PBIS and the *Responsive Classroom®* Approach

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), an evidence-based framework for developing positive behavior, is used in schools nationwide to create a positive climate for learning.

The *Responsive Classroom* approach is a research-based approach to teaching that offers elementary schools practical strategies for bringing together social and academic learning throughout the school day. *Responsive Classroom* teaching practices and strategies achieve many of the goals of PBIS. These strategies were developed by elementary classroom teachers and school leaders. Schools can use the *Responsive Classroom* approach to implement high-quality PBIS. (Northeast Foundation for Children, n.d.)

The premise of both PBIS and the *Responsive Classroom* approach is that continual teaching, modeling, and reinforcing of positive behavior will support children's positive behaviors, reduce discipline problems, and promote a climate of greater productivity, safety, and learning.

Following is a description of what PBIS is and how the *Responsive Classroom* approach fits with PBIS.

What Is PBIS?

PBIS, also known as PBS (Positive Behavior Supports), is a framework for providing a broad range of systemic and individualized strategies for achieving important academic and behavior outcomes while preventing problem behavior (OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, n.d.).

An application of behavior analysis, PBIS focuses on teaching children positive behaviors and changing children's environment so that using the positive behaviors becomes more effective for them than using negative behaviors (Sailor, Dunlap, Sugai, & Horner, 2008; OSEP Technical Assistance Center on PBIS, n.d.; Association for Positive Behavior Support, n.d.[a]).

The developers of PBIS name goals and identify broad features that help ensure success in reaching those goals, but they do not prescribe or advocate specific teaching practices or programs. This allows schools to choose practices and programs that fit their geographic, cultural, and logistical characteristics (Florida's Positive Behavior Support Project, n.d.).

PBIS was originally developed as a way to work with students and other individuals with developmental disabilities in various settings, including schools. It was an alternative to punishment-based and other aversive interventions for addressing self-injuring, aggressive, or other behaviors that impeded an individual's learning or the learning or comfort of others (Sailor, Dunlap, Sugai, & Horner, 2008).

Over time, educators began to expand the scope of PBIS to address the larger school community. They recognized that individuals with disabilities do better when the whole school environment is one that supports positive behavior, and that all students benefit from such an environment. PBIS thus evolved into a way to design schoolwide supports—those for typical students as well as students with disabilities (Sailor, Dunlap, Sugai, & Horner, 2008).

PBIS's Three-Tiered Framework

PBIS recommends a three-tiered approach for preventing problem behaviors schoolwide:

■ *Primary Prevention*

Classroom and schoolwide strategies for all students in the school. The goal is to create a positive social culture in which positive behaviors are explicitly taught and reinforced and all adults respond to problem behaviors in a consistent way. For example, to prevent injuries caused by running in the halls, schools might establish and teach the rule "Walk in the halls," create a routine of staff stationing themselves in hallways during transition times to supervise students, and agree that an adult will accompany any group of students when they are in the halls (OSEP Technical Assistance Center on PBIS, n.d.).

■ *Secondary Prevention*

Additional interventions for students with at-risk behaviors who need a little more than primary prevention. Examples of Secondary Prevention include check-ins/check-outs, small-group or individual review of the rules, social skills clubs, and behavior contracts (OSEP Technical Assistance Center on PBIS, n.d.).

■ *Tertiary Prevention*

Highly individualized interventions for students who engage in serious problem behaviors. Tertiary Prevention may be needed for children with emotional and behavioral disorders, as well as students with no diagnostic label but who are demonstrating serious problem behaviors. The supports are tailored for each child. For example, for "Hannah," a ten-year-old who was engaging in significant off-task and disruptive behaviors, the interventions included teaching her to use on-task behaviors for group lessons and seatwork, and to keep track of her own behavior on a behavior card. She then could trade in the plus signs on her card for the reward of inviting a friend to join her for free time (OSEP Technical Assistance Center on PBIS, n.d.).

How Are PBIS and the *Responsive Classroom* Approach Similar?

PBIS and the *Responsive Classroom* approach share the same fundamental principles about how best to minimize problem behavior (Association for Positive Behavior Support, n.d.[b]; OSEP Technical Assistance Center on PBIS, n.d.; Beach Center on Disability, 2009). Here are "big ideas" that both approaches emphasize:

■ *Use positive strategies*

Both PBIS and the *Responsive Classroom* approach use positive strategies to help children develop desired behaviors. Both recognize that punitive or "get tough" strategies can be counterproductive and are harmful to children.

■ *Establish a positive environment*

Both PBIS and the *Responsive Classroom* approach focus on changing children's environment in ways that support positive behavior and discourage negative behavior.

■ *Teach skills*

Both PBIS and the *Responsive Classroom* approach recognize that if we want children to meet behavior expectations, we have to take deliberate steps to teach them how.

■ *Reinforce positive behavior*

Both PBIS and the *Responsive Classroom* approach recognize the importance of continuously reinforcing positive behavior once children have been taught how to behave positively.

■ *Respond to inappropriate behavior*

Both PBIS and the *Responsive Classroom* approach emphasize having a system for responding immediately and consistently to children's inappropriate behavior.

Recognition of the Link Between PBIS and the *Responsive Classroom* Approach

Many educators throughout the U.S. recognize the above-described similarities between PBIS and the *Responsive Classroom* approach. For example:

- In Fairfax, Virginia, a report evaluating district public schools' implementation of PBS says "PBS is a framework that provides an approach to school discipline and that can incorporate other behavior programs such as *Responsive Classroom*, character education, bully prevention programs, Second Step, etc." and that PBS "addresses the needs of all students and can include basic character education programs, bully prevention, and *Responsive Classroom*" (Fairfax County Public Schools, 2006).

- The Chicago Public Schools, in telling its teachers and school leaders about PBIS, cites the University of Virginia's research on the *Responsive Classroom* approach as evidence suggesting the impact of PBIS (Chicago Public Schools Toolkit, 2008).

- Rae Ann Knopf, the Vermont PBS state coordinator, writes, "PBS complements other efforts under way in Vermont schools and creates a framework for maximizing their value (*Responsive Classroom*, Olweus Bullying Program, LSCI, CPI, Second Step, RtI, CES, etc.)" (Knopf, n.d.).

Research on the *Responsive Classroom* Approach

A 2004 study by the University of Virginia examined educational outcomes at schools using the *Responsive Classroom* approach. It found the following:

- Children scored higher on reading and math tests.

- Children had better social skills.

- Teachers felt more effective and positive about teaching.

To learn more about this study and a four-year, federally funded study under way, visit www.responsiveclassroom.org/research.

Responsive Classroom Practices Fit Well into PBIS's Three-Tiered Framework

Here's how specific *Responsive Classroom* practices fit within PBIS's three-tiered framework for providing a continuum of behavior supports to students.

PBIS Primary Prevention:

School/classroom-wide systems for all students and settings

***Responsive Classroom* Practices:**

Morning Meeting
Rule creation
Interactive Modeling
Role-playing
Positive teacher language
Logical consequences
Classroom organization
Collaborative problem-solving

PBIS Secondary Prevention:

Additional systems for students with at-risk behavior

***Responsive Classroom* Practices:**

Additional modeling
Additional role-playing
Buddy teacher time-out
Additional collaborative problem-solving
Individual written agreements

PBIS Tertiary Prevention:

Highly individualized systems for students at high risk

Here's a Closer Look

PBIS identifies several features that are key to success in schoolwide efforts to support children's positive behavior. The *Responsive Classroom* approach offers a rich array of practices that match these features. Using the *Responsive Classroom* approach can therefore help your school implement PBIS successfully.

PBIS key feature:	*Responsive Classroom* practices:
A common purpose and approach to discipline throughout the school	▪ Establishing a schoolwide discipline policy that staff and parents support ▪ Training staff to use consistent methods of teaching the rules and responding to misbehavior
A small number of positively stated expectations for all students	▪ Creating, in ways that build student investment, 3 to 5 positively stated rules in each classroom and for the whole school
Procedures for teaching these expectations	▪ Using Interactive Modeling, positive teacher language, and role-playing to teach children what expected behaviors look and sound like ▪ Providing students with structured practice of expected behaviors and explicit feedback
A continuum of procedures for encouraging expected behavior	▪ Using practices such as Morning Meeting, rule creation with students, Interactive Modeling, and role-playing with the whole class ▪ Using further modeling, additional role-playing, and individual written agreements with students who need more intensive supports ▪ Using positive reinforcing and reminding teacher language ▪ Doing group reflection activities such as compliment circles and closing circles
A continuum of procedures for discouraging inappropriate behavior	▪ Responding to misbehavior with positive redirecting teacher language and logical consequences ▪ Using collaborative problem-solving strategies such as class meetings with the whole class or small groups and problem-solving conferences with individuals ▪ Using individual written agreements with students who need additional support
Ongoing evaluation of effectiveness	▪ Observing students, reflecting on the success of practices, and adjusting teaching techniques accordingly ▪ Using *The Responsive Classroom® Assessment* to collect data on the use of specific strategies

How Do PBIS and the *Responsive Classroom* Approach Differ?

PBIS and the *Responsive Classroom* approach share many more commonalities than dissimilarities. There are, however, some differences between the two. One difference is that the *Responsive Classroom* approach does not offer tertiary prevention strategies, the individualized interventions for students at high risk, although it provides foundational supports for those students.

Another difference between PBIS and the *Responsive Classroom* approach concerns how to reinforce children's positive behavior. The *Responsive Classroom* approach emphasizes the use of reinforcing teacher language for most students. It strongly recommends beginning with such language and complementing it with several additional practices: structured reflections and behavior self-assessments by students, opportunities for the class to celebrate its accomplishments as a whole, and opportunities for each child to celebrate his or her individual progress.

The *Responsive Classroom* approach recommends using no further reinforcement if none is needed. If some students need more reinforcements, such as behavior-tracking charts and rewards for positive behavior, the *Responsive Classroom* approach offers guidelines on their effective use.

By comparison, PBIS does not specify which reinforcing methods are preferable for the majority of children. Rather, PBIS leaves it up to individual schools to choose from the full continuum of positive adult responses. That continuum ranges from the use of reinforcing teacher language to the use of material rewards (Florida's Positive Behavior Support Project, n.d.).

How Can Educators Learn More About the *Responsive Classroom* Approach?

Wide-ranging services and resources are available to help your school implement the *Responsive Classroom* approach.

- Introductory one-day workshops
- Week-long trainings at your school or at advertised sites around the country
- Follow-up workshops and on-site consultations
- Books, DVDs, professional development kits, and assessment tools
- Development of teacher leaders at your school to support schoolwide implementation
- National conference for administrators and teachers

To learn more, visit www.responsiveclassroom.org, or call 800-360-6332.

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