

## Positive Behavior Support in the Classroom: Facilitating Behaviorally Inclusive Learning Environments

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### Abstract

Teaching in a public school is a demanding job as the multiple dynamics of a classroom can be a challenge. In addition to addressing the challenging behaviors that many students without disabilities exhibit, more and more students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) are being included in the general education classroom. Effective instruction and the development of effective instructional environments have been demonstrated to decrease problem behaviors in students with histories of failure in school. Positive behavior support (PBS) provides a framework for considering development of instructional environments that increase the teacher's ability to deliver effective instruction to all students, thereby increasing success rates and reducing negative behavior across the school. The same PBS features: prediction, prevention, consistency, and evaluation apply in the classroom to decrease the number of problem behaviors and increase academic and social success. This paper presents a description of the key features of effective classroom PBS and demonstrates each via the use of case examples. The premise of PBS is that the more effectively the environment is designed, more effective it can be in facilitating classrooms that run smoothly and efficiently, allowing teachers to recognize, assess, and plan for students with special needs.

Keywords: Emotional and behavioral disorders, classroom management, PBS, and effective instruction

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In our public schools, classroom teachers deal with a variety of challenging student behaviors. In the minds of most are instances of violence and crime. However, the most common disciplinary referrals are for behaviors whose purpose is to avoid class (i.e., truancy and tardy), followed by fighting and bothering others – also resulting in removal from and therefore avoidance of class (McFadden, March, Price, & Hwang, 1992; Morgan-D'Atrio, Northrup, LaFleur, & Spera, 1996). In addition, many schools continue to report instances of bullying, disrespect, verbal abuse, and general classroom disorder as occurring daily or weekly (DeVoe et al., 2004). But far and away, teachers report that the disruptive behaviors that they are forced to deal with on a daily basis are much less violent and intense, but are far more frequent and usurp great amounts of instructional time (Sprague & Walker, 2000). These behaviors include simple disrespect, failing to follow through with simple instructions, and generally being off-task. All-together, issues related to challenging student behavior are reported by teachers as the most difficult and stressful of their professional lives (Furlong, Morrison, & Dear, 1994; Kuzsman & Schnall, 1987; Safran & Safran, 1988).

There is little doubt that teaching in a public school classroom is, to say the least, a demanding job. The multiple dynamics of a classroom can be a challenge for any teacher. Today, however, the role of the classroom teacher is becoming even more multidimensional as teachers are being asked to accommodate for students with more diverse academic and behavioral needs in the general education setting (McLeskey, Henry, & Hodges, 1998). Such situations may require teachers to organize several small group activities throughout the classroom while at the same time providing the instruction or guidance that students with special needs require. All this must occur while simultaneously maintaining some acceptable standard of classroom discipline.

In addition to addressing the challenging behaviors that many students without disabilities exhibit (DeVoe et al, 2004), more and more students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) are being included in the general education classroom (Cheney & Barringer, 1995; McLeskey et al., 1999; Sawka et al., 2002). Representing only one to five percent of the student population but typically accounting for more than half of the school's discipline referrals (Sugai, Sprague, Horner, & Walker, 2000; Taylor-

Greene et al., 1997), this population of students increases the demand for teachers to possess skills and abilities to effectively manage behavior, even among the youngest students (Sawka, McCurdy, & Mannella, 2002). Two things are clear: (1) simple inclusion in general education classroom will not, by itself, change these students' behaviors (Cartwright, Cartwright, & Ward, 1988; Gable, McLaughlin, Sindelar, & Kilgore, 1993), and (2) reliance solely on punishment and exclusion (e.g., suspension and expulsion) as the response to these issues is ineffective (Hyman & Perone, 1998; Shores, Gunter, & Jack, 1993; Sulzer-Azaroff & Mayer, 1991). Furthermore, in the absence of effective management, continued failures often result in burnout and attrition for teachers (Zabel & Zabel, 2002), and a host of negative life outcomes for students – including involvement in the correctional, welfare, and mental health systems (Patterson, Reid, & Dishion, 1992; Sprague, Walker, Stieber, Simonsen, Nishioka, & Wagner, 2001; Tremblay, Mass, Pagani, & Vitaro, 1996).

For veteran teachers, working under these conditions might come as second nature, due to many years of experience. However, for novice teachers such a task might prove to be a formidable challenge. Research has noted that beginning teachers consistently enter the field feeling unprepared for managing a classroom (Davies & Ferguson, 1997; Gold, 1996; Jones, 1996; Mitchell & Arnold, 2004; Rickman & Hollowell, 1981; Safran & Safran, 1988; Veeman, 1984), possibly because teacher education programs provide insufficient training or instruction to prepare teachers to manage classrooms with diverse learners and a range of behavioral challenges (Chamberlain & Vallance, 1991; Coombs-Richardson & Mead, 2001; Teasley, 1996). In fact, it is reported that most teachers learn what behavior management skills they do have as part of in-service rather than pre-service training (Sawka, McCurdy, & Mannella, 2002). As a result, many beginning teachers cite classroom management as one of their biggest concerns (Mastrilli & Sardo-Brown, 2002) and many teachers eventually cite this same difficulty as a reason to leave the teaching profession (Luekens, Lyter, Fox, & Chandler, 2004).

On a positive note, recent research suggests effective instructional practices can *prevent* the development of both academic and social behavior deficits (Brestan & Eyberg, 1998; Brophy, 1986; Kame'enui, Good, & Harn, 2005; Lyon et al., 2001; Simmons, Kame'enui, Good, Harn, Cole, & Braun, 2002; Tolan & Guerra, 1994; Wehby, Lane, & Falk, 2003). In short, effective instruction may prevent students from falling behind and beginning an escalating pattern of failure. Students who receive effective instruction may be less likely to exhibit problem behavior in an attempt to escape or avoid academic tasks that are difficult or impossible for them to successfully complete (Ferro, Foster-Johnson, & Dunlap, 1996; Fleming, Harachi, Cortes, Abbott, & Catalano, 2004). Finally - and importantly - effective instruction relates not only to academic success, but also to social success; students need to be taught appropriate social behavior in the same way they are taught academic skills (Anderson & Kincaid, 2005; Greer-Chase, Rhodes, & Kellam, 2002; Scott, Nelson, & Liaupsin, 2000).

Simply stated, effective instruction is that which is both efficient and effective in promoting student success with whatever skill is being taught. Still, classroom issues including large numbers of students, wide-ranging skill diversity, and behavioral concerns have hampered teachers' ability to deliver effective instruction. The purpose of this paper is to describe how procedures and practices associated with positive behavior support can be used in the classroom context to support teachers' ability to deliver effective instruction to all students, thereby increasing success rates and reducing negative behavior.

### Positive Behavior Support

The idea behind positive behavior support (PBS) is that behaviors are predictable and that predictable problems are preventable. As any teacher can attest, problem behaviors, while pervasive, are generally predictable under a variety of specific circumstances. Under a PBS system, specially designed rules, routines, and physical arrangements are used to effectively decrease the number of problem behaviors that occur due to inadequate or poorly designed environments. PBS can be conceived of as a

four-step framework for implementing effective instructional practices. The first step involves predicting problems in terms of who will fail, what that failure will look like, when and where failure is most likely, and why failure occurs under these circumstances. Understanding a problem is key to considering its predictability and sets the occasion for prevention strategies. Step two builds upon that prediction by developing specific rules, routines, and physical arrangements aimed at preventing predictable problems. This involves instruction of what the expected behaviors are (what we want students to do) as well as creating environments in which we maximize the probability of those successful behaviors occurring (what we do to help students). Routines and arrangements include both antecedent and consequence strategies, as well as consideration of the physical landscape – where adults are placed, how we arrange desks, and how many students can be engaged in an activity at one time. All of these strategies are developed with equal consideration to both the logic of effectiveness and the reality of implementation. That is, teachers must select strategies that will work and that are workable, given logistics and the realities of their time and effort. Step three involves the actual implementation of these strategies in a consistent manner across adults in the classroom, across students, and over time. Inconsistency is the enemy of instruction. Just as we would not ignore a student's comment that  $2 + 2$  is equal to 5 for fear of allowing a misrule to take hold, we also must not allow social misbehavior to be ignored. Effective instruction requires immediate and consistent feedback. Step four involves the collection of data to evaluate instruction. When our monitoring indicates that students are meeting their instructional objectives we continue with those successful strategies. When data indicates failure we must reconsider and change instruction and our routines and arrangements as necessary to facilitate success.

#### *PBS at the School-wide Level*

A growing evidence base supports the utility of PBS for enhancing the social behavior of students (e.g., Biglan, 1995; Horner, Sugai, Todd & Lewis-Palmer, 2005; Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Sugai & Horner, in press; for a review of empirical support see Anderson & Kincaid, 2005). Further, research suggests that, when schools use evidence-based instructional strategies, school-wide PBS enhances academic outcomes as well (McIntosh, Chard, Boland & Horner, 2006). To support academic outcomes, school-wide PBS addresses behavioral issues that impede student learning to promote a learning environment that is positive, safe, and productive. Specific rules are taught and rewarded or corrected using an ongoing data monitoring system to evaluate progress.

Proactive support extends across multiple systems of intervention to respond to multiple levels of student need. Primary prevention provides all students the foundation of positively stated behavioral expectations, teacher-directed instruction, and incentive systems for appropriate behaviors (Sugai, et al., 2000). For students who display emerging behavior patterns, secondary interventions use behavioral procedures to decrease problem behavior through correction and reinforcement. Students unresponsive to primary or secondary support systems require individualized tertiary interventions that are specific to the functional needs of the student. This systems approach predicts the occurrence of problem behaviors in order to prevent future occurrences through effective instructional practices that change environmental contexts to better support student success.

The remainder of this paper is focused on descriptions of PBS at the classroom level for both the classroom at large and for individual students in need of additional or supplemental instructional strategies.

#### *PBS at the Classroom Level*

Prevention of behavior problems in schools cannot be solved with a single intervention. Rather, a hierarchy of more focused prevention strategies for small groups of students and individualized support for a few students is needed to address the needs of those who have not responded to school-wide interventions (Lewis, Sugai, & Colvin, 1998; Sugai et. al). This PBS approach at the school-wide level lays the groundwork to establish common expectations for all students. PBS at the classroom level is

founded on the same expectations that have been established school-wide but includes individualization in consideration of the unique needs of a given classroom. In this way, systems within the school share common rules, common language, and a common framework to match student needs with levels of intervention (Scott, 2001).

Whereas school-wide PBS builds the foundation to establish a safe school climate, class-wide PBS efforts enhance overall classroom functioning and afford time and effort for dealing with students whose needs are more intense (Hieneman, Dunlap, & Kincaid, 2005; Lohrman & Talerico, 2004). The same PBS features- prediction, prevention, consistency, and evaluation apply in the classroom to decrease the number of problem behaviors and increase academic and social success. In the classroom, the universal prevention components of class-wide PBS include: effective classroom management structure (rules, routines, and physical arrangements), effective instructional methods, a system to acknowledge when students follow rules, and in-class discipline methods (Hieneman, Dunlap, & Kincaid, 2005). For students in need of additional support, secondary interventions provide more focused attention and increased corrective feedback. Individualized or tertiary prevention requires a closer look at patterns that reliably predict occurrences of problem behavior.

Under the PBS framework, the first step to implementing class-wide PBS is to actively predict failure by understanding the who, what, when, where, and why of problem behaviors. In typical classrooms, rules and expectations work most of the time but break down during specific contexts. For example, students may need more reminders when there are changes to the daily schedule such as in the case of assemblies or scheduled testing. For example, Josh, a student with attention difficulties has trouble staying on-task during reading, especially when it precedes assemblies. In response to this predictable problem, the teacher provides written reminders on assembly days, in addition to verbal prompts and regular specific praise to help him stay focused and successful. Similar strategies may be equally helpful in other predictably problematic contexts such as changes in who gives the instruction (substitute teacher, instructional assistant) or during transitions (between classes, high energy to low energy activities). In another example, Moriah has trouble with inconsistency and thus tends to have problems following directions with substitute teachers. On days when there is a substitute, the teaching assistant greets Moriah at the school bus, lets her know that a substitute will be working with the class, and reminds her of the classroom expectations for following directions. Brent, on the other hand, has trouble with transitioning from whole class to small group work. Thus, his teacher has made sure that all students know and can repeat the expectations for transitioning, providing Brent with additional reminders and the occasional “thumb’s up” sign to reinforce his appropriate behavior. In all three cases, assembly days for Josh, substitute teachers for Moriah, and transitions for Brent, school staff have been able to use prediction of problem behaviors to proactively address them. Understanding the specific contexts of problem behavior allows rules, routines and physical arrangements to target these specific areas. When including students with more intense needs in the general education setting, such considerations and strategies are crucial not only to create a solid foundation for the class, but also to provide teachers with sufficient time to meet the needs of all students.

The second step involves the development of rules, routines, and physical arrangements tailored to prevent problem behaviors during those specific contexts. In order to maximize success, physical landscape and adult supervision is arranged to facilitate appropriate behavior. While most students in the classroom may be successful with simple routines and minimal instruction, students with disabilities often require much more support to maintain success. Considered as part of the prevention logic of PBS, such circumstances require the teacher to think ahead to when and where these students may fail and to develop the simplest possible appropriate prevention strategies to facilitate success across all students. Strategies may include: pre-correction, desk arrangement to allow for better traffic flow, or specific procedures for problematic routines. For example, during assembly schedule days, the teacher may decide

to have Josh sit in a desk closer to her for more frequent monitoring and feedback, and re-correcting Moriah's teacher may leave a note reminding the substitute to pre-correct.

Step three involves the actual implementation of rules, routines, and physical arrangements with a strong focus on consistency. The teacher must consider the rules to reflect crucial student behaviors that must be demonstrated if the student is to be successful. Routines and arrangements, then, are things that the teacher does to make it more likely that the rules can and will be followed. We can think of these teacher-based pieces as the structures of effective instruction (groupings, curricula, interaction, etc.). When considered as instruction, consistency is a crucial component. For example, if the teacher teaches and implements classroom rules and routines but other adults who also work in the classroom do not, instruction will be ineffective in the same manner as it would if the answer to  $2 + 2$  varied by teacher or context. Brent's teacher realizes this and makes certain that the transition routines occur in a similar manner each day so that Brent can learn expected behavior from repetitive success with consistent positive feedback. Similarly, Josh's teacher must make certain that the prompts and reminders are consistently available on assembly days and that contingencies for his behavior remain constant.

The last step involves evaluation as to whether the rules, routines and physical arrangements have demonstrated success in reducing problem behavior. Goals are set and outcomes are monitored as benchmarks for evaluation. For example, while we may monitor math test scores across the classroom to evaluate math instruction, we must also evaluate individual student behavior, both academic and social, to insure that our class-wide routines and strategies are effective in creating the success necessary to allow meaningful involvement in the class. In addition, sharing goals and progress monitoring with students fosters ownership and pride in the performance and success. While evaluation often sounds difficult and time-consuming it is possible to develop simple and efficient methods of tracking students' behavioral performance. For example, Moriah's teacher asks the substitute to keep track of the number of directions that were presented and whether Moriah complied. A simple tally on a piece of paper might indicate a direction with a cross tally indicating compliance. At the end of the day the substitute leaves the data for the teacher who simply counts up the number of cross-tallies (compliance) and divided by all marks to get the percent of directions with which Moriah complied. Similarly, Brent's teacher can note whether behavior is appropriate during each transition opportunity and summarize performance daily or weekly.

### *Considerations*

PBS at the classroom level is a process that begins with an assessment of current instructional practices for purposes of creating learning environments that are conducive to the facilitation of academic and social success. Teachers should self-assess their own instructional practices, considering their own effective use of active supervision, explicit redirection, and provision of specific feedback to students (Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, & Sugai, 2006). The purpose of self-assessment is to think about classroom practices that are effectively in place for all students. The explicit instruction of expectations for transitions serves not only Brent but also the entire class. Active supervision and specific feedback to stay on-task during assembly schedule days do not just serve as additional support for Josh, but for the rest of the students who may also feel excited and unable to focus on days where the class schedule is altered. In a similar vein, pre-correcting as a strategy for substitute teachers can also support the entire class in maintaining appropriate behavior and need not be exclusively directed at Moriah. In most cases, effective classroom practices are easily supplemented to include students with more intense behavioral needs.

When problems occur in specific contexts, the strongest action plan involves consistency and collaboration among all adults who work in the classroom. Each stakeholder helps to predict problems and contributes to the development of strategies that are relevant, consistent, and effective for that setting (Jolivette, Barton-Arwood, & Scott, 2000). Effective strategies are those that take into consideration teacher time and effort, resources, and current routines in order to seamlessly embed proactive rules,



routines and physical arrangements into current classroom practices. The goal is not to disrupt ongoing effective instruction but to compliment existing classroom strengths to facilitate positive student behaviors.

### Case Study

#### *Classroom*

Mrs. Clondike felt overwhelmed, overworked and ready for a change. All year long she had been struggling to maintain order in her classroom. For the most part, the students would have a few calm days followed by several days or sometimes just activities that were marked by frequent, disruptive behaviors that ate away at instructional time. Even when things ran smoothly, there were a few “high flyers” that could throw a wrench in the entire flow of the lesson.

Taking a step back, she assessed current classroom management practices. She asked herself questions like: Have I taught specific rules? Do students know procedures for every day class activities? Do physical arrangements maximize traffic flow and minimize distractions? First, Mrs. Clondike needed to review the foundation of her behavior management approach, her class rules. The current classroom rules were: “Try your best, Work hard, and Be cooperative.” These rules appeared to work to keep students on task sometimes. However, the ebb and flow of positive student behavior prompted her assess the true level of effectiveness.

She pulled in the instructional assistant and special education teacher who also worked in her room to evaluate rules, routines, and physical arrangements. A close examination of the rules highlighted the lack of explicitness; they could not come to consensus on what student behaviors exemplified class rules.

As a team, adults shared observations of problem behaviors and listed patterns of when and where they occurred most often. Even though they had not previously discussed the pattern of behaviors, when posed with the question, “Where can you predict that problem behavior will occur tomorrow?” they found themselves largely in agreement. During large group instruction, off-task behavior, such as talk outs occurred more frequently in the back of the room. Students were out of seat to get a drink of water at the sink, sharpen pencils, or get materials – all of which were located in the rear of the room, farthest from Mrs. Clondike’s desk. The off-task behavior impacted not only the students who sat in the back of the room, but some of the students who needed quiet space to complete their work, as well as the students who were more distractible.

The team felt that it was imperative to develop a plan that would target the entire class functioning as well as provide extra support to address problem routines and activities. They worked together to develop realistic strategies to tackle predictable problems. In order to ensure that the plan would be implemented by all adults in the room and did not add to the already numerous demands on teacher time, they focused on a plan that was both efficient and logical given existing classroom demands. For example, although problems occurred at the sink, excluding all sink use was not realistic as students needed to be able to wash up for lunch and get a drink of water. The group worked to balance logic and reality in order to set students up for success. Routines were outlined and posted next to problem areas like the back table, where daily materials were kept, and at the sink. Listed as simple, brief procedural steps, posting routines included: how and when to sharpen pencils, obtain materials for class activities (paper, texts, etc.) get a drink of water, and wash hands. Rules for whole group instruction and independent work were also explicitly laid out and posted above the blackboard to ensure that students knew what was expected of them during that time.

Logical considerations for preventing behavior problems also included a reorganization of the physical arrangement of the classroom. Seating arrangements were changed from a horseshoe to four,

six-desk pods to facilitate traffic flow to common areas and keep students more efficiently moving and working during routines. Mrs. Clondike also moved her desk to the back of the room, so as to increase her ability to provide supervision in the problem areas.

The team then set goals to reduce off-task behaviors by a modest 30% for the first two weeks of implementation of the proactive plan. They agreed that it would be time consuming to have one adult simply collect behavioral data. Instead, they established that by keeping track of how many students had to stay in for recess each day, along with tracking the number of completed assignments per the entire class, they could get an idea of the effectiveness of their plan in facilitating student success. If the proactive reorganization of their classroom was effective then the number of distractions would decrease and, not only could they spend more time teaching, but students would be able to spend more time focused on their work.

Lastly, and most importantly, these rules and routines were explicitly taught and consistently reinforced. Mrs. Clondike decided to teach classroom rules and routines as she would any other lesson. First she explained the rule and rationale, modeled examples, provided opportunities to practice, and then monitored to see if students displayed behaviors. When she caught students following the rules she used specific praise to reinforce their appropriate behavior. Statements like, "Great job waiting your turn at the sink, Tim", "Thanks, Olivia, for raising your hand," and "Donovan, I like the way you waited until after teacher instruction to sharpen your pencil" became commonplace. Periodically, like when scheduled activities were interrupted, or after return from a school break, she provided increased reminders of rules and expectations.

Even with as much success as Mrs. Clondike's class began to experience, there were still a few students who needed more prompting than their peers to follow the rules and routines. Again, Mrs. Clondike, her instructional assistant and the special education teacher collaborated to examine the pattern of problem behaviors. They noticed that most of the students who were having trouble adhering to the rules and routines were predictably having the most difficulty with hand raising during whole group instruction. Their talk outs disrupted the pacing of the lesson.

To address this problem behavior, the team decided to implement a group contingency as a step beyond the universal prevention strategies of explicit rules, routines and physical arrangements. Group contingency reinforcement is an intervention that can be used for the whole class or specific to individuals. When the performance of the group or individual meets the set criterion, the whole class gets a reward, (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 1987). Every time a student raised their hand to speak, the entire class received a "class point". Every time a student spoke out of turn, Mrs. Clondike received a "teacher point". If the class beat Mrs. Clondike's score they were allowed to pick the order of the afternoon reading activities, silent reading, workbook, word list, etc. After a few days, the class was solidly beating Mrs. Clondike and she was able to move to goal setting with the class. By implementing this simple and efficient system, Mrs. Clondike was able to facilitate success across both the classroom as a whole and with smaller groups of students in need of an extra push to make it over the roadblocks and experience success.

However, there was still one student who would predictably have problems following rules and routines nearly every Monday. This student, Kyla, had a history of behavior difficulties and they were exacerbated early in the school week. The class-wide and supplemental prevention strategies were not sufficiently supporting Kyla to decrease the number of days she stayed in for recess or to increase her hand raising or work completion. Mrs. Clondike and her team again sat down to discuss patterns of problem behavior specific to Kyla. As they discussed Kyla, it became apparent that they were unsure of what activities and routines were predictably problematic. Other than acknowledging that she had a more difficult time on Monday mornings, they could not determine where and when she would have the most

problems. When the class had been less structured, Kyla had looked almost like everyone else in the class. Now that other students responded so positively to the primary and secondary prevention components, she stood out like a sore thumb.

Mrs. Clondike and her assistants recognized that Kyla's behaviors were more complex and that necessary additional collaboration required creation of a student team that would include the school behavior specialist, the principal, and Kyla's parents. Upon meeting, the student assistance team decided to conduct a functional behavior assessment (FBA) to determine the motivation, or function of Kyla's behavior. The purpose of FBA at this level is simply to identify when and why the problem behavior occurs. Key is the question of how misbehavior is functional for Kyla or how it meets her needs. Once behavior is understood plans can be developed to replace problem behaviors with appropriate alternatives that can also be functional in helping her to meet her needs. In this way, the team worked together to design a plan with the greatest chance of success in encouraging appropriate, pro-social classroom behaviors. When the function of a student's behaviors is considered the intervention supports that individual in the same way primary and secondary interventions support the class at large, by predicting where student behaviors will break down and working to proactively prevent those break downs.

In order to do so, the student assistance team at Mrs. Clondike's school needed more information. The behavior specialist interviewed the classroom teacher to determine what Kyla's problem behavior looked like, during what routines it predictably occurred, and what rules, routines and physical arrangements were already in place to support her. Because Kyla's behaviors seemed to occur throughout the day, during different types of work, the class teacher was not able to definitively predict when and where her inappropriate behaviors would occur. The specialist joined the class for a few short periods to observe Kyla. She determined that Kyla's problem behaviors: out of seat, talking out of turn, and disrupting other students by physically touching their belongings, could be predicted to occur most frequently during tasks that required multiple steps to complete. The function, or motivation behind the behaviors seemed to be adult attention. When Kyla would act out, Mrs. Clondike or the educational assistant would attend to her.

The rules, routines and physical arrangements already in place focused on classroom behaviors such as when and how to utilize class materials, how to use the sink, how to transition smoothly, but did not specifically support Kyla's academic needs. By adding additional academic support in the form of extra attention from the educational assistant, Mrs. Clondike was able to ensure that Kyla understood the task at hand. The educational assistant would simply assess Kyla via a "check-in" several times during the course of the assignment to check for understanding. If Kyla was unsure of a particular step or task, the educational assistant would explain the task again and ask Kyla to repeat the directions using her own words. In this way, Kyla would receive positive attention from an adult throughout the class. The goal was to immediately provide her the academic support and positive attention with the longer term goal to gradually pulling back on the schedule of attention and teaching Kyla to recruit positive attention through asking appropriate questions when she felt confused or overwhelmed by a task.

In attending to the function of Kyla's behavior, the team was able to develop a realistic intervention that made the inappropriate behaviors irrelevant. With positive, frequent check-ins by the educational assistant, Kyla was not left to her own accord to solicit attention. This plan supported Kyla's pro-social behavior by reinforcing school appropriate behavior that would serve her throughout her school career. The strategy to support Kyla fit well into the existing classroom structure where the educational assistant circulated throughout the class during whole group instruction. Additionally, the extra check-ins required the educational assistant to make her presence more prominent during whole group instruction effectively influencing other students to stay on-task.



PBS focuses on modifying the environmental context and developing supports to provide all students. Increasingly schools are adopting school-wide PBS practices that support the social and learning needs of all students, to catch those who need more support, and better identify individualized interventions for a few students (Scott, 2001; Horner, Sugai, Todd, & Lewis-Palmer, 2005). The key features of PBS have been identified as prediction and prevention, development of rules, routines and physical arrangements, consistent implementation, and evaluation. The key is in developing these steps so that they may be embedded into a current system to maximize effectiveness and efficiency in a continuum of support from the entire school and then mirrored in classroom systems, albeit individualized to the context and expectations inherent in individual classrooms (Lewis, Powers, Kelk, & Newcomer, 2002; Kartub, Taylor-Green, March, & Horner, 2000). Research continues to grow and extend demonstrations of positive outcomes when pro-social behaviors are defined, taught, and reinforced across populations and settings.

PBS grows in maximally effective when it is linked across the spectrum from school-wide to classroom to small groups and on to individual students. While the strategies will differ in complexity, the consistency of instruction and the development of supportive environments are constant. However, PBS in the classroom based on the logic of prediction and prevention via effective instructional environments can be implemented even in schools that are not implementing PBS school-wide. But the more comprehensive the model and the more consistency with which it is applied, the more effective it can be in facilitating classroom environments that run smoothly and efficiently, allowing teachers to recognize, assess, and plan for students with special needs.

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