

## Strategic Planning for Increased Social, Emotional and Behavioral Needs in 2021-2022: Leveraging PBIS

This guidance document was a collaborative writing endeavor by state PBIS leaders.

Sara C. McDaniel, Ph.D.

Deborah Turner, M.Ed.

Jennifer Jeffrey-Pearsall, Ph.D., NCSP, BCBA-D

Robert Putnam Ph.D., L.P., BCBA-D, LABA



### Introduction and Purpose

The end of the 2019-2020 and the entire 2020-2021 school years presented myriad challenges for schools, educators, families, and students. We want to start by recognizing the genuinely heroic efforts all stakeholders made to keep students and teachers safe and guide schools toward re-opening in-person instruction. While the world begins to shift to post-pandemic thinking, it is essential to take this time to plan for post-pandemic instruction and programming across a multi-tiered social-emotional and behavioral framework. At Tier 1, many schools will need to revisit, expand, and reteach schoolwide expectations for the 2021-2022 school year. Some may even need to continue with virtual PBIS Tier 1 expectations for students who are still learning in the virtual environment. But, how do we address an anticipated increase in social-emotional and behavioral needs in the 2021-2022 school year?

**The Problem.** To answer this, we must first get to some of the causes of the predicted increased need. During the pandemic, students were exposed to numerous new and, in some cases, catastrophic traumas (e.g., death in the family, social isolation, medical anxiety, school closures, food and housing insecurity, financial downfall). In addition, the lack of access to school-based or community-based mental health services and lack of access to social-emotional and behavioral (SEB) interventions exacerbated these traumas. Eighty-three percent of students with existing mental health needs reported their conditions worsening during the pandemic and school closures<sup>i</sup>. According to the CDC, childhood abuse reports from home have decreased, while hospitalizations from abuse have increased<sup>ii</sup>. The social and health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children worldwide are so severe that organizations such as UNICEF warn of an entire generation of school-age children missing out on returning to school and thriving in school<sup>iii</sup>. This concern potentially impacts the U.S. as well. An estimated three million U.S. students have missed out on instruction all together during the 2020-2021 school year shift to virtual instruction<sup>iv</sup>. As some schools are re-opening, attendance rates are alarmingly low. Some students may have moved, dropped out, taken jobs, or families may be concerned about returning to in-person instruction. These concerns vary across racial and ethnic groups, with minoritized groups feeling less comfortable with the shifts back to in-person instruction, mitigation efforts, and overall safety<sup>v</sup>.

**The Importance of Promoting Well-being in Crisis Recovery.** The pandemic has helped us realize the significant role schools play in [TD1] – students SEB and mental health well-being – and we need to continue to prioritize this. ***With the above-outlined challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, schools can expect that the needs of students have changed, and in most cases, have been exacerbated.*** It is possible that with routine surveillance and screening procedures, schools will see higher rates of students identified for Tier 2 SEB supports than the typical proportions of around 10-15% of a school's population. Without shifting what Tier 1 looks like including screening and identification procedures for the 2021-2022 school year, schools may see upwards of 20-30% of students qualifying for Tier 2 supports. This amount of targeted intervention would overload the 3-tiered system and is unsustainable for a school year. The upcoming school year presents the opportunity to innovate and adapt to best support students. This brief provides the readers with multi-pronged strategies to prevent overloading the system and proactively address supporting educators who have also been exposed to additional trauma and stress. These educators may also have increased SEB needs while asked to provide additional supports for their students. Staff well-being is at the heart of this work. Asking educators to do more with the same number of resources will be setting them up for failure. It may also increase the rate of quality educators leaving the field of education.

**Re-Entry or Return Planning for Summer 2021.** Each state, district, and school should carefully take inventory of local and home trauma levels, academic loss (or unfinished learning), attendance gaps, and percentage of students who have not returned. They should create a Re-Entry plan to proactively address increased SEB needs in the schools. Fortunately, many states, districts, and schools have already begun to identify strategies and supports to improve attendance and academic performance. We encourage individual educators to also plan for increased SEB needs.

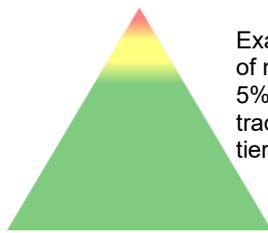
### **Leaning on Tier 1 to Address Increased SEB Needs**

**Know the Need: Let Data Guide the Process.** The first step in preparing for the next school year is to identify the types and proportion of student need. Collecting information from students, families, community resources, and existing databases during this summer and throughout the year will provide teams with the data needed to make intentional (data-informed) adjustments to the Tier 1 system. When considering data to review, be sure to include data sources that illustrate externalizing, internalizing, and basic needs.

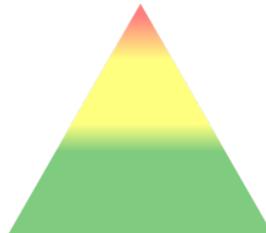
- **Informal surveys sent to students and families:** Surveys can include questions about basic needs (e.g., housing/food), stressors, or Adverse Childhood Events (ACEs<sup>vi</sup>) experienced by students and/or families (e.g., loss of a parent or loved one, illness, loss of job/housing), questions about whether the student has a special person in school (examine the connection to school), areas where the student or family could use help, and/or overall ratings of well-being (see an example of Family Wellness Check in [Guidance on Adapting Check-In Check-Out \(CICO\) for Distance Learning<sup>vii</sup>](#))
- **Existing data:** attendance (tardy/excused/unexcused), office referral data (ODRs), suspensions, measures of engagement used during the 2020-2021 school year, visits to the nurse for somatic complaints or frequent illness absence, unplanned visits to the counselor or administrators

- **Community data:** access to food banks, unemployment rates, incarceration rates
- **Formal Universal Social, Emotional, Behavioral (SEB) screeners:** (e.g., (Social, Academic, Emotional Behavior Risk Screener/SAEBR; Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire/SDQ; Social Skills Rating System/SSRS; UCLA Brief COVID-19 Screen for Child/Adolescent PTSD, etc.) if these have already been adopted systematically within your system or could easily be incorporated at this time.

If more than 20% of your student population is experiencing need in a specific area, the Tier 1 system can help address that need<sup>viii</sup>. Addressing this need is accomplished through (a) ensuring high-fidelity implementation of Tier 1 practices, (b) increasing the intensity and frequency of some Tier 1 practices (e.g., teaching expectations and reinforcement), and (c) “pulling down” advanced tier strategies into the Tier 1 system. Knowing your need will help you identify the high-leverage evidence-based approaches that are most needed in your system.



Example: Proportion of need (80%, 15%, 5%) maintained by traditional multi-tiered framework.



Example: Results from an informal survey on trauma associated with COVID-19 indicate that more than 40% of students experienced at least one traumatic event over the past year. The team decides to pull in strategies used during SAIGs (Tier 2) into their schoolwide matrix and to have teachers practice coping strategies with students daily during SEL or circle time.

Data reviews should begin this summer and continue throughout the year to guide the action planning process. Keep in mind, some traditional data sources (e.g., ODRs or OSS) were often not the best indicators this past year. *TIP: Ensure data are easily accessible by your team and present your data regularly in a visual format to staff.*

**Invest In and Strengthen Tier 1 at Both Schoolwide and Classroom Levels.** Invest in high-quality implementation of your Tier 1 system. Teams with high fidelity Tier 1 implementation should review practices and increase the frequency and intensity of efficient Tier 1 strategies to build a stronger foundation for all students. For teams struggling with implementation before the pandemic, build from areas of strength and action plan to address weakness areas. The following table includes examples of Tier 1 features and suggested modifications to support the return to school beyond traditional Tier 1 implementation with fidelity.

## Schoolwide Tier 1 Enhancements to Support Increased SEB Need

Tier 1 Feature	Suggestions
<b>Teaming</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include staff or community partners<sup>ix</sup> with social, emotional, behavioral expertise on the Tier 1 team (e.g., social worker, counselor, behavior specialist, community mental health partner, school psychologist).</li> <li>• Have dedicated time to meet regularly (monthly).</li> <li>• Use an agenda based on the annual action plan.</li> <li>• Be sure that your administrator/s actively attend the meetings.</li> <li>• Celebrate accomplishments by the team, staff, and/or student outcomes and do not overwhelm team members with other committee obligations.</li> <li>• Review meaningful data, e.g., attendance, connections to school, internalizing screening data.</li> </ul>
<b>Behavioral Expectations &amp; Matrix</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expectations and examples reflect the culture and values of the school community<sup>x</sup> to promote connection to the school and the importance of returning to school.</li> <li>• Include students and families in the revision of expectations.</li> <li>• Embed social and emotional skills into the matrix. Use your data to identify the types of skills students need (e.g., trauma, anxiety, depression).</li> </ul>
<b>Teaching Expectations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach and reteach expectations and routines to fluency.</li> <li>• Teach coping strategies, emotional regulation, mindfulness, and well-being strategies to all students.</li> <li>• Increase social-emotional learning (SEL) time and use SEL time to address data-informed Tier 1 needs.</li> </ul>
<b>Feedback &amp; Acknowledgement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase systematic acknowledgment and feedback. Start with high frequency at the beginning of the year with plans toward fading throughout the year.</li> <li>• Support staff in providing high rates of praise throughout the year (e.g., Be+ App).</li> <li>• Praise and acknowledge student use of SEB strategies (e.g., coping skills, emotional regulation, adjusting to routines).</li> </ul>
<b>Data-Informed Adjustments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider existing Tier 2 interventions and what elements of those interventions could be used universally with all students               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Examples: Skills or curriculum typically taught during small group SAIGs, homeroom goal setting, classroom counseling,</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Focus on Building Relationships Before Diving into Content:** Meaningful relationships between students and staff significantly contribute to student learning and are associated with resilience for youth experiencing trauma, higher academic engagement, attendance and grades, and teacher satisfaction<sup>xi</sup>. As you plan for next year, consider the following:

- Dedicate time at the beginning of the year to build connections with students
- Support staff with behavior-specific praise and praise ratios (6:1) to promote relationships
- Conduct frequent check-ins with students using a range of staff
- Provide training to staff on the role of empathy<sup>xii</sup>
- Identify early on the students with few adult connections and intentionally work to build relationships with these students.
  - Activity with Staff: [Making Sure Each Child Is Known](#)<sup>xiii</sup>[TD2]
  - Actions with students: 2 x 10 method<sup>xiv</sup>

**Classroom Practice Enhancements.** Invest in high-quality implementation of a small number of effective classroom practices to increase meaningful instructional minutes. As well, teams should invest in the training and coaching systems needed to support teachers with effective classroom practices, including the following:

Practice	Description	Resource
<b>Greetings at the Door</b>	Greeting students as they enter the classroom allows for positive interaction between teacher and student. A teacher can quickly take note of any differences with students and direct students to the first activity.	Center on PBIS <a href="#">Positive Greetings at the Door</a> <sup>xv</sup>
<b>Engaging Instruction, Opportunities to Respond (OTRs)</b>	Arranging frequent opportunities for students to engage with high levels of success.	<a href="#">Engaging Instruction to Increase Equity in Education</a> <sup>xvi</sup>
<b>Specific Feedback</b>	Providing specific praise to students for behaviors and positive social interactions. Praise is provided more frequently than correction interactions (e.g., 6:1).	<a href="#">Behavior Specific Praise Tip Sheet</a> <sup>xvii</sup> <a href="#">Student Teacher Game</a> <sup>xviii</sup> <a href="#">Be+ App</a> <sup>xix</sup>
<b>Active Supervision</b>	Frequent moving, scanning, and interacting with students.	<a href="#">Missouri Active Supervision Tool</a> <sup>xx</sup> <a href="#">Midwest PBIS Active Supervision Snapshot</a> <sup>xxi</sup>
<b>Instructional and Restorative Error Corrections</b>	Responding to unexpected behaviors proactively, instructionally, and restoratively. Managing challenging behavior in the classroom.	<a href="#">Missouri Discouraging Inappropriate Behavior in The Classroom Tool</a> <sup>xxii</sup> <a href="#">Midwest PBIS Continuum of Responses Snapshot</a> <sup>xxiii</sup>

Given the interactions teachers have with students and the relationships they form, classroom teachers are well-positioned to help teams identify student needs. To support this, teams should provide staff with information on awareness and action around early warning signs associated with mental health concerns and trauma impacts. Teachers do not need to have all the answers but can proactively identify the need and determine whether they can respond through classroom strategies or need to request assistance.

### Supporting Students with Remaining SEB Needs at Tier 2

Before moving forward with more traditional Tier 2 supports, schools must ensure that the above strategies of reteaching Tier 1 and folding in necessary Tier 2 supports into the universal Tier 1 occurs. Then, students who are still not responsive to the new, expanded Tier 1 are supported within Tier 2 through targeted, matched, supplementary strategies and interventions. Educators should attend to the critical components of Tier 2 (e.g., identification with multiple sources of data, matching the intervention to student need, tailoring interventions, using progress monitoring, and making data-based team-guided decisions for Tier 2 programming). These critical components of Tier 2 should remain in place for this transition year, but with a few specific focus areas.

**First.** it is vital for a continuum of Tier 2 strategies and interventions to be available rather than a single Tier 2 intervention. For example, this year may require traditionally fewer intensive strategies (e.g., goal setting) along with more intensive strategies (e.g., self-monitoring with self-graphing), all within Tier 2.

**Next.** with the data from multiple sources (e.g., SEB screener, ODRs, teacher, or family nomination), a classroom teacher may find that more than 20% of the class could benefit from Tier 2 SEB intervention. It is essential to consider with a high rate of students within that class requiring Tier 2 that some traditional Tier 2 strategies and interventions can (and in this case should) be delivered classwide. This implementation of Tier 2 strategies classwide can include morning meetings, check-in/check-out, self-monitoring, check and connect, classwide counseling, and social skills lessons or units that enhance Tier 1 efforts.

**Finally.** Tier 2 interventions typically delivered in small groups of 3-4 students, such as social skills, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), or Check-in/Check-out, may be expanded to larger group size to accommodate increased need without additional resources. For example, tier 2 intervention groups could serve 6-8 students in larger group size, doubling the capacity of Tier 2 access.

### Tier 2 Enhancement Planning Guide

Steps	Who is Responsible?	What do we Need?	When will it be completed?
Ensure a continuum of Tier 2 evidence-based interventions are available <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many are available</li> <li>• What training might we need</li> </ul>			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What materials might we need</li> <li>• What personnel might we need</li> </ul>			
Develop a strategy to use data to determine whether Tier 2 should be delivered universally classwide (to all students in one class)			
Develop strategies to expand small groups and provide effective Tier 2 delivery to all students who require it			

### **Implications for Stakeholders: Support Staff and Related Service Providers**

School support staff and related service providers (e.g., instructional aides, school psychologists, counselors, social workers, etc.) play a role in ensuring students learn in a safe and supportive learning environment. Because students connect with school support staff on many occasions throughout the school day, they can foster positive, trusting relationships with students and improve school climate by connecting with students in various settings. School support staff can assist with the review of data to make ongoing adjustments. They can review Tier I data and monitor schoolwide data to determine what expectations may need to be revisited or retaught. School support staff can provide in-class support by assisting teachers with classwide check-ins and discussions about feelings. They can co-facilitate groups, morning meetings, coaching sessions, or provide supports in the classroom.

Administrators play an essential role in aiding and providing support to staff and students. They can leverage existing related service providers or add additional related service providers through CARES ACT funding. Administrators can use summer learning opportunities to reorient to school and fill in acquisition gaps in social, emotional, and behavioral domains for students not receiving equitable access this school year. They can adopt flexible approaches or alternatives to discipline such as a code of conduct revision, alternatives to suspension, or increased instructional and restorative responses to unexpected behaviors (e.g., decreased punitive and exclusionary discipline). Administrators can provide classroom teachers with resources and support through co-teaching or adding additional support staff in classrooms.

Parents, guardians, and community members are essential collaborators upon returning to school. Leveraging families and communities will help to alleviate undue stress and anxiety for many students. Communication can be streamlined with families to ensure documents and materials going home represent the population and language and are culturally responsive. Administrators, teachers, and support staff can schedule parent problem-solving conferences. Families and community members can support with reiterating skills and practices at home or within the community. School staff can ask families and community members to provide feedback about curriculum, interventions, or school expectations and give insight into how the student is adjusting. A guide can be developed or shared using PBIS to support their students socially, emotionally, and

behaviorally. Helping students to discover strategies that work best for them based on their personality, needs, and culture is a pathway to healthy emotion regulation. These skills can likewise be taught to families to support building emotional skills and supports together with their children.

## Conclusion

It is essential to recognize that although we are nearing the post-pandemic circumstance, we are still in the midst of the pandemic and attending crises. Student and staff needs will continue to shift and evolve, and our systems must be equally dynamic. To address the increase in SEB needs, we must understand some of the causes of the predicted increased need, the need to invest in and strengthen Tier 1 at schoolwide and classroom levels, and the need to support students at Tier 2 with remaining SEB needs. It is also important to understand the implications for school support staff and related service providers. They play an important role in ensuring students learn in a safe and supportive learning environment. Increasing multi-tiered interventions and support is the most effective way to serve the most students appropriately while also maximizing the use and efficiency of already stretched resources.

---

<sup>i</sup> [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanchi/article/PIIS2352-4642\(20\)30109-7/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanchi/article/PIIS2352-4642(20)30109-7/fulltext)

<sup>ii</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6949a1.htm?s\\_cid=mm6949a1\\_w](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6949a1.htm?s_cid=mm6949a1_w)

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/reports/averting-lost-generation-covid19-world-childrens-day-2020-brief>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/reports/averting-lost-generation-covid19-world-childrens-day-2020-brief>

<sup>v</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6949a2.htm?s\\_cid=mm6949a2\\_w](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6949a2.htm?s_cid=mm6949a2_w)

<sup>vi</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2019)

<sup>vii</sup> Center on PBIS (2020)

<sup>viii</sup> Eber et al. (2020)

<sup>ix</sup> Eber et al. (2019)

<sup>x</sup> Levenson et al. (2021)

<sup>xi</sup> Fergus & Zimmerman (2005); Hattie (2009); Sparks (2019)

<sup>xii</sup> Brene Brown, Empathy vs. Sympathy <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZBTYViDPIQ>

<sup>xiii</sup> Korbey (2017); <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjZx0VdmgkE>

<sup>xiv</sup> Mendler (2001)

<sup>xv</sup> <https://www.pbis.org/resource/positive-greetings-at-the-door>

<sup>xvi</sup> <https://www.pbis.org/resource/examples-of-engaging-instruction-to-increase-equity-in-education>

<sup>xvii</sup> <http://tennesseebps.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Behavior-Specific-Praise-Tips.pdf>

<sup>xviii</sup> <https://www.pbis.org/resource/the-student-teacher-game>

<sup>xix</sup> <https://www.pbis.org/announcements/track-positive-reinforcement-with-our-be-app>

<sup>xx</sup> <https://pbissmissouri.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/ECP5.1-Teacher-Tool-Classroom-Active-Supervision-1.pdf>

<sup>xxi</sup> [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DVhQ\\_6ADZpggPPwKn4iGofmb8VC2TyR6/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DVhQ_6ADZpggPPwKn4iGofmb8VC2TyR6/view)

<sup>xxii</sup> <https://pbissmissouri.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/ECP4.4-Teacher-Tool-Classroom-Discouraging-Inappropriate-Behavior-1.pdf>

<sup>xxiii</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ErGtm1vybhObEEzPzEN11AdHrWUEHftP/view>

---

## Full References

- Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (2020). *Guidance on Adapting Check-in Check-out (CICO) for Distance Learning*. University of Oregon. [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org).
- Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (2020). The Student/Teacher Game. University of Oregon. [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org).
- Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (2019). Positive greetings at the door. PBIS strategy handout. University of Oregon. [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)
- Chaparro, E. A., Nese, R. N. T., & McIntosh, K. (2015). Examples of engaging instruction to increase equity in education. OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org).
- Eber, L., Barrett, S., Scheel, N., Flammini, A., & Pohlman, K. (November 2020). Integrating a Trauma-Informed Approach within a PBIS Framework. Center on PBIS, University of Oregon. [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)
- Eber, L., Barrett, S., Perales, K., Jeffrey-Pearsall, J., Pohlman, K., Putnam, R, Splett, J., & Weist, M.D. (2019). *Advancing Education Effectiveness: Interconnecting School Mental Health and School-Wide PBIS, Volume 2: An Implementation Guide*. Center for Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (funded by the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education). Eugene, Oregon: University of Oregon Press.
- Fergus, S. and Zimmerman, M.A. (2005) Adolescent resilience: A framework for understanding healthy development in the face of risk. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 26, 399-419. doi: 10.1146/annurev.publhealth.26.021304.144357
- Gilbert, L.K., Strine, T.W., Szucs, L.E., et al. (2020). Racial and ethnic differences in parental attitude and concerns about school reopening during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report CDC*, 69, 1848-1854. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6949a2>
- Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses related to achievement*. London: Routledge.
- Korbey, H. (2017). The power of being seen: How well do you know your students/. In a Nevada school, a simple strategy pushes teachers to look beyond the lessons. *Edutopia*. Retrieved from: <https://www.edutopia.org/article/power-being-seen>
- Lee, J. (2020). Mental health effects of school closures during COVID-19. *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, 4(6), 421. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642\(20\)30109-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642(20)30109-7)
- Levenson, M., Smith, K., McIntosh, K., Rose, J., & Pinkelman, S. (2021). *PBIS Cultural Responsiveness Field Guide: Resources for Trainers and Coaches*. University of Oregon. [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org).
- Mendler, A. (2001). *Connecting with Students*. Association for Supervisions and Curriculum Development.
- Sparks, S. (2019, March). Why teacher-student relationships matter. *Education Week*. Retrieved from: <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/why-teacher-student-relationships-matter/2019/03>

- 
- Swedo, E., Idaikkadar, N., Leemis, R., et al. (2020). Trends in U.S. Emergency Department Visits Related to Suspected or Confirmed Child Abuse and Neglect Among Children and Adolescents Aged <18 Years Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic — United States, January 2019–September 2020. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report CDC*, 69, 1841–1847. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6949a1>
- United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). (2020). *Averting a Lost COVID Generation: A Six Point Plan to Respond, Recover and Reimagine a Post-Pandemic World for Every Child*. United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), New York.
- Katzenbach, J. B., Shuster, B. C., Shafer, B. H., Lloyd, B. P., & Carter, E. W. *Tennessee Behavior Support Project Behavior Specific Praise Tip Sheet*. Vanderbilt University. Retrieved from: <https://tennesseebssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Behavior-Specific-Praise-Tips.pdf>