

Positive Behavior Supports: A Framework to Support All Students

Colorado is on the map....the OSEP Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports map that is. Due to the success of our Colorado PBS Initiative, examples of successes in our schools are included in national PBS presentations by Dr. George Sugai, Dr. Rob Horner and Anne Todd. On the national map of participating PBS states, Colorado "blinks" as an exemplar state.

The Behavior Learning Team and the Prevention Initiatives Unit teamed with school districts and university partners in 2002 to create a vision to establish positive, predictable learning environments for all Colorado students. The response has been extremely positive and this year we have increased from 137 schools to 274 schools in 31 school districts.

The initial "New Team" training focuses on systems change at the school-wide or universal level. Building level teams meet monthly to define clear positive expectations for students and determine how they will be taught and positively acknowledged in all school settings. Using discipline data for decision making is also a critical component as they identify particular problem behaviors or locations within the building and respond in a consistent and effective manner. Teams are encouraged to engage families and community partners in all phases of implementation.

While this approach is successful for 80-90% of the students, targeted group interventions (specialized interventions for learners who are at-risk for academic or social failure) and intensive individualized supports for students with chronic/intense behavior challenges are necessary for 10 -20 % of the students. At this point teams begin to analyze individual student behavior and identify the "theme" or communicative intent behind the problem behavior. Students can then be matched to available interventions to meet their needs in an appropriate manner. A student who does not get assignments written in his planner may have a "check in/check out" with an adult who can prompt and monitor his success in this area. A student who needs adult attention may have the opportunity to be a teacher assistant or join an after school club of interest. Social skills and anger management groups may be other options or the school may develop an after school homework club.

A more extensive Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) may need to be completed on students with the most challenging needs. The team will then identify specific teaching goals, interventions and supports to help these students learn new skills and increase appropriate behavior in all school setting.

This is the focus of training for our experienced PBS teams in their second or third year. These interventions are identified through a Competing Pathway Analysis. This collaborative process helps define the essential features of problem behavior and identify proactive strategies to modify environmental

variables and support student behavior change. The team follows eight steps which are frequently presented in a visual flow chart format (See multiple examples on www.cde.state.co.us/pbs in the presentation for the Traumatic Brain Injury Conference). Actually the process is quite simple to teach, create and implement and has application for a wide range of behaviors which interfere with successful participation in school, home and the community.

1. The first step is to clearly define the problem behavior in observable terms.
2. Next, using information from the brief or intensive FBA, determine what typically happens before the problem behavior is observed: predictors or antecedents.
3. Now, use your knowledge of “function of behavior” and determine what typically happens after a problem behavior is observed: the maintaining consequences.
4. Using information gathered about the student’s medical, psychological and family background, determine what events, conditions or activities (setting events) increase the likelihood of the behavior. This is a critical time to get input from family members, counselors, medical personnel and others working with the student.
5. Now that you have analyzed the problem behavior, what is the desired behavior you would like the student to demonstrate?
6. If the student or classroom peers engage in this behavior, what is the typical consequence?
7. Since the child is clearly not demonstrating the behavior at this point in time, determine what would be an acceptable alternative or replacement behavior that the student could perform that meets the same outcome or maintaining consequence as the problem behavior.
8. The last step is to identify intervention strategies that decrease the likelihood of problem behavior and increase the newly identified replacement behavior for each of the 4 identified components: setting events, predictors, teaching and reinforcement/consequences.

In the classroom setting one example might be as follows: John (1) throws his math paper on the floor when (2) teacher ask him to complete independent work which (3) allows him to avoid failure as he is asked to leave the group. The teacher is aware that John (4) has a more difficult time on days he is tired and hasn’t slept well or has not had his medication. She would really like John (5) to complete his assignment quietly and (5) earn his points toward a good grade like the rest of the class. But she realizes that if John was (6) able to indicate in some way that he needed help, then he would be able to (7) avoid failure in a more proactive and appropriate manner.

What (8) strategies can the team develop to increase the replacement behavior and make the problem behavior inefficient and irrelevant? To minimize the impact of John’s ADHD and sleeping problems (Setting Events), the team will

work with mom to have a back and forth book (or a morning voice mail for an older child) to alert the staff he had a rough night or is out of meds. A person may be the “check in/check out “ contact that greets John and spends 5 -10 minutes talking about strategies and supports available if he needs help. To address the predictor or antecedent the teacher could use a “help card” or signal and cues so the class could let her know if someone needs help. At that point the students have the option of pairing up to do the assignment. John may need some support to develop these new skills and teaching strategies during small group or individual time with a school psychologist or social worker.

Application of the Competing Pathway Model goes beyond addressing specific behavior problems in the classroom setting. Individual student support teams can use this analysis for students who are consistently tardy for class, have a high rate of incidents in non-classroom settings (lunchroom, restroom) or who respond poorly to changes in schedules or routines. Social workers and mental health personnel can work collaboratively with school teams to minimize the academic and social challenges students with ADHD, anxiety and depression face on a daily basis by identifying specific strategies and teaching roles to increase a student’s ability to ask for help or to use relaxation or calming strategies. Itinerant staff in OT/PT, Speech/Language or vision/hearing services can provide expertise on predictor and antecedent strategies to minimize the impact of a child’s disability and to increase academic and social competence.

Another important application is working with families to support student behavior at home by pinpointing “sticky situations” and assisting parents to identify triggers for problem behaviors. The Positive Behavior Support Coaches are working with Kiki Mc Gough and Jessica Krueger from CDE and Shirley Swope from PEAK as they present “*Behavior Change is a Family Affair*”, a three hour Saturday class where parents will map out a behavior change plan using the competing pathway model. Six sessions will be scheduled this fall throughout Colorado for families and staff working together to promote positive behavior and consistency in home and school environments.

Please contact Kiki Mc Gough, PBS Coordinator at (303) 866-6768 or mcgough_k@cde.state.co.us for additional information on the Colorado School-wide PBS Initiative or use of the Competing pathway Model. Visit our PBS website at www.cde.state.co.us/pbs where we have posted our PBS and Competing Pathway Model presentations.