TIER 3 SCHOOL-LEVEL SYSTEMS GUIDE

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Tier 3 School-level Systems Guide

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Introduction

Tier 3 interventions are intended for the small number of students in any school or program who require intensive and individualized social, emotional, and behavioral (SEB) support in addition to those provided at Tiers 1 and 2. For an overview of Tier 3 foundational systems and key practices, see What is Tier 3 Support? The purpose of this practice guide is to assist Tier 3 Systems Teams, or combined Advanced Tiers (Tier 2 and 3) Systems Teams, in developing the foundational Tier 3 school-level systems features. These system features include procedures for teaming, identifying students, training and coaching staff, involving stakeholders, matching students with functional behavior supports, and evaluating the overall effectiveness of Tier 3 interventions and student responsiveness. (For guidance at the individual student level, see the Tier 3 Student-level Systems Guide.¹)

Students requiring individualized SEB support often have intensive academic needs as well. This guide focuses primarily on supporting students’ intensive SEB needs but includes considerations for integrating intensive academic and SEB supports through key systems features. The following resources provide more in-depth guidance on intensive academic supports:

- Integrating Academic and Behavior Supports within an RtI Framework²
- Integrated Multi-Tiered System of Support Overview³
- Levels of Intervention and Evidence: Intensive Intervention (Tier 3)⁴

Tier 3 – Intensive, Individual Interventions⁵

All schools implement individualized interventions for specific students, however, many schools struggle to develop and implement systems that support effective, team-based, and data-driven implementation of those individualized interventions. Too often, the lack of a systems-based approach leads to the intensive use of staff resources with little or no coordination resulting in minimal change in student outcomes or unknown effectiveness.

When developing foundational Tier 3 systems, schools are encouraged to carefully consider capacity, readiness, and how Tier 3 supports fit within their existing positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) or multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) framework. Tier 3 supports build upon the structure provided at Tiers 1 and 2, utilizing data, systems, and intensified function-based practices tailored to the needs of individual students. Schools implementing Tier 1 and Tier 2 with fidelity have a solid preventative foundation that makes them more likely to be able to meet the needs of students with more intensive and complex needs (Kim, McIntosh, & Hoselton, 2014). Therefore, we recommend that schools exploring Tier 3 readiness also complete a comprehensive assessment of Tiers 1 and 2 systems to identify strengths, capacity, and priorities for enhancement. When foundational tiers are solidly in place, schools can expect that a relatively small number, 1-5%, of students will need additional, intensive Tier 3 supports. However, it is important to note that schools do not need to fully establish Tier 1 and 2 supports and systems before...
implementing foundational Tier 3 supports for students who need more individualized approaches.

Resources for Assessing Readiness for Tier 3

- The Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) Guide
- Tier 3 Building Readiness Checklist (Midwest PBIS Network)
- Tier 3 Readiness (Missouri Tier 3 Workbook)

**Tier 3 Teaming Systems**

The goal of teaming at Tier 3 is to ensure that students who require support beyond Tiers 1 and 2 receive SEB support that meets their individual needs and that those supports result in positive student outcomes. Because providing individualized support requires more time and school resources than support at Tiers 1 and 2, we recommend that schools implementing Tier 3 have two types of teams for supporting students with complex needs.

- **The Tier 3 Individual Student Team.** The Individual Student Team is made up of stakeholders most familiar with the student (e.g., classroom teacher, family members, related service personnel) and led by personnel with advanced behavioral expertise who are responsible for designing, carrying out, and monitoring the progress of individualized student behavior support plans (BSPs). Often, this level of expertise is not available at the school building level but should be accessible at the district or community level. In fact, it is not uncommon for the intensive needs of students at this level to require involvement of community resources beyond the school.

- **The Tier 3 School Systems Team.** Whereas the Individual Student Team is focused on the implementation of Tier 3 supports for an individual student, the primary role of the Tier 3 Systems Team is to monitor and facilitate the implementation of school-level systems that make the consistent use of those supports possible (e.g., screening systems, professional development, coaching systems, student-level teaming systems). Depending on a number of different factors (e.g., school size, existing grade-level or academic teaming structures) schools may have a stand-alone team focused on Tier 3 systems or a combined Tier 2/Tier 3 systems team. The Tier 3 School Systems Team will also directly connect to the school’s Tier 1 and 2 teams as part of a comprehensive and consistent system for supporting all students.

This guide focuses on the Tier 3 School Systems Team. The role of the individual student team is explained in more detail in the **Tier 3 Student-level Systems Guide**.

**Tier 3 School Systems Team: Membership**

To effectively support Tier 3 systems, it is important for teams to meet at least monthly and use a variety of data sources (see example data sources in Identifying Students below) to identify trends across student groups and engage in team-based problem solving. Systems team members may include individuals in a variety of different roles (e.g., teachers, administrators, school psychologists, behavior specialists, community members) and will vary widely across schools. It is critical for Systems Teams to include members who bring the following types of knowledge, skills, and authority:

- Advanced behavioral expertise
- Knowledge of Tier 3 data systems and data-based decision making
- Authority to make administrative decisions
• Knowledge of how Tier 3 systems are implemented across grade levels
• Knowledge of how Tier 2 systems are implemented across grade levels and communication with or membership on the Tier 2 school team
• Social, emotional, and mental health expertise and knowledge of related community supports and agencies
• Knowledge of academic benchmarks and evidence-based interventions
• Knowledge of how to facilitate effective coordination of Tier 3 supports (e.g., person-centered planning, wraparound support, family supports)

It is also strongly recommended that school-level teams supporting implementation at Tier 3 include family, student, and community perspectives when designing, adapting, and evaluating the effectiveness of Tier 3 systems.

School Systems Team: Activities

The role of the Tier 3 Systems Team is to define, document, and ensure staff are trained in the foundational systems needed to effectively implement Tier 3 student supports. Not all staff will need to be trained in Tier 3 supports for a specific student. However, all staff should have some familiarity with what is expected when providing intensive supports for any student, as any student in a classroom may need such supports in the future. The responsibilities of the Systems Team include defining the processes for efficiently identifying students who need Tier 3 support and regularly using data to evaluate staff use of and student response to individualized support.

The role of this team is critical to providing a seamless continuum of support for students at advanced tiers.

Team members meet regularly (at least monthly) to ensure that Tier 3 systems are being implemented with fidelity and that students are benefitting from those systems and supports. (Remember, a student-level Tier 3 team will meet more frequently to assess how support for that student is progressing.) The Tier 3 School System Team responsibilities do not include addressing the progress of an individual student or making modifications to a student’s plan, but rather will include: Creating, documenting, and monitoring the use of a request for tier 3 supports (see example in the section below) and decision rules for identifying students with Tier 3 needs. (Note: this is a request for specific Tier 3 supports and not a referral for special education evaluation or services)

• Tracking the total number of students within subgroups (e.g., sorting data by grade level and ethnicity) receiving Tier 3 and the specific types of interventions being delivered at Tier 3
• Gathering data from Individual Student Support Teams to evaluate overall student response to Tier 3 intervention (e.g., students progressing and struggling, length of time students have been receiving support, students who have successfully transitioned to less intensive support)
• Collaborating with Tier 2 team members (or using Tier 2 data in the case of a combined Advanced Tier Team process) to (a) identify students who are not being successful with Tier 2 support and (b) transition students who are progressing well at Tier 3 to less intensive support at Tier 2
• Evaluating if Tier 3 systems are being implemented as designed and intended using measures such as the Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI)\textsuperscript{10} and Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory (R-TFI)\textsuperscript{11}

• Using Tier 3 fidelity data to create and implement action plans to improve Tier 3 systems coordination

• Coordinating with the District-Level Systems Team to provide staff training opportunities and ensure BSP implementers have necessary skills and support

• Reporting fidelity data and school-level behavioral and academic Tier 3 outcome data to the Schoolwide PBIS Leadership team

Providing Brief Versus Complex Tier 3 Supports

One of the best ways that schools can work toward effectively implementing Tier 3 systems is by building school capacity to design and implement function-based support. All students with persistent challenging behavior (i.e., behavior that has not or cannot be sufficiently addressed at Tiers 1 and 2) should receive behavior support that is designed to directly address the function of their behavior. At Tier 3, information about the student, their SEB strengths and challenges, and the learning context is gathered through the FBA process to better understand what purpose the challenging behavior serves for the student. Depending on the nature, severity, and pervasiveness of the challenging behavior to be addressed, FBA can range from gathering detailed information and consulting with classroom staff to a more comprehensive and resource-intensive process involving student records reviews, multiple stakeholder interviews, and direct observations of student behavior within a variety of contexts (Scott, Alter, & McQuillan, 2010).

Individual student teams then use the information gathered in the FBA process to design an individualized plan (or BSP) focused on:

• Preventing challenging behavior by modifying triggering antecedents and prompting desired behavior

• Teaching and reinforcing replacement skills that allow the student to communicate their needs and experience success

• Redirecting the student to use desired skills and minimizing reinforcement, or the “payoff” following challenging behavior

This process is described in more detail in the Tier 3 Student-level Systems Guide.\textsuperscript{12}

Like the FBA process, student BSPs can range in complexity. For example, students who continue to struggle despite Tier 2 intervention supports may experience success with the addition of a small number of individualized strategies designed for use by classroom staff. By contrast, students who engage in the most intensive and complex challenging behavior often require a comprehensive plan which, along with function-based strategies, includes a crisis or safety plan, coordinated supports such as person centered planning and wraparound,\textsuperscript{13} mental health services, and supports that extend to home and community settings.
Because not all students with Tier 3 needs require the same level of intervention, Tier 3 School Systems Teams can help maximize efficiency by defining a continuum of individualized support. By matching the breadth of the FBA/BSP process to the intensity of student need, schools can more effectively allocate valuable time and resources while still meeting the needs of those who require Tier 3 support. It is recommended that team members work with district- and school-level behavior support personnel to document the different types of FBA/BSP protocols used in their school and under what circumstances each is recommended. Table 1 shows an example of how teams might create decision rules to help determine when to recommend a brief vs. comprehensive FBA/BSP process and who should make up the FBA/BSP team.

For more detailed information about brief and comprehensive FBA/BSP and how schools and districts can create a range of supports at Tier 3 see the following resources:

- [Tier 3 Brief Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) Guide](#)
- [Tier 3 Comprehensive Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) Guide](#)
- [Tier 3 Student-level Systems Guide](#)
- [Basic FBA to BSP Trainer's Manual](#)

### Table 1. Differences in Brief vs. Comprehensive FBA/BSP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Brief FBA/BSP</th>
<th>Comprehensive FBA/BSP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behaviors</td>
<td>• A small number of high frequency behaviors that are NOT dangerous (e.g., talking out, out-of-seat behavior, work refusal), for which universal and/or group-level targeted interventions have not been effective&lt;br&gt;• Patterns of behavior that staff are able to easily identify using a simple interview format&lt;br&gt;• Behaviors that occur in 1 to 2 school routines (e.g., specific classrooms/activities, lunch, recess)</td>
<td>• Chronic high-intensity or dangerous behaviors (e.g., hitting, throwing objects, property destruction, self-injurious behaviors)&lt;br&gt;• Behaviors that serve multiple functions (e.g., problem behaviors that are multiply controlled by both escape and social attention)&lt;br&gt;• Behaviors that occur in 3 or more school routines or across the entire school day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Members</td>
<td>• School staff member(s) most familiar with the student (e.g., classroom teacher)&lt;br&gt;• The student&lt;br&gt;• Family member(s)&lt;br&gt;• School-based professional trained in brief FBA/BSP process</td>
<td>• School staff most familiar with priority student&lt;br&gt;• The student&lt;br&gt;• Relevant district and school support staff&lt;br&gt;• Family member(s)&lt;br&gt;• Representatives from community agencies (e.g., mental health, social work)&lt;br&gt;• Behavioral expert trained to develop and implement intensive interventions for students with severe problem behaviors (e.g., school-psychologists, behavior specialist, behavior analyst)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Loman, Strickland-Cohen, Borgmeier, & Horner (2013)
Identifying Students who Require Tier 3 Support

Efficient, accurate identification of students in need of individualized supports is a critical function of the Tier 3 Systems Team. This requires a clear, documented process that considers multiple data sources, similar to the process and data sources used to identify students for Tier 2 supports. Teams will want to consider:

- Universal screening data
- Request for support from staff, family, or student (both academic and behavioral)
- Existing school data
  - Intense behavior or critical event
  - Chronic behaviors
  - Nonresponse to Tiers 1 & 2

**Universal Screening Data**

There are many benefits to universally screening students for academic and SEB concerns as part of a systematic method of identifying students at risk for poor learning outcomes. Universal screening provides a means of identifying problems early and connecting students with supports that may prevent issues from worsening and requiring more intensive services. Since students need both academic and behavioral skills for school success, we recommend screening for both SEB and academic concerns.

The following links provide more detailed information on universal screening:

- [Best Practices in Universal Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Screening: An Implementation Guide](#)
- [Ready, Set, Go, Review: Screening for Behavioral Health Risk in Schools](#)
- [Universal Screening – Systematic Screening to Shape Instruction: Lessons Learned & Practicalities](#)
- [Universal Screening within a Response-to-Intervention Model](#)
- [Academic Screening Tools Chart](#)

Universal screening methods for SEB concerns generally involve teacher and/or student report on questionnaires or responses to brief statements related to emotional and/or behavioral characteristics. Screening tools are only designed to identify students and are not diagnostic tools.

Examples of validated tools used to universally screen students for SEB concerns:

- The Behavioral and Emotional Screening System (BASC-2 BESS; Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2007)
- Social, Academic, and Emotional Behavior Risk Screener (SAEBRS; Kilgus, Chafouleas, Riley-Tilman, and von der Embese, 2013)
- The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997)
- The Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders (SSBD: Walker and Severson, 1994)
Request for Additional Supports

A second method of student identification is teacher nomination or request for additional support. Those who know students well may be aware of issues that are not documented with data or that occur outside scheduled universal screening. Teachers are typically the ones to request additional support for students but parents, nonteaching staff, or students themselves can also initiate the process. (Note: Such a request for additional support is NOT the same thing as a referral for special education services. Not all students who require Tier 3 support need special education services, and not all students who receive special education services will need Tier 3 support in all areas. Further, the request for Tier 3 supports is separate from and must not delay a referral for special education services. Both processes can occur simultaneously.) Opening the request for support process up to others provides more opportunities for students in need of intensive supports to be identified. Of course, the process is only effective to the degree that it is known. If teachers, parents, or students are not aware of the process for requesting additional support, they will not utilize it. Therefore, it is critical that all are informed of where to access request for support forms, how to submit them, and what to expect after submission.

Similarly, it is important that the request form is both easy to complete and provides the information necessary for decision-making. To ensure an efficient and effective process, request forms should include the following information (Anderson & Scott, 2009):

- Identifying information: Student name, grade, demographic information, person making the referral, and date of request.
- Academic information: This may include recent grades, credit completion, attendance, or other academic performance data. Academic and emotional/behavioral issues often co-occur. Including both on the same form conveys a more complete picture of the context in which the problem(s) is occurring.
- Information about SEB concerns: Provide a checklist of common SEB concerns. Include both internalizing and externalizing concerns. While checklists have the benefit of taking less time to complete and minimizing subjective interpretation, it is also helpful to provide a blank space for specific concerns to be written in.
- Information regarding strategies or interventions that have already been tried and the level of success achieved with each: Common strategies may also be provided in a checklist.

Although a request for support can be made any time there is concern, schools or districts may consider scheduling a staff review and nomination process at designated times throughout the schoolyear (e.g., toward the end of the first reporting period of the year). During this time, teachers will be asked to review their class rosters alongside a list of risk characteristics and submit the names of any students meeting risk criteria to the Tier 3 Systems Team.
Existing School Data

Finally, existing data should be reviewed regularly by the Tier 3 Systems Team (or combined Advanced Tiers Systems Team) to identify students who may require Tier 3 supports. It is helpful for teams to develop a standardized process with data decision rules for reviewing existing school data to automatically “flag” students for consideration. It is recommended that decision rules are developed relative to (a) nonresponse to supports at Tiers 1 and 2, (b) chronic challenging behaviors or SEB concerns, and (c) less frequent critical events or intense behaviors.

NONRESPONSE TO TIERS 1 & 2

Progress monitoring data collected and reviewed for students enrolled in academic or SEB Tier 2 interventions provide a critical source of information regarding students’ response to intervention and potential need for individualized supports. Students that fail to respond to Tier 2 despite evidence of fidelity of implementation may be considered for Tier 3 supports. Intensification of supports may also be considered for students that show some improvement but not at an adequate rate, referred to as a “questionable” response to intervention.

For more detailed guidance on examining and interpreting progress monitoring data and response to Tier 2 intervention, see the following resource: Chapter 4: Identifying Students for Individualized Support. The following frequently asked questions and answers provide further clarification about non-responsiveness to Tiers 1 and 2.

- How long should a student receive a Tier 2 intervention before the Systems Team analyzes data to determine response/progress?

In general, it is recommended that a student participates in an intervention for at least two to four weeks before data are analyzed to determine effectiveness (Crone, Hawken & Horner, 2010). Teams will also want to collect a sufficient amount of data before making decisions about effectiveness. Experts advise that eight data points collected across an even longer period (i.e., at least four to six weeks) may be necessary to demonstrate a stable trend of student performance for teams to determine student response (Deno et al., 2009). Of course, if a student’s SEB needs intensify during this time, teams may implement Tier 3 support without waiting.

- When should the Tier 3 Systems Team consider providing more intensive, individualized supports for a student receiving a Tier 2 intervention?

Students should not be stuck in Tier 2 if the intervention is not working. However, before intensifying supports, teams should ensure fidelity of implementation, consider the match between the perceived function of behavior and/or academic diagnostic data and the intervention, the appropriateness of the goal, and potential modifications or intensifications of the existing intervention. If the above conditions are met and progress monitoring data continue to indicate a lack of response, teams should consider a more intensive, individualized intervention. Remember, that consideration of more intensive Tier 3 supports is not the same as a referral for special education services. Both processes can occur concurrently to produce the most effective and efficient response to student need.
Can a student receive Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 supports at the same time?

Yes! Multi-tiered systems of support, such as PBIS, are designed to enable students to access a continuum of interventions at any level to support their success. Students receiving intensive, individualized supports should also be included in all Tier 1 supports and have access to Tier 2 supports, as needed. For example, a student with an individualized behavior support plan (Tier 3) may also receive academic tutoring (Tier 2), be enrolled in Check In Check Out (Tier 2) and should be formally taught schoolwide expectations and acknowledged for demonstrating them consistent with school-wide practice (Tier 1).

How does support at Tier 3 differ from Special Education?

The primary difference between Tier 3 supports and Special Education is that students do not need a diagnosis to receive Tier 3 supports. Instead, access to intensive, individualized supports provided at Tier 3 is based on identified need, regardless of disability status. As described by the National Center on Intensive Intervention and Center on PBIS, “The primary purpose of intensive intervention is to ensure that students with the most severe and persistent learning and/or behavioral needs have access to the requisite level of support.” Although “intensive intervention may be an appropriate mechanism for delivering specially designed instruction for some students with disabilities...schools must ensure that intensive intervention is available to all students who need it.” (National Center on Intensive Intervention & Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2021).

CHRONIC SEB NEEDS

In schools with Tier 2 systems in place, students with persistent, ongoing SEB needs should be identified for Tier 2 supports first and considered for Tier 3 supports based on data decision rules for nonresponse, described above. In order to be proactive and intervene early it is critical that the school Tier 2 Systems Team (or a combined Advanced Tiers Systems Team) review data frequently. Identifying students with SEB and/or academic concerns and intervening early is the most effective way to change SEB trajectories.

Table 2, based on one developed by Missouri PBIS, provides an example of the data sources teams may consider (MO SW-PBS Tier 2 Team Workbook, 2017). Consider local norms as well as national standards when developing data decision rules for how to define proficient, at-risk, and high risk. Students with scores reaching the level of “at-risk” would be considered for Tier 2 intervention, while students with scores in the “high risk” level would be considered for Tier 3 intervention.
There are some events or behaviors that are so concerning or severe that very few occurrences will automatically trigger consideration of Tier 3 supports. This level of severity tends to include behaviors that significantly impact learning of the student or others and/or dangerous behaviors that threaten the safety of the student or others (e.g., significant property destruction, display of weapons, assault, cutting oneself, attempting suicide). Certain transitions (e.g., transitioning back to school following hospitalization or alternative placement) may also necessitate consideration for individualized support, as would students who are experiencing a pattern of removals from the learning environment.

Tier 3 Systems Teams should identify the behaviors or events that would lead to a direct request for Tier 3 supports. These decision rules will be guided by district policies and procedures but should also be informed by school staff, families, and community stakeholders (e.g., SEB and mental health providers in the community). Tier 3 interventions for intense and persistent challenging behavior often require a comprehensive FBA/BSP completed by someone with advanced behavioral expertise and wraparound services.

### Table 2. Data Used to Consider Additional Supports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>At-Risk</th>
<th>High Risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office Discipline Referral (ODR)</td>
<td>0-1</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>4 or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor Classroom Behavioral Incidents</td>
<td>0-2</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>6 or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absences</td>
<td>&lt;4 per quarter</td>
<td>4+ per quarter</td>
<td>8 per quarter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tardy</td>
<td>&lt;4 per quarter</td>
<td>4+ per quarter</td>
<td>8 per quarter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In School Suspension</td>
<td>0-1</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>4 or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of School Suspension</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades</td>
<td>2.5 or higher</td>
<td>D or F in any class</td>
<td>Ds or Fs in multiple classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Inventory</td>
<td>800+</td>
<td>799 or lower</td>
<td>599 or lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Assessment</td>
<td>3 or 4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>NS; 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Staffing and Professional Development

To build systems that allow individualized support to be delivered quickly and effectively, it is critical to ensure that school-based staff have the knowledge and skills needed to support students with Tier 3 needs. This includes providing targeted professional development and training for staff based on the role they play in supporting the students at Tier 3.

Training for Behavior Support Team Leaders

To increase capacity to support students with Tier 3 needs most efficiently (i.e., without having to rely solely on district-level behavior support specialists) it is recommended that schools identify and train a few (e.g., 3-5) individuals who will be tasked with leading individual student teams in the FBA/BSP process. Those tasked with leading the FBA/BSP process need to have training and on-going coaching support from district-level behavior specialists related to:

- Understanding behavioral theory
- Conducting FBA (e.g., staff interviews, records reviews, collecting direct observation data in school settings)
- Identifying individualized interventions that are function-based and contextually appropriate
- Leading a team in using assessment information to design individualized SEB/academic supports
- Implementing individualized BSPs
- Training and coaching plan implementers
- Designing, collecting, and using fidelity and outcome data for progress monitoring and to inform changes to BSP over time

In addition to training, it is critical for school-based FBA/BSP team leads to have the necessary time allocated to carry out the responsibilities associated with their role. School-level Behavior Specialists are often special education teachers, school counselors, school psychologists, or school social workers with advanced behavioral training and enough flexibility provided within their role to regularly conduct FBA interviews and classroom observations, facilitate student support team meetings, and support plan implementers.

Training for All School Staff

It is essential to build school-based capacity to support the FBA/BSP process, as BSPs are typically implemented by classroom staff. It is not unusual for most if not all teachers to have one or more students with individualized needs in their classroom in any given school year. Thus, at a minimum all educational
staff school should receive professional development training to understand:

1. how Tier 3 systems and supports function within their school’s PBIS framework,

2. the process for nominating or referring a student who is having behavioral challenges for Tier 3 supports, and

3. their potential role as a member of an individual student support team.

To design Tier 3 supports that are not only likely to be effective but also feasible for use in typical classroom settings, team leads with behavioral expertise work closely with members of the Individual Student team, including the student’s classroom teacher(s), to build student BSPs. Once the BSP has been created, classroom staff are responsible for carrying out the strategies and supports included in the plan on a daily basis. To facilitate the behavior support planning process and ensure that individualized BSPs are successfully implemented, it is strongly recommended that all school staff also receive training related to the FBA/BSP process. Though it is not necessary for all educational staff to have the skills needed to independently conduct FBA or build comprehensive plans, it is important for all staff to have a basic understanding of behavioral function and what is meant by a function-based approach to preventing and addressing challenging behavior (Borgmeier et al., 2017). Specifically, we recommend that all school staff receive training related to:

- Understanding why challenging behavior occurs (i.e., what purpose it serves)
- Teaching replacement skills so students have alternative ways to express their needs
- Considering function when selecting preventive, teaching, and consequence strategies
- Monitoring BSP implementation and student outcomes

**Training for Building Administrators**

Active commitment by building administrators is critical for implementing and sustaining Tier 3 systems and supports. Administrators play a central role in behavior support planning in that they provide decision making authority that allows teams to allocate the resources (e.g., time, personnel) needed to implement the BSP (Evanovich & Scott, 2016). Having an administrator on the Tier 3 Systems Team can also increase staff accountability and encourage consistent BSP implementation. Administrators participate in trainings along with staff to learn more about function-based logic, the FBA/BSP teaming process, and the role the administrator plays in the process. Participation by administrators in trainings with staff can also help signify a strong commitment to supporting students with Tier 3 needs.
Coaching

An important distinction needs to be made between initial training related to Tier 3 systems and practices and the on-going coaching needed to effectively implement those practices in schools. Training is necessary but insufficient, as training alone is unlikely to lead to lasting change in behavior or the effective use of new skills (Kraft et al., 2018). Beyond initial training, educators need ongoing support from skilled coaches to generalize and adapt new skills to their unique contexts. A critical aspect of successful Tier 3 implementation in schools is coaching support for School Systems Teams (systems coaching), Individual Student Teams (systems coaching), and BSP implementers (individual/instructional coaching).

**Systems Coaching**

It is recommended that the school-level team receive regular support from a coach (typically a district specialist or outside consultant) with expertise in schoolwide PBIS, Tier 3 systems, data systems, and implementation science. Coaching at this level is focused on helping teams build the organizational systems and operating procedures needed to fully implement and sustain an effective Tier 3 model. Systems coaches provide guidance and support with teaming activities such as:

- Creating and training staff in Tier 3 systems, policies, and procedures
- Defining team member roles and team operating procedures
- Using aggregated student data (e.g., % of students meeting individual behavior goals) for decision making related to Tier 3 systems
- Completing and scoring fidelity instruments (e.g., the TFI) for Tier 3 systems
- Using fidelity data to identify and prioritize Tier 3 action plan items

**Team Coaching**

Once a BSP has been created, Individual Student Team members are encouraged to meet regularly (i.e., every one or two weeks initially, and at least monthly once the student is making acceptable progress) to review and monitor plan implementation and student outcomes. Coaching support for student team members is often provided by either a district-level or school-based individual with extensive applied behavioral expertise who focuses on helping the team to effectively design, monitor and adapt Tier 3 support for individual students. Specific areas of coaching support might include:

- Using multiple sources of data to identify BSP strategies that are function-based as well as contextually and culturally relevant
- Designing BSP implementation and evaluation plans
- Making decisions based on BSP implementation and student progress-monitoring data
- Creating decision rules and data-driven processes for determining when and how to intensify, adapt, or systematically fade Tier 3 student support
Individual/Instructional Coaching

Beyond working with other members of the Individual Student Team to create the BSP, classroom staff need ongoing opportunities to receive in-situ coaching support on how to effectively implement the plan. Specifically, plan implementers should receive coaching on how and when to:

- Use each of the BSP strategies in typical school contexts
- Collect and record direct-observation behavioral data
- Problem-solve unanticipated barriers
- Adapt the plan as necessary in response to student need and contextual factors

Coaching support at the individual/instructional level should be tailored to the unique interventions being implemented, implementer(s) skills, and phase of BSP implementation (e.g., initial implementation vs. ongoing support for an established plan). For example, a teacher who is implementing new behavior support strategies will likely need more direct coaching support in the classroom setting prior to and during the first few (e.g., 2-3) days of implementation. Best practices in direct coaching support include role-play and/or modeling, prompting, and opportunities to receive immediate feedback (Freeman, Sugai, Simonsen, & Everett, 2017). Therefore, it is important for coaches at this level to have extensive behavioral knowledge and training in how to effectively coach staff.

As staff become more comfortable implementing the plan over time, coaching support can shift to focusing more on using behavioral data to evaluate student response and adapt the plan accordingly. In addition to asking staff to collect behavioral data, it is recommended that individual/instructional coaches work with implementers to arrange regular (e.g., weekly or bi-weekly) observations of the BSP being implemented during the typical school day over the first few weeks of plan implementation. It is also important for coaches to provide regular opportunities for implementing staff to ask questions, problem-solve, or request additional coaching support.

Note: Optimally, the same individual(s) would provide coaching to the Individual Student Team and BSP implementers to maximize efficiency and promote consistent use of the plan. This role may be the responsibility of one or more district or school-level personnel with extensive applied behavioral knowledge. Regardless of job title, it is critical that personnel in this role have time within their schedule explicitly allocated (by district or building administrators) to providing coaching support for staff implementing Tier 3 support.

The following resources provide more information on providing coaching within MTSS/PBIS:

- [What is Coaching?](#)
- [Coaching for Ongoing Professional Learning within Tiered Support Models](#)
Student, Family, and Community Involvement

A key feature of PBIS is the involvement of student, family, and community stakeholders in the design and implementation of schoolwide systems of support (Minke & Anderson, 2005; Sugai & Horner, 2006). Engaging students, families, and community members in the development of Tier 3 systems and procedures is critical to ensuring the relevance and sustained implementation of Tier 3. Students, families, and community members help to ensure Tier 3 systems and practices are accessible, reflect and respect community values, and integrate other sources of support (e.g., community-based mental or physical health support, after-school care, coaches). Furthermore, family and community engagement in education is associated with substantial benefits, including improved academic performance and school engagement (Fan & Williams, 2010; Rumberger, 1995) as well as increased collaboration between parents and teachers (Fefer et al., 2020). Consider the following examples of engaging stakeholders in developing Tier 3 systems and procedures:

- **Student identification process:** Get input from family members, students, and relevant community stakeholders on the acceptability and accessibility of the methods for identifying students for Tier 3 supports. This process is not the same as referring a student for special education supports. Involving families in planning the universal screening process can help identify and address potential concerns early on. Seeking feedback from families and students on the format of request for support forms and the ease of the process can help ensure accessibility. Coordination with relevant community organizations may be helpful in determining appropriate data decision rules and data sources.

- **Monitoring & communicating student progress:** Members of Tier 3 student teams work together to support student behavior and outcomes. Therefore, it is critical that the process in place for monitoring and communicating student progress is family- and student-friendly. Language and procedures that are common in education may not be familiar to students, families, and community members. A common language should be used to describe goals and progress toward those goals. Seeking input from other stakeholders (e.g., on language, process for setting goals, method of communication) when developing or formalizing progress monitoring systems can prevent confusion and miscommunication across student-level teams.

- **Integration with other tiers of support:** Too often, families of students receiving individualized supports are unaware of the continuum of supports at Tiers 1 and 2 or how these supports are related to Tier 3 interventions. Families can provide input on ways to integrate Tier 3 with supports at other tiers as well as develop effective two-way communication.

Tier 3 Systems Teams are encouraged to provide a variety of ways to engage with and seek input from students, families, and community members. Methods of engagement should span a continuum that involves smaller numbers of people as demands for time increase. For example, a Tier 3 Systems Team may engage stakeholders in the following ways, organized from least to most time intensive:

- Surveys
- Focus groups
• Active participation on Individual Student Team
• On-going membership on School Systems Team

Communication and partnership with relevant community organizations at the systems level is more likely to result in effective, comprehensive, and sustainable supports for children and youth with complex needs. Coordination and alignment of PBIS and mental health supports begin at the district level, as detailed in <link to Tier 3 District Systems brief>. Though coordination and alignment are important throughout the full continuum of support (Tiers 1, 2, and 3), it is especially critical in Tier 3. Students with Tier 3 needs often require community supports in addition to those provided at school. However, families may be unaware of relevant community resources. Even when students are connected with external supports, these interventions are often siloed and uncoordinated and use of data for decision-making is inconsistent. By seeking input from community social and mental health organizations as well as families, systems for connecting families with community resources can be developed at the school level and coordination can be supported.

The following resources provide more detailed information on facilitating student, family, and/or community engagement at Tier 3:

• **Aligning and Integrating Family Engagement in Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS): Concepts and strategies for Families and Schools in Key Contexts**

• **Family-School-Community Alliance: PBIS Essentials for Families**

• **Installing an Interconnected Systems Framework at the School Level: Recommendations and Examples to Guide School Leadership Teams, Practitioners, and Coaches**

**Data Systems for Evaluating School Team Success**

Implementation is a process, not an event. Implementation of the Tier 3 systems described above requires planning, preparation, and continual evaluation and adjustment. Tier 3 Systems Teams are responsible for asking (and answering) the following questions:

• How many students are receiving Tier 3 supports?
• Are those supports effective and resulting in meaningful change?
• Are Tier 3 interventions implemented as designed?
• Is our request for additional support system efficient and effective?
• Are our Tier 3 systems equitable?

School teams answer these questions by developing data systems to evaluate the success of their Tier 3 system of supports. Tier 3 Systems Teams will want to examine two kinds of data: fidelity data and outcome data. Fidelity data are used to determine if Tier 3 interventions are provided as intended. Outcome data measure student growth in response to those interventions. Just as Individual Student Teams collect and review these data to assess individual student progress, Systems Teams collect these data across students to assess the effectiveness of the system.
Outcome Data

Prior to monthly meetings, information should be collected to summarize the number of students currently receiving individualized interventions and their progress status. In order to identify possible patterns related to students identified for supports and the effectiveness of supports, it is recommended that data is disaggregated (e.g., sorted by grade level, ethnicity, type of interventions delivered). A data system such as I-SWIS (www.pbisapps.org) summarizes this information in a centralized location through a web-based application. Regardless of whether an application is used or data are collected from individual Student Team facilitators, ensuring the Systems Team can easily access the following information supports systems-level decisions about individualized interventions:

- Student’s name
- Student’s demographic information (e.g., grade, race/ethnicity, IEP/504 status)
- Team coordinator’s name
- Date Tier 3 intervention started
- Type of Tier 3 intervention (e.g., academic, brief FBA/BSP, comprehensive FBA/BSP, wraparound)
- Progress status (e.g., meeting goals, making progress toward goals, not making progress, or support discontinued.)

Once this information is collected and reviewed, it can be compiled to provide a monthly summary snapshot reviewed by the Tier 3 Systems Team. Table 3, based on the Tier 2/3 Tracking Tool developed by the Midwest PBIS Network (2015), provides an example.

Table 3. Tier 3 Tracking Tool

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th># of Students Participating</th>
<th># of Students Meeting Goals</th>
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Fidelity Data

Assessing the fidelity of Tier 3 interventions across individual teams provides meaningful information on the general robustness of the systems supporting individual Student Teams. If many teams struggle to meet regularly or collect progress monitoring data, this indicates changes at the systems level (e.g., staffing and scheduling, coaching and professional development, data collection systems) may be necessary. The following data may be reviewed regularly by the Systems Team to assess the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the school’s Tier 3 systems:

- Time between identification of students for Tier 3 supports and intervention
- Proportion of individualized teams meeting at least monthly
- Frequency of individualized teams collecting and reviewing progress monitoring data related to fidelity of implementation and student outcomes
- Proportion of individualized teams that include families, community members, students, and teachers

In addition to regular review of the above data, Tier 3 Systems Teams are encouraged to complete Tier 3 of the Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) at least annually, although teams may choose to complete more frequently while developing necessary systems. Completing Tier 3 of the TFI, either separately or in combination with Tier 1 and Tier 2, helps teams assess the extent to which core features are in place and guides action planning.

Additional Resources

The following resources provide further guidance on Tier 3 school-level systems implementation:

- Tier 3 Installation Brief
- MO SW-PBS Tier 3 Workbook & Resources
References


Evanovich, L. L., & Scott, T. M. (2016). Facilitating PBIS implementation: an administrator’s guide to presenting the logic and steps to faculty and staff. *Beyond Behavior, 25*(1), 4-8.


Embedded Hyperlinks

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7. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-M7HUVgas2_0RopZtvQkyVi48GtKnqo/
22. https://charts.intensiveintervention.org/ascreening
27. https://www.pbis.org/topics/coaching
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