



# EDU TOPICS

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

May, 2018

## PBIS Results Impressive After Just Eight Weeks

It's only been about two months since the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program was introduced into Yvonne B. Miller High School classrooms, and yet 95 percent of all students already have earned points for meeting behavioral expectations, and student trips to the Reflection Room have been cut in half.

These are among the improvements, some of them dramatic, observed by instructors since the PBIS program was introduced on Feb. 5.

"There are three big reasons for our early success," notes Behavior Analytical Services Manager Autumn Kaufman. "Our partnership with Residential Services from the top down has been instrumental. Deputy Director of Education Dr. Lisa Floyd, Deputy Director of Residential Services Joyce Holmon, Bon Air Superintendent Russell Jennings and Residential Program Manager Maurice Sessoms and their staffs have all provided critical support.

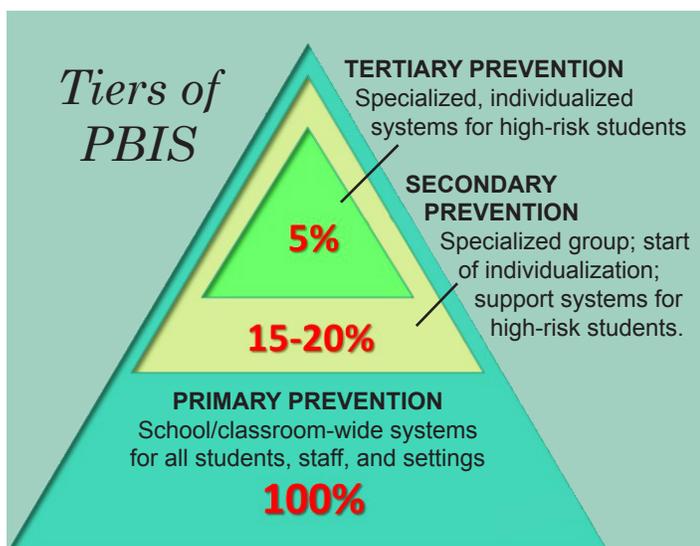


## Taking A "Chance" On Mascot's New Name

After an intensive two-week campaign to find a name for Yvonne B. Miller High School's new cougar mascot, and after 116 possible names were submitted, the Education Leadership Team took the "Chance."

Shortly after the mascot was introduced at Education Department's Summer Administrative Planning Session, they asked students and staff to submit name suggestions. After the top 10 names were selected, they voted on their favorite – and Chance was the winner.

Yvonne B. Miller High School Principal George Drewry and a resident together suggested the name. Drewry received a gift card to a local restaurant for submitting the winning entry, as well as personal congratulations from Chance. The resident also received a prize.



Mr. Sessoms is working closely with our team to help take PBIS facility-wide.”

Kaufman noted that instructors especially have been “absolutely amazing. They have gone above and beyond to be consistent and support each other as we learn the process and figure out the small bumps that come with any new initiative.”

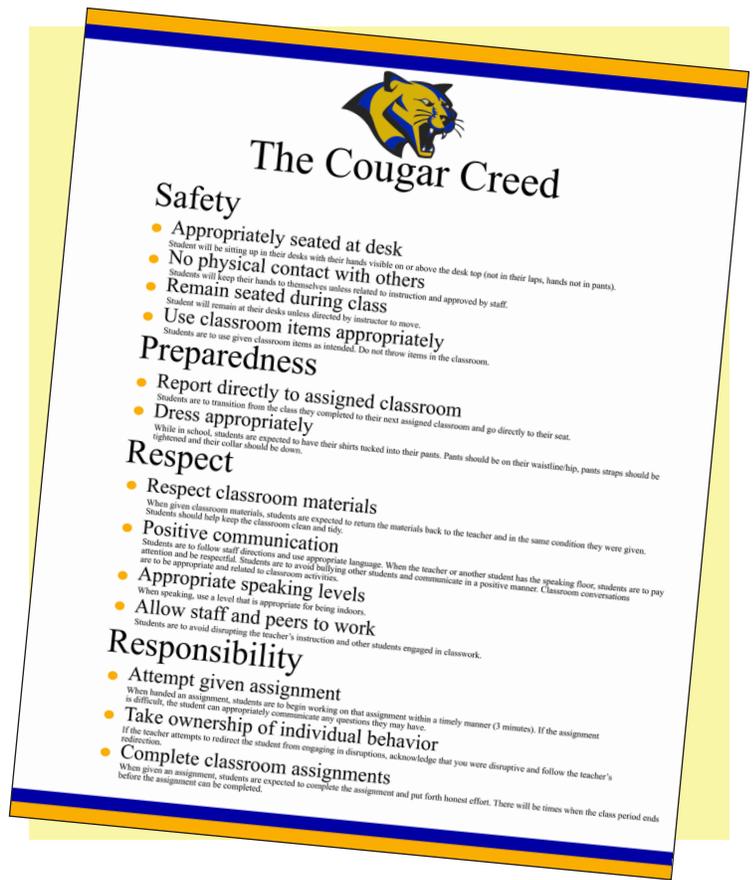
What makes the early success of the program even more remarkable is that residents are responding so well because their peers are asking them to.

“We have had major support from our Student Government Association (SGA) members in ensuring the success of this program,” Kaufman says.

PBIS is an evidence-based practice based on the principles of applied behavior analysis, a systematic approach for influencing socially important behavior by looking at the impact of environmental variables based on the principles of learning and behavior.

“The biggest philosophical difference is that PBIS changes the focus from reactive to proactive strategies as well as an overall positive climate,” Kaufman says. “It provides instruction, practice, and reinforcement for students about what behaviors are expected of them.” Intervention strategies are organized across three tiers based on the level of intensive support required for students to achieve success (see graphic, front page). Student data is used to guide the use of strategies and interventions. Program fidelity measures occur to assure successful implementation.

After seeing a presentation on PBIS at the National Symposium on Juvenile Services in Colorado in 2016, Dr. Floyd and Director of Special Education and Gifted Programs Jill Becker returned to Virginia determined to try it here. They assembled an implementation team with representatives from all DJJ agency



departments to review a draft plan. The Behavior Analytical team oversees the use of the reflection room and of PBIS. They exchange information with the state of Nevada, which is successfully using the program within their maximum security facility and court service units, and works closely Residential Services and the residents themselves to be sure all stakeholders are involved.

The SGA helped create the “Cougar Creed,” which spells out behavioral expectations in the classroom. And, perhaps most significantly, they are the ones

that have achieved “buy-in” from their fellow residents by meeting with them one-on-one. “The SGA members go over the Cougar Creed with their peers, encouraging them to get on board with the program,” Kaufman says.

Each resident is given a point card during their class time with staff providing points as they observe students meeting behavioral expectations. Points are never taken away. Every Wednesday, students receive their point total along with a “Cougar Menu” to purchase items with the points they have earned. Residential staff fills the orders and delivers them to units the



The Behavior Analytic team, standing, from left: Evelyn Gonzalez, Behavior Specialist; Jacqueline Washington-Porter, Instructional Assistant; Vani Kaushik, Program Support Tech; Dr. Toni Childress, Academic Support Specialist; Autumn Kaufman, Behavior Analytical Services Manager; Maurice Sessoms, Bon Air Residential Program Manager. Seated, from left: Behavior Specialists Jay Lane and James Santoyo.

following week. Each community determines how to distribute items to its residents.

“Some of the positive changes we’re seeing in such a short time are truly remarkable,” Kaufman says. “One resident who had a history of disruption and spent a lot of time in the reflection room has been a lead point-earner, and the amount of time he has spent in the reflection room since the start of PBIS has decreased by 98 percent.”

Kaufman welcomes feedback and suggestions from staff to help make the program even better. “Please feel free to get in touch with me or James Santoyo with any ideas you may have.”



*Left: Jacqueline Washington-Porter inventories a bag of rewards a resident purchased with points earned for good behavior as part of the PBIS program. Right: Yvonne B. Miller High School Mascot “Chance” rallies residents on the first day of the program.*

## *Pittman Brings Hope Through Faith To Adults in Newport News*



Richard Pittman knows his weekend ministry to adults in the Newport News City Jail has had an impact when he sees them come to the Denbigh Church of Christ, his home church, for worship after they are released.

Pittman, a JROTC instructor with DJJ since 1998, began meeting with inmates at the jail 11 years ago through the Christians Against Substance Abuse program. In his presentations, Pittman concentrates on how Christian principles can be

applied in a useful, practical way for the men when they reenter the community. “I help them identify where they are in their relationship with Christ,” Pittman says. “I encourage them to visit my church when they get out.”

He says his greatest reward is watching those he spoke to get on their feet again by turning to the church for help. If they do visit, the church helps find them housing and job opportunities. If they don’t own a car, they are provided bus transportation.

