PBIS Rules, Rewards Boost School-Wide Behavior and Academics

By relying on concise rules and frequent rewards, principals say the PBIS approach to school-wide behavior management drastically reduces discipline problems and improves academic performance among all students.

Over a four-year period, principal Andrew Krugly saw office referrals and suspensions at Dewey Elementary School decrease, test scores climb, and the achievement gap in math shrink to almost nothing.

The primary reason, according to Krugly, is students' hunger for Tiger Tickets. Students receive the tickets from their teachers and other staff members for obeying school rules and meeting and exceeding expectations. Kids can trade the tickets in for rewards. And there is no excuse for not knowing the rules: the expectations for every occasion and every location are very specific and on display in hallways and classrooms.

The rules and rewards strategy is at the core of Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS), a school-wide approach to behavior management.

8 Critical Factors For a School-Wide Discipline Program

These are the steps PBIS organizers advise administrators to start with when establishing a school-wide behavior...
management program:

Step 1: Establish leadership team membership

Step 2: Develop brief statement of behavior purpose

Step 3: Identify positive school-wide behavioral expectations

Step 4: Develop procedures for teaching school-wide behavioral expectations

Step 5: Develop procedures for teaching classroom-wide behavioral expectations

Step 6: Develop continuum of procedures for encouraging and strengthening student use of school-wide behavioral expectations

Step 7: Develop continuum of procedures for discouraging student behavior violations of school-wide rules

Step 8: Develop data-based procedures for monitoring implementation of school-wide positive behavior system

"The whole climate [of the school] is different," since adopting PBIS, said Krugly, who has been using PBIS at the K-5 school in Evanston, Illinois, since 2002. "Before, more kids were sitting in hallways or outside my office. We had no real system in place to deal with consequences for behavior."

Several principals who use PBIS told Education World that they were elated to see that when student behavior improved under the system and teachers had more time to focus on instruction, academic performance shot up as well.

GETTING EVERYONE ON BOARD

The Office of Special Education Programs of the U.S. Department of Education created and funds a PBIS technical center to disseminate information about effective school-wide disciplinary practices and provide support to schools and districts to implement them.

"We conducted a review of best practices and consolidated them to the fewest number of things educators can do to have the greatest impact," explained Dr. George Sugai, who is the co-director of the national Center on PBIS. The other co-director is Rob Horner of the University of Oregon. Sugai also is a professor of special education and director of the Center for Behavioral Education & Research at the University of Connecticut's Neag School of Education. The Universities of Oregon and Connecticut are the lead institutions for the PBIS center, which is a collaborative of six universities and three agencies.

One of the keys to a school-wide behavior management plan is for everyone to agree to a common approach, Sugai told Education World. Educators need to emphasize prevention and positive modeling. The next highest priority is behavior management. "To improve classroom climate, you have to have good classroom management," he said. "Students need to know the consequences for rule violations and teachers have to know what's going on."

Good instruction is one of the best behavior management tools, added Sugai. "When kids are engaged more often with academic engagement that
works, they are less likely to misbehave." And when teachers spend less time on classroom management, they can spend more time on instruction.

The center now has data from about 7,000 schools with which its staff members have worked. Members of the center provide schools with resources, consultants, and on-site assistance.

**LEAVE NO LOOPHOLES**

PBIS focuses on creating and sustaining primary (school-wide), secondary (classroom), and tertiary (individual) systems of support for positive behavior.

Schools start implementing PBIS by developing expectations and rules for the whole school.

At Dewey Elementary and many other PBIS schools, the framework for the rules and expectations are similar to these:

- Be respectful
- Be safe
- Be caring
- Be here
- Be ready

At Dewey, these are called the Dewey Dos. Besides the Dewey Dos, PBIS at Dewey includes a matrix of behavioral expectations; ?Cool Tools, which are lesson plans used to teach students the behavioral expectations; Tiger Tickets, the acknowledgment/reinforcement (reward) system; and ?office discipline referral forms (ODRs).

**Graduated Discipline And PBIS**

Children who misbehave at Dewey Elementary School can receive an office discipline referral (ODR) form. This form indicates whether a student has committed a major or minor infraction.
“The form will also help teachers be more consistent, not only with enforcing our Dewey Do's but also in taking corrective action when children have disobeyed the rules,” according to the school Web site.

Before an ODR is filled out, teachers try to resolve the situation through regular classroom management techniques. If the teacher is unable to do so, he or she completes an ODR. After the third minor offense, an ODR indicates that a major infraction has been committed. At that point, the issue is sent to principal Andrew Krugly's office. Parents are notified immediately if there is a major offense. If a student has committed minor offenses, the ODR forms are sent home at the end of every two-week period. A teacher may, however, contact a parent before two weeks pass to discuss the issue.

In January 2002, before implementing PBIS, Dewey had 6.5 office referrals per day. By January 2006, the number had dropped to 2.2 daily office referrals.

For students at Conway Middle School who don't follow the rules, the school also has a step-by-step discipline plan that includes warnings,
contacting parents, discipline referrals, detention, and parent conferences. "We do have discipline issues -- but we are taking care of business here," principal Luis Tousent said.

ODRs at Dewey also are used to tweak the PBIS system. Data from ODR forms are entered into a computer program and a team of staff members reviews the information each month to determine what type of infractions are occurring, where, and under what circumstances. Sometimes the data leads to changes in procedures or often become the topic of a Cool Tool, a weekly mini-lesson teachers present in class that involves role-playing and making choices. If several playground scuffles occurred in a week, the Monday Cool Tool might focus on conflict resolution, noted Krugly. "We're making informed decisions based on behavior data."

Little is left to interpretation.

Parents are asked to review the school's code of conduct and behavior matrices with their children and sign a form acknowledging they have read them and return the form to school.

PBIS plays out in a similar way at North Elementary School in Des Plaines, Illinois. "We start with three or four Golden Rules," said Carol Gibbs, principal of the 526-student K-5 school. Gibbs said she inherited PBIS from the prior administration. "I'm sure it was in response to discipline issues which at the time were pretty hefty." And now, "we're in year five [of PBIS]; we're in a good place, but we have a lot to do still," she told Education World.

The first few weeks of the school year at North are devoted to introducing and re-enforcing the rules. "For the first week of school, we focus on what the Golden Rules mean in classrooms," Gibbs explained. "We have training modules for how they work in bathrooms, hallways, classroom, and buses. The second week we do hallways, the third week bathrooms, and the lunchroom we do by grade. For the buses, we walk students through the procedures and then have students sign a contract."

"We took a tip from Ruby Payne," she added. "We tell kids school is like church -- not like home. So they need to be respectful."

**DON'T SKIMP ON REWARDS**

Once the rules are in place and reviewed, the other vital component of PBIS is rewards for adhering to the rules. At Dewey, Krugly requires teachers to give out at least ten Tiger Tickets a day. "Adults have to be more positive, rather than being reactive to behavior," he said. Students can redeem the tickets for extra recess time, items at the school store, privileges, activities such as drawing with chalk on the sidewalk, or to participate in special celebrations. Whole classes also can earn Tremendous Tiger Tickets for
rewards. One year ten tickets earned a student the chance to try to drop Krugly into a dunk tank. This past school year, the big prize was allowing students to tie-dye shirts if they earned 15 tickets.

Students cannot lose tickets once they have earned them. But for students who commit infractions, there is a graduated system of discipline. (See sidebar, Graduated Discipline)

Krugly also has seen how PBIS helps teachers. In one case, a teacher started the year with a very chatty group of first graders. After two weeks, she was frazzled from constantly trying to quiet them down, he said.

Krugly told the teacher to stop her lessons every three-to-five minutes and write out three Tiger Tickets. She didn't have to pass them out immediately; she could do that during a break. The teacher said that would mean a lot of pausing -- but Krugly pointed out that she already was interrupting her lessons every few minutes to shush the students anyway.

After two days of writing out massive numbers of tickets, the teacher told Krugly that the students' behavior had not yet improved drastically, but she was feeling better because now she was stopping instruction to do something positive -- reward kids who were not chatting.

At the end of three weeks, Krugly said, the teacher didn't have to issue as many tickets because the chatting had decreased. "And she was a happier teacher," he said.

The school-wide system for catching students being good at North school is called Eagle Eyes, Gibbs said. Each classroom has its own reward system.

Luis Tousent, the eighth grade administrative dean at Conway Middle School in Orlando, Florida, said the PBIS reward system has been very effective in his school. "It helped reduce negative behaviors considerably," Tousent told Education World. School administrators began to see a change a year after adopting a school-wide PBIS system. "The whole school has bought into it -- as far as our school goes, it is working well."

In 2002-2003, the first year using PBIS, Conway had 1,621 office referrals for discipline problems, Tousent said. The next year, referrals were down to 1,012, and by 2004-2005, office referrals had dropped to 819. Conway has been considered a top school for the past seven years.

"We're trying to do anything we can to instill positive behavior. We're trying to motivate kids. At the same time, we don't reward average behavior. You don't get a
"If they are not getting into trouble, they are taking care of business, which is what we want," Tousent told Education World.

Conway's PBIS program revolves around the motto PRIDE (Preparedness, Respect, Integrity, Dignity, Excellence) and has a reward system for every grade level. Sixth graders receive paper High 5's and seventh graders earn Falcon Dollars for conducting themselves according to PRIDE. Eighth graders accumulate points for academics, conduct, attendance, lack of discipline referrals, and participation in extracurricular activities. Rewards can include being able to leave school earlier some days or being allowed to wear a hat. Administrators are constantly changing the reward system to keep students interested in the program.

"It's so woven into the fabric of the school that it is difficult to think about the school without it," Tousent added

BUT ARE KIDS BEING PAID TO BE GOOD?

**Academic Gains Under PBIS**

Dewey Elementary School principal Andrew Krugly noted significant gains in test scores, particularly among minority, low-income, and special education students since implementing PBIS.

In 2002, pre-PBIS, 65 percent of students in grades 3-5 were meeting or exceeding the state goal in reading. By 2007, the number was 87 percent. Also in 2002, 72 percent of grade 3-5 students were meeting or exceeding the standard in math; by 2007, it was 95 percent. During that same period, the number of African-American students meeting or exceeding...
standards in math jumped from 46 percent to 93 percent. "That means we essentially eliminated the achievement gap in math," Krugly noted.

North Elementary School saw comparable gains. The percentage of grade 3-5 students meeting or exceeding standards in reading in 2002-03 was 62 percent; by 2006-07 it was 75 percent, said principal Carol Gibbs. Math scores in the proficient range also increased over the same period from 78.4 percent to 82.5 percent.

Hispanic students also made monumental progress in reading -- from 34.9 percent proficient in 2002-03 to 81.3 percent in 2006-07.

With all the emphasis on rewards, though, one could wonder if students are falling in line just to earn treats and privileges, and whether the positive behaviors get cast aside when no rewards are on the horizon.

But several administrators said they do not consider PBIS "paying" or "bribing" kids to be respectful and responsible.

"We did have to ask ourselves, 'Do we want to pay kids to behave?'" Krugly said. "But you have to decide what you want more. Do you want kids to perform better? Do you want more instructional time? And people have been rewarding kids for behaving before this. Now teachers have more time to teach and have more time to work with teachers and staff. Over the past five years, test scores have risen significantly and referrals decreased significantly."

Educators also have noted that students continue to follow positive behaviors when they go on to middle school, Krugly told Education World.

And some students are not interested in the rewards themselves, but in amassing Tiger Tickets. "Some kids collect them just to set a goal to see how many they can collect," he said. "About 20 percent don't spend any tickets at all."

Schools need ways to override the negative messages children see in society and rewards do the job, pointed out Tousent. "Here's the situation -- we have powerful forces working against us," he told Education World. "Being smart is not cool, being educated is not cool. We're trying to do anything we can to instill positive behavior. We're trying to motivate kids. At the same time, we don't reward average behavior. You don't get a reward for breathing. We reward outstanding behavior."

For example, if a student who never turns in homework finally completes an assignment, he or she could earn a reward. But if the student turned in homework the next day, there would be no reward, because now he or she is meeting expectations, said Tousent.

Students are extremely motivated by the reward system, he added. The school no longer is allowed to offer food from outside vendors as an incentive, which is unfortunate in a way because it was effective. "Nothing motivates like stuff and food," Tousent noted.

The system works for about 94 percent of students in North school, added Gibbs. "Some kids may need more intensive intervention, like a chart on
their desk, and have to check in with the teacher daily…but if you do it [PBIS] correctly, it improves relationships…with kids, teachers, and parents. It's a framework for improving relationships and increasing the amount of academic time on task.

### Additional Resources

**PBIS Resources**
- Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports
- The PBIS Compendium
- PBIS Maryland

**More Articles from Education World's Discipline Series**

**Practicing Love & Logic Can Mean Happier Schools**
Stressing positive teacher-student relationships, empathetic adults, and differentiated consequences, the Love & Logic approach to behavior management has fans among teachers and parents. Included: Nine essential skills for teachers practicing Love & Logic.

**Discipline with Dignity Stresses Positive Motivation**
The Discipline with Dignity approach teaches educators to create positive motivators for kids so they take responsibility for their own behavior. Included: Examples of Discipline with Dignity in action.

**Responsive Classroom Practices Teach the Whole Child**
By intertwining social and academic learning, advocates of the Responsive Classroom system say, children become more independent learners and more considerate people.

**Explore More Education World Resources**

**Classroom Management 101**
Education World's archive of classroom management articles includes tons of management tips; ideas for establishing classroom rules and rewards; suggestions for tackling the homework dilemma; bullying resources; tips for back-to-school and new teachers; and columnists such as Fred Jones, Dr. Ken Shore, and Howard Seeman.

**Morning Meetings in Middle School: An Elementary Ritual Grows Up**
Many elementary classes start each morning with a meeting that sets the stage for the learning that will occur during the day, but more and more middle schools are finding that this social experience is just, if not more, important in upper grades.

**The Bull's-Eye of School Discipline**
It's not discipline, per se, that we need. It's *relationships*. In particular, it's the relationships that students have with others, both adults and children, that have a more direct effect on their behaviors, attitudes, and general well-being than any other single factor in the school.
environment.

**Principals Share Programs That Work**
There are hundreds of programs out there. Some claim to raise student achievement. Others aim to improve student behavior, stop bullying, or keep kids off drugs… But do these programs work? (This article includes a description of PBIS.)

**Order in the Cafeteria: Tips for Improving Behavior and Supervision**
Some principals have nightmares about "cafeteria time." But with rules for traffic flow and behavior firmly in place, many principals say lunchtime can run hitch-free.

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