



Educating Parents on Positive Behavior Support Systems for Students with Disabilities: A Review of Literature

By Janine Castro

This issue of **NASET's Classroom Management Series** was written by Janine Castro of Florida International University. As evidenced at schools and, children with disabilities can pose many demanding challenges for their parents, teachers, and service providers to resolve. There is a need for constant attention to be provided and the search of strategies that can be used in school and at home is ongoing in order to help students with disabilities to fulfill their needs and have a high quality life, positive behavioral supports (PBS) must be in place. PBS can provide parents, educators and everyone who is involved in the children's education, evidence-based strategies that help to understand why problem behavior occurs and to identify multiple strategies to effectively reduce problem behavior. The focus of this article is to educate parents on positive behavior support system, special education teachers must consider several factors, one of the most important ones is the need of educating parents to be able to help their kids. There are plenty of literature and data on approaches and new strategies being used all over the nation, (McKevitt & Braaksma, 2008), and most include the application of PBS.

Introduction

As evidenced at schools and, children with disabilities can pose many demanding challenges for their parents, teachers, and service providers to resolve. There is a need for constant attention to be provided and the search of strategies that can be used in school and at home is ongoing in order to help students with disabilities to fulfill their needs and have a high quality life, positive behavioral supports (PBS) must be in place. PBS can provide parents, educators and everyone who is involved in the children's education, evidence-based strategies that help to understand why problem behavior occurs and to identify multiple strategies to effectively reduce problem behavior.

Carr (2007), mentioned the expansion of PBS is facilitating the link of this field to other disciplines.

Positive behavior support (PBS) represents an empirically driven concern with quality of life (QOL), support through systems change, and linkage to multiple behavioral, social, and biomedical sciences. The major impediments to QOL are problem behavior, skill deficits, and dysfunctional systems. A model for addressing dysfunctional systems is presented, and its relationship to issues of behavior maintenance and sustainability of intervention efforts is described. The expansion of PBS to new populations and venues will likely be facilitated by linking this field to other disciplines, including organizational management, community/ecological psychology, cultural psychology, biomedical science, and positive psychology. Such linkage will enhance the development of PBS conceptually, methodologically, and empirically, culminating in a more effective and unique applied science (Page 3)

The focus of this article is to educate parents on positive behavior support system, special education teachers must consider several factors, one of the most important ones is the need of educating parents to be able to help their kids. There are plenty of literature and data on approaches and new strategies being used all over the nation, (McKevitt & Braaksma, 2008), and most include the application of PBS.

For most of the parents who having children with behavior issues, academic success can also be impacted by their lack of basic academic skills (National Association of School Psychologist, 2002). According to experienced teachers, parents who are dealing with behavior problems are being consumed by these day after day, due to the fact that children at home are most likely to engage in disruptive behavior than in other settings. On the other hand, parents who address their children's needs through PBS support, find more effective and positive strategies. The behavior interventions generally focus on the problem that causes the behavior and use positive interventions to significantly moderate or change the undesired behavior.

Parents find PBS to be an extremely important and useful tool. Studies show PBS- related interventions can reinforce student performance in the classroom and significantly reduce behavior problems. These same interventions can be used at home or in any other environment where the behavior occurs.

Best Practices Strategies

Positive behavior intervention strategies focus on redirecting children by focusing on the teaching of replacement behaviors using positive and negative reinforcement. This is key for parents who must manage the behavior of children with emotional problems, some of which can be severe. There is important information that class my attention about emotional and behavior problems. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2013), in the student population ranging from ages 3 through 21, about 6% were identified as having an Emotional Behavioral Disturbance (EBD). Research also found that students with special needs have a higher dropout rate than their non-disabled peers. How can parents be successful and help their children at home regardless of their disability status? Teachers can assist with this issue. Specifically, teachers can provide parents with information and their input of what works. For starters, the parents and teachers must identify the purpose of the challenging behavior, and teach the child what is expected, so that when the desired behavior is evidenced tangible or intangible rewards must be in place. Moreover, according to studies on PBS; parents need to discuss the intervention that they will use at home with the school so that all are 'on the same page'. Specific strategies must also be outlined, these include: oral praise, preferred activities, and tangible rewards, among others. If at the beginning these do not give solutions, the reward schedule needs to be intensified.

Another aspect parents need to consider is that the behavior may be triggered by an unknown or not perceived influence. As evidence, behavior problems have been associated with a vast variety of factor; such as emotions, aggression, hyperactivity, food, allergies, just to mention a few. (Havighurst, 2013). Thus collaboration is key, and monitoring and being patient with the children are also important components to the success of PBS.

The relationship between parents and their children, and the importance of educating parents on PBS, can impact the child in a positive way. To be most effective, every person who is related to the child or close to him/her must know about PBS. This can also empower families to create a safe environment where the children will likely feel self-confident and secure. It is also key to go over what is expected on a daily basis in order to change the inappropriate behavior.

Strategies Parents Can Use to Help Their Children at Home

Arguably, motivation is necessary in order to achieve, thus very little can be done if the child is not motivated. Some studies explain that people are motivated by incentives, rewards, recognition, prestige, stimuli, etc. According to the principles of PBS: “God made man to go by motives, and he will not go without them any more than a boat without steam, or a balloon without gas. Find out what motivates man, touch that button to turn the key that makes men achieve.” (Helmlinger, 1997, page 2). A motivated child is engaged most of the time; accordingly, parents need to show that they really want their child to succeed in ways that the child can perceive and understand. There is not a single strategy to motivate or encourage children, parents have to find as many ways as possible and evaluate to the outcomes often as to determine if the effect they want to have is happening in the child.

Research has shown PBS principles have resulted in helping children improve their behavior, social skills, and academics. *In the USA, it appears that the most widely adopted advance in positive behavior interventions is an evidence-based multilevel approach, named Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). In 2014, nearly 20,000 schools across the USA have implemented PBIS (McIntosh 2014, Page 1).* Additionally, according to the literature, students who have parental support, are more likely to improve their behavior rather than those who only have the teachers’ support. Role models are needed in all environments, and receiving regular feedback from parents can reinforce children’s self-esteem and can eventually give them the capacity to self-monitor. Based on empirical data, the following best practices significantly increase prosocial behavior: use of positive behavior support, educating parents on positive behavior support system, being patient and consistent using positive reinforcement, providing children with strategies to help them self-monitor their behavior, monitoring children behavior; using same strategies at different environments.

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About the Author

Ms. Janine Castro moved to Miami, FL from Ecuador having taught in several capacities including special education for over 20 years. Whilst at Dade County Public Schools, she has taught in field of special education, varying exceptionalities including autism and intellectual disabilities, for the last 13 years, have also trained teachers and paraprofessionals. Ms. Castro's current position is a special education high school teacher, in a low income community, she worked at an Adult Center teaching ESOL at nights for the last 12 years. Ms. Castro is passionate about teaching, and believes in empowering and supporting families who struggles in raising children with disabilities.