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## Media Review: Positive Behavior Support Technology

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## MEDIA REVIEW

# Positive Behavior Support Technology

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### ABSTRACT

*Schoolwide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) programs provide a framework for dealing with discipline problems in k-12 schools by using the action research process and positive reinforcement. As schools across the country continue to implement PBIS programs, programmers and app designers are creating innovative products to assist teachers and administrators with their efforts. This review will highlight some of the most popular apps and programs that are currently on the market.*

**Keywords:** *positive behavior support, positive behavior interventions and supports, schoolwide positive behavior, ClassDojo, RedCritic Teacher, SWIS Suites, Check-In/Check-Out, PBIS, SWPBS*

## Introduction

Schoolwide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) programs provide a framework for dealing with discipline problems in k-12 schools by using the action research process and positive reinforcement. Once students are educated as to what acceptable behavior is and is not, schools then agree on a set of expectations for the entire campus. Students are progress-monitored to ensure expectations are being met and then placed on a tier system. Tier 1 students include the general population; Tier 2 students are those requiring moderate support; and Tier 3 students are those

who are not showing progress with Tier 2 interventions (Sugai & Horner, 2002). As k-12 schools across the country continue to implement (PBIS) programs, programmers and app designers are creating innovative products to assist teachers and administrators with their efforts. This review will highlight some of the most popular apps and programs that are currently on the market.

## ClassDojo

<https://www.classdojo.com/>

ClassDojo is a k-12 app that can be used to reinforce and support positive behavior in both face-to-face and virtual

classrooms using real-time technology. Since its launch in 2011, it reportedly has more than 3 million users 5 years later (Williamson, 2016). Once a teacher signs up for a free account, he or she is able to assign each student a user name. Parents are then notified of the username and can download the app for free. Teachers reinforce positive behavior by awarding virtual points to students as parents are notified in real time.

Students can view their progress through an internet capable device independently or collaboratively with the teacher. Another benefit is that the app can be customized for a particular class. For example, if a teacher has a class that tends to need reinforcement in a certain behavioral area, such as respect, the teacher can allot increased points for being respectful. Other areas of focus include perseverance, participation, helping others, and leadership to name a few.

There have been some concerns about this app from caregivers who feel it is a violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Parents fear that student discipline issues will be shared with other parents/guardians. If principals ensure that teachers are only using the program for positive reinforcements, these concerns can be minimalized. The ClassDojo website provides recommendations for schools and explains its approaches to protect students, parents, and teachers.

## RedCritic Teacher

<https://www.redcritterteacher.com/>

RedCritic Teacher allows K-12 teachers to reward face-to-face and online students virtually for positive behavior. Using a smartphone or computer, parents can watch the rewards accumulate in real-time while students can view their progress on any internet capable device including interactive whiteboards in classrooms. While the program is similar to Class Dojo, RedCritic Teacher is not free: plans start at \$4.99 per month. Another concern pertains to displaying student rewards on classroom interactive whiteboards. Steps and precautions should be considered before sharing student data.

The program is challenge-based in that teachers are asked to develop daily, weekly, or monthly challenges for students to accomplish. For example, a teacher may challenge his or her students to receive a certain number of points for behavior during a particularly rowdy math class. If the students accomplish their goal, the points may be doubled. The program has received generally strong reviews from both parents and teachers, but the pricing of the product makes it difficult to compete with other services that are free. RedCritic does provide wearable rewards such as badges, stickers, and wristbands, which can be distributed to students face-to-face or at a distance, making the system more tangible.

## SWIS Suite

<https://www.pbisapps.org/Applications/Pages/SWIS-Suite.aspx>

The School-Wide Information System (SWIS) Suite is a comprehensive data storage product for schools that are implementing School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports. Once school discipline referrals are entered into a computer data base, teachers and administrators can view graphs and charts that pinpoint areas of concern as data are summarized so that individual, group, and student body information can be analyzed over time. For example, a school may notice that a particular student is having reoccurring discipline problems at a certain time of the day or during a certain class. The data can then be used to form intervention plans and identify goals for improvement.

Data are not available to parents or students unless an administrator allows access, so privacy is less of an issue. Pricing for the product varies based on the number of students enrolled at a particular school. The program meets most state program requirements as it identifies key data details including the location and time of the event, and even the possible motivation behind it.

## Check-In Check-Out (CICO-SWIS)

<https://www.pbisapps.org/Applications/Pages/SWIS-Suite.aspx>

From the same makers of the SWIS Suite, CICO-SWIS allows users to track

Tier 3 students who are on a Check-In, Check-Out plan. PBIS World (n.d.) suggests that plans can be used for students who are not participating in class, exhibiting behavioral problems, or demonstrating low motivation and effort. Tier 3 students are those who are not able to be successful with Tier 2 interventions (Scott & Eber, 2003) and can benefit from this approach. Research shows success with CICO. For example, Dart, Cook, Collins, Gresham, and Chenier (2012) report academic engagement increased from 26% to 75% after using a modified version or treatment of CICO with a 5<sup>th</sup> grade student.

Students using CICO are required to start and end the school day with a teacher or faculty member who enters the data. Typically, this is a school guidance counselor; but any staff member can serve in the role. The goal for a student may be as simple as not having any outbursts for the entire school day. The PBIS team can then monitor reports to see if each student is meeting his or her goals for the day.

The product is generally used in face-to-face schools, but could be used in virtual settings as well. Students are able to view their progress with teacher permission. If targets are not being met, the team can then implement new interventions that can be progress monitored. Pricing is similar to SWIS in that it is based on the number of students enrolled in the program.

## Conclusion

Technology can assist PBIS teams with the management of data when implementing schoolwide programs. Depending on the budgetary restrictions of the individual school, some technology tools may be readily available while others may not be financially feasible. While all of the apps mentioned in this article may be useful, most practitioners would agree that a strong PBIS program starts with the commitment of the people who are implementing it. The focus must remain on positive supports and recognition rather than punishment (Scott & Eber, 2003). Technology can assist implementers, but it cannot replace caring educators who are making decisions based on the individual needs of their students.

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**Gregory C. Mandalas** is a principal and K-5 curriculum director in Pennsylvania. He has led the implementation of Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions with schools under his leadership being recognized at the state level for implementation with fidelity. His research interests include differentiated instruction, curriculum mapping, and the utilization of the backwards design model.