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Building District-Level Capacity for Positive Behavior Support

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As more and more schools adopt school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) as a model for school improvement and the success of initial demonstration sites becomes evident, districts are faced with expansion and sustainability issues. Careful planning of these implementation efforts requires district personnel to be familiar with the resources and supports needed to implement and sustain such district-wide systems change efforts and build an infrastructure to support SWPBS initiatives. The purpose of this article is to expand upon *School-wide Positive Behavior Support: Implementers' Blueprint and Self-Assessment* (Sugai et al., 2005) by describing the how-to of the SWPBS implementation process with specific activities and providing user-friendly tools that can assist a district in "going to scale." Obstacles to and future considerations for expanding the practice of SWPBS are also presented.

Keywords: *systems level planning; positive behavior support; school wide; systems change; district support; implementation sustainability; readiness activities*

Nearly every state has adopted some form of school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) as a model for systems level school improvement. The Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2005) reported that nearly 5,000 schools across 40 states have adopted some approach to positively and proactively addressing the behavior of all students within a school using school-wide positive behavior support, defined as "a broad range of systemic and individualized strategies for achieving important social and learning outcomes while preventing problem behavior with all students" (Sugai et al., 2005). As the success of initial demonstration schools becomes evident, districts are faced with an ever-increasing request for additional schools to receive training and begin SWPBS implementation. Often, requests come from school administrators who desire the same or similar outcomes as their colleagues in PBS demonstration schools. In Florida, it is not uncommon for school districts to initiate SWPBS with 1 to 3 schools the first year and to request 15 or 20 new schools the following school year. District administrators have been known to envision that "all of [their] 150 schools will be PBS schools in the next three years," often without planning for the support required to succeed at that level of implementation.

Without careful planning, such district-wide implementation efforts will likely fail, as district personnel will be unfamiliar with the available resources and with the supports necessary to implement and sustain such district-wide systems change efforts. Collaboration with key district-level stakeholders will assist in supporting and sustaining currently trained and implementing schools and in planning for district-wide expansion. This level of district involvement will build awareness and enhance PBS efforts by utilizing cross-departmental collaboration and preventing the occurrence of competing initiatives.

School-wide Positive Behavior Support: Implementers' Blueprint and Self-Assessment (Sugai et al., 2005) provides a user-friendly guide to improving the efficiency and success of large-scale replications of positive behavior support. This practical tool provides a thorough outline for getting SWPBS started, sustaining efforts, and planning for expansion. The implementation elements in the blueprint consist of the following: (a) leadership team, (b) coordination, (c) funding, (d) visibility, (e) political support, (f) training capacity, (g) coaching capacity, (h) demonstrations, and (i) evaluation.

While the *Implementers' Blueprint* is a tremendous resource for understanding the *what* and *why* of each feature, it does not describe the how-to of the implementation process. The purpose of this article is to enhance the blueprint by describing specific activities and providing user-friendly tools that can assist a district in going to scale. The article discusses each of the nine elements of the blueprint, sharing specific activities and tools that have demonstrated success in helping school districts build capacity for PBS.

Editor's Note: The action editor for this article was Robert H. Horner.

Figure 1
School-Wide Positive Behavior Support: District Readiness Checklist for Leadership Team (2-Sided)

District: _____   Date: _____   Contact Person: _____

Documents/evidence complete?	Items to complete prior to school-wide PBS training
☐ YES ☐ NO	1. A district representative has been identified as the PBS district coordinator (i.e., lead contact) for all PBS initiatives within your district. **List district representative, and provide contact information (name, title, address, phone, cell, fax, e-mail):**
☐ YES ☐ NO	2. District administrators have participated in an awareness presentation summarizing Florida's PBS project and the school-wide PBS process. **List date(s) of presentation, location(s), and name of presenter(s):**
☐ YES ☐ NO	3. A district positive behavior support (PBS) team is formed and has broad representation (including regular and exceptional student education, student support services, personnel preparation, curriculum and instruction, management information systems, safe and drug free schools, school improvement, transportation, etc.). **List team members, and identify roles:**
☐ YES ☐ NO	4. District PBS team commits to attending a portion of the school-wide training and participating in annual or biannual update meetings to discuss progress to date. **Describe when you meet or plan to meet (days, location, and time) throughout the school year:**
☐ YES ☐ NO	5. District PBS team has participated and completed a needs assessment and action plan facilitated by Florida's PBS project. **Provide copy of action plan, and list date of completion:**
☐ YES ☐ NO	6. PBS coaches (facilitators) have been identified by the PBS district coordinator to receive additional training and actively participate in school-wide initiatives (may overlap with district PBS team). **List PBS coaches and roles:**
☐ YES ☐ NO	7. District has allocated or secured funding to support the school-wide initiatives (e.g., School Improvement, Safe and Drug Free Schools, other school or community resources) in their respective schools. **Identify funding source(s) that will be utilized:**
☐ YES ☐ NO	8. School-wide discipline (e.g., school climate, safety, behavior) is identified as one of the top district goals. **Attach a copy of district goals or letter of support from superintendent's office.**
☐ YES ☐ NO	9. The district will provide a letter from area superintendent(s) to participating school principals reminding them of the training dates, requirements of attendance, stipend requirements, items needed at training, etc. **Attach a copy of the letter.**
☐ YES ☐ NO	10. Following training, the district will provide a letter from area superintendent(s) to participating school principals on the importance of data collection and the need for daily use of the database system and encouraging participation of team members in ongoing training opportunities. **Attach a copy of the letter of support disseminated to administrators.**
☐ YES ☐ NO	11. The district is aware that SWIS III is a school-based discipline data system that is neither intended to replace nor capable of replacing the current district database. **Confirm:** ☐ Yes OR ☐ No **List current discipline data system utilized in your district:**
☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ N/A	12. If your school district agrees to adopt SWIS III for participating schools, then the district agrees to provide the participating schools computer access to Internet and at least Netscape 6 or Internet Explorer 5. **Confirm available Internet access:** ☐ **Netscape** _____ OR ☐ **Internet Explorer** _____ *(Please remember that SWIS training is OPTIONAL and follows successful completion of school-wide training.)*
☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ N/A	13. If your school district agrees to adopt SWIS III for participating schools, then the district will provide time for a person from your MIS department to develop query statements necessary for SWIS compatibility with your current district database. **List MIS person and provide contact information:** *(Please remember that SWIS training is OPTIONAL and follows successful completion of school-wide training.)*
☐ YES ☐ NO	14. The district agrees to allow the participating schools to revise and utilize a discipline referral form, problem behavior definitions, and coherent discipline referral process in order to enhance data-based decision making on campuses. **Confirm:** ☐ Yes OR ☐ No
☐ YES ☐ NO	15. The district agrees to allow Florida's PBS project to utilize information from schools and district for future training, technical assistance activities, professional conference presentations, or submission to scholarly publications in the following format(s): **Confirm:** ☐ **Anonymously, without school identifiers** OR ☐ **With the school and district name identified**

Implementing the PBS Blueprint at the District Level

Planning

One of the key tools that can be used to assess the preliminary capacity of a district and to communicate the prerequisites for participating in SWPBS training activities is the District Readiness Checklist (see Figure 1). The District Readiness Checklist summarizes many of the key features in the blueprint and provides a measurable objective for the district to assess its current capacity and its ability to support PBS. It is recommended that the items on this checklist be reviewed and assessed by key district

Figure 2
District Action Planning Guide: Florida's Positive Behavior Support Project

Current Status
    1. Commitment to school-wide PBS
    2. Other initiatives that may impact (positively or negatively) school-wide PBS efforts

Enroll
    1. Members of leadership team, Cross-representation
    2. Capacity to identify the number of schools to be involved
    3. Complete yearly self-assessment and action plan with PBS project
    4. Plan and follow through with a 3- to 5-year action plan
    5. Commit to regular meetings and a process to implement school-wide PBS

Strengths
    1. Coordination
        a. Coordinator/district contact with sufficient FTE to make the process work
    2. Funding
        a. Funding to support activities for the next 3 years
    3. Visibility
        a. Issues that may impact support for the PBS process by the board/superintendent
    4. Training Capacity
        a. Providing training to new schools
        b. Identified trainers freed up to train or recruit new schools
    5. Coaching Capacity
        a. Facilitating (direct assistance or coaches) to participating schools
        b. Support to facilitators working with teams at least once a month
    6. Demonstrations
        a. Schools identified
        b. Range of schools (e.g., exemplary vs. challenging, elementary vs. secondary)
        c. Fiscal and technical support for each school
    7. Evaluation
        a. Standard evaluation processes established
        b. SWIS in each school for assistance in data-based decision-making
        c. Opportunities for participating schools to network

Goals
    1. Goals to accomplish in three years. Outcomes you would like to achieve
    2. Goals to accomplish in one year. Outcomes you would like to achieve
    3. Tasks to be accomplished in the next three months to make progress towards those goals
First Steps
    1. Tasks to be initiated and by whom in the next week to address 3-month goals
    2. Person to follow up on the first steps
    3. Schedule next district leadership team meeting
    4. Person to reproduce and disseminate this document

Note: From Florida's Positive Behavior Support Project, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL.

stakeholders each school year as the discussion of expansion occurs. Most items on the checklist are addressed during biannual district action planning meetings.

The district action planning meeting is used to assist the district leadership team (key stakeholders) in developing an annual, comprehensive plan for gaining commitment, coordinating support, and evaluating progress of PBS activities for all schools in the district. The district action plan helps to determine which district personnel, representing various service areas, are needed to build and maintain PBS as a priority for schools within the district. The district action plan also determines the district-level personnel who may be identified as PBS coaches. PBS coaches are directly responsible for facilitating and assisting school-based PBS teams with implementation and for regularly monitoring school-wide progress. The district action plan also allows the district leadership team to plan

for resources (e.g., time, funding) to support implementing school teams. In addition, during the district action planning process, the district leadership team generates goals for expanding positive behavior supports within the district for the upcoming school year. Many district leadership teams request to meet quarterly rather than annually or biannually to maintain cross-departmental communication and stay informed of current and planned PBS efforts.

The Florida PBS Project has found the use of a structured team process to be very effective in assisting the district leadership team in planning for each year (see Figure 2). The items addressed on the District Readiness Checklist, including several of the elements in the blueprint, are summarized utilizing graphic techniques on large pieces of paper so that the entire team can remain active participants throughout the process. The process requires as little as 2 hours to complete and allows the

district leadership team to measure where they have been and where they are now and to plan for future PBS efforts. Results of the meeting are transferred to a document and used during subsequent team meetings to assist in action planning based upon the goals established.

Implementation Element 1: Leadership Team

Establishing a district leadership team is the first and most important activity to complete prior to initiating district-level SWPBS activities. Although the district leadership team may only meet annually or biannually, it provides the vision, leadership, and resources necessary for going to scale in a district. It has been the policy of Florida's Positive Behavior Support Project that SWPBS training should not occur until a district leadership team is formed and meets at least once for an initial district action planning meeting. In the same manner that the school leadership team or school-based PBS team is responsible for SWPBS at the school level, the district leadership team is responsible for implementation efforts across a district. The major responsibilities for the team are (a) identifying a district contact to serve as a collaborator with the state PBS project, (b) participating in annual or biannual team planning meetings, (c) identifying PBS coaches or facilitators for each school site, (d) evaluating the effectiveness of each school's coach, (e) identifying specific schools that will receive SWPBS training, (f) coordinating with the state PBS project during the intensive summer training, (g) providing support for coaches and school teams implementing PBS, and (h) monitoring the progress of school teams by reviewing discipline data, academic data, and other PBS evaluation measures.

District leadership teams often undergo a transition across school years from an initial team to an established district leadership team. The initial team may consist of a few people who are enthusiastic and committed to establishing SWPBS within their district. These individuals have the formidable task of building awareness and soliciting additional district stakeholders. The initial team may only support a few schools in completing the initial SWPBS training in hopes of establishing demonstration sites and building momentum toward establishing PBS throughout the district. However, if a district is committing to going to scale, it is recommended that the initial leadership team be expanded to include additional members. Additional members of the district leadership team should have a commitment to the PBS process, a vision for expansion and sustainability, the capacity to make decisions, and the ability to commit resources to SWPBS expansion efforts. The district leadership team should include but not be limited to upper-level administrators from an array of departments, including general and special education, student support services, personnel preparation, curriculum and instruction, dropout prevention, management information systems, safe and healthy schools, school improvement, and transportation.

Florida's Positive Behavior Support Project (FLPBS) serves a coaching and support role for each of the district leadership teams. Initially, the FLPBS staff member may organize and lead the district leadership planning meeting. As the district team gains a better understanding of the PBS process and its own district-level needs, the FLPBS staff member assumes a role as a resource or technical assistance contact. After a few years, several district teams may even organize and complete district leadership meetings without the direct involvement of FLPBS project personnel.

Implementation Element 2: Coordination

One of the first tasks of the district leadership team is to choose a PBS district coordinator. District coordinators are district-level personnel who can be released from some of their other job responsibilities to oversee day-to-day PBS activities across their district. These individuals may currently be managers for district grants, school psychologists, department directors, program specialists, or some other function, or a new position can be established that is devoted strictly to PBS efforts.

The characteristics and responsibilities of the district coordinator include (a) being a district-level (as opposed to a school-based) employee, (b) managing district budgets that support PBS initiatives, (c) being the main contact person for the FLPBS project, (d) being the liaison between the FLPBS project, related projects, and PBS coaches, (e) securing additional funding to support PBS initiatives, (f) scheduling trainings and district-level meetings, (g) facilitating and being a member of the district leadership team, (h) implementing evaluation activities, (i) attending all trainings sponsored by the FLPBS project, (j) attending and possibly cotraining with the FLPBS project, and (k) occasionally attending school-based team meetings to provide district support.

As the characteristics and responsibilities indicate, it is vital that a district coordinator be established prior to the first training on SWPBS. Often, this person is the first point of contact for the FLPBS project in that he or she solicits involvement from the initial district leadership team members. The training agency or the FLPBS project provides support to the district coordinator to help accomplish tasks required to sustain district-level PBS efforts. The FLPBS project then begins to reduce district support as the district coordinator becomes more proficient in his or her job responsibilities. As the number of trained

schools in a district increases, the amount of time allocated for a district coordinator to complete the PBS activities must correspond with that increase.

Implementation Element 3: Funding

The district leadership team needs to address the issue of funding for sustaining and expanding efforts within the district. Funding is needed for a variety of purposes and may include support for (a) individual schools' SWPBS activities, (b) the salary of a district coordinator, (c) the time provided to school teams by PBS coaches, (d) participation of various implementers in local, state, and national conferences on PBS, and (e) state and national presenters for ongoing training. Support to individual schools may include providing start-up monies to kick off school-wide activities, providing stipends for substitute teachers while team members are meeting or attending training, establishing and building a school store, purchasing school-wide incentives, paying for a data entry person, and so forth. These supports may be provided to the school in the form of a mini grant from the district after the school has provided an SWPBS action plan and budget.

As the number of participating schools increase from year to year, the time required by a district coordinator will likely increase. Florida's experience has been that once districts have trained approximately 6 schools, 50% of an individual's salary needs to be devoted to coordinating PBS initiatives. When a district reaches 10 or more schools, a full-time position may be necessary. In addition, the number of coaches needed to support participating schools will likely increase. As a result, the district will need to restructure and plan how tasks for which coaches were previously responsible (e.g., educational evaluations, class consults) will now be accomplished. If this is not done, coaches will likely have new PBS responsibilities in addition to their prior school responsibilities, struggle with burnout, and not be able to adequately support SWPBS implementation efforts.

The FLPBS project has provided funds to school districts to help support their initial school-wide initiatives. The funds (up to $15,000 for districts with six or more trained schools) were made available for what the district deemed appropriate to support their SWPBS initiatives for 1 to 3 years. However, as these external funds provide an additional incentive to districts, they can also create a perception of free support. External funds should be used to boost efforts so a district cannot become completely reliant on those funds to develop its infrastructure. External funds can sometimes create a barrier in capacity-building by causing districts to develop a reliance on an external source rather than building a district infrastructure to support their efforts. When external funds disappear, the infrastructure that was once supported by them may also disappear. Therefore, it is important to utilize the funds to create systems change within the district by providing initial support with plans to reduce external funds following 3 years of implementation.

Implementation Element 4: Visibility

The purpose of building visibility is to increase awareness of PBS activities, to maintain communication across key district and community stakeholders, and to solicit increased interest in expanding PBS efforts throughout the district and community. Dissemination strategies at the district level may include (a) newsletters, (b) presentations at school board meetings, (c) features on school and district Web sites, (d) articles in local newspapers, (e) segments on the local news, (f) presentations at administrators' meetings, and (g) acknowledgment of PBS model or exemplar schools (see Note 1). Any or all of these strategies can be utilized within a given district. District coordinators are encouraged always to notify the district leadership team of dissemination strategies proposed or utilized to maintain communication and participation.

Dissemination efforts at the state level may include the following (a) newsletters, (b) a state-supported Web site, (c) an online forum, (d) annual coaches' trainings, (e) district coordinators' meetings, and (f) annual implementers' forums with acknowledgment of the current PBS model schools across the state. Newsletters disseminated statewide and access to a Web site can increase interest among nonparticipating districts and schools and promote the vision that a PBS initiative is more than a district project and part of a larger statewide initiative supporting children's education. Although coaches' trainings will be discussed later (see Implementation Element 7), it is important to remember the need to link coaches, district coordinators and school teams with their colleagues. District coordinators in Florida participate in 1 or 2 days of meetings each year with the state PBS project staff. These meetings provide opportunity for feedback from and to the state PBS project and an opportunity for the district coordinators to share in planning and evaluating the agenda of the FLPBS project for the next year. The annual implementers' forum provides an opportunity for two or three team members from each school to attend a statewide, 1-day conference on school-wide positive behavior support. This forum provides an opportunity to recognize model schools, to share statewide outcome data, and to learn from similar schools across the state.

These efforts in building visibility across the state assist in securing ongoing funds for Florida's PBS project. However, if your state currently does not have a project to oversee PBS initiatives, then dissemination activities are needed to build stakeholder involvement in hopes of moving toward the formation of a PBS state advisory team. When utilizing visibility strategies, it is important to highlight the outcomes of specific PBS activities as well as the costs and benefits of those outcomes at a district or state level (Sugai et al., 2005). Furthermore, use of these strategies not only builds interest in assisting in district- and state-level expansion efforts but may also assist in building an internal support network. For example, use of a newsletter can highlight the activities and outcomes experienced at participating schools. When newsletters are disseminated to nonparticipating schools, this information can help to build interest for future SWPBS participation, can assist implementing schools in networking and gathering ideas from neighboring schools, and can generate increased buy-in and communication across schools in the district.

Implementation Element 5: Political Support

Political support refers to the written or verbal commitment to SWPBS that is communicated to school administrators, personnel, parents, and students. This may occur via public board meetings, written policies, and redistribution of resources. For instance, political support might include key district administrators' identifying the improvement of social behavior (e.g., discipline, school improvement, climate, safety) as one of the key district goals. If the improvement of social behavior is not a high priority, supports for the district leadership team, coordination, funding, visibility, political support, training, coaching, demonstrations, and evaluation will be greatly affected and may not survive in the long term (Sugai et al., 2005). Political support may also include awareness and communication that SWPBS initiatives can contribute significantly toward achieving the goals of other high-priority initiatives in a district or state, including No Child Left Behind (P.L. 107–110), Reading First (Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Title I), various character education curricula, and Safe Schools–Healthy Students Initiative (Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Title IV).

Obtaining political support and increasing visibility strategies are symbiotic. Achieving a high level of political support will increase the visibility of SWPBS activities. For example, if you are requesting time at an administrators' meeting to increase awareness, the district superintendent should be able to get PBS on the agenda and show his or her support of the district's PBS efforts. Likewise, the district may be more apt to gain political support through increased district-level awareness. For example, districts and schools may be reluctant to commit to SWPBS because so many initiatives are already in place. High-priority initiatives such as Reading First and No Child Left Behind may seem to take precedence. If your district leadership team is utilizing visibility strategies to dispel the myths that PBS is a separate initiative and increase district awareness that PBS is a program and process that can enhance other mandated initiatives, the district may be more liable to provide additional supports.

Implementation Element 6: Training Capacity

Trainers

Sugai et al. (2005) discussed the need to decrease reliance on outside expertise when planning for and conducting PBS trainings. However, it is important to determine whether this is or is not an issue for a district or state. For instance, in Florida, there is already a state-funded PBS project that is responsible for providing PBS trainings and support to districts. Therefore, it is not an expectation for the district to commit to a train-the-trainer model. Because the Florida PBS project is responsible for creating—and updating—the training curriculum and is fluent in the material, it may be difficult to maintain a train-the-trainer model. Because the FLPBS project is conducting multiple trainings across the state, its staff may be more familiar with the material and provide more effective and meaningful trainings. Even if the FLPBS project staff provide the majority of the training, experienced coaches and district coordinators are encouraged to assist with the training and share their SWPBS process experiences with schools.

If there is a funded project in your state that coordinates PBS activities and supports trainings but is ill-equipped, due to lack of personnel or experience, to conduct PBS trainings, outside trainers or experts should be utilized to conduct the initial trainings until trainers are competent to take over. Lead trainers should be well versed in the training curriculum, adept at training adult learners, and experienced in the application of SWPBS across multiple schools. A plan for fading out the lead trainers and/or co-training with experienced individuals should be considered.

Training Curriculum

Another issue to consider when addressing training capacity is the need to develop an effective PBS training

curriculum. An effective training curriculum should be (a) comprehensive, (b) provided in multiple formats, (c) organized, and (d) an accurate reflection of effective practice in PBS. A comprehensive PBS training curriculum should address not only the universal application of PBS but also classroom, targeted group, individual student, and coaches' training. For example, if the initial training that occurs is at the universal level of SWPBS, at what point can participants access training in the other levels of PBS (i.e., classroom, targeted group, individual)? A plan for delivering the next phase of training should be addressed prior to beginning the first phase of SWPBS training. Several states have the capacity to require multiple (10 or more) days of training per year for their coaches and school teams and may be able to train all or several of the SWPBS levels in one year. Other states, such as Florida, have limited access to teacher and administrator training time and may only cover one level of PBS training (beginning with the universal level) per year.

Florida's PBS project provides the training curriculum in multiple formats, including on-site and online training, consecutive and interspersed days, and small- and large-group formats. The district leadership team needs to identify the best training format for the district when planning for upcoming PBS trainings. Additional trainings to consider include (a) booster training for schools that are not implementing with high fidelity after 1 year of support, (b) training on the School-wide Information System (May et al., 2002) or other data-based systems, (c) retraining for school teams that may have lost their administrators or most of their team members, and (d) overviews for administrators, faculty, and new teams (see Note 2).

An organized training curriculum is essential to an effective training experience. Organized materials that are essential components to the training include training manuals with PowerPoint presentations and slide handouts, case examples relevant to the audience (e.g., high school examples for teams from high schools), activities, action plans, and references. Materials may also include active demonstrations, videotapes, CDs with forms and templates, and any additional or supplementary resources. Teams participating in training should hear and see examples of critical areas such as developing a data-based decision process; establishing a school-wide reward system; and developing effective expectations, rules, and consequences. A significant amount of time should also be allocated during and/or after the training process to apply the concepts to teams' own schools in an action planning or workshop format.

Finally, many universal, classroom, targeted group, and individual student trainings in PBS are adapted to

meet the unique needs of a district (e.g., urban vs. rural emphasis; elementary, middle, or high school emphasis). It is essential that such adaptations be evaluated by individuals skilled in the PBS process to make certain that critical components addressed in training are consistent with current research and best practice in applying PBS in school settings. These adaptations are also essential to obtaining participant buy-in during the training process. In addition, training outcomes should be evaluated each year. The evaluation results should assist in developing modifications to the curriculum and training process.

Training Preparation

The better to prepare schools for participation in the initial SWPBS training, Florida's PBS project requires each interested school to complete the Individual School Training Readiness Checklist (see Figure 3a). This requirement is in place to assess the school's commitment to training and implementation. The checklist also begins the process of evaluating a school's willingness and capacity to support PBS efforts. Because comprehensive SWPBS training focuses on a systems change approach and requires up to 4 full days of training (universal level), it is essential that teams be aware of their commitment prior to investing their time and energy. Some district leadership teams have used this form as an application package for training with deadlines for completion. If schools are interested in receiving training on the School-wide Information System, a Web-based data entry and retrieval system, the second page of the checklist can be completed upon the final day of training (see Figure 3b; May et al., 2002).

Implementation Element 7: Coaching Capacity

The FLPBS project staff also assists the district leadership team in determining how to support schools through the use of PBS coaches. Coaches are often school personnel who are released from some of their prior responsibilities to provide facilitation for the school-based PBS team through implementation and to attend any district- (monthly coaches' meetings) or state-level (annual coaches' training) events. A coach may be a district-level person or a site-based person (e.g., education specialist, school psychologist, social worker, behavior specialist, guidance counselor). Since coaches may be required to attend local and state activities that are not occurring at their particular school, it is essential that coaches not be classroom teachers or administrators. Coaches should be selected based upon their function (what they can do and what they are required to do), not

Figure 3a
School-Wide Positive Behavior Support: Training Readiness Checklist for Individual Schools (2-Sided)

Documents/evidence complete?	Items to complete prior to school-wide PBS training
❑ YES ❑ NO	1. A school improvement plan exists that includes school-wide discipline (i.e., behavior, school safety, school climate) as one of the top school goals. **Attach a recent copy of your school improvement plan and school mission statement**
❑ YES ❑ NO	2. A positive behavior support (PBS) team is formed and has broad representation (including some school improvement team members, a behavior specialist or team member with behavioral expertise, administrator(s), guidance counselor, and regular and special education teachers). **List team members and roles:**
❑ YES ❑ NO	3. Principal or AP who is responsible for making discipline decisions is an active participant on PBS team and agrees to attend all 3 days of school-wide training. **List participating principal(s) here:**
❑ YES ❑ NO	4. Principal commits to school-wide PBS and is aware that PBS is a 3- to 5-year process that may require ongoing training and/or revisions of school's PBS plan. **Please provide principal signature(s) here:**
❑ YES ❑ NO	5. PBS team commits to meet at least once a month to analyze school-wide data and solve problems. **Describe when you meet or plan to meet (days, location, and time) throughout the school year:**
❑ YES ❑ NO	6. PBS team has reached consensus and completed the PBS initial *Benchmarks of Quality* and new school profile. **Attach a recent copy of the completed initial *Benchmarks of Quality* and new school profile**
❑ YES ❑ NO	7. Your entire faculty, including your PBS team, participated in an awareness presentation on school-wide PBS. **Indicate date of presentation and presenter name(s):**
❑ YES ❑ NO	8. Majority of your faculty, staff, and administration are interested in implementing school-wide PBS. **Attach recent assessment or survey and results (i.e., percentage or range of faculty committed):**
❑ YES ❑ NO	9. School has allocated or secured funding from its district to support school-wide initiatives. **Identify funding source:**
❑ YES ❑ NO	10. An individual at the district level has been identified as the lead district contact or PBS district coordinator. **Lead district contact:**
❑ YES ❑ NO	11. PBS coaches or facilitators have been identified by the district coordinator to receive additional training and actively participate in the school-wide initiatives. **List PBS coach (with title) who will be supporting your PBS team:**

Note: From Florida's Positive Behavior Support Project, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL.

Figure 3b
School-Wide Positive Behavior Support: SWIS Readiness Checklist for Individual Schools
(SWIS Training is Optional and Follows Successful Completion of School-Wide Training)

School: _____   District: _____   Date: _____

Documents/evidence complete?	Items to complete prior to SWIS training
❑ YES ❑ NO	12. The school uses an office discipline referral form and problem behavior definitions that are compatible with SWIS. **Attach a final copy developed during the school-wide training.**
❑ YES ❑ NO	13. The school has a coherent office discipline referral process. **Attach a final copy developed during the school-wide training.**
❑ YES ❑ NO	14. Data entry time is allocated and scheduled to insure that office referral data will be current to within a week at all times. **Describe this process on campus:**
❑ YES ❑ NO	15. Three people within the school are identified to receive a 2+ hour training on the use of SWIS. **List individuals and their roles:**
❑ YES ❑ NO	16. The school has computer access to Internet and at least Netscape 6 or Internet Explorer 5. **Confirm available Internet access: ❑ Netscape ____ OR ❑ Internet Explorer ____**
❑ YES ❑ NO	17. The school agrees to ongoing training for the team receiving SWIS data on uses of SWIS information for data-based decision-making. **Confirm: ❑ Yes OR ❑ No**
❑ YES ❑ NO	18. The school district agrees to allow the PBS coaches or facilitators to work with school personnel on data collection and decision making procedures. **List PBS coach(es) who will work with your school team:**
❑ YES ❑ NO	19. The school agrees to continue to input data into the district database until SWIS compatibility with the district database is completed. This may require the school to double enter its discipline data in the meantime. **Confirm: ❑ Yes OR ❑ No**

Note: SWIS = School-wide information system (May et al., 2002). From Florida's Positive Behavior Support Project, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL.

Table 1
Skill-Building Across Experienced PBS Coaches

Coaching 101	Coaching 102	Coaching 103
• Using your data effectively	• Assisting with funding and fund-raising efforts	• Establishing an individual PBS system
• Requesting technical assistance for your team	• Reaching beyond the school: Involving parents and the community	• Establishing a classroom PBS system
• Problem solving with the team	• Changing the school climate (est. ratio of 4 to 1, adding teacher incentives, etc.)	• Establishing targeted group trainings and systems
• Creating your yearly plan for training and implementation	• SW Booster training requirements	• Knowing when your school is ready to move to the next level and options
• Completing your product book	• Using data to make necessary changes in procedures and systems	• Apprenticing new coaches
• Establishing effective team meetings and team roles	• Keeping your process new, creative, and interesting	• Assisting with district trainings and presentations
• Coaches' role and responsibilities		

Note: PBS = positive behavior support.

by their district titles. How the coaching process works should be adapted to the unique characteristics of the district (e.g., small and rural districts may be able to have one coach for three schools, but a large urban district may need one coach for each participating school).

The characteristics and responsibilities of the PBS coach include (a) having the freedom to move across schools, (b) understanding the school-wide PBS process and having some general knowledge of behavioral principles, (c) having the skills necessary to facilitate teams effectively throughout the process (across the school year during team meetings and during training activities), (d) attending any trainings with their respective school-based teams and co-training with the FLPBS project after the first year of district implementation, (e) being a facilitator to and a member of the school-based team, (f) reporting to the district coordinator, (g) being the main contact person and liaison for the school-based team, and (h) collecting any team, district, or state evaluation data.

The PBS coaches' primary function is to maintain fidelity of implementation following PBS training. Not only do the school-based teams need continued support from their coaches, but the coaches themselves need ongoing support from district personnel. One approach to supporting coaches is for the district coordinator to host monthly coaches' meetings. These meetings may consist of an established monthly or bimonthly agenda, skill-building activities, data sharing, success stories, problem solving, and opportunities for networking. These face-to-face meetings can enhance consistency across coaches when facilitating their school-based teams through implementation and can assist in maintaining clear communication across coaches supporting various schools within a district.

Coaches must also have a wide array of skills in addition to understanding how the PBS process works. For this

reason, most successful efforts to sustain coaching networks at a state or district level have required them to undergo formal training. In Florida, new PBS coaches receive 1 day of training on the following topics prior to their team's receiving SWPBS training: (a) overview of Florida's PBS project, (b) overview of school-wide PBS, (c) roles and responsibilities, (d) learning from experienced coaches, (e) evaluation process and utilizing data, (f) readiness tools (preparing for summer training), (g) action planning and implementation, and (h) effective team strategies.

After school-based teams have been trained, coaches receive additional technical assistance and training during monthly coaches' meetings which are organized by the district coordinator and supported by a FLPBS project staff member. Experienced coaches (those who have attended the new coaches' training and initial SWPBS training) also receive ongoing training at least once a year in the following areas: (a) a review of the evaluation process, (b) data-based decision making, (c) a problem-solving process, (d) what to do once a universal-level PBS system is in place, (e) facilitating an effective team, and (f) changing school culture. Coaches can also choose training tracks for shorter sessions based upon their experience level and their school's needs. Table 1 indicates the content of three tracks (Coaching 101, 102, and 103) that are designed for the different needs of experienced PBS coaches.

Implementation Element 8: Demonstrations

Demonstration sites typically consist of exemplar schools implementing PBS with fidelity. Demonstrations serve as a training resource or model for future and/or struggling teams and reinforce the rationale for continued district expansion (Sugai et al., 2005). Some districts initially choose to train a few schools so that they can

focus their supports on producing successful demonstration sites prior to expansion across the district. If this is to occur, it is essential that the activities that produce successful outcomes be carefully documented, particularly with challenging or struggling schools. Most importantly, it is futile to develop demonstration sites without an active district leadership team and identified PBS district coordinator. Without the district leadership team and district coordinator, the district will not have the capacity or ability to recognize a school's achievement and be able to expand the process to new or interested schools.

State programs may differ in how they identify model or exemplary schools. Some states identify exemplary schools using the *School-Wide Evaluation Tool* (SET), a research-validated tool for assessing implementation of school-wide positive behavior support (Horner et al., 2003; Sugai, Lewis-Palmer, Todd, & Horner, 2001). A school that scores 80% on the SET with a corresponding 80% on the training component of the SET is considered to be an exemplary school and may be identified at a yearly celebration at the district or state level. In Florida, the FLPBS project utilizes a different instrument, the *Benchmarks of Quality for School-wide PBS* (BoQ; Kincaid, Childs, & George, 2005; Cohen, Kincaid, & Childs, 2007), to identify model schools. Schools that score above an 80% on this rating scale can be identified as a model school if the district coordinator and FLPBS project staff agree that the score is reliable and that the school's data indicate at least some success in decreasing behavior outcome data (e.g., office discipline referrals [ODRs]). These schools are presented with a PBS banner at the FLPBS project's yearly implementers' forum and are highlighted on the FLPBS Web site.

Implementation Element 9: Evaluation

Evaluation is essential to determining whether SWPBS has been effective within a school, a district, and state. The evaluation process assesses the fidelity of SWPBS, provides data on students and other outcomes (e.g., academic, ODRs, in-school and out-of-school suspensions), identifies model schools or demonstration sites, and assists in developing an action plan for problem areas and acknowledging successful areas. Since data provide information on what is working and not working, it is important that the data be collected throughout the school year and disseminated frequently to provide ongoing feedback on the progress of activities. This constant feedback or evaluation allows for teams, districts, and states to adjust their efforts during the year based upon the information collected.

Evaluation instruments may measure training effectiveness and satisfaction, technical assistance efforts, team processes, implementation activities, and student outcomes (see Note 3). Florida's PBS project collects evaluation reports from all of its PBS schools at least twice per year, at midyear (December) and at the end of the year (June). These reports are used by the FLPBS project and the state funding source to assess the effectiveness of FLPBS project activities. The reports are also summarized and provided to each school via the district coordinator. The evaluation reports on each school in a district are reviewed with the district coordinator, and successes and issues are identified for discussion at the next scheduled district action planning session.

Coaches' Self-Assessment

This is a rating of the coach's knowledge and skills related to facilitating the implementation of SWPBS. The results are used to direct the training, resources, and technical assistance provided to coaches. Each coach completes one self-assessment annually.

School Profile

This is a collection of basic demographic information about the school. Results assist the FLPBS project in providing support and demonstrating effectiveness across the state. Basic contact information and demographics (e.g., ethnicity, attendance, reading outcomes) are provided and are used to investigate how implementation may differ across participating schools with various characteristics. The coach completes this tool with assistance from school personnel.

School Team Update

This tool provides an update of school PBS team activities related to the use of data, team functioning, and implementation of PBS elements. The results are used to identify the progress of schools and to identify critical issues related to implementation. The coach completes a school team update for each school

Team Process Survey

This is an evaluation of the team's functioning and effectiveness. The results are used to identify areas of needed support for teams and coaches in order for them to work more effectively while implementing SWPBS. Each member of the PBS team (including the coach) completes a team process survey. The completed forms are compiled by the state project, and a written summary of the results is provided to the district coordinator and coach.

Benchmarks of Quality

This evaluation instrument assesses the fidelity of SWPBS implementation by listing more than 50 benchmarks of

Figure 4
Benchmarks of Quality Total Scores 2005
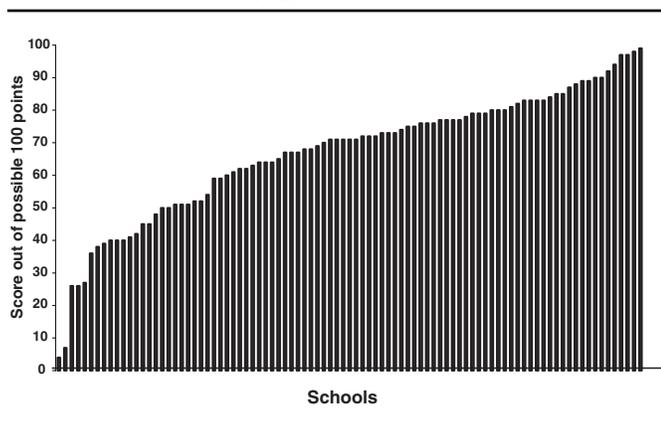
quality for SWPBS activities (Kincaid et al., 2005; Cohen et al., 2007). The coach completes the benchmarks scoring form (100-point scale) after the PBS team members have completed and returned team member rating forms. A guide describes the administration of the instrument and provides a rubric for scoring each item. The results are used to evaluate the extent to which teams are implementing SWPBS, to identify potential model schools, and to provide a mechanism for school teams to identify areas of strength and weakness for establishing future action plans. This information is summarized and reported back to the school-based PBS team. A comparison of *Benchmarks of Quality* scores for all of Florida's reporting schools is presented in Figure 4. These figures indicate the range of implementation of Florida's schools and are reported to Florida's Department of Education (Kincaid, George, & Childs, 2005) each year.

Outcome Data Summary

This tool provides basic outcome data related to attendance, behavior referrals, and academic achievement. The results are used to identify whether the implementation of SWPBS has had an impact on the outcome data variables. The coach completes this form with assistance and input from the school-based PBS team and data-entry personnel.

Staff Satisfaction

This instrument may be developed by the district to assess how well staff members are implementing SWPBS and to assess their satisfaction with the PBS process. Questions to address these areas may be included in the school's existing annual climate survey. No formal instrument has been developed by Florida's

PBS project because each district and school has its own format for obtaining these data. Schools are simply required to report their questions and information collected from their questionnaire. The PBS team is responsible for collecting these data and submitting it to the FLPBS project.

In summary, evaluation data assist in (a) gaining an understanding of how the plan is functioning ("Are we really doing what we think we are doing?"), (b) measuring the plan's effectiveness ("Is what we're doing working?"), and (c) identifying and examining strengths and weaknesses of the PBS plan. Combined results derived from various instruments assist in identifying ways to improve the PBS process. These data allow school teams, coaches, and district coordinators to refocus and establish new action plans for each school year.

Initial data (i.e., coaches' self-assessment, school profile, school team update, and team process survey) are collected in mid-December (initial request made in early November) to assist with action planning, delivery of appropriate technical assistance, and training for ongoing skill building. By receiving this information midyear, teams can intervene and prevent potential problems early on by receiving project support no later than the end of January. Outcome data (i.e., *Benchmarks of Quality*, outcome data summary, and staff satisfaction) are collected in June (initial request made in early April if a school wants to be considered a model school) to assist in determining model school status, evaluating overall outcomes, and planning for future actions.

When the FLPBS project first provided training in SWPBS in 2002–2003, the only implementation elements that were utilized prior to training were leadership team and coordination, at best. Of those 36 schools, only 25% of schools trained were still implementing by the second school year. The following year (2003–2004), the FLPBS project incorporated the remaining seven implementation elements as prerequisites to training. Of the 57 new schools trained, 80% of schools trained were still implementing by the end of the school year. The following year (2004–2005), the FLPBS project revamped its evaluation process to include both outcome data and BoQ scores. Of the 81 new schools trained, 90% were still implementing by the end of the school year. The most recent school year (2005–2006), the FLPBS project continued to refine its processes and procedures and began to pilot Web-based training, technical assistance and evaluation. Of the 96 new schools trained, 96% of schools were still implementing by the end of the school year. These results suggest that the use of the nine implementation elements may better predict success in outcome and sustainability; results, however, could be higher still if

the FLPBS project could control for district-initiated transfers of administrators.

Of the 17 schools that received PBS model school status in 2004–2005—a distinction that required a reduction in discipline referral data, a recommendation from the district coordinator, and a score of at least 80 points on the BoQ—94% returned the following school year as repeat model schools. The following year (2005–2006), 24 new schools were added to the model school list. Although these data are preliminary and descriptive in nature, it is important to note that of the majority of schools that complete the evaluation instruments with intact teams, do indeed make progress on their annual BoQ scores. This outcome suggests the value in the use of the implementation elements as described in this article. A separate article summarizing the evaluation process and findings is currently in progress.

Conclusion

Without careful planning and collaboration, district personnel may not be able to organize the resources and supports necessary to implement and sustain district-wide school-wide positive behavior support efforts. If school districts attend to the nine implementation elements discussed in *School-wide Positive Behavior Support: Implementers' Blueprint and Self-Assessment* (Sugai et al., 2005) and in this article, they should have greater success in implementing PBS with fidelity. However, there are still likely to be numerous systems-level issues that may impede the progress of SWPBS. Just as maintaining enthusiasm and funding for SWPBS at the school level will be a yearly issue, those same issues will likely be problematic at the district level, given a wide range of competing initiatives. As well, navigating the waves of policy and personnel changes at the district level will also be critical to maintaining a district's capacity for SWPBS. Finally, it will be important for district administrators to make a commitment to a comprehensive and strategic PBS approach. Schools and districts will not successfully meet the needs of all students if they only make a commitment to implementing the universal level of PBS. An appreciation and commitment to a comprehensive application of PBS at the school, classroom, targeted group, and individual-student levels will lay the foundation for a district to establish a sustainable practice of PBS for all schools and all students.

Two additional issues to confront in district and statewide implementation of SWPBS are how to measure the process of implementation and how to define the elements that lead to effective implementation. Many of the tools and measurement instruments described in this article and others that are used across the nation seem to have a practical utility for districts and state projects. However, their reliability and validity may not have been measured to the degree necessary to establish them as appropriate tools for dissemination across multiple states. In the same way, the *Implementers' Blueprint* describes nine elements that appear to have face validity as they relate to implementation efforts. However, the "critical" elements have not been scientifically examined to determine whether they are, in fact, critical to the success of systems change efforts at the district and state level.

As efforts at expansion of SWPBS continue, practitioners will likely continue to combine practices, tools, and materials in a process that is sometimes as much art as science. Practices that intuitively appear to be effective, tools that have good face validity, and materials that participants like should continue to be used. However, researchers and practitioners are urged to continue the science that validates these practices, tools, and materials and expands our knowledge of what works in SWPBS.

Notes

1. Visit http://www.flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu (Florida's Positive Behavior Support Project state Web site) or http://www.pbismaryland.org (Maryland's PBIS state Web site) for more information.

2. Refer to http://www.flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu for further resources available for training and for training readiness checklists.

3. For a copy of Florida's evaluation forms, visit http://flpbs .fmhi.usf.edu

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