

Positive, Proactive Approaches to Supporting Children With Disabilities

Professional Development to Support Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Needs

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.

SCHOOL- AND CLASSROOM-BASED PRACTICES

Resource	Description	Audience	Reference Citation
Behavior Basics: Understanding Principles of Behavior	The purpose of this module is to gain foundational knowledge of what behavior is, how behavior is defined, and what environmental factors influence behavior. This foundational knowledge is core to understanding behavior, supporting students with challenging behavior, and later, diagnosing the function of behavior and developing effective behavioral interventions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local and district agencies School administrators 	National Center on Intensive Intervention. (n.d.). <i>Behavior basics: Understanding principles of behavior</i> . https://intensiveintervention.org/resource/behavior-basics
Building Trauma-Informed Schools	A Center for Parent Information and Resources (CPIR) resource collection in five parts, this one addresses the question, "What does it mean to be a trauma-informed school?" This stand-alone webpage shares tools and training resources for schools to use in professional development and ends with a sampling of self-assessment instruments for organizations, especially schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local and district agencies School administrators 	Center for Parent Information and Resources. (2018). <i>Building trauma-informed schools</i> . https://www.parentcenterhub.org/trauma-schools
DITCH THE CLIP! Why Clip Charts Are Not a PBIS Practice and What to Do Instead	Clip charts have been a common classroom strategy for many years. Once considered an effective tool for displaying behavioral progress and adherence to classroom rules, they may not be as helpful as once thought. This practice brief describes how such strategies are inconsistent with a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) approach and, more importantly, can be harmful. It also provides alternative strategies that are evidence-based and more likely to improve student behavior while promoting a safe, positive classroom.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educators School administrators 	McIntosh, K., Sugai, G., & Simonsen, B. (2020). <i>Ditch the clip! Why clip charts are not a PBIS practice and what to do instead</i> . Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. https://www.pbis.org/resource/ditch-the-clip-why-clip-charts-are-not-a-pbis-practice-and-what-to-do-instead
Family Engagement: Collaborating With Families of Students With Disabilities	This self-paced module addresses the importance of engaging the families of students with disabilities in their child's education. It highlights some of the key factors that affect these families and outlines some practical ways to build relationships and create opportunities for involvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educators Local and district agencies State and regional agencies 	IRIS Center. (2022). <i>Family engagement: Collaborating with families of students with disabilities</i> . https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/fam

SCHOOL- AND CLASSROOM-BASED PRACTICES

Resource	Description	Audience	Reference Citation
Focusing on the Function of Behavior Within the Context of DBI	The purpose of this training is to gain foundational knowledge of how all behavior serves a purpose or function. This foundational knowledge is core to understanding behavior, supporting students with challenging behavior, and diagnosing the function of behavior and developing effective behavioral interventions. This module introduces the function of behavior and provides suggestions for how you can use this understanding within the context of a data-based individualization (DBI) process. While this module briefly mentions the role of a Functional Behavioral Assessment, this is not the focus of this module.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local and district agencies • School administrators 	National Center on Intensive Intervention. (n.d.). <i>Focusing on the function of behavior within the context of DBI</i> . https://intensiveintervention.org/resource/focusing-function-behavior-dbi
Habits of Effective Classroom Practice	This practice brief describes how to (a) develop habits of effective classroom practice and (b) expand effective habits in our schools, districts, and states.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators • Health and related services providers • Local and district agencies • School administrators 	Simonsen, B., Yanek, K., Sugai, G., & Borgmeier, C. (2020). <i>Habits of effective classroom practice</i> . Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. https://www.pbis.org/resource/habits-of-effective-classroom-practice
Using the Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity Within the Data-Based Individualization Process: A Behavior Example	This training module introduces the Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity and describes how it supports the DBI process by helping provide explicit guidance on how to select and evaluate validated behavior intervention programs to best meet students' needs and intensify or adapt those interventions when students or groups of students do not adequately respond.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local and district agencies • School administrators 	National Center on Intensive Intervention. (n.d.). <i>Using the taxonomy of intervention intensity within the data-based individualization process: A behavior example</i> . https://intensiveintervention.org/resource/using-taxonomy-behavior

CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICES

Resource	Description	Audience	Reference Citation
Classroom Diversity: An Introduction to Student Differences	This self-paced module offers a broad overview of how diversity (i.e., culture, language, exceptionality, and socioeconomic status) affects learning and how teachers can better meet the needs of all their students in their classes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators • Local and district agencies • State and regional agencies 	IRIS Center. (2022). <i>Classroom diversity: An introduction to student differences</i> . https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/div
Cultural and Linguistic Differences: What Teachers Should Know	This self-paced module examines the ways in which culture influences the daily interactions that occur across all classrooms and provides practice for enhancing culturally responsive teaching.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators • Local and district agencies • State and regional agencies 	IRIS Center. (2022). <i>Cultural and linguistic differences: What should teachers know</i> . https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/clde
Discussing Race, Racism, and Important Current Events With Students: A Guide With Lesson Plans and Resources	This guide aims to increase the frequency and quality of conversations about race, racism, and current events regarding race in K-12 classrooms to support students and provide voice and self-reflection. It includes recommendations and tips for creating statements of support, preparing for and facilitating constructive classroom discussions, addressing harmful statements, and designing lesson plans and units for ongoing learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators • Health and related services providers • Local and district agencies • School administrators • State and regional agencies 	Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. (2021). <i>Discussing race, racism, and important current events with students: A guide with lesson plans and resources</i> . https://www.pbis.org/resource/discussing-race-racism-and-important-current-events-with-students-a-guide-with-lesson-plans-and-resources
Dual Language Learners With Disabilities: Supporting Young Children in the Classroom	This self-paced module offers an overview of young children who are dual-language learners. Further, it highlights the importance of maintaining children and families' home language at the same time they are learning a new or second language, discusses considerations for screening and assessing these children, and identifies strategies for supporting them in inclusive preschool classrooms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators • Local and district agencies • State and regional agencies 	IRIS Center. (2022). <i>Dual language learners with disabilities: Supporting young children in the classroom</i> . https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/dll

CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICES

Resource	Description	Audience	Reference Citation
PBIS Cultural Responsiveness Field Guide: Resources for Trainers and Coaches	This field guide outlines an integrated framework to embed equity efforts into school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports (SWPBIS) by aligning culturally responsive practices to the core components of SWPBIS. The goal of using this guide is to make school systems more responsive to the cultures and communities that they serve. This guide is part of a five-point intervention approach for enhancing equity in student outcomes within a SWPBIS approach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators • Health and related services providers • Local and district agencies • School administrators • State and regional agencies 	Leverson, M., Smith, K., McIntosh, K., Rose, J., & Pinkelman, S. (2021). <i>PBIS cultural responsiveness field guide: Resources for trainers and coaches</i> . Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. https://www.pbis.org/resource/pbis-cultural-responsiveness-field-guide-resources-for-trainers-and-coaches
Teaching English Language Learners: Effective Instructional Practices	This self-paced module helps teachers understand second language acquisition, the importance of academic English, and instructional practices that will enhance learning for English Learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators • Local and district agencies • State and regional agencies 	IRIS Center. (2022). <i>Teaching English language learners: Effective instructional practices</i> . https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/ell

COACHING			
Resource	Description	Audience	Reference Citation
Classroom Practitioner Coaching Guide	This manual provides tips and guidance for coaches as they implement practitioner coaching with classroom teachers related to the implementation of social, emotional, and behavioral teaching practices with young children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators • Local and district agencies • School administrators 	Vorhaus, E., Binder, D. P., Ferro, J., MacNish, A., von der Embse, M., Fox, L., & Hemmeter, M. L. (2021). <i>Classroom practitioner coaching guide</i> . National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations. https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Class-Practitioner-Coach-Guide.pdf
Equity Coaching Guide	<p>The Pyramid Model Equity Coaching Guide provides the classroom coach with a reflection tool to examine the implementation of Pyramid Model practices through the lens of culturally responsive practices and identification of implicit bias. The Pyramid Model Equity Coaching Guide is used within the collaborative coaching partnership and ongoing coaching activities to identify when there are equity concerns related to practice implementation.</p> <p>The tool provides the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective questions that the coach uses to identify areas of concern; • Guidance for identifying the concern and supportive data; • Links for resources that might be used to address areas of concern; and • Conversation starters and strategies for supporting the coachee in addressing concerns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators • School administrators 	Ferro, J., Fox, L., Binder, D. P., & von der Embse, M. (2022). <i>Equity coaching guide</i> . National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations. https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/Implementation/Equity/Guide/index.html
Program Leadership Team Guide: Implementing Practice-Based Coaching Within the Pyramid Model	The purpose of this guide is to provide leadership teams with guidance for implementing coaching within their programs. Leadership teams must develop a plan for three considerations in the implementation of coaching: (a) getting ready for coaching; (b) enacting coaching; and (c) evaluating coaching.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators • Local and district agencies • School administrators 	Von der Embse, M., Nemeč, A., Vorhaus, E., Fox, L., Ferro, J., Hemmeter, M. L., & Binder, D. (2019). <i>Program Leadership Team guide: Implementing practice-based coaching within the Pyramid Model</i> . National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations. https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/LeadershipTeam_PBC_Guide.pdf
Unpacking Coaching Webinar Series	This series covers topics related to implementing coaching to improve early childhood practitioners' use of evidence-based practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators • Local and district agencies • School administrators 	National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations. (n.d.). <i>Unpacking coaching</i> [Webinar series]. https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/Implementation/coach.html

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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