

# Pennsylvania's Schoolwide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports System:

## An Introduction



# Pennsylvania's Schoolwide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports System: An Introduction

## What is the Schoolwide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports System?

Schoolwide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) is a proactive approach to discipline that promotes appropriate student behavior and increased learning. Traditionally, models of school discipline tend to be reactive (i.e., student misbehavior results in punitive consequences). The word "approach" is key in that SWPBIS provides direction, not a canned program, for developing a comprehensive system of behavior support tailored to individual school needs.

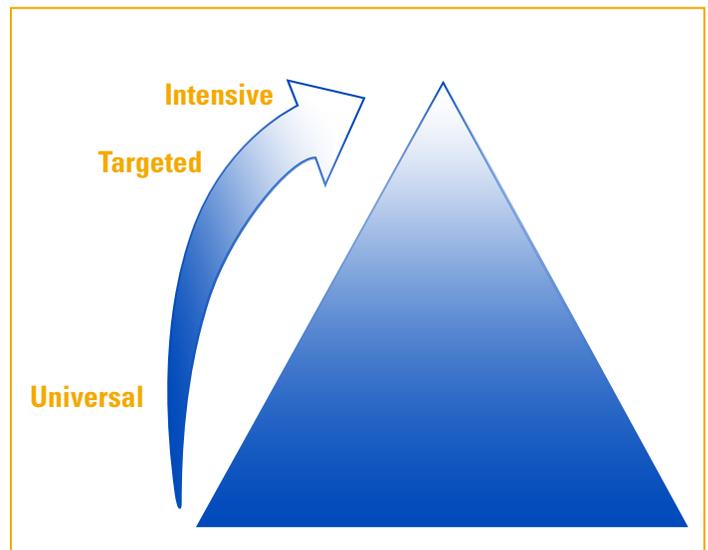
The system is based upon a three-tiered model (See Figure 1). The first tier (universal) serves as the foundation upon which the other two tiers are built. This tier provides a system of supports to all students in a school based on preventative practices that emphasize teaching and reinforcing expected student behaviors. Tier two (secondary) provides targeted interventions to support students classified as "at risk," who require more intervention than is typically provided within tier one universal support. Supports offered in tier three (tertiary) require the most intensive level of intervention for students with the most significant behavioral/emotional support needs.

This three-tiered approach does not require less effort than current, non-SWPBIS practices, but it channels and focuses school-based efforts, making them more efficient and effective. Characteristics of SWPBIS:

- Interventions are planned and positive rather than reactive and punitive
- Conditions (antecedents) contributing to inappropriate behavior are carefully managed or eliminated
- Multiple opportunities for positive, corrective feedback are created while negative critical feedback is limited or eliminated
- Prosocial behaviors are taught directly, practiced frequently, and routinized so that they become automatic

Research supports that a positive, direct instructional approach is more effective than traditional punishment-based alternatives in improving student academic success and improving overall school climate (Horner, 2000; Myers, 2001).

Figure 1: SWPBIS Model



## Is There More Than One Model of SWPBIS?

SWPBIS approaches are as varied as the schools in which they are applied. The approach adopted by the Bureau of Special Education/Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) was developed by Rob Horner, George Sugai, and others associated with the University of Oregon. This research-based approach is recognized nationally and is supported by a federal grant through the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Their website is recognized and supported by the OSEP Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports <[www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)>.

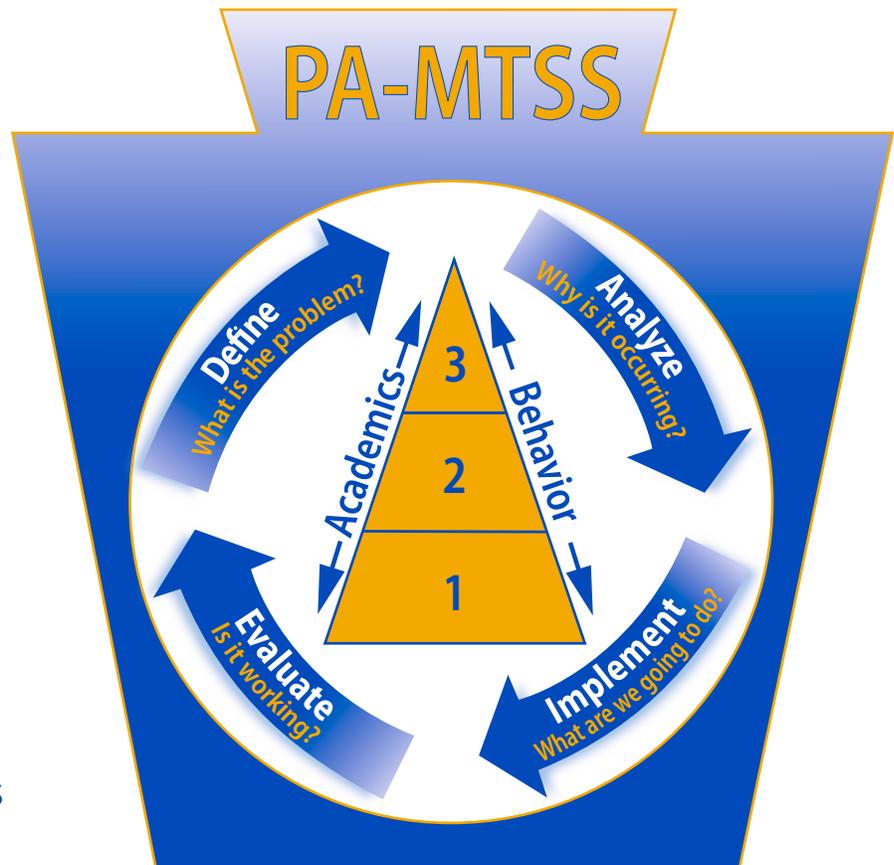
It is important to realize that SWPBIS is intended for all students, not just students who receive special education services. The SWPBIS approach is structured to provide a blueprint to support all students in a school, from the most compliant to those requiring the most intensive supports. This approach:

- is research based;
- promotes accountability and sustainability through data collection and planned, well-articulated individual building to district level structures; and
- fosters school-community partnerships at all levels.

Furthermore, the SWPBIS model conceptually aligns with Pennsylvania's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) (See Figure 2).

Figure 2: PA-MTSS

Pennsylvania's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is defined as a comprehensive system of supports that, in the commonwealth, includes standards-aligned, culturally responsive, and high quality core instruction, universal screening, data-based decision-making, tiered services and supports, family engagement, central/building level leadership, RtII/SLD determination, and professional learning. Simply put, Pennsylvania's MTSS represents a broad set of evidence-based practices that may be implemented across a system to include academics and behavior within a recursive and systematic problem-solving process. PA-MTSS is relatively synonymous with RtII and is intended to help all students meet with continuous academic and behavioral success. The SWPBIS framework also aligns with Pennsylvania's MTSS.



The MTSS framework is comprised of multiple tiers that work in tandem and are associated with efficient, effective, and increasingly intensive services and supports for all students, including students with disabilities. The first tier of the model represents provision of standards-aligned core instruction for all students. It is anticipated that this first tier of service delivery will be sufficient, meaning that most students will meet with academic and/or behavioral success in response to high-quality core instruction that is provided within the larger context of a healthy system. The second tier of service delivery is available to students who are beginning to fall below benchmark status, and who therefore may benefit from supplemental

instruction and intervention. The third tier is for students who are experiencing the most significant academic, social-emotional, or behavioral deficiencies. Tier 3 services and supports are highly customized to students' needs and represent the most intensive services that a school can provide within the confines of general education.

The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA '04) established the use of an alternative method for the identification of a student with a specific learning disability. Students who do not respond adequately to core and supplemental instruction and intervention may be considered for eligibility for special education services.

## Why is an SWPBIS System Necessary for a School?

SWPBIS can help significantly in maximizing the time students are engaged in relevant learning tasks. Time “off task” is not only unpleasant for staff but also decreases time for instruction; therefore, an approach to school discipline (e.g., SWPBIS) that maximizes learning time is of tremendous value to schools or districts seeking the proficient level of academic achievement for all students. Research has shown that changes such as those listed below contribute to high achievement and prosocial behavior in children and adolescents (Colvin, Kameenui, & Sugai, 1993; Mayer, 1995; Walker and Sprague, 1995).

- Differentiated instructional practices
- Improved instructional delivery
- Consistent, nonpunitive discipline practice
- Opportunities to learn prosocial and self-management skills
- Consistent, clear rules and high performance expectations
- Consistent enforcement of rules

The SWPBIS approach provides a continuum of prevention and intervention supports at each of the three tiers: universal (for all students), secondary (for students at risk), and tertiary (for students with intensive needs). At the tertiary level, SWPBIS embraces the conceptual approaches of wraparound and/or person-centered planning for students who have challenging behavioral needs requiring intensive support.

## Resources

Colvin, G., Kameenui, E.J., & Sugai, G. (1993). School-wide and classroom management: Reconceptualizing the integration and management of students with behavior problems in general education. *Education and Treatment of Children, 16*(1), 361-381.

Horner, R. (2000). Positive behavior supports. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 57*(2), 97-105.

Lembke, E. & Stichterm, J. (2006). Utilizing a system of screening and progress monitoring within a three-tiered model of instruction: Implications for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Beyond Behavior, Spring*, 3-9.

Mayer, G. (1995). Preventing antisocial behavior in school. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 28*(1), 476-478.

Myers, D. (2001, April). *Creating a continuum of effective behavioral supports*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network, Harrisburg, PA.

Walker, H.M., & Sprague, J.R. (1995). The path to school failure, delinquency, and violence: Causal factors and some potential solutions. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 35*(2), 67-73.

## Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

**Tom Wolf**  
Governor



[www.facebook.com/  
pattanpublications](https://www.facebook.com/pattanpublications)