



**Positive Behavior
Support (PBS)
In Philadelphia:
Where We've Been and
Where We Need to Go**

A report by Public Citizens for Children and Youth



February 2009

About PCCY

Public Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY) serves as the region's leading child advocacy organization and works to improve the lives and life chances of its children.

Through thoughtful and informed advocacy, community education, targeted service projects and budget analysis, PCCY seeks to watch out and speak out for children and families. PCCY undertakes specific and focused projects in areas affecting the healthy growth and development of children, including child care, public education, child health, juvenile justice and child welfare.

Founded in 1980 as Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth, our name was changed in 2007 to better reflect the expanded work in the counties surrounding Philadelphia. PCCY remains a committed advocate and an independent watchdog for the well-being of all our children.

*Special Thanks to the Stoneleigh Center
whose support of a Stoneleigh Fellow,
Kelly Siegel, makes this PBS work possible*

Public Citizens for Children and Youth

#7 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, 6th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19103

215-563-5848 / 215-563-9442 / www.pccy.org / info@pccy.org

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) In Philadelphia:

Where We've Been and Where We Need to Go

Table Of Contents

Introduction: School Environment in Philadelphia	3
Looking Closer at PBS	4
PBS and Single School Culture	5
Planting Seeds for PBS to Grow	6
PBS Brings Structure to Schools	6
What About Implementation?	9
Start With A Broad-Base in Each School	9
Secure Support from the Central Office	9
Build Capacity Region by Region	9
School Readiness	10
Estimated Costs of District-wide PBS	10
Problems with Implementation	11
Addressing Elements for Success	12
Creating a Sustainable PBS System in Philadelphia	15
Appendix	18
Endnotes	20
Thanks	21

Introduction: School Environment in Philadelphia

Schools should be launching pads for learning, exploring and soaring. Yet, often we find they too closely resemble holding pens where adults struggle to keep order in the hope that teaching and learning can effectively take place.

Developing a positive learning environment in a school plagued with negative student behavior is in itself a difficult task. But many would agree that schools that maintain focus on the negative have been unable to produce the academic and climate results they desire.

The School District of Philadelphia paid \$41 million during the 2005-2006 school year for the transfer of some 2,400 disruptive and violent students to privately-managed, disciplinary alternative schools. In addition, the District invested \$4.5 million in an expansion of school police coverage. Yet, 6,214 “serious” incidents were cited in and around its schools; this included nearly 1,800 assaults by students on teachers. In 2008, the numbers have increased slightly.

These reports “raise real concerns about whether all schools provide the kind of environment necessary to ensure safety and promote student achievement,” Pennsylvania’s Education Secretary Gerald Zahorchak said in a May 2007 news release. Meanwhile, the city’s own former police commissioner, urging that more attention be paid to prevention and to building a better community, offered, “We cannot arrest our way out of the problem.”

He’s not alone in such thinking; indeed, recognition is growing around the need for schools to approach discipline and school climate proactively. We now have research that shows a direct correlation between improved school climate and improved academics. More time on task and less time correcting behavior is resulting in higher test scores and more learning. By teaching students positive behavior, schools are creating healthy, safe, school climates.

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is one strategy local, state, and federal officials are now seriously considering. A popular, proactive school climate improvement/discipline process, PBS’s effectiveness is backed by research. PBS is currently being implemented in 7,953 schools nationwide¹, where it is defined by a number of core features: a focus on prevention, clearly defined expectations, acknowledgement of appropriate behavior, consistent and known consequences for problem behavior, data collection analyses and utilization, a continuum of intensive, individual interventions for students with chronic behavior problems, team-based implementation, and system-wide adoption. Notably, PBS features a role for all students and staff in the school building while encouraging capacity-building within a school district through the use of coaches who can show others the way.

This report reviews past attempts to implement PBS in Philadelphia schools and the lessons learned as well as proposals for future success. Our findings are based on interviews with school staff and with agencies that have provided technical assistance to the schools, data provided by the School District of Philadelphia and current literature on successful PBS initiatives. Contacted by email and/or via phone about their school’s experience with the PBS process, 15 of the 28 principals responded to our request for an interview.

***Building a “Core Curriculum”
for School Climate: The 8
Core Elements of PBS***

(1) A Focus on Prevention –
*Proactive instead of reactive
approaches to discipline.*

**(2) Clearly Defined
Expectations that Adults Teach
and Model –***Pro-social
behaviors are established
across all school settings.*

**(3) Acknowledgement of
Appropriate Behavior through**
*a school-wide recognition
system.*

**(4) Consistent Consequences
for Problem Behavior –***Chosen
from a menu of options
designed to decrease office
referrals.*

**(5) Ongoing Collection of
Data and use of Data for
Decision Making**

**(6) A Continuum of Intensive,
Individual Interventions for
students who are at-risk and at
high-risk.**

**(7) Administrative Leadership
and Team-Based
Implementation –***The process
is driven by the school
leadership team with the
support of the principal.*

**(8) System-wide Adoption
Designed to Support All
Effective Practices –***The school
district commits to supporting
PBS initiatives through policy,
training, and support.*

After reviewing the experiences of these schools, we close by offering recommendations to improve Philadelphia’s current implementation process to create an effective, sustainable, district-wide PBS system that is aligned with current District initiatives, such as Single School Culture.

Looking Closer at PBS

PBS recognizes that paying as much attention to teaching, modeling and rewarding good behaviors as we do to instruction yields remarkable results in both social and academic growth. By investing in prevention and modification of behavior, schools are able to reclaim much of the time and energy expended through traditional disciplinary actions and put that time and energy back into academic instruction and achievement. More specifically, the evidence-based outcomes affiliated with PBS include schools gaining more instructional time and achieving higher results on standardized achievement tests while simultaneously experiencing declines in office discipline referrals and suspensions.² PBS’s success in improving student attendance is also noteworthy and especially important in motivating children who face significant barriers to academic success.

This positive support strategy admittedly signals a drastic departure from the more traditional reliance on models of school Codes of Conduct and Zero Tolerance policies, which primarily focus on behaviors only after they become problematic.³ A recent article in the *Baltimore Examiner* noted that “Charles County Public Schools and Baltimore Public Schools are reversing the trend (of increasing suspension as a solution to problem behavior) because of their implementation of the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports system.”⁴ PBS is new neither to the state of Pennsylvania – which initiated a 31-school pilot project in 2007 – nor to the School District of Philadelphia, where personnel from some 28 schools have undergone varying degrees of training to attempt putting PBS elements into place.

Nationally, PBS legislation to provide funding so PBS can reach all schools had been proposed by President Barack Obama, while he was serving as an Illinois Senator, with fellow Illinois legislators, Senator Dick Durbin and Representative Phil Hare (see “Positive Behavior for Effective Schools Act”: S. 2111 and HR Bill 3407).

Locally, attempts to develop PBS have been sporadic, producing inconsistent results in the 28 schools that have received training. One of PBS’s bright lights in Philadelphia has been James Logan Elementary School.

School-wide behavioral expectations:

Each school leadership team develops 3 – 5 behavioral expectations, framed in a positive, not restrictive, manner:

Examples: *Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Safe, Be Kind, Be a Friend, Respect Yourself, Respect Others, Do your best, Follow adult directions.*

Each of these expectations contains specific pro-social rules that are taught to children.

In the classroom, Be Responsible includes: Raise your hand to speak, Follow adult directions, Come to class prepared.

Signs that a school is fully implementing PBS:

Expectations are publicly posted in 8 out of 10 building locations.

At least 70% of students can state the school rules when asked.

At least 90% of staff can state the school rules.

50% of students indicate that they have received positive recognition for practicing expected behaviors over the past two months.

When the school was highlighted for the best fifth-grade reading gain (a 54-percentage point increase) in Philadelphia and the suburbs for the 2007-2008 school year, the principal cited not only the school's academic approach, but also PBS, which he said in a news article, "helped tremendously."⁵

The School District of Philadelphia's Office of Specialized Services has done much to raise awareness, secure grants and arrange PBS training. Schools received coaching, training and technical assistance supported by federal, state and District-funded initiatives. A trio of Pennsylvania-based providers has been working with them. Project cohorts have consisted of a number of schools (3 - 10) with funding support provided from one to three years. Philadelphia has not had a district-wide initiative in which PBS is prioritized and systematically grown each year.

PBS and Single School Culture

The School District of Philadelphia has adopted Single School Culture for safety and discipline, focusing on three components: A for academics, B for behavior and C for culture. This "Single School Culture" is "not a program but a way of organizing and running a school. It begins with shared norms, beliefs, values, and goals and results in agreed upon processes and procedures that produce consistency in practice."⁶ Single School Culture incorporates PBS, whose implementation structure may assist in the realization of Single School Culture's B and C components.

We are now at a turning point in developing a broad movement supporting proactive methods to creating positive behavior in our schools, learning from our history in order to move forward successfully. While there have been some small-scale accomplishments in Philadelphia with PBS to date, key representatives from the School District, the philanthropic community and educational activists are now turning their focus towards implementing PBS with a new degree of high-level commitment and fidelity throughout the District, placing emphasis on whole school adoption, and securing the appropriate intervention and supports needed for PBS to take root.

Planting Seeds for PBS to Grow

For best results, schools should choose to become PBS schools. This choice entails the entire school agreeing to adopt the process as a community – with administration, parents and students brought into the model from the beginning, and at least 80 percent of faculty supporting the adoption of the strategy.

From each school, leadership teams made up of 5 – 8 staff train with a behavioral health consultant (the “external coach”) to develop and implement their PBS system. Simultaneously, “internal facilitators” are employed by the District and based out of the regional offices, where they are able to work closely with the schools while undergoing training in PBS by the external coach in order to cultivate District PBS expertise. At the school level, faculty collect and analyze discipline data so that progress and problems can be identified, discussed and treated with the assistance of the internal PBS facilitator.

The work must be transparent; students who respond well must be acknowledged and rewarded. At the same time, students who need more supports must have them. The external coaches, who visit on-site at least twice a month, help the leadership team identify issues, analyze data and develop the appropriate agreed-upon responses to student behavior.

“Positive behavior is the glue that holds everything together.” – Elementary School Principal, Philadelphia

PBS Brings Structure to Schools

PBS has its roots in special education. But unlike current school-based behavioral health or special education programs that are able to serve only a small population of a school’s students, ***PBS is designed to serve all students through a school-wide system of prevention.*** By doing so, the percentage of children with the most severe behavioral problems is narrowed, allowing schools to concentrate on providing effective interventions to children at the greatest risk. PBS has been championed by special education advocates because the model also promotes the inclusion of children with special needs, who are taught and rewarded using the same rules the rest of the school follows.

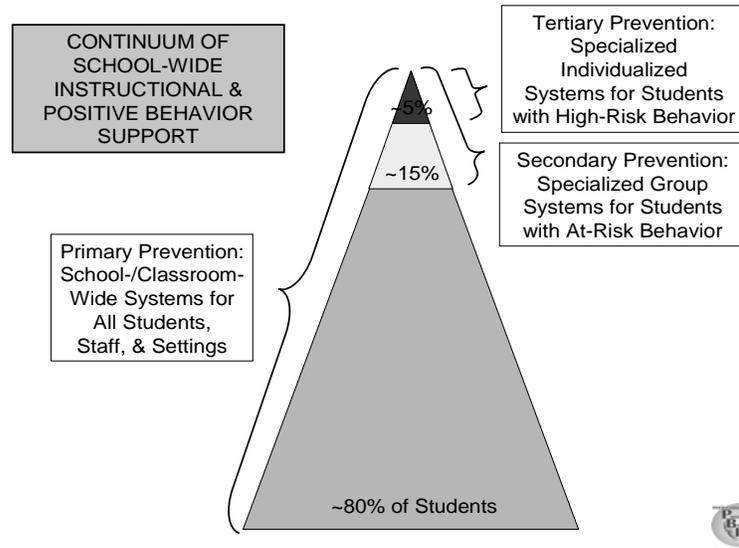
Reaping Positive Rewards: the Results of Implementing the Eight Core Elements of PBS:

- *Decreased suspensions and Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs)*
 - *Improved student academic performance through higher results on standardized tests*
 - *Overall savings in student instructional time: 1 ODR = 45 minutes lost from each student*
 - *Savings in staff time: 1 ODR = 15 minutes lost from administrators and teachers*
 - *Increased ratings of faculty effectiveness*
 - *Improved consistency across faculty*
 - *Reduced faculty absenteeism*
-

A Secondary Level Example -- 'Check In . . . Check Out'

Data is collected to identify children who need additional levels of support. The leadership team works with the coach to design and implement a “check-in” system for students who have continual behavioral problems. Each morning, an identified child meets with the administrative assistant (volunteer staff person) to establish the student’s goal for the day (ex: keeping hands to him or herself in the hallways and lunchroom). The child is given a piece of paper stating the goal and using a scale to measure whether or not the child met their goal. Data is used to calculate the percentage of the day that the child has met his/her goal. If the child shows improvement on goal completion that day, the child is recognized for his/her progress (no matter how small), and his/her picture is tacked to a bulletin board in the hallway. However, if the child is not able to meet the goal, the picture is removed and the child must work the next day to have it reposted.

The PBS structure is best reflected in this three-tiered triangle:



It is important to note that the 80%:15%:5% ratio dividing students according to the level of intervention needed may not be the same for every school or every district. In fact, researchers predict that a higher percentage of students in urban schools require secondary and tertiary supports than those in suburban and rural schools.⁷ While the ratio may vary among urban schools, the message remains the same: the school-wide structure, consistent rules, agreed-upon and known interventions, and data review affiliated with PBS prevents new behavioral problems from emerging, while addressing the problems of children who have on-going emotional and mental health issues.

Tier 1: Universal level describes the heart of PBS and its focus on school-wide implementation, so that all students and all staff are on the same page. All students benefit from a good school climate; the entire school benefits when everyone is engaged in developing and enforcing the rules and is responsible for understanding the consequences of not following them.

Tier 2: Secondary level uses targeted interventions for children who exhibit some degree of behavioral problems despite the school’s use of a universal PBS system. These students may need an increase in adult and peer support through different programming, structure, feedback and prompting.

Secondary interventions are not as intense or individually-tailored as those on the tertiary level. They can usually be administered (in a group setting) by regular school staff who may have appropriate time and who have been appropriately trained in PBS intervention techniques, even if they do not specialize in behavioral health or social services.

Tier 3: Tertiary level of specialized and individualized systems is the top tier of the triangle for students with high-risk behavior. Students in this group have either failed to respond successfully to Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions or exhibited behaviors that were harmful to themselves, their peers, or school staff such that an individual intervention is warranted in lieu of a group intervention. Tier 3 is compatible with many school-based behavioral health models and wraparound services currently being used in Philadelphia schools with the support of the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH).

Examples of behavioral health programs in Philadelphia schools consistent with Tier 3 supports:

- SBBH: School-Based Behavioral Health
- CARE: Children Achieving through Re-Education
- Group TSS: Group Therapeutic Staff Support
- SAP: Student Assistance Program
- TESC: Therapeutic Emotional Support Classroom I
- C & E's: Consultation and Education Specialists
- TSS: Therapeutic Staff Support

Individual student data is maintained in order to observe trends in behavior, both positive and negative. In PBS, all decisions regarding intervention for students are based on data review. At the tertiary level, students who exhibit high-risk behaviors participate in functional behavior assessments in order to determine which environmental factors are prompting their problem behaviors. Efforts are then focused on either altering the student's environment or providing specialized individual interventions. Throughout the Commonwealth, a similar process (commonly referred to in Philadelphia as the **Comprehensive Student Assistance Process**, or CSAP) is employed to determine next steps for children exhibiting academic problems due to emotional and behavioral difficulties, as well as those facing other barriers.

What About Implementation?

Start with a Broad Base in Each School

Large-scale PBS initiatives require at least 3 – 5 years to effectively design, implement and track outcomes. PBS is not a prepackaged program; it takes a high level of commitment and planning to implement all PBS core features into schools, typically beginning with the universal system in years 1 – 2, and expanding to a tertiary system by year three. Implementation may take longer for some schools based on factors such as school size, staff turnover, the capacity to consistently review data, and ongoing commitment of the school’s leadership team to attend meetings and trainings.

Secure Support from the Central Office

Because PBS seeks to create change within systems, implementation is both a process of working from the top down and the bottom up; support should be system-wide and within individual schools. In a large urban school system such as Philadelphia’s, support of the central office administration is critical in order to grow PBS as a “core curriculum” for school climate and behavior throughout the District. The first step in district commitment is the development of a leadership team that will design, guide, monitor and oversee the process. Responsibilities of this team would include securing resources, monitoring the development of within-district expertise, designing the stages of implementation and evaluating PBS school sites. The selection of a district-wide leadership team (in some cases a citywide leadership team) should be a collaborative effort between the school district and other stakeholders in educational and behavioral health organizations.

Build Capacity Region by Region

For successful district-wide PBS implementation, careful consideration should be given to growing the process, beginning with a cohort of schools coached internally by appropriate school district personnel (ideally at the regional level) and externally by a coach from a behavioral health provider with PBS expertise. In the Philadelphia area, schools practicing PBS have been trained by Devereux Center for Effective Schools, Arcadia University’s B²EST program or the State Department of Education’s Pennsylvania Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN). Models of PBS implementation from around the country indicate that internal “coaches” or “facilitators” are initially able to support approximately four schools within a region during first-year implementation. Over time, as schools internalize the steps for successful implementation, school district coaches should be capable of working with 8 – 10 schools, similar to New York City’s experience employing nine internal PBS coaches or facilitators to support 100 schools. Coaching responsibilities include attending all relevant trainings, coordinating activities between trainers and school leadership teams, providing on-going technical support to school leadership teams, leading data-collection efforts at the local schools and reporting data to a PBS lead contact within the district.

School Readiness

While PBS may be adopted as the “core behavior curriculum” or strategy for improving school climate and behavior, not all schools are ideal candidates for immediate implementation, as PBS requires a cultural shift in thinking and process. Change that takes root generally begins at the ground level in soil prepared to accept it. This is particularly true of PBS, which requires that at least 80 percent of the school’s staff vote in favor of its adoption. PBS has a better chance of success in a school where leadership is both a driving force and a believer in the process.

“The principal must buy into (PBS) and have his heart in it and be committed. It’s like a marriage: it has its pitfalls, but if you keep at it, you’ll see changes.” – Elementary School Principal, Philadelphia

Estimated Costs of District-wide PBS

So what costs are associated with building a district-wide, sustainable PBS system? The largest costs cover the salaries of District employees who are trained to serve as internal facilitators, who would visit implementing schools each week to provide technical assistance and support to school teams, as well as professional development to the entire school staff as needed. In the first year of implementation these facilitators, who are full-time district employees, would ideally work at the regional level with school teams from about 4 - 5 different schools to assess readiness and develop and implement PBS action plans. These employees may be newly hired by the District or may be “re-deployed” from other District positions to serve as internal facilitators.

Additional costs in the first few years of a district-wide implementation would include technical assistance from an external coach to train the internal facilitators and the school leadership teams. The cost of hiring substitute teachers to cover classes for grade-level teachers on the school leadership team while they participate in three full-day PBS trainings per year is also included. Finally, a small portion of funding would be set aside for data collection in each implementing school, preferably through a database system such as School-wide Information Systems (SWIS).

Making PBS Work – Creating a Recipe for PBS Success in School Buildings:

Buy-in is needed from administrators, staff, and parents. Schools should not be involuntarily referred for PBS – in fact, at least 80% of staff must vote in favor of it.

Readiness means schools agree to submit data, allot time to review it with PBS coaches, form a leadership team, and commit the team’s staff time for training.

Collect, monitor and analyze data – Group data allows leadership team members to observe trends in behavior, and thus determine environmental factors that are prompting problem behavior. Data on individual students allows school staff and administration to track changes in students’ behavior.

Reviewing progress – School leadership teams commit to meet at least once per month to review data and plan interventions. If behavioral data does not improve due to implementation, leadership team members will work with their coaches to adjust plans.

In order to build capacity within the District, we suggest initially supporting a cohort of schools by providing them with technical assistance so that they may implement all the core features of PBS.

Once a cohort of schools existed that demonstrated successful outcomes, the plans for PBS implementation would be able to spread markedly at a rate of 20 schools added each year. As schools reach a maintenance phase (typically between years 3 and 5), coaches would be freed up to take on new schools, thereby increasing their number of assigned schools to 8 – 10, similar to coaching structures in the New York City and Wake County, NC, school districts. As the District continues to build its capacity for PBS and develop its own expertise in training, initial costs, such as external coaches, would subside as more District employees are reallocated for facilitator positions.

Problems with Implementation

Philadelphia's experience with PBS to date has been based on short-term funding with few sustainable support systems in place, lacking a long-term vision for transforming a school's climate and, as a result, its academic success.

From our interviews with 15 Philadelphia principals, we found that only six schools have been able to maintain many of the critical elements of PBS.

The remaining nine schools cited difficulty sustaining the model; the reasons included being hampered by issues of funding, leadership, inadequate data collection, frequent principal and/or staff turnover, and a lack of all-important staff or principal buy-in and support.

Because PBS is an approach to discipline aimed at changing the ways in which educational and behavioral systems interact, the need to implement PBS with fidelity is key. But without support from the District, individual schools have struggled to implement all eight core elements, therefore resulting in a mixed adherence to fidelity. Some of the challenges to high-fidelity PBS implementation for Philadelphia schools are described below in more detail:

- Lack of staff buy-in. Schools did not vote on implementation but were assigned PBS, creating a sense of weariness for staff who were faced with other behavioral programs that promised similar outcomes but were fragmented and not school-wide.
- Inadequate technical assistance. Some schools received one-time, week-long training but none of the follow-up, on-site coaching associated with long-term PBS success.
- Insufficient interventions. Schools lacked interventions for students with greater needs and were dependent solely on universal level practices instead of building up to secondary and tertiary level supports.
- Inconsistent data collection methods.
- Incomplete follow-through and lack of funding. Schools stopped implementing PBS once funding for external coaching ceased.

Without support from their District, many schools will pick and choose parts of PBS. In fact, a study completed by Bradshaw et al. (2008)⁸ found that schools that have not been trained in PBS may already be following certain elements of PBS, such as the “positive ticketing” of students as a way to acknowledge students who follow the rules. But while some schools insist they are implementing PBS despite missing elements, experts caution that **the lack of fidelity in implementation nets not only fewer rewards, but difficulty in sustaining the model** – particularly in stressful times. To get the most out of PBS trainings and to solve problems with Philadelphia’s lack of in-house coaching expertise and general sustainability, adherence should be paid to PBS’s tools of implementation- School Wide Information Systems (SWIS) and the School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET).

Addressing Elements for Success: Tools of Implementation

School-Wide Information Systems (SWIS) is a web-based information system designed to help school personnel use office referral data to design school-wide and individual student interventions. SWIS is the preferred and most accepted method of data collection being used in PBS initiatives throughout the nation, and is designed to be highly cost-effective and time-efficient. Yet until recently the School District of Philadelphia had not authorized the use of SWIS to track behavioral data, citing preference of other data collection software. The lack of support for SWIS has created a range of problems for Philadelphia schools, which became weighed down with the responsibility of compiling handwritten “pink slips” that lacked the information needed to determine the antecedents and consequences of the offending behavior. The lack of attention to data is serious since data analysis is critical to the ability of a PBS leadership team to identify problematic trends in behavior, create interventions for students, and determine whether the interventions have been successful in changing unwanted behavior.

Building a PBS foundation: School leaders and coaches

School (building) Leadership Team:

5 - 8 staff members who can commit time, energy, and creativity to shaping a positive school climate.

The team can and should include:

- *Grade-level teachers*
- *Counselor*
- *Special Education Liaison*
- *Climate Manager/
Assistant Principal*
- *Principal*
- *Home and School
Liaison/Parent
Ombudsman*

External Coaches:

Behavioral health providers hired on as consultants to work with the school leadership team to develop their PBS system. In Philadelphia, external coaches have included staff from:

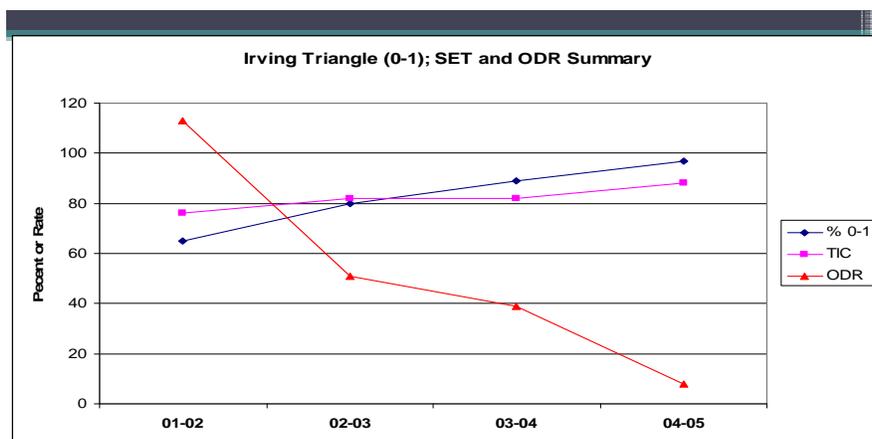
Devereux Center for Effective Schools

Arcadia University’s B²EST Program

Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN).

Internal Coaches:

District employees based in regional offices that support school leadership teams, beginning with 4 schools and growing to 8-10 schools at a time. Trained by the external coaches to ensure full knowledge of PBS implementation, internal coaches are needed to support District-wide PBS over a long period of time.



The graph charts office discipline referrals (ODR) from one Chicago elementary school that have decreased with each year of PBS implementation.⁹

School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET) is a tool that measures a school’s utilization of PBS’s eight core elements prior to training and periodically throughout the school year. Through interviews, surveys and on-the-spot inquiries about expectations, SET evaluates whether or not school-wide PBS implementation efforts are (a) occurring as planned, (b) resulting in change in schools, and (c) producing improvement in student outcomes.¹⁰ Schools with a high SET score are said to be **fully implementing** PBS, versus schools designated as **partially implementing**.

“By analyzing data collected on all students, the Leadership Team was able to identify times, days and settings in which problematic or negative behaviors were most common among students.”
– Elementary School Principal, Philadelphia

Quality Coaching varies among providers and funding models. Philadelphia schools trained and coached by the Devereux Center for Effective Schools, based in King of Prussia, PA, generally receive three day-long trainings per year for a school leadership team, plus on-site visits by Devereux-based coaches who gather observations, problem-solve, assist in facilitating meetings, and help compile and analyze data.

Similarly, Arcadia University’s B²EST program, conducted at the school’s campus in Glenside, PA, provides initial day-long trainings, with frequent on-site support that includes observations and feedback, as well as monthly professional development with school staff. Coaching from the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) includes several days per year of training at PaTTAN’s King of Prussia offices for school leadership teams. PaTTAN is also able to provide ongoing support to school teams, although they have been somewhat limited in their abilities to furnish on-site coaching until recently.

While exposure to PBS has admittedly helped some principals and schools redesign their approach to behavior, schools that have used PBS effectively speak of on-going coaching and adequate support systems as “making a difference.” They also pointed positively to coach-supported “kick-off” rallies for the entire school – staff and students – that explain the principles and expected outcomes of PBS and outline the agreed-upon behavioral expectations for the school.

Ensuring All Levels of Prevention

All schools interviewed reported difficulties in designing interventions for children who are at high-risk. Some pointed to Consultation & Education specialists, School-Based Behavioral Health clinics, and Children

Achieving through Re-education (CARE) classrooms, as providing some degree of support. Other schools that did not have such resources cited limitations in their ability to provide for a small, but pivotal percentage of their students. While many support programs exist in Philadelphia, they are not found in every school. PBS requires that all three levels of intervention be available for students. Building each school’s capacity to provide effective, on-site support will be a collaborative effort between the District, the City Department of Behavioral Health, and external coaches who can point to secondary and tertiary strategies being used in initiatives across the country.

“Resources are very limited with kids who have grave problems, and the mental health demand can be overwhelming.” – Elementary School Principal, Philadelphia

Long-term Funding

While short-term grants have provided valuable resources for initial implementation of PBS, funding to sustain PBS past individual schools’ start-up expense has been sparse. In the past, grant funding was often directed to outside providers for external coaching, while opportunities to fund internal coaches – and thus expand and refine District-based capacity to sustain PBS long-term – was overlooked.

“Children cannot learn if they don’t feel safe, and PBS helps them feel like someone cares about them. PBS has contributed to creating a safe, secure, caring environment for our students and staff.” – Elementary School Principal, Philadelphia

Creating a Sustainable PBS System in Philadelphia

PBS offers the promise of a district-wide, coherent approach to positive school climate that can result in improved atmosphere, teaching and learning in Philadelphia's public schools. Many in the school community are anxious to turn this corner and begin to implement this strategy but it will take a high level of commitment and support. As we have noted from the previous attempts to implement PBS in Philadelphia schools, if there is no infrastructure in the District to maintain PBS once a grant expires, then PBS initiatives become vulnerable.

Interviews with Philadelphia school principals who have been part of demonstration projects where PBS is no longer being implemented with fidelity reveal that PBS was not effective due to factors that could have been avoided if systems supporting ongoing PBS efforts had been in place. Interviews conducted with contracting agencies that provided technical assistance to cohort schools contained valuable lessons for future efforts, all of which pointed to the need for infrastructure.

PBS experts advise that school districts and regions that want to begin the collaborative process of PBS training and implementation first show readiness for PBS.

Large, urban school districts “have unique challenges due to factors such as size, high poverty rates, diverse communities, and limited resources.”¹¹ Efforts are underway in urban districts throughout the country.

Requirements for Demonstrating Readiness Include¹²:

- A commitment to positive student social behavior and/or school climate as one of the top five goals for the district/region. Without this commitment and understanding, academic pressures will take precedence over behavioral issues, rather than working together to meet a common goal.
- A district representative identified to serve as the PBS lead contact between the schools, regional coaches, city leadership team, and outside funders (if used).

PBS in other large, urban school districts:

Atlanta: 15 school/4-year grant pilot project to grow PBS within the district, with strong support from Atlanta Public Schools' Superintendent.

Baltimore: Schools using PBS showed a 69% increase in 8th grade math scores between 2003 and 2006.

Chicago: Part of the larger Illinois effort, Chicago is leading the way by practicing PBS in over 30 high schools.

Cleveland: The results of a study commissioned after a fatal shooting in a Cleveland school point to using PBS rather than punitive, reactive discipline processes throughout the District.

Los Angeles: The Los Angeles Unified School District changed their district-wide discipline policy in 2007 to reflect support for PBS and has put resources into their schools to encourage PBS implementation.

New York: NYC has nine PBS internal coaches (FTE) that support 100 schools.

- The development of a district leadership team that meets regularly and includes broad representation from within the District as well as other child-centered agencies within the city, such as behavioral health, child welfare and juvenile justice agencies. This leadership team is responsible for overseeing progress in the implementing schools and collecting data from school-based team for annual review.
- The identification of two PBS coaches within the implementing region, with a commitment by the district to devote funds to fully support one coach in the third year of implementation.
- The provision of release time for school leadership teams for three days of training annually across three years.
- Support for and adoption of the use of School-Wide Information Systems (SWIS) as the school-based discipline data system.
- Data collection and the use of data-based decision making to formatively evaluate target schools.

Additional Recommendations Based on Philadelphia’s Experience with PBS to Date and Other Districts’ Successful, School-wide PBS Systems Include:

- The district as a whole should develop its coaching capacity to provide an infrastructure upon which the District can build and sustain a PBS initiative. Doing so would also decrease the negativity some school staff associate with external consultants hired by the District. Coaches would be responsible for supporting school-based teams as they work toward the development of the PBS system in their group of schools. The responsibilities of coaches may be compatible with other behavioral health positions already existing within the District, such as the CSAP liaisons. If PBS is adopted and embraced by the District, shifts in funding current behavioral health initiatives may be possible. Reapplication for grant and foundation funding, combined with school district and other governmental support should result in long-term sustainability of PBS so that all District schools have the opportunity to participate.
- The district and its schools must have well-defined, clear codes of conduct. School districts that commit to PBS should work to align their codes of conduct with a proactive, PBS-informed approach to discipline that offers teachers and staff a variety of strategies and consequences.
- The importance of maintaining a PBS strategy when school staff changes must be recognized. When there is a change in school leadership, such as the principal, the incoming administrator should be educated about the PBS system already in place in the school, and commit to continuing PBS and supporting the school’s leadership team as part of the selection process. This recommendation reinforces the principle that PBS is a **commitment made by the staff of the building and the District leadership**, and its success should not be contingent on the individual principal but on the leadership team as a whole. Coaching efforts should be increased during the transition period to assist the new principal in understanding the eight core elements and facilitating his/her collaboration with the school leadership team.

- The importance of principal and staff support is critical to successful results. All efforts should be made to offer PBS – solely on a voluntary basis – to schools that express solid interest in PBS.
- Schools should encourage the participation of outside behavioral health providers. Schools that have contracted behavioral health providers (such as C & E specialists and SBBH) should invite these providers to join their school’s leadership team to help facilitate awareness about deeper (tertiary) level interventions and decrease the gap between academic and behavioral health services. The school district should support schools that do not have social services and behavioral health resources in place but wish to grow a school-wide PBS system that reaches all levels of students.

“The good news is that it is possible to maintain a safe and productive school climate without removing students from the classroom. Out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, removals to alternative schools, and referrals to the criminal justice system can all become a less central part of school discipline. Our schools and our children deserve nothing less.” – Southern Poverty Law Center’s report on Effective Discipline for Student Success¹³

Appendix

How to Bring PBS to Your School or School District

If you wish to become involved personally or professionally to help bring PBS to your city, state, school district, or your individual school the following resources are a good place to start for advice about how to build a sustainable PBS system:

- **www.pbis.org** – The US Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) supports a National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. The Center’s website acts as a one-stop shop for tips about PBS, offering links to the most current PBS research around the country and featuring an online library with many free, downloadable surveys, tools, and training guides.
- **www.pbisillinois.org** – Illinois’s state-wide PBS effort has many tools and surveys available for download for school staff, coaches and other interested parties.
- **www.pbismaryland.org** – Maryland’s state-wide PBS effort provides nice examples on how to build PBS from the ground-up. Provides sample behavioral lesson plans from schools around the state.
- **www.pbssurvey.com** – Free access to PBS tools including SET, Self-Assessment Survey, Safety Survey and Team Checklists.
- **www.swis.org** – School-wide Information System is a web-based information system designed to help school personnel to use office referral data to design school-wide and individual student interventions.

First Step: Raising Awareness

- For parents: Contact your Home and School liaison to arrange a meeting with an administrator to discuss why you want your child to attend a school that prioritizes consistent behavioral expectations, positive reinforcement, and proactive intervention and support planning for all students. If you are not involved with the Home and School Association, contact your school administrator directly.
- For school staff: Approach your principal, climate manager or dean of students to talk about the school’s current methods for handling behavioral and safety issues. Include discussion of everyday problems as well as past crises. Focus on the eight core elements of PBS, mapping out how this information will help the school with consistent, effective behavior management and climate improvement.
- For administrators: Contact your district office of climate and safety, and/or behavioral health and emotional support programming to find out if PBS has been practiced anywhere in the District.

Next step: Form or Join a Leadership Team

Leadership teams are used at all levels of PBS to plan the implementation model, secure funding, develop “buy-in,” and track progress in participating schools. To find out more about the current leadership teams in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania, contact: PCCY at 215-563-5848, ext. 36 (Philadelphia) or PaTTAN (Pennsylvania) at 1-800-446-5607, ext. 6868. Once you have established a few of the core members of your leadership team, use the **www.pbis.org** website to contact your state PBS representative who can guide you and your team on setting up implementation.

Endnotes

- ¹ Spaulding, S.A., Horner, R.H., May, S.L., & Vincent, C.G. (Nov. 2008). Evaluation brief: Implementation of school-wide PBS across the United States. Unpublished manuscript.
- ² Illinois PBIS Network (2008). Retrieved from www.pbisillinois.org.
- ³ National Economic and Social Rights Initiative (March 2007). Deprived of Dignity: Degrading Treatment and Abusive Discipline in New York City and Los Angeles Public Schools.
- ⁴ Groover, J. (December 22, 2008). Public schools see drop in suspensions. The Baltimore Examiner. Retrieved from <http://www.baltimoreexaminer.com/local/> on December 23, 2008.
- ⁵ Graham, K.A. (August 16, 2008). One school's steps to PSSA success. Philadelphia Inquirer. Retrieved August 16, 2008 from www.philly.com
- ⁶ Message from Superintendent Arlene C. Ackerman- Single School Culture. The School District of Philadelphia. Retrieved December 28, 2009 from www.philasd.org/announcements/single_school_culture.html
- ⁷ Bohanon et. Al. (2006) School-wide application of positive behavior support in an urban high school: A case study. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, (3)3, pages 131-145.
- ⁸ Bradshaw, C., et al., (2008). Implementation of School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in elementary schools: Observations from a randomized trial.
- ⁹ Horner, R. (2008, March). What is school-wide positive behavior support? Paper presented at the PCCY/United Way Summit on Positive Behavior Support, Philadelphia, PA.
- ¹⁰ Sugai, G., Lewis-Palmer, T., & Horner, R. (2001). School-wide Evaluation Tool, version 2.1. Educational and Community Supports, University of Oregon; Eugene, OR.
- ¹¹ Bohanon et. Al. (2006) School-wide application of positive behavior support in an urban high school: A case study. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, (3)3, pages 131-145.
- ¹² OSEP Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. (2004). School-wide Positive Behavior Support Implementers' Blue-Print and Self-Assessment. University of Oregon; Eugene, OR.
- ¹³ Southern Poverty Law Center. (2008). Effective discipline for student success: Reducing student and teacher dropout rates in Alabama. Montgomery, AL, page 12.

Thanks

PCCY Funders: Advanta Corporation, Aetna Foundation, The Annenberg Foundation, The Barra Foundation, The Claneil Foundation, The Dolfinger-McMahon Foundation, Eagles Youth Partnership, The Samuel S. Fels Fund, John C. and Chara C. Haas Charitable Trust, Phoebe W. Haas Charitable Trust, The Hess Foundation, Independence Blue Cross, The Independence Foundation, Jewish Funds for Justice, Christian & Mary Lindback Foundation, The Lomax Family Foundation, The Christopher Ludwick Foundation, The Northwest Fund, The Pew Charitable Trusts, The Philadelphia Foundation, Philadelphia Youth Network, The Puffin Foundation, Ltd., The Elizabeth B. and Arthur E. Roswell Foundation, The Shefa Fund, The Paula Steinebach Trust, Target Stores, United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania, Wachovia Foundation, Washington Mutual, William Penn Foundation

PCCY Staff: Shelly D. Yanoff, *Executive Director* * Christie Balka, Dennis Barnebey, Melissa Berrios, Joshua Cohen, Bobbie Dunham, Kathy Fisher, Steven E. Fynes, Sherrie Glensky, Sid Holmes, Gretchen Elise Iversen, Bill Madeira, Colleen McCauley, Suzann Morris, Louise Pangborn, Kelly Siegel, Sheila Simmons, Gail Smith, Roxy Woloszyn and Deborah Zubow

PCCY Board: James Martin, *President*, Carolyn Adams, *Vice President*, Barbara Grant, *Secretary*, Darren Spielman, *Treasurer*, Fasaha Traylor, *Immediate Past President* * *Board Members:* Naomi Alper, Leann Ayers, Jalila Brown, David Camp, James Earl Davis, Evelyn Eskin, Paul Fink, Richard Frazier, Philip R. Goldsmith, Mark Goldstein, Reverend Robin Hynicka, Stephanie Kallen, Stephanie Korber, Robert Listenbee, Wanda Mial, Yvette Nunez, Susmita Pati, Jerilynn Radcliffe, Matt Riggan, Pat Russell, Quyen Shanahan, Judy Silver and Cheryl Weiss - *Honorary Directors:* Christie W. Hastings, John Riggan, Allener Rogers, Donald Schwarz and Pat West

Special Thanks to the Following Who Helped with this Report: Members of the Philadelphia City PBS Leadership Team (Christina Ager, Dennis Barnebey, James Golden, David Fair, Deborah Klehr, Barry McCurdy, Diane Reed, Kelly Siegel, Sheila Simmons, Vern Trent, Debra Weiner and Rachel Zibbell), Shelly Yanoff (PCCY Executive Director), Jennifer Goldbloom (PaTTAN), Jennifer Jeffrey (Devereux Center for Effective Schools): PCCY staffers Dennis Barnebey, Sid Holmes, Steven Fynes, Kelly Siegel, and Sheila Simmons; the PCCY Education Committee and School District leaders for their support in moving PBS forward: Tomas Hanna, Maria Pitre, and Brenda Taylor, as well the school leadership and personnel who shared their PBS experiences.



Public Citizens for Children and Youth

#7 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, 6th Floor, Philadelphia, Pa 19103

215-563-5848 / 215-563-9442 / www.pccy.org / info@pccy.org