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Michael Elium is currently Assistant Dean of External Partnerships and Coordinator of Special Education Programs in the Benerd School of Education at the University of the Pacific. He has been responsible for developing and leading Pacific's master's and doctoral programs in Shanghai, China and an Urban Teacher Residency Program partnership in California. He teaches graduate students in special education, school psychology, and educational leadership.

Immediately prior to coming to Pacific in 2004 he was Director of Psychological Services/Special Education of an ethnically diverse school district in Northern California. In that role he led a successful district wide positive behavior support effort, working closely with advocacy groups to engage the community. He has prior experience as a special education teacher, school psychologist, psychologist implementing systematic behavioral programs for departments of mental health in two states, and administration experience in a 90,000 student district in Florida. He remains heavily involved in K-12 school districts as a researcher/third party evaluator.

He is a staff development specialist for the Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior at the University of Oregon. He has led school wide positive behavior support implementation projects for Juvenile Facilities, Court Schools, Adult Detention Centers, and conducted large-scale staff development and technical assistance to school districts. He presents nationally on this topic and serves as an expert witness for litigation on special education. He holds bachelors and masters degrees in psychology, a doctorate in special education and holds active California education credentials.



## School Wide Interventions: Simplifying the Message

PENT – South Forum

March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Michael Elium, Ed.D.  
University of the Pacific

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## Who Are You (We)?

- Behaviorists
- School Psychologists
- Special Educators
- Long History of Behavioral Training and Implementation with Special Populations

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## What Do We Like to Do?

- Design (Often Complex) interventions
- Use sophisticated terms
- Train & consult with our “Audience”
- Design more sophisticated interventions
- Apply a Special Educator’s logic

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- Most School Wide interventions have their genesis in special education
- So... We should be well-received, right?
- Then where is the disconnect??
- To implement "School Wide" Interventions we depend on what audience?

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### Frequent Messages from the Experts

- "We know more about What to do than about How to get what we know in place"
- "We must use data to make decisions"

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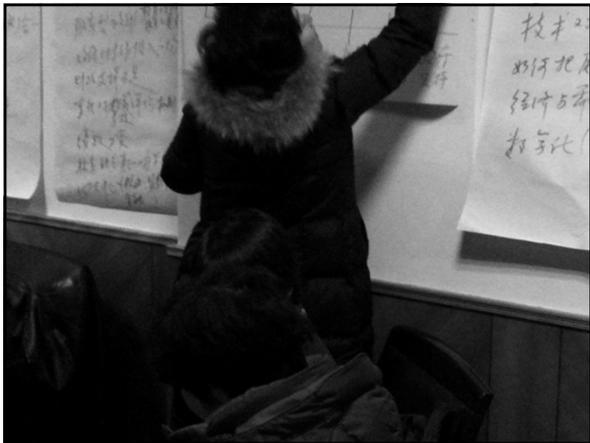
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**IVDB** Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior  
Community-Based Prevention and Intervention

- “Why is the leap from academic research to application and sustainability such a chasm?”
- The Answers???

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**IVDB** Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior  
Community-Based Prevention and Intervention

### Who is Our “Audience” for School Wide Interventions?

- General Ed – Teachers & Administrators
- School wide interventions depend heavily, if not totally on them.

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## What Must Our Audience Do?

- Improve academic performance
- Create success for large groups
- This is their mandate

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- “The Wrong Way to Change Human Behavior is by Creating an illogical Mandate Strictly on the Basis of Coercion” (Anthony Muhammad, in his 2010 book “Transforming School Culture”)

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Be afraid. Be very afraid.

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- What does Our Audience Like to Do?
- See academic success in a high percentage of students
- Work in a safe environment

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### What Is Our Audience Often “Good” At?

- “We had 1200 Suspensions in Our First Year – We Were Really Top Notch at Suspending Kids” Doug McCreath (2012)

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### “When You Devote Time to Things like Character Education, Behavior Intervention, and Social Skills, You Have Lost Your Instructional Focus”

Rob Williams (2012)

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### There Are People in this Equation

- Know Your Audience
- Know the Paradigm From Which They Operate
- The Last Thing They Need is Something New to Learn!

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### Characteristics of This Audience

- Not Receptive
- Skeptical of Academic Research as Truly Applicable to “Their” Setting & Kids
- “My Community is Unique”
- Are they Wrong?

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### Characteristics of Any Audience

- 17 minute attention span
- Need to understand how they as Individuals will be impacted
- i.e., What about me?

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"What the \_\_\_ does this have to do with ME?"



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"Something NEW I have to do"



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### What to do? Messaging

- We must re-language for our audience
- Adjust the terms with which we have become so comfortable
- Describe interventions in ways that make them seem possible to implement and sustain

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“Wow! Teaching Behavior and  
Socials skills is a Completely New  
Concept for Us. You Guys Have  
Really Changed our Way of  
Thinking” Teachers and Principals, 2012

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Terms We Know So Well Are  
a Signal: “Time to Tune-Out” by  
Our Audience

- Reward
- Positive/Negative Reinforcement
- Function Based Support
- Antecedents, Hypothesis etc.

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- Why don't people do what is needed?
- We cannot achieve system change if our audience does not understand us and our language

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**IVDB** Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior  
Community-Based Prevention and Intervention

### Activity, yes, an Activity!

- Take 90 seconds at your table/group
- Brainstorm 5 commonly used behavioral or intervention terms
- “Re-language” each term for a general ed audience
- You will report out – Make them real!

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**IVDB** Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior  
Community-Based Prevention and Intervention

### When Training

- How do you get them to hear you?
- Understand their context
- Create context by helping them understand the whole board, yet sharply hone single accomplishments
- Teachers tend to over personalize

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"...So you are saying I am not doing this right? Me???"



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### Distant Vision & Up Close Focus

Hone Single Accomplishments = National Championships  
for the Crimson Tide



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### When Training...

- Anticipate defensiveness
- Be able to deal with the doubters...
- ... the objections... in a public forum
- People support what they create: Establish Clear Tasks to be completed
- Demystify the Black Box
- Benefit to them (Incident, Action, Benefit)

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Program?? Not Another Program!!



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## Tasks You Will Accomplish

- Complete a Self Assessment & Set Priority Goals
- Identify a Number of Clearly Defined Behavioral Expectations for the Campus
- Develop Lesson Plans for Teaching Those Expectations
- Schedule Times for Teachers to Teach Them

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## Tasks (cont)

- Formulate the Foundation of a School Wide Reward & Acknowledgment System
- Develop an Action Plan for Approaching Discipline & Behavior for the Year
- Agree on a Schedule for Your Team to Meet Regularly
- Develop a Plan for Assessing the Entire Faculty and Getting them On Board
- Rules Posted in all Common Areas

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Your Focus Today

Non Classroom Systems

Not Your Focus Today: Individual Students

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### When Training...

- “People Don’t Resist Change, They Resist Being Changed” – Chalfain, 2010
- The Cycle
  - 10% - innovators
  - 25% - early adopters
  - 50% - late adopters
  - 12-15% - never get on Board

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### When Training

- Use role play in every training
- Establish credibility & believability
- “I Really Don’t Believe all Kids Can Learn.” Some Cut-Up and Should be in Woodshop. My Only Tool is to Send Them Out.” Gen Ed Teacher, 2011

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## When Training...

- Research vs. implementation
- People generating the research live in a different paradigm – Data sets? Urban environments?
- Most general ed teachers do not digest research and do not believe it applies to them. About 5% of journal articles are ever read (Beck, 2005)

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## Now... to Solutions

- The Missing Piece – Skills You must have that mid-level managers may not have - Ability to facilitate meetings
  - Structure, Agenda, Strategy
  - Norms for behavior – we know why!
  - Group memory – Help people own their words
  - Ability to cope with difficult behaviors

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### Solutions (cont.)

- Helping the decision makers: First, help principal select the right leadership team for school wide interventions.
- Develop a strategy for approaching a full faculty meeting
- Diffusing rumors
- Working effectively with unions
- Candor

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### Solutions (cont.)

- Helping the decision maker(s)
- Strategy (no edible reinforcers policy)
- Sequencing
- Pace of implementation
- Using data vs. force of personality or administrative authority

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**CIO INSIGHT**  
**ARE YOU A BULLY BOSS?**



**30%**  
of employees with abusive bosses are likely to slow down, or even make errors on purpose, compared to just 6% of employees without abusive bosses.

Source: "Good Boss, Bad Boss" by Bob Sutton (Business Plus)

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### Solutions (cont.)

- Using Leverage – “Sometimes a loss is a win”
- Infrastructure development
- Get the foundational pieces in place
  - School board
  - Subs to allow training release
  - Collab/meeting time formalized

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### Solutions (cont.)

- Repetition, Repetition, Repetition
- “This Rtl program takes time away from my “Real” teaching. My kids lose.” Respond with a Dr. Phil??
- Boosters, coaching, technical assistance
- Realistic time frames

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### Take Aways

- Understand the paradigm of our audience
- Balance between need for freedom and structure
- Don’t value one at the expense of the other
- Re-language
- Not going to change everyone
- Mid-management is key

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### Take Aways

- Infrastructure is critical
- Practice urgent patience
- Best solutions are often simple
- Defining success – long term mindset, adjust expectations accordingly
- The Process, The Process

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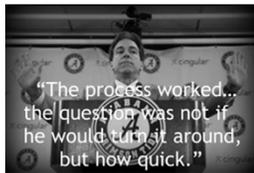
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### Be Systematic



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### Pay Offs

- Pay off for implementation
- Who needs a pay off for work performed?
- “I only want to help kids” Is this sustainable?
- What does pay off look like?

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## Pay Offs

- Create bench marks
- Celebrate successes
- Publicly acknowledge teachers and principals
- Awards, recognition

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After all, if Special Educators don't do the simple things: understand human nature, develop strategy accordingly, acknowledge successes, we are not walking our walk.

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## Thank You!

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