



NJ Positive Behavior Support in Schools

PBSIS is a partnership between the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (NJOSEP) and The Elizabeth M. Boggs Center at UMDNJ. This project is funded through the New Jersey State Improvement Grant for Special Education: Partnerships for Access, Equity, and Outcomes (IDEA B Funds, Contract Grant Award: H323010006).

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Welcome

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Welcome to the first edition of the PBSIS newsletter. The goal of this newsletter is to share information about the Positive Behavior Support in Schools (PBSIS) Initiative. PBSIS is a NJ OSEP funded initiative to support the inclusion of students with disabilities within general education programs by developing the capacity of schools to create environments that encourage and support pro-social student behavior at the school wide, classroom, and individual student levels using current, research validated practices in positive behavior support. To do this, the PBSIS project uses the School Wide Positive Behavior Support multi-tiered model of intervention that includes: Universal Interventions for all students, all settings, and all staff; Small Group Interventions for groups of students who are at-risk; and Individualized Interventions for students with the most intensive needs. Our hope is that this newsletter will serve as a vehicle to disseminate best practices related to School Wide Positive Behavior Support. Additionally, this newsletter will provide a forum for sharing the successes PBSIS building teams have experienced and challenges they have overcome. We hope that you find the newsletter helpful and invite you to share your success stories, questions, and points of interests with us to include in future newsletters.

Visit the NJ PBSIS website at:
www.njpbs.org

Message from NJOSEP

For the past three years, the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, has partnered with the Elizabeth M. Boggs Center to introduce Positive Behavioral Supports in Schools to New Jersey. Positive Behavioral Supports in Schools (PBSIS) is part of a national initiative to provide systems level supports to staff and students within public school settings. As you read the articles within this newsletter, you will learn about the three levels of support: school-wide, small group and individual supports to assist staff learn proactive ways of teaching and rewarding students for appropriate behavior and to provide a continuum of more

intensive interventions for students who need them. From the Department's perspective, PBSIS is a way of fostering positive school environments so that all students, most particularly, students with disabilities, can be successfully included within general education programs. For many students with disabilities, explicit teaching and reinforcement of appropriate behaviors are critical to help students understand and demonstrate "unspoken, but expected" school behaviors. Additionally, by creating school-wide positive expectations and recognition systems all staff become more positive in their interactions with students, and

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School Spotlight: Eisenhower Middle School

R's and Stars: Creating a Respectful School!

By Cory Radisch
Teacher & PBSIS Team Member

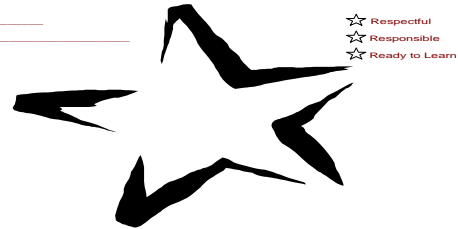
Shouldn't kids just behave? Ideally, the answer to that question is yes. However, it has become apparent that if schools want their students to be respectful and responsible it is our job to teach them how. At Eisenhower Middle School, in Freehold Township, a majority of our office referrals during school year 04-05 were marked as disrespectful behavior. After surveying our students, we realized that students needed more instruction on respectful behaviors. They were well versed in telling us things they should not do, but were unsure about what staff expected of them.

Our school, like most other schools, had expectations; we just never conveyed them consistently. Each year, at our opening assembly, the administration would start out by telling our students what they were not allowed to do and what consequences would result. We never actually taught our students the expectations until they were caught doing something inappropriate. Therefore, the small percentage of students who behaved inappropriately would get the majority of the attention. However, the negative recognition they were receiving did little to prevent or change the unwanted behavior. We needed a change in our approach.

That change came in the form of our Positive Behavior Support In Schools grant. After collecting and analyzing data for nearly a year, Eisenhower Middle School developed their new expectations: Be Respectful, Responsible, and Ready to Learn. Our incredible staff designed lesson plans for every area of our school, as well as a school-wide recognition system to use whenever our students meet or exceed these expectations. We have dubbed the framework **R's and Stars**: The R's are for the expectations

and the stars are how the students are recognized for positive behaviors.

Date: _____
Staff Name: _____



Star Slip for recognizing positive behaviors

The implementation of R's and Stars has created a tremendous change in our school. **As of March 1, we have a 36% decrease in office referrals from a year ago.** More than just a reduction in problem behavior, we are seeing an increase in appropriate behavior. Our staff members distribute nearly 1,300 stars per month and we have recognized over 8,000 positive behaviors so far this year. Incredibly, our ratio of positive feedback to negative feedback is roughly 30:1, seven times the suggested ratio of 4:1.

Our students genuinely like being recognized. One sixth grade student was quoted as saying, "It's cool to be recognized, but it is cooler to be appreciated." Staff members have also commented on changes in their classrooms. For example, one teacher stated, "Recognizing students for expected behaviors at the beginning of the class has improved student focus. My students are more motivated to start working and I make fewer corrective statements." Establishing routines and acknowledging students have made classrooms that are more efficient. In my class, routines and expectations are discussed daily, resulting in more time for instruction. For example, after my students see me close the door they know immediately to get started on their "Do Now." I made it a habit of distributing stars to those students who started before the door was closed. Other students witnessed this and before long, the majority of my students were starting their work before the door was shut. The environment in my class was dramatically changed I no longer have to spend the first few minutes getting the class settled.

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Hope and Promise with SWPBS

By John C. Lestino, MA LPC
Professional Development Chairperson
NJASP

The New Jersey Association of School Psychologists (NJASP) is a professional organization of school psychologists with nearly fifty years of experience in helping the children of New Jersey. The NJASP members work at the Child Study Team, prevention, and early intervention stages of student support. Several years ago the NJASP initiated meetings with the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) to build bridges to work on common challenges. The meetings with the NJDOE were a means to directly formalize NJASP's efforts to support school age students more collaboratively with the Department of Education. Those initial meetings often consisted of direct dialogue and discussion with Barbara Gantwerk, Acting Assistant Commissioner, Division of Student Services and Roberta Wohle, Acting Director, Office of Special Education Programs. These meetings were the foundation for a truly collaborative partnership with the NJDOE. The goals of these initial meetings were to communicate ideas, discuss solutions and to work pro-actively toward improving school-based outcomes for our children. We discussed program initiatives around school leadership practices and the many school activities that school psychologists are directly involved in and contributing to.

Over the past year the NJDOE, Office of Special Education Programs confirmed an opportunity for school psychologists to become leaders and participants in the school improvement initiative Positive Behavior Supports in Schools (PBSIS). PBSIS provides training and outreach to schools using a multi-tiered intervention model called School Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS). A major goal of the PBSIS initiative is to help increase the inclusion of students with disabilities within general education programs by strengthening the capacity of New Jersey schools to create and support environments that encourage and maintain pro-social student behavior at the school wide, classroom, and individual student levels.

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Planning for Next Year

Are you ready for next year's instructional event? Although September feels far away, planning needs to occur this spring to make sure that next fall's instructional event goes smoothly. Whether this is your first or fifth instructional event, your PBSIS team should spend time during your spring meetings discussing and planning for the upcoming instructional event. Use the End of the Year Checklist below to make sure everything is covered.

End of Year Checklist

- A date(s) for the instructional event has been identified and approved
- If half-day/in-service is needed for the instructional event, approval from superintendent has been obtained
- Lesson plans for each area have been developed, reviewed, and finalized
- All necessary materials for the lesson plans are developed (e.g., directions, scripts, video clips, worksheets)
- A schedule of events with times, locations, and personnel coordination has been developed and approved
- Additional needed personnel (teach a lesson, supervise area, etc.) have been secured
- All necessary materials for instructional event have been developed and copied for staff
- Scripts for opening and closing remarks have been developed
- A sufficient number of tickets and prizes are available for the first 2 months of school
- ODR forms are finalized and copied
- A schedule for next year's PBSIS team meetings has been developed

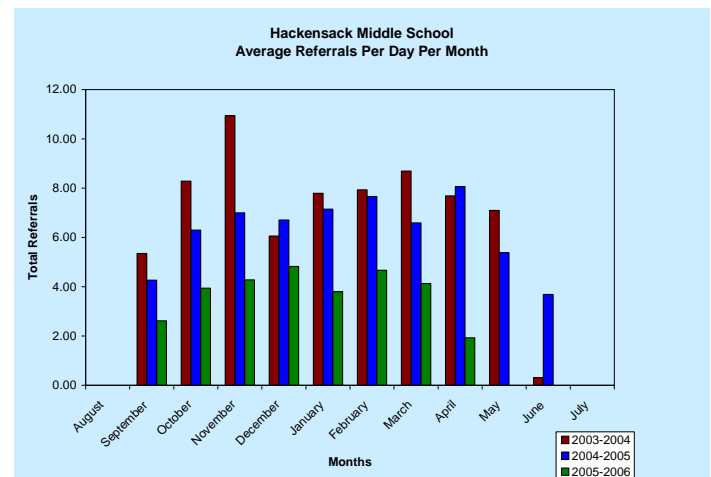
Success Story: Hackensack Middle School

Hackensack Middle School is located in northeastern NJ and has approximately 720 7th and 8th grade students. The school began the PBSIS planning process during the 2003-2004 school year, during which time they planned their universal intervention, including development of school wide expectations, a system to recognize students meeting the expectations, and a consistent office discipline referral process.

In September 2004, school staff taught students the expectations and recognition system in a half-day instructional event. During the year the PBSIS team focused on improving the universal intervention and making it part of the school's structure.

In looking at their data, the team identified a small group of students who were receiving a large percentage of the school's office discipline referrals. During the 2005-2006 school year, groups of staff members were trained on skills to help support those students who are in need of more support. Two groups of students were targeted: (1) students who would benefit from small-group interventions, such as behavior contracts, social skills instruction, and staff mentoring; and (2) students who required more intensive, individualized support.

Hackensack Middle School now implements interventions at all three tiers of behavior support: universal interventions for all students, small-group interventions for students with repeated referrals, and individualized interventions for students who require more intensive support. As can be seen in their data, they have seen a decrease in office discipline referrals during every month of the current school year.



The continued implementation of all three levels of positive behavior support will help to make the school a more positive learning environment for all students and staff. The hard work of the Hackensack Middle School PBSIS team and the entire school staff has resulted in many positive outcomes. We would like to congratulate them on making their school a better place!

Message from NJOSEP

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students respond accordingly. While there will always be some students for whom a greater level of intensive supports are needed, through PBSIS precious school resources can be redirected from dealing with many nuisance behaviors to more serious, ongoing difficulties. Through careful collection and analysis of behavioral data, schools we have been working with are becoming more proactive in identifying their needs and putting interventions in place.

As a result, many staff and students are reporting improvements in school climate by staff and students as well as reductions in discipline referrals. We are also seeing that some of our schools are beginning to develop systems of support to work with students who have more intensive needs. We are excited to be partnering with the New Jersey School Psychologists Association to expand our work next year to additional districts, thereby creating more examples of these practices within our state.

R's and Stars: Creating a Respectful School!

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This has created more instructional time and has afforded me the ability to provide individual help when students are struggling with a concept.

Our data signifies success, but also allows us to determine when to apply specific intervention strategies. Our cafeteria received the first intervention. Office referrals and staff feedback indicated that we needed to improve the behavior in our cafeteria. The first part of our intervention included staff development on active supervision. The second part of the intervention was re-teaching the cafeteria expectations. The last part of the intervention incorporated a cafeteria competition between the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Students were able to earn cafeteria stars for exhibiting positive behaviors and the class with the most stars at the end of the competition was rewarded with an extended lunch to play games or listen to their ipods. As staff actively supervised the competition, we saw an improvement in the overall behavior and climate in our lunchroom.

Interventions not only help in large group settings, but with individuals who present frequent challenging behaviors. We have been successful with many "at-risk" students, as we

have incorporated our expectations (Respectful, Responsible, and Ready to Learn) into specific behavioral management plans for these students. Behavior is like any other skill, it must be taught in order for students to be successful. Establishing routines and frequently reminding these students of the expectations is important; however, it is critical that when they meet or exceed expectations we acknowledge them instantly. The energy put into making this work is not only for the "at-risk" student, but for the entire class. In using our old reactive strategies, teachers spent just as much or more time and effort trying to get difficult students on task. Consequently, it negatively impacted the rest of the learners. With the implementation of these positive behavior support management plans, teachers have discovered the benefits of being proactive. One colleague stated, "As we learned in our professional development, I have the ability to prevent fires, not just put them out. It allows me to feel comfortable knowing my energy will be spent teaching, not correcting poor behavior." The proactive strategies are the crux of PBSIS. In only a few short months, we have seen many benefits from our work. Moreover, we know we still have work to do. It is important to understand that PBSIS is a framework with no finish line. When people ask me how PBSIS is going, I always say, "It's good, but it can be better." The bottom line is when we are talking about our character, we can always be better.

Question & Answer

The staff at our school want to know if PBSIS is making a difference at our school. What should we tell them?

It is very important that the PBSIS team communicates with the school community about changes in the school and there are several pieces of information that can be shared with them. First, it is important to look at your school's office discipline referrals each month to determine if there have been changes in the number of referrals. Look at both monthly and yearly comparisons. Examining if there has been a change in the number of suspensions is also helpful. Another idea is to remind the staff about the increase in positive reinforcement students have received. For example, sharing with staff that over 100 students have received a postcard home commending them on their appropriate school behavior this year will demonstrate the increase of student recognition. Finally, the PBSIS team can survey staff and students to see if their perceptions of the school have changed.

Hope and Promise with SWPBS

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Using the School Wide Positive Behavior Support model (SWPBS), the PBSIS project works with schools to develop a continuum of behavior support for all students that is premised on prevention and instruction. One of the central features of SWPBS is the assurance that citizenship and discipline practices within a school are consistent and coordinated with administrative involvement/support and classroom teacher participation and involvement. SWPBS practices hold the promise of widening and strengthening good building procedures in the area of self-discipline for the range of student populations. The goal is that as school climate improves overall (in both social and scholastic realms) two important outcomes also occur: (1) an increase in student academic productivity, and (2) a broadening of the ability to provide behavioral support to a continuum of student needs within the local building.

A main outcome of SWPBS is the increased likelihood of creating a positive school climate due to the staff's focus on important and defined student outcomes, (e.g. the utilization of research validated practices); an emphasis on systems of support (rather than individual or grade level); and decision-making informed and shaped by data collected at the local building level. All-in-all the PBSIS initiative builds on many of the core ecological factors that can positively impact student self-discipline in the service of academic and social-citizenship skill development.

We have already had an impact this year, as NJASP sponsored a series of regional meetings throughout the state whereby approximately 150 school psychologists and several building administrators were able to gain a working knowledge of the SWPBS program. Talk about outreach! We are most appreciative of being part of this very important program, and look forward to being an integral part of this initiative.

Conference & Training Opportunities

- NJ DOE Learning Resource Centers offer different training sessions on behavior support. Check with your local Learning Resource Center for more information:
 - Northern Region: (973) 414-4491
 - Northern Satellite: (973) 631-6345
 - Central Region: (732) 274-5570
 - Southern Region: (856) 582-7000
- The Elizabeth M. Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities is sponsoring the following conference:
 - "Positive Behavior Supports: State of the Art and Evidence Base"
 - June 16, 2006
 - 8:00a.m. – 4:15 p.m.
 - Find more information at:
<http://rwjms.umdnj.edu/boggscenter/conferences/index.htm>

Stay in Touch

Please share your success stories, questions and comments. Contact us via email: sharon.lohrmann@umdnj.edu or stacy.martin@umdnj.edu

Have a great summer!