

# Definition of Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support (SW-PBS)

SW-PBS is a process for creating safer and more effective schools by structuring the learning environment to support the academic and social success of all students. The process supports the adoption and long-term implementation of efficient and effective discipline throughout the school environment. SW-PBS methods are research-based, proven to significantly reduce the occurrence of problem behaviors in schools and supported by a three-tiered model.



## Tier 1:

SW-PBS is a proactive approach. Each school designates a Leadership Team and coach that is selected by the administrator and faculty. The primary goals of SW-PBS are to prevent the development of inappropriate behavior, reduce ongoing patterns of problem behavior, and to increase the likelihood of improved academic performance of all students through teaching and learning time gained when the numbers of inappropriate behaviors are reduced.

As staffs learn how to consistently embed the teaching and monitoring of appropriate social and behavior skills into the school day and curriculum, they also learn to anticipate how to structure school environments so the appropriate skills will be utilized more often. It is important that schools actively communicate with families so they understand and support the SW-PBS process. Families can also benefit from learning how to use similar strategies for teaching and supporting their children's appropriate social and behavior skills.

SW-PBS first establishes strong Tier 1 prevention through employing school-wide systems of actively teaching and recognizing appropriate social skills and behavior, using consistent systems to discourage inappropriate behavior and educating all staff in how to implement and participate in the process. In addition, staff members are taught how to collect and utilize data for effective decision making related to the overall culture and climate of their school and the effectiveness of their Tier 1 systems and practices.



The top two tiers of the triangle involve establishing a second team of school personnel who have background training and specialized expertise in accurately identifying and building more intensive student support systems. Many schools already have teams in place for this purpose. These may be known as *Care Teams*, *Student Assistance Teams*, *Teacher Support Teams*, or other titles with a similar purpose. The SW-PBS process assists schools in streamlining systems to accurately utilize these teams and to assure a continuous flow of information across the three tiers.

When schools employ effective systems, practices and data-based decision-making consistently and with fidelity, desired outcomes are achievable across all three tiers.



- **Outcomes** — the academic, social and behavior targets that are endorsed and emphasized by students, families and educators
- **Systems** — the supports that are needed to enable accurate and durable implementation of the practices of PBS by all staff
- **Data** — the information that is used to identify the current status, the need for change, and the effects of interventions
- **Practices** — the evidence-based interventions and strategies that are taught and structure the way staff interact with students

## Tier 2:

Some students will respond to the Tier 1 level of support but will still exhibit some specific difficulties. These students may be demonstrating academic and/or behavioral deficits that will require more intensive supports. Tier 2 interventions can be effective in working with students at-risk for academic and/or behavioral concerns.



Secondary interventions rest on the foundation of Tier 1 school-wide and classroom systems (remember the triangle above). Without school-wide prevention, we can't reliably identify students in need of targeted interventions. Tier 1 systems must be in place and used consistently and with fidelity by all staff. To correctly identify which students are in need of more intensive supports and what types of supports they need, the SW-PBS leadership team assists staff in reviewing data. Typically schools decide on a set of data-decision rules for identification. For instance a school may decide that once any student has received a certain number of office discipline referrals (perhaps 2-5), that student's referrals will be automatically reviewed to determine what types, locations and times of referrals. Other referral sources could include teachers or families, counselor reports, or student-reported concerns.

Tier 2 small group interventions are strategies and procedures put into place to support a group of students who display similar needs or deficits as identified through the data review described above. Typically about 15-20% of students will continue to have problems and will need the more intensive interventions. Approximately 10-15% will respond to the targeted group interventions.

When a student is part of a small group intervention the staff members who interact with him/her should be made aware of it so that they can also provide the right types of prompts and encouragement. Small group interventions provide an opportunity for the students to have a more personal, positive connection with at least one additional adult. This is important because many of these students' school experiences have not been successful.

Some of the critical features involved in establishing effective Tier 2 interventions are:

- The interventions should be consistent with the school-wide expectations and should incorporate similar language.
- Adequate resources and staff to support the interventions should be dedicated and available before the interventions are begun.
- The interventions should require low effort on the part of the teacher(s). The intervention(s) recommended should fit well within the classroom or other environments where it is implemented. Interventions that require too much time or too many resources will probably not be implemented consistently and with fidelity. It is important to have the teacher involved when deciding what interventions will be used so it will be workable.
- A system to refer and identify students should be in place, and procedures for referral and identification should be clear to all staff and families.
- A system should be in place to maintain data-based and timely monitoring of the intervention to decide if it should be maintained, revised, or restructured.

There are many different types of Tier 2 interventions. Some that have been successful across age and grade levels include (a) Check-in/Check-out, (b) Social Skills Clubs, (c) Mentoring, and (d) interest-based clubs (homework, art, chess, sports, and/or music). These interventions provide a means for students to actively practice the skills that are being re-taught and reinforced through the intervention.

### **Tier 3:**

A smaller group of students, approximately 1-5%, will be provided with ongoing Tier 1 support, will probably have been included in a Tier 2 support, and will still be experiencing difficulty. In many cases these students have school histories significant for academic and behavioral difficulties over an extended period of time. Because their needs may be both more significant and more chronic, the types of support systems employed will be individualized and specific. Just as with the Tier 2 level, schools must build on the established schoolwide system to accurately identify these students, and data-based decision making is essential.



Students with these types of behavior problems require specially designed and individualized interventions that match the needs, or function, of the behaviors. This is where functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and behavior intervention planning (BIP) are utilized. Expertise in the science of behavioral assessment is necessary for the development and implementation of individualized support plans. The school's tertiary system must include: (a) personnel who are trained in the basic principles of behavior, functional assessment, and behavior support planning, (b) a system for early identification and referral, and (c) an organizational structure that allows for flexible teaming and planning. The process can be initiated through a teacher's, family member's or student's request for assistance or through systematic tracking of data to monitor students, or other means defined by the school/district.

The school teams which are formed to design and implement individual student plans should include those adults who are typically involved with the student on a daily basis along with other staff who have more specialized skills (i.e. school counselors, social workers, special education staff, school psychologists, administrators, and school nurses). The team also includes the family members and if appropriate the student. If the team is to be successful, they must be given the time to meet on a regular basis.

A functional behavioral assessment (FBA) begins by the team working with the teacher(s) to identify the interactions between the student's behavior and the environment(s) where it is most likely to occur. The team then defines the behavior in operational terms (what it looks/sounds like, how often, in what circumstances). For instance, "When Joe is asked to turn in his homework in math class, he verbally refuses on approximately 4 out of 5 days." This definition not only serves as a means to correctly identify the behavior, but phrases it in such a way that another person could understand the problem and could directly observe it. Also included would be a setting where the occurrence of the problem behavior is low in order to confirm the summary statement. Next a designated person(s) will observe the student in the problem setting for the identified behavior. Other information will also be gathered (i.e. interviewing others who have and/or currently work with the student, review school records, interview family members and student) in order to develop a summary statement.. All information gathered will then be used by the team to design a behavior intervention plan (BIP). Another term sometimes used for this plan is an individualized positive behavior support plan.

The BIP is designed to change contributing variables associated with the student's behavior, the teacher's behavior and the environment. The BIP is based on an instructional approach, similar to that used by teachers for academic instruction. Follow-up observations by team members, on-going monitoring of specified data and other means may be employed to revise, refine, end or continue the plan. The BIP will be reviewed by the team on a regular basis until such time as the team and the teacher(s) make a decision to do otherwise.

Because many of the problems exhibited by students in need of a FBA and BIP are long-standing and significant, school personnel should understand that it is likely to take extended periods of time and intensive intervention before the problems will begin to improve. Any plan may be influenced by unforeseen changes in the student's or school's situation. For these reasons it is important for all involved to continue to dedicate the time, resources and personnel as necessary to increase the likelihood of the plan's success.

## **Getting Started:**

Missouri SW-PBS recommends district-wide adoption for schools to achieve optimal results. When students transfer or transition from one school to another, it is helpful to have complementary discipline processes in place. It is also beneficial in terms of providing effective professional development.

There are six steps that should be taken to prepare for successful introduction of SW-PBS in a district:

1. Secure school and district administrator agreement.
2. Secure commitment & agreement to implement from at least 80% of staff.



3. Establish a SW-PBS leadership team at each school.
4. Conduct an assessment of the current schoolwide discipline system.
5. Create an Action Plan based on current school data, staff input, and school/district mission.
6. Establish a system to collect office discipline referrals and other identified data on a regularly scheduled basis.

The Missouri regional SW-PBS consultants assist schools/districts in understanding the six steps. Specific information related to each of these and what are involved in completing them is also available from the consultants.

Once a school/district has made the commitment to implement SW-PBS, personnel are trained through a series of state and regional workshops. Typically a school will use the first year to participate in training, review current school processes, and prepare for full-scale implementation the following school year. In succeeding years additional trainings will be provided to assist schools' progress and to provide technical support.

**The essential components of a successful SW-PBS system are:**

Common philosophy and purpose  
Leadership  
Clarifying expected behaviors  
Teaching expected behaviors  
Encouraging expected behaviors  
Discouraging inappropriate behaviors  
Ongoing monitoring  
Effective classroom practices

SW-PBS is a national and international initiative that is currently being implemented in over 10,000 schools. A national center for PBIS is supported through the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and is recognized as an IDEA that Works. The Missouri initiative is actively supported through the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Division of Effective Practices. Regional SW-PBS consultants may be contacted through the information provided under the Personnel Directory on this website, or through the local RPDC in your area.

