

## **Improving School Climate through *Race to the Top*: Including Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in State Grant Applications**

In recently released guidance, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) expresses a particular interest in states using *Race to the Top* grants to improve school climate and highlights Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) as a transformation model for turning around a state's lowest achieving schools. This fact sheet provides detailed information for state education agencies on how to include school climate and PBIS in *Race to the Top* applications.

### **What is PBIS?**

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.<sup>1</sup> More than 10,000 U.S. schools are implementing PBIS and saving countless instructional hours otherwise lost to discipline. The premise of PBIS is that continual teaching, recognizing and rewarding of positive student behavior will reduce unnecessary discipline and promote a climate of greater productivity, safety and learning. PBIS schools apply a multi-tiered approach to prevention, using disciplinary data and principles of behavior analysis to develop school-wide, targeted and individualized interventions and supports to improve school climate for all students.

Schools that effectively implement PBIS demonstrate:

- Up to 50% reduction in office referral rates per year (and a corresponding reduction in suspension and expulsion rates)
- Improved attendance rates
- Improved academic achievement
- Improved staff morale and perceptions of school safety<sup>2</sup>

### **States can use *Race to the Top* funds to expand PBIS efforts to improve school climate.**

ED has created a new priority in *Race to the Top*'s Invitational Priority Number Six. ED is "particularly interested" in applications in which a state's LEAs (Local Education Agencies) "create the conditions for reform and innovation ... by providing schools with flexibility and autonomy in ... creating school climates and cultures that remove obstacles to, and actively support, student engagement and achievement."<sup>3</sup>

In discussing this new invitational priority, ED noted, "We acknowledge that positive behavioral interventions and supports ... are important to consider in ensuring that students have a safe and productive environment in which to learn."<sup>4</sup> States interested in expanding their PBIS efforts should include their plans in their *Race to the Top* applications under Invitational Priority Number Six.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert H. Horner et al, *A Randomized Wait-List Controlled Effectiveness Trial Assessing School-Wide Positive Behavior Support in Elementary Schools*, 11 J. POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS 133 (2009); Catherine P. Bradshaw et al, *The Impact of School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) on the Organizational Health of Elementary Schools*, 23 SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY QUARTERLY 462 (2008); Jeffrey R. Sprague & Robert H. Horner, *School Wide Positive Behavioral Supports*, in THE HANDBOOK OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND SCHOOL SAFETY: FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE (Shane R. Jimerson & Michael J. Furlong, eds., 2007). For additional research on PBIS, please visit [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org).

<sup>2</sup> Horner, *supra* note 1; Bradshaw, *supra* note 1; Sprague & Horner, *supra* note 1.

<sup>3</sup> US DEP'T OF EDUC., RACE TO THE TOP: APPLICATION FOR INITIAL FUNDING, 90-91 (2009).

<sup>4</sup> 74 Fed. Reg. 59688, 59707 (Nov. 18, 2009).

**States can use both *Race to the Top* and State Fiscal Stabilization Funds to implement PBIS as a transformation model for their lowest achieving schools.**

In *Race to the Top* Compulsory Criterion (E), “Turning around the Lowest Achieving Schools,” ED asks states to support LEAs’ school-turnaround efforts through several possible reform models, including the “transformation model.”<sup>5</sup> ED cites PBIS as an example of a transformation model that states can include in their applications for both *Race to the Top*<sup>6</sup> and Phase II State Fiscal Stabilization Funds.<sup>7</sup>

**ED is particularly interested in states’ efforts to measure the impact of school climate programs with their longitudinal data systems.**

ED is “particularly interested in applications in which the State plans to expand statewide longitudinal data systems to include ... school climate and culture programs.”<sup>8</sup> States intending to track disciplinary data in their longitudinal data systems to measure the impact of PBIS and other school climate programs should highlight their plans under Invitational Priority Number Four.

**ED suggests tracking district-level disciplinary data to provide early warning of a student’s risk of educational failure.**

In *Race to the Top* Compulsory Criterion (C)(3), “Using Data to Improve Instruction,” ED asks states to include their plans to increase the “use of local instructional improvement systems that provide teachers, principals, and administrators with the information and resources they need to inform and improve their instructional practices, decision-making, and overall effectiveness.”<sup>9</sup> ED notes that local instructional improvement systems can integrate disciplinary data with instructional data “to provide early warning indicators of a student’s risk of educational failure.”<sup>10</sup> States should include their plans for helping LEAs implement instructional improvement systems that integrate disciplinary and academic data in their *Race to the Top* applications under Compulsory Criterion (C)(3).

**Local Education Agencies can use Title I and IDEA Recovery Funds to implement PBIS.**

ED suggests that LEAs use their IDEA Recovery Funds for intensive, district-wide professional development in PBIS.<sup>11</sup> LEAs may also expand their PBIS efforts using Title I Recovery Funds for school-wide programs and school improvement.<sup>12</sup>

**For more information, visit [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org).**

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<sup>5</sup> US DEP’T OF EDUC., RACE TO THE TOP: APPLICATION FOR INITIAL FUNDING, 45, 71-74 (2009). NOTE: an LEA with more than nine persistently lowest-achieving schools may not use the transformation model for more than 50 percent of its schools. *Id.* at 45.

<sup>6</sup> US DEP’T OF EDUC., RACE TO THE TOP: APPLICATION FOR INITIAL FUNDING, 74 (2009).

<sup>7</sup> 74 Fed. Reg. 58436, 58488 (Nov. 12, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> US DEP’T OF EDUC., RACE TO THE TOP: APPLICATION FOR INITIAL FUNDING, 52 (2009).

<sup>9</sup> US DEP’T OF EDUC., RACE TO THE TOP: APPLICATION FOR INITIAL FUNDING, 31 (2009).

<sup>10</sup> US DEP’T OF EDUC., RACE TO THE TOP: APPLICATION FOR INITIAL FUNDING, 9 (2009).

<sup>11</sup> US DEP’T OF EDUC., AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT OF 2009: *IDEA* RECOVERY FUNDS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTHS WITH DISABILITIES, 3 (2009) *available at*: <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/index.html>.

<sup>12</sup> For requirements on school-wide programs and school improvement under Title I, see 20 U.S.C. § 6314 (school-wide programs) and 20 U.S.C. § 6316 (school improvement).