Conducting the Tiered Fidelity Inventory and Walkthrough Remotely

Introduction

During a global pandemic, schooling may look remarkably different. Schools are implementing contingency plans for a wide range of operating models (e.g., remote, hybrid, in-person), and remote learning is likely to be an integral component of school plans. Evidence-based frameworks, such as positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), provide a critical foundation to meet the needs of students, families, and educators in this new context, but only when implemented with fidelity. Therefore, it is even more important to evaluate the fidelity of implementation of PBIS to support and guide decision-making. This practice brief (a) provides a rationale for conducting the Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI)[1], regardless of operating model; (b) shares guidance on how to complete the TFI, including the walkthrough, remotely; and (b) responds to frequently asked questions related to conducting the TFI remotely.

Why Conduct the TFI Remotely?

Although the ways schools implement PBIS to support student behavior may look different during a pandemic, the core features of PBIS remain the same. Especially during periods of disruption, school teams should prioritize and monitor implementation of the core features of PBIS. The TFI is an efficient fidelity tool that allows schools to assess and monitor the fidelity of all intervention tiers. Our current guidance (SWPBIS Tiered Fidelity Inventory 2.1 Administration Manual[1]) was developed for in-person administration, involving an external coach meeting with members of the school-wide leadership team. Various school operating models (e.g., hybrid, remote) may prove challenging for a full school team to complete the TFI in person with an external coach, as recommended. If it is not possible to get everyone in the same room, school teams can conduct a the TFI remotely. Conducting a TFI remotely provides additional flexibility and allows critical school personnel to participate in both evaluation and action planning.

Steps to Conduct a Remote TFI: Collecting, Scoring, and Interpreting Data

School teams should conduct a TFI (or other PBIS fidelity measure) at least once during the school year. To closely monitor fidelity and guide action planning, school teams may consider conducting a TFI in the Fall and Spring, as implementation may shift over the course of the academic year. The Fall TFI will guide school teams' action planning to enhance PBIS implementation within current school models, and the Spring TFI will assess schools' overall implementation during the school year. Schools can complete the TFI in a fully-remote or hybrid (e.g., some individuals can participate in-person, while others participate remotely) format.
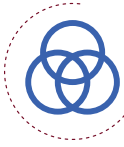
Step 1. Conduct a Remote TFI Walkthrough

Conducting at least one TFI with a walkthrough per year is recommended. An external coach or team member can conduct a remote TFI Walkthrough with randomly selected staff and students through Zoom breakout rooms, Microsoft Teams Channels, or other remote platforms. First, identify a random and representative sampling of classrooms, staff, and students.

Second, coordinate with teachers to schedule interviews. Interviews could occur across multiple days to ensure full representation. For example, arrange to interview first graders at the end of their synchronous virtual Morning Meeting, and third graders at the end of their synchronous virtual English Language Arts lesson, and so forth.

Third, consider minor adjustments to how you will ask questions. For example, some schools have developed separate behavior expectations matrices, teaching, and acknowledgment systems for in-person and remote models. If a school has implemented both models or is operating in a hybrid model, consider asking staff and students what the school expectations are within each model and whether they have given/received acknowledgement within the last two months within each model. Additionally, consider asking staff whether they have taught the school expectations for each model to students during the school year.

Fourth, determine how to conduct the walkthrough interviews within the remote platform used by the school. The paragraphs below illustrate how to use two common platforms (Zoom and Microsoft Teams) to conduct the walkthrough, and other virtual platforms may also be used if they allow small groups to meet within a meeting.

- *Zoom Virtual TFI Walkthrough*. Many schools have access to Zoom as a video conferencing platform. One of the features that makes Zoom popular in schools is the use of breakout rooms, which allow a session host to split Zoom meetings into separate sessions with specific participants in each session. To conduct the TFI Walkthrough, a school team member or external coach (interviewer) may join a synchronous class or a Zoom meeting set-up for the purpose of the TFI Walkthrough. The session host creates a breakout room for the interviewer to meet with individual students and staff. Once the interview concludes, the interviewee (student or staff member) self-selects to leave the breakout room, returns to the main session, and the meeting host (e.g., classroom teacher) invites a new participant to join. The interviewer and session host rotate through this process until all interviews within that Zoom session are complete. Once the interviews are complete, join the next scheduled session and follow the same interview procedures. (See an example from one school on the next page.)

- *Microsoft Teams Virtual TFI Walkthrough*. Microsoft Teams is another video conferencing platform commonly used by schools. Like Zoom breakout room, users of Microsoft Teams can schedule video conferencing meetings with pre-set meeting channels (i.e., smaller teams within a team). To create individual channels, the session host schedules a session or class. Within the larger session, the host creates individual channels (i.e., breakout rooms) with the interviewer and interviewee. The channels will run during the larger session. The interviewer and interviewee can join their channels
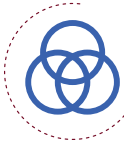
for the interview and leave them when the interview is complete. Once the interviews are complete, join the next scheduled session and follow the same interview procedures.

Example: Virtual Walkthrough in One School

We conducted a TFI Walkthrough with a school using Zoom.

1. We worked with the school's PBIS leadership team to randomly select classroom teachers and students for interviews.
2. The PBIS leadership team worked with teachers and staff to select times and schedule the walkthrough interviews.
3. Each teacher sent us links to their sessions. They included the specific time they wanted us to join the class.
4. Teachers created a breakout room for the examiner and interviewee after we joined the session.
5. We followed the TFI Walkthrough procedures to interview students and staff during the breakout session across multiple classes.
6. At the end of each interview, students left the breakout room, returned to the main session, and the teacher sent another student to the breakout room.
7. We interviewed teachers at the end of class or during a class with a teaching assistant, who continued instruction while the teacher was interviewed.

Step 2. Complete the TFI with Your School PBIS Leadership Team

Many steps to completing the TFI look the same regardless of operating model (in-person, hybrid, or remote). First, schedule the TFI at a time when an external coach and members of the PBIS leadership team can attend. Second, ask your PBIS Assessment Coordinator to open the survey in PBIS Assessment. Third, with support from an external coach, members of the PBIS leadership team discuss and come to consensus on a score for each item that reflects the degree of implementation. Teams can use video conferencing tools such as polls or chats to efficiently rate items.

When determining a score, remember that critical features of PBIS assessed by the TFI remain the same, regardless of operating model (in-person, hybrid, or remote). However, teams may be sensitive to changes in implementation during hybrid or remote models. Consider the following examples:

- *1.1 Team Composition*. After viewing the *A School Guide to Returning to School*,[2] schools may have identified additional areas of expertise (e.g., school nursing, IT, public health, community mental health) they would like to add to their team. They may still be in the process of recruiting members with these areas of expertise to their team.

- *1.2 Team Operating Procedures*. The team may have easily pivoted to virtual meetings, retaining a similar meeting agenda, minutes, and defined roles; however, they may have paused updating their action as they developed return-to-school guides for the fall. Their next step may be to integrate the return-to-school plan with their school-wide action plan so they use one comprehensive plan to
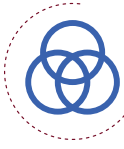
prompt key action steps. In optimal circumstances, all educators would have access to one integrated implementation manual to address instructional contexts (remote, hybrid, and in-person) for ease of access if, and when, contexts shift.

- **1.3 Behavior Expectations**. Schools may have adjusted expectations for different school contexts. Many schools will have adapted the PBIS framework to address both in-person and remote learning environments (see *Creating a PBIS Behavior Teaching Matrix for Remote Instruction*[3]). For schools to score a "2," they would need to have a teaching matrix that addresses all environments and actively and effectively communicate expectations to staff, such that 90% of staff can list at least 67% of expectations.

- **1.4 Teaching Expectations**. Schools may be in the process of teaching expectations in the context of new routines and learning environments. It is important to build or modify the expectations teaching schedule to ensure teachers effectively taught expectations to all students in the context of new routines.

- **1.5 Problem Behavior Definitions**. Schools may need to adjust problem behavior definitions to reflect behavior in remote contexts, and staff vs. office managed procedures may be under revision.

- **1.6 Discipline Policies**. Documentation may reflect in-person policies and procedures, and still require revision to address hybrid or remote models.

As these examples illustrate, changes to implementation of core features may result in slightly lower scores on one or more TFI items.

In addition, if school team members are considering two (or more) different learning models (e.g., in person and remote), they may realize that each learning mode would result in a different score for a particular TFI item. For example, when scoring item 1.5, they may realize that "definitions and procedures for problems are clearly defined, documented, trained, and shared with families" for in-person models (scoring a 2), but under revision for remote learning (scoring a 1). In that case, they should retain the lower score on the TFI to prompt action planning. (See FAQ at the end that addresses concerns with obtaining a lower TFI score.)

Step 3. Use the Results to Support Action Planning

Once the team has completed the evaluation, they will use this information to make interpretations given the current circumstances. To that end, it is less important to focus on a score and more important to consider how the information guides decision making. Schools may obtain low scores because the school situation changed rapidly. These results do not reflect a school's previous model of operation. An accurate score, reflecting the current model, will help teams target specific areas of implementation and develop action plans that respond to the current situation and context. For example, teams may find they did not adjust their school-wide teaching matrix for remote learning. In this case, they would develop a revised matrix that illustrates school expectations are demonstrated in each remote learning routine (e.g., remote instruction, group work in breakout rooms; see *Creating a PBIS Behavior Teaching Matrix for Remote Instruction*[3]). Additionally, teams may shift priorities (e.g., providing supports to teachers to acknowledge students) to reflect needs presented in the current context.
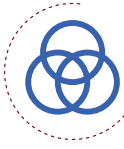
Continue to Monitor Outcome Data

In addition to monitoring implementation fidelity, school teams should continue to use outcome data to (a) monitor effects of implementation, (b) identify students and staff who may need additional support, and (c) evaluate overall implementation efforts. School teams who use PBISApps can continue to access and use their outcome data (e.g., office discipline referral data in SWIS, school climate survey data, attendance data, lesson engagement data), regardless of operation mode, as PBISApps tools are online. For suggestions on using PBISApps remotely, review *Using PBISApps While Students are Home*.[4]

Summary

To ensure students are supported in this time of great social, emotional, and behavioral need, school leadership teams can continue to conduct the TFI at least annually to assess PBIS implementation and guide action planning. Educators have become increasingly fluent with virtual learning platforms and tools. PBIS teams and external reviewers do not have to skip the TFI or the walkthrough; they can work together to complete the assessment remotely if it is not feasible to do so in person. Amidst continuing changes and adjustments, it is even more critical to assess fidelity of implementation and ensure data guide teams' implementation decisions. Completing the TFI will help teams navigate these changing contexts by providing guideposts and supporting action planning.

Frequently Asked Questions

Will completing the TFI under these circumstances result in a lower score and make it difficult to compare scores across years?

The most important function of the TFI is monitoring fidelity and prompting action planning, not the score. It's true that the TFI is helpful in monitoring a school's progress in implementation over time, but it is primarily designed to help teams identify strengths, gaps, and set priorities. There is no need to compare TFI scores to previous years; it would be comparing apples to oranges. Instead, focus on how the results of the assessment can inform and guide your team's action planning as you respond to the current and changing context.

Do we have to do a walkthrough this year? It feels like too much for our coaches and staff.

Ideally, each school receives a walkthrough for at least one TFI per year. A lot can change in one school year (especially the 2020-21 school year), and including the walkthrough in your Tier 1 assessment provides an opportunity to gather information directly from students and staff. However, if completing a walkthrough becomes a barrier to completing a TFI, it is better to complete a TFI without a walkthrough than not to complete a TFI at all. Just make sure not to score a 2 for any items that require a walkthrough as evidence of full implementation (e.g., 1.3, 1.4, 1.9).
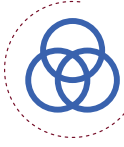
How do we get a random sample of students and staff for the virtual Walkthrough?

Consider randomly selecting a sample of teachers across grade levels and asking them to participate in a virtual Walkthrough. Plan to interview a small number (e.g., 2-3) of students from each class. We recommend identifying a sample that is slightly larger than that required by the TFI Walkthrough guidelines in case there are issues with scheduling or technology. It may also be helpful to review the TFI's purpose and the remote administration procedures with all staff ahead of time. Once in the virtual classroom, somewhat randomly select students to participate in the Walkthrough (e.g., first name starts with __, wearing the color __).

References

Algozzine, B., Barrett, S., Eber, L., George, H., Horner, R., Lewis, T., Putnam, B., Swain-Bradway, J., McIntosh, K., & Sugai, G. (2019). *School-Wide PBIS Tiered Fidelity Inventory*. Eugene, OR: Center on PBIS, University of Oregon. www.pbis.org.

Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (March, 2020). *Creating a PBIS Behavior Teaching Matrix for Remote Instruction*. Eugene, OR: Center on PBIS, University of Oregon. www.pbis.org.

Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, State Implementation and Scaling up of Evidence-Based Practices Center, National Integrated Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Research Network, National Center on Improving Literacy, & Lead for Literacy Center. (June, 2020). *A School Guide for Returning to School During and After Crisis: A Guide to Supporting States, Districts, Schools, Educators, and Students through a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Framework during the 2020-2021 School Year*. Eugene, OR: Center on PBIS, University of Oregon. www.pbis.org.

Education and Community Supports. (2020). *Using PBISApps While Students are Home*. Eugene, OR: University of Oregon. www.pbisapps.org

Embedded Hyperlinks

1. https://www.pbis.org/resource/tfi
2. https://www.pbis.org/resource/a-school-guide-for-returning-to-school-during-and-after-crisis
3. https://www.pbis.org/resource/creating-a-pbis-behavior-teaching-matrix-for-remote-instruction
4. https://www.pbisapps.org/About-Us/Pages/Using-PBISApps-While-Students-are-Home.aspx