



**POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION
AND SUPPORTS (PBIS) IN EARLY
CHILDHOOD SETTINGS**

OVERVIEW

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Developing instruction to support social/emotional development and effective interventions to address challenging behavior is an ongoing process in early childhood programs. Identifying teaching strategies that can be used to decrease the challenging behavior of children while increasing social competence should also promote positive outcomes in children's daily lives. Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) is one approach that has produced successful outcomes for children with disabilities who engage in severe forms of challenging behavior, and is now being implemented successfully with typically developing children.

PBIS is built on a research-based foundation of preventing problem behavior through environmental arrangement, effective teaching and programming, teaching children appropriate social and communication skills, and developing individualized interventions for those children who engage in more serious forms of challenging behavior. PBIS is the integration of 1) valued outcomes, 2) behavioral and biomedical science, 3) validated procedures, and 4) systems change information to enhance children's life experiences and reduce problem behaviors. These research-validated interventions emphasize teaching new skills and designing environments that naturally decrease problem behavior.

Research studies provide evidence that PBIS strategies can be used to support all children. Emerging in the mid-1980's, PBIS developed as a direct response to concerns over the use of punishment procedures to control severe problem behavior of people with developmental disabilities. At the same time, research emerged in the behavioral field that contributed to the understanding of the meaning, or function, of problem behavior. These early efforts in PBIS produced meaningful outcomes for children and adults with disabilities. Over the course of the last 15 years, PBIS has expanded into schools, social service agencies, and more recently early childhood programs. With active initiatives in most states to build capacity, the PBIS model represents a comprehensive, systematic approach that is capable of changing the lives of children and their families.

In early childhood programs, the successful implementation of the PBIS model is dependent on several key features. First, the agency must develop a coordinated approach to implementing the model: administrative and staff support, training time and resources, and monitoring outcomes must all be considered. Second, PBIS strategies, such as social/emotional skill instruction or behavioral expectations, should be designed around developmentally appropriate practices. Finally, a program-wide application of PBIS should include a team-based approach to developing interventions, input of all staff, and participation from the families of the children enrolled in the program. The following article by Fox, Dunlap, Hemmeter, Joseph, and Strain (2003) highlights these features and describes the PBIS model for early childhood settings.

