AZ Response to Intervention (RTI)

AZ RTI Positive Behavioral Interventions & Support (PBIS)
Technical Assistance Paper

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The Need for a Positive and Systematic Approach

Schools are responsible for developing academic, social, and behavioral competence in all students so that they may be successful in school and in life. As schools attempt to educate students, they are faced with many challenges that affect their ability to provide stable and effective learning environments. Schools are comprised of students with varying needs, backgrounds, and resources. New school initiatives and expectations often strain resources and divert attention to multiple issues. Schools are asked to accomplish more and more without reducing the current workload. In addition, teachers are continuing to experience difficulty instructing students due to disruptive behavior problems in the classroom (Office of Special Education Programs [OSEP] Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2004; Sugai et al., 2000).

As a result of these and other challenges, schools often lack efficient and effective strategies for addressing behavior concerns. Instead, schools frequently respond to behavioral challenges in a reactive and punitive manner. Although a "get tough" attitude or "zero tolerance" policies might provide an immediate response to behavior problems, the reduction is often temporary and the problems tend to resurface. Problem behaviors may, in fact, return at higher rates and at more intensive levels (OSEP Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2004). Punishing problem behaviors (without a proactive support system) is associated with increases in (a) aggression (b) vandalism (c) truancy and (d) dropping out. (Mayer 1995, Skiba and Peterson 1999, and March & Homer 2002.)

Instead of relying on ineffective reactive and negative procedures, schools need to develop positive and effective practices that match the needs of their educational environment. One systematic approach to addressing behavior issues in schools that is both proactive and preventative is identified as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports is a general term that refers to the "the application of positive behavioral interventions and systems to achieve socially important behavior change" (Sugai et al., 2000, p.133). PBIS is not a curriculum or new initiative but rather a framework that provides a school-wide continuum of behavior supports for all students in both classroom and non-classroom settings (such as restrooms, playgrounds). The focus is on developing proactive and positive strategies that actively teach students appropriate behaviors while preventing and reducing the occurrence of inappropriate behaviors. By developing a school-wide system to teach and reinforce appropriate behaviors, a positive school climate is created and common behavior problems are reduced. As some students will require additional support, more intensive behavioral interventions are systematically administered. These will be discussed later.

PBIS is comprised of six basic elements:

1. **Setting and defining** expectations & routines
2. **Teaching** behavior & routines in all settings
3. **Actively monitoring** behaviors
4. **Acknowledging** appropriate behavior
5. **Reviewing** data to make decisions
6. **Correcting** behavioral errors

Setting and Defining Expectations

Typically, schools wait for a problem to occur then punish for it. The problem with reactive strategies is that they rarely work. Research shows that:

- Punishment alone will not lead to durable change in behavior. (Braaten, 1994)
- Reactive strategies that rely primarily on punishment assume that individuals know what is expected, how to do it, and are properly motivated. Unfortunately, it often fails to teach the expected behavior. (Horner & Sugai 1999)
- Some forms of punishment may actually be rewarding, thus maintaining problem behaviors. (Gresham, 1991; March & Horner, 2002)

In order to effectively change school-wide behavior, it is essential that everyone know what the expectations are. The steps for establishing expectations are:

1. Staff should define 3-5 rules for behavior in all of the school. These will be the foundation for all behaviors. Many schools have chosen “Safe, Respectful and Responsible”, but any group of positive, behavior-defining words is acceptable.
2. Once the rules are established, the group needs to prescribe what appropriate behavior looks like in light of these rules, i.e. what are the observable behaviors in the halls, cafeteria, playground? Behaviors are expressed in positive terms. It is imperative that all staff be knowledgeable of the expectations. Some examples of positive behavioral rules are:
   - We walk in the halls because we are safe.
   - We use indoor voices in the classroom because we are respectful.
   - We complete our work because we are responsible.
3. Lastly, the staff establishes the consequences for inappropriate behavior, including what behaviors should be handled on the spot and which ones require an office referral.

   The following site also provides a checklist for the implementation of PBIS: http://www.pbisaz.org/resources/ideas/AzSET_Fall_07.pdf

Teaching Behaviors in All Settings

Time needs to be set aside to teach all students all behaviors in all areas. The adults responsible for supervising an area should teach the rules for that area. For example, classroom teachers teach classroom expectations; playground assistants teach playground expectations, and lunchroom monitors teach appropriate lunchroom behaviors.

Students may need to be reminding of the expectations throughout the year and new students need orientation to the expectations. Classroom discussions or student leadership groups may facilitate this ongoing education regarding the rules.

Actively Monitoring Behavior

The effective monitoring of behavior using language consistent with the expectations is essential with a PBIS approach. Some elements of good behavior monitoring are:

- The adult moves about the supervised area having personal interaction with students
- The adult does not ignore inappropriate behavior.
- The adult uses the words the students have been taught, i.e., “John, remember we swing straight because it is safe.”
- The adult informally acknowledges appropriate behavior and establishes a positive relationship with students.

Acknowledging Appropriate Behavior

The staff establishes a school-wide and classroom process for positive recognition. This can be any thing that the staff believes will reinforce positive behaviors. A few effective examples include:

- In one school where the school mascot was a bear, the staff made small squares with bears on them. Whenever the class (as a group) demonstrated appropriate behaviors, a staff member gave the group a bear square. The bear squares earned by each class were recorded on a large graph in the hall. At the end of each month, the class with the most bears received an award.
- In another example, students exhibiting appropriate behaviors were given a “Caught being good” card that they could redeem for a reward on each Friday.
- As many educators are against giving food items with sugar or salt as rewards, one means of determining appropriate incentives is to have the students develop a menu of rewards.

Additional Ideas for rewards can be found at: http://www.successfulschools.org/

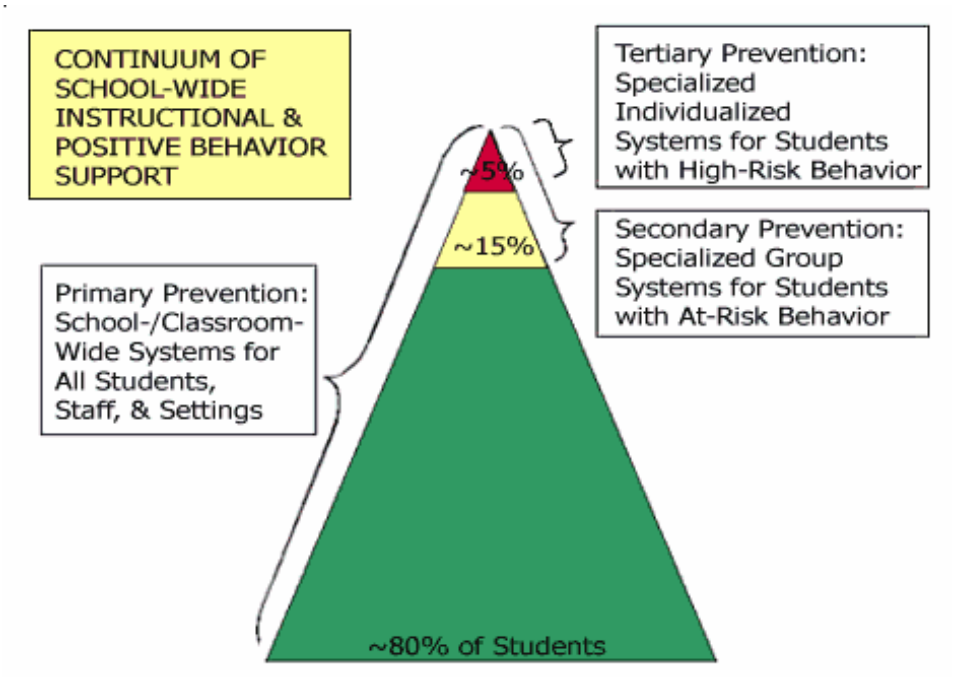
Reviewing Data

It is important to set up a means to track behavior data. In Arizona, the *Safe Schools Data Base* facilitates record keeping. This does require that someone in the school be assigned to input the behavior data on a daily basis. Most of the time, the data comes from discipline forms or discipline logs kept by the staff or the office. If the school does not have a uniform system of recording behavior problems, the first thing the behavior team must do is to develop such a system. By using a data base, the school can track when, where, and what kinds of problems are occurring in the school. The behavior team (or total staff) should meet regularly to review this data and adjust school procedures to help establish appropriate behaviors. When a problem area is found, this team should formulate a theory about the cause and form a plan to address the issue. New expectations will be established and taught to the staff and students.

> Example: In one elementary school, the behavior team noted that there were many office referrals occurring just after recess and just after lunch. The team met and theorized that the problem was the students came in from recess still wound up from playing. They came in the hall all at once and were continuing their recess behaviors. The team decided to put numbers on the wall outside and had classes lined up on their number. Teachers got all students quiet and facing the front of the line before they came inside and the student were expected to be quiet as they entered the halls and classroom. Discipline referrals dropped dramatically.

Correcting Behavioral Errors using Tiered Interventions

As the year progresses, the behavior team should meet to address problems and adjust procedures to fit new situations. The team will also need to establish procedures for students who are repeatedly inappropriate in spite of reeducation on the expectations. This team should be practiced in functional behavioral analysis so they can identify problem behaviors and begin to address the causes. It is in this step that PBIS is very similar to RTI. These levels of support in PBIS are identified as primary, secondary and tertiary prevention. (OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports 2007)



The Primary Prevention Stage

The purpose of primary prevention is to prevent problem behavior from occurring. Positive behavior support at this level involves defining and directly teaching school-wide rules and routines to all students, and reinforcing students for demonstrating those behaviors (OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2007). Schools develop ongoing systems for acknowledging and rewarding appropriate behaviors, and a continuum of consequences for problem behaviors. School teams regularly collect and monitor data such as the number of office discipline referrals for decision-making purposes. It is expected that approximately 80% of students will demonstrate appropriate behaviors with this level of support.

Example: Using Primary Prevention to Reduce Hallway Noise

A rural middle school in western Oregon applied the principles of school-wide positive behavior support to address hallway noise levels during lunchtime (Kartub, Taylor-Greene, March, & Horner, 2000). The staff was concerned that noisy transitions during lunch periods disrupted the instruction of classes still in session. Although staff members monitored the hallways, asked students to be quiet, and meted out consequences such as detention, their efforts met with little success.

To address the problem, staff defined what level of noise would be acceptable in the hallway. Teachers dedicated time in the schedule to take students into the hallway and demonstrate acceptable noise levels. Students were given the

opportunity to model and provide feedback to each other for acceptable noise levels in the hallway. To remind students of expected behavior, the school dimmed the lights in the hallway and added a blinking light. Students were taught the phrase "When you see the light, lips stay tight." Finally, students were given the opportunity to earn rewards (five minutes extra lunchtime) for every three days of acceptable hallway noise levels.

After the intervention was implemented, noise levels (measured using decibel data) were reduced to acceptable levels. Teachers observed that noise levels were reduced and that students began monitoring themselves. By teaching appropriate behavior, altering the environment to clarify expectations, and by rewarding desired behavior, the school was able to create a positive environment in which students socially supported each other and actively engaged in appropriate behavior.

The Secondary Prevention Stage

Secondary prevention is designed to provide support to students who continue to demonstrate behavior problems despite primary prevention strategies. Approximately 15% of students may require support in addition to primary prevention strategies in order to demonstrate appropriate behavior in the school setting. Secondary prevention strategies are more intensive and often target groups of students or provide simple interventions for individual students (OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2007c). Targeted interventions include activities such as social skills groups, group counseling, and mentoring programs. School teams establish methods for identifying students in need of additional behavior support at this level. Students' progress is monitored through methods such as reviewing the number of office referrals, completing behavior rating scales, and conducting direct observations.

Example: Using a Check-In and Check-Out (CICO) Intervention

A suburban elementary school in the northwestern United States developed a targeted intervention to address the behavior problems of ten second-grade students (Fairbanks, Sugai, Guardino, & Lathrop, 2007). The school was implementing school-wide positive behavior support with fidelity when teachers nominated ten students for additional intervention. These students demonstrated more problem behaviors as compared to their classmates with behaviors such as inappropriate physical contact, talk-outs, not sitting properly in one's chair, noncompliance, and non-disruptive off-task behavior. As these students did not respond to school-wide positive behavior supports, a Check-In and Check-Out (CICO) intervention was implemented.

Students participating in the intervention carried cards with school-wide rules stated as goals (e.g. "respects others," "manages self," and "solves problems

responsibly”). Teachers rated students on a scale of 0-2 in their demonstration of these behaviors during six 60-minute time intervals during the day. Teachers provided students with specific praise or corrective feedback regarding their behavior during the time intervals. At the end of the day, students total points earned for the day were calculated. If the students earned a specified percentage of the total points possible, the whole class earned a reward such as free time, extra recess, a piece of candy, or a whole class game. Once students met a particular percentage (e.g. 75% of total points earned) consistently, teachers raised the criteria needed to earn a reward (e.g. 80% of total points earned). Fidelity of the intervention was measured through a fidelity checklist and direct observation.

As a result, four out of the ten students indicated responsiveness to the CICO intervention. Once the intervention was implemented, their number of problem behaviors decreased and remained at low levels. During the intervention, the frequency of problem behaviors for the four students participating in the intervention was lower than those of their peers.

The Tertiary Prevention Stage

Tertiary prevention is designed to address the needs of individual students who demonstrate continued problem behavior despite primary and secondary prevention strategies. Approximately 1-5% of students may require this level of intensive intervention. Students requiring tertiary prevention may demonstrate significant behavioral challenges that disrupt their learning and the learning of other students. At this level, individuals who know the student well collaborate as a team to conduct functional behavior assessments and develop behavior intervention plans. The focus of tertiary prevention is to provide intensive behavior supports tailored to the individual needs of students. The goal of tertiary prevention is to reduce the occurrence of problem behavior and to increase the occurrence of adaptive behaviors that will help students to be more successful in school and in life (OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2007d).

Example: Using a CICO Intervention and Function-Based Support

The suburban elementary school that developed a secondary intervention to address the behavior problems of ten second-grade students found that four students responded and six students did not respond to the targeted intervention (Fairbanks et al., 2007). These students’ levels of problem behavior maintained at similar levels or increased, and they continued to demonstrate serious disruptive behavior problems. Of the six students, four were selected for more intensive intervention. The remaining two students did not participate in additional intervention due to classroom and parental factors.

For each of the four students selected for intensive intervention, the teacher and school counselor completed the *Functional Assessment Checklist for Teachers and Staff* (FACTS) and identified the following factors: (a) student strengths, (b) specific behaviors of concern, (c) routines in which problem behaviors were likely to occur, (d) and conditions in which the behaviors were likely to occur. Next, a school team developed individualized behavior support plans for each student based on the hypothesized function, or purpose, of the problem behaviors exhibited. The plans included information collected from the FACTS as well as information regarding alternative behaviors and desired behaviors. The plans outlined intervention and instructional strategies to address the behaviors, how the plans were to be implemented, how data would be collected, short-term and long-term goals, and criteria for making decisions about the results of the plans. In addition to the interventions and strategies implemented through the behavior support plans, the students continued to participate in the Check-In and Check-Out intervention.

As a result, all four students indicated responsiveness to their individualized interventions used in addition to the Check-In and Check-Out intervention. The rate of problem behaviors immediately decreased and was maintained at low levels. While participating in the intervention, the four students receiving individualized and intensive intervention demonstrated lower rates of behavior problems than those of their peers.

RTI and PBIS: How are they related?

RTI and PBIS both use a three-tiered model of prevention. The model of prevention used by both systems is based on a public health model of disease prevention which identifies three levels of prevention efforts: primary, secondary, and tertiary. In the public health model, primary prevention involves providing universal prevention activities for all individuals, secondary prevention involves using selective measures for smaller at-risk groups, and tertiary prevention involves indicated measures for those at high risk for developing disease (Gordon, 1983). Both RTI and PBIS have adopted the public health model of prevention for use in education. The focus of RTI has been primarily to prevent academic problems while the focus of PBIS has been to prevent social and behavioral problems.

Both PBIS and RTI provide content-rich data for any team considering the need for special education for a student suspected of having a disability. Both PBIS and RTI provide high quality data to IEP teams engaged in the development of present levels of academic and functional performance, measurable IEP goals, and progress monitoring.

In addition to a three-tiered model of prevention, key features in common between RTI and PBIS include (Sandomierski, Kincaid, & Algozzine):

- Students are provided with quality curriculum and instruction

- A range of interventions are systematically applied and increase in intensity based on student need
- Both models use evidence-based interventions
- Data is collected to monitor progress and determine intervention effectiveness
- Team decision-making is incorporated into the process
- Fidelity is monitored and measured

PBIS and Arizona: What Supports Are Available?

The *Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports of Arizona* (PBISAz) group is a collaborative effort between the Arizona Department of Education, Arizona State University, University of Arizona, and Northern Arizona University. The group is also supported by the Center for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports at the University of Oregon. The purpose of PBISAz is "to establish a comprehensive and focused statewide effort to improve the capacity of educators, administrators and education professionals to address their specific school discipline needs and enable the development of positive teaching and learning environments." The project provides schools with expertise and resources in order to support disciplined learning environments and high academic standards in Arizona schools.

PBISAz provides direct support to school-based leadership teams as they examine their needs, implement changes in their system, and identify interventions that match the needs of their school communities. Specific supports provided by PBISAz include:

- Website: The pbisaz.org website that provides access to resources and direct communication with project and field experts online
- Conferences: Two-day conferences to assist school-based leadership teams in planning as well as additional conferences providing general information on school-wide discipline procedures, functional behavior assessment, and training for leadership teams in the coaching model
- Online Education Courses: Distance education courses and interactive instructional television courses are available online for credit that address specific issues related to school-wide discipline procedures, data collection and analysis, efficient systems, best-practices, functional behavior assessment, individual behavior management, and academic interventions
- Ongoing Professional Development: Online and face-to-face consultations to assist schools with implementing and maintaining their strategic safe school plans.

In addition, grant funding is available through the Arizona Department of Education that provides funding, support, and training to school teams. Applications are available at *http://www.pbisaz.org/*.

Where Can I Find More Information on PBIS?

- For more information on becoming involved in PBIS in Arizona, go to the Arizona PBIS website at http://www.pbisaz.org/

- Go to the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs Technical Assistance Center on PBIS website at http://www.pbis.org/

- Go to other state PBIS websites for more information and examples (such as http://www.pbismaryland.org/ or http://www.pbisillinois.org/)