



## Using Positive Discipline to Support PBIS School Wide Models

The reason many schools are engaged in PBIS is because they want kids to be able to learn, to do well and they want to do it in a way that is positive. Positive Discipline (PD) has these same goals.

Some of the great things about PBIS include:

- Opportunities to help with data collection;
- Whole school/systemic school culture buy-in necessary for maximum fidelity and best outcomes for students
- Development of Behavioral plans that are documentable

Implementation of PBIS can be challenging for adults when:

- Behaviorist theory may not address beliefs behind the behavior for the student
- Using positive and negative incentives may not be effective in teaching kids tools to do the “right” thing when no one is looking
- PBIS is an effective whole school system of building expectations. Depending on implementation, PBIS may not address intrinsically building SEL capacity and leadership skills

According to Bruce Perry, MD, “relationships are the agents of change and the most powerful therapy is human love.” Positive Discipline Lessons can help a PBIS culture focus on the **relationship** in an authentic, supportive and mutually respectful way.

PD and PBIS have different theories about human behavior, so naturally follows that strategies are different. The PD tools can feel really encouraging for the adult and the student, and can help the adults in the building provide concrete tools for parents and family members in growing home/school partnerships for student support.

PBIS uses **incentives** with an emphasis on the positive. PD uses relationships, encouragement and focus on helping a student feel capable and connected.

PD focuses on proactive **teaching skills** needed to behave. PBIS focuses on responding to the misbehavior.

PD focuses on having adults teach and model. Transition to using PD tools with fidelity can be slower; our culture aligns with PBIS. This is not surprising as we live in an incentive-based society. PBIS focuses more on what the student “should” be doing.

Widening the frame, we must consider students with insecure attachment or trauma histories. Although a school environment does not always provide the ideal or intentional environment for doing so, we also know that human beings with these issues in their past may often find themselves in the Tiers 2 and 3.

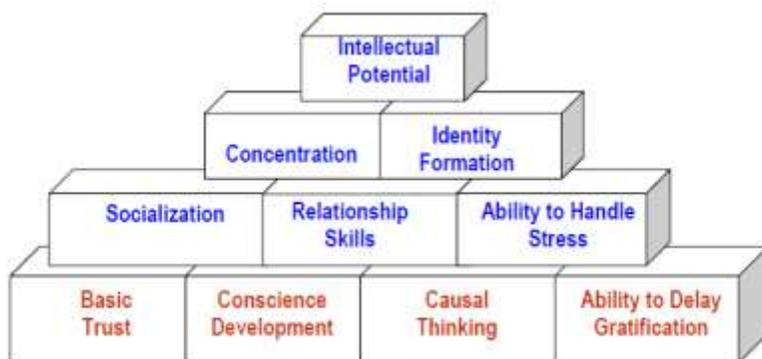
*“Students often exhibit behaviors that are a result of trauma but that can be misinterpreted by a teacher as willful disobedience, or that the child has greater controls over his/her behavior than he/she does. Potentially further complicating interpretation of behavior are cultural factors which may be difficult for the teacher to identify and understand.”*

Framingham Public Schools Teachers' Strategies Guide for Working with Children Exposed to Trauma, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 2008 p. 4

Children's experience with trauma and secure or insecure attachment often affects children's reactions under stress. Learning environments can offer additional challenges to children and activate their (perhaps overactive) fight or flight responses.

**Positive Discipline in the Classroom: Leaders Guide**

includes an illustration of the *Attachment Building Blocks* adapted by Penny Davis from 'Attachment Parenting' by Grossmont College Foster and Kinship Education.



Consider specific Positive Discipline tools to encourage skill building in areas that may need to be strengthened. These skills are also helpful as Tier 1 supports for building connections with all learners. Children who have trauma and insecure attachment in their histories may have delayed development of impulse control or language, which can make misbehaviors more prevalent. Proactive responses in our adults can provide opportunities for connection, accountability and building skills. Lesson plans for these specific skills are available in **Positive Discipline in the Classroom: Teachers' Guide Activities for Students.**

<p><b>Basic Trust</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Routines (including class meetings)</li> <li>• Consistency and reliability in the relationship.</li> <li>• Relationships based on dignity and respect (firm and kind)</li> <li>• Listening to their story</li> </ul>	<p><b>Causal Thinking</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "What" and "how" questions</li> <li>• Limited choices</li> <li>• Focusing on solutions</li> <li>• Avoid traditional consequences children can't process without causal thinking).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Ability to Delay Gratification</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Routines</li> <li>• Consistency</li> <li>• Relationships built on dignity and respect (firm and kind)</li> <li>• Class meetings – working with peers</li> <li>• Mistakes are opportunities to learn</li> </ul>	<p><b>Conscience Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "What" and "how" questions</li> <li>• Class meetings</li> <li>• Gradual building of empathy (being listened to, feeling felt)</li> <li>• Respecting differences</li> </ul>
<p><b>Relationship Skills and Socialization</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult relationships based on dignity and respect (firm and kind)</li> <li>• Class meetings</li> <li>• Problem solving</li> <li>• Wheel of choice</li> <li>• Opportunities for play and practice and making mistakes</li> <li>• Mistakes are opportunities to learn</li> </ul>	<p><b>Ability to Handle Stress, and Concentration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• De- escalation tools (modeled, taught, expected)</li> <li>• Teaching students about their own brain (brain in the palm of the hand)</li> <li>• Using "I statements"</li> <li>• Learning language for emotions</li> <li>• Space for "chilling out" (Positive Time Out or Chill Down Time – CDT)</li> <li>• Class meeting to be heard and validated, and to recognize that others have similar feelings.</li> <li>• Mistakes are opportunities to learn</li> </ul>	<p><b>Identity Formation and Intellectual Potential</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom jobs and responsibility</li> <li>• Being able to contribute in meaningful ways</li> <li>• Using "I" statements and learning language for emotions</li> <li>• Opportunities to practice during play</li> <li>• Learning how to make amends and fix mistakes instead of "paying for them"</li> <li>• "It seems like you feel..... because..."</li> </ul>	

Article adapted from a series of conversations on the Positive Discipline List Service (closed group list of Positive Discipline Trainers and Trainer Candidates), a presentation by Steven Foster, Lead Trainer posted to that conversation thread. Illustration found in the *Positive Discipline in Schools and Classroom: Leaders' Guide*, originally attributed to Penny G. Davis, MA. Used with permission. Table created using information available in handout "Tools for Rebuilding the Foundation for Children with Insecure Attachments or Trauma by Jody McVittie, as found on page 72 of *Positive Discipline for Early Childhood Educators* by Jane Nelsen, Cheryl Erwin and Steven Foster. For trainings in Chicago, IL and the Midwest, contact Kristin Hovious at [Kristin.hovious@selchicago.com](mailto:Kristin.hovious@selchicago.com) Find trainings worldwide at [www.positivediscipline.org](http://www.positivediscipline.org). Purchase these materials at [www.positivediscipline.com](http://www.positivediscipline.com).

