**Building Support**

*Condensed from* [Newcomer, L. & Barrett, S., (2009). Administration roles and functions in PBIS high schools. In B. Flannery & G. Sugai (Eds.), SWPBS implementation in high schools: Current practice and future directions. (pp 23-42). University of Oregon.](https://assets-global.website-files.com/5d3725188825e071f1670246/5d72cab0a69a1e7b69d0a0ea_highschoolmonograph2009.pdf)

**Establish the need for change.** A first step is to articulate a vision of what is possible contrasted with a clear and objective review of current conditions. Emphasize the contrast by enhancing the conceptual distance between the current status and the goals behind implementation. Present visual images (graphs based on data) so that the contrast between current conditions and desired outcomes is clearly illustrated and understood. When establishing the need for change, focus on the core features of what is different in SWPBS that will lead to the desired outcomes (e.g., data-based decisions, clear working structures, consistency across settings). Movement in this direction may require that the principal openly questions existing practices and procedures that are not aligned the goals of SWPBS and are not evidence-based and student-centered.

**Address valued outcomes.** In addition to outlining the improved outcomes for students, focus on the outcomes related to an improved school climate and teaching environment (e.g., a decrease in disruptive behavior, an increase in positive student-adult interaction, more time to teach).

**Provide the skills, resources and tools to be successful.** It is difficult for people to move willingly in a new direction if they do not feel they have a level of competence or the resources needed to be successful. Address this by acknowledging that SWPBS may represent a new approach for many, and that time and resources will be allocated to support staff in the process.

**Reinforce efforts.** Reinforce individual staff behavior to promote cooperation and collaboration and publicly acknowledge faculty and staff effort, contributions and successes. Such recognition not only reinforces the behavior, it serves as an antecedent to encourage others to participate. In addition to public recognition during meetings and formal gatherings, seek out contributing individuals to offer specific praise and appreciation for their efforts.

**Be knowledgeable about SWPBS.** Know the empirical evidence that supports the effectiveness of SWPBS and be able to articulate the key concepts and practices. As one principal stated, “If you’re going to have conversations with teachers about change and expectations, you better be well-grounded in what you’re discussing.”

**Conduct formal and informal overviews and meetings.** Facilitate structured dialogues to uncover concerns, assumptions and levels of comfort and discomfort regarding SWPBS. Acknowledge in meetings that changes will occur and will impact people in different ways, but that the outcomes will be better for the school as a whole and in the best interest of students. The administration at South Lakes High School (SLSH) in Reston, Virginia, embraced the philosophy that change requires ownership and found it necessary to provide multiple opportunities for all staff to participate in the dialogue. For that purpose, the principal regularly surveyed faculty and students and hosted an annual PBIS Faculty Forum which faculty attended during their planning periods. This practice created an opportunity to discuss in a small group with the principal and PBIS team members what is working and voice any concerns regarding SWPBS.

**Engage staff in the conversation.** Throughout the discussion, the participants stressed the benefit of a “planning year” to conduct a needs assessment and provide opportunities for staff to process information and build consensus around the vision and goals of SWPBS. The goal of staff engagement is to develop a “critical mass” of teachers and staff who will support implementation and sustain the prescribed practices. This is in alignment with the general recommendation of achieving 80% faculty support before implementing SWPBS (e.g., Team Implementation Checklist). In addition to faculty-wide meetings, principals met with department chairs and other stakeholders to listen, respond to concerns and obtain feedback. The information gathered during the planning year helped the PBIS team develop proactive responses to identified problems. The conversations also became an important vehicle to address challenging topics and underlying assumptions. For example, one principal indicated that discussions related to school-wide behavior and discipline frameworks allowed for further discussion and interest in cultural diversity, a discussion that had been attempted previously but never evolved.

**Create a safe working environment.** Set expectations and norms of conduct for faculty meetings to guarantee civil and respectful discourse and promote collaboration and cooperation. It is important, particularly in the initial implementation efforts, for the principal to attend and monitor the direction and tenor of all meetings. Effective facilitation of meetings includes monitoring group emotions; it can help to break tension during a discussion by calling attention to the fact that it exists and working with the group to rectify the problem. Model and emphasize talking with and not at colleagues.

**Be transparent in the use of data.** It was acknowledged that faculties often have a mistrust of data and how they are used. To counter this impression, participants recommend transparency in the use of all data. Data were shared monthly at faculty meetings, with discussions around the implications of the data, including links between consistent implementation to data results (improved or not). At SLHS, data analysis is taken even farther with the establishment of a nine member research committee to work with the principal to analyze data annually. The team receives release time during the school day to review data and make recommendations. Devoting time and resources to allow broad representation on the research team and the focus on data has emphasized the importance of data and has reinforced the idea PBIS is a school-wide initiative which involves the faculty assessing the progress and merits of SWPBS.

**Create efficient working structures.** Change can be unsettling, and the challenges that will occur as adjustments are made may create tension. In addition, current systems and structures may impose barriers in unforeseen ways and reveal problems for which there are no immediate answers, which can also add to unease. Clear articulation of the goals, implementation steps and evaluation processes can alleviate some of the stress caused by change. To create and promote a comprehensive and integrated plan, develop and review a master calendar of all school-wide initiatives, including SWPBS with the staff on a regular basis as well as a predictable process to assess implementation efforts and progress. Clarity on the plan and how SWPBS fits into the overall functioning of the school can help create a sense of stability, direction and confidence in the process.

**Start small and establish concrete goals.** Given the size and complexity of high schools, large reform efforts and widescale implementation can easily overwhelm and discourage staff. Acknowledge that implementation may lead to disruption of the status quo and cause some unease. Move carefully and deliberately to narrow the focus with small, obtainable goals. For example, LHS limits action plans to only two goals at any given time, thereby preventing their resources and faculty from being overwhelmed by the process. As procedures are put into place, ensure that they are related to the established goals and that faculty understand the link between the procedures and the goal.