

## Integrating Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Content into Teacher Preparation Programs

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### Executive Summary

Challenging P–12 student behavior is one of the primary stressors for beginning teachers and an oft-cited reason for leaving the profession (Lentfer & Franks, 2015). To improve classroom and behavior management, many P–12 school personnel are implementing positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS). Designed to meet the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of all students, PBIS is a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) framework (Sugai et al., 2000). MTSS consists of tiers at the universal (i.e., all students; tier 1), secondary (i.e., some students; tier 2), and tertiary (i.e., a few students; tier 3) levels for academic and behavioral supports, with an emphasis on carrying out those supports as intended (i.e., with fidelity; OSEP Technical Assistance Center, 2015). In their 2014 *Dear Colleague Letter on the Nondiscriminatory Administration of School Discipline*, personnel in the United States Departments of Education and Justice encouraged frontline practitioners in P–12 schools to adopt and implement PBIS (Lhamon & Samuels, 2014). This appeal, coupled with already widespread adoption of PBIS in P–12 schools across the U.S., confirms teacher educators shoulder responsibility for preparing pre-service special and general educators to enter the classroom with adequate knowledge and skills in PBIS competencies. In this brief, we describe PBIS basics and offer guidelines for teacher educators that ensure PBIS is included in teacher candidates' education curriculum.

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*“Reviews indicate that pre-service teachers may have limited exposure to classroom management training or may be exposed to competing theoretical frameworks, which may be confusing for new teachers.”*

—Freeman et al.,  
2014, p. 108

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### Aim & Background

Students with disabilities are more than twice as likely to receive one or more out of school suspensions when compared to same-aged peers without disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Exclusionary discipline practices, such as suspension and expulsion, impede learning due to missed instruction (Losen et al., 2015), leaving students with disabilities at heightened risk for falling further behind academically. One approach aimed at interrupting this vicious cycle is PBIS, which provides school personnel with an array of empirically validated, proactive interventions proven to prevent challenging behavior, increase academic achievement, and improve pro-social behavior in students with and without disabilities (Bradshaw, Koth, Thornton, & Leaf, 2009). In addition, culturally responsive pedagogy (Cartledge, Lo, Vincent, & Robinson-Ervin, 2013) should be infused into the PBIS framework to support students from diverse backgrounds.

### Findings, Implications & Recommendations

If school personnel are to carry out PBIS effectively, then they must receive instruction in the knowledge and application of it during their teacher preparation program (Kennedy & Thomas, 2012). As such, special and general education teacher educators need to ensure that PBIS is taught throughout the pre-service curriculum. This includes not only how teaching what PBIS is through coursework but also how to carry it out with fidelity. The latter of which requires sequenced

opportunities to practice using PBIS with feedback in simulated and clinical experiences varied across diverse, P–12 learners and school contexts. Taking a knowledge and practice-based approach helps special and general education teacher educators ensure effective preparation of teacher candidates in PBIS. Below we offer six specific guidelines for special and general education teacher educators to do just that. In Figure 1, we offer additional resources.

**Guideline 1.** Provide all teachers instruction on the use of PBIS (Walker & Hott, 2017) to address MTSS through classwide Tier 1 behavioral practices. For Tiers 2 & 3 PBIS, refer to innovation configurations (IC) to develop and enhance course syllabi and content. Especially helpful are *Evidence-Based Practice for Classroom and Behavior Management: Tier 2 and 3 Strategies* (Gage, 2015) and Course Enhancement Modules (CEM), such as the Classroom and Behavior Management module which addresses strategies for multiple types of student groupings (Berry Kuchle, Littman, Elledge, & McInerney, 2014). The content provided in the IC and CEM will enable teacher candidates to demonstrate PBIS competencies.

**Guideline 2.** Assign behavior management modules from IRIS, such as Classroom Management (Part 1; <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/beh1/#content>) to support teacher candidates' content acquisition of Tier 1–type classwide PBIS strategies.

**Guideline 3.** Teach the principles of reinforcement as best practice (Gongola & Daddario, 2010) to build teacher candidates' knowledge and practice in effectively addressing P–12 students' challenging behavior in PBIS at Tiers I, II, and III.

**Guideline 4.** Teach culturally responsive pedagogy (Cartledge, Lo, Vincent, & Robinson-Ervin, 2013) as an approach for understanding how teacher and P–12 student behaviors are influenced by one's culture and how that might impact effective PBIS implementation.

**Guideline 5.** Teach CEC's Social/Emotional/Behavioral High-Leverage Practices 7, 8, 9, and 10 (HLPs; McLeskey et al., 2017) to provide teacher candidates with an understanding of not only how to prevent but also to respond to P-12 students' challenging behavior in respectful and culturally relevant ways.

## Conclusion

When school personnel implement PBIS well, they are better able to support the social, emotional, behavioral, and academic development of all P-12 students. Doing so requires full support from general and special educators as well as administrators. Teacher educators following the guidelines included in this brief will be more likely to matriculate highly effective special and general education teachers who possess essential PBIS knowledge. As such, these teachers will not only be more equipped to meet the varied and unique social, emotional, behavioral, and academic needs of today's diverse learners, with and without disabilities, but also be better prepared to overcome professional challenges, remain effective in the classroom, and become school and district leaders.

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*“Most states require some form of training for pre-service teachers; however, frequently this requirement does not explicitly include research-based classroom management practices.”*

—Freeman et al.,  
2014, p. 117

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Figure 1. Resources for Including PBIS in Teacher Preparation Programs

Resource	Websites	Description
Council for Exceptional Children	<a href="https://highleveragepractices.org/">https://highleveragepractices.org/</a>	Offers descriptions of social/emotional/behavioral HLPs 7, 8, 9, and 10.
	<a href="https://highleveragepractices.org/701-2-4-2/">https://highleveragepractices.org/701-2-4-2/</a>	Provides a classroom video demonstration of HLP7: “Establish a Consistent, Organized, and Respectful Learning Environment”.
PBIS: OSEP Technical Assistance Center	<a href="https://www.pbis.org/">https://www.pbis.org/</a>	Includes information and resources that support PBIS implementation in schools. When used with fidelity (as intended), these resources support social-emotional-behavioral learning and academic achievement for P-12 students.
	<a href="https://www.pbis.org/school/pbis-and-the-law">https://www.pbis.org/school/pbis-and-the-law</a>	Provides explanation of why PBIS is included in IDEA with relevant case law noted. Includes a description of the historic exclusion of students with behavior needs in educational opportunities as rationale for evidence-based practices included in PBIS.
Culturally Responsive PBIS	<a href="http://crpbis.org/">http://crpbis.org/</a>	Includes information about an educational initiative with four schools in WI that aims to carry out PBIS in culturally responsive ways for the betterment of all students.
The CEEDAR Center	<a href="http://cedar.education.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Behavior-Management-tier-two-and-three-strategies.pdf">http://cedar.education.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Behavior-Management-tier-two-and-three-strategies.pdf</a>	Offers information, an example, and an Innovation Configuration template for use in behavior management course(s).
	<a href="http://cedar.education.ufl.edu/cems/classroom-and-behavior-management/">http://cedar.education.ufl.edu/cems/classroom-and-behavior-management/</a>	The Course Enhancement Module provides a facilitator’s guide, downloadable PowerPoint slide presentations, presenter notes for PowerPoint slides, and accompanying handouts.