POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS & SUPPORTS
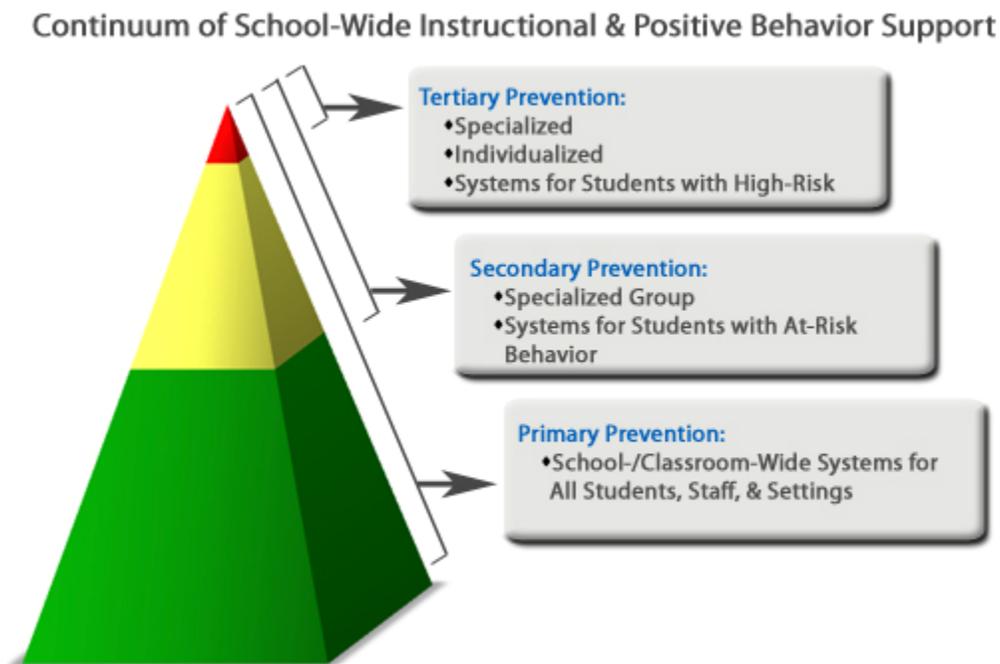
School-wide PBIS

What is School-wide PBIS?

Numerous products are available for school personnel, parents, and care-providers, all with the promise of erasing targeted behaviors. Unfortunately, no magic wand single-handedly works to remove the barriers to learning that occur when behaviors are disrupting the learning community. The climate of each learning community is different; therefore, a one size fits all approach is less effective than interventions based on the needs of each school.

One of the foremost advances in school-wide discipline is the emphasis on school-wide systems of support that include proactive strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviors to create positive school environments. Instead of using a piecemeal approach of individual behavioral management plans, a continuum of positive behavior support for all students within a school is implemented in areas including the classroom and nonclassroom settings (such as hallways, buses, and restrooms). Positive behavior support is an application of a behaviorally-based systems approach to enhance the capacity of schools, families, and communities to design effective environments that improve the link between research-validated practices and the environments in which teaching and learning occurs. Attention is focused on creating and sustaining primary (school-wide), secondary (classroom), and tertiary (individual) systems of support that improve lifestyle results (personal, health, social, family, work, recreation) for all children and youth by making targeted behaviors less effective, efficient, and relevant, and desired behavior more functional.

The following diagram illustrates the multi-level approach offered to all students in the school. These group depictions represent systems of support not children:


Continuum of School-Wide Instructional & Positive Behavior Support

Tertiary Prevention:
- Specialized
- Individualized
- Systems for Students with High-Risk

Secondary Prevention:
- Specialized Group
- Systems for Students with At-Risk Behavior

Primary Prevention:
- School-/Classroom-Wide Systems for All Students, Staff, & Settings

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

Frequently, the question is asked, "Why should I have to teach kids to be good? They already know what they are supposed to do. Why can I not just expect good behavior?" In the infamous words of a TV personality, "How is that working out for you?"

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 step 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 PBIS is to establish a climate in which appropriate behavior is the norm.

What is a systems approach in school-wide PBIS?

An organization is a group of individuals who behave together to achieve a common goal. Systems are needed to support the collective use of best practices by individuals within the organization. The school-wide PBIS process emphasizes the creation of systems that support the adoption and durable implementation of evidence-based practices and procedures, and fit within on-going school reform efforts. An interactive approach that includes opportunities to correct and improve four key elements is used in school-wide PBIS focusing on: 1) Outcomes, 2) Data, 3) Practices, and 4) Systems. The diagram below illustrates how these key elements work together to build a sustainable
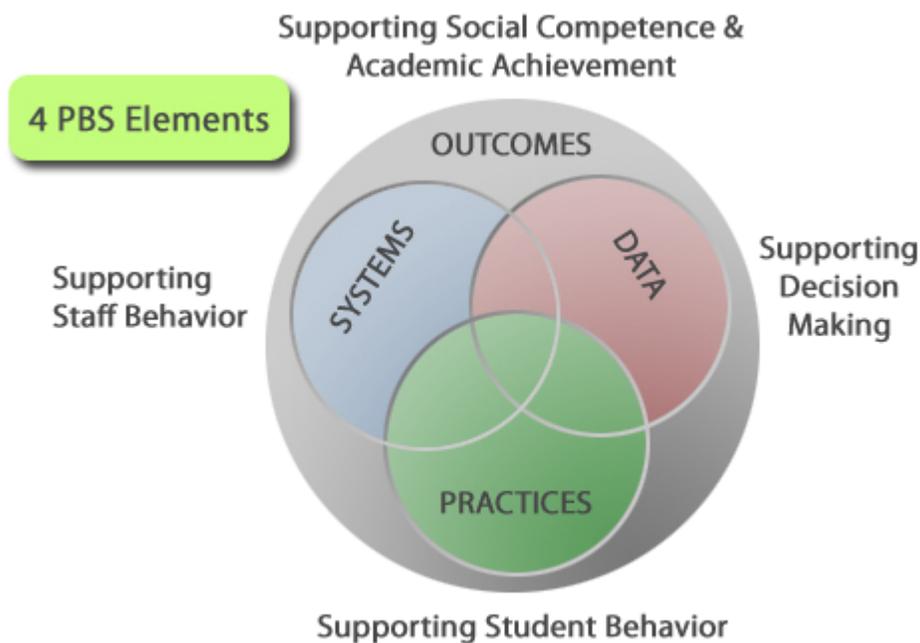
system:

- Outcomes: academic and behavior targets that are endorsed and emphasized by students, families, and educators. (What is important to each particular learning community?)
- Practices: interventions and strategies that are evidence based. (How will you reach the goals?)
- Data: information that is used to identify status, need for change, and effects of interventions. (What data will you use to support your success or barriers?)
- Systems: supports that are needed to enable the accurate and durable implementation of the practices of PBIS. (What durable systems can be implemented that will sustain this over the long haul?)

SWPBIS for Beginners

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) when applied at the School-wide level is frequently called: SWPBS or Sw-PBIS. For the remainder of this article SWPBS will be used when referring to School-wide Positive Behavior Support.

SWPBS refers to a systems change process for an entire school or district. The underlying theme is teaching behavioral expectations in the same manner as any core curriculum subject.

Typically, a team of approximately ten representative members of the school will attend a two or three day training provided by skilled trainers. This team will be comprised of administrators, classified, and regular and special education teachers.

The school will focus on three to five behavioral expectations that are positively stated and easy to remember. In other words, rather than telling students what not to do, the school will focus on the preferred behaviors. Here are some examples from other schools:

- Respect Yourself, Respect Others, and Respect Property
- Be Safe, Be Responsible, Be Respectful
- Respect Relationships and Respect Responsibilities

After the SWPBS team determines the 3-5 behavioral expectations that suit the needs of their school, they will take this information back to the staff to ensure at least 80% of the staff buy into the chosen expectations. Consistency from class to class and adult to adult is very important for successful implementation of SWPBS.

The team will then create a matrix of what the behavioral expectations look like, sound like, and feel like in all the non-classroom areas. This matrix will have approximately three positively stated examples for each area. Here is an example line from one school:

	Bus	Cafeteria	Restroom	Playground
Respect Property	Keep feet and hands where they belong. Throw unwanted items in wastebasket. Keep food and drinks in backpack.	Place tray on kitchen window shelf after scraping leftovers into wastebasket. Wipe table with sponge provided. Clean food spills off floor.	Flush toilet after use. Use two squirts of soap to wash hands. Throw paper towels in wastebasket.	Report any graffiti or broken equipment to adult on duty. Return playground equipment to proper area. Use equipment as it was designed.

This would be filled out for each non-classroom area and each behavioral expectation. The Sw-PBS team would take the matrix back to the whole staff to ensure 80% buy-in from the entire staff on what expectations are taught in each area.

Another primary activity for the SWPBS team is determining how the behavioral expectations and routines will be taught in and around the school. There are many lesson plans available for teaching respect, responsibility etc. This website has many examples available under the primary level. Many schools choose to use several days at the beginning of each year to take the students around the school to stations, where the skills are taught in setting specific locations. For example, a bus may be brought to

the school and the children will practice lining up, entering the bus, sitting on the bus, and exiting the bus using hula hoops to denote proper body space distance in lining up to enter the bus.

The next activity the SWPBS team will begin is the fine tuning of the office discipline referral form. The team will decide "What behaviors are an instant trip to the office and what behaviors are taken care of in the classroom." It is very important that every staff member is consistent. If it is not permissible to use a cell phone in band class then it has to not be permissible in art class.

Many schools choose to use School-wide Information System (SWIS). This is a web based program which graphs office discipline referral data. This program creates instant graphs for behavioral incidents per day- per month, time of day, specific behaviors, location and by specific student. The graphing program provides many other options. For more information on SWIS, please visit www.swis.org

Another activity for the SWPBS team is to determine a "gotcha" program. The gotchas are a system for labeling appropriate behavior. This website has many examples of gotchas in the primary section. Some schools use NCR paper for gotchas with one copy going home to parents, one to the classroom teacher, and one to the principal for weekly drawings.

The above activities are just a few of the steps a school begins to implement Sw-PBS. For further study check out these links in the resource box:

- Blueprint for Positive Behavior Support Manual
- Getting PBIS Into Your School Newsletter Article
- PBIS Video
- State Map for Contact Information for Your State

Positive Behavior Support Youth At-Risk and Involved in Juvenile Corrections

Why "positive" support for "bad" kids?
Over 170,000 youth in the US are being held in short-term juvenile detention facilities or incarcerated in long-term juvenile correctional facilities. Many more are in community-based residential and day treatment or alternative education settings as an alternative to incarceration. Although most people assume that youth are placed in these programs because of their antisocial and delinquent behavior, many are placed because of "status offenses"—acts that wouldn't be considered criminal if committed by adults. Furthermore, this large population of youth is characterized by numerous and complex needs. For example, 50 to 75% of approximately 170,000 incarcerated youth are estimated to have one or more mental health disorders and 30 to 50% are estimated to have educational disabilities. Many of these youth lack basic academic, social, and problem-solving skills, and have histories of physical, sexual, and substance abuse. Current zero tolerance and get-tough policies in schools focus on punishment to address problem behavior, which effectively start these youth along the school-to-prison pipeline. When they become incarcerated, they enter a world of even greater intolerance and a focus on security that overrides their need for treatment and positive growth experiences.

How is positive behavior support provided to these youth?

In schools and communities, initiatives are underway to alter the pathway that leads from school to prison. This pathway begins with the disproportionate exposure of at-risk students to exclusionary disciplinary practices that alienate them from school and contribute to their academic and social failure, which leads to their dropping out of school and established patterns of antisocial and delinquent behavior, negative peer associations, and criminal activity. The School-to-Prison Reform Project, sponsored by the Southern Poverty Law Center, is focused on building resilience to these negative outcomes through enhancing school protective factors, specifically, by promoting positive behavioral interventions and support in schools. Another initiative is Tools for Promoting Educational Success and Reducing Delinquency, a project sponsored by the National Association of State Directors of Special Education and the National Disability Rights Network. Sets of tools have been developed in 9 sets beginning with prevention and early identification of at-risk children and culminating in transition of youth back to community schools. The three-tiered positive behavior support model is an essential framework for these tools, which are based on effective practices in schools and communities.

Positive behavior support also has been successfully implemented in a variety of alternative education and day treatment programs. These are operated by educational, mental health, or juvenile justice agencies in a variety of settings, the chief characteristics of which is that they are not residential and they include treatment and other programs not found in most public schools.

A range of secure care facilities is available for youth who have been arrested or adjudicated, and who are being diverted from juvenile correctional programs or placed in them. These include residential treatment, short-term detention, and incarceration in a juvenile correctional facility. In a growing number of these programs, positive behavior support is being tried as an alternative to traditional disciplinary practices in, with the same beneficial effects that have been observed in public schools. Teaching youth what behaviors are expected and acknowledging them for displaying these is proving to be an effective alternative to traditional approaches to discipline in these facilities. Still, secure care facilities aren't public schools, and implementation efforts require adaptation to the features of detention and correctional settings. Chief among these are the 24-hour secure care milieu, and the presence of staff from a variety of disciplines and who have limited exposure to the notion of a positive approach to discipline.