

Positive, Proactive Approaches to Supporting Children With Disabilities

Implementing Evidence-Based Approaches to Respond to Student Needs: Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

Overview

Public early childhood programs, elementary, and secondary schools are responsible for meeting the needs of children with disabilities, which includes addressing their social, emotional, and behavioral needs. Far too often, positive and proactive approaches that focus on preventing interfering behavior are not part of a child's individualized education program (IEP). As a result, children with disabilities—particularly children with disabilities of color—are frequently subjected to exclusionary discipline, which removes them from their learning environment without focusing on how to best meet their unique behavioral needs. Schools and early childhood programs must understand how to protect the rights and needs of children with disabilities to ensure their disability-based behaviors are understood and that their IEPs are appropriately developed and effectively implemented to enable social, emotional, and academic success.

In July 2022, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), published the guide [*Positive, Proactive Approaches to Addressing the Needs of Children with Disabilities: A Guide for Stakeholders*](#), which provides actions state educational agencies (SEAs), local educational agencies (LEAs), schools, early childhood programs, and educators can take to implement positive, proactive, and preventative practices that seek to better address a child's behavioral needs while decreasing the use of exclusionary discipline. These practices reinforce core pillars of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), including how addressing the behavioral needs of children with disabilities is part of IDEA's requirement to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) provided in the least restrictive environment (LRE), and the IEP as the vehicle for fulfilling this obligation. By implementing practices associated with these positive and proactive approaches, students with disabilities can be assured of access to an educational environment that is nondiscriminatory, supportive, positive, and nurturing for both their academic and behavioral development.

OSEP Technical Assistance (TA) Center Resources

The resources in the following tables can support schools and early childhood programs in implementing positive, proactive approaches to support and respond to children's behavioral needs more effectively. Following the resources is information about OSEP TA Centers that can provide additional information to support schools in implementing the practices described below.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (UDL)

Resource	Description	Audience	Reference Citation
Technology and UDL for Students With Disabilities	<p>On the Parent Center eLearning Hub, there are three capacity-building self-paced modules created by CITES for the Center for Parent Information and Resources (CPIR) and for Parent Center staff. Reserved for Parent Center staff only, not available to the public, the modules are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An overview of technology for students with disabilities; • Considering technology in the UDL framework; and • The accessible educational materials decision-making process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators • Researchers 	<p>https://parentcenterlearninghub.litmos.com/account/login/</p>
Universal Design for Learning: Creating a Learning Environment that Challenges and Engages All Students	<p>This self-paced module examines the three principles of UDL and discusses how to apply these principles to the four curricular components (i.e., goals, instructional materials, instructional methods, and assessments).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators • Local and district agencies • State and regional agencies 	<p>IRIS Center. (2022). <i>Universal Design for Learning: Creating a learning environment that challenges and engages all students</i>. https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/udl</p>

UNIVERSAL IMPLEMENTATION

Resource	Description	Audience	Reference Citation
Effective Instruction as a Protective Factor	<p>Effective instruction can be a protective factor for student wellness, mitigating competing risk factors. This brief highlights key considerations and resources for educators to (a) create an effective context for learning, (b) emphasize appropriate content, and (c) use data-driven instructional practices to increase the likelihood that all students experience academic, social, emotional, and behavioral benefit.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators • School administrators 	<p>Simonsen, B., Goodman, S., Robbie, K., Power, M., Rodriguez, C., & Burns, D. (2021). <i>Effective instruction as a protective factor</i>. Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. https://www.pbis.org/resource/effective-instruction-as-a-protective-factor</p>
Examples of Engaging Instruction to Increase Equity in Education	<p>This technical brief is based on the 5-point multicomponent approach to reduce disproportionality. This brief elaborates on point one, regarding academic instruction, by defining key principles of evidence-based instructional practices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators • School administrators 	<p>Chaparro, E. A., Nese, R. N. T., & McIntosh, K. (2015). <i>Examples of engaging instruction to increase equity in education</i>. OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. https://www.pbis.org/resource/examples-of-engaging-instruction-to-increase-equity-in-education</p>

UNIVERSAL IMPLEMENTATION

Resource	Description	Audience	Reference Citation
Leadership Team Implementation Manual	This manual provides leadership teams with the resources, forms, and ideas to guide program-wide implementation of the Pyramid Model within classroom programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local and district agencies School administrators 	<p>Fox, L., Binder, D. P., Hemmeter, M. L., Barton, E. E., & Vatland, C. (2018). <i>Leadership team implementation manual</i>. Vanderbilt University & University of South Florida.</p> <p>https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Leadership_Team_ImplementationGuide.pdf</p>
Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) in the Classroom	This guide provides guidance to educators in implementing positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) in the classroom across the continuum of student need. Educators regularly provide a range of supports for students in the classroom—from universal supports for all students to intensive and individualized supports for a few students. This guide will help educators familiar with PBIS organize classroom supports for preventing, teaching, and responding to students' social, emotional, and behavioral needs across the continuum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educators School administrators 	<p>Simonsen, B., Robbie, K., Meyer, K., Freeman, J., Everett, S., & Feinberg A. (2021). <i>Multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) in the classroom</i>. Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports.</p> <p>https://www.pbis.org/resource/multi-tiered-system-of-supports-mtss-in-the-classroom</p>
Practical Strategies for Implementing the Pyramid Model	This resource collection provides early childhood educators and administrators with practical strategies and materials to guide young children's social, emotional, and behavioral skill development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educators School administrators 	<p>National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations. (n.d.). <i>Practical strategies for implementing the Pyramid Model</i>. https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/Implementation/Program/strategies.html</p>
Supporting Students With Disabilities at School and Home: A Guide for Teachers to Support Families and Students	This guide highlights five key practices for teachers and families to support all students, including students with disabilities, at school and home. For each practice, the guide provides (a) tips for teachers to support students with disabilities during instruction; (b) tips for families that educators can share to support or enhance learning at home, especially during periods of remote instruction; and (c) free-access resources that include strategies shown to be effective by research (e.g., informational guides, downloadable materials, research-based programs).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educators Health and related services Providers Local and district agencies School administrators State and regional agencies 	<p>Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, National Center on Intensive Intervention, & National Integrated Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Research Network. (2020). <i>Supporting students with disabilities at school and home: A guide for teachers to support families and students</i>. University of Oregon.</p> <p>https://www.pbis.org/resource/supporting-students-with-disabilities-at-school-and-home-a-guide-for-teachers-to-support-families-and-students</p>

TARGETED IMPLEMENTATION

Resource	Description	Audience	Reference Citation
Behavioral Intervention Tools Chart	The National Center on Intensive Intervention (NCII) publishes this chart to assist educators and families in becoming informed consumers who can select behavioral interventions that best meet their individual needs. The Center's Technical Review Committee (TRC) on Behavioral Intervention independently established a set of criteria for evaluating the scientific rigor of studies demonstrating the efficacy of behavioral intervention programs. The TRC rated each submitted study against these criteria but did not compare it to other studies on the chart. The presence of a particular program on the chart does not constitute endorsement and should not be viewed as a recommendation from either the TRC on Behavior Intervention or NCII.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators • Local and district agencies • State and regional agencies 	National Center on Intensive Intervention. (2021). <i>Behavioral intervention tools chart</i> . https://charts.intensiveintervention.org/bintervention
PBIS Tier 2 Video Library	Recordings here include keynotes and presentations about PBIS concepts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators • Health and related services providers • Local and district agencies • School administrators 	Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. (n.d.). Video. https://www.pbis.org/video-examples/video#tier-2
Tier 2 Overview	Overview of Tier 2 practices and systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators • School administrators 	Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. (n.d.). <i>What is tier 2 support?</i> https://www.pbis.org/pbis/tier-2
Tier II Data, Systems & Practices	This practice brief was developed as a result of the roundtable dialogue that occurred at the 2019 PBIS Leadership Forum in Chicago, IL, and provides an overview of the process of designing and implementing Tier 2 systems and practices within a PBIS framework. Approaching Tier 2 design from the district level is encouraged; however, considerations and suggestions for schools implementing Tier 2 independent of a district-level initiative are included.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators • School administrators 	Hatton, H., & Guffey, T. (2020). <i>Tier II data, systems & practices</i> . Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. https://www.pbis.org/resource/tier-ii-data-systems-practices

INTENSIVE IMPLEMENTATION

Resource	Description	Audience	Reference Citation
Behavior Strategies to Support Intensifying Intervention	This series of behavioral strategies are intended to support teachers working with students with primary academic deficits and challenging behaviors. Each strategy incorporates key terminology, an overview of the purpose, and all associated materials. The strategies also integrate approaches for intensification for students with more challenging behaviors. Although teachers supporting students with the most challenging behaviors may be able to implement some of these strategies, these students will likely need support through a more comprehensive behavioral plan. The materials are organized around three overarching areas: antecedent modification, self-management, and reinforcement strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators 	National Center on Intensive Intervention. (n.d.). <i>Behavior strategies to support intensifying intervention</i> . https://intensiveintervention.org/implementation-intervention/behavior-strategies
Building Social and Emotional Competencies Among Students with Intensive Needs	Getting along with others, paying attention, following directions, making responsible decisions, and managing emotions are challenges for many students who require intensive intervention and may be linked to difficulties with executive functioning, communication, behavior, and academic learning. In this webinar, presenters Mara Schanfield and Zach Weingarten shared an overview of how social emotional learning relates to intensive intervention and offer sample strategies and resources for building social and emotional competencies for students in need of intensive learning, social, emotional, or behavioral supports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators • School administrators 	Schanfield, M., & Weingarten, Z. (2022). <i>Building social and emotional competencies among students with intensive needs</i> [Webinar]. National Center on Intensive Intervention. https://intensiveintervention.org/resource/social-and-emotional-competencies-intensive-intervention
PBIS Tier 3 Overview	Tier 3 practices and supports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators • Health and related services providers • Local and district agencies • School administrators 	Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. (n.d.). <i>What is tier 3 support?</i> https://www.pbis.org/pbis/tier-3
Tier 3 School-Level Systems Guide	The purpose of this practice guide is to assist Tier 3 systems teams or combined advanced tiers (Tier 2 and 3) systems teams in developing the foundational Tier 3 school-level systems features.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators • School administrators 	Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. (2022). <i>Tier 3 school-level systems guide</i> . University of Oregon. https://www.pbis.org/resource/tier-3-school-level-systems-guide

INTENSIVE IMPLEMENTATION

Resource	Description	Audience	Reference Citation
Tier 3 Student-Level Systems Guide	<p>Tier 3 student level systems support all students who are not responding to Tier 1 and Tier 2 supports and would benefit from intensive strategies matched to individual student needs. Student challenges may include behaviors that range from disruptive behaviors to aggression (externalizing) and/or suicidal ideation, depression, or anxiety (internalizing). These behaviors might be impacted by trauma or crisis situations (temporary or permanent) or driven by mental health needs. Tier 3 behavioral supports may be helpful for any student, no matter the (dis)ability, who needs support to meet intensive social, emotional, and behavioral needs. This guide can assist all educators with understanding the systems that must be established to support students with intensive needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Educators• Health and related services• Providers• Local and district agencies• School administrators	<p>Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. (2022). <i>Tier 3 student-level systems guide</i>. University of Oregon. https://www.pbis.org/resource/tier-3-student-level-systems-guide</p>

OSEP TA Centers

- **Center for Parent Information and Resources (CPIR)** | CPIR provides universal technical assistance to the network of Parent Centers funded by OSEP. Among its priorities are: (a) providing Parent Centers with products and materials to support their work with families; (b) increasing Parent Centers' knowledge and capacity in specific domains; and (c) increasing the coordination of parent training efforts throughout the network. Among the products and services CPIR provides to the Parent Center network are: (a) its information-rich website in English and Spanish (called the Parent Center Hub); (b) a twice-monthly newsletter called the *Buzz from the Hub*; (c) the eLearning Hub, which features online, self-paced learning modules for all Parent Center staff as part of capacity building; (d) frequent webinars on high-priority topics; (e) national Parent Center capacity-building conferences; (f) private communication spaces where Parent Centers can share resources and collaborate with their colleagues (CentersConnect); and (g) coordination of annual data collection and reporting of Parent Center activities, training contacts, and services provided to families, professionals, and youth with disabilities.
<https://www.parentcenterhub.org>
- **Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)** | The Center on PBIS was initially funded in 1998 and a new 5-year funding cycle launched in October 2018. The purpose of the new center is to improve the capacity of state educational agencies, LEAs, and schools to establish, scale up, and sustain the PBIS framework to (a) scale up Tier 2 and 3 systems to improve outcomes for students with or at-risk for disabilities, (b) enhance school climate and school safety, and (c) improve conditions for learning to promote the well-being of all students. The Center on PBIS is grounded in the values of comprehensive prevention, based on human-centered science, and implemented through collaborative partnerships, centered in equity, to improve social, emotional, behavioral, and academic outcomes.
<https://www.pbis.org>
- **IDEA Data Center (IDC)** | IDC provides TA to build the capacity of states and LEAs to collect, report, analyze, and use high-quality IDEA Part B data. IDC offers a full range of services and resources to support states' efforts to submit 616 (State Performance Plans and Annual Performance Reports or SPP/APR) data and 618 (or ED*Facts*) data that meet the U.S. Department of Education's data quality standards for accuracy, timeliness, and completeness. IDC also partners with States and LEAs to help them use these data to identify programmatic strengths as well as areas for improvement, including addressing root causes of poor performance and evaluating progress toward goals and desired outcomes.
<https://ideadata.org>
- **IRIS Center** | The IRIS Center develops and disseminates free, engaging online resources about evidence-based instructional and behavioral practices to support the education of all students, particularly struggling learners and those with disabilities. These resources, designed to bridge the research-to-practice gap, are intended for use in college teacher preparation programs, in professional development (PD) activities for practicing professionals, and by independent learners. The array of IRIS resources includes modules, case studies, fundamental skill sheets, information briefs, course/PD activities, a high-leverage practices alignment tool, and an online glossary of disability-related terms.
<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu>
- **National Center on Intensive Intervention (NCII)** | NCII is housed at the American Institutes for Research and works in conjunction with many of our nation's most distinguished data-based individualization (DBI) experts. The mission of the NCII is to build knowledge and capacity of state and local leaders, faculty and professional

development providers, educators, and other stakeholders to support implementation of intensive intervention for students with severe and persistent learning and/or social, emotional, or behavioral needs using DBI.

<https://intensiveintervention.org>

- **National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations** | The mission of NCPMI is to improve and support the capacity of state systems and local programs to implement an early childhood multi-tiered system of support to improve the social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes of young children with, and at risk for, developmental disabilities or delays. The goals of the center are to assist states and programs in their implementation of sustainable systems for the implementation of the Pyramid Model for Promoting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children (Pyramid Model) within early intervention and early education programs, with a focus on promoting the social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes of young children birth to five, reducing the use of inappropriate discipline practices, promoting family engagement, using data for decision-making, integrating early childhood and infant mental health consultation and fostering inclusion.

<https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/index.html>

More information on positive, proactive approaches to supporting the behavioral needs of children with disabilities is available from the [U.S. Department of Education](#) and a companion [resource page](#), which includes an eight-part TA Resource Guide series and an archived video summarizing the Department's guidance and its main principles.

This document contains resources collected from OSEP-funded technical assistance centers that are provided for the user's convenience to assist in implementation efforts. The inclusion of these materials is not intended to reflect their importance, nor is it intended to endorse any views expressed, or products or services offered. These materials may contain the views and recommendations of various subject-matter experts. The opinions expressed in any of these materials do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education (Department). The Department does not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of any outside information included in these materials.

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