Ohio’s Commitment to Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

Over the past year, there has been tremendous excitement and momentum in Ohio around Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and the importance of school climate to student success. Ohio’s adopted strategic plan for education, *Each Child, Our Future*, highlights the need for a positive climate in every school to support student well-being, academic achievement and future success. In August 2018, Ohio enacted one of the strongest state laws in the country addressing multi-tiered behavioral supports in the interest of reducing disciplinary referrals, especially for prekindergarten through grade 3 students. As enacted by the 132nd General Assembly, House Bill 318, the *Supporting Alternatives for Fair Education (SAFE) Act*, strengthened the requirements for school districts to implement PBIS. In this report, you will find highlights from Ohio’s robust PBIS initiative and will learn more about best practices from award-winning schools across the state.

The Ohio Department of Education is required by law¹ to submit a report to the Ohio General Assembly that includes the following:

1. A summary of the best practices for implementing a Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports framework by school districts throughout Ohio; and
2. The total number of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions issued by a school district or building to students in prekindergarten through grade 3, disaggregated by category of offense and disaggregated within each offense by sex, race, economic disadvantage and disability.

WHAT IS PBIS?
Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports is a framework that guides districts and schools in developing policies and practices that proactively define, teach and support appropriate student behavior. PBIS creates consistent, predictable learning environments that increase positive behavior and academic outcomes for each student by teaching behavioral expectations across all environments (from the bus, to the classroom and in the hallways, to the lunchroom). Schools effectively implementing PBIS promote positive behavior through encouragement and reinforcement and provide correction of inappropriate behavior through prompting, reteaching and opportunities for behavior correction.

PBIS BEST PRACTICES FROM OHIO’S SCHOOLS
Ohio has a longstanding PBIS Network. Guided by the Department’s Center for Student Supports, the network develops training, coaching materials, guidance and resources to support the scaling up of PBIS in Ohio schools.

The Ohio PBIS Network identified nine best practices, included below, for the effective implementation of PBIS. These nine best practices are based on best practices identified by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Program’s Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports and elements of the Tiered Fidelity Inventory, an assessment measuring the extent to which school teams apply the core features of PBIS.

PBIS BEST PRACTICES
1. Consistent administrative leadership and involvement. Administrators guide the necessary cultural shift and systemwide efforts for successful implementation of PBIS.
2. Team-based structures, such as building-level teams and district-level teams, are in place to ensure implementation of practices. These teams assess, problem-solve and plan for the implementation of PBIS.

¹ Section 9, HB 318, 132nd General Assembly
3. Each school district (or building) identifies three to five positively stated behavioral expectations, such as being safe, respectful and responsible.

4. The three to five behavioral expectations are taught explicitly in settings across the school environment, including the classroom, hallway, cafeteria and restroom. Lesson plans are created and employed throughout the school year.

5. Districts and schools develop systems to consistently acknowledge and reinforce students who demonstrate the behavior expectations. Well-developed acknowledgment systems are tailored to the developmental levels of the students, are constructed to minimize the use of tangible rewards and promote student responsibility and motivation.

6. Districts and schools establish consistent systems for the correction of behavior errors. This includes clear policies and procedures for addressing classroom-managed behaviors and office-managed behaviors (minor vs. major behaviors).

7. PBIS teams consistently collect and analyze data for problem-solving and decision-making. The data is collected at the schoolwide, small-group and individual student levels and reviewed at least monthly.

8. A multi-tiered system of support is available to meet the varying needs of students. All students receive core instruction and reinforcement of the schoolwide behavioral expectations (Tier I). Small-group instruction and additional social or academic skill practice is provided as supplemental supports for some students (Tier II). Individualized assessment, intervention plans and wraparound services are provided for students who need comprehensive supports (Tier III).

9. Practices are implemented in a culturally responsive manner that honor and reference the varied cultural backgrounds of the students. Staff receive training and ongoing professional development to promote cultural awareness and sensitivity. Staff periodically review discipline data and address any disproportionality patterns. Students and families are actively engaged in the planning and implementation process.

BEST PRACTICES IN OHIO’S SCHOOLS
Schools that apply these best practices experience success and sustainability with their PBIS efforts.

Helke Elementary School in Vandalia has a robust PBIS framework. The school attributes its success to the strong commitment from both administration and staff. This commitment has allowed the school to develop clear and consistent practices for teaching and reinforcing behavior. The PBIS team meets on a regular basis to review and analyze schoolwide data. Using the data, the team has changed practices to best meet the needs of students. Additionally, the school developed comprehensive systems to support students who need additional support. This includes practice time when students meet with staff members to work on skills they find difficult.

A teacher at Helke Elementary explained that students respond well to the practice time because the extra time spent with staff strengthens relationships and improves self-confidence. Staff and students both see improvements in the school climate.

Similar success has been seen at Harvey High School in Painesville. The PBIS team at Harvey High School recognizes the importance of administrative leadership. The commitment and support from administration was evident when the school identified internal PBIS coaches to guide the work. PBIS coaches within a school building help ensure consistency of practices and adult implementation.

Erica Houston, teacher and PBIS coach from Harvey High School, notes the value of consistency in the high school setting. "In high school there are so many moving parts. You have several different departments. You have students that may be going to a career center during the day, students that are coming in later, students that are in CCP (College Credit Plus) coming in late, coming in early. The only way to maintain that regularity and continuity from one room to the next, one grade to the next, one level to the next, is by implementing PBIS.
where everyone is enforcing the same expectations for behavior, for academics, for everything. To me it’s more important in high school than in any other level.”

CELEBRATING POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS IN OHIO

The schools mentioned above are not alone in their success with PBIS. Each year, the Ohio PBIS Network recognizes Ohio schools implementing PBIS with fidelity through a recognition system. Schools can earn recognition at the bronze, silver or gold levels. Ohio schools and districts apply to their regional state support teams for this recognition, and awards are announced each fall. The schools receive a certificate of award, are recognized at the annual statewide PBIS Showcase Conference and are encouraged to present their work at the showcase to teach other schools and districts about their practices.

Two hundred thirty districts and schools received awards for the 2018-2019 school year. Many of these award winners open their doors to neighboring districts wishing to observe exemplar PBIS practices. A list of PBIS award winners can be found on the Department’s PBIS Recognition, Visitation and Showcase webpage.

ELIMINATING OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS AND EXPULSIONS FOR OHIO’S YOUNGEST LEARNERS

Ohio law requires districts and community schools to eliminate out-of-school suspensions and expulsions for students in prekindergarten through grade 3 by the 2021-2022 school year for offenses without exemptions outlined below. Schools are required to phase in reductions in the number of out-of-school suspensions or expulsions allowed for prekindergarten through grade 3 students, using the district’s 2018-2019 school year data as a baseline. Districts, community schools, STEM or STEAM school established under chapter 3326 of the revised code, and college preparatory boarding schools established under chapter 3328 of the revised code are expected to gradually decrease suspensions as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Percent of Out-of-School Suspension/Expulsion Reductions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018-2019</td>
<td>0% reduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019-2020</td>
<td>25% reduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020-2021</td>
<td>50% reduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021-2022</td>
<td>100% reduction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School districts and community schools will receive their baseline data in a separate communication from the Department, and reduction will be monitored accordingly. The reduction and elimination requirement does not include out-of-school suspensions or expulsions related to circumstances that pose significant danger to school and student safety. Districts and schools are not required to reduce or eliminate out-of-school suspensions and expulsions for these reasons:

- Bringing a firearm to a school or on any other district property;
- Bringing a firearm to an interscholastic competition, extracurricular event or any other school program or activity that is not on the district’s property;
- Bringing a knife capable of causing serious bodily injury to a school, or other school property, interscholastic competition, extracurricular event, or other program or activity sponsored by the school or in which the district is participating;
- Possessing a firearm or knife capable of serious bodily injury (including any initially brought on school property by another person) at a school or other district property, interscholastic competition, extracurricular event, or any other school program or activity.

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2 Section 9, HB 318.
3 ORC 3313.66(B)(2)(a)
4 ORC 3313.66(B)(2)(b)
5 ORC 3313.66(B)(3)
6 ORC 3313.66(B)(3)
• Committing an act that is a criminal offense when committed by an adult and that results in serious physical harm to persons or property while the student is at school, on other district property, or at an interscholastic competition, extracurricular event, or any other school program or activity\(^7\);
• Making a bomb threat to a school building or any premises at which a school activity is occurring at the time of the threat.\(^8\)

Out-of-school suspension and expulsion data for prekindergarten through grade 3 students in public school districts and community schools for the 2018-2019 school year can be found on the Department’s [webpage](#). The data are disaggregated by category of offense and further disaggregated by sex, race, whether the student has been identified as economically disadvantaged and whether the student has a disability.

These statistics are calculated using data reported in the Education Management Information System (EMIS) by districts and community schools for the 2018-2019 school year. The numbers provided represent the number of discipline *incidents* and do not represent the actual *numbers* of students who were suspended out-of-school or expelled in prekindergarten through grade 3. Any school district or community school with numbers in any offense category and/or disaggregated category made up of fewer than 10 students will be displayed as <10 in the associated spreadsheet. The data are disaggregated by category of offense:

1. **Immediate Health and Safety Exemptions** – A prekindergarten through grade 3 student was issued an out-of-school suspension or expulsion at the discretion of the district or community school necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of the student, student’s fellow classmates, classroom staff or teachers, or other school employees.
2. **Out-of-school Suspensions and Expulsions Without Exemptions** – A prekindergarten through grade 3 student was issued an out-of-school suspension or expulsion by the district or community school, but the offense was not listed as an exemption in Ohio Revised Code. This category of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions must be gradually eliminated by the 2021-2022 school year.
3. **Ohio Revised Code 3313.66 Exemptions** – A prekindergarten through grade 3 student was issued an out-of-school suspension or expulsion for an offense the Ohio General Assembly identified as a necessary reason for suspension and expulsion listed above.
4. **Data Reporting Error** – This category represents out-of-school suspensions or expulsions of prekindergarten through grade 3 students that were not coded in EMIS as any of the above categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline Reason</th>
<th>Statewide PK-3 Offense Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A prekindergarten through grade 3 student was issued an out-of-school suspension or expulsion at the discretion of the district or community school necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of the student, student’s fellow classmates, classroom staff or teachers, or other school employees.</td>
<td>8,164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A prekindergarten through grade 3 student was issued an out-of-school suspension or expulsion by the district or community school, but the offense was not listed as an exemption in Ohio Revised Code. This category of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions must be gradually eliminated by the 2021-2022 school year.</td>
<td>10,655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A prekindergarten through grade 3 student was issued an out-of-school suspension or</td>
<td>3,028</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^7\) 3 ORC 3313.66(B)(4)  
\(^8\) ORC 3313.66(B)(5)
Ohio districts and community schools issued 26,220 out-of-school suspensions and expulsions to prekindergarten through grade 3 students in the 2018-2019 school year. Of these 26,220 out-of-school suspensions and expulsions, 11,192 were incidents determined to be a significant risk to student and school safety or to the immediate health and safety of students and staff. These 11,192 out-of-school suspensions and expulsions are included in Ohio Revised Code exemptions. However, 10,655 out-of-school suspensions and expulsions were issued to prekindergarten through grade 3 students for out-of-school suspensions and expulsions without exemptions. Out-of-school suspensions and expulsions in this category must be reduced and ultimately eliminated by 2021-2022. The 2018-2019 school year serves as the baseline for this gradual elimination.

The data included in this report are baseline data and do not represent implementation of training and coaching of PBIS with an intent of decreasing out-of-school suspensions and expulsions. With increased support for training and implementation of PBIS, the Department expects to see decreases in out-of-school suspensions and expulsions accordingly.

**PBIS: AN EFFECTIVE STRATEGY FOR REDUCING OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS AND EXPULSIONS**

Ohio schools implementing PBIS with fidelity have demonstrated noteworthy reductions in their rates of office discipline referrals, suspensions and expulsions. With these reductions, administrators and teachers have more time to focus on academic progress, and students who previously were removed from the academic environment now spend more time receiving instruction. Further, decreased behavior distractions in the classroom lead to an increase in academic instruction time for other students in the classroom. Comparing the gold winners to the bronze winners in the graphs below illustrates that high-fidelity implementation results in fewer discipline referrals and fewer out-of-school suspensions.
The sample for the data consisted of 49 schools that were recognized for implementing PBIS with a high degree of fidelity in the 2015-2016 academic year. These schools received gold, silver or bronze awards by the PBIS network. In addition, 31 of the schools were elementary schools and 18 were middle or high schools.

The 132nd General Assembly of the Ohio Legislature points to PBIS as a support to schools and districts to reduce and eventually eliminate out-of-school suspensions and expulsions for students in prekindergarten.
through grade 3. With more training opportunities and supports to implement PBIS, schools and districts are expected to eliminate out-of-school suspensions and expulsions by the 2021-2022 school year.

EXPANDING PBIS
PBIS is a systems change process that takes districts and schools three to five years to fully implement. This requires ongoing training and coaching. The Department is using a two-prong approach to scale up and expand the use of PBIS across the state. The Department is working to support schools in aligning and integrating PBIS with other initiatives, such as trauma-informed care and social-emotional learning. The Department also is preparing PBIS trainers and coaches through state support teams and educational service centers to increase direct supports for Ohio’s districts and schools. In addition, the Department received a five-year School Climate Transformation grant from the U.S. Department of Education to expand and enhance PBIS training, coaching and online resources. The scale-up of PBIS represents just one of the many efforts the Department is undertaking to enhance social-emotional learning, as outlined in Ohio’s strategic plan, Each Child, Our Future. PBIS is a core component of the plan’s priority strategy to meet the needs of the whole child, which is a direct reflection of social-emotional learning. For PBIS to be implemented with fidelity, clear communication about the interconnectedness between PBIS and social-emotional learning is essential. Further, PBIS is the foundation for social-emotional learning, with a simultaneous focus on both results in improved school climate and improved outcomes for students and families. PBIS teaches desired behaviors that cultivate social and emotional development, and both PBIS and social-emotional learning focus on relationships at their core, as well as the explicit teaching of behavior expectations and social-emotional skills.