

# PRACTICES FOR SCHOOL-WIDE PBIS IMPLEMENTATION

March 2015



In the following report, Hanover Research details best practices for the implementation of school-wide Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (SWPBS) through a literature review and case profiles of school districts that have successfully implemented SWPBS.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Executive Summary and Key Findings ..... 3**
  - Introduction .....3
  - Key Findings .....3
- Section I: PBIS Implementation..... 5**
  - Defining SWPBS .....5
  - Implementation Plans.....7
  - Creating a Leadership Team .....10
  - Staff Buy-In .....12
- Section II: Operating a SWPBS System ..... 14**
  - Professional Development.....14
    - Training .....14
    - Coaching .....15
  - Student Engagement .....15
    - Establishing General Expectations.....15
    - Teaching Observable Expectations.....16
    - Designing Positive Acknowledgement Systems .....17
    - Designing Consequence Systems.....17
  - Program Assessment .....18
    - Data Collection.....18
    - Evaluating Implementation .....19
  - A Note on Secondary Implementation .....20
  - Long-Term Sustainability .....21
- Section III: Case Studies..... 23**
  - Excelsior Springs School District, MO .....23
    - Key Features of ESSD’S Program .....23
  - Public Schools of Robeson County, NC.....25
    - Key Features of PSRC’S Program .....25
  - Rock Island School District, IL .....27
    - Key Features of RISD’s Program .....27
- Appendix A: Typical Implementation Timeline..... 29**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

### INTRODUCTION

In the following report, Hanover Research details best practices for the implementation of school-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBS) through a literature review and case profiles of school districts that have successfully instituted SWPBS. The report consists of the following three sections:

- **Section I: SWPBS Implementation** presents a literature review of SWPBS implementation, including a thorough discussion of best practices in planning, creating a leadership team, and increasing staff buy-in across the K-12 spectrum.
- **Section II: Operating a SWPBS System** provides a review of best practices for the operation of SWPBS, focusing on professional development of staff members, student engagement, program assessment, and long-term sustainability.
- **Section III: District Profiles** provides an examination of three districts that have successfully implemented SWPBS. These case profiles include discussions of staff-buy-in, professional development efforts, program visibility, and outcome information where available.

### KEY FINDINGS

- **Beyond a collection of levelled, proactive behavioral supports, SWPBS is a systemic, data-based compilation of tiered practices focused on supporting student's social and academic achievement.** To accurately implement the program at a district level, administrators should understand the importance of all four SWPBS components: practices, systems, data, and outcomes. Systems enable the school-wide implementation of practices, evidence-based practices establish methods through which schools try to improve student behavior, data track student behavior and identify areas for growth, and improved student outcomes serve as the goal around which all SWPBS activity revolves.
- **The implementation of SWPBS is a multi-year process that involves the participation of multiple administrative groups at the school and district level.** Although the implementation of SWPBS is typically spearheaded by an official "Leadership Team," the leadership team works in conjunction with a number of other groups and individuals such as district administrators, building principals, SWPBS trainers, coaches, liaisons, and school-wide SWPBS groups.
- **Regular data collection and program assessments serve as valuable checks and balances to the SWPBS system.** Whether through online systems such as SWIS or through district-specific programs, data collection allows administrators to identify the when, where, who, and how of behavioral incidents. Additional analysis of these data points can isolate programmatic weaknesses, identify areas for future growth, and increase the program's perceived accountability. Meanwhile, program

assessments such as staff and student surveys allow districts to track community opinions and ideas regarding the implementation of the program.

- **Staff buy-in is crucial to the success of SWPBS, as the program may not be implemented with fidelity across the school campuses otherwise.** The literature on implementation frequently recommends that districts obtain at least 80 percent buy-in from staff through an anonymous balloting process before committing to the program. In circumstances where buy-in is not achieved, SWPBS leaders can further engage with staff members by discussing their perceptions of PBIS as well as the program’s evidence-based effectiveness and value before surveying staff buy-in again. Although some programs have succeeded without majority buy-in from staff, research finds that this typically occurs in districts with strong leadership teams and heavy administrative support.
- **Professional development for staff should occur once before the official start of the program and annually thereafter.** Generally, the district leadership team heads the initial training of all staff at building sites. To prevent adding a time-intensive training requirement to the already-busy schedules of faculty members, teams may need to find creative ways to introduce employees to PBIS without overtaxing them. Suggested training opportunities include staff meetings, after school meetings, early-exit days, or special teacher work days.
- **Professional development is a crucial opportunity for SWPBS leaders to identify new individuals willing to contribute to the growth of the program.** As trainings occur throughout the school year and the implementation of SWPBS deepens, the leadership team can identify staff members at various schools who are available to serve as SWPBS program coaches. These coaches work with emerging and established school teams to monitor the consistency of implementation, increase implementation efficiency, acknowledge outcomes, and facilitate the review of school data.
- **Successful implementation of SWPBS requires a recorded commitment to the long-term sustainability of the program, not just to the initial phases of development.** Districts should consider institutionalizing their commitment to SWPBS by making it a part of their district improvement plan. Additionally, the program should be visible and its successes should be publicized. Staff and community members are more likely to continue prioritizing the program when its value is widely understood and supported by readily available data.

## SECTION I: PBIS IMPLEMENTATION

In the following section, Hanover Research reviews the literature on the best practices for the implementation of PBIS. The section begins with a brief overview of the PBIS framework when applied at the school and district level, followed by a detailed breakdown of the components of implementation.

PBIS is a proactive approach to improving student behavior that is reinforced by additional interventions for small groups and individual students with further needs. The approach is strongly supported by the National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS TA Center), established by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs.<sup>1</sup>

When applied at the school or district level, PBIS is also commonly known as School-Wide Positive Behavioral Support (SWPBS or Sw-PBIS). However, the terms “PBIS” and “SWPBS” are often used interchangeably throughout the literature.<sup>2</sup> Because this report focuses primarily on the application of PBIS systems at the district level, we choose to use the term SWPBS throughout our report.

### DEFINING SWPBS

SWPBS is a flexible, three-tiered framework for assisting school personnel in adopting and organizing behavioral interventions intended to support the success of all students. SWPBS strongly emphasizes a positive, proactive approach to addressing behavioral issues and focuses on introducing, modeling, and reinforcing what students *should* do rather than waiting for misbehavior to occur before reacting.<sup>3</sup> Figure 1.1 outlines the three tiers of behavior support that SWPBS provides.

**Figure 1.1: SWPBS – Tiered Framework of Behavioral Support**

TIER	DESCRIPTION
First Tier	Universal supports for all students within a school or district. This is the primary level, and its essential features include positively stated expectations, strategies to teach expectations, high rates of reinforcement for complying with expectations, and clear routines to increase the likelihood of success.
Second Tier	Secondary or small group/targeted level of supports focusing on students who require additional intervention to achieve outcomes. This level uses strategies such as small group instruction in self-management and social skill development as well as academic support in groups.
Third Tier	Individual supports implemented with students who have chronic patterns of problem behavior. The focus is on the completion of a functional behavioral assessment that leads to an individualized positive behavior support plan.

Source: Lewis, 2005.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “PBIS: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports.” PBIS. <https://www.pbis.org/>

<sup>2</sup> “SWPBS for Beginners.” PBIS. <https://www.pbis.org/school/swpbis-for-beginners>

<sup>3</sup> “What Is School-Wide PBIS?” PBIS. <https://www.pbis.org/school>

<sup>4</sup> Lewis, T. “Implementing School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports.” *Impact*, 18:2. 2005. <http://ici.umn.edu/products/impact/182/182.pdf>

Because the three tiers are composed of a series of general guidelines, each level is flexible and encompasses a “broad range of systemic and individualized strategies for achieving social and academic outcomes.” No school programs need to be exactly alike. Rather, every SWPBS program can be adapted to suit the surrounding environment.<sup>5</sup>

Common systemic and individualized intervention strategies can be categorized as follows:

- **School-wide strategies:** Teaching and acknowledging a small number of positively stated behavioral expectations, clear and distinctive definitions for rule violations, and data-decisions rules
- **Non-classroom strategies:** Active supervision, reminders, setting-specific routines
- **Classroom strategies:** Effective academic instruction, active supervision, high praise rates
- **Individual student strategies:** Function-based behavior intervention supports, explicit social skills instruction, wraparound processes

These strategies are flexible, and can be molded to better meet each school’s unique needs and meet age-appropriate standards – a generic “one size fits all” package is not required.<sup>6</sup> For example, one journal publication from McKeivitt and Braaksma (2008) included an expectation matrix with examples for classroom expectations such as “raise your hand to speak,” “keep your eyes on the speaker,” and “keep hands and feet to yourself,”<sup>7</sup> whereas a PBIS orientation document by researchers at the Universities of Oregon and Connecticut included sample expectations such as “get to class on time” and “have books and pencil.”<sup>8</sup>

In SWPBS, these behavioral practices are combined with data and systems in order to create durable, school-wide structures that better supports student outcomes. Figure 1.2 details the relationships between the four elements of practices, data, systems, and outcomes in SWPBS.

---

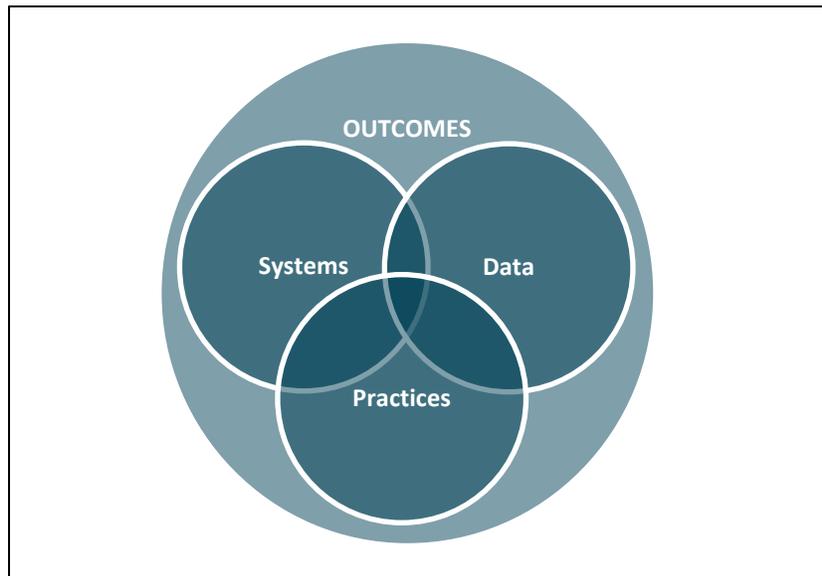
<sup>5</sup> “Effective Schoolwide Discipline in Virginia: A Statewide Initiative That Provides Positive Behavioral and Academic Supports to All Students.” Virginia Department of Education, June 2007. p. 1, 3.  
[http://ttac.odu.edu/esd/documents/ESD\\_Manual.pdf](http://ttac.odu.edu/esd/documents/ESD_Manual.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Molloy et al. “Understanding Real-World Implementation Quality and ‘Active Ingredients’ of PBIS.” *Society for Prevention Research*, February 14, 2013. p. 594.  
<http://search.proquest.com/docview/1442601866/7873A020D5084A7CPQ/7?accountid=132487>

<sup>7</sup> McKeivitt, B.C. and A.D. Braaksma. “Best Practices in Developing a Positive Behavior Support System at the School Level.” *Best Practices in School Psychology V*, 2008. p. 741  
[http://www.nasponline.org/publications/booksproducts/bp5samples/735\\_bpv89\\_44.pdf](http://www.nasponline.org/publications/booksproducts/bp5samples/735_bpv89_44.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Horner, R., G. Sugai, and C. Dickey. “Middle School PBS Orientation, San Jose: School-Wide Positive Behavioral Support.” PBIS. p. 32.  
<http://www.pbis.org/common/cms/files/pbisresources/1008rhMiddleSchoolPBSOrientationSanJose.ppt>

**Figure 1.2: Relationship Between the SWPBS Elements**



Source: [www.PBIS.org](http://www.PBIS.org)<sup>9</sup>

Each element in the figure is defined by the PBIS TA Center as follows:

- **Student outcomes:** Academic and behavior targets that are endorsed and emphasized by students, families, and educators. These outcomes address the question of, “What is important to each particular learning community?”
- **Practices:** Interventions and strategies that are evidence based. These practices are built on practical considerations, and address the question, “How will you reach the goals?”
- **Data:** Information that is used to identify status, need for change, and effects of interventions. These data address the question, “What data will you use to support your success or barriers?”
- **Systems:** Supports that are needed to enable the accurate and durable implementation of the practices of PBIS. These systems address the question, “What durable systems can be implemented that will sustain this over the long haul?”<sup>10</sup>

Thus, SWPBS is more than simply a series of behavioral strategies. **SWPBS is a systemic, data-based compilation of tiered practices focused on supporting student’s social and academic achievement.**

## IMPLEMENTATION PLANS

Before implementing SWPBS, schools must develop a clear implementation plan that assigns responsibilities to key stakeholders, describes program goals, and details the steps

<sup>9</sup> “What is School-wide PBIS?,” Op. cit.

<sup>10</sup> Reproduced with minor variations from Ibid.

that will be taken during implementation. One example of such a plan is the OSEP Center on PBIS’ “Implementation Blueprint,” which is detailed in Figure 1.3 below.<sup>11</sup>

The Blueprint was created as a 38-step preliminary guide to SWPBS implementation, and is widely cited as a tool of choice in discussions of best practices. Other resources, such as the School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports Implementation Guide developed by the Michigan Department of Education, also provide guidelines for schools and districts seeking to implement SWPBS.<sup>12</sup>

**Figure 1.3: OSEP Council on PBIS Implementation Blueprint**

IMPLEMENTATION COMPONENT	FEATURE
<b>Leadership Team (Coordination)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leadership Team is configured to address multi-school (district) and/or multi-district (region, state) leadership and coordination.</li> <li>2. Leadership Team is established with representation from appropriate range of stakeholders (e.g., special education, general education, families, mental health, administration, higher education, professional development, evaluation &amp; accountability).</li> <li>3. Leadership Team completes SWPBS Implementation Blueprint self-assessment at least annually.</li> <li>4. Leadership Team completes a 3-5 year prevention based action plan that delineates actions linked to each feature of the Implementation Blueprint.</li> <li>5. Leadership Team establishes regular meeting schedule (at least quarterly) &amp; meeting process (agenda, minutes, dissemination).</li> <li>6. Leadership Team has established individual(s) who have adequate &amp; designated time to manage day-to-day operations.</li> <li>7. Leadership Team has established individuals who put policy &amp; action planning into practice.</li> <li>8. Leadership Team has established individuals who inform leadership team on implementation outcomes.</li> <li>9. Organizational leadership has authority to implement.</li> </ol>
<b>Funding</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. Recurring/stable state funding sources are established to support operating structures &amp; capacity activities for at least three years.</li> <li>11. Funding &amp; organizational resources across related initiatives are assessed &amp; integrated.</li> </ol>
<b>Visibility</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. Dissemination strategies are identified &amp; implemented to ensure that stakeholders are informed about activities &amp; accomplishments (e.g., website, newsletter, conferences, TV).</li> <li>13. Procedures are established for quarterly &amp; public acknowledgement of implementation activities that meet criteria.</li> </ol>
<b>Political Support</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14. Student social behavior is one of the top three to five goals for the political unit (state, district, region).</li> <li>15. Leadership Team reports to the political unit at least annually on the activities &amp; outcomes related to student behavior goal &amp; SWPBS implementation.</li> <li>16. Participation &amp; support by administrator from state chief or equivalent administrator are agreed upon &amp; secured.</li> </ol>

<sup>11</sup> “Implementation Blueprint and Self-Assessment: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports.” OSEP Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, September 25, 2010.  
[http://www.pbis.org/common/pbisresources/publications/SWPBS\\_ImplementationBlueprint\\_vSep\\_23\\_2010.pdf](http://www.pbis.org/common/pbisresources/publications/SWPBS_ImplementationBlueprint_vSep_23_2010.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Dunlap, K., et al. “School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports: Implementation Guide 2010.” Michigan Department of Education. [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/SchoolwidePBS\\_264634\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/SchoolwidePBS_264634_7.pdf)

IMPLEMENTATION COMPONENT	FEATURE
<b>Policy</b>	17. SWPBS policy statement developed and endorsed. 18. Procedural guidelines & working agreements have been written & referenced for implementation decision making. 19. Implementation data & outcomes are reviewed semiannually to refine policy. 20. Audit of effectiveness, relevance, & implementation integrity of existing related (similar outcomes) initiatives, programs, etc. is conducted annually to refine policy. 21. Action plan for integrated and/or collaborative implementation of SWPBS with other initiatives having similar outcomes and goals.
<b>Training Capacity</b>	22. Leadership Team gives priority to identification & adoption of evidence-based training curriculum & professional development practices. 23. Leadership Team has established local training capacity to build & sustain SWPBS practices. 24. Leadership Team has established plan for continuous regeneration & updating of training capacity.
<b>Coaching Capacity</b>	25. Leadership Team has developed a coaching network that establishes & sustains SWPBS. 26. Individuals are available to provide coaching & facilitation supports at least monthly with each emerging school teams (in training & not at implementation criteria), & at least quarterly with established teams. 27. Coaching functions are identified & established for internal (school level) & external (district/regional level) coaching supports.
<b>Evaluation Capacity</b>	28. Leadership Team has developed an evaluation process & schedule for assessing (a) extent to which teams are using SWPBS, (b) impact of SWPBS on student outcomes, & (c) extent to which the leadership team’s action plan is implemented. 29. School-based data information systems (e.g., data collection tools & evaluation processes) are in place. 30. District &/or state level procedures & supports are in place for system level evaluation. 31. Annual report of implementation integrity & outcomes is disseminated. 32. At least quarterly dissemination, celebration, and acknowledgement of outcomes and accomplishments.
<b>Behavioral Expertise</b>	33. At least two individuals on leadership team have behavioral expertise and experience to ensure implementation integrity of SWPBS practices and systems at three capacity levels (a) training, (b) coaching, and (c) evaluation. 34. Individuals with behavioral expertise have SWPBS content competence. 35. The interaction and relationship between effective academic instruction and school-wide behavior support are visible and promoted. 36. SWPBS behavioral expertise includes fluency with the process and organizational strategies that support and enhance the use of evidence-based behavioral practices.
<b>School/District Demonstrations</b>	37. At least 10 schools have adopted SWPBS, & can be used as local demonstrations of process & outcomes. 38. At least 2 districts/regions have established demonstrations of system-level leadership teams to coordinate SWPBS implementation in 25% (3 or more) or more of their schools.

Source: OSEP Council on PBIS<sup>13</sup>

It is worth noting that it typically takes two to three years of program development in order to fully implement SWPBS systems across all three tiers.<sup>14</sup> For a detailed timeline of the first year of implementation, please refer to Appendix A.

<sup>13</sup> Taken verbatim from “Implementation Blueprint and Self-Assessment: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports,” Op. cit., pp. 70-73.

## CREATING A LEADERSHIP TEAM

The creation of a leadership team is an essential first step towards full SWPBS implementation. The team should be composed of eight to 10 individuals whose work is associated with the prevention of problem behavior, the development of behavioral competence, and the management of resources related to behavioral supports. These individuals may come from areas such as Special Education, Student Health, Dropout Prevention, Data Management, Multiculturalism, School Psychology, and more.<sup>15</sup> Pre-existing committees in these areas with behavioral goals very similar to those of PBIS should be integrated into the PBIS team to the greatest extent possible to avoid overlap and to create an inter-disciplinary, collaborative environment.<sup>16</sup>

The leadership team must have authority from existing administrative entities to implement change, as well as the necessary resources with which to do so.<sup>17</sup> In fact, the leadership team's ability to clearly communicate with such administrative entities is vital, as staff may be reluctant to make changes without administrative approval. To better facilitate this communication, leadership teams should consider appointing a team representative responsible for presenting progress and requests to the administration and receiving feedback to discuss with the wider team.<sup>18</sup>

After the leadership team is established and organized, the team is typically trained through an initial series of workshops that "review key concepts about student development, discipline, and the PBS theoretical approach to changing behavior, improving school climate, and facilitating system effectiveness." Initial workshops should also focus on how the basic principles of PBIS underlie the development of individually tailored SWPBS plans. This training may be supplemented throughout the year through a series of "booster" trainings intended to review key PBIS principles and their application.<sup>19</sup>

The leadership team should work to increase capacity in four primary areas:

- **Training Capacity:** The leadership team will establish the system's ability to self-assess for specific programmatic and staff development needs and objectives, develop a training action plan, invest in increasing local training capacity, and implement effective and efficient training activities.
- **Coaching Capacity:** The leadership team will establish the system's ability to organize personnel and resources for facilitating, assisting, maintaining, and adapting local school training implementation efforts. Resources are committed for both initial training and on-going implementation support.

---

<sup>14</sup> Dunlap, K., et al., Op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>15</sup> "Implementation Blueprint and Self-Assessment: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports," Op. cit., p. 77.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 76.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 80.

<sup>18</sup> Handler, M.W., et al. "Practical Consideration in Creating School-Wide Positive Behavior Support in Public Schools." *Psychology in the Schools*, 44:1, 2007. p. 32.

<http://faculty.unlv.edu/sloe/Courses/EPY%20715/SWPBS%20articles/Handler2007.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 31.

- **Evaluation Capacity:** The leadership team will establish the system’s ability to establish measurable outcomes, methods for evaluating progress toward these measurable outcomes, and modified or adapted action plans based on these evaluations.
- **Coordination Capacity:** The leadership team will establish the system’s ability to develop an operational organization and “rhythm” that enables effective and efficient utilization of materials, time, and personnel in the implementation of an action plan.<sup>20</sup>

Concrete goals for the leadership team within the four primary areas include the following:

- Completing a self-assessment
- Creating a 3-5 year action plan
- Establishing regularly scheduled meetings
- Identifying a coordinator to manage and facilitate
- Securing stable funding for efforts
- Developing a dissemination strategy to establish visibility (website, newsletter, conferences, TV)
- Ensuring student social behavior is the top priority of the district
- Establishing trainers to build and sustain school-wide PBIS practices
- Developing a coaching network (each school identifies a school coach to facilitate)
- Evaluating school-wide PBIS efforts<sup>21</sup>

Due to the breadth of these goals, participation on the leadership team is a considerable time investment for district and school staff members. Data from research published in *Psychology in the Schools* on PBIS implementation indicates that the leadership team needs “approximately 40 to 50 [hours] of planning and development time during the first year to identify the school’s needs, develop a plan, and present the plan to staff and students.” Following the launch of the plan, “the leadership team will need approximately 2 [hours] per month to discuss plan effectiveness.” Accordingly, administration should account for the demands of this time commitment and consider offering incentives for participation on the leadership team. This can include providing coverage for teachers during the school day, scheduling additional time outside of school, and providing professional development or graduate school credits to individuals involved in the program.<sup>22</sup>

Partly due to the scheduling and time demands of leadership team participation, team attrition rates can be a concern. Schools can plan for this by measuring participant interest, identifying those most likely to remain on the team, and presenting other staff members

---

<sup>20</sup> Reproduced with minor variations from “District Level.” PBIS. <http://www.pbis.org/school/district-level>

<sup>21</sup> Taken verbatim from Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Handler, M.W., et al., Op. cit, pp. 30-31.

with the opportunity to join on a yearly basis.<sup>23</sup> Attrition is not necessarily negative. Regularly bringing on new members and allowing older members to rotate off the team may reduce “burn out” and creates opportunities for new ideas.<sup>24</sup>

## STAFF BUY-IN

Staff buy-in is crucial for the success of SWPBS. The literature frequently recommends that schools obtain at least 80 percent staff buy-in through an anonymous balloting process before starting SWPBS in order to ensure that the program will have sufficient organizational support. Although a lack of staff buy-in may not be impossible to overcome, schools may experience increased difficulty with implementation, program sustainability, and effectiveness without this level of buy-in.<sup>25</sup>

In an article for *Educational Leadership*, Charles Schwahn and William Spady offer five reasons that prevent staff from supporting educational change:

- People do not change unless they share a compelling reason to change.
- People do not change unless they have ownership in the change.
- People do not change unless their leaders model that they are serious about the change.
- People are unlikely to change unless they have a concrete image of what the change will look like for them personally.
- People cannot make a change – or make it last – unless they receive organizational support for the change.<sup>26</sup>

Accordingly, there are a number of options available to districts looking to increase staff support for SWPBS. For example, program leaders can build rapport by establishing a SWPBS administrator at each school who communally supports PBIS efforts by attending all relevant meetings, modeling intervention strategies, and participating in the leadership team.<sup>27</sup> The teaching faculty can be instructed on the defining characteristics of PBIS, program timelines, and expectations. Key district administrators can also participate in SWPBS leadership team meetings to indicate high-level support for the initiative.<sup>28</sup> In this manner, districts can increase programmatic organizational support, visibility, and ownership to create the momentum needed for educational change.

Even after the initial buy-in occurs, annual evaluations of staff participation and opinions of the program remain a valuable resource for SWPBS administrators, as regular assessments

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 32.

<sup>24</sup> Dunlap, K., et al., Op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>25</sup> McKeivitt, B.C. and A.D. Braaksma, Op. cit., p. 737.

<sup>26</sup> Taken verbatim from Schwahn, C. and W. Spady. “Why Change Doesn’t Happen and How to Make Sure It Does.” *Educational Leadership*, 55:7, April 1998. pp. 45-47.

<http://search.proquest.com/docview/224857930/3A7CCE7BECD443EPQ/1?accountid=132487>

<sup>27</sup> McKeivitt, B.C. and A.D. Braaksma, Op. cit., p. 737.

<sup>28</sup> Handler, M.W., et al., Op. cit, p. 34.

allow for adjustments and responses to unanticipated problems. A common evaluation used for this purpose, an online survey known as the Self-Assessment Survey (SAS), is discussed in further detail in the subsection “Evaluating Implementation” of Section II.

## SECTION II: OPERATING A SWPBS SYSTEM

In the following section, Hanover Research reviews the literature on the best practices for the operation of PBIS, focusing on professional development of staff members, student engagement, program assessment, and long-term sustainability.

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

#### TRAINING

Ideally, all school staff – including non-certified staff and volunteers – should be trained in the basics of SWPBS behavioral interventions and supports. Training only the teaching staff limits the opportunities for program implementation and effectiveness, as demonstrated by the following example given by researchers McKeivitt and Braaksma:<sup>29</sup>

...when a student walks down a hallway and demonstrates desired expectations for hallway behavior, a custodian who witnesses the behavior can acknowledge the student. Only if that custodian is knowledgeable about PBS will he or she use the acknowledgement system that is part of the school's PBS framework.

Initial staff training is typically headed by the SWPBS leadership team. This training can occur during staff meetings, after school, or during special teacher work days. Because finding appropriate times to work with staff can be difficult, teams may need to find creative ways to introduce employees to PBIS without overtaxing them. For example, a school could briefly alter schedules so that a leadership team member takes over for a classroom teacher while they attend a training session.<sup>30</sup>

In order to implement and sustain SWPBS, professional development should continue to occur annually after the initial training, and all new staff should receive orientation in the program framework. Continual professional development ensures that SWPBS is viewed as a long-term priority by staff.<sup>31</sup> As more and more training occurs, the leadership team can identify new individuals to assume team training responsibilities. This deliberate creation of new coaches allows for both team attrition and, hopefully, the expansion of SWPBS to more schools in the district.

Lastly, training sessions are a valuable opportunity to establish a formal system of communication between the SWPBS leadership team, coaches, and staff members. Especially in schools with fragmented communication systems where only certain staff members are “in the know,” shared professional development periods can build valuable communicative infrastructure. Training sessions allow for an initial introduction to the system, implementation guidance, and later, feedback regarding the perceived effectiveness of SWPBS.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> McKeivitt, B.C. and A.D. Braaksma, Op. cit., p. 738.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 738.

<sup>31</sup> Dunlap, K., et al., Op. cit., p. 42.

<sup>32</sup> Handler, M.W., et al., Op. cit., p. 33.

## COACHING

The creation of a network of SWPBS coaches across schools further supports formal professional development sessions. These individuals, who are selected by the leadership team, help link training experiences with the actual use of the SWPBS systems and practices.

The OSEP Implementation Blueprint makes the following recommendations regarding coaching networks:<sup>33</sup>

- **Leadership team has developed a coaching network that established and sustains SWPBS.** This coaching network increases each system’s capacity for organizing personnel and resources, facilitates and adapts local school training implementation efforts, and provides evaluatory feedback to the leadership team.
- **Individuals are available to provide coaching and facilitation supports at least monthly with emerging school teams, and at least quarterly with established teams.** At team meetings, the primary function of these coaches—who may work internally in roles such as school counselor or behavioral specialist—is to provide reminders of important implementation activities.
- **Coaching functions are identified and established for internal (school level) & external (district/regional level) coaching supports.** For emerging teams, coaching functions typically include reviewing and reporting school data, checking team progress against the Team Implementation Checklist, and reporting school progress to district leadership. For establish teams, coaching functions include monitoring the consistency of implementation, increasing implementation efficiency, acknowledging outcomes, and facilitating the review of school data.

## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

The introduction of SWPBS to students can be categorized into four distinct stages: establishing expectations, teaching observable expectations, designing positive acknowledgement systems, and designing consequence systems.<sup>34</sup> All four stages are based on the theory that students are not “born with” bad behavior, but that behavior is taught, can be manipulated by the environment, is predictable, and is affected by biophysical and environmental factors.<sup>35</sup>

### ESTABLISHING GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

**The first step in engaging students with SWPBS is to establish general behavioral expectations.** These expectations should be brief, positively stated, developmentally appropriate to the ages of the students, and specific to the culture of the school building.

Some school may choose to link these expectations to an acronym, like STAR (Safe, Teachable, Accept Responsibility, Respectful) in order to make it easier for students to

---

<sup>33</sup> Taken verbatim from “Implementation Blueprint and Self-Assessment: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports,” Op. cit., pp. 88-89.

<sup>34</sup> Dunlap, K., et al., Op. cit., pp. 12-18.

<sup>35</sup> “Implementation Blueprint and Self-Assessment: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports,” Op. cit., p. 15.

remember. However, this is not necessary, especially when coming up with an acronym requires the use of valuable planning time that can be better spent in other areas.<sup>36</sup> One example provided on the PBIS.org website is that of Jonesboro Middle School in Clayton County, Georgia, where the following expectations are used in implementing SWPBS:<sup>37</sup>

- Be Respectful of Self, Others, and Property
- Be Responsible and Prepared at All Times
- Be Ready to Follow Directions and Procedures

The best time to introduce these expectations to the student body is at the start of the school year. If this is not possible due to the demands of the implementation timeline, schools can also successfully introduce expectations following a school break or at the beginning of a new semester.<sup>38</sup>

### TEACHING OBSERVABLE EXPECTATIONS

**In this stage of student engagement, each established general behavioral expectation is broken down and taught as specific, observable behaviors in each location of the school.** These observable behaviors are recorded in “expectation matrices” that are posted in non-classroom and classroom locations throughout the school. The publicity of such matrices and other materials throughout buildings establishes a common language among students and staff, identifies the school as SWPBS school to all visitors, and serves as a reminder of ideal behavior through the day.<sup>39</sup> An example school-wide expectation matrix is demonstrated in Figure 2.1 below.

**Figure 2.1: Example Behavioral Expectation Matrix**

		SCHOOL-WIDE EXPECTATIONS		
		Be Responsible	Be Respectful	Be Safe
Location	Classroom	Bring materials for class; turn in homework	Raise your voice to speak; keep your eyes on the speaker	Walk; keep hands and feet to yourself
	Hallway	Pick up trash and throw it away	Use quiet voices; shut locker doors	Walk; keep hands and feet to yourself
	Cafeteria	Put tray, utensils, and garbage in appropriate locations; clean up spills and pick up trash	Use quiet voices; use manners while eating	Use eating utensils as intended; walk; keep hands and feet to yourself

Source: McKenna and Braaksma<sup>40</sup>

<sup>36</sup> McKeivitt, B.C. and A.D. Braaksma, Op. cit., p. 740.

<sup>37</sup> “Case Example: Jonesboro Middle School.” PBIS. <http://www.pbis.org/school/primary-level/case-examples>

<sup>38</sup> Dunlap, K., et al., Op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, p. 12.

<sup>40</sup> Reproduced with minor edits from McKeivitt, B.C. and A.D. Braaksma, Op. cit., p. 741.

Like the general expectations, these observable behavioral expectations are ideally introduced to the student body at the beginning of the school year. Following the introduction, all teaching and non-teaching staff should continually model the behaviors. The Michigan Implementation Guide makes the following recommendations regarding direct instruction in observable behavioral skills:<sup>41</sup>

- Teach behaviors as you would teach academics or any other skill.
- As the program is getting underway (and subsequently at the beginning of every school year) provide frequent trials or lessons. Then, over the course of the school year, schedule refresher lessons.
- Keep lessons brief (5-15 minutes typically).
- Take students to various locations in the school for instruction.
- Adults can use simple corrective responses with students (positive practice) when errors are observed; e.g., disrespectful language or tone— “Let’s try saying that the right way, thanks.”

### *DESIGNING POSITIVE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT SYSTEMS*

**In a SWPBS framework, staff members systematically recognize students’ positive behaviors through a series of physically tangible or socially visible rewards.** Such rewards can include redeemable tickets, positive acknowledgement cards, increased access to preferred activities, and public recognition. Yet regardless of the reward chosen, the system should be convenient and straightforward to encourage early adoption by staff members.<sup>42</sup> One example of such a system can be seen at Jonesboro Public School, where administrators created a reward system of “Gotcha!” cards. Whenever a student was seen engaging in desired behaviors, staff gave them a “Gotcha!” card that could be traded in for small tangible items such as ice cream at lunch. Students are even allowed to give “Gotcha!” cards back to teachers for modeling exemplary behavior.<sup>43</sup>

### *DESIGNING CONSEQUENCE SYSTEMS*

**The delivery of consequences should be neutral, predictable, and consistent.** Students should receive equitable consequences for similar behaviors across all classrooms. For example, a student who uses inappropriate language in Math class should typically receive similar punishment as a student who uses inappropriate language in Science or History.

To ensure this equity of treatment, school staff should categorize behavioral infractions into different groups (such as minor or major) and determine possible consequences for each category. This categorization also allows for the creation of a “consequence sequence” that clearly scales the penalties that students can receive. Elementary schools in particular may choose to make their consequence sequences as visible and predictable as possible.

---

<sup>41</sup> Taken verbatim from Dunlap, K., et al., Op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>42</sup> McKeivitt, B.C. and A.D. Braaksma, Op. cit., p. 741.

<sup>43</sup> “Case Example: Jonesboro Middle School,” Op. cit.

Figure 2.2 demonstrates typical consequence sequences at the elementary school level.

**Figure 2.2: Elementary School Consequence Scale**

CONSEQUENCES BY LEVEL – MINOR TO MAJOR
Warning
Privilege loss (e.g., 5-10 minutes off recess)
Time out (frequently with “think sheet”)
Parent contact
Office discipline referral

Source: Michigan Implementation Guide<sup>44</sup>

## PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

### DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is one of the four central programmatic elements of SWPBS. By collecting data, administrators can monitor the effectiveness of the system, track student social achievement, and identify school needs. Staff should enter information into a database on a weekly basis, and this information should be summarized and shared monthly.<sup>45</sup>

While some schools may choose to use their own data systems or spreadsheets for this tracking, the OSEP Technical Center endorses the use of the School-Wide Information System (SWIS).<sup>46</sup> SWIS provides an online information system that creates graphs for behavioral incidents “per month, time of day, specific behaviors, location and by specific student,” along with many other options. By using data to isolate the exact times and locations at which problematic behavior tends to occur, staff can further adapt SWPBS to maximize student’s social and behavioral achievements.<sup>47</sup>

The Michigan Department of Education’s Implementation Guide for SWPBS recommends that schools gather the following forms of measurable data:

- Total suspensions by month
- Daily average ODRs by month
- Problem behaviors YTD
- Location of behavior incidents YTD
- Time of day YTD
- Number of referrals by student YTD
- Referrals by grade YTD
- Referrals by staff YTD
- Positive behavior indicators<sup>48</sup>

The Michigan Implementation Guide additionally recommends that schools compare this data year-by-year to understand any longitudinal changes or areas of growth. Further, when

<sup>44</sup> Dunlap, K., et al., Op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>45</sup> McKeivitt, B.C. and A.D. Braaksma, Op. cit., pp. 743-744.

<sup>46</sup> “SWPBIS for Beginners,” Op. cit.

<sup>47</sup> Dunlap, K., et al., Op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p. 12.

sharing data with staff members, schools should recognize progress, interpret and explain trends from raw numbers, and suggest next steps for improvement.<sup>49</sup>

## **EVALUATING IMPLEMENTATION**

The OSEP Center on PBIS promotes three main evaluation methods along with a number of more specialized tools.<sup>50</sup> These three tools are described in detail below; all are available online at [www.pbssurveys.org](http://www.pbssurveys.org).

The **School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET)**: This external assessment evaluates emerging and established SWPBS programs. By working in conjunction with local school contacts, the OSEP Technical Assistance Center conducts SET at selected schools at three points in time: before SWPBS interventions begin, six to 12 week after interventions are implemented, and annually thereafter. Data is collected through school tours, administrator interviews, data analysis, and the examination of program materials.<sup>51</sup> The results of SET help schools determine annual goals for SWPBS, design and revise procedures as needed, and compare progress from year to year.<sup>52</sup>

The **Team Implementation Checklist (TIC)**: This internal assessment guides the activities of the emerging PBIS team by tracking action-plan items and identifying technical assistance needs. Example checklist items include “Administrator attends PBIS meetings 80% of the time,” “Team has identified clear mission/purpose”, and “Teaching matrix distributed to all staff.”<sup>53</sup> One team member completes the checklist on the PBS Surveys website with consensus of the team three times per year for individual schools until each relevant school meets and maintains fidelity on SET.<sup>54</sup>

The **Self-Assessment Survey (SAS)**: This internal assessment, typically completed by all building level staff, tracks perceptions and opinions of SWPBS implementation. Once analyzed, the results assist leadership teams with continued action planning, internal decision making, assessment of change over time, awareness of building staff, and team validation.<sup>55</sup> SAS is conducted once at the program baseline and annually thereafter.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>50</sup> “Evaluation Tools.” PBIS. <http://www.pbis.org/blueprint/evaluation-tools>

<sup>51</sup> “Evaluation Tools: School-Wide Evaluation (SET).” PBIS. p. 1. <https://www.pbis.org/blueprint/evaluation-tools>

<sup>52</sup> “Illinois PBIS Network – FY10 PBIS Evaluation Tools and Recommended Timeline.” Illinois PBIS Network, 2009. p. 2. [www.pbis.org/...09.../C3\\_ILPBISFY10EvaluationToolsandTimeline.doc](http://www.pbis.org/...09.../C3_ILPBISFY10EvaluationToolsandTimeline.doc)

<sup>53</sup> “Evaluation Tools: The Team Implementation Checklist (TIC v 3.1).” PBIS. p. 1. Available at: <https://www.pbis.org/blueprint/evaluation-tools>

<sup>54</sup> “Illinois PBIS Network – FY10 PBIS Evaluation Tools and Recommended Timeline,” Op. cit., p. 1.

<sup>55</sup> “PBIS Assessment Surveys: Self-Assessment Survey (SAS).” PBIS Apps. p. 1.

<https://www.pbisapps.org/Applications/Pages/PBIS-Assessment-Surveys.aspx#sas>

<sup>56</sup> “Illinois PBIS Network – FY10 PBIS Evaluation Tools and Recommended Timeline,” Op. cit., p. 1.

## A NOTE ON SECONDARY IMPLEMENTATION

The majority of documented SWPBS implementation efforts have focused on elementary and middle schools, and specific guidelines for secondary school implementation are less formally developed than they are at younger grade levels.<sup>57</sup>

Although the conceptual basis of SWPBS remains the same regardless of grade level, implementation methods that succeed at the elementary and middle school level may need to be adjusted to achieve similar success in the high school environment. However, research suggests that although implementation of SWPBS at the high school level brings unique challenges, the SWPBS framework can be equally as effective for secondary students as it has been shown to be for elementary and middle school students. For example, in a comprehensive three-year study of Chicago Public Schools, researchers found that dress code violations fell from 26.63 per every 100 students to 8.39 per 100 students between the second and third year of implementation. Serious disobedience of authority decreased from 1.64 per every 100 students to 0.05 per every 100 students, and daily office referrals fell by 20 percent. The proportion of students with two or more reported ODRs also decreased.<sup>58</sup>

The high school context involves organizational differences and competing priorities that are not present at lower grades. The large organizational structure of high schools “does little to foster a sense of shared responsibility for individual students or the school environment as a whole,” and some researchers find that discipline problems are positively related to school size: as school populations increase, so does the chance that discipline problems will be reported.<sup>59</sup> Beyond these organizational differences, high schools may have markedly different long-term priorities due to their emphasis on post-secondary outcomes, dropout prevention, diploma achievement, and career planning.<sup>60</sup>

Successful high school SWPBS systems acknowledge these differences. In “Monograph on SWPBS Implementation in High Schools,” University of Oregon researchers Flannery and Sugai isolate five elements of successful high school SWPBS implementation based on a study of 13 high schools across nine states. These elements are depicted in Figure 2.3 on the following page.

---

<sup>57</sup> Bohanon-Edmonson, H., et al. “Positive Behavior Support in High Schools: Monograph from the 2004 Illinois High School Forum of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports.” OSEP Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2005. pp. 2-3.

<https://www.pbis.org/common/cms/files/pbisresources/PBSMonographComplete.pdf>

<sup>58</sup> Bohanan, H., et al. “Schoolwide Application of Postive Behavior Support in an Urban High School: A Case Study.” *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 8:3, Summer 2006. p. 140.

<http://search.proquest.com/docview/218797910/fulltextPDF/79EDA3A6180642A5PQ/1?accountid=132487>

<sup>59</sup> Flannery, K. and G. Sugai. “School-Wide PBIS Implementation in High Schools: Current Practice and Future Directions.” OSEP Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2009. p. 25.

<http://flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu/High/General/High%20School%20Monograph.PBIS%202010.pdf>

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p. 18.

**Figure 2.3: Five Elements of Successful High School SWPBS Implementation**

IMPLEMENTATION ELEMENT	ROLE IN HIGH SCHOOL
<b>Administration Roles and Functions</b>	Unique to high schools is the administrative structure of multiple administrators and departments or division heads. Administrators should be actively involved in planning and implementation, model desired practices, and acknowledge staff efforts and contributions.
<b>Staff Participation</b>	Staff participation is achievable, but with specific and formal actions, for example, (a) focusing on success for all students, not just a few, (b) using data for decision making, and (c) keeping student outcomes (e.g., graduation, achievement, social competence) as tantamount.
<b>Connections to Academic Curriculum</b>	Successful high school implementation of PBIS acknowledges the systems and structures that challenge the connection of academic and social curriculum (e.g., content-focused, size, emphasis on student’s responsibility for learning).
<b>Data-Based Decision Making</b>	A consistent and trained staff member is responsible for data management, decisions are made with data and by a team with leadership authority, data reports are easy to read and shared at least monthly with all faculty and staff members for collaborative decision making, every effort is made to identify students who require more intensive behavior support, and various sources of both academic and behavioral data are used make decisions.
<b>Secondary and Tertiary Supports</b>	Secondary and tertiary supports should not be underestimated in high schools. Their successful implementation is linked to (a) a strong and formal commitment from school and district personnel and leadership, (b) the use of data for decision making, (c) careful and prioritized allocation of resources, and (d) careful selection of evidence-based practices.

Source: Positive Behavioral Support in High Schools<sup>61</sup>

## LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

Sustaining SWPBS beyond the three-year implementation period can be challenging. In “Factors Related to Sustained Implementation of Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Support,” as published in *Exceptional Children* in 2013, researchers found that sustainability requires a school and district-wide commitment to the below four factors.<sup>62</sup>

- **Priority:** Schools and districts should continue to view SWPBS as relatively important to the success of their students, and the program should be institutionalized into written policy. Without adequate emphasis on the significance of SWPBS, it is unlikely that teachers and administrators will choose to invest their limited time in the program and the program may become marginalized.
- **Effectiveness:** The successes of SWPBS should be continually demonstrated through student data analysis and program assessments. Demonstration is crucial: by linking the day-to-day practice of SWPBS with improved student outcomes, administrators help cement staff views on the value of the program.

<sup>61</sup> Reproduced with edits from Ibid, pp. 16-18.

<sup>62</sup> McIntosh, K., et al. “Factors Related to Sustained Implementation of Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support.” *Exceptional Children*, 79:3, 2013, pp. 294-296.

<http://search.proquest.com/docview/1314483641/fulltextPDF/56C6ED8CF00E42AEPQ/1?accountid=132487>

- **Efficiency:** SWPBS practices should be realistic and easily implemented in classroom settings. If teachers can conveniently incorporate interventions into their daily routines, they are more likely to continue using them with fidelity.
- **Continuous Regeneration:** Given that school's individual needs may shift over time, the SWPBS system should be constantly adapted to better suit a changing environment. This adaptation is dependent on the regular collection of data, as data analysis provides program administrators with the opportunity to identify weak points and opportunities for further growth.

## SECTION III: CASE STUDIES

In the following section, Hanover Research profiles three districts that have implemented SWPBS, including Public Schools of Robeson County (NC), Excelsior Springs School District (MO), and Rock Island School District (IL). These case studies include discussions of staff buy-in, professional development efforts, program visibility, and outcomes information where available.

### EXCELSIOR SPRINGS SCHOOL DISTRICT, MO

Excelsior Springs School District (ESSD) began including SWPBS in its comprehensive school improvement plan (CSIP) in 2008.<sup>64</sup> By 2014, Missouri’s Department of Elementary and Secondary education awarded six district schools at the gold and silver levels for their participation in SWPBS. In the same year, the district also received the inaugural Dr. Mary Ritcher Missouri SWPBS School and District of Distinction award.<sup>65</sup>

EXCELSIOR SPRINGS SCHOOL DISTRICT (2012-2013)		
Total Operational Schools		7
Total Teachers*		217.3
Total School Administrators		11
Students	Total	2949
	Economically-Disadvantaged	42.4%
	English Language Learners	0.2%
	American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.5%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	0.5%
	Hispanic	4.4%
	Black	5.9%
	White	83.7%
	Hawaiian Native/Pacific Islander	0.1%
	Two or More Races	4.9%
*Full-time equivalent		
Source: National Center for Education Statistics <sup>63</sup>		

Describing ESSD, a statewide PBIS consultant in Missouri noted that the district has “strong systems, data, and practices in each school and district-wide,” and the staff are also continuously asking, “how can we make SW-PBS even more effective?” They concluded by noting that after years of hard work, ESSD is now at the stage where the primary priority is ongoing monitoring for program sustainability.<sup>66</sup>

To learn more about key features of the district’s implementation of SWPBS, Hanover Research spoke with Mr. Vincent Spallo, the Director of Curriculum and Instruction at ESSD.

### KEY FEATURES OF ESSD’S PROGRAM

**SWPBS implementation was staggered across the elementary, middle, and high school levels.** The program was jump-started when the Assistant Superintendent of Student Services began talking with other staff members about PBIS. The elementary school

<sup>63</sup> Elementary/Secondary Information System, National Center for Education Statistics. <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/>

<sup>64</sup> Fine, A. “Excelsior Springs School District: Positive Behavior Intervention Support.” District Administration, November 2014. <http://www.districtadministration.com/dod/awards/excelsior-springs-school-district-positive-behavior-intervention-support>

<sup>65</sup> “Dr. Mary Richter Award.” Missouri Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support. <http://pbissmissouri.org/richter-award>

<sup>66</sup> Copeland, E. “Excelsior Springs Awarded 1st Annual Statewide PBS Honor.” *The Excelsior Springs Standard*. <http://www.excelsiorspringsstandard.com/news/excelsior-schools-awarded-1st-annual-statewide-pbs-honor/>

principals were the first to respond to this initiative, leading to the implementation of SWPBS in elementary schools around 2007. The middle school followed two years later, and the high school subsequently followed the middle school after another two years.<sup>67</sup>

**Staff buy-in was a challenging component of SWPBS implementation.** A cadre of teachers pushed back against the theories underlying SWBPS and doubted the legitimacy of rewarding students “for doing what they should be doing.” In order for the program to succeed, the district had to overcome that mindset among the faculty. In fact, Mr. Spallo advises districts considering PBIS to get teacher buy-in “first and foremost,” adding, “Don't make the first conversation you have with them a conversation that says ‘We *are* going to do this -- so what do you think?’ Go slowly the year before you want to implement it.”<sup>68</sup>

**The program is tailored to each age group.** Although SWPBS looks very similar across all of the district's elementary schools, implementation at the secondary school level has been adapted to better fit the developmental status of older students. For example, the motto for the elementary school systems is GRR: Go Safely, Respectfully, and Responsibly. In the high school, this changes to Tiger Pride: Take Pride in Yourself and Others.<sup>69</sup>

Some teachers at the high school were initially anxious that the students would be too sophisticated or too mature to buy in to the SWBPS reward system, but this fear was ultimately unfounded. As Mr. Spallo noted, “We found the exact opposite to be true. Those kids that do the right thing enjoy being singled out and recognized for doing that because they haven't ever been recognized for it before.” At the middle and high school level, the idea that “good things happen when you do what's expected of you” can be further tied into real life and the expectations surrounding school, family, and work.<sup>70</sup>

**Staff training first occurred at the start of SWPBS and now continues annually.** The year before SWPBS officially began, a committee led spring and summer training for staff members. This training occurred over a half day in the spring and two or three full days in the summer. Additionally, the regional professional development council came to each of the buildings to discuss the program.

Now that the program is fully operational, school staff meet once a quarter on early release days to focus on PBIS, develop a rubric, and “develop similar language so that teachers are saying the same things regarding student behaviors.” Further, teacher groups from ESSD are sent to the annual Missouri PBIS conference for continued PBIS development every year.<sup>71</sup>

**SWPBS was introduced to students on multiple fronts.** The primary introduction occurred at all-school assemblies and grade-level assemblies, where the administrative staff spoke

---

<sup>67</sup> Spallo, Vincent. Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Excelsior Springs School District. Phone interview. February 26, 2015.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

with the students about the reasons behind the adoption of SWPBS and what the implementation would look like for them. After leaving these assemblies, students went back to their classrooms and had additional, pre-scripted discussions with their classroom teachers about the program so that they heard the same messages from both the building principal and their classroom teachers.<sup>72</sup>

**SWPBS has proved to be notably successful in decreasing behavioral incidents.** The district tracks “a mountain” of behavioral data, including what behaviors take place, where they occur, when they occur, at what grade level they occur, and much more, through SWIS. This information reveals that since the implementation of SWPBS, the number of discipline infractions at ESSD schools has dramatically reduced. In the first year of implementation at Excelsior Springs High School, there were “around 2000 or 2500” referrals yearly. By the second year of implementation, that number had been reduced by a third. In the second year of SWPBS, the high school only counted around 400 total referrals, representing roughly a 75 percent reduction since the start of the program.<sup>73</sup>

## PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF ROBESON COUNTY, NC

The Public Schools of Robeson County (PSRC) has a history of successfully implementing SWPBS. Three schools in the district received PBIS recognition from the North Carolina department of Public Instruction in 2011-2012, 14 schools received recognition in 2012-2013, and 23 schools received recognition in 2013-2014. Thirty-four schools across the district now implement PBIS.<sup>75</sup>

PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF ROBESON COUNTY (2012-2013)		
<b>Total Operational Schools</b>		
	42	
<b>Total Teachers*</b>		
	1511.4	
<b>Total School Administrators</b>		
	75	
<b>Students</b>	<b>Total</b>	24,651
	<b>Economically-Disadvantaged</b>	81.7%
	<b>English Language Learners</b>	6.1%
	<b>American Indian/Alaskan Native</b>	42.3%
	<b>Asian/Pacific Islander</b>	0.8%
	<b>Hispanic</b>	12.6%
	<b>Black</b>	25.1%
	<b>White</b>	15.3%
	<b>Hawaiian Native/Pacific Islander</b>	0.1%
	<b>Two or More Races</b>	3.9%
*Full-time equivalent		
Source: National Center for Education Statistics <sup>74</sup>		

### KEY FEATURES OF PSRC'S PROGRAM

**The district's SWPBS program is well-organized and contains multiple levels of administrative supports.** PSRC has a dedicated PBIS Coordinator,<sup>76</sup> and each K-8 school has a PBIS team composed of one to two coaches that meet at least four times per school year. During these meetings, coaches “network, share ideas, problem solve, and celebrate successful implementation as school leaders in the PBIS initiative.” Other coaching responsibilities include:<sup>77</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Elementary/Secondary Information System, National Center for Education Statistics. <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/>

<sup>75</sup> “PBIS State Recognition Recipients 2010-Present.” Public Schools of Robeson County. <http://www.robeson.k12.nc.us/Page/48905>

<sup>76</sup> “PBIS: Overview.” Public Schools of Robeson County. <http://www.robeson.k12.nc.us/Page/46530>

<sup>77</sup> “PBIS Coaches and Trainers.” Public Schools of Robeson County. <http://www.robeson.k12.nc.us/Page/48924>

- Checking that the PBIS team works efficiently
- Ensuring that staff are well informed about current discipline data
- Ensuring that classroom teachers have tips and training to be more effective, with a focus on instilling methods of positive reinforcements and consequences to deal with problem and appropriate behavior as it happens

**The district's SWPBS program is extremely visible.** The PSRC website has a thorough and easily accessible webpage that provides viewers with an overview of PBIS, names of PBIS coaches and trainers, PBIS resources, photo galleries, and other related links.<sup>78</sup> Additionally, each individual school has its own PBIS webpage listing general expectations, committee members, goals, behavior matrixes, handbooks, lesson plans, and meeting minutes. For example, the webpage at Union Chapel Elementary School begins with a description of the school's behavioral expectations, or "ROAR:" Be Responsible, Organized, Attentive, and Respective. This is supplemented by a brief introduction to the theory behind PBIS as well as a description of the school's reward system, which include tallies on the "ROAR Chart" and the distribution of "Tiger Paws."<sup>79</sup>

**The district's SWPBS resources are easily accessible, as are the SWPBS resources for individual schools.** Files available on the district webpage include helpful documents such as, "How to Upload an Action Plan on the NC Data Management System," "How to Access and Complete the SAS Survey," "PBIS for Administrators," and "Data Study for Staff – Example."<sup>80</sup> Visitors to school webpages can even access the meeting minutes of PBIS school teams to track the operation of the PBIS program in real time.<sup>81</sup> For example, the January 2015 meeting at Magnolia Elementary discussed student behavior, internal motivation, and the use of the Class Dojo as a behavioral reward.

**The district's staff are well-trained and engage in regular program evaluation.** According to the district website, all PBIS trainers undergo three training models of PBIS before visiting various locations in Robeson County. The trainers come from a variety of grade levels and departments, "so that teams receiving training are exposed to a variety of viewpoints and ideas for dealing with student behavior and PBIS implementation." Two individuals on the training team also serve as PBIS Schoolwide Evaluation Tool (SET) evaluators by assisting the LEA Coordinator and Behavior Support staff in administering the SET annually across all schools.<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> "PBIS: Overview," Op. cit.

<sup>79</sup> "What Is PBIS?" Union Chapel Elementary School. <http://www.robeson.k12.nc.us/domain/4782>

<sup>80</sup> "District-Friendly Resources." Public Schools of Robeson County. <http://www.robeson.k12.nc.us/Page/47122>

<sup>81</sup> "PBIS Committee Meeting Minutes." Magnolia Elementary School. <http://www.robeson.k12.nc.us/Page/51284>

<sup>82</sup> "PBIS Coaches and Trainers," Op. cit.

## ROCK ISLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT, IL

In 2010, Rock Island School District’s (RISD) Thomas Jefferson Elementary School was the first and only school in the state to receive “exemplar” status from the Illinois Board of Education for “achieving full implementation of the program and demonstrating the ideal model of building the program while maintaining academic integrity.”<sup>84</sup> Several other district schools use SWPBS,<sup>85</sup> including Rock Island High School, which was one of eight public high schools to receive part of a \$500,000 state grant towards the implementation of SWPBS in 2007.<sup>86</sup>

ROCK ISLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT (2012-2013)		
Total Operational Schools		14
Total Teachers*		‡
Total School Administrators		‡
Students	Total	6,770
	Economically-Disadvantaged	60.5%
	English Language Learners	8.3%
	American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.1%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	4.4%
	Hispanic	14.8%
	Black	27.7%
	White	41.6%
	Hawaiian Native/Pacific Islander	0.1%
Two or More Races	11.3%	
*Full-time equivalent		
Source: National Center for Education Statistics <sup>83</sup>		

### KEY FEATURES OF RISD’S PROGRAM

**The district prioritizes PBIS by including discussions of its effectiveness and future operation in meetings of the School Board.** District-wide PBIS goals discussed by the Board in 2011 included the implementation of all three behavioral support tiers at schools, universal data screenings to identify students in need of Tier 2 support, and the establishment of monthly building system meetings to review progress data.<sup>87</sup>

**The district utilizes both financial and personnel resources to implement PBIS.** RCPS has an official PBIS liason, and Tier 2/3 coaches work specifically with PBIS school implementation teams. Additionally, Rock Island High School is one of only six districts in the state to participate in a grant-funded Tier 2/3 project with the Illinois PBIS network.<sup>88</sup>

**School expectations and rewards for positive behavior vary by school and grade level.** At Thomas Jefferson Elementary School, general behavior expectations are summarized in the “5 Skills for Life:” Truth, Trust, Respect, Responsibility, and Active Listening. Rewards for

<sup>83</sup> Elementary/Secondary Information System, National Center for Education Statistics. <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/>

<sup>84</sup> “Thomas Jefferson Achieves ‘Exemplar’ Status in PBIS Network.” Rock Island/Milan School District #41, November 8, 2010. <http://rockislandschools.org/riec/rinews/2010/11/08/thomas-jefferson-achieves-exemplar-status-in-pbis-network/>

<sup>85</sup> [A] “School Goals.” Earl Hanson. <http://rockislandschools.org/riec/earlhanson/denkman-links/about/school-goals/>  
[B] “School and Building Information.” Thurgood Marshall Learning Center.

<http://rockislandschools.org/riec/tmlc/denkman-links/about-3/school-building-information/>

[C] “School and Building Information.” Longfellow Liberal Arts School.

<http://rockislandschools.org/riec/longfellow/denkman-links/about/school-building-information/>

<sup>86</sup> “News.” Illinois State Board of Education, May 14, 2007. <http://www.isbe.net/news/2007/may14.htm>

<sup>87</sup> “Board of Education Summary, Sept. 27.” Rock Island/Milan School District #41, September 27, 2011. <http://rockislandschools.org/riec/boe/2011/10/12/board-of-education-summary-sept-27/>

<sup>88</sup> “Board Summary, September 28,” Op. cit.

positive behavior include Care Cards and Bulldog Bucks,<sup>89</sup> which can be redeemed at the Bulldog Store.<sup>90</sup> Meanwhile, Rock Island High School's general behavioral expectations are summarized by "ROCKS:" Respect, On Time, Cooperation, Keep Focused, and Safety. The program focuses on the impact of bullying and the importance of treating others with respect, and rewards for desirable behavior include coupons for free cookies and a weekly "parking space winner."<sup>91</sup>

**The district carefully tracks student performance data and notes areas that need improvement.** In meeting minutes from 2010, the district's school board notes that "the Elementary and Jr. High Schools have shown great improvement over the last three years, showing a decrease in referrals because of the implementation of PBIS." When data from Rock Island High school showed an increase in referrals, the Board concluded that "the data tells the Building Intervention Teams that changes are needed. There is a good universal team in place... and things are turning around."<sup>92</sup>

---

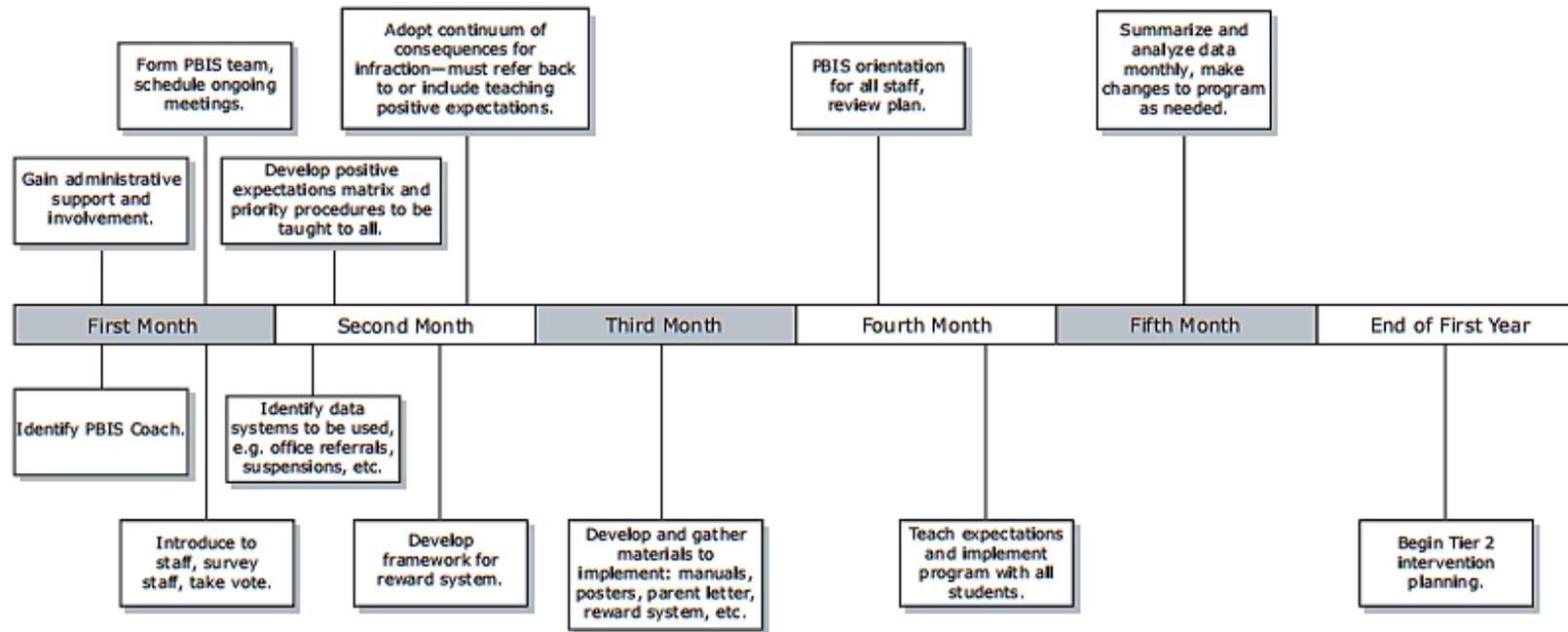
<sup>89</sup> Spencer, T. "TJ Bulldog Bugle." Thomas Jefferson School, Rock Island/Milan School District #41, August 12, 2014. <http://rockislandschools.org/riec/thomasjefferson/2014/08/18/tj-bulldog-bugle-august-12-2014/>

<sup>90</sup> Spencer, T. "TJ Daily Announcements." Thomas Jefferson School, Rock Island/Milan School District #41, January 9, 2015. <http://rockislandschools.org/riec/thomasjefferson/2015/01/21/tj-daily-announcements-january-9-2015/>

<sup>91</sup> "RIHS Announcements." Rock Island High School, Rock Island/Milan School District #41, February 12, 2015. <http://rockislandschools.org/riec/rihs/2015/02/12/rihs-feb-12-announcements-2/>

<sup>92</sup> "Board Summary, September 28." Rock Island/Milan School District #41, September 28, 2010. <http://rockislandschools.org/riec/boe/2010/09/29/board-summary-september-28/>

## APPENDIX A: TYPICAL IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE



Source: Michigan Implementation Guide<sup>93</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Dunlap, K., et al., Op. cit., p.9.

## PROJECT EVALUATION FORM

Hanover Research is committed to providing a work product that meets or exceeds partner expectations. In keeping with that goal, we would like to hear your opinions regarding our reports. Feedback is critically important and serves as the strongest mechanism by which we tailor our research to your organization. When you have had a chance to evaluate this report, please take a moment to fill out the following questionnaire.

<http://www.hanoverresearch.com/evaluation/index.php>

## CAVEAT

The publisher and authors have used their best efforts in preparing this brief. The publisher and authors make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this brief and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of fitness for a particular purpose. There are no warranties that extend beyond the descriptions contained in this paragraph. No warranty may be created or extended by representatives of Hanover Research or its marketing materials. The accuracy and completeness of the information provided herein and the opinions stated herein are not guaranteed or warranted to produce any particular results, and the advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for every partner. Neither the publisher nor the authors shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages. Moreover, Hanover Research is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, or other professional services. Partners requiring such services are advised to consult an appropriate professional.



**4401 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 400**

**Arlington, VA 22203**

**P 202.559.0500 F 866.808.6585**

**[www.hanoverresearch.com](http://www.hanoverresearch.com)**