

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports: A Multi-tiered Framework that Works for Every Student

The most effective tool teachers have to handle problem behavior is to prevent it from occurring in the first place. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) programs help teachers recognize the significance of classroom management and preventive school discipline to maximize student success. PBIS strategies are critical to providing all young people with the best learning environment.

— NEA President Lily Eskelsen García

PBIS is a prevention framework that works for all students

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a general term that refers to positive behavioral interventions and systems used to achieve important behavior changes. PBIS was developed as an alternative to aversive interventions used with students with significant disabilities who engaged in extreme forms of self injury and aggression.¹ PBIS is not a new theory of behavior, but a behaviorally based systems approach to enhancing the schools' ability to design effective environments that are conducive to quality teaching and learning.

The National Education Association (NEA) views PBIS as a general education initiative, though its impetus is derived from the special education law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). PBIS improves the social culture and the behavioral climate of classrooms and schools which ultimately lead to enhanced academic performance. "Viewed as outcomes, achievement and behavior are related; viewed as causes of each other, achievement and behavior are unrelated. In

this context, teaching behavior as relentlessly as we teach reading or other academic content is the ultimate act of prevention, promise, and power underlying [Positive Behavioral Supports] PBS and other preventive interventions in America's schools."²

Legislation calls for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

Positive Behavioral Supports has held a unique place in special education law since Congress amended the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997. Referred to as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports in IDEA, PBIS is the only approach to addressing behavior that is specifically mentioned in the law. This emphasis on using functional assessment and positive approaches to encourage good behavior remains in the current version of the law as amended in 2004.

PBIS implementation

Successful PBIS programs are dependent upon the entire school community. The principles and tenets of PBIS are the same as those represented in Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Response to Intervention (RTI) as they include universal screening, continuous progress monitoring, data-based decision making, implementation fidelity, and evidence-based interventions. PBIS is not a manualized, scripted strategy or curriculum. It requires adopting and organizing evidence-based behavioral interventions into an integrated continuum that enhances academic and social behavior outcomes for all students.

Every school has a unique climate, so a one size fits all approach is not as effective as interventions based on the needs of the learning community. School-wide PBIS includes proactive strategies for designing, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviors. A continuum of PBIS for all students within a school is implemented in all areas of the environment (classrooms, hallways, restrooms, and busses).

In 1972, the court in *Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia* (348 F.Supp. 866 (D.D.C. 1972)) found that students with disabilities were being excluded from educational opportunities for issues related to behavior. Congress intended to address this exclusion in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, as the Supreme Court in *Honig v. Doe* (484 U.S. 305 (1988)) clarified, saying:

Congress very much meant to strip schools of the *unilateral* authority they had traditionally employed to exclude disabled students, particularly emotionally disturbed students, from school (p. 323).

PBIS is a multi-tiered system designed to be inclusive of all environments and link research-validated practices. Attention is focused on creating and sustaining primary (school wide), secondary (classroom), and tertiary (individual) systems of support that improve results for desired behaviors. The primary prevention is school-wide for all students, staff, and settings. The secondary prevention is for a specialized group of students who exhibit at-risk behaviors and the tertiary prevention would be for those students who need specialized, individualized supports for at-risk behaviors.

Implementing evidence-based intervention practices are the key to a successful PBIS program. Components include but are not limited to:

School-Wide

- Leadership team
- Behavior purpose statement
- Set of positive expectations and behaviors
- Procedures for teaching school and classroom expected behaviors
- Continuum of procedures for encouraging/discouraging desired behavior

Individual Student

- Behavioral competence at school and district levels
- Function-based behavior support planning
- Team- and data-based decision making
- Targeted social skills and self management
- Individualized instructional and curricular accommodations

Classroom

- School-wide
- Maximum structure and predictability in routines

- Positively stated expectations taught, posted, reviewed, and supervised
- Maximum engagement through high rates of opportunities to respond
- Continuum of strategies to acknowledge appropriate behaviors and responding to inappropriate behavior

Congress recognized the need for schools to use evidence-based approaches to proactively address the behavioral needs of students with disabilities. Thus, in amending the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act both in 1997 and in 2004, Congress explicitly recognized the potential of PBIS to prevent exclusion and improve educational results in 20 U.S.C. § 1401(c)(5)(F):

(5) Almost 30 years of research and experience has demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by—

(F) providing incentives for whole-school approaches, scientifically based early reading programs, *positive behavioral interventions and supports*, and early intervening services to reduce the need to label children as disabled in order to address the learning and behavioral needs of children.

Nonclassroom

- Active supervision by all staff
- Positive expectations and routines taught and encouraged
- Precorrections and reminders
- Positive reinforcement

IDEA's Requirements to Use Functional Behavioral Assessments and Consider PBIS

IDEA requires:

- The IEP team to consider the use of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports for any student whose behavior impedes his or her learning or the learning of others (20 U.S.C. §1414(d)(3)(B)(i)).
- A functional behavioral assessment when a child who does not have a behavior intervention plan is removed from his or her current placement for more than 10 school days (e.g. suspension) for behavior that turns out to be a manifestation of the child's disability (20 U.S.C. §1415(k)(1)(F)(i)).
- A functional behavioral assessment, when appropriate, to address any behavior that results in a long-term removal (20 U.S.C. §1415(k)(1)(D)).

PBIS works for all of us

NEA recognizes that professional development is critical to proper implementation of PBIS and the improved behavioral outcomes that PBIS can foster. For an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team to “consider” the use of PBIS, IDEA requires the team to have knowledge of PBIS, discussion of its use, and the capacity to implement PBIS to improve outcomes and address behavior. If the program is to be successfully implemented school wide, PBIS needs the attention of time, training, and buy-in from the entire school community.

NEA views PBIS as a multi-tiered system of support that works for all students and believes adding language in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to “consider” the use of PBIS would be beneficial. Employing PBIS ensures a consistent and proactive approach for

all students. Results from the past few years indicate that this type of multi-tiered intervention (can reduce problematic student behavior, reduce referral rates to special education, and enhance students' social behavior.³ PBIS supports the success of all students and establishes an environment in which appropriate behavior is the norm.

School-wide Positive Behavioral Supports: frameworks versus models

Positive Behavioral Supports (PBS) or School-wide Positive Behavioral Supports (SWPBS) are the generic terms for a set of planned, integrated, school-wide approaches that help schools to address (a) positive school climate and safety, (b) classroom discipline and behavior management, and (c) student self-management and a continuum of interventions for students exhibiting social, emotional, and/or behavioral challenges. A recent meta-analysis of over 200 studies of school-based programs (Durlak, et al., 2011) revealed that classroom time spent on social, emotional, and behavioral learning and self-management helped to significantly increase students' academic performance, interpersonal success, emotional self-control and well-being, and behavioral skills and development.

There are a number of national frameworks or models to guide the implementation of SWPBS. For example, some schools use approaches reflecting the PBIS framework from the National PBIS Technical Assistance Center located jointly at the Universities of Oregon and Connecticut and funded by the U.S. Department of Education since 1996 (www.pbis.org).

Project ACHIEVE is a comprehensive school improvement model and program consisting of seven interdependent components, one of which is its Positive Behavioral Support System (PBSS) component (Knoff, 2012; www.projectachieve.info). Partially supported by Department of Education grants since 1990 and implemented in over 1,500 schools or districts nationwide, Project ACHIEVE was recognized in 2000 by the U.S.

Department of Health & Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) as an evidence-based model prevention program. Project ACHIEVE's whole-school model has integrated PBSS into a multi-tiered continuum of academic and behavioral instruction and intervention approaches, and Response-to-Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) since its early beginnings.

While there are other SWPBS models available, it is important to distinguish between a "framework," which provides an outline of principles, procedures, and practices, and a "model," which provides an explicit implementation sequence and specific procedures and practices focused on clearly-identified outcomes.

The goals of a School-wide Positive Behavioral Support System

The ultimate goal of a SWPBS is to maximize students' social, emotional, and behavioral self-management skills as demonstrated by high and consistent levels of effective:

- Interpersonal, social problem solving, conflict prevention and resolution, and emotional coping skills that occur...
- in the classroom and common areas of the school that result in...
- academic engagement and achievement, and that...
- prevent or discourage specific acts of teasing, taunting, bullying, harassment, hazing, and verbal/physical aggression.

To accomplish these goals, students need to learn, master, and apply—at appropriate developmental levels—the following competencies:

- Social Competencies
 - Listening, engagement, and response skills
 - Communication and collaboration skills

- Social problem-solving and group process skills
- Conflict prevention and resolution skills
- Emotional Competencies
 - Emotional self-awareness, control, and coping skills
 - Awareness and understanding of others' emotions and emotional behavior
 - Positive self-concept, self-esteem, and self-statement skills
- Cognitive-Behavioral Competencies
 - Self-Scripting, self-monitoring, self-evaluation, self-correction, and self-reinforcement skills
 - Social, interactional, and interpersonal skills
 - Classroom and building routine skills
 - Instructional and academic supporting skills

Instructional Staff need to demonstrate:

- Effective, differentiated instruction and sound classroom management approaches
- Knowledge and skill relative to determining why students are academically and/or behaviorally underachieving, unresponsive, or unsuccessful in the classroom
- Collaborative interactions with related services personnel (e.g., school counselors or psychologists) or other assessment/intervention consultants
- Commitment to implementing, with support, more strategic or intensive academic, behavioral instruction, or intervention to address specific student needs

Schools need to:

- Develop and implement a preschool through high school "Health, Mental Health, and Wellness"

program guided by a scaffolded scope and sequence of courses, curricula, modules, or experiences

- Systematically teach students social, emotional, and behavioral skills consistent with their developmental levels
- Identify classroom and common school area behavioral expectations and standards for all students, and develop and implement a school-wide behavioral accountability system involving incentives and differentiated responses to progressive levels of inappropriate student behavior
- Have related service and other staff available to provide consultation to classroom teachers, to complete functional assessments of behaviorally challenging students, and to help implement strategic or intensive instructional and intervention services, supports, strategies, and programs to underachieving, unresponsive, or unsuccessful students
- Reach out to parents and engage community resources in areas and activities that support students' academic and social, emotional, and behavioral learning, mastery, and proficiency
- Evaluate the outcomes of SWPBS activities, especially in the following areas: positive school and classroom climate; high levels of student engagement and achievement; high levels of prosocial student interactions; low levels of school and classroom discipline problems requiring office discipline referrals or school suspensions or expulsions; low levels of student drop-out rates (at the secondary level) or placements in alternative schools or settings; high rates of student high school graduations and post-secondary school successes

The National Education Association believes that effective disciplinary procedures enhance high expectations for quality instruction and learning. A safe and nurturing

environment in which students are treated with dignity is the right of every student.

The Association promotes study, development, and funding for a variety of effective discipline procedures. The Association also believes that governing boards, in conjunction with local affiliates, parents/guardians,

students, education employees, community members, and other stakeholders, should develop proactive policies, procedures, standards, and professional development opportunities that provide the necessary administrative support to education employees for the maintenance of a positive, safe school environment.⁴

REFERENCES

¹Durrand & Carr, 1985

²Algozzine, Wang, & Violette (2011) George Sugai, OSEP Center on PBIS Center for Behavioral Education & Research, University of Connecticut, November 8, 2011

³www.pbis.org

⁴NEA Handbook

RESOURCES

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NEA IDEA Special Education Resource Cadre
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www.nea.org

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Special Education Programs
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/index.html>