The PBIS Team Handbook

Revised & Updated Edition

A Guide for Tier 1 Implementation

Char Ryan, Ph.D.
Beth Baker, M.S.Ed.

Setting Expectations and Building Positive Behavior

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PRAISE FOR THE
PBIS Team Handbook

"Through personal anecdotes and helpful tips, Ryan and Baker describe one of the most critical aspects of PBIS implementation: the school team. This revised edition includes cutting-edge research and tools to help teams overcome barriers and improve outcomes for all student groups, including students of color."

—**Kent McIntosh, Ph.D.,** professor, special education, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon

"PBIS is being used in literally thousands of schools across the United States. *The PBIS Team Handbook* provides an accessible description of the key features of PBIS and useful guidance on how a school or district would launch the PBIS adoption process."

—**Rob Horner,** co-director, OSEP Technical Assistance Center on PBIS, Eugene, Oregon

"This revised edition of *The PBIS Team Handbook* provides the updated practical directions and tools coaches and teams need to implement the framework with fidelity along with tips to deal with real situations that happen within the complex settings of schools. Char and Beth give us important updates about the relationship between MTSS and PBIS. It is also vital to talk about the addition of a new chapter on disproportionate discipline and cultural responsiveness as well as how these affect the data as we learn more about our implicit bias. *The PBIS Team Handbook* highlights this in a very humanistic way. The book continues to be a vital resource for coaches and for those implementing PBIS."

—**Cristina Dobon-Claveau,** LCSW, PPSC, wellness and prevention coordinator, Roseville Joint Union High School District, Roseville, California

"The second edition of *The PBIS Team Handbook* continues to be an important resource for all schools as they navigate the process of improving outcomes for all students, especially students who struggle with social-emotional learning. The parts of the book that have remained the same provide a solid framework for schools and districts as they work through the process of implementing PBIS, and the addition of a chapter on equity and disproportionality is timely. As a [veteran teacher and administrator], I can attest to the disproportionality which has existed historically and continues to exist despite the good intentions of professionals who support students. Ms. Baker's sharing of her self-reflections related to this topic is courageous and inspiring. I appreciate the referrals to tools that can be used to assess a school's cultural responsiveness as well as to tools to reduce disproportionality. Thank you for providing a user-friendly, real resource for schools!"

—**Barb Mackey,** assistant special education director, Northern Lights Academy, Cloquet, Minnesota

"*The PBIS Team Handbook* has been an invaluable resource for our school and staff members. It provided us the opportunity to build capacity with not only our teachers, but also our parent community. The authors' ability to provide theoretical and practical information in an engaging format was another reason our school was able to implement PBIS so successfully. Our PLC team used the ideas and information in the handbook to create a much needed plan for our context. *The PBIS Team Handbook* is a critical resource that has assisted our school in creating and utilizing a positive, consistent, and, most importantly, *sustainable* model of behavioral support!"

—Kelly Kramer, Ed.D., director, International School of Dongguan, Dongguan, China

"*The PBIS Team Handbook* is a practical, step-by-step guide to implementing and sustaining a proactive schoolwide PBIS program, while embedding cultural differences, challenges to equity, and tools for teams to consider the disproportionality created in schools today. *The PBIS Team Handbook* is a must-have book for schools to create and sustain a proactive positive behavior support program to meet the needs of each and every student."

—**Amy Piotrowski, Ed.S.,** supervisor, student support services,
Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School District, Burnsville, Minnesota

"This revised and updated edition provides a detailed step-by-step how-to guide for the implementation of PBIS from initial consideration to successful practice. Reader-friendly text includes information on essential elements of PBIS, research-based practices with descriptions and examples of team member roles and tools for fidelity and sustainability, and numerous resources and reproducible forms. An important addition is a chapter on how to address issues of disproportionality. It provides practical information for both novice and veteran professionals."

—**Sheldon Braaten, Ph.D.,** executive director, Behavioral Institute
for Children and Adolescents, Little Canada, Minnesota

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Dedication

From Char: I dedicate this book to my family, friends, and colleagues who offered their unconditional support, patience, and continual validation. You boosted my confidence and gave me feedback in important ways.

From Beth: I dedicate this book to all practitioners of PBIS—those who are just starting out and those who might be further along in their journeys. Thank you for your work in helping create positive change in our schools. You make a difference.

Acknowledgments

From Char: I want to thank the OSEP Technical Assistance Center on PBIS for the amazing work it has done across the country in creating a clear vision and process for implementing PBIS as well as ways to maintain the process and outcomes. The Center and all its partners do an awesome job of creating and sharing materials and training and of making all the information widely available to schools.

I give special thanks to George Sugai for teaching and modeling and training us in Minnesota. I am also extremely grateful to Rob Horner and Kent McIntosh for the years of collaboration, support, and mentoring and, in particular, for their generous review of and suggestions for this revised edition.

My colleagues at MNPBIS were wonderful in reviewing content and advising about the challenges of making difficult material understandable and accurate. They have done a marvelous job of moving and expanding PBIS in Minnesota from our humble beginnings to a strong statewide program.

Thanks to Judy Galbraith, president and founder of Free Spirit, for believing in us and our idea and ensuring that we had the necessary supports to get it done. The team at Free Spirit is special and did great work in development, design, and outreach.

I owe a particular thank-you to Meg Bratsch, our editor. She has the expertise, skills, organization, and patience that was needed to lead us through the process. She is passionate about the topics and provided us with thoughtful questions to clarify challenging concepts. I cannot imagine completing this project without her support and structure.

Thank you to Norena and Karen, long-time leaders and mentors in Minnesota. They gave me advice, suggestions, and asked for clarifications. They understand the process.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the love and support from family and friends, colleagues, and others in my life. It seemed as if I was always missing things because I was "busy" writing and meeting deadlines. Special thanks to John for your support and to Anne for your indomitable spirit.

It takes a team, both big and small, and with that good things happen.

From Beth: Thank you to all who read the revisions, especially Marquisha Lawrence Scott and Jackie Drolet. Thank you to those who have supported me while pushing through the rewrites: Ani Rubin, Sheryl Tuorila, and Mark Wilde. And a big thank-you to Meg Bratsch for asking the good questions.

Contents

List of Figures

List of Reproducible Forms

See page 201 for instructions on how to download the digital forms.

Introduction

Historically, many educators have relied on reactive practices, responding after behavior occurred, to improve student behavior. We hand out a detention or a visit to the principal for a disruptive behavior. If the behavior doesn't change, maybe the next time we call home and issue another detention. If that still doesn't work, we call home again and issue a suspension. These practices will work for some students, yet others seem unaffected by behavioral "interventions" such as these. After all this work, the behavior isn't improving, and the teacher gives up trying. Given their high number of office referrals and suspensions, these students become what we call "high flyers." Although they've been suspended multiple times, their behavior is still far from stellar. Exclusion does not teach these students new behavior.

Another way to deal with behavior is proactively. Arrange the environment to elicit appropriate behavior and reduce problematic behavior. We teach and model for students exactly how we want them to behave and intervene swiftly and often until they grasp it—thus avoiding the need for harsh punishments. The guidelines provided by Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) were created for this approach. Schoolwide PBIS (hereafter referred to as PBIS) has emerged as a powerful organizing framework that supports school staff in their efforts to move from reactive to proactive behavioral interventions. Supported by decades of research, PBIS is strongly rooted in behavioral theory and practice. By combining evidence-based practices with a systems approach to implementation, PBIS has created a model that has widespread adoption and lasting success.

Using the PBIS framework, schools develop practices to prevent problem behavior and to teach and reinforce expected behaviors consistently across school settings. The system supports all school staff using data to monitor the outcomes.

Consistent data collection enables schools to determine whether the interventions are working for students and whether staff members are receiving the support they need to use the interventions effectively. PBIS, when implemented with fidelity across school systems and grades, has been shown to improve student outcomes (academic skills, prosocial behaviors, graduation rates, attendance, and so on). A school that has fully implemented PBIS will demonstrate a continuum of practices for students with typical needs all the way through practices for students who have high-intensity needs.

> **A Note on Terms**
> Throughout this book, we often refer to students' problem behavior as "disruptive behavior." We do this for brevity. In reality, of course, there are a number of behaviors that constitute minor or major infractions, as defined by schools and districts. We also encourage staff to be mindful of students who may not exhibit disruptive behaviors but rather exhibit depressive (quiet and inward) behaviors that prevent them from engaging in class and with their classmates and teachers. These students may need additional support as well.

PBIS is a three-tiered framework based on the public health prevention model reflecting a continuum of prevention, from universal interventions to intensive ones. Implementation of PBIS occurs in progressive stages, with Tier 1 being fully implemented before Tiers 2 and 3. It may take your school two or three years to firmly establish Tier 1, the universal level. This book will help you develop a sound understanding of PBIS and will walk you through the steps of implementing Tier 1. Though we do not cover Tiers 2 and 3 in this book, we provide a brief description of how to prepare for this expansion.

One of the most valuable elements of PBIS is that it lets teachers do what they do best: *teach*. And it gives administrators more time to lead. Best of all, it gives students more time, confidence, and motivation to learn.

About This Revised Edition

PBIS is a system of evidence-based practices. Since this book was originally published, the field of PBIS has continued to advance in research and in practice. We are committed to keeping pace with improvements, and we strive to reflect and convey the current best practice in PBIS drawn from the field.

At the time of this publication, there are nearly 26,000 schools implementing PBIS in the United States and in 23 countries worldwide. For current numbers, check www.pbis .org. This is exciting news and demonstrates the worldwide movement to improve educational practice and ensure safe and effective learning environments for students.

Specific updates in the book include:

- the integration of MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) and PBIS

- the most current evaluation tools and how to use them to measure success

- a discussion of PBIS and equity to ensure the framework provides an equitable education and positive behavioral outcomes for all students

The PBIS framework was designed by school leadership teams to address behavioral and disciplinary practices that affect school communities. It is a fluid process that requires not only careful monitoring of data and implementation of strategies and action plans, but also the human capacity for building relationships and committing together, as a school facility, to improve the educational achievements of students.

> This book will help you develop a sound understanding of PBIS and will walk you through the process of implementing Tier 1 of the framework.

Why We Wrote This Book

We wrote this book to explain the components of the PBIS framework and its implementation in user-friendly terms and to offer examples and lessons learned from our experience. The following stories from Char and Beth describe what brought them to PBIS:

From Char: I have spent my entire career working with infants, children, adolescents, and adults with behavior challenges and other special needs. I taught, counseled, coached, trained, and administrated. Over this time I have seen and experienced a lot of trends. For me, PBIS is one of the most significant positive approaches available.

In the early days of my career, now decades ago, we used time-outs and restraint, practices that we steadfastly restrict now. Although I had sound training in behavioral theory and practice, I had a lot to learn and needed to do so early on. One example that stands out was my experience with a student with self-injurious behavior. Briefly, this student banged his head on tables, walls, and any other hard object within reach. The headbanging occurred nonstop at times, perhaps thirty times in a minute; it was stressful to watch. Our team created a plan where we would gently restrain him by holding his arms down. One day his parents said "no more" to restraint practices. At first I was anxious

about how we would handle the behavior. The amazing thing was that we became far more proactive and effective. We identified predictable triggers and possible reinforcements for headbanging as well as alternative behaviors. We consequently changed the environment as well as our response, used positive approaches, and kept lots of data. The student's headbanging declined. No injuries occurred to the student or staff, and we resumed teaching. In short, we used positive behavioral interventions. Part of the transition to this PBIS model, for me at least, was overcoming my fear and opening to new ways of practice.

In the 1990s, I was a state specialist for students with emotional-behavioral disorders (EBD), for whom I have always been a strong advocate. The field was working very hard to promote the use of positive behavioral interventions with these students. Sadly, exclusionary and punitive practices were commonplace in those days; seclusion and restraint were frequently implemented and undocumented. There was (and still is) significant stigma and misunderstanding about students with behavior challenges. For one, it was widely assumed by some that students *chose* particular problem behaviors because they wanted to disrupt the school day for everyone else. This belief in negative motives seemed to justify adults' use of harsh punishment and exclusion of these students from school. It was painful to see this happen so often and at the same time talk with students' families, who were desperate for their children to get a good education. While as educators we should not accept problematic behavior, we need to use more positive and effective practices and mental health awareness to restore a healthy school climate.

Throughout these years, we knew that PBIS worked for individual students with challenging behavior. We used

function-based evaluations and positive behavior support plans—what we now consider Tier 3 practices. We had the practices and we had the data, and yet PBIS was still a very hard sell. Our school systems were simply not designed to support the change that was needed. Then in 2002 I attended the first national Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) conference in Chicago. Bingo! It was so inspiring and clearly the right direction to go. Finally we had a model for a continuum of supports for the entire school system.

In 2005, Minnesota began to implement PBIS statewide, starting with nine schools. I was lucky to be the state coordinator for this effort. As change spread in our schools, one of my brightest moments occurred when a talented principal called me and said that with PBIS in place, his school was better able to serve students with emotional-behavioral disorders. He recognized the challenges for these students. This school is a community, and this principal remains one of Minnesota's visionaries.

As I reflect on these educational advances, I see what a significant shift schoolwide PBIS has provided. When Beth asked if I wanted to write a book with her about it, my only answer was "Yes!"

From Beth: I was teaching middle school students with emotional-behavioral disorders, and one day during a math lesson a student said to me, "You're a (insert expletive)." I am not sure why he said it, but I didn't like it. I responded, "That's it! You are suspended! You can go home!" and went to find an administrator. Instead I found the school psychologist and told her what had just happened in my classroom. She asked me, "What do you hope to get by suspending this student?" I told her that he couldn't speak to me that way and he

needed to go home. "Do you really think suspending him one more time for the behavior he's been doing for six years is going to change anything?" I thought about it for a minute and then sheepishly replied "No." But I felt exasperated and defeated—what else could I do but suspend him? The school psychologist gave me a social skills curriculum she had received from a mental health treatment center and suggested that it might be helpful to use with my students. She asked her intern to lead the curriculum's lessons with my class.

Over the coming months, the intern taught my students how to use calming strategies, including deep breathing and visualization. He talked with them about different sources of anger and showed them how to release their anger in healthy ways. As a class, we developed common language to discuss feelings and how we react to those feelings. For my part, the curriculum prompted me to work toward understanding my students better and where their behaviors might be originating. As I learned more about my students' backgrounds, families, and school histories, I realized that the feelings and behaviors they demonstrated in class were perhaps a response to me, but could also be a result of much more than my desire to teach them math, for example. Because most of my students were students of color, and all were receiving special education services for emotional-behavioral concerns, perhaps they were frustrated with trying to navigate a system that they were unfamiliar with and that continued to put them in the category of "less than." They were simply displaying the same behaviors they had always used to cope with anger, hurt, and frustration. The student who called me a name wasn't really angry at me—he was angry at the world (and he eventually told me as much when we discussed the

incident). In the past, swearing at a teacher had brought him an automatic suspension, an easy way to escape school. But this consequence had not served to change his behavior. Once I understood this, I wanted to keep the students in the building and work with them on developing better ways of identifying anger and frustration, their root causes, and how to either cope with a situation or use problem-solving to find solutions and change what can be changed.

I remember this incident quite vividly and how it made me rethink my purpose in teaching students with challenging behaviors. It was no longer just about the academics; now I saw how focusing on the social-emotional aspect of my students' lives could also improve their everyday experiences over the long term. I began allowing behavioral "do-overs" in my classroom. We talked about feelings and processed the causes of disruptive behaviors, and I acknowledged and reinforced the new prosocial skills my students were learning. I changed the environment of my classroom from being reactive to proactive to ensure that students felt welcomed and engaged.

With these changes, I no longer felt like a gatekeeper, sending kids back and forth to the behavior room. Now I felt more involved and connected with my students and enjoyed watching them grow emotionally—they could share with me what they were frustrated about and then together we could come up with a solution. The atmosphere in my classroom became calmer. And as a result, we could spend more time on academics.

The changes didn't happen overnight. There was a lot of work involved—relationships built by taking baby steps—and some kids weren't interested in talking about their feelings. Even so, I remember running into a parent of one of these students a few years after the family had

moved to a different district. She gave me a hug and told me that her son was doing really well and that his anger was no longer causing him significant trouble. Was it what he had learned in my classroom? Maybe. Was it maturity? Possibly. Does it matter? Not to me. What matters to me is that he figured out a way to cope with his behaviors that worked for him and was not disruptive to everyone around him.

That was my introduction to PBIS, although I was yet to fully understand the theories and principles involved and the potential it had to improve an entire school's culture. Eventually I enrolled in graduate school to earn a master's degree in education, and part of my program required that I do an action research project (implement a project and collect data on it over time). The middle school where I was teaching had just started a schoolwide character education program, and I knew it would be a perfect setting to collect data for my project. While conducting research on social-emotional learning, I kept bumping into articles on PBIS. When I started reading them, I realized that although the program at my school was a great start, it did not include interventions for students who were being continually referred out of class and who were in need of more intensive supports. It also didn't emphasize data collection.

I started looking at our school's data and determined which students were having trouble—not just their names, but also their race and ethnicity, special education services, grades, attendance, behavioral strengths, and patterns. The school's handling of behavior and discipline problems paralleled a scenario that is repeated across the country: A student would get referred out of the classroom and go to the behavior room; here he or she would complete a form agreeing not to do the behavior again, get a lecture, and then return to class. For some students, this process was repeated several times a day, day after day. Teachers were frustrated because behaviors weren't changing. Some students were actually choosing to act out to get sent to the behavior room. Administrators were distressed with the number of students out of class, because we all know that students don't learn unless they are in class.

I began to memorize research and sound bites about PBIS, but I had a hard time really explaining the overall concept and its practices to my colleagues. If only I knew exactly what PBIS meant . . . If only there were a book that spelled everything out in simple language.

Eventually, our principal decided to adopt PBIS in our school. She began by gathering a PBIS team together. We registered for a two-year cohort training with our state department of education. It was at these trainings that I got to know Char, one of the trainers and the coauthor of this book. She was a great mentor to me while I took on the role of a PBIS coach and led my school through the implementation process.

In time, we began talking more about the layers and parts of PBIS and why implementation often seems difficult. By then I had worked as a special education teacher (for students with emotional-behavioral disorders), as a behavior specialist, and as a PBIS coach. Char's expertise in PBIS included serving as the Minnesota PBIS coordinator and working as a coach, as an evaluation specialist, and as a trainer. We decided to collaborate on creating this guide to help educators who are considering PBIS understand how it operates and how to bring it into their own schools with success.

About This Book

The PBIS Team Handbook is written primarily for district PBIS coordinators and teams and new and emerging PBIS coaches—both internal (school-based) and external (district)—and for leadership teams, including administrators and school staff. It is intended for both new and current staff members. We've received feedback from readers who have been involved with PBIS for over a decade and who feel this book provides them with a more complete and detailed understanding of PBIS and how to lead others.

Part One: What Is PBIS? The first five chapters of this book present the components, roles, and expected outcomes of using the PBIS framework.

- **Chapter 1: PBIS 101** provides a detailed overview of PBIS, what it is, how it originated, how the tiers work, who is involved in using the strategies in a school setting, and what steps are necessary to begin implementing it with fidelity. You'll learn what this type of systems change may look like in your building and how these changes will lead to a safer, calmer school climate. This chapter also discusses the fit between PBIS and MTSS.

The sections, chapters, and resources in this book align with the *PBIS Implementation Blueprint* developed by Rob Horner and George Sugai, with support from the US Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Throughout this book, we refer to sections of the website for the national OSEP Technical Assistance Center on PBIS (www.pbis.org)—a nationwide network that supports schools throughout the country with SWPBIS resources. Please take a look at the PBIS website to see all the contributors who have helped make PBIS the huge success that it is. Another foundational resource is the *Handbook of Positive Behavior Support*,[1] which details the history, depth, and breadth of this initiative.

- **Chapter 2: The PBIS Leadership Team** details the role of a team in introducing and implementing PBIS, describes how to form an effective team, and identifies key roles and responsibilities for different team members. New research shows the significance of a strong leadership team as a key factor in schools sustaining PBIS.[2] We also discuss how to prepare for, conduct, and evaluate team meetings to ensure that best practices are being followed, and we explore the specific role of administrators in PBIS. We provide suggestions for how to develop and maintain a strong and effective leadership team.

- **Chapter 3: The PBIS Coach** describes the key role and tasks of this important leader in the implementation process, from the knowledge and skills a coach needs to specific steps in guiding the process. Ideas on how to grow and develop as a coach are also covered.

- **Chapter 4: Data and Assessment** includes the newest tools available for monitoring progress, action planning, achieving fidelity, and sustaining practices. It explains the essential assessment and data collection piece of PBIS. It identifies the key components in any behavior monitoring system used to track referrals and summarizes the numerous assessment tools that are commonly used in PBIS. This chapter also highlights the latest changes in the Schoolwide Information System (SWIS) and provides recommendations for setting annual data evaluation schedules.

- **Chapter 5: Effective Data-Based Decision-Making** details a method of data-based problem-solving for PBIS Leadership Teams that can be used with implementation progress, fidelity, and student outcome data. It also briefly introduces the Team-Initiated Problem-Solving (TIPS) model.

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1. Sailor, Dunlap, Sugai, and Horner, eds., 2009.
2. McIntosh et al., 2018.

Part Two: Implementing PBIS Tier 1. This section of the book offers a step-by-step guide through the five stages of implementation, explaining the main tasks of each stage, the individuals involved, and how to keep stakeholders informed.

- **Chapter 6: PBIS Stage 1: Exploration and Adoption** explains how to get started with PBIS, including how to determine need, collect baseline data, and take the first steps to get buy-in from school staff and administrators.

- **Chapter 7: PBIS Stage 2: Getting Ready— Installing the Infrastructure** discusses the important task of establishing a PBIS Leadership Team and the initial work of the team as they develop an action plan. At this point, schools typically develop the three to five schoolwide expectations that will serve as the foundation for behavioral change in their school and design an approach to teach and reinforce those expectations.

- **Chapter 8: PBIS Stage 3: Getting Going— Initial Implementation** explains how to put the eight key features of PBIS effectively in place. Special attention is focused on training staff at this stage.

- **Chapter 9: PBIS Stage 4: Up and Running—Full Implementation** explores what PBIS looks like once all the features are in place and the strategies of reinforcement have become automatic to all school staff. The chapter discusses how to ensure that the strategies and principles of PBIS are being used as intended and with fidelity.

- **Chapter 10: PBIS Stage 5: Sustaining and Continuous Improvement** is updated with the most current research on sustainability and looks at how to sustain PBIS over the long term, when leadership and staff turn over and when momentum slows. The discussion includes adapting PBIS to changing circumstances, addressing common barriers at this stage, and identifying what actions will lead to continual improvement and support for PBIS throughout the school. Practical examples are provided.

- **Chapter 11: Equity and Disproportionality: How PBIS Can Help** addresses the importance of reviewing discipline practices that are inequitable to students of color. It is imperative that school discipline practices are fair and just and that learning environments are open and welcoming to all students.

Part Three: Setting the Stage for PBIS Tiers 2 and 3. The final section of this book explores how to know when your school is ready to move beyond the first tier of PBIS and what to do next.

- **Chapter 12: Are You Ready for Advanced Tiers?** offers questions to help you consider whether your school is comfortable enough to advance to the second and third tiers of PBIS to meet the needs of students with more pronounced behavioral challenges. Updates include tools that districts and schools can use to assess their needs and readiness for advanced tiers.

Glossary, Resources, and Appendix. At the end of this book is a glossary of relevant terms, an updated list of references and resources, and an appendix filled with reproducible forms and lists to help you and your school with PBIS implementation. You will also find these forms in the digital content.

Digital Content. The digital content accompanying this book contains customizable versions of all the reproducible forms as well as a PDF presentation that can be modified for use in your school to introduce the PBIS framework to your staff or district. We have done the research and created this tool to help you provide professional development in your school or district. See page 201 for details on how to access the download from Free Spirit's website.

PLC/Book Study Guide. If you wish to use this book in a professional learning community (PLC) or book study group, a PLC/Book Study Guide with chapter-by-chapter discussion questions is available. You may download the free guide at freespirit .com/PLC.

How to Use This Book

Regardless of whether your school is already in the midst of implementing PBIS or has yet to commit to adopting it, you will find information and resources in this book that apply to where you are on your journey. You may choose to read the book straight through or select specific sections or chapters that address where you are right now. We have updated the book to include current evidence-based practice. It focuses on the *how* of thoroughly implementing Tier 1 and is designed to promote the sustainability of the framework as much as the initial implementation.
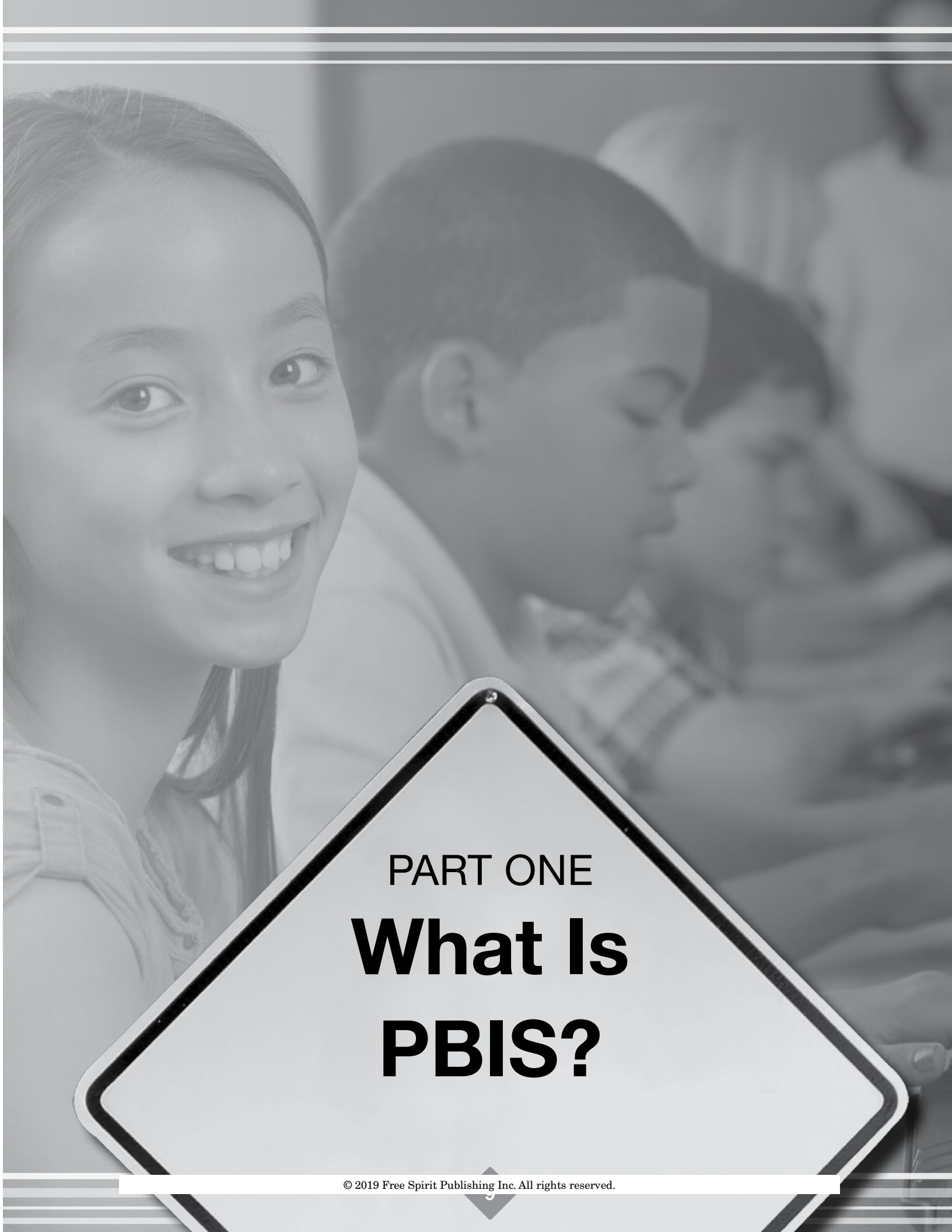
PLCs and book study groups can use this book in schools exploring or already using PBIS. These chapters will help you get caught up on the terminology and the process. (It took Beth about two years to catch on to some of the nuances of the model.) Also, principals may purchase copies of the book for the PBIS Leadership Team to have on hand during the implementation phase and to walk your team through the process. Staff members who are new to your building may also appreciate having a copy to catch up on what PBIS is all about. Readers tell us that the easy flow and step-by-step guidance are very helpful, even for schools and districts that have already been implementing PBIS.

We welcome you to this wonderful journey. It will likely be filled with pit stops, hills, and valleys. But with patience and perseverance, you can help lead your school to reduced behavioral problems and improved academics, fostering an environment in which teachers are teaching more, administrators are disciplining less, and students are more engaged and productive.

Char Ryan and Beth Baker

PART ONE

What Is PBIS?

PBIS 101

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is now being used in nearly 26,000 schools across the United States and in 23 countries worldwide, across all school settings, from the lunchroom to the library, from the locker room to the individual classroom—and everywhere in between. The PBIS framework has been adopted by rural, suburban, and urban schools; by area learning centers (ALCs), charter schools, and separate-site special education programs; and by preK schools through high schools. Some juvenile justice centers also use PBIS. The framework can be implemented in any school that is interested in improving behavioral and academic outcomes for all students. Many educators and other school staff are witnessing the benefits of this approach and seeing safer, calmer learning environments.

You may be a coach or PBIS team member looking for a way to communicate to others what PBIS represents. Or perhaps you are a staff member trying to figure out just what PBIS means to you. Regardless of your role, this chapter will provide you with a basic understanding of the PBIS approach and how it can be used in your school.

How Was PBIS Developed and How Does It Work?

In the 1980s, researchers at the University of Oregon began to research and develop interventions for use with students who had challenging behaviors in school settings. They noted success with the following practices:

- preventing unwanted behaviors
- using evidence-based practices to teach new behaviors
- teaching the new behaviors explicitly, mindfully, and step-by-step
- keeping data to track progress toward meeting social skills goals

In 1997, Congress reauthorized the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and secured funding to establish the National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (www.pbis.org). Researchers from across the country contributed their research and implementation ideas. Finally, all the key studies and research involving behavioral change and supports for students with challenging behaviors were in one spot. The center also created partnerships with university researchers in Oregon, Florida, Missouri, and other states. This led to the expansion of the PBIS framework from special education classrooms to schoolwide programs. In 2002, the center hosted the first PBIS Leadership Forum in Chicago, and in 2004, Rob Horner and George Sugai, with support from the US Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, wrote the PBIS blueprints to guide practitioners in implementing PBIS. Updated blueprints can be found at www.pbis.org/blueprint briefstools.

PBIS is an organizing framework for schools to determine how they want to operate

as a community—that is, what type of learning environment they want to create and what that means in terms of student behavior and academic achievement. PBIS is grounded in a continuum of evidence-based interventions that are used consistently throughout the school to prevent problematic behavior, to teach prosocial skills, and to reinforce new skills. The framework includes a set of clear practices that are embedded in a three-tiered support system for students. Teachers use specific techniques and procedures, while real-time data provide evidence to determine outcomes. A variety of measurement tools included in the framework are described in chapter 4 and discussed in more detail in later chapters. The framework includes the following eight key features:

1. PBIS Leadership Team that guides the implementation

2. Statement of vision or purpose

3. Three to five schoolwide positive behavioral expectations

4. A continuum of procedures for encouraging the expected behaviors, including a behavioral matrix explaining how those expectations will look in the school

5. Lesson plans that teach the expected behaviors across all classroom and nonclassroom settings

6. Acknowledgment system that recognizes students using expected behavior—both within and outside of the classroom

7. Flowchart of detailed procedures showing how to handle student misbehaviors schoolwide— across all classroom and nonclassroom settings

8. Data-based system for monitoring implementation, fidelity, and outcomes

PBIS is implemented in stages, which enables the school to be fully prepared and trained for the interventions and system changes. The PBIS Leadership Team monitors the fidelity of implementation and completes assessments to ensure the process is on track to success. Staff members

are surveyed to determine what school settings and behaviors may need extra attention (such as hallway behaviors) and what areas may simply need to maintain prosocial behaviors (for example, by posting expectations to remind adults and students about appropriate behaviors).

> Ultimately, PBIS is an organizing framework for schools to determine how they want to operate as a community.

Educators have spent a lot of time, energy, and money figuring out the best way to teach kids reading, math, and other disciplines. PBIS helps schools include social-emotional learning skills. Teachers know that students who regularly interrupt class or who spend a lot of time in the principal's office aren't learning academic or social-emotional skills. What's more, we know that students who are aware of their emotions and can regulate when they are feeling frustrated will do better in school. As a special educator by training, Beth has written many goals for students about self-regulation and then taught those students how to recognize when they are frustrated or anxious and how to handle it in the classroom. We know that students learn the expected school behaviors if they see them modeled and are given time for practice, feedback, and skill reinforcement across school settings. Yet when it comes to social-emotional skills, many teachers aren't comfortable teaching these "soft" skills. Some don't want to spend time teaching behaviors they think their students should already know, despite the evidence that some students haven't mastered the skills we want them to have.

Over the past decade, schools have improved their collaboration with mental health providers. Many districts now have formal agreements with local mental health agencies that provide needed services on-site in the schools. Historically, there have been many barriers to this cooperation. Given that 20 percent of students experience a serious mental health disorder, their success depends on

our ability to integrate these systems. For some good examples of integration, see www.pbis.org and look through the sections "School," "Community," and "Research."

PBIS and MTSS

Many schools now implement MTSS, or Multi-Tiered System of Supports, to provide academic support for students. MTSS first appeared in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015. The law requires states to ensure the success of all students and all schools. MTSS is not required by this law, per se. It is defined as a "comprehensive continuum of evidence-based systemic practices to support rapid response to students' needs, with regular observation to facilitate data-based instructional decision-making."[1] MTSS is a service delivery framework based on the concept of prevention and increasing levels of supports (tiers) for academic and social behavior.

PBIS was introduced in the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA, in which it was not officially defined or required. However, state departments that accepted federal funds were required to develop their own multi-tiered systems of supports.

Interventions in both MTSS and PBIS utilize evidence-based practices, progress monitoring, and data collection to determine schoolwide, as well as individual student, needs. When combined with MTSS, PBIS provides school teams with tools to create student-centered behavioral interventions and plans. PBIS and MTSS are compatible in their systems approach to practice and implementation.

There is growing discussion and action to integrate MTSS and PBIS into a single unified systemic approach incorporating evidence-based practices to achieve clear academic and social-behavioral outcomes. There are logical reasons for doing so, including:

- Academic and social behavior are related; this is well-known.
- Tiered systems of supports based on a prevention model produce positive outcomes.

- Both PBIS and MTSS have demonstrated widespread application and durability.
- Integrating around common features offers the possibility of increased efficiency.

However, the process of integrating MTSS and PBIS requires a lot of effort and time and needs to be done systematically. There often is confusion about how best to do this or even if these two frameworks are mutually exclusive. The worst-case scenario would be if the strong evidence-based elements of either approach were lost in the process of bringing them together.

In discussions with state MTSS specialists, we agree that the best approach is to clearly recognize the common elements and focus the work on these similarities. Here are a few examples:

1. PBIS focuses on improving student behavioral and, relatedly, academic outcomes. MTSS also focuses on prevention and problem-solving to achieve higher rates of academic proficiency and close the achievement gap.

2. PBIS focuses on evidence-based supports for students across schoolwide, nonclassroom, classroom, and individual student settings. MTSS focuses on academic supports for classes and groups of students.

3. PBIS establishes a continuum of supports in three tiers that is based on screening, progress monitoring, and team-based decision-making for social-behavioral outcomes and improved learning environments. MTSS also focuses on three tiers of academic support for students: core instruction, supplemental instruction, and intensive intervention.

4. PBIS uses data for accurate decision-making and monitoring in a team-based framework. MTSS uses multiple sources of data to define, measure, and improve academic instruction.

We support the effective integrations of these frameworks. Here are some examples of states that have made good progress in doing so:

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1. Knoff, Reeves, and Balow, 2018.

- **California's Department of Education** provides a good description of MTSS and how it encompasses both PBIS and Response to Intervention (RTI): www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/ri.
- **Minnesota's Department of Education** uses MTSS to improve the achievement of students who are not meeting grade-level standards: education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/mtss.
- **Indiana's Department of Education** combines MTSS with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to enhance learning environments for all students, including those students who have special needs. The website provides many links for further study: www.doe.in.gov /specialed/universal-design-learning -udl-multi-tiered-system-supports-mtss.

This recap is brief and does not detail some of the more complex characteristics of PBIS and MTSS. But it hopefully gives readers a general idea of the commonalities. Our purpose in this book is to provide user-friendly approaches to understanding and implementing PBIS with fidelity.

A Tiered Model

PBIS offers three tiers of support to ensure all students get the help they need. Beginning at Tier 1, or the universal tier, primary prevention interventions for all students are established. Tier 2 involves interventions for students whose behaviors might be considered at-risk. And Tier 3 offers intensive interventions for individual students who have the greatest needs. For teachers and other educators, the PBIS framework guides us to look at the practices we use and to identify new skills we may need to develop in order to fully support all students in an equitable and culturally responsive way.

The three-tiered system of PBIS is based on a model of prevention from public health. The model says that 80 percent of people will respond to general guidance or correction, about 15 percent will need a bit more treatment, and maybe the top 5 percent will need specialized treatment. PBIS replicates that model. The model recognizes that not all problem behavior is the same, nor do all students

respond to the same types of interventions. The PBIS framework guides schools in meeting the needs of students at all tiers through a continuum of interventions. This continuum is designed to help staff prevent challenging behaviors by teaching and acknowledging prosocial behaviors.

Figure 1.1:
PBIS Three-Tiered Triangle

Tier 3

Tier 2
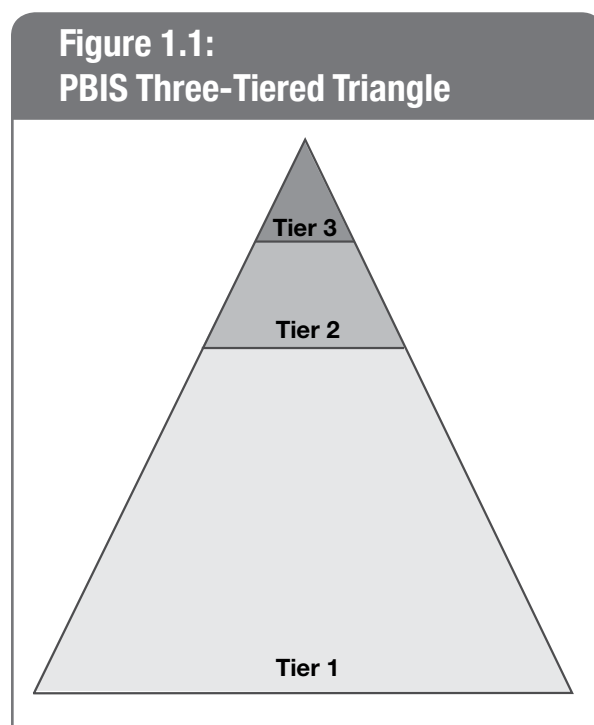
Tier 1

Figure 1.1 illustrates the PBIS three-tiered triangle. The bottom of the triangle (typically shown in green) represents schoolwide behavioral practices, called Tier 1 interventions. This is the universal prevention of disruptive behaviors by creating quality learning environments for all students across all areas of the school, including nonclassroom settings. This tier includes three to five positively stated schoolwide expectations, lesson plans for teaching expected behaviors to all students, and a practice for monitoring their use. Systems are set up for handling disruptive behavior in the classroom, including when to write an office discipline referral (ODR). Staff may be given professional development in classroom management skills and social-emotional learning.

Tier 2, typically shown in yellow, involves secondary prevention. This is specialized instruction for students who may be considered at-risk and may benefit from small-group instruction in social-emotional skills. For example, during her time as a coach, Beth and the school social worker had a "Lunch Bunch" group of students who were accumulating tardies during the day. After the students finished their lunches, the social worker provided lessons on why it's important to be on time for class and how to get to class on time. Another evidence-based practice at Tier 2 is Check-In Check-Out (CICO) for students who need more assistance beyond Tier 1 interventions. CICO provides more positive adult contact, specific social skills instruction, specific focus on students' achieving schoolwide expectations, and daily contact with adults about progress. Students who succeed with CICO rarely require Tier 3 interventions.

Tier 3 at the top of the triangle (typically shown in red) reflects the most intensive interventions for students with the highest level of need. Students who have behaviors that are deemed to be the most challenging or frequent receive interventions at Tier 3. This tier focuses on one-on-one interventions to help students learn expected school behaviors or on strategies to replace the challenging behavior. Tier 3 interventions require detailed, individual functional behavioral evaluations, behavior support plans, and increased staff involvement.

Outcomes Supported by Three Integrated Elements

The overarching goal for schools is to ensure the academic success and social competence of all students. In the PBIS framework, three integrated elements support the outcomes for social competence:

1. **Data to support decision-making.** Data are used to develop plans and actions that respond to what is really occurring in the school rather than grasping at straws and saying things like, "I am pretty sure most of our students have never had a referral," or "He said at the staff

meeting that things are going well, so they must be." Data that are kept current provide a real-time look at your school climate.

2. **Practices to support student behavior.** Expectations for student behavior are developed and clearly communicated and taught to all students. Another essential component involves specifically and systematically acknowledging students for performing expected behaviors. Along with this, practices are in place for preventing students' disruptive behaviors from erupting in class or in the hallways and other settings.

3. **Systems to support staff behavior.** Staff are trained to prevent many student behavioral problems as well as to deal with disruptive behaviors in a more proactive and positive manner. Systems infrastructure includes creating routines that support and sustain new adult behavior.

These three elements are key to having a behavioral model that is effective, efficient, and relevant. **Figure 1.2** illustrates the way they interact to produce positive outcomes.

Figure 1.2: PBIS Elements
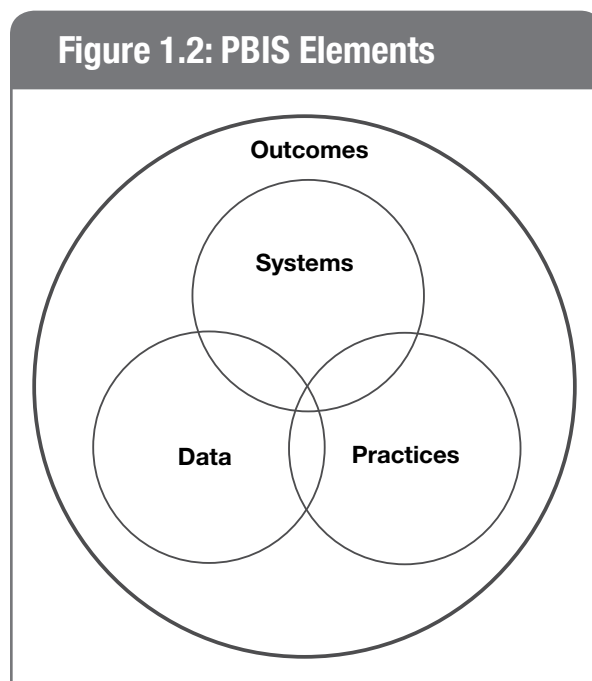
How Is PBIS Implemented?

Anyone who has ever tried to make big changes or adopt new practices in a school knows that it is a complex process. An entire body of science has evolved that studies adoption, implementation, and sustainability of evidence-based practices across the fields of education, social services, medicine, and business. Today, the National Implementation Research Network offers valuable resources to those who want to know more about the implementation science of evidence-based practices.

Implementation science gives us an important perspective regarding the work we are doing. First, the process of adopting a new system of practice—no matter how popular—tends to take up to three to five years or more. From the onset, schools must make a long-term commitment to change.

The second big idea from implementation science is that system change occurs in stages leading to full implementation. The stages portray implementation as a process rather than an event. This means that adoption occurs in a progressive, if not uneven, trend. This dimensional approach has implications for what we do as leaders, coaches, and team members. Understanding this progressive evolution of implementation helps us develop specific tasks for those involved in introducing and using PBIS in schools. The process, then, requires ongoing attention, commitment of resources, and *patience*. In Minnesota, where we work, administrators and schools are advised from the moment of PBIS application that they need to understand and commit to a multiyear process.

The following list summarizes the five stages schools move through as they plan for and then begin using PBIS in their buildings. Each chapter in part 2 of this book details one of the five stages of PBIS implementation.

1. **Exploration and adoption:** Learning more about PBIS and whether it would be a good fit for your school. Does your school need it? How could it be helpful?

2. **Installation:** Getting commitments from your district, your school administration, and your school staff; setting up your PBIS Leadership Team and defining leadership and coaching roles; setting up a data management system such as Schoolwide Information System (SWIS) or another way to track office discipline referrals; choosing a universal, or schoolwide, social skills curriculum or teaching methods.

> The process of adopting a new system of practice—no matter how popular—tends to take up to three to five years or more.

3. **Initial implementation:** Training school staff and students, collecting baseline data, putting minimal features in place—such as identifying your school's vision and purpose, selecting three to five behavioral expectations, teaching behavioral expectations schoolwide, and setting up the behavioral referral process. The PBIS Leadership Team collects baseline data. New schools may start with the Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) as a means of formative evaluation and needs assessment. Some teams may choose to start by completing the Team Implementation Checklist (TIC). Either instrument will help you identify next steps and set action plans. Schools will choose to complete one or the other instrument but not both at this point. The team should also use the Self-Assessment Survey (SAS) to survey the staff and hear their thoughts on how well the school is functioning and on areas of strength and areas in need of modification.

4. **Full implementation:** All universal, or Tier 1, components are now operating completely. Behavioral expectations are taught schoolwide and the PBIS Leadership Team meets on a regular basis. All eight PBIS features (see page 11) are implemented and meet fidelity criteria.

At this point, districts may consider expanding PBIS to other schools.

5. **Sustainability and continuous improvement:** PBIS has become common practice, which is reflected in school or district policy and visibility. Schools have implemented systems that ensure continuous adaptation to fit local contexts and changes while maintaining fidelity. Ongoing fidelity assessment assures the team of their program's sustainability and provides data for continued improvement.

Who Is Involved with PBIS?

PBIS is a schoolwide initiative. This means that every adult on staff who encounters students during the school day—from bus drivers to hall monitors to teachers and administrators—is trained in using PBIS practices so students receive the same message consistently in all school settings. Successful implementation of PBIS relies on at least 80 percent agreement from staff, or what we refer to as staff buy-in. Buy-in is an important and constant consideration, both while PBIS is being implemented and during later stages in which sustainability and improvement are the focus.

When schools decide to implement PBIS, a coach and a representative PBIS Leadership Team are chosen to ensure that the practices of PBIS are being used with fidelity across all school settings. The coach might be a general or special education teacher, behavior specialist, school psychologist, social worker, or counselor. The PBIS Leadership Team should be composed of a cross section of staff in your building. It must be a representative group academically, by grade and curriculum area, and also must reflect the diversity and racial makeup of your school.

Administrators, in particular, play a key role in providing leadership and garnering initial and long-term support for PBIS. This support takes many forms—including a clear vision and purpose, financial support for substitute teachers, full-time equivalent (FTE) staff allocations for coaches

and others in key roles, and public support for the initiative and its success within the district and community. Indeed, systems change becomes possible in a school only when it is backed by a larger network of support.

Figure 1.3 on page 17 identifies the essential components and their organization in a complete PBIS system. The chart can serve as a blueprint for teams at various levels—school, district, region, state, and beyond. This graphic provides a macro look at the various school-based system components that need to be in place to support and sustain PBIS.

So how does this graphic organizer apply to a school team? Notice that the PBIS Leadership Team is at the center. This is consistent with PBIS being a team-implemented framework. As implementation progresses, the PBIS Leadership Team needs to address several supportive systems; these are situated along the top of the diagram:

- **Funding** at the school and district level is critical. The PBIS Leadership Team develops a plan to ensure ongoing funding.

- **Visibility** is crucial to telling your story from beginning to end—to staff in your school, to your district administration, and to the school board, parent-teacher organization, community, and so on.

- **Political support** refers to embedding the PBIS framework into the structure of the school and district so that key stakeholders support it.

- **Policy** includes multiple levels, from revising local school policies around discipline and behavior to districtwide changes. We have seen district PBIS Leadership Teams work to adopt a uniform referral form and policy across all schools, integrating PBIS with other systems such as MTSS and maintaining core features for sustainability.

The bottom set of boxes in figure 1.3 refer to the components that must be developed and maintained at all levels, and particularly at the school level:

- **Training** includes the installation of the framework initially, as well as the development of internal capacity to train new staff and students.

- **Coaching** is essential to ensure that the knowledge acquired through training is applied accurately. We know from research that transfer of knowledge to the classroom level is accomplished most effectively when coaching is part of the process. Administrators need to focus on ensuring that PBIS coaches or those who provide the essential coaching functions are allocated the time, FTE, to accomplish the work, including training and development.

- **Evaluation** is a core feature of PBIS implementation and sustainability. Each school must ensure that routines for collecting and using data accurately in decision-making are established and that they become a permanent feature.

- **Behavioral expertise** is necessary; schools and PBIS Leadership Teams must have staff with the specialist knowledge and skills to apply to all tiers of intervention.

All parts of this system are needed to ensure that PBIS is completely functional and sustainable. At the end of the implementation phase, your school may be the "model or demonstration" site for your district. Keep this graphic in mind as you begin the early stages of implementation, when it is easy to lose sight of the big picture and be consumed by the initial steps.

Figure 1.3: The PBIS System
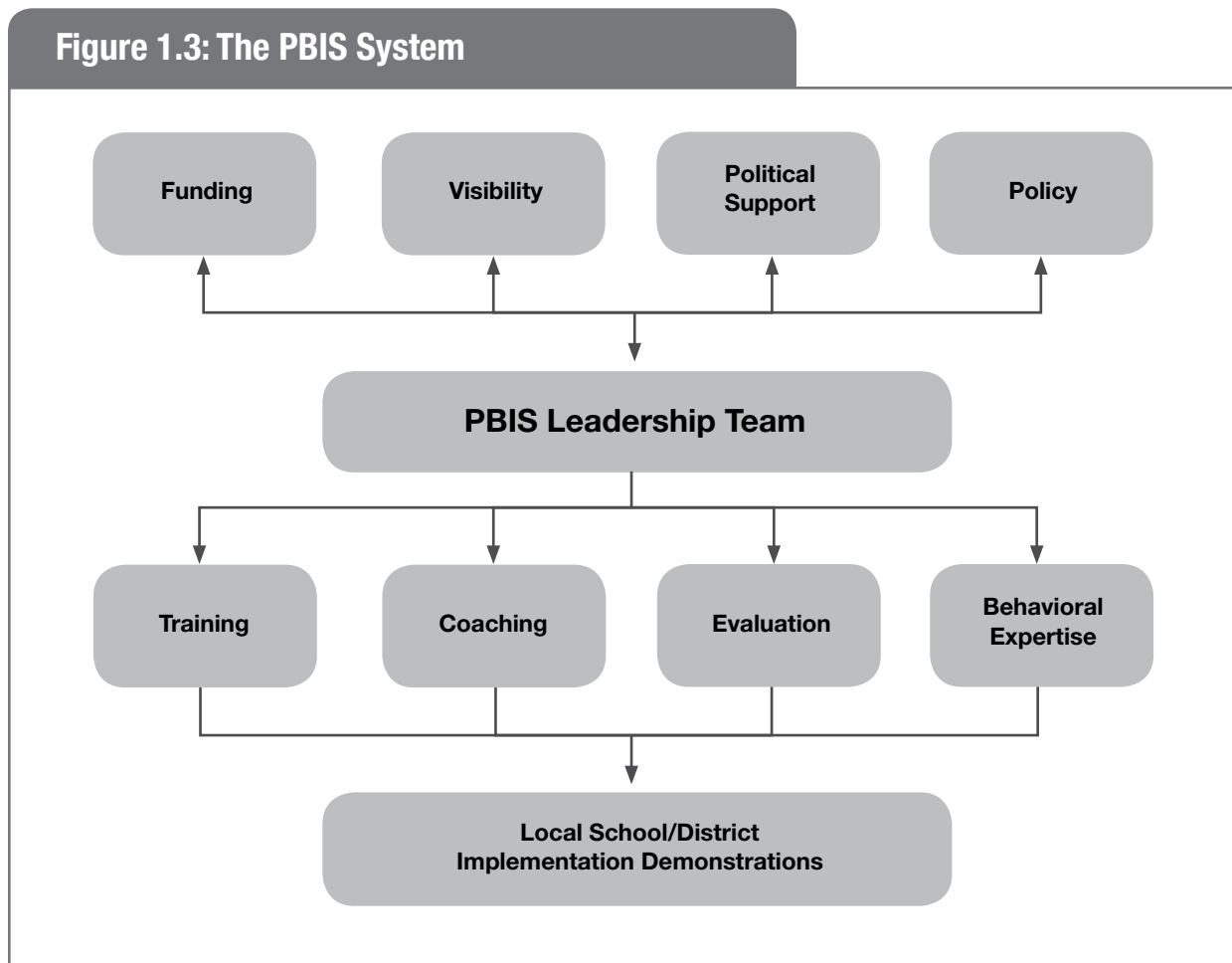
From *Implementation Blueprint and Self-Assessment* developed by the OSEP Technical Assistance Center on PBIS, 2010.

What Type of Training Is Involved?

Most states have PBIS training sites, mostly housed in departments of education or large universities. Some states use the "cohort method," in which districts apply to the cohort and are trained over a one-to-three-year period. Emphasis is on building local capacity and implementing a team-led approach, so audiences are typically school teams. Some states offer a variety of training opportunities for coaches to continue the process of implementing and sustaining PBIS. Still other districts conduct trainings on their own, without the benefit of a large organization to turn to for PBIS training knowledge and experience. If you are interested in formal PBIS training (which we recommend), start with your state department of education or visit www.pbis.org/pbis-network to find your state coordinator. There are also regional PBIS technical assistance centers, including the Midwest PBIS Network, the Mid-Atlantic PBIS Network, the Northeast PBIS Network, and the Northwest PBIS Network.

What Type of Funding Is Required?

Funding needs vary from state to state as well as from district to district. When your school or district makes a decision to implement the PBIS framework, contact the PBIS centers in your state to learn about funding requirements. Some expenses might include the cost of training as well as manuals, guest teachers for the PBIS Leadership Team attending training, planning time for the Leadership Team, release time to prepare lesson plans for teaching schoolwide expectations, incentives for a reinforcement or reward program, and general office supplies. Some schools also purchase a curriculum for Tier 1 schoolwide interventions, such as Second Step or Responsive Classroom, to integrate within the framework. In addition, your school may decide to use a web-based information

system, such as SWIS (see pages 71–75), that requires a subscription fee. As you will learn, some expenses are covered by state or regional organizations, while some belong to individual districts. When Char has met with prospective schools or districts, she has used a simple cost-benefit example demonstrating the contributions of each entity. An impressive review of the costs of implementing PBIS versus the costs of suspensions and expulsions for individuals, schools, and communities can be found at the PBIS website. See www.pbis .org/policy-and-pbis under the heading "Evaluation Briefs" for a detailed breakdown of these costs.

Resource
The PBIS website (www.pbis.org) is developed and maintained by the OSEP Technical Assistance Center on PBIS and offers a wide range of resources, including practice and policy briefs, for schools, districts, states, and regional centers. It houses presentations and training videos you can use for personal and professional development in PBIS. The site also contains information about state coordinators so you can find names and contact information (see www.pbis.org/pbis-network).

What Are the Expected Outcomes of PBIS?

Having good behavioral *systems* and disciplinary *practices* in place and using *data* to confirm or deny your hunches will create outcomes that every school wants to see: improved social and behavioral competence and improved academic achievement. Schools that use the PBIS framework see a decrease in office discipline referrals (ODRs) and suspensions and an increase in academic achievement. Teachers have more time to teach, students have more time to learn, and administrators have more time to run the school rather than spending their days dealing with behaviors. All of this improves favorability with parents and families, stakeholders, and the surrounding community.

Teachers and staff also may experience their schools and students in a different way. Beth recalls talking with a middle school teacher whose school was in its second year of PBIS implementation. She had been ready to resign her position and leave the field of teaching altogether when her school adopted PBIS. But using PBIS completely changed her experience in the classroom and her view of her career by giving her the tools to work with disruptive students. Now she is recommitted to her profession and reenergized in her work with students. Stories like this from teachers and administrators are common and, though anecdotal, they represent the powerful potential of PBIS for preventing or slowing staff turnover, which remains a huge challenge for schools.