



CENTER ON  
**PBIS** Positive Behavioral  
Interventions & Supports



# A DISTRICT GUIDE FOR RETURNING TO SCHOOL DURING AND AFTER CRISIS:

A Guide to Supporting Districts,  
Schools, Educators, and Students  
through a Multi-Tiered Systems of  
Support Framework

CENTER ON POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS  
STATE IMPLEMENTATION AND SCALING UP OF EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES CENTER  
NATIONAL INTEGRATED MULTI-TIERED SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT RESEARCH NETWORK  
NATIONAL CENTER ON IMPROVING LITERACY  
LEAD FOR LITERACY CENTER

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# A District Guide for Returning to School During and After Crisis:

A Guide to Supporting Districts, Schools, Educators, and Students through a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Framework

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## Purpose, Outcome, Context, Guiding Principles, and Rationale for the Guide

### Purpose

**T**his abbreviated district guide describes the use of a multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) framework, like positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), to restart classrooms and schools in a manner that all students, families, and educators are supported effectively, efficiently, and relevantly. This guide is *not* a primer on MTSS or PBIS. (For a basic introduction, visit [PBIS.org](https://www.pbis.org).) This guide *is* a set of considerations for experienced leadership teams to enhance, adjust, or adapt state, district, school, and classroom action plans to meet the current context.



## Table of Contents

### Introduction

Outcomes and Context . . . . .	4
Guiding Principles and Rationale . . . . .	6

### Key Recommendations

1. Provide Support through the Implementation Cascade. . . . .	7
2. Leverage Existing Systems . . . . .	8
3. Back to Basics: Do What Works, and Do It Well . . . . .	9
Table 1. Examples of Critical Practices to Support Students’ Social, Emotional, and Behavioral (SEB) Growth and Learning . . . . .	11

### Putting it All Together: Using the Guide . . . . . 13

### Guidance for District Leadership Teams\*

Table 3. Considerations for District-Level Implementation of Key Systems to Support Schools Across the Timeline of Crisis Response and Recovery . . . . .	14
Table 4. District Considerations for Supporting Implementation of Key Practices, with Examples During Periods of Remote and In-Person Instruction . . . . .	19
Table 7. Example School Teaching Matrix of Expectations Within Routines/Settings. . . . .	22

### Additional Considerations. . . . . 23

### Embedded Hyperlinks . . . . . 26

### Disclaimer and Recommended Citation . . . . . 28

\* Table numbers are retained from the [complete guide](#); therefore, tables are NOT numbered continuously in this abbreviated guide.



In particular, this guide provides recommendations for **District leaders** (superintendents, members of the district-wide leadership team) as they enhance their district-wide action plan to include a comprehensive plan for returning to school during a significant public health crisis. (See [district-level action planning tips](#).) A [complete guide](#)<sup>7</sup> that includes state, district, school, and classroom recommendations to support implementation of key practices is available on [pbis.org](#).

### Outcome

The ultimate outcome of this work is to support **students, families, and educators**<sup>\*</sup> during the transitions back to school during and following the global pandemic in a manner that prioritizes their health and safety, social and emotional needs, and behavioral and academic growth.

### Context

COVID-19 has disrupted many aspects of our “normal” home, school, work, and community relationships, expectations, and routines. It has also contributed to economic challenges that have impacts at the global, national, state, local, and family levels. Although we have learned valuable lessons from past tragedies and crises (e.g., natural disasters, accidents, violence), mitigation, healing, and recovery are unlikely to be like anything we have experienced.

The COVID-19 public health crisis has also highlighted disparities in health care, and disproportionate health



outcomes for people of color. Simultaneously, a national movement, fueled by ongoing violence toward and murders of Black people, has resulted in a national movement to make Black lives matter. Given the inequities that have long existed in education, this movement encourages educators to examine their own practice and ensure that students who are black, indigenous, and people of color also benefit from education.

Given the current and future progression of COVID-19 and on-going economic challenges, the return to in-person school will be challenging. However, given the national focus on equity, there is also reason for hope and an opportunity to design education that works for all. Thus, as students, family, school, and community members consider a “restart” of school,

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\* We view educators as a general term that includes all school members who collectively support students, including general and special education teachers, school nurses, instructional assistants or para professionals, counselors, janitors, school psychologists, administrators, social workers, administrative assistants, bus drivers, coaches, speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, and other related personnel



effective, efficient, culturally relevant, and contextually appropriate decision making must guide our planning and implementation.

As such, our restart will be more than “flipping a switch” to turn school back on. For example, consider the following **current and anticipated conditions**:

- Students, families, and educators have experienced multiple disruptions to instruction. On-going or fluctuating needs may continue to cause disruptions for students, families, and educators throughout the next year.
- Gaps among students will be larger than ever before due to disruptions in and unequal access to instruction. Although some students may have maintained or increased skills during remote learning, many students, especially students with or at risk for disabilities, may have experienced interruptions in access and needed social, emotional, behavioral, and/or academic supports.
- The structure of school may be different with environmental changes to enable physical distancing, practices for keeping safe and healthy, and variations of remote, hybrid, and in-person learning.
- Requirements to wear masks and maintain physical distance may make it harder to establish positive connections when educators and students are together.

- Early career educators may have experienced interruptions in their pre-service and induction support, and may enter the field at a critical time with less preparation.
- Resources (budget, time) may be limited, affecting (a) availability of training, coaching, and technical assistance and (b) educators’ roles and responsibilities (e.g., coach re-assigned to classroom). Requirements to modify space to ensure physical distance may further tax resources.
- There may be greater emphasis on using new practices and less emphasis on developing systems to support educators in implementing effective practices correctly and consistently.

Given these conditions, we must deliberately (re)arrange teaching and learning environments within an MTSS framework so (a) all students experience vibrant, positive, and constructive adult and peer relationships; (b) students who are at risk for academic, social, emotional, and/or behavioral difficulties proactively receive increased and targeted supported; and (c) students with disabilities or other significant academic, social, emotional, and/or behavioral challenges receive intensive and individualized supports to promote positive and equitable outcomes for all students.



## Guiding Principles

Our recommendations are grounded in the **core elements of PBIS/MTSS** (Figure 1).

- Prioritize **equity**. MTSS is for all students, families, and educators. Use the MTSS framework to differentiate supports for students, and monitor to ensure equitable outcomes are observed.
- Make student growth and benefit central to all decisions. Student **outcomes** that reflect equitable learning opportunities must be the ultimate criteria for all decisions, including those related to funding, practice selection and implementation (see [Hexagon Tool](#)<sup>8</sup>), policy, and professional development.
- Prioritize the most efficient and effective **practices**. Emphasize practices that are supported by evidence, match the local culture and current context, and promote high-quality implementation across time. Integrate, align, and connect practices within domains: (a) effective environments, instruction, and intervention to support social, emotional, and behavioral (SEB) growth and (b) high leverage academic instruction to support student learning. If a new practice is identified, consider evidence, contextual fit, and feasibility (see [Hexagon Tool](#)<sup>9</sup>). Most importantly, do a few important and relevant practices well, that is, with the high degree of accuracy, fluency, durability, and adaptability.
- Use **data** to inform decisions about (a) which students, families, and educators need which supports (screening); (b) continuing, adjusting, or fading supports for students, families, and educators (progress monitoring); (c) ensuring all students, families, and educators experience benefit (equitable outcomes); and (d) supports are

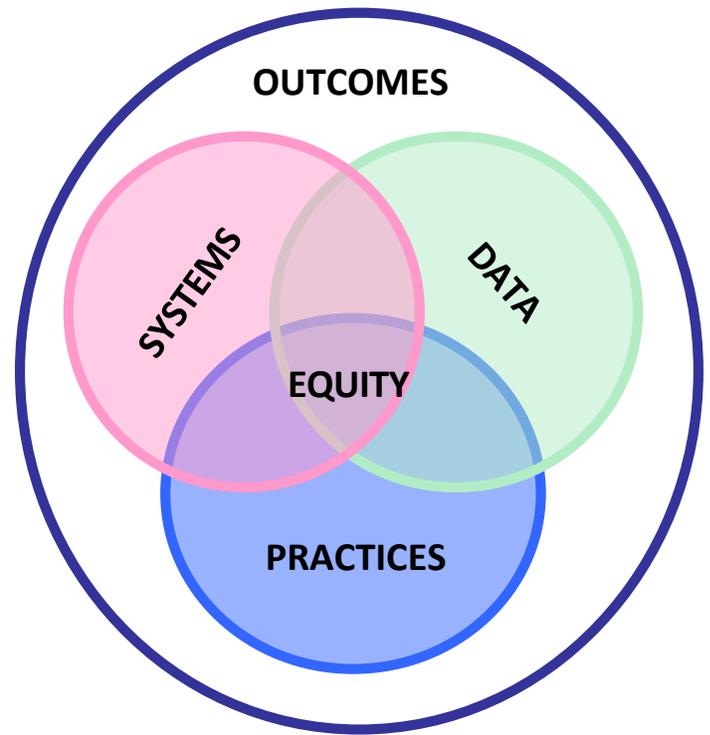


Figure 1. Core elements

being implemented with fidelity.

- Continue to invest in **systems** to support high-fidelity implementation across time. Leverage existing leadership teams to guide planning and implementation, and consider efficient and effective means to support educators' professional learning and wellness within current resources, experience, and expertise.

## Rationale

Given this context, we see a strong rationale for (1) providing support throughout the implementation cascade, (2) leveraging what works in existing systems, and (3) going back to basics by focusing on a small number of practices that have the biggest impact and



doing them well.

## 1. Provide Support Throughout the Implementation Cascade

As stated, the ultimate goal of support is student growth and benefit. To realize that benefit, consider how to provide support throughout the implementation cascade. **State** and regional leadership teams coordinate training, coaching, and evaluation to support all districts within the state. **District** leadership teams provide training, coaching, and evaluation to support all schools within the district. **School** leadership teams provide on-going coaching to support educators and monitor their implementation of key practices in **classrooms** that ultimately support **student**

growth and benefit. At the same time, bi-directional communication creates feedback loops throughout the cascade; for example, educators learn from students and adjust or enhance their classroom practices; and districts communicate needs, resources, and lessons learned to inform state-level systems, as *Figure 2* illustrates.

This abbreviated district guide provides [recommendations for district](#) leadership teams to leverage existing systems (next section) to support implementation of critical practices (following section). A [complete guide](#)<sup>19</sup> that includes state, district,



Figure 2. Implementation cascade from district support to student benefit.



school, and classroom recommendations to support

implementation of key practices is available on pbis.org.

## 2. Leverage Existing Systems

To maximize both benefit and efficiency, enhance and adjust existing systems to support implementation.

As educators implementing MTSS/PBIS, the [Implementation Blueprint](#)<sup>11</sup> [district/state capacity-building graphic](#)<sup>12</sup> (Figure 3) may be a familiar

organizational structure to consider both executive team functions (stakeholder engagement, funding alignment, policy, and workforce capacity) and implementation functions (training, coaching, and evaluation) of leadership teams. We recommend

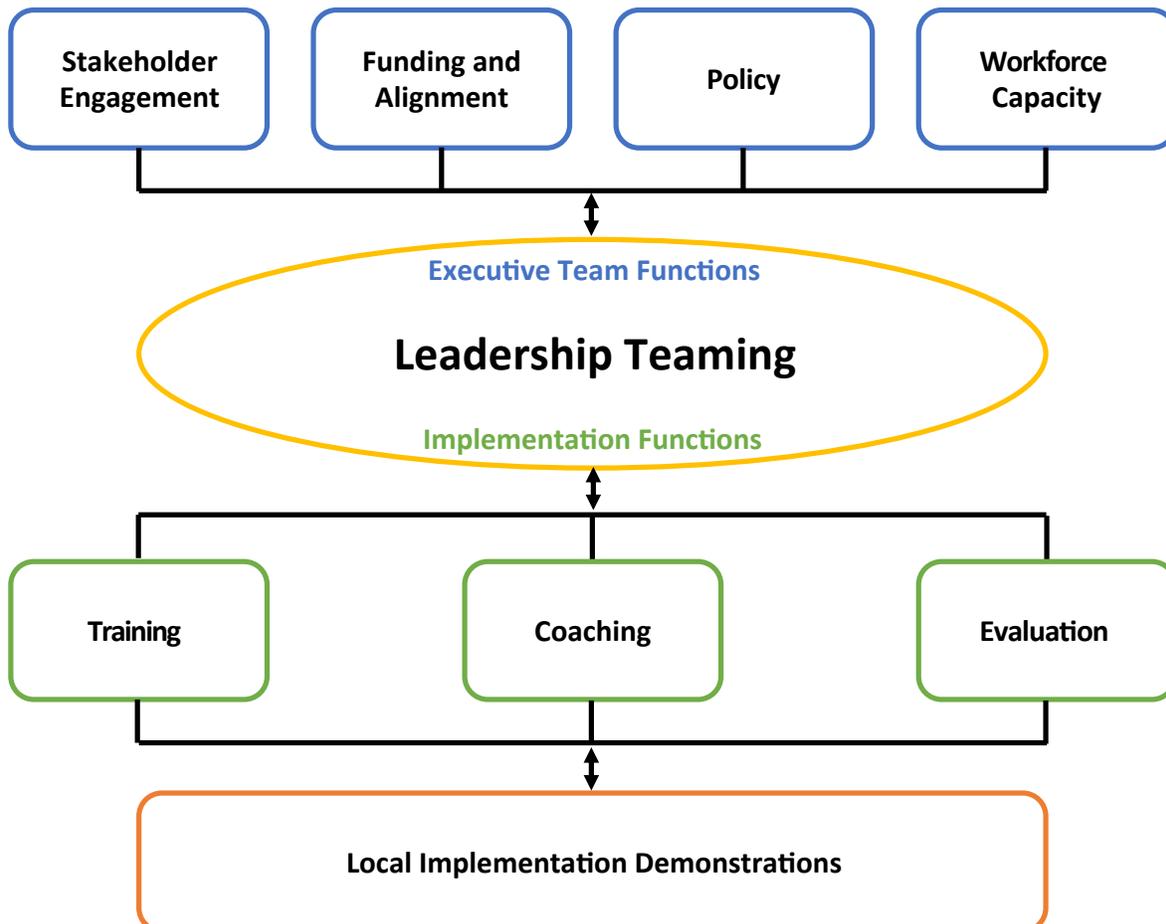


Figure 3. Implementation blueprint graphic.



district leadership teams enhance these elements throughout their response to the public health crisis.

(see [Table 3](#)).

### 3. Back to Basics: Do What Works, and Do It Well

Given the challenging context, we recommend going “back to basics” by (a) focusing on a small number of evidence-based and culturally relevant practices, across social, emotional, behavioral (SEB) and academic domains, that have an equitable and big impact and (b) doing them well. [Figure 4](#) illustrates the importance of key Tier 1 practice features to create positive,

predictable, and safe learning environments that support students’ SEB and academic growth.

Specifically, we recommend that educators connect, screen, support, teach, and monitor.

- **Connect.** Enhance **relationships** among educators, students, and families to promote **effective communication** during times of disrupted learning.

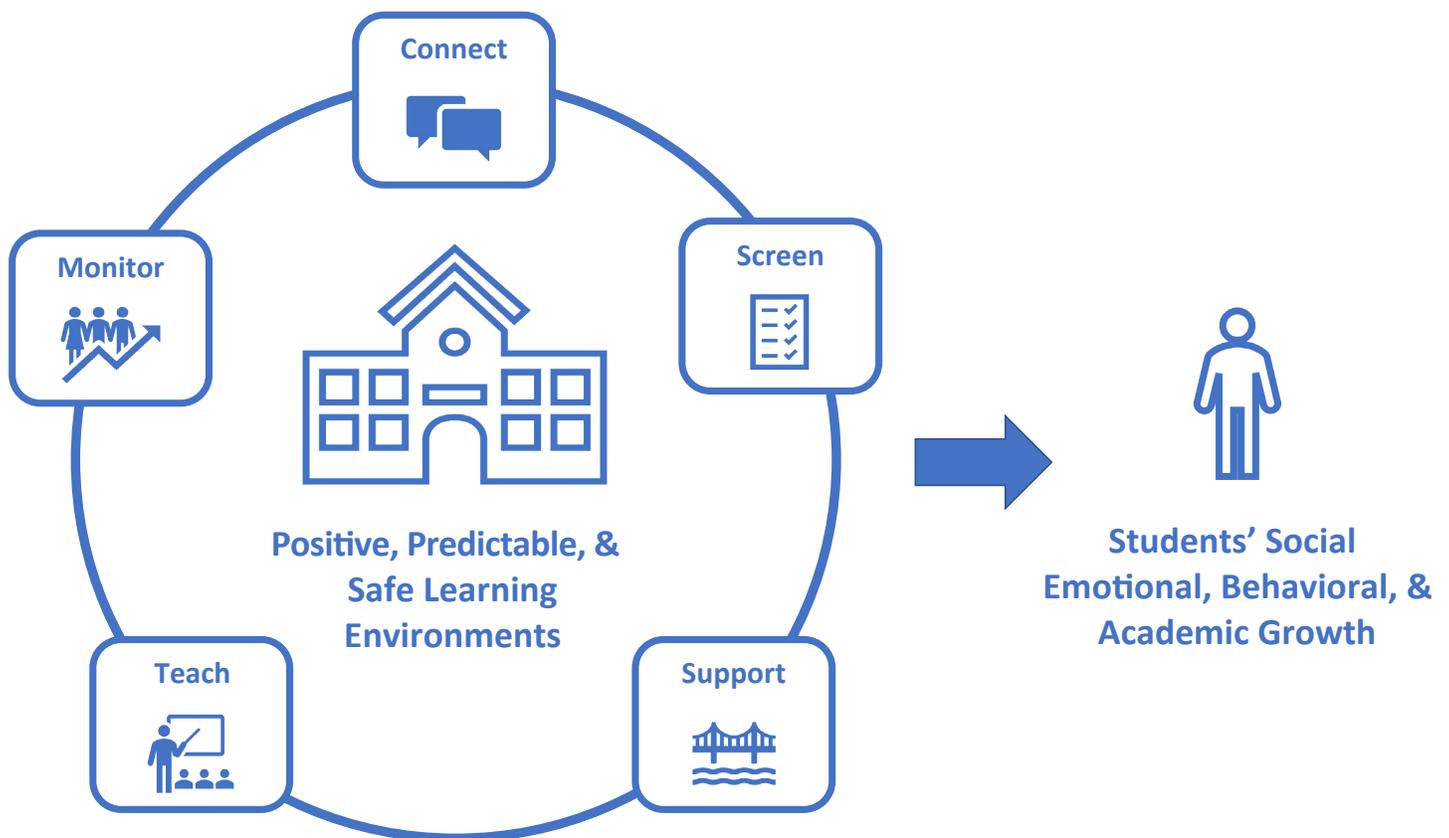


Figure 4. Critical practices to support students’ social, emotional, behavioral, and academic growth



**Check in** with students daily and with families regularly to identify support needs as they emerge.

- **Screen.** Formally or informally **screen** to efficiently identify students who need more support (related to health, safety, SEB needs, academic concerns). For students who require additional support, **differentiate and intensify** Tier 1 and consider Tier 2 or Tier 3 (see [Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity](#)<sup>13</sup>).
- **Support.** Establish a **safe environment** (in class and/or online). Teach, prompt, and acknowledge **predictable routines, positive expectations** and **SEB skills**. Bridge expectations (teach connections) across settings (e.g., home, school, community).
- **Teach.** Effectively **teach and prompt** critical **academic** skills, and actively **engage** students in learning. Prompt and reinforce expectations and SEB skills throughout instruction. Provide **positive and supportive feedback** to support skill development.
- **Monitor.** Continue to **monitor** implementation

and safety, health, SEB, and academic needs to (a) **enhance** supports for all students and (b) **identify** students who require more support (Tier 2 or Tier 3) over time. Match the intensity of monitoring to the intensity of need.

*Table 1* highlights specific examples of practices and strategies in two key domains: (a) effective (positive, predictable, and safe) environments, instruction, and intervention to support social, emotional, and behavioral (SEB) growth and (b) high leverage academic instruction and intervention to support student learning. Included practices are practical, usable, doable, and easy to implement. *Table 3* provides examples of these practices during remote and in-person learning at the district level.



Critical Practices	Examples of Practices to Support	
	Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Growth	Student Learning
<p><b>Connect</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use <b>positive greetings at the door</b><sup>14</sup> (or at login for remote learning)</li> <li>• Regularly <b>check-in</b> with students and families, and adapt <u>check-in during periods of remote instruction</u><sup>15</sup></li> <li>• Build <b>relationships</b> with students, among peers, and with <u>families</u><sup>16</sup> through purposeful communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide structured <b>opportunities</b> for students to use language throughout the day in pairs, small groups, and in whole-class settings to promote connection and oral language development</li> <li>• <b>Connect</b> with families regularly to discuss and address issues together</li> </ul>
<p><b>Screen</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select and implement a <b>SEB screener</b><sup>17</sup> or develop procedures for informal screening (e.g., extant data, family wellness check)</li> <li>• Regularly <b>review data</b> in school-wide team meetings to make decisions, based on level of risk and other data, to <b>differentiate and/or intensify</b> <u>Tier 1</u><sup>18</sup>, <u>Tier 2</u><sup>19</sup>, or <u>Tier 3</u><sup>20</sup> support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a <b>universal screening protocol</b><sup>21</sup> to screen all students for learning difficulties</li> <li>• Select and implement <b>academic screening measures</b>,<sup>22</sup> with established <u>technical adequacy</u>,<sup>23</sup> to identify students for intervention or monitoring</li> <li>• Implement consistent data team meetings, as part of a <b>decision-making process</b>,<sup>24</sup> to review screening data, group students appropriately, and <b>differentiate and intensify</b> instruction as needed</li> </ul>
<p><b>Support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design <b>safe environments</b> (e.g., physical distance, planned pathways)</li> <li>• Develop and teach <b>predictable routines</b></li> <li>• Use a <b>matrix</b> (see <u>Table 7</u>) to define, teach, and prompt <b>positive expectations</b> and key SEB skills within routines for <u>in-person</u><sup>25</sup> or <u>remote</u><sup>26</sup> instruction (also see <u>Supporting and Responding to Behavior</u><sup>27</sup>)</li> <li>• Maintain a <b>5:1 ratio</b> (5 positive comments for each negative comment), and consider other strategies, like the <u>student/teacher game</u><sup>28</sup>, to <b>acknowledge</b> student behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that the <b>master schedule</b> allocates sufficient time for key academic instruction, including high quality classroom instruction for all students and supplemental small-group or individualized intervention for students that need additional academic support</li> <li>• Incorporate academic routines in <b>matrix</b></li> <li>• Set, visibly post, and refer to <b>learning goals and objectives</b> for all important facets of instruction</li> </ul>



Critical Practices	Examples of Practices to Support	
	Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Growth	Student Learning
<p><b>Teach</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin each lesson with a <b>positive reminder</b> of expected behavior and SEB skills</li> <li>• <b>Prioritize</b> key SEB skills to emphasize</li> <li>• Purposefully <b>integrate instruction</b> in <u>SEB and academic skills</u><sup>29</sup></li> <li>• Actively <b>engage students</b><sup>30</sup> in instruction</li> <li>• Ensure instruction and support is <u>culturally responsive</u>,<sup>31</sup> incorporates <u>student voice</u>,<sup>32</sup> and promotes active civic engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Prioritize</b> key academic skills</li> <li>• Explicitly teach <b>background knowledge</b> to set up for the lesson</li> <li>• Provide <b>explicit and systematic instruction</b><sup>33</sup> at a brisk pace that includes (a) teacher demonstrations, (b) clear and explicit language, and (c) multiple and varied opportunities for all students to respond and participate</li> <li>• Engage a <b>gradual release</b> of responsibility (I do, we do, you do), and provide sufficient guided practice before releasing students to work independently</li> <li>• Provide consistent, supportive, and corrective <b>feedback</b> during instruction</li> </ul>
<p><b>Monitor</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect and use simple <b>data</b> to monitor student engagement and SEB skills</li> <li>• Regularly <b>review</b> data to (a) adjust <u>Tier 1</u><sup>34</sup> support (if needed) or (b) consider additional supports (<u>Tier 2</u><sup>35</sup> or <u>Tier 3</u><sup>36</sup>) for students with limited skill growth or interfering behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Throughout instruction, elicit frequent student group and individual responses to <b>monitor comprehension</b> of lesson content</li> <li>• Regularly collect and <b>review progress monitoring</b><sup>37</sup> data, and use data to inform instructional decision making, including adjusting tiers of instruction, group size, instructional time, instructional content, and instructional delivery</li> </ul>

Note: SEB = social, emotional, behavioral

*Table 1. Descriptions and examples of critical practices to support students' social, emotional, and behavioral (SEB) growth and learning.*



## Putting it All Together: Using the Guide

In the rest of this guide, we provide tips to enhance existing action plans to leverage existing systems ([Table 3](#)) and support implementation of key practices ([Table 4](#)). Note that a complete guide that includes state, district, school, and classroom recommendations to support implementation of key practices is available on [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org).

We recognize that preparing for next year will occur in phases, and learning will take a variety of forms (from in-person to remote, and everything in between) on a variety of schedules (from all to a few students in each form of learning at any point in time), based on guidance from national, state, and local health officials.

Consider the phase of the year (prior to, during, or after initial return to school) and type of instruction (remote, hybrid, or in-person) as you view the tables to focus on the most relevant information for your current needs. We conclude with additional considerations for this challenging time in our educational history. Consider the following questions to choose where to start:

- [How can we enhance our district action plan to support each phase of our return to school?](#)
- [How can my district support implementation of critical practices?](#)

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\* Table numbers are retained from the [complete guide](#); therefore, tables are NOT numbered continuously in this abbreviated guide.



## Guidance for District Leadership Teams

At the **district level**, the goal is to provide district leadership, by engaging in executive and implementation functions, to support to schools and educators to ensure they are able to implement key practices intentionally and at an intensity that students benefit. In addition, district leadership

highlights local demonstration examples of educators and students in on-line, classroom, and school settings. **Table 3** presents considerations for enhancing, adjusting, or adapting district-level implementation of key systems features throughout the school year.

Critical Systems	Key Considerations	Prior to Return to School	Initial Return to School	After Initial Return to School
<b>Leadership Teaming</b>	Invest in district-level leadership, and consider whether your leadership team includes members with all relevant areas of <b>expertise</b> (e.g., health and safety, mental health, school-based behavioral health, school nursing, academic content expertise, special education, IT). Use <b>effective team meeting</b> approaches (e.g., <a href="#">Team Initiated Problem Solving [TIPS]</a> <sup>38</sup> , <a href="#">plan-do-study-act [PDSA]</a> <sup>39</sup> ) to maximize the effectiveness of remote and in-person team meetings, prioritize team-based and data-driven <b>decision making</b> , and maintain an <b>action plan</b> to prompt key implementation steps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and onboard new team members who may be more critical in this new context (e.g., health and safety, mental health, school-based behavioral health, school nursing, academic content expertise, special education, IT)</li> <li>Consider revisiting team norms related to group decision making and communication routines</li> <li>Revisit vision and mission to ensure they communicate clear, focused, and relevant messages related current context (e.g., equity, safety, positive and predictable environment, clear academic goals)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain effective teaming practices</li> <li>Consider increasing frequency of team meetings to support the need to review, monitor, adjust, or enhance existing practices or potentially implement new practices and systems (consider <a href="#">Hexagon Tool</a><sup>40</sup>) to address rapidly changing needs</li> <li>Monitor team member wellness and redistribute action plan items as needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain effective teaming practices</li> <li>Plan for team member turn over and regularly assess membership needs to ensure adequate representation and effective teaming practice</li> <li>Monitor team member wellness and redistribute action plan items as needed</li> </ul>

Note: IT = information technology; MTSS = multi-tiered systems of support; PDSA = plan-do-study-act; SEB = social, emotional, behavioral

**Table 3. Considerations for district-level implementation of key systems to support schools across the timeline of crisis response and recovery.**

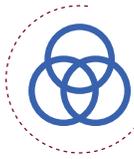


## Guidance for District Leadership Teams *continued*

Critical Systems	Key Considerations	Prior to Return to School	Initial Return to School	After Initial Return to School
<b>Stakeholder Engagement</b>	Consider a range of strategies (e.g., website, newsletters, phone calls) to maintain <b>regular communication</b> with stakeholders (families, community organizations, public health and medical professionals, school boards) to promote effective collaboration and support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish or strengthen communication routines with all stakeholders and ensure reliable access to online information for all</li> <li>Communicate anticipated changes and implications for implementation of effective key practices</li> <li>Expand stakeholder group to include public health and local medical professionals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase communication frequency and modalities to ensure all stakeholders receive key updates and to prevent mis-information</li> <li>Gather and act on stakeholder input to improve implementation</li> <li>Partner with family and community organizations to identify needs and provide support during the initial return to school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce frequency of communications but maintain regular updates to all stakeholders</li> <li>Assess implementation effectiveness</li> <li>Gather and act on stakeholder input to improve implementation</li> <li>Partner with family and community organizations to identify needs and provide support throughout the year</li> </ul>
<b>Funding &amp; Alignment</b>	Consider how to leverage existing and/or secure new <b>funding streams</b> to (a) support integrated implementation of key practices, (b) address new or intensified need (e.g., food security, SEB, academic, mental health), and (c) flexibly provide support students and staff. Also, consider opportunities to <b>integrate and align</b> <sup>41</sup> initiatives, programs, and practices to maximize efficiencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify flexible funding streams that can be re-purposed for crisis response needs</li> <li>Secure short-term crisis funding from local, state, or federal sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prioritize funding to support the implementation for any new practices (e.g., physical distancing) and key effective ongoing practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and prioritize new funding streams that provide support for integrated MTSS</li> <li>Communicate with individuals at state and local levels who influence policy and budget decisions</li> </ul>

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*Table 3. Considerations for district-level implementation of key systems to support schools across the timeline of crisis response and recovery.*

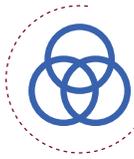


## Guidance for District Leadership Teams *continued*

Critical Systems	Key Considerations	Prior to Return to School	Initial Return to School	After Initial Return to School
<b>Policy</b>	Consider <b>necessary adjustments</b> to the language and/or implementation of policies and procedures most affected by the public health crisis, including those related to health and safety, attendance, opportunity gaps, curriculum standards, grade promotion or graduation, discipline, and related areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review policy to promote equity of access to instruction and supports</li> <li>Revisit policies that disproportionately impact marginalized populations</li> <li>Review and revise policy to ensure it supports practice to meet academic and SEB needs of all students and staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess impacts of policy changes on all students and staff and adjust as needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop long term policies that support student and staff wellness during remote and in-person learning conditions</li> </ul>
<b>Workforce Capacity</b>	Consider <b>unique needs</b> of (a) early career educators who may have experienced interrupted pre-service and induction support, (b) educators with minimal experience using technology to support students in a remote environment, (c) educators learning to build/strengthen relationships with physical distancing, and (d) all staff learning new protocols for health and safety and remote learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess staff needs with respect to key implementation practices and changes in learning context</li> <li>Develop plan to support staff who have transitioned into new roles (e.g., coach reassigned to classroom)</li> <li>Provide guidance to assess and monitor staff wellness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to assess and monitor staff wellness, needs of workforce capacity, and effectiveness of supports to guide decision-making on modifications</li> <li>Provide intensive in-person or virtual coaching supports to ensure staff are supported with new instructional platforms and environments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to assess and monitor staff wellness, needs of workforce capacity, and effectiveness of supports to guide decision-making on modifications</li> <li>Assess implementation and outcomes and adjust supports as needed</li> <li>Move toward MTSS for teachers, differentiating professional development supports</li> <li>Consider expanding new teacher mentoring supports and providing ongoing PD to support new learning</li> </ul>

Note: IT = information technology; MTSS = multi-tiered systems of support; PDSA = plan-do-study-act; SEB = social, emotional, behavioral

*Table 3. Considerations for district-level implementation of key systems to support schools across the timeline of crisis response and recovery.*



## Guidance for District Leadership Teams *continued*

Critical Systems	Key Considerations	Prior to Return to School	Initial Return to School	After Initial Return to School
<b>Training</b>	(Re)establish a <b>professional development plan</b> , <sup>42</sup> and consider training <b>topics</b> all staff may need to support students during the return to school year, including training in key practices (Table 2), health and safety, equity, and related topics. Consider <b>flexible training methods</b> (e.g., remote and in-person).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider lessons learned during Spring 2020 (e.g., expanded expectations matrix, connections with students and families) to inform selection, training, and implementation of key practices</li> <li>Provide PD to all staff in key areas (e.g., IT, physically distanced requirements, relationship building in virtual environments)</li> <li>Provide training in short recorded “snapshots” to accommodate staff who may not be able to participate in live training events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide ongoing job-embedded professional development activities for all staff, focusing on evidence-based practices and programs</li> <li>Provide access to previously recorded training snapshots</li> <li>Provide plan for how educators may access additional professional learning opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review training capacity to ensure that training is provided on topics related to “current normal” and/or if there are emerging skill develop needs that should be addressed (consider implementation fidelity data)</li> <li>Provide educators access to additional professional learning opportunities in flexible formats</li> </ul>
<b>Coaching</b>	Consider <b>flexible coaching approaches</b> <sup>43</sup> to support implementation of key practices, including remote coaching, peer-to-peer support, or self-management, given the potential for disruptions to traditional coaching models and restricted resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop coaching capacity in new key areas to ensure coaches have content knowledge needed to support implementation upon return to school</li> <li>Develop coaching plans to be implemented in the fall</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement coaching plans</li> <li>Assess implementation and adjust as needed</li> <li>Provide resources and tools for coaching, with guidance for more focused coaching for educators who are in new positions or serving different functions than in the past</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adjust coaching practices based on implementation and staff wellness/need</li> <li>Continue to assess and build coaching capacity to support any new practices or systems</li> </ul>

Note: IT = information technology; MTSS = multi-tiered systems of support; PDSA = plan-do-study-act; SEB = social, emotional, behavioral

*Table 3. Considerations for district-level implementation of key systems to support schools across the timeline of crisis response and recovery.*

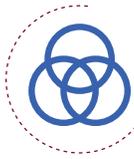


## Guidance for District Leadership Teams *continued*

Critical Systems	Key Considerations	Prior to Return to School	Initial Return to School	After Initial Return to School
<div style="border: 1px solid green; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <b>Evaluation</b> </div>	<p>(Re)establish an <a href="#">evaluation plan</a><sup>44</sup> to <b>collect and closely monitor</b> data on health, safety, social, emotional, behavioral, and academic needs and outcomes alongside fidelity and capacity data; to (a) identify students, family, educators, and schools that require additional support, (b) evaluate the fidelity and outcomes of support, and (c) drive data-based adjustments to maximize benefit for all during remote and in-person learning. Consider <a href="#">District Systems Fidelity Inventory (DSFI)</a><sup>45</sup> and <a href="#">District Capacity Assessment (DCA)</a><sup>46</sup> to assess district-level implementation fidelity and capacity, respectively.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Re)establish and enhance data calendar to monitor transition and support continuous <a href="#">PDSA cycles</a>,<sup>47</sup> including consideration that capacity and fidelity may change throughout the year</li> <li>• Focus on evaluating immediate staff and student wellness and needs</li> <li>• Adapt previous evaluation strategies to context of return to school</li> <li>• Clarify what data are most necessary to guide effective implementation and successful outcomes</li> <li>• Expand data routines and systems as needed, and ensure process is in place to <a href="#">examine and act on disaggregated data</a><sup>48</sup> (by race, gender, and disability) to promote equity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use data calendar to monitor transition and support continuous <a href="#">PDSA cycles</a></li> <li>• Focus on evaluating implementation fidelity of new key practices</li> <li>• Provide supports and resources to screen students who may need more intensive academic and/or non-academic supports</li> <li>• Apply MTSS logic to differentiate support to schools based on need</li> <li>• <a href="#">Examine disaggregated data</a>, review with school leadership teams, and ensure action steps are in place to promote equity for all students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use data calendar to monitor transition and support continuous <a href="#">PDSA cycles</a></li> <li>• Focus on evaluating impact of new key practices and ensuring equity of access and outcomes</li> <li>• Adjust training and coaching supports as needed</li> <li>• Consider new or refined practices when indicated by data</li> <li>• Apply MTSS logic to differentiate support to schools based on need</li> <li>• <a href="#">Examine disaggregated data</a>, review with school leadership teams, and ensure action steps are in place to promote equity for all students</li> </ul>
<div style="border: 1px solid orange; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <b>Local Implementation Demonstrations</b> </div>	<p>Highlight local <b>school-based examples</b> of educators effectively supporting students, including effective implementation of key practices during in-person and remote-instruction, integration and alignment of support, and using data to drive decisions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify schools that have adjusted supports for effective implementation of SEB and academic MTSS, and share with other districts and schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify schools that demonstrate successful initial return to school implementation of MTSS in any or all areas of academic or SEB supports</li> <li>• Emphasize practices that promote staff and student wellness and relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify schools that demonstrate success in after the initial return to school implementation of MTSS in either or all areas of academic or SEB supports</li> <li>• Focus on exemplars that demonstrate equitable access and outcomes</li> </ul>

Note: IT = information technology; MTSS = multi-tiered systems of support; PDSA = plan-do-study-act; SEB = social, emotional, behavioral

*Table 3. Considerations for district-level implementation of key systems to support schools across the timeline of crisis response and recovery. Return to beginning*



## Guidance for District Leadership Teams *continued*

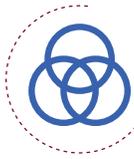
Table 4 presents considerations for district-level action steps to support implementation of critical practices. Recognizing that some districts may plan to resume the school year in remote, in-person, and/or hybrid models, we provided overall considerations, examples for remote learning, and

examples for in-person learning. When hybrid models occur, prioritize actions from each context that maximize strengths of that mode of instruction.

Critical Practices	Considerations for District-Wide Action Plan	Examples for Remote Learning	Examples for In-Person Learning
 <p><b>Connect</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set expectation that educators regularly <b>check-in</b> with all students and families (before school year resumes and throughout the year)</li> <li>Consider district-wide strategies to <b>monitor collaboration</b> (e.g., <a href="#">climate survey</a><sup>49</sup>) and <b>family engagement</b><sup>50</sup> (family perspective on school climate, family engagement survey) and adjust engagement strategies based on data</li> <li><b>Partner</b> with other child and family serving organizations (behavioral health, faith based)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check in with each student and family regularly (and share responsibility across all educators in the district and school)</li> <li>Adapt district <a href="#">check-in/check-out approach for remote instruction</a><sup>51</sup></li> <li>Modify <a href="#">positive greetings at the door</a><sup>52</sup> to “positive greetings at login” to ensure each student starts instruction with a positive interaction</li> <li>Set expectation that educators keep families informed about student progress and needs so they can support instruction at home when needed</li> <li>Use a survey to assess student, parent, and educator access to and perceptions of support during periods remote learning</li> <li>Provide structured opportunities for student to interact with teachers and peers to promote connection and oral language development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invite young or vulnerable students to resume school early and connect with their prior teacher and support system</li> <li>Adopt <a href="#">positive greetings at the door</a><sup>53</sup> as an approach to ensure each student starts with a positive interaction and provide quick daily check-in</li> <li>Use lessons learned during remote learning to enhance connections with families (e.g., regular check-ins)</li> <li>Use school climate survey suite (parent, student, and educator surveys) to monitor perceptions of climate throughout the year</li> <li>Prioritize opportunities for students to use language throughout the day in pairs, small groups, and in whole-class settings to promote connection and oral language development</li> </ul>

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Table 4. District considerations for supporting implementation of key practices, with examples during periods of remote and in-person instruction.



## Guidance for District Leadership Teams *continued*

Critical Practices	Considerations for District-Wide Action Plan	Examples for Remote Learning	Examples for In-Person Learning
<p><b>Screen</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement district-wide plan to screen for elevated <a href="#">SEB</a><sup>54</sup> and/or <a href="#">academic</a><sup>55</sup> risk at the beginning and throughout the year</li> <li>Use screening data and other data sources to allocate resources to schools</li> <li>Assess needs of staff</li> <li><a href="#">Communicate with community</a><sup>56</sup> about purpose and benefit of screening</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Train educators in risk and protective factors, and ask educators to consider those factors when partnering with families to identify student needs</li> <li>Establish a nomination process for students, families, and educators to request additional SEB or academic support</li> <li>Explore options for virtual screening</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Train educators to screen for <a href="#">SEB</a><sup>57</sup> and/or <a href="#">academic</a><sup>58</sup> risk during periods of in-person instruction (repeat periodically throughout year)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide district-wide professional development that emphasizes how to establish a safe, positive, and predictable environment (physical design to promote safety, predictable routines, positive expectations) within a PBIS framework (revisit and revise matrices and lesson plans as needed)</li> <li>During district professional development, provide guidance for how to build connections between learning and expectations at home and school</li> <li>Design system of support for staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set expectations that all teachers start the instructional period with a positive interaction</li> <li>District trainers demonstrate how to crosswalk home, school, and community expectations (see <a href="#">Appendix D of Cultural Responsiveness Field Guide</a><sup>59</sup>)</li> <li>Support schools in adapting their <a href="#">PBIS teaching matrix for remote instruction</a><sup>60</sup></li> <li>Use grade level teams and/or professional learning communities (PLC) to strengthen relationships with colleagues</li> <li>Communicate expectation that teachers teach and prompt SEB skills at the beginning of each significant change (start of year, change between in-person and remote instruction)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>District trainers provide a range of examples of how to develop a classroom layout that meets safety recommendations, emphasize typical and new routines, and teach students how to engage in expected behavior in the context of those environments and routines</li> <li>Support schools in adapting their PBIS teaching matrix for new health and safety routines (see <a href="#">Table 7</a>)</li> <li>Host meeting of school leadership teams to provide time to revisit and revise matrices and lesson plans as needed</li> <li>Ask schools to arrange schedules to ensure SEB skills are explicitly taught (or re-taught) in the first days of each routine change (resuming school, shift between in-person and remote learning, returning from break)</li> </ul>

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*Table 4. District considerations for supporting implementation of key practices, with examples during periods of remote and in-person instruction.*



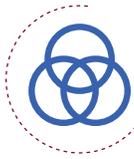
## Guidance for District Leadership Teams *continued*

Critical Practices	Considerations for District-Wide Action Plan	Examples for Remote Learning	Examples for In-Person Learning
<p><b>Teach</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide guidance to encourage educational leaders to identify key skills in each domain (SEB, academic), and develop district-wide plan to support high-quality implementation of integrated SEB and academic support</li> <li>Provide district-wide professional development that emphasizes how to provide academic supports within a MTSS framework</li> <li>Align SEB and academic instruction and intervention within an integrated MTSS/PBIS framework, and provide high quality professional development to support teachers' implementation of integrated support</li> <li>Set district expectations that educators provide specific feedback to encourage learners to use and develop their SEB and academic skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide guidance in how teachers can continue to provide and differentiate explicit and systematic academic instruction and intervention remotely to students based on their needs (e.g., using screening data)</li> <li>Adapt academic interventions for remote instruction, including synchronous explicit instruction</li> <li>Provide guidance for teachers to integrate key SEB skills into remote academic instruction</li> <li>Provide professional development in how to use effective feedback to support students' academic and SEB skill development</li> <li>Communicate and monitor expectation of at least 5 positive interactions for every 1 corrective (5:1 ratio) during remote learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify key academic outcomes that may have been impacted by the pandemic (e.g., foundational academic skills) and develop a plan to prioritize instruction and intervention in those areas to accelerate student learning</li> <li>Provide guidance for teachers to integrate key SEB skills into academic instruction</li> <li>Communicate and monitor expectation of at least 5 positive interactions for every 1 corrective (5:1 ratio)</li> <li>Support monitoring of implementation through efficient and/or existing routines (e.g., walk throughs)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Monitor</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop flexible plan to monitor students' academic, social, emotional, and behavioral progress that can be implemented during periods of remote or in-person learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate expectation that educators monitor attendance and engagement in remote learning as indicators of risk, and increase check-ins following periods of limited engagement</li> <li>Explore options for <a href="#">virtual progress monitoring</a><sup>61</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement district-wide supports for educators to monitor social, emotional, behavioral, and/or academic progress monitoring data collected when students are in school</li> </ul>

Note: IT = information technology; MTSS = multi-tiered systems of support; PDSA = plan-do-study-act; SEB = social, emotional, behavioral

**Table 4. District considerations for supporting implementation of key practices, with examples during periods of remote and in-person instruction.**

[Return to beginning](#)

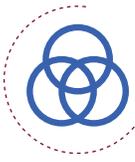


## Example School Teaching Matrix of Expectations Within Routines/Settings

SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS	CONTEXT/SETTING				
	Hallway	Classroom	Bus	Online Group	Online Independent
<b>Respect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Smile with your eyes and wave to acknowledge adults &amp; peers</li> <li>Use kind language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greet adults &amp; peers at beginning &amp; end of activity</li> <li>Use kind language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk kindly to students sitting in your area</li> <li>Wait turn to board/exit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mute when listening</li> <li>Use kind language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take turns if others waiting</li> <li>Wear headphones</li> </ul>
<b>Responsibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain 6' (big) personal space bubble</li> <li>Take care of your materials as you transition in the hallway</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stay in assigned spot to maintain 6' distance</li> <li>Do your best</li> <li>Engage in learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Let bus driver know if unsafe behavior seen</li> <li>Sit in assigned seat &amp; maintain distance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Log-in/off on-time</li> <li>Actively participate</li> <li>Have materials ready for each lesson/activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stay engaged</li> <li>Keep device charged</li> <li>Ask for help (via email, chat, or with help of a parent) when you're stuck</li> </ul>
<b>Safety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wear mask</li> <li>Follow 1-way direction arrows</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wear mask</li> <li>Disinfect desk/table before &amp; after use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wear mask</li> <li>Disinfect seat</li> <li>Keep hands to self</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep password private</li> <li>Let teacher know if private chat is inappropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disinfect keyboard &amp; mouse</li> <li>Take short breaks from your seat and screen</li> </ul>
<b>All Context &amp; Settings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Model &amp; prompt expected behavior</li> <li>Provide positive &amp; informative (i.e., behavior, context) feedback when expected behavior observed</li> <li>Pre-teach expected behavior before entering problem setting /contexts</li> <li>Re-teach when expected behavior when not observed</li> <li>Intensify supports for chronic problem settings/contexts</li> </ul>				

Table 7. Example school teaching matrix of expectations within routines/settings.

[Return to beginning](#)



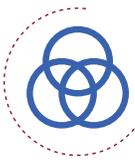
## Additional Considerations

**Build on strengths.** Consider potential protective factors that may benefit students, including [family involvement](#), [key knowledge and skills](#), [connections to school](#), [positive relationships with teachers and staff](#),<sup>62</sup> and [positive peer relationships](#),<sup>63</sup> and work with schools to build supports to enhance those. For example, suggest schools develop plans to strengthen family connections, proactively teach key academic and behavioral routines needed for success, maintain relationships between staff and students (consider identifying preferred adults vs assuming assigned teacher is preferred) and develop new staff/student relationships that will facilitate transition back to school (e.g., introduce new grade level teacher), and maintain supportive peer relationships and consider ways to develop new protective peer relationships to support transition back (e.g., introduce new classmates).

**Differentiate transition supports for students who need targeted or intensive support.** As schools to consider young students (e.g., pre-K or K) who have not experienced transitions between teachers and classrooms, consider students changing schools in the absence of traditional transition activities (e.g.,

students moving up from elementary to middle or middle to high school), and consider students with known or anticipated challenges as they develop their transition plans including [students with intensive behavioral needs](#)<sup>64</sup>.

**Promote positive and effective school climates.** When students are able to return to in-person school, a primary focus will understandably be health and safety. However, to support health and safety efforts and create a positive and effective school climate, district leaders can leverage their PBIS/MTSS framework and “double down” on positive and proactive supports. This is a time for schools to re-teach and re-emphasize positively stated expectations, provide reminders, increase acknowledgement for appropriate behavior. Engage in activities that foster relationships between and among educators, students, and families. In addition, districts may help schools anticipate concerns with bias or disrespect. Support schools in developing a plan to explicitly teach respect and directly respond to instances of bias related to race, illness history, health condition, disability, or related issues that are heightened in the current context by (a) [teaching](#)<sup>65</sup>



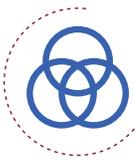
students an effective “stop” response, how to respond if they observe bias, and how to disengage and (c) providing support for educators to teach, prompt, and respond to bias in a swift, instructionally-focused way.

**Maximize benefits of in-person instruction.** Because in-person instruction may be limited, the time together will be precious. Clearly communicate the need to be intentional with instruction, and provide district guidance that (a) emphasizes key SEB and academic skills to be taught; (b) supports educators in increasing the frequency, specificity, and intensity of instruction; and (c) ensures educators provide many opportunities for students to engage, practice, and receive feedback on key skills. Sequence and align practices within and across the tiers so that practices within each tier are implemented in a coordinated way, and transitions among tiers are seamless.

**Plan for disruptions.** Anticipate implementation gaps (due to individual absences, stay-at-home orders, etc.) and increase screening across time to identify changing risk status. Use screening data to organize needs and practices along a continuum, ensuring basic needs (e.g., safety, health, nutrition, shelter) are met first. Explicitly teach, practice, and reinforce skills that will enable educators, students, and families to navigate future disruptions. For example, if a district assigned a daily or weekly learning plan for students, use a

similar format to communicate and assess homework. If educators used technology to facilitate remote learning, provide opportunities for students to practice using that technology for collaborative activities (e.g., collaboration with students in another school/classroom) during the school day. Anticipate, plan, and enact an equitable response and accommodations due to impact on vulnerable populations like students and staff with underlying medical conditions, students with disabilities for whom transitions are difficult, students with a history of more intense need (academic, behavioral, social-emotional, functional, technology) who may experience a greater number, duration, and/or impact of disruptions.





Only when needed to meet new or unique needs, select new evidence-based practices. A useful tool for use when considering whether to adopt a new program or practice is the [Hexagon Tool](#)<sup>66</sup> from the National Implementation Research Network. Use of this tool guides team discussion on the need, fit, capacity to implement, evidence, usability, and supports of the program or practice.

**Consider integrity of and access to remote learning.**

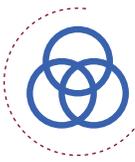
Given the complexities of on-line learning, it is critical to consider (a) the integrity of instructional modification for on-line learning, platform, and technology infrastructure and (b) students' access to technology.

**Integrity of instructional modification.** Instructional modifications include changes made to typical instruction to accommodate remote learning (e.g., modifying instructional activities, procedures to be more conducive to on-line learning while staying true to the core features of the instructional strategy). To promote integrity, identify core features of the practice and create a variety of forms in which the core features are provided (e.g., touch screen with your finger rather than touch word on page in book).

Integrity of the online platform. The goal is to ensure that students can access and efficiently focus on material being presented and not unnecessary distractions on screen or background noise. Consider options to magnify words on screen, hide desktop background, and/or remove any graphic or wording on shared screen that is not relevant to lesson.

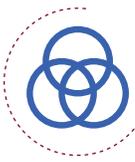
**Integrity of technology infrastructure.** In addition to considering how instruction is modified and the platform on which its delivered, consider the technology infrastructure (e.g., how do we adjust for video blips when streaming may lock up or the sound stammers or sound modulates when bandwidth is not sufficient). Provide frequent opportunities to respond to make sure each student is engaged and hearing/seeing the presented lesson. Have a routine for when computer may freeze and need to be restarted.

**Access to technology.** Given variability in access to technology and internet, consider ways to enhance and support access or provide a range of ways to access instruction (e.g., apps that may be opened on phones, tablets, or computers; reading materials accessible on-line or in print; learning packets available for pick-up or on google classroom; using free public radio or TV stations to deliver critical messages and content).



## Embedded Hyperlinks

1. <https://www.pbis.org>
2. <https://sisep.fpg.unc.edu>
3. <http://www.mtss.org>
4. <https://improvingliteracy.org>
5. <https://leadforliteracy.org>
6. <https://www.pbis.org/pbis/getting-started>
7. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/returning-to-school-during-and-after-crisis>
8. <https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/resources/lesson-1-hexagon-tool>
9. <https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/resources/lesson-1-hexagon-tool>
10. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/returning-to-school-during-and-after-crisis>
11. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/pbis-implementation-blueprint>
12. <https://www.pbis.org/topics/districtstate-pbis>
13. <https://intensiveintervention.org/taxonomy-intervention-intensity>
14. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/positive-greetings-at-the-door>
15. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/guidance-on-adapting-check-in-check-out-cico-for-distance-learning>
16. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/family-school-collaboration-in-positive-behavioral-interventions-and-supports-creating-a-school-atmosphere-to-promote-collaboration>
17. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/systematic-screening-tools-universal-behavior-screeners>
18. <https://www.pbis.org/pbis/tier-1>
19. <https://www.pbis.org/pbis/tier-2>
20. <https://www.pbis.org/pbis/tier-3>
21. <https://improvingliteracy.org/brief/best-practices-universal-screening>
22. <https://charts.intensiveintervention.org/ascreening>
23. <https://intensiveintervention.org/resource/screening-standards-overviews>
24. <https://improvingliteracy.org/brief/four-questions-ask-after-universal-screening>
25. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/school-wide-expectations-teaching-matrix>
26. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/creating-a-pbis-behavior-teaching-matrix-for-remote-instruction>
27. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/supporting-and-responding-to-behavior-evidence-based-classroom-strategies-for-teachers>
28. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/the-student-teacher-game>
29. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/classroom-integrated-academics-and-behavior-brief>
30. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/examples-of-engaging-instruction-to-increase-equity-in-education>
31. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/pbis-cultural-responsiveness-field-guide-resources-for-trainers-and-coaches>
32. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/high-school-pbis-implementation-student-voice>
33. <https://intensiveintervention.org/intensive-intervention-features-explicit-instruction>
34. <https://www.pbis.org/pbis/tier-1>
35. <https://www.pbis.org/pbis/tier-2>



## Embedded Hyperlinks *continued*

36. <https://www.pbis.org/pbis/tier-3>
37. <https://intensiveintervention.org/intensive-intervention/progress-monitor>
38. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/pbis-forum-in-brief-tips>
39. <https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/resources/activity-l61-apply-pdsa-cycle-your-work>
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