

The Good Behavior Game: A Classroom-Based Behavior Management Strategy

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The Baltimore Education and Prevention Partnership

- Baltimore City Public School System has collaborated in three generations of education and prevention field trials.
- They were directed at helping children master key social task demands in 1st-grade classroom.
- The first generation will be our main focus today, where the Good Behavior Game (GBG) was tested by itself and the children, now young adults, were followed to ages 19–21.
- This research has been supported by NIH: NIMH, NIDA, NICHD

Impact of Poorly Managed Classrooms on Students

- Aggressive, disruptive behavior, as early as first grade, is a major risk factor for academic failure, later school drop-out, delinquency, drug abuse, depression, and other problem outcomes.
- Children with behavior problems in poorly managed first grade classrooms were up to 20 times more likely to exhibit severe aggressive problems in middle schools compared to their counterparts in well managed first grade classrooms.

Impact of Poorly Managed Classrooms on Teachers

- The number one reason for teacher burn-out is the inability to manage classrooms.
- Teachers need tested tools to manage classrooms, i.e., to teach children how to be students.
- A large portion of first grade teachers need such tools, e.g., ~50% in Baltimore.

The History of the Good Behavior Game (GBG)

- GBG was originally developed by Barrish, Saunders, & Wolfe at the University of Kansas with the first report in 1969.
- At least 18 short-duration, non-randomized trials followed and described positive results.
- These led to the developmental epidemiologically-based randomized field trials in Baltimore to test GBG.

Goals of GBG

- Provide teachers a classroom-wide method to socialize children into the role of student
- Reduce classroom aggressive, disruptive behavior to enhance classroom teaching and learning
- Prevent school failure, drug abuse, delinquency, and other problem outcomes

Design of 1st Generation Trial

- 41 1st-grade classrooms in 19 schools.
- **ACROSS** schools: Schools were matched and randomly assigned.
- **WITHIN** each intervention school: Children were balanced across all 1st-grade classrooms.
- Then 1st-grade classrooms and teachers were randomly assigned to standard program classrooms or to intervention classrooms.

GBG Impact From Elementary through Middle School

- By end of first grade
 - Reduced off-task behavior
 - Reduced aggressive/disruptive behavior
 - Improved teacher and peer ratings
- By middle school
 - Reduction teacher ratings of aggressive behavior in high aggressive males
 - Delayed or reduced initiation of cigarette smoking

GBG Impact through Young Adulthood

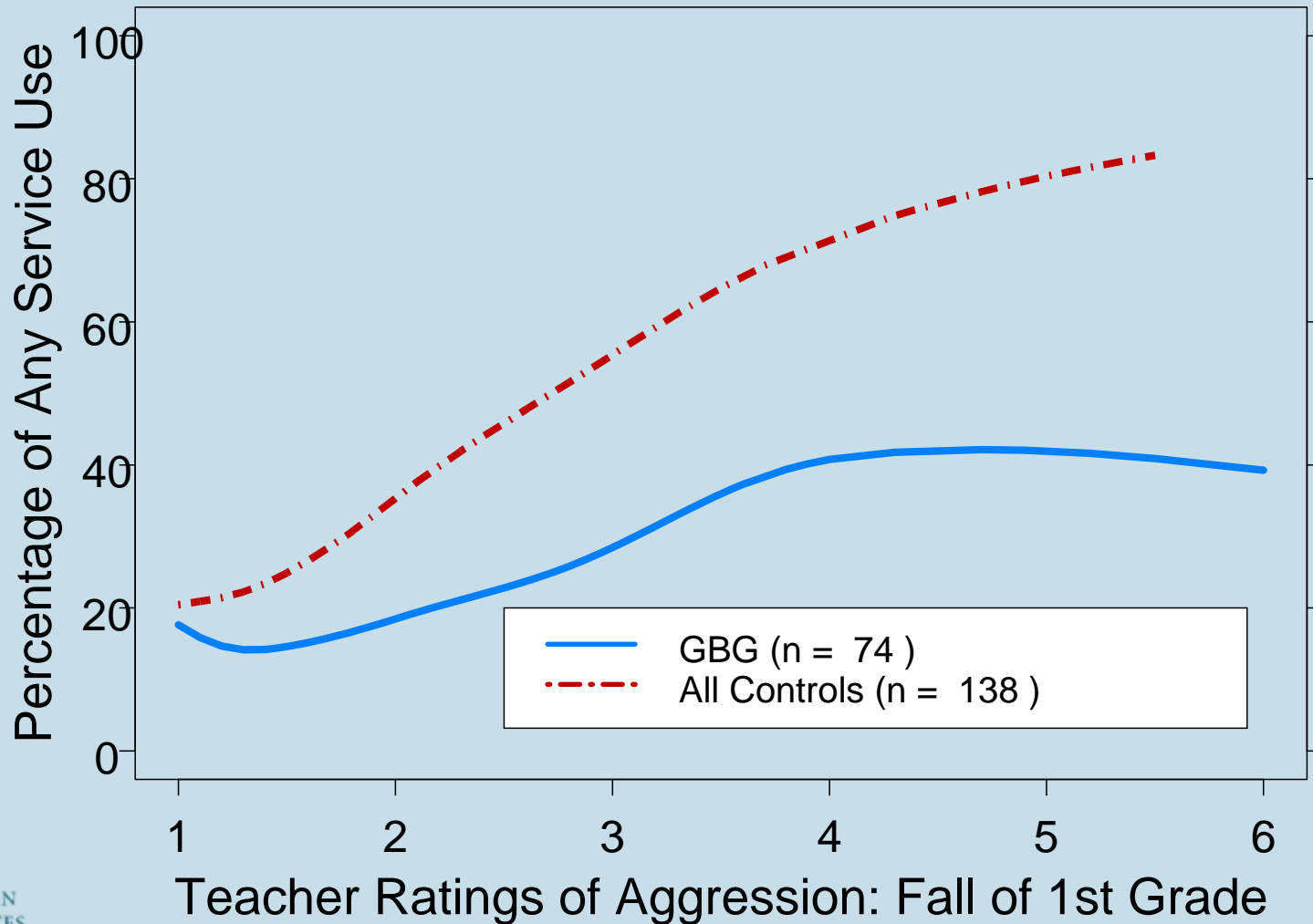
- Telephone interviews of 77% of youth by age 19-21
- Test whether GBG has an impact on drug or alcohol use, ASPD, service use
- Does this impact vary by level of aggressive behavior in first grade or by gender?

Summary of Findings

Impact of GBG at Young Adulthood	GBG Classrooms	Standard Program Classrooms
High School Graduation* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Males who were highly aggressive, disruptive in first grade 	75%	20%
Lifetime Illicit Drug Abuse/Dependence Disorder <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Males Males who were highly aggressive, disruptive in first grade 	19% 29%	38% 83%
Lifetime Alcohol Abuse/Dependence Disorder <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All males and females 	13%	20%
Regular Smoker (10 or more cigarettes a day) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All males Males who were highly aggressive, disruptive in first grade 	7% 0%	17% 40%
Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All males and females Males who were highly aggressive, disruptive in first grade 	17% 41%	25% 86%

*Impact varied significantly by school

GBG Impact vs All Controls on Any Service Use for Males



Fidelity of Implementation

- Teacher practices
 - General classroom behavior management
 - GBG-specific activities
- Practices of others in support system
 - Coaches
 - Principals
 - Other school personnel
 - District level personnel

Patterns of Quality of GBG Implementation in 12 Intervention Schools: 2004-05



Lessons Learned I

- 1st-grade classrooms are of central importance to later academic, mental, and behavioral health.
- A relatively simple method of classroom behavior management can have a dramatic long-term impact if done with fidelity.
- Females were less responsive to GBG than are higher risk males.

Lessons Learned II

- Without a system to mentor, model, and monitor teacher practices over time, GBG practices are not sustained.
- Teachers need support from principals; principals from area leaders; area leaders from chief academic and executive officers; and all need support from the School Board.

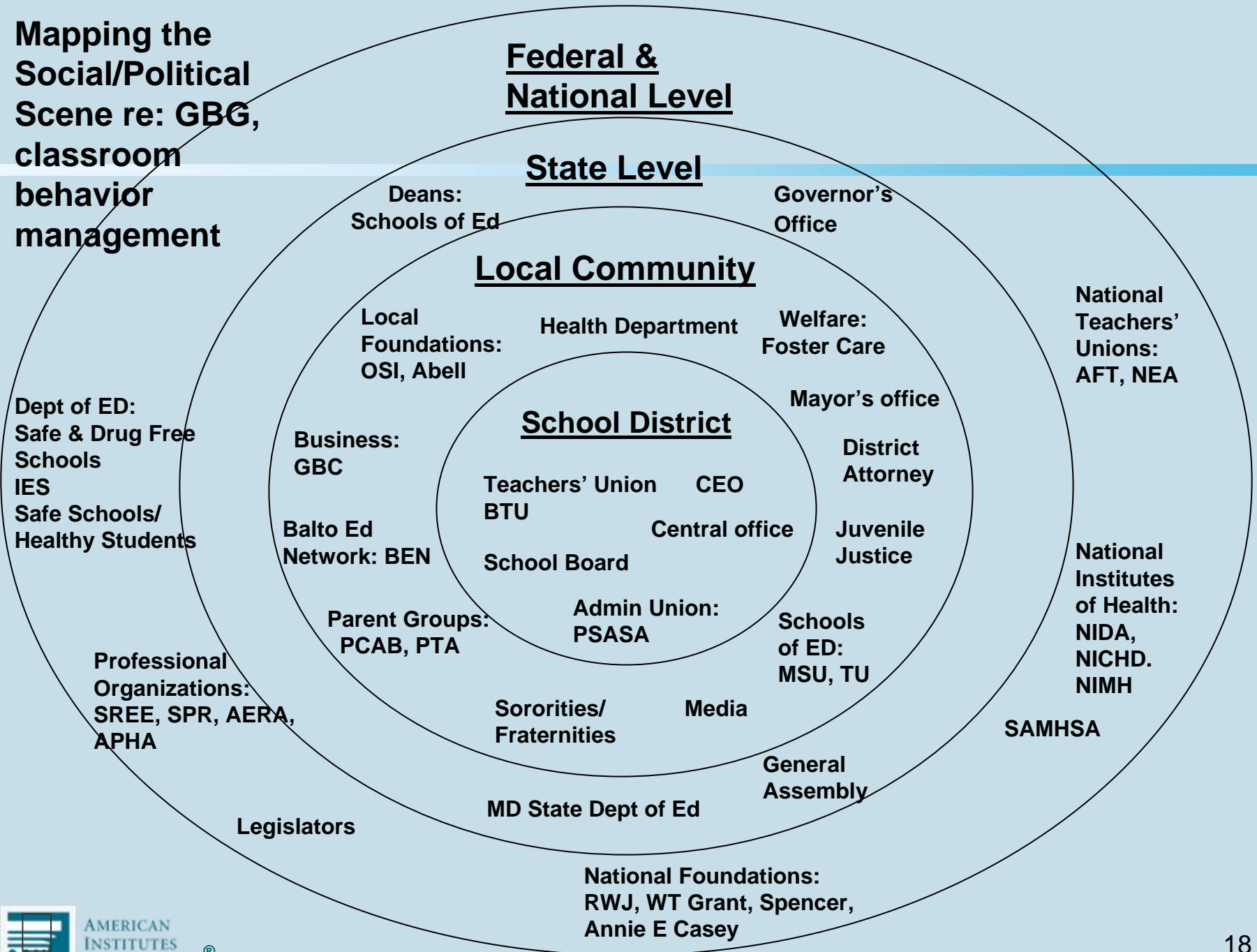
Core Elements in Moving GBG into Practice

- Governance structure to support teachers' practices over time and scaling up practices
- Professional development across multiple levels of the school district
- Monitoring of practices over time
 - Teacher practices
 - Practices of individuals across the multi-level structure

Professional Development

- Stage 1: Pre-implementation (Readiness)
- Stage 2: Implementation
- Stage 3: Sustaining Practices and Going to Scale (Monitoring)

**Mapping the
Social/Political
Scene re: GBG,
classroom
behavior
management**



Good Behavior Game Overview

- A behavior management strategy aimed at socializing children into the role of student and reducing aggressive/disruptive behavior in the classroom
- Teams are rewarded for each child's pro-social behavior, and not rewarded when a child is disruptive. It is "group contingent."

GBG Core Elements

Reflects Essential Ingredients of Effective Classroom Behavior Management:

- Rules for Classroom Behavior
- Student Teams (Small Groups)
- Behavior Monitoring
- Systematic Use of Reinforcement

Preparation – First Six Weeks of School

- Teachers instruct students on four classroom rules: displayed in classroom (poster, desk)
- Teachers observe students and place them in heterogeneous teams, balanced for learning and behavior.
- Teachers select a time to play the GBG (time increases during the year).
- Teachers select daily and weekly rewards.
- Students “practice” the GBG with the teacher.

GBG Implementation

- In Baltimore, GBG consists of dividing the 1st-grade class into three heterogeneous teams.
- Played during times that the students are working independently of the teacher.
- Early in the year, GBG is played systematically for ten minutes, three times a week, and announced to the class by the teacher.
- The ten minutes are extended gradually over the year until the process is integrated into the entire day.
- Rewards are more abstract as the year goes on.

Good Behavior Game Learning Walk

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