



School-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

Parent Involvement and Leadership

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All parents want their children to succeed in school. Research shows that parent involvement in a child's school experience promotes academic success, decreases behavioral challenges, and increases commitment to learning.

This presentation explains how parents can be involved in teaching and supporting their child's appropriate behaviors at school. School-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (often referred to as school-wide PBIS) is a model for creating a predictable and positive environment in which students can learn and grow. By implementing a program of consistent teaching of behavioral expectations, reinforcement, and appropriate consequences, schools can create a climate of success for all students.

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What is Parent Involvement?

Parent involvement is a vision that “sees families and professionals working together as mutually respected equals, engaging in open and honest two-way sharing of information.”

Barbara Freisen, *Focal Point* 2004, *Partnering with Families*

Parent involvement is a collaborative process between parents and professionals that assumes each has something to learn and something to teach. This model recognizes families as a source of strength and information where parents are valued for their knowledge and understanding about their child.

For successful collaboration to take place however, parents need information and support about how to work side by side with professionals.

Family Involvement in School

- Creates a shared responsibility and a balance of power
- Is a key to student and school success
- Builds positive relationships between family and school
- Increases optimism and self-satisfaction for the child and family
- Respects multiple definitions of family
- Promotes understanding about different cultural styles in families

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Because family involvement in school discipline is a new idea, professionals and parents often struggle with how to achieve a balance of shared responsibility and power. Both parents and professionals must focus on building relationships that are positive and recognize and promote each other's strengths rather than weaknesses.

Professionals and parents often have significantly different understandings of what is meant by family involvement. Many professionals see parent involvement as a supportive role. Parents, however, may view involvement more as their opportunity to have valid input into their child's school program.

Ideally, the focus of family involvement in school should be on the bigger picture of developing a partnership that increases optimism and satisfaction in the school process, respects the ever-changing definition of "family," and embraces cultural styles in families.

School-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

- Offers a new framework for parent involvement
- Creates an environment where all parents have a chance to participate in their child's school success

School-wide PBIS is a new framework for parent involvement in school. The concept focuses on managing behaviors by identifying appropriate behavioral expectations, teaching those behaviors, and reinforcing them across all environments. Research shows that having positive behavior supports reduces suspensions, expulsions, and drop-out rates. Fewer students may be referred to special education for their behavior needs because they receive support early on to help manage their behaviors.

Engaging parents in that process is important because it helps to maintain consistency across all environments. When parents are involved with their child's school in identifying appropriate behavior and are given the opportunity to participate in teaching and sustaining that behavior through the use of positive reinforcement, the outcomes are more likely to be positive.

According to studies done by the National PTA, when families are involved, there is a positive effect on student behavior. Students whose parents were involved in their school reported feeling more self-confident, liking school more, and being less willing to engage in at-risk behaviors.

What is Parent Leadership?

- Being a source of strength and expertise regarding children's behavioral needs
- Influencing decision making about what services and supports are necessary
- Working closely with the school to ensure that services and supports are provided or altered as needed

While family involvement is important to school success, development of parent leadership is crucial to making changes. Identifying and training parents to be leaders is a necessary and important part of creating positive family involvement.

Parent leaders who are willing to work closely with the school to make sure that services and supports are provided or offered as needed can be models of advocacy for other families. They also can influence decision making about what services and supports are necessary.

Parent leadership can take the form of leading a parent-teacher organization, serving as a parent representative on the SW-PBIS leadership team, or offering to be the parent liaison to school administration. With solid parent leadership, schools and families will work together more effectively .

The Challenge for Professionals in Working with Families

Professional beliefs that parents:

- are part of the problem
- expect schools to “fix” the problem
- don’t trust professionals

Some professionals may face a number of potential barriers when working with families. They may, for example, believe that parents expect too much of the school, are unwilling to cooperate, or are a part of the problem.

The Challenge for Parents in Working with Professionals

Parent beliefs that:

- professionals do not communicate in a way they can understand
- they are being judged for their child's problems
- some professionals don't honor or respect their experiences
- schools keep punishing the child for behaviors that are part of their disability

Similarly, parents may face a number of potential barriers when working with professionals. These barriers may include not knowing how the school system works, how decisions are made in school, what factors influence decisions, or what legal constraints schools must address. Parents may also feel that they are being blamed for their child's problems or feel isolated from their family, friends, and community because of their child's behaviors. Parents who have experienced frustration in school themselves may also bring those experiences into their interactions.

SW-PBIS and Parent Involvement

The goals of SW-PBIS are to:

- establish a learning environment that is positive, preventive, and predictable
- establish the capacity of schools to educate all students
- increase academic instruction time and reduce classroom management time
- increase commitment to school
- improve parent effectiveness

To reduce the potential for problems in parent collaboration and to maximize the potential for school success for every child, parents and professionals must work together to overcome those presumptions and instead focus on establishing a learning environment that works for all children.

SW-PBIS is focused on creating a school climate that is positive and safe, where all children can learn and grow. It is also based on the premise that parents are more effective when they are involved in this process.

How to be Involved in SW-PBIS

If you are a parent:

- Educate yourself about SW-PBIS.
- Work with your administrator to bring the SW-PBIS initiative to your school.
- Mobilize other families to take an active role in the creation and implementation of SW-PBIS development.
- Create opportunities for active family involvement.
- Develop clear communication about SW-PBIS with a consistent message for family involvement.

If you are a parent, you can help set a school climate that is positive and safe by educating yourself on how School-wide Positive behavior interventions and supports works.

You also can meet with your school administrator to bring the idea to your school. One way is to mobilize other families to work with you to take an active role in the creation and implementation of the project.

If your school already uses School-wide PBIS, you could offer to develop ways to include families. For example, at the school's open house, families could be offered a calendar of activities or a guide that explains how they can teach and reinforce similar appropriate behaviors at home.

Developing a consistent, clear communication about School-wide PBIS activities is also important. Some schools may develop Friday Folders with weekly updates on their activities; others may offer regularly scheduled school gatherings to acknowledge student success in behavior management. Parents can be instrumental in helping to set up effective communication between the school and the family.

How to be Involved in SW-PBIS

If you are a professional:

- Make sure SW-PBIS information gets to all families, not just those who come to school.
- Participate in community meetings to help families understand the purpose of SW-PBIS.
- Create venues to give parents information, help, and support to teach and implement SW-PBIS at home and in the community.

If you are a professional, a good way to involve parents would be to make certain that information about School-wide positive behavior interventions and supports reaches all families, not just those who come to school. This outreach could include participating in cultural festivals or nurturing someone from a culturally diverse family as a parent leader. Promoting school-wide PBIS in events outside of school also encourages community support of the concept.

In Summary

- Changing behavior through SW-PBIS takes the effort of a “village.”
- Research and best practices consistently support family involvement as a key component to school success.
- Partnership between families and schools promotes a clear message of shared responsibility involvement.

“No matter what the demographics, students are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores, attend school regularly, have better social skills, graduate, and go on to post-secondary education when schools and families partner.”

(Karen Mapp, *Family Involvement Equals Student Success No Matter Background*, 2006)

Families want their children to succeed.

Professionals want their students to be successful.

School-wide positive behavior interventions and supports promotes both school success and family involvement.

When schools and families work in partnership to promote learning and positive emotional growth, children are more likely to succeed in life as well as in school.

School-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

Resources:

www.pacer.org

www.pbis.org

www.education.state.mn.us

These resources will be helpful in giving you more information about School-wide positive behavior interventions and supports.