

How to Create and Implement a Sustainable School-Wide PBIS Program

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Overview:

1. Train your staff!

- a. Introduce your team to the principles and foundations of PBIS.
- b. Discuss the most common types of misbehavior. Categorize these behaviors.
- c. Create 3-5 positively worded expectations as a team.

2. Develop your PBIS leadership team!

- a. Determine teacher/staff buy-in. If less than 70%, PBIS will not succeed due to inconsistencies in rewards and consequences.
- b. Determine individuals interested in leadership positions (PBIS leadership team).
- c. Determine the level of resistance/concerns about PBIS.

3. Roll out PBIS incentive to the student body.

- a. Introduce 3-5 school-wide (umbrella statement) expectations and provide a variety of social situations to the student body.
- b. Have students provide examples of success in various social settings. (What does success look like for each expectation?)

4. Create a behavior matrix and make it visible!

- a. Identify possible social interactions - in class, during special events, in the media center, etc.
- b. Define what success looks like for each interaction.

5. Collect Data!

- a. Evaluate your school-wide expectations based on behavior trends.

b. Modify expectations if necessary.

6. Identify successful and struggling students.

a. Use your data to identify your successful and struggling students.

7. Celebrate success and provide support.

a. Praise students who consistently meet expectations.

b. Build a "club" for struggling students.

c. Use this club as a way to provide support, such as social skills training or self-management.

Make sure students see this club as a positive thing and NOT a punishment.

8. Advertise your PBIS Program and PBIS-Related Events!

a. Make PBIS-related events known to the student body. If children know there is a special reward at the end of the quarter, this will motivate them to meet expectations.

9. Recognize Staff Members!

a. Raffles / incentive options

b. Shout-outs during staff meetings or on morning announcements.

10. Share your expectations and victories with families and local businesses!

a. Ask for local businesses to support the PBIS program.

b. Involve companies by allowing them to reward students for positive behaviors when in public!

I wanted to open my presentation with an inspirational quote.

"If a child doesn't know how to read, we teach."

"If a child doesn't know how to swim, we teach."

"If a child doesn't know how to multiply, we teach."

"If a child doesn't know how to drive, we teach."

"If a child doesn't know how to behave, we... teach? ...punish?"

Why can't we finish the last sentence as automatically as we do the others?

Tom Herner, 1998.

But not this quote. Everyone knows this quote. It's the quote that every single PBIS and discipline training begins with around the world. For many young teachers, this quote is provocative and eye-opening. But as I sat at my computer at 4:00 am typing the words of a man who pretty much wrote the book on PBIS, I became annoyed. I became highly sensitive to its counter-intuitive nature with regards to PBIS (mostly due to a lack of sleep). And it suddenly dawned on me WHY this quote was irritating me so much. After reading, analyzing, and discussing this quote countless times at numerous training sessions, I remembered something. The first time I had heard this quote was at the beginning of my PBIS journey and my teaching career, and it was almost impossible to wrap my head around "behavior" classes, or explicitly teaching behavioral expectations. But when I read this quote for the 23rd time, I was not at the beginning of my PBIS journey, nor was I able to ignore an unforgivable error – this quote fails to embody what PBIS is. There is a substantial emphasis on things the child "can't" do and what teachers are expected to do. Teach. So, I decided to re-write it using positively worded, specific language and explicitly stated the desired outcomes.

If a child knows how to read, he reads for enjoyment. We teach him to explore his world through infinite possibilities, with unlimited lives to be lived. We create a life-long reader, which is so much better than being TikTok famous.

If a child knows how to swim, we teach her to dive in the ocean. We teach her about sea life and oceanography. We create a marine biologist.

If a child knows how to multiply, we open a savings account for him. We teach about the importance of investing in the future. We create a financially literate adult who understands loans, credit, and yields.

If a child knows how to drive, we save big on car insurance. We also teach her the importance of understanding that a car is a two-ton weapon. We create a safer road for someone to travel.

If a child knows how to behave, we celebrate. We were able to teach because the child knows how to act/cope/advocate for themselves in a classroom.

There. I fixed it. (You're welcome!)

My real inspiration for this paper came from the adage, "you catch more flies with honey than you do vinegar." I will ask you to keep this expression in the back of your mind throughout my presentation. I may have randomly included pictures of flies and honey pots to remind you of this saying. BZZZZ.

PBIS is a multi-tiered behavior management system (usually, a 3-level pyramid) that stands for Positive Behavior Interventions and Support. PBIS aligns with restorative justice practices, trauma-informed care, conscious (mindful) discipline, social-emotional learning, and many other holistic approaches to education. PBIS is founded upon the fundamental principle that positive reinforcement will yield better results than traditional (punitive) discipline alone (when used appropriately). BZZZ. Based on my personal experiences, the procedure I have outlined will lead to a successful and sustainable PBIS program. There is a lot of information that will say you should have a team in place first, but I disagree. It is my professional opinion that your program is only as strong as those who do not support or buy into this type of

behavior management system. That being said, do not force staff members to participate in the incentive – simply entice them with a duty-free lunch or a jeans day pass or a free six-pack of coffee pods, or extra copies, or a "Beat the Bus pass"... you know. Teacher things! BZZZZ!

Step 1: Train your staff!

Staff buy-in is the most critical component of a successful PBIS program. Hold staff training that introduces the philosophy and foundations of PBIS. Ask your staff to define the most common behavioral problems and ask them to reflect on how they handle those problems. Take a moment to reflect on their answers and try to put them into five categories or "umbrellas," such as disrespect, defiance of school rules, or disregard for student/staff safety. Is there anything that surprises the staff or administration? What do these behaviors have in common? Is there a universal discipline procedure in place for office-managed and minor incident referrals? Is the progression of consequences the same from one teacher to the next? Is the result the same for every child and every infraction? (If it is, then you have well-trained staff members who are practically perfect. Or perhaps they're robots who are incapable of empathy). Take those examples of negative behaviors and turn them into 3-5 POSITIVELY WORDED school-wide expectations as a team. Make sure that these expectations are clearly stated. Nothing should be ambiguous or open to interpretation, especially in the lower levels.

Pirates have PRIDE (MS) - They are Prepared, Respectful, In-Control, Dependable, and Engaged.

Coyotes HOWL (M/HS) - Have a Growth Mindset, Own their Education, Work as a Community, and Lead responsibly.

Eagles SOAR (ES) - Are safe, outstanding citizens, aware and responsible.

Try to make sure that every voice is heard and that everyone is represented somewhere within the school-wide expectations. I know this is difficult, but in doing so, the staff is more

likely to take ownership of the school culture and strive to model the expectations we set forth. Make sure to develop a plan to reward students who meet your expectations - stickers, marbles, tokens, coins, a punch card, or anything that you can physically hand to a student on the spot! For example, some schools use a paper ticket; others use a token economy or a digital platform*. Some teachers celebrate the behavior as it occurs, while the school recognizes students at the end of the week for a more holistic viewpoint. Whatever you decide, keep it as simple as possible and offer a variety of ways to celebrate student success – exclusive student rewards, whole-class rewards, and school-wide incentives. The array will increase both staff and student buy-in while (hopefully) decreasing resistance.

At the end of the initial training, survey your staff – anonymously. If it is possible, give staff members the option of identifying themselves as "resistant/hesitant "on-board" or "interested in leading." By doing so, you will determine staff buy-in* (or lack thereof), identify individuals who are interested in being on the PBIS leadership team, and highlight the specific reservations that staff has about PBIS and this sort of behavior management system. The most common misconception is that kids are getting rewarded for what they should be doing (which is a good thing) while not getting punished for not meeting expectations. That is NOT the case, but more on this a little later. *PLEASE NOTE: If you do not have a staff buy-in of at least 70% depending on the size of your school, the PBIS incentive will not work due to inconsistencies in giving rewards and discipline procedures.

Step 2: Build your PBIS leadership team - emphasize on leadership.

Congratulations! Everyone is on board and wants to be on the PBIS leadership team! Just kidding. Use the results of your survey and your relationships with staff members to put together your PBIS dream team. PBIS team members should have a genuine interest in PBIS, should be able to form positive relationships with students and staff, be willing to attend PBIS-related training and support/train other staff members as necessary. The PBIS leadership team is responsible for developing the program, analyzing data, planning PBIS-related events, offering support to teachers, students, and families when necessary, training staff members,

and sharing data with the entire staff regularly. The PBIS leadership team should meet at least once a month.

Every PBIS leadership team MUST have the following:

1. An administrator who is invested in and utterly supportive of the PBIS initiative as a whole. Having administrative backing is the second-most critical (tied for first) component of any PBIS program. You will never get anything done without someone who can make decisions that affect the entire school. The administrator would ideally be the principal or the second-in-command and will have the authority to attend PBIS meetings AND schedule times for specific PBIS-related events, such as grade level assemblies (4 times per year, ideally), school-wide celebrations (2-4 times per year) and fundraisers (at least one per month). I am attaching a list of tried and true, no or low-cost fundraising ideas for your convenience!
2. A behavior specialist/discipline assistant – someone who is capable of putting together a Function of Behavior Assessment or a Behavioral Intervention Plan. Being able to put these plans together will be crucial for providing Tier 2 and 3 supports to students.
3. A school counselor/psychologist – someone who is trusted by students, who might have inside knowledge about situations or things out of the students' control.
4. At least one representative for each grade level (or at least each school level) – someone who is looking to be involved, but new to the school or teaching, in general, is a great person to include. In doing so, you give a voice and get insight from those teachers who are so overwhelmed by everything that they don't if/ how they'll survive until June. Pay special attention to these people – they're not okay, and you're adding ANOTHER thing to their never-ending laundry list of things a teacher is supposed to do.
5. A special education teacher – Ask someone to look at the IEP goals for the exceptional students. If a student's goal is to advocate for him/herself when they don't understand

something, then being rewarded or praised for being an active participant in classes can help students reach this goal. Remember, your initial expectations should be easily attainable by your general (average) population. They should also be easily tailored to meet the needs of those who fall outside of the bell curve.

6. A fundraising wizard* - someone who can complete fundraiser paperwork quickly and efficiently and has the capability of making prizes/money just appear out of thin air! You will also need this person to help create fundraising ideas!

*7. In an ideal world, your team would also include several student representatives (at least one for each grade level). These students would be the voices of your citizen or student population. They can help to develop a universal language that everyone understands, and will share the things that they and their classmates are interested in. This information will help you to offer school-wide incentives that the student body wants to participate in!

8. A family/community liaison (at least one per grade level that you serve). These people can help facilitate communication between families and other members of the community, but this can be incorporated later in the process. If students truly internalize and exhibit the expectations that you have instilled in them at school, their families and the general public will notice when they are out in society. Parents can have conversations with their children about what it means to "be responsible" or "be in control" both at home and at school.

Step 3: Roll out your PBIS incentive to students.

Student buy-in is the third most critical component when implementing PBIS. GET EVERYONE EXCITED! Hold a grade level assembly during the last period on a Friday or during the first period on a Thursday. (The teachers will thank you for this, too). Introduce the school-wide expectations that you and your staff are going to teach and uphold. Urge the students to contribute to the conversation. Ask them what they think about the staff's commitment to their

education, success, and, ultimately, their futures. Then, ask the students to come up with examples of what success looks like for each expectation. Ask them for feedback on the school-wide expectations. GET THEM INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS. But whatever you do, do not stop when you reach the classroom. PBIS is a school-wide initiative that includes more than just teachers or instructional staff. Ask students to contribute ideas for what success looks like on the bus, in the cafeteria, gym, when there is an alternative placement, a special event or a guest teacher for the day, or even when outside of school.

Respectfully request that the students commit to these expectations as the adults have. Give all students who are in attendance a "welcome to the PBIS leadership team" starter pack. This program lives and dies with the belief of each student. Give them school swag, like a pencil with your school's name printed on it or a lanyard. Give them a coupon for a free cookie or bag of chips from the cafeteria. Even better, get a voucher for a free *Slurpey from 7-11 or a *Twistee from Wendy's*.

Step 4: Create a visible behavior matrix!

The PBIS leadership team should now be able to create a behavior matrix using the school-wide expectations and the examples of success the students gave you for each setting. A behavior matrix should be visible and posted in all high-volume student areas, with a particular focus on each specific area. For example, in the cafeteria, have the cafeteria portion printed in isolation using colored ink instead of black. Provide a copy of the behavior matrix to your bus drivers, cafeteria workers, guest teachers, and guest speakers. You can expect to see a decrease in bus referrals if the bus drivers are known to award points for meeting expectations. You might see a cleaner cafeteria if students know they are being watched and awarded points for being neat and helpful.

Step 5: Collect data.

Data is a driving force in the field of education. We use data to measure student knowledge and growth. We use data to evaluate the effectiveness of our teachers. We also use it to inform and

plan for the future. More often than not, we do not know the standards by which we are being measured, or which specific component the evaluator is looking for at any given moment. Data is just as compelling in PBIS. By using your school-wide expectations as the standards and awarding points for specific behaviors (as outlined by the examples of success), you can measure the strength of your school's culture and the overall effectiveness of your PBIS program. If the results are positive, that's great! If the effects are adverse, that's great too! Any data is useful data in the curious case of PBIS. If you do not see a positive trend, such as a decrease in office-managed referrals during lunchtime, then you might want to reevaluate the expectations in the cafeteria with the PBIS leadership team. Invite someone from the cafeteria to sit in on your next meeting and listen to their concerns, frustrations, and expectations. Doing so will foster a stronger sense of community between instructional and non-instructional staff.

*BZZZZZZZZ

Step 6: Identify successful and struggling students.

Data informs everything! Highlight a specific expectation each month or each quarter and ask teachers to focus specifically on those identified behaviors. If being prepared is an expectation, make sure you know your population! Not everyone can afford to buy the heavy-duty 3-ring binders, so they might have to settle for a 5-subject notebook instead. Don't be so rigid in your interpretation of the expectation that you are setting disadvantaged students up for failure based on the letter of the law. Make sure to play it fair—students who have to work harder to succeed are more likely to try when their efforts are noticed and praised. Give 3 points to Johnny for bringing a pencil to school on day #74, even though he forgot it on days 1-73. Make sure that he has a reason to bring that pencil back! Those bonus points might help him to remember it tomorrow. Give Restless Raina a point for holding her focus for 12 whole minutes, which is double the 6 minutes you got from her yesterday. Celebrate their efforts to improve upon these behaviors, but celebrate those little victories differently than you would celebrate Madison. Madison is the girl who always quietly gives Johnny her spare pencil because she knows he never has one. Not only is she prepared for herself, but she is also prepared to the point of helping another student. The data analysis will yield two different

reports – students who are consistently meeting or exceeding the school-wide expectations and students who need additional support.

Step 7: Celebrate Success and Provide Support

You must celebrate the students who are consistently meeting expectations. Have an awards ceremony, ice cream party, or free period for the students who are the top earners. Make sure they know that you recognize and appreciate their behavior. For those students who are identified as needing support, create a club that they go to during the celebration. Use this club period to determine what kind of support they need. Have the behavior specialist work on social skills or coping techniques. Make this club something that the students look forward to so that they do not feel like they are being punished or ostracized.

Step 8: Advertise your PBIS Program and PBIS-Related Events!

Introduce your standards as early in the school year as you can. Set specific dates and times aside for PBIS-related events and celebrations at least once per quarter. I recommend holding grade-level assemblies at the beginning of the school year and after all long breaks (4 total). Publicize the PBIS-related events as much as possible! Staff vs. student basketball game – 1 ticket = 50 points to attend! These celebrations are to be kept entirely separate from academic success or attendance rates because best practice is to separate the grades from behavior and attendance. Have one of these events per semester. Allow teachers to have small celebrations at first – for example, set a school-wide goal of 25 points per class and offer 15 minutes of free or playtime when each class reaches that goal. Encourage teachers to have a treasure box or set up a class store and let individuals pick something when they reach 10 points. Open up a school store in the cafeteria where students can use their "money" to purchase food items or drinks. Work your way up gradually to a school-wide celebration that recognizes the best of the best and invite everyone!

Step 9: Recognize your Staff!

Students are not the only ones who should be recognized! Offer incentive options for teachers who support the PBIS program and its growth! Have a raffle during staff meetings or simply give a shout-out to them during morning announcements! BZZZZZ*

Step 10: Share your expectations and victories with families and local businesses! BZZZZZ*

Get the community involved! In my opinion, these communal representatives play a critical role in determining the effectiveness of PBIS as a whole. If students genuinely internalize the principles and expectations that they are held to while in school, then it will carry out into the "real-world" and will be visible to those outside of a school setting. This data interests me the most. I love nothing more than getting the parent phone calls thanking me for recognizing their child's positive behavior, or getting an e-mail from a local business asking how they can help support our PBIS program. Seriously, go to your local fast food establishments, other restaurants and ask them for coupons or vouchers. Then ask everyone to chip in and get them a little plaque that shows they sponsored your program at school – they eat it up, and so do the families! You can even involve community members by allowing them to reward students for behaving appropriately in public or in their communities!

In summary, PBIS should be a school-wide commitment. The administration must commit to nurturing the program and supporting its champions, teachers must commit to explicitly teaching behavioral expectations and providing help to students in need, and students must commit to doing their best every day. Starting a PBIS program is no easy feat, but I sincerely hope that this will help you get started on your PBIS adventure. Remember, you catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar. BZZZZZ.