

Supporting PBIS Implementation Through Phases of Crisis Recovery

As school and district communities consider options for effectively supporting students, educators, and families during and after a crisis, it can be difficult to identify critical impactful actions. Mindsets can range from not knowing where to start to thinking we must do it all, which can result in not doing anything. The PBIS framework can serve as a road map to meeting this challenge. It is best to think in terms of implementing as small incremental steps that result in progress toward effectively meeting student, educator, and family needs.

This document provides strategies to guide implementation efforts through the various phase of crisis recovery. As Figure 1 illustrates, schools and districts choose their path based on their implementation level: getting started (green) or strengthening (blue). Then, they consider key actions based on their crisis response phase.

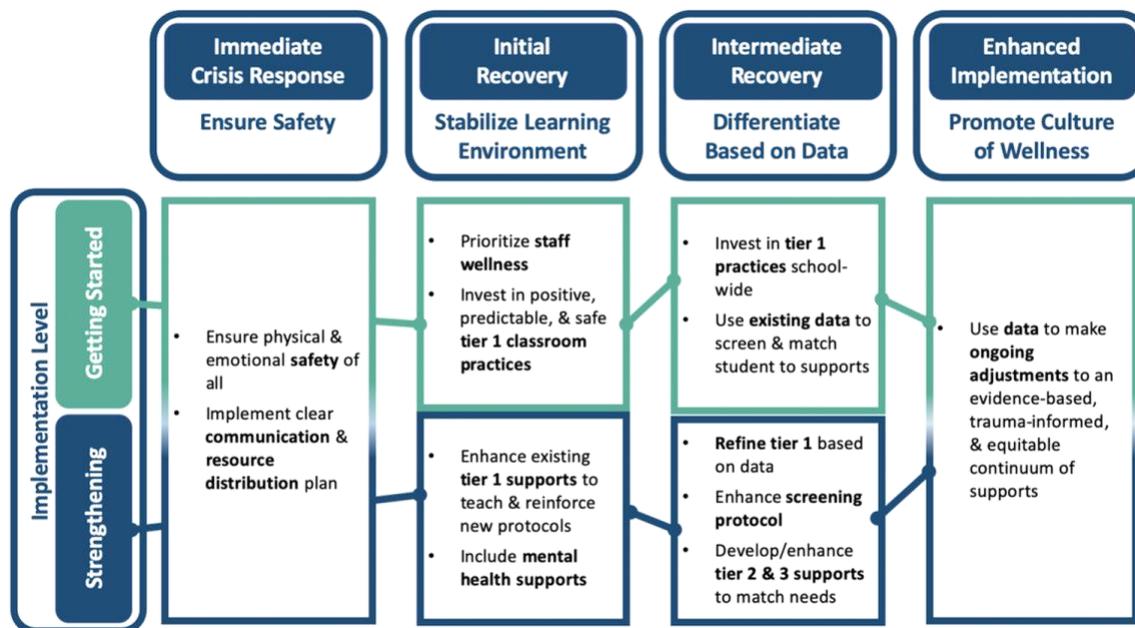


Figure 1. Key actions by implementation level and crisis response phase.

More comprehensive information can be found in the [Supporting Schools During and After Crisis](#)¹ section of the [Center on PBIS website](#)².

Implementation Level

In deciding where to begin, schools and districts consider their implementation level:

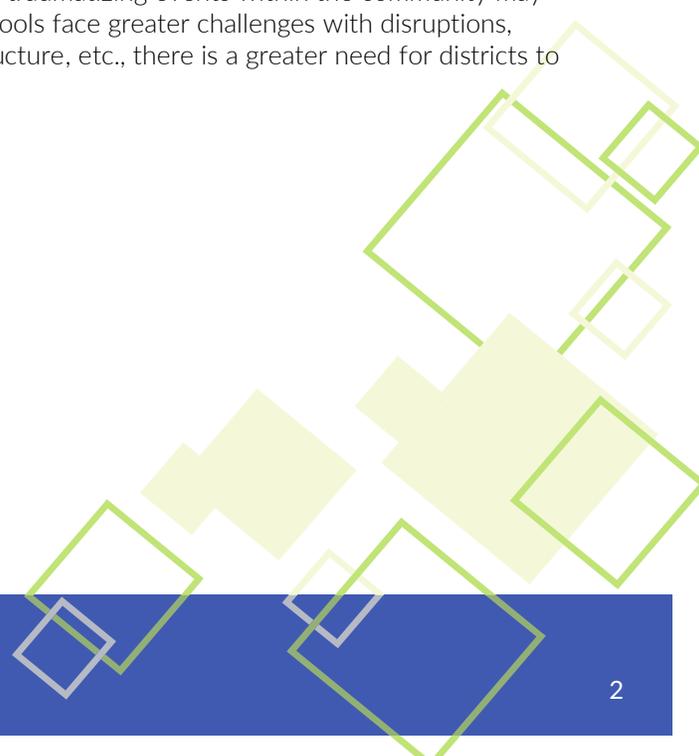
- **not implementing** PBIS at this time,
- **getting started** with implementation when there was not a previously formalized adoption and implementation, or
- **strengthening** and maintaining current implementation efforts by building onto the activities and structures that are already in place.

These simplified implementation levels are based on [stages of implementation](#)³. The table below describes “getting started” and “maintaining & strengthening.”

Getting Started	Maintaining & Strengthening
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an explicit commitment to implementation • Schools were not implementing with fidelity prior to the crisis • District or school teams are in training or action planning stages but have not yet begun school-wide implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools were implementing with at least tier 1 fidelity prior to the crisis • Strong district commitment and infrastructure to support implementation at the school level exists

Crisis Recovery Phase

Whether you are just getting started or working to maintain and strengthen your implementation efforts, your activities and responses will differ based on the crisis recovery phase. Each crisis recovery phase is characterized by the impact on the school/district and the reactions of individuals within the educational system. It is important to note that new crisis events or re-traumatizing events within the community may result in a return to the previous phase at any time. As schools face greater challenges with disruptions, uncertainty, diminishing resources, changes in context, structure, etc., there is a greater need for districts to provide more structure, support, and communication.



Immediate Crisis Response *(Primary focus is on ensuring safety)*

In this phase, the educational programming has been paused, interrupted, or significantly disrupted. Schools may be temporarily closed. Immediate safety procedures may not have been established or implemented. During this interruption, there is often a lack of information or misinformation. Educators, students, and their families may be confused, anxious, or scared about the circumstances that created the crisis. The following box highlights key immediate crisis response actions.

	Actions	Resources
Both Getting Started and Maintaining & Strengthening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure physical and emotional safety of all • Implement clear communication and resource distribution plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) offers a virtual tool kit⁴ to support school and district preparedness as well as topic-specific resources⁴.

Initial Recovery *(Primary focus is on stabilizing the learning environment)*

In this phase, schools are open (virtually or in person), and basic safety procedures are established and implemented consistently. Resources, policies, and procedures may not be available to address educational programming during the initial response. Educators, students, and their families may be confused, anxious, or scared about the initial approach to educational programming following the crisis. Educators may not have skills or knowledge for new or modified educational programming. During this phase, it is important to be kind to yourself—your context has changed and you cannot do things as you did before the crisis. Find the few core practices important to your school that continue to support student social, emotional, and behavioral success and work on those. Remember, you don't have to do this alone—leverage your allies (e.g., families, students, community, agencies) and keep your focus on prioritized activities. During the initial recovery phase, it may be necessary to initially focus more on practices and not necessarily systems to help us re-engage, but our long-term strategy must include investment in systems, practices, and data to produce meaningful, equitable, and lasting outcomes.

	Actions	Resources
Getting Started	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize staff wellness • Invest in positive, predictable, safe & equitable tier 1 classroom practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Wellness webinar⁶ and brief⁷ • Supporting and Responding to Behavior⁸ Classroom Practices • Building Habits for Classroom Practices Webinar⁹ and Brief¹⁰
Maintaining & Strengthening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance existing tier 1 supports to teach & reinforce new protocols • Include mental health supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting Schools During and after Crisis¹¹ • Teaching Social-Emotional Competencies through a PBIS Framework¹² • Supporting Mental Health through an Interconnected Systems Framework¹³

Intermediate Recovery *(Primary focus is on differentiating support based on data)*

In this phase, schools are open (virtually or in person) and have established basic safety procedures that are implemented consistently. Schools may have recently switched learning modes and/or educational programming may still be disrupted. Resources, policy, and procedures are being developed to support educational programming during the intermediate response. Educators, students, and families may experience fatigue, disillusionment, grief, loss, and a wish to return to the way things were prior to the crisis.

	Actions	Resources
Getting Started	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in tier 1 practices school-wide to establish a positive, predictable, and safe environment Use existing data to screen & match student to supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tier 1 practices¹⁴ Data-Based Decision-Making¹⁵ Using outcome data to implement MTSS¹⁶
Maintaining & Strengthening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refine tier 1 based on data Enhance screening protocol Develop/enhance tier 2 & 3 supports to match identified needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data-based Decision Making¹⁷ Systematic Screening¹⁸ Tier 2¹⁹ and Tier 3²⁰ Overviews

Enhanced Implementation *(Primary focus is promoting a culture of wellness)*

As your setting recovers from the crisis, you enter the enhanced implementation phase. In other words, you may not return to the previous way of doing things. This isn't necessarily a bad thing. In fact, there is learning that has taken place during the crisis that can help make implementation better than before the crisis. Training and implementation support may become more flexible and tailored to educators' needs. Efficiency may take place by finding new ways of doing things, while removing or stopping prior strategies that are no longer effective. During this phase, schools whether getting started or strengthening their implementation, focus on implementing an evidence-based, trauma-informed, and equitable PBIS framework with fidelity. Most students are engaged and progressing in their learning while also demonstrating appropriate social, emotional, behavioral skills. Most staff are implementing consistent proactive practices. Data exist to identify students needing more support. Educators come to terms with the crisis and make way for a new beginning.

	Actions	Resources
<i>Both Getting Started and Maintaining & Strengthening</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use data to make ongoing adjustments to an evidence-based, trauma-informed & equitable continuum of supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrating a Trauma-Informed Approach within a PBIS framework²¹ Culturally Responsive Field Guide²²

Summary Recommendations

Regardless of your level of implementation prior to a crisis, the PBIS framework can help guide action steps toward recovery. Schools and districts with a PBIS framework solidly in place before a crisis may be able to more easily adjust practices and assess needs. However, schools and districts without a PBIS framework in place prior to a crisis can still identify key action steps to both facilitate recovery and move toward [PBIS implementation](#).²³

For all schools and districts, we recommend:

- Strengthen what you have and build upon your PBIS investments
- Focus on doing less better by stopping what is not needed or not working
- Identify and communicate priority action steps based on your level of implementation and stage of recovery
- Use relevant data to guide implementation at all levels and stages

Embedded Hyperlinks

1. <https://www.pbis.org/current/returning-to-school-during-and-after-crisis>
2. <https://www.pbis.org>
3. <https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/module-4>
4. <https://rems.ed.gov/virtual-toolkit/index.html>
5. <https://rems.ed.gov/ResourcesToSupportEMP>
6. Staff wellness webinar coming soon to www.pbis.org
7. Staff wellness brief coming soon to www.pbis.org
8. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/supporting-and-responding-to-behavior-evidence-based-classroom-strategies-for-teachers>
9. <http://www.pbis.org/video/building-habits-of-effective-practice-webinar>
10. <http://www.pbis.org/resource/habits-of-effective-classroom-practice>
11. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/returning-to-school-during-and-after-crisis>
12. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/teaching-social-emotional-competencies-within-a-pbis-framework>
13. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/advancing-education-effectiveness-interconnecting-school-mental-health-and-school-wide-positive-behavior-support>
14. <https://www.pbis.org/pbis/tier-1>
15. <https://www.pbis.org/topics/data-based-decision-making>
16. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/using-outcome-data-in-high-schools>
17. <https://www.pbis.org/topics/data-based-decision-making>
18. <https://www.pbis.org/topics/data-based-decision-making>
19. <https://www.pbis.org/pbis/tier-2>
20. <https://www.pbis.org/pbis/tier-3>
21. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/integrating-a-trauma-informed-approach-within-a-pbis-framework>
22. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/pbis-cultural-responsiveness-field-guide-resources-for-trainers-and-coaches>
23. <https://www.pbis.org/resource-type/blueprints>



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