RIGHTS OF MASSACHUSETTS YOUTH REGARDING POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS (PBIS) AND SOCIO-EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)

Prepared by the Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee
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What are tools schools can use to develop self-regulation?

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) are two approaches to improving student behavior and academic achievement in schools. Schools use these tools to help students self-regulate their emotions and behaviors.

PBIS is sometimes known simply as Positive Behavioral Supports (PBS), or even SWPBS (School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports).[1] PBIS is a comprehensive, long-term approach that aims to promote positive student behavior and students' quality of life. The aim of PBIS is to address issues in the student's environment and overall situation that might lead to problem behavior, rather than reactively disciplining problem behavior as it occurs.[2] Schools using PBIS set expectations for behavior and employ positive strategies to teach and reinforce positive behaviors.[3]

Educators accomplish this objective by creating a support system that implements PBIS at school-wide, classroom and individual levels.[4] This support system should include all individuals who have an interest in a student's success, including family members, friends, employers, community members, teachers, school administrators, and various professionals.[5] Based on their personal knowledge of the student, members of the support system should work together to create the interventions and supports that will benefit the student.

Social and emotional learning, or SEL, is a different approach to healthy personal and academic development. Some educators view PBIS and SEL as incompatible, while others believe they can be implemented together.[6] SEL differs from PBIS in that it focuses on full development of the student over behavioral management alone. SEL teaches skills around emotional management, compassion and caring for others, building healthy interpersonal relationships. Students learn how to understand and handle their emotions in challenging situations and make

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[1] OSCP Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, *What is School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports?,* http://www.pbismaryland.org/WhatIsSWPBS.pdf.

[2] *See* E.G. Carr, Rehabilitation Research & Training Center on Positive Behavior and Support, Positive Behavior Support: Evolution of an Applied Science (2004).

[3] http://www.casel.org/basics/other.php#pbs

[4] *See* E.G. Carr, Rehabilitation Research & Training Center on Positive Behavior and Support, Positive Behavior Support: Evolution of an Applied Science (2004).

[5] *Id.*

[6] David Osher et al., *A Comprehensive Approach to Promoting Social, Emotional and Academic Growth in Contemporary Schools*, *in Best Practices in School Psychology V* 9 (2007).

decisions constructively. SEL programming can take place in the classroom, in extracurricular activities, and even at home.

Resources:

OSEP, Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, Effective Schoolwide Interventions website, http://www.pbis.org/

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning website, http://www.casel.org/

What is the current vision of how to promote social/emotional academic growth in school?

A 2007 paper, "A Comprehensive Approach to Promoting Social, Emotional and Academic Growth in Contemporary Schools" recognizes the physical, socio-emotional and cultural factors that affect students and teachers' abilities to function at their best in the classroom.[7] The authors suggest four conditions that, when implemented together, create healthy and successful schools that promote social, emotional and academic growth.[8] The four conditions are:

1. Safety. This includes physical and emotional safety, both of which are vital to a student's active engagement in learning in the school environment. Students must feel that risks, both real and perceived, are not too great to attend school regularly and engage intellectually.[9]
2. Support. This means that students feel accepted by peers and adults, and feel that they belong in their school environment. This can also describe a sense of mutual support between students and teachers that enables both to thrive in their respective roles.[10] Educators can foster this sense of belonging in a number of ways, including instrumental, informational, appraisal and emotional support.[11]
3. Social and emotional capacities, or SEL skills, of students. The ways that students respond to challenging situations affects their capacity to learn. If students are able to recognize how such situations affect them emotionally, persevere through challenges, work in groups, and avoid risky behaviors, they are likely to be more able to learn effectively.[12]

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[7] David Osher et al., *A Comprehensive Approach to Promoting Social, Emotional and Academic Growth in Contemporary Schools*, *in Best Practices in School Psychology V* 2 (2007).

[8] David Osher et al., *A Comprehensive Approach to Promoting Social, Emotional and Academic Growth in Contemporary Schools*, *in Best Practices in School Psychology V* 1-2 (2007).

[9] David Osher et al., *A Comprehensive Approach to Promoting Social, Emotional and Academic Growth in Contemporary Schools*, *in Best Practices in School Psychology V* 2-3 (2007).

[10] David Osher et al., *A Comprehensive Approach to Promoting Social, Emotional and Academic Growth in Contemporary Schools*, *in Best Practices in School Psychology V* 3 (2007).

[11] David Osher et al., *A Comprehensive Approach to Promoting Social, Emotional and Academic Growth in Contemporary Schools*, *in Best Practices in School Psychology V* 3 (2007).

[12] David Osher et al., *A Comprehensive Approach to Promoting Social, Emotional and Academic Growth in Contemporary Schools*, *in Best Practices in School Psychology V* 3 (2007).

4. Challenge. This means that the school environment fosters high expectations for students that are shared and understood by students, peers, teachers and families.[13]

The paper also argues that a three-tiered intervention approach is necessary to address the strengths and needs of individual students while focusing on the four conditions for learning.[14] The three types of interventions can be classified as 1) universal; 2) early and 2) intensive.

Furthermore, the paper promotes the idea that PBS and SEL can successfully integrate to form a stronger model for promoting social, emotional and academic growth in schools.[15]

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[13] David Osher et al., *A Comprehensive Approach to Promoting Social, Emotional and Academic Growth in Contemporary Schools*, *in Best Practices in School Psychology V* 3 (2007).
[14] David Osher et al., *A Comprehensive Approach to Promoting Social, Emotional and Academic Growth in Contemporary Schools*, *in Best Practices in School Psychology V* 5 (2007).
[15] David Osher et al., *A Comprehensive Approach to Promoting Social, Emotional and Academic Growth in Contemporary Schools*, *in Best Practices in School Psychology V* 9 (2007).