



Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

Program Description

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) uses a systems approach to establish the social environment and behavioral supports needed for a school to be an effective learning setting for all students. PBIS is not a prepackaged curriculum. Rather, the concept is to assess and design unique support systems that meet the cultural and programmatic needs of each school. The approach is grounded in recent advances in applied behavior analysis, instructional design, mental health, and education reform. PBIS, also called School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SW-PBS), employs three tiers of support:

1. **Primary Prevention Practices:** Provides proactive support for students in all locations at all times.
2. **Secondary Prevention Practices:** Targets students at risk for behavioral problems and educational failure.
3. **Tertiary Prevention Practices:** Provides intensive support for students with chronic patterns of problem behavior.

Target Audience

PBIS is a school-wide system (rather than a curriculum or program) that can be utilized at the elementary, middle, and/or high school level. It has traditionally been most successful in elementary and middle schools; however, a forum that took place in Naperville, Illinois, in 2004 focused on implementation challenges specific to high school settings. A monograph on this topic can be found at www.pbis.org/files/PBSMonographComplete.pdf.

Special Populations/Available Adaptations

PBIS has roots in the inclusion movement and person-centered philosophy. With its focus on systems change and its emphasis on matching the intensity of the intervention to the intensity of the problem behavior, PBIS is applicable to students of all abilities and needs.

Program Components

PBIS is a school-wide or district-wide system of positive behavioral support, which includes the following components (www.pbis.org/schoolwide.htm#Components):

- (a) An agreed-upon and common approach to discipline
- (b) A positive statement of purpose
- (c) A small number of positively stated expectations for all students and staff
- (d) Procedures for teaching these expectations to students
- (e) A continuum of procedures for encouraging displays and maintenance of these expectations
- (f) A continuum of procedures for discouraging displays of rule-violating behavior
- (g) Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the discipline system on a regular and frequent basis

Evaluation tools are available to monitor the extent to which schools are implementing the three tiers of PBIS, as well as the extent to which implementation is associated with improved school safety and improved student outcomes. An overview of these evaluation instruments is available at www.pbssurveys.org and www.swis.org. (See below for details on evaluation tools.)

Training and Technical Assistance

Training is available for school teams and coaches, and there is also a training manual for individuals who have been trained and have participated in implementation (see pbismanual.uecs.org/). School teams include teachers, administrators, and other personnel with direct student contact, and training typically involves 24–30 hours of training during each of two to three years. The training emphasizes prevention of problem behavior, active instruction on positive behaviors, predictable and consistent consequences for problem behavior, functional behavioral assessment procedures, applied behavior analysis interventions, and ongoing use of data for active decision making. Training and technical assistance are available through the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Technical Assistance Center on PBIS (See www.pbis.org).

Program & Training Costs

The OSEP Technical Assistance Center works with each state to build a leadership team and model for training. The costs vary depending on the support each state defines as needed locally. The goal of the TA Center is to help each state build local capacity to provide training for school teams. Since district-based coaches become PBIS trainers, the cost of conducting a training must take into account the coaches' time as a percentage of their regular salary.

Evaluation Results

Evaluation results indicate that PBIS (a) can be adopted with fidelity by schools, (b) is associated with decreases in office discipline referrals, and (c) is associated with increases in academic gains (if effective instructional practices are also in place). Evaluation procedures and results are available at www.pbis.org and www.pbssurveys.org and are reported in Horner, Sugai, Lewis-Palmer, and Todd (2005). Additional evaluation outcomes are reported in state evaluation documents (e.g., Illinois evaluation reports, Eber, 2005).

Evaluation Components

Tools for Self-Assessment and Fidelity Assessment are available through www.pbis.org and www.pbssurveys.org. Specific instruments for measuring school use of SW-PBS practices include (a) Team Implementation Checklist; (b) School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET); (c) EBS Self-Assessment Survey; and (d) Individual Student System Evaluation Tool (I-SSET).

Instruments for assessing the effect of implementation are defined in the SW-PBS Evaluation Template, and these include student office discipline referrals (www.swis.org), student academic achievement, and perceptions of student “risk and protective factors” (Student Safety Survey).

Agency/Institution Recognition

PBIS is described in the publication *Safeguarding Our Children: An Action Guide*, produced by the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Justice, and the American Institutes for Research (www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/actguide/action_guide.pdf, p.19). Please note: Although this publication does not assign ratings of effectiveness like other registries of evidence-based interventions, evidence of effectiveness was necessary for it to be included.

Contact Information

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