

School Climate: #ConnectTheDots Brief

The Role of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

Positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) help create a positive school climate that promotes student achievement and well-being. PBIS supports positive behavioral change through a three-tiered, systems level framework that focuses on teaching and reinforcing desired behaviors rather than simply punishing negative behaviors. Successful implementation results in significant reductions in office discipline referrals and suspensions as well as other problem behaviors, such as emotional dysregulation, concentration problems, bullying, and peer rejection. PBIS can also foster improvements in students' prosocial behaviors and academic achievement, in teacher self-efficacy, and in students' perception of a positive school climate. Despite this success, some educators commonly use more reactive and punitive approaches, including suspension and expulsion. These practices contribute to a more negative school climate, which is associated with increased bullying, student behavior problems, dropping out of school, and low rates of student and teacher engagement and satisfaction. Instead, PBIS creates positive personal development and a positive and effective learning environment wherein students thrive (Bradshaw, 2013; Sawka-Miller & Miller, 2007).

A Few Brief Facts

- PBIS is effective for reducing antisocial behavior along with improving perceptions of school safety (Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010; Sawka-Miller & Miller, 2007).
- Successful implementation of PBIS is associated with decreases in administrator and teacher time spent on student discipline, and large increases in time spent on instruction (Reinke, Herman, & Tucker, 2006).
- Implementation of Tier 1 universal interventions is promisingly associated with increased academic outcomes (Horner et al., 2010).
- At-risk and high-risk youth benefit the most from exposure to PBIS (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, & Leaf, 2015).
- Universal PBIS led to decreases in office discipline referrals and positive school climate (Horner et al., 2009).

Ensuring Successful PBIS Implementation

- Provide a continuum of behavioral supports and interventions across a multitiered system of supports, that is, universally for all students (Tier 1), selectively for at-risk populations (Tier 2), and individually for students exhibiting more significant behavioral problems (Tier 3).
- Universally implement clearly articulated behavioral expectations that are explicitly taught.
- Ensure high rates of behavior-specific praise school-wide, keeping the ratio of positive praise to negative interactions at 5:1. Consider using a minimum number of tangible tickets to accompany verbal praise daily.
- Create a leadership team for organization, frequent training, and ongoing data analysis.
- Commonly utilized effective interventions at the Tier 2 level include: Check & Connect, Check-in/Check-out, First Steps to Success, and Think Time.
- At the Tier 3 level, effective strategies use individualized supports based on the function of the behavior.

The Role of the School Psychologist

School psychologists are integral members of the school team, applying expertise in mental health, learning, and behavior to help students succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally. Given school psychologists' specialized training, they provide a wealth of information to ensure successful implementation and monitoring of PBIS. For example, they may assume active roles on a PBIS leadership team by collecting and analyzing school data, implementing targeted interventions, conducting a functional behavioral assessment, developing an individualized behavior plan for a student, and providing consultative services to teachers at the universal level. Research has consistently demonstrated the benefits of implementing PBIS, including an improved school climate and decreases in problem behaviors. PBIS connects the dots among many key stakeholders within a school setting, encouraging a positive school climate and thriving students.

Related Resources

[Positive Behavior Supports: Information for Educators](#) – NASP Fact Sheet

[Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports](#) – Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Technical Assistance Center

[Positive Behavioral Supports: Tips for Parents and Educators](#) – *Communiqué*

[A Promising Approach for Expanding and Sustaining School-Wide Positive Behavior Support](#) – *School Psychology Review*

References

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