The What and Why of PBIS

Over decades of educating our youth, we have all heard it stated in one way or another that *in order for students to learn, they need an environment that is conducive to learning.* Research has shown that schools can make a significant positive impact on their students regardless of their circumstance. At the heart of Lezotte's (2010) effective schools research, seven factors were identified as characteristics of effective schools across the racial and socioeconomic spectrum. The first factor had to do with creating a school environment where students feel safe emotionally and physically—a climate free of behaviors such as bullying, fighting, harassing—in an environment not created merely through punishment. Michael Thompson (Fabelo et al., 2011), researcher and director of the Justice Center at the Council of State Governments, conducted a study indicating that the discipline of suspension and expulsion for "discretionary violations" actually does more harm than good for the individual student. This type of discipline damages the sense of community within the school, and students are three times more likely to end up in a juvenile detention center the following year if they receive suspensions and expulsions for discretionary violations. Thompson advocates for school-wide implementation of "positive behavior interventions and supports" to prevent misbehavior.

Through our work in hundreds of schools, we have encountered and experienced school environments or aspects of the school environment described in School Environment A and School Environment B. Which of

School Environment A	School Environment B
✓ As students arrive to campus, there is no evidence of adults welcoming and greeting students.	✓ With your first step on the campus, you feel so welcomed that you feel like you belong; the positive culture is contagious.
✓ Walls are bare with just a few signs indicating where the office and bathrooms are located.	✓ Positively stated messages are posted in every setting throughout the school.
✓ Upon entering the school office, no one acknowledges you for several minutes, and when spoken to, it is with a negative or irritated tone.	✓ Upon entering the school office, school personnel greet you, and you feel like you are their priority.
✓ Staff and students are unclear about behavior expectations. The main message communicated to students is *what not to do.*	✓ Clear behavior expectations and rules are evident and understood by all students and staff. The main message communicated to students is *what to do.*
✓ The office is filled with students lined up to see an administrator for misconduct. However, staff members complain that nothing ever happens to students sent to the office for misconduct.	✓ Office referrals are minimal. More students are lined up in the office being acknowledged for appropriate expected behavior.
✓ Negative talk about students, administration, and/or other colleagues permeates the staff lounge.	✓ Productive talk permeates the staff lounge. It is a family atmosphere of caring and sharing.
✓ Students take their time getting to class after the bell rings, unconcerned about being tardy or missing instruction.	✓ Students understand the value of being to class on time and don't want to miss a minute of instruction.
✓ Administrators are consumed with discipline issues all day long; therefore, it is difficult for them to get out of their offices.	✓ Teachers greet students daily as they walk into the classroom with a handshake, high five, fist pump, or positive verbal acknowledgment. Active supervision of students occurs in designated locations throughout the schools.

the two school environments or parts of the environment most resonate with you? Which environment would you like to experience every day?

Abundant research supports what we all now know: As educators, we must create a school environment that results in a positive impact on the emotional, social, and physical well-being of every child and accelerates learning. So now what? How do we take this knowledge and translate it into action? How many of us at either a district or school level have been or are expected to design and sustain a tiered system for support for the other side of the triangle—the social, emotional, and behavioral support side—but

are a little unclear about what that might look and sound like? Where is the comprehensive book that supports educators in bridging this knowledge-implementation gap, and guides us in how to create a system that every one of our students deserves—a Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Champion Model System? Until this book, one did not exist.

The foundation for this book was built on the original dissertation research work of Dr. Jessica Djabrayan Hannigan in partnership with Dr. Linda Hauser and on years of putting this research into everyday practice where it matters most—in schools and districts positively changing the lives of kids. For schools that have implemented our PBIS Champion Model System, academic and behavioral results have not only been positive but profound and compelling. Schools have seen a 50 percent or more decrease in discipline incidents during their first year of implementation, which have resulted in more students staying in school, less student and adult time and energy spent on behavior issues with more time and energy spent on learning, and more resources allocated toward the mental health of students requiring Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports (preventive model).

The two authors of this book have a combined fifty plus years of experience learning from and leading students, community members, teachers, principals, university partners, and district office staff. Dr. Jessica Djabrayan Hannigan has recently trained over 300 schools in California on the PBIS Champion Model System. The primary purpose of this book is to share from our research, study, experience, and practice what we have learned about designing, implementing, and sustaining highly effective PBIS systems that produce positive academic and behavioral outcomes in schools. Our ultimate goal is to support teachers, schools, and districts in creating positive learning environments where students and adults thrive and experience academic and social success. This book is intended to be an interactive guide—a how-to for practitioners—in creating quality environments in schools and districts that optimize learning and build a solid Tier 1 PBIS system.

WHAT IS PBIS?

PBIS is a systems approach to establish the social culture and the behavioral supports needed for all children in a school to achieve both social and academic success (Sugai & Horner, 2002). PBIS is not a new intervention package or a theory of behavior. It is the application of a behaviorally based systems approach to enhance the capacity of schools, families, and communities to design and facilitate effective environments where teaching and learning can occur. Designed to develop a culture of

positive behavior support in schools, the implementation of a PBIS system is intended to create an environment for great first teaching, high levels of learning, and improved behavior within general and special education classroom settings.

We design systems to teach students to read and do math as well as teach children and young adults how to tie their shoes, ride a bike, and drive a car; however, we sometimes fail to explicitly teach students how to behave or the actions needed to create an environment that fosters their success. Why is this? Do we believe we do not have enough time during the school day or that focusing our energy and time in this area will take away critical instructional time for academics? Do we believe this is the parent's responsibility? Do we assume that students should and do know the expected behaviors in all educational settings? Research shows that schools using traditional types of discipline continue to experience significant increases in violence and destructive behavior as well as increases in the number of students excluded from instruction due to suspension or expulsion. Furthermore, the use of suspension and expulsion in schools is negatively related to academic achievement independent of socioeconomic influences; and exclusionary discipline such as office referrals, suspensions, and expulsions does not contribute to better learning outcomes (Skiba & Rausch, 2005). As Einstein stated, the definition of insanity is "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." We must be focused on results, not just emotions. The old way of doing business to address student behavior is not working. We can no longer accept or afford the wait-to-fail or wait-to-misbehave model of behavior; we must be proactive.

A more proactive approach to implementing efficacious behavior supports includes such actions as consistently using and reviewing discipline policies within the classroom and school (Fenning & Bohanon, 2006), developing a discipline team (Noonan, Tunney, Fogal, & Sarich, 1999), and using data to evaluate discipline codes (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Therefore, many states, school districts, and schools have shifted from a wait-to-misbehave approach that is followed by an attempt to change student behavior through punishment or through a high negative impact consequence model to implementation of school-wide prevention and proactive approaches such as PBIS.

HOW IS PBIS CONNECTED TO RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION?

Similar to Response to Intervention (RTI), the PBIS framework follows a three-tiered system of intervention delivery, providing different levels of

behavior support based on student need and response to the intervention. If the student is not responsive to the intervention in the primary tier (Tier 1), more intensive behavioral intervention is provided in the secondary tier (Tier 2), or a highly individualized plan is developed for the student who needs more intensive tertiary tier (Tier 3) support. Experience has taught us that the RTI framework is most helpful in understanding and organizing data and student information. Based on how students respond, each intervention tier includes specific implementation elements.

PBIS PRIMARY TIER (TIER 1)

- Behavioral expectations defined
- Behavioral expectations taught
- Reward system for appropriate behavior
- Continuum of consequences for problem behavior
- Continuous data collection and use for decision making (Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010)

PBIS SECONDARY TIER (TIER 2)

- Universal screening
- Progress monitoring for at-risk students
- System for increasing structure and predictability
- System for increasing contingent adult feedback
- System for linking academic and behavioral performance
- System for increasing home/school communication
- Data collection and use for decision making (Horner et al., 2010)

PBIS TERTIARY TIER (TIER 3)

- Functional behavioral assessment
- Team-based comprehensive assessment
- Linking of academic and behavioral supports
- Individualized intervention based on assessment information and focused on: (a) prevention of problem contexts, (b) instruction on functional equivalent skills and desired performance skills, (c) strategies for extinction of problem behavior, (d) strategies for enhancing contingent reward of desired behavior, and (e) use of negative or safety consequences if needed
- Data collection and use for decision making (Horner et al., 2010)

PBIS is implemented in many schools and districts throughout the United States—specifically, in states that have transformed their academic and behavioral practices to improve student achievement. We have found through our years of research, experience, and practice that the schools and districts most effective at PBIS implementation and progress monitoring are implementers who follow quality criteria. As a result of our study and work, we have developed both a framework for creating a comprehensive PBIS model system and accompanying tools, strategies, and action steps to help move classroom, school, and district systems one step closer to designing and implementing a proactive behavior model that produces great results and outcomes for all students. Examples and case studies from several schools implementing PBIS at a Champion Model level are highlighted in this book.