

Integrating Social and Emotional Learning into your School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports Framework



Addressing the behavioral, social, and emotional needs of students fosters a school environment that sets the stage for learning to occur. This document highlights how a framework for teaching and reinforcing behavioral skills of students, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), can be used as the foundation for enhancing the social and emotional skills of students.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a multi-tiered framework that uses evidence-based practices informed by implementation science for teaching and promoting positive student outcomes.¹ Practices used within PBIS focus on altering the environment to prevent and reduce the likelihood of problem behaviors from occurring through teaching and reinforcing behavioral expectations to all students. This is achieved by using a data-based problem-solving process to match the intensity of support provided to the level of student need across each tier: tier 1 (for all students),

tier 2 (for some) and tier 3 (for a few). Universal screening and progress monitoring are utilized to ensure students receive the appropriate level of evidence-based supports. Furthermore, the framework includes the use of collaborative teaming structures and a commitment to continuous improvement through coaching and professional development.² Schools implementing PBIS have seen a myriad of positive outcomes, including reductions in problematic behaviors among students and improvements in school climate.

Social and Emotional Learning

While PBIS focuses on addressing the behavioral needs of students, social and emotional learning (SEL) focuses on supporting the cognitive and emotional needs of students. SEL programs aim to support all students in the skill acquisition and application of managing emotions, setting and achieving positive goals, feeling and demonstrating empathy for others, building and sustaining positive relationships, and engaging in responsible decision-making.³ The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and

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Emotional Learning (CASEL) outlines the following skills in five core competencies that can be taught and applied across settings, including districts, schools, classrooms, home, and communities:

1. Self-awareness: Know your strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a 'growth mindset.'
2. Self-management: Effectively manage stress, control impulses, and motivate yourself to set and achieve goals.
3. Social Awareness: Understand the perspectives of others and empathize with them, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures.
4. Relationship Skills: Communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.
5. Responsible Decision-making: Make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety, and social norms.⁴

When implemented with fidelity, SEL programs have been associated with several positive outcomes, including improvements in academics^{5,6} and attendance,⁷ and reductions in dropout rates,⁷ externalizing behaviors,⁵ and internalizing problems.⁵

Why Integrate PBIS and SEL?

While SEL and PBIS originate from different theoretical backgrounds, a goal of both approaches includes promoting positive behaviors, relationships, and school climate through evidence-based practices.⁸ Both SEL and PBIS emphasize the importance of prevention.⁹ The core elements of PBIS (i.e., providing students with a continuum of evidence-based supports based on need, utilizing teaming structures, engaging in data-based decision-making, conducting universal screening and process monitoring, and engaging in ongoing professional development and coaching) can provide a useful framework for implementing SEL programs. Because SEL programs are typically delivered in a universal fashion, the three-tiered PBIS framework allows for targeted assessment and intervention based on students' needs.⁸

When implemented within the PBIS framework, the four social-emotional conditions for learning promoted by SEL programs (i.e., physical and emotional safety, school connection, high expectations for performance and behavior, and teaching social-emotional core competencies in the context of daily classroom instruction) are addressed by leadership teams at the onset while creating school-wide expectations and planning school-wide instruction to generalize skills. Social and emotional learning practices provide

students with the instructional tools to acquire the skills needed to demonstrate school-wide behavioral expectations set by the school's PBIS implementation team and can offer options for evidence-based curricula.

Implementing these two initiatives can be accomplished in either a parallel or combined fashion.⁸ In a parallel approach, SEL and PBIS are implemented simultaneously without consideration to areas that overlap or differ from each other. By contrast, strategically integrating SEL within the PBIS framework may promote many benefits for the district or school such as efficiency in implementation by reducing the likelihood of duplicating efforts, maximizing resources, and enhanced outcomes with stronger application and generalization of a broader set of skills that is above and beyond implementing these initiatives on their own.

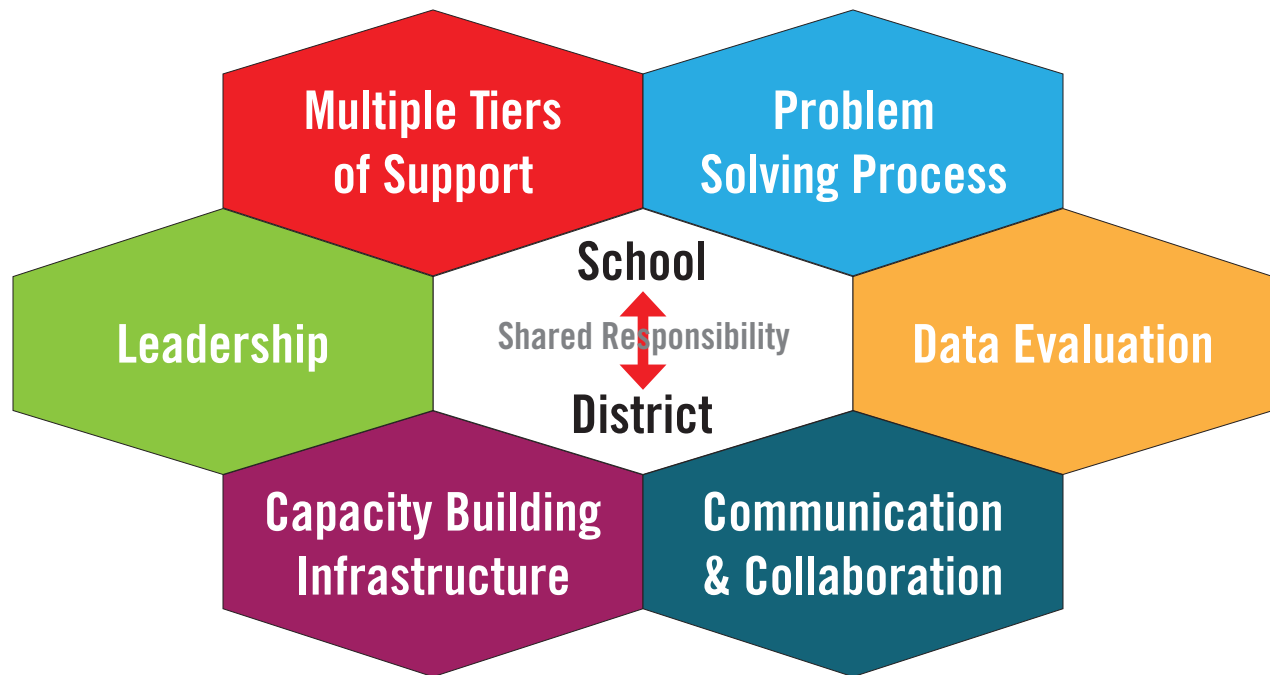


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Critical Components of a Multi-Tiered System of Support



Multiple Tiers of Support and Problem Solving Process

Because SEL programs are typically delivered in a universal fashion, the three-tiered PBIS framework can allow for targeted assessment and intervention based on individual students' needs.⁸ Schools should assess their existing resources and programs to identify needs, integrate initiatives, and reduce ineffective practices.⁸

Schools implementing PBIS will need to expand the data that they utilize to understand which social-emotional skills to teach. They should review data from schools, families, and communities to understand patterns and identify skills to teach. Data should also be used to select and develop referral decisions.⁸

After programs are selected, teams should review PBIS and SEL programming with consideration of the core components of each model to effectively coordinate programs.⁸ The curriculum being used to teach behavior can be utilized to teach social-emotional competencies. Teams should develop plans for teaching social-emotional skills that are connected to the PBIS curriculum. Teams can utilize a teaching matrix to map behaviors associated with social emotional competencies to existing PBIS expectations.

Teams should consider the short- and long-term aims of each approach to guide how to teach social, emotional, and behavioral

skills. For example, in the short-term, teams may wish to manage student behavior to decrease office discipline referrals; while a long-term goal may be students developing self-discipline. A combined PBIS and SEL approach can help support both of these goals. For example, a common school-wide expectation in PBIS, respect others, can be taught and reinforced to students behaviorally. Then, teachers can discuss with students the importance of this expectation in developing positive relationships with others. Students who reflect on the skill may engage in the behavior in different ways in the future.⁹

Teams should also be mindful of how external rewards are used in a combined approach. While PBIS often uses tangible rewards to reinforce desirable student behaviors, SEL programs tend not to focus on them. While tangible rewards can be used in the short-term to address problem behaviors of students, teams may consider using reinforcers such as praise, privileges, or recognition. When tangible rewards are used, teams may consider using them when the behavior aligns with the SEL skill taught, such as cooperation or teamwork.⁹

Data Evaluation

A comprehensive system for assessment and evaluation should be developed for successful integration. A potential barrier to integration



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Recommendations for Integrating SEL and PBIS

Key stakeholders, such as educators, students, families, and community members, should be informed about and should discuss the benefits and challenges of integration.



is having an incomplete data collection system. For example, teams may identify tools to use without having a system for collecting or analyzing data regularly. Furthermore, teams may not have a system for using their data in a way that is easily accessible.

Teams should collect and analyze data on strengths, needs, implementation fidelity, and program effectiveness on an ongoing basis.⁹ Examples of data sources to consider include attendance, school climate surveys, student visits to specialists, such as counselors and nurses, and community data such as calls to crisis centers, incarceration rates, and domestic and substance abuse data.

Communication and Collaboration

To effectively integrate SEL into the PBIS framework in a manner that will be sustained over time, key stakeholders need to have an understanding of the combined initiative. Staff and community buy-in is also required for integration in order for implementation to be successful. Key stakeholders, such as educators, students, families, and community members, should be informed about and should discuss the benefits and challenges of integration. These stakeholders should be present on an integration steering committee which can help promote buy in at multiple levels.

Schools should also develop a shared vision linked to specific language and routines, which can support implementation.⁸

Capacity Building Infrastructure

A multi-year implementation plan should be developed for integrating PBIS and SEL. This plan should include the purpose of integration and outline procedures for selecting programs, implementing trainings, and implementing and integrating programs. It should also positively state student and staff expectations and detail procedures and systems for monitoring fidelity. This multi-year plan should be updated on a yearly basis. It is recommended that implementation of the integrated PBIS and SEL model occur in planned phases using an outcome-driven process. Teams should engage in ongoing progress monitoring of fidelity and outcomes at all phases of implementation.⁸ Furthermore, social-emotional and behavioral competencies should be embedded into the mission of the school, as well as all aspects of the curriculum.

Schools will need to have access to the appropriate resources, including time, training, and supports for all staff to model, teach, and reinforce social-emotional and behavioral competencies.⁸ Training and coaching for staff should be developed and implemented in an integrated manner to ensure staff understand the connections between PBIS and SEL. Technical assistance at the district and state levels should occur to help promote implementation at the school level.⁸

Leadership

School leaders, such as principals and administrators, need to develop a shared commitment to integrating SEL and PBIS. They must understand the benefits of this approach, as well as what resources are needed for implementation and sustainability.⁸

The leadership team responsible for integrating PBIS and SEL should be representative of the school community. Barriers to integration can occur when schools utilize multiple leadership teams that are implementing too many initiatives, or when leadership team membership is not reflective of the school community. Groups that are not represented on the leadership team are likely to resist new initiatives.⁹

A single leadership team that includes key stakeholders should be used to integrate PBIS and SEL initiatives. Developing a road map of SEL and PBIS practices can help teams identify how programs can complement each other. Leadership teams are responsible for engaging in data-based action planning by using data sources such as student outcomes, implementation data, and professional development needs. Teams should be aware of what programs are already in place when integrating new initiatives.⁹



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References & Resources

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Resources to Assist Teams in the Integration of SEL within a PBIS Framework:

- [Teaching Social-Emotional Competencies within a PBIS Framework](#)
- [Funding for SEL Resource](#)
- [Now is the Time –Technical Assistance Webinar: Every Student Succeeds Act and Social Emotional Learning](#)
- [Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\) Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs](#)
- [SAMSHA Evidence Based Practices Resource Center: https://www.samhsa.gov/ebp-resource-center](https://www.samhsa.gov/ebp-resource-center)
- [Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development: https://www.blueprintsprograms.org/](https://www.blueprintsprograms.org/)
- [Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's \(OJJDP's\) Model Programs Guide \(MPG\)](#)
- [Suicide Prevention Resource Center – Best Practices Registry](#)
- [Promising Practices Network \(archived\)](#)
- [What Works Clearinghouse](#)
- [WestEd Resources on Social Emotional Learning: https://www.wested.org/resources/social-and-emotional-learning-a-whole-child-approach/](https://www.wested.org/resources/social-and-emotional-learning-a-whole-child-approach/)



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