

## Frequently Asked Questions:

### Is PBIS just for special education?

Although the Technical Assistance Center is sponsored by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), School-wide PBIS is not a special education initiative. School-wide PBIS is based on the research based application of over 7000 schools currently implementing successful changes in their school environment. School-wide PBIS evolved from valid research in the field of special education. This research indicated that results should be based on data with specific outcomes.

### Does PBIS work in urban settings?

School-wide PBIS has been effective in urban, rural, and suburban settings. Implementation has also been successful in the juvenile justice system. Interest in PBIS for daycare centers, nursing homes, and businesses is beginning to surface. The major components fit into most any community:

1. Identify the expected behaviors,
2. Teach, model and practice what those behaviors look like, sound like, and feel like,
3. Specifically praise appropriate behavior with private or public acknowledgement, and
4. Measure outcome data to determine successes and barriers to reaching the desired goals.

### Our school uses a character traits building course. Can we still use that?

Many of the character traits can be incorporated into the behavioral expectations of the school. Research indicates that 3-5 behavioral expectations are optimal for student retention. Many of the character traits involve 7-9 traits, which may prove to be too much for some of the students. Several of the traits can be condensed in the expectations, but taught separately within the expectation.

### Our school doesn't have very many office discipline referrals. Should we still consider School-wide PBIS?

Many schools use office discipline referral data alone to determine if things are going well in their community. As a matter of fact, a few schools actually see an increase in office discipline referral data because educators are consistently applying the consequences; which might not have been happening prior to School-wide PBIS. There are many factors to consider when beginning a new system change: the climate of the school, teacher turn-over rate, parent satisfaction, and student's perceived safety. Each school uses data to determine the point at which they begin secondary and tertiary levels of PBIS. Some schools need two or three years at the primary prevention level and some are ready to move quickly into secondary and tertiary levels of support training.

### Do we have to eliminate other initiatives if we begin with School-wide PBIS?

Most frequently the answer to this question is no. Effective practices currently in place in the school can become part of the School-wide system. School-wide PBIS will allow for consistency of these practices. Here is an example of when a practice would need to change: A school district was on the list for highest out of school suspensions(OSS) in their state. One of the PBIS team members was



asked to gather the data to determine what behavior(s) should be targeted for change. When the team sat down with their coach, they determined that over 70% of the OSS were given for skipping school. Using the logic of School-wide PBIS, the team would determine the function behind skipping school. Since the function of skipping school would be to escape school, it no longer made sense to assign two more days of OSS for every day of skipping. This practice would need to change and the team would determine what would work best for their particular learning community.

### **What are the steps involved in setting up a school-wide system of discipline?**

An effective school-wide system of discipline or positive behavioral interventions and supports is only as good as the structures and processes that are in place to support their sustained use. When setting up a school-wide system of discipline or positive behavioral interventions and supports, the following steps should be followed:

1. Establish a school-wide leadership or behavior support team to guide and direct the process. This team should be made up of an administrator, grade level representatives, support staff, and parents.
2. Secure administrator agreement of active support and participation.
3. Secure a commitment and agreement from at least 80% of the staff for active support and participation.
4. Conduct a self assessment of the current school-wide discipline system.
5. Create an implementation action plan that is based data based decision making.
6. Establish a way to collect office referral and other data on a regular basis to evaluate the effectiveness of school-wide PBIS efforts.

### **What are the components of a comprehensive school-wide system of discipline or positive behavioral interventions and supports?**

All effective school-wide systems have seven major components in common a) an agreed upon and common approach to discipline, b) a positive statement of purpose, c) a small number of positively stated expectations for all students and staff, d) procedures for teaching these expectations to students, e) a continuum of procedures for encouraging displays and maintenance of these expectations, f) a continuum of procedures for discouraging displays of rule-violating behavior, and g) procedures for monitoring and evaluation the effectiveness of the discipline system on a regular and frequent basis.

### **How do we know if a school-wide system of discipline or positive behavioral interventions and supports is effective?**

Many schools make the mistake implementing a school-wide system of discipline or positive behavior support without monitoring its effectiveness on a regular and frequent basis. Regular monitoring and evaluation are needed to a) prevent ineffective practices from wasting time and resources, b) improve the efficiency and effectiveness of current procedures, c) eliminate elements of the system that are ineffective or inefficient, and d) make modifications before problem behavior patterns become too durable and unmodifiable.

### **Can a school buy a ready-made or published school-wide discipline curriculum?**

Many published school-wide discipline programs that can be purchased have the necessary features. However, every school has its unique features (for example: students, size, staff composition, geographic location) that must be taken into account when any discipline program is selected. The best approach is to assess what is currently in place in your school, whether it is effective, and what needs to be added or improved. Once this assessment is completed, a program that best addresses the features of your school can be selected.

**What relationship does a school-wide system of discipline or positive behavioral interventions and supports have with other school initiatives, like safe and drug-free schools, IDEA04, NCLB, character education, early literacy?**

School-wide positive behavior support is not considered a new initiative. Instead, it is a set of problem solving strategies and processes that can be used to build upon a school's existing strengths. However, school-wide PBIS has a lot of characteristics that overlap with other initiatives. Proactive school-wide discipline systems create environments in which: a) learning and teaching are valued, and aggressive, unsafe behavior are discouraged; b) respect, responsibility, cooperation, and other highly valued character traits are taught and encouraged; c) individual differences are valued rather than criticized; d) educating students with disabilities can be supported more effectively and efficiently, and e) teaching fundamental skills like reading and math can be maximized.

**How do I get PBIS in my school?**

Each state in the United States has a contact person from the PBIS Technical Assistance Center and a state representative who can assist you with determining where to start for your state and area. The center map is available by clicking this link ([PBIS in your state](#))

The following table will address what PBIS is not and what it is.

PBIS is not:	PBIS is:
...a canned program in a box for purchase.	...a 3-5 year training commitment to address proactive systems changes in the "way schools do business."
...throwing out the baby with the bathwater.	...a way of taking all the great initiatives already implemented in the school and tying them together into a framework that works toward a common language, common practice, and consistent application of positive and negative reinforcement.
...being sickeningly sweet to children and giving them stickers.	...teaching, modeling, practicing, and rewarding appropriate behavior and having clear consequences for targeted behaviors.
...ignoring inappropriate behavior.	...achieving full staff "buy-in" on consistent implementation

	of office discipline referrals. If it is not okay to cuss in classroom "A", then it will not be okay to cuss in classroom "B".
...something a bunch of people made up for the new pendulum to swing in the educational field.	...rooted in evidence based practices which adults use to respond to the interventions needed to address behavioral and academic competence for each and every student.
...a one shot training or "Spray and Pray" seminar.	...this training is based on the needs of each educational unit; which is why the teams are requested to commit to a 3-5 year training schedule based on the unique needs of their school community. Teams also consist of a representative sample of the school.

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