

Unsnarling PBIS and Trauma-Informed Education

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Abstract

We posit that Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) serves as a way to label, punish, and surveil students, which is antithetical to trauma-informed education. We put existing critiques of PBIS in conversation with literature on trauma-informed education, critical analyses rooted in social justice and draw on our experiences as educators. Grounded in a human-centered pedagogical orientation, we propose that educators advocate against the use of PBIS in their schools and instead focus their efforts on culturally sustaining pedagogies, systemic trauma-informed practices, and affirming practices based on asset views of students and communities.

Keywords

trauma, urban education, best practices, social, racism, social, discipline policies, subjects

Introduction

In a time of collective trauma from the pandemic, social unrest, and attacks on public education, it is imperative that educators attend to the social, emotional, and behavioral health and well-being of our students. Although many agree that children are not okay, there is no consensus on how to approach

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this challenge. One approach, embraced by many schools, is the behaviorism-based framework Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Despite PBIS's stated emphasis on student well-being, we believe PBIS and trauma-informed practices are fundamentally incompatible (Venet, 2021) and educators and scholars should critically question the entanglement of the two.

PBIS is a framework for managing student behavior implemented in over 27,000 schools in the United States as of 2018 (Center on PBIS, 2022). The framework, described as a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS; Simonsen et al., 2021), is federally funded in most States, and its popularity and widespread adoption allows it to escape serious scrutiny. Ohio (2018) law even requires all school districts in the State to "implement a positive behavior intervention and supports framework on a system-wide basis" (n.p.). In our work in schools, we receive private messages or are pulled aside for tentative questions from educators who seem hesitant to publicly express their concerns with PBIS. It seems that educators seem worried about openly questioning it, perhaps because of the large-scale investment in PBIS.

In the past 10 years, another paradigm emerged: trauma-informed educational practice (Thomas et al., 2019). Trauma-informed education (TIE) is a human-centered approach that seeks to transform learning environments and education policy to be more supportive of trauma-affected people and to prevent trauma from occurring in schools (Venet, 2021). As schools seek to implement TIE practices, they often plug TIE into existing PBIS/MTSS structures and systems with PBIS being identified as a key strategy for supporting trauma-informed school environments (Thomas et al., 2019). PBIS and TIE are increasingly intertwined, as we discuss below. We assert that mixing TIE with PBIS is ultimately harmful for students, especially students of color and disabled students.

Although PBIS is presented as supporting student social and emotional well-being for *all* students, educators, and families, in practice PBIS upholds or creates harm, as discussed throughout our analysis. The tiered design and focus on data collection prevent classrooms and schools from being heterarchical or democratic. Despite its promise to reduce disparities in discipline and learning, PBIS does not address or disrupt racist beliefs such as deficit views and color-evasiveness (Fergus, 2021) and views cultural responsiveness as an add-on. We contend that PBIS reproduces and produces trauma, specifically race-based and ableist trauma within schools. TIE is a potentially powerful paradigm shift for schools but loses its promise when yoked to PBIS.

This paper draws from Annamma's (2018) construct of "pedagogy of pathologization." We posit that PBIS serves as a way to label, punish, and surveil students, which is antithetical to TIE. We put existing critiques of PBIS in conversation with literature on TIE and DisCrit and draw on our own

experiences as educators. Grounded in a human-centered pedagogical orientation, we propose that educators actively advocate against the use of PBIS in their schools and instead focus their efforts on culturally sustaining pedagogies, systemic trauma-informed practices, and affirming practices based on asset views of students and communities.

Positionality Statement

Our identities guide our approach to this critique. Rhiannon (she|her) is mixed Korean and white. She holds a Master's degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders and was a licensed Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) for 12 years and worked as an elementary SLP for six year before working on an "interdisciplinary team" and consulting with teams and families across a preK-12 school district.

Alex (she/her) is a white, Jewish, disabled woman. She has a Master's degree in education and is a licensed middle and high school English teacher. She previously worked at an alternative therapeutic school using a trauma-informed and antibehaviorist approach to supporting students. She facilitates professional development in TIE practices. Together, Rhiannon and Alex have cofacilitated healing space for educators centered around trauma-informed principles as well as professional development for educators.

Our experiences in schools guide our concern and critique of PBIS. Rhiannon served on PBIS Tier 1 and Tier 2 committees and attended numerous PBIS workshops during her work in public schools. We both consult with school districts and teachers who use PBIS. Alex's work in alternative education primarily served students who experienced labeling, punishment, and surveillance in public schools, leading to their referral to an alternate setting through identification in the special education system.

Literature Review

In this literature review, we describe the origins of PBIS and TIE, as well as some of the common critiques of TIE. We describe how Annama's (2018) "pedagogy of pathologization" provides a critical frame for analyzing PBIS. From here, we will address the entanglement of PBIS and TIE.

An Overview of PBIS

Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports is defined by the Center on PBIS (2022) as "an evidence-based three-tiered framework to improve and

integrate all of the data, systems, and practices affecting student outcomes every day” (n.p.) and is used in over 27,000 schools in the United States. PBIS is widely implemented in urban schools with varying degrees of fidelity (Gray et al., 2017, Scherer and Ingle, 2020).

There are three tiers within PBIS and are represented by a triangle with three different colors. The bottom and first tier is colored green. It is suggested that “80% or more” of students will “experience success” in this tier (Center on PBIS, 2022, n.p.). This tier is described as “practices and systems establish a foundation of regular, proactive support while preventing unwanted behaviors” (n.p.). This tier focuses on school-wide implementation and “reinforcement of positive behaviors” through the use of tokens or other systems to track the frequency of students engaged in “positive behaviors.” This tier emphasizes consistency across the entire school for reinforcing the school-wide expectations and the PBIS team develops a “continuum of procedures for discouraging problem behavior.”

The second tier focuses on “supporting students who are at risk for developing more serious problem behaviors before they start.” This tier is colored yellow and PBIS suggests that somewhere between 10% and 15% of students will “need some type of Tier 2 support.” The third tier, colored red, is described as an “effective way to address sometimes dangerous, often highly disruptive behaviors creating barriers to learning and excluding students from social settings,” and PBIS suggests this tier is for somewhere between one and five percent of students “for whom Tier 1 and Tier 2 supports have not been sufficient to experience success” (Center on PBIS, 2022, n.p.).

PBIS is rooted in behaviorism (Horner & Sugai, 2015; Knestrict, 2019; Weiss et al., 2010), a philosophy that suggests that behaviors are observable and measurable and can be modified or adjusted with rewards and consequences (Kohn, 1993/2018). Knestrict (2019) described PBIS as being “derived from a solidly behaviorist brain trust” that “continues to manifest itself as a system of glorified bribes to children to manipulate them into adopting behaviors, seen by the adults in power as desirable and appropriate” (p. 1). This framework also promotes adherence to white heteropatriarchal and ableist norms of behavior (Annamma, 2018; Connor et al., 2016).

These behaviorist roots are important because behaviorism, as developed by B.F. Skinner, is drawn from a worldview in which people’s internal wants and needs are irrelevant, placing focus instead on rewards and punishments as a means to attain prescribed “desired” behaviors (Kohn, 1993/2018). Behaviorist approaches may be effective at gaining short-term compliance, but in the long-term damage relationships, undermine motivation, and decrease creativity and risk-taking (Kohn, 1993/2018). Although PBIS’s materials do not mention behaviorism explicitly, it cannot be divorced from

this lineage and worldview (Anderson & Kincaid, 2005; Horner, & Sugai, 2015). Horner and Sugai (2015) stated that:

The impact of behavior analysis on PBIS is most clear in (a) the emphasis on operational definitions of behavior and intervention elements, (b) the logic model used to select environmental manipulations designed to alter student and staff behavior, and (c) an unrelenting commitment to measurement of both implementation fidelity and the impact of PBIS on student outcomes. (p. 80)

PBIS seeks to increase “expected behavior” by offering praise and tokens to students for “following expectations” and to prevent “unwanted behavior” through “pre-corrections” and “providing training to families, school personnel, and students regarding interventions” and to “collect and monitor data” (Center on PBIS, 2022).

Additionally, it is important to note that the word “positive” in “Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports” does not refer to an affective quality. Rather, it “means educative approaches to changing behaviors rather than aversive practices and removing students from the classroom” (yoon, 2022, p. 271). This echoes the language of behaviorism, although in our experience most educators interpret the word “positive” to mean “good behavior” or a quality of optimism and kindness. Knestrict (2019) suggested that PBIS is often “guided by an obsession with obedience centered on white, middle-class, achievement-based values, largely developed independent of children’s input, void of cultural sensitivity” (p. 1).

Defining TIE

COVID-19 has been a collective trauma, an event that strains community ties and our collective sense of meaning (Duane et al., 2020). The impacts of collective trauma can disproportionately affect those already experiencing marginalization (Duane et al., 2020). Although collective trauma impacts school communities, so too does the ongoing trauma of oppression as well as individual experiences of trauma from inside or outside of schools (Venet, 2021). Urban youth of color impacted by interpersonal violence as well as systemic oppression can face a “Persistent Traumatic Stress Environment” in which trauma is continuous and ongoing, not a thing of the past (Ginwright, 2015, p. 3). This reality means it is essential for schools to rethink policy, practice, and pedagogy through an understanding of how trauma influences learning and the school community. TIE is one way for educators to frame this urgent work.

Trauma-informed education is a decentralized approach with no singular definition or ownership by a specific person or company (Venet, 2021).

TIE evolved from the broader trauma-informed care movement, which began in behavioral health services to recenter the experiences and needs of survivors of violence (Elliott et al., 2005). As an approach specific to schools, TIE emerged in the early 2010s (Thomas et al., 2019).

Fallot and Harris (2011) conceptualized a trauma-informed approach as including “Safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, and empowerment are the core values of a trauma-informed culture of care. These tenets stand as antidotes to the toxic impact of trauma” (p. 30). Over the past 20 or so years, many models of trauma-informed care have emerged, some focusing on health care services, some on educational systems, and others on whole communities. Although the specifics of each framework vary, most touch on the five values above, with a sixth later added by the Substance and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2014) to include cultural, historical, and gender issues.

Although there is some research exploring the effectiveness of trauma-informed interventions (Roseby & Gascoigne 2021; Thomas et al., 2019), there is more needed. Among the existing research, there is no consensus on a particular framework or model for TIE, or even agreement on what the term “trauma-informed” means in a school context (Thomas et al., 2019). Thus, in schools, TIE can refer to a wide range of practices, from social–emotional learning to retooled disciplinary practices to sensitivity in the curriculum. A broad definition of TIE includes trauma prevention as well as: “trauma-informed educational practices respond to the impacts of trauma on the entire school community and prevent future trauma from occurring” (Venet, 2021, p. 11). TIE on a whole-school level may include adjustments to policy, school-community partnerships, and professional development on violence prevention and harm reduction.

Justice-Oriented TIE

Scholars in many fields have critiqued mainstream implementations of TIE, noting that the implementation of TIE without a critical structural lens can reproduce deficit views of marginalized children and continue to place the burden for change on individuals (e.g., Becker-Blease 2017; Boylan 2021; Khasnabis & Goldin, 2020; Venet 2021). One concern is that supposedly trauma-informed educators can take on a savior narrative that dehumanizes trauma-affected students, especially students of color (Goldin, Duane & Khasnabis, 2022). The savior narrative positions educators, specifically white women, as “well-intentioned, caring, and generous” (Sondel et al., 2019, p. 7). This is further perpetuated when white women and white educators are positioned as the most qualified, even, and especially, in schools serving predominantly Black students and families in urban schools (Sondel et al., 2019).

Growing out of these critiques are a handful of models of TIE that are rooted in equity, justice, and structural awareness. Examples include equity-centered TIE (Venet, 2021), systemically trauma-informed practice (SysTIP) (Khasnabis & Goldin, 2020), culturally responsive trauma-informed schools (Blitz et al., 2016), and healing-centered engagement (Ginwright, 2018). In this analysis, we define TIE through a justice-oriented lens. Schools must address the trauma caused by the inequity in the education system in order to truly be trauma-informed.

Pedagogy of Pathologization

Rooted in the field of Disability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit), Dr. Subini Annamma developed a framework called the “Pedagogy of Pathologization” to analyze the ways racism and ableism function to impact multiply-marginalized students of color (Annamma, 2018). Annamma describes a cycle of “hyper-punishment, hyper-labeling, and hyper-surveillance” that disproportionately negatively impacts disabled youth of color. Her work primarily focused on Black girls within the “school-to-prison-nexus” (p. 12). For our purposes of examining PBIS, we will apply the “pedagogy of pathologization” more broadly.

In schools, the combination of racism and ableism contributes to racist and ableist definitions of “normal” that are weaponized against disabled students and students of color (Annamma & Morrison, 2018). Annamma argued that schools and educators can then act as agents of a “prison nation” and employ a “pedagogy of pathologization” that “created criminals of students who did not fit unspoken yet desired normative standards (e.g., white, male, able-bodied)” (2018, p. 13). The tools of the pedagogy of pathologization are present in PBIS, encouraging teachers to measure students against standards of “normal,” to collect data on the ways that they deviate from these standards, and to use the data to apply labels and punishments with long-lasting impacts.

Entanglement of PBIS and TIE

PBIS and TIE are often spoken of in the same breath by educators, researchers, and policy makers, despite differences in their structure, ownership, and philosophy. In section 4108 of the Every Student Succeeds Act, PBIS and trauma-informed practice are included as strategies for supporting “safe and healthy students,” indicating that both approaches can work in harmony toward a shared goal (ESSA, 2015). However, the connections are less clear when looking closely at the scholarship, both authored by proponents of PBIS and by supporters of trauma-informed practice.

Beyond the mention in federal law, many States also group the two. Wisconsin, for example, maintains a robust online resource center for trauma-

sensitive instruction. One of these resources is a 2015 white paper by state superintendent Tony Evers titled “Using PBIS to Help Schools Become More Trauma-Sensitive.” Evers detailed the supposed alignment between PBIS and key understandings in TIE, largely focusing on the ways that PBIS can help to modify behavioral expressions of students’ coping strategies.

Education organizations and policy-makers also recommend PBIS and TIE together with no comment on potential conflict, for example, the Coalition for Social and Emotional Learning provides guidance on integrating both trauma-informed practice and PBIS with their SEL approaches (casel.org). From our own experiences in the field, we often work with schools that both implement PBIS as a whole school and seek to implement TIE and rarely do leaders at these schools name any contradiction between the two.

PBIS Perspective on TIE

In a 2020 paper from the Center on PBIS, authors Lucille Eber and colleagues explored how trauma-informed approaches can be integrated within PBIS. They concede that PBIS is *not inherently trauma-informed* but that trauma-informed approaches must be intentionally “integrated” and “added to the menu” and school teams need to “modify their MTSS to be trauma-informed” (Eber et al., 2020, p. 6). Their analysis noted that nothing about PBIS must be fundamentally changed in order to align with trauma-informed principles; instead, TIE is an enhancement or consideration. This indicates a belief that PBIS and TIE are already compatible as designed. The authors contend that PBIS and trauma-informed practice are “grounded in similar science” (p. 4). It is unclear which similar science the authors are referring to, beyond a general connection within the social sciences; as discussed above, PBIS and TIE evolved from different social science backgrounds.

Trauma-Informed Perspective on PBIS

Some TIE practitioners believe PBIS to be a good match for the tenets of their approach, but because TIE is not a centralized program, there are varying perspectives. Many resources on TIE identify PBIS/MTSS as an effective intervention for trauma-affected students (see Thomas et al., 2019; Roseby & Gascoigne, 2021). For example, in the 2019 book *The Trauma-Sensitive Classroom*, author Patricia Jennings recommends structuring trauma-informed interventions within the three tiers of PBIS. Similarly, the authors of *Building Resilience in Students Impacted by Adverse Childhood Experiences* (Romero et al., 2018) map interventions onto the PBIS tiers, for example, individualized counseling at Tier 3 and recognizing Behavior as a Form of Communication at Tier 1 (p. 95). Texts like these implicitly accept the value in the tiered PBIS pyramid.

Some texts include a more critical lens on PBIS. Craig (2017), author of *Trauma-Sensitive Schools for the Adolescent Years* and *Trauma-Sensitive Schools*, organized parts of her book around tiered (MTSS) approaches. This would seem to indicate an alignment with PBIS. However, she also clearly stated that behaviorist approaches are not trauma-informed: “Most teachers are trained to manage behavior through contingency reinforcement. Even those trained in applied behavior analysis base their interventions on the assumption that with enough reinforcement, students can learn to exert cognitive control over their behavior. These interventions are seldom effective with youth who have trauma histories” (p. 85). Craig explained that for trauma-affected youth, behaviorist interventions underscore a lack of personal agency and autonomy, and they view rewards and punishments as functions of adult mood rather than their own actions. Craig recommended a collaborative, rather than behaviorist, approach.

Although these scholars point to particular aspects of PBIS that may not be trauma-informed, others recognize that the entire PBIS framework is at odds with TIE. Venet (2021) wrote that because of the behaviorist nature of PBIS, it is “fundamentally incompatible” with TIE (p. 63). Venet highlighted how MTSS tiers can create harmful labels for students in need of support, labels which end up being unevenly applied based on how children respond to stress. Some behaviors may be categorized into a “tier” while others go unnoticed or perceived as “normal,” which then creates an equity of access issue to tiered supports. This echoes Wilson’s (2015) critique of PBIS: “by design, students must engage in maladaptive behaviors to get access to additional mental health services” (p. 91). From a trauma-informed perspective, school systems should strive for fewer barriers to mental health services, not more.

Ensnarled Together

How do PBIS and TIE become entangled? Both are seen as “behavior management” approaches. PBIS positions itself as behavior management in its own materials (Center on PBIS, 2022). TIE frameworks differ; however, many TIE resources suggest a decrease in challenging behavior as a primary outcome for TIE implementation (Jennings, 2019; Romero et al., 2018; Souers & Hall, 2016). Justice-informed models of TIE are more expansive and place more emphasis on changing the behavior of adults rather than changing the behavior of children (Venet, 2021).

PBIS and TIE are also ensnarled when they are both used as possible solutions to inequity. Proponents of PBIS suggest that it can be utilized to reduce disproportionate disciplinary actions taken against Black and Hispanic youth in urban school districts (Baule, 2020) and thus pitch PBIS as a

justice-oriented approach. However, Heidelberg et al. (2022) in their analysis of “discipline referrals received by Black students in urban elementary and middle schools” (p. 138) found that “high-fidelity implementation of Tier I [school-wide] PBIS does not equate to reduced ODRs [office discipline referrals] for Black students” (p. 151).

The pervasive connections between PBIS and TIE require a critical lens to unpack and determine whether PBIS and justice-oriented TIE truly deserve to be ensnarled together.

Trauma-Informed Practice, Pedagogy of Pathologization, and PBIS: A Close Reading

To demonstrate the incompatibility of PBIS and TIE, we build on Annamma’s (2018) “pedagogy of pathologization” (p. 13) by applying the frame in a close read of current PBIS documents. The key tools of the pedagogy of pathologization are hyper-surveillance, hyper-labeling, and hyper-punishment (Annamma, 2018). We use these tools to interrogate the ways that PBIS produces and reproduces trauma.

Figure 1 shows the relationship between a pedagogy of pathologization and key practices of PBIS. Both of these are trauma-inducing; the antithesis of being trauma-informed.

As educators, we use close reading as a professional and pedagogical tool with our students, examining not just only the surface meaning of the words on the page but also the implications, messages “between the lines,” and the meaning of what’s missing. Close reading includes understanding the “interaction between the reader and a text,” “making careful observations of a text

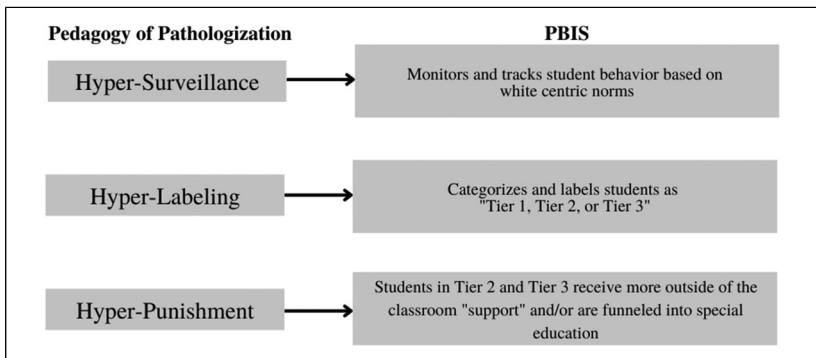


Figure 1. How pedagogy of pathologization shows up in PBIS.

and then interpretations of those observations,” and “rereading ... that helps a reader to carry new ideas to the whole text” (Lehman & Roberts, 2014, p. 4).

We chose to do a close reading of the PBIS.org pages on the three tiers, titled Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3. These pages are freely accessible on PBIS.org through the “PBIS” section of the navigation bar¹. We accessed these pages during July and August 2022. The pages are concise and contain links to other resources for further learning. See Appendix A for direct wording of “Key Practices” at each tier at the time, we accessed these pages.

Each page is structured with the following sections (with each tier’s number label replacing X):

1. What is Tier X?
2. Foundational Systems
3. Key Practices
4. The Tier X Team
5. Assessments
6. Explore the Evidence Base for Tier X

We examined how language demonstrated the behaviorist roots of PBIS, alignment or misalignment with trauma-informed principles, and implied messages about students and their behavior. To identify alignment with trauma-informed principles, we looked at how the descriptive language connected to SAMHSA’s (2014) principles of trauma-informed care: (a) safety; (b) trustworthiness and transparency; (c) peer support; (d) collaboration and mutuality; (e) empowerment, voice, and choice; and (f) cultural, historic, and gender issues. We pay particular attention to additional elements of justice-oriented TIE such as addressing inequity as a method of reducing trauma (Venet, 2021). Our process included individual reading and annotation of the pages and shared discussion and meaning-making.

In each of the three sections to follow, we provide examples of how PBIS’s own materials indicate a pedagogy of pathologization that is trauma-inducing and not trauma-informed.

Tier 1

The Tier 1 page of PBIS.org presents an overview of the proactive and whole-school elements of PBIS. Foundational systems include a leadership team, a commitment to creating a positive school climate, and “On-Going Data-Based Monitoring, Evaluation, and Dissemination.” Core practices identified on this page primarily focus on student behavior, including proactively teaching expectations, developing routines, and creating a range of responses to “discourage unwanted behavior.”

The language on this page contradicts principles of trauma-informed care and emphasizes notions of “normal” which uphold ableism and racism. The repeated use of the term “unwanted behavior” places importance on unnamed actors who are doing the “wanting,” presumably teachers and other school staff. This erases the agency and empowerment of students for whom behavior is not a matter of “wanting” or “not wanting,” but instead, an effort to communicate, a result of unmet needs or an attempt to meet one’s own needs, or a natural expression or reaction to one’s surroundings and conditions. For example, a child making noise by rocking back-and-forth in their chair might be defined by a teacher as exhibiting “unwanted behavior,” while for the student this is an appropriate effort to self-soothe. When we place more importance on the adults’ wants and needs, we diminish the humanity of the child. This facilitates hyper-punishment, particularly for disabled children and children of color whose behavior is interpreted by many teachers through racist and ableist lenses (Amemiya et al., 2020; Annamma, 2018).

Tier 1 includes the development of a “Continuum of Procedures for Discouraging Unwanted Behavior.” In our experience in schools, this is often developed as a “chart” outlining consequences for various “unwanted behaviors.” Office discipline referrals are often used to identify some of the “unwanted” or “contextually inappropriate behaviors” (Simonsen et al., 2021). ODRs are categorized into “minor” and “major” (McIntosh et al., 2018). Minor ODRs are managed within the classroom, while major ODRs are managed by the school administrator/administrative team. All ODR data are collected and analyzed by PBIS teams (Simonsen et al., 2021).

Examples of “unwanted” behaviors captured by ODRs included the large-scale analysis of over 3,000 schools included: “defiance/disrespect/insubordination/non-compliance, disruption, tardiness, and other behavior” (Gion et al., 2013). In our experience, the behaviors in these types of categories can often be prevented and/or addressed through collaboration, community-building, and restorative approaches to relational harm. The overrepresentation of these types of “infractions” on ODRs demonstrates a practice of punishing children for noncompliance.

Hyper-punishment is defined as “a negative consequence in anticipation of wrongdoing or severe penalties in response to unwanted behaviors” and “this punishment was often for the same behaviors that other students had committed, but as they were not multiply-marginalized, they were imagined as less problematic and therefore undeserving of consequences” (Annamma, 2018, p. 14). Black children are more likely to be “hyper-punished” through expulsion or other “consequences” (Annamma, 2018; National Prevention Science Coalition, 2020) than their white counterparts. Reliance on ODRs and the act of describing behaviors as “contextually appropriate” or “contextually

inappropriate” (Simonsen et al., 2021) decontextualizes experiences of ableism, racism, sexism, transphobia, and other forms of social harm. There is no mention of these types of trauma or any other forms of trauma as relevant when understanding student behavior.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) (2014) suggests that applying a trauma-informed lens requires these key actions: (a) the realization of “the widespread impact of trauma”; (b) to recognize “signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system; (c) to respond “by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices; and (d) to “actively resist re-traumatization” (p. 9). When PBIS leaves the context of trauma and the impact of oppression on students’ lives and behavior out of their materials, it denies the realities of the impact of trauma, blocks recognition of its signs and symptoms, fails to create a responsive environment, and does nothing to resist retraumatization.

The continuum for discouraging unwanted behaviors does not address the harm done by teachers or adults to students, instead focusing on “appropriate consequences” for youth. This hyper-punishment is connected to hyper-surveillance, or “the excessive scrutiny in the anticipation of problem behaviors, attitudes, or presence” (Annamma, 2018, p. 14). Throughout the Tier 1 description, there is an emphasis on “data” without a recognition of the ways that data may be biased and weaponized in service of the overidentification and over-punishment of disabled students, students of color, and multiply-marginalized students. This thread continues through Tier 2.

Tier 2

According to PBIS, Tier 2 is intended to “provide targeted support for students who are not successful with Tier 1 supports alone” and focuses “on supporting students who are at risk for developing more serious problem behavior before they start” (n.p). Tier 2 is intended for a smaller group of students than Tier 1; the PBIS pyramid appears on this page with the middle tier highlighted in yellow and labeled “some.”

Where Tier 1 used the phrase “unwanted behavior,” Tier 2 emphasizes the term “problem behavior.” This phrasing places emphasis on the adult’s perception of a problem, rather than any curiosity of underlying needs, motivation, or agency of the student. The term “problem behavior” also indicates a deficit view of students. There is no mention of trauma or of race or racism as potential etiologies of the so-called “problem behaviors.”

The text on this page notes that Tier 2 interventions are characterized by students “choos[ing] to participate.” From our practitioner experience, we

have seen no evidence of student choice to opt in or opt out of interventions. Indeed, the recommendations on this same page seem to contradict this idea, as “increased pre-corrections” by the teacher are recommended practices. Students typically do not opt into being corrected by their teachers. TIE necessarily encourages “empowerment, voice, and choice,” none of which are explicitly present in Tier 2.

Recommended Tier 2 practices include “increased adult supervision” to facilitate data collection. This practice is often in tandem with assigning a one-to-one staff member to “support” this student which increases hyper-surveillance of a student/students. Support personnel and teachers are asked to collect data and even carry a clipboard to track student behaviors. These “behaviors” include developmentally appropriate actions such as “calling out” when it is not their turn. There is continued focus on addressing the student’s “behaviors” and no interrogation of the classroom practices or school environment that may be detrimental to student well-being and eliciting the so-called “problem behaviors.”

Another Tier 2 “key practice” listed is “increased focus on possible function of problem behavior.” Rather than a collaboration with students to determine what they need, “function of behavior” is often used as a euphemism for increased surveillance to collect data which is then interpreted by the adults. One of the strategies identified is “positive reinforcement.” PBIS recommends “feedback sessions” with teachers and other adults “5–7 times a day” which further encourages hyper-surveillance. In our practice, we have observed that this strategy is operationalized through rigid points systems or checklists upon which teachers must evaluate students frequently, often connected to a “behavior plan” that is developed without meaningful student or family input. This attention to the individual also draws attention away from an interrogation of any classroom-wide, school-wide, or contextual factors that may be at play.

Combined, these Tier 2 practices constitute hyper-surveillance through their encouragement that teachers place a heavy focus on data collection of individual student behaviors. These data can then be used in the service of hyper-labeling, which can take the route of referral through Tier 3 practices on the way to identification as needing special education services (Bornstein, 2017).

Hyper-labeling is described as “the formal/informal naming of a student’s undesired identity (e.g., race, gender, disability) *and* the addition of other wanted identities” (Annamma, 2018, p. 14). In our fieldwork, we have frequently heard students referred to as “tier two kids” or “trauma kids” or “special ed kids.” This type of hyper-labeling both reduces students to these labels and perpetuates the idea that “those kids” are the problem. These are also often paired with other racist and classist beliefs about students

and their families. Indeed, research has demonstrated that boys and students of color are overrepresented in referrals to Tier 2 services (Reno et al., 2017). There is no guidance present on the PBIS tiers page for examining the over-identification of negatively racialized students or students with other marginalized and multiply marginalized identities for more “intensified, active supervision” (Center on PBIS, 2022) within Tier 2. Inequity in schools serves to exacerbate and cause trauma (Venet, 2021), so PBIS’s production of inequity can never be trauma-informed.

Tier 3

The Tier 3 page describes PBIS as “an effective way to address sometimes dangerous, often highly disruptive behaviors creating barriers to learning and excluding students from social settings.” The passive voice in this sentence separates actors from their actions: who is doing the excluding? Who is determining what is disruptive and dangerous?

The Tier 3 page also states that 1% to 5% of students will require Tier 3 intervention. This statement, along with Tier 3’s place at the red tip of the PBIS pyramid and the language above, connotes an ableist expectation that people who need more support from others are both rare and dangerous. It is also unclear how PBIS developed the expectation that only 1% to 5% of students need individualized support. Amid a mass-disabling pandemic, we wonder who benefits from the expectation that most people do not need a high level of support.

Functional Behavioral Analysis (FBA) is identified as a “key practice,” with bullet points expanding on the intention of FBAs to be used as a tool to “reduce unwanted behavior.” The language in this section includes phrases such as “positively reinforcing appropriate behavior” and “reducing rewards for unwanted behavior” (a euphemism for punishment). These phrases echo the core ideas of behaviorism and emphasize a coercive adult–child relationship and abled–disabled relationship, which stands in direct opposition to the trauma-informed principles of empowerment, collaboration, and mutuality. Studies of teacher attitudes in PBIS have echoed this, with teachers expressing a desire to punish students within the PBIS framework (Reno et al., 2017, yoon, 2022). Behaviorist systems contribute to the hyper-punishment within a pedagogy of pathologization.

Interestingly, the Tier 3 page also mentions a strategy of “Person Centered Planning,” but this seems to be a recommendation of an outside resource available to educators implementing Tier 3 interventions, as opposed to a core feature or philosophy of PBIS. We also note that this is the first mention in all three of the tier web pages of being person-centered or human-centered.

The data collection emphasis in Tier 3 contributes to hyper-punishment. From our field experience, students who receive Tier 3 services are more likely to be referred to outside placements and/or alternative placements, especially Black and other systemically minoritized students. These placements can be explicitly named as punitive, or experienced that way by students. PBIS makes no mention of addressing disproportionate overidentification and disparate outcomes for Black, poor, and multiply marginalized youth on this landing page.

The Tier 3 page does reference a need for “cultural and contextual fit,” noting that a student’s personal characteristics, neighborhood, and the school culture “influence and add value to” Tier 3 practices. However, this section is vague and does not name any of the ways that “culture and context” would influence Tier 3 practices.

What’s Not on These Pages and Limitations of Our Analysis

We recognize that the materials on PBIS.org lack the full context of a PBIS training or more detailed publication, but we see these materials as essential information on the public face of PBIS that the organization feels is important enough to stand alone on its website. We also note that we did not use a formal coding process for our analysis. We hope that this commentary serves as a catalyst for further critical research on PBIS.

In our close reading of the three-tier pages on PBIS.org, we noted the meaning and connotation of language above and also noticed what was missing or unnamed. As we assessed these pages through the SAMHSA principles, it was notable that none referenced sensitivity to cultural, historical, or gender issues, or to any social identities or systemic conditions for that matter, apart from the Tier 3 section referenced above. This absence is important because it implies a collective agreement on such terms as “appropriate,” “inappropriate,” and “dangerous,” when identity, culture, and social context matter a great deal in these definitions.

Elsewhere on the PBIS website, there are resources for disability and equity but the lack of integration into the core PBIS tier descriptions suggests that these are seen as add-on or extra, not integral to the approach. The equity document does not name ableism, racism, or other forms of oppression as impacting schools, students, educators, or families. Equity work needs to center on a deep interrogation of oppressive systems.

The second tier suggests focusing more on “possible function of problem behavior.” Additionally, Center on PBIS (2022) suggests that closing the “opportunity gap” can be partially achieved by the following: (a) using explicit instruction; (b) building and priming background knowledge; (c) increasing opportunities to respond; and (d) providing performance feedback.

At no point in this, or in any other tier, is there any suggestion to examine, identify, and disrupt school practices, curricula, policies, and procedures that may be contributing to the so-called “problem behaviors,” especially for multiply-marginalized students. From a justice-oriented trauma-informed lens, we wonder about the absence of addressing school-based harms.

Discussion: PBIS is Trauma-Inducing, Not Trauma-Informed

Despite the moniker “positive,” PBIS is anything but. The practices of PBIS serve to reproduce ableist and white supremacist culture within schools, a culture that actively causes trauma to marginalized students (Annamma, 2018; Love, 2019; Venet, 2021; yoon, 2022). During classroom observations of the implementation of “positive feedback,” Rhiannon noted that educators offered students tokens for “sitting still,” “waiting their turn,” and “being quiet.” She observed educators’ shame-based and coercive comments like “I was going to give you a [token] but you started talking.” Coercion and shame are features of traumatizing conditions, not of justice and healing.

Throughout the documents connected to PBIS and our field observations and experience, we suggest that PBIS is in fact trauma-inducing because (a) it upholds white supremacist and ableist notions of “normal” (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Knestrict, 2019); (b) it erases multidimensional identities; and (c) it applies deficit labels to students whose identities have been marginalized especially in regard to race and disability. PBIS upholds a pedagogy of pathologization and is not in alignment with fundamental trauma-informed principles nor justice-oriented trauma-informed practices. Therefore, even as many education experts group PBIS and trauma-informed practice together, we must unsnarl the two.

There is a dearth of research that examines the relationship between PBIS and racial disparities in U.S. public schools. The existing research is often focused on showcasing that PBIS does in fact “work.” The questions posed are centered on proving that PBIS works because it reduces the racial disparities of ODRs (McIntosh et al., 2021). Such research is also often framed in the same problematic ways as PBIS itself; for example, in a brief outlining the research base behind PBIS’s efficacy, 18 different citations include the phrase “problem behavior” in their titles, echoing the deficit-based framing we previously discussed (Horner & Sugai, 2020). This work is often lacking an intersectional/multidimensional examination of ODRs, a broader examination of the student body population (who is deemed disabled or pushed out of school), and there is no mention of ableism.

Given the biases that go into teachers' understanding of such expectations, it is not surprising that discipline data collected within PBIS demonstrates racial inequities. In one study, male students and students of color were disproportionately identified as needing Tier 2 intervention, and participating in these interventions did not ultimately impact student academic achievement (Reno et al., 2017). In yoon's (2022) analysis of teacher perspective on PBIS, the implementation of PBIS did not shift teachers' deficit views about disabled students of color. Given this theme in the research, it is time to stop expecting PBIS to solve inequality.

PBIS's materials recycle the same deficit viewpoints as "traditional" behavioral approaches. Bornstein's (2017) research suggested that PBIS enabled educators to continue discriminatory and exclusionary practices by providing a new language: PBIS systems "built a logic that could ultimately justify excluding students who were regarded as having emotional or behavioral disabilities" (p. 145). This logic operates through teachers disciplining students based on deviance from compliance-focused norms, and then evaluating the evidence of their own discipline choices as "data" of student disability. In this way, Bornstein found that teachers are swapping "disorderly" for "disordered" in their deficit-oriented understanding of children's behavior, rather than PBIS enabling an actually positive or strengths-based shift in understanding.

McIntosh et al. (2021) found that an "equity-focused" approach to PBIS reduced the overrepresentation of Black youth in the number of ODRs in schools that participated in a year-long training. Although we celebrate the reduction in ODRs, we wonder if a reduction in ODRs indicates that Black youth, Latinx youth, disabled youth, and other youth marginalized by society are thriving in schools. We wonder whether or not they are invited to bring their whole selves into school or if they are encouraged to conform to a narrow notion of "normalcy" and are rewarded for doing so. Further, we strongly disagree that the low bar of soliciting input "at least once a year" will ensure that "Tier I is culturally responsive and reflects the values of the local community" (Center on PBIS, 2022).

PBIS encourages a sustained focus on "student behaviors" and "discouraging unwanted behaviors" but completely ignores the disrespect students experience from educators. ODRs are predominately for "defiance" and "disrespect" (Gion et al., 2013), which continuously disproportionately negatively impact Black youth and youth with identities marginalized by society (Annamma, 2018; Greffund et al., 2014). Annamma's work (2018) amplified the experiences of disabled girls of color and highlighted instances where teachers or other educators were disrespectful toward students and students responded with matched disrespect. In these instances, youth were punished, and there was no accountability for the educators. This detours the impact of

hierarchy and other external factors such as “unjust punishment from authority figures” (Amemiya et al., 2020, p. 25).

Amemiya et al. (2020) described that when “freedom is threatened, people may experience psychological reactance, an aversive state comprised of negative emotions (e.g., anger or frustration) as well as certain cognitions such as rejecting existing authority structures” (p. 25). They further state that “this psychological state may motivate people to restore their freedom by engaging in behaviors that are prohibited (i.e., defiant behavior)” (p. 25). If noncompliance, then, can represent an assertion of freedom, PBIS instead seeks to focus on *rewarding* students for complying with school rules and *changing* their behavior without addressing the injustices which elicit righteous indignation and frustration from students being overly targeted. This echoes Shalaby’s (2017) work positing that students deemed as “troublemakers” are actually “canaries in the coal mine” demonstrating what is wrong with our school environments.

Rewarding students for following directions, completing tasks, and being quiet is the antithesis of liberatory education. Although data suggest that applying PBIS can reduce the disciplinary disparities of Black youth and other racially targeted groups (McIntosh et al., 2018, 2021), this does not create “a collective space to methodically tear down the educational survival complex and collectively rebuild a school system that truly loves all children and sees schools as children’s homeplaces, where students are encouraged to give this world hell” (Love, 2019, p. 102). Systems like PBIS seem to suggest that “success” is possible if we follow behavioral expectations, but as yoon (2022) writes, “behavior systems that do not interrogate common-sense control, normalization, and removal are unlikely to be transformative without critically grappling with the reality that state institutions like school systems will not love us, no matter how compliant we are” (p. 273). PBIS can never create more just schools or a more just world.

Although we have primarily focused our analysis on the design and intention of PBIS rather than its implementation, it is essential to note that more “fidelity” to PBIS does not address any of the problems we have outlined here nor make it more trauma-informed. We echo the question posed by yoon (2022): “While there is a great deal of attention to fidelity of implementation in PBIS research, I suggest, instead, asking who maintains fidelity to the dignity of disabled [Black, Indigenous, and Students of Color] and their families, to their complex personhood, and to their dreams” (p. 272).

Who is Responsible for Changing These Practices?

When schools implement PBIS, teachers and administrators are at risk of overemphasizing compliance and consequences rather than seeking to

understand the etiologies and presentations of trauma responses. None of the key practices within any of the tiers suggest trauma responses as potential etiologies of “unwanted behavior.” PBIS emphasizes that a school can and should “effectively teach appropriate SEB skills to all students” (Center on PBIS, 2022, n.p.) but makes no mention of the social, emotional, or behavioral elements of trauma responses, including those connected to experiencing identity-based harms and/or traumas (Saleem et al., 2020). In other words, implementing PBIS in line with the strategies outlined on PBIS.org actually steers educators *away* from being trauma-informed.

This encourages and sustains teacher labeling and pathologization of student behavior (Bornstein, 2017). PBIS reproduces binary constructs such as appropriate/inappropriate and orderly/disorderly, which prioritize dominant norms rooted in whiteness and ableism and harms students who have been historically and are currently marginalized. To truly create trauma-informed and healing-centered schools, we must divest from PBIS and disentangle it from TIE.

When special educators and school psychologists use PBIS language and data to apply labels, this pathologization is made visible. However, the responsibility to disrupt pathologization belongs to everyone including classroom teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, social workers, school nurses, administrative assistants, school board members, transportation staff, food services, and custodial staff. The in-the-hallway conversations about “those kids” and “their parents” are also part of the problem and require addressing. Teacher education programs and in-service training must both acknowledge patterns and habits of white saviorism, anti-Blackness, and other forms of oppression within schools and ensure these are being directly addressed.

Policy makers and educators need to be willing to engage in honest and uncomfortable conversations about the programs we rely on and the origins of these programs. This includes PBIS but extends well beyond this framework. We must divest from programs that have been pitched to be the answer to “problem behaviors,” especially ones that do not address systemic oppression. This requires us to depersonalize the critiques of any program used. We can ask ourselves and each other these questions: *why* do I feel so protective of this program? *What if* I reflected on and allowed myself to be challenged on current and former educational practices?

We live in a complex and nuanced world. Token systems and ODR charts will not create healthy and thriving learning communities. We need radically different and racially-just approaches that are flexible, adaptable, and responsive to the realities of our world. Annamma states the need for “research situated deeply in the social context and rooted in our search for justice” (2018, p. 136). We need less research focusing on proving that PBIS works and more research centered on applying theoretical frameworks such as DisCrit to

examine how programs are disrupting or maintaining the status quo with a centralizing focus on the experiences of youth and families whose stories, experiences, and expertise are consistently undervalued and discounted (Annamma 2018; Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Connor et al., 2016; Shah & Grimaldos 2022).

Where Do We Go from Here?

Simply applying words and phrases like “equity” or “trauma-informed” like Band-Aids does not address the oppressive impact of many practices, policies, and programs in education and society.

Trauma-informed, culturally sustaining practices must be intentionally paired with justice-centered disruptive theories and frameworks such as DisCrit (Connor et al., 2016) to address historical and present injustices, and embedded into every element of public education. This requires partnership with families and communities, especially those who are continuously dismissed, ignored, and disbelieved. We must disrupt the weaponization of policy and curriculum “as tools of whiteness to discount, deny, and silence” (Shah & Grimaldos, 2022, p. 22).

We recognize that some are working to change PBIS from the inside, such as Culturally Responsive PBIS (Bal, 2018). Although we do not subscribe to this approach, we know that there are many paths toward disrupting systemic oppression and we encourage continued disruption at all levels and in many ways. However, we do not believe that we can fix a program that is working the way it was intended; to be a tool of conformity, control, and compliance. We align ourselves with “abolitionist teaching” (Love, 2019) as the path toward truly liberatory and transformative educational practices. Love defines abolitionist teaching as “the practice of working in solidarity with communities of color while drawing on the imagination, creativity, refusal, (re)membering, visionary thinning, healing, rebellious spirit, boldness, determination, and subversiveness of abolitionists to eradicate injustice in and outside of schools” (p. 2).

An abolitionist approach to supporting youth and their families refuses any framework that upholds whiteness as “normal” and facilitates “hyper-surveillance, hyper-punishment, and hyper-labeling” (Annamma, 2018, p. 13). It necessarily positions Black, multicultural, disabled, trans, queer, and all people whose identities have been pushed to the margins as holding answers to educational issues, rather than portraying them as in need of “fixing” or recipients of saviorism by those in positions of power. We also advocate for abolishing PBIS by de-implementation of this framework and resisting any new adoption of PBIS. We call on educators to resist the pairing of TIE with PBIS wherever they see it. In addition to these

PBIS-specific recommendations, however, we urge all educators and education policy-makers to learn from, listen to, and take action guided by the people who are most impacted by programs and frameworks: marginalized students, educators, caregivers, families, and community members.

The project of abolitionist teaching is a large and complex one. There are many ways to begin. For example, we suggest centering these approaches: (a) asking students about their hopes and dreams; (b) working in partnership with families to ensure that there is a power-balanced relationship between home and school; (c) working with and securing funding for translators, interpreters, and cultural liaisons; and (d) examining staff and student interactions and address racism, ableism, gender-based violence, homophobia, and other forms of oppression playing themselves out in school through ongoing practices of accountability. These and similar strategies are explicitly included in justice-oriented TIE models (Venet, 2021).

As educators and schools respond to the collective trauma of the early 2020s, there have already been calls for more compliance and more punishment. Unsnarling PBIS from justice-oriented trauma-informed approaches will not be easy, but it is necessary for our collective liberation.


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Note

1. All direct quotes in the following sections (unless otherwise cited) are taken from the online descriptions of tiers on PBIS.org and do not have associated page numbers.

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Appendix A: Key Practices of PBIS

Key Practices of PBIS from PBIS.org Retrieved between July and August 2022

Tier I

School-wide Positive Expectations and Behaviors are Defined and Taught

Rather than establishing specifically what not to do, schools define and teach the behaviors and expectations they want to see. Schools should identify 3–5 positively stated, easy-to-remember expectations. These should align with creating the kind of positive school climate the school wants to create. Anyone should be able to walk into the school at any time and ask 10 random students to name the school-wide expectations. At least 80% of the time those students should be able to say what they are and give examples of what they look like in action.

For students to know the expectations, they must be taught. The Tier I team should decide how students will learn expected academic and social behaviors across various school settings.

Procedures for Establishing Classroom Expectations and Routines Consistent with School-Wide Expectations

Students spend the majority of their day within classroom settings. It's critical the expectations in the classroom align with the broader school-wide systems. This consistency supports better behavioral outcomes for all students. Teachers explain what the school-wide expectations look like in their classrooms during specific classroom-level routines.

Continuum of Procedures for Encouraging Expected Behavior

A school's Tier I team determines how to acknowledge students positively for doing appropriate behaviors. Schools adopt a token system in addition to offering specific praise when students do what's expected. No matter the system, it should be:

- Linked to school-wide expectations
- Used across settings and within classrooms
- Used by 90% or more of all school personnel
- Available to all students within the school

Continuum of Procedures for Discouraging Problem Behavior

All discipline policies should include definitions for behaviors interfering with academic and social success. They offer clear policies and procedures for addressing office-managed versus classroom-managed problems. Defining both the behaviors and the procedures promotes consistent application of Tier I across all students and school personnel.

Procedures for Encouraging School-Family Partnerships

Teams should solicit stakeholders, including families, for input on Tier I foundations. Opportunities to provide ongoing feedback and direction should happen at least once a year, if not more regularly. This input ensures Tier I is culturally responsive and reflects the values of the local community.

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Appendix A. (continued)

Key Practices of PBIS from PBIS.org Retrieved between July and August 2022

Tier 2**Increased Instruction and Practice with Self-Regulation and Social Skills**

Regardless of the intervention, Tier 2 supports include additional instruction for key social, emotional, and/or behavioral skills. An important outcome of Tier 2 interventions is when students can regulate on their own, when, where and under what conditions particular skills are needed and can successfully engage in those skills. Once data indicate a positive response to the intervention, students learn how to monitor and manage their own behavior.

Increased Adult Supervision

Tier 2 supports include intensified, active supervision in a positive and proactive manner. For example, adults may be asked to move, scan, and interact more frequently with some students, according to their needs. This can be accomplished with simple rearrangements across school environments.

Increased Opportunity for Positive Reinforcement

Tier 2 supports target expected behavior by providing positive reinforcement often. For example, students who participate in a Tier 2 Check-in Check-out intervention engage in feedback sessions with their classroom teacher and other adults in the school as many as 5–7 times per day. Many students view this positive adult attention as reinforcing and as a result may be more likely to continue engaging in expected behaviors.

Increased Pre-Corrections

At this level, another key practice to prevent problem behaviors is to anticipate when a student is likely to act out and do something to get ahead of it. For example, specifically reminding students of classroom expectations. These pre-corrections might be gestures or verbal statements delivered to an entire class, a small group of students, or with an individual student. Pre-corrections set students up for success by reminding them, prior to any problem, what to do.

Increased Focus on Possible Function of Problem Behavior

It is important to consider why students engage in certain behaviors in order [to] align Tier 2 interventions best suited to their needs. When they know what motivates students to behave a certain way, teachers can help them find alternatives to their unwanted behavior.

Increased access to academic supports

Some students receiving Tier 2 behavior support may need additional academic support, too. Often challenging behavior serves the purpose of allowing students to avoid or even escape academic tasks that are beyond their skill level. Academic intervention along with behavioral support may be needed to improve student success.

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Appendix A. (continued)

Key Practices of PBIS from PBIS.org Retrieved between July and August 2022

Tier 3**Function-based assessments**

Functional behavior assessment (FBA) is the formal process for ensuring a student's plan centers on why a student behaves the way they do. FBA allows teams to identify which interventions are most likely to be useful for an individual student.

Plans resulting from a formal FBA process will include strategies for:

- Preventing unwanted behavior
- Teaching appropriate behavior
- Positively reinforcing appropriate behavior
- Reducing rewards for unwanted behavior
- Ensuring student safety

Wraparound

Wraparound differs from many service delivery strategies, in that it provides a comprehensive, holistic, youth and family-driven way of responding when children or youth experience serious mental health or behavioral challenges. Wraparound puts the child or youth and family at the center of the process to develop a support plan. With support from a team of professionals and natural supports, the family's ideas and perspectives about what they need and what will be helpful drive all of the work in Wraparound.

The student and their family members work with a Wraparound facilitator to build their Wraparound team, which can include the family's friends and people from the wider community, as well as providers of services and supports.

With the help of the team, the family and young person take the lead in deciding team vision and goals, and in developing creative and individualized services and supports that will help them achieve the goals and vision. Team members work together to put the plan into action, monitor how well it's working, and change it as needed.

Person-Centered Planning

Person-Centered Planning (PCP) is a way for diverse people, who share a common need to align: Their vision, purposes, and goals, Their understanding of the student's past, present, and future life, and Their actions for change, mutual support, personal and team development, and learning.

Cultural and Contextual Fit

With every practice, the student's and the school's culture and context must be considered. Each of these elements influences and adds value to a school's Tier 3 practices:

- Local environments such as neighborhoods and cities
 - Personal characteristics such as race, ethnicity, and nationality
 - Learning histories such as family, social routines, customs, and experiences
 - Language such as dialect and vocabulary
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