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

revised March 2021
Purpose, Outcome, Context, Guiding Principles, and Rationale for the Guide

Purpose

This 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.) 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.
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* 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 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 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 ongoing 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,

* 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 supports; 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®), 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®). 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 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 that includes state, district, classroom, school, district, and state levels.

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\textsuperscript{11} district/state capacity-building graphic\textsuperscript{12} (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

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{implementation_blueprint.png}
\caption{Implementation blueprint graphic.}
\end{figure}
district leadership teams enhance these elements throughout their response to the public health crisis.

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.

\[Figure 4. \text{Critical practices to support students' social, emotional, behavioral, and academic growth}\]
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).

- **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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of Practices to Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Growth</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use <a href="#">positive greetings at the door</a> (or at login for remote learning)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Regularly <a href="#">check-in</a> with students and families, and adapt check-in during periods of remote instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Build <a href="#">relationships</a> with students, among peers, and with families through purposeful communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Select and implement a SEB <a href="#">screener</a> or develop procedures for <a href="#">informal screening</a> (e.g., extant data, family wellness check)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Regularly review data in school-wide team meetings to make decisions, based on level of risk and other data, to <a href="#">differentiate and/or intensify</a> Tier 1, Tier 2, or Tier 3 support</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Design <a href="#">safe environments</a> (e.g., physical distance, planned pathways)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Develop and teach <a href="#">predictable routines</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use a <a href="#">matrix</a> (see Table 7) to define, teach, and prompt <a href="#">positive expectations</a> and key SEB skills within routines for in-person or <a href="#">remote</a> instruction (also see Supporting and Responding to Behavior)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Maintain a 5:1 ratio (5 positive comments for each negative comment), and consider other strategies, like the <a href="#">student/teacher game</a>, to acknowledge student behavior</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 7**: Please refer to the table for more details on the matrix and its components.
# Examples of Practices to Support Critical Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Practices</th>
<th>Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Growth</th>
<th>Student Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teach</strong></td>
<td>• Begin each lesson with a <em>positive reminder</em> of expected behavior and SEB skills</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Prioritize</strong> key SEB skills to emphasize</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Purposefully <strong>integrate instruction</strong> in SEB and academic skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Actively <strong>engage students</strong> in instruction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Ensure instruction and support is <strong>culturally responsive</strong> incorporates <strong>student voice</strong> and promotes active civic engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Prioritize</strong> key academic skills</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Explicitly teach <strong>background knowledge</strong> to set up for the lesson</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Provide <strong>explicit and systematic instruction</strong> 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</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Engage a <strong>gradual release</strong> of responsibility (I do, we do, you do), and provide sufficient guided practice before releasing students to work independently</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide consistent, supportive, and corrective <strong>feedback</strong> during instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Monitor</strong></td>
<td>• Collect and use simple <strong>data</strong> to monitor student engagement and SEB skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Regularly <strong>review</strong> data to (a) adjust <strong>Tier 1</strong> support (if needed) or (b) consider additional supports (Tier 2 or Tier 3) for students with limited skill growth or interfering behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Throughout instruction, elicit frequent student group and individual responses to <strong>monitor comprehension</strong> of lesson content</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Regularly collect and <strong>review progress monitoring</strong> data, and use data to inform instructional decision making, including adjusting tiers of instruction, group size, instructional time, instructional content, and instructional delivery</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

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?

* 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Systems</th>
<th>Key Considerations</th>
<th>Prior to Return to School</th>
<th>Initial Return to School</th>
<th>After Initial Return to School</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership Teaming</strong></td>
<td>Invest in district-level leadership, and consider whether your leadership team includes members with all relevant areas of expertise (e.g., health and safety, mental health, school-based behavioral health, school nursing, academic content expertise, special education, IT). Use effective team meeting approaches (e.g., Team Initiated Problem Solving [TIPS], plan-do-study-act [PDSA]) to maximize the effectiveness of remote and in-person team meetings, prioritize team-based and data-driven decision making, and maintain an action plan to prompt key implementation steps.</td>
<td>• 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) • Consider revisiting team norms related to group decision making and communication routines • 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)</td>
<td>• Maintain effective teaming practices • 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 Hexagon Tool to address rapidly changing needs)</td>
<td>• Maintain effective teaming practices • Plan for team member turn over and regularly assess membership needs to ensure adequate representation and effective teaming practice • Monitor team member wellness and redistribute action plan items as needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Note: IT = information technology; MTSS = multi-tiered systems of support; PDSA = plan-do-study-act; SEB = social, emotional, behavioral</td>
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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.
### Critical Systems

**Stakeholder Engagement**

Consider a range of strategies (e.g., website, newsletters, phone calls) to maintain **regular communication** with stakeholders (families, community organizations, public health and medical professionals, school boards) to promote effective collaboration and support.

- Establish or strengthen communication routines with all stakeholders and ensure reliable access to online information for all
- Communicate anticipated changes and implications for implementation of effective key practices
- Expand stakeholder group to include public health and local medical professionals

**Funding & Alignment**

Consider how to leverage existing and/or secure new **funding streams** 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 **integrate and align** initiatives, programs, and practices to maximize efficiencies.

- Identify flexible funding streams that can be re-purposed for crisis response needs
- Secure short-term crisis funding from local, state, or federal sources

### Key Considerations

**Prior to Return to School**

- Increase communication frequency and modalities to ensure all stakeholders receive key updates and to prevent mis-information
- Gather and act on stakeholder input to improve implementation
- Partner with family and community organizations to identify needs and provide support during the initial return to school

**Initial Return to School**

- Reduce frequency of communications but maintain regular updates to all stakeholders
- Assess implementation effectiveness
- Gather and act on stakeholder input to improve implementation
- Partner with family and community organizations to identify needs and provide support throughout the year

**After Initial Return to School**

- Identify and prioritize new funding streams that provide support for integrated MTSS
- Communicate with individuals at state and local levels who influence policy and budget decisions

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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

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</table>
| **Policy**       | Consider necessary adjustments 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. | • Review policy to promote equity of access to instruction and supports  
• Revisit policies that disproportionately impact marginalized populations  
• Review and revise policy to ensure it supports practice to meet academic and SEB needs of all students and staff | • Assess impacts of policy changes on all students and staff and adjust as needed | • Develop long term policies that support student and staff wellness during remote and in-person learning conditions |
| **Workforce Capacity** | Consider unique needs 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. | • Assess staff needs with respect to key implementation practices and changes in learning context  
• Develop plan to support staff who have transitioned into new roles (e.g., coach reassigned to classroom)  
• Provide guidance to assess and monitor staff wellness | • Continue to assess and monitor staff wellness, needs of workforce capacity, and effectiveness of supports to guide decision-making on modifications  
• Provide intensive in-person or virtual coaching supports to ensure staff are supported with new instructional platforms and environments | • Continue to assess and monitor staff wellness, needs of workforce capacity, and effectiveness of supports to guide decision-making on modifications  
• Assess implementation and outcomes and adjust supports as needed  
• Move toward MTSS for teachers, differentiating professional development supports  
• Consider expanding new teacher mentoring supports and providing ongoing PD to support new learning |

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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

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| Training         | (Re)establish a professional development plan[^42] and consider training topics 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 flexible training methods (e.g., remote and in-person). | • 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  
• Provide PD to all staff in key areas (e.g., IT, physically distanced requirements, relationship building in virtual environments)  
• Provide training in short recorded "snapshots" to accommodate staff who may not be able to participate in live training events | • Provide ongoing job-embedded professional development activities for all staff, focusing on evidence-based practices and programs  
• Provide access to previously recorded training snapshots  
• Provide plan for how educators may access additional professional learning opportunities | • Review training capacity to ensure that training is provided on topics related to “current normal” and/or if there are emerging skill development needs that should be addressed (consider implementation fidelity data)  
• Provide educators access to additional professional learning opportunities in flexible formats |

| Coaching         | Consider flexible coaching approaches[^43] 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. | • Develop coaching capacity in new key areas to ensure coaches have content knowledge needed to support implementation upon return to school  
• Develop coaching plans to be implemented in the fall | • Implement coaching plans  
• Assess implementation and adjust as needed  
• 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 | • Adjust coaching practices based on implementation and staff wellness/need  
• Continue to assess and build coaching capacity to support any new practices or systems |

[^42]: 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**

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<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation</strong></td>
<td>(Re)establish an evaluation plan[^44] to collect and closely monitor 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 District Systems Fidelity Inventory (DSFI)[^45] and District Capacity Assessment (DCA)[^46] to assess district-level implementation fidelity and capacity, respectively.</td>
<td>• (Re)establish and enhance data calendar to monitor transition and support continuous PDSA cycles[^47], including consideration that capacity and fidelity may change throughout the year. • Focus on evaluating immediate staff and student wellness and needs. • Adapt previous evaluation strategies to context of return to school. • Clarify what data are most necessary to guide effective implementation and successful outcomes. • Expand data routines and systems as needed, and ensure process is in place to examine and act on disaggregated data[^48] (by race, gender, and disability) to promote equity.</td>
<td>• Use data calendar to monitor transition and support continuous PDSA cycles[^47]. • Focus on evaluating implementation fidelity of new key practices. • Provide supports and resources to screen students who may need more intensive academic and/or non-academic supports. • Apply MTSS logic to differentiate support to schools based on need. • Examine disaggregated data[^48], review with school leadership teams, and ensure action steps are in place to promote equity for all students.</td>
<td>• Use data calendar to monitor transition and support continuous PDSA cycles[^47]. • Focus on evaluating impact of new key practices and ensuring equity of access and outcomes. • Adjust training and coaching supports as needed. • Consider new or refined practices when indicated by data. • Apply MTSS logic to differentiate support to schools based on need. • Examine disaggregated data[^48], review with school leadership teams, and ensure action steps are in place to promote equity for all students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Implementation Demonstrations</strong></td>
<td>Highlight local school-based examples 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.</td>
<td>• Identify schools that have adjusted supports for effective implementation of SEB and academic MTSS, and share with other districts and schools.</td>
<td>• Identify schools that demonstrate successful initial return to school implementation of MTSS in any or all areas of academic or SEB supports. • Emphasize practices that promote staff and student wellness and relationships.</td>
<td>• 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. • Focus on exemplars that demonstrate equitable access and outcomes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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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.

[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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Practices</th>
<th>Considerations for District-Wide Action Plan</th>
<th>Examples for Remote Learning</th>
<th>Examples for In-Person Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Set expectation that educators regularly check-in with all students and families (before school year resumes and throughout the year)</td>
<td>• Check in with each student and family regularly (and share responsibility across all educators in the district and school)</td>
<td>• Invite young or vulnerable students to resume school early and connect with their prior teacher and support system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect</td>
<td>• Consider district-wide strategies to monitor collaboration (e.g., climate survey and family engagement) and adjust engagement strategies based on data</td>
<td>• Adapt district check-in/check-out approach for remote instruction</td>
<td>• Adopt positive greetings at the door as an approach to ensure each student starts with a positive interaction and provide quick daily check-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Partner with other child and family serving organizations (behavioral health, faith based)</td>
<td>• Modify positive greetings at the door to “positive greetings at login” to ensure each student starts instruction with a positive interaction</td>
<td>• Use lessons learned during remote learning to enhance connections with families (e.g., regular check-ins)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Set expectation that educators keep families informed about student progress and needs so they can support instruction at home when needed</td>
<td>• Use school climate survey suite (parent, student, and educator surveys) to monitor perceptions of climate throughout the year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Use a survey to assess student, parent, and educator access to and perceptions of support during periods remote learning</td>
<td>• 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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide structured opportunities for student to interact with teachers and peers to promote connection and oral language development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.
### Guidance for District Leadership Teams continued

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<tr>
<td><strong>Screen</strong></td>
<td>• Develop and implement district-wide plan to screen for elevated SEB and/or academic risk at the beginning and throughout the year &lt;br&gt; • Use screening data and other data sources to allocate resources to schools &lt;br&gt; • Assess needs of staff &lt;br&gt; • Communicate with community about purpose and benefit of screening</td>
<td>• Train educators in risk and protective factors, and ask educators to consider those factors when partnering with families to identify student needs &lt;br&gt; • Establish a nomination process for students, families, and educators to request additional SEB or academic support &lt;br&gt; • Explore options for virtual screening</td>
<td>• Train educators to screen for SEB and/or academic risk during periods of in-person instruction (repeat periodically throughout year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support</strong></td>
<td>• 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) &lt;br&gt; • During district professional development, provide guidance for how to build connections between learning and expectations at home and school &lt;br&gt; • Design system of support for staff</td>
<td>• Set expectations that all teachers start the instructional period with a positive interaction &lt;br&gt; • District trainers demonstrate how to crosswalk home, school, and community expectations (see Appendix D of Cultural Responsiveness Field Guide) &lt;br&gt; • Support schools in adapting their PBIS teaching matrix for remote instruction &lt;br&gt; • Use grade level teams and/or professional learning communities (PLC) to strengthen relationships with colleagues &lt;br&gt; • 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)</td>
<td>• 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 &lt;br&gt; • Support schools in adapting their PBIS teaching matrix for new health and safety routines (see Table 7) &lt;br&gt; • Host meeting of school leadership teams to provide time to revisit and revise matrices and lesson plans as needed &lt;br&gt; • 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)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 4. District considerations for supporting implementation of key practices, with examples during periods of remote and in-person instruction.
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</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Teach**          | • 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  
• Provide district-wide professional development that emphasizes how to provide academic supports within a MTSS framework  
• 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  
• Set district expectations that educators provide specific feedback to encourage learners to use and develop their SEB and academic skills  
• 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)  
• Adapt academic interventions for remote instruction, including synchronous explicit instruction  
• Provide guidance for teachers to integrate key SEB skills into remote academic instruction  
• Provide professional development in how to use effective feedback to support students’ academic and SEB skill development  
• Communicate and monitor expectation of at least 5 positive interactions for every 1 corrective (5:1 ratio) during remote learning  
• 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  
• Provide guidance for teachers to integrate key SEB skills into academic instruction  
• Communicate and monitor expectation of at least 5 positive interactions for every 1 corrective (5:1 ratio)  
• Support monitoring of implementation through efficient and/or existing routines (e.g., walk throughs)  
• Develop flexible plan to monitor students’ academic, social, emotional, and behavioral progress that can be implemented during periods of remote or in-person learning  
• Communicate expectation that educators monitor attendance and engagement in remote learning as indicators of risk, and increase check-ins following periods of limited engagement  
• Explore options for [virtual progress monitoring](#)  
• Implement district-wide supports for educators to monitor social, emotional, behavioral, and/or academic progress monitoring data collected when students are in school | | |
| **Monitor**         | • Implement district-wide supports for educators to monitor social, emotional, and academic progress that can be implemented during periods of remote or in-person learning | | |

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*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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS</th>
<th>CONTEXT/SETTING</th>
<th>Hallway</th>
<th>Classroom</th>
<th>Bus</th>
<th>Online Group</th>
<th>Online Independent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respect</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Smile with your eyes and wave to</td>
<td>• Talk kindly</td>
<td>• Greet</td>
<td>• Talk</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>• Mute when</td>
<td>• Take turns if</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acknowledge adults &amp; peers</td>
<td>students</td>
<td>adults &amp; peers at beginning &amp; end of</td>
<td>kindly</td>
<td></td>
<td>listening</td>
<td>others waiting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use kind language</td>
<td>activity</td>
<td>use kind language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Wait turn to board/exit</td>
<td>• Use kind</td>
<td>• Greet</td>
<td>• Log-in/off on-time</td>
<td>• Describe</td>
<td>• Take turns if others waiting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>language</td>
<td>adults &amp; peers at beginning &amp; end of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsibility</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Maintain 6’ (big) personal space bubble</td>
<td>• Let bus driver know if unsafe behavior seen</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>• Log-in/off on-time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Take care of your materials as you transition in the hallway</td>
<td>• Sit in assigned seat &amp; maintain distance</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Actively participate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Stay in assigned spot to maintain 6’ distance</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Have materials ready for each lesson/activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Do your best</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Engage in learning</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Safety</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Wear mask</td>
<td>• Wear mask</td>
<td>• Wear</td>
<td>• Keep password private</td>
<td>• Disinfect keyboard &amp; mouse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Follow 1-way direction arrows</td>
<td>• Disinfect desk/table before &amp; after use</td>
<td>mask</td>
<td>• Let teacher know if private chat is inappropriate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Disinfect seat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Keep hands to self</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All Context &amp; Settings</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Model &amp; prompt expected behavior</td>
<td>• Provide positive &amp; informative (i.e., behavior, context) feedback when expected behavior observed</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>• Keep password private</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pre-teach expected behavior before entering problem setting /contexts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Let teacher know if private chat is inappropriate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Re-teach when expected behavior when not observed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Intensify supports for chronic problem settings/contexts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*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, and positive peer relationships, 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.

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.
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 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
4. https://improvingliteracy.org
5. https://leadforliteracy.org
6. https://www.pbis.org/pbis/getting-started
8. https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/resources/lesson-1-hexagon-tool
12. https://www.pbis.org/topics/districtstate-pbis
18. https://www.pbis.org/pbis/tier-1
22. https://charts.intensiveintervention.org/ascreening
34. https://www.pbis.org/pbis/tier-1
Embedded Hyperlinks continued

40. https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/resources/lesson-1-hexagon-tool
42. https://www.pbis.org/resource/training-and-professional-development-blueprint-for-pbis
43. https://www.pbis.org/resource/district-level-coaching
44. https://www.pbis.org/resource/evaluation-blueprint-for-pbis
46. https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/resources/district-capacity-assessment-dca
47. https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/resources/activity-l61-apply-pdsa-cycle-your-work
49. https://www.pbisapps.org/Applications/Pages/PBIS-Assessment-Surveys.aspx#scs
52. https://www.pbis.org/resource/positive-greetings-at-the-door
55. https://charts.intensiveintervention.org/ascreening
58. https://charts.intensiveintervention.org/ascreening
60. https://www.pbis.org/resource/creating-a-pbis-behavior-teaching-matrix-for-remote-instruction
62. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1005108700243
63. https://doi.org/10.1186/s13612-015-0037-8
65. https://www.pbis.org/topics/bullying-prevention
66. https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/resources/hexagon-exploration-tool
The strategies and suggestions provided in this document are informed by research and illustrate the experiences of the document authors. Readers are encouraged to review and adhere to guidance provided by their state and district education agencies. This document was supported from U.S. Department of Education funds provided by (a) the Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports cooperative grant supported by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP; H326S180001), and Renee Bradley serves as the project officer; (b) the State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices Center grant supported by OSEP (H326K120004), and Jennifer Coffey served as the project officer; (c) the National Integrated Multi-Tiered System of Support Research Network cooperative grant supported by the Institute of Education Sciences (R324N180020), and Amy Sussman serves as the program officer; (d) the National Center on Improving Literacy grant from the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, in partnership with OSEP (S283D160003), and Kristen Rhoads served as the project officer; and (e) Lead for Literacy Center grant supported by OSEP (H326L180002), and David Emenheiser serves as the project officer. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education. No official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of any product, commodity, or enterprise mentioned in this document is intended or should be inferred.

Suggested Citation for this Publication