Believe in every child

An Introduction to school-wide Positive Behaviour Support

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Some common school problems...

For students
• Poor/no communication skills
• Challenging behaviour (self injury, tantrums, aggression, absconding, insert your favourite here)
• Few self-help skills
• Failure to engage
• Failure to acquire skills/low attainment

For educators
• Frustration
• Feeling I’m not doing enough
• Feeling I don’t have the right tools
• Feeling resources are used inefficiently
How long have educators been dealing with these issues?
• A long time.

What prevents effective solutions?
• Failure to base decisions on credible empirical evidence
• Failure to use available resources efficiently
• Pressure to be new and innovative

We can do better!
Some notes on credible evidence

NO 😞

• Theories
• Testimonials
• Recommendations from people you trust
• Websites
• Books
• Training programmes
• Someone saying they have evidence

YES ☺️

• Experimental research published in a peer-reviewed journal
• Always ask:
  • What specific changes will this intervention produce?
  • How do you know?
  • Can you show me the data?
We can all agree...

1. It is better to **prevent problems** than to deal with them once they occur.  
   – This requires a preventative (not reactive) approach to intervention

2. When children have intensive needs, we want to make sure they get effective, evidence-based interventions **as quickly as possible**.  
   – This requires that we quickly identify those children and have resources readily available to them.

• Both require a **SCHOOL CULTURE** that supports these ideals.
School-wide Positive Behaviour Support

• School-wide positive behaviour support (SWPBS) is a strategy for improving social and academic behaviour of ALL students.
  – **School-wide**: Focus on the whole school
    • Not just certain children, classrooms or teachers
  – **Positive**: Focus on building teaching and reinforcement systems aimed at acquiring important skills
    • Instead of focussing on behaviours we don’t want or what children can’t do
  – **Behaviour**: Focus on specific expectations
    • Which helps us define what we want pupils to be *doing*
  – **Support**: Focus on ensuring all students receive the support they need to be successful
How does SWPBS work?

• SWPBS uses a “multi-tiered” approach to intervention.

• This means that all students get some form of intervention for building skills and improving behaviour
  • but it systematically identifies students with more intense needs to ensure they get the interventions/supports they require.

• So...SWPBS helps students get the evidence-based supports they need
  • whilst also helping schools use their resources more efficiently.
Tier 3: Tertiary Prevention:
Highly individualised
Behaviour Support
Planning

Tier 2: Secondary
Prevention:
Focussed intervention on
specific challenges or skills

Tier 1: Primary Prevention:
School-/Classroom-
Wide Systems for
All Students,
Staff, & Settings

~80% of Students

~15%

~5%
Let’s think about the flu...

• Prevention first!
  • Flu jab (Tier 1)

• Flu jab didn’t work? What next?
  • Bed rest, drink lots of fluids, paracetamol (Tier 2)

• Still unwell?
  • Antiviral medication, intravenous fluids, hospital care (Tier 3)
Now let’s think about the educational equivalent...

• What does “education flu” look like?
  • Poor/no communication skills
  • Challenging behaviour
  • Few self-help skills
  • Failure to engage
  • Failure to acquire skills/low attainment
Preventing Education Flu: Tier 1 Strategies

• Focus on SYSTEMATIC teaching communication skills across ALL levels of ability
  • Using effective, evidence-based strategies (e.g., discrete trial teaching)
  • Vocal, PECS, Makaton

• Focus on activities that build functional skills
  • Passive engagement doesn’t build skills
  • For anything we do in the classroom, we should be asking “What skill is this teaching?”
  • If the skill is “sitting and observing something” or if you can’t identify the behaviour that is being taught and how it is helpful to the child, choose something else!
Preventing Education Flu: Tier 1

• Use high rates of reinforcement
  • so that children don’t need to engage in problem behaviour to get it.

• Raise expectations
  • No child is too ______ to learn.
  • Does “He’s not ready” really mean “I’m not sure I can teach it”? 

• Take data daily.
  • This is the only way to know if teaching is effective.
  • Documenting IEP goals is not enough.
Tier 2 Strategies

• Some children still get the education flu, even after the jab.
• Tier 2 strategies typically involve a “stronger dose” of Tier 1.
• For example
  • More time allocated to building particular skills (including contriving opportunities to teach the skill across the day)
  • Reinforcement systems to target particular skills (e.g., a token system) or to decrease particular behaviours (e.g., reinforcing a specific alternative behaviour)
Tier 3 Strategies

• Recall that if SWPBS is done right, there should only be about 5% of children who need the most intensive level of support.

• These supports are highly individualised and aimed at addressing specific skills deficits or challenging behaviours.
  - Interventions often require specialist training and intensive 1-to-1 support for intervention delivery

• Often involve a functional behaviour assessment, which should be conducted under the guidance of a qualified behaviour analyst

• Focus is still on **skill building**
  - Simply identifying triggers for problem behaviour and removing them does nothing to build skills or resiliency
SWPBS in Mainstream Schools

• The structure is the same, but the strategies in Tiers 1 and 2 are slightly different.
• If you want more information on SWPBS in mainstream schools, contact me 😊
If we get this right, children and their teachers will be more successful.

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School-/Classroom-Wide Systems for All Students, Staff, & Settings

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Tier 2: Secondary Prevention:
Focussed intervention on specific challenges or skills

~15%

Tier 3: Tertiary Prevention:
Highly individualised Behaviour Support Planning

~5%
Evidence


Interested in learning more?

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Positive approaches to behaviours that challenge