

Positive Behavior Support: A Teacher-Friendly Approach to Improving Student Behavior

By Michelle Lockwood,
Positive Behavior Support Specialist, NJCIE

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is a systems approach to effective and positive behavior support for all students. PBS emphasizes preventing challenging behaviors and teaching students alternatives to these behaviors. PBS is an effective method for increasing school safety, enhancing students' social-behavioral skills, and creating a more positive school climate. PBS includes a *continuum* of strategies for achieving desired social, behavioral, and learning outcomes.

Positive behavior support is the federal law's preferred strategy for supporting students with disabilities who exhibit challenging behaviors. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that PBS be considered in all cases of students whose behavior impedes their learning or the learning of others, reflecting IDEA's preference for use of research-based interventions. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA) renewed this commitment to provide positive behavioral support for students.

To help “tighten up” classroom management systems, let’s look at Positive Behavior Support (PBS) at a class-wide level. Before we can address student behavior, we have to make sure that the students understand what we expect them to do. This is not as simple as it sounds. Actively teaching class-wide expectations is an integral part of PBS at any level. The steps below may help you begin this process.

Getting Class-Wide Positive Behavior Support Started:

- Share PBS information with your administration. Discuss your ideas regarding your class-wide PBS ideas. Administrative support is key to implementing and sustaining PBS.
- If administration is in agreement, share information regarding your PBS ideas with any co-teachers or assistants with whom you collaborate, so everyone is on the same page.
- With your collaborators, figure out student expectations. Determine what you want the students to do, what will happen when they do what is required, and what will happen if they don't do what is asked of them.
- Once you have thought about your expectations, complete the following set up activities:
 1. Identify 3-5 *positively* worded rules/behavioral expectations for your classroom/environment. These might be things like “Respect Yourself, Respect your Environment, and Respect Others” or “In Our Classroom, we follow the three R's: Ready to Learn, Responsible, and Respectful.”

Remember: Keep the rules short and sweet. Don't use negative statements in your rules—tell the students what they *should* be doing, instead of what they *should not* be doing. The “should nots” can be covered when you teach the students these rules.

2. Design a rules matrix to inform students of how these rules/expectations look in each environment (in the cafeteria, in your class, in the hallway, in the bathrooms, etc). Lots of great examples of these can be found at www.pbis.org.
3. Design lesson plans for teaching behavioral expectations to your students.
4. Design a class-wide system for positively rewarding students when they meet the established expectations.
5. If the students need individual, frequent, visual reminders of these expectations, create behavior feedback sheets (i.e., point sheets or other token chart). Use these daily with students to help them see their progress toward meeting expectations and possibly earning incentives.
6. Create a hierarchy of responses that will occur if students do not meet the established expectations.

7. Discuss data collection methods to determine effectiveness. Determine how success will be measured and how student needs will be identified.
- It is often helpful to include student input in the above set up activities.
 - Make sure all your collaborators have information about your PBS system before beginning implementation with your students.

Implementing with Students:

- Deliver an overview to the students of the behavioral rules/expectations and of the class-wide system for recognizing and rewarding students for meeting these expectations. These can range from positive notes home to class parties.
- Solicit student input into the incentive/reward options.
- Teach behavioral expectations to the students using the lessons prepared during set up activities.
- Now that the students know what is expected, catch them meeting these expectations. Let them know when they are following the rules.
- Make positive comments multiple times per day. Be sure to recognize students (collectively and individually) when they *are* meeting the expectations more often than when you remind them that they are not.
- Implement incentives/rewards with the students. Share their progress toward earning incentives with them at least once a day.
- If created, use the behavior feedback sheets (i.e., point or token sheets).
- Collect data on student success and needs (graphing points, reviewing office referrals, etc).

Spreading the Word:

- Review behavioral progress with your students often.
- Share PBS information with other staff members.
- Share PBS information with parents.
- Collect data about students' success as well as where they may need some extra help.
- Review and adjust the student rewards to maintain their effectiveness.
- Use this type of data to make refinements to your Class-Wide Positive Behavior Support System.

Now that you've implemented class-wide PBS, you may notice a student or two who aren't quite getting it. We'll discuss implementing individual student behavior interventions based on the principals of positive behavior support in an upcoming installment of "Tips and Resources". However, if you need more information ASAP, contact NJCIE for assistance.