



NJ Positive Behavior Support in Schools

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Involving Families in PBSIS

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Involving family members in the PBSIS leadership team is important to the success and sustainability of school-wide positive behavior support. Family members can provide a wealth of knowledge regarding children’s perspectives on school, children’s needs at home, family and community member views, and effective ways to communicate with families and the community at large. Having a family member at your school’s monthly PBSIS meetings is a great way to help ensure that the PBSIS team is meeting the needs of all school stakeholders. Ideally, schools should strive to have family representatives on the PBSIS team who have had experience with general and special education. Getting family members at the meetings may take some creative scheduling, such as having meetings early in the morning, late afternoon, or evening. If family members are unable to attend school meetings due to schedule conflicts, try conference calls or videoconferencing. Even if family members cannot participate in the entire meeting, designate a set time (e.g., last 30 minutes of meeting) when they can call in to get an update and participate in decision-making.



Beyond having family representation on the PBSIS team, it is important to disseminate information about PBSIS activities to all family and community members. Family members who are informed about PBSIS activities at the school can help reinforce PBSIS expectations at home (e.g., asking students about the school expectations during dinner). Here are some suggestions for keeping family members informed about PBSIS activities:

- ♦ Develop a family PBSIS newsletter. You can include updates on PBSIS activities in the school, tips on how to include positive behavior support strategies in the home, and suggestions for how parents can reinforce the school expectations. Make sure to have alternate language formats of the newsletter in prevalent languages of the community.

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For more information and products visit the NJ PBSIS website
www.njpbs.org

PBSIS Hints from Hackensack High School

Hackensack High School has been involved with the PBSIS initiative since the 2004-2005 school year, and is currently starting their third year of implementing the universal intervention. The Hackensack High School PBSIS team has facilitated some great changes at their school during the past several years and we believe everyone can benefit from some of their "lessons learned." The following are some helpful PBSIS hints based on the experiences from the Hackensack High School PBSIS team:

Use data to differentiate PBSIS instruction: The PBSIS team compared the number of office discipline referrals each grade accumulated over the school year. The team found that one grade received more referrals than the other grades. Based on the data the team is planning to differentiate instruction at their next PBSIS instructional event. Instead of having all students receive the same amount and type of instruction related to the behavioral expectations, the team decided to provide more intensive and targeted instruction to the grade with the higher number of referrals. This is a great example of how the PBSIS team is using data to make decisions that meet their specific school needs.

Educate your staff about PBSIS: To help their staff learn more about positive behavior support strategies and the PBSIS program, the team decided to hold a PBSIS "lunch and learn" session. During their lunch hour, staff could attend a brief informational session to receive updates on PBSIS data and activities. The "lunch and learn" also served as a great venue for staff members to ask the team questions about the PBSIS process. Another way the team is helping their staff learn about PBSIS is by creating a **PBSIS library section** at the school. The team is ordering books on positive behavior support strategies for the school-wide, classroom and individual level that all staff can consult. Both of these examples are creative ways to help all school staff become knowledgeable about positive behavior support.

Bring on new team members: PBSIS teams may find that they lose team members over time due to retirement, maternity or sick leave or other reasons. When the Hackensack High School team experienced a loss of original team members, they recruited new team members who brought novel and creative ideas to the team. Bringing new members onto the team is a great way to infuse energy, fresh thinking and excitement to the PBSIS planning and implementation process.

Ways to Support Your PBSIS Coach

A PBSIS coach has important responsibilities, so it is helpful to find ways to provide support to a coach. Here are some ways to support your PBSIS coach:

- Enlist a co-coach to help (think of asking parents as well as staff).
- Offer your PBSIS coach professional development credits for his/her PBSIS work.

- Provide your PBSIS coach with 1-2 hours a week of secretarial support.
- If applicable, provide your PBSIS coach with classroom coverage 1-2 hours a week to allow him/her time to engage in PBSIS responsibilities.
- Recruit parent and student volunteers to help with PBSIS activities, such as photocopying, typing or distributing information to staff.

School Spotlight: Washington Elementary

By Dean A. Smith, M.A., L.C.S.W.
Coach, PBSIS

Greetings from Washington Elementary School in beautiful Roselle, New Jersey! We are starting our fifth year of enjoying the benefits of implementing Positive Behavior Support in Schools. There have been challenges, success, adversity and a lot of learning taking place over the past four years.

This year, we have a new building principal, Mrs. Dana Walker who has continued to support and implement the PBSIS program and philosophy. Mrs. Walker deserves a great amount of credit for being an active proponent and participant in the PBSIS program as a new administrator. She has a great deal of responsibility in her new position as principal. Despite her busy schedule, she continues to ensure that PBSIS is a priority for Washington Elementary.

It has been a long and rewarding road for Washington Elementary. During the 2005-2006 school year, we were on the news on two occasions. Washington's PBSIS was featured on an educational news piece on channel 12 with Brian Johnson. We were also featured on a Channel 7 Eyewitness News Piece with Art McFarland. Washington Elementary School was also awarded the NJ School Board's School Leadership Award for our PBSIS program. It has been nice to be recognized for our hard work. We also feel that our success has provided a nice opportunity to spread the word about PBSIS.

Washington Elementary continues to use resources within our district to implement PBSIS. For example, our district's pre-vocational program for students with autism does the printing of our "Patriot Passes" for our reinforcement system.

We look forward to continuing with PBSIS for many years to come. We have also applied its principles to some of the other schools in our district. Grace Wilday Junior High School completed training last year and will be jumping on board the PBSIS train during the 2007-2007 school year. It's a pleasure to see that our hard work and success seems to be contagious!

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- ♦ Submit brief articles on PBSIS activities to local community papers so members of your community can stay informed about PBSIS at your school.
- ♦ Present PBSIS updates at PTA, PTO, or other parent organization meetings.
- ♦ Disseminate PBSIS information at school events, such as "Back to School Night," parent-teacher conferences or school sporting events.
- ♦ Hold workshops at local community centers that are tailored to the needs of families. The first part of the meeting can be used to inform parents about PBSIS activities, while the second part can be a workshop on topics of interest to families, such as college financial aid, tax preparation or cooking classes. Additionally, you can present information about how to integrate positive behavior support strategies into the home setting.
- ♦ Create a DVD or video that parents can borrow from the school or local library that introduces and explains PBSIS at your school. You can also create media documents that help parents implement PBSIS components at home, such as using the expectations in the home setting and acknowledging appropriate behavior.
- ♦ Create a PBSIS web page that links to your school's website and includes information about PBSIS at your school. You can also post links to other websites that have positive behavior support information for families. In addition, if you create a DVD or video as suggested above, you can provide it to families via your website!

Tips for Teachers: Defusing Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom

Does the following scenario sound familiar to you? *While completing a writing assignment, Johnny loses his focus and starts talking to other students. His teacher tells him to stop talking and get back to work. Johnny says, "I don't care about this stuff, I am not doing it." His teacher responds, "Why do you always fight with me? You need to complete your work." Johnny puts his head down on the desk and his teacher tells him to pick his head up or go to the office. Johnny then stands up, slams his work on his desk and storms out of the room.*

Teachers face a variety of disruptive and disrespectful behaviors within their classrooms. These behaviors are not only frustrating for the teacher, but they also result in a loss of instructional time for the student and the entire class. Teachers and other school staff are dealing with disruptions on a daily basis and, like the scenario above, many minor behavior problems can quickly escalate into more major disruptive behaviors. Below are some tips for teachers and other school staff on defusing disruptive behaviors in the classroom.

PREVENTION IS THE BEST INTERVENTION

Life is easier and less frustrating for everyone when behavior problems do not occur in the first place. There are several simple and effective steps teachers can use to prevent disruptive behaviors from occurring:

♦ **Determine why the behavior is occurring:**

There are many reasons why problem behaviors could be occurring. Some common reasons why students exhibit problem behaviors include boredom, frustration with a task, to gain control of a situation, or to get attention (positive or negative). Once you understand why the behavior is occurring you can make simple changes to prevent the behavior. Examples include adapting materials or instruction, providing the student with

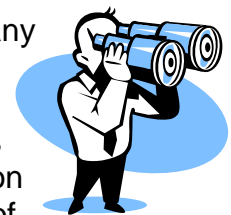
choices, having the student use a signal to indicate frustration, or having the student participate in group work.

♦ **Praise:** A simple yet extremely effective intervention is acknowledging students for demonstrating appropriate behavior. This is a great way to encourage the student to display that same behavior in the future. Additionally, acknowledging a student who is on-task can help motivate other students to get on-task. Simple statements that are positive and indicate the reason for the praise are very effective. PBSIS schools can also use their school's PBSIS tickets or coupons to acknowledge appropriate student behavior. Staff should try for a ratio of 4 positives to every one negative/corrective comment made to the class to ensure students are receiving sufficient affirmation of their performance.



♦ **Precorrection:** Instead of correcting students after they exhibit a problem behavior, prevent behaviors from occurring by teaching and reminding *before* the problem behavior occurs. For example, if students typically enter the classroom loudly, dedicate a few minutes to practicing the correct way to enter the room and then stand outside the classroom door and remind them to be quiet before they enter the classroom. In addition, remember to praise those students who do enter the classroom quietly!

♦ **Active supervision:** Many disruptive behaviors can be prevented when students are aware that a teacher is keeping a watchful eye on them. The key components of effective supervision are visually *scanning* the classroom, *moving* around the room and getting close to those students who are off-task, and *interacting* briefly with students to ensure they are on-task.



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Tips for Teachers: Defusing Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom

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CATCH IT EARLY AND REDIRECT

Most initial problem behaviors that students exhibit are lower intensity behaviors and can be stopped quickly. Some strategies to use with students exhibiting lower intensity behaviors include:

♦ **Remind the class about the expectations:**

Give a reminder to the class about the expected behavior and praise students who are demonstrating the expectations. This will keep the majority of the class on-task and prompt students who are off-task to follow the expectations.

♦ **Maintain the class before attending to the student:**

To keep the instructional program moving forward, focus first on the needs of the majority of the class, as it is better to have one student off-task rather than thirty. This technique will also help eliminate having an audience focus on the problem behavior. Assign an independent or small group activity to keep the class engaged so you can speak one-on-one with the disruptive student.



♦ **Redirect the student:** Typically, students exhibiting lower intensity behaviors can be redirected back to the task at hand without escalating their behavior. The key is to talk to the student individually and bring their attention back to the immediate task. Thus, bringing up the problem behavior at this moment may not be beneficial (you can always talk about the problem behavior after class). Instead, determine if the student needs assistance, prompt the student to begin the task, or provide the student with a choice regarding task completion (e.g., which part of task to begin first).

AVOID A POWER STRUGGLE

Student behavior can escalate from lower intensity to higher intensity in a relatively short time period. A key variable in the escalation process is how others, particularly adults, respond to the student.

Some students are skilled at drawing adults into a power struggle, where the adult's response can



actually trigger more disrespectful behavior by the student. This can occur without the adult being aware that he/she has entered into a power struggle. Adults can help prevent the escalation of student behavior by being aware of and controlling their responses. Problematic student behavior can be very challenging and frustrating, so avoiding a power struggle can be difficult. Here are some strategies to avoid power struggles:

♦ **Appear calm, even if you are not:**

Appearing calm is the first and most important way to avoid a power struggle. Your reaction to the student's behavior will greatly influence how the student responds next. It does not matter what you think or feel, just make sure your outward appearance does not show that you are upset (e.g., use a neutral tone of voice). Try to remember that the student is engaging in a behavior that has worked for him/her in the past with other adults. Some students have had a lot of practice in getting a desired response from adults through their behavior (e.g. getting attention or being sent out of a difficult class).

♦ **Determine if a "cool down" is necessary:**

If a student's behavior is starting to escalate and emotions are running high (for you and the student), have the student take a "cool down" break. This break is not intended to let the student get out of work or an activity; rather it is to let the student gain control of his/her

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emotions and behavior. You will be able to more effectively deal with the situation when the student has calmed down.

♦ **Speak privately with the student:** Some disruptive behaviors are due to a student “saving face” in front of peers. The student may believe that giving-in to the teacher’s demands would make the student look weak in front of the class. Addressing the student in private will allow the student to respond without peer pressure.

♦ **Be brief:** When talking with students who are acting disrespectful it is important to keep your responses brief and related to the current situation. Lengthy responses may make the student’s behavior worse or be what the student wants, especially if the student is engaging in the behavior to get adult attention. If the student continues to act disrespectfully, give the student an option of either engaging in the appropriate behavior or experiencing a consequence. Make sure that the consequence is clear, appropriate and feasible. Making threats that are not implemented will only make future situations worse.

When disruptive behavior occurs in the classroom, remember that prevention is the best intervention! Any behavior that can be predicted can be prevented. Additionally, when a student starts to engage in problem behavior there are different strategies that can be used to prevent the escalation of behavior. Most importantly, when students are engaging in disruptive behaviors ensure that your responses prevent you from entering a power struggle with the student. The above mentioned strategies are simple, yet effective ways to defuse disruptive behavior.

PBSIS Coach Receives School Psychologist of the Year Award

Congratulations to John Lestino, the PBSIS coach at Ridgway Middle School in Edgewater Park Township, who received the New Jersey School Psychologist of the Year award from the New Jersey Association of School Psychologists. John accepted the award at a conference on May 11, 2007.

Training Opportunities

The NJDOE OSEP Learning Resource Centers (LRCs) offer different training opportunities related to instruction and behavior support. Below are behavior support workshops offered during the 2007-2008 school year:

- Functional Behavioral Assessment and Design of Intervention Plans
- Small Group Interventions for Students with Repeated Problem Behaviors
- Supporting Inclusion Through the Development of Respectful Classroom Environments: A Training for Trainers

Please call your local LRC regarding dates, registration and fees for these workshops:

- Northern Region: (973) 414-4491
- Northern Satellite: (973) 631-6345
- Central Region: (732) 274-5570
- Southern Region: (856) 582-7000

Stay in Touch

Please share your success stories, questions and comments via email:

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