

Integrating PBIS and Restorative Discipline

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"What happened? Who's to blame? What's the consequence or punishment?"—from traditional discipline practices

"What happened? What harm has resulted? What needs to happen to make things right?"¹—from restorative discipline

During the past 15 years, the use of certain "consequences" for disruptive behavior in schools—office referrals, in- and out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions—has skyrocketed.² Paradoxically, these practices have been shown to actually increase aggressive behavior, truancy, vandalism,



further behind academically⁵ and become increasingly marginalized. When students are given no educational alternative in the wake of disruptive behavior, schools may actually be contributing to serious short- and long-term negative outcomes: alienation, school failure, delinquency, mental health problems, and substance abuse.⁶

Rather than just excluding students who persistently behave inappropriately, schools can better serve their

entire student bodies by transforming the disciplinary process so that it

- helps students accept responsibility for their actions,
- places high value on academic engagement and achievement,
- teaches alternative ways to behave, and
- focuses on restoring damage to the environment and social relationships in the school.

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From Restorative Justice to Restorative Discipline

A general interest in restorative justice in society at large has contributed to the development of restorative justice practices in schools and the ways that these practices might address ongoing concerns about discipline and school violence. When applied to schools, restorative discipline emphasizes repairing any harm caused by destructive behavior. This restitution and repair in the process of administering school discipline includes sanctions, but the approach does not focus on punishment as the sole solution. In fact, restoring the relationships damaged

(Restoration, continued on page 12)

1. Costello, B., Wachtel, J., & Wachtel, T. (2009). *The restorative practices handbook for teachers, disciplinarians, and administrators*. Bethlehem, PA: International Institute for Restorative Practices.
2. Hoffman, M. T. (2006). Review of issues in school violence research and kids and violence: The invisible school experience. *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics*, 27, 509.
3. Skiba, R. J., Michael, R. S., Nardo, A. C., & Peterson, R. (2002). The color of discipline: Sources of racial and gender disproportionality in school punishment. *Urban Review*, 34, 317–342. <http://www.indiana.edu/~safeschl/cod.pdf>
4. Kim, S., Kamphaus, R. W., Orpinas, P., & Kelder, S. H. (2010). Change in the manifestation of overt aggression during early adolescence: gender and ethnicity. *School Psychology International*, 31, 95–111.
5. Gregory, A., Skiba, R. J., & Noguera, P. A. (2010). The achievement gap and the discipline gap. *Educational Researcher*, 39, 59–68.
6. Maulik, P. K., Eaton, W. W., & Bradshaw, C. P. (2010). The effect of social networks and social support on mental health services use, following a life event, among the Baltimore Epidemiologic Catchment Area cohort. *Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research*, 38, 29–50. doi: 10.1007/s11414-009-9205-z

7. Smith, J. D., Schneider, B. H., Smith, P. K., & Ananiadou, K. (2004). *The effectiveness of whole-school antibullying programs: A synthesis of evaluation research*. *School Psychology Review*, 33, 547–560.
8. Sumner, M. D., Silverman, C. J., & Frampton, M. L. (2010). *School-based restorative justice as an alternative to zero-tolerance policies: Lessons from West Oakland*. Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley, School of Law.
9. For an overview of SWPBIS, see *The Special Edge*, Spring 2013, at <http://www.calstat.org/specialEdgeOld.html>
10. Lewis, S. (2009). *Improving school climate: Findings from schools implementing restorative practices*. Bethlehem, PA: International Institute on Restorative Practices.
11. For more on “affective questions,” see <http://lms.dcsdk12.org/pd/mod/book/tool/print/index.php?id=8697>
12. For more on “active listening,” go to <http://cultureofempathy.com/projects/Empathy-Movement/References/Reflective-Listening.htm>
13. For more on “reframing,” go to <http://www.ncte.org/library/nctefiles/resources/journals/ej/1022-nov2012/ej1022reframing.pdf>
14. Bradshaw, C. P. (2008). Impact of school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) on the organizational health of elementary schools. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 23, 462–473.

(**Restoration** continued from page 11)

by the misbehavior becomes the priority. The fundamental value is that any damaged relationship can and should be repaired and that the offending individual can and should be reintegrated into the school community—not only for the good of that individual but also for the good of the community as a whole.⁷ This approach has led to reduced rates of office disciplinary referrals, out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions.⁸ Anecdotal reports also document increased satisfaction with the disciplinary process by everyone involved—including students.

Practices

Restorative practices work to address the needs of those harmed (e.g., other students, teachers, community members), and they work to ameliorate the harm through a balance of appropriate sanctions, restitution, and restorative processes, such as peacemaking circles and mediation. The person who caused the harm is held accountable, and the practices allow her or him to be “restored” to the school community. Restorative practices

- focus on repairing the harm done rather than only on who’s at fault for breaking rules,
- give voice to the person(s) harmed,
- use collaborative problem-solving methods,
- enhance responsibility, and
- reintegrate the offending student into the school community.

Readers of this publication are familiar with the tenets of schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and supports (SWPBIS),⁹ which reframe school discipline in a model of prevention, not simply reaction. As within a system of SWPBIS, restorative discipline includes schoolwide prevention practices, where teachers provide instruction in (and model through their own behavior) skills in relationship building, reframing, conflict resolution, mindfulness of personal stress points, and the importance of seeing things from another person’s point of view.¹⁰ School policies and practices that focus on restoring relationships, repairing any damage, and assigning consequences or other

responses to the problem do so in ways that are flexible and appropriate to the harm caused and the unique needs of all affected. This use of “differentiated discipline” gives administrators and other members of the school community opportunities to focus on repairing harm and moving forward rather than just dwelling on the severity or duration of a consequence.

How SWPBIS and Restorative Discipline Can Work Together

Both SWPBIS and restorative discipline attempt to change the way schools address issues of discipline, shifting the focus away from reacting to misbehavior with punitive consequences and toward strengthening and supporting desired behavior through positive relationships and repair. Both contribute to a positive school climate, one that emphasizes prevention and positive responses to problem behavior (e.g., teaching expected behaviors and supporting ways to make amends for our actions). The multitiered framework of SWPBIS provides a structure for making data-based decisions regarding the level of support or intervention that is needed. SWPBIS also offers a system of data collection and analysis to inform decisions regarding behavior.

Within a SWPBIS system, some restorative discipline interventions, such as negotiating alternatives to exclusionary discipline, typically apply at the second or third tiers of prevention. However, some restorative discipline practices—such as relationship and community building (making affective statements, asking affective questions,¹¹ active listening,¹² and reframing¹³), class meetings, or circles—can be used as universal prevention practices at tier one. For example, a class meeting may be held to discuss how all students are affected by the theft of one student’s property and to explore what everyone can do to prevent this behavior.

Recommendations

Child and adolescent behavior problems are a major public health issue. To address this issue in a way that actually helps students—and that doesn’t provide a quick fix that only hides the problem—schools must do the following:

- Establish a “system of care” for students who need intensive behavioral supports.
- Support access to health care and social services for students and their families if there is a disciplinary action or if a student is at risk of such action.
- Conduct a full assessment for social, medical, and mental health problems for any expelled or suspended youth (or any youth at-risk for suspension or expulsion).
- Limit out-of-school placement for suspension or expulsion to the most egregious circumstances, and implementation processes for successful reintegration and restoration.
- Develop and implement restorative practices and alternatives to out-of-school suspension or expulsion.
- Explore with parents matters related to safety and supervision whenever their child is barred from attending school.
- For out-of-school suspension or expulsion, be able to demonstrate how attendance at a school site, even in an alternative setting with a low ratio of highly trained staff to students, would be inadequate to prevent a student from causing harm to himself or herself or to others.

We know that social, emotional, and mental health support for students can decrease the need for referrals, suspension, and expulsion.¹⁴ Restorative justice, ideally implemented within a system of SWPBIS, offers one promising approach to creating a school that embodies an effective way to provide that support. ►

For an extensive explanation of how restorative discipline fits within a system of SWPBIS, read Jeffrey Sprague’s “Restorative Discipline and School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports,” available at <http://www.calstat.org/info/AdditionalResources.html>.

(Behavior continued from page 16)

supports are established: At the first tier, all students are given clear, consistent, positive instruction on how to behave. At the second, students who show signs of challenging behavior are given those next-level supports, usually in groups. The third tier is reserved for those students whose behavior requires intensive intervention.

Even if a school doesn’t have a system of PBIS, there is a great deal teachers can do at the classroom level to create a healthy climate, promote positive behavior, and ensure success—for themselves as well as for their students. The following specific practices are proven to be effective in supporting positive behaviors and reducing or eliminating challenging behavior for all students, with and without disabilities.

Comprehensive Classroom and Behavioral Management

This first-tier approach requires careful planning and effort. It’s designed for and shared with all students, typically at the beginning of the school year, and regularly and consistently reviewed throughout the year. But the time spent in preparation and in direct instruction will set expectations for a successful school year and decrease the likelihood of many behavioral challenges. A comprehensive plan includes several components:

1. A statement of purpose that is brief, positive, and clear; one that conveys the goal of the plan and communicates why the plan is important.
2. Rules that are positively stated, direct, and observable and that state expectations for students while they are in the classroom.
3. Procedures that address both daily routines and less frequent activities and that identify the steps students should take to successfully complete each task.
4. Consequences that clearly articulate what happens when the rules and procedures are violated or ignored

and that are designed to encourage appropriate behavior and discourage inappropriate behavior.

5. An action plan that determines how the behavior management plan will be implemented, shared, and maintained.

While a comprehensive classroom management plan will help teachers successfully address most behaviors, some students may demonstrate disruptive and noncompliant behaviors that require additional intervention.

The Acting-Out Cycle

When students act out, teachers often think that the inappropriate behaviors “came out of nowhere.” Yet these kinds of behaviors—from shouting or defying instructions to fighting or destroying property—typically occur in a predictable cycle. A calm student is disrupted by some kind of trigger that leads to agitation, which accelerates if the trigger isn’t interrupted, leading to more extreme behaviors.

By understanding this cycle, teachers can effectively intervene before the behavior becomes extreme, minimizing or preventing the results. For example, a teacher may notice a student tapping his pencil or showing other signs of agitation. At this point, the teacher can give the student individualized instruction, allow the student to take a break, or redirect the student in some other way.

Evidence-based Behavioral Interventions

“High-probability requests” represents another strategy that promotes compliant behavior in potentially volatile situations. Teachers first prompt students to engage in behaviors in which they are likely to comply (e.g., passing out papers), then immediately follow this kind of request with one they are less likely to perform (e.g., independent academic tasks). Research shows that students are more likely to comply when they are already doing what they are supposed to do.

(Behavior, continued on page 14)

(Behavior continued from page 13)

“Choice making” also increases compliance. For example, if a student struggles with a particular learning task, the teacher can allow her to choose from a number of different ways to complete it. This list might include the option to either write or type an assignment or to work either independently or with a peer. Teachers may also allow students to choose when to complete a task within the school day. Choice making promotes a sense of control and autonomy for the student and has also been shown to increase compliance.

For the majority of students, a comprehensive management plan and evidence-based behavioral interventions provide adequate support for appropriate classroom behavior. In some cases, however, more focused interventions may be necessary.

Individualized Interventions

Students with severe and persistent behavioral challenges will need individualized supports. These supports include helping students learn self-regulation strategies if they struggle to stay on task—how to monitor and manage their own classroom behaviors (e.g., bringing required materials to class or

listening to directions for assignments)—and set goals for improvement.

Functional behavioral assessment (FBA) is another individualized strategy for addressing problem behaviors that threaten to become serious. Through FBA, teachers and other education professionals, such as school psychologists, work to determine the reasons for the challenging behaviors by analyzing the antecedents to problem behavior (i.e., conditions that precede the behavior) and the consequences (i.e., responses that follow the behavior). Educators then develop a behavior intervention plan (BIP) to address these behaviors by

Free and Online: Resources for Classroom and Behavioral Management

Early Childhood/ Early Intervention & Prevention

The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations of Early Learning (CSEFEL):

- Preschool and Infant Toddler Modules, both in English and Spanish—
http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/training_modules.html

Classroom and Behavior Management Plans

IRIS

- *Classroom Management (Part 1): Learning the Components of a Comprehensive Behavior Management Plan*—
<http://iriscenter.com/module/beh1/> and
- *Classroom Management (Part 2): Developing Your Own Comprehensive Behavior Management Plan*—
<http://iriscenter.com/module/beh2/>

Positive Environments, Network of Trainers (PENT)

- *Strategies to Achieve Success with Difficult Learners: Effective Strategies for Successful Teaching*—
<http://www.pent.ca.gov/pos/cl/classroom.html>
- *BIP Desk Reference: A comprehensive resource and training manual for developing behavior intervention plans and structuring school environments to prevent behavior problems. The manual outlines how to write and evaluate a comprehensive behavior plan*—
<http://www.pent.ca.gov/dsk/bipmanual.html>

National Technical Assistance (TA) Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

- *Classroom Checklists, Effective Classroom Plan, Inventory Checklist; Classroom Management Self-Assessment (Revised)*—
http://www.pbis.org/school/secondary_level/default.aspx

The Acting Out Cycle

IRIS

- *Addressing Disruptive and Noncompliant Behaviors (Part 1): Understanding the Acting-Out Cycle*—
<http://iriscenter.com/module/bi1/>

PBIS TA Center

- *Understanding and Responding to Escalating Behavior*—
http://www.pbis.org/school/tertiary_level/default.aspx

Behavioral Interventions

IRIS

- *Addressing Disruptive and Noncompliant Behaviors (Part 2): Behavioral Interventions*—
<http://iriscenter.com/module/bi2/>

PENT

- *BIP Desk Reference*—
<http://www.pent.ca.gov/dsk/bipmanual.html>

Self-regulating Strategies

IRIS

- *SOS: Helping Students Become Independent Learners*—
<http://iriscenter.com/module/sr/>

PENT

- *Positive Environments and Rtl: Classrooms*—
<http://www.pent.ca.gov/pos/cl/classroom.html>

Functional Behavioral Assessment

IRIS

- *Functional Behavioral Assessment: Identifying the Reasons for Problem Behavior and Developing a Behavior Plan*—
<http://iriscenter.com/module/fba/>

PENT

- *Behavior Planning*—
<http://www.pent.ca.gov/beh/behplan.htm>

PBIS TA Center

- *Functional Assessment Checklist for Teachers and Staff (FACTS); Functional Behavior Support Plan*—
http://www.pbis.org/school/tertiary_level/default.aspx

Funding for Professional Development

CalSTAT

- Funds for behavioral trainings (awarded on a “first come, first served” basis) are available for schools from CalSTAT—
<http://www.calstat.org/ta.html>

adjusting antecedents (triggers, such as a frustrating assignment) and consequences (the rewards or results, such as being removed from class so the child doesn't have to deal with the frustration) that contribute to the problem. The student then learns appropriate replacement behaviors.

California educators interested in learning and mastering these practices have a wealth of supports available to them. Both the IRIS Center and PENT (Positive Environment, Network of Trainers) offer free online training modules and resources to support the implementation of these effective methods (see table on page 14). Several national projects also provide invaluable information and support for educators.

The IRIS Center

The IRIS Center, funded through Vanderbilt University, is dedicated to improving school outcomes for all children, especially those with disabilities. The center develops and makes available at no cost interactive training modules, case studies, activities, and other instructional materials through its Web site: www.iriscenter.com. This national center has a branch in California at Claremont Graduate University (CGU). Funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs,⁵ IRIS@CGU provides training to teacher educators and professional development providers across the nation through Web Tours, Webinars, Faculty Seminars, and Work Sessions. IRIS@CGU coordinates these training and outreach services.

PENT

A California Positive Behavior Initiative, PENT has been providing information and resources to educators in the state for more than 20 years. The

organization's goal is to help educators achieve high educational outcomes through the use of positive, proactive strategies. PENT's Web site disseminates evidence-based behavioral practices and helpful information, as do PENT's widely established network of trainers.

National Centers

Two national centers also offer online, evidence-based resources and training for teachers interested in improving their practice relative to student behavior: (1) The National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports at <http://www.pbis.org> and (2) the Center on Social and Emotional Development for Early Learning (CSEFEL) at <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu>.

Conclusion

Classroom and behavior management can be one of the most challenging aspects of a teacher's job; it is also a critically important one. Students cannot learn in a chaotic environment—whether it is of their own making or caused by others. By understanding the essentials of an evidence-based behavioral approach and accessing the many available resources, teachers can build the knowledge and develop the skills they need to effectively manage their classrooms and support optimal learning for every student. ►

(Law continued from page 7)

Hamilton particularly likes the new law's emphasis on "intervening before [behavior] becomes a full-blown problem" through PBIS and bringing "everyone, all staff members—from teachers and school administrators to bus drivers and office help—on board so a consistent response is in place."

Lenz uses a multitiered system of supports (MTSS) such as PBIS to explain the logic of the new law. In a tiered system, he says, "everybody gets something. But

we were at the top of the pyramid with the Hughes Bill [regulations]. Not everyone needs that kind of intense support." With MTSS and AB 86, "we get to work our way up there, and only if necessary. . . . The law now doesn't limit what a district can do. This is a whole new and exciting world for LEAs. [The new law] aligns well with a multitiered system of supports—and it should translate directly to positive outcomes for students."

Challenges

Some parents still voice concerns, however, that go well beyond any new law or regulation. Jane Floethe-Ford, director of education for Parents Helping Parents, a parent training and information center (PTI) in San José, says that "mental health and behavior issues are simply not being addressed in too many schools, whether it's before AB 86 or after."

Specifically, according to Krista Rose, "Too many suspensions are not being documented. And then the FBAs aren't happening, and appropriate supports and services are not being provided for the student and staff involved. Parents are often unaware of what suspension means," Rose says, "and of the ramifications for their child's education. For parents to be effective IEP team members, education in this area is crucial. They then can be part of the process—know the requirements related to suspension and when and how to get documentation." Floethe-Ford adds that "any time students are removed from the classroom because a behavior issue is overlooked, it's a problem. They lose instructional time. It's not intentional, but it's happening."

Behavior is central to learning. And children need to be in school and in class in order to learn. This issue of *The Special EDge* examines some of the broader concerns that Rose and Floethe-Ford raise by highlighting effective ways to address student behavior, both before and after it becomes a problem. ►

Note

5. OSEP, Project #H325E120002.