Trail of “Tiers”:

Why School is Not Always a Walk in the Park for Our Students

Jason W. Byars, PBIS Program Manager
Georgia Department of Education
Georgia’s Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
Office of School Safety and Climate

- Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
- Safe and Supportive Schools
- Counselors and Social Workers
- School Nurses
- School Safety Trainer
- School Safety Assessment
- School Safety Data Analyst
- GEMA Staff Member on Special Assignment
Focus on School Climate
“If an egg is broken by an outside force, life ends. If broken by an inside force, life begins. Great things always begin from the inside.”
GaPBIS is NOT about an outside force:

- Tokens
- Tickets
- Bucks
- Parties
- School stores
- Rewards
Goals of an Imposed Consequence

1. Teaching students' basic lessons about right and wrong ways to behave.
2. Giving students the incentive to behave the right way.
Chaussettes

- Border Collie/Pit Bull Mix
- French word for “Socks”
- Easy to train
- Kennel
- Outside
(Most) Students Know How We Want Them to Behave

They do not need:
STICKERS
DEPRIVING THEM FROM RECESS
SUSPENDING THEM FROM SCHOOL

In fact, most challenging students want to behave the right way…but they need something more from us.

They are lacking the skills.
GaPBIS IS about an inside force:

- Skill Building
- Defining Expectations
- Acknowledgement
- Accountability
- Climate
PBIS is about changing the egg from the inside out.

To do this adults have to understand what is going on inside the children they serve.
The question is: Do we REALLY want to know what is going on inside of them? Externalizing vs. Internalizing.
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Report – June 2019

- Tracked over 14,000 middle and high school students over 20 years
- “Students who felt connected to their school and family as adolescents grew up safer and with better mental health than those who were disconnected as teenagers.”
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Report – June 2019

• “Connected adolescents were less than half as likely to be the victims of physical violence, to use illicit drugs, or to be diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease by their 20s or 30s, a significant decline in risk.”

• CDC recommends, “Providing teachers more training on classroom management, particularly positive behavior management and ways to make classrooms feel inclusive.”
PBIS Endorsement

Georgia College and State University
- On-line
- 3 courses
- Coursework is focused on teacher preparation
- Dr. Rob Sumowski
- Robert.Sumowski@gcsu.edu

Georgia Southern University
- On-line
- 3 courses
- Coursework is focused on leadership and administration
- Dr. Kymberly Harris
- Kharris@Georgia southern.edu
PBIS vs. Traditional Discipline Model

In a school with PBIS…
• A positive school environment is evident.

In a school with traditional discipline…
• Staff and students are reactive and negative towards inappropriate behavior.

Source: Georgia Department of Education. 2013. “Addressing Climate, Safety, and Discipline in Georgia Schools.”
PBIS vs. Traditional Discipline Model

In a school with PBIS...
- Educators, teach, monitor and acknowledge appropriate behavior before relying on punishment.

In a school with traditional discipline...
- Parents and students are provided with the Code of Conduct and the consequences if students violate the rules.

Source: Georgia Department of Education. 2013. “Addressing Climate, Safety, and Discipline in Georgia Schools.”
#90/69. Students are frequently recognized for good behavior.

### 2014-15
- Strongly Agree: 16.5%
- Somewhat Agree: 21.9%
- Somewhat Disagree: 22.7%
- Strongly Disagree: 38.9%

### 2018-19
- Strongly Agree: 15.6%
- Somewhat Agree: 22.2%
- Somewhat Disagree: 22.6%
- Strongly Disagree: 39.5%
PBIS vs. Traditional Discipline Model

**In a school with PBIS…**

- Adhering to school-wide expectations and rules are taught and recognized.

**In a school with traditional discipline…**

- Inappropriate behavior is more likely to be acknowledged than positive behavior.

Source: Georgia Department of Education. 2013. “Addressing Climate, Safety, and Discipline in Georgia Schools.”
#88/67. My school sets clear rules for behavior.

**2014-15**

- Strongly Agree: 49.6%
- Somewhat Agree: 36%
- Somewhat Disagree: 5.8%
- Strongly Disagree: 8.6%

**2018-19**

- Strongly Agree: 50.9%
- Somewhat Agree: 34.7%
- Somewhat Disagree: 6.2%
- Strongly Disagree: 8.2%
PBIS vs. Traditional Discipline Model

In a school with PBIS...
• A predictable, consistent, fair, and equitable disciplinary system is the norm.

In a school with traditional discipline...
• Disciplinary practices, which are not based on data or research, are inconsistent. Consequences often lead to ISS/OSS resulting in a loss of instruction.

Source: Georgia Department of Education. 2013. “Addressing Climate, Safety, and Discipline in Georgia Schools.”
#13/11. All students are treated fairly by the adults in my school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018-19</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>41.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PBIS vs. Traditional Discipline Model

In a school with PBIS…
• The school has a tiered support system to meet the needs of all students.

In a school with traditional discipline…
• A system for providing students with a continuum of support is not present.

Source: Georgia Department of Education. 2013. “Addressing Climate, Safety, and Discipline in Georgia Schools.”
The Results...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FY18 LEVELS OF RECOGNITION</th>
<th>School Climate Star Ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinguished (n = 13)</td>
<td>0.00% (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational (n = 320)</td>
<td>0.00% (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging (n = 365)</td>
<td>1.37% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Installing (n = 379)</td>
<td>1.85% (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-PBIS Schools (n = 1,159)</td>
<td>2.85% (33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Schools (Statewide) (n = 2,236)</td>
<td>2.01% (45)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
% of Schools with 4 or 5 Star Climate Ratings

- Statewide: 71.11%
- Non-PBIS Schools: 55.39%
- PBIS Schools: 88.02%
- PBIS Schools with High Fidelity: 94.29%

94.29% of Operational & Distinguished PBIS Schools Earned a 4 or 5 Star Climate Rating in FY18
Offering a holistic education to each and every child in our state.

What is ISF?
Interconnected Systems Framework
PBIS + SMH = ISF

• “The Interconnected Systems Framework (ISF) described in this monograph represents a proposed and developing interconnection of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and School Mental Health (SMH) systems to improve educational outcomes for all children and youth, especially those with or at risk of developing mental health challenges.”
“Culture is what you have, CLIMATE is why you have it.”
May 31st - Grand Canyon Rim to Rim
Journey Details

• Began at 4:00 a.m.
• Temperature was 30 degrees
• Snow on the ground
• Had to have head lamps to light the path
• 5 men between the ages of 48 – 62 with a variety of skill levels
The Descent

- North Kaibab Trail
- 15.9 miles to Phantom Ranch
- Temperature was 90+ degrees
- Elevation change of approximately 6,000 feet
The Ascent

- 2 choices:
  - South Kaibab Trail
    - 8 miles
    - No water or shade
    - Very little flat trails
  - Bright Angel Trail
    - Added 3 miles to trip
    - Has water and shade
    - More flat areas
- Sunset at 8:30 p.m.
- High winds after sunset
- Temperature was 55 degrees
Travel and Trauma
Not Everyone Flies...
BRAIN RULE # 8

“Stressed brains don’t learn in the same way that non-stressed brains do.”

John Medina, PhD, Seattle Pacific University
University of Washington
Our Students Arrive to Begin Their Journey With a Wide Variety of Experiences

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Nadine Burke-Harris
“I don’t need the practice...”
Lessons Learned from my Dad

• Ability is not the same thing as skill.
• Do not pay someone to do something that you can do yourself.
• Be careful what you tell your children. It could come back to haunt you.
Lessons Learned from OTHER Dads

1. Q: What did I choose to do today?
   A: I said the worst word possible.

2. Why did I make this choice?
   All of Nebraska was trying to shoot just a walk, would be.

3. Who did I bother or disrespect?
   [Handwritten: torn]

4. Name three things I could have done better.
   1. I could of had what the heck (if thats ok) I could of
      try [illegible].
   2. Why did I change my mind?
      [illegible]
   3. What habit have I chosen not to use today?
      [Handwritten: be proactive]
Lessons Learned from OTHER Dads

2. Q: Why did I make this choice?
   A: All of (another teacher) kids were trying to cheat so no one would be guard.
Lessons Learned from OTHER Dads

• 3. Q: Who did I bother or disrespect?
• A: (Lists 3 friends).
Lessons Learned from OTHER Dads

- **4. Q:** Name 3 things I could have done better.
- **A:** I could have said ‘What the heck?’ (if that’s ok). I could say please stop (but, anyway they would keep on doing it).
Lessons Learned from OTHER Dads

4. Q: Name 3 things I could have done better.

A: Or I’ve could have asked nicely for someone else.
Lessons Learned from OTHER Dads

• 5. Q: What habit have I chosen not to use today?

• A: Be proactive?
Lessons Learned from OTHER Dads

6. Where did you find this word?
A: FROM MY DAD!
Remember…

- My dad is not your dad.
- My experiences are not your experiences.
- My abilities and skills are not your abilities and skills.
- Neither are the children we serve.
- Believe in their abilities.
- Help them develop the skills they need.
What is Trauma?

Trauma refers to extreme or chronic stress that overwhelms a person’s ability to cope & results in feeling vulnerable, helpless & afraid.

Can result from one event or a series of events.

Event(s) may be witnessed or experienced directly.

Experience is subjective.

Often interferes with relationships; self regulation; & fundamental beliefs about oneself, others & one’s place in the world.
What percentage of your students live with these experiences?

- A parent who’s an alcoholic or addicted to drugs
- A parent who’s a victim of domestic violence
- Family member in jail
- Family member diagnosed with a mental illness
- The disappearance of a parent through divorce, death or abandonment
Your classroom may look like this:
ACEs in the Classroom

ACEs are the greatest single predictor of health, attendance and behavior.

ACEs are the second strongest predictor, after special education status, for academic failure.

The relationship between academic achievement and health status appears much less related to income than to ACEs.
ACEs impact student learning

- INABILITY TO PROCESS VERBAL/NONVERBAL WRITTEN INFORMATION
- INABILITY TO EFFECTIVELY USE LANGUAGE TO RELATE TO OTHERS.
- LACK OF SEQUENTIAL ORGANIZATION.
- NOT UNDERSTANDING CAUSE AND EFFECT.
ACEs impact student learning

- Lack of sense of self and perspective.
- Inability to distinguish emotions.
- Lack of executive functions: setting goals, developing a plan, carrying out goals, reflecting on the process.
- Difficulty with transitions (endings & beginnings).
Resilience research: If you have a high ACE score, are you doomed?  

*No!*

The good news is that the brain is plastic, and the body wants to heal.

The brain is continually changing in response to the environment. If the toxic stress stops and is replaced by practices that build resilience, the brain can slowly undo many of the stress-induced changes.

There is well documented research on how individuals’ brains and bodies become healthier through mindfulness practices, exercise, good nutrition, adequate sleep, and healthy social interactions.
How do we see these students?

**Uninformed view**
- Anger management problems
- May have ADHD
- *Choosing* to act out & disrupt classroom (e.g., disrespectful or manipulative)
- Uncontrollable, destructive
- Non-responsive

**Trauma-informed view**
- Maladaptive responses (in school setting)
- Seeking to get needs met
- Difficulty regulating emotions
- Lacking necessary skills
- Negative view of world (e.g., adults cannot be trusted)
- Trauma response was triggered

**Uninformed response**
- Student needs consequences to correct behavior or maybe an ADHD evaluation

**Trauma-informed response**
- Student needs to learn skills to regulate emotions & we need to provide support

WI Department of Public Instruction Trauma-Sensitive Schools
Resources
http://sspw.dpi.wi.gov/sspw_mhtrauma Adapted from Daniel & Zarling (2012)
How a person interacts with a child can change how a traumatized student is wired.

Understanding and empathizing with one’s experiences will allow you to react and respond to them with more compassion. Simply acknowledging that a child’s behavior may stem from trauma related anxiety may change your reaction.

By YOU having a more empathic mindset and response, you are helping children/students to develop more empathy and compassion.
Be a Mr. Jensen
Childhood Resiliency Starts With:

A shift in thinking from “What’s wrong with you?”

to “What happened to you?”

Resilient students need resilient teachers.
When Our Students Arrive on the First Day of School, They Are Already Playing on an Uneven Playing Field
How Do We Level the Playing Field?

Training and Supports
Interconnected Systems Framework:

Tier III
Crisis Intervention / Referrals

Tier II
Focus on Skill Building Groups

Tier I
Focus on Prevention
Teach Expectations
Tier I Support - Foundation

Option A

Option B
If instruction is our foundation at Tier I, does it look like a hiking boot or a flip flop?
Tier I Supports
Tier II Supports
Ross Greene – Assessment of Lagging Skills and Unsolved Problems

Lagging Skills

• Identify the skills that are lagging.

• “Difficulty Handling Transitions”

• “Difficulty Maintaining Focus”

• “Difficulty Seeking Attention in Appropriate Ways”
Ross Greene – Assessment of Lagging Skills and Unsolved Problems

Unsolved Problems

• Identify the specific conditions in which the behavior is occurring.
• “Difficulty Moving from Choice Time to Math”
• “Difficulty Sitting Next to Kyle in Circle Time”
• “Difficulty Standing in Line for Lunch”
Tier III Supports

Training remained the same, but the INTENSITY and FREQUENCY increased.
What Happens if We Do Not Level the Playing Field?
Challenging Behavior

Challenging behavior is reflective of a developmental delay.

For students to behave adaptively they need: motivation and skills.

Many years we have focused on motivation.

Research says focus on the SKILLS part.
What Happens to Our Students When We Do Not Address Their Behavior Skill Deficit?
School to Prison Pipeline…

Punitive Index Ranking
1. Mississippi .559
2. Arkansas .400
2. South Carolina .400
4. Alabama .365
5. Louisiana .327
6. Georgia .325
7. Delaware .291
7. Oklahoma .291
9. West Virginia .288
10. Tennessee .285
School to Prison Pipeline…

State Imprisonment Rate (per 100,000)
1. Louisiana 816
2. Oklahoma 700
3. Alabama 633
4. Arkansas 599
5. Mississippi 597
6. Arizona 593
7. Texas 584
8. Missouri 526
9. Georgia 517
10. Florida 513
13. U.S. Total 471

www.sentencingproject.org
www.livesinthebalance.org
Coincidence?

Punitive Index Ranking

1. Mississippi .559
2. Arkansas .400
2. South Carolina .400
4. Alabama .365
5. Louisiana .327
6. Georgia .325
7. Delaware .291
7. Oklahoma .291
9. West Virginia .288
10 Tennessee .285

State Imprisonment Rate (per 100,000)

1. Louisiana 816
2. Oklahoma 700
3. Alabama 633
4. Arkansas 599
5. Mississippi 597
6. Arizona 593
7. Texas 584
8. Missouri 526
9. Georgia 517
10. Florida 513
13. U.S. Total 471
Percentage of adolescents in juvenile detention centers with at least 1 mental illness.

Girls
- With: 65%
- Without: 35%

Boys
- With: 75%
- Without: 25%
Prevalence of Child and Adolescent Mental Disorders

- The 21% represents 4 million children and adolescents in this country who live with serious mental disorder.
- This equates to **5 or 6 children in each classroom** in our schools.
Median Age of Onset

- 50% of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14, 75% by age 24 (WHO).
- Anxiety Disorders = Age 6
- ADHD and Behavior Disorders = Age 11
- Mood Disorders = Age 13
- Substance Use = Age 15

(NAMI.org)
There is on average a 10-year delay between young people experiencing their first symptoms and receiving help.

© Centre for Mental Health, 2016
More than 60% of people with a mental illness will not seek the help they need — stigma is one of the main reasons.
Prevalence of Child and Adolescent Mental Disorders

The 20/20 Problem

20% of children have a mental health disorder
20% of those get the help they need
Student Health Survey Data
Total Number of Secondary Students Completing the Survey

• Georgia
  • 14/15 = 629,648
  • 15/16 = 663,797
  • 16/17 = 672,307
  • 17/18 = 674,354
  • 18/19 = 689,986
114/84. In the past 30 days, (on how many days) have you felt sad or withdrawn?

Source: Georgia Student Health Survey 2.0
115/85. In the past 30 days, (on how many days) have you felt suddenly overwhelmed with fear for no reason, sometimes including a racing heart or fast breathing?

Source: Georgia Student Health Survey 2.0
116/86. In the past 30 days, (on how many days) have you experienced severely out of control behavior that could hurt yourself or others?

Source: Georgia Student Health Survey 2.0
117/87. In the past 30 days, (on how many days) have you avoided food, thrown up, or used laxatives to make yourself lose weight?

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11.02</td>
<td>10.17</td>
<td>9.96</td>
<td>12.28</td>
<td>13.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Georgia Student Health Survey 2.0
118/88. In the past 30 days, (on how many days) have you experienced intense worries or fears that get in the way of your daily activities?

Source: Georgia Student Health Survey 2.0
119/89. In the past 30 days, (on how many days) have you experienced extreme difficulty concentrating or staying still, which has put you in physical danger and/or caused school failure?

Source: Georgia Student Health Survey 2.0
120/90. In the past 30 days, (on how many days) have you experienced severe mood swings that have caused problems in relationships?

Source: Georgia Student Health Survey 2.0
121/91. In the past 30 days, (on how many days) have you experienced drastic changes in your behavior and/or personality?

Source: Georgia Student Health Survey 2.0
69. During the past 12 months, (on how many occasions) have you thought about dropping out of school?

Source: Georgia Student Health Survey 2.0
YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AT SCHOOL

1 IN 5 CHILDREN AGE 13-18 HAVE OR WILL HAVE A MENTAL ILLNESS.

THAT MEANS IN A CLASSROOM OF 25 STUDENTS, 5 WILL EXPERIENCE A MENTAL ILLNESS.

2ND LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH FOR AGES 10-24.

50% OF STUDENTS AGE 14 AND OLDER WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS DROP OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL.

EVERY DAY IN THE UNITED STATES OVER 5,240 STUDENTS IN GRADES 7-12 ATTEMPT SUICIDE.

4 OF 5 HAVE GIVEN CLEAR WARNING SIGNS.
79/58. During the past 12 months, (on how many occasions) have you seriously considered harming yourself on purpose?

Source: Georgia Student Health Survey 2.0
81/60. During the past 12 months, (on how many occasions) have you harmed yourself on purpose?

Source: Georgia Student Health Survey 2.0
83/62. During the past 12 months, (on how many occasions) have you seriously considered attempting suicide?

Source: Georgia Student Health Survey 2.0
85/63. During the past 12 months, (on how many occasions) have you attempted suicide?

Source: Georgia Student Health Survey 2.0
5.68% of Georgia Survey Respondents = 39,191 Students

SunTrust Park has a seating capacity of 41,000
Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for teens. Over 90% of adolescents who die by suicide live with a mental illness.
Data Does Not Paint the Entire Picture…
What are students searching?

- 8/23 XXXX - searched internet about poisons used to kill people, “fastest killing poisons.”
- 8/23 XXXX - looking on internet about how to make a noose.
- 8/24 XXXX - looked on internet and searched “What happens if you put a plastic bag on your head.”
- 8/29 XXXX googled, “How to end your life” and “Why teachers hate kids.”
- 8/31 XXXX- Searched internet, “Why am I feeling very down lately. I feel like I want to end my life.”
- 8/31 XXXX - googled “I want to die.”
- 8/31 XXXX - searched internet about “How to kill yourself.”
- 9/7 XXXX created a Google Doc that only had “I want to die” written on the page
- 9/7 XXXX searched the internet for the Suicide Hotline phone number
- 11/17 XXXX - ”I want to kill myself. Please help.”
- 1/26 XXXX- “How to kill yourself in school.”

Source: Griffin-Spalding County Project AWARE
Why are students searching the internet for answers?
7. I know a student at my school that I can talk to if I need help.

12.36% of students responded that they ‘Disagree’ when asked if they knew a student at school if they need help.
8. I know a student at school that I can talk to if I am feeling sad or down.

19.98% of students responded that they ‘Disagree’ when asked if they knew a student at school if they felt sad.

Question was removed from the survey in 2018-19
91/70. I know an adult at school that I can talk with if I need help.

160,811 students in Georgia responded that they ‘Disagree’ when asked if they knew an adult at school if they need help.

23.31% of students responded that they ‘Disagree’ when asked if they knew an adult at school if they need help.
Relationships Matter

#85 - During the past 12 months, (on how many occasions) have you attempted suicide?

#91 - I know an adult at school that I can talk with if I need help.
# Teens and Self-Image: Survey Results

**Question 8. How much influence does each of the following have on your life?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>A Lot or Some</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher</strong></td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other kids</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl/Boyfriend</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrities</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV Shows</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teens and Self-Image: Survey Results

**Question 5. Who understands you the most?**

- Friend: 42%
- Parent: 28%
- Girl/Boyfriend: 10%
- No one: 8%
- Sibling: 5%
- Religious Leader: 1%
- **Teacher**: 1%
- Other: 5%
Georgia Appleseed Center for Law and Justice 2019 “Good Apple” Award

Presiding Justice David E. Nahmias
Supreme Court of Georgia
Why is School Climate Important?
Are our students running to our schools, or away from them?
“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”

~ Frederick Douglass
Offering a holistic education to each and every child in our state.

www.gadoe.org
@georgiadeptofed
youtube.com/georgiadeptofed
Questions/Comments

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