

# Climate/Culture & PBS System



**Boulder Valley School District**  
*Excellence and Equity*

## **BVSD Response to Intervention**

### *Climate/Culture and PBS*

#### *How to Use This Section:*

*This section contains some resources and information:*

- *Overview of Positive Behavior Support (PBS)*
- *Two Excellent Articles:*
  - *Assuming the Best By Rick Smith and Mary Lambert*
  - *School-Wide Positive Behavior Support and Response to Intervention By George Sugai*
  - *Response to Intervention and Positive Behavior Support: Brothers from Different Mothers or Sisters with Different Misters? By Therese Sandomierski, Don Kincaid, Bob Algozzine*
- *Resource List*
- *CDE PBS Website:*  
*<http://www.cde.state.co.us/RtI/PositiveClimate.htm>*

## BVSD Response to Intervention

# Positive Behavior Support PBS: Success for ALL Students

### What is PBS?

PBS is a broad range of systematic and individualized strategies designed to prevent problem behavior will all students so that they may achieve important social and learning outcomes.

PBS is...

- Proactive and preventative
- Instructionally focused
- Empirically sound
- Data-based
- A Systems Change Model

School-Wide Systems are developed. These systems create a school environment that is

- *Predictable*—Common language for all staff and families  
Common Vision & understanding of expectations
- *Positive*—Ongoing teaching and recognition for positive behavior
- *Safe*—Consistent process for addressing problem behavior  
Continuum of behavior support
- *Consistent*—All adults use similar expectations through all school environments (classroom, hall, recess, restroom, etc.)

### Why should we be committed to implementation of School-wide PBS?

It benefits students! Research on PBS demonstrates...

- Reduction in problem behavior
- Increased Student Engagement
- Risk and protective factors improve—students see school as a safe, supportive environment
- Improved academic performance, when coupled with effective instruction
- Improved family involvement.

It benefits teachers and staff! Research on PBS demonstrates...

- Improved consistency across faculty
- Better collaboration in support of individual students
- Improved classroom management
- Increased ratings of faculty “effectiveness” (Staff perceive themselves as more effective due to coherent planning, improved student behavior, effective strategies for addressing problems)
- Reduced faculty absenteeism, improved retention

## What does PBS look like?

*Expectations for student behavior are defined.*

This looks like...

- 3 to 5 positively stated expectations are developed that apply to all students, all adults, and across all settings (ie, Coyote Code of PRIDE)
- Expectations are linked to your school mission or values statement
- Expectations are written in your discipline handbook and disseminated to all students and families
- Expectations are posted across school settings

*Expectations are taught.*

This looks like...

- Expectations are adopted by all staff and taught to all students.
- Lessons include..
  - Verbal presentation of the skill (Explaining)
  - Guided and independent practice of the skill (Doing)
  - Guidelines for prompting and reinforcement (Reinforcing)
  - Evaluation criteria (monitoring)
- Lessons are taught at the beginning of the school year and booster sessions are used as data indicates.
- All Staff is constantly encouraging students to have positive behavior in all settings.
- Staff is highly visible and there is active supervision by all staff—Move, Interact, Scan, then you won't "MIS" anything.

*Positive Behavior is Acknowledged.*

This looks like...

- Ratio of at least 5 positives to 1 correction/negative (5:1).
- Immediate, contingent, and behavior specific acknowledgement
- A continuum of continuous to intermittent acknowledgements
- Celebrate PBS successes with staff, students, and parents

## What will make PBS successful in a school?

### ***Eight Key Practices***

1. Administrative Leadership
2. Team implementation
3. Define Concrete Expectations
4. Teach Behavior Expectations
5. Acknowledge and Reward Positive Behavior
6. Monitor and Correct Behavior
7. Use Data for Decision Making
8. Family and Community Engagement

## Assuming the Best

Rick Smith and Mary Lambert

**Students want to learn both content and appropriate behavior. And they can only do it in a safe, structured classroom.**

When Paul Kilkenny, a mentor teacher in East San Jose, California, works with teachers, he occasionally finds himself in the role of cheerleader. He notes,

My teachers work with kids who are often in tough situations, and the kids can bring that same toughness into the classroom. When the teachers find themselves focusing extensively on student misbehavior, sometimes my job is simply to remind them to continually assume the best about their students.

Assuming the best is essential for long-term learning and positive connections to take place in our classrooms. When it comes to classroom-management, there are no exotic new consequences that teachers can use to get students on task. The most effective classroom management comes in the form of strategies that prevent acting out before it occurs. And those strategies arise primarily from assuming that our students want to be here, want to participate, and, specifically, want to learn good behavior. When we internalize and act from this assumption, our students behave better and learn more.

## The Invisible Contract

Whenever students walk into the classroom, assume they hold an invisible contract in their hands, which states, "Please teach me appropriate behavior in a safe and structured environment." The teacher also has a contract, which states, "I will do my best to teach you appropriate behavior in a safe and structured environment."

This approach can radically change our perspective on student misbehavior. To illustrate, in the beginning of the school year, Mark decides to test his teacher, whom we will call Mrs. Allgood. Mark looks at his invisible contract and thinks, "This contract is important. Let's see whether Mrs. Allgood is going to uphold her end of it." So Mark breaks a small rule to see what will happen. If Mrs. Allgood is harsh or punitive to Mark for breaking the rule, he says to himself, "This class isn't *safe*; she isn't honoring the contract." However, if Mrs. Allgood ignores Mark and he gets away with breaking the rule or if she enforces it inconsistently, Mark says to himself, "This class isn't *structured*; she isn't honoring the contract."

Either way, Mark is not satisfied. So he thinks to himself, "To communicate the importance of this contract and give the teacher another chance, I'll break a slightly larger rule." He will continue to break larger and larger rules until Mrs. Allgood comes through consistently with both safety and structure. When she's consistent over time, Mark says to himself, "Oh good, she's honoring the contract. Now I can relax and focus on learning."

The bottom line is that when students test us, they want us to pass the test. They are on our side rooting for us to come through with safety and structure. When students act out, they are really saying, "We don't have the impulse control that you have. We are acting out so that you will provide us with safety and structure—be soft yet firm—so that we can learn the behavior we need to learn to be happy and successful."

However, few students approach their teachers and directly ask to be taught behavior in a safe and structured environment. What, then, is the justification for this assumption?

## Our Internal Radios

Imagine that students have radio tuners in their heads and are continually tuning in to a myriad of radio stations that deal with what it means to be a youth. These stations differ for students of different ages and cultural settings, but they all focus on fitting in, being cool, achieving short-term gratification, and enjoying consequence-free behavior. Often, many of our students will narrate these radio noises out loud, as though these signals express the truth of who the students are. They will entertain such ideas as "I don't care about learning," "My friends' opinions of me matter more than my own or my teachers' opinions," "Fitting in and looking good matter more than being good," or "Why bother to try?"

Now imagine that students have radio beacons in their hearts. These beacons pour out the same basic message over and over again:

We want to learn and participate. We want to be positive. Please teach us appropriate behavior as well as content. Please know that we often want to narrate the noises in our heads, but we need you to honor our hearts at the same time. Please be compassionate, allowing us our wants as you honor our needs.

When we internalize the assumption that students want to learn and participate, we begin to see that beneath their complaints about the lesson, homework, or seating chart, students are saying one thing: "Please care for us today." As we honor this message, without belittling or marginalizing the noises that students narrate, we can get our message through the noise of their heads into the receptive place in their hearts. Our communication becomes clear and kind, and our enthusiasm becomes contagious.

We teachers have the same radio tuners and beacons as our students do. Regardless of what our experience is when we come to school—whether we are feeling ready, regretting lack of sleep, or mulling over tensions at home—we can reach through our own mental noise and our students' noise and touch them heart to heart.

This will affect all our communications with students, especially those that address inappropriate behavior. This softening of our communication enables us to be firm when necessary, but in a way that invites cooperation rather than arguments and protests. Our students' behavior will begin to reflect these positive assumptions. What shifts is the *how*—the manner in which we communicate. Our students begin to feel that we are on their side, even as we address the *what*—their behavior. By holding our ground with our own radio noises ("These kids don't care." "They're just lazy." "Why bother?"), we can hold our ground with student misbehavior in a way that is both firm and soft, corrective and inviting. In addition, as we exercise this "muscle of positivity," we avoid the burnout so often associated with teaching tough kids. We create a self-fulfilling prophecy of appropriate and engaging student participation.

## Positive Strategies, Positive Results

The strategies that follow can improve our interactions with students, create classrooms that honor students' need for safety and structure, and promote student learning.

### Strategy 1: Use Volume, Tone, and Posture

When we assume that students want to learn behavior, we can readily see that we are here to *teach* behavior. This changes our interactions with students. For example, Mrs. Allgood is teaching a lesson; in the

back of the classroom, Mark is disturbing his neighbors by showing them his new *Sports Illustrated*. He needs to stop. If Mrs. Allgood assumes that she's only here to teach content—to stay on task—she will go so quickly through the discipline piece that Mark will probably not understand, and so he will continue to act out. Some teachers jokingly refer to this as "drive-thru discipline."

On the other hand, if Mrs. Allgood assumes that she is here to teach behavior, she will pause in her lesson and address Mark's behavior. Her first option is to walk up to him and quietly state her request: "Please put that away and have a seat." If that's not possible because of time or furniture constraints, she will shift from "content mode" to "behavior mode," facing Mark squarely as she softens her voice and lowers her tone. Knowing that Mark is committed to both learning appropriate behavior and wanting to look good in front of his friends, she won't publicly humiliate him. Her shift in volume, tone, and posture will firmly but softly communicate what she expects of him, deescalating possible tension.

By taking these extra moments to address Mark's behavior, Mrs. Allgood will have more time to focus on teaching content because Mark will most likely get it the first time around. And if he says something under his breath, she knows that she can let him have the last word. It's his way of saving face as he refocuses on learning content.

### Strategy 2: Implement the Two-by-Ten Strategy

Raymond Wlodkowski<sup>1</sup> did extensive observations of student behavior, cataloguing student time in and out of seat as well as the types, instances, and severity of student disruptions. In particular, he researched a strategy called "Two-by-Ten." Here, teachers focus on their most difficult student. For two minutes each day, 10 days in a row, teachers have a personal conversation with the student about anything the student is interested in, as long as the conversation is G-rated. Wlodkowski found an 85-percent improvement in that one student's behavior. In addition, he found that the behavior of all the other students in the class improved.

Martha Allen, an adjunct professor at Dominican University's Teacher Credential Program in San Rafael, California, asked her student teachers to use the Two-by-Ten Strategy with their toughest student. The results? Almost everyone reported a marked improvement in the behavior and attitude of their one targeted student, and often of the whole class. Many teachers using the Two-by-Ten Strategy for the first time have had a similar corroborating experience: Their worst student became an ally in the class when they forged a strong personal connection with that student.

This can be counterintuitive. But the students who seemingly deserve the most punitive consequences we can muster are actually the ones who most need a positive personal connection with their teacher. When they act out, they are letting us know that they are seeking a positive connection with an adult authority figure and that they need that connection first, before they can focus on learning content.

The teachers whom Paul Kilkenny mentors in East San Jose regularly use the Two-by-Ten Strategy with their challenging students. "Not only does it help with the toughest students," says Paul, "but also it helps the teachers remember their humanity as they attempt to survive and thrive in the classroom."

### Strategy 3: Break Things into Steps

Just as students often need complex math problems broken down into small, digestible lessons, so they need small, manageable steps when it comes to learning behavior and classroom procedures.

For example, if Mark has a hard time putting his art supplies away on time, instead of punishing him Mrs. Allgood can meet with him, and together they can practice putting the supplies away. Instead of one step—"Put your things away"—the teacher can guide the student through several steps: "Pick up the scissors and

place it in the scissors tray; return the colored paper to the stack in the back of the room; put your project in your folder." By practicing each of the steps, Mark has a better sense of what to do and is more likely to succeed when Mrs. Allgood announces clean-up time to the class.

Instead of throwing up our hands and saying, "These kids don't care" or "These kids can't succeed," we should assume they are committed to success in both content and behavior. We can then put our energy into breaking down the behaviors we want to see into simple steps so that students clearly understand what we expect of them.

#### Strategy 4: Use Behavior Rubrics

Rubrics work great for content—and equally great for procedures and behavior. For example, if a particular student is inappropriately loud, Mrs. Allgood can provide the student with a 1–5 *volume rubric*. A 1 would indicate a whisper, a 3 would indicate a normal conversational tone, and a 5 would indicate a yell. The student can practice all five numbers, and the teacher can then assign different numbers to different school and social situations: A 1 would be appropriate if the student asked a classmate to borrow a pencil while the rest of the class was engrossed in a writing task; a 3 would be appropriate for students conversing during group work; a 5 would be appropriate on the playground. Rubrics work well for many classroom behaviors, such as lining up, settling down to learn, and getting ready for dismissal.

#### Strategy 5: Use Visuals

Visuals also serve as great road maps for student success. If, for example, students have difficulty getting their textbooks and homework on their desks when the bell rings at the beginning of class, Mrs. Allgood can use visuals like the ones on pages 18–19 to clarify exactly what she expects. She can use a diagram, drawing, or photograph of the surface of the desk, with the textbook open to the proper page and the homework on the upper left-hand corner of the desk. At the start of class, using PowerPoint or an overhead, she can flash the picture on the board or screen in front of the room, giving the students "17 seconds to be ready to start." Visuals work well for such activities as setting up labs, putting supplies away, and clarifying the school dress code.

## More Than a Smile

For many teachers, being positive means putting on a smile, pretending to like a particular student, or going through the motions of using strategies purportedly designed to enhance the classroom environment. In contradistinction, by assuming the best about our students—particularly in situations in which that assumption seems most implausible—we exercise a muscle that is real and lasting.

Assuming the best is an underlying orientation that enables us to treat both our students and ourselves with respect and dignity. It helps us understand that when students act out, they are sending us a message that they want a positive connection. Then we can start to see "discipline moments" as opportunities for teaching an essential piece that students want to learn.

## Endnote

<sup>1</sup> Wlodkowski, R. J. (1983). *Motivational opportunities for successful teaching* [Leader's Guide]. Phoenix, AZ: Universal Dimensions.

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# **School-Wide Positive Behavior Support and Response to Intervention**

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Schools are complex environments where the collective skills, knowledge, and practices of a culture are taught, shaped, encouraged, and transmitted. Teachers are challenged to provide effective and explicit instruction that maximizes students' acquisition of concepts, skills, and information, and students are challenged to remain attentive, responsive, and engaged to benefit from these instructional opportunities. These formidable goals are enriched and complicated by learners with diverse learning histories, unique strengths and limitations, and defining cultural influences. In addition, schools, families, and students continually must adapt to maximize benefits from the school experience.

In recent years, achieving these goals has required that schools a) increase instructional accountability and justification, b) improve the alignment between assessment information and intervention development, c) enhance use of limited resources and time, d) make decisions with accurate and relevant information, e) initiate important instructional decisions earlier and in a more timely manner, f) engage in regular and comprehensive screening for successful and at-risk learners, g) provide effective and relevant support for students who do not respond to core curricula, and g) enhance fidelity of instructional implementation (Sugai, 2007).

In response, a general problem-solving framework, Response to Intervention (RTI), has evolved to address these need statements. Although not new or limited to special education, RTI initially appeared as policy in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004), and it has conceptual and empirical foundations in, for example, applied behavior analysis, curriculum-based measurement, precision teaching, pre-referral intervention, teacher assistance teaming, diagnostic prescriptive teaching, data-based decision making, early universal screening and intervention, behavioral and instructional consultation, and team-based problem solving (Sugai, 2007). RTI has been described as an approach for establishing and redesigning teaching and learning environments so that they are effective, efficient, relevant, and durable for all students, families, and educators (Sugai, 2007). Specifically, RTI is shaped by six defining characteristics (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005; Christ, Burns, & Ysseldyke, 2005; Fuchs & Deshler, 2007; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007; Fuchs, Mock, Morgan, & Young, 2003; Gresham, 2005; Gresham et al., 2005; Kame'enui, 2007; National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 2006; Severson, Walker, Hope-Doolittle, Kratochwill, & Gresham, 2007):

1. *Universal screening*: Learner performance and progress should be reviewed on a regular basis and in a systematic manner to identify students who are a) making adequate progress, b) at some risk of failure if not provided extra assistance, or c) at high risk of failure if not provided specialized supports.

2. ***Data-based decision making and problem solving:*** Information that directly reflects student learning based on measurable and relevant learning criteria and outcomes should be used to guide decisions regarding instructional effectiveness, student responsiveness, and intervention adaptations and modifications.
3. ***Continuous progress monitoring:*** Student progress should be assessed on a frequent and regular basis to identify adequate or inadequate growth trends and support timely instructional decisions.
4. ***Student performance:*** Priority should be given to using actual student performance on the instructional curriculum to guide decisions regarding teaching effectiveness and learning progress.
5. ***Continuum of evidence-based interventions:*** An integrated and linked curriculum should be available such that:
  - a. A core curriculum is provided for all students;
  - b. A modification of this core is arranged for students who are identified as nonresponsive, and
  - c. A specialized and intensive curriculum is developed for students whose performance is deemed nonresponsive to the modified core. Elements of this continuum must have empirical evidence to support efficacy (intervention is linked to outcome), effectiveness (intervention outcomes are achievable and replicable in applied settings), relevant (intervention can be implemented by natural implementers and with high fidelity), and durable (intervention implementation is sustainable and student outcomes are durable).
6. ***Implementation fidelity:*** Team-based structures and procedures are in place to ensure and coordinate appropriate adoption and accurate and sustained implementation of the full continuum of intervention practices.

Although most RTI implementation efforts have focused on academic curriculum and instructional practices (e.g., early literacy and numeracy), applications of the RTI framework also are represented in the implementation of School-wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) practices and systems (Sugai et al., 2000). A comparison of RTI applications in early literacy and social behavior reveals similarities within core RTI characteristics (see Figure 1).

## RtI Application Examples

	<b>EARLY READING/LITERACY</b>	<b>SOCIAL BEHAVIOR</b>
<b>TEAM</b>	General educator, special educator, reading specialist, Title I, school psychologist, etc.	General educator, special educator, behavior specialist, Title I, school psychologist, etc.
<b>UNIVERSAL SCREENING</b>	Curriculum based measurement	SSBD, record review, gating
<b>PROGRESS MONITORING</b>	Curriculum based measurement	ODR, suspensions, behavior incidents, precision teaching
<b>EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS</b>	5-specific reading skills: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension	Direct social skills instruction, positive reinforcement, token economy, active supervision, behavioral contracting, group contingency management, function-based support, self-management
<b>DECISION MAKING RULES</b>	Core, strategic, intensive	Primary, secondary, tertiary tiers

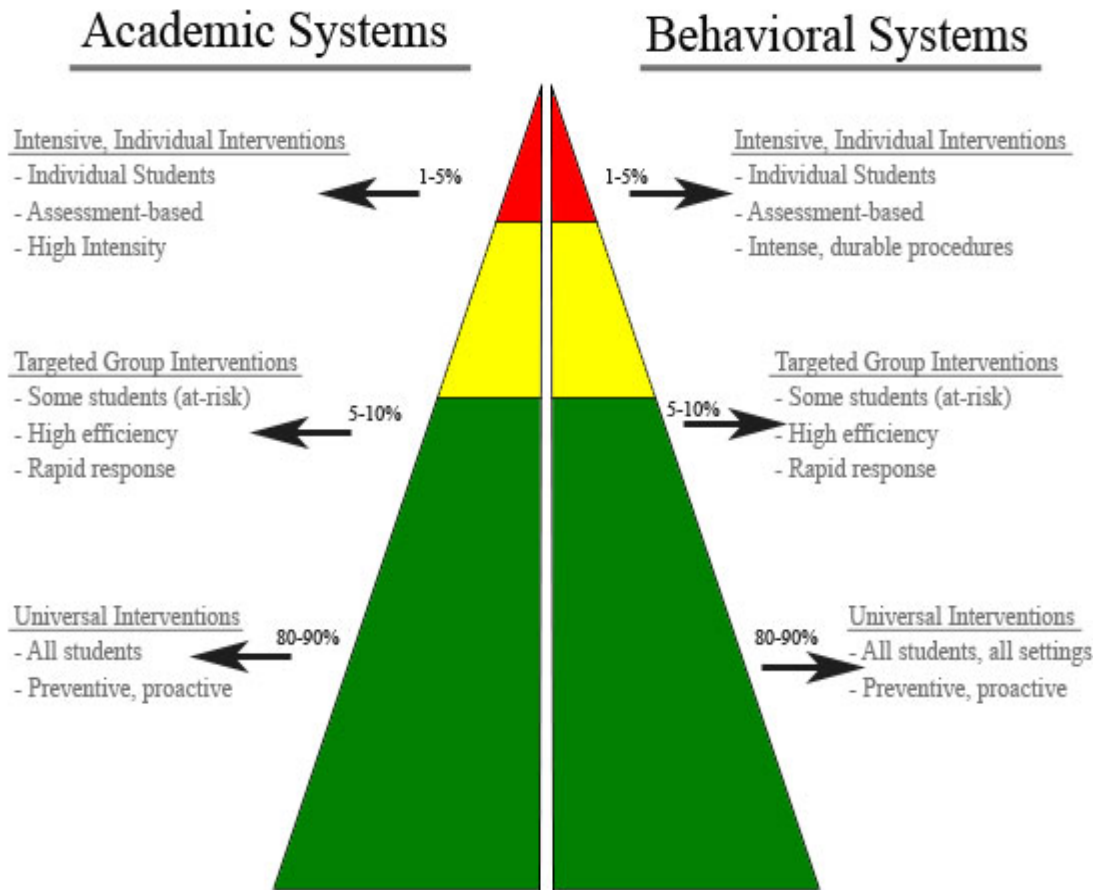
*Figure 1: Comparison of RTI in Literacy and Social Behavior*

SOURCE: Sugai, G., (August 1, 2007). *School-wide positive behavior support and responsiveness-to-intervention*. Keynote presentation to and paper for the Southern Maryland PBIS Summer Regional Conference. Waldorf, MD. Reprinted with permission.

A particularly important feature of SWPBS and RTI is an emphasis on prevention (see Figure 2), which has its roots in public health and disease control and occurs at three levels:

1. **Primary tier prevention:** All students are exposed to a core social behavior curriculum to prevent the development of problem behavior and to identify students whose behaviors are not responsive to that core.
2. **Secondary tier prevention:** Supplemental social behavior support is added to reduce the current number and intensity of problem behavior.
3. **Tertiary tier prevention:** Individualized and intensive behavior support is developed to reduce complications, intensity, and/or severity of existing problem behavior.

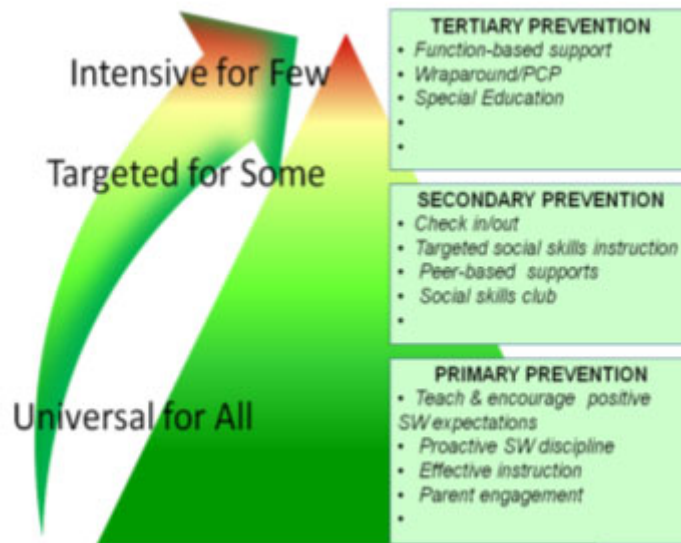
This three-tiered prevention logic has direct application to both academic and social behavior supports (Kame'enui, 2007; Lane et al., 2007; O'Shaughnessy, Lane, Gresham, & Beebe-Frankenberger, 2003; Sadler & Sugai, in press).



*Figure 2: Integration of Academic and Social Behavior Three-Tiered Continuum of Behavior Support*  
 SOURCE: Sugai, G. (June 23, 2001). *School climate and discipline: School-wide positive behavior support*. Keynote presentation to and paper for the National Summit on Shared Implementation of IDEA. Washington, DC. Reprinted with permission.

Although conceptualized as a three-tiered framework, this continuum of evidence-based practices of RTI and SWPBS applications is best represented as a blended integration that has relevance and application across the range of teaching and learning environments that exist in schools and communities. In Figure 3, examples of specific school-based behavioral interventions are organized in the traditional three-tiered framework but also are aligned along this integrated curriculum. If done properly, each practice should have decision rules for determining movement up and down the continuum based on student performance. The specialized nature of interventions and breadth of the continuum will vary by developmental level (e.g., early childhood/preschool, elementary, middle, high school), environmental constraints (e.g., small vs. large school), alternative programming (e.g., correctional school, hospital setting), and so on. For example, an intensive program for students with significant emotional and behavioral disorders might have a structured level system and token economy for all students that involves hourly

social behavior progress monitoring and feedback associated with school-wide social skills (primary tier); a peer- or adult-based individualized behavioral contracting system with continuous prompting, monitoring, and feedback (secondary tier); and cognitive-behavioral counseling sessions every morning that are linked to psychopharmacological and person-centered process planning (tertiary tier).



*Figure 3: Integrated Continuum of Positive Behavior Support With Intervention Examples*

SOURCE: Sugai, G. (2007, December). Responsiveness-to-intervention: Lessons learned and to be learned. Keynote presentation at and paper for the RTI Summit, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C. Reprinted with permission.

Although applications of the RTI logic and SWPBS approach seem straightforward, research (Christ et al., 2005; Fairbanks, Sugai, Guardino, & Lathrop, 2007; Fuchs & Deshler, 2007; Gresham, 2005; Klingner & Edwards, 2006; Sandomierski, Kincaid, & Algozzine, 2007) has shown that school personnel need to continually rethink their practices in a number of areas.

In conclusion, RTI is a good framework and logic for organizing and increasing the efficiency with which evidence-based practices are selected, organized, integrated, implemented, and adapted. Examples and applications of the RTI logic are being developed, demonstrated, and tested in a number of academic content areas and in social behavior supports. As represented in SWPBS, RTI gives priority to the continuous monitoring of important student performance indicators in response to high-fidelity implementation of evidence-based practices. Timely screening and data-based decisions are encouraged so that more effective and efficient interventions can be provided for students whose behaviors are not responsive to core practices and interventions. Preventing the development and lessening the intensity of problem behavior must be a high priority of instructors seeking to maximize student learning and the impact of effective interventions. If done wisely in the context of other initiatives and interventions across classroom and nonclassroom

settings, the possibility of improving student academic and social behavior outcomes can become a reality for all students.

1. How curriculum adoptions and instructional design decisions are made;
2. How special and general educators work together to address the needs of all students;
3. What assessment tools and procedures are used to make reliable and valid instructional decisions;
4. How high fidelity of implementation of best practices is assessed, evaluated, and supported;
5. What communications among students, teachers, and families look like;
6. How resources are organized to respond effectively and efficiently with students who do not achieve the desired outcomes in response to the intervention;
7. What criteria are used to determine whether a practice is evidence based;
8. How the practices and systems align with the social, cultural, and educational vision and values of students, family members, and school staff.

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# Response to Intervention and Positive Behavior Support: Brothers from Different Mothers or Sisters with Different Misters?

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Recent updates to state and federal special education guidelines are changing the way schools are expected to support students with problem behavior. Traditionally, approaches to assisting these students included parent conferences, observations, a minimum number of general interventions, a review of educational and social records, and a psychological evaluation (Special Programs for Students who are Emotionally Handicapped, 2006). Now, with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act and revision of IDEA, schools are being encouraged to turn towards proactive approaches that match the service a student receives with his/her level of need. One such approach is called Response to Intervention, or RtI.

Response to Intervention (RtI) is defined as “the practice of providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals, and applying child response data to important educational decisions” (Batsche et al., 2005). Based on a problem-solving model, the RtI approach considers environmental factors as they might apply to an individual student’s difficulty, and provides services/intervention as soon as the student demonstrates a need. Focused primarily on addressing academic problems, RtI has emerged as the new way to think about both disability identification and early intervention assistance for the “most vulnerable, *academically unresponsive children*” in schools and school districts (Fuchs & Deshler, 2007, p. 131, emphasis added).

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is based on a **problem-solving model** and aims to prevent inappropriate behavior through teaching and

reinforcing appropriate behaviors (OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2007). Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is a process that is consistent with the core principles of RtI. Similar to RtI, PBS offers a **range of interventions that are systematically applied to students based on their demonstrated level of need**, and addresses the role of the environment as it applies to development and improvement of behavior problems.

Both RtI and PBS are grounded in differentiated instruction. Each approach delimits critical factors and components to be in place at the universal (Tier 1), targeted group (Tier 2), and individual (Tier 3) levels. Our goal is to describe the shared (identified in **bold**) characteristics of these approaches as a basis for highlighting how best to meet the needs of children experiencing academic *and* social difficulties in school.

### *Tier 1(Universal)*

School achievement and success requires that students have adequate exposure to a **quality curriculum and instruction**. While this feature is easily understood and accepted with regard to academic achievement, it is less easily evident or applied for behavior. With academic achievement, a curriculum contains the critical content skills every student is expected to learn, and it directs assessment and intervention practices central to RtI. For behavior, a universal curriculum focuses attention on the set of social skills all students are expected to display. For proponents of PBS, the universal curriculum consists of the school-wide expectations, rules, and procedures, as well as the lesson plans used to teach them. While easily articulated and supported, this aspect of high quality school-wide behavioral instruction is seldom evident in what is taught in schools. One important contribution of PBS has been its' proponents efforts to elevate behavior curricula and instruction to levels of interest and importance that are similar to those found with academics.

Both RtI and PBS support a **preventative** approach to teaching academic and social behavior, beginning at the Tier 1 level. In schools using PBS, the practice of teaching and reinforcing students for displaying the school-wide expectations is considered to be a universal intervention, delivered to every student in every setting. By teaching and reinforcing expected behaviors, teachers and other professionals using PBS increase the probability that the majority of students will act according to the expectations, and acts as a proactive intervention for students with a history of problem behavior. Similarly, those who envision potential payoff

from RtI see it coming from early identification of and strong preventive intervention for academic problems.

When universal **intervention is carried out with fidelity**, schools can begin to identify students who are in need of additional support. These are the students who,, in spite of receiving assistance that has been successful with a majority of other students, continue to display academic and/or social problems. The benchmark assessments and progress monitoring procedures that are prominent in RtI illustrate this, and speak to the importance of **using data for decision making**. The collection and use of records of behavior provides important decision-making data in PBS schools. For many students, a history of office discipline referrals (ODRs) may be adequate to identify them as needing more support; students who have a high number of ODRs relative to the rest of the school's population are easily identified as having a poor response to the universal intervention.

While ODRs are necessary for identifying students with high rates of externalizing behaviors, they are not sufficient for identifying all students in need of Tier 2 supports. Students who have internalizing behaviors, and students who have less severe externalizing behaviors, are often not captured in school-wide ODR information (Clonin, McDougal, Clark, & Davison, 2007; Nelson, Bennen, Reid, & Epstein, 2002; Severson, Walker, Hope-Doolittle, Kratochwill, & Gresham, 2007). The needs of these students still must be addressed in order to prevent future behavior problems and to facilitate school-wide academic achievement. Therefore, schools that implement tiered interventions for behavior must also incorporate a **screening measure to proactively identify at-risk students**. This idea is consistent with RtI for academics, where schools use academic screeners (such as DIBELS) to identify students experiencing reading difficulties (University of Oregon Center on Teaching and Learning, 2007; University of South Florida Problem Solving and Response to Intervention Project, 2007). *However, no such screening or identification measure has been widely investigated or implemented for the behavioral side of RtI.* Nomination processes which ask teachers to rank the top internalizing and externalizing students in their classrooms, such as the one used in the Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders [SSBD] system (Walker & Severson, 1992) appear to hold much promise for identifying students at-risk of or exhibiting significant problem behaviors.

Identifying and meeting the educational needs of students requiring additional support must also address the classroom environment. Otherwise, it would be difficult to argue that a student had a poor

response to intervention, when the intervention was put into place in the midst of a maladaptive environment. As part of the prevention process, schools must continually look at their classroom-level data to determine the overall health of each of their classrooms. Classroom environments in which numbers of students experiencing academic difficulties are consistently high require analysis and attention. Classes that generate a high number of ODRs, have high levels of off-task behavior, have continuing low achievement, or have extended periods of unstructured time also require action. Administrators and support teams should work with those classroom teachers to pinpoint the areas that are most in need of development. **It is only after high-quality academic and behavior instruction and interventions are established at both the school-wide and classroom levels that schools could conclude that a student has a need for additional services.**

### *Tier 2 (Targeted Group)*

Once a student has been identified as needing additional support, both RtI and PBS advocate for using **evidence-based interventions** that require **resources appropriate to the student's level of need**, and then **monitoring the progress** of students receiving those interventions. At Tier 2, this is interpreted as providing interventions that are easy to administer to small groups of students, and which require limited time and staff involvement. In schools that are using PBS, a check-in/check-out program such as the Behavior Education Program (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004) meets these criteria and provides a way to focus at-risk students' attention on the school-wide expectations. Other possibilities for Tier 2 interventions include social skills groups, group counseling, or mentoring programs. While a plethora of such programs exist for purchase and use within schools, many do not have a solid research base that supports their effectiveness. Similarly, although there are instructional procedures with promise for improving academic skills, there is "widespread uncertainty" about what "scientifically validated" instruction means within RtI (Fuchs & Deshler, 2007, p. 131). Therefore, districts and schools are encouraged to closely monitor the implementation and outcomes of such programs. And even the best programs, if they are implemented poorly, will likely not produce the desired impact on academic and/or behavior change. Clearly, the area of targeted group/Tier 2 interventions will benefit from future efforts at applied research.

Another area of common interest and overlap is the degree to which students have the necessary academic and behavioral skills to succeed at school. Most educators would agree that it is rare to find a student who

has behavior challenges who does not also have academic challenges, and many times the behavioral problems originate because of the student's inability to succeed academically at a level comparable to his/her peers. An analysis conducted by the FL PBS Project of three schools in Florida found that over 80% of all students identified as having severe behavioral problems were also identified by their teachers as having academic problems. If a student has shown a poor response to universal and classroom-level behavioral interventions, his/her academic proficiency should be assessed. If the student has academic deficits, they should receive evidence-based interventions that directly address their needs. Schools may find that it is necessary to provide academic and behavior interventions simultaneously, but a judgment of the student's response to the behavior intervention should be interpreted cautiously until the academic problems are remediated.

**Progress monitoring** can be efficiently achieved for Tier 2 interventions using variations of teacher rating scales that reflect students' academic and/or behavior goals (the school-wide expectations). Samples of these scales for behavior can be accessed at the Florida PBS website (<http://flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu/>). Most commonly, rating scales require teachers (or another adult) to record their opinion of a student's behavior during a specific time period, such as a 50-minute class or subject period (e.g., Language Arts, or Math). As the teacher fills out the rating scale, they provide brief, specific verbal feedback to the student about why they earned that rating. The most obvious drawback to this method of progress monitoring is that the teacher's reported opinion is being measured, not the actual instances of academic or social behavior. However, at this level of analysis, the resources dedicated to any particular student should match his/her level of need; more time-consuming and intensive measures should be left to levels of intervention that are equally intense.

As with the universal and classroom levels of intervention, academic and behavior **interventions must be carried out with fidelity** in Tier 2 before the student can be judged to have an adequate or insufficient response to intervention. This would mean that interventions would be evaluated not only with regard to how they were delivered to the student, but also with regard to the way in which they generalized to non-treatment settings. For example, if a student participates in a "pull-out" social skills group with the school's guidance counselor, fidelity would have to be evaluated for the manner in which the counselor presented the social skill lessons to the students, as well as the manner in which the teachers applied the social skill lessons in the classroom. Similarly, evidence of

academic performance should reflect improvements across settings, people, and materials. The process of monitoring intervention fidelity and supporting teachers while effective interventions are implemented is of key importance, and requires further investigation on both state and national levels.

### *Tier 3 (Individual Student)*

Prior to selecting a Tier 2 intervention, the school's PBS/RTI team should have already met to discuss the student's behavioral needs, classroom issues, and academic needs. At **Tier 3**, the school team needs to conduct a more in-depth analysis of the student's data, which at this point would include all of the information examined at Tier 1, as well as the student's response to and the fidelity of the Tier 2 intervention(s). The classroom teacher(s) should have a larger role at this stage of the problem-solving process, as more in-depth information is collected through one-on-one consultation. At the beginning of Tier 3, consultation regarding persistent behavior problems could include a brief Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA), and/or completion of a behavioral or mental health rating scale. If a student continues to have difficulty, a comprehensive FBA would be warranted. As a student moves along the third Tier of intervention and support, schools will want to continue to use the guiding principle of matching services, time, and resources to a student's demonstrated need. A simple Behavior Improvement Plan (BIP) that includes evidence-based interventions and is based on the results of the FBA should be used early in the Tier 3 stage, and the student's response to the plan should be closely monitored. If a student continues to show a poor response to the plan, additional school personnel are gathered to apply a more structured problem-solving process to the situation, and develop a more detailed plan. As a student's behavior problems are revealed to be persistent and/or severe, additional data collection procedures (such as direct observation by non-classroom personnel) may become necessary. This same process (e.g., developing an individualized education program) is evident in efforts to implement Tier 3 interventions in RtI approaches although these actions often are reserved for or emerge from special education professionals and programs.

At Tier 3, access to an array of assessment information is essential for **effective team decision-making**. Different data are necessary for identifying students in need of more intensive support, for assessing the function(s) of their problem behaviors, and for evaluating the outcomes of individualized education programs. At this stage, more intensive progress monitoring techniques should be applied. Teacher rating scales can still

play an important role in this process, but they should provide more detailed information than what was gathered during Tier 2. For instance, time periods within the rating scale may be reduced to create a more precise measure of how the teachers' perception of the student's behavior improves or worsens over time. In cases where students repeatedly show poor response to intervention, it may be necessary to gather data on specific instances of behavior using direct observation. This, of course, would require significant amounts of staff time and expertise; however, by this stage of the intervention process, the student's behavioral difficulties have been shown to be persistent, and may also be intense, and the additional time and resources would be warranted. Again, the similarities in and importance of teams across RtI and PBS are obvious and compelling.

### *Changing the Lives of Students with Problems*

RtI and PBS offer opportunities to address academic and behavior problems effectively with interventions at different levels of intensity and support. If a student is not making adequate progress, decision-making teams consider if the interventions were implemented with fidelity. If not, additional support is provided or intervention plans are revised to better match the context of the classroom and the teacher's ability to respond effectively.

While RtI and PBS offer great promise, "...it is untrue and misleading to claim that we currently have a necessary and sufficient knowledge base to guide the implementation of RTI [and PBS]...across all grades, for all academic [and behavior] skills, in all content areas, for all children and youth" (Fuchs & Deshler, 2007, p. 134). We have few models of districts implementing these systems across all schools and all three levels for all students. As such, it sometimes feels as if we are watching a "runaway train" destined to wreck and are trying to lay track (practices, research, and data) to avoid the disaster. So, while RtI and PBS share common parentages, histories, and features, there is still much work to be done to insure that a combined approach can deliver on the promise of improving both academic and behavior outcomes for all students.

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