Nowadays it is sometimes forgotten that the pressure on educators is high since they are supposed to be responsible for paying attention to different learning styles, maintaining discipline, avoiding violence, solving the students’ academic or social problems, and creating a positive classroom atmosphere that should motivate the diversity of students for them to achieve success in every single area. It is certainly not an easy job and that is the reason why interventions are becoming more and more popular. School-based interventions: The tools you need to succeed, coauthored by Kathleen L. Lane and Margaret Beebe-Frankenberger, is a book that will give a great deal of insight to principals, teachers, school psychologists, and any other professional educators who are or could be involved to some extent or another in the process of implementing interventions.

The book is divided into an introduction, three major parts, an appendix with reproducibles and an ample index. The chapters are well organized and most of the time follow the same structure rigorously -excluding chapters 1 and 7. Every chapter ends with a useful summary that covers the key points dealt with in the previous pages, as well as a wide reference section for those readers interested in doing some follow-up reading.

Chapter 1, “Designing Effective Interventions: Introduction and Overview,” provides a readable introduction that highlights the complex and diverse expectations on the part of society that students should improve their knowledge, skills, behaviour and sociability as soon as they start going to school. Due to this kind of demand, school-based interventions are gaining popularity in the United States as well as other countries. Educational institutions provide interventions that could be separated into three different groups: primary, secondary and tertiary. Primary intervention’s purpose is to prevent the appearance of problems and they are addressed to the whole student body (80-90% should respond in a positive way); secondary interventions try to reverse harm by making use of selective grouping and are addressed to students who did not respond positively to primary interventions (usually 10-15%); finally tertiary interventions focus on specific students’ problems and are put into practice individually, with people who did not respond to secondary interventions in the desired way (about 3-5 % of students).

Part I, “Reviewing Linking and Monitoring Strategies,” includes Chapters 2-3 and concentrates on two components relevant to the efficient design of interventions: linking interventions to assessment results and monitoring
changes during interventions. In Chapter 2, the authors make clear that prior to, during, and at the end of interventions one should collect and analyze data - this process is usually called ‘assessment’ and has paramount importance to achieve the intended outcomes; linking interventions to assessment results requires four stages: problem identification, problem analysis, plan implementation and plan evaluation. Chapter 3 starts with an explanation of what monitoring changes means. Some authors prefer to call this process ‘formative evaluation;’ it requires comparisons to determine if there has been any improvement, flexibility to make adjustments and continuous feedback to the students, parents and interventionists. The methods to evaluate changes must be as varied as possible and should take into account four aspects: feasibility, objectivity, reliability and sensitivity. Students’ progress is usually monitored by school-related professionals, but cooperation of parents and even self-monitoring are also highly recommended strategies in most cases.

Part II, “Introducing the Core components Model” comprises of Chapters 4-6, which respectively deal with social validity, treatment integrity, as well as generalization and maintenance. In Chapter 4, the authors define the term social validity by mentioning the social significance of intervention goals, the social acceptability of intervention procedures and the social importance of intervention outcomes. To assess social validity it is important to pay attention to all the parties of the intervention -- school professionals, parents and students-- since they will provide different opinions, perspectives and attitudes about a particular treatment. The most common methods of assessing social validity include direct observation, surveys, interviews and inspection of the number of times the interventions are repeated. Chapter 5 clarifies that treatment integrity refers to the degree to which the intervention was carried out in the same way as it was planned in the beginning. In some cases the interventions may not be implemented with integrity due to several factors like unavailable materials, lack of time or motivation, more than one person in charge of implementing the intervention, and so forth. If this occurs, the final result might vary substantially. Chapter 6 highlights the importance of maintaining the new skill after the training period has finished; generalization should be programmed before the intervention is implemented and we should also take into account stimulus and reinforcement, response suppression, conducting interventions in the most appropriate environments, and so forth.

Part III, “A Summative Example,” consists of just Chapter 7, the last one. This chapter is a synthesis of the main contents of the book and provides examples of primary, secondary and tertiary interventions including their results; it is certainly a good close for the book.

The 53-page appendix is intended to offer the reader plenty of useful reproducibles that can be adapted to every single school need – it is worth mentioning that the ‘perfect’ school does not exist, therefore we will always have to cope with some kind of ‘problems’ that need interventions. The book also includes a wide index that helps you find the specific point you are looking for.

A minor drawback is that sometimes the book becomes a little bit monotonous since the authors usually keep the same structure and use the same concepts again and again. This is one of the main characteristics of guides and maybe that is the reason why the authors have made use of it in this book: because they intend it to be a kind of step-by-step guide for both professionals and newcomers.

One of the positive features of School-based interventions: The tools you need to succeed
is that it provides countless forms, tables, figures, boxes and examples. This makes the book an excellent resource for people in professions related to designing, implementing, monitoring and maintaining school-based interventions.

To put it in a nutshell, we can conclude that following the steps mentioned in this book will surely facilitate the laborious task of implementing interventions in the most suitable way as well as obtaining better and lasting outcomes. A must read if you are a school-related professional.

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