

GETTING INVOLVED WITH POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS IN YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL

Michelle White & Meme Hieneman

“Positive behavior support involves identifying the purposes behavior serves for a child and the circumstances in which these behaviors are most and least likely.”

Positive Behavior Support is becoming common practice in schools across the nation and has been successful in improving students' social and academic performance. Unfortunately, parents are often unaware of how positive behavior support is being used and how they can take an active role in their children's schools. This article describes this model and how parents can partner with educators to help students.

Positive behavior support was originally developed to overcome serious behavior problems of individual children. It offered a refreshing alternative to reactive and often demeaning strategies that were traditional procedures for educators trying to manage student behavior. Positive behavior support involves identifying the purposes behavior serves for a child (e.g., attention, avoidance of difficult tasks) and the circumstances in which these behaviors are most likely and least likely. With this information, educators and parents can develop strategies to 1) prevent problems, 2) teach skills to replace problem behavior, and 3) encourage appropriate behavior.

What is School Wide Positive Behavior Support?

More recently, these basic principles have been applied to entire classrooms and schools. School-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) is now viewed as a multi-level approach to student support and discipline. SWPBS is a team-based process for planning and problem solving that targets all students and staff on a particular school campus. The goal is to create environments where appropriate behavior is more effective and efficient than problem behavior, leading to a more positive school climate.



SWPBS is managed by a team of individuals representing the administration, faculty, support staff, students, and their families. This team gathers and reviews data on student behavior and progress and then uses this information to change the environment to prevent typical problem behavior from occurring (e.g., by posting written reminders of school expectations or increasing supervision in particular areas around the school). The team encourages staff – and families, when possible – to teach students social skills such as conflict resolution and encourage appropriate behavior with praise and rewards. They also develop consistent consequences to discourage problem behavior. These strategies are incorporated in the school's overall plan, with the team monitoring progress.

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4575 SE Dixie Highway
Stuart, FL 34997
www.TEAMPBS.COM
(888)832-6727

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For parents of school-aged students, it is helpful to learn about positive behavior support and become involved in supporting ongoing behavior change efforts. Parents can get involved in three ways. First, they can learn about and possibly assist in developing the school's SWPBS plan. Second, parents can support strategies used at the school by providing resources and volunteering. And third, parents can follow through at home. Here are some specific ideas for getting involved:

- *Learn your school's expectations, rules, rewards systems, and consequences for breaking rules and review them with your children.* This information is likely to be available on bulletin boards, the school's website and newsletters, materials teachers send home, and phone messages; it is also shared through the district in handbooks, the code of conduct, parent information sessions, and other district communications.
- *Volunteer to assist with events and activities for rewarding student behavior.* Examples how parents can volunteer include overseeing a school store run by the SWPBS team, donating treasure box items, assisting with school-wide reward events, and raising funds for special events.
- *Participate in parent-teacher organizations and school advisory committees.* By getting involved in these groups, parents can shape the school's directions and connect community members who can provide additional support.
- *Communicate consistently with children and teachers, reinforcing expectations and following through at home.* Parents can follow-through by talking to their children about daily events and their children's successes and challenges. They can also develop rules, homework routines, and rewards for appropriate behavior that mirror those at school.



Regardless of a school's particular approach to SWPBS, it is important for parents to be partners in this process. Parents need to be informed, communicate concerns and take part in problem-solving, and support SWPBS efforts by consistently using the strategies both at home and school. When educators and parents are on the same page, school will be a successful experience for everyone involved.

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