



# Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

Supporting your child's positive behavior  
at home and in the community

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Parents play a crucial role in helping their children be successful in school. When schools and parents work together as partners, students reach even higher levels of success. Whether parents are providing a safe home that encourages learning and appropriate behavior or working with school teachers and administrators on specific learning goals for their child, it's vital for parents to support their child's education. One of the most effective ways to do that is by using Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports. PBIS is a research-based, school-wide system of discipline based on the belief that appropriate behaviors can be taught. It also works well at home and in the community.

This presentation will explain the principles of PBIS, explore how some schools are using it effectively, and – most importantly – how you can use it at home.

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This publication is partially funded through a grant from the MN Dept of Education



# What is PBIS?

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PBIS is a research-based strategy used to teach appropriate skills and behavior.

PBIS is based on :

- Teaching the expected behavior
- Recognizing and rewarding the behavior when it is used

Managing and improving your child's behavior isn't about punishment or consequences. Although punishment might temporarily stop negative behavior, it doesn't teach your child the behavior you'd like to see. PBIS is a process that teaches children how to behave appropriately by focusing on teaching, practicing, and rewarding good behavior.

## How does PBIS work?

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- Decide the behavior you want to see
- Teach the expected behavior
- Practice the expected behavior
- Provide meaningful reinforcement
- Enforce logical consequences for negative behaviors

When all students are taught the same behaviors and social skills, those principles and values become an important part of school culture. Schools use PBIS to create a system of support that works for all students, an approach – research shows- that improves school climate and increases learning opportunities. But teaching alone does not change or shape behavior.

Schools need to create an environment where new behaviors can be practiced, reinforced, and rewarded, an environment where there are consistent, logical consequences for negative behaviors.

# PBIS in school

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1. Develop simple, broad rules
  - Be Responsible
  - Be Respectful
  - Be Helpful
2. Describe what these mean
  - State the expectation
  - Provide examples
  - Reteach, reteach, reteach
3. Reward the behavior when it occurs

For PBIS to work in schools, at least 80 percent of the staff needs to agree on some simple but broad rules. Research shows that agreement on expected behaviors, and how to change problem behaviors, is crucial for success. Let's say a school chooses these expected behaviors: Be responsible, be respectful, and be helpful. It's important to describe what these behaviors look like in a variety of school settings – the classroom, the lunchroom, or on the bus for example.

By identifying expectations in different settings, the teacher can teach the expected behavior. When that positive behavior happens, it needs to be rewarded. Establishing a consistent system of reinforcement is as important as teaching the behavior itself.

# PBIS in School

	Responsible	Respectful	Helpful
Classroom	Be prepared for class	Raise your hand Wait to be called on	Push your chair in when you leave
Lunchroom	Sit at your assigned table	Clean up after yourself	Pick up and dispose of trash on floor even if it's not yours
Bus	Stay seated Stay in your assigned seat	Talk in a quiet voice	Keep your body (hands and feet) to yourself Do not push

Here's an example of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports at work in schools. Once everyone agrees on the expected behaviors and how to change problem behaviors, then it's time to define those expectations in a variety of school settings. This is how the teachers know what behaviors to teach.

For example, responsibility in the classroom might mean having your supplies ready when class begins. Responsibility in the lunchroom might mean sitting at your assigned table. On the bus the expectation could be staying in your own seat. Respect in the classroom could mean raising your hand. Respect in the lunchroom might mean cleaning up your lunch tray. On the bus, respect could be talking in a quiet voice.

The expectation for being helpful in the classroom could be pushing in your chair when you leave; in the lunchroom it could be picking up someone else's trash on the floor; on the bus it might mean keeping your hands and feet to yourself.

# Meaningful Reinforcement

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Give a “ticket” when the preferred behavior is “caught”



Have a pizza party for the class when students earn a class total of 100 tickets



Positive recognition is very effective in changing behavior. Once students have been taught positive behaviors, they need to be rewarded when those behaviors occur. By “catching” the child doing the preferred behavior, you can reinforce what it is you are looking for.

To make this work, schools have to decide what kind of reinforcement is appropriate and establish a plan to reward positive behavior. For example, they might create a “ticket” that staff could give to students when they are doing what’s right. Once students earn their ticket, they put it into a special box in the classroom. When the class reaches a total of 100 or more tickets, the class is rewarded with a pizza party.

## When Misbehavior Happens

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Minor misbehaviors (such as talking out of turn, not having homework in on time, refusing to sit at assigned table during lunch or being loud)

Major misbehaviors (such as truancy, physical aggression or threatening others)

Just because students have been taught positive behaviors, and those behaviors have been reinforced, doesn't mean there won't be any negative behaviors in the future. Schools have traditionally written behavior policies that outline problem behaviors and how they will be handled. These tend to be fairly general, and it's often left up to teachers to determine how and when to use them. Employing the PBIS approach is a little different.

When a school adopts the PBIS model, it needs to establish what behaviors teachers are expected to handle (minor misbehaviors) and what behaviors administrators are expected to handle (major misbehaviors). Then they need to agree on how to respond in each case.

# Examples of Meaningful Consequences

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## Minor misbehaviors

Loss of “caught-in-the-positive act ticket”

Assigned “help time” in classroom

Create a plan with teacher on how to apologize for offending language

## Major misbehaviors

Sent out of class to administrator

Classroom teachers should handle minor misbehaviors. When students speak out of turn, use offensive language, or refuse to be responsible, respectful, or helpful, they should face immediate, meaningful consequences. This reinforces the expected behavior. For example, any student who is not prepared for class could lose a “caught-in-the-positive act” ticket. Students who refuse to clean up their area when asked, or use an inappropriate word in class, might have to stay after school to help in the classroom or create a plan with the teacher on how to apologize for using offensive language.

Administrators should handle major misbehaviors in a way that is consistent with the school district’s policies. Major misbehaviors are usually about safety or truancy and the school district already has a policy on how to respond appropriately.

By clearly defining minor and major misbehaviors and the consequences for each, schools help staff and students know what to expect.

## How do parents use PBIS?

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- Decide the behavior you want to see
- Teach the expected behavior
- Practice the expected behavior
- Provide meaningful reinforcement
- Enforce logical consequences for negative behavior

PBIS works well at school but it can work just as well at home. As your child's first teacher, you know your child best. You also know the rest of your family and your family's core values. Supporting positive behavior doesn't mean changing the child – it means changing the environment so that it supports and reinforces the kind of behavior you want to see. To make this work, your family will need to decide what behavior you expect and what the consequences will be for negative behavior.

# PBIS at Home

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1. Develop simple, broad rules
  - Be Responsible
  - Be Respectful
  - Be Helpful
2. Describe what these mean
  - State the expectation
  - Provide examples
  - Reteach, reteach, reteach
3. Reward the behavior when it occurs

What does PBIS look like at home? Simply transfer the kind of simple, broad school rules for use at home and in the community. Have a family meeting to talk about what it looks like to be responsible, respectful, and helpful before school, after school, and on the weekends. Just like at school, you'll need 80 percent agreement (four out of five family members for example) on these expectations. Parents and children may have similar ideas or their ideas may be very different. The key to success is having contributions from everyone in the family. Once the expectations have been established, it's time to set up a reward system. That way your child can be recognized for using the preferred behavior.

## PBIS at Home and in the Community

	Responsible	Respectful	Helpful
Before School	Get up on time Eat breakfast	Take turns in the bathroom Flush the toilet	Make your bed Pick up your clothes
After School	Call mom or dad when you get home	Come home right after school	Let the dog out
On Weekends	Clear plans with mom or dad first	Come home on time	Do your laundry
In the Community	Use bike rules, follow street signs	Take your cell phone with you	Don't litter

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Here is an example of how the PBIS model could look at home. Remember that, for this to work, everyone in the family must be involved. If the expectation is that the child must check in with a parent when they get home, make sure they have a way to do that. For example, they might call a special number, send a text, or leave a message if there is no answer. Parents with younger children can decide what behaviors are appropriate, but parents with older children should include the children in deciding and agreeing on what appropriate behaviors look like at different times or in different places. Sometimes parents and children do not agree. In that case the family must figure out a way to resolve their differences.

In this PBIS at Home and in the Community matrix, being responsible before school means getting up on time and eating breakfast, being respectful means taking your turn in the bathroom and flushing the toilet, and being helpful means making your bed and picking up your clothes.

Being responsible after school means checking in with a parent when you get home, being respectful means coming home right away, and being helpful means letting the dog out.

Being responsible on weekends means clearing all plans with a parent first, being respectful means coming home on time, and being helpful means getting your laundry done.

And being responsible in the community means following bike rules and street signs, being respectful means taking your cell phone with you, and being helpful means not littering.

## Meaningful Reinforcement

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Put a golf tee in a jar every time the preferred behavior is “caught”



“Buy” prizes with golf tees every week



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Remember to establish a plan to reinforce the behaviors you’d like to see! For each time you use negative recognition, you should use positive recognition five times. The more you can “catch” the child doing the preferred behavior, the more you can reward – and reinforce – that behavior.

For example, you could put a golf tee in a jar every time you “catch” the child doing the right thing. Create a reward system so that the golf tees can be used to “buy” rewards. Most families find that buying “alone time” with a parent for a special activity works well. Would your child like to fish, hike, go to a movie, or play a game with you? Remember, effective rewards don’t have to cost money.

# Misbehavior at Home

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## Minor misbehaviors

- Not getting up on time for school
- Taking too long in the bathroom
- Forgetting to do your laundry
- Forgetting to walk the dog

## Major misbehaviors

- Going out without clearing plans with parents
- Staying out after curfew

Just because you have taught and reinforced positive behaviors, that doesn't mean your child won't have any negative behaviors. The PBIS approach is focused on teaching positive behaviors, but you'll also need a plan to give meaningful consequences for misbehavior. As a family, you should choose what those consequences will be. Make a list of "minor misbehaviors" and "major misbehaviors" and decide, as a family, how these should be handled.

# Examples of Meaningful Consequences

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## Minor misbehaviors

Set alarm 10 minutes earlier for one week if late more than twice in a week

Be the last person to use the bathroom for one week if you use someone else's time more than twice in a week

Do a load of laundry for someone else in the family if you forget to do your laundry once a week

## Major misbehaviors

Lose a weekend privilege

Come in an hour earlier than curfew

Here are some examples of meaningful consequences for misbehavior. It is important for both parents and children to know exactly what the consequences will be. Remember, just because a child has a misbehavior, that doesn't mean you can't reward the child for a positive behavior that happens as a result. For example, a family might decide that the consequence for taking too long in the bathroom twice in one week is to be the last person to use the bathroom for the following week. But offenders can still earn a "tee" for using the bathroom for an appropriate amount of time when it is finally their turn.

## The Goal of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

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- Shape appropriate and desirable behaviors
- Use a strategy that is based on teaching and reinforcement
- Avoid relying on punishment to change behavior
- Be proactive, not reactive

Children need unconditional love and acceptance from their parents. They also rely on you to help them understand how to act in the world around them.

The Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports approach is a major change from the traditional parenting strategy of control and consequence. To make PBIS work at home, you'll need to be proactive, set a plan, teach to that plan, reward positive behaviors, and define appropriate consequences.

For the parent-child relationship to be stronger, we need to teach our children, not punish them. We need to reward our children for doing the right thing, not catch them doing the wrong thing.

## In the end....

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- Establish your expectations
- Allow yourself to respond, not react
- Support positive behavior
- Enjoy your child!

Parenting isn't always easy, especially if your child has challenging behaviors. Helping your child develop positive behavior requires a family commitment to reinforce the expectations, reward positive behaviors, and model and practice them yourself. Using a plan like Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports can give you the tools to teach and reward appropriate behavior. It will refocus your family on the concept of working together and will help you create a more enjoyable and harmonious home life.