It was great to see so many of you at the Second International Association for Positive Behavior Support Conference held in Tampa on March 10-12, 2005! There were hundreds of presentations, workshops and posters that addressed PBS at the individual, classroom, targeted group and school-wide levels and over 1200 registered participants for the event. It was a great opportunity to see what is happening in other parts of the country and to share the wonderful things that are happening in Florida.

As I watched presentations from states, districts and schools, I was impressed with the quality and quantity of PBS work occurring across the country. It pleases me to see Florida so actively involved in this nationwide effort to support positive behaviors of students. In fact, we should all take a few minutes to celebrate the remarkable contributions to the PBS efforts that are being made in Florida. We have an unbelievable philosophical and financial commitment to PBS from our state Department of Education as well as from colleagues in higher education. We have districts that have built their capacity to expand PBS efforts to all of their schools, to train and support coaches and teams, and to make positive behavior support a reality for all of their students. Finally, we have individual school teams that are implementing PBS with creativity and fidelity. I am amazed by the new ideas and positive outcomes that I hear from coaches, district coordinators and the PBS Project faculty. We believe that some of our elementary, middle and high schools are among the very best in the country! We are very proud of the efforts you have made and the results you are seeing.

Take a few minutes to celebrate what you have done. You have made some amazing changes in your schools and in the lives of your students.
In the Spotlight: Indian River County High Schools

In Indian River County, we understand that implementing school-wide PBS at the high school level presents some unique challenges that are not always present at the elementary and middle school levels. Size, organization, operations, approach to learning and teaching, and approach to behavior management are all considerations for teams when applying PBS practices in high schools. Concerns at the high school level include graduation and attendance rates (curriculum, credits), safe schools (threats, intimidation, harassment), and problem behavior (drugs, abusive language, insubordination). In an effort to provide a safe, productive, and positive environment for learning, two high schools in Indian River County are implementing a school-wide PBS program.

Sebastian River High School is completing their first year with a school-wide PBS process. The success of PBS in the ESE department during the 2003-2004 school year led to the decision to implement PBS across campus for the 2004-2005 school year. The response from teachers has been very positive from the beginning. The successful start is the result of full staff support. After reviewing last year’s discipline data and surveying staff regarding their student discipline concerns, the PBS team began the planning phase of implementation. The goals of the PBS team were to develop a standard set of campus-wide expectations, establish a reward system, and to make the system easy for teachers and students to implement. SHARK expectations are posted in each classroom and have been directly taught to students. Feedback from teachers and students has been very positive. The clearly stated and consistent expectations have helped in decreasing discipline referrals significantly. The expectations have assisted teachers in refocusing students after returning to school following both hurricanes.

Tribal PRIDE is the motto that refers to the school-wide expectations for Vero Beach High School’s Fighting Indians. In addition to establishing expectations for the entire school community, the Tribal Council at VBHS launched the school year by providing all teachers with lessons to teach behavioral expectations and specific training in the principles of PBS. Numerous ongoing reward programs have been developed to recognize the display of Tribal PRIDE by students, faculty, support staff, and community members. Monthly review of programming based on collected data aids the team in making the two campuses safer and more pleasant for all—an atmosphere where the best teaching and learning can occur. Teachers, students, and administrators are commenting about the success of implementing PBS strategies and their integration with existing programs at VBHS.

—Greg Ern, Ed.S., NCSP, District PBS Coordinator

In Lee County, the district coordinator scheduled coaches’ meetings, to occur six times during the school year. The district coordinator facilitates the meeting and always has an agenda prepared to make quality use of the hour that they spend together. The coaches meet after school hours at the public library and discuss the PBS processes in place or in progress at their specific sites. Most importantly they share ideas, data, and strategies, and brainstorm together real solutions to any issues that have been presented. With support from Florida’s Positive Behavior Support Project the district has agreed to pay every coach a stipend for attending these after hour meetings.

Lee County is one great example of how important Positive Behavior Support coaches or team facilitators are to their school team’s successful implementation. There are other districts around the state that utilize similar processes to maximize the support provided to their school teams.