

Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL)

Fact sheet

Being trauma-informed using Positive Behaviour for Learning



Being trauma-informed

When we are trauma-informed we are aware of the effects of trauma on students' learning, wellbeing and behaviour; including attendance, engagement, relationships with others, academic achievement and behaviour. We are mindful of the traumatic experiences in the lives of students and take conscious steps to prevent re-traumatisation. When we are trauma-informed we provide universal support to all students and are sensitive to the individual needs of students, addressing their needs holistically. Effective use of trauma-informed practices in schools is supported when positive behaviour supports are in place.

Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL)

PBL is a framework which uses a multi-tiered system of support aimed at proactively supporting all students. Data-based decision-making is an integral component of PBL, allowing identification of support needs and the ability to monitor and evaluate interventions. PBL draws together evidence-based programs and practices to increase academic achievement, improve safety, decrease problem behaviours and establish a positive school environment. PBL has the ability to organise, implement and evaluate multiple social and behavioural initiatives in order to avoid duplication of efforts, increase efficiency and success of existing programs and services, and address issues which impact on student learning in an integrated manner.

Trauma-informed practice and PBL



Research shows that many students have experienced, or are still experiencing, early trauma. The high prevalence of trauma underlines the importance of a whole-school approach, which assumes that all students will benefit from support, taking into consideration emotional, academic and behavioural responses. In addition, an awareness amongst all staff of the prevalence and effects of trauma, and the importance of a positive school environment, is the foundation for effective trauma-informed support.



Students who have experienced developmental trauma are more likely to present with problem behaviours, which may be externalising (e.g., aggression) or internalising (e.g., withdrawal). These behaviours are often adaptive, and perform a needed function for students. PBL uses a functional approach to behaviour support, which takes into account both the factors impacting on problem behaviour, and the skills needed to learn alternative behaviours which will still meet the necessary function for students. PBL places strong importance on the need to teach, practise and reinforce desired behaviours.



Students who have experienced trauma need to feel safe and secure. PBL helps schools to develop a safe and supportive school environment, with consistent and positive behavioural supports in place.



An understanding of the effects of trauma on students can help to inform implementation of PBL by increasing awareness of the need to provide safety and security in responding to problem behaviours by being predictable and respectful and taking into account that there may be hidden reasons for the misbehaviour.



Trauma-informed practice and PBL across the tiers

Tier 1



- A safe and supportive school environment is established for all students and staff.
- Staff model respectful and caring relationships and emotional regulation.
- Expected behaviours, social and social-emotional skills are explicitly taught within the curriculum, with multiple opportunities for practice and feedback.
- Responses to problem behaviours are consistent, instructional, respectful, non-punitive and inclusive.
- Academic instruction is differentiated and all students are provided with opportunities to succeed.
- All students are provided with choices which enhance engagement with learning and provide opportunities to regulate emotions.
- Ongoing coaching and professional development is available to all staff.

Tier 2



- Classroom problem-solving teams set up to provide additional support to classroom teachers with trauma-informed classroom practices and responses to problem behaviours.
- Tier 2 referral system includes process for nominating students with internalising as well as externalising behaviours.
- Daily check-in system and adult mentors to connect students with positive adults and monitor student behaviour and wellbeing.
- Practical Functional Behaviour Assessment process to identify reasons for behaviour and develop behaviour support plans to remove or neutralise triggers, and to teach and reinforce alternative behaviours.
- Small group interventions for stress management, self-regulation etc.

Tier 3



- Interventions (teaching, environmental and individual) which address individual triggers for behaviour.
- Interventions which teach coping, stress management, self-regulation and problem solving strategies.
- Functional Behaviour Assessment and individual behaviour support planning.
- Case management by designated Tier 3 action team.
- Parent/caregiver involvement.
- Community/agency involvement.