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ONE Community Working Together

## PRESS RELEASE

### More than 60 Arizona schools recognized for reducing discipline referrals, creating positive environments

PHOENIX—Five Arizona schools snagged top honors for creating a positive school culture and reducing principal visits and suspensions from the PBISAz Achievement Awards ceremony on April 29.

Congratulations to the five gold winners: Holbrook Junior High in Holbrook, Trailside Point School in Laveen, SHARP School in Mesa, Lake View Primary in Page and Lowell Elementary in Phoenix.

“Lowell Elementary School is proud of our PBIS efforts,” said principal Tyson Kelly.

The school reported a 75 percent decrease in student suspensions and referrals to the front office for discipline since the first year administrators brought PBIS to Lowell. “It is amazing to see a Kindergartener on the playground who excitedly runs over to tell you that he got a ROAR card this morning for being Accountable because he finished his work in class.”

Moreover, buzzwords have now translated into real-life successes. “Data-driven is no longer just a catchphrase at Lowell,” said school psychologist Meredith Swank. “We use data to inform our decisions which positively impacts our choices about students, both academically and behaviorally. We are also more mindful about our progress and consistently look for opportunities to improve our outcomes. We have room to grow, but are on a great track.”

The curriculum dubbed PBIS, or positive behavior interventions and supports, arose in the 1990s as part of research into how the social culture of a school—and not just instructional interactions—was just as key to creating an effective place to learn for kids of all abilities and challenges. PBISAz is the largest project funded by the Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council, a group which aims to enhance the lives of students and adults with developmental disabilities, which includes autism, behavioral disorders and cerebral palsy.

PBIS sets up a 3-Tier pyramid-type system for schools to support each student based on behavioral patterns. Preventing problem behavior before it arises by rewarding positive actions is a large part of the platform.

If the first tier activities fail to succeed, students move up the pyramid to receive more individualized plans to prevent problem behaviors. Students with high-risk behavior receive Tier 2 or 3 supports at the onset. The ultimate goal is to create positive school climates that encourage expected behavior and reduce challenging behavior across all students and all areas of the school. When this happens, there are fewer behavioral challenges and fewer students

who exhibit those challenges. This in turn reduces exclusionary practices like office referrals, suspensions, restraints and seclusion.

“I can’t begin to tell you how proud I am of the staff and administrators of these schools,” said Dr. Dan Davidson, director of PBISAz. “There is no mandate or requirement for schools to implement PBIS, and it is a lot of hard work. It is a testament to the dedication these schools have to their students.”

Throughout Arizona, 68 schools have verified they implement PBIS as measured by standard national survey instruments for the 2015-2016 school year. To learn more about PBIS and resources in Arizona, visit [www.PBISAz.org](http://www.PBISAz.org).

**To view and download photos from the awards ceremony and pictures of individual winners, [click here](#).**

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### Who we are

A staff of five assists the all-volunteer Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council, which is made up of individuals with developmental disabilities, family members, providers and state agency representatives. The 23-member Council meets quarterly to hear reports and vote on which projects to support by allocating federal funds, which total more than \$1.2 million each year. Visit us online at <https://addpc.az.gov/>

### What we do

We serve Arizona residents with developmental disabilities along with their families, providing original research and support to projects that accomplish our three current goals: **increasing employment opportunities, encouraging individuals to advocate for themselves and empowering those individuals with information.**