Further Validation of the Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders in Middle and Junior High School

Paul Caldarella, Ph.D., Michael J. Richardson, M.S., & Benjamin J. Young, B.S.
Brigham Young University
Positive Behavior Support Initiative

Screening for Students At-Risk for EBD

- Screening for EBD allows for prevention and early intervention, which can reduce the need for more intensive services. Although there has been an emphasis on screening in elementary schools, there has been less work in secondary schools.
- The Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders (SSBD) is a multifaceted screening system for use in elementary schools. Advantages include relative ease of administration and potential to consider all students in a school before using more intrusive, time consuming measures.
- Recent research (Caldarella, et al. 2008) evaluated the SSBD for use in secondary school and revealed statistically significant differences between students identified through SSBD screening and non-identified students on office disciplinary referrals (ODR) and cumulative grade point averages (GPA). Significant correlations between scores on the SSBD and on well-established teacher rating scales were also found.
- The current study extends these findings by examining correlations between SSBD scores and parent ratings, teacher ratings, and student self-ratings of behavior.

Sample & Setting

- Participants were from two suburban secondary schools in Utah; a middle (grades 6-7) and junior high (grades 7-9) school.
  - Total Students: 2473
  - Male/Female: 1887/106
  - Free, Reduced Lunch: 38%
  - African-American: 1%
  - Caucasian: 89%
  - Native American: 1%
  - Hispanic: 8%
  - Pacific Islander: 5%

- Students nominated for participation via the SSBD:
  - Nominated Students: 226
  - Internally-nominated: 189
  - Externally-nominated: 17
  - Students invited to Participate: 123
  - Students receiving follow-up measures: 66
  - Seventy-three percent of nominated students were male, 84% Caucasian, and 13% Hispanic. Students of other ethnicities (African American, Native American, Asian, and Pacific Islander) comprised roughly three percent of the nominated students.

Results & Discussion

- The Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders (SSBD) is a multifaceted screening system for use in elementary schools. Advantages include relative ease of administration and potential to consider all students in a school before using more intrusive, time consuming measures.
- Recent research (Caldarella, et al. 2008) evaluated the SSBD for use in secondary school and revealed statistically significant differences between students identified through SSBD screening and non-identified students on office disciplinary referrals (ODR) and cumulative grade point averages (GPA). Significant correlations between scores on the SSBD and on well-established teacher rating scales were also found.
- The current study extends these findings by examining correlations between SSBD scores and parent ratings, teacher ratings, and student self-ratings of behavior.

Procedures & Measures

- Three behavior rating scales were used in this study: the SSBD (Walker & Severson, 1992), the ASEBA (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001), and the SSRS (Gresham & Elliott, 1990). Stage One involves nomination of students who exhibit internalizing or externalizing behavior, and ranking them according to severity. Stage Two involves a behavior checklist and two rating scales: Adaptive and Maladaptive behavior. The ASEBA and SSRS contain internalizing and externalizing subscales.
- Classroom teachers completed the SSBD (Stage One and Two) and the teacher forms of the ASEBA (the Teacher Report Form—TRF) and SSRS during a meeting at the school.
- Parent participants completed the parent forms of the ASEBA (the Child Behavior Checklist—CBCL), and the SSRS. Forms were sent home with students, mailed to parents, or delivered by researchers.
- Student participants completed the ASEBA (the Youth Self Report—YSR) during an invited lunch. Instructions were read aloud and questions were clarified as requested by students.
- Two additional measures were obtained from existing school data sources (a district database): office disciplinary referrals (ODR) and cumulative grade point averages (GPA).

Limitations & Conclusions

- The sample of students was relatively small. The population from which these students were drawn also lacked geographic and ethnic diversity, and did not include high school students. In addition, no formal item analysis was conducted.
- Findings indicate that parent and self-ratings, as well as comparison teacher ratings, support the validity of using the SSBD for screening at the secondary school level. Correlations between ratings on the SSBD and student and parent ratings on other behavioral measures are of particular interest for this study, and support prior research on the use of the SSBD in middle and junior high school settings (Caldarella, et al. 2008).

Contact Information & References

Brigham Young University Positive Behavior Support Initiative
www.byu.edu/pbsi/index.html
(801) 377-0560
(801) 377-0560


This research was funded in part by an OSEP Grant # 0324430124.