



**TO:** P-12 Education Committee

**FROM:** Cosimo Tangorra, Jr. *Cosimo Tangorra Jr.*

**SUBJECT:** Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports and New York State's Structure of Support

**DATE:** March 9, 2015

**AUTHORIZATION(S):** *Elizabeth R Berlin*

### **SUMMARY**

#### **Issue for Discussion**

To provide the Board of Regents with information on the Department's initiatives related to Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and information on how PBIS provides a framework to improve school climate, reduce suspensions and improve outcomes for all students.

#### **Reason(s) for Consideration**

For information and discussion.

#### **Proposed Handling**

This item will come before the P-12 Education Committee for discussion at the March meeting of the Board of Regents.

#### **Background Information**

##### **What is PBIS?**

PBIS is a multi-tiered system of supports to create and maintain positive school climates where teachers can teach and students can learn. This evidence-based framework emphasizes the prevention of behavioral and school discipline problems by teaching, modeling and recognizing positive, appropriate behavior in schools. PBIS is not a curriculum, program, or single practice, but is a systems framework that guides the selection and implementation of evidence-based practices for improving behavioral and social-emotional outcomes for all students while increasing opportunities for academic engagement and improved performance.

Like Response to Intervention, PBIS has tiers of support.

1. Primary Prevention (Tier 1): Primary prevention is a school wide level of support that focuses on teaching and reinforcing three to five behavioral expectations for conduct, such as "be safe," "be responsible," and "be respectful." These expectations are explicitly taught and translated into positively stated examples of what these behaviors look like in classrooms and non-classroom areas to ensure consistency across all settings.
2. Secondary Prevention (Tier 2): Secondary Prevention is designed to provide targeted small group or simple individual interventions to support students who are not responding to Primary Prevention efforts. School teams use data such as office discipline referrals to identify students who need further instructional supports related to behavior. Teams design and use appropriate and effective interventions, monitoring student response through data collection and adjusting support as needed.
3. Tertiary Prevention (Tier 3): Tertiary supports are for those students whose needs are not being met by Primary and Secondary efforts alone and are experiencing intense and/or chronic problem behavior. School teams use functional behavioral assessment and person-centered planning to connect school, family, and community supports to design appropriate and effective behavioral intervention plans for individual students. Tertiary supports will be more effective if there are strong Tier 1 and 2 systems in place.

### **Outcomes when PBIS is used, with fidelity, in schools**

Research indicates that schools that effectively implement PBIS with fidelity demonstrate improved school climates, better student academic, behavior and social outcomes and parental engagement. Specifically, when schools implement PBIS, results include:

- Reductions in disciplinary referrals, suspensions and expulsions while increasing academic performance;
- Increases in the consistent use of positive teaching and reinforcement strategies for behavior;
- Use of more engaging, responsive, preventive and productive approaches to problematic behavior; and
- Use of positive and individualized supports for students whose behaviors require more specialized intervention.

Data collected from a sample of New York State schools implementing PBIS is consistent with these outcomes. High fidelity of implementation of a PBIS framework correlated with higher academic performance and a statistically significant decrease in suspension and office discipline referrals for specific groups of students.

## **Department initiatives to support PBIS implementation in schools**

The Department has used Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) discretionary funds to support PBIS since 2002 when it instituted a statewide system of training and technical assistance for schools implementing PBIS. Through seven individual contracts, NYSED offered regional and individual technical assistance to schools on PBIS practices and systems. In order to target support to districts identified through the state's aligned accountability system, in 2009 NYSED's PBIS structure of support was integrated as part of a coordinated statewide special education technical assistance network, the Regional Special Education Technical Assistance Support Centers (RSE-TASC).

Through the RSE-TASC, NYSED initially funded 15 Behavior Specialists and in 2013 expanded the number of Behavior Specialists to 30. While RSE-TASC Behavior Specialists provide professional development to interested schools on a regional basis, most of their work is dedicated to providing embedded professional development support to schools whose data shows high rates of suspension of students with disabilities and/or disproportionality by race/ethnicity in the disciplinary actions for students with disabilities. As of July 2014, the Behavior Specialists reported providing embedded professional development and technical assistance to fully implement the framework of PBIS in 176 New York schools, with support offered to additional schools, at various levels of intensity, through regional professional development.

In the current 10 RSE-TASC contracts, NYSED supports 40 full-time behavior specialists, 10 of which are dedicated to support positive behavioral supports in preschool programs.

In 2010, NYSED established the State's PBIS Technical Assistance Center (NYS PBIS TAC) [www.nyspbis.org](http://www.nyspbis.org). The purpose and goals of the PBIS TAC are to:

1. provide professional development and technical assistance to the RSE-TASC Behavioral Specialists and develop and/or update research-based curriculum on PBIS to be used by RSE-TASC Behavioral Specialists in their work with school districts;
2. evaluate the effectiveness of RSE-TASC's Behavior Specialists intervention with school districts;
3. provide timely access to research-based information on PBIS statewide through a web-based resource library (and liaison with national PBIS technical assistance centers; and
4. provide regional professional development sessions.

## **Recommendations**

1. The Office of Special Education and the Student Support Services Office will collaborate on initiatives to promote PBIS to reduce incidents of school violence and improve school climate.
2. The Office of Special Education and the Office of Early Learning will collaborate to improve behavior practices in New York's regular early childhood programs, including Universal Pre-K programs as well as in special education preschool programs.
3. Support PBIS implementation as an evidence-based school improvement initiative to improve the results in focus districts and focus schools and to address issues of disproportionality by race/ethnicity in disciplinary actions.

## **Panel Presentation**

Panelists from three schools and a representative of the NYS PBIS TAC will discuss their PBIS implementation and results. In addition to questions from the Board of Regents, the panel's discussion will be focused around the following questions:

- What are the specific activities/strategies taken to implement PBIS in your school?
- What have been the challenges to implementation?
- How has the implementation of PBIS changed your school's climate and culture?
- What has been the impact of PBIS on academic outcomes?
- What are the changes to office disciplinary referrals and suspension rates as a result of PBIS?
- How is data used to inform the level of intervention and to identify students in need of increased levels of behavioral or academic support?
- What are some ways the Department can continue to support the field's efforts to implement PBIS?

## **Panel Members**

**Erika Tobia**                      **Principal**  
**Kaiama Hamer**                **Dean**  
P.S. 41(Gun Hill Road School)  
Bronx, NY

P.S. 41 is a K-5 elementary school located in Bronx, New York with a total enrollment of 876 students. Approximately 91 percent of the student population qualifies for a free or reduced lunch. 60 percent of the students enrolled in the school are African American, 37 percent are Hispanic, one percent is Asian, and one percent is Caucasian. Ten percent are English Language Learners population and 19 percent of all students are identified as students with special needs.

**Patti LaBarr**                    **Principal**  
Harold T. Wiley School  
Watertown City School District

The H. T. Wiley School has a total enrollment of 585 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. Approximately 50 percent of the student population qualifies for a free lunch and ten percent qualifies for reduced lunch. 70 percent of the students enrolled in the school are Caucasian, 12 percent are Hispanic or Latino, eight percent are African American, three percent are Asian, five percent are Multiracial, and one percent American Indian or Alaska Native. 63 percent of all students are economically disadvantaged, 17 percent of all students are identified as students with disabilities, and three percent are students with limited English proficiency.

**Ray Raefski,**                    **Principal**  
Hawthorne Cedar Knolls  
Special Act school

Hawthorne Cedar Knolls Union Free School District is located 30 miles north of New York City in the suburban Westchester Community of Hawthorne. The campus is owned and operated by the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services which provides a residential program. Hawthorne Cedar Knolls Union Free School District provides the educational component for both residential students and day students placed by their local Committees on Special Education as well as Department of Social Services and Office of Mental Health.

**Kevin Quinn - NYS PBIS TAC Representative**

Kevin P. Quinn, Ed.D. is an Associate Professor of Special Education in the School of Education, at the State University of New York (SUNY) Albany. For the last several years he has served as department chair for the Department of Educational and Counseling Psychology. Dr. Quinn is a consultant to the New York State Technical Assistance Center for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports and he is a member of the New York State Education Department's Safe Schools Task Force. His ongoing research agenda is focused on interventions to support improved social behavior for all students, including those with emotional and behavioral disorders. He has extensive experience working directly with children and youth with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) including teaching at and administering the Rose School, a nationally recognized model demonstration alternative school for children and youth with EBD living in Washington DC.