

NYC Task Force For Quality Inclusive Schooling
“Creating an Inclusive Environment for All Students”
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School-Wide and Individual Student-Level Positive Behavior Supports and

Inclusion

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Presenter's Background:

Dr. Craig A. Michaels' extensive resume includes comprehensive education experiences, which contribute to creating an effective inclusive environment for all students. These experiences include degrees in the areas of educational psychology, special education, fine arts, as well as painting and photography. Although his degrees in the arts are not directly related to education, having a background in the arts allows him to integrate these skills into the inclusive environment. This in turn assures that various disciplines exist and are cultivated in inclusion

classrooms. Dr. Michaels' teaching experiences include instructing courses in teaching, learning, counseling and special education. His vast knowledge serves as a tool to address the emotional, social and academic needs of students learning in an inclusive environment. This workshop described and examined a relatively new program known as, Positive Behavior Support (PBS).

Workshop Objectives:

- Illustrate how educators can use what is referred to as "positive, proactive and practical interventions" to create socially appropriate and desired behaviors in the classroom.
- Promote the inclusion of students with disabilities in environments within school, home and the community.

Topical Outline

The workshop covered an array of interrelated topics. Initially, the focal points of the PBS model were introduced, which lead into a discussion of the communicative functions of behavior. Following these topics myths associated with individuals with learning disabilities were addressed, including the harsh consequences that are associated with these myths. Other topics addressed during this workshop included a discussion of key themes and values associated with PBS, as well as a look at a behavior examination tool known as Functional Behavioral Assessment.

Content of Session:

A focal point of PBS is changing challenging behaviors by shifting attention from "fixing" the individual students to creating helpful accommodations and adaptations in the

classroom environment. Michaels described behavior as being a communicative function. He proceeded to explain that students would often time exhibit inappropriate behaviors because they achieve a desirable outcome (e.g. an escape or attention). For instance, a child who has an aversion to math class may display inappropriate behavior. This behavior can serve as an escape if the teacher asks the child to leave the room as a consequence of the undesirable behavior. Instead of responding to undesirable behaviors with harsh consequences, PBS suggests having students engage in self-determination, which in turn will allow them to make clear choices and "exert control over life." Myths connected to this topic were addressed and critiqued. Myths included beliefs such as, "some individuals are too profoundly disabled to make choices."

In the second segment of this workshop Michaels defined Positive Behavior Support (PBS). Essential characteristics of this model include collaborative team teaching, which includes the collaboration of families and caretakers, as well as student-centered environments. Encouraging socially meaningful changes is another important value integrated into this model. All these elements are assessed using an organized and systematic assessment process that was described in the final portion of the workshop.

The PBS assessment process is known as the Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA). The overall objective of this assessment is to gather the information needed to understand the functions of behavior. Environmental, communication, choice and teaching variables should be considered when proceeding with this assessment. Environmental variables include queries such as, where or when is a behavior most likely to occur? Communication variables include questions such as: Is this student displaying a behavior to gain attention? Choice Variables include considerations such as: Is the student making choices that are meaningful to him or her?

Finally, teaching variables that should be examined include considerations of whether staff is trained in implementing the program.

Relevance to Inclusion:

This workshop was relevant to inclusion, because PBS is an intervention that promotes the inclusion of different types of learners; including students with disabilities. PBS focuses on making positive changes and adaptations in the environment. This creates an environment that is welcoming to all learners. Additionally, many educators use children with disabilities' behavior as a reason for not wanting inclusion students in their classroom. If these educators had a better understanding of what those behaviors mean they can make adaptations to the classroom environment and better accommodate the needs of all students. These adaptations and interventions address the needs of each individual student and help assure that no child is left behind socially, emotionally or academically.