

George Masao Sugai by Lori Moses

Born: 1951

Nationality: Third generation Japanese American

Fields: Education, Special Education, Educational Psychology

Institutions: [University of California at Santa Barbara](#), [University of Washington](#), [University of Kentucky](#), [Edith Cowan University](#), [University of Oregon](#), [University of Connecticut at Storrs](#)

Alma mater: University of California (B.A.), University of Washington (M.Ed. & Ph.D.)

Known for: Positive Behavior Support, School-Wide Behavior Support, School Based Behavioral Assessment, Applied Behavior Analysis, Functional Behavior Assessment

Dr. George Sugai is a present day leader in the educational community. The following comes from¹, unless otherwise stated. Currently, Dr. Sugai is a tenured professor position in Special Education at the [University of Connecticut in Storrs](#). He also holds Carol J. Neag Endowed Chair in Behavior Disorders at the University of Connecticut.

Sugai's contributions began in the early 1970s when he began his career as a special education teacher in Aurora, Colorado. He is best known for his work in [school-wide positive behavior support](#) (SWPBS), functional behavioral assessment (FBA), teacher training, social skills instruction, classroom and behavior management, systems change, and educating students with behavioral disorders. Sugai initiated his higher education work at the [University of Kentucky](#) (1979-1983), until moving to the [University of Oregon](#) (1984-2005) in Eugene where he held such positions as Assistant Professor, Special Education, Associate Professor, Special Education (tenure) and Professor, Special Education (tenure).

¹ Anonymous author. (2009). University of Connecticut, Neag School of Education. Retrieved September 21, 2009. <http://www.education.uconn.edu/directory/details.cfm?id=249>

Since 1981, Sugai's has published more than 100 refereed papers in a variety of professional journals, most notably *Exceptional Children*, *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, *Behavior Disorders*, and *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders* (Sugai, 2009). Sugai also has written a number of monographs, chapters, and college textbooks which emphasize the application of applied behavior analysis principals to schools and classrooms. The SWPBS and FBA work of Sugai and his colleagues has influenced many aspects of education for students with disabilities (Sugai et al., 2000). Sugai has also presented at numerous state, national and international conferences.

Professional Affiliations and Grant Activities

George Sugai professional affiliations include [Council for Exceptional Children](#), [Association for Direct Instruction](#), [Association for Positive Behavioral Supports](#), [Council for Children with Behavior Disorders](#), and [Association for Behavior Analysis](#) (Sugai, 2009). He has directed or c-directed numerous grant funded projects, totaling more than \$25 million dollars since 1984². He is currently co-director (with Rob Horner) of the [Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports](#) at the [University of Connecticut](#) and the [University of Oregon](#), and director of the [Center for Behavioral Education and Research in the Neag School of Education](#) (Sugai, 2009). Sugai's work has influenced the implementation of SWPBS internationally (e.g., Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Mexico, Norway, Greece, Korea)³.

² Anonymous author. (2009). University of Connecticut, Neag School of Education. Retrieved September 21, 2009. <http://www.education.uconn.edu/directory/details.cfm?id=249>

³ Anonymous author. (2009). Ministry of Education, Keynote Speakers. Retrieved October 2, 2009.

Background Information

The following comes from G. M. Sugai (personal communication, October 20, 2009). George Masao Sugai was born in Santa Cruz, California in 1951. Sugai completed his Bachelors Degree in Botany at the [University of California at Santa Barbara](#). A summer job as a nature director at [Camp Harmon](#), an Easter Seal Camp for individuals with disabilities, led Sugai to pursue a career in special education. After completing his Masters degree in Special Education at the [University of Washington](#) in 1974, he taught in Colorado for three years, and then returned to the University of Washington to complete his Ph.D. in 1980.

During his doctoral program, Sugai worked closely with Rick Neel, Owen White, Norris Haring, Gene Edgar, Ellis Evans and Steve Schinke. Professionally, Sugai's close colleagues and collaborators include Geoff Colvin, Don Bailey, John Emerson, Rob Horner, Ed Kame'enui, Tim Lewis, Mike Nelson, Jerry Tindal, and Mark Wolery. Much of Sugai's work has been influenced by a number of important behavioral psychologists and special educators, for example, [Donald Baer](#), [Sidney Bijou](#), Ed Blackhurst, Doug Carnine, Ted Carr, Glen Dunlap, Zig Engelmann, David Gast, Frank Gresham, Norris Haring, Jim Kauffman, Alan Kazdin, Ogden Lindsley, Todd Risley, [B.F. Skinner](#), [Julie Vargas](#), [Hill Walker](#), Ruth Waugh, among many others.

Early Work

Much of Sugai's early research "emphasized improving individual student behavior"⁴In 1980 at the University of Washington, Sugai completed his Ph.D. dissertation, by examining the effects of student self-monitoring on the improvement of

⁴ Anonymous author. (2009). Neag School of Education, Endowed Faculty. Retrieved September 21, 2009. http://www.education.uconn.edu/about/endowment_sugai.cfm

problem classroom behavior (Sugai, 1980, Abstract). From this research, Dr. Sugai and his colleagues used positive and preventive behavioral technologies and principles to solve and study a number of applied academic and behavioral issues and problems.

While at the University of Oregon, Sugai and Geoff Colvin showed “how instructional principles can be employed to remediate chronic social behavior problems among students” (Colvin & Sugai, 1988). It was concluded that “a proactive approach could reduce the degree to which students are excluded from schools and increase their opportunities for academic and social success” (Colvin & Sugai, 1988; Colvin, Kame’enui, & Sugai, 1993). Much, if not all of Sugai’s early work focused on proactive strategies designed to prevent the development and occurrences of problem behaviors. These studies took place during “a period of significant advancement in conceptualizing how services should be organized and provided to persons with disabilities” (Bradley, 2009, Foreward). As a result, the education of all students, but especially, students with behavior problems would benefit.

In 1993, a team of researchers, including Drs. Sugai and Rob Horner, addressed the need for an efficient, effective, and relevant means of using office discipline information to make decisions. The result was the development of the [School-Wide Information System](#) a web-based information system used in schools.⁵

Further Work

“On June 4, 1997, amendments to the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#) became law (P.L. 105-17). These amendments introduced several new concepts, two of which are particularly important to the education of children whose behaviors violate school codes of conduct or are outside norms of acceptable social behavior: (a)

⁵ Anonymous author. (2009). School Wide Information System. Retrieved October 6, 2009.

<http://www.swis.org/index.php?page=whoAreWe>

positive behavioral interventions and support (PBIS) and (b) functional behavioral assessment (FBA)” (Sugai et al., 2000). Accordingly, in 1998 the U.S. Department of Education awarded a Cooperative agreement to the University of Oregon. This was co-directed by Drs. Horner and Sugai with collaborators from University of South Florida, University of Missouri, University of Kansas, University of Kentucky, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, University of Arizona, and University of Florida, and from Sheppard Pratt Health Systems in Maryland, May Institute in Massachusetts, and Illinois State PBIS Network. The aim of this award was to establish a national Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS)⁶ by developing and disseminating an evidence-based, positive and preventive school-wide approach for supporting the academic achievement and social behavior development of all students.

The induction of the amendments to IDEA and the funding awarded to the University of Oregon by the U.S. Department of Education began a long and successful dissemination and implementation of SWPBS. Sugai emphasizes that “PBS is not a new intervention package or a new theory of behavior, but an application of a behaviorally based systems approach to enhance the capacity of schools, families, and communities to design effective environments that improve the fit or link between research-validated practices and the environments in which teaching and learning occur” (Sugai et al., 2000).

The University of Connecticut hired Sugai in 2005 where he established the [Center for Behavioral Education and Research](http://www.cber.org/about/) (CBER), dedicated to continuing “rigorous research that improves educational and social outcomes for all children and

⁶ Anonymous author. University of Connecticut. Neag School of Education. Retrieved October 3, 2009.
<http://www.cber.org/about/>

youth in schools.”⁷ According to G.M. Sugai (personal communication, October 20, 2009), one of the most interesting and encouraging accomplishments in his field of work is moving behavior analytic technology into mainstream education by using positive behavior support systems.

Editorships

Sugai’s has made significant contributions to the field of special education and SWPBS through a number of other dissemination activities. Numerous books recognized as essential resources for anyone in the field of education. Such books include: *The Handbook of Positive Behavior Support* (2009); *Functional Behavioral Assessment: A Special Issue of Exceptionality* (2009); *School Based Behavioral Assessment: Informing Intervention and Instruction* (2007); and *Developing Positive Behavioral Support for Students with Challenging Behaviors* (1999). *The Handbook of Positive Behavior Support* (2009) is an exceptional guide for individuals working with a variety of children. The material covers documented and proven research on Positive Behavior Support since its inception in the 1980’s, a period when new approaches were being developed and implemented for working with children with disabilities (Bradley, 2009).

One of Sugai’s favorite publications is *Effective Teaching: Applied Behavior Analysis with Exceptional Children* (Wolery, Bailey, & Sugai, 1988), in which the principles and practices of behavior analysis, precision teaching, and effective teaching are used to demonstrate how outcomes for individuals with disabilities could be achieved.

⁷ Anonymous author. University of Connecticut. Neag School of Education. Retrieved October 3, 2009. <http://www.cber.org/about/>

References

- Anonymous author. (2009). Ministry of Education, Keynote Speakers. Retrieved October 2, 2009.
<http://www.minedu.govt.nz/theMinistry/EducationInitiatives/TaumataWhanonga/KeynoteSpeaker.aspx>
- Anonymous author. (2009). Neag School of Education, Endowed Faculty. Retrieved September 21, 2009.
http://www.education.uconn.edu/about/endowment_sugai.cfm
- Anonymous author. (2009). School Wide Information System. Retrieved October 6, 2009. <http://www.swis.org/index.php?page=whoAreWe>
- Anonymous author. (2009). University of Connecticut, Neag School of Education. Retrieved September 21, 2009.
<http://www.education.uconn.edu/directory/details.cfm?id=249>
- Anonymous author. University of Connecticut. Neag School of Education. Retrieved October 3, 2009. <http://www.cber.org/about/>
- Bradley, R. (2009). Foreward. In Sailor, W.; Dunlap, G.; Sugai, G.; Horner, R. (Eds.), *Handbook of Positive Behavior Support*. United States: Springer.
- Colvin, G., & Sugai, G. (1988). Proactive strategies for managing social behavior problems: An instructional approach. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 11, 341-348. Retrieved from PsychInfo database. (Accession No. 1991-08409-001).

- Sugai, George M. (1980). *Self Monitoring: Effectiveness as a Behavior Management Procedure with Delinquent Adolescents*. [Abstract] (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from Dissertations & Theses: Full Text. (Publication No. AAT 8026317).
- Sugai, G., & Rowe, P. (1984). The effect of self-recording on out-of-seat behavior of an EMR student. *Education & Training of the Mentally Retarded*, 19, 23-28. [Abstract]. Retrieved from PsychInfo database. (Accession No. 1984-24564-001).
- Sugai, G., Horner, Robert H., Dunlap, G., Hieneman, M., Lewis, Timothy J., Nelson, M., Scott, T.,...& Ruef, M. (2000). Applying positive behavior support and functional assessment in schools. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2(3), 131-142. doi:10.1177/109830070000200302.
- Sugai, George M. (July 4, 2009). Abbreviated VITA, George M. Sugai. Retrieved September 21, 2009. <http://www.education.uconn.edu/directory/cvs/shortvita.pdf>