

National PBIS Leadership Forum | October 22 - 23, 2025 | Hilton Chicago



@PBISForum
#pbisforum

Including Students with Extensive Support Needs in the PBIS Framework - 2J

Presenters:

Virginia L. Walker, University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Megan E. Carpenter, Clemson University

Krysten Douglas, School District of Newberry County

- **Topic:** Students with Disabilities
- **Keywords:** PBIS Foundations; Implementation

The National PBIS Leadership Forum is a technical assistance activity of the Center on PBIS



CENTER ON
PBIS

Positive Behavioral
Interventions & Supports

Meet the Presenters



Virginia L. Walker Ph.D.,
BCBA-D | UNC Charlotte



Megan E. Carpenter,
Ph.D., BCBA-D | Clemson
University



Krysten Douglas | School
District of Newberry
County



National PBIS Leadership Forum

Who is in the audience today?

Join by Web **PollEv.com/virginiawalk268** Join by Text Send **virginiawalk268** to **22333**



National PBIS Leadership Forum

Learning Objectives

1. Describe potential **barriers** and **facilitators** of access to and participation in PBIS for students with ESN
2. Identify **strategies** to adapt existing interventions and supports to promote equitable access and participation for students with ESN
3. Identify ways in which **school personnel** who support students with ESN can promote the inclusion of students with ESN in PBIS



Who are students with ESN?

- Heterogeneous population of students
- Commonly receive special education services under the following IDEA eligibility categories:
 - Intellectual disability
 - Autism
 - Multiple disabilities



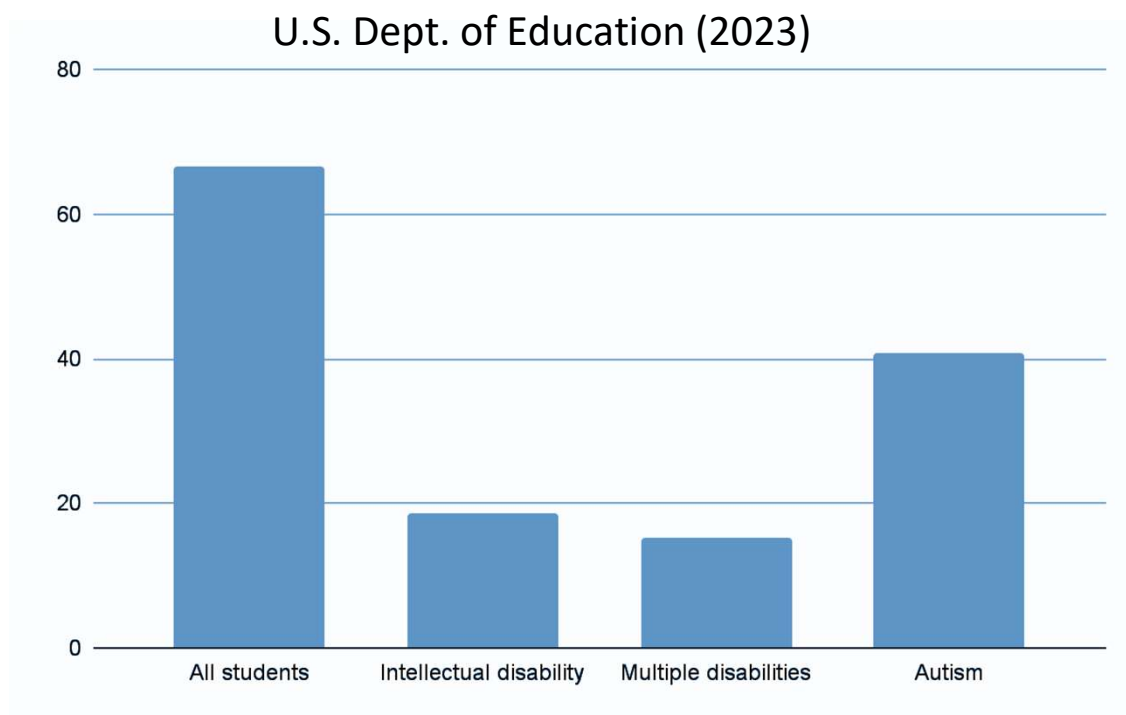
Who are students with ESN?

- Might participate in the **state alternate assessment** based on alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAS; Taub et al., 2017)
- Are at risk of **restraint and seclusion** (Westling et al., 2010)
- Are the least likely to spend a majority of the school day in inclusive, **general education settings** (Morningstar et al., 2017)

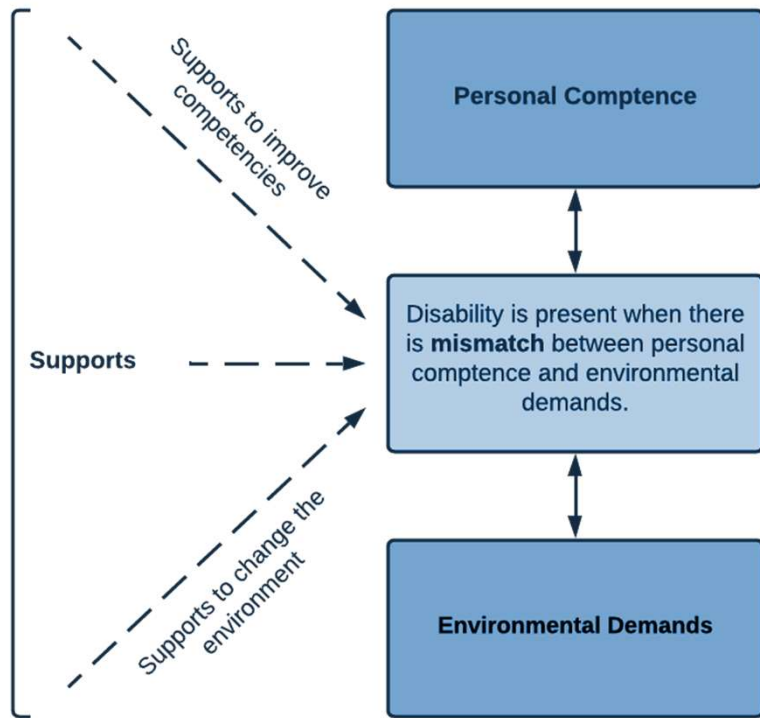


Educational placement data

80% or more
of the school
day in
general
education
classes



Who are students with ESN?



- Require pervasive, ongoing support across a range of domains
- **Important:** The type of support, frequency of support, and daily support time will vary across students with ESN.



Who are students with ESN?



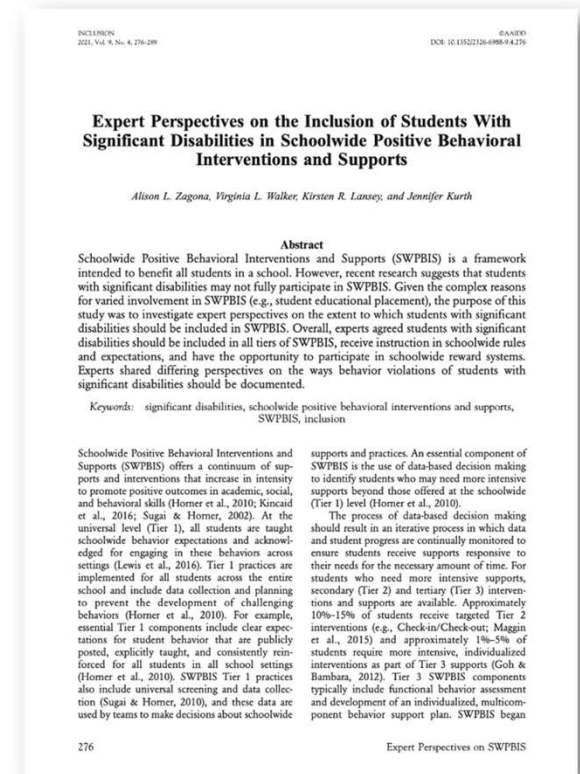
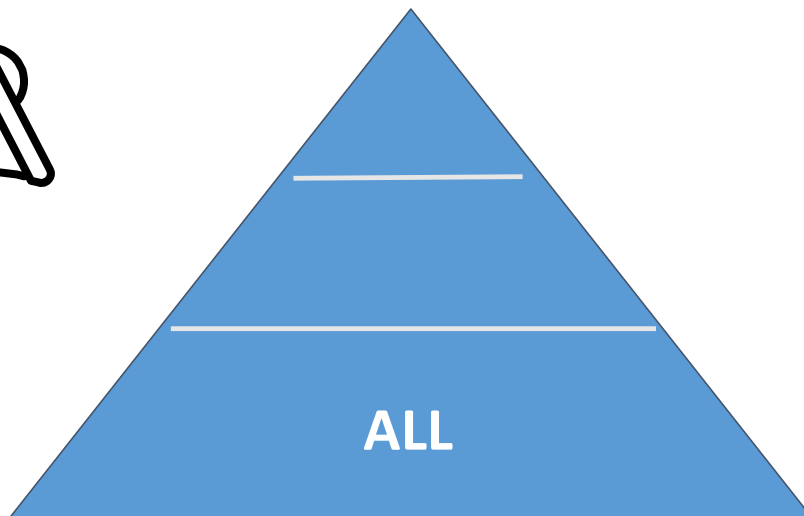
	BATHROOM EXPECTATIONS
BE RESPECTFUL	- Allow for privacy - Flush toilet
BE RESPONSIBLE	- Use toilet quickly and quietly - Keep bathrooms clean
BE SAFE	- Use pass when alone - Wash hands, keeping water in sink



National PBIS Leadership Forum

Inclusive and Equitable PBIS

- PBIS was designed to be inclusive and equitable.



National PBIS Leadership Forum

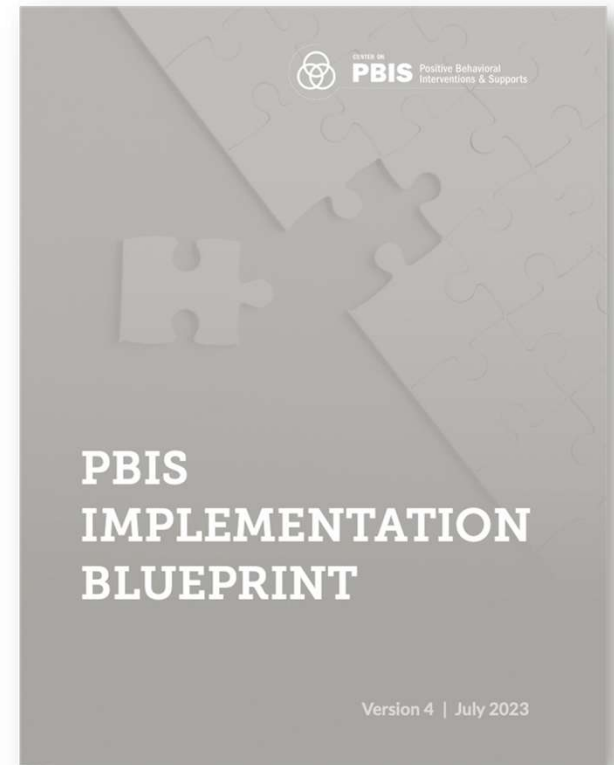
Inclusive and Equitable PBIS

- PBIS was designed to be inclusive and equitable.

<https://tinyurl.com/ye27s3c4>



SCAN ME



National PBIS Leadership Forum

School-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports and students with extensive support needs: a scoping review

Virginia L. Walker¹ , Lyndsey Aiono Conradi², M. Kathleen Strickland-Cohen^{3*} and Holly N. Johnson¹

¹Department of Special Education and Child Development, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Charlotte, NC, USA; ²Department of Special Education, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, USA; ³Department of Special Education, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR, USA

School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) is an inclusive multi-tiered system of behavioral supports that has been widely adopted by K-12 schools in the United States. SWPBIS focuses on creating safe, equitable, and inclusive school environments and has been linked to both positive behavioral and academic outcomes for students and improved perceptions of efficacy and job satisfaction for school personnel. However, there remain concerns about the involvement of students with extensive support needs (ESN) in SWPBIS despite calls to action in 2006 and 2016 for research in this area. Addressing these concerns, we conducted a scoping review to examine the current research literature on SWPBIS and students with ESN. We found that only 10 studies have been conducted since the 2006 call to action. Studies primarily focused on stakeholder perspectives regarding the importance or availability of SWPBIS for students with ESN. Although few studies examined SWPBIS effectiveness, findings from these studies lend support to the effectiveness of Tier 1 SWPBIS for students with ESN. We describe several key implications for supporting the inclusion of students with ESN in SWPBIS and future research initiatives.

Keywords: school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports; SWPBIS; multi-tiered systems of support; extensive support needs; severe disabilities

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004), students with disabilities who receive special education services have the right to access general education settings with appropriate supplementary aids and services. Yet, despite research linking inclusive education to positive outcomes for students with disabilities (e.g. improved communication and social skills, greater academic achievement; Agran *et al.* 2020), the majority of students with extensive support needs (ESN) continue to be educated in separate settings (e.g. self-contained classrooms in public schools, private alternative schools; Wehmeyer *et al.* 2021). In the United States, students with ESN are the 1–2% of students who typically receive special education services under the categories of autism, intellectual

disability, and multiple disabilities who are eligible for alternate assessment (Taub *et al.* 2017). In separate settings, students with ESN are more likely to be passively engaged and have limited access to high-quality instruction (Kurth *et al.* 2016; Pennington and Courtade 2015). Likewise, they are less likely to have access to the general education curriculum and same-age peer models of expected behavior (Gee 2020) and more likely to experience punitive discipline practices such as physical restraint and seclusion (Gage *et al.* 2022). Thus, in separate settings, students with ESN are much less likely to access opportunities to learn and practice behaviors required for success in inclusive, general education settings, thereby increasing the probability of continued exclusion (Hawken and O'Neill 2006).

School-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports

Although research has demonstrated the effectiveness of a variety of behavioral interventions in inclusive,

What do we know about students with ESN and PBIS?

- Varied perceptions of appropriateness across school personnel
- Wide range of availability and involvement
- Availability and involvement may relate to educational placement

Correspondence to: Virginia L. Walker, Department of Special Education and Child Development, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, 9201 University Blvd., Charlotte, NC 28223, USA. Email: virginia.walker@unc.edu
*Department of Special Education, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT, USA



School-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports and students with extensive support needs: a scoping review

Virginia L. Walker¹ , Lyndsey Aiono Conradi², M. Kathleen Strickland-Cohen^{3*} and Holly N. Johnson¹

¹Department of Special Education and Child Development, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Charlotte, NC, USA; ²Department of Special Education, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, USA; ³Department of Special Education, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR, USA

School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) is an inclusive multi-tiered system of behavioral supports that has been widely adopted by K-12 schools in the United States. SWPBIS focuses on creating safe, equitable, and inclusive school environments and has been linked to both positive behavioral and academic outcomes for students and improved perceptions of efficacy and job satisfaction for school personnel. However, there remain concerns about the involvement of students with extensive support needs (ESN) in SWPBIS despite calls to action in 2006 and 2016 for research in this area. Addressing these concerns, we conducted a scoping review to examine the current research literature on SWPBIS and students with ESN. We found that only 10 studies have been conducted since the 2006 call to action. Studies primarily focused on stakeholder perspectives regarding the importance or availability of SWPBIS for students with ESN. Although few studies examined SWPBIS effectiveness, findings from these studies lend support to the effectiveness of Tier 1 SWPBIS for students with ESN. We describe several key implications for supporting the inclusion of students with ESN in SWPBIS and future research initiatives.

Keywords: school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports; SWPBIS; multi-tiered systems of support; extensive support needs; severe disabilities

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004), students with disabilities who receive special education services have the right to access general education settings with appropriate supplementary aids and services. Yet, despite research linking inclusive education to positive outcomes for students with disabilities (e.g. improved communication and social skills, greater academic achievement; Agran *et al.* 2020), the majority of students with extensive support needs (ESN) continue to be educated in separate settings (e.g. self-contained classrooms in public schools, private alternative schools; Wehmeyer *et al.* 2021). In the United States, students with ESN are the 1–2% of students who typically receive special education services under the categories of autism, intellectual

disability, and multiple disabilities who are eligible for alternate assessment (Taub *et al.* 2017). In separate settings, students with ESN are more likely to be passively engaged and have limited access to high-quality instruction (Kurth *et al.* 2016; Pennington and Courtade 2015). Likewise, they are less likely to have access to the general education curriculum and same-age peer models of expected behavior (Gee 2020) and more likely to experience punitive discipline practices such as physical restraint and seclusion (Gage *et al.* 2022). Thus, in separate settings, students with ESN are much less likely to access opportunities to learn and practice behaviors required for success in inclusive, general education settings, thereby increasing the probability of continued exclusion (Hawken and O'Neill 2006).

School-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports

Although research has demonstrated the effectiveness of a variety of behavioral interventions in inclusive,

What do we know about students with ESN and PBIS?

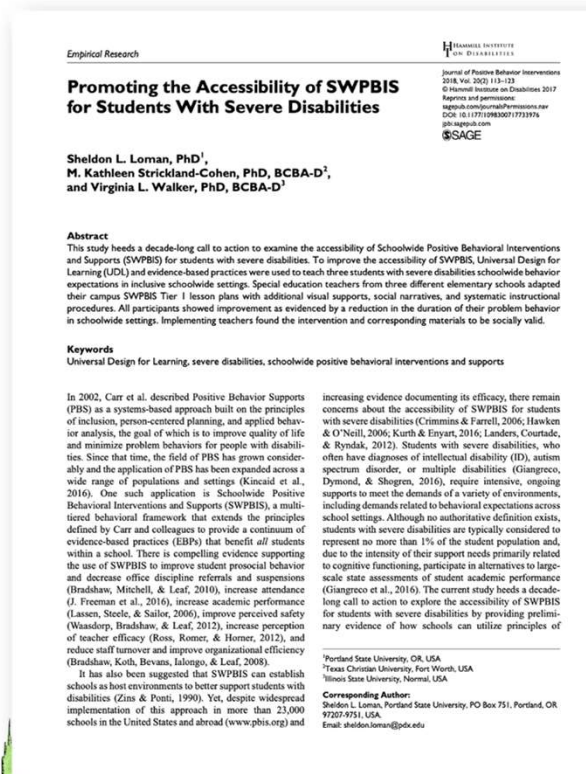
- Barriers include:
 - Misconceptions about PBIS
 - Perceptions of student abilities and characteristics
 - Educational placement
 - PBIS team composition
 - Resources and training

Correspondence to: Virginia L. Walker, Department of Special Education and Child Development, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, 9201 University Blvd., Charlotte, NC 28223, USA. Email: virginia.walker@unc.edu
*Department of Special Education, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT, USA



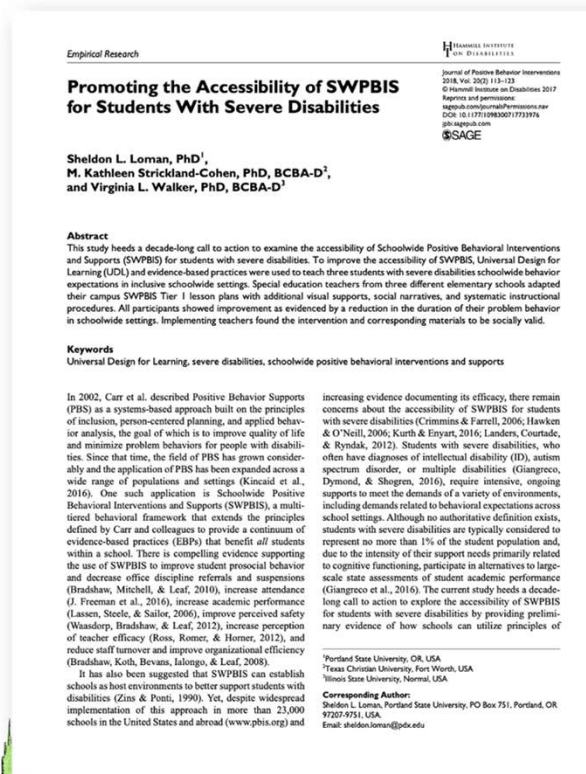
What do we know about students with ESN and PBIS?

- **Adapted Tier 1 supports are effective for students with ESN (Loman et al., 2018)**

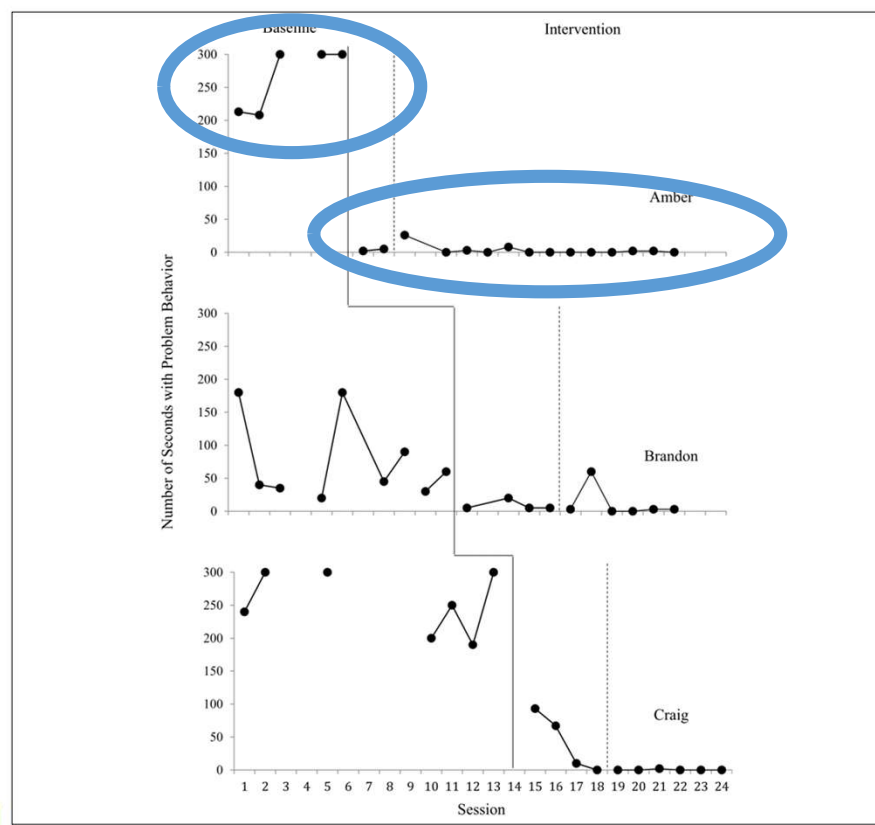


What do we know about students with ESN and PBIS?

- Loman et al. (2018) example:
 - Single-case, multiple probe across participants design
 - 3 students with ESN
 - Inclusive, school-wide settings
 - Baseline = access to existing PBIS supports
 - Intervention = adapted PBIS lesson plans



What do we know about students with ESN and PBIS?



Empirical Research

HAWKINS INSTITUTE
ON DISABILITIES

Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions

2018, Vol. 20(2) 113–123

© Hawkins Institute on Disabilities 2017

Reprints and permission:

sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/1098300717733976

jpi.sagepub.com

SAGE

Promoting the Accessibility of SWPBIS for Students With Severe Disabilities

Sheldon L. Loman, PhD¹,
M. Kathleen Strickland-Cohen, PhD, BCBA-D²,
and Virginia L. Walker, PhD, BCBA-D³

Abstract

This study heeds a decade-long call to action to examine the accessibility of Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) for students with severe disabilities. To improve the accessibility of SWPBIS, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and evidence-based practices were used to teach three students with severe disabilities schoolwide behavior expectations in inclusive schoolwide settings. Special education teachers from three different elementary schools adapted their campus SWPBIS Tier 1 lesson plans with additional visual supports, social narratives, and systematic instructional procedures. All participants showed improvement as evidenced by a reduction in the duration of their problem behavior in schoolwide settings. Implementing teachers found the intervention and corresponding materials to be socially valid.

Keywords

Universal Design for Learning, severe disabilities, schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and supports

In 2002, Carr et al. described Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) as a systems-based approach built on the principles of inclusion, person-centered planning, and applied behavior analysis, the goal of which is to improve quality of life and minimize problem behaviors for people with disabilities. Since that time, the field of PBS has grown considerably and the application of PBS has been expanded across a wide range of populations and settings (Kincaid et al., 2016). One such application is Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS), a multi-tiered behavioral framework that extends the principles defined by Carr and colleagues to provide a continuum of evidence-based practices (EBPs) that benefit all students within a school. There is compelling evidence supporting the use of SWPBIS to improve student prosocial behavior and decrease office discipline referrals and suspensions (Bradshaw, Mitchell, & Leaf, 2010), increase attendance (J. Freeman et al., 2016), increase academic performance (Lassen, Steele, & Sailor, 2006), improve perceived safety (Wassdorff, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2012), increase perception of teacher efficacy (Ross, Komer, & Horner, 2012), and reduce staff turnover and improve organizational efficiency (Bradshaw, Koth, Bevans, Jalonge, & Leaf, 2008).

It has also been suggested that SWPBIS can establish schools as host environments to better support students with disabilities (Zins & Ponti, 1990). Yet, despite widespread implementation of this approach in more than 23,000 schools in the United States and abroad (www.pbis.org) and

increasing evidence documenting its efficacy, there remain concerns about the accessibility of SWPBIS for students with severe disabilities (Crimmins & Farrell, 2006; Hawken & O'Neill, 2006; Kurth & Enyart, 2016; Landers, Courtade, & Ryndak, 2012). Students with severe disabilities, who often have diagnoses of intellectual disability (ID), autism spectrum disorder, or multiple disabilities (Giangreco, Dymond, & Shogren, 2016), require intensive, ongoing supports to meet the demands of a variety of environments, including demands related to behavioral expectations across school settings. Although no authoritative definition exists, students with severe disabilities are typically considered to represent no more than 1% of the student population and, due to the intensity of their support needs primarily related to cognitive functioning, participate in alternatives to large-scale state assessments of student academic performance (Giangreco et al., 2016). The current study heeds a decade-long call to action to explore the accessibility of SWPBIS for students with severe disabilities by providing preliminary evidence of how schools can utilize principles of

¹Portland State University, OR, USA

²Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, USA

³Illinois State University, Normal, USA

Corresponding Author:

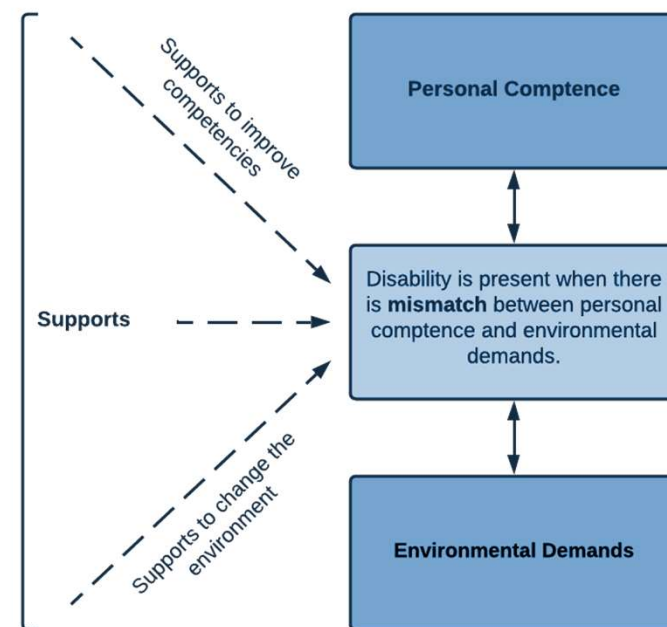
Sheldon L. Loman, Portland State University, PO Box 751, Portland, OR 97207-9751, USA

Email: sheldon.loman@psu.edu

National PBIS Leadership Forum

Strategies to promote inclusive and equitable PBIS

- Supports can improve competency and/or change the environment.
- **Remember:** Supports bridge the mismatch between competencies and environmental demands.



Strategies to promote inclusive and equitable PBIS

TIES Center Literature Review

Systematic literature review on research focused on PBIS and students with ESN

TIES Center Video Series

Including Students with ESN in PBIS: Tier 1 (6 videos, 5-10 minutes)

<https://tinyurl.com/mwnn7um>

X



SCAN ME

TIES Center TIPS

#26 - Making universal supports accessible

#27 - Including all students in SWPBIS

#30 - Behavior is communication

#31 - Teaching school-wide expectations

Ties Center Brief

Practical suggestions for promoting access to and meaningful participation in PBIS for students with ESN

National PBIS Leadership Forum

Strategies to promote inclusive and equitable PBIS



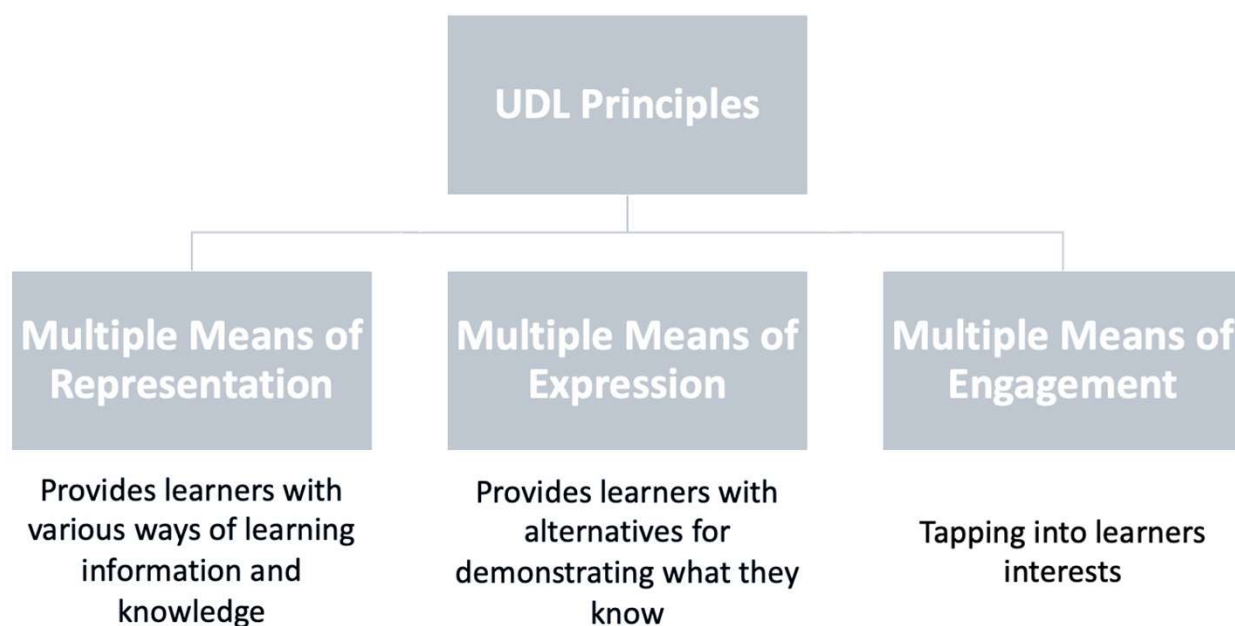
- **Universal Design for Learning** (CAST, 2024) is helpful in designing accessible PBIS

Strategies to promote inclusive and equitable PBIS

<https://tinyurl.com/337atdjv>



SCAN ME



National PBIS Leadership Forum

Strategies to promote inclusive and equitable PBIS

- [CAST: UDL Guidelines](#)
- [EBPs CEEDAR Center](#)
- [ASD EBPs](#)

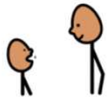


National PBIS Leadership Forum

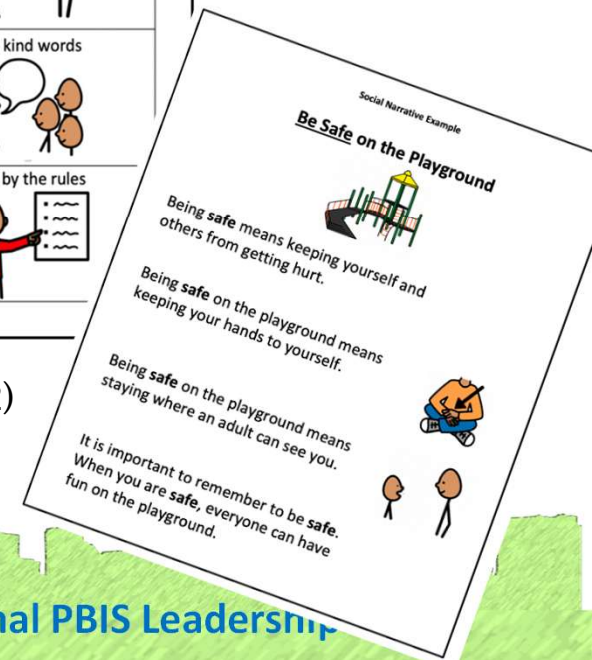
Supports for teaching expectations

- Visual supports
- Video modeling
- Task analysis
- Systematic instruction
- Social narrative

Adapted Poster Example

Playground Expectations		
Be Safe	Hands to self 	Stay where an adult can see you 
Be Respectful	Share with others 	Use kind words 
Be Responsible	Return playground equipment 	Play by the rules 

Walker and Loman (2022)



National PBIS Leadership

Supports for acknowledgement systems

- Individualized reinforcement
 - <https://ebip.vkcsites.org/preference-assessments/>
- Frequency of reinforcement
- Immediacy of reinforcement
- Connect individualized systems to school-wide system
- Acknowledgement events inclusive and accessible

<https://tinyurl.com/mv4euch9>



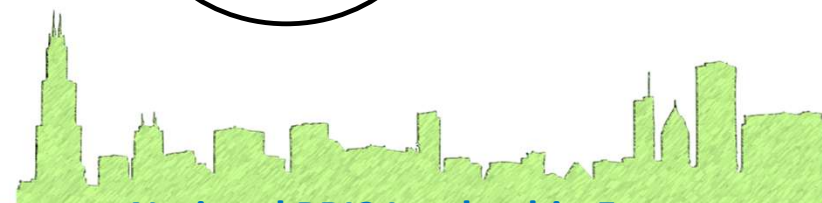
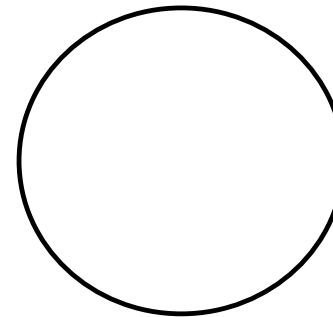
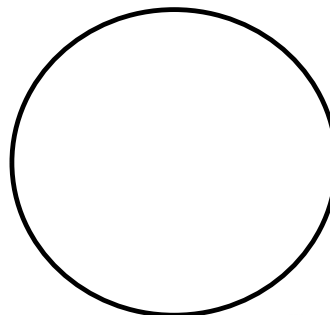
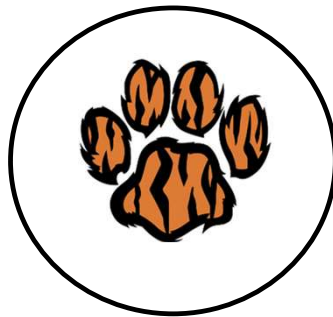
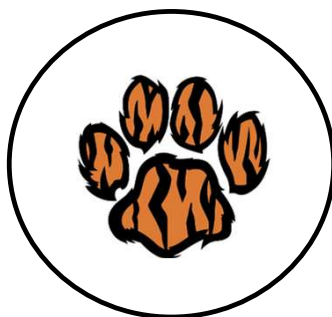
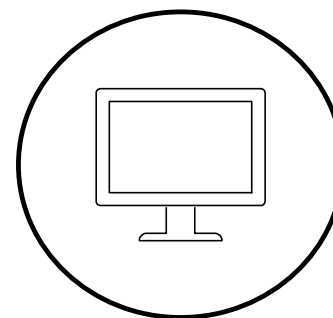
SCAN ME



National PBIS Leadership Forum

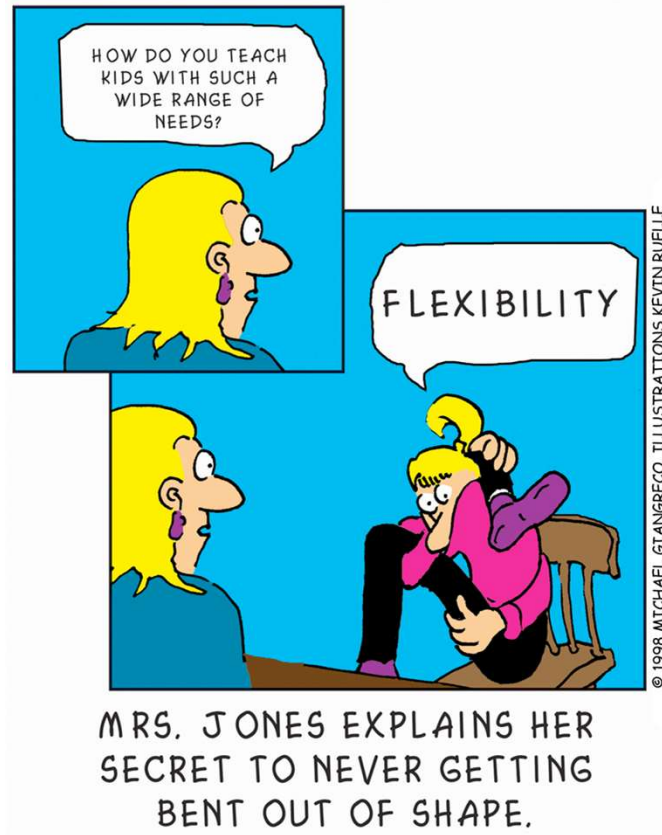
Supports for acknowledgement systems

I am working for



National PBIS Leadership Forum

Strategies to promote inclusive and equitable PBIS



SWPBIS Lesson Design Worksheet

Routine/Environment: Playground

Instructor(s): Mr. Snyder and Ms. Owen

Key School-wide Social Skill Goals/Outcomes	What We Want Students to Do to Demonstrate Learning	What We Do Now	Applying UDL: Representation of Content	Applying UDL: Student Actions/ Expression	Applying UDL: Student Engagement/ Motivation
Note: From the 3-5 SWPBIS expectations (e.g., "Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be Responsible")	Note: From the behavioral matrix developed by the SWPBIS team				
Students will be safe at the playground	- Keep hands to themselves - Stay where an adult can see them	- Show students the poster at the playground - Remind them of the rules	- Provide pictures as prompts of the expectations. - Use video examples of the expectations - Role play and practice examples and non-examples - Develop and use social narratives and/or Powercards to explain the expectations	- Students can use different ways to communicate their understanding of expectations (e.g., create posters or videos, use voice output devices) - Students can illustrate what the expectations should look like and sound like	- Meaningful reinforcement (finding incentives that students prefer). - Peer-mediated Interventions where students can partner with other students in supporting safe+ at the playground - Self-management and reinforcement strategies where student can give themselves a "thumbs up, thumbs sideways, or thumbs down" how they were safe at the playground

Loman & Walker (2020). Adapted from Tamarkin, D. (n.d.), Universal design for learning: Applications in biology. Springfield, MA: At Ease Project, Springfield Technical Community College.



Scan me!

Exemplar District/School

- Rural North/Central South Carolina
- Student population is roughly 6,000 students
- Under 20 schools, including Alternative Education Center, Career Center, and Adult Education Center
- Year 3 with MTSS implementation for Academics
- Year 2 with MTTS-B Implementation (Four Partner Schools)



Rationale for PBIS and Students with ESN

- School culture with strong focus on inclusive practices in general education and special education
- Schools house programs specifically for students with ESN
- District commitment to Special Olympics Unified Champion School
- Focus on building common language across settings
- High expectations for ALL students



How? Ready... Willing... Able

Readiness:

- Professional development/training related to positive and proactive supports for students with ESN
 - Verbal de-escalation skills
 - Function-based Thinking
 - Opportunities to Respond
- Collaborative teaming
 - grade-level participation for students
 - grade-level teaming for planning purposes
 - Special education representation on leadership team



How? Ready... Willing... Able

Willing

MTSS-B Implementation in ALL school settings

- All students, All staff, All settings
- Internal MTSS-B School Leadership Team is inclusive
- Collective problem solving (ECHO Model)

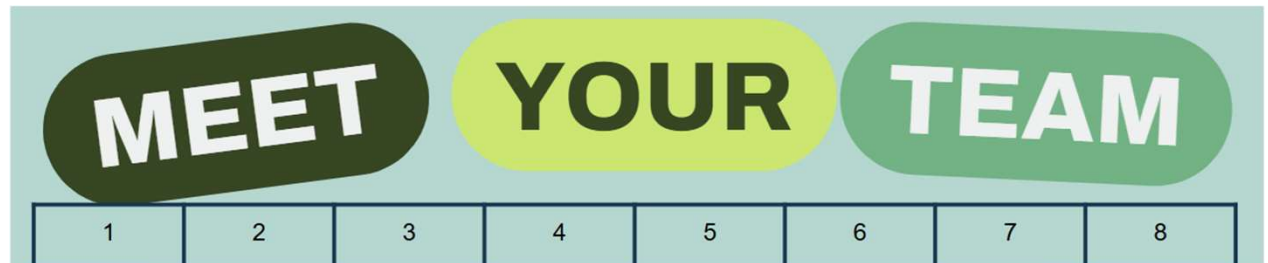
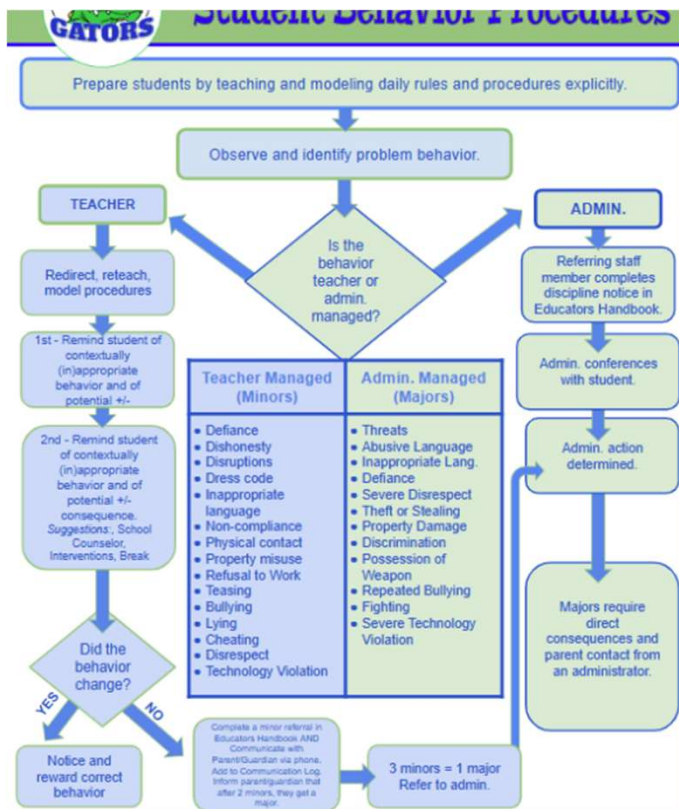


How? Ready... Willing... Able

Able

- Tier 1 strategies to ensure accessibility and meaningful participation for students with ESN (e.g., Common teaching of expectations, School-wide Matrix, Classroom Matrix, Acknowledgement systems)
- Tier 1 data collection and data-based decision making that includes students with ESN (SAS, Practices Inventory, TFI, monthly MTSS data meetings)
- Tier 1 curriculum addressing self-regulation will all students

Evidence of Ready... Willing... Able



Share Out:

In the notes leave 1 suggestion, 2 positives, 1 question

- PK review K
- K review 1st
- 1st review 2nd
- 2nd review 3rd
- 3rd review 4th
- 4th review 5th
- 5th review PK
- AA review MLP
- MLP review Speech
- Speech review SPED
- SPED review Interventionists (Stroud, McCutchen)
- Interventionists review AA



National PBIS Leadership Forum

Evidence of Ready... Willing... Able

Behavior Matrix

	Teacher-Direct Instruction	Small Group Activities	Independent Work	Transitions	Technology	
RESPECT	Hands and feet to yourself during circle time.	All four legs of chair on the floor.	Be kind to Mrs. Riser's working materials.	No talking when walking in the hall.	Use gentle hands when working on the I-Pads.	
SUCCESS	All eyes on me and criss cross applesauce.	Eyes on task.	Completed work.	Make sure you stay behind the other person when walking in line.	Completing work assigned on the I-Pad.	
RESPONSIBILITY	Participate during circle time.	Participating during IEP work	Cleaning up work materials when finished.	Hands and feet to myself when walking in the line.	Staying on my I-Pad program and not playing on other games.	



Behavior Matrix

On the Bus	In the Hall	In the Gator Cafe	In the Classroom	In the Restroom	At Recess
Walk quietly	Walk quietly	Quiet line when getting lunch	Stay in your work area	No more than 3 students at a time	Show good sportsmanship
Walk in a straight line	Use silent greetings	Carry tray with both hands	Continue working when guests visit	Clean your hands when finished	Use school-appropriate language
No feet or objects in the aisle	Stay on the right side of the hall	Only eat your food	Hands and feet to yourself	Hands and feet to yourself	Take turns
Quiet and kind voices	Straight line	Clean up after yourself		-Leave the restroom clean and neat for the next person	Use equipment correctly
Hands and feet to yourself	Hands and feet to yourself	Stay in your seat		-Flush the toilet when done	Hands and feet to yourself
		Music On: Quietly eating Music Off: Whisper talking			



National PBIS Leadership Forum

Evidence of Ready...Willing...Able



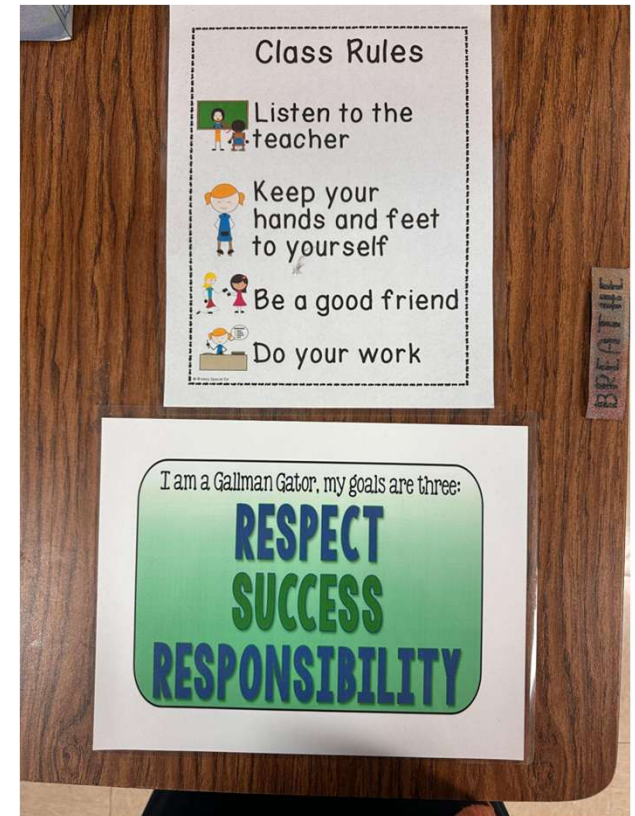
Challenges

- Schools at different levels of readiness
- Admin and staff turn-over
- Needing to go “slow” but wanting to move “fast”
- Making “unique needs” “fit”.. thinking flexibly!



Tips and Recommendations

- Involve ALL stakeholders (ALL means ALL: Parents, students, teachers)
- Provide on-going coaching (top-down and middle-out)
- Give space and grace for the work to take place..
- Supporting students with ESN requires flexibly thinking and application!
- BYOC (Bring Your Own Chair) - if you are not invited to “the table”



Questions?



National PBIS Leadership Forum

Please Complete this Session's Evaluation

10/22

2J – Including Students with Extensive Support Needs in the PBIS Framework

Four options, pick one!

1. Mobile App

Click "Take Survey" under the session description.

2. QR Code

Scan the code on this slide.



3. Online

Click on the link located next to the downloadable session materials posted online at:

www.pbis.org/conference-and-presentations/pbis-leadership-forum

4. Direct Link

Click the link provided in the email reminder you receive after your session ends.



After you submit each session evaluation, click the link to enter the **gift card raffle!**

Evaluations are **anonymous!** We send reminder emails to all participants.

National PBIS Leadership Forum