

School-wide Positive Behavior Supports

Michael P. George
Centennial School of Lehigh University
mpg6@lehigh.edu

Main Messages

- There is a strong relationship between low -level misbehavior and violence
- Preventing violence is easier than dealing with it
- Positive reinforcement is our most powerful tool for changing behavior
- We can create safe, civil learning environments where ALL children can learn

Schools: A Context for Violence

☞ In an examination of violence in rural schools, 52% of the teachers indicated their belief that violence was increasing at the middle and high school levels.

☞ The behaviors of concern were not those typically perceived by the public, namely, deadly violence, drugs, gang involvement or weapons.

☞ Rather teachers were concerned with behaviors that indicate incivility, such as rumors, verbal intimidation, threats, pushing, shoving and sexual harassment.

Peterson, Beekley, Speaker & Pietrzak, 1996

Bullying

Bullying is a **low-level form of violence** that is inflicted repeatedly on other, usually weaker students, and may consist of verbal remarks or gestures that are meant to intimidate and gain power over a victim and can include threats of bodily harm, weapon possession, extortion, civil rights violations, and gang activity up to and including assault and battery, attempted murder, and murder. Sexual harassment is a form of bullying.

Low-level Misbehavior and Violence

⚡ There is a clear relationship between day -to-day school disciplinary disruptions and more serious violence.

National Center for Educational Statistics Report, 1999

⚡ By implementing comprehensive programs that improve the overall school climate and reduce minor disruption, schools may also be reducing the risk of more serious violent incidents.

Skiba & Peterson, 2000

Violence in Un-owned Spaces

- ⚡ Schools used suspension and expulsion to deal with violent events-only administrators viewed these methods as effective
- ⚡ Violence seldom occurred in classrooms where teachers were present
- ⚡ The common denominator of violence was school spaces with few or no teachers
- ⚡ The presence of "other adults" did not deter violence in those spaces
- ⚡ *All the dangerous spaces where locations that teachers perceived outside their professional responsibility to supervise*

American Educational Research Journal, 1999

What Doesn't Work...

A review of over 500 studies by Lipsey (1992) showed that the least effective responses to violence in schools are...

- ✍ Counseling
- ✍ Psychotherapy
- ✍ Punishment

Lipsey, M. W. (1992). Juvenile delinquency treatment: A meta-analytic inquiry into the variability of effects. In T. Cook, et al. (Eds.), *Meta-Analysis for Explanation*, 83-126.

... What's More Effective

- ✍ Social skills training
 - ✍ Academic or curricular restructuring
 - ✍ Behavioral interventions
- (Lipsey, 1992)

Successful School Programs

- ✍ Have clear rules
- ✍ Teach students alternative responses to misbehavior
- ✍ Deter violent behavior with clear consequences
- ✍ Use data to make decisions
- ✍ Emphasize academics

U.S. Department of Education (1998). *Safe, Drug-free Schools for ALL Students: What Works*. American Institutes for Research, Washington, DC

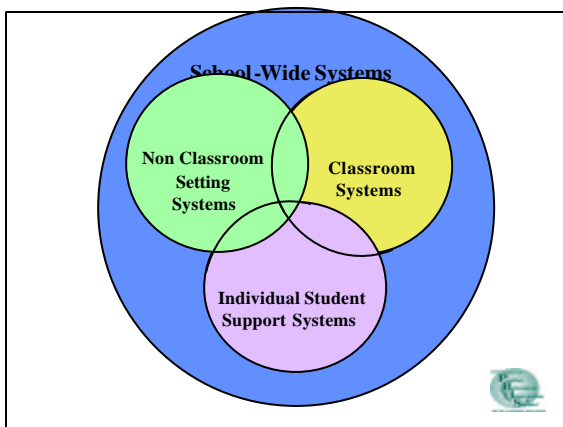
Positive Behavioral Support

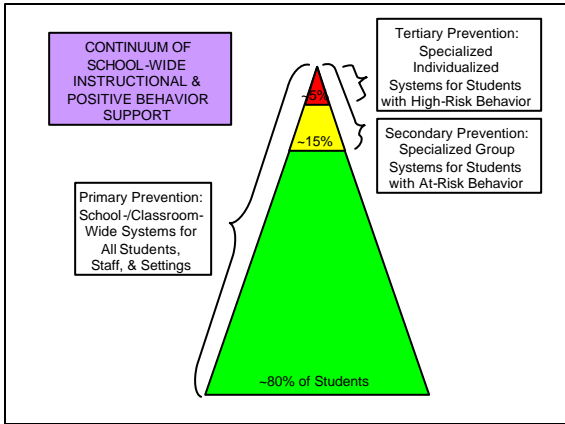
Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is a general term that refers to practical interventions that lead to positive and socially important behavior change.

Sugai, et al 1999

What is a School-wide Intervention?

- ✦ A **clear set of standards** that define behavioral expectations
- ✦ An overall framework that allows for a **consistent and predictable staff response** to students' misbehavior
- ✦ A positive step toward fostering **self-management** on the part of students
- ✦ The first step in developing a **social skills** curriculum
- ✦ A resource for **consistent decision-making**





Common Features of School-wide Interventions

- Total staff commitment
- Used data to make decisions
- Clearly defined rules and expectations
- Directly taught rules and expectations to all students
- Provided multiple opportunities for practicing appropriate responses
- Directly taught consequences for rule-violating behavior
- Recognized positive behavior
- Consistently followed through

The Process of School-wide Change

- Organize a school-wide team
- Identify target areas of concern
- Assess and collect data
- Set a vision and goal
- Develop a comprehensive plan for change
- Implement the plan
- Evaluate progress toward the goal

U.S. Department of Education (2000). Safeguarding our children: An Action Guide, Washington, DC

Case Study # 1

Special education day school for children and youth with emotional disturbance, ages 6 through 18

Approximately 90 students in elementary, middle and high school programs

Serves 40 school districts

Connecting the Tiers: Developing Decision Rules

- ✍️ How are teachers to work together
- What procedures?
- Who employs them?
- When to employ them?
- How to employ them?
- How to evaluate success?

Case Study # 2

Elementary School in high crime area

Serves 550 students, mostly minority

Sixty-seven percent free and reduced

Advantages of a School-wide Intervention

- Encourages and supports student behavior
- Develops common expectations for conduct
- Orchestrates faculty and staff responses to misbehavior
- Empowers all school staff to participate in managing behavior and establishing the school climate
- Prevents emotional and behavioral disorders in children

Questions / Discussion