

Positive Behavior Support in Schools

Frequently Asked Questions



What is PBS?

Positive Behavior Support is a collaborative (team-based), educative, proactive, and functional process to developing effective interventions for inappropriate behavior.

How is PBS a process?

PBS is not a packaged program with a set script. There are critical components that comprise the entire process. The components are individualized to meet the specific needs of each school. Additionally, the components are always changing to meet the specific needs of the school (e.g., population changes, maintain interest, address multiple levels of inappropriate behavior, etc.).

How is PBS proactive?

The team uses discipline data to identify patterns and possible causes of inappropriate behavior. This information is then used to develop effective interventions to decrease inappropriate behavior and increase desired behavior across campus. The use of yearly, monthly, or more frequent data comparisons helps to prevent the same patterns of inappropriate behavior from reoccurring and assist the core team in adapting the school-wide PBS plan.

How is PBS educative?

Students in our schools come from many different backgrounds and cultures that view “behavior” differently; thus, we cannot *assume* that students know how to behave appropriately when at school. Furthermore, many of our students are making poor choices when confronted with a conflict. Consequently, we must teach our students how to behave at school to ensure that they do make better choices. PBS views inappropriate behavior in the same manner that problems in reading or math are viewed...as a skill deficit. When a skill deficit exists, we must teach the appropriate skill. By doing so, a unified and positive school climate forms informing students and staff that appropriate behavior is a priority in school.

How is PBS functional?

Students engage in inappropriate behavior to obtain something they want (e.g., attention, getting out of an assignment, etc...); thus, it serves a purpose for them. PBS uses the function of the inappropriate behavior to identify an appropriate consequence and avoid rewarding the misbehavior.

What does PBS look like at school?

- Discipline DATA are used to help track progress and identify areas to target for intervention
- CONSISTENT discipline referral PROCESSES & PROCEDURES exist throughout the school
- Use of school-wide EXPECTATIONS & RULES in specific settings to TEACH students appropriate behavior
- A REWARD SYSTEM to encourage appropriate behavior and EFFECTIVE CONSEQUENCES to discourage inappropriate behavior

How long will it take to implement PBS?

Because school-wide PBS is a process, not a program, the length of time it takes to get started varies by school. Schools typically take between 3 months to 1 year to fully implement all the critical components of PBS. Components are generally introduced a few at a time. The process is ongoing and constantly adapted to meet the changing needs of the school and to address current concerns. Many schools begin noticing improvements right away. However, it may take a few years for the school's philosophy regarding the handling of inappropriate behavior to change.

How will this affect me?

Faculty and staff must decide if positive behavior support is a good fit for their school. Once the school obtains an 80% approval rate from faculty and staff (must include administration), the core team begins brainstorming and working on each of the critical components of PBS. Faculty, staff and students are asked for input/feedback on all components and to contribute to the overall school-wide PBS plan. All members of the school are participants in positive behavior support and adhere to the school-wide expectations.

Popular Myths regarding PBS

“The *positive* in Positive Behavior Support means we give out rewards”

The *positive* refers to a change in focus from reactive (focusing on what students do wrong) to proactive (teaching and recognizing what students do right). It refers to an overall change in the school climate to a learning environment where students and teachers feel appreciated, safe, and respected. Rewards are used to assist staff in focusing on the positive and to assist students in making better choices.

“We will no longer punish students for inappropriate behavior”

PBS does not ignore inappropriate behavior. Consequences are more than “punishment” and serve to either increase or decrease inappropriate behavior. PBS views appropriate consequences as those that are effective in changing the student's inappropriate behavior. Schools develop a plan for inappropriate behavior that matches consequences to the severity of the inappropriate behavior in order to maintain consistency across campus.

“PBS uses bribes to get students to behave”

Using a reward system is not bribing a student to behave appropriately. A bribe occurs when something is offered to a person before the behavior to get them to behave in a specific way. PBS acknowledges and rewards students for following school-wide expectations and rules after the behavior occurs. Thus, rewards are *earned*, not offered as payoff in exchange for good behavior.