

From Your School Psychologist

Helping Your Child Succeed Through Positive Behavioral Supports (PBS)

Positive Behavioral Supports (PBS) help parents and school staff create and maintain a safe, supportive learning environment, promote positive life skills, and reduce negative behaviors so that all children can succeed in school. PBS addresses both individual behavior and environmental factors and focuses on skills building rather than punishment. PBS programs can address issues such as bullying prevention, social skills development, resilience building, and discipline.

What does PBS do?

- Applies behaviorally based approaches to create effective environments in which teaching and learning occur.
- Focuses on creating and sustaining school-wide, classroom, and individual supports that make problem behavior less rewarding and exhibiting desired behavior more functionally effective.
- Establishes a leadership team that guides the implementation of PBS strategies.
- Develops a set of core behavioral expectations for all students in the school.
- Engages all school staff, parents, and students in maintaining expectations and employing PBS strategies.
- Teaches those expectations across all areas of the school.
- Provides positive reinforcement for meeting expectations.
- Establishes a hierarchy of consequences as corrective procedures.
- Collects data on the use of established procedures and the impact of those procedures on behavior.
- Builds a set of procedures for maintaining PBS strategies school-wide.

What are the levels of PBS?

School-wide (Primary) Intervention

Intervention at this level is designed to prevent problem behaviors from occurring in the first place. These proactive approaches typically involve the creation of a school climate and culture that supports and promotes positive student behavior. Behavior is addressed through a school-wide approach, meaning that all components of a school system, including physical locations (e.g., classroom, cafeteria, gym, playground) and personnel (e.g., teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, support staff) are involved in the prevention efforts.

Classroom (Secondary) Intervention

Recognizing that not all students will respond to school-wide intervention efforts, targeted group interventions must be put into place for the small number of students who need more support. These students may be called “at risk” because they have a higher incidence of problem behaviors than expected. These students may need small group reteaching of the expectations in various school settings, or they may need small group instruction in social skills or social problem solving.

Individual (Tertiary) Intervention

There is always a very small group of students in schools whose behavior is so severe or disruptive that they require intensive, individualized interventions. These students may have individualized education programs (IEPs) and/or individualized behavior support plans that are developed based on a functional behavioral assessment. Because these interventions are student-specific, there is not a specific intervention strategy for tertiary prevention efforts.

A Role for Parents

Parent involvement in all aspects of their child's education is often the key to the child's success. This is particularly true when there are behavioral concerns. Parent communication with the school and participation in school activities can provide academic and behavioral support as well as help develop a healthy school climate.

How can parents help?

- Work to develop a positive school climate.
- Participate on the leadership team.
- Teach your children the importance of school-wide expectations at home, at school, and in the community.
- Volunteer in school activities.
- Support with teaching and reinforcement of expectations in home and community settings.
- Help with school efforts to advertise the program to the community.
- Work to gather community resources (earn funds, canvas local merchants for participation) for creating and maintaining the program.
- Take part in the instruction and reinforcement systems if your child is part of a classroom or individual intervention program.
- Celebrate your child's successes.

Adapted from: "Positive Behavior Supports: Tips for Parents," by Candace Cartwright Dee, PhD, and John Boyle, EdS, NCSP, www.nasponline.org, 2007. The full handout is available online at www.nasponline.org/families.