School-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SW-PBIS):

What Parents Need to Know

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How do schools address school safety, acknowledge students for accomplishments, and effectively discipline students? These are important questions parents and educators ponder. One way to address these issues is by building school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports (SW-PBIS; Sugai & Horner, 2002). Instead of using a patchwork of short-term solutions for individual students and situations, SW-PBIS focuses on proactive ways to define, teach, and sustain appropriate student behaviors across school settings (Kincaid, Childs, Blase, & Wallace, 2007; Turnbull, et al., 2002). Through SW- PBIS, a continuum of behavior support is designed for all students and implemented in all areas of the school including the classroom, lunchroom, restrooms, and playground. The primary goal of SW-PBIS is to enhance the capacity of schools to design effective environments to increase teaching and learning. This article will discuss traditional ways of dealing with problem behavior, define how PBIS is different and what it looks like in a school,   describe how parents can become involved in PBIS, and conclude with how PBIS might look if implemented in your child's school.

The Problem with the Traditional Way of Dealing with Challenging Behavior

Many parents report that their main school concern is the safety of their child (Neilsen Gatti, Stansberry-Brusnahan, & Nelson, 2007). Challenging behaviors in schools, ranging from disruptive classroom behavior to physical violence, is a safety concern and also represents barriers to teaching and learning. Parents and educators alike share this concern.

There are many assumptions about discipline in the school setting. One assumption is that discipline is about punishing students when they are inappropriate allowing the adults to maintain control and gain compliance. For example, consider a child who is repeatedly disruptive in class and as a result he is sent to the principal's office. The outcome of this response is that the teacher regains control of the classroom and hopes that this punishment will stop the behavior from occurring again in the future. Consider another example of more serious behavior; a student gets in such a heated argument with the teacher that it results in being suspended from school. Again, there is an assumption that this consequence takes care of the situation and behavior and it may in the short term, but what isn't considered is the long term effect of these consequences on the behavior.

In addition to being sent to the office and suspension, punishment may also include verbal and written reprimands, denial of privileges, detention, and even expulsion. While the use of these types of responses to challenging behavior is the schools attempt to deal with behavior and create safe

environments, these practices are primarily reactive, foster negative associations, and most importantly don't teach appropriate behaviors. This tendency to over rely on punishment, especially used inconsistently and in the absence of positive strategies has shown to be ineffective (Sugai & Horner, 2002). For example, detention, suspensions and expulsions do not lead to positive educational outcomes for students, nor do they result in a safer school climate. Punishment may work short term to defer behaviors but it may have long-term negative consequences for the student and the school.

Another concern with this way of dealing with problem behavior is that schools tend to focus on individual situations or individual student behavior rather than the entire school climate. This approach doesn't examine the reason why behaviors are occurring. For example, let's say the assistant principal is noticing that his entire afternoon consists of dealing with behavior referrals after lunch and recess. The traditional way of dealing with this problem is punishing each student with the hope that problems decrease in the future. In addition, the school may come up with tougher policies for lunch and recess, such as silent lunch, eating in isolation, or taking away recess and other privileges. As stated previously not only do these approaches fail, they also cause more work for administration and create negative social climates. How do schools shift from a punishment paradigm to a more positive approach to addressing behavior? One way is through SW-PBIS. Figure 1 compares schools procedures for dealing with discipline before and after implementing SW-PBIS.

What is SW-PBIS?

School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports is a positive discipline plan for the entire school where the approach is to proactively prevent or reduce challenging behaviors and produce positive outcomes (Turnbull et al., 2002). The focus of this approach is to make problem behavior less effective and desired behavior more relevant. According to the American Heritage Dictionary, discipline is "training that is expected to produce a specific character or pattern of behaviors, especially training that produces moral or mental improvement." This is the focus of SW-PBIS. School-wide PBIS works under the assumption that like reading and math, behavior can be taught. PBIS seeks to create positive environments by utilizing proactive strategies such as introducing, defining, modeling, teaching, and supporting positive behavioral expectations school-wide and then reinforcing and rewarding students for these positive social behaviors (Scott et al., 2002). It is about creating positive school environments so that all children feel safe and can learn. The goals of SW-PBIS are listed below.

Goals of PBIS

Some of the goals of PBIS are to
- Create more proactive school and classroom environments for all students
- Improve the climate of the school by establishing a learning environment that is positive, preventive, and predictable to improve student behavior
- Increase the effectiveness and relevance of the school's efforts to provide behavior support systems and prevent the development of challenging behavior
- Reduce unnecessary punishment such as discipline referrals, detentions, suspensions, and expulsions
- 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
- Enhance the continuum of behavior support for students who display significant behavior challenges and their families
- Improve the provision of specialized interventions to students at high risk for behavioral challenges

(from Neilsen Gatti, et al., 2007)

Basic Assumptions of PBIS

The basic assumptions of SW-PBIS include:

1. **Identifying and teaching** expected behaviors.
2. **Reinforcing and rewarding** expected behaviors.
3. **Enforcing consistent meaningful consequences** when violations of the expected behaviors occur.

The basic assumptions are illustrated in Figure 2 and described below. All of the expectations, rewards, and consequences are shared with students and parents.

1. Identifying and Teaching Expected Behavior

In a school-wide system of behavioral support, the school identifies a minimum of three to five expectations across the school environment. Figure 3 provides some examples of school-wide expectations, including expectations for the cafeteria. Part of teaching the expectations involves posting the expectations throughout the building including, hallways, classrooms, cafeteria, the main office, gyms, auditoriums, and media rooms. Basically everywhere students go, expectations are posted. Teaching the expectations involves identifying what the expectations look like in various locations and situations across the school day. To do this, the school PBIS team, develops a teaching matrix, which includes the expectations and what it looks like to follow those expectations across the day. Take the expectation of respect for example. The teaching matrix would include

details on what respect looks like in the hall, classroom, bus, cafeteria, etc. Figure 4 illustrates an example of what one part of a teaching matrix might look like. Consider the lunchroom and recess example described above. The entire staff including the lunchroom and recess staff would teach the students these expectations through lessons, role-playing, and practice. Rather than punishing students for not following the expectations, staff would acknowledge expected behaviors through a reinforcement and reward system.

2. Positively Reinforcing and Rewarding Expected Behaviors

When students engage in the school-wide expectations, they would be acknowledged with some form of positive reinforcement such as bonus bucks, lottery tickets, or caught in the act coupons. These acknowledgements could be utilized to purchase items, entered in a weekly drawing for rewards, permit a special privilege, allow the student's name to appear on a wall on honor, or be recognized during an assembly. All staff including administration, teachers, lunchroom personnel, bus drivers, librarians would be supplied with these tools for acknowledgement.

3. Enforcing Consequences for Violations

In addition, the school would identify a consistent meaningful way to respond to problem behavior when it occurred. Procedures for responding to challenging behavior should be designed to communicate to and teach students, staff, and parents what specific behaviors violate the school-wide expectations. Typically these violations fall under minor or major problems. To develop these procedures, the SW-PBIS team needs to work with the administration and staff to develop clear distinctions between behaviors that fall under each category. One of the main distinctions between these types of behaviors is that minor behaviors are dealt with by building staff or the classroom teacher and major violations are managed by administrative staff. At minimum, this process should be communicated with families in the school discipline handbook.

Levels of School-Wide Support

Schools utilizing SW-PBIS focus their attention on creating and sustaining systems of supports to meet the needs of all students. This continuum of behavior support found in figure 5 addresses the range of student behavioral needs across a school setting (Sugai & Horner, 2002). The model is based on the premise that approximately 80% of students respond well to this level of school-wide support and the remaining 20% of students need additional support (Turnbull et al., 2002). Let's take the lunchroom example again, even after implementing a school-wide approach to dealing with problems in the lunchroom; a small number of students may still be struggling during this time. The school could consider changing the seating arrangements, the routine, or developing a self-monitoring system for successful participation during lunch. Through this second level of support, the school can address approximately 10-15% of the remaining students who require more support to be successful in school. Given

this continuum of support, most schools may still have about 5-10% of students who continue to struggle and need additional individual support such as that typically accomplished through functional behavioral assessment and designing individual positive behavioral support plans. The continuum of support is described in more detail below.

1. Universal systems of support (primary prevention-school wide):
Behavioral support is provided for ALL students school-wide. This type of system of support offers all students

- ➢ Social skills instruction
- ➢ Positive and proactive discipline
- ➢ Social behavior expectations
- ➢ Active supervision and monitoring
- ➢ Positive reinforcement systems
- ➢ Fair and corrective discipline
- ➢ Parent training and collaboration

2. Small group systems of support (secondary prevention): This level of support is designed to provide additional and targeted interventions for the 10-15% of students who need more support than is provided through the universal systems. Typically, these interventions are more intensive since a smaller number of students require this level of support. Secondary prevention interventions are often delivered through small groups. Approximately 15% of students need this level of intervention to be successful. This level of system support provides

- ➢ Social skills groups
- ➢ Conflict resolution
- ➢ Self management programs
- ➢ Adult mentors (checking in)
- ➢ Small group instruction
- ➢ Altered seating arrangement or schedule

3. Targeted individual student systems (tertiary prevention-individual):
More intensive, individualized supports is provided for a FEW individual students with problem behaviors for whom universal and group/classroom supports have not been fully effective in teaching expected social-interpersonal behaviors in all school settings. Approximately 5%-10% of the student population requires this level of system support. This targeted system of support provides:

- ➢ Individual academic support (IEP/504)

- ➢ Intensive social skills instruction
- ➢ Functional behavior assessment (FBA) based behavior intervention plans (BIP)
- ➢ Supervision and monitoring
- ➢ Interagency collaboration
- ➢ Intensive collaboration with family
- ➢ Intensive family-based interventions

Family Involvement in PBIS

Approaches to teaching expected behavior require consistent efforts across settings—school and home. When a child displays challenging behavior at school, a strong partnership between the school and family needs to be established to maximize the effectiveness of the intervention strategies. Historically, family involvement has been seen as a key feature when developing individual (tertiary) positive behavior support plans for students with special needs. With SW-PBIS, there is a move from an individually-based approach to a more school-wide emphasis and family involvement is needed within all aspects of primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention for best results.

Parents are used to volunteering to participate in related school activities including school celebrations, field trips or helping out in the classroom. Many parents express a willingness to also actively and positively participate in their child's behavior support program (Neilsen-Gatti, et al., 2007). The following are some suggestions for family involvement at the different levels of support systems.

School-Wide
- ➢ Learn about PBIS
  - o Read materials offered by school related to PBIS
  - o Attend presentations offered by school to learn about school's PBIS model
- ➢ Participate in PBIS planning
  - o Provide information on family priorities and issues and necessary information regarding the communities cultural values, beliefs and practices with school
  - o Participate in discussions to establish congruence between family expectations and school-wide expectations for behavior
- ➢ Carry over PBIS initiatives into home and community environments
  - o Learn how to teach your children the importance of PBIS behavior expectations at home and in the community. Some SW-PBIS programs design a teaching matrix for the home as well as the school environment. See the example in figure 4
  - o Discuss and teach PBIS behavior expectations to your children

- o Implement PBIS strategies at home and in the community
- o Reinforce PBIS strategies in the home and community setting
- ➢ Help ensure parent participation in PBIS
  - o Help other families understand PBIS
  - o Develop parent initiatives
  - o Establish ongoing linkages & supports with other school families
- ➢ Help get community involved
  - o Develop ongoing linkages to community resources and actively engage community supports for the school's efforts. (i.e. Search for donations and free resources in the community for PBIS reinforcement programs.)

Small Group
- ➢ Provide necessary information regarding your family's cultural values, beliefs and practices with classroom teacher
- ➢ Participate in the development and implementation of targeted interventions within classroom
- ➢ Support targeted efforts of classroom teacher with students in classroom

Individual
- ➢ Participate on your child's individual behavior support team
- ➢ Share your child's strengths and needs in order to develop a behavior plan
- ➢ Offer suggestions to the team based on your unique perspective and knowledge of child
- ➢ Educate the team regarding strategies or interventions that are most acceptable to family members
- ➢ Advocate for your child's needs with other team members
- ➢ Review outcome data to determine the effectiveness of strategies implemented by the behavior plan

The information above is adapted from the Matrix for Family Involvement; New Hampshire Center for Effective Behavioral Interventions and Support (NH-CEBIS); and the New York State Positive Behavioral Interventions & Support Initiative: Team Implementation Checklist. All can be found on the PBIS.org website.

Putting it All Together: A Case Study

School-wide PBIS is based on the set of core principles as described above. It is not a packaged curriculum that a school purchases and then implements. Instead, each school takes the core principles and brings them to life in their own way. This section describes a hypothetical case-study to illustrate the process of implementing SW-PBIS in a kindergarten through eighth grade school, Morningside Community School. The steps for implementing SW-PBIS are listed in Figure 6.

Getting Started

Since the 2005-2006 school year, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) has provided intensive training to schools applying to be part of the Minnesota SW-PBIS initiative. During the spring of the previous school year, the Morningside administration assessed staff buy-in and support. It is recommended that schools secure commitment and agreement from at least 80% of the staff for active support and participation to make SW-PBIS effective. In addition, the school must make a three year commitment to the initiative and identify SW-PBIS as a top priority in the school improvement plan. The purpose of this buy-in is to ensure a smoother implementation phase. After the Morningside staff secured this commitment to SW-PBIS, they applied to MDE to participate in the SW-PBIS training. Once the school was accepted, the school administration identified a team to go to training through MDE. The team was made up of the principal and assistant principal, a teacher from each teaching team, two special educators, a para-educator and two parents. The training involved a series of workshops across three years. During the first training, team members learned about SW-PBIS and began to design how they wanted SW-PBIS to look in their school. Following the first training session, the team had a lot of work to do. They needed to establish the school-wide expectations, develop the teaching matrix, and create an action plan. When the team returned to the school, they used the staff meetings to train the rest of the staff on the SW-PBIS system. During year one implementation, the SW-PBIS team met regularly to continue designing the system, teaching the expectations, planning assemblies, examining data, and troubleshooting problems.

Implementation

Morningside began their school-wide program by identifying their expectations and presenting them to the staff. They identified the three B's; Be respectful, Be ready, and Be responsible. Their mascot is the Bears, so they used bear paws, honey pots, and honeybees in all of the visuals. After they established the three expectations, they held a make and take workshop after school and each teaching team made posters for the hallways, classrooms, media center, and lunchroom. In addition, the principal had t-shirts made for all the staff, including the support staff and bus drivers. While the t-shirts were being made the SW-PBIS team developed the teaching matrix (as seen in Figure 4). Finally, the team developed their bear paw lottery ticket system. They designed bear paws that listed the expectations. The team instructed the staff to give students the bear paw along with a descriptive praise statement anytime they observed students engaging in the expectations. When students received a ticket, they were told to write their name on the ticket and place them in the classroom honey pot ticket bucket. At the end of the week, each classroom, brought their bear honey pot down to the office for the weekly drawing. The principal or representative drew two tickets for each classroom. In addition, the classroom with the most bear paws, received extra time in the gym or outside on

that day. Finally, the school held monthly behavior assemblies focused on one of the expectations, what it looked like, and provided opportunities to practice.

Morningside wanted to start their SW-PBIS program out right, so before they began implementing, they sent home notes to the parents describing the program and invited them in for dinner and SW-PBIS program (for examples of letters see the PBIS.org website). Childcare was provided. At the program, the staff practiced the first behavior assembly with the parents, received input on the program, brainstormed ideas for implementation in the home and community, and got volunteers to help with future SW-PBIS events.   Following the assembly, there was quite a buzz about SW-PBIS and the staff was excited to get started with the students. By the first of November, the school was ready for their first student assembly to present the SW- PBIS program to their students. The day started with an assembly and then students were divided in stations around the school to learn the expectations across the various areas of the building. After lunch, the students returned to the room, for more activities about the program.

Next Steps

The school staff, family, and students were excited about the school-wide program and staff handed out lots of bear paws that first week. However, the SW-PBIS team still had a lot of work to do. They needed to continue to collect and look at data on behavior issues when, where and who. They also needed to develop a more consistent way to deal with problem behaviors when they occurred. Finally, they were anticipating giving out lots of prizes and awards to recognize students and their appropriate behavior. They planned to solicit neighborhood businesses and agencies to help them with this. Not only were they planning on reaching out to families, but also to the community. The team generated lots of ideas for this, such as inviting businesses to give out bear paws at grocery stores, restaurants, banks, etc. Then students could bring in their community bear paws to the office and place them in the community honeypot for bear paws from the community. In addition, they encouraged parents to take bear paws home to give out at home. Again, students could bring in the bear paws or families could have special events at home to recognize "bear paw' behavior. As you can see the possibilities seemed endless and SW-PBIS generated quite a bit of excitement in this school and community.

Summary

The traditional way of dealing with problem behaviors with the hope that problems decrease has been proven to be ineffective. This is why it is so exciting to see schools abandoning this reactive and piecemeal approach for school-wide PBIS approaches. Not only does SW-PBIS address parents concerns with safety but also it can enhance the capacity of schools to design effective environments to increase teaching and learning. Parents are an integral part of SW-PBIS and it is important for parents to have an understanding of what it is an how it is

implemented in schools. This knowledge can empower families to participate fully in their children's education.

References

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Figure 1. Schools before and after the implementation of PBIS.

PBIS in a School Setting

Before PBIS	After PBIS
Discipline strategies vary across classrooms	Discipline strategies are consistent school wide and across classrooms
School safety is based on reacting to behavior problems	School safety is based on preventing behavior problems
Administrators react to student problems	Teams proactively anticipate and plan for student problems
Behavior is controlled	Behavior skills are taught
School concentrates time on punishing challenging behavior	School concentrates time on reinforcing positive behaviors
Parents are not part of the school team and think that schools rely too heavily on punishment to stop misbehaviors	Parents are part of a PBIS team and help support a positive approach to behavior

PBIS Goal: Shaping Behavior

Teach or re-teach expected behavior

Enforce meaningful consequences

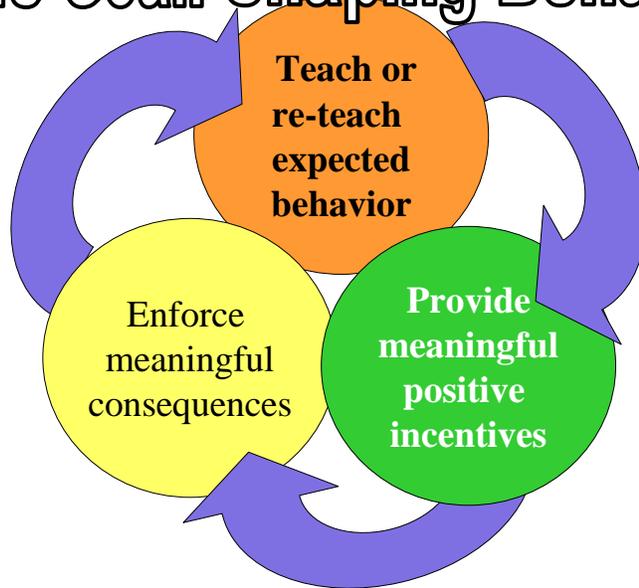**Provide meaningful positive incentives**

Figure 2. Basic assumptions

Figure 3. Examples of expectations

Examples of Elementary School Expectations
- ❖ Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Ready

- ❖ ROAR, Responsible, On-track, Able, and Respect

- ❖ Be Kind, Be Safe, Be Respectful, and Be a Learner.

- ❖ Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Safe, and Be your Best

Examples from Middle School Expectations
- ❖ Respecting myself, others, property, and community

- ❖ SOAR: Self-control, Optimism, Awareness, and Respect

- ❖ Mustang PRIDE: Positive, Respect, Integrity, Determined, and Excellent.

Examples from High School
- ❖ CARE: Creating a safe community, Achieving our goals, Respecting others and ourselves, and Encouraging learning for everyone

- ❖ SAIL – Speak wisely, Act appropriately, In place, and Learning

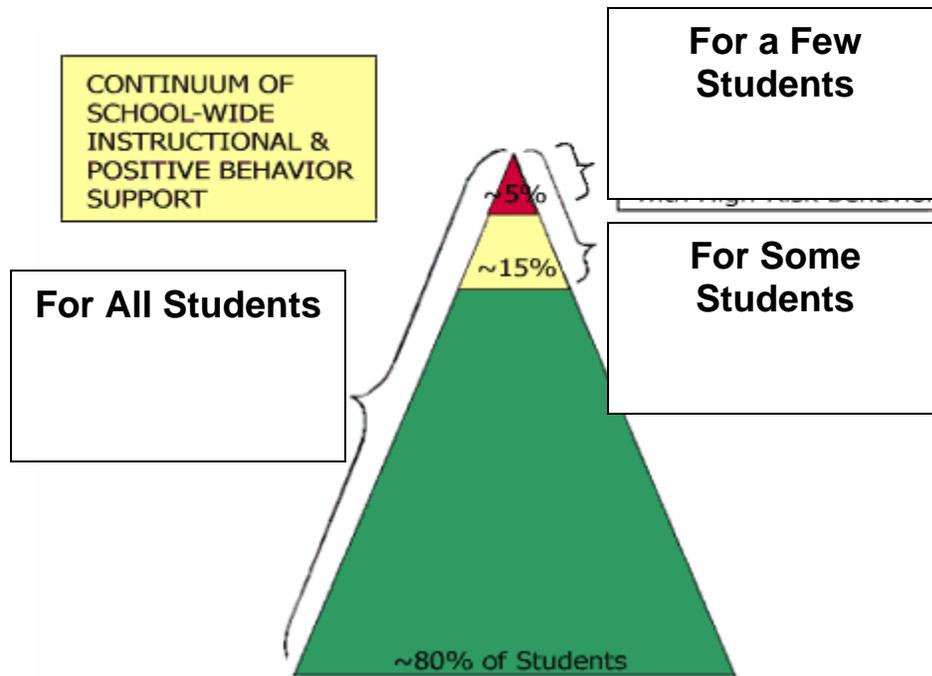Cafeteria Expecations; used with permission from Maple Lake Elementary, Maple Lake, Minnesota

For a Few Students

~5%

For All Students

~15%

For Some Students

~80% of Students

Figure 5. Continuum of school-wide instructional and positive behavioral support (adapted from PBIS.org)

Figure 6. Setting up SW-PBIS

How Does a School Set Up a SW-PBIS Program?

If you are interested in approaching your school about PBIS these are the steps to set up a school-wide system of positive behavioral supports:

1. Establish a school-wide behavior support team made up of administration, teachers, support staff, and parents to guide the process.
2. Secure administrator's support to actively participate.
3. Secure at least 80% of the staff's support and participation.
4. Conduct an assessment of the current discipline plan.
5. Create an implementation plan which should include:
    a. An agreed upon common discipline approach
    b. A positive statement of purpose
    c. A small number of positively stated expectations
    d. Procedures for teaching these expectations
    e. Procedures for encouraging expectations
    f. Procedures for discouraging negative behavior
6. Establish a way to collect data, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the discipline system on a regular and frequent basis.

Adapted from "**What are the steps involved in setting up a school-wide system of discipline?**" http://www.pbis.org/schoolwide.htm

Figure 4. Sample of teaching matrix for school and home. Used with permission from Maple Lake Elementary School, Maple Lake, Minnesota.

	Classroom	*Hallway*	Music	Phy. Ed.	Lunch	Recess	Media/Lab
Be Respectful	- Take turns - Listen - Follow directions - Use appropriate voice level	- Follow directions - Keep hands and feet to self - Stand in line quietly	- Use manners - Look at teacher - Listen	- Be a good listener - Take turns	- Say "Please" and "Thank you" - Listen to adults - Use inside voices	- Treat the equipment properly - Treat others the way you want to be treated	Use the computers, books, shelf markers, magazines and furniture correctly

Be Ready

Be Responsible

Be Respectful

Here is more information about the school-wide expectations at our school. Students will be taught these expectations and given an opportunity to practice them around the school. Throughout the year students and classrooms demonstrating the school-wide expectations will be recognized in various ways. Below is an example on how these characteristics could be used in the home. Talk about it with your child and add your own examples. Using the words often and discussing what they mean will help your child understand appropriate behavior.

Together we make a difference!!

	Morning Routine	Chore Time	Homework Time	Bed Time	Meal Time	Family Time
Be Respectful					Listening to others	Taking turns
Be Responsible		Finishing your jobs	Knowing what assignments you have			
Be Ready	Having your clothes and backpack out			Having your toys put away		