



**Positive**  
**BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS**  
**AND SUPPORTS** *of Georgia*

PBIS Update

January 2016



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HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM THE GaDOE PBIS TEAM!!

## **Letter from the State Coordinator**

As I look forward to a brand new year, I must start by reflecting back on the wonderful work and events that brought us to where we are today. We are so

grateful for the support, commitment and enthusiasm for the work to improve and maintain positive school climate in schools all over Georgia, through PBIS implementation.

For almost eight years, the PBIS Team at the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) has led the "movement" to bring PBIS to every school in Georgia. With guidance from the PBIS National Technical Assistance Center and our amazing resource agent, Dr. Heather Peshak George, we have trained over 600 school and program teams and continue to provide ongoing technical assistance and training. None of this would have been possible without the support and backing of the GaDOE through our most active cheerleaders, Deborah Gay, State Director of Special Education and Dr. Garry McGiboney, Deputy State Superintendent.

Regional School Climate Specialists perform invaluable technical assistance to our PBIS districts and have enabled us to bring on the largest number of districts and schools this past year. The addition of 16 School Climate Specialists based in each RESA was made possible by funding included in the State budget beginning two years ago. This funding is the result of the support and advocacy of many outside partners who came on board with our first PBIS Summit in 2013 and continue to support through the many groups and agencies represented on the *Georgia Education Climate Coalition*. Many people played integral roles in spreading the message of improving school climate through PBIS - State Representatives Randy Nix and Katie Dempsey, State Board of Education members Helen Rice and Barbara Hampton, Rob Rhodes and Georgia Appleseed, Vanessa Elkin and the Southern Education Foundation, Brad Bryant and REACH Georgia, Arianne Weldon and the Get Georgia Reading Campaign, Voices for Georgia's Children, and many, many others.

The commitments from the Superintendents and leadership in each PBIS district to support this work by providing personnel, funding and PBIS expectations through an identified District Coordinator has made all the difference in sustainability and in the results we are seeing in PBIS schools. Strong and supportive leadership at the district and school level is the defining factor in the success of PBIS.

Last, but not least, none of this would be possible without the incredible

passion, energy, expertise and commitment of our GaDOE PBIS team. Current team members MiMi Gudenrath, Sandy DeMuth, Tara Davis, Mark Fyneweaver, Tony Feldmann, Justin Hill, Rebecca Blanton and Cheryl Benefield log more miles and hours than you could count to provide the finest training and technical assistance tailored to meet the needs of the School Climate Specialists and districts we serve.

We look forward to the new year with enthusiasm and know that by improving and maintaining positive school climates, we will see improved outcomes for Georgia students!

With warm regards,  
*Ginny O'Connell*

## **Annual State District Coordinator and School Climate Specialist Meeting**

On December 1, 2015 approximately 100 PBIS District Coordinators and School Climate Specialist gathered at Georgia State University for the annual meeting with the Georgia Department of Education. Superintendent Richard Woods opened the meeting, followed by presentations from Dr. Garry McGiboney, Deputy State Superintendent, and Ginny O'Connell, State PBIS Coordinator. A panel discussion of different perspectives on PBIS implementation included Dr. David Lewis, Superintendent of Muscogee County Schools; Jason Kaup, School Climate Specialist, Pioneer RESA; Jill Rogers, PBIS District Coordinator, Murray County Schools; Jaime Espinosa, Principal, Gwinnett County Schools; and Lindsay Dunn, PBIS Coach, Lincoln County Elementary School.

The highlight of the meeting included the presentation of certificates for schools implementing PBIS at the Emerging and Operational levels. District Coordinators received certificates recognizing 287 schools for the 2014-2015 school year. To view the list of schools on our web page, visit <http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Pages/Positive-Behavioral-Interventions-and-Support.aspx>



## National Presentations

Georgia was very present at the National PBIS Leadership Forum in Chicago in October. Presentations at this conference are by "Invitation Only" and included:

- Tara Davis, GaDOE and Cassa Andrews, DECAL on the integration of Schoolwide PBIS and the Pyramid Model for young children in Georgia
- Dr. Bob Burgess on PBIS implementation in a large suburban school district
- Ginny O'Connell on leading PBIS implementation at the State level for all State Coordinators

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## New PBIS Districts for the 2015-2016 School Year

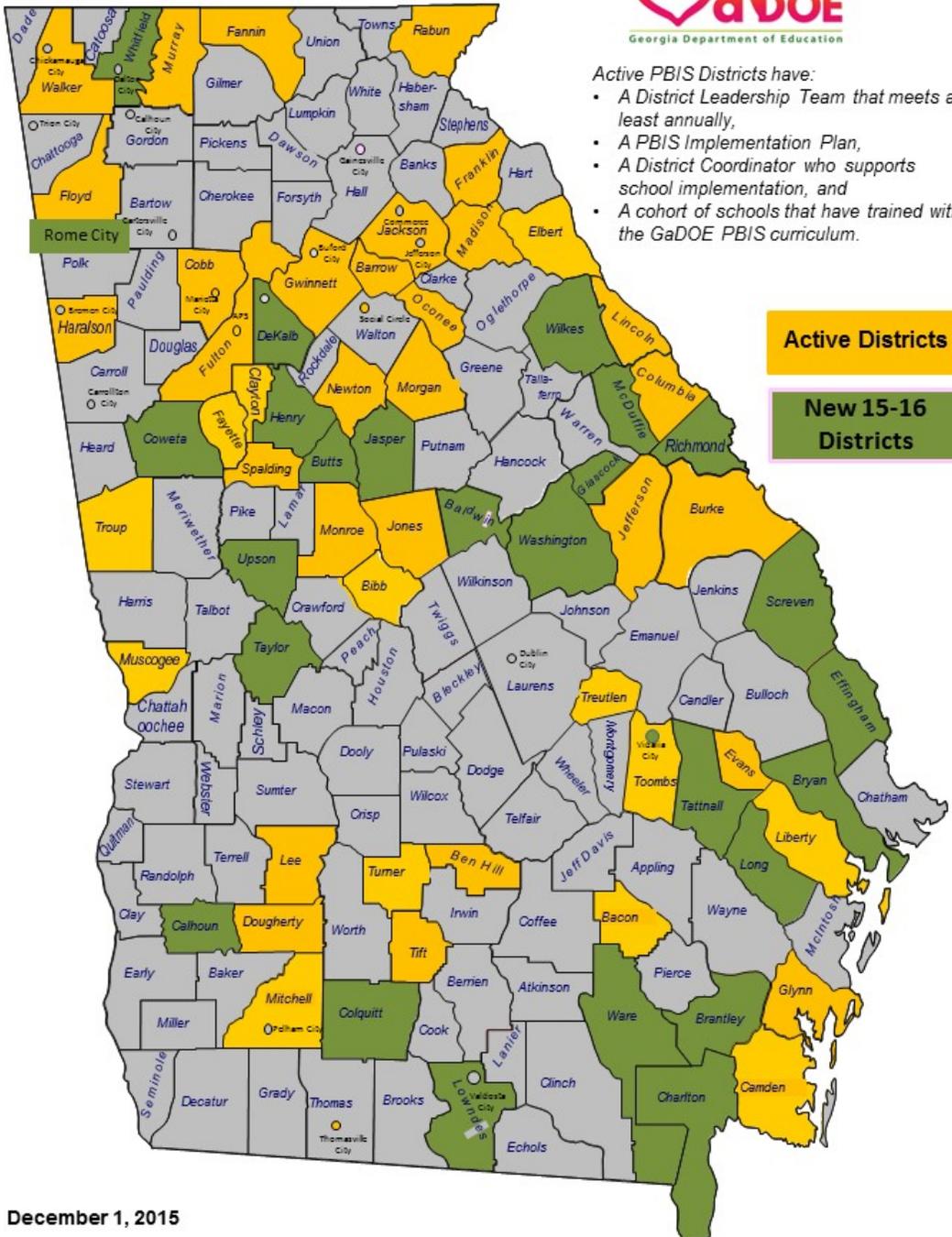
Welcome to the **28 new PBIS Districts** for the 2015-2016 school year:

Baldwin, Brantley, Bryan, Butts, Calhoun, Charlton, Colquitt, Coweta, DeKalb, Effingham, Gainesville City, Glascock, Henry, Jasper, Long, Lowndes, McDuffie, Richmond, Rome City, Screven, Tattnall, Taylor, Thomaston-Upson, Vidalia City, Ware, Washington, Whitfield, Wilkes County School Districts.

## Active Georgia PBIS Districts



- Active PBIS Districts have:
- A District Leadership Team that meets at least annually,
  - A PBIS Implementation Plan,
  - A District Coordinator who supports school implementation, and
  - A cohort of schools that have trained with the GaDOE PBIS curriculum.



## Addressing the mental health needs of our students.

Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) introduces participants to the unique risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems in adolescents, builds understanding of the importance of early intervention, and teaches individuals how to help an adolescent in crisis or experiencing a mental health challenge. The course teaches participants the risk factors and warning signs of a variety of mental health challenges common among adolescents, including anxiety, depression, psychosis, eating disorders, AD/HD, disruptive behavior disorders, and substance use disorder. YMHFA is designed for adults who regularly interact with adolescents including teachers, school staff, coaches, youth group leaders, parents, and first responders. Through our GA Project AWARE grant, the GaDOE and our partners at Georgia State University have established 9 trainers to provide YMHFA training throughout the state. For more information on the course, visit <http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/cs/take-a-course/course-types/youth/>

To learn about training opportunities or schedule a training in your area, contact [Cheryl Benefield](#) at [cbenefield@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:cbenefield@doe.k12.ga.us) or by phone at 404-657-1531.

### **Highlights from a new PBIS District!!!!!!**

#### **Haralson County Schools**

**Haralson County High School discipline data shows significant decreases in several areas!**

#### **Compared to the same time frame last year. .**

**Cell phone violations are down by 59%.**

**Out of School Suspensions are reduced by 77%**

**In-School Suspensions are down by 45%**

**Doing things the REBEL Way!!!**



## Learn More



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