



Metro Atlanta Schools and Childcare Centers Launch Early Learning Climate Prototype

Motivated by evidence of the strong relationship between school climate and reading proficiency, an innovative public-private partnership is creating a model for the promotion of positive learning climates in Atlanta’s early learning centers and elementary schools.

The Early Learning Climate Prototype is funded by the David, Helen, and Marian Woodward Fund – Atlanta and implemented by the Metropolitan Regional Educational Service Agency ([MRESA](#)), in partnership with the [Georgia Department of Education](#) (GaDOE) and [Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning](#) (DECAL). It is a research-informed approach designed to teach teachers and staff how to use Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS) to improve the learning climate – an indicator significantly correlated with third-grade reading outcomes.

Early Education Success through Positive Learning Climates is the prototype for what is possible through a safe, supportive, and positive [Learning Climate](#)—one of the four strategic pillars of the [Get Georgia Reading Campaign’s](#) common agenda.

As adults, we can relate to how the climate—the “how we feel around here”-- of our workplace affects our attitude, even our ability, to do our jobs effectively. This is just as true for students in the classroom and their ability to learn. Therefore, MRESA is thrilled to lead the Early Learning Climate Prototype building upon the existing systems already in place by our partners, to ensure that our youngest learners are provided with the most positive learning climate possible,” said Leigh Ann Putman, Executive Director of MRESA. “RESAs across Georgia have always had strong partnerships with our K-12 school districts, and the opportunity to work with early learning centers extends our reach so we can help children be ready to learn from the minute they enter the classroom.”

Working with the University of South Florida and renowned national leaders in both school-wide PBIS (implemented in K-12 schools) and program-wide PBIS, the pyramid model (implemented in early learning centers), the partners are creating a blended PBIS model tailored to the developmental stages that children move through during their first eight years. The prototype is focusing on two elementary schools and one “feeder” early learning center within Atlanta Public Schools, DeKalb County Schools and Fulton County Schools.

The participating sites include:

- Brookview Elementary (Fulton County Schools)
- Childcare Network #50 - Candler Road (DeKalb County)
- Deerwood Academy (Atlanta Public Schools)
- Ronald E. McNair Discovery Learning Academy (DeKalb County Schools)
- Seaborn Lee Elementary (Fulton County Schools)
- Sheltering Arms – Welcome All Road (Fulton County)
- Toney Elementary (DeKalb County Schools)
- Whitefoord Community Project, Inc. (Atlanta City)
- Whitefoord Elementary (Atlanta Public Schools)

Over the last two weeks, the childcare centers and schools participated in a three-day leadership team training lead by GaDOE, DECAL and University of South Florida staff. Leadership teams learned how to create and set universal expectations and rules across environments, as well as the importance of teaching children appropriate behavior through modeling and reinforcement.

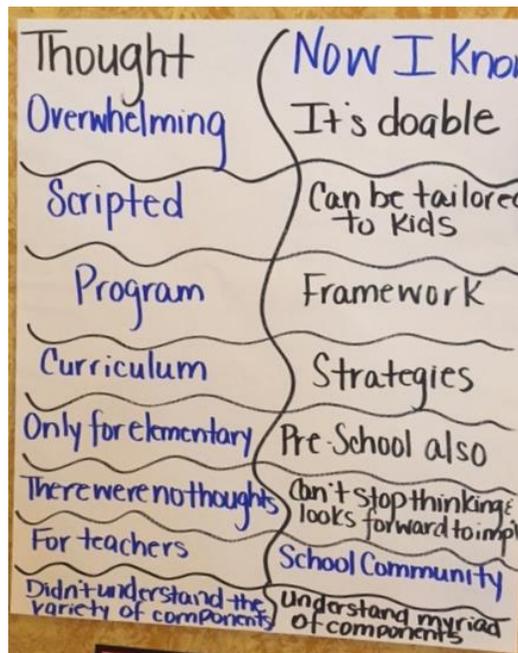
“Positive school climate is enormously important, and we see over and over again that climate impacts student achievement,” State School Superintendent Richard Woods said. “High-quality PBIS training and implementation is an important step as Georgia’s schools work to address the issue of climate. I am proud of these schools and early learning centers as they work to improve the learning climate for students from the very start of their educational experience.”

Particular emphasis was placed on recognizing early learning as birth – 3rd grade and the additional supports all children need throughout those crucial years. Throughout next school year, teachers in these grades will also be supported with additional social/emotional, developmentally appropriate classroom strategies to help them keep their students calm, engaged, and safe while learning in the classroom. At early ages, when students don't have language or a fully developed vocabulary, their behavior becomes their language.

"We are excited about the potential of this work to promote alignment of programs and services for children birth to third grade," Amy Jacobs, Commissioner, Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning said.

Throughout the year, childcare center and school teams will utilize data to track behavior incidents and adjust strategies as needed to help children with self-regulation skills and promote self-awareness.

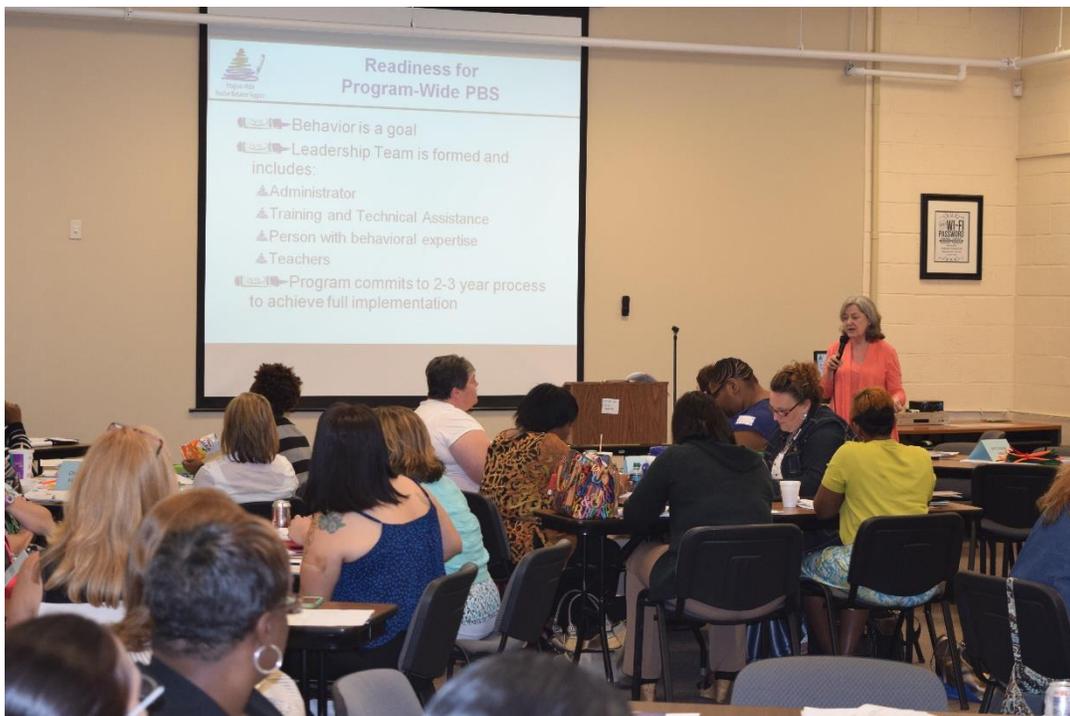
Georgia is one of only a few states pioneering the blended PBIS approach birth – third grade and beyond. Therefore, these sites are uniquely poised to serve as models throughout our state and perhaps the country showing how aligned positive learning climates can ultimately affect child/student engagement, teacher morale, and academic achievement.



Whitefoord Elementary School compares what they *thought* was PBIS to what they *now know* is PBIS



Tara Davis, PBIS Educational Program Specialist at the GaDOE shares *What is Behavior?* with the elementary school PBIS leadership teams at training



Dr. Lise Fox, Professor, Department of Child and Family Studies at the University of South Florida talks with early learning childcare centers about PW-PBIS, the Pyramid Model at training



Cassa Andrews, PBIS Program Manager at DECAL coaches McNair Discovery Learning Academy on early learning strategies for PreK – 3rd graders at their school



Whitefoord Community Project, Inc. Childcare Center discusses action planning for determining program expectations and rules



Toney Elementary School participates in PBIS action planning.