

The Teacher Para Learning Connection

State Support Team 9

Issue 6

January 2015



This newsletter is a means of connecting teachers and paraprofessionals as they learn new ideas together that support the students they serve. This newsletter will be published four times a year.

Teacher and para teams are more than “peanut butter and jelly”, a generic mixing of people that go together well. Teacher and para teams have energy, represent two distinct roles defined by the law and *individual members who work together to support student needs on a daily, consistent basis.*

Resources for Teacher-Paraprofessional Teams

PBIS in Ohio –

<http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Other-Resources/School-Safety/Building-Better-Learning-Environments/PBIS-Resources>

PBIS website –

<https://www.pbis.org/>

Positive Language

Want positive behavior? Use positive language (2012) from *Responsive Classroom Newsletter* at <https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/>

Relevant Vocabulary to PBIS

Discipline = teaches social skills; focuses on student learning; shows students what they did wrong to teach the new behavior; promotes the ownership of the problem behavior to the student; facilitates problem solving, and seeks resolution and leaves dignity intact (Hierck, Coleman, Weber, 2011)

Reinforcement = a consequence (action after the behavior occurs) that increases the likelihood that the behavior will occur in the future (paychecks increase the likelihood that I will come to work each day)

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

PBIS is a general education initiative for all students to guide the implementation of practices to improve both the academic and behavior outcomes of students. “Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, is a broad range of systemic and individualized strategies for achieving important social and learning outcomes in school communities while preventing problem behavior. The key attributes of PBIS include preventive activities, data-based decision making, and a problem solving orientation (Horner, 2000; Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Sugai et.al., 2000; Weigle, 1997)” (PBIS Fact Sheet, Ohio Department of Education). PBIS is written into policy in Ohio and aligns with multiple initiatives and federal mandates.

The **PBIS framework** is based upon the premise that we teach students the academics such as reading, math and writing; likewise we can teach social behaviors. Using the **PBIS framework**, schools create environments that increase the likelihood that students learn both academics and desired behaviors. The idea of teaching social behaviors is part of a paradigm shift promoting the use of preventive, positive strategies rather than reacting to socially inappropriate behaviors. The paradigm shifts **away from using punishment** to control behaviors to the **teaching of socially appropriate social skills**.

PBIS is designed to promote a tiered system of support beginning with universal supports for all students such as school-wide expectations. School wide examples include: walk in the hallway using quiet voices; hands to self; use socially appropriate language; and respect personal space. These social behaviors are taught in the natural environment where the student learns such as **teaching social behaviors in context** (in the hallways, cafeteria, and classrooms). **Consistent consequences** by all school personnel are used along with **effective instructional techniques to provide student academic success** which in turn diminishes the behavior issues.

Example: Students often do not understand the difference between tattling and reporting until we teach the differences using examples and comparisons. Tattling means students are trying to get attention or get someone in trouble and can occur at any age level. Reporting means students are alerting an adult to tell about a dangerous situation or helping to keep everyone safe (Fitzell, 2010).

Positive language supports the learning of social skills. As adults, we need to choose our words and the tone of voice we use when speaking with students. We can begin with greetings of students and using language to convey our belief in students that they want to choose positive behaviors. “Good morning Denise, I am glad to see you today. I see you remembered to keep your hands to yourself as you walked down the hallway.” Clear, direct language needs to use words, tone of voice, and facial expressions to communicate calmness and respect for the student. Sarcasm or innuendos cannot be used. Language that reinforces student’s specific positive actions and socially appropriate skills helps to continue these actions. “I saw how you helped Clare pull the towel from the dispenser. That helped to keep the line moving as we cleaned up in art class” (www.responsiveclassroom.org).



Para’s are like V0-5 HAIR SPRAY... They hold through all kinds of weather.

What do the supports by the paraprofessional look like in PBIS?

Paraprofessionals as support personnel in the schools assist in creating the environments for learning both academic and behavior skills. Teachers provide the coaching with paraprofessionals observing, learning, and implementing strategies that support environments for student success. What does this look like?

Paraprofessionals under the direction of the teacher are often the personnel who provide the accommodations in the inclusive classroom, defined as the least restrictive environment for a student. These accommodations are legally mandated and often include positive, proactive environment strategies to support student learning of social behaviors. Examples of environment supports include:

- Organizing seating arrangements close to natural lighting or away from computers that are distracting; (*supports academic success, reduces frustration due to sensory deficits/stimulation*)
- Reviewing and reinforcing the routines in a classroom such as putting completed assignments into the teacher's mailbox or using a checklist to ensure all required supplies are brought to class (pencils, eraser, textbook, notebook paper, art box); (*reduces confusion, re-teaches and reinforces the expectations for class preparation and promotes self-regulation*)
- Supporting the development of relationships by stepping away from a student to provide opportunities for peers to socially interact, pose questions, and provide assistance; (*when adults step aside, peers are more likely to fill the space and interact*)

- Integrating transition cues such as visual timers, individual schedules, completion of defined number of problems before a break; (*reduces frustration and anxiety; reinforces expected behaviors*)
- Reinforces the expectations and classroom management plans by giving individual supports such as providing choices for activities after completed work, showing choice diagram for positive consequences, group supervision through scanning. (*re-teaches and reinforces the expectations for class preparation and promotes self-regulation*)

Paraprofessionals may re-teach skills initially taught by the teacher and provide the **reinforcement** (consequences after the behavior) to increase the likelihood that the behavior reoccurs. Following the plan defined by the instructional team and in alignment with an understanding of the student's profile (preferences, interests, needs, and strengths), the paraprofessional often implements the plan for **reinforcements** to promote the learning of new behaviors.

Examples of **reinforcement** include:

- Tangible/Material reinforcers – stickers, bookmarks, bubbles, free homework pass
- Social reinforcers – pat on the back, extra gym time with a peer to shoot basketballs, special lunch time with a sibling, special friend, teacher
- Activity reinforcers – puzzle, computer time, crafts, walk to the library
- Edible reinforcers – selection of a food item that the student likes

Alignment with the CEC Paraprofessional Standards

Standard 5 – Learning Environment/Social Interactions – Use routines and procedures to facilitate transitions as determined by the instructional team

Standard 5 – Learning Environment/Social Interactions – Adapt physical environment to provide optimal learning opportunities as determined by the instructional team

What PBIS information supports the collaborative teams of teachers and paraprofessionals?

Paraprofessionals are valuable support personnel who are often the front-line supporters of our teachers and the students whom they serve. As we commend them for their daily work, assisting them in understanding the students' goals, school or classroom expectations, and how to support the instructional team in their role is always helpful. Discussion items within teams to assist the paraprofessional in their role may include:

- What are the behavior expectations in the school or within the classroom?
- What are defined as major infractions versus minor infractions of the expectations? (profane language, kicking, hands on bulletin boards or peers in the hallways)
- Who are problems with behavior referred to? What preventative strategies within the school or classroom are used to address social behaviors?
- How can the paraprofessional support the individualized plans of students with whom they work? Is there a profile with basic information that can be shared confidentially?