

**The Implementation, Goals and Cost of American K-12 School-Based Behavior  
Modification Programs and their Counterproductive Nature**

**By**

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## **The Implementation, Goals and Cost of American K-12 School-Based Behavior Modification Programs and their Counterproductive Nature**

For decades now, the American K-12 school system has willfully invited outside influence within schools and classroom settings to manage curriculum, subject content and behavioral outcomes for students. Too often, teacher will be blindsided by their local school boards and administrators with “one more thing to do.” Productivity within American K-12 schools has also become worse, while teachers are typically forced to do more.

Over ten years ago, one of these private entities and organizations decided to attack the subject of behavior in school. The money lenders and those interested in streamlining/communizing K-12 education across America came up with the phrase “social and emotional learning.” Americans were cautioned about this subversive approach in 1980 within the book titled, *The Leipzig Connection*. Now, this umbrella subject has spawned numerous programs, one of which is called; *PBIS* or *Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports*. On their own website, *PBIS* states the following:

*Funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE), the Technical Assistance Center on PBIS supports schools, districts, and states to build systems capacity for implementing a multi-tiered approach to social, emotional and behavior support. The broad purpose of PBIS is to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of schools and other agencies. PBIS improves social, emotional and academic outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities and students from underrepresented groups (<https://www.pbis.org>).*

*PBIS* requires/forces schools to implement a “three tier system” for compliance, with countless behavioral modifications along the way. Each tier requires teachers and school staff members to consistently monitor individual student behavior, build committees, and record outcomes—all while rewarding what they believe to be positive behaviors among their students. The process for rewarding students for their “positive behavior” is usually accomplished with arbitrary objects (toys, candy etc.), and fake monopoly money that students can use to get out of class for non-academic activities, among other methods—all while destroying intrinsic motivation and teaching students that doing well, for the sake of doing well, isn’t good enough. Having watched this program infiltrate American K-12 school systems firsthand, I can assure you that this program is having a detrimental effect on students, teachers, and their collective academic productivity.

Regarding the negative impact on students, developmentally speaking, students are collectively taught that in order to do something correct, they should consider the potential for a reward as a motivator. In essence, students are openly bribed by their teachers and administrators. For example, schools will have non-academic activities that take place during the actual school day, while rewarding students who have more “fake money” than other students, with outside of the classroom activities—such as games in the gymnasium, dances and contests. Those students who fail to acquire the needed “funds” for a “reward” are given extra homework and extra class assignments that are linked to the subject matter for which the teacher is responsible for teaching. Therefore, learning more becomes the punishment. Schools are now openly punishing students with learning. Learning becomes the punishment, while not learning becomes the reward. No wonder K-12 school systems are graduating students who can’t read, write, or speak English fluently.

Educators themselves are not free from the negative effects of such communistic, one-size-fits-all programs. As a requirement of *PBIS* implementation, and programs like it, teachers are consistently evaluated to assess their ability to implement the programs requirements. Therefore, such programs become yet another way for American K-12 teachers to be evaluated on something that has nothing to do with teaching their specified subject matter. Secondly, *PBIS* requires teachers to consistently monitor student's behaviors and make determinations as to who is deserving of "rewards," who is not, and which students are in need of further "behavioral goals," all while allowing students to call one another out for their negative behaviors, publicly. Therefore, the very program that claims to end disruptions and violence, actually creates division and segregation among the student population, which are antecedents to conflict and violence. Teachers are then forced to manage the division among the student population, that has in fact been created by the very program itself. Students are quickly ostracized with this program's implementation regarding the required behavioral management and behavioral modification at the hands of their teachers. Furthermore, upon receiving these arbitrary rewards that are required with the implementation of such programs, many students simply throw them away or purposefully avoid them. Unfortunately, this too, creates a behavioral shift in effective students that can lead to what is referred to as *reversal learning* and/or *behavioral extinction*. Psychologically and sociologically *reversal learning* and/or *behavioral extinction* occur when a school environment's makeup shifts a student's frame of mind from being productive to being unproductive, or from being polite to being combative, confrontational or deviant. See how this is counterproductive?

Administrators and teachers have no business playing the role of a psychiatrist or psychologist within a school-based environment. This is not their job. Simply put, the job of an

educator is to teach their subject in the most objective way possible by being allowed to possess and maintain academic freedom, and then go home to prepare for the next day.

The communization of instruction and the high levels of psychological programming that are taking place within American K-12 school systems are in plain sight. Programs such as *PBIS* spit in the face of known behavioral and motivational research that has existed for over a century. Unfortunately, *PBIS* and programs like it, have now been legislated within State Departments of Education and State Governments in a way that “highly encourages” local school districts to adopt such programs without the say or input of highly effective, independent educators.

Now, there are over 50 different “positive behavior programs” that exist within American K-12 schools and “social and emotional learning” was the kick-starter. These “behavior modification programs” began within the elementary levels of K-12 education and they have made their way straight through middle school and high school settings. Many students themselves, in particular middle school and high school-aged students, find these programs to be childish, of low intellect, and insulting to their own individual intelligence. Many effective educators themselves feel the same way.

An additional program that has been shown to produce an awkward, counterproductive learning environment within a classroom and school-wide setting, which is also a modification of the *PBIS* initiative, is a program referred to as the *PAX Good Behavior Game* (<https://www.goodbehaviorgame.org>). This “game” claims that it was originally created in the 1960’s and 1970’s with proven methods for managing the behavior of students and their academic outcomes within a classroom setting and a school-based environment. Not only is the *PAX Good Behavior Game* counterproductive, it’s also remarkably expensive. The *PAX* website

fails to directly show how much the program, its training and implementation cost. However, if you contact the managers of the program via email, they will send you the following information:

*The basic cost for a one-day, onsite Initial PAX GBG Training for up to 40 participants is \$2900, plus the cost of a kit for each participant and trainer travel expenses. Kits are \$289 for each teacher; \$139 for administrators/counselors; and \$39 for any support staff that you have attend the training (i.e., paraprofessionals/aides, etc.). Estimated trainer travel expenses are \$2200 unless we have a trainer in your area, in which case estimated expenses are generally around \$500 depending on the inception point of the trainer. We work to secure the trainer with the least amount of travel required, but this is not always guaranteed.*

*We also offer Online Initial PAX GBG Training. Pricing is \$449 for each teacher, which includes the kit. This price is adjusted to reflect the applicable kit for each participant (i.e., a school counselor would only need the \$139 kit, so the cost would only be \$328, plus shipping.) Sessions begin on the first and third Monday of each month. I have attached an informational flyer with details.*

In summary, the cost of training and implementation, along with a “package” for each teacher, for a total of only 40 teachers—will cost upwards of \$16,600. *The PAX Good Behavior Game* also claims the following regarding the outcomes and the purpose of the program:

- *Seamless integration with PBIS and most school-wide initiatives.*
- *Increased engaged learning by students.*
- *More time to teach and learn each day.*

- *Fewer disruptions per hour in classes.*
- *Improved benchmark scores that predict success on standardized tests.*
- *Reduced need for special education.*
- *Improved family life because of children's improvements at school.*
- *Improved benefits of other prevention efforts.*
- *Increases college attendance of boys by 107%*
- *Increases college attendance of girls by 52%*
- *Increases high school graduation of girls by 25%*
- *Increases high school graduation of boys by 19%*
- *Decreases special education services for girls by 26%*
- *Decreases violent crime among high aggressive boys by 32%*
- *Decreases alcohol abuse by all boys and girls by 35%*
- *Decreases any psychiatric service for all boys by 40%*
- *Decreases any drug use by all boys by 50%*
- *Decreases suicidal thought by all boys and girls by 51%*
- *Decreases special education services for all boys by 57%*
- *Decreases anti-social personality disorder among high aggressive boys by 60%*
- *Decreases opiate use by all boys and girls by 64%*
- *Decreases smoking among aggressive boys by 65%*
- *Decreases regular smoking by all boys by 68%*

At face value, these statistics are fraudulent. None of the percentages that are mentioned or published on the *PAX Good Behavior Game* website are cited, nor are the studies themselves described. *PAX* only claims to be supported by Johns Hopkins University.

If one were to watch *PAX* in action, either in person or on YouTube, the counterproductive nature of this program and its implementation are palpable. For example, the programs requirement, by design, has any disruptive behavior during instruction called out verbally, either on the spot by other students or it's called out in-between instructional transitions by the teacher and the other students, using made-up coded language such as the non-English word "Spleem." The names of the students who are guilty of alleged wrongdoing are written on the front board and singled out. As with *PBIS*, such students are then segregated from "rewarded activities" that other compliant students are allowed to attend, while non-compliant students are disciplined with additional subject specific coursework or "busy work."

This program also requires teachers to implement games with students, in-between formal instruction as a reward, which can last upwards of one hour depending on the teachers' discretion. Rewarded games that can occur for upwards of one hour, include "flip cup." This game allows students to flip a half-filled water bottle in the air in an attempt to have it land right side up on a table upon giving it one full rotation. Not only does this game/reward have nothing to do with academic learning, it directly conditions students to practice a college binge-drinking game, which is where "flip cup" was originally created. It also allows the teacher to take a break, for at least an hour's worth of what should be instructional time, as students engage in a meaningless activity. This has been implemented within elementary schools all across America without question or consideration for its ramifications. Again, is it any wonder why students are

moving from one grade level to the next without knowing the basics of reading, writing, comprehension and arithmetic?

I encourage anyone to watch the *PAX Good Behavior Game* and *PBIS* in action on YouTube or in person. It's also not an accident that the comments section underneath these videos on YouTube that highlight the programs usage are in many cases—turned off.

Forcing such programs through State legislation, without input from educators themselves, who are always downhill from any educational decision, is reckless and unprofessional. Fortunately, many State legislators know that it's not the governments job to raise children, nor is it the school's job to waste a child's time when learning should be the priority. However, these objective State legislators may be outnumbered, as such communistic programs are popping up like weeds all across American K-12 school systems, while directly contributing to a lack of productivity and academic achievement. In the words of Dr. Thomas Sowell: *"It is hard to imagine a more stupid or more dangerous way of making decisions than by putting those decisions in the hands of people who pay no price for being wrong."*

*Dr. Sean M. Brooks has spoken nationally and internationally on the topics of conflict and violence in school, teacher education, teacher leadership, curriculum and instruction, classroom management, and freedom and independence in education. He holds three degrees in Education, including a Ph.D. in Education with a specialization in learning, instruction and innovation. Dr. Brooks is the author of the books; *Where the Finger Points, Violence Among Students and School Staff, The Mental and Emotional State of School-Aged Students, The Origins of School Violence, and Purposeful Deception.**