

PBIS STATE COORDINATOR

Passing of the Torch: Georgia's New PBIS Program Manager

Jason W. Byars, Ed.S., GaDOE PBIS Program Manager

On January 2, I officially took the reigns of PBIS in Georgia from former Program Manager Mr. Justin D. Hill, EdS. Part of the transition entailed a combined presentation to the Professional Standards Commission on Georgia's PBIS Endorsement for Educators in which Dr. Rob Sumowski from Georgia College and State University and Dr. Kymberly Harris from Georgia Southern University presented as well. The quartet described to the commissioners the purpose of the nation's first ever PBIS endorsement. I have often heard it said that "success is when opportunity meets preparation." I am



not sure that any amount of preparation prepared me enough for such an opportunity and responsibility as leading PBIS in the greatest state in the nation. However, I can "go confidently in the direction of [my] dreams" because of the men and women who have come before me and the ones that are presently walking beside me.

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The single greatest blessing during this transition is coming to work each day with Susan Barrow, Rebecca Blanton, Sharon Champion, Tammi Clarke, Sandy DeMuth, Tony Feldmann, MiMi Gudenrath, Timi Hunt, Debi Keane, Ben Moore, and Brandy Woolridge while being supported by our Director, Dr. Zephine Smith-Dixon. Georgia is unique due to the extensive PBIS collaboration between the Department of Education, the School Climate Specialists in our RESA Districts, the District Coordinators and our state's colleges and universities. Nowhere else in the nation will you find such a braided support network for PBIS. It is truly an honor to have the opportunity to serve each of you in this new position. Please feel free to contact me at JByars@doe.k12.ga.us or 404-576-1331 if I can ever do anything to support you.

District Spotlight: Bibb County

In Memory of Mr. Kent Sparks

Curlandra Lightfoot Smith, PBIS Coordinator

PBIS implementation in high schools can be a challenge. Keeping almost 1,000 students motivated to attend school, be on time, consistently follow school expectations, pass their classes and build in just enough time to allow for socializing can be overwhelming. In addition to student achievement and social emotional learning, we ensure faculty and staff are equipped to be successful and feel supported. However, Mr. Kent Sparks seemed to find the formula to balance the demands and “Build good ships.” What ships, you ask? The ships that Mr. Sparks and his entire school staff consistently referred to, were the students who overcame obstacles, to attend school every day and be “Respectful and Responsible”.

Mr. Kent Sparks worked as an educator and football coach for 26 years, ending his career as the Beloved Principal of Rutland High School in Macon, GA. He believed that PBIS implementation should be simple (so that all students can be taught and understand), consistent and data driven. Mr. Sparks was exemplary in his way of acknowledging students and staff in such a way that was meaningful. He created a culture of respect, accountability and leadership.

Rutland High School increased from a 1-star climate rating to a 4-star climate rating under his leadership. “Mr. Sparks was dedicated to the students and staff of Rutland High School. Each and every day he valued people and relationships. He demonstrated true leadership and believed that one can not quantify the true measurement that fostering a positive relationship with students has on their future success. “His motto was ‘it can be done’ and he proved that it can,” Wendy Pooler, Rutland High Assistant Principal, said.

He led his school to become the first PBIS Distinguished High School in the state. His passion for PBIS and school climate resonated throughout his school building and throughout the district. “At heart, Mr. Sparks was a coach! He knew that students needed and wanted feedback. He took his experiences as a coach and applied them to his implementation of PBIS at Rutland High School. Giving quality feedback, celebrating success, and knowing ‘it can be done’ was Mr. Sparks to his core. PBIS at Rutland under his leadership was one of the best in the state because of



Dr. Curtis Jones, Mr. Kent Sparks, and Curlandra Lightfoot Smith

Kent Sparks,” said Dr. Curtis Jones, Superintendent & National Superintendent of the Year.

When it came to doing the work, Mr. Sparks was always first to seek out opportunities to make sure his PBIS team was successful. Last year, when a last minute training opportunity came available for Rutland High, I took a deep breath, called Mr. Sparks and said, “Mr. Sparks, there is a two-day training coming up in less than two weeks for your PBIS team, and it’s in Atlanta.” His response was, and always was, “We’ll be there.” That was his way. He often volunteered to share his PBIS experiences with others.



Bibb County Spotlight *continued*

School Spotlight: Mashburn ES

Mr. Sparks graciously allowed multiple schools from around the state to visit and tour his school.

Not only did he open his doors for others to learn from him and his team, he also purchased the guests lunch, out of his own budget. This speaks to his passion for creating positive experiences for others. Mr. Sparks also served on the Bibb PBIS District Leadership Team and was an ambassador for PBIS and school culture and climate.

“Mr. Kent Sparks was a true ambassador for high school implementation of PBIS in Georgia. He devoted his time, his talents, and his resources to ensuring the success of improving school climate throughout the Rutland community. He graciously opened the doors of Rutland High School to visitors from all of Georgia who wanted to come see his school in action. We are proud to acknowledge that under his leadership, Rutland High School is the first Distinguished PBIS High School in Georgia. The Georgia PBIS Team is grateful to him for his leadership and vision,” said Mimi Gudenrath, GaDOE PBIS Program Specialist

We know that Mr. Sparks left behind a legacy for his family, students, staff, colleagues and community. We also know his students and staff will be more “Respectful and Responsible” because of the foundation he laid. His work continues through the positive culture and climate that is now embedded in each student and staff member at Rutland High School, under his leadership. Job well done Mr. Sparks.



“We Shall Build Good Ships Here; At A Profit If We Can, At A Loss If We Must, But Always Good Ships.” Collis Potter

More than a Welcome!

David Feuerbach, School Safety and Climate Coordinator

Mashburn Elementary School, located in Forsyth County, had a morning of celebration for their students upon their return from winter break. The idea behind the celebration was for the students to find joy and excitement on their first day back. The administrative team from Mashburn, administrators from cluster schools, a school board member, county office personnel, the Forsyth County Sheriff, local business partners, and students from the cluster high school arrived early in the morning to participate in this event.



The students were greeted with encouraging signs, cheered on, and embraced with kind words as they exited their cars and school buses, and as they walked through the hallways. Teachers stood outside their doors and welcomed students as they walked to their classes. It was a great experience to see these students full of excitement as they walked down the hallways. It was also remarkable to see Mashburn’s stakeholders so excited to take part in this event.

Carla Gravitt, Principal of Mashburn Elementary, expressed that this event made such an impact on teachers and students that her teachers asked if they could occasionally welcome students to the school in this manner as they are dropped off in the morning. Mrs. Gravitt and her administrative team will cover certain grade level rooms in the morning, so that teachers can celebrate the students. This has now become part of their culture!

Around the State: Early Learning

Georgia's Early Learning Climate PBIS Aligned Model

Brandy Woolridge, GaDOE/DECAL Early Learning PBIS Program Specialist

In order to increase academic achievement and decrease the number of suspensions in our elementary schools, we must inspect the climate of the school. Research shows that there is a direct correlation between school climate and reading proficiency scores.

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) and the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) have partnered together to roll out Georgia's Early Learning Climate PBIS Aligned Model in PBIS elementary schools. The key difference between K-12 Classroom PBIS and the Early Learning Aligned Model is that while both models embrace classroom climate the aligned model promotes reading proficiency by the end of 3rd grade.

“Positive relationships are the foundation of learning.”

Bibb and Rockdale County School Districts are currently implementing Georgia's Early Learning Climate PBIS Aligned Model in 3-4 of their PBIS elementary schools. Cohort PBIS elementary schools receive training, coaching and support on developmentally appropriate practices and strategies for early learners.



- *Ingram-Pye Elementary School
- *Southfield Elementary School
- *Springdale Elementary Schools
- * Northwoods Academy Early Learning Center



- *Barksdale Elementary School
- *Flat Shoals Elementary School
- *Honey Creek Elementary School
- *Pine Street Elementary School
- *Rockdale Early Learning Center



Relationship Strategies for Teachers

Hugs, High Fives and Thumbs-up: Give individual praise through hugs, high fives and thumbs up for all students. Find what works best for the student.

Class Jobs: Give class jobs to students, rewarding them for practicing the expectations of the classroom and school.

Positive Note Home: Send a positive note home to parents sharing how their child is doing with following the classroom expectations/rules. Be sure to include specific examples of what was observed.

Example: Carlos used the solution kit cards to resolve a peer conflict over a kite during recess. Carlos and his classmate decided to take turns flying the kite.

4:1 Deposits: A highly effective practice used to build positive relationships with students is maintaining a 4:1 ratio of positive to negative interactions or “deposits” to “withdrawals.” Research supports that the ratio of positives to negative should be at least **4 positive interactions for every 1 negative interaction**. When adults become more mindful of the need to increase the number of positive interactions, relationships with students become stronger and the classroom climate becomes more positive.

Example: “Kathleen, thank you for being responsible during lunch by waiting in line patiently to get your carton of milk.”

For additional PBIS resources for elementary schools, visit the GaDOE PBIS Early Learning at www.gadoe.org/pbis/earlylearning

GAPBIS ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Jean Ramirez PBIS Scholarship

GaDOE PBIS in conjunction with the Georgia Foundation for Public Education is proud to announce the **Jean Ramirez PBIS Scholarship Program for 2019-2020**. Under the program, scholarships will be awarded to two Georgia College and State University (GCSU) students and two Georgia Southern University (GSU) students pursuing a PBIS graduate certificate beginning in 2019-2020. Currently, these are the only universities in Georgia that offer graduate certificates in PBIS.

More information can be found within the application

[PBIS Scholarship Application](#)

Congratulations to our new School Climate Transformation Grant Manager

Rebecca Blanton



Rebecca Blanton has been selected as the School Climate Transformation Grant Manager. Ms. Blanton brings extensive experience managing federal grants for the Department of Education. She currently serves as the Project AWARE Grant Manager and will continue in that role until the completion of the SAMHSA grant in September 2019. The five-year School Climate Transformation grant is designed to continue to expand the work of PBIS in Georgia, focusing on the integration of mental wellness and PBIS, early learning, and supporting communities impacted by the opioid crisis.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

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About the Program

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is an evidence-based, data-driven framework proven to reduce disciplinary incidents, increase a school’s sense of safety and support improved academic outcomes. The premise of PBIS is that continual teaching, combined with acknowledgement or feedback of positive student behavior will reduce unnecessary discipline and promote a climate of greater productivity, safety and learning.

