



Behaviour Management in the Classroom from an ABA Perspective: Punishment vs. Positive Behaviour Support (PBS)

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Facts about punishment in a school discipline context

- Punishment basically refers to applying negative consequences for misbehaviour
- It often has a “moral” overtone – i.e., the students deserve the punishment because they were “bad”

In Behaviour Management, there is a narrower definition: Punishment is the presentation or removal of events that leads to a reduction in a behaviour (Kazdin, 1989)

Punishment is not a “one size fits all” approach. It affects different students, contexts and problems in different ways.

There are 3 basic types of Punishment:

- Presented when Challenging Behaviour (CB) occurs (e.g., reprimand from teacher)
- Student removed to less reinforcing setting when CB occurs (e.g., time-out)
- Response-cost – privileges, tokens, rewards removed when CB occurs

Punishment is:

- Commonly used
- Generally effective, but only in the short term
- Tends to *rapidly* stop challenging behaviour
- Teacher is then reinforced for using punishment

Side Effects of Punishment (Martens, 1990)

- Students who get punished regularly tend to:
 - o Decrease in positive school attitude
 - o Have a more negative perception of teachers
 - o Become more punitive in peer and adult interaction

An Alternative to Punishment: Positive Behavioural Supports (PBS) (Florida Positive Behavior Support Project, 2007)

- A collaborative assessment-based process
- Involves 3 levels: (1) School-wide and Classroom-wide (Universal or Prevention), (2) Targeted for students assessed as at-risk, (3) Indicated, for individual students

- Develops effective, individualized interventions for Challenging Behaviours
- Focuses on a proactive, educative approach
- Based on why behaviour occurs (function)

PBS Involves the application of evidence-based strategies to:

- Increase academic performance
- Increase safety
- Decrease challenging behaviours
- Establish positive school cultures

Myths about PBS:

Myth: “All we do is give out rewards”

Facts:

- PBS is a change of focus from a reactive, negative/punishment approach
- PBS is a change to proactive teaching and recognizing what students are doing right (positive)
- Students and teachers feel appreciated, safe and respected
- Rewards are used to assist staff in focusing on the positive

Myth: “We will no longer punish for inappropriate behaviour”

- PBS does not ignore inappropriate behaviour
- Consequences go beyond punishment
- Consequences are actions following inappropriate behaviour that decrease it and/or increase appropriate behaviour

Myth: “PBS uses bribes”

- A reward system is not the same as bribes
 - Bribes are something offered or given to a person in a position of trust to influence that person's views or conduct
 - PBS acknowledges and rewards students for following school-wide expectations and rules
 - Appropriate behaviour is acknowledged after it occurs
 - Rewards are earned, not offered as payoff in exchange for good behaviour
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How do we do PBS? Here are 5 basic steps, see the references for further readings and/or contact your school psychology staff.

1. Identify behavioural goals
2. Gather relevant information
3. Develop Summary Statements
4. Generate Behavioural Support Plan
5. Implement and Monitor Outcomes

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References:

Florida's Positive Behavior Support Project http://www.flpbs.fmhl.usf.edu/resources_classroom.asp

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