

High School PBIS Implementation: Staff Buy-In

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Buy-in from stakeholders is important for the successful adoption, full implementation and sustainability of any school-based initiative (Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005). It's also one of the critical elements for implementation of Tier 1 PBIS included in the TFI, BoQ, and the Blueprint. This brief describes the unique features of high school settings that can make building buy-in more difficult and identifies strategies that have been successful for securing staff buy-in in high schools.

Rationale

Researchers have identified three unique contextual characteristics that influence the overall implementation of the PBIS framework in high schools: school size, developmental level of the students, and organizational culture (Flannery & Kato, 2017). These factors directly affect PBIS implementation by impacting key foundational systems of collecting data, establishing leadership, and fostering communication. Below we briefly describe these key differences and their impact on building and maintaining staff buy-in (Flannery et al., 2013; Flannery & Kato, 2017).

Size

High schools are usually physically larger with higher student and faculty populations, which can make data collection more difficult. Communication systems among

stakeholders are often more complicated because of a larger administrative team and more faculty. Therefore, it's critical to establish flexible, efficient, and effective communication systems.

Organizational Culture

The organizational culture of high schools is often centered on academic achievement with faculty organized in content area departments. The priority given to academics may make the behavioral focus of PBIS seem less relevant and may make it more difficult to build and maintain staff buy-in and commitment for implementation. However, research supports the importance of having college and career readiness initiatives that address social, emotional, and behavioral skills (Morningstar, Lombardi, Fowler, & Test, 2017).

Developmental Level

Adolescence is a developmental phase associated with an increased desire for independence and focus on peer relationships (instead of adults). This requires teams to think creatively about how to engage students in their implementation process to better facilitate a positive peer culture, rather than just adopt examples from elementary settings that may be more readily available.

High School Specific Examples

In order to better understand PBIS implementation in high school settings, we conducted a series of interviews with high school PBIS coaches, team leaders, and administrators. The barriers to securing and maintaining buy-in that they identified and the strategies they used to increase buy-in in high schools are described below.

Identified Barriers

- Staff turnover
- Myths and misunderstandings about PBIS
- Philosophical beliefs of teachers about teaching behavior and acknowledging students that conflict with PBIS

Strategies for Securing Initial Buy-In

- Sharing data that identifies the need for PBIS at faculty meetings
- Providing a “PBIS 101” overview to dispel myths
- Presenting to smaller groups via professional learning communities, content level, or department meetings
- Sharing ongoing discipline data with all faculty
- Including all staff in the development of the PBIS plan (e.g., developing expectations) through surveys and individual or small group meetings
- Visiting another successfully implementing PBIS high school

Strategies for Maintaining Buy-In

- Identifying beliefs and mindsets that align with the principles of PBIS
- Increasing visibility of those implementing, including

the PBIS team, administration, teachers, and families

- Communicating how PBIS meets the specific needs of classrooms or the high school
- Connecting PBIS with other school initiatives and classroom activities
- Incorporating the school mascot
- Intentionally bringing others along, especially key “social influencers” at the school to support and share their personal experiences
- Viewing PBIS in action - seeing it actively work on campus
- Making it easy for the staff to implement (e.g. providing materials, scripted lessons)
- Sharing the data to show that PBIS works
- Recognizing staff for their efforts in supporting PBIS (e.g., providing recognitions from students, gift certificates, school sports team clothing, prime parking spot, recognition at meetings)
- Providing ongoing PD that includes obtaining and using staff input for revisions (e.g. summer leadership meeting planning)

Strategies for Ongoing Communication and Data Sharing

- Establishing a regular schedule of communications through faculty meetings, emails, bulletin boards, information in mailboxes, newsletters, school-wide announcements, smart board slide shows, flat screen TVs in cafeteria, google classrooms
- Holding open PBIS meetings
- Sharing data through weekly e-mail/newsletter from the principal or PBIS team to staff
- Showing data trends before and after PBIS implementation (e.g., TFI or BoQ scores and office referrals), including disproportionality data

Summary

Getting buy-in may be a challenging task for high schools with a larger staff, more departmentalization by subject, and a bigger student population. Additionally, buy-in must be obtained from faculty and staff at the school and as students (Flannery, Frank, Kato, Doren, Fenning, 2013). This brief identifies some of the contextual barriers to staff buy-in for high schools and provides advice obtained from the field.

Resources

- [Consider Context: Implementation in Secondary Schools¹](#)
- [Barriers and Solutions to SWPBIS Implementation in High School²](#)
- [School-Wide PBIS Implementation in High Schools: Current Practice and Future Directions³](#)
- [Lessons Learned on Implementation of PBIS in High Schools: Current Trends and Future Directions⁴](#)
- [Schoolwide Positive Behavior Supports⁵](#)

1. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/1256/consider-context-implementation-in-secondary-schools>
2. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/1058/barriers-and-solutions-to-swpbis-implementation-in-high-school>
3. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/1004/school-wide-pbis-implementation-in-high-schools-current-practice-and-future-directions>
4. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/1257/lessons-learned-on-implementation-of-pbis-in-high-schools>
5. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/1001/schoolwide-positive-behavior-supports>

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