

Reducing Reliance on Crisis Management Practices in MA Schools: Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS)

Implementation Guide

*Additional resources related to the CPS model
are also available at www.livesinthebalance.org*

July 2026

Created by the non-profit Lives in the Balance in collaboration with the
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Table of Contents

Introduction _____	3
Orientation to Collaborative & Proactive Solutions _____	4
Part 1: Module Discussion Guides _____	8
Part 2: Key CPS Model Paperwork _____	10
Part 3: Sample Implementation Roadmaps _____	11
Mission and Values as a Foundation for Change _____	17
Part 4: Data Collection and Outcome Guide _____	18

AI Assistance Statement: Portions of this document were developed with the assistance of generative AI to support drafting and editing. The authors reviewed, revised, and verified all content and are responsible for the final document.

Introduction

The data have it right: there have never been more kids with social, emotional, and behavioral challenges. Sky-high rates of concerning behavior, depression, anxiety, suicidality, and chronic school absenteeism tell us it's so. For educators, these kids represent an immense challenge, partially because, for a very long time, educators have been primarily trained to manage crises. Reactive practices such as de-escalation, restraint, and seclusion occur once a student is already becoming agitated and/or exhibiting concerning behavior. But those practices do nothing to address the factors that are causing that behavior.

The enclosed implementation resource was developed to complement the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) web modules in providing educators with practical tools, implementation guidance, and systems-level strategies for translating these concepts into everyday practice. Grounded in the evidence-based Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS) model, this guide is intended to help your school or program move beyond crisis response toward proactively preventing the circumstances that often lead to behavioral emergencies.

Being reactive isn't a given, even in programs working with the most challenging kids. The CPS model has helped many schools dramatically reduce or eliminate crisis management procedures, along with staff and student injuries. It all starts with recognizing that concerning behavior is a student's frustration or distress response. It's the way students signal or communicate that there's an expectation they're having difficulty meeting. When caregivers focus on those expectations – rather than on the frustration responses that are caused by them – restraint and seclusion often become unnecessary.

That may sound far-fetched to some. But being proactive isn't wishful thinking; in many schools, it's a reality. The CPS model – this implementation guide included – provides the mindset, practices, implementation tools, planning resources, reflection questions, and examples designed to help your school create proactive systems, build staff confidence and cohesion, and create learning environments where behavioral crises become increasingly rare.

That's what we've been doing in schools and treatment facilities all over the world for a very long time. We can't wait to work alongside you to change things for the better in your building. And not just for the kids...for you too.

- Dr. Ross Greene

Orientation to Collaborative & Proactive Solutions

The evidence-based Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS) model was originated by Dr. Ross Greene and described in his books *The Explosive Child*, *Lost at School*, *Lost & Found*, *Raising Human Beings*, and *The Kids Who Aren't Okay*. The model has been shown to be highly effective in reducing or eliminating the use of crisis management practices such as de-escalation, restraint, and seclusion, along with staff and child injuries.

CPS represents a dramatic departure from traditional discipline. It focuses on the “unsolved problems” that cause concerning behaviors (and solving them) rather than on modifying the behaviors. It views concerning behavior as a frustration or distress response, rather than as willful noncompliance. As documented by the research that has accumulated over the past 40-50 years, kids with maladaptive frustration responses are not poorly motivated but rather are struggling with various skills such as flexibility/adaptability, frustration tolerance, problem solving, and emotion regulation. This is a much more accurate, compassionate, productive set of lenses.

An unsolved problem is any expectation a student is having difficulty meeting. The advantage to focusing on unsolved problems is that they are highly predictable. That being the case, they can be identified proactively (using an instrument called the Assessment of Skills and Unsolved Problems, or ASUP). And they can therefore be solved proactively, which dramatically reduces the need for reactive responses to the behaviors that are caused by those problems. Solved problems don't cause concerning behavior; only unsolved problems do.

The problem solving process is also collaborative; meaning that the student is an integral, indispensable part of the process. This arouses skepticism in many adults, for a variety of reasons. Many feel that solving problems collaboratively means they're capitulating or giving in. Once they learn more about the model, they come to recognize that they're doing no such thing. Some adults, who may be accustomed to viewing kids with concerning behaviors as attention-seeking, manipulative, coercive, and unmotivated, have difficulty moving beyond motivational procedures (consequences) to engage kids in solving the problems that are causing those behaviors. Some adults are uncomfortable trying something new. And some adults are particularly skeptical about whether kids who are non- or minimally- speaking or have high support needs can be engaged in the process. We understand and appreciate the skepticism. We look forward to working alongside you to help you overcome these hurdles. In the meantime, there are a lot of videos of kids of different ages, cognitive abilities, language processing skills, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds participating in the process awaiting your review on the Lives in the Balance website (www.livesinthebalance.org).

Aside from the problem-solving process, the emphasis on being proactive rather than reactive, and the reduced emphasis on modifying behavior through consequences, there are other facets of the model that are important to your efforts to reduce reliance on crisis management practices, including:

- In CPS, the definition of good teaching is meeting every student where they're at. It doesn't mean treating every student exactly the same or having the same goals for every student.
- There's also an emphasis in the CPS model on developmental variability, which refers to the fact that every kid has a unique developmental trajectory, with a mix of strengths and vulnerabilities. Regrettably, many initiatives and practices in education are aimed at getting every student over the same line by the end of the school year. This has placed pressure on educators to place expectations on students that

they already know students can't meet, thereby causing concerning behavior. That's not meeting every student where they're at.

- And there's an emphasis on expectation management. This means giving deliberate thought to whether an expectation being placed upon a student is in range for that student developmentally. Educators have been trained to believe that there's a strategy, support, adaptation, or accommodation that will bring all expectations into range for a student, but this simply isn't true. And it makes no sense to place expectations on students that they can't meet. That's not selling any student short; that's meeting every student where they're at.

If your school is using crisis management practices a lot, CPS can dramatically change things for the better and help you reduce your use of those practices. If your school is rarely using crisis management practices, CPS will improve your interactions and relationships with your students and give you an important tool to help them overcome their struggles.

Here are some of the questions that often arise when educators first learn about the CPS model (adapted from the book *The Kids Who Aren't Okay*):

Q: Do you need an ASUP on every kid in your building?

A: Only if your student body is primarily comprised of kids with concerning behavior (as in the case of special purpose schools or special education classrooms. In general education schools, there are usually ten to fifteen kids who are struggling the most, getting in trouble the most, and accessing the school discipline program the most. The ones who account for 70 to 80 percent of discipline referrals and the punitive, exclusionary interventions that follow those referrals. Those students need you to complete the ASUP, ASAP.

Q: Moving away from focusing on behaviors to the problems that are causing them is going to be a big shift, yes?

A: No question about it. But doing so will help your school or program take ten giant steps toward being early (proactive) rather than late (reactive). Doing so will also help you appreciate the futility of a lot of the punitive, exclusionary disciplinary practices we've been busy applying to those behaviors.

Q: How is the ASUP different from tools we already use, like FBAs and behavior rating scales?

A: FBAs and behavior checklists typically focus on defining and measuring behavior; the ASUP helps us identify the problems that are causing those behaviors. There's no need to wait for a behavior to occur before we recognize that a student is having difficulty meeting an expectation.

Q: Most FBAs I've read all came to the conclusion that a student's concerning behavior was for the purpose of getting, escaping, and avoiding. Is there a different definition of "function" in the CPS model?

A: That's the traditional definition of the function of a kid's behavior. As you've read, concerning behaviors simply communicate that there are expectations a student is having difficulty meeting. That's a much more accurate, productive definition of "function." And a good FBA should be crystal clear about those unsolved problems and should point us in the direction of solving them.

Q: Educators can't be all things to all kids.

A: Right. But educators have always solved problems with their students.

Q: Educators get blamed for everything.

A: Perhaps so. Fortunately, the CPS model isn't about blame. Educators inherited a lot of the structures, systems, and practices that aren't working very well in schools. Questioning the things that aren't working and then changing them is better not only for students but for educators as well.

Q: At what tier is all this problem-solving taking place?

A: Any tier. Every tier. With or without tiers. The earlier the better. Most students who need an ASUP are already identified or already at Tier 3. What we've done so far hasn't worked.

Q: And you think we have time to solve problems with students?

A: Possibly not, at least not as things are currently configured in your building. There's no question that the school schedule wasn't designed to give educators time to solve problems with kids (apparently, the schedule was constructed without giving thought to the fact that some students were going to have difficulty meeting our expectations). And the school discipline program was designed to make it easy to send those kids to someone else, either the principal or assistant principal (for discipline) or the school psychologist or school counselor (for counseling). The fact that unsolved problems have piled up is an indication of the shortcomings of such designs. So, we have some re-designing to do. We're going to have to create structures that create time. That requires commitment more than anything else. It's not that hard. The reality is we're already spending significant time reacting to concerning behavior. The goal is to shift that time from reactive to proactive by solving the problems that are causing those very time-consuming behaviors.

Q: Early in my teaching career, I always went to the student first to find out what was making it hard for them to meet an expectation. Now we rush into deciding what tier a student is in, get the behavior intervention plan done quickly, and the student's voice has been lost. No wonder I'm so unhappy!

A: Nothing particularly rewarding in thinking about tiers, getting a behavior plan done quickly, and being unilateral. Nothing rewarding about adhering to an algorithm for responding to concerning behaviors without solving the problems that are causing them. It isn't just students who've paid the price for these developments, educators have paid a heavy price too.

Q: My school has put a lot of effort into being trauma-informed. Is that a major focal point of the CPS model?

A: Well, the CPS model is considered trauma-informed. Which makes sense, since it includes the ingredients of trauma-informed care (emotional and physical safety, collaboration and mutuality, trustworthiness and transparency, and empowerment and choice). That said, in the CPS model, we view trauma as one of many factors that can compromise a kid's ability to handle problems and frustrations. So, while we think trauma-informed care has helped many caregivers be more empathic toward kids with concerning behaviors, and that its emphasis on relationship-building is important, we also know that relationships alone aren't going to solve the problems that are causing a student's concerning behaviors. You need something more. When you're solving problems collaboratively and proactively, relationship-enhancement occurs as part of the process.





“

If we want to get where we need to go, we need more than new strategies.

We need new lenses

through which to understand students

and new practices

that reflect that understanding.

Part 1:

Module Discussion Guides

Reflection and conversation are essential to changing practices. The discussion questions on these pages are designed to accompany each of the three video modules. These question sets are provided to help individuals and teams think more deeply about the ideas presented. The goal is to encourage curiosity, thoughtfulness, and honest dialogue. Use these pages to capture your team's thinking, identify opportunities, and begin planning your next steps.

Module 1:

Reflecting & Navigating Definitions

1. How might viewing students through the lens of developmental variability influence your work with students?
2. How does the idea that meeting every student where they're at align with your current practice? Where does it challenge your thinking?
3. To what extent is expectation management already part of your practice? Where might there be opportunities to be more intentional?
4. What, if anything, did this module inspire you to change in your school, program, or classroom?
5. What do you think about the dichotomy between "early" and "late"? Are there aspects of daily life in your school/program/classroom that you'd like to change because they're late?
6. What opportunities and challenges do you see in using Plan C to temporarily put some expectations on hold? What barriers might make this difficult?
7. How would shifting the focus from concerning behaviors (and modifying them) to unsolved problems (and solving them) change the way your team responds to students?

Module 2: The Mechanics of Plan B



1. How does the “Kids Do Well If They Can” philosophy align with your own beliefs about students? Are there situations where it feels more challenging to apply?
2. Which students, if any, do you anticipate might be difficult to engage in the problem-solving process? What barriers might need to be addressed first?
3. In what ways could the ASUP complement or replace some of the paperwork practices currently used with students who are struggling?
4. How student-driven are the interventions in your school, program, or classroom? Where do you see opportunities to increase student voice?
5. How much insight do you think students typically have into what’s making it difficult for them to meet expectations? How might you find out?
6. What benefits, if any, do you see in having students actively participate in developing solutions to unsolved problems?
7. The module suggests that the ASUP can help “write your FBA and BIP for you.” How might using the ASUP influence the quality or usefulness of your Functional Behavior Assessments and Behavior Intervention Plans?

Module 3: Systemic Integration & Measuring Impact

1. As you think about implementing CPS in your school, program, or classroom, what opportunities excite you most? What challenges or sources of resistance do you anticipate?
2. How could CPS be integrated into the practices and initiatives already in place in your school or program?
3. How well does the sample mission statement reflect the vision for your school, program, or classroom? What, if anything, would you revise?
4. What insights did you gain from hearing educators describe their experiences implementing CPS? What felt most applicable to your own setting?
5. Who would you want to include in a CPS core implementation team, and why? What roles or perspectives would be important to have represented?
6. Dr. Greene suggests that schools can dramatically reduce seclusion and other crisis management practices (even before staff become highly skilled in Plan B) by relying less on Plan A and adult-imposed consequences and placing greater emphasis on expectation management. How feasible does this approach feel in your setting? What would it take to make it successful?
7. Developing proficiency with Plan B takes time and practice. What would help your staff make that commitment? What barriers would need to be addressed?

Part 2: Key CPS Model Paperwork

The Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS) model is supported by a set of practical paperwork tools that help turn concepts into everyday practice. The resources below can be used to identify unsolved problems, prepare for and guide Plan B conversations, document progress, and build systems across staff.

Consider introducing these tools as they become relevant to your implementation, helping educators develop confidence while creating a shared approach to supporting students. All of the documents below can be found on the Lives in the Balance website at <https://livesinthebalance.org/cps-materials-paperwork/>

Title and Link	Description
<u>CPS Quick Reference Posters</u>	These printable posters provide quick, easy-to-reference reminders of the core concepts and practices of Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS). Display them in classrooms, staff workspaces, and meeting areas to reinforce consistent language and support implementation in everyday practice.
<u>CPS Model Doc 1: Assessment of Skills & Unsolved Problems (ASUP 2024)</u>	The primary discussion guide for identifying skills students are struggling with and the expectations they're having difficulty meeting.
<u>CPS Model Doc 2: ASUP Guide & Verbs to Avoid</u>	Instructions on writing specific, "split" unsolved problems while avoiding labels like "staying calm" or "listening".
<u>CPS Model Doc 3: Plan B Cheat Sheetstep</u>	Detailed breakdown of the goals, words to use, and "don'ts" for each step.
<u>CPS Model Doc 4: Drilling Cheat Sheet</u>	Specific strategies like reflective listening and tabling to use when a student is stuck.
<u>CPS Model Doc 5: Problem-Solving Referral Form</u>	A tool for staff to request coverage while they meet with a student proactively.
<u>CPS Model Doc 6: Problem Solving Plan</u>	A tracking sheet for identified concerns and agreed-upon solutions.



Part 3: Sample Implementation Roadmaps

Successfully implementing Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS) is not about checking off a list of one-size-fits-all activities. Instead, program leaders will need to think through the architecture of their existing school system to thoughtfully build the knowledge and schoolwide practices that support lasting change.

Every school and program begins from a different place. Some already have strong collaborative structures between adults and students at school. Others may need to make some big shifts in introducing a new way of thinking about concerning behavior. Because of these differences, there is no single “right” implementation plan.

The roadmaps that follow are intended to serve as examples of how implementation can unfold over time in different contexts. They are designed to help you think strategically about the sequence of implementation rather than prescribe a rigid timeline. You may move through some components more quickly than others, revisit an earlier component when new staff join your team, or adapt activities to meet the unique needs of your setting. That flexibility is both expected and encouraged.

Although the activities differ, successful implementation generally requires four components:

1. Preparing for Change

Creating the conditions for successful implementation by establishing a shared vision, building readiness, engaging core stakeholders, and developing an initial implementation plan.

2. Beginning Implementation

Building knowledge, confidence, and early momentum as staff begin learning, practicing, and applying the CPS model in authentic settings.

3. Creating Structures to Support Shared Practice

Developing the systems, coaching, collaboration, and opportunities for modeling and practice that promote consistent use of CPS across classrooms, teams, programs, or schools.

4. Creating Structures that Support Sustainability

Embedding CPS into the organization’s culture, systems, routines, and continuous improvement processes so implementation is maintained and strengthened over time.

This guide includes two sample implementation roadmaps:

- Part A: A broad, whole-building sample implementation plan for schools introducing CPS across general education, special education, and school-wide systems.
- Part B: A sample implementation plan for special education and special purpose programs serving students with more intensive support needs.

While the activities within each roadmap reflect the unique needs of these settings, both are organized around the same four components because sustainable implementation depends on the same foundational principles.

As you review these examples, focus less on when each activity occurs and more on why it occurs. Each component lays the groundwork for the next, helping schools build the capacity needed to implement CPS with confidence and fidelity over time.

Keep in Mind

Implementation is rarely linear. Schools and programs often revisit earlier components as they welcome new staff, strengthen skills, or refine existing practices. Returning or looping back to an earlier component is a normal part of building sustainable change.

Sample Implementation Roadmap Part A:

Rollout for Whole-School Implementation

Component 1: Preparing for Change (Months 1–6):

The goal of this component is to establish a Core Team that develops a deep understanding of the CPS philosophy, becomes proficient in applying the model with selected students, and begins designing how CPS will be thoughtfully embedded into the school's systems, practices, and mindset over time.

Sample activities:

- Establish a representative Core Team, whose members will become skilled at the model first.
- Consider sharing the three video modules with the Core Team and complete the discussion guides together.
- Read additional CPS materials and review training videos at www.livesinthebalance.org.
- Print and display CPS Quick Reference Posters in the classrooms or offices of Core Team members.
- Core Team begins practice using the model with selected students.
- Meet regularly to reflect, build confidence, and refine implementation.
- Develop an initial vision and implementation plan for introducing CPS schoolwide. Consider creating a revised Mission/Values Statement (sample can be found later in this section of the guide).

Component 2: Beginning Implementation (Months 7–10):

The goal of this component is to build staff understanding and buy-in by introducing the CPS philosophy, creating opportunities for shared learning, and beginning to integrate CPS into existing structures and problem-solving processes.

Sample activities:

- Present the CPS philosophy building-wide.
- Complete a Group Book Study using *Lost at School* or *The Kids Who Aren't Okay* by Dr. Ross Greene.
- Share examples and early successes from the Core Team's work.
- Integrate CPS into MTSS, SST, and/or Student Assistance Team discussions.
- Begin using the ASUP to better understand students who are struggling.
- Create opportunities for staff discussion, questions, and reflection.

Component 3: Creating Structures to Support Shared Practice (Months 11–15):

The goal of this component is to expand consistent use of CPS across the school by supporting all staff in applying the model with confidence, while providing coaching, mentorship, and opportunities to strengthen practice over time.

Component 3 *cont.*

Sample activities:

- Embed the ASUP into existing student support processes, including MTSS and SST.
- Core Team members provide coaching, mentorship, and modeling to colleagues.
- Create opportunities for staff to practice Plan B and receive feedback.
- Use CPS language consistently across student support meetings and collaborative discussions.
- Continue refining implementation based on staff experiences and student outcomes.

Component 4: Creating Structures that Support Sustainability (Months 16–24):

The goal of this component is to establish CPS as the school's standard approach to understanding and supporting students by embedding the philosophy into everyday practice, school systems, policies, and family partnerships.

Sample activities:

- Incorporate CPS language and principles into school policies, procedures, and documentation.
- Establish the ASUP and Plan B as the primary approach for responding to students experiencing difficulty meeting expectations.
- Provide ongoing coaching and onboarding so new staff develop proficiency in CPS.
- Engage families by sharing CPS resources and opportunities to learn and use the model at home.
- Use implementation and student outcome data to guide continuous improvement.
- Develop a plan for onboarding and supporting new staff in learning and implementing CPS.



Sample Implementation Roadmap Part B: *Special Education or Special Purpose Program* *Roll-Out*

Component 1: Preparing for Change (Months 1–6)

The goal of this component is to develop a highly proficient Core Team that builds confidence using CPS with selected students while designing how the model will be integrated into the program's daily routines, supports, and systems over time.

Sample activities:

- Establish the Program Core Team: This team should include key professionals in the program who will become skilled in the CPS model first..
 - Examples include: the lead special education teacher, classroom paraprofessionals, and the program's clinician or school psychologist.
- The "Practice Student" Pilot: Each member of the Core Team selects one student to focus on.
 - Each staff member oversees completion of the ASUP to identify unsolved problems and begin practicing proactive Plan B conversations during pre-selected timeframes that work for your program's daily schedule.
- Print and display CPS Quick Reference Posters in the classrooms or offices of Core Team members.
- Complete a Core Team Book Study using *Lost at School* or *The Kids Who Aren't Okay* by Dr. Ross Greene.
- Work with the Core Team to develop a "baseline" data plan" depending on your goals for integrating CPS into the program. At this stage, the goal is capturing the current state of your program and hone in on practices that are clearly unilateral, reactive, and focused on concerning behaviors rather than on the problems that are causing them. You'll want to attend to both mindsets and practices.
 - You might decide to track reliance on in-the moment de-escalation, room clears, and seclusion.
 - You might decide to survey your staff (using our pre-assessment survey tool) to determine baseline attitudes and mindset about supporting kids with concerning behaviors in your program.
 - Shift mindsets together through consultation: Core team staff meet weekly in case consult to practice CPS and shift their lenses from behaviors (and modifying them) to unsolved problems (and solving them).

Component 2: Beginning Implementation (Months 7–10)

The goal of this component is to build a shared understanding of CPS among all program staff while intentionally integrating the model into existing instructional, behavioral, and IEP processes.

Sample activities:

- Present the "Kids do well if they can" philosophy to all program staff (paras, 1:1 aides, and related service providers like OTs/SLPs).
- Share Resources about the CPS Model: Distribute these modules or resources from the Lives in the Balance website with relevant program staff.
- Begin operationalizing use of the ASUP: Use the ASUP to identify the specific unsolved problems that will become the targets for students' IEPs or BIPs.

- Identify common program-wide unsolved problems (e.g., transitions back from recess, navigating center time) and use Plan B with the whole class to find collaborative solutions.

Component 3: Creating Structures to Support Shared Practice (Months 11–15)

The goal of this component is to establish CPS as the program’s primary framework for understanding and supporting students while strengthening staff proficiency through coaching, collaboration, and daily practice.

Sample activities:

- Universal ASUP Usage: All program staff use the ASUP for any student who is struggling to meet expectations. It becomes the standard pre-referral and triage instrument for the program.
- On-the-Ground Coaching: The Core Team provides coaching support to paras and aides, helping them learn how to schedule Plan B conversations, build proficiency in Plan B conversations, and appropriately utilize Plan C to manage expectations.
- Crafting a Stabilization Plan: For the students who are experiencing the most difficulty – to the point that it is hard for them to meet most expectations – program staff will work together to remove non-essential expectations (Plan C) until the student is “available” for learning through Plan B.
- Repurpose spaces previously used for isolation or seclusion, as proactive supports become the norm.
- Shift what gets measured. In addition to tracking behavioral escalations, begin monitoring solved problems, successful Plan B conversations, and reductions in reactive interventions.

Component 4: Creating Structures that Support Sustainability (Months 16–24)

The goal of this component is to sustain CPS as the program’s standard approach by embedding it into everyday practice, strengthening family partnerships, and creating systems that support long-term implementation.

Sample activities:

- Provide ongoing coaching and professional learning to strengthen staff proficiency.
- Use the ASUP to guide intervention planning and team discussions.
- Embed CPS language into IEPs, BIPs, and other program documentation.
- Share ASUPs and Problem Solving Plans to support successful student transitions.
- Collaboratively solve common program-wide challenges using Plan B.
- Develop an onboarding plan to introduce new staff to the CPS philosophy and practices.
- Celebrate progress by highlighting solved problems and implementation successes and develop additional CPS champions to sustain implementation over time.
- Partner with families to address shared unsolved problems across home and school, and offer families opportunities to learn and practice Plan B.
- Review implementation and student outcome data to guide continuous improvement.

Worksheet: Developing Your CPS Implementation Roadmap

Use this worksheet to develop an implementation plan that reflects your school's or program's unique needs. The checkboxes below are intended to spark ideas—they are not a checklist of required activities. Adapt, add, or remove activities as needed.

Component	Our Goals	Potential Activities	Who Will Lead?	Timeline	Progress Indicators
Component 1: Preparing for Change		☐ Establish a Core Team ☐ Complete Book Study ☐ Identify practice students ☐ Complete ASUPs ☐ Review CPS resources ☐ Develop a baseline data plan ☐ Collect baseline data ☐ Hold regular case consultations ☐ Other: _____			
Component 2: Beginning Implementation		☐ Introduce CPS to staff ☐ Share training resources ☐ Integrate CPS into MTSS/SST ☐ Begin using the ASUP ☐ Identify common unsolved problems ☐ Hold staff discussions ☐ Other: _____			
Component 3: Creating Structures to Support Shared Practice		☐ Use the ASUP consistently ☐ Provide staff coaching ☐ Practice Plan B regularly ☐ Develop stabilization plans ☐ Use Plan C strategically ☐ Monitor and communicate solved problems to relevant staff ☐ Other: _____			
Component 4: Creating Structures that Support Sustainability		☐ Update policies and documentation to reflect ASUP and CPS vocabulary ☐ Develop onboarding CPS training for new staff ☐ Expand family partnerships and share knowledge about the CPS Model ☐ Review implementation data ☐ Celebrate successes publicly and regularly ☐ Plan for sustainability ☐ Other: _____			

Need support? If your school or district would like assistance planning implementation or making sense of your data, the team at Lives in the Balance is here to help. We'd love to hear from you. Visit us at www.livesinthebalance.org.

Mission and Values as a Foundation for Change

During the early stages of implementation, some schools and programs choose to develop or revisit their mission and values statement as a way to establish a shared vision for change. This process can help build consensus around the beliefs that will guide implementation and influence changes to policies, practices, and decision-making processes. While not a prerequisite for implementing CPS, a mission and values statement grounded in student-centered, collaborative principles can serve as an important touchstone throughout the implementation process.

Sample Mission/Values Statement:

We strive to provide whatever it takes to ensure that students are successful academically, socially, and emotionally and reach their highest potential.

We are highly attuned to the developmental variability of our students and strive to meet each student where they're at; each student is their own reference point for expectations, goals, and progress.

Our school is student-centered, safe, and nurturing, and we employ practices that are non-punitive, non-exclusionary, and relationship- and skill-enhancing.

We focus on proactively identifying and solving the problems that are interfering with students' success rather than simply modifying the behaviors that are caused by those problems; our students are integrally involved in the problem-solving process.

Part 4: Data Collection and Outcome Guide

Introduction & Developing a Data Plan

Measuring What Matters

Reducing seclusion, restraint, and other restrictive interventions requires more than counting crisis events. Effective implementation is reflected not only in fewer restrictive practices, but also in changes in adult thinking, student experiences, and the systems schools use to proactively identify and solve problems.

Data should support learning and continuous improvement. This effort is different from data taking for compliance. The goal of your data taking efforts should be to collect meaningful information that helps your team understand what's working, identify barriers, and guide your next steps for implementing change.

Build Your Measurement Plan

Start with the data you already have.

Most schools already collect a tremendous amount of information related to student behavior, discipline, attendance, and school climate. Rather than creating an entirely new data collection system, begin by identifying the data your school already gathers and think through how it can help you monitor progress toward your implementation goals.

Every school begins implementation from a different place. Some schools, as a result of this project, are working to eliminate the use of seclusion. However, there are other reasons that schools decide to implement Collaborative & Proactive Solutions. Some schools are focused on reducing office discipline referrals, increasing instructional time, improving school climate, strengthening adult-student partnerships in problem solving, or addressing inequities in discipline practices.

Before deciding what additional data to collect, identify the changes your team hopes to see. Then ask:

How will we know if we're making progress?

Use the planning questions below to guide your discussion.

Reflection Question	Your Team's Notes
What are our primary goals for implementation of Collaborative & Proactive Solutions?	
What changes do we hope to see for students?	
What changes do we hope to see in adult practice?	
What data do we already collect that could help us measure progress?	
Are there important outcomes we are not currently measuring?	
How often will we review our data?	
Which team members will be responsible for collecting and reviewing the data?	

Choosing Meaningful Measures

Not every school needs to collect every type of data. Select measures that align with your implementation goals and help your team understand whether your efforts are making a meaningful difference.

If your goal is...	You might monitor...
Reduce seclusion and/or restraint	Frequency of seclusion and restraint, duration of incidents, room clearings, student and staff injuries, repeat incidents, crisis response data
Reduce punitive or exclusionary discipline	Office discipline referrals, classroom removals, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, expulsions
Increase instructional access	Instructional time lost due to behavioral crises, attendance, classroom participation, time spent engaged in instruction
Strengthen problem solving practices with students	ASUP completion, Plan B conversations, family participation, number of unsolved problems identified and successfully resolved
Improve school schoolwide practice	Staff surveys, coaching reflections, implementation fidelity, educator attitudes
Improve student experience	Student surveys, interviews, focus groups, student voice, sense of belonging
Promote equitable outcomes	Discipline and restrictive intervention data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, disability status, English learner status, grade level, and other relevant student groups

Four Ways to Measure Progress

No single measure tells the whole story. Schools are encouraged to collect data across the four domains below.

1. Student Outcomes

This is where we look for changes in student outcomes over time.

Examples include:

- Office discipline referrals
- Classroom removals
- In-school suspensions
- Out-of-school suspensions
- Physical restraint
- Seclusion or isolation
- Room clearings
- Instructional time lost due to behavioral crises
- Student and staff injuries related to behavioral incidents

Much of this information already exists within school data systems. Schools should maintain consistent methods for documenting restrictive interventions, including the frequency, duration, precipitating events, and any student or staff injuries. Rather than focusing on individual events, look for trends across time, particularly for students who are receiving CPS support.

As implementation becomes established, schools should expect to see a gradual reduction in punitive and exclusionary discipline and a corresponding decrease in the use of restraint, seclusion, and other restrictive interventions.

2. Adult Practice

Changes in student outcomes should be accompanied by changes in adult practice.

Consider questions such as:

- Are educators identifying unsolved problems earlier?
- Are Plan B conversations occurring more frequently?
- Are staff using the Assessment of Skills and Unsolved Problems (ASUP) to guide intervention planning?
- Are families being engaged as collaborative partners?
- Are crises being prevented rather than managed?

Traditional behavior systems often measure success by counting challenging behaviors. **CPS encourages schools to measure success by documenting the unsolved problems that have been successfully resolved through the use of CPS and Plan B Conversations.** As students and adults work together to solve recurring problems, schools should see a growing “pile” of solved problems. More solved problems should lead to fewer recurring crises requiring adult intervention.

These data may come from implementation logs, coaching records, team reflections, or staff feedback.

3. Schoolwide Practice & Climate

Implementation also changes the way adults think about students and respond to concerning behavior.

Evidence might include:

- Greater curiosity about the causes of behavior
- Increased collaboration among staff
- Reduced reliance on punitive or exclusionary responses
- Greater confidence using proactive strategies
- Stronger relationships between educators, students, and families

These changes are often best captured through staff reflection, interviews, surveys (samples included in this resource), or team discussions.

Schools should also examine whether improvements are occurring equitably across student groups. Reviewing discipline and restrictive intervention data by race, ethnicity, disability status, English learner status, grade level, and other relevant demographics can help identify disparities and ensure that reductions in restrictive practices benefit all students.

4. Student Experience

Perhaps the most important measure of success is the student’s experience.

Ask questions such as:

- Do students feel heard?
- Do students feel like they belong?
- Are students involved in solving the problems affecting their everyday lives?
- Do they experience school as fair, predictable, and supportive?
- Do they have trusted adults they can turn to?
- Do students feel safe in the care of adults at school?

When students begin describing school this way, it is often a strong indicator that the schoolwide practice is changing in meaningful and lasting ways. This information can come from student surveys, interviews, informal conversations, or reflection activities.

The Big Picture

Data should be used to support learning and continuous improvement. Data should not be used to assign blame. While reductions in seclusion, restraint, and other restrictive interventions are important indicators of progress, they are “downstream” indicators of a larger goal. **The ultimate goal is a school where fewer students reach the point of crisis because adults are identifying unsolved problems early, partnering with students and families, and solving those problems collaboratively.**

As implementation deepens, schools should expect to see more than just fewer incidents. They should see stronger relationships, increased student voice, more instructional time, greater staff confidence, and a schoolwide practice that increasingly responds to concerning behavior with curiosity, compassion, and collaboration.

Need support? If your school or district would like assistance planning implementation or making sense of your data, the team at Lives in the Balance is here to help. We’re always eager to partner with educators working to build more collaborative, proactive, and compassionate schools for kids. To learn more or connect with our team, visit us at www.livesinthebalance.org.



Pre-Assessment Survey: Baseline Attitudes, Beliefs, and Structures

CPS Beliefs and Practices Pre-Assessment

Response Scale

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

Kids Do Well If They Can (5 items)

1. Students who have difficulty meeting expectations are, in general, poorly motivated. (Reverse score)
2. When students exhibit concerning behavior, it is often because they are struggling with skills related to flexibility, frustration tolerance, and emotion regulation.
3. Challenging behavior is best understood as a frustration or distress response.
4. Challenging behavior is best characterized as attention-seeking, manipulative, and coercive. (Reverse score)
5. Concerning behavior is “working” for students because it helps them get, escape, and avoid. (Reverse score)

Behavior vs. Unsolved Problems (4 items)

6. The best way to solve the problems that are causing concerning behavior is through the use of consequences. (Reverse score)
7. The problems of my students are largely unpredictable. (Reverse score)
8. The primary cause of concerning behavior is a student’s home life and family circumstances. (Reverse score)
9. The best way to be proactive in dealing with students’ concerning behavior is to proactively identify and solve the problems that are causing that behavior.

Collaboration (4 items)

10. Students generally cannot be relied upon to assist in solving the problems that are affecting their lives. (Reverse score)
11. It is virtually impossible to involve non- and minimally speaking students in solving problems collaboratively. (Reverse score)
12. Adult-driven interventions such as supports, strategies, accommodations, and adaptations are integral to the process of solving problems collaboratively. (Reverse score).
13. Students can often provide helpful information when it comes to what is making it hard for them to meet certain expectations.

Proactive vs. Reactive Practice (3 items)

- 14. De-escalating is a good example of crisis prevention. (Reverse score)
- 15. Existing systems and structures in most schools are not conducive to preventing crises.
- 16. The sequence of restraint and seclusion typically begins with an expectation a student is having difficulty meeting.

Developmental Variability & Systems Readiness (3 items)

- 17. Efforts to differentiate instruction tend to lower expectations and sell students short. (Reverse score)
- 18. Developmental variability refers to the fact that while students are all different. It is the job of the classroom teacher to make sure they can all meet the same expectations by the end of the school year. (Reverse score)
- 19. Expectation management refers to the need to give consideration to whether a particular expectation is actually in range for a student at this point in their development.

For a print-and-use version of the pre/post assessment surveys, visit the CPS website at <https://livesinthebalance.org/cps-materials-paperwork/>.



Post-Assessment Survey: Measuring Growth

CPS Beliefs and Practices Pre-Assessment

Response Scale

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

Kids Do Well If They Can (5 items)

1. Students who have difficulty meeting expectations are, in general, poorly motivated. (Reverse score)
2. When students exhibit concerning behavior, it is often because they are struggling with skills related to flexibility, frustration tolerance, and emotion regulation.
3. Challenging behavior is best understood as a frustration or distress response.
4. Challenging behavior is best characterized as attention-seeking, manipulative, and coercive. (Reverse score)
5. Concerning behavior is “working” for students because it helps them get, escape, and avoid. (Reverse score)

Behavior vs. Unsolved Problems (4 items)

6. The best way to solve the problems that are causing concerning behavior is through the use of consequences. (Reverse score)
7. The problems of my students are largely unpredictable. (Reverse score)
8. The primary cause of concerning behavior is a student’s home life and family circumstances. (Reverse score)
9. The best way to be proactive in dealing with students’ concerning behavior is to proactively identify and solve the problems that are causing that behavior.

Collaboration (4 items)

10. Students generally cannot be relied upon to assist in solving the problems that are affecting their lives. (Reverse score)
11. It is virtually impossible to involve non- and minimally speaking students in solving problems collaboratively. (Reverse score)
12. Adult-driven interventions such as supports, strategies, accommodations, and adaptations are integral to the process of solving problems collaboratively. (Reverse score).
13. Students can often provide helpful information when it comes to what is making it hard for them to meet certain expectations.

Proactive vs. Reactive Practice (3 items)

- 14. De-escalating is a good example of crisis prevention. (Reverse score)
- 15. Existing systems and structures in most schools are not conducive to preventing crises.
- 16. The sequence of restraint and seclusion typically begins with an expectation a student is having difficulty meeting.

Developmental Variability & Systems Readiness (3 items)

- 17. Efforts to differentiate instruction tend to lower expectations and sell students short. (Reverse score)
- 18. Developmental variability refers to the fact that while students are all different. It is the job of the classroom teacher to make sure they can all meet the same expectations by the end of the school year. (Reverse score)
- 19. Expectation management refers to the need to give consideration to whether a particular expectation is actually in range for a student at this point in their development.

For a print-and-use version of the pre/post assessment surveys, visit the CPS website at <https://livesinthebalance.org/cps-materials-paperwork/>.

LIVES in the BALANCE

Created by Lives in the Balance in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Additional resources related to the CPS model are also available from the non-profit Lives in the Balance at www.livesinthebalance.org

