULTS

We were interested in the functional relation between TIPS training and problem-solving behaviors. We used observations and participant perceptions to document it.

Direct Observation Results

A summary of DORA results across baseline, coaching, and TIPS-trained phases for meeting foundations and thoroughness are provided in Figures 1 and 2, respectively. Baseline meeting foundations results from Figure 1 indicate that teams entered the study with many meeting foundations practices in place. The mean baseline phase for meeting foundations scores for Schools A, B, C, and D were 85.6%, 70.9%, 67.3%, and 45.6%, respectively. The meeting foundations scores for Schools A, B, C, and D all improved across the coaching and TIPS phases, averaging 90.1, 91.6, 83.8, and 86.6, respectively. These gains represent an average increase over baseline of 37.3% (range = 5.3% to 89.9%). A review of DORA elements indicated that the most common areas of meeting foundations improvement across the teams were in the areas of taking meeting minutes in a format that made the minutes accessible and easy to review, establishing an agenda for the meeting, having a person assigned to bring the data summary to the meeting, consistent team attendance and an increase in starting and ending meetings within 10 min of the scheduled time.

Visual analysis of Figure 1 data during and after baseline requires comparison not just of level changes, but comparison of slope, variability, immediacy of effect following introduction of Coaching (comparison of last three data points in baseline with first three data points in Coaching + TIPS), overlap of data in Coaching+TIPS trained with data in baseline, and the consistency of data patterns in similar phases across teams (Horner et al., 2005; Kennedy, 2005; Kratochwill et al., 2010; Parsonson & Baer, 1978). A functional relation in a single-case design is defined by at least three demonstrations of an experimental effect (e.g., change in pattern following introduction of the independent variable) with these demonstrations distributed

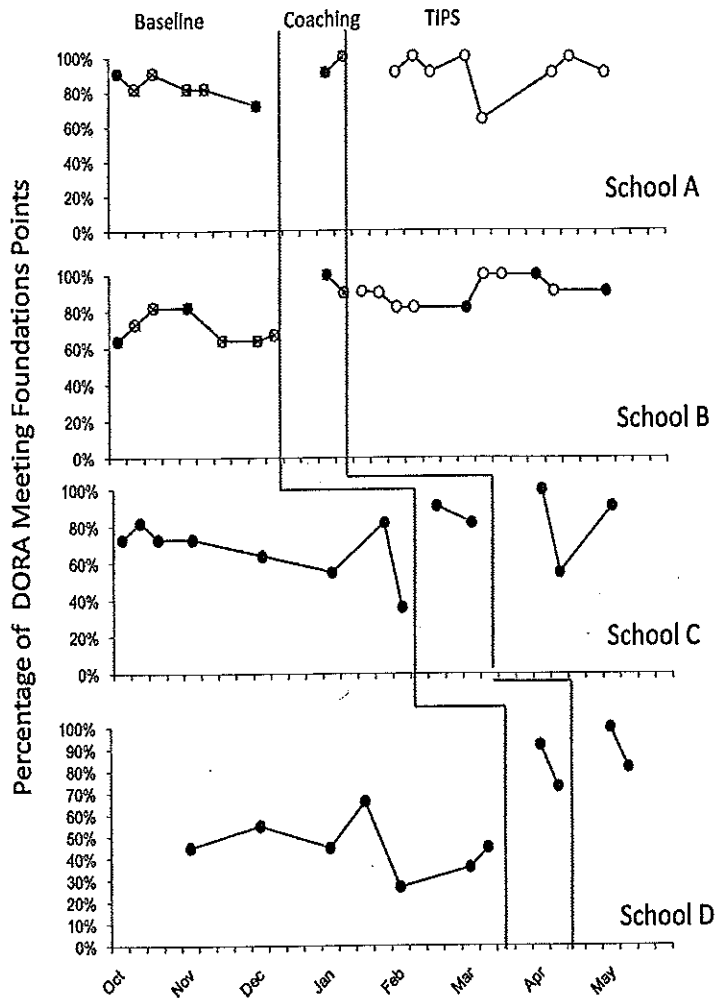


FIGURE 1 DORA Meeting foundation scores for School Teams A, B, C, and D. Open data points index scores during "individual student meetings," closed data points index scores from schoolwide support meetings.

across at least three different points in time. On the basis of these criteria, we view the results from Schools B, C, and D as collectively meeting the standards for documenting a functional relation. While the meeting foundations results for School A are consistent with the interpretation of a functional relation between TIPS training and meeting foundations practice improvement, the magnitude of the effect for School A is sufficiently small to preclude a declaration of effect.

Results for thoroughness of decision making are provided in Figure 2. Baseline data provide a more varied pattern across school teams. School A averaged thoroughness scores of 39.2% during baseline but the final point

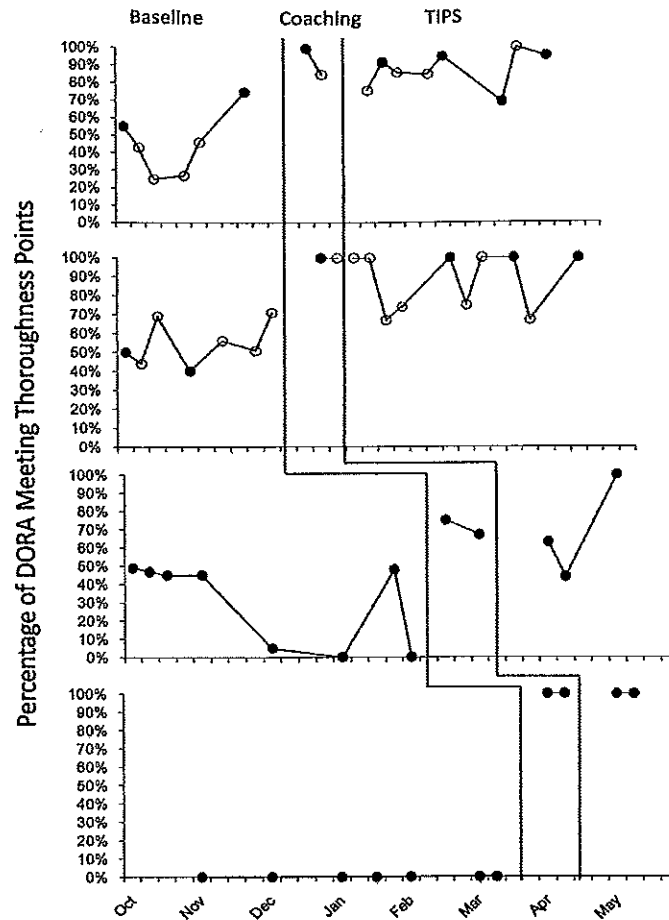


FIGURE 2 DORA Meeting thoroughness scores for School Teams A, B, C, and D. Open data points index scores during "individual student meetings," closed data points index scores from schoolwide support meetings.

of baseline is an outlier that shifts the level and slope of the baseline scores. If logistical factors had not dictated the timing when the coaching phase was introduced, it would have been preferable to obtain at least two more baseline data points for School A. Additional data would have allowed a more confident description of baseline thoroughness practices for School A. School B averaged 54.4% on the DORA thoroughness score across baseline with an increasing trend (slope = 2.2). School C averaged 29.9% on the DORA index of thoroughness during baseline with a decreasing trend (slope = -5.8) and variability ranging from 0.0% to 49%. School D posed a challenge during baseline. The team engaged in extensive discussion, but at no time did they frame a problem that resulted in building a solution. We assigned a "0" score for thoroughness of decision making during baseline for School D with the

logic that the meeting was held with the purpose of defining problems and making decisions, and neither occurred.

After TIPS training each school documented immediate and sustained improvement in the thoroughness of their decision making. Schools A, B, C, and D averaged 87.1% (range = 69–100%), 90.3% (range = 67–100%), 69.8% (range = 44–100%), and 100%, respectively, across the coaching and TIPS phases of the study. These improvements represent an average improvement of 86% (range = 47.9–133%). Gains were observed for each school in each of the subscale areas of DORA for problem solving: defining problems with more precision, using data for defining the problem and building solutions, determining solutions, and assigning a person and timeline to the plan.

Visual analysis of the thoroughness results with consideration of level, trend, variability, overlap, immediacy of effect and consistency across similar phases leads us to conclude that a functional relation is demonstrated by the effects for Schools B, C, and D, with School A again serving as an outlier. The last data point in the baseline phase for School A creates a trend that precludes arguing that the improved thoroughness practices observed in coaching and TIPS-trained phases were associated with introduction of the intervention.

Two considerations in this analysis warrant additional attention. Because the first two meetings following training included coaching support they are at once (a) assessments of the effect of the initial training and (b) part of the intervention. We compared baseline performance against coaching plus TIPS-trained conditions in the analysis, but our conclusions would be same if we compared only TIPS-trained scores against baseline. A second consideration is the fact that for Schools A and B the same individuals met twice a month, but one meeting focused on schoolwide issues, and the second focused on individual student issues. There were many more problems identified during the individual student meetings, but our focus here was on the meeting foundations and thoroughness practices that should have been constant across the meeting focus. Given that the same individuals were engaged in both meetings, we reported both scores within appropriate phases. A review of Figure 1 and Figure 2 allows assessment of possible variation associated with type of meeting. We did not see patterns that would preclude integrating data from the two meetings, but we recognize the potential for variability imposed by the shifting focus for team meetings.

Problem-Solving Feedback Form

Team member perceptions of the problem solving practices are summarized in Table 2. Team members completed the Feedback Form with a total of 23 responses ($n_{\text{Team A}} = 6$, $n_{\text{Team B}} = 5$, $n_{\text{Team C}} = 2$, $n_{\text{Team D}} = 10$). The teams were consistent in reporting modest to low ratings before TIPS training across the 12 questions assessing use of data, the effectiveness of their solutions,

and their satisfaction with meeting procedures and results. Team members also were consistent in reporting moderate to high ratings for the same questions following their training and use of TIPS procedures. Across the four schools, the average percentage of team members rating the 12 Feedback Form questions as "very high agreement" or "high agreement" was 19.5% for pre-TIPS-training practices and 90.5% for their post-TIPS-training practices.

DISCUSSION

Using teams to provide consultative support for children and youth experiencing academic and social problems in school and other settings has been a recommended practice in schools for many years (Algozzine & Ysseldyke, 2006; Graczyk et al., 2006; Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004; Robinson, 1996; Rosenfield & Gravois, 1996; Snell & Janney, 2000; Young & Kim, 2010) and school psychologists are expected to play an important part on them (Gutkin, 1999; Gutkin & Conoley, 1990; Gutkin & Curtis, 1999; Lee & Boughtin, 1999; Magi & Kikas, 2009; Ysseldyke et al., 2006; Ysseldyke, Dawson, Lehr, Reschly, Reynolds, & Telzrow, 1997; Ysseldyke, Reynolds, & Weinberg, 1984). The process typically involves individuals collectively meeting to review data to make decisions about how to address academic and social concerns (Boudett, City, & Murnane, 2006; Burns & Symington, 2002; Graden, 1989; Safran & Safran, 1996; Ysseldyke et al., 2009; Ysseldyke & Weinberg, 1981). The first step in most of these models is to review expectations and performance and identify problems by addressing "who, what, where, and when" questions. Developing and refining a hypothesis about "why" the problem exists is the next step before discussing and developing solutions and developing and implementing an action plan to address it. The final step typically involves evaluating and revising the implemented solution to identify the need and direction for additional actions in the iterative cycle. Although the process has been widely advocated, guidance has come more from professional advice than from research- and evidence-based practice (cf. Conoley et al., 2009; Flowers & Carpenter, 2009; Gelzheiser, 2009; Ronka, Lachat, Slaughter, & Meltzer, 2008; Schmoker, 2003; Ysseldyke et al., 2009).

Although perceptions of the role and effectiveness of school psychologists vary (Collins & Proctor, 2009; Gilman & Gabriel, 2004; Gilman & Medway, 2007; Kaniuka, 2009; Meyers, Roach, & Meyers, 2009; Ysseldyke et al., 2009), administrators, teachers, and parents often view them as a go-to resource for effective assistance in solving problems (Cowan & Cohn, 2009, p. 32). This continuing expectation as well as their typically central role on collaborative teams and the pervasive use of these teams creates a powerful need for continuing documentation of professional practice related to school-based decision making and how to improve it (Tysinger et al., 2009; Ysseldyke et al., 2009). We provide here the first example we have found of

direct observation data used in an experimental design to assess the specific practices of school team problem solving.

For the past 25 years, school psychology has been guided by a series of three "Blueprints for Training and Practice" that define domains in which competent professionals "... should be educated to develop and be expected to deliver in school and community settings" (Ysseldyke et al., 2009, p. 177). In *Blueprint III*, the functional competency of Data-Based Decision Making and Accountability directs that "school psychologists should be good problem solvers who collect information that aids in understanding problems, making decisions about appropriate interventions, assessing educational outcomes, and making accountability decisions"; and, the document "is literally loaded with reference to the need for psychology in school and community settings to be delivered in ways that are collaborative and consultative" (Ysseldyke et al., 2009, pp. 190, 193). Our results indicate that with one day of in-service team training and two coached meetings, typical school teams were able to adopt and retain team meeting practices that are more consistent with those recommended in the literature for effective consultation, problem solving, and decision making. In addition, the training process and team-meeting practices were judged by team members as effective and satisfactory. Taken together, these data have implications for professional development and future research related to key domains of competence for training and practice in school psychology.

Although most professionals in school psychology agree that consultation is a critical competency for success in school- and community-based practice, some argue that professional development related to what it takes to be successful in a consultative role is insufficient and ill-defined (Graden, 2004; Meyers et al., 2009; Rosenfield, 2002). Although limited in scope and generality, our findings provide preliminary indications for the foundations and processes that should be focused on in efforts to improve consultation and decision making in schools. The organizing structure demonstrated to be acceptable and successful for the teams that we studied supports professional and functional behavior by focusing on important consultative skills that enhance decision making. Our results also point to the need for continuing research to (a) replicate the effects and assess their maintenance or durability, (b) demonstrate that team-developed solutions are actually implemented, and (c) demonstrate that improving team problem solving results in enhanced social and academic outcomes for students.

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