



ADVANCING WELLNESS and RESILIENCE in EDUCATION

Information Brief

PBIS for Parents: A Primer

WHAT IS PBIS?

DEFINITION AND MEANING IN SCHOOLS

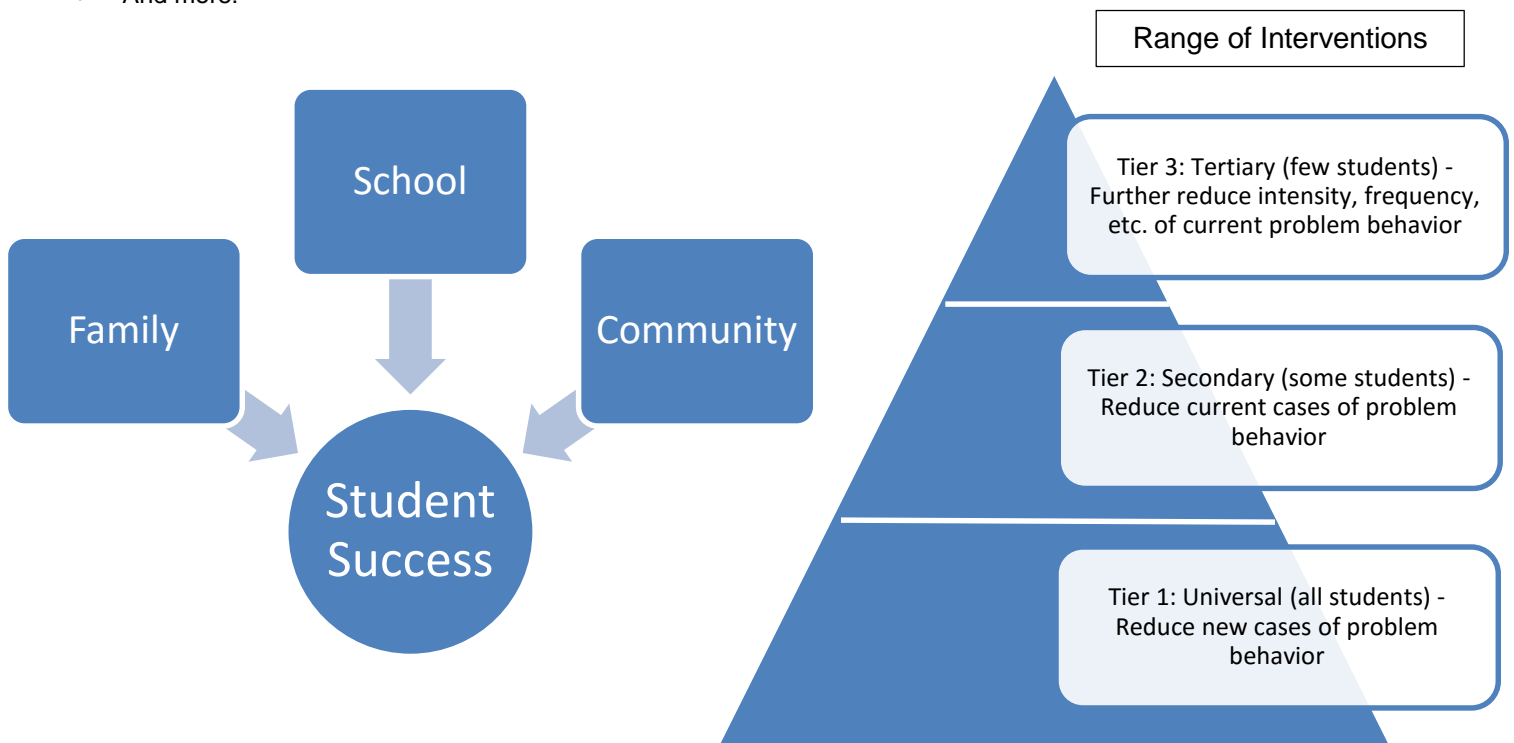
PBIS stands for “Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports.” In schools, this framework involves directly teaching students expected behaviors in the building. Expected behaviors are worded in a positive way, focusing on how students **should** behave, rather than what they shouldn’t do. For example, one expectation may be “Be Respectful” rather than “Don’t be Disrespectful.” These expectations are the same throughout the school building for all students and staff so that a student is not punished in one classroom for something that is allowed elsewhere. PBIS schools also praise and recognize students for the positive behaviors they show at school (e.g., with rewards from a raffle, sending positive notes home, or special privileges) so that these positive behaviors are more likely to happen in the future. In addition, PBIS involves using a range of supportive services (called interventions) to encourage appropriate behaviors and prevent or address problem behaviors. These interventions are based on data and are evidence based, meaning they have been shown to work in school settings.^{13,15}

WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF PBIS?

PBIS is founded on the ideas that behavior can be taught and that all students will do well when they are placed in a setting in which they can thrive. PBIS schools seek to focus on positive behaviors and create a consistent and predictable environment for students. By focusing on positive behaviors and decreasing unnecessary punishments, all students are more likely to view school as a positive setting for learning. Overall, PBIS seeks to increase time students spend in the classroom, decrease time spent on punishment or classroom management, and improve the school environment. This allows students to continue to develop the life and social skills needed for future success both inside and outside the classroom.

WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES OF PBIS?

- Improved in student academic outcomes^{6,8}
- Reduced reports of bullying and peer rejection¹⁷
- Improved feelings of school safety⁶
- Improved productivity in schools¹
- Reduced office disciplinary referrals and suspensions^{2, 6, 8}
- Lower teacher burnout and more positive beliefs by teachers about their abilities to teach¹²
- And more!



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR PARENTS TO BE INVOLVED IN PBIS?

It is nearly impossible to separate the role of the family from the role of the school in teaching students and preparing them for future life success. Parents and other caregivers should be involved in their student's education throughout the year, whether their child is having a great experience or difficulties. Research shows that family involvement can enhance student outcomes above and beyond the role of schools, including improved reading, math, and social-emotional skills; higher test scores and grades; increased attendance and levels of homework completion; and improved attitudes about school.^{14, 16}

Research also shows that parents are able to further improve student outcomes when they are given additional direction and support in how they can help their children.¹⁶ Parents of all different backgrounds are interested in helping their students thrive, and research indicates that parents are able to improve their students' learning in math and reading when given the proper support to encourage this learning.¹⁶ Further, research suggests that good parenting at home has a strong positive effect on child achievement and adjustment, and that this involvement extends beyond the impact of the quality of a school.³

It is important to note that it is the legal and ethical responsibility of the school to provide opportunities for parents to get involved in the school, and that family involvement plays a significant role in student success.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN PBIS?

Parental involvement with PBIS can take many forms, including providing a safe and supportive environment for students, modeling positive behaviors and values in the home, providing educational opportunities and help to students, or participating in school events and activities.³ Parents can also be valuable members of the intervention team and may be involved in interventions as part of the PBIS system at school. Specifically, parents may be contacted as part of a universal Tier 1 plan to recognize positive behavior or asked to provide feedback about the curriculum or school expectations. Parents of students for whom universal intervention may not be enough may be asked to help with interventions at the Tier 2 level. Examples could be monitoring student work, reviewing a behavior report card or signing a behavior contract, providing permission for the student to participate in a social skills club or group counseling experience, or being asked about techniques or "reinforcers" that may be especially helpful for a child. Lastly, at the tertiary Tier 3 intervention level, parents can be involved in working with the behavioral support team to conduct a functional behavioral assessment and create an effective behavior support plan to identify and reach the team's goals for the child.

It is important to note that parental involvement does not have to take place in the school building itself in order to help the child. In fact, hours that parents spend in the school and dollars spent on school supplies are not related to student achievement.⁹ However, parental enthusiasm and positive parenting practices that often lead to parent-school involvement are related to positive educational outcomes.¹⁸ Other research indicates that participation in educational activities at home (e.g., reading to a child) has the largest effects on student achievement and adjustment, far beyond involvement in the form of communication with teachers or participation in school activities.^{4, 7} Parental values about education and about their child's ability to succeed have also been shown to influence student goals, motivation, self-perception, and eventual achievement.³ This research suggests that it is not a parent's ability to skip work in order to attend school functions or provide the very best materials for their child that leads to improved achievement and outcomes, but rather the ability to provide a supportive environment for education and to help the child remain involved in his or her education at school and in the community.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED IN PBIS OR HELP MY CHILD AND SCHOOL?

- Talk with the school about ways to better serve your child (e.g., background information, culture, interests, talents, needs, and relevant personal circumstances).
- Teach and discuss the school's expectations and rules, and why they are important both in school and at home.
- Provide positive reinforcement at home (e.g., rewarding good choices through praise or quality time).
- Monitor your child's homework completion, grades, attendance, etc.
- Ask questions about how you can best help your child.
- Support and advocate for your child, but respect the views of teachers and administrators who may have a different perspective. It is okay to respectfully disagree at times.
- Implement other PBIS ideas into your home life (e.g., consistent expectations, behavior support plans).
- Get involved with a PBIS planning team or volunteer to participate in activities at school.
- Ask for help or resources if you need them, or provide examples of resources in the community that may benefit other students or families.

WHAT ARE SOME CONCRETE WAYS I CAN IMPLEMENT PBIS PRINCIPLES AT HOME?

Many of the principles of PBIS that have been shown to enhance student success can also be applied at home. For example, the hallmark principles of PBIS are setting clear expectations and using consistent and appropriate support and consequences when those expectations are not met.

Preventing the Problem (Universal Prevention/Tier 1 in PBIS):⁵

- Set 3-5 clear expectations using positive wording and reward the behavior when it occurs.
- Create a matrix or visual display with examples of how these expectations can be met in different situations and locations (see Table 1 below).
- Teach, model, and practice appropriate behavior.
 - A family meeting may be helpful to review these expectations and behaviors.
- Acknowledge positive behavior more often than negative behavior (4:1 ratio recommended).
 - Creating a system of meaningful reinforcers and consequences for these behaviors is helpful.¹⁰
 - When you have to say “No,” it is important to give a reason why.
 - Use consistent discipline procedures when expectations are not met.
 - Be calm, remind the child of expectations, reteach/model/practice behavior, implement the consequence.
- Allow choice whenever possible, or consider changing routines in order to avoid the problem altogether.

Initial Steps for Managing Problem Behaviors (Targeted Intervention/Tier 2 in PBIS):

- Continue to use different preventative strategies (e.g. reinforcement, modeling, clear expectations).
- Begin looking for the “ABCs” of behavior to consider the function or goal of the behavior: the Antecedents (A), or things that happen before the behavior; the Behavior (B) itself; and the Consequences (C), or what happens after the behavior.
- Holding a family meeting or scheduling a weekly time to talk about behaviors, chores, etc. may be helpful in moving forward.
- Consider using more targeted interventions that are commonly used in schools and have research supporting their usefulness. Examples include:
 - Daily Behavior Report Cards – rate behaviors on pre-determined criteria for the hour, day, etc. and review daily
 - Behavior Contracts – a document of expected behaviors and rewards, consequences, etc. based on set goals
 - Check-In Check-Out – check-in with child regarding behavior at set times; often used with above techniques

Steps for Problem Behavior Management (Intensive Intervention/Tier 3 in PBIS):¹¹

1. **Decide what behavior you want to change** (e.g., a child throws tantrums in the grocery store).
2. **Decide how you want it to change** (e.g., reduce how often tantrums occur, eventually to 0% of visits).
3. **Use behavioral principles to change that behavior.**
 - a. Determine a reason you think that behavior is happening (the function of the behavior) (e.g. the child wants candy).
 - b. Test your guess and watch what happens (e.g., “Tantrums occur 50% of visits, but only when in aisle with candy).
 - c. If your guess is correct, move on. If not, repeat until the function appears to be well understood.
4. **Use supports that have been proven to work.**
 - a. Clearly state expectations for behavior (e.g., saying “We will only be buying items on the grocery list today”).
 - b. Teach new skills that get the same results (e.g., asking nicely for a snack rather than throwing a tantrum).
 - i. Model and practice the appropriate behavior.
 - ii. Allow choices for the child whenever possible.
 - c. Change environments or routines (e.g., bringing a snack on longer trips in the grocery).
 - d. Reward positive behaviors (e.g., praising the use of the skill or occasionally buying a treat when asked nicely).
 - i. Do not reinforce the undesired behaviors (e.g., do NOT buy a candy bar to end a tantrum).
 - ii. Provide appropriate punishment (e.g., timeout with explanation and without emotion) if these behaviors are consistently not met or the behavior is severe (e.g., hitting a parent).
5. **Repeat** until the child masters the expected behavior, and then try again with a new behavior!

	IN THE CAR	AFTER SCHOOL
BE KIND	Give a compliment or thank-you to driver	Share toys with siblings
BE RESPONSIBLE	Keep your hands and feet to yourself	Complete homework without reminder
SHOW RESPECT	Use an inside voice	Listen while others are speaking

Table 1. This is one example of a simple PBIS Matrix that could be used outside of school but still includes the school's stated rules.

COMMON PBIS-RELATED ACRONYMS

- **BIP/BSP/BEP:** Behavior Intervention/Support/Education Plan
- **CICO:** Check-in/Check-out
- **FBA:** Functional Behavior Assessment
- **IEP:** Individualized Education Plan
- **IDEA:** Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- **MTSS:** Multi-tiered Systems of Support
- **ODR:** Office Disciplinary Referral
- **PBS:** Positive Behavior Support
- **PBIS:** Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports
- **SWPBS:** School-wide Positive Behavior Support
- **SST:** Student Support Team

Note. This is not meant to be a complete list: if you are ever confused, please do not hesitate to ask a teacher or administrator – many times these words become a habit and aren't even noticed!

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This brief was developed [in part] under grant number CFDA 93.243 from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The views, policies, and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of SAMHSA or HHS.

**We also would like to acknowledge the Ohio Department of Education for their support of this work.
Prepared by Kevin Shaw and Amity Noltemeyer
Miami University**