

An explanation of PBS

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What is PBS?

PBS stands for "Positive Behavior Supports," a systems approach to school behavior that emphasizes (a) prevention of problem behaviors through proactive instruction of desired behavior, regular reinforcement of appropriate behavior, and monitoring and correction of problem behavior; (b) on-going collection and use of data for decision-making; and (c) application of more intensive and individualized behavior support for students who do not respond to prevention efforts (Lewis & Sugai, 1999).

How does it work?

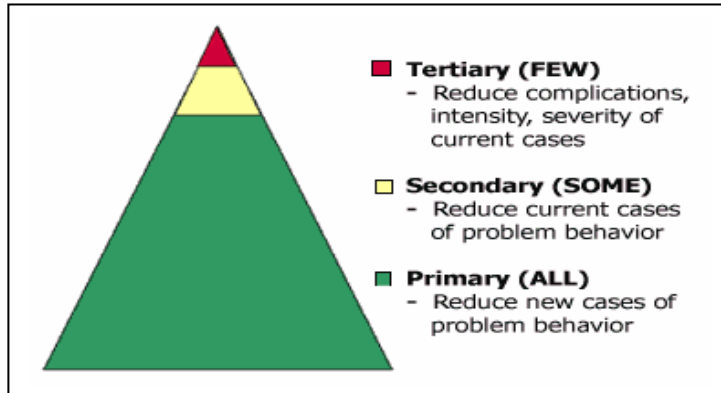
"Positive Behavior Supports" (PBS) focuses school staff efforts on addressing four systems in schools that are critical to promoting learning through developing students' skills in assuming responsibility for their behavioral choices. These systems include:

- School Wide Systems (what is done for all students)
- Specific Setting Systems (managing recess, hallways, lunch areas, etc.)
- Classroom Systems (keeping classroom and building systems consistent)
- Individual Systems (supporting high risk students with individual plans)

PBS schools focus on site-specific critical outcomes to measure success. This is a custom designed process and is not a canned prescriptive program with one size fitting all schools. The school staff decides on the current status of their management process and selects the areas of focus for their school. PBS schools use school-wide and classroom positive reinforcement to promote expected student behavior, teach behavioral expectations like academic skills, and use data-based information to guide intervention and management. The research indicates that schools using this approach have dramatically reduced discipline problems and increased staff satisfaction.

Why is it so important to focus on teaching positive social behaviors?

In the past, school-wide discipline has focused mainly on reacting to specific student misbehavior by implementing punishment-based strategies including reprimands, loss of privileges, office referrals, suspensions, and expulsions. Research has shown that the implementation of punishment, especially when it is used inconsistently and in the absence of other positive strategies, is ineffective. Introducing, modeling, and reinforcing positive social behavior is an important part of a student's educational experience. Teaching behavioral expectations and rewarding students for following them is a much more positive approach than waiting for misbehavior to occur before responding. The purpose of school-wide PBS is to establish a climate in which appropriate behavior is the norm.



What is Primary Prevention?

Primary Prevention involves school-wide efforts to prevent student misbehaviors. For example, giving children vaccinations against common diseases such as measles and chicken pox is done to prevent initial occurrences of these diseases. As a school-wide Primary Prevention, positive behavior support consists of rules, routines, and physical arrangements that are developed and taught by school staff to prevent initial occurrences of problem behavior. For example, to prevent injuries to

students caused by running in hallways, schools may develop Primary Preventions by 1) establishing and teaching the rule, “walk in the hallways;” 2) creating a routine in which staff station themselves in the hallways during transition times to supervise the movement of pupils; or 3) altering the physical arrangement, such as making sure that an adult is with any group of students when they are in the hallways.

What are we trying to prevent?

It goes without saying that we want to prevent the major “behavioral earthquakes” that we hear about in the news: violent acts against teachers or other students, theft, bullying behavior, drug use, and the like. However, research has taught us that efforts to prevent these serious problems are more successful if the “host environment”—the school as a whole—supports the adoption and use of evidence-based practices. Practices that meet these criteria include teaching and rewarding students for complying with a small set of basic rules for conduct, such as “be safe,” “be responsible,” and “be respectful.” These rules translate into sets of expectations that differ according to various settings in the school. Thus, on the playground “be safe” means stay within boundaries and follow the rules of the game. In hallways and on stairs, it means to keep your hands and feet to yourself and to walk on the right side. Some parents and educators believe that students come to school knowing these rules of conduct, and those who don’t follow them simply should be punished. However, research and experience has taught us that systematically teaching behavioral expectations and rewarding students for following them is a much more positive approach than waiting for misbehavior to occur before responding. It also establishes a climate in which appropriate behavior is the norm. Finally, the use of Primary Prevention strategies has been shown to result in dramatic reductions in the number of students being sent to the office for discipline in elementary and middle schools across the United States and Canada. In effect, by teaching and encouraging positive student behavior (i.e., positive behavior support), we reduce the “white noise” of common but constant student disruption that distracts us from focusing intervention expertise on the more serious problems mentioned above.

What if Primary Prevention doesn't work?

Having a system for documenting the occurrence of problem behaviors (e.g., office discipline referrals) provides a way to determine which students need more intensive intervention.

What is Secondary Prevention?

Secondary Prevention is designed to provide targeted interventions to support students who are not responding to Primary Prevention efforts. Interventions within Secondary Prevention are more intensive since a smaller number of students within the yellow part of the triangle are at risk for engaging in more serious problem behavior and need a little more support. Common Secondary Prevention practices involve small groups of students or simple individualized intervention strategies. Targeted interventions are an important part of the continuum of behavior support needed in schools, and there is a growing literature documenting that targeted interventions can be implemented by typical school personnel, with positive effects on up to 67% of referred students. Specific Secondary Prevention interventions include practices such as “social skills club,” “check in/check out” and the Behavior Education Plan.

Individual PBS plans at the Secondary Prevention level involve a simple assessment to identify the function a problem behavior serves (Functional Behavioral Assessment or FBA) and a support plan comprised of individualized, assessment-based intervention strategies that include a range of options such as: (1) teaching the student to use new skills as a replacement for problem behaviors, (2) rearranging the environment so that problems can be prevented and desirable behaviors can be encouraged, and (3) monitoring, evaluating, and reassessing this simple plan over time.

What differentiates Secondary Prevention from other systems of positive behavior support?

The main difference between secondary and other levels of positive behavior support is the focus on supporting students at risk for more serious problem behavior. Secondary Prevention addresses the needs of students who require more support than is available for all students (i.e., Primary Prevention) and less support than is available for individual students who need flexible, focused, personalized interventions (tertiary prevention). This means that Secondary Prevention allows teams to select features of the process (e.g., types of programs or interventions, data collection tools used, information gathered, and degree of monitoring) to provide more focused behavior support to students with behavior needs that do not require intensive, individualized plans.

When should a program of Secondary Prevention be implemented and who should be involved?

Decisions to implement Secondary Prevention interventions are usually grounded in records of student behavior compiled by classroom teachers or other professionals. In some schools, students with two or more office referrals are considered eligible for secondary, targeted behavior support. The decision to use Secondary Prevention is typically made by the school's planning team and behavior support team. Secondary Prevention is most effective when approached as a collaborative (rather than expert-driven) process. With individual plans, support teams including the student's family, educators, and/or other direct service providers should be involved in assessment and intervention. It is also helpful to include people who have specific expertise in intervention programs being considered. In general, support teams should include people who know the student best, have a vested interest in positive outcomes, represent the range of environments in which the student participates, and have access to resources needed for support.

How can we effectively address the needs of individuals within group environments? 🌟

Individual systems and other levels of positive behavior support are complementary in that well-structured group applications (e.g., classroom management systems) provide a foundation for effective individualized support. Often, the need for individual systems is minimized by these broader systems; however, some students require a greater degree of individualization and support. It may be necessary to adapt features of group applications (e.g., physical arrangement, routines, types of rewards) to meet the needs of individual students within certain settings.

How are targeted group interventions implemented?

Targeted group interventions are implemented through a flexible, but systematic, process. Key features of Secondary Prevention interventions include:

1. Continuous availability.
2. Rapid access (72 hr).
3. Very low effort by teachers.
4. Consistent with school-wide expectations.
5. Implemented by all staff/faculty in a school.
6. Flexible intervention based on assessment.
7. Functional assessment.
8. Adequate resources (admin, team), weekly meeting, plus 10 hours a week.
9. Student chooses to participate.
10. Continuous monitoring of student behavior for decision-making.

How do we know when a secondary intervention plan is effective?

Effective secondary interventions produce measurable changes in behavior and improvements in a student's quality of life (e.g., participation in integrated activities, improved social relationships, independence and self-sufficiency). Direct observations and frequent monitoring of progress are widely-used methods for evaluating these outcomes, and determining adjustments that might be warranted when progress does not occur within a reasonable time frame.

How are families involved in positive behavior support?

Historically, family involvement has been seen as a key feature when developing tertiary (individual) positive behavior support plans for students with comprehensive needs. As the practice of Positive Behavior Support has evolved from an individually-based approach to a more school-wide emphasis, family involvement within all aspects of Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Prevention has expanded. Family members participate in planning teams, learn how to teach their children the importance of school-wide expectations at home and in the community, and volunteer to participate in related school activities including school celebrations, public relations, and the search for donations and free resources in the community.

What are key characteristics of schools with high family involvement in school-wide PBS?

States, schools, and districts that have high levels of family involvement in the school-wide PBS process have made action plans for including families and communities in all aspects of the collaborative process. One of the most consistent predictors of parent involvement in school is the degree to which the school practices encourage and guides parent involvement. For instance, one school included a list of volunteer activities that parents sign up for each year. An activity at this school involved writing form letters to request free samples and resources from sports teams, celebrities, and other business so that these items could be used to reinforce students for positive social behavior throughout the school year. Parents with the highest volunteer hours are presented with recognition awards at school celebrations where school-wide PBS efforts are the major focus of the festivities. School practices that inform and involve parents are stronger determinants of parent involvement in education than parent education, family size, marital status or student grade level. Family events are scheduled to introduce the school-wide expectations, show progress on school-wide outcomes, and provide families with access to information about community resources. The following resource guide helps schools and families work together to incorporate positive behavioral supports into the IEP.

For more information on PBS use these websites:

<http://www.ode.state.or.us/initiatives/idea/pbs.aspx>

<http://www.pbis.org>