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The PBIS Champion Model

The behavioral needs of a student should be addressed with the same level of focus and attention as their academic needs. You cannot have one without the other, if we are to educate the whole child, especially if our ultimate goal is to prepare students for college and a career. It is hard to argue the importance between instructional time and academic achievement; therefore, our top priority in education should be to keep students in class and engaged in learning to the greatest degree possible. Students who cannot demonstrate appropriate social skills will struggle tremendously, if we focus our efforts only on their academics while failing to address their critical behavioral needs. “Targeted” behavior supports are to be provided for students displaying occasional signs of mild to moderate at-risk misbehavior. Students in need of targeted supports can be identified more easily and their needs or behavior can be addressed more effectively when Tier 1, school-wide supports are soundly in place.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is growing exponentially as a term, although not so much in its application or practice. PBIS has received negative pushback in some schools and districts, not so much because of the ineffectiveness of PBIS but rather the ineffectiveness of the *implementation* of PBIS in those places. PBIS, where implemented at a very surface level (albeit by well-intended individuals), has been negatively viewed by staff as being only banners, tickets, and incentives, with the lack of accountability or discipline. Time after time, we run into teachers with a very negative view of PBIS; teachers see the results

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of ineffective implementation as a reflection of the system rather than its implementation. If all ten markers in *The PBIS Tier One Handbook* are not in place, you are not doing PBIS. Also, don't get caught up with the semantics. Call it what you want (i.e., Response to Intervention [RTI] behavior or Multi-Tiered System of Supports [MTSS] behavior), but the question remains: Do you have a system of multiple, increasingly intensive tiers of support for students who struggle with their behavior?

The PBIS Champion Model, as a framework, is designed to help educators work together through a problem-solving model to provide an equitable education; support academic and behavior needs in a systematic way that addresses the needs of *all* students; and align the entire system of initiatives, supports, and resources; while implementing continuous improvement processes across all levels of the system. How do we do this in our schools? Where do we start? How do we strengthen our implementation of existing systems to address all of these components?

You will need to assess your current state prior to beginning this work. Most decisions within this framework are made by teams (site leadership teams, student support teams, or grade-level teams). To assess your current state and to ensure coherence throughout your system, work with a wide representation of staff/team members in your school across multiple grade levels using the following process: Ask each of the selected team members to list all initiatives/interventions in each tier provided for both the academic and behavior systems in your school. *Note:* This also includes Special Education, Gifted/Gate, English Language Development, etc. After the list is created, answer the following questions as a team for each item listed:

Who? (Criteria to get in and out, which students are served?)

What? (What do the students receive in the intervention?)

How? (Who is delivering the intervention? How often?)

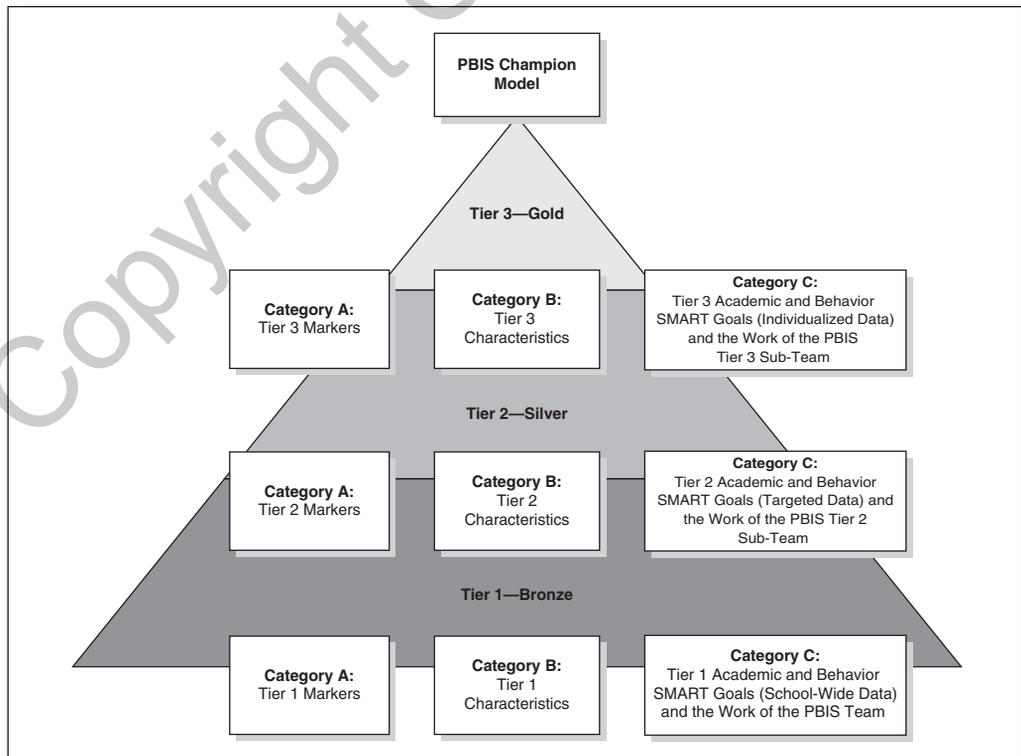
Measured? (How is the intervention monitored for effectiveness/fidelity? How often?)

When at least 80 percent of your staff staff can clearly articulate the response to these four questions within each intervention or initiative implemented in all three tiers, then your school will be on the right track for creating tiered systems that will sustain and align to this framework. This process will inform your system as to where adequate training/support is needed as well as where to refine and enhance based on the continuous monitoring through the use of accurate data. Creating a behavior system

aligned with this framework will take time and hard work. The work is never done; it will require ongoing effort based on the needs of your school. In order for this type of systematic framework to succeed, implementation and nurturing of the academic/behavior systems in the school need to be a top priority. Academic and behavior systems are very connected; you can't focus on one and not the other. Therefore, the PBIS Champion Model will enhance your system to support *all* students.

The PBIS Champion Model is a comprehensive systems approach for the design and delivery of PBIS in a school. This action-oriented framework provides *quality criteria* and *how-to steps* for developing, implementing, monitoring, and sustaining each level of the system: Bronze (Tier 1), Silver (Tier 2), and Gold (Tier 3). Each tier in the system consists of three categories: Category A—markers, Category B—characteristics, and Category C—academic and behavioral goals, and the work of the PBIS Team. Each category is composed of quality criteria and a set of defined actions. A brief overview of the quality criteria for each tier is provided with a quick glimpse of what a Champion Model school looks like in each level (Bronze, Silver, and Gold).

Figure 1.1



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From our experience, most school administrators/staff indicate their school has some degree of a system in place to reactively respond to a student's behavior challenges, but many concede that they struggle implementing effective Tier 2 and Tier 3 behavior systems. The PBIS Champion Model Framework will help you gather baseline information and provide a set of criteria for establishing effective tiered systems in your school. Answer the following questions based on your school's current state as a baseline:



Can the school administration/staff articulate the importance of connecting academics and behavior when working with students? Explain:

Are similar resources allocated to both academic and behavioral supports? Explain:

Can the administration/staff articulate what is expected of them at the classroom level (Tier 1) as they are providing academic supports? Explain:

Can the administration/staff articulate what is expected of them at the classroom level (Tier 1) as they are providing behavioral supports? Explain:

Can the administration/staff articulate what is available for targeted or at-risk (Tier 2) academic interventions at the school for students not responding to the classroom supports alone? Explain:

Can the administration/staff articulate what is available for targeted or at-risk (Tier 2) behavioral interventions at the school for students not responding to the classroom supports alone? Explain:

Can the administration/staff articulate what is available for individualized (Tier 3) academic interventions (general education and special education) at the school for students not responding to the classroom level or targeted/at risk levels of intervention? Explain:

Can the administration/staff articulate what is available for individualized (Tier 3) behavioral interventions (general education and special education) at the school for students not responding to the classroom level or targeted/at risk levels of intervention? Explain:



Having a solid, preventive Tier 1 behavior system in place (see *The PBIS Tier One Handbook*) for a comprehensive guide, coupled with an innovative response to students who misbehave (see *Don't Suspend Me!: An Alternative Discipline Toolkit*) will be critical for the success of the work in this book.

Ask yourself this question: Do you have the ABCs of PBIS Tier 1 implementation in place? If the answer to this question is No or you do not know what the ABCs of PBIS Tier 1 are, utilize *The Tier One Handbook* to build your foundation first, before delving into Tier 2 markers for the best outcomes.

Why is this recommended? Through our professional experience of working with schools on implementation of both academic and behavior RTI, MTSS, and tiered-school interventions in general, we can say with confidence that if PBIS/the PBIS Champion Model is not implemented with fidelity in each tier, it will result in insufficient Tier 2 interventions, with too many students overidentified as needing them. Often, we find this is connected to inadequate leadership, fixed beliefs regarding discipline, and/or ineffective school systems (academic/behavior) missing critical key markers of implementation. Without a foundation of Tier 1 in place, you will encounter the following most common red flags, which will negatively impact your implementation of an effective Tier 2 system.

Here are the leading red flags connected with poor PBIS implementation:

PBIS referred to as a program—If PBIS is referred to as a program, the perception from the teachers and staff will be “this too shall pass.” PBIS needs to be referred to as the behavior side of the school system; behavior RTI.

Lack of administrator buy-in—Administrators who do not believe in the fundamental markers necessary to implement a comprehensive behavior system will produce a staff who does not believe in the fundamental markers and will quickly return to the old way of responding to misbehavior—the easier way. Another common buy-in error is an administrator assuming everything is already being done with fidelity at their school when it is not. This is the toughest red flag to address, because it can involve bruised egos and difficult conversations. It also requires intervention from the district office or an immediate supervisor to ensure the administrator knows implementation is not optional, and even the best school systems need to continuously assess and improve.

Administrators not understanding all tiers of implementation—Administrators who do not understand the complexity of implementation in each tier (school-wide, targeted/at-risk, and individualized) struggle to build and sustain PBIS at model levels. We commonly see principals send other site representatives to trainings and/or PBIS team meetings while they themselves cannot fully articulate the system they are hoping to design and implement.

Teacher and staff misunderstanding of PBIS implementation—

If teachers and staff are not properly trained on the markers of implementation, the goals and outcomes of implementation, and the reasons for why it is necessary to implement, they will have a shallow understanding of what PBIS means. A shallow understanding will produce those who refer to PBIS as only tickets, incentives, banners, and no discipline. If a staff defines PBIS only in this way, it is evident they do not understand that PBIS is an RTI behavior framework.

Lack of appropriate communication with staff about alternative discipline—When teachers and staff are not supported adequately with discipline, they will blame PBIS for not punishing students. This is a game-changing red flag and indicates the following:

- Collaboration and communication is not taking place with regard to discipline in a timely manner
- The expectation and culture of the school has still not shifted to the belief of helping *all* students learn and behave

To reiterate, in most cases, it is not PBIS that is not working, it is the **implementation** of PBIS that is not working. Tighten up implementation of Tier 1 before moving on to Tier 2 for the best outcomes.

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