

Bring more of the positive into schools.



When schools are strategic and thoughtful about student behavior and classroom discipline using a proven framework, like school-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, it does more than reduce classroom disruptions and bullying. It results in school-wide improvements in academic performance, attendance, and feelings of safety.

An emerging consensus among researchers shows schools are not only a primary place for children to learn academics but where they hone social, emotional, and behavioral habits just as important as school-smarts to their long-term success.¹ Many teachers report feeling ill-equipped to address behavior concerns in the classroom. However, a growing number of Texas schools are adopting frameworks and strategies that guide children and youth to make good choices, while providing teachers the tools necessary to address students' needs and identify those kids who might need additional help to be better prepared to learn in the classroom. State-level support for efforts like these would bring strategies already shown to work to schools and classrooms across Texas.

What to Know:

- A 2012 national survey of school teachers found that **87% of teachers teach students with behavioral challenges** and 72% of those say they need more resources to address the behavioral needs of their students.² Social and behavioral challenges contribute to a host of other issues for schools and Texas: from bullying to disciplinary actions, from truancy to dropping out of school.³
- An extensive study by the Council of State Governments published in 2011 found an astounding **60 percent of Texas students were suspended or expelled** at least once between 7th and 12th grade. Kids punished this way are also about five times more likely to drop out of school or repeat a grade.
- While any child can act out sometimes, **not all students face the same type of discipline** for their errors in behavior. Among kids with an emotional disturbance, half are suspended 11 times or more.⁴ African-American students, and in particular African-American males, are substantially more likely than their peers to receive a discretionary disciplinary action that removes them from the classroom, even though they are not more likely to receive a mandatory removal for more severe offenses.
- **School disciplinary referrals are the single greatest predictor of juvenile justice involvement in Texas.**⁵ According to the Council on State Government's analysis, "When a student was suspended or expelled for a discretionary school discipline violation, this action nearly tripled (2.85 times) the likelihood of juvenile justice contact within the subsequent school year."⁶ Although not factored into the Council on State Government report, many disciplinary challenges fall to school resource officers, who issue Class C misdemeanor tickets for misbehavior. This, too, increases justice system involvement.
- **Educators report feeling ill-equipped to handle behavior issues** and related concerns at school.^{7, 8} Nearly 1 out of 3 special education teachers and 1 in 4 school health service staff say they feel they do not have the training, support, or supervision to deal with students' behavioral health challenges.⁹ Despite that, most children who receive mental or behavioral health services get them at school.¹⁰
- The good news is schools that deliberately plan a successful approach for children can see progress school-wide.¹¹ One effective framework, called school-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SW-PBIS or school-wide PBIS), can

cut bullying by half or more; what's more, research shows **PBIS can cut disciplinary actions by up to 60 percent**, while also improving attendance, academics, and the school climate.^{12, 13}

How to Make it Happen:

- **Link more schools to PossiBillitleS, by promoting and assisting schools in the use and implementation of school-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports:** When implemented to fidelity, school-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports improves schools' climate. When schools effectively use the "PBIS" approach school-wide for all students, teachers have the tools they need to prevent and address students' behavior concerns early. Schools can implement PBIS with little or no outside funding, and federal grants can support schools that need extra resources.

For more on this recommendation, see <http://txchildren.org/PBIS>

Thinking About Costs

Providing supports that allow children to stay in school and complete their education benefits Texas. It lowers public costs and increases residents' wages and tax revenues. One analysis found for every one student Texas gets through school who otherwise would have dropped out, the state saves an estimated \$4,935 per year in public costs.

School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports helps schools keep kids engaged. It also increases their funding, improving attendance rates and reducing truancy and exclusionary disciplinary practices. Dallas ISD, for example, lost more than \$1.5 million dollars from out-of-school suspension alone in the 2010-2011 school year.

Sources



"Thinking about Costs"

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