

The connections between education and health Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

The Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework is an example of an evidence-based strategy with both education and health benefits. The **second** and **third** policy briefs in HPIO's four-part education and health series describe the importance of student mental health services and supports and school-based social-emotional learning, respectively. Both can be more effectively implemented when combined with PBIS. This fact sheet provides additional detail on PBIS and how it works.

What is PBIS?

PBIS is based on the idea that children can be taught how to behave appropriately, similar to how they are taught mathematics or science. Instead of reactionary discipline policies, PBIS is a comprehensive, proactive approach to improving academic and social outcomes for all students, while preventing problem behaviors. It is a decision-making framework for selecting, organizing and implementing evidence-informed behavioral supports and interventions in a school community.¹ Recognizing that interventions will not have the same effects on all students, the PBIS framework is comprised of three tiers of interventions and supports which correlate with level of student need (see figure 1). PBIS implementation looks different in every school.

Effective schoolwide implementation of PBIS can create a positive and safe school culture and climate for all students and staff.² It can decrease behavioral disruptions, thereby increasing instructional time and reducing the need for disciplinary actions such as office referrals and suspensions.³ However, appropriate structures and processes must be in place to support effective implementation of PBIS and achieve these outcomes.

There is strong research evidence that universal PBIS, which refers to strategies implemented schoolwide, improves behavior in school-age children.⁴ Studies have also found that universal PBIS:

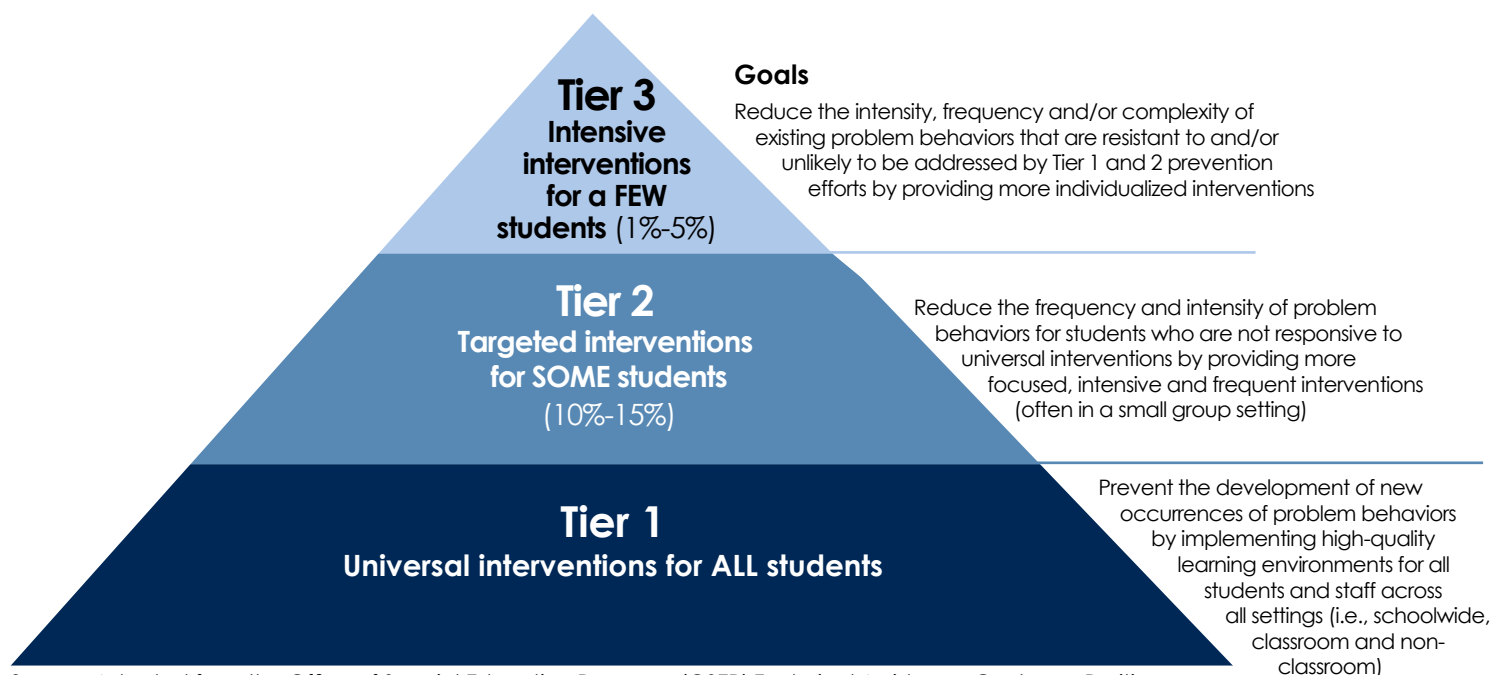
- Increases academic achievement
- Improves school climate
- Improves social-emotional skills
- Reduces bullying⁵

How does PBIS work?

Problem-solving through data-based decision making

A schoolwide leadership or behavioral support team guides the process of developing and implementing the school's PBIS framework. The team is usually comprised of an administrator, grade level representatives, support

Figure 1. **Three tiers of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)**



Source: Adapted from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

staff and parents, but others are often engaged.⁶ Using a problem-solving orientation, the leadership team:

- Analyzes school data, including disciplinary data, to determine what they would like to see change
- Selects appropriate evidence-informed policies and programs, such as social-emotional instruction
- Assesses the school's current systems and policies to determine what will need to change to support the implementation plan

Positively-stated behavioral expectations

All school staff are involved in developing a set of three to five positive behavioral expectations for the school, which are positively-worded, clear and easy to remember. For example: Be respectful of self, others and property. Expectations are chosen based on what the school has identified as needing to change.⁷

Students are taught what execution of these behavioral expectations looks like across various settings such as the classroom, hallways and playground. The expectations are normally posted in various places around the school.

Schoolwide, consistent implementation

PBIS has been found to be most effective when it has administrative support and is implemented consistently across the school.⁸ Therefore, it is critical for at least the majority of staff to buy in and agree to actively participate. This includes non-teaching staff such as bus drivers and lunchroom attendants.

Positive social behaviors are taught, modeled and reinforced by school staff. Students are rewarded for demonstrating the behavioral expectations – often with prizes or recognition. Any teacher, administrator or staff member who observes a student demonstrating a positive behavior consistent with the school expectations can recognize that student.

Disciplinary policies are also established, communicated and expected to be implemented consistently throughout the school. For example, actions warranting an office referral in one classroom will warrant the same consequences in a different classroom.

Tiered interventions

PBIS interventions are typically organized into three progressively intensive tiers (see figure 1) so that the school's behavioral resources and efforts are appropriately matched to the level of student need. This is consistent with the **multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) framework**.⁹

Notes

1. "PBIS FAQs." OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. Accessed Dec. 7, 2017. <https://www.pbis.org/school/swpbis-for-beginners/pbis-faq>

2. *PBIS Fact Sheet*. Ohio Department of Education. February 2014. <http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Other-Resources/School-Safety/Building-Better-Learning-Environments/PBIS-Resources/Ohio-Positive-Behavior-Interventions-Network-1/Why-Overview-Fact-Sheet.pdf.aspx>

3. "PBIS in the Classroom." OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. Accessed Dec. 7, 2017. <https://www.pbis.org/school/pbis-in-the-classroom>

4. "School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (Tier 1)." What Works for Health. Accessed Dec. 8, 2017. <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/take-action-to-improve-health/what-works-for-health>

5. *Ibid.*

6. "Tier 1 FAQs." OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. Accessed Dec. 7, 2017. <https://www.pbis.org/school/tier1supports/tier1faqs>

7. "Tier 1 Case Examples." OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. Accessed Dec. 7, 2017. <https://www.pbis.org/school/swpbis-for-beginners/pbis-faqs>

8. *Getting Started...with Ohio Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports*. Ohio PBIS Network. <http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Other-Resources/School-Safety/Building-Better-Learning-Environments/PBIS-Resources/Ohio-Positive-Behavior-Interventions-Network-2/Getting-Started-with-Ohio-PBIS.pdf.aspx>

9. "MTSS." OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. Accessed Dec. 7, 2017. <https://www.pbis.org/school/mtss>

10. "What is Tier 3 PBIS?" OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. Accessed Dec. 7, 2017. <https://www.pbis.org/school/tier-3-supports/what-is-tier-3-pbis>

11. Weiss, Giudi and Kathleen Skowrya. "Schools turn to treatment, not punishment, for children with mental health needs." Innovation brief. Models for Change, 2013.

Ideally, appropriate, evidence-informed policies and strategies are used in each tier.

- **Tier 1** schoolwide interventions aim to enhance positive behavior across the school and discourage problem behaviors. The Good Behavior Game is an example of a Tier 1 evidence-based strategy.
- **Tier 2** involves more targeted interventions for some students who are not fully responding to Tier 1 policies and are at risk for problem behaviors. Tier 2 support programs often involve small groups of students or simple individualized strategies, such as having the student check in and check out with a designated staff member at the beginning and end of each school day.
- **Tier 3** involves more intensive individualized interventions for a few students exhibiting severe and persistent behavioral challenges and not responding to Tier 1 or 2 interventions. For example, a behavior intervention plan may be developed for each student in Tier 3, outlining mental health services and other wraparound supports which may be helpful. Students in need of Tier 3 supports often include students with developmental disabilities or behavioral disorders.¹⁰

Many schools recognize that student behavior problems are often associated with untreated mental health conditions.¹¹ The PBIS multi-tiered framework is ideal for incorporating a range of mental health interventions, including mental health promotion, early intervention and treatment. For more information on school mental health programs, see HPIO's policy brief **Connections between Education and Health No. 2: Health Services in Schools**.

Continual monitoring of student progress

Data collection and analysis are key to evaluating whether a school's PBIS plan is successfully improving student behavior and academic outcomes. Schools should continually collect and monitor data, making adjustments when policies or practices do not seem to be having the desired effects.

PBIS in Ohio

The Ohio Administrative Code (**3301-35-15**) states, "Each school district shall implement positive behavior interventions and supports on a system-wide basis." The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) **State Support Teams** and **Ohio PBIS Network** offer resources, technical assistance and training services to assist schools with PBIS implementation. Although school districts are required to use PBIS, ODE does not track the number of districts implementing it.