

A Parent's Guide to Positive Behavior Support

Frequently Asked Questions

I've heard my child's teacher talk about positive behavior support, what does it mean?

Positive behavior support is a comprehensive approach that addresses problem behaviors across environments by changing or eliminating events that trigger inappropriate behaviors. When necessary, logical consequences may follow a behavior in order to shape a more appropriate behavior in the future. By eliminating problem behaviors, your child will learn new skills to get what he/she wants. The overall goal of PBS is to not only reduce inappropriate behaviors but to also develop communication skills, social skills and self-control skills that will lead to improved relationships and more opportunities to participate at home, in school and in the community.

What kinds of behaviors can be changed or eliminated?

Virtually any behavior can be altered or eliminated using PBS. Some of the more common behaviors include hitting, biting, spitting, hand flapping, head banging, inappropriate touching of objects or people, excessive talking and interrupting others.

What are some examples of positive behavior support?

The types of supports used will depend on the individual child and his/her needs. Some common examples used in the school setting include making accommodations to your child's schedule, adapting class work and/or homework, providing additional support, supplying assistive technology, having the child participate in social groups and implementing a communication system.

Examples of positive behavior support at home include using the chosen communication system, giving choices, providing a structured routine that minimizes triggering events, and reinforcing the specific interventions at home that are also used at school.

My child's teacher wants to create a behavior plan using positive behavior supports, what exactly will the teacher do with my child?

First, your child's teacher or educational team will identify and define the behaviors that are interfering with your child's academic and/or social progress at school. Next, your child's teacher will gather some information to determine what predicts the behavior, what the actual behavior is and then what happens after the behavior. This is called a functional behavior assessment. Your child's teacher will use a data collection sheet in multiple environments to ensure that the data collected is useful and free from bias. The third step is to use the data to make a guess about what triggers the behavior and/or what consequences sustain the behavior. Fourth, your child's teacher or team will create an intervention plan using positive behavior support. The final step is to follow up on the plan to see if the plan is successful or if any changes need to be made.

What role do I play as a parent? How can I become more involved?

As a parent, your role is very important. Your insights into your child's behavior and your cultural background can be important factors when designing positive behavior support. As a member of the IEP team, the positive behavior supports that are created should be realistic and workable for you to carry through at home as well. By reinforcing the communication skills, the academic skills and the social skills at home and while in the community, you are helping your child generalize the skills learned in school to other situations. Generalizing skills is often the most difficult aspect of any program for children displaying behavior problems. Providing opportunities to practice these newly learned skills in different environments outside of school can greatly improve your child's quality of life and that of the lives of others directly involved in their care.

How long does it take to see results?

Every child is different and will progress at different rates. However, the most important point is that progress is being made. If there is no progress or very little progress, then maybe the intervention is not appropriate, the triggering event was not identified correctly or the consequences are still reinforcing the behavior. In such cases, making changes to the behavior plan might be necessary.

Where can I find more information?

Several books have been written for professionals and parents. They include:

Five Universal Principles of Positive Behavior Support by Annemieke Golly

Parenting With Positive Behavior Support: A Practical Guide to Resolving Your Child's Difficult Behavior by Meme Hieneman, Karen Childs and Jane Sergay

Families and Positive Behavior Support: Addressing Problem Behaviors in Family Contexts by Joseph Lucyshyn, Glen Dunlap, and Richard Albin

Additional information can be found on the Internet at the following sites:

<http://www.uoregon.edu/~ttobin/>

<http://www.pbis.org/families.htm>

http://www.nasponline.org/publications/cq/cq352pbs_ho.aspx

<http://www.nau.edu/ihd/positive/ovrvw.shtml>