

Setting Up for the New School Year: How Well-Managed Schools Helped My PBIS School Sparkle

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As summer comes to an end and we head into our second year of [Well-Managed Schools](#) implementation (in my current school), a million *new* sparkly ideas, or “gems” as I like to call them, come to mind about how to refresh and invigorate staff. As the excitement builds, I have found myself thinking about these gems (and sometimes saying them out loud):

- "Oh! Wouldn't it be awesome to get a bunch of kids and create videos to help teach expectations?!"
- "Let's look through our curriculum and see where we can find areas for blended teaching."
- "Let's spend time as a committee writing lesson plans for teachers to use for planned teaching."
- "Oooooo! We could create a blog and then have contributors talk about behavior."

With my excitement booming, I sat down to reflect on these ideas with a staff member. And during that meeting, a statement was made that caused all of those Princess Poppy sparkles (Trolls reference) to go up in flames, "Now that we're a full year in, we don't need to spend as much time teaching, this will be great!"

Honestly, I wanted to agree with her because that would have been easy, but the truth is I just couldn't. You see, Well-Managed Schools will ALWAYS be a work in progress and we'll never be at a point where it is something we can reference casually or a book that we can put on a shelf because everyone's mastered it by now. Just as behavior evolves and continues to be multi-faceted, we need to adapt and be flexible, yet provide a predictable environment with predictable outcomes. And as our trainer often told us, the magic of this model IS the teaching!



I reflected on my own experiences with this model, and the transformations I have seen in the schools where I have helped implement it.

I can remember vividly sitting in the initial training almost five years ago. I knew that Well-Managed Schools would be good for kids (they didn't need to sell me on that!) but I didn't expect to be inspired to look at myself critically as an educator. This model has forced me to fine tune my philosophy about kids, how we treat them as individuals, how we view behavior as skill deficits with positive and/or negative consequences, how we coach students to make decisions and take ownership, and how we help bridge the connection between social/emotional learning and academics. And five years in, I can honestly say that I am still learning, growing, modeling, teaching and reflecting every single day.

Recently, I was speaking with a few principals about the implementation and impact of Well-Managed Schools on our building data. I shared a few highlights our staff experienced this year due to their hard work in implementing Well-Managed Schools with fidelity.

- A decrease in office referrals
- An increase in the amount of time scholars are in their instructional environment
- An overall increase in a greater positive learning climate

One posed the questions, "Well, what did you do with [PBiS](#)? Did Well-Managed Schools replace it?"

I suppose that wasn't a question that I had pondered before because in my mind Well-Managed Schools aligns completely with the PBiS umbrella, providing specific strategies and interventions to support PBiS. I went on to explain how we have worked as a building to bridge the connection and as our assistant principal states, "that's just how we do business, we are in the kid business!"

Each month we systematically look at our data, make instructional decisions about behavior, and take action. Well-Managed Schools is just a venue for delivering the explicit instruction of behaviors and expectations, which fully supports the PBiS mission. The beauty is that each staff member in our building has the same [common language](#) to ensure scholars are successful. Each staff member treats all scholars with a high level of respect, even when it may not be reciprocal because we view behavior as a missing skill and try extremely hard to not become emotionally invested. We are all accountable for teaching prosocial behaviors (including myself!) and provide interventions just like we would teach reading or math. Our admin team continuously communicates that behavior is just as important as academics and we treat it that way. Because let's admit it, we're not churning out a product, we're developing our future and we owe it to them to help them be successful in managing how to navigate society and what to do when big emotions occur. These are life skills that, no matter what profession they choose, can not only benefit them as an individual but also benefit society as a whole.

As the conversation came full circle, it closed with, "I'm sold! How much is the program?" I sat there for a moment and the only thing I could honestly reply was, "Priceless."

So, as another school year begins, I invite you to take a look at your personal mission for being an educator and be reflective on how it aligns with your building initiatives and responses to behavior. If you dare, post it in a place where you can reference it often. Take those shiny gems and place them back on the shelf for now. Dust off the tried and true practices that promote a positive learning climate, establish collective behavioral instruction and provide the most consistency for your staff, scholars and families because at the end of a tough day or a miraculous week they will provide you with the same positive outcome as they were designed to provide for others.