

What is Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)?

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a problem-solving model for preventing inappropriate behavior through teaching and reinforcing (rewarding) appropriate behavior. PBIS is based on the belief that all children can exhibit appropriate behavior if provided with the proper environment and supports. The PBIS model identifies early intervening, assessment, data collection, data-based decision making, and use of research-based interventions as key components of successful behavior management. PBIS is based on a “tiered,” or leveled, system of prevention:

- **Primary Prevention** is a school-wide approach for developing clearly defined behavioral expectations and teaching and modeling appropriate behavior.
- **Secondary Prevention** involves strategies for students or groups of students who are more “at-risk” for problem behavior and includes class-wide management systems.
- **Tertiary Prevention** targets the needs individual students who demonstrate a pattern of problem behavior.

How can PBIS be Applied to Help my Child?

The following are key components of the problem-solving model outlined by PBIS. These methods can be used both at school and at home to address problem behavior.

Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA). Human behavior is almost always purposeful; people do things for a reason. We eat because it takes away the unpleasant feeling of hunger. We go to work because we are rewarded with a paycheck. We snap at a loved one because we didn't get enough sleep the night before. Likewise, children often have a reason for the behaviors they exhibit. Understanding the reasons behind their behavior is the first step in successful behavioral intervention.

A Functional Behavioral Assessment, or FUBA, is a process of gathering data in order to determine the reason(s) for a child's behavior. This is done by identifying the “ABC's:”

- **“A”** stands for **Antecedent**—what happens before or while the behavior is evident. When does the behavior happen? Where does it happen? Who is present when it occurs?

- **“B”** stands for **Behavior**—the *specific, observable, and measurable* behavior that must be addressed. Describing a behavior as “name-calling during class” rather than “being disruptive” is far more helpful when collecting data and considering interventions.
- **“C”** stands for **Consequence**—what happens to the child as a result of his or her behavior. Why is the behavior working for this child? What does he or she “get out of it?” This is also called the **function** of the behavior.

Most behavior can be classified into these major functions:

- To obtain: Attention (peer or adult), a tangible (i.e., candy, toy), stimulation/sensory needs, control, or communication
- To avoid: Attention, an undesirable task or situation, or unpleasant sensory experiences

Data collection is a key part of developing a hypothesis (guess) about the function of a child's behavior. Teachers and parents may keep a record of the events surrounding a child's behavior (time, place, individuals present, etc.) and what happens as a result. Trained behavior specialists, such as school psychologists, may also observe the child in different settings in order to gather data. Not only is data collection important when conducting a FBA, it is also vital for monitoring progress and evaluating the effectiveness of behavioral interventions.

Example: David was constantly getting in trouble for name-calling during class. His teacher kept track of when the behavior happened and the outcome of the behavior over a 2-week period. After reviewing the data, the teacher noticed that the behavior was most likely to occur during math class (*antecedent*). The teacher also noticed that the most likely *consequence* of the student's behavior was being sent to the principal's office. After speaking with David and his parents, the teacher developed the following hypothesis: David was very confused and overwhelmed by the math curriculum, and his behavior enabled him to *avoid an undesirable task*.

Once a hypothesis on the behavior's function has been developed, the next step is to devise a way for the child to achieve that function in a more appropriate way, or, in other words, to provide him or her with a replacement behavior. *It is not enough to teach children what not to do; they must also be taught EXPLICITLY what to do through direct instruction.*

If formulated appropriately, a clearly defined antecedent, function, and replacement behavior can be inserted into a summary statement similar to the one below:

When (David finds a math assignment difficult), he (calls other students names from across the room) in order to (avoid class work by getting sent to the principal's office).

Instead of (calling other students names from across the room) in order to (avoid class work by getting sent to the principal's office), I want David to (use a signal when he needs a break).

The replacement behavior serves the same *function* as the problem behavior—by having a break, David can leave the overwhelming situation in an appropriate way rather than being sent to the principal's office.

Behavior Intervention Plan. Once the Functional Behavioral Assessment and summary statement are complete, the next step is to develop a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). In the schools, formal BIP's are typically developed by the school team *and should include parents—behavioral strategies are far more effective when consistently implemented at both home and school*. BIPs list the strategies that the team will use to encourage the replacement behavior (i.e., signaling for a break) and to discourage the problem behavior (i.e., calling other students names).

In order to reinforce, or increase, the appropriate replacement behavior, BIPs should clearly dictate what types of reinforcement, or rewards, the child will receive for using it. For example, the BIP may indicate that the teacher will reward David with praise each time he signals for a break instead of name-calling. The team may also decide that David will earn certain privileges, at home and school, by using the replacement behavior. *Reinforcing appropriate behavior is the most powerful tool for behavioral change.*

Strategies for discouraging the problem behavior *should not be focused on “putting a child in his place.”* Rather, they should be designed to change the consequences of the behavior so they no longer “work” for the student. In the example, David's behavior “worked” for him because he was able to avoid difficult assignments. Thus, sending him to the principal's office was not an effective consequence.

Negative consequences must be designed carefully and should not unnecessarily restrict a child's freedoms. Activities that require "hands on," such as forced time-outs, seclusion, and restraints, are NOT consequences; rather, they are procedures to be used only when children pose a serious threat to themselves or others.

PBIS and the Law

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) states that school teams shall, "in the case of a child whose behavior impedes the child's learning or that of others, consider the use of positive behavioral interventions and supports, and other strategies to address that behavior." In other words, if a child's behavior is interfering with his or her learning or the learning of others, the school must consider effective, research-based strategies for addressing the behavior, including PBIS. For children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), behavioral concerns must be addressed through IEP goals or through a BIP. As with any goal, progress must be regularly assessed, and modifications must be made if no progress is evident. Ongoing data collection is key to assessing progress and identifying when changes to the current IEP or BIP are needed.

PBIS and Response to Intervention (RtI)

Because it emphasizes research-based interventions, data collection, and a tiered model based on student need and response, the PBIS model is often associated with the Response to Intervention (RtI) model. RtI is a new method under IDEA for determining when a student is in need of more intensive interventions, including special education services. Similar to PBIS, RtI focuses on using sound, research-based strategies to facilitate academic success. Through assessment and data collection, students who lack progress are identified for more intensive interventions according to their needs.

Where can I learn more about PBIS?

www.pbis.org contains more information on PBIS and how it can be utilized by schools and families.

www.interventioncentral.org provides numerous resources for collecting and organizing data on student behaviors.

You may also contact the Parent Information Center for more information and to learn about possible workshops in your area.

For more information about PBIS

CONTACT:



Parent Information Center

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Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS)

Disability Brochure #23



Tips for Successful Behavior Interventions

Parent Information Center
1-307-684-2277

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