Tips for Educators: IEPs as an Essential Element of Individual Support Within Schoolwide PBIS

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Schoolwide PBIS has three key components:

- Universal support—provision of support to *all* students in a wide range of school settings in a proactive way to enable students to receive support without formal identification or referral for specific problem behavior.
- Group support—provision of more intensive support for students who have received universal support but who continue to experience patterns of problem behavior.
- Individual support—the most intensive support provided to students on an individual basis who have not had their needs adequately met through universal and group support because they require more intensive supports specifically tailored to their strengths, preferences, and unique needs.

Although early PBIS applications involved individual support to students with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities (Carr et al., 1999), individual support has not gotten nearly as much emphasis in many schoolwide models as had universal support. For PBIS to truly be *schoolwide* in meeting the needs of *all* students, individual support is an absolutely necessary component. In fact, IDEA specifies that during the development, review, and/or revision of a student's IEP, the IEP must "consider, if appropriate, strategies including positive behavioral supports, strategies, and supports to address…behavior" [34 C.F.R.300.346 (a)(2)(i) (1999)] for students whose behavior impedes their learning or the learning of others.

There has been limited emphasis in the PBIS literature on the development of IEPs that fully incorporate PBIS; likewise, there has been limited mention in literature primarily focusing on IEPs of PBIS considerations. Thus, an extremely important area for future emphasis is the development, implementation, and evaluation of IEPs as a tool for ensuring the effective delivery of individual PBIS support.

Based on a comprehensive legal analysis and review of IEP literature, we propose a framework for IEP conferences. This framework includes:

- Preparing in advance
- Connecting and getting started

- Sharing visions, great expectations, and strengths
- Reviewing formal evaluation, functional behavioral assessment, and current levels of performance
- Sharing resources, priorities, and concerns
- Developing goals and objectives
- Developing behavior intervention plan
- Determining placement
- Determining supplementary aids/services
- Determining related services
- Addressing assessment modifications
- Addressing grading
- Concluding the conference

Rather than seeing PBIS as an add-on to the IEP, this framework incorporates PBIS as an important element within each component.

In the remainder of this article, we share with you tips for educators in incorporating PBIS into each of these components (Salend, 2001; Shaw, Olive, & Wilber, 2001; Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001). Because parent partnerships are such an important element of effective IEP conferences (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001), we have also developed parallel tips for parents to enhance the likelihood of educator-parent collaboration. In this newsletter we include only the tips for educators, but you can find the tips for parents on our website—www.pbis.org. Through collaboration there is every reason to be optimistic that IEPs can be an effective vehicle for enhancing the effectiveness of individual PBIS support.

We would be very grateful if any readers of this newsletter would share successful strategies with us of what has worked in IEP conferences and especially share with us IEPs that do a particularly good job in one or more components in terms of incorporating PBIS. (Of course, you would need to remove all personally identifiable information and get the consent of the student and parent prior to sharing an IEP with us.) In future editions of the newsletter and on the website (www.pbis.org), we would greatly value having the opportunity to share IEP best practices that are submitted to us.

Preparing in Advance:

- Call parent(s) and discuss with him or her what he or she should expect during a conference
  - Send a written copy of the parent legal rights, if the parents don't already have this information
  - Conduct a functional behavior assessment (FBA) of the student's behavior, and share the results with the parents prior to the meeting
  - Tell the parents about other evaluations to be discussed at the conference

- What are the results?
- Send copies before the meeting
- Ask the parent about his or her preferences for how the conference will be run
  - Time
  - Location
  - Date
- Discuss whom the parents would like to be in attendance
  - Their child, if appropriate
  - Family members
  - Child advocate
  - Special education teachers
  - General education teachers
  - Physical and/ or occupational therapists
  - Speech and language therapist
  - PE teacher/Adaptive PE teacher
  - Music education teacher or therapist
  - School psychologist
  - School administrator
  - Special education administrator
  - Peers (possibly for just part of the meeting)
  - Professionals from community agencies
- Reflect on the school's strengths
  - In what areas can you provide helpful suggestions for the IEP?
  - Ask what support the family needs to address problem behavior at home.
- Discuss the conference with the student
  - Consider his or her preferences for participation
  - Ask about concerns
  - Ask about what the student sees as his or her accomplishments
  - If the student will participate in the conference, plan with him or her and the parents the supports that will be needed for the student to have meaningful participation
- Ask the parents if they need any help arranging transportation and/or child care if needed
- Consider whether it would be helpful to have the parents visit the student's classes and take notes prior to the conference
- Consider whether it would be helpful to have the parents visit possible future placements for the student
- Consider having a school pre-conference to enable other teachers to provide perspectives (e.g.

This is the time to find out if the student does well in one class and not another and examine the reasons why, prior to the IEP meeting.)

- Discuss results of evaluations
- Discuss student strengths in all classes or areas
- Discuss behavioral concerns and results of the functional behavior assessment
- Discuss and list areas that the IEP should address
  - Prioritize those you wish to work on the most
  - Review previous IEPs
    - Make sure the new IEP does not repeat the same goals and objectives unless it is appropriate to do so
    - Review progress of the previous year
      - Identify factors that have contributed to gains
      - Identify factors that have contributed to setbacks/lack of progress
- Communicate with staff from any community agencies, related service providers, teachers, or family members who will not be able to attend the conference
  - Write down their perspectives
- Write out your agenda for the meeting and share it with the parents in advance
  - Meet with parents, if necessary, to plan an agenda

Connecting and Getting Started

- Greet everyone
  - Help the parents with names of anyone who is new to them
- Clarify the purpose of the conference
  - Review the agenda
  - Suggest any preferred changes to the agenda
- Review the time frame
  - Identify people who may have to come and go so you don't miss the opportunity to hear from them

Sharing Visions, Great Expectations, and Strengths

- Ask the family to share their visions for the future
  - What are the family's great expectations?
  - On what student and family strengths can you build?
- Ask others on the team to share their visions of the most desirable future for the student
  - These should be based on the student's:
    - Strengths

- Preferences
- Needs

Reviewing Formal Evaluation, Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA), and Current Levels of Performance

- Ask the parent(s) for any questions he or she wrote down in advance about the evaluation results they received
- Ask parent(s) if he or she needs clarification of any terms that are new to him or her
- Discuss the evaluation procedures and test results
  - Ask if anyone disagrees with the results
  - Discuss why the results may or may not accurately reflect the student's daily performance
- Specify current levels of performance in all areas requiring specially designed instruction
- Discuss the FBA (Why is the problem behavior happening?)
  - What happens before the behavior?
  - What happens after the behavior?
  - What has been the consequence or reward?
- What hypotheses were discovered in the FBA as to why the behavior is occurring?
  - How were hypotheses tested?
  - What were the results?
- Using the FBA, precisely describe the behavior that occurs in school and home
  - Discuss how these problem behaviors occur in each setting
    - Discuss similarities and differences
    - Discuss what might account for any differences
  - Compare rewards and consequences in each setting
- Based on the findings of the FBA, discuss how PBIS should be considered in the development of all components of the IEP
  - Brainstorm ways to incorporate PBIS into:
    - Changing environments (school and home)
    - Altering daily routines
    - Teaching new skills
    - Ensuring rewards or consequences

Sharing Resources, Priorities, and Concerns

- Coordinator of the group should list the following on a chart for all to see:
  - Visions of the group for the student, especially related to appropriate behavior
  - Strengths of the student, family, and school

- Preferences of the student
- Major behavioral, academic, and social concerns at home and school
    - Who will need support?
    - Who can give support?
    - Plan how everyone can share his or her expertise and resources to create a comprehensive support program
  - Prioritize the list, encouraging team consensus

Developing Goals and Objectives

- Help generate appropriate goals and objectives (in light of current levels of performance) for all academic subjects, nonacademic subjects, and extracurricular activities that you believe will require specially designed instruction and/or support
- Make sure these goals and objectives are consistent with:
  - Preferences
  - Visions
  - Strengths
  - Priorities
  - Consider:
    - Social relationships
    - Future educational goals
    - Future career goals
- Make sure the goals expand the positive contributions the student can make to:
  - Family
  - Friends
  - Community
  - School
- Clarify who is responsible for each goal and objective
- Talk about how the goals and objectives will be generalized to other settings
- Determine how the objectives will be evaluated
  - What procedures will be used?
  - What schedule will be followed?
  - How will parents and other educators be informed of progress?

Developing Behavior Intervention Plan

- Identify target behavior using:
  - Observable, measurable, and clear descriptions of behaviors

- Don't use words that cannot be measured and observed like:
  - Aggressive
  - Frustrated
- Do use observable and measurable words like:
  - Hitting with hands
  - Screaming
  - Lying down on the floor
- Identify behavior conditions as specifically as possible:
  - Where the behavior is likely to occur
    - Recess, snack table, circle etc.
    - Hallway, passing period, restroom
  - When the behavior is likely to occur
    - Before music, after eating, during math
  - Who is around when behavior occurs
    - Teachers, peers, paraprofessionals
- Write at least two objectives for every problem behavior (more may be appropriate)
  - One objective should be written to decrease problem behavior
  - One objective should be written to increase new desirable or socially acceptable behavior to replace the problem behavior
- Identify criteria that will be used to measure success:
  - Frequency
  - Accuracy of response
  - Duration
- Identify timeline for:
  - Implementation
  - Monitoring progress
    - Data collection
      - Who and when
      - Materials for data collection
      - Types of data collection
  - Demonstration of mastery

Determining Placement

- Ensure that the placement is the least restrictive and most inclusive environment
  - Does the placement enable appropriate individualized instruction?
  - Will the student have access to the general curriculum and will modifications be included?

- Will the school ensure peer tutoring, mentoring, or cooperative grouping when appropriate?
- Will the student have a sense of belonging with peers with and without disabilities?
- Will PBIS be fully implemented in the placement?

Determining Supplementary Aids/ Services

- Ensure that supplementary aids/services are appropriate in each of the following dimensions:
  - Physical dimension
    - Mobility of student
    - Room arrangement
    - Seating
  - Instructional dimension
    - Access to general curriculum
    - Class work and homework
    - Assistive technology
    - Instructional strategies
    - Skill acquisition, maintenance, and generalization
    - Test taking
  - Social and Behavioral Dimension
    - Positive behavior support
    - Self-management skills
    - Peer support
    - Friendships
  - Team Collaboration Dimension
    - Paraprofessional, part or full time
    - Consultation from specialist(s)
    - Training for any or all members of the team

Determining Related Services

- Determine the related services needed to ensure educational progress, how often services will be provided, and who will provide each service (§ 300.24):
  - speech-language pathology and audiology services;
  - psychological services;
  - physical and/or occupational therapy;
  - recreation, including therapeutic recreation;
  - counseling services, including rehabilitation counseling;
  - orientation and mobility services;

- medical services for diagnostic or evaluation purposes;
- school health services;
- social work services in schools;
- parent counseling and training; and
- transportation.

Addressing Assessment Modifications

- What is the rationale for modifying assessment or taking alternative assessment?
  - Which tests will be modified?
  - Which tests are required at the current grade level?
    - State-wide assessments
    - District-level tests
  - What modifications will be made?
    - Reading of the directions
    - Reading of the test
    - Quiet room provided
    - Calculator provided
    - Shortened test time
    - Lengthened test time
    - Other
  - If the student is taking alternative assessments, what will be the format?
    - Paper portfolios
    - Electronic portfolio
    - Video tapes
    - Other

Addressing Grading

- Consider the possibility of the following grading systems for measuring progress:
  - Anecdotal/descriptive and portfolio grading
  - Checklists/rating scales
  - Contract grading
  - IEP grading
  - Level grading- indicating what grade level and semester level on which a student is working, for example: Third grade, second semester work.
  - Mastery level/criterion systems: For example, assigning a goal and marking when the student reaches that goal such as 80% mastery in five out of five trials.

- Multiple grading- grading on ability, effort, and achievement. Report cards can then include a listing of the three grades for each content area, or grades can be computed by weighting the three areas.
  - Numeric/letter grades
  - Pass/fail systems
  - Progressive improvement grading- As student takes tests , participates in learning activities, and receives feedback and instruction based on his or her performance throughout the grading period. Performance on cumulative tests and learning activities during the final weeks of the grading period are used to establish the student's grades.

Concluding the Conference

- Summarize the major decisions and follow-up tasks
  - Orally
  - In writing
- Clarify who is responsible for any follow-up tasks and a date by which each is to be accomplished
- Clarify how PBIS will be implemented
- Ask for a date to review the IEP implementation
- Determine how you will communicate as a team
  - Daily notebook
  - E-mail
  - Phone calls
- Review how progress will be measured and information shared
- Express appreciation for the team collaboration in decision making
- Affirm how valuable this alliance is to you and the school

References

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 *et seq*. (1999); 34 C.F.R.§ 300.24 *et seq*. (1999); 64 Fed. Reg. 12,406-12,672 (1999) (primary federal special education statute that provides funding and sets out substantive and procedural requirements for state and local special education programs).

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