

# Research Highlights

## Topic: Positive Behavior Support

Turnbull, H. R., Wilcox, B. L., Turnbull, A. P., Sailor, W., & Wickham, D. (2001). IDEA, positive behavioral supports, and school safety. *Journal of Law and Education*, 30(3), 445-503.

### BOTTOM LINE

This article analyzes IDEA's 1997 framework, the six principles governing the rights of students and duties of schools, and the relationship of PBS to IDEA. It also sets out IDEA's provisions related to student behavior and school discipline, defines and explains PBS, sets out guidelines for agency implementation of PBS, and argues that if schools will use PBS and follow the guidelines there is no need to strike a balance between the rights of students with disabilities and those without as all will be effectively served.

### TIPS

- The “guidelines” for agency implementation of PBS are italicized in the text and provide a basis for the development of a PBS program based on a policy declaration, four levels of application of PBS, four components of PBS, and best practices for implementation of PBS.
- An agency should declare a policy that includes:
  - ◆ A commitment to provide an appropriate education for all students
  - ◆ A finding that all students benefit from safe and orderly schools
  - ◆ The declaration that the right to PBS, as well as to a free appropriate education in the least restrictive environment can assure a safe and conducive learning environment
  - ◆ A statement outlining basic rights of all students receiving PBS
  - ◆ A statement requiring that PBS be consistently implemented

TIPS  
cont.

- The four levels of application of PBS are:
  - ◆ School wide rules
  - ◆ School wide behavior
  - ◆ IEP students
  - ◆ Comprehensive, community-based (school-linked) services
- The four components of PBS are:
  - ◆ System change activities
  - ◆ Environmental alterations
  - ◆ Skill instruction activities
  - ◆ Behavioral consequence activities
- Best Practices for implementation include:
  - ◆ On-going, long-term interventions and supports
  - ◆ Transfer of intervention/support duties from professionals to non-professional caregivers when appropriate
  - ◆ Collaboration among IEP team members in design and implementation of PBS
  - ◆ Personnel preparation for implementation and other capacity building efforts
  - ◆ Monitoring

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KEY FINDINGS

- IDEA embeds positive behavioral support , functional behavioral assessment, and functional analysis within its requirements and through support of the six principles that underlie the IDEA.
- IDEA requires the IEP team *to consider* PBS in two circumstances:
  - ◆ During the IEP process, when appropriate, as a special factor, when the child's behavior impedes the child's learning or that of others
- When amending an IEP to address behavioral problems.
- We believe that IDEA creates a rebuttable presumption in favor of PBS and against the use of aversive interventions whenever impeding behavior occurs.
- Impeding behaviors are:
  - ◆ Those that could cause the student to be disciplined or result in consideration of a change in placement
  - ◆ Are consistently recurring and therefore require functional behavioral assessment and systematic and frequent applications of behavioral interventions (PBS)

## METHOD

- Consideration of PBS should include:
  - ◆ Sufficient understanding of PBS and how it works
  - ◆ The ability to implement PBS
  - ◆ Discussion about whether to employ PBS
  - ◆ Detailing the reasoning behind any decision to employ or not employ PBS
- Attempts to “strike a balance” between school safety and the rights of individuals with disabilities to a free appropriate public education have resulted in ineffective policies that do not attempt to address the causes of violent behavior (they merely react punitively to such behavior) and create an adversarial relationship between administrators of school discipline policies and parents who have children with behavioral challenges.
- Implementation of PBS will satisfy concerns about both school safety, by addressing the underlying causes of challenging behavior and preventing its occurrence, and upholding the spirit and requirements of IDEA’s discipline provisions.
- This article resulted from the analysis of the legal requirements set out in IDEA, discussions with experts on PBS, and examination of the research literature on PBS.

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## RELATED PUBLICATIONS

- Turnbull, H. R., Wilcox, B. L., Stowe, M. J., & Turnbull, A. P. (2001). IDEA requirements for use of PBS: Guidelines for responsible agencies. *Journal of Positive Behavior Support*, 3(1), 11-18.
- Turnbull, H. R., Wilcox, B. L., Stowe, M. J., Raper, C., & Hedges, L. (2000). Public policy foundations for positive behavioral interventions, strategies, and supports. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2, 218-230.
- Turnbull, H. R., Turnbull, A.P., & Wilcox, B. L. (2002). Family interests and positive behavior support: Opportunities under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. In J. Lucyshyn, G. Dunlap, & R. Albin, (Eds.), *Families and positive behavior support: Addressing problem behavior in family contexts* (pp. 349-370). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

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*This research was conducted in collaboration with the Beach Center on Disability. It was funded by the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Families of Children with Disabilities of the National Institute on Disability Rehabilitation and Research (H133B980050) and private endowments. For more information, contact the Beach Center on Disability at 1200 Sunnyside Avenue, 3111 Haworth Hall, The University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045-7534. Phone: 785-864-7600. Email: [Beachcenter@ku.edu](mailto:Beachcenter@ku.edu). Website: [www.beachcenter.org](http://www.beachcenter.org).*

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