

Getting Started With

These 6 steps will
set you up for success

By Scott Trungadi





The best approach to student discipline is a proactive approach. The more energy a new leader invests in developing systems that support the communication of school expectations, the fewer behavioral interruptions will occur during a typical school day. The fewer disruptions, the less instructional time is wasted, giving students more time to engage in learning and more opportunities to grow.

A common first step to any new initiative is assembling a committee to lay the groundwork for that initiative's success.



READ MORE ABOUT PBIS:

The PBIS Team Handbook: Setting Expectations and Building Positive Behavior by Beth Baker and Char Ryan

The PBIS Tier One Handbook: A Practical Approach to Implementing the Champion Model by Jessica Djabrayan Hannigan and Linda A. Hauser

Implementing Positive Behavior Support Systems in Early Childhood and Elementary Settings by Melissa A. Stormont, Timothy J. Lewis, Rebecca Sue Beckner, and Nanci Johnson

Creating a system to appropriately manage student behaviors also allows new administrators to invest more energy into supporting classroom instruction. As a new administrator, one quickly learns that nothing is more valuable than more time!

The Schoolwide Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (SWPBIS) framework for cultivating desired student behaviors is a system that is very effective in managing undesirable student behaviors. According to **pbis.org**, positive behavior support “is an application of a behaviorally based systems approach to enhance the capacity of schools, families, and communities to design effective environments that improve the link between research-validated practices and the environments in which teaching and learning occur.” Rather than the traditional piecemeal approach of individual behavioral management plans, PBIS is “a continuum of positive behavior support for all students within a school and implemented in areas including the classroom and nonclassroom settings, [including] hallways, buses, and restrooms.”

Through my own experiences, I have identified six key steps to the successful creation and implementation of a PBIS framework:

1. Develop a Core PBIS Team With a PBIS Facilitator

A common first step to any new initiative is assembling a committee to lay the groundwork for that initiative's success. A PBIS committee will be crucial to the development and implementation of these new practices to

foster a positive environment and school community. I recommend creating a team that has representation from a wide range of your school community. My team includes a classroom teacher from every grade level, a mental health professional, a school counselor, a PBIS coach, a parent representative, and student representatives.

I cannot stress enough the importance of connecting with a PBIS facilitator. A PBIS facilitator is a trained expert in PBIS philosophies and program development. These experts go through extensive training, and have access to and knowledge of a wide variety of resources and supports. The PBIS facilitator can run workshops to provide your staff with the knowledge needed to implement the philosophies behind PBIS; the facilitator will also help your committee conduct a tiered fidelity inventory (TFI).

2. Conduct a Tiered Fidelity Inventory to Create a PBIS Implementation Action Plan

Effective leaders use research-based practices and reliable data points in decision-making processes. The tiered fidelity inventory is an empirically validated assessment tool that can be used to identify areas of need and track progress over time.

The initial assessment, led by your PBIS facilitator, will help identify areas of strength and weakness within each intervention tier. I recommend that new leaders focus on Tier I, or schoolwide, interventions.

3. Develop Systems for Supporting Students and Collecting Behavioral Data

Your initial action plan will involve establishing systems to recognize students who are following the school's values, or norms, on a regular basis. This step is crucial to the success of your PBIS programming.

In my district, we have established norms that identify the values of our community. Our norms include, “Be Here, Be Safe, Be Honest, Care for Self and Others, and Let Go and Move On.”

The success of any initiative or program relies heavily on the ability to communicate how the program operates. The students in my building respond to our PBIS recognitions because, as a school community, we have developed common language through our norms. Developing a culture in which everyone communicates using the same language goes a

long way toward strengthening the success of the program.

4. Provide Professional Development for Building Staff

Of course, a well-developed student discipline system needs to be efficiently implemented by school staff. In order to reinforce the expected school behaviors, school staff must understand how to implement the system when supplying students with appropriate consequences for undesirable behavior.

In my school, we use a digital clipboard to document all student discipline issues. The digital documentation system provides an easy-to-use platform for all school staff members to document discipline-related issues.

5. Focus on Recognizing Students Who Follow School Expectations

In my building, we have established several programs to recognize students who live these norms during the school day, including our “Student of the Month” program, in which students are recognized by their team of teachers for following our established norms, and biquarterly grade-level “Expectation Celebrations” for students who have not received any documented infractions during the established window of time. After the celebration, the behavior window is reset, and all students are provided a new opportunity to attend a future celebration.

6. Consistently Review Data to Identify Where Program Improvements Can Be Made

For a leader, decision-making always revolves around a review of data. When we see data points that show student growth and development, we can surmise that our instructional programs are having positive results.

When we established a PBIS framework in my school, I considered implementing **PBISapps.org’s** School-Wide Information System (SWIS) office referral tracking software. This software allows me to track the number of office referrals students receive in my building on a yearly basis. I can see how many referrals we had by student, grade level, problem behavior, location, time of day, and day of the week. We can even track our office referrals over a multi-year period. Ideally, as our PBIS programming strengthens, I will see the number of office referrals decrease on a yearly basis. If I see less-than-ideal results, I can use data points



The most successful school initiatives use research-based strategies, involve collaboration, rely on data decision-making, and continuously evolve to meet the needs of a diverse school population and community.

provided by the software to identify revisions we need to make to our PBIS action plan.

Once you have established your systems for recognizing students and for supporting students to become better decision-makers, your team will identify ways to improve the current programming. Take advantage of these opportunities to collaborate and improve the PBIS practices in your school setting. Remember to conduct the TFI instrument multiple times throughout the year to evaluate your new initiatives implementation.

The most successful school initiatives use research-based strategies, involve collaboration, rely on data decision-making, and continuously evolve to meet the needs of a diverse school population and community. A new leader will find success in any initiative through seeking continuous improvement. **P**

Scott Trungadi is an assistant principal with the Greenwich Public School District in Greenwich, Connecticut.