

Core Principles of PBIS

- 1. We can effectively teach appropriate behavior to all children.** All PBIS practices are founded on the assumption and belief that all children can exhibit appropriate behavior. As a result, it is our responsibility to identify the contextual setting events and environmental conditions that enable exhibition of appropriate behavior. We then must determine the means and systems to provide those resources.
- 2. Intervene early.** It is best practices to intervene before targeted behaviors occur. If we intervene before problematic behaviors escalate, the interventions are much more manageable. Highly effective universal interventions in the early stages of implementation which are informed by time sensitive continuous progress monitoring, enjoy strong empirical support for their effectiveness with at-risk students.
- 3. Use of a multi-tier model of service delivery.** PBIS uses an efficient, needs-driven resource deployment system to match behavioral resources with student need. To achieve high rates of student success for all students, instruction in the schools must be differentiated in both nature and intensity. To efficiently differentiate behavioral instruction for all students. PBIS uses tiered models of service delivery.
- 4. Use research-based, scientifically validated interventions to the extent available.** No Child Left Behind requires the use of scientifically based curricula and interventions. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that students are exposed to curriculum and teaching that has demonstrated effectiveness for the type of student and the setting. Research-based, scientifically validated interventions provide our best opportunity at implementing strategies that will be effective for a large majority of students.
- 5. Monitor student progress to inform interventions.** The only method to determine if a student is improving is to monitor the student's progress. The use of assessments that can be collected frequently and that are sensitive to small changes in student

- behavior is recommended. Determining the effectiveness (or lack of) an intervention early is important to maximize the impact of that intervention for the student.
6. **Use data to make decisions.** A data-based decision regarding student response to the interventions is central to PBIS practices. Decisions in PBIS practices are based on professional judgment informed directly by student office discipline referral data and performance data. This principle requires that ongoing data collection systems are in place and that resulting data are used to make informed behavioral intervention planning decisions.
 7. **Use assessment for three different purposes.** In PBIS, three types of assessments are used: 1) screening of data comparison per day per month for total office discipline referrals, 2) diagnostic determination of data by time of day, problem behavior, and location and 3) progress monitoring to determine if the behavioral interventions are producing the desired effects.

Primary prevention is significant- in that it -moves the structural framework of each educational unit from reactive approaches to proactive systems change performance. This effort cohesively unites all the adults in using 1) common language, 2) common practices, and 3) consistent application of positive and negative reinforcement. There are many caveats to the training, planning, and implementation of PBIS. Just a few of the features are listed below:

Behavioral Expectations

The primary prevention of positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) consists of rules, routines, and physical arrangements that are developed and taught by school staff to prevent initial occurrences of behavior the school would like to target for change. For example, a school team may determine that disrespect for self, others, and property is a set of behaviors they would like to target for change. They may choose the positive reframing of that behavior and make that one of their behavioral expectations. *Respect Yourself, Others, and Property* would be one of their behavioral expectations. Research indicates that 3-5 behavioral expectations that are positively stated, easy to remember, and significant to the climate are best. At the end of the year, a researcher should be able to walk into

the school and ask ten random students to name the behavioral expectations and 80% or better of the students should be able to tell the researcher what they are and give examples of what they look like in action.

Labeling Appropriate Behavior in Actions

The school team would then build a matrix (graph) listing the behavioral expectation in a horizontal row. There would be column labels above the behavioral expectations listing all the areas in the school where this behavior could be: 1) taught, 2) modeled, 3) practiced, and 4) observed. For example, in a middle school the columns might include: 1) commons area, 2) cafeteria, 3) gymnasium, 4) bus, 5) hallway, 6) restroom, and 7) sidewalks. The building leadership team would choose two or three examples of what respecting self, others, and property would look like in each of these areas. For example, respecting property in the bathroom would be to "Use the amount of paper towels needed. A good amount would be two." Another example of showing respect for others in the bathroom might include "Be sure to flush the toilet when finished."

Teaching Appropriate Behavioral Actions

The building leadership team would then decide how they were going to teach these behaviors to the students. Some schools choose to have stations and rotate all the children through various locations where the adults act out the appropriate behaviors relevant to each area. Some schools choose to show a non-example first and then the appropriate example last. After adults model the appropriate behavior, students emulate the new behavior before they rotate to the next learning station. Adults give feedback to the students on their performance during the training, to alleviate any misrules they may begin. For example, some schools place hula hoops on the floor in front of the entrance to the cafeteria tray area. Adults model for students that only one person stands in each hula hoop and the line only advances as a hula hoop becomes empty. The hula hoops allow the children to visualize personal space better than just telling them "don't push and crowd".

Observing and Praising Appropriate Behavioral Actions

The building leadership team would also determine how they intended to "catch" students exhibiting the appropriate behaviors. Specific praise

is extremely important in increasing the reoccurrence of appropriate behavior. Some schools decide to give out small pieces of paper labeled as "gotchas". All staff hand the gotchas with specific praise to students as they witness appropriate behaviors in the common areas.

Conclusion

These are just a few examples of the procedures and practices that occur during the initial training for primary prevention. Precise facets of the training make it specific to each building. The important features are: 1) most schools realize similar results; 2) implementation looks completely different at each site, based on the needs of their specific unit and 3) ongoing decisions are made based on data driven results.

It goes without saying that we want to prevent the major "upsurges in targeted behaviors" 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 that 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.

Primary Prevention, through positive behavior support, works for over 80% of all students in a given school (based on a criterion of the number of students who have one or fewer office discipline referrals per month). But obviously, no intervention works across the board for all students. For a variety of reasons, some students do not respond to the kinds of efforts that make up Primary Prevention, just as some children do not respond to initial teaching of academic subjects. Some children need booster shots and some children need intensive interventions.

Putting into place systematic Primary Prevention strategies offers two advantages: First, it reduces the "water torture" caused by large numbers of office discipline referrals for minor problems. As we suggested earlier, this volume of referrals obscures and distracts our attention from more serious problems. Second, having a system for documenting the occurrence of targeted behaviors (e.g., office discipline referrals) provides a way to determine which students need more intensive intervention. For example, the criterion for considering the need for moving into secondary prevention for a student or group of students might be 4 or more office discipline referrals in a month. Without Primary Prevention, of course, the number of students meeting this criteria and needing additional help will be much larger.