

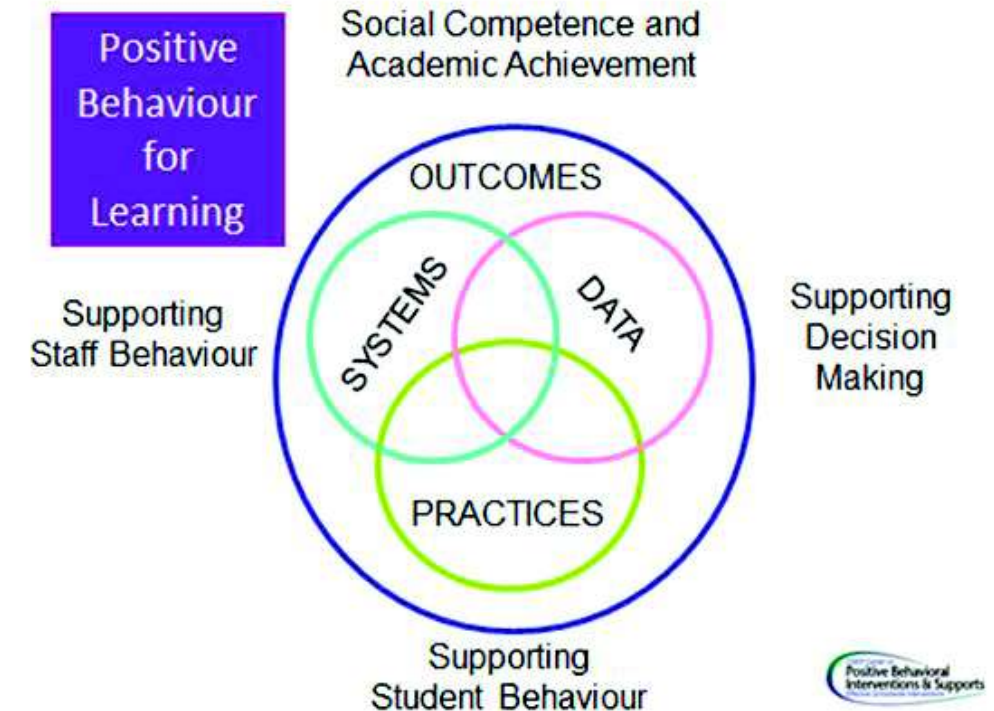
using the positive behaviour for learning framework to meet the academic and social needs of students with special needs...

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Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) is a systems approach that addresses the diverse academic and social needs of students in schools to support them achieving outcomes that will enable them to be successful. PBL is a multi-tiered framework that guides the establishment of a continuum of supports that may be modified to meet the needs of ALL students. Critically, Positive Behaviour for Learning emphasises a problem solving approach focused on building the capability of teachers to (1) recognise student learning and support needs (2) respect learner diversity and (3) respond effectively to student need.

School-wide Universal Prevention reinforces one of the most important and powerful aspects of a whole school systems approach to behaviour and academic learning – the prevention of problems. When both academic and behavioural instruction are consistently utilised school-wide and in the classroom, it is easier to identify where learning errors might be occurring as well as how to correct them. Effective classroom management and instruction are critical components of Universal Prevention. When implemented systematically, the majority of students (80-90%) will be sufficiently supported by the prevention strategies implemented at this level.

At the Advanced Tiers level, students who are unresponsive to universal prevention strategies are considered at risk, and therefore provided with more specialised support beyond the school-wide plan. Here the PBL / Learning and Support team focuses on reducing the number of existing cases of problem behaviours by establishing efficient and rapid responses including differentiated delivery of the social and academic curriculum. Small group targeted interventions are characterised by instruction that is more specific. The goal is to assist students to build essential skills, reduce or prevent the likelihood of problem behaviour occurrences and to enable these students to be supported by the school-wide PBL effort. When universal prevention is sufficiently embedded, there will often remain a small proportion of students who will



require more personalised and intensive intervention and support. These students have complex needs and often present with a range of disabilities. Here PBL/ Learning and Support teams work with families and other support agencies with a focus upon reducing the intensity and or complexity of existing cases of problem behaviour by providing supports that are: function based; contextually appropriate and person centred; strength based and instructionally oriented; and linked to the school-wide universal prevention approach.

“PBL provides a framework to organise and plan school-wide support and interventions to meet the specific needs of students in the school setting...”

PBL provides a framework to organise and plan school-wide support and interventions to meet the specific needs of students in the school setting, both broadly and when additional needs arise, with small group and individual student interventions. The application of a combined data, systems, practices approach enables schools to

organise their resources effectively and address the specific needs by making data based decisions, using evidence based practices and developing effective, efficient systems that support staff to implement, monitor and manage interventions across a multi-tiered continuum. This approach enables schools to braid together a wide range of initiatives and policies into one continuum that can be modified in intensity to meet the academic and social needs of all students.

PBL is supported by a large body of research undertaken over 20 years that provides strong evidence for its effectiveness (Richter, Lewis and Hagar, 2011). A specific PBL research collaboration with the University of Western Sydney began in 2006. This project involved 28 schools in the area formerly referred to by the Department of Education and Communities as Western Sydney Region. The success of that project led to a major longitudinal study funded by the Australian Research Council and the Department of Education and Communities. The study, *Enabling schooling success: Psycho-social drivers and the impact of positive behaviour for learning intervention on behaviour, well-being, academic engagement and achievement* will finish mid-2014 and will further enhance our understanding of the implementation of PBL in Australian schools.

Applying the framework to a broad range of settings including Schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs)

Currently there are more than 800 schools across NSW Public Schools (representing 36% of the State) that are trained to implement Positive Behaviour for Learning. This includes 32 Schools for Specific Purposes that service students with a range of disability and complex learning and behavioural needs. One of the key advantages to using the PBL framework is its broad application to a wide range of settings and the capacity for schools to modify the intensity of support provided across the multi-tiered continuum. Whilst Universal school-wide support is made up of essential features such as developing school-wide expectations and a teaching matrix from which to explicitly teach and reinforce expected behaviours and social skills, the delivery of these in terms of frequency, form and structure can be modified and intensified to suit the needs of the students and the setting. For example in an SSP for students with intellectual disability, the implementation of a universal school-wide strategy often necessitates the implementation of a communication program to support staff in teaching all students to develop essential communication skills and to learn the school-wide expectations. So whilst the core features of implementing PBL and the science of behaviour remain the same, the context influences the delivery.

Implementing the essential features of PBL: Considerations for intensification of support across the multi-tiered continuum

Universal Prevention



- Learning adjustments provided to meet differing needs and to suit communication, cognitive, social and emotional, physical and developmental level
- Explicit teaching methods to address individual learning needs e.g. communication supports, sensory considerations in order to facilitate the understanding of school-wide expectations
- Increased opportunities across settings in the school and beyond to practice and promote generalisation of skills
- Responses to behaviour – consideration of function of behaviour, teaching intensified and modified to correct learning errors
- Staff training and commitment is essential. Strong focus on building staff capability to understand, recognise, respect and respond to the behaviour and learning needs of students specific to their context

- Staff capacity building through mentoring arrangements

Advanced Tiers - Intensive Personalised Support

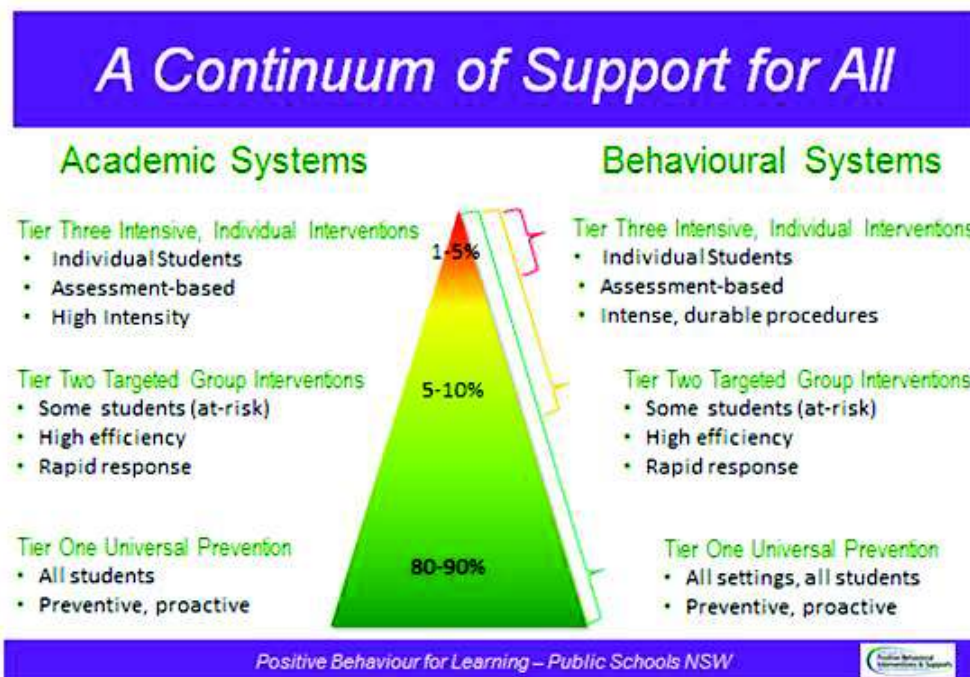
- Increased complexity of clientele in SSPs due to level of disability, emotional and behavioural disorders, trauma and multiple diagnoses and impact of these variables on behaviour
- Support for teachers – high level of professional development in understanding behaviour and providing behaviour support to re-engage students in learning
- Required flexibility in learning programs
- Focus on nurturing and supporting staff and student well-being

An Exemplar: Applying the PBL framework to a School for Specific Purposes (SSP)

Halinda School is an exemplar of an holistic approach to education and the implementation of the PBL framework in a special needs setting that effectively braids together initiatives into an integrated system of support that meets the social and academic needs of all students and supports and values all stakeholders. Halinda School is positioned in Whalan, Western Sydney and services students with diverse abilities, accommodating and adjusting for a range of disabilities including Autism, Physical and Moderate to Severe Intellectual Disabilities. Led by Principal Jan Eccleston, the school has worked systematically to develop a multi-tiered system of support, developing a positive school culture and climate for staff, students, family and community. Having a large number of students with high needs requires an intensification of the support provided across the continuum. Staff has been supported to shift to a problem solving approach that is positive and strengths based through effective communication and consultation, ongoing professional development, a culture of inclusivity and strong community partnerships.

Advanced Tiers - Targeted Support

- Small group intervention – targeted at class level and based on student need



In addressing the essential features of school-wide Universal Prevention strate-

gies, Halinda School has focused on student engagement and well-being by implementing strategies that address learning dispositions, social functioning, happiness and satisfaction. This has seen the restructuring of playgrounds; the implementation of a high level of visual communication; and staff training to improve their understanding of students' behaviour. Staff have developed a sense of shared responsibility for all students in the school. The whole school focus on engagement has seen the effective use of data to track and address the needs of students with low engagement who require a more personalised approach and those with high engagement in need of additional learning challenges. Aligned with the essential features of PBL Universal Prevention, there is a strong emphasis on effective acknowledgement and reinforcement of appropriate behaviour and other areas of learning such as communication, social skills and functional literacy.



“Halinda School has focused on student engagement and well-being by implementing strategies that address learning dispositions, social functioning, happiness and satisfaction...”

Targeted group interventions have focussed on family engagement. Halinda School understands the impact of parent connection and works closely with families and community groups in a spirit of collaboration. Families are provided with many opportunities to support them and their children and address specific identified needs. These include outreach programs offered through TAFE, communication workshops offered by the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, the development of a community garden, and bus tours to support students' transition to post school options. Additional programs to support students include signing choir, music groups, and a wheelchair buddy system have been very successful in supporting students to develop skills around safety, responsibility and empathy. A sense of *'being, belonging and becoming'* is deeply ingrained in the school culture.

Where intensive personalised support is required, staff at Halinda School conduct a '360 degree ecological inventory' including home and school environments, support services involvement, the student's learning history, skill levels and functional behaviour analysis. This approach is supported by current research (Howard I. Bath, 2009; Uniting Care Children, Young People and Families - Social Justice Unit, 2011; Department of Employment, Education and Training, 2004). The analysis of the gathered information, behaviour data and research literature form the basis for planning interventions using a student 'strengths based' approach and includes the monitoring of progress and effectiveness.

Redefining the purpose of school at this particular point in time for the individual student may be required if a student's emotional status, is compromised. Starting from where the student is in terms of his/her emotional needs facilitates the development of trust, emotional security, self-regulation and resilience. Principal Jan Eccleston notes that this process is important in developing 'the quality school life picture' for the rehabilitation and education of the student.

Footnote: The Public Schools NSW Positive Behaviour for Learning leadership team are working collaboratively with cross-functional and interagency teams to develop an effective and integrated support framework that improves the efficiency and effectiveness of support provided for students with additional needs such as disability and mental health needs including the impact of trauma.

In addition an Advanced Tiers Project team has been established and is currently working to develop consistent content state-wide to continue to build the capability of school teams and PBL coaches across NSW.

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PBL wiki: <http://pbisupport.pbworks.com>
PBIS: www.pbis.org

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