



Conscious Discipline and PBIS... Can Schools Use Them Together?

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Being able to self-regulate your thoughts, feelings and impulses enough to demonstrate positive behavior is a prerequisite for school success and student achievement. The current understanding of child development indicates we must systematically teach positive behaviors just as we teach science, reading and math.

In response to this understanding, policy makers at the national, state and local levels have generated an educational framework called Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to foster more proactive teaching of missing social emotional skills. Many schools are now asking, “Are Conscious Discipline and PBIS compatible with each other, and can our school use both?”

The short answer is, “Yes,” although there are some key differences between how Conscious Discipline and PBIS recommend reinforcing children’s positive behavior.

Overview

The purpose of this document is to explain compatibility and differences between Conscious Discipline and PBIS. Before we begin, understand that PBIS is not a prescribed program. It is a framework of thinking that asks educators to be proactive instead of reactive, to use evidenced-based interventions to teach instead of relying on consequences and to consider that some children will need more interventions than others. This framework of thinking is also the basis of Conscious Discipline.

The term PBIS is often thought to be synonymous with prescribed protocols. This unfortunate misunderstanding causes confusion among educators who often think they cannot access a professional development service unless it carries the specific PBIS label. In response to this wide spread confusion, the United States Department of Education (USDOE) states:

The USDOE uses the term “positive behavioral interventions and supports” generically in reference to any model or curriculum that employs a proactive, “positive, multi-tiered continuum of evidence-based behavioral interventions that support the behavioral competence of all students”

“Discipline isn’t something you do to children, it’s something you develop within them.”

- Dr. Becky Bailey

Conscious Discipline

Conscious Discipline is a research-based, comprehensive self-regulation program whose goal is to promote skill changes in teachers, staff, administrators and parents so they can effectively instill these same skills in children. Conscious Discipline asks adults to change their perceptions and response to conflict in order to model positive behaviors and provide positive behavioral supports. This infusion is aimed at changing the school culture, discipline strategies and self-regulation skills of all stakeholders (children, families, teachers and staff) to optimize academic achievement.

The Conscious Discipline approach rests on the foundational beliefs that the brain is a social organ and that optimal learning comes through healthy relationships. The adult’s response to children’s upset, conflicts and misbehavior will either foster or inhibit a healthy relationship and facilitate or hinder self-regulation. Every interaction in Conscious Discipline becomes a conscious, proactive intervention.

Decades of research state that healthy relationships are the key to optimal learning. Healthy relationships boost learning, significantly improve behavior, motivate children internally (rather than externally) and foster the willingness to problem solve. Internal motivation shifts children from “What to do I get if I am good” to “How do I give of my goodness to others.”

Conscious Discipline is based on our knowledge of optimal brain development, building schools based on:

1. Safety by teaching adults the Seven Powers for Conscious Adults that foster self-regulation
2. Connection by creating a compassionate school climate--called the School Family--that provides the routines, rituals and structures that promote the daily practice of social-emotional competence
3. Problem solving through teaching both adults and children the Seven Basic Skills of Discipline for social emotional competence and executive skill development

PBIS

PBIS is a framework for providing behavioral supports and interventions that enhance students' academic and social outcomes. It is a guide to creating systems that meet the differentiated and individual needs of students. The PBIS framework does not provide or require schools to use specific practices. Instead, it names essential features of an effective behavior support system. These include:

- The use of respectful, non-punitive, prevention-oriented practices
- A focus on skill teaching
- The use of evidence-based practices
- The availability of a continuum of interventions or tier-based approach that meets the needs of all students
- Ongoing assessment of students' needs
- Data-based decision making

Districts and schools then employ specific practices that have these features and that fit their particular needs and culture (Horner, 2014; PBIS OSEP Technical Assistance Center, n.d., PBIS FAQs). Although the PBIS framework does not stipulate specific practices, PBIS trainers working at the district or school level may guide schools toward specific behavior practices or social-emotional learning programs (PBIS OSEP Technical Assistance Center, n.d., SWPBIS for Beginners).

How Conscious Discipline and PBIS Align

Schools adopting Conscious Discipline can use the PBIS framework to ensure systematic decision-making, and schools adopting PBIS can use Conscious Discipline to meet the PBIS goals of supporting positive behavior in all students. Here's how:

Three Tiers of Support

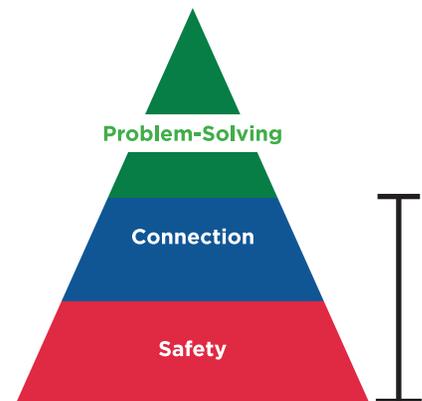
PBIS calls for schools to provide three tiers of positive behavior support to meet students' differing needs (PBIS OSEP Technical Assistance Center). Conscious Discipline aligns with each tier in the following ways:

Tier I supports are universal and intended to address basic student needs

- Brain-based: Conscious Discipline Brain State Model helps in understanding how internal emotional states dictate behavior
- Safety: Seven Powers for Conscious Adults change adults' perceptions about discipline and conflict
- Connection: The School Family builds connections through a culture of compassion
- Problem-solving: Seven Skills of Discipline increase prosocial skillsets

Bailey, B.A. (2015). *Conscious Discipline: Building Resilient Classrooms*. Loving Guidance, Inc. Florida.
Bailey, B.A. (2011). *Managing Emotional Mayhem: The Five Steps for Self-Regulation*. Loving Guidance, Inc. Florida.

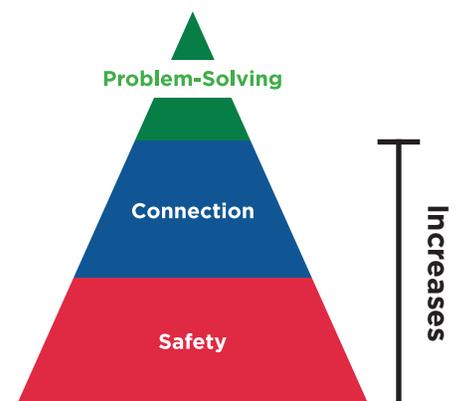
Conscious Discipline Tier 1, Universal Supports



Tier 2 supports involve supplemental interventions for students with additional needs

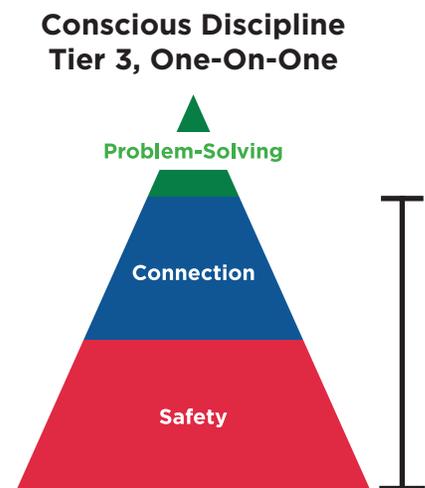
- **Safety boosters:**
 - Picture routines
 - Picture schedule
 - N.A.R.C.S. – **N**oticing, **A**ssertiveness (adults), **R**outines with pictures, **C**omposure, **S**afe Place/Safekeeper
 - Feeling Buddies Self-Regulation Curriculum
- Connection boosters:
 - Connection rituals
 - Baby Doll Circle Time program
 - Small group family groupings
- Problem-solving boosters:
 - Executive skill lending library: Focus on helpful behaviors through systematic behavior plans
 - Implement targeted small group interventions

Conscious Discipline Tier 2, Small Group



Tier 3 supports provide more intensive and individualized support for students with the most severe needs. Conscious Discipline is based on the fundamental principle that effective behavioral supports are the same for all children at all levels; however, the frequency, duration and intensity of the support offered varies in response to the level of the student's needs. The more intense the student's need, the greater the adult's focus on the core behavioral supports for safety and connection. The efficacy of the approach greatly increases when the adult strengthens safety and connection before applying specific executive skill interventions because doing so fosters brain integration and willingness.

- Safety boosters:
 - Increase the intensity of N.A.R.C.S.
 - One-on-one interventions
 - Focus on developmental needs for sense of safety and sense of belonging
- Connection boosters:
 - One-on-one intensive connection rituals
 - Focus on helpful behaviors through systematic behavior plans
- Problem-solving boosters:
 - Executive skills lending library



How Conscious Discipline and PBIS Differ

Both Conscious Discipline and PBIS recognize that reinforcing students' positive behaviors is crucial if students are to sustain those behaviors. Often schools or districts have interpreted the need to reinforce behavior as a requirement to use external motivators like rewards. Conscious Discipline relies on social reinforcers, preferring to enhance internal motivation and thereby supporting the goal of self-regulation.

Instead of tangible rewards, Conscious Discipline utilizes the relationship to reinforce positive behaviors. It provides teachers with the skills to create healthy relationships with even the most challenging students. Often, Tier 2 students are relationship-reluctant and Tier 3 students are relationship-resistant. Simultaneously increasing our focus on developing the relationship as we teach new skills greatly increases outcome success with these children. The main social reinforcers Conscious Discipline uses are positive intent, noticing, celebrations and being of service to others.

Conscious Discipline Meets and Exceeds PBIS Framework

Reinforcement Recommendations and Guidelines	PBIS	Conscious Discipline
States that acknowledging positive student behaviors is important to increasing the reoccurrence of appropriate behaviors.	✓	✓
Emphasizes that schools should have methods for acknowledging students' positive behaviors.	✓	✓
Prescribes methods for the acknowledgement of appropriate behavior.	✓	✓
Encourages schools to provide reinforcements that highlight the fact that everyone is working together to build a positive community rather than focusing on individuals earning rewards.	✓	✓
Provides specific instruction and strategies for creating a compassionate school climate.	✗	✓
Builds adults' self-regulation skills.	✗	✓
Provides specific, researched and brain-compatible interventions and strategies.	✗	✓
Links home and school, embedding resiliency factors across all settings.	✗	✓
Encourages the use of external tangible rewards systems. *	✓	✗

*If a state or a district requires an external tangible reward system, a district or school may apply for a waiver in order to use an intrinsically based system.

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