Pennsylvania's Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support System:

An Introduction

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Bureau of Special Education
Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network

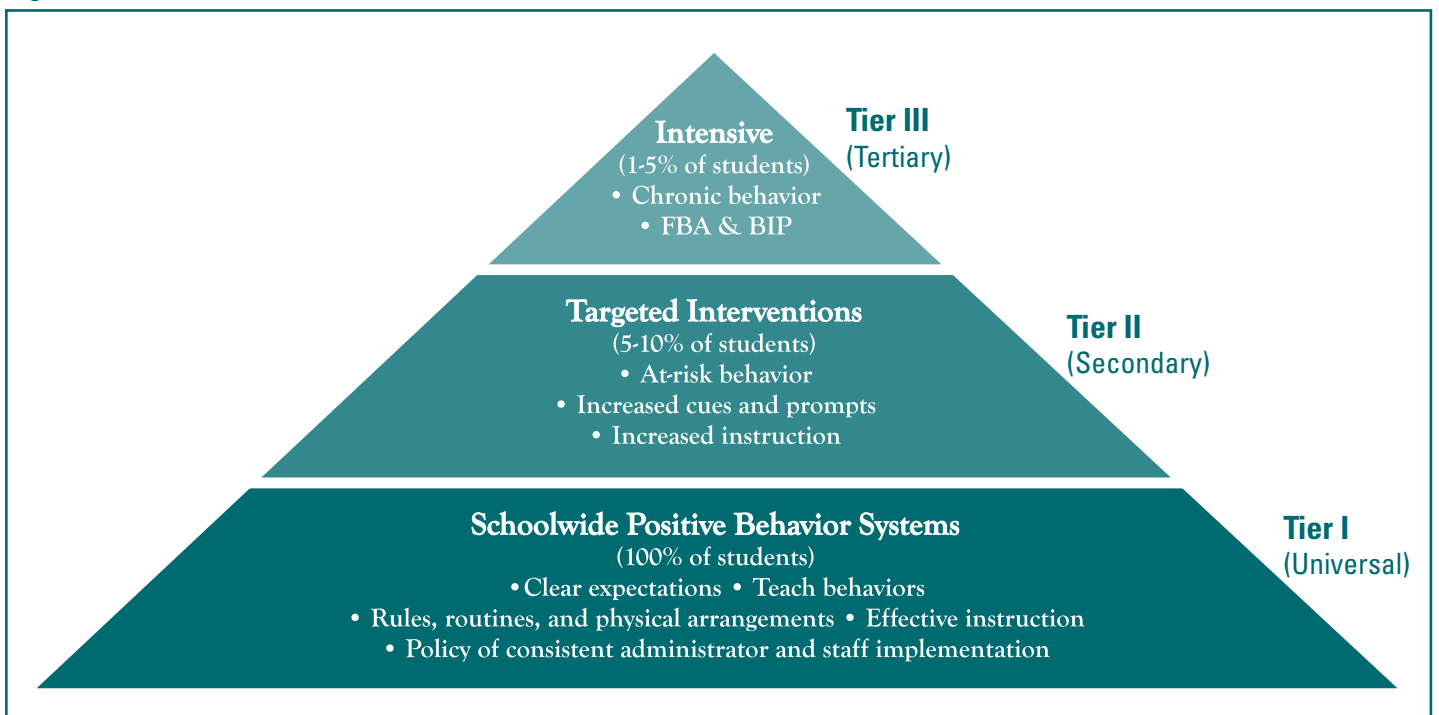# The Pennsylvania Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support System: An Introduction

What is Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support?

Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) is a proactive approach to discipline that promotes appropriate student behavior and increased learning. Traditionally, models of school discipline tend to be reactive (i.e., student misbehavior results in punitive consequences). The word "approach" is key in that SWPBS provides direction, not a canned program, for developing a comprehensive system of behavior support tailored to individual school needs.

The system is based upon a three-tiered model (See Figure 1). The first tier (universal) serves as the foundation upon which the other two tiers are built. This tier provides a system of supports to all students in a school based on preventative practices which emphasize teaching and reinforcing expected student behaviors. Tier two (secondary) provides targeted interventions to support students classified as "at risk," who require more intervention than is typically provided within tier one universal support. Supports offered in tier three (tertiary) require the most intensive level of intervention for students with the most significant behavioral/emotional support needs.

Figure 1: SWPBS Model

Tier III (Tertiary)
Intensive
(1-5% of students)
• Chronic behavior
• FBA & BIP

Tier II (Secondary)
Targeted Interventions
(5-10% of students)
• At-risk behavior
• Increased cues and prompts
• Increased instruction

Tier I (Universal)
Schoolwide Positive Behavior Systems
(100% of students)
• Clear expectations • Teach behaviors
• Rules, routines, and physical arrangements • Effective instruction
• Policy of consistent administrator and staff implementation

This three-tiered approach does not require less effort than current, non-SWPBS practices, but it channels and focuses school-based efforts, making them more efficient and effective. Characteristics of SWPBS:

- Interventions are planned and positive rather than reactive and punitive
- Conditions (antecedents) contributing to inappropriate behavior are carefully managed or eliminated
- Multiple opportunities for positive, corrective feedback are created while negative critical feedback is limited or eliminated
- Prosocial behaviors are taught directly, practiced frequently, and routinized so that they become automatic

Research supports that a positive, direct instructional approach is more effective than traditional punishment-based alternatives in improving student academic success and improving overall school climate (Horner, 2000; Myers, 2001).

Is There More Than One Model of SWPBS?

SWPBS approaches are as varied as the schools in which they are applied. The approach adopted by the Bureau of Special Education/Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) was developed by Rob Horner, George Sugai, and others associated with the University of Oregon. This research-based approach is recognized nationally and is supported by a federal grant through the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Their website is recognized and supported by the OSEP Center on Positive Behavior Support and Interventions <www.pbis.org>.

It is important to realize that SWPBS is intended for all students, not just students who receive special education services. The SWPBS approach is structured to provide a blueprint to support all students in a school, from the most compliant to those requiring the most intensive supports. This approach:

- is research based;
- promotes accountability and sustainability through data collection and planned, well-articulated individual building to district level structures; and
- fosters school-community partnerships at all levels.

Furthermore, the SWPBS model conceptually aligns with Pennsylvania's three-tiered Response to Intervention (RtI) framework (See Figure 2).

Figure 2: RtI Model

The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA '04) established the use of an alternative method for the identification of a student with a specific learning disability. In addition to the traditional ability/achievement discrepancy standard, schools may now use a Response to Intervention (RtI) model as part of the comprehensive evaluation performed to establish special education eligibility.

Pennsylvania's three-tiered RtI model promotes the delivery of instruction in regular education that is based on the students needs, academic or behavioral. Through the use of classroom assessments and pro-gress monitoring, students are provided the appropriate level of instruction and needed academic interventions. The first tier of the model represents those students who are meeting expected academic benchmarks through the use of the core curriculum materials and effective teaching strategies. The second tier is for those students who are found to be at risk of failure and in need of additional instructional time and supplemental materials. The third tier is for students who are experiencing significant academic, social-emotional, or behavioral difficulties. They are provided research-supported strategies and interventions designed to reduce the severity of the student's problem and/or to prevent it from becoming worse. Students who respond successfully to the interventions will need fewer and less intensive strategies, until they are fully supported through universal level strategies alone, or perhaps with secondary level interventions. Students who do not respond well or who respond poorly to the structured interventions and supplemental materials may be considered for a multidisciplinary evaluation and the possible need for specially-designed instruction. This would be considered the most intensive level of intervention within the third tier of support.

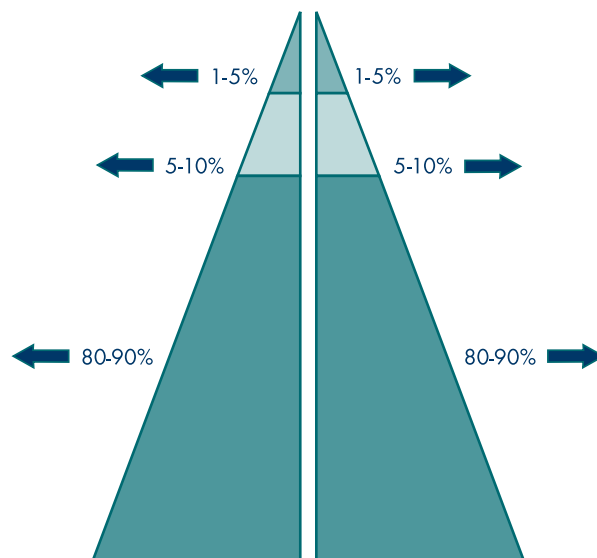

Academic Systems

Tertiary Interventions
- Individual students
- Assessment-based
- High intensity

Secondary Interventions
- Some students (at risk)
- High efficiency
- Rapid response
- Small group interventions
- Some individualizing

Universal Interventions
- All students
- Preventive, proactive

1-5%
5-10%
80-90%

Behavioral Systems

Tertiary Interventions
- Individual students
- Assessment-based
- Intense, durable procedures

Secondary Interventions
- Some students (at risk)
- High efficiency
- Rapid response
- Small group interventions
- Some individualizing

Universal Interventions
- All settings, all students
- Preventive, proactive

Sugai, G., Horner, R. H., & Gresham, F. M. (2002). Behaviorally effective school environments. In M. Shinn, H. M. Walker, and G. Stoner (Eds.), *Interventions for academic and behavior problems II: Preventive and Remedial Approaches* (pp. 315-350). Bethesda, MD: NASP Publications.

Why is an SWPBS System Necessary for a School?

In light of the need to increase No Child Left Behind based Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) scores incrementally so all students reach the proficient level by 2014, effective and efficient use of school time is paramount. SWPBS can help significantly in maximizing the time students are engaged in relevant learning tasks.

Time "off task" is not only unpleasant for staff but also decreases time for instruction; therefore, an approach to school discipline (e.g., SWPBS) which maximizes learning time is of tremendous value to schools or districts seeking the proficient level of academic achievement for all students. Research has shown that changes such as:

- differentiated instructional practices;
- improved instructional delivery;
- consistent, nonpunitive discipline practices;
- opportunities to learn prosocial and self-management skills;
- consistent, clear rules and high performance expectations; and
- consistent enforcement of rules

contribute to high achievement and prosocial behavior in children and adolescents. (Colvin, Kameenui, & Sugai, 1993; Mayer, 1995; Walker and Sprague, 1995).

The SWPBS approach provides a continuum of prevention and intervention supports at each of the three tiers: universal (for all students), secondary (for students at risk), and tertiary (for students with intensive needs). At the tertiary level, SWPBS embraces the conceptual approaches of wraparound and/or person-centered planning for students who have challenging behavioral needs requiring intensive support.

Resources

Colvin, G., Kameenui, E.J., & Sugai, G. (1993). School-wide and classroom management: Reconceptualizing the integration and management of students with behavior problems in general education. *Education and Treatment of Children, 16*(1), 361-381.

Horner, R. (2000). Positive behavior supports. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 57*(2), 97-105.

Lembke, E. & Stichterm, J. (2006). Utilizing a system of screening and progress monitoring within a three-tiered model of instruction: Implications for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Beyond Behavior*, Spring, 3-9.

Mayer, G. (1995). Preventing antisocial behavior in school. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 28*(1), 476-478.

Myers, D. (2001, April). *Creating a continuum of effective behavioral supports*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network, Harrisburg, PA.

Walker, H.M., & Sprague, J.R. (1995). The path to school failure, delinquency, and violence: Causal factors and some potential solutions. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 35*(2), 67-73.

If the ideas and practices connected with SWPBS are of interest and you would like further information, please contact your local PaTTAN office.

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