

PBIS – lessons learned – Part 1

Michael Tunks

Professor George Sugai is one of the founders of School Wide Positive Behaviour. He is Professor, Special Education at the University of Connecticut; Director, Center for Behavioral Education & Research; Co-Director, Center of Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports and the Carole J. Neag Endowed Chair.

In a recent presentation in Dubbo, NSW, Prof Sugai listed four empirically based 'big ideas' from the early years of School Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) that have become foundation stones:

- Teach and recognize behaviour directly – schoolwide
- Focus adult behaviour in team-based school wide action planning
- Consider ALL as foundation for some by establishing local behaviour expertise
- Integrate evidence-based practices in three-tiered prevention logic

From 15 years of SWPBS implementation nine key lessons have been learned:

- 1 Invest in prevention for all
- 2 Teach behavior like academic skills, explicitly and deliberately.
- 3 Emphasise PBIS as framework, not curriculum
- 4 Invest in multi-tiered systems logic
- 5 Invest in capacity for implementation fidelity
- 6 Give priority to research based practices and systems
- 7 Work smarter by doing a few effective things very well
- 8 Guide decisions with data
- 9 Consider context and culture.

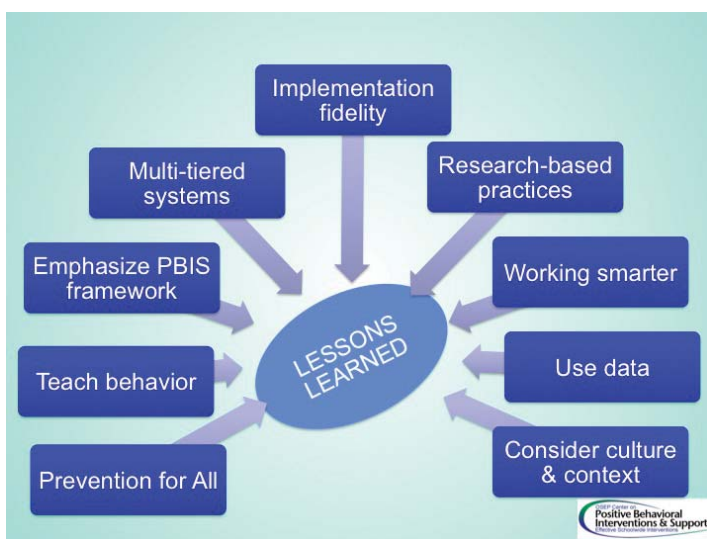


Figure 1: Lessons learned

These key lessons expound the 'big ideas' as practitioners work to implement SWPBS with fidelity. SWPBS is founded on evidence-based research findings. To experience these advantageous findings in our schools and classrooms we need to faithfully replicate what the research is telling us to do. This is fidelity and the key lessons have emerged from the efforts of many thousands of schools worldwide striving to improve academic and behaviour outcomes for students.

Invest in prevention for all

In the 1980s typical school responses to a behaviour problem were usually characterised by reactive and non-constructive interventions with an emphasis on punishment. These responses were largely inconsistent across

Teaching Matrix		SETTING					
		All Settings	Hallways	Playground	Cafeteria	Assembly	Bus
Expectations	Respect Ourselves	Be on task. Give your best effort.			Eat all your food. Select healthy foods.	Study, read, compute.	
	Respect Others	Help to self. Help/share with others.	Use normal voice volume. Walk to right.	Play safe. Include others. Share equipment.	Practice at table. Whisper. Return books.	Listen/watch. Use appropriate applause.	Use a quiet voice. Stay in your seat.
	Respect Property	Recycle. Clean up after self.	Pick up trash. Clean up eating area.	Push in chairs. Treat books carefully.	Pick up. Treat chairs appropriately.	Wipe your feet. Sit appropriately.	

Figure 2. A teaching matrix of desired behaviours

staff and school and had limited effects on behaviour. Research findings now encourage schools to develop environments that promote prevention strategies for all students. These strategies include:

- Actively decreasing new problem behaviours,
- Reducing the intensity of existing problem behaviours,
- Eliminating triggers of problem behaviours
- Teaching pro-social behaviours.

SWPBS has adopted these strategies into its own 'logic' statement: "Successful individual student behaviour support is linked to... school climates that are effective, efficient, relevant, durable, scalable and logical for all students."

Teach behaviour like academic skills, explicitly and deliberately

The deliberate teaching of prosocial behaviour has long lagged far behind our focus on academic tuition and improvement. However, 15 years of SWPBS experience has shown that a raising of the focus on teaching behaviour skills

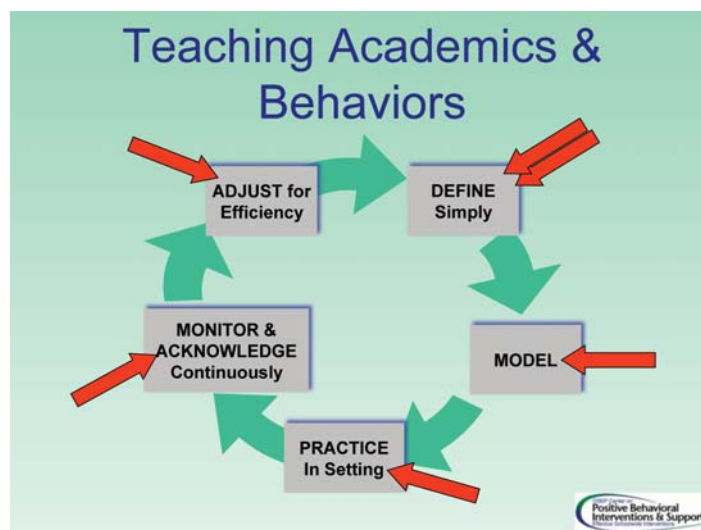


Figure 3: How to teach behaviour

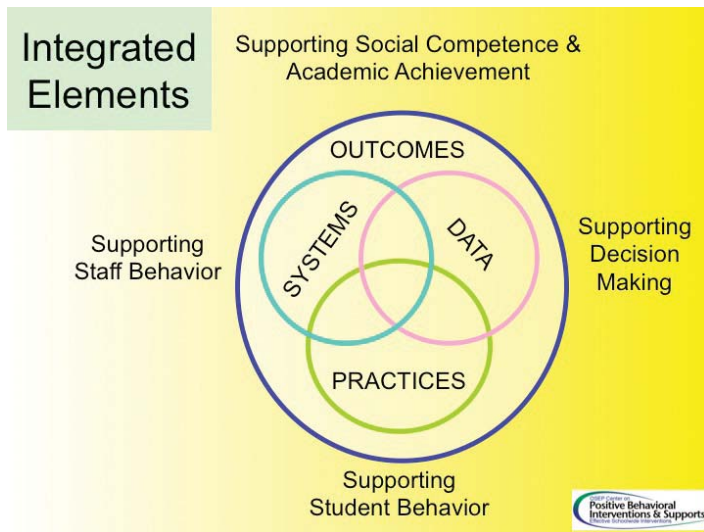


Figure 4: SWPBS integrated elements

to all students has a positive benefit on the incidence of poor behaviour and also contributes to improvements in academic achievement.

How do we teach behaviour? The use of a teaching matrix constructed for your school environment will clearly enunciate the expected behaviours for various settings.

For example, encouraging students to respect others may involve teaching them to whisper when in a library. We can teach this behaviour by:

- 1 Define the desired outcome simply
- 2 Model it so students can see what it looks like
- 3 Practice the behaviour in the setting
- 4 Monitor and acknowledge desired behaviour
- 5 Adjust and continue cycling through steps a–d.

Emphasise SWPBS as framework, not curriculum

Despite needing to 'teach' behaviour skills there is no new behaviour curriculum we need to add on to an already crowded teaching schedule. SWPBS is more of a 'how to' than a 'what'. It is a change to adult behaviour in the way we teach (see the previous article in Term 3 2011 *Education Today*). It is the adoption and integration of evidence-based systems, data and practices into how we teach that will shape student outcomes both academically and behaviourally. These three main supporting elements are specifically targeted:

- Systems – inform and support teacher/staff behaviour
- Data – supports effective decision-making
- Practices – shape and support student behavior.

Invest in multi-tiered systems logic

Our students have strengths and weaknesses across curriculum subject areas. We, the teachers, are trained to identify these differences and implement appropriate strategies to assist students meet prescribed curriculum outcomes. Some students need a little help, some need more help and some need lots of help – and in some areas more than others. (See Theora in Figure 5)

Similarly, with behaviour support strategies we need to recognize that differentiated treatment is required.

We must be careful not to label students as belonging to any particular tier of behaviour (e.g. Molcom is a Tier 3 behaviour problem) because not all of Molcom's behaviours are in the Tier 3 band.

We need to use data and be precise in our descriptions of behaviour so that we do not label individual students as behaviour problems but instead we carefully define the problem behaviours.

This article is one in our continuing series on School Wide Positive Behaviour for Australian schools. Please look back at previous issues of *Education Today* for more information. **ET**

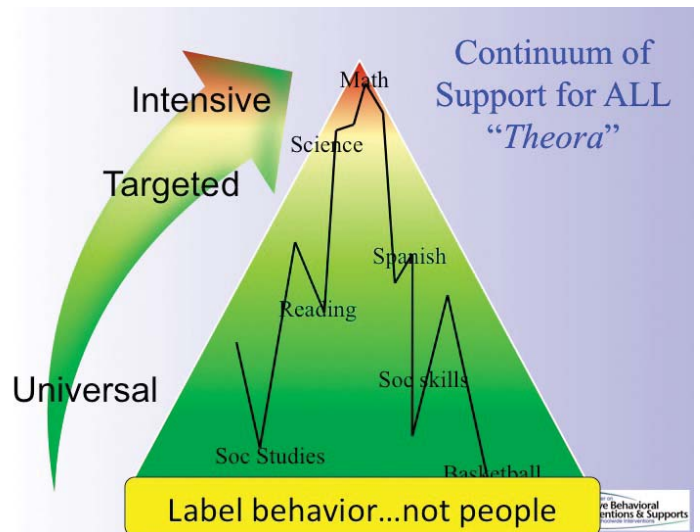


Figure 5: Curriculum 'map' for Theora

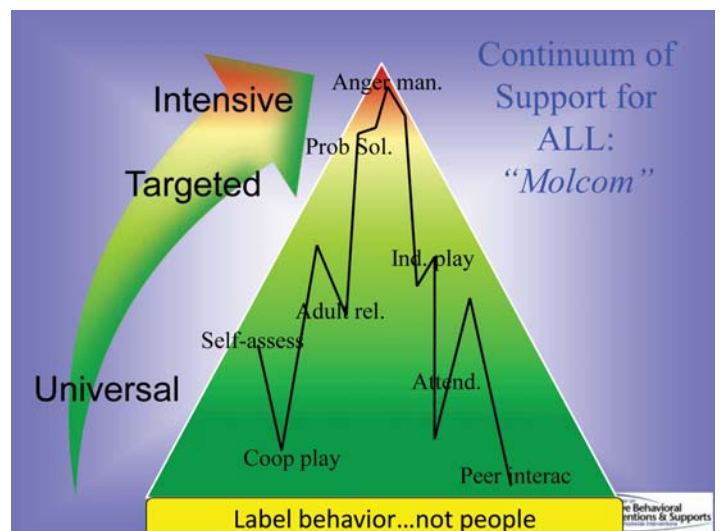


Figure 6: Behaviour 'map' for Molcom



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