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# The Integration of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports and Social and Emotional Learning

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Successful schools are safe, supportive, and challenging environments that provide all students with positive conditions for learning and enhance their social competence and academic performance (Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010). The integration of two school-based prevention models that aim to achieve these broad goals – Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS; Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Sugai & Horner, 2006; Sugai, Horner et al., 2000) and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL; Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2008; Elias et al., 1997; Zins & Elias, 2006; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004) – can create a comprehensive, multi-tiered prevention approach to meet the needs of all students (Adelman & Taylor, 2003; Sugai & Horner, 2006; Osher,

Dwyer, & Jackson, 2004; Strein, Hoagwood, & Cohn, 2003; Weist, 2001). The PBIS framework seeks to reach these ends by altering the school's organizational context and works with adults in the school to implement enhanced procedures and systems with fidelity to guide data-based decisions related to student behavior problems and academic performance. SEL uses a student-centered, strengths-based approach that aims to promote a set of core student competencies (i.e., self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making) through culturally and developmentally appropriate instruction (CASEL, 2003, 2008; Elias et al., 1997).

Although the goals of both PBIS and SEL are similar in their focus on improving the school environment and promoting positive behavior, they differ in their specific primary objectives, theoretical foundations, organizational structure, and activities. Consequently, some confusion has developed about the compatibility of these two models and whether they can be coordinated in order to optimize positive social, emotional, and academic outcomes for students. In this chapter, we provide a brief overview of each model and a rationale for their integration. We then outline a step-by-step integration approach and feature examples of two different types of SEL and PBIS integration.

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## Two Complementary Approaches to School-Based Prevention

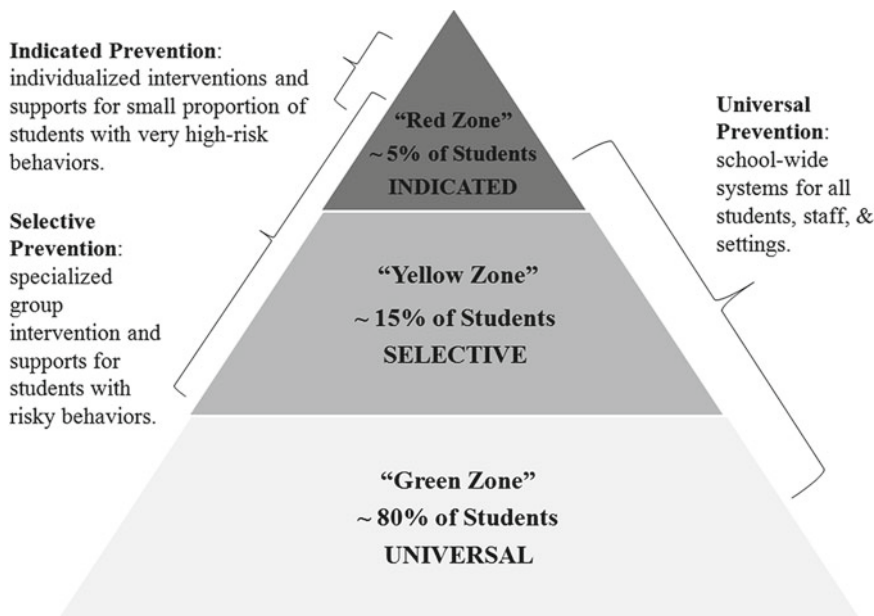
### Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

#### Overview

PBIS refers to a school-wide application of behavioral systems and interventions to achieve behavior change in schools (Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010; Sugai, Horner et al., 2000). PBIS has strong behavior analytic foundations and is a non-curricular framework that strives for a flexible fit with school culture and context. It can be implemented in any school level, type, or setting. A three-tiered, public health system-wide framework is applied (Mrazek & Haggerty, 1994; O'Connell, Boat, & Warner, 2009; Walker et al., 1996) to guide development and implementation of a continuum of behavioral and academic programs and services: (a) universal (primary, school-wide "green-zone"), (b) selective (secondary, "yellow-zone"), and (c) indicated (tertiary, "red-zone") (see Fig. 1). The universal elements of the model, typically referred to as

school-wide PBIS, are the most commonly implemented aspect of the three-tiered model. Currently, over 18,200 schools have participated in the implementation of the universal school-wide elements of PBIS ([www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)).

The tiered PBIS framework focuses on the academic, behavioral, and environmental contexts in which behavior problems are observed. Applying PBIS, schools establish a set of positively stated, school-wide expectations for student behavior (e.g., "Be respectful, responsible, and ready to learn"), which are developed by the school's PBIS team and taught to all students and staff across all school settings (e.g., classroom, hallways, buses, field trips, dances, sporting events). A school-wide system is then developed to formalize how adults and students are recognized for exhibiting the expected positive behaviors appropriately in a given setting. Although the focus is on increasing the frequency of positive interaction between staff and students and between students themselves, tangible reinforcers, such as tickets, parties, prizes, or special privileges like an opportunity to have lunch with a favorite teacher or administrator, are sometimes used to formalize and prompt acknowledgements.



**Fig. 1** Three-tiered framework of Position Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) (Note. Adapted from Walker et al. (1996), O'Connell et al. (2009), and Mrazek and Haggerty (1994))

The PBIS framework emphasizes teaching, prompting, and acknowledging student use of developmentally and contextually appropriate expected behaviors so that (a) prosocial behaviors are more likely to be emitted instead of rule violating behavior; (b) staff attention is directed toward fostering safer and respectful school environments or cultures; (c) chaotic learning environments become more preventive, positive, and predictable; and (d) more strategic supports can be enlisted for students who present more resistant problem behavior. The PBIS framework also clarifies disciplinary consequences with respect to minor (classroom-managed) and major (administrator-involved) rule violations. The school discipline system is reconceptualized as an inhibitor for students who have relatively good social behaviors and as a screening tool for students who require more intensive behavior supports and interventions.

Because student and adult behavior are so inextricably intertwined, the PBIS framework provides structures and routines to support adults so that consistency, predictability, and positive relations are promoted across school contexts. School-wide implementation is emphasized in order to establish staff buy-in and is facilitated through a team-based process. Each PBIS school forms a leadership or implementation team, which is comprised of a teacher from each grade level, at least one administrator, and student support staff. Parent and student membership and participation are strongly encouraged. The PBIS team leader is often an administrator or experienced teacher. A coaching process is used at the school, district, and state level to serve as a bridge between professional development and planning activities and the team's actual implementation efforts in the school. Coaching also is used to promote high fidelity implementation through ongoing progress monitoring, prompting, and encouragement. Individuals who provide coaching supports can be internal to the school or externally provided by the district; coaches are typically school psychologists, guidance counselors, social workers, or other staff who have expertise in behavior management, social skills instruction, data-based decision-making, class-

room management, school discipline, functional behavioral assessment, and behavior intervention planning. A district and state-level support team is also formed to provide training, coaching, evaluation, policy, and funding guidance and technical assistance (e.g., see Bradshaw & Pas, 2011).

A critical element of the PBIS framework is the use of data to inform and guide planning and implementation decision-making (Irvin et al., 2004, 2006; Sugai & Horner, 2006). The emphasis is on the collection of multiple data elements on both desired and problem behaviors to monitor implementation quality and program outcomes. The school's PBIS team (a) specifies the most important questions that must be examined on a routine basis (e.g., rate of suspension events each day, by location, by event type), (b) determines the best data source (e.g., office discipline referrals), (c) acquires a data system that enables easy input and output displays (e.g., School-Wide Information System or SWIS [[www.swis.org](http://www.swis.org)]), (d) follows a regular schedule for review and analysis of data, and (e) develops a routine for disseminating and acting on the decisions (e.g., whole school, groups of students, and/or individual students).

Within a PBIS framework, data are used to answer four main questions. First, how are students doing – *what's going on?* Second, is the intervention or practice having the desired effect – *is it working?* Third, is the intervention being implemented as developed and recommended – *are we using it correctly?* And, fourth, what changes are needed to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, and durability of the intervention and its effects – *what next?* Several instruments and guidelines have been created to support PBIS data-based decision-making around the four questions (e.g., Bradshaw, Debnam, Koth, & Leaf, 2009; Horner et al., 2004).

### **Empirical Support**

Increasing evidence suggests that successful implementation of school-wide or the universal (Tier 1) PBIS system is associated with sustainable changes in disciplinary practices and improved systems to promote positive behavior among students (Barrett, Bradshaw, & Lewis-Palmer, 2008; Bradshaw,

Reinke et al., 2008; Horner et al., 2009). Quality implementation of school-wide PBIS has been linked with significant reductions in disruptive behaviors and improved social skill knowledge (Barrett et al., 2008; Horner et al., 2009; Metzler, Biglan, Rusby, & Sprague, 2001; Sprague et al., 2001). Specifically, several studies, including two randomized controlled studies of school-wide PBIS in elementary schools, have shown that high quality implementation of the model is associated with significant reductions in office discipline referrals and suspensions (Bradshaw, Mitchell, & Leaf, 2010; Horner et al., 2009) and other problem behavior (McIntosh, Bennett, & Price, 2011), such as teacher ratings of classroom behavior problems, concentration problems, emotion regulation problems, and bullying (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, & Leaf, 2012; Waasdorp, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2012).

Significant improvements also have been observed in student reports of school climate (Horner et al., 2009; McIntosh et al., 2011), staff reports of the school's organizational health (e.g., principal leadership, teacher affiliation, and academic emphasis) (Bradshaw, Koth et al., 2008; Bradshaw, Koth, Thornton, & Leaf, 2009; McIntosh et al., 2011), teacher self-efficacy (Kelm & McIntosh, 2012; Ross & Horner, 2006), and academic achievement (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Horner et al., 2009; McIntosh et al., 2011).

Improvements in the schools' organizational context achieved through PBIS, in turn, may enhance the implementation quality of other more intensive preventive interventions (Bradshaw, Koth et al., 2009) and reduce the need for more intensive school-based services (Bradshaw et al., 2010). Consistent with the three-tiered logic, evidence indicates that the impact of PBIS may vary as a function of the child's risk profile or the age at which she or he is first introduced to a PBIS environment (Bradshaw, Waasdorp et al., 2012; Waasdorp et al., 2012). In a recent randomized controlled trial of PBIS in which the universal, school-wide PBIS model was contrasted with the integration of selective preventive interventions and school-wide PBIS, significant impacts were demonstrated on teacher efficacy, academic

performance, and special education service use (Bradshaw, Pas, Goldweber, Rosenberg, & Leaf, 2012).

## Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

### Overview

While PBIS refers to a school-wide application of behavioral systems and interventions to achieve behavior change in schools, SEL emphasizes the perspective that enhancing students' cognition and emotions are also critical for students' success in school, career, and life. SEL involves the processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. SEL integrates competence-promotion and youth-development frameworks that foster personal and environmental protective mechanisms and reduce risk factors (Bear, 2010; Greenberg et al., 2003; Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008; Hawkins, Smith, & Catalano, 2004). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2003) has identified five interrelated cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies: *self-awareness* (ability to accurately recognize one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior), *self-management* (ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations), *social awareness* (ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports), *relationship skills* (ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups), and *responsible decision-making* (ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior, social interactions, and school) (CASEL; Zins, Payton, Weissberg, & O'Brien, 2007). The capacity to coordinate these competencies when

dealing with daily situations and challenges provides a foundation for better adjustment and school performance as reflected in more positive social behaviors, fewer conduct problems, less emotional distress, and improved grades and academic test scores (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011).

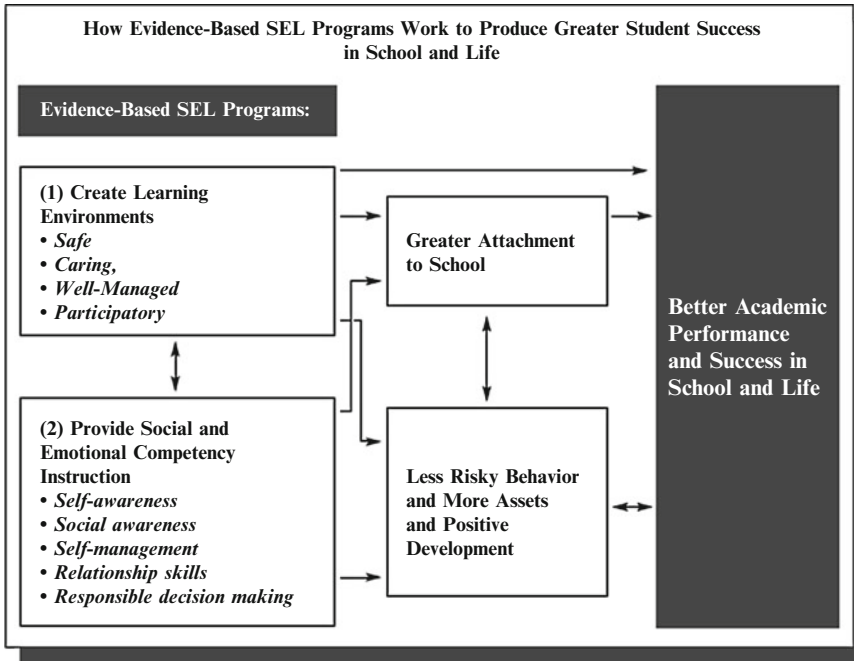
In addition to a focus on individual competencies, SEL also provides a framework for school improvement (Devaney, O'Brien, Resnik, Keister, & Weissberg, 2006). SEL programming is intended to be implemented in a coordinated approach school-wide, and lessons are reinforced in and out of the classroom. Specifically, the SEL framework can be used to promote conditions identified as necessary for learning and academic achievement: physical and emotional safety, school connection, social-emotional learning, quality instruction, and a climate of high expectations for achievement and behavior (Osher et al., 2010). Furthermore, SEL emphasizes the importance of enhancing students' competencies with developmentally appropriate and culturally competent classroom instructional strategies and teacher practices to promote students' social, emotional, and academic learning. A recent advance, for example, has been to establish preschool to high school SEL learning standards that specify what students should know and be able to do (see, e.g., the State of Illinois Social and Emotional Learning standards at [http://www.isbe.state.il.us/ils/social\\_emotional/standards.htm](http://www.isbe.state.il.us/ils/social_emotional/standards.htm)).

SEL draws on research regarding core skills and other protective factors that have been shown to be associated with positive youth outcomes across multiple domains. For most SEL programs, reductions in any particular high-risk behavior or the establishment of specific positive behaviors are achieved through a longer-term investment in developing the social and emotional competencies of children. By fostering protective factors and promoting social-emotional well-being, SEL has the potential to reduce or prevent a range of immediate and long-term untoward outcomes across multiple ecological settings (see Fig. 2). For example, by promoting self-regulation, youth learn to express

positive and negative affect while maintaining appropriate behavioral control (Denham & Weissberg, 2003).

### **Empirical Support**

There is a growing body of evidence documenting the effectiveness of SEL programs. A series of meta-analyses and reviews have concluded that universal school-based SEL interventions are generally effective across a diverse range of social, emotional, behavioral, and academic outcomes (see CASEL, 2003; Durlak et al., 2011; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2002; Wilson, Gottfredson, & Najaka, 2001; Zins et al., 2004). For example, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2003) reviewed outcomes on 80 SEL programs, with the goal of providing guidance to educators in selecting appropriate SEL programs. Twenty-two of these programs were identified as higher-quality programs that were well designed, had research that documented their positive impact on behavior and/or academic performance, and provided professional development and technical assistance services to support implementation. In a meta-analysis of 165 published outcome studies of school-based prevention programs, Wilson and colleagues (2001) found that SEL-oriented programs resulted in reduced dropout and improved attendance. The US Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2002) reports on model prevention programs supporting academic achievement has also documented increased grade point averages, improvements in standardized test scores, and improved reading, writing, and math skills resulting from school-based prevention programs including SEL components. More recently, a meta-analysis by Durlak and colleagues (2011) that examined results from 213 studies of universal SEL interventions indicated that SEL led to significantly less emotional distress, fewer negative behaviors, improved school attitudes and behaviors, and better academic performance among students, with an 11 percentile-point gain in academic achievement in comparison to



**Fig. 2** Framework for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs (Note. Source: <http://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/logicmodel.gif>)

controls. A separate meta-analysis on after-school programs conducted by Durlak, Weissberg, and Pachan (2010) found that after-school programs that specifically sought to enhance social and interpersonal skills of students demonstrated significant improvements in self-perceptions, school bonding, social behaviors, academic performance, and problem behaviors.

Although the findings regarding the impacts of SEL programming on academic outcomes have generally been favorable (Durlak et al., 2011; for a review see Zmuda & Bradshaw, 2012), a recent multisite randomized trial of seven different SEL programs did not demonstrate impacts on student academic achievement, behavior, or social-emotional development (Social and Character Development Consortium, 2010). The report highlighted the importance of the fidelity with which SEL programs are implemented, as prior research documents a clear association between high quality implementation and student outcomes (Domitrovich et al., 2008). Specifically, an emphasis on four practices

associated with effective skill training (SAFE, sequenced, active, focused, explicit) moderated several program outcomes in both meta-analyses led by Durlak and colleagues (2010, 2011).

### Rationale for Integrating PBIS and SEL

The PBIS and SEL approaches have some fundamental differences, but they also have great potential to be compatible and offer a full range of strategies and techniques for effective school-wide management and positive student development (Bear, 2010; Osher et al., 2010). Both emphasize the use of evidence-based strategies and techniques – albeit sometimes different ones – to promote positive behaviors, relationships, and school climate and to prevent or correct behavior problems. It is important to acknowledge some differences in their theoretical roots (e.g., PBIS emphasizes applied behavior analysis, whereas SEL emphasizes cognitive-affective-behavioral perspectives) and their primary aims (e.g., PBIS focuses primarily on

redesigning teaching and learning environments to support behavior, while SEL highlights teaching and learning strategies that enhance student social-emotional competence). As such, the proximal focus of PBIS is on the reduction of problem behaviors and enhancement of positive school expected behaviors, which in turn lead to positive effects on school climate, prosocial behavior, and academic achievement. SEL's primary focus is on enhancing social and emotional and behavioral competencies which in turn lead to reductions in problem behavior and improvements in school climate and academic achievement. Therefore, the process of coordinating SEL and PBIS requires careful blending and thoughtful connection of the core components of the two models into one enhanced intervention or strategy. A school or school system may consider a number of the following reasons for integrating these two models.

### **Synergistic Effects on Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Skills**

Combining PBIS and SEL could address some of the common concerns expressed regarding the two models. For example, although the PBIS literature emphasizes the importance of directly teaching, prompting, and acknowledging prosocial behavior, it does not offer an explicit curriculum for teaching children social-emotional skills and competencies like those taught in a SEL curriculum or the daily integration of social, emotional, and academic learning in classroom instruction. SEL brings added emphases on children's cognitions and emotions as well as social-emotional skill development, which are not emphasized in school-wide PBIS. Furthermore, PBIS and most SEL models have relatively modest intervention effects (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Bradshaw, Waasdorp et al., 2012; Wilson et al., 2001; cf. Durlak et al., 2011<sup>1</sup>), which may be a result of the multitude of factors that collectively

contribute to youths' problem behavior. Addressing social-cognitive, emotional, and behavioral skills is important for socially competent behavior, positive peer relations, and academic success (Durlak et al., 2011). Furthermore, the student population is heterogeneous in terms of their need for different types of skill development (Kellam & Rebok, 1992). As a result, school-wide PBIS may not address the underlying non-behavioral mechanisms contributing to the problem behaviors for all students. For example, children at risk for internalizing problems, like depression or anxiety, may benefit from a tiered approach through PBIS, but may also require exposure to SEL content, which addresses emotions more directly, in order to reduce rates of these internalizing problems (O'Connell et al., 2009). In contrast, a student with impulse control problems may benefit from the combined focus on emotion regulation skills through an SEL curriculum and the system for reinforcement offered through school-wide PBIS. The PBIS approach also may benefit SEL by increasing the transfer of learning across settings by connecting and reinforcing the social-emotional skills developed through the curriculum in non-classroom settings, thereby promoting generalization of the skills. SEL models may promote the generalization and sustainability of improved student functioning by developing children's capacities to coordinate cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills (Hawkins et al., 2004; Osher et al., 2010). Broader and longer-term impacts on delinquent and anti-social behavior, school dropout and academic failure, and improved mental health could thus result through the combination of PBIS and SEL.

### **Increased Efficiency of Program Delivery**

Integrated programs are less vulnerable to turnover with administration and more likely to become part of the overall mission and fabric of the school environment (Adelman & Taylor, 2003; Greenberg, Domitrovich, Graczyk, & Zins, 2001). An integrated model could build on and reinforce the individual program components (Domitrovich et al., 2010). Common program elements and staff responsibilities for

<sup>1</sup>Durlak et al. (2011) made the case that SEL programs are as or more effective than other established interventions on several outcomes. This is in contrast to the review by Wilson et al. (2001), which indicated modest intervention effects.

program oversight and management could be streamlined so that there is less repetition and duplication of efforts. Furthermore, with limited time in the school day, the efficiency and effectiveness of any prevention and promotion efforts has to be maximized. An integrated SEL and PBIS model has the potential to reduce system overload and maximize sustainability (Domitrovich et al., 2010).

### **Tiered Prevention Approach**

PBIS provides a framework for the integration of programs and services. Students whose needs are not fully met by a universal SEL program or a universal system of positive behavior support (Sugai & Horner, 2006) would require targeted and/or individually tailored preventive interventions based on systematic assessment of their needs (Debnam, Pas, & Bradshaw, 2012; Hawken, Vincent, & Schumann, 2008; Sugai & Horner, 2009, 2010; Sugai, Horner et al., 2000; Walker et al., 1996). Like other tiered prevention models, such as Response to Intervention, PBIS emphasizes data-based decision-making, continuous progress monitoring, a continuum of evidence-based interventions, and monitoring of implementation fidelity (Hawken et al., 2008). Through review of data at the child, classroom, or school level, other more intensive evidence-based practices or SEL interventions can be selected to meet the needs of the target population. The PBIS framework provides an opportunity for integration of programs to meet a range of student social and emotional learning needs. By using a common language, logic, and structure, as well as the existing systems established through the school-wide PBIS framework to implement the other complementary evidence-based practices, the integrated model may result in more sustainable changes in the school environment and optimize outcomes for the student (Domitrovich et al., 2010; Osher et al., 2007; Sugai & Horner, 2006).

### **Optimized Organizational Context**

As Han and Weiss (2005) noted, “sustainability is likely to occur only in the context of institutionalization of systemic changes in attitudes, expectations, support mechanisms, and infrastructure” (p. 667). Therefore, a multilevel

school-wide discipline framework, which has documented effects on promoting organizational climate and reducing problem behaviors across school settings (e.g., Bradshaw, Koth et al., 2009; Bradshaw et al., 2010), may provide the optimal context for enhancing the implementation quality and outcomes achieved by SEL programs. The organizational framework offered by PBIS may help encourage sustained implementation of SEL programs. For example, PBIS can provide a school-wide context in which the SEL core competencies can be taught, practiced, and reinforced throughout the day. Moreover, by improving school-wide climate and behavior management practices across school settings, PBIS may enhance the implementation quality and effects of classroom-based SEL programs (Domitrovich et al., 2008, 2010). Furthermore, PBIS has been shown to increase the amount of instructional time available to teachers (Scott & Barrett, 2004), which makes it more likely that teachers will have the class time to administer classroom-based SEL programs as intended. SEL approaches emphasize an array of integrated explicit and embedded teaching strategies that teachers adopt as common practices to foster student’s social, emotional, and academic learning (Zins et al., 2004). SEL’s focus on planned, systematic, and developmentally appropriate curriculum and instruction strategies can coordinate with and strengthen PBIS efforts by giving students the voice and skills to contribute to the creation of safe, engaging, learning environments.

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### **Process of Integrating PBIS and SEL**

We recommend a model for integration in which both PBIS and SEL principles guide the initial and ongoing school-level planning processes, using this integrated approach. PBIS provides the overarching, three-tiered framework for implementation of SEL and other related programs and supports. SEL programming is integrated and offered at the universal, selective, and indicated levels and a data-driven approach to assessing student needs which, in turn, drives the selection of SEL programs, to direct decisions about referral to intervention, and to monitor program



impacts. In the integrated model, the SEL approach guides the PBIS planning process at the outset to ensure that leadership committees create school expectations that address the four social-emotional conditions for learning: physical and emotional safety, school connection, high expectations for performance and behavior, and teaching social-emotional core competencies in the context of daily classroom instruction. Then, SEL helps to provide students with the tools to realize and contribute to the behavioral expectations set by the school's PBIS implementation plan and the specific goals related to students' social, emotional, and academic learning.

The data collected through PBIS (e.g., office discipline referrals, suspensions, school climate, positive behavior, program fidelity) can be used to guide the selection of more intensive SEL-based preventive interventions for individual children not responding to the universal model. Consistent with the principles of SEL, additional data should be collected on student competencies and social-emotional skills through teacher ratings, parent ratings, self-reports, or performance assessments (Kendziora, Weissberg, Ji, & Dusenbury, 2011). At the class or school level, the data can be used more generally to select other universal programs to meet state SEL standards (see, e.g., the Illinois SEL standards, <http://casel.org/standards/learning.php#IL>).

## **An 11 Step Approach to Integration**

The following step-by-step approach may be helpful resource for practitioners interested in integrating PBIS and SEL (hereafter referred to as PBIS+SEL). This approach was developed, in part, based on lessons learned from the integration of SEL programs with PBIS through the Johns Hopkins Center for Prevention and Early Intervention (see Domitrovich et al., 2010) and draws upon conceptual frameworks to maximize implementation quality of evidence-based preventive interventions in schools (e.g., Adelman & Taylor, 2003; Domitrovich et al., 2008; Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005; Wandersman, Imm, Chinman, & Kaftarian, 2000).

### **Step 1. Commit to a Coordinated Implementation of PBIS + SEL**

The principal and other school leaders must recognize the value of an integrated PBIS+SEL approach to school improvement and understand what resources (e.g., time, money, staffing) will be necessary to successfully implement and sustain the approach school-wide and at the classroom level. This recognition involves understanding the theoretical, research, and practical underpinnings of both approaches and recognizing ways that they can coordinate efforts to more powerfully promote the social, emotional, and academic learning of all students. This commitment by the school's leadership ensures support for implementation at the highest levels (Debnam et al., 2013; Domitrovich et al., 2008; Kam, Greenberg, & Kusché, 2004).

### **Step 2. Secure Staff and Broader Community Buy-In for PBIS + SEL Implementation and Integration**

A core requirement of PBIS implementation is demonstration that at least 80 % of staff buy-in or agree to implement the approach, especially, given the requirement to implement across all school contexts, rather than in select classrooms or settings. Therefore, a similar buy-in process needs to occur for the integrated PBIS+SEL model, whereby staff formally or informally vote to implement the program, and students and the parent community endorse this school-wide effort. Some schools, particularly at the secondary level, may require a lengthy period of time to garner sufficient buy-in for the adoption of the integrated program, but this is seen as a critical aspect of successful implementation (Adelman & Taylor, 2003).

### **Step 3. Engage Stakeholders to Form a PBIS + SEL Integration Steering Committee or Team**

At this stage, the principal may create a venue to share information and discuss the benefits and potential challenges of PBIS+SEL integration with key school and community stakeholder groups. Key stakeholders should include teachers, students, families, student support personnel,

support staff, and community members. Thereafter, the principal forms a steering committee or team that is representative of these stakeholders and that is authorized to make decisions about planning and implementation. The steering committee can help to ensure shared leadership and buy-in at multiple levels, which is necessary for successful implementation. Because both models encourage the formation of an implementation team, a unified team should serve as a coordinating team for the integrated implementation of PBIS + SEL.

#### **Step 4. Develop a Shared Vision to Implement an Integrated PBIS + SEL Approach at the School**

This vision may be informed by the four social-emotional conditions of learning: physical and emotional safety, school connection, high expectations for performance and behavior, and teaching social-emotional core competencies. The creation of the shared vision also helps to gain the necessary buy-in for program adoption and serves as the basis for delineating further the student, staff, and community outcomes against which implementation success and/or adaptation can be evaluated and planned. This shared vision would be linked with a common language and common organizational routines that would reflect the local culture and contents in which implementation is being supported. With clearly specified vision, language, and routines, school leadership can distribute and direct leadership authority and decision-making to support implementation.

#### **Step 5. Assess School-Wide Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT analysis) to Integrated PBIS + SEL Implementation**

One tool that can be used to organize the existing programs and identify gaps in levels of need is an inventory the schools' support services using a three-tiered triangle. This program "audit" process can be led by the school's combined PBIS + SEL leadership team, which serves as the organizing body for training, program coordination, and progress monitoring (Devaney et al., 2006; Sugai & Horner, 2006), or by other school-wide teams

(Osher, Dwyer, & Jackson, 2004). The objective of such an audit would be to eliminate ineffective efforts, combine or integrate activities that have similar intended outcomes, add activities that are needed for critical needs, and modify activities to enhance efficacy, efficiency, relevance, and durability. An integrated PBIS + SEL approach would acknowledge the existing challenges and limitations by focusing on using existing resources in a more coherent, relevant, and direct manner.

#### **Step 6. Review and Select PBIS + SEL Programming and Formulate Decision-Making Guidelines About Referral**

Given the limited systematic research on which elements of PBIS + SEL are most impactful when integrated, we primarily are guided by theory in selecting which components to retain in isolation or blend between models. Without careful attention to the core components of each model, implementers may unintentionally (or intentionally) drop critical elements of the programs that are perceived as harder to implement or incompatible. While the integration process may require additional planning time and coordination of programs, supports, and systems, it will likely result in a more sustainable effort with a broader impact on student outcomes (Domitrovich et al., 2010).

Data sources that can guide selection and referral decisions include office discipline referrals through, for example, the SWIS system (Irvin et al., 2006; Sugai, Sprague, Horner, & Walker, 2000) and parent, teacher, and self-ratings of students' competencies and skills. Programs should be selected with an emphasis on efficiency. Crosscutting SEL programs that impact a range of social, emotional, and behavior outcomes (see CASEL, 2003; Lewis & Sugai, 1999) in an effective manner will help school staff "work smarter, not harder." It is important to note, however, that the implementation of more intensive programs (i.e., "moving up the triangle") requires greater resources and often collaboration with outside agencies (e.g., community-based mental health services). More specifically, the more intensive selective and indicated programs and services often are delivered to

small groups of students or to individual students by staff with specialized training, like counselors or school psychologists. Therefore, these programs and services should be reserved for those students with the greatest needs. By optimizing the implementation of the universal prevention programs, schools can reduce the number of students requiring these more intensive supports.

### **Step 7. Create an Action Plan for Integration, Based on the Assessment, Which Includes Alignment of Purpose, Goals, Benchmarks, and a Common Timeline**

Once the SEL program or set of programs is selected, the integration process requires alignment of goals, activities, and language across the specific SEL program and PBIS, which contrasts with simultaneous implementation of additive or parallel programs that are unrelated (Domitrovich et al., 2010). Therefore, a critical step in the integration process is identifying commonalities and connections between the programs, so that the school uses a common language and process for implementation. Integrating PBIS and SEL requires that the school retain the unique strategies of each model and merge overlapping components, which results in a holistic model that delivers a broader set of approaches simultaneously.

This action planning involves the development of a multi-year implementation plan, which should include the following components: (a) positive statement of purpose, which emphasizes the integration process; (b) procedures for selecting the SEL programming, training staff, implementing and integrating the programs, and sustaining them; (c) an approach for gaining and maintaining staff buy-in for the integrated program or model; (d) positively stated expectations of students and staff involved in the integration and implementation process (as described above, this should involve a school-based PBIS-SEL team, which coordinates the integration and implementation process); (e) procedures and systems for monitoring fidelity of the program components and outcomes for students and the school environment (e.g., student and staff perceptions of climate); and (f) a timeline for implementation that is updated at least once a year to adapt to

changes in leadership, resources, and priorities and be responsive to emerging concerns and opportunities.

### **Step 8. Develop and Provide Ongoing Professional Development Activities**

The training and ongoing coaching of school staff should occur in a coordinated effort, so that the models are presented as integrated, rather than discrete, efforts. Research indicates that most schools already are implementing a variety of prevention strategies or programs simultaneously (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2002); however, the uncoordinated fashion likely contributes to increased burden, program burnout, lesser outcome effects, or, in some cases, program washout where the activities are contradictory rather than complementary (Adelman & Taylor, 2003; Sugai & Horner, 2006). Therefore, staff must have a clear understanding that the new initiative represents an *integration* of PBIS and SEL, rather than just simultaneous independent implementation of the two models. Simply implementing multiple, uncoordinated programs likely contributes to the program fatigue and low implementation quality noted in several studies (Domitrovich et al., 2010; Fixsen et al., 2005). Although the buy-in process can be more challenging for some schools than others, staff should be made aware of and involved in the development of the schools' PBIS + SEL implementation plan (Devaney et al., 2006). Multiple days may be required to conduct the initial staff training – often staggered across the school year; however, ongoing embedded professional development opportunities also must be provided. It should be clear from the start that the three-tiered logic is guiding the program implementation process. The connections between programs should be made explicit to teachers and school staff, otherwise they may be perceived as independent programs.

### **Step 9. Integrate PBIS + SEL Model Launch**

Regardless of whether staff members are familiar with PBIS or SEL, implementation should be planned, integrated, phased oriented, and outcome-driven. Implementation phases include exploration, installation, initial implementation,

full implementation, and continuous regeneration (Fixsen et al., 2005). We recommend creating a phased implementation process, such as beginning with the school-wide activities to address the school context and create the systems necessary for support, and then adopt specific SEL approaches that have been reviewed and endorsed by the school team. The SEL programs could be piloted in select classrooms to gain staff buy-in through developing local exemplars and success stories. Alternatively, schools could layer school-wide PBIS onto an existing SEL program in order to help generalize the skills and competencies developed across all school settings.

School staff members need to be informed, flexible, and creative and work collaboratively in order to make the accommodations needed to integrate and implement PBIS+SEL. The PBIS+SEL team can play a critical role in the integrated implementation of the effective programs, including implementation tracking and outcome monitoring. Similarly, PBIS+SEL coaching can be instrumental in promoting high quality implementation and integration of both models by providing on-site technical assistance and guidance at the team and program implementers (e.g., teachers, student support staff). Having a staff member who is trained in both models and involved in school-wide implementation process of SEL and PBIS and provides coaching or facilitating supports can help ensure a seamless connection between the models.

### **Step 10. Provide Ongoing Technical Assistance at District and State Levels**

The integrated PBIS+SEL approach extends well beyond the school building. Programs and supports must be integrated at the district and state levels in order to ensure accurate and sustained implementation at the building level. School districts and states will play a critical role in providing technical assistance and overall coordination of an integrated PBIS+SEL approach (Barrett et al., 2008; Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Bradshaw, Pas, Bloom et al., 2012; Devaney et al., 2006; Fixsen, et al., 2005), which include, for example, state departments of education or university-based technical assistance center. In fact, some school districts and state departments of education are

adopting the three-tiered organizational structure at these higher levels in order to increase efficiency by reducing duplication of programs and staffing, competition for scarce resources, and program burnout and/or turnover (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Bradshaw, Pas, Bloom et al., 2012; Barrett et al., 2008). Districts and states often provide resources for technical assistance through coaching and regional or state-wide training events.

Another important type of linkage is with state standards for SEL and PBIS, which are not often integrated at the policy level. The implementation of a PBIS+SEL approach can be used to enable state level support and resources. As noted above, the implementation of more intensive programs and mental health services requires greater resources and often collaboration with outside agencies. Therefore, states and districts play a critical role in facilitating and coordinating the delivery of these programs and services, so that they complement, build on, and extend the continuum of positive behavior support services provided within the school building.

Through linkage of school-based PBIS and SEL efforts with state and federal initiatives, like Systems of Care, Safe Schools/Healthy Students, and Safe and Supportive Schools, delivery of services and programs could be made more coordinated and efficient (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Bradshaw, Pas, Bloom et al., 2012; CASEL, 2008). National organizations, such as a National PBIS Technical Assistance Center ([www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)) and CASEL ([www.casel.org](http://www.casel.org)), provide resources, materials, and assistance in the implementation and evaluation of PBIS and SEL and host leadership forums and trainings to support state and district leaders in the implementation, integration, and sustainability of PBIS and SEL in relation to other programs and initiatives.

### **Step 11. Evaluate and Refine for Continuous Improvement**

Ongoing progress monitoring of implementation fidelity and program outcomes should occur at all stages of the implementation process and can be performed through the PBIS+SEL data collection systems (e.g., surveys, teacher ratings, observations, school records) and other school, district, and state data collection systems

(Devaney et al., 2006; Irvin et al., 2004, 2006; Kendziora et al., 2011). For example, behaviorally oriented data collection systems could be augmented with surveys and rating systems to capture a broader range of indicators, including prosocial behavior, social-emotional functioning, and academic support needs. Implementation data should be collected on all PBIS+SEL processes and components in order to monitor the implementation quality of the integrated system of support and to indicate areas in need of further training and technical assistance. While continuous improvement necessarily involves some innovation, Fixsen et al. (2005) differentiate innovation and improvement from program drift by highlighting the importance of implementing with fidelity first before initiating refinements. This final stage reflects an emphasis on results-based accountability, as described in the Getting to Outcomes (GTO) framework by Wandersman et al. (2000). It is important to emphasize that monitoring should occur at all stages of the implementation process, so that implementers can take steps if needed to enhance implementation when and where necessary.

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### Examples of the Integration of PBIS and SEL

The integration process could occur in multiple ways. One approach is horizontal, whereby a universal SEL program is integrated with school-wide PBIS. A second approach is vertical integration, whereby evidence-based SEL programs and strategies are implemented at the different tiers (i.e., universal, selected, indicated) of the public health framework (Walker et al., 1996). Below we provide an example of each type of integration based on the Johns Hopkins Center for Prevention and Early Intervention's work with PBIS and Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS; Greenberg, Kusché, Cook, & Quamma, 1995), a universal, classroom-based SEL model, and Coping Power (Lochman & Wells, 2004), an indicated intervention for aggressive children. In both examples, the PBIS framework provides an organizational structure for the integration of these

complementary prevention and promotion programs. Below we describe the process followed for integrating these two models with PBIS.

### PBIS and PATHS

PATHS is designed to promote social and emotional competence; prevent violence, aggression, and other behavior problems; improve critical thinking skills; and enhance the classroom climate via teacher-led instruction aimed at facilitating emotion regulation (particularly anger management), self-control, social problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills (Greenberg et al., 1995; Kam et al., 2004). The social-emotional skills targeted in PATHS are consistent with the SEL core competencies. PATHS is a universal program which has been shown to be helpful for reducing both internalizing and externalizing behavior problems (Greenberg & Kusché, 2006) and thus is a good complement to the more behaviorally focused PBIS framework. The organizational features of schools implementing school-wide PBIS (e.g., improved organizational health, communication among staff, and principal leadership; Bradshaw, Koth et al., 2009) in turn likely enhance the school-wide implementation of the PATHS curriculum. The more intensive PATHS model will likely meet some of the social-emotional skills deficits displayed by children not responding adequately to universal, school-wide PBIS. The organizational framework offered by PBIS may help encourage sustained implementation of PATHS. By lowering the overall levels of disruptive behaviors in school, PBIS increases the likelihood that teachers will have time to deliver PATHS.

The integration of PATHS and PBIS occurs by first identifying specific connections between the PATHS lessons and the school-wide behavioral expectations (e.g., a common focus on respect for others). The PBIS reinforcement system is utilized to reward use of the SEL skills learned through the PATHS lessons across all school contexts and by all school staff, even those not typically involved in the PATHS program (e.g., cafeteria workers, hall monitors, music teachers, bus drivers). The three-tiered PBIS approach,

along with the data system, provides a structure for identifying children not responding adequately to PATHS, who then are referred for more intensive interventions through the PBIS framework. Although a research study is currently under way to document the combined impact of PBIS and PATHS on student outcomes, a study by Sprague and Golly (2004) reported positive outcomes when testing a combination of school-wide PBIS with another similar universal SEL program called Second Step. Similarly, work by Knoff (2004) on Project ACHIEVE, which connects a school-wide model of positive behavior support with a SEL curriculum (Stop and Think), has also demonstrated promising outcomes.

### **PBIS and Coping Power**

Whereas PATHS was implemented as a universal SEL program (horizontal integration), Coping Power can be integrated vertically with PBIS as an indicated preventive intervention that teaches SEL skills. Most commonly used with upper elementary school children to reduce use of aggressive behavior problems, Coping Power is a multicomponent intervention that provides training in social skills and social problem-solving. It addresses the social-cognitive factors and mechanisms involved in aggressive/disruptive behavior problems over the course of a single school year or longer (Lochman & Wells, 2004). It is traditionally implemented using a group format for students and a separate group for parents. As such, Coping Power's focus on social-emotional and behavior problems for children with increased behavioral risk makes it an ideal program to pair with PBIS. By integrating Coping Power with PBIS, children who are nonresponders to the school-wide discipline system and have a persistent pattern of aggressive behavior problems are identified for participation in Coping Power.

A common concern raised about Coping Power is the extent to which the skills developed in the Coping Power sessions are used outside of the group intervention. Connecting elements

of the Coping Power child intervention with the whole-school PBIS model may enhance generalizability of the skills developed during the Coping Power sessions for use in other school settings. Specifically, the school-wide structure and reinforcement system formed through PBIS could help extend and generalize the social-emotional and behavioral skills developed in the Coping Power child sessions to other non-group settings, such as the classroom and cafeteria where students are at increased risk engaging in disruptive behavior (Irvin et al., 2006). PBIS also creates a safe, consistent, and predictable environment which will allow children to practice and be reinforced for skills learned in the Coping Power intervention across school settings. Additionally, Coping Power and PBIS language are made consistent across programs, behavior cards, and student goals devised as part of the Coping Power program and are tied to the school-wide behavior expectations. The Coping Power clinician, classroom teachers, and other school staff reward students for exhibiting prosocial behaviors and skills learned in Coping Power. The consistent language and rewarding of behaviors across programs are expected to make it more likely that skills and behaviors learned from Coping Power are practiced and reinforced across school settings, thus increasing generalization. The parent Coping Power sessions also provide an opportunity to educate the parents about how to use the principles of PBIS to establish and reinforce behavioral expectations and SEL skills at home, in turn further generalizing the skills learned at school and in the group sessions to the home environment.

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### **Conclusion**

The increasing emphasis on use of evidence-based practices in schools has resulted in some confusion regarding the process by which schools should select and implement programs. While the tendency is to believe that doing more programs will result in better outcomes for youth, doing less in a more effective, effi-

cient, and relevant manner might be better (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2002). The use of multiple non-integrated or uncoordinated, and in some cases contradictory, programs may result in program burnout among administrators and teachers and/or washout of program effects (Shriver & Weissberg, 1996). Furthermore, the increased burden of multiple, often redundant program activities for staff and students, will likely result in limited sustainability of the programs. The careful integration of PBIS and select SEL approaches provides the potential for a synergistic effect, both directly on children's social, emotional, and behavioral problems and indirectly through enhanced program implementation and greater efficiency in program delivery.

Further conceptual and empirical work on the integration of PBIS and SEL is needed to test the process outlined in this chapter and to determine the impact of an integrated model on students, schools, and staff. However, we hypothesize that the optimized organizational school structure promoted through a coordinated PBIS+SEL framework can result in a more conducive school environment to implement effective programming, that in turn will lead to greater program integrity and enhanced outcomes for students and staff (Domitrovich et al., 2008). Much of the framing of this chapter has assumed that PBIS precedes the SEL implementation, but one could very well start with SEL and then adopt PBIS. Regardless whether implementation is ordered or concurrent, school staff should carefully consider how all the elements of SEL and PBIS programming fit together in the context of a school-wide effort to most effectively promote a positive school environment and increase students' social, emotional, and academic learning, academic performance, and well-being (Osher et al., 2004).

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