



# Supporting All Students to be Successful (PBIS): One Rural K-12 School's Story

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The staff, students and community surrounding Hepburn School recognized that one of the major building blocks of effective classroom management is proactive behaviour management. They implemented Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in order to enhance the health, efficiency and effectiveness of their learning community. Initial results indicated that the initiative had a positive impact on school culture; however, an evaluation of its impact was undertaken to ensure that ongoing learning, improvement, and monitoring remained part of the school's approach to behaviour management.

## PBIS

The U.S. Office of Special Education Programs developed PBIS as an alternative to aversive interventions with students who misbehave. Its goal was to approach behaviour positively and preventatively, respond to displays of positive behaviour in a way that models and teaches behavioural expectations, and encourage the continuation of positive behaviour. Encompassing a broad range of systemic and individualized strategies, PBIS provided a flexible, integrated approach to behaviour management. In it, the school saw more than another fad in administrative practice or another program adding to the workload of teachers.

*PBIS is the container that holds together all the great character education activities that many schools, ours included, already deliver. All the*

*numerous curricula that incorporate the teaching of values can be tied together by PBIS. The many great and positive ideas and concepts, already being taught in our school finally have a common thread weaving them together to form the fabric of what we believe, what we do, what we expect.*

*(Excerpt from research report)*

By shifting their thinking to view behaviour preventatively, the school staff hoped to reduce the number of disruptive student behaviours, thereby increasing teaching and learning opportunities for all students.

## Changing and Analyzing School Culture

Led by a team from the school that had received training in PBIS, teachers worked together to establish common language, expectations, and priorities for student behaviour. Their discussions were distilled as the Hepburn Hawks High Fives, which seemed to cover virtually all desired behaviours. The staff also identified school locations or activities that warranted special focus with respect to behavioural expectations. These locations/activities included the classroom/ gym, commons and hallways, library, computer lab, bus, and extra-curricular activities. Efforts were made to convey behavioural expectations in age-appropriate ways in the classroom, school-wide, and in relationship to specific locations. A system was developed to recognize students who displayed positive behaviours and provide them with public recognition.

### The Hepburn Hawks High Fives

1. Be respectful and caring.
2. Be responsible.
3. Be safe.
4. Choose to learn.
5. Celebrate success

Data were gathered on the impact of PBIS through the examination of school records, reflective discussions with teachers, students and support staff, a survey of teachers designed to provide a snapshot of student behaviour and suggestions for improvement, and student reviews of behavioural expectations at the key locations in the school.

### Results

PBIS resulted in a marked reduction in the number of behavioural incidents that resulted in suspensions from school (e.g., bullying, disrespect, truancy, non-compliance, defiance or physical assault). The number dropped from 22 incidents in 2001-02 to two incidents in 2002-03 and one incident in 2003-04. Moreover, incident records kept by the school showed that 70% of recesses and noon hours now passed without incident.

Teachers, students and support staff indicated overwhelming belief in the benefits of PBIS and support for its continued implementation. Some of the changes that they saw in the culture of the school were:

- Greater focus on being positive and proactive,
- Provision of support for students who struggle behaviourally as well as students who struggle academically,
- Greater attention to teaching students behavioural expectations,
- Development of common concepts and language for talking about behaviour, and
- Consistency and simplicity of a systematic way to teach, respond to and redirect behaviour.

It was noted that the success of PBIS is dependent on “buy-in” from all staff and students. Students in the middle years and high school grades are more likely to accept PBIS when they are treated differently from primary and elementary students in the ways that they are recognized for positive behaviour. In a K-12 school, staff are challenged to develop ways of recognizing positive behaviour that are equally meaningful for all students without compromising the integrity of PBIS.

It was also noted, that a “behaviour curriculum” is like any other curriculum in its need for on-going review and adaptation to maintain its effectiveness. Reflective opportunities and connections between teachers are keys to ensuring that PBIS continues to thrive.

***Kids are more encouraged  
to do the right thing  
instead of being punished for  
doing the wrong things.***

**- Student comment**