



PBIS Frequently Asked Questions New Brunswick PBIS Team

What should a school have in place before launching PBIS with staff and students?

- It is essential to have a principal who is willing to **champion PBIS as a long-term cultural framework**, not a short-term initiative.
- The principal should have a **foundational understanding of Tier 1 PBIS**, including the purpose, the evidence base, and the expected outcomes such as improved school climate, increased instructional time, and consistent adult practices.
- The principal establishes a **PBIS Leadership Team** that represents different roles and perspectives within the school (administration, teachers, support staff).
- The PBIS team requires **protected learning time** to develop a shared understanding of Tier 1 PBIS and the **12 Critical Elements**, with an emphasis on fidelity and consistency.
- We recommend schools engage in **shared professional reading and learning**, including the *Tier 1 PBIS Handbook* (Djabrayan Hannigan & Hauser), the NB PBIS Guide, and the NB PBIS website.
- Schools are encouraged to review the **Tier 1 Fidelity Checklist** early in the process so the team understands what effective implementation looks like and can use it for **ongoing reflection and improvement**, not evaluation.
- From the beginning, schools should acknowledge that **PBIS must be culturally responsive**. Values, expectations, and recognition systems should align with the school's cultural context, community norms, and student population rather than being copied from another setting.

What are the most important first steps when introducing PBIS into a school setting?

- Under the leadership of the principal, the PBIS Team organizes a **PBIS 101 professional learning session** for all staff to establish a common language and shared purpose.
- It is critical that staff clearly understand that PBIS is:
 - proactive rather than reactive
 - evidence-based
 - implemented gradually over time
 - dependent on consistency and fidelity
- Staff collaborate to identify **school-wide values** that reflect both the school culture and the broader community. This process should intentionally include **staff voice and choice** through surveys, discussions, or activities.
- Student voice is also intentionally included through age-appropriate strategies such as classroom discussions, visuals, or student-created materials.

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- Once values are established (e.g., *Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be Ready to Learn*), the **behaviour matrix is developed**, ensuring expectations are:
 - observable
 - positively stated
 - culturally and developmentally appropriate
 - The PBIS Team commits to **clear, ongoing communication** with staff and families, so expectations, goals, and progress are transparent.
 - Early planning includes how the school will **acknowledge both student and staff behaviour** aligned with the school values, recognizing that adult behaviour modeling is central to Tier 1 success.
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What does a realistic first-year implementation timeline look like for schools?

All schools move at different paces depending on staff readiness, capacity, and logistical factors. With that in mind, most schools typically accomplish the following during Year 1 of Tier 1 PBIS implementation:

- A PBIS Leadership Team is formed and meets on a regular schedule.
- A **simple, manageable behavioural data collection system** is established and trialed.
- Data is reviewed regularly and used to **guide school-wide decisions**, not to label students.
- School-wide values are clearly defined and visible.
- A behaviour matrix is created or partially developed.
- A **recognition system is designed for both students and staff**, aligned with the school values.
- Some schools begin explicitly teaching behavioural expectations in high-priority areas identified through data (e.g., playgrounds, hallways).

A key focus in the first year is building **strong systems**, not perfection. Fidelity, reflection, and learning from data are prioritized over speed.

How should behaviour expectations be taught, practised, and reinforced across school spaces?

Once a section of the behaviour matrix is complete and staff are ready, schools often use a focused teaching approach commonly referred to as a **“blitz.”**

- A high-priority area (e.g., hallway, playground) is selected based on behavioural data.
- A clear timeline is established (typically 2–4 weeks).

- Staff are intentionally prepared with:
 - a shared understanding of expectations
 - lesson plans for explicit instruction
 - clarity around adult roles and consistency
 - PBIS lessons emphasize:
 - teaching expectations
 - modeling
 - guided practice
 - positive reinforcement
 - Visual supports (posters, signage) are created **as teaching tools**, not decorations, and are actively referenced by staff.
 - Students may contribute by creating posters, videos, or demonstrations, reinforcing ownership and relevance.
 - Families are informed and encouraged to **reinforce shared language and expectations at home**, strengthening consistency across environments.
 - Behaviour data is collected **before and after** the blitz to determine impact.
 - The PBIS Team reviews the data and reflects on:
 - fidelity of implementation
 - consistency of adult responses
 - appropriateness of reinforcement
 - Expectations continue to be monitored and reinforced after the blitz to ensure sustainability.
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What common challenges do schools face during the first year of PBIS implementation?

- **Staff buy-in** is a common challenge. Effective strategies include honouring staff voice, communicating transparently, acknowledging existing strengths, celebrating progress, and recognizing adult efforts aligned with PBIS values.
 - **Behavioural data use** can be challenging. Schools are supported to start small, keep systems simple, and celebrate consistent data entry. Data is shared responsibly to highlight trends, inform decisions, and show progress.
 - **Prioritization** is often difficult in busy schools. When PBIS is not prioritized, schools remain in reactive mode. Successful schools intentionally allocate time, leadership, and sometimes staffing to support PBIS implementation.
 - Leadership plays a critical role in framing PBIS as **worth the effort** and essential to student and staff well-being.
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Tier 1 PBIS is a long-term commitment to creating safe, predictable, and positive learning environments. When implemented with fidelity, cultural responsiveness, and consistent leadership, PBIS supports not only student behaviour but also staff collaboration, instructional time, and overall school climate.