

Supporting Students With Disabilities With Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports in the Classroom: Lessons Learned From Research and Practice

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Katherine Meyer, PhD,¹ Sandra Sears, MA¹, Robert Putnam, PhD²,
Crystal Phelan, DPT³, Alicia Burnett, MEd³, Susannah Warden, BA³,
and Brandi Simonsen, PhD¹

Abstract

Positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) is a widely adopted framework to support the social, emotional, and behavioral growth of all students. This article addresses two key questions related to supporting students with disabilities through PBIS: (a) Why focus on universal classroom PBIS practices?—without support, students with disabilities experience poor outcomes—and (b) How do you implement PBIS in classrooms that support all students?—differentiate and intensify supports.

Keywords

disorders/disabilities, positive behavioral supports, school/classroom management, school/classroom environments

Positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) is a multitiered behavioral framework that provides a continuum of research- or evidence-based practices designed to benefit all students. More than 29,000 schools (www.pbis.org) implement PBIS to support more than 15 million students, including more than 2 million students with disabilities. Based on a public health prevention model, PBIS organizes support into three tiers of prevention. Tier 1 provides universal support for all students within a school setting, referred to as *universal practices* throughout this article. Tier 2 offers targeted support for students who require additional support to be successful. Tier 3 provides intensive support for students who engage in chronic or high-risk behaviors and require individualized support to be successful. Within each tier, school leadership teams use a data-driven process to develop systems that facilitate the implementation of research- or evidence-based practices to improve outcomes for students (Center on PBIS, 2015). In this article, we focus on the importance of implementing universal practices in classrooms to support all students, including students with disabilities.

When educators implement universal PBIS with fidelity, outcomes improve. Specifically, students improve academic performance (Horner et al., 2009; Lee & Gage, 2020), social-emotional competence (Bradshaw et al., 2012), and attendance (Freeman et al., 2015). Students also

engage in less disruptive and aggressive behaviors (Bradshaw et al., 2012), report fewer unhealthy and unsafe behaviors, such as drug and alcohol abuse (Bastable et al., 2015), and receive less reactive and exclusionary discipline, including office discipline referrals and suspensions (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Lee & Gage, 2020). In addition, educators perceive PBIS schools as healthier and safer environments, with improved ratings of organizational health and school climate (Bradshaw et al., 2008), school safety (Horner et al., 2009), and teacher efficacy (Ross et al., 2012). In the context of universal PBIS practices, researchers have found that effective classroom PBIS practices are critical to achieve improved outcomes (Childs et al., 2016) and sustain PBIS implementation (Mathews et al., 2014).

Emerging evidence suggests that students with disabilities benefit from universal supports (e.g., Bradshaw et al., 2012; Grasley-Boy et al., 2019). In schools that implement

¹University of Connecticut, Storrs, USA

²The May Institute, Randolph, MA, USA

³Lynn Public Schools, MA, USA

Corresponding Author:

Katherine Meyer, University of Connecticut, 249 Glenbrook Road, Unit 3064, Storrs, CT 06269-3046, USA.
Email: Katherine.meyer@uconn.edu

PBIS, students with disabilities engage in more prosocial behavior and are less likely to experience concentration problems and disciplinary incidents, engage in behaviors that interfere with learning, be suspended, or be referred to alternative schools than students with disabilities in comparison schools (Bradshaw et al., 2012; Gage et al., 2018; Grasley-Boy et al., 2019). To maximize benefit, it is important that universal PBIS practices are implemented in classrooms where students spend the most time.

Recent guidance documents, like *Supporting and Responding to Behavior* (Office of Special Education Programs [OSEP], 2015), have described critical universal positive classroom behavior support practices. However, less attention has been given to how to differentiate universal PBIS practices in classroom settings to better support all students, including students with disabilities. In this article, we begin to address this gap in the research-to-practice literature. Specifically, we ask and answer two critical questions:

1. Why focus on universal classroom PBIS practices to support students with disabilities?
2. How do effective educators implement and differentiate universal PBIS practices to support all students in classrooms?

Why Focus on Universal Classroom PBIS Practices to Support Students With Disabilities?

Students with disabilities comprise a significant portion of the school-age population and are increasingly educated in general education classrooms. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2020) reported that 7 million school-age students, or 14% of all public-school students, have a disability, and the majority (over 60%) spend at least 80% of their time in general education classrooms. These data highlight the importance of ensuring that universal PBIS practices implemented in all classrooms are differentiated to support students with disabilities.

Unfortunately, there is evidence that too often universal supports are not accessible to students with disabilities (Shuster et al., 2017), contributing to a discipline gap characterized by disproportionate exclusionary discipline (Vincent et al., 2011). Students with disabilities who exhibit challenging behavior represent less than 5% of the student population, but they typically account for more than 50% of discipline referrals in schools (Scott et al., 2007). Compared with their peers, students with disabilities are (a) twice as likely to be suspended, expelled, referred to law enforcement, or subjected to school-related arrests and (b) more than 5 times as likely to be subjected to restraint or seclusion in schools (U.S. Department of Education, Office for

Civil Rights [OCR], 2018). Students with disabilities also experience harassment and bullying based on sex, race, and disability at higher rates than their peers (U.S. Department of Education, OCR, 2018).

Among students with disabilities, students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) experience the poorest outcomes. When compared with students with other disabilities, students with EBD are (a) less likely to achieve academically, pursue postsecondary education, or be employed and (b) more likely to experience reactive and exclusionary discipline, drop out of school, and have contact with law enforcement or the justice system (Bradley et al., 2008; Sanford et al., 2011). These data illustrate the need to invest in effective classroom practices that improve outcomes for all students, especially for students with disabilities identified with EBD. PBIS provides a framework for supporting the delivery of effective universal supports in classrooms.

How Do Effective Educators Implement and Differentiate Universal PBIS to Support Students?

Within the PBIS framework, effective educators implement and differentiate universal classroom practices to support all students, including students with disabilities. Universal PBIS classroom practices with documented empirical support include an effectively designed physical environment, predictable classroom routines, positive classroom expectations, prompts and active supervision, varied opportunities to respond, and acknowledgment of desired behavior (OSEP, 2015).

Supporting and Responding to Behavior (OSEP, 2015) provides a helpful and practical guide for teachers to identify and adopt research- or evidence-based positive classroom behavior support practices. We use this guide's organizational structure to consider how to differentiate and intensify these strategies to support students with disabilities (see Table 1 for a summary, examples, and resources to support implementation). At the end of each section, examples from three teachers in integrated and substantially separate classrooms at Callahan Elementary School are included. These "Spotlights on Practice" illustrate ways classroom supports can be differentiated to ensure universal PBIS practices are accessible to all students.

Foundational Practices

Establishing the foundations for effective classroom behavior supports early in the school year creates a supportive, predictable environment, and prevents problematic behaviors from arising. Three key foundational elements are (a) developing and teaching predictable classroom routines; (b)

Table 1. Strategies to Implement and Differentiate Critical Universal Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Classroom Practices.

Core practice	Implement	Differentiate	Resources
Example strategies to . . .			
1. Teach predictable routines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post the classroom schedule and review daily. Post directions and provide prompts for specific routines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider students' age and ability when posting routines (e.g., written vs. picture schedule); customize as necessary to meet individual students' needs. Label materials and locations related to routines (e.g., post bathroom sign-out sheet with the routine by the door). Supplement verbal instruction with pictures and/or videos. Allow students to demonstrate understanding by acting out expected behavior or through other forms of communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A template and example for teaching positive expectations within routines: https://www.pbis.org/resource/creating-effective-classroom-environments-plan-template Videos by the Behavior Response Support Team teach COVID-19 safety and can be found in several languages on their YouTube channel: https://louisville.edu/education/kyabri/files/brst_covid https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxkGHLVqVpni8rPwWk9p_g These short (1–2 min) videos illustrate physical arrangements and routines that support structure and consistency in a variety of classrooms: http://louisville.edu/education/abri/primarylevel/structure/group A guide from the Midwest PBIS Network providing rationale, examples, and tips for organizing the physical classroom: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DQ_XBm5xkn8Fu4u1ZVnM6ZipPTtALhxf/view
2. Teach positive expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a matrix of behavior expectations within classroom settings and routines. Use lesson plans for each setting/routine to teach expectations explicitly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate visuals to label and prompt appropriate use of instructional materials (e.g., label drawers or bins with contents, include visual prompts for learning centers). Arrange the physical space with consideration to the physical and health needs of students, such as those in wheelchairs, with mobility challenges, or with visual impairment. Consider spacing to support students who struggle to keep their bodies and materials to themselves. 	
3. Effectively design space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimize distractions by ensuring that visual displays are purposeful (e.g., meaningful, instructionally relevant). Consider arranging desks to facilitate your most common instructional approach (rows for direct instruction, clusters for cooperative learning). Consider the path that you would like students to take as they enter, exit, and move about the classroom and arrange furniture to facilitate this. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapt OTRs for disabled students so that they may participate appropriately. Build on students' communication strengths (e.g., verbal, written, response cards, alternative augmentative communication) to enable them to participate in OTRs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online applications such as Pickers, Flipgrid, Nearpod Collaborate, and Kahoot can support diverse OTRs in both virtual and in-person settings: https://get.pickers.com/ https://info.flipgrid.com/ https://nearpod.com/collaborate https://kahoot.com/
4. Actively engage students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver a variety of opportunities to respond (OTRs); options include individual responding, unison responding, mixed responding (a ratio of 70% unison to 30% individual responding may be more effective than either approach in isolation). Provide high rates of OTRs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supplement verbal prompts with nonverbal prompts such as visuals, gestures, modeling, and physical guidance. Refer to visuals posted in the classroom when reviewing expectations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One strategy for prompting desired behavior: positive greetings at the door, is described with a checklist and can be adapted to remote learning: https://www.pbis.org/resource/positive-greetings-at-the-door
5. Use prompts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefly review expectations before starting the day's activities or transitioning to a new activity to increase the likelihood of appropriate behavior. Review classroom expectations and the routines at the beginning of each day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use this opportunity to check-in and connect with students that may need more frequent adult attention by asking about the game last night, paying a genuine compliment, or giving a thumbs up. 	
6. Actively supervise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circulate around the classroom, check in with individual students and visually scan the room during group, partner, and independent work. When meeting with individual students, face the rest of the class, periodically scan the classroom, and take opportunities to provide positive or corrective feedback to the class. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use this tool to quickly self-assess your active supervision practices: https://pbismissouri.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/ECP5.1-Teacher-Tool-Classroom-Active-Supervision-1.pdf https://www.pbis.org/resource/positive-greetings-at-the-door

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Example strategies to . . .	
Core practice	Differentiate
	Resources
7. Acknowledge desired behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intensify praise for students with disabilities by acknowledging them more frequently. Set up a dependent group contingency in the classroom, such as a marble jar, so that praise provided to individual students contributes to reinforcement for the whole class. Acknowledge progress toward individualized behavior goals. Consider pairing verbal corrections with visual supports to help the student redirect to the appropriate task or routine. To avoid getting pulled into power struggles, keep the correction brief and disengage after redirecting the student. Reteach, remind, employ a function-based response to inappropriate behavior. Think about whether the inappropriate behavior serves to provide something to the student (e.g., gain attention) or relieve the student from something unwanted (e.g., escape from a difficult task). Try to achieve praise to correction ratios of 9:1 for students with disabilities to increase engagement and decrease disruption.
	Implement
7. Acknowledge desired behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide specific praise contingent upon expectation-following behavior. Make praise explicit to enable the learner to know precisely what he/she did well. Deliver immediately after the behavior being praised. Assess student interests to ensure the type and delivery of praise are motivating. Correct behavioral errors in the same manner you use to correct academic errors. Keep behavioral corrections brief and deliver privately in a calm manner, ending by redirecting to the task or activity. Develop a pre-determined sequence of responses to inappropriate behavior (e.g., remind the student of the expectation, speak with the student privately after class, complete a reflection sheet with a student identifying appropriate alternative behaviors). Implement self-management procedures, such as a checklist to track praise and who has been praised, a bracelet with movable beads to count praise or OTRs, a timer to prompt for positive feedback, and other strategies to support attaining this ratio.
8. Correct behavioral errors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Student/Teacher Game prompts and acknowledges desired classroom behavior: https://www.pbis.org/resource/the-student-teacher-game Multiple methods of positive reinforcement while maintaining physical distance are suggested: https://www.pbis.org/resource/socially-connected-while-physically-distant This 10-min video from Northeast PBIS reviews strategies for redirecting behavioral errors and avoiding power struggles: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5QINNFT0E&feature=youtu.be Restorative questions can be used to help students process the effects of their behavior: https://www.pbis.org/resource/restorative-questions Alternative methods to clip charts for providing students with feedback on behavior are described: https://www.pbis.org/resource/ditch-the-clip-why-clip-charts-are-not-a-pbis-practice-and-what-to-do-instead Self-monitor teacher praise with the Be+ App: https://www.pbis.org/announcements/track-positive-reinforcement-with-our-be-app
9. Consider other consequences	
10. $\geq 5:1$ positive to corrective ratio	

COVID = coronavirus disease.

teaching positive classroom expectations; and (c) effectively designing the physical classroom environment. To ensure these foundational elements support students with disabilities, consider students' unique needs and differentiate support.

Developing and teaching predictable routines. Establishing classroom routines and procedures increases structure and predictability, which increases student engagement and decreases disruptive and problematic behavior (Kern & Clemens, 2007). Plan and teach routines early in the school year and review, adjust, and reteach routines throughout the year. All students benefit from explicit teaching, modeling, and practice of classroom routines, and students with disabilities may need even more frequent review and rehearsal. Typical classroom routines include arrival and dismissal, transitions between activities, requesting help, accessing materials, “downtime” in between instruction, making up missed work, and what to do after work is completed. Novel routines may need to be developed, explicitly taught, and regularly practiced for virtual learning (e.g., using the chat feature, working in breakout rooms) and new contexts (e.g., washing hands, wearing masks, cleaning surfaces).

Routines often involve multiple steps, which can make them difficult for students with disabilities to execute. Break routines down into a step-by-step task analysis, explicitly teach each step, and provide visual supports (e.g., writing or pictures) to increase the likelihood that students with disabilities complete the routine as expected. For example, a classroom routine for requesting help in an elementary classroom may involve (a) quietly checking with a peer neighbor and, if more help is still needed; (b) silently raising your hand until an adult acknowledges you; and then (c) waiting in your seat until an adult comes over. Teach the routine explicitly to all students and provide reminders as needed. To support students with disabilities, teach the routine to fluency, review and practice daily, and post a visual reminder of the steps. Creating routines and procedures around the most problematic areas of the room or times of the day promotes predictability and smooth operating procedures in the classroom. Recognizing students for following classroom routines reinforces adherence to the routines and promotes continued performance.

Spotlight on Practice: Predictable Routines—*Teachers at Callahan described using top-down topic webs of the schoolwide expectations to teach students classroom routines. For example, Ms. Phelan uses a visual web to review the routine for getting started with her students at the beginning of each day. Similar webs are developed for transitions, small-group instruction, and other routines. Some students receive individualized checklists to further support the completion of daily routines. Language consistent with the schoolwide expectations is used throughout the teaching of classroom routines. If students have difficulty with certain routines, such*

as transitions, additional opportunities are provided to practice these and receive feedback.

Teaching positive expectations. Link classroom expectations to schoolwide expectations, teach them explicitly, and check for understanding. Explicitly teaching expectations in the context of classroom routines provides students with structure, decreases time spent correcting behavior, and increases academic engagement and achievement (Alter & Haydon, 2017). Teach classroom expectations using clear verbal explanations provide relatable examples and nonexamples and use visual and social narratives to help ensure all students understand. For example, Teddy, a child with autism, may not respond to verbal prompts (e.g., “line up quietly at the door”), but he may respond to a picture of students lining up. To accommodate diverse reading abilities or needs, write instructions in words and pair with images or video models. In addition to posting visual reminders in the classroom, students with disabilities may benefit from individualized visual supports such as laminated reminder cards or social narrative cards, which they can keep with them and reference (Loman et al., 2018). After teaching expectations, provide multiple ways for students to demonstrate their understanding. Some students may have difficulty verbally restating expectations but may be able to express their knowledge by acting out the expectation or using other means of communication.

Spotlight on Practice: Positive Expectations—*When teaching expectations in the classroom, teachers pair verbal instruction with visuals. Students can demonstrate their understanding in multiple ways, including verbally by acting out the expectations, drawing a picture, or selecting and gluing pictures of expected behavior from a variety of examples and nonexamples.*

Designing the physical environment. Promote desired behavior and prevent challenging behavior by effectively designing the classroom environment (Wong & Wong, 2009). When creating the physical layout of the classroom, consider the diverse abilities and needs of students. Specifically, design an environment that is easy for students and staff to navigate and modify for specific mobility or health concerns. For example, during a public health crisis, use the physical arrangement to support required physical spacing and sanitization routines. Arrange learning spaces to facilitate key activities, such as small group and whole group instruction, learning centers, and independent work. Organize instructional materials to facilitate efficient transitions.

Also, consider prompts that support the effective use of the space. For example, label drawers or bins with their contents or include visual instructions for learning centers. Post or project a visual plan for small-group work that identifies group members (by names and/or photos)

and location on a classroom map before transitioning to small-group work. Post visuals to support learning strategies (e.g., steps of the writing process, mathematical formulas) and critical content (e.g., periodic table) to support independence and engagement with academic tasks. Depending on the developmental level and learning needs of students, consider pairing written prompts with pictures. Carefully consider the purpose, accessibility, and utility of visual materials displayed to ensure materials enhance, rather than distract from, the learning environment.

Spotlight on Practice: Effective Environmental Design—*Teachers post classroom expectations, aligned with schoolwide expectations, at the front of the room next to the Smartboard as a reminder to students and staff. Seating is arranged to face the Smartboard, and students who benefit from reminders of expectations are seated closer to the poster. To support accessibility for all students, bins of materials are labeled with photos of the contents to help students navigate centers. In substantially separate classrooms, students are seated at tables with no more than two students at a table to encourage partner work and opportunities to practice social skills while simultaneously minimizing distractions.*

Positive and Proactive Strategies

The most effective way to increase appropriate behaviors and reduce problematic behaviors in the classroom (and the time spent correcting them) is to prevent their occurrence. Key proactive and preventive strategies include actively engaging students with varied opportunities to respond (OTRs), prompting expected behavior, and providing active supervision.

Actively engage students by providing OTRs. Providing high rates of OTRs in the classroom leads to improved academic performance, increased on-task behavior, and reductions in inappropriate and disruptive behaviors (Haydon et al., 2012), especially for students with disabilities (Partin et al., 2010; Sutherland & Wehby, 2001). As a guideline, current research indicates effective teachers provide three to five OTRs per minute for simple responses (e.g., verbal or gestural) and as few as one OTR per minute when responses are more complex (e.g., solving a math problem) or one OTR every 10 to 30 min for tasks that require more time to complete (e.g., writing; MacSuga-Gage & Simonsen, 2015).

Considering the quality and variety of OTRs and how they fit the needs of students with disabilities will help to ensure all students are actively engaged in instruction. Students who are uncomfortable speaking in front of the class may welcome OTRs that are one-on-one with a teacher or trusted peer in face-to-face interactions or using breakout rooms in virtual learning environments, choral or group responses, or nonverbal response options. For example,

students may recite the multiples of 7 together in a choral response, hold up a math calculation on a whiteboard, or give a thumbs up to agree with a statement or question.

Technology may also be utilized to increase OTRs, such as looking up examples of “igneous rocks” online, graphing results to a multiple-choice question using an electronic response system, or embedding polls and options to respond in chat into virtual classes. These may lead to additional OTRs in small groups as students discuss the responses. Other online applications such as Plickers (<https://plickers.com>) or Kahoot (<https://kahoot.com>) provide increased OTRs for whole-group and small-group lessons and allow teachers to assign students code names if students are more comfortable responding anonymously. Teachers can also use assistive technology, such as augmentative and alternative communication applications and devices, to increase all students’ abilities to participate in OTRs.

Spotlight on Practice: Engaging Instruction—*Callahan’s teachers described a variety of methods for providing students opportunities to engage with and respond to instruction, including Kahoot to generate instant responses that can be presented visually, turn and talk, and Plicker polls. One teacher described incorporating movement into her OTRs by assigning each corner of the room to a different answer (a, b, c, or d) and asking students to move to the corner corresponding to their answer. This practice allows all students to respond and engages those who are less apt to raise their hand.*

Prompt expected behavior. Provide prompts and reminders of desired behavior before the behavior is expected to improve student behavior, particularly before transitions (Alberto & Troutman, 2013; Cook et al., 2018). Greet students individually when they enter the classroom or virtual session and briefly review expectations before starting the day’s activities. This simple practice increases the academic engagement and on-task behavior of students with disabilities (Allday & Pakurar, 2007). When students were greeted at the door and reminded of expectations, they engaged in the task at hand more quickly (Allday et al., 2011).

Provide prompts to the whole class before starting an activity or making a transition to decrease disruptive behavior and increase academic engagement, even if only a small number of students “need” the reminder (Cook et al., 2018). Prompts are most effective when they are specific and explicit about the desired behavior. For example, remind students of how to work in pairs and ask for help before beginning partner work. To ensure prompts are accessible to all students, include nonverbal prompts. For example, with prior teaching, a visual organizer may serve as a reminder for structuring notes. Similarly, students may look at a picture sequence posted above the sink that prompts the steps of effective hand washing or refers to a visual schedule of activities. Nonverbal prompts have the added benefit of promoting independence. These practices can easily be

extended to the virtual classroom, where nonverbal prompts can appear on slides, on a virtual background, or other locations within the remote learning platform.

Spotlight on Practice: Effective Prompts—*Callahan's teachers described supplementing verbal prompts for previously taught desired behavior with nonverbal prompts, such as anchor charts reminding students of daily routines, and using sign language to remind individual students of expected behavior. In many classrooms, a simple card system is used by students to request the bathroom or a break. This allows students to request such breaks without interrupting the lesson or drawing attention to themselves by placing a colored card on their desk.*

Actively supervise. Active supervision (moving, scanning, and interacting) promotes on-task behavior and minimizes off-task behavior in a variety of settings (Haydon et al., 2019; Lewis et al., 2000). Throughout the day and, especially during challenging routines (e.g., transitions between activities), move among students, scan the room frequently, and provide frequent specific feedback to promote engagement and support student behavior. During remote instruction, move among virtual breakout rooms, scan students' behavior, and check in and provide feedback verbally or via chat. This offers opportunities to connect with students, provide additional support, and build positive relationships, which can be particularly beneficial for students with EBD and other disabilities. For students who enjoy high rates of adult attention, briefly comment on work or check in (e.g., ask how a student is doing, provide a thumbs up) when circulating around the room or monitoring a virtual classroom to reinforce on-task behavior and prevent disruptive attention-seeking behavior.

Proximity control, often a component of active supervision, is a strategy in which a teacher moves closer to a student to redirect that student to expected behavior. Research has shown the effectiveness of proximity control to reduce problem behavior with a child with autism (Conroy et al., 2005) as well as improve academic engagement in students with disabilities (Werts et al., 2001). Proximity control may not be appropriate for all students or when physical distance needs to be maintained due to student needs or public health concerns. In these instances, rely on verbal or nonverbal redirections and other active supervision strategies.

Spotlight on Practice: Active Supervision—*Ms. Phelan actively supervises her students throughout the day and particularly during centers and partner work. During these times, she monitors the room while checking in briefly with individual students or groups, reminding students how to use materials correctly and where to look for instructions, and acknowledging them for their effort, attention, and progress. Ms. Burnett described using proximity to actively supervise during independent seatwork including kneeling or crouching down to have quiet check-ins with individual students.*

Responding to Student Behavior That Is Appropriate or Inappropriate for the Context

The previous strategies all help prevent problematic behavior and encourage appropriate behavior and academic engagement. In addition to these proactive strategies, responding to student behaviors in ways that increase appropriate behaviors and decrease future inappropriate behaviors supports students' academic and behavioral outcomes. Effective responses include acknowledging appropriate behavior, correcting inappropriate behavior, and ensuring students experience more positive than corrective feedback. Differentiate response strategies, consider function of behavior, and intensify positive feedback to support appropriate behavior of students with EBD and other disabilities.

Acknowledging behavior. Acknowledging desired behavior by providing praise or other forms of reinforcement is one of the most effective ways of increasing a variety of behavioral and academic skills (Partin et al., 2010; Sprick & Garrison, 2008). Acknowledge behaviors that are consistent with expectations (e.g., being safe, respectful, responsible), replace challenging behaviors (e.g., being in seat to decrease out of seat behaviors), and include individualized behavioral goals for students (e.g., asking for a break rather than ripping up assignment).

Specific verbal praise that explicitly names the desired behavior or skill (e.g., "Great problem solving") is effective for most students. In fact, simply increasing the frequency of specific praise to all students improves the engagement of students with or at risk for EBD (Allday et al., 2012). However, some students may respond better when verbal praise is paired with nonverbal cues or tangible items. For example, some students may respond better to a thumbs up, air fist bump, or high five paired with a brief praise statement (e.g., "Nice waiting").

Wearing a mask that covers the mouth makes frequent and specific verbal praise even more critical due to the interference with nonverbal facial cues. Consider pairing specific praise with an emoticon, photo of someone smiling, or saying, "I'm smiling because . . ." Provide a token (e.g., point, ticket, tally mark, stamp, coin) that can be exchanged for an item, activity, or privilege of value in conjunction with specific praise to reinforce students effectively. Tokens earned by individual students may be pooled toward a classwide reward to address concerns about students with disabilities being treated differently or acknowledged more frequently than other students. Link praise with schoolwide expectations and align with schoolwide acknowledgment systems, when possible.

Regardless of the method of delivery (e.g., specific praise, gestures, tokens), acknowledgment of appropriate behavior is most effective when it is sincere, meaningful,

directed toward an individual or group, and occurs soon after the desired behavior. That said, some students may find public praise aversive and respond better to praise that is delivered privately. Consider surveying students to identify their preferences and interests when designing your classroom acknowledgment system. When the acknowledgment methods used in a classroom are successful, the behaviors and skills targeted will increase. If the skills targeted by acknowledgment are not increasing or only seem effective for some students, it may indicate a need to reexamine the method(s) of delivery.

Spotlight on Practice: Acknowledge Expected Behavior—

Callahan's teachers described the use of a group contingency in their classrooms in which SOAR tickets earned by students for demonstrating schoolwide values are recorded with "eagles" on a classwide tracking board. When 100 eagles are recorded on the board, the class earns a reinforcer, often a group activity or privilege. Students contribute ideas for the reinforcer for their class. Ms. Phelan has modified this slightly to meet the developmental level of her integrated preschool class. She focuses on one core value per month and visually depicts the class' progress toward earning a classwide reinforcer by building a monthly-themed animal (e.g., turkey, glow-worm) piece by piece.

Correcting behavioral errors. Behavioral errors occur in every classroom, even with the implementation of proactive strategies. When addressing minor behavioral errors, corrections that are immediate, direct, and brief, and conclude with the student demonstrating the correct response, are particularly effective at decreasing undesired behavior in the future (Baker, 1992; Barbetta et al., 1994). Correct behavioral mistakes as you would academic mistakes. Start by signaling that an error has been made and reviewing the desired behavior. Corrections are most effective when they are brief and delivered privately, calmly, and respectfully. For example, when a student has not started working on a writing task within 1 min, she may be quietly reminded, "Please begin your assignment. Raise your hand if you need help." In the virtual learning environment, behavioral error corrections may be delivered via a private chat message.

A verbal correction alone may not be sufficient for all students. Some students may not respond to a verbal correction unless it is paired with visual supports to redirect the student to the appropriate task or routine. Students with disabilities, particularly those with or at risk for EBD, benefit from corrections that include modeling and practicing a desired replacement behavior. Make sure the desired replacement behavior effectively meets the same function, or purpose, of the misbehavior. For example, if a student blurts out an answer without raising her hand, she may be reminded, "Please raise your hand before calling out your answer," accompanied by the teacher modeling a hand

raise. If the student responds by raising her hand, quickly reinforce the behavior by calling on the student.

To avoid getting pulled into power struggles stemming from correcting misbehavior, keep the correction brief and disengage after redirecting the student. Furthermore, once a desired skill (e.g., raise hand) has been taught and practiced to replace the challenging behavior (e.g., calling out), ignore the problematic behavior (e.g., keep teaching when the student calls out) and quickly prompt (e.g., model hand raise while teaching) and reinforce the desired behavior (e.g., "Thank you for raising your hand"). In addition, for students with identified behavioral needs, link individualized, function-based consequence strategies in behavior intervention plans to your classroom plan.

Spotlight on Practice: Respectfully Correct Behavioral

Errors—*To avoid escalating student behavior or getting pulled into power struggles, Ms. Burnett provides quick and calm corrections and redirections to students in her substantially separate class. After students are calm and demonstrating appropriate behavior, Ms. Burnett invites the student to accompany her on a brief errand to provide a non-threatening opportunity to debrief, discuss how to handle the situation the next time, and practice the desired behavior. This allows her to address the behavioral error away from others and review the expectations with the student before re-entry to the classroom.*

Provide more positive than corrective feedback. Reinforcement should occur frequently to ensure students receive more positive than corrective feedback. For most students, a ratio of at least five praise statements for every correction is recommended to maintain a positive and engaging environment (Cook et al., 2017). However, students with disabilities, especially those with or at risk for EBD, appear to be particularly sensitive to praise and corrective feedback and tend to receive less teacher praise and more reprimands than other students (Caldarella et al., 2019; Sutherland & Wehby, 2001). For example, when students at risk for EBD received higher rates of praise, they demonstrated higher rates of engagement (Downs et al., 2019). In comparison, higher rates of reprimands were associated with more frequent disruptive behavior by all students, especially students with EBD (Downs et al., 2019). As a rule of thumb, a ratio of nine praise statements for every correction is recommended for students with disabilities, particularly those at risk for EBD (Caldarella et al., 2019).

Spotlight on Practice: Positive to Corrective Ratio—Ms.

Warden employs a timer to remind her to acknowledge students' appropriate behaviors throughout the day to ensure a high ratio of positive feedback. Ms. Phelan uses sign language (e.g., Hurray!) to provide nonverbal praise at times when verbal praise may be disruptive.

Putting It All Together: Examples and Tools to Guide Implementation

PBIS provides a useful framework for guiding the differentiation of universal classroom practices to support students with disabilities in the classroom. Implementing universal classroom PBIS practices is directly linked to students' academic and behavioral success and appears to be particularly crucial for facilitating positive results for students with disabilities. We encourage educators to implement and differentiate universal classroom PBIS practices (see Table 1 for the summary) to support students with EBD and other disabilities.

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ORCID iD

Katherine Meyer  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1075-619X>

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