



## **Pyramid of Behavior Interventions:**

### **Seven Keys to a Positive Learning Environment**

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#### **Study Guide**

This study guide is a companion to the book *Pyramid of Behavior Interventions: Seven Keys to a Positive Learning Environment*, by Tom Hierck, Charlie Coleman, and Chris Weber. *Pyramid of Behavior Interventions* asks educators to commit to proactively serving all students and anticipating their needs. The authors argue that students will experience frustration, confusion, and perhaps failure if they do not have clearly articulated routines, structures, and expectations for their learning environment. They use a three-tiered pyramid of behavior model as the basis for their continuum of effective schoolwide behavior support, providing seven keys to a positive learning environment: common expectations, targeted instruction, positive reinforcement, support strategies and interventions, collaborative teams, data-driven dialogue, and a schoolwide systems approach.

*Pyramid of Behavior Interventions*—Study Guide

This study guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to either work their way through the entire book or to focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular chapter. It is designed to help you benefit from and apply the ideas presented in *Pyramid of Behavior Interventions*. It can be used by individuals, small groups, or an entire faculty.

We thank you for your interest in this book, and we hope that this guide proves to be a useful tool in your efforts to promote success for all students.

## **Introduction**

### **This We Believe**

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1. The authors assert that “there are no throwaway kids or designated failures . . . just students at different stages of learning.” Do you and your team support this assertion with your actions in your classroom, school, or district?
2. The authors point out that students learn very little academically if their social-emotional needs are not met first. Reflect on how creating a safe, caring classroom environment can support academic learning and contribute to positive behavior in students.
3. Share with your group your thoughts about one high-impact teacher who made a difference in your life. What did that teacher do? What qualities did he or she possess? How did he or she make a connection with you? How did the teacher make learning meaningful? What impact did he or she have on your life?
4. The authors believe that creating and managing effective relationships is a core skill required by all educators. Reflect on your ability in this core skill. What do you do well, and in what areas might you improve?
5. Do you and your team strive to make students feel connected to school? Consider how this might help students both behaviorally and academically.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Creating a Positive Learning Environment**

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1. Consider the three-zoned pyramid of behavior the authors describe. How does it compare to the population of your classroom or school? As educators, do you avoid the trap of focusing only on the problems at the top of the pyramid?
2. What are your school's or district's typical responses to students in the red zone? Do you have high expectations for these students?
3. Schools must have a dual focus on students' behavioral and academic needs. The professional learning communities (PLC) concept and the positive behavioral interventions and support (PBIS) model together support this focus. Consider the list of similarities on pages 18–19. Does your school currently promote any of these aspects of the PLC concept or the PBIS model?
4. Positive relationships between students and adults matter and make a difference. Have some teachers or staff in your school or district built positive relationships with students who seem to have trouble in other classrooms? Reflect on what they have done to build those successful relationships.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Common Expectations**

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1. Consider your school rules, codes of conduct, and mission statement. Are they positively phrased? Do they link behavior to academic success? Do they use a common language to describe expectations?
2. What is the five-step process for developing common expectations the authors describe in the example from Wilson Middle School? Consider whether or not your classroom expectations and procedures concerning behavior link with your overarching school expectations. How could they be better aligned?
3. Do the adults in your school model the common expectations for students? Are parents aware of common expectations for students?
4. Do you build positive acknowledgements into your processes for behavior management? If so, how? What other ways could you incorporate positive acknowledgements?
5. The authors provide examples of how to make common behavioral expectations an integral part of the school day. Consider other ways you or your team could use a commonly developed behavior matrix to reinforce positive behavior.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Targeted Instruction and Positive Reinforcement**

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1. The authors assert that targeted social skills must be taught directly within a culture of caring and be woven into the language and events of everyday life in the school. How might you ensure that this happens in your classroom or school?
2. Discuss the differences in the ways schools often respond to students with behavior problems versus those with academic problems. What are the flaws in the traditional approaches to behavior problems? Discuss the best teaching practices the authors highlight. How can you or your team integrate these suggestions into your classrooms or schools?
3. The authors advocate the use of positive reinforcement that is appropriate to the student and the school setting, moving from tangible to intangible, from tokens to verbal reinforcement, from frequent to infrequent reinforcement, and from regular to random reinforcement. Do you or your school ensure that external means of motivating students are balanced with internal means?
4. The authors describe several specific strategies for positive reinforcement within the school and classroom. Which of these might you or your team adopt? Share your own strategies for positive reinforcement with your colleagues.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Support Strategies and Interventions**

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1. What two critical questions must staff ask when analyzing student misbehavior?
2. Review the eight steps in creating a behavior analysis flowchart, the process for conducting an ABC analysis, and the details of creating behavior contracts.  
Consider how you or your team could use these tools to develop support strategies and interventions for specific students.
3. What acceptable alternatives to problem behavior do the authors suggest?  
Brainstorm some other alternatives that might work for your students in your environment.
4. Why might some educators think acceptable alternatives are an unfair approach?  
What are the downfalls of a one-size-fits-all approach?
5. Discuss the differences between discipline and punishment.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Collaborative Teams and Data-Driven Dialogue**

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1. Implementing behavior interventions and creating a positive learning environment require both relationships and results. They require the critical task of collaborative teams engaging in meaningful dialogue about data. What specific actions can leaders take to support collaborative inquiry within teams?

2. What is a climate of trust, and how can teams work to establish this type of climate to foster powerful collaboration?
3. Do your teams have agreed-upon norms that guide your conversations?
4. What tools are available to your team to assist when responding to behavior issues? Where might you look to find other tools for this purpose?
5. The authors suggest a behavioral documentation form as a way for staff to manage referral data and design schoolwide and individual student interventions. What five critical questions does this tool help teams focusing on behavior issues to answer?

## **Chapter 6**

### **A Schoolwide Systems Approach**

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1. What are the five steps in the collaborative inquiry model the authors describe? Does your team currently use a cycle of inquiry to analyze data on student performance, implement an action plan, and monitor or adjust your efforts?
2. What does it mean to approach analysis with clear questions, rather than “reading results like tea leaves,” as the authors note? Why is this critical?
3. The authors note that the planning for improvement step is where some teachers step away from the process—unprepared to face the truths they’ve uncovered with data analysis. Consider how you or your team reacted in the past when results showed many of your students were not meeting expectations.



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4. What do the authors identify as the single most precious resource in education today? Do you agree?
5. What are the six characteristics that support a healthy school culture according to Saphier and King (1985)? Reflect on why these are critical to implementing a schoolwide systems approach to positive learning environments.