



Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS)

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Increases Student Learning and Improves School Culture

Pittsburgh Public Schools has always been committed to creating environments where teachers can teach and students can learn. Through the framework of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), we now have a formalized way to provide consistent supports and interventions that ensure all students and staff have clear expectations for a safe and engaging learning environment.

PBIS is built on a foundation of expectations. When students know what is expected of them, they are more likely to behave appropriately. With that thought in mind, principals, teachers, and staff at every school in the District work together to set up behavioral expectations and subsequent rewards that are specific to their school. Expectations are reinforced and acknowledged at places like morning meetings, classrooms, and school-wide events.

Expectations are broad, and age-appropriate. Most revolve around common objectives such as being respectful, responsible, and safe. Consistency is the key to success. Each building has selected their own set of positively stated expectations. All adults and students throughout their school utilize the same expectations in all environments.

In some schools, when students are “caught being good,” they are acknowledged with tickets or points that reinforce the likelihood that the positive behavior will occur again. Opportunities to reinforce student behavior happen at the building, classroom, and individual levels. Each building has their own acknowledgment system that feature items and experiences that are meaningful to all students. Over time, negative behaviors disappear in favor of preferred positive behaviors.



All students, even ones who struggle with appropriate behavior, can achieve success and learn social and emotional skills that will help them be successful in school and in life.

How Teachers use PBIS:

I like how you are being respectful and waited your turn instead of shouting out the answer.

Good job sitting down as soon as the bell rang—way to be responsible.

Nice work completing that assignment on time!

Thanks for working quietly when we had a classroom visitor.

You're doing a great job of staying organized.


Expect great things.



What Does PBIS Look Like in A School?

It looks like many students are being recognized for doing the respectful, responsible, and safe thing. Although comments will vary, depending on the students' ages and abilities, PBIS may sound like a teacher saying these things:

- I like how you are being respectful and waited your turn instead of shouting out the answer.
- Good job sitting down as soon as the bell rang – way to be responsible.
- Nice work completing that assignment on time!
- Thanks for working quietly when we had a classroom visitor.
- You're doing a great job of staying organized.





You'll hear similar comments anywhere on school grounds— on the playground, in the cafeteria, in the halls, or on the bus.

For example:

- Glad to see you're not pushing and shoving in line – way to be safe!
- Thanks for keeping your hands and feet to yourself.
- I'm glad you threw that trash in the wastebasket.
- You helped to clean up that spill! Thank you!
- You made a good decision to talk to an adult about that problem.

Three Tiers of Interventions

PBIS is for all students, at all grade levels. The implementation may vary from PreK to high school, but the premises are the same. This approach is designed to promote positive, proactive, and preventable behaviors through the development of predictable, sustainable, and consistent supports and interventions. Here's how PBIS is structured:

Tier #1 focuses on school-wide programs and practices that apply to everyone in the building, and serves as the primary level of behavior intervention prevention. This would include classroom management strategies that establish basic expectations for students, public posting of expectations, frequent acknowledgments, and teaching desired behaviors. Approximately 85% of students meet the expectations, and are rewarded for their good behavior.

Tier #2 acknowledges that some students need additional support to keep their behavior on track. Teachers and staff meet with these students in small groups to set more specific behavior objectives. Using Restorative Practices techniques, they work together to help the students understand how their behavior affects others, and strive to welcome them back into the classroom and school community. Only 10% of all students fall into this group.

Tier 3 services provide individualized interventions for students with more intensive needs. If a student does not respond to Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions, he or she will be given an individualized behavior or academic plan to help them achieve their goals.

Adults are Accountable, Too

At Pittsburgh Public Schools, we understand that positive behavior must be entrenched in our culture. Teachers, principals, and other PPS staff members follow specific guidelines to ensure that PBIS is being implemented in a positive, strategic way. They attend professional development sessions to strengthen their knowledge of PBIS interventions and supports, and discuss ways to improve PBIS in their schools. The District collects data, and uses it to improve the way PBIS is delivered in every school.

PBIS helps to decrease disruptions, increase instructional time, and improve student social behavior and academic outcomes.

Need more information?
Contact your child's school.

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