PBIS-RISE: A GPT-Powered Questionnaire Generator for Assessing Student Understanding of Behavioral Expectations

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Abstract

The PBIS-RISE Generator introduces a novel application of Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen-AI) in the domain of behavioral education, specifically within the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework. While PBIS promotes the development of locally adapted behavioral expectation matrices to foster prosocial conduct, a persistent challenge lies in evaluating students' comprehension of these expectations in a standardized yet context-sensitive manner. PBIS-RISE addresses this need by employing a GPT-based model, trained and prompted on PBIS theory, validated behavior matrices, and existing school climate assessments to generate customized questionnaires. These instruments reflect each school's cultural norms and educational goals while preserving fidelity to the PBIS framework. The generator creates items across six core dimensions: Behavioral Comprehension, Modeling, Generalization, Value Association, Emotional Association, and Meta-Emotional Reflection, thereby aligning with both the cognitive and affective domains of social behavior education. The RISE acronym: Reflecting on Interactions, Standards, and Expectations, captures the tool's reflective and student-centered design. For educators and school psychologists, PBIS-RISE supports data-driven decision-making, enabling scalable yet individualized behavioral assessments that inform tiered interventions. For teachers, it reduces the burden of developing evaluation tools and enhances consistency in behavior-related assessments. As educational research increasingly explores the integration of AI in formative assessment, PBIS-RISE offers a replicable, theory-grounded, and ethically aligned model to support equitable behavioral education in diverse school settings.

Keywords: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), generative AI, GPT, questionnaire generation, social-emotional learning

Introduction

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a multi-tiered, evidence-based framework for improving social, emotional, and academic outcomes through explicit teaching, practice, and reinforcement of prosocial behavior across school settings. In PBIS, behavior is treated as teachable, predictable, and responsive to environmental conditions. The framework has developed as an alternative to reactive, exclusionary discipline approaches by emphasizing prevention, instructional routines, and ongoing use of data to guide decisions. Reviews of the evidence base describe PBIS as grounded in behavioral science and implemented through systems-level practices, including common expectations, consistent acknowledgments, and data-based problem solving (Horner et al., 2010).

Within PBIS, the expectations matrix is a central artifact that translates broad school values (for example, Respect, Responsibility, Safety) into observable and teachable behaviors for specific contexts such as classrooms, hallways, cafeterias, playgrounds, laboratories, buses, and online learning environments. The matrix is local by design: schools adapt language, examples, and emphasis to reflect community norms, developmental levels, and contextual realities. Lane and colleagues describe expectation matrices as setting-specific descriptions of behavior that support consistency across staff and clarity for students, while still aligning with the core logic of schoolwide PBIS (Lane et al., 2019). Royer et al. (2021) further illustrate how the Schoolwide Expectations Survey for Specific Settings can inform the content and structure of matrices by eliciting staff perspectives about expectations in particular locations and routines.

A persistent challenge, however, lies in evaluating whether students actually understand the expectations as intended. Many schools rely on indirect indicators (such as office discipline referrals, classroom disruptions, or teacher reports), but these indicators are typically lagging and can confound understanding with performance, opportunity, or context. Behavioral assessment literature emphasizes that measures should match their purpose, be sensitive to instructional change, and be interpretable for decision-making (Chafouleas et al., 2012). When the purpose is to guide reteaching, schools need feasible, instructionally aligned comprehension checks that can be administered frequently, quickly scored, and clearly mapped back to matrix content.

This problem creates a tension between contextualization and standardization. On one hand, the value of PBIS matrices is their cultural coherence: the behaviors are meaningful because they are situated in local settings and expressed in the language used by staff and students. On the other hand, without a stable assessment structure it becomes difficult to compare results across classes, track changes over time, or aggregate information for PBIS team decision-making. The need for scalable yet locally grounded assessment is particularly visible in international and multilingual contexts, where direct adoption of standardized instruments may be inappropriate or may weaken local ownership of expectations.

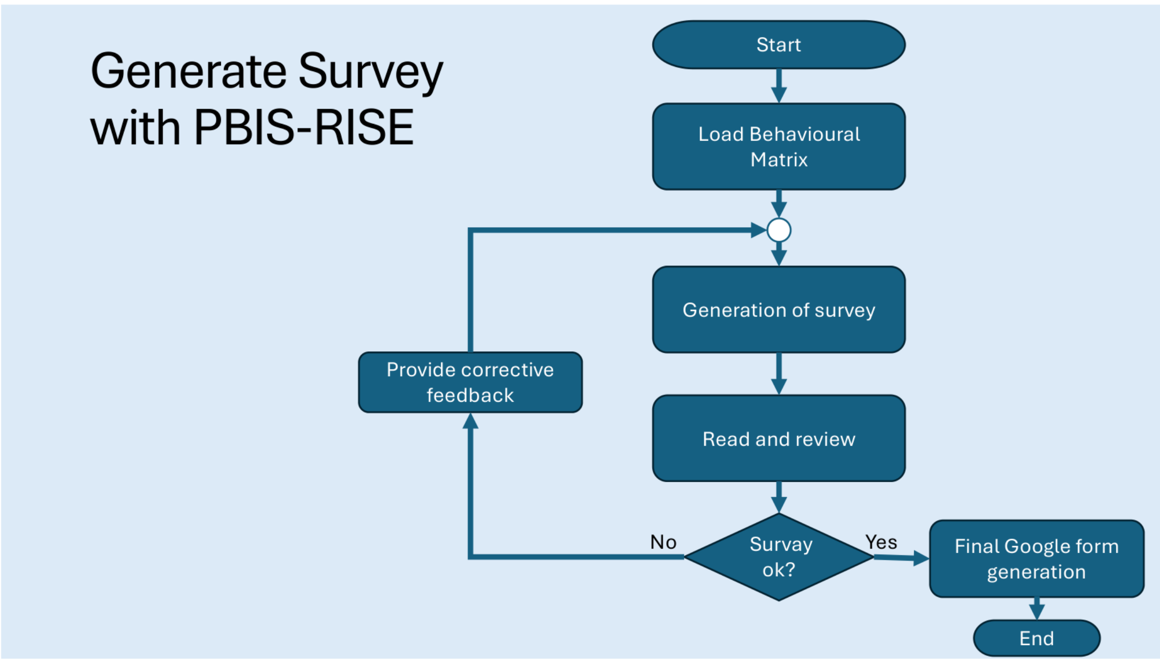
PBIS-RISE addresses this tension by using generative artificial intelligence as a scaffolding engine for assessment design. Recent work on AI in education suggests that generative models can support personalization, item drafting, and formative assessment design, but also highlights risks such as biased outputs, low transparency, and validity threats when items are generated without constraint or expert review (Arslan et al., 2024; Luckin, 2018). PBIS-RISE adopts a constrained-generation approach: the school's own matrix is treated as the authoritative content source, while the generator applies a stable theoretical blueprint to produce questionnaires that are locally instanced but structurally comparable.

The key idea of PBIS-RISE (Reflecting on Interactions, Standards, and Expectations) is that student understanding of expectations includes both cognitive and affective components. Students must comprehend what the expectation means, recognize modeled examples, generalize the expectation to novel situations, and connect expected behaviors to underlying values and emotional experiences. This view is consistent with social and emotional learning perspectives that emphasize the integration of cognition, emotion, and values in developing prosocial conduct (Zins et al., 2004).

PBIS-RISE is a revised and amplified version of a prior measurement tool, the PBIS-KBVE questionnaire (Knowledge of Behaviors, Values and Emotions) presented by Chifari et al. (2025). PBIS-KBVE operationalized student learning outcomes through four dimensions: Behavioral Comprehension (BC), Behavioral Generalization (BG), Behavioral Values (BV), and Emotions (E). PBIS-RISE expands this model to six dimensions by adding Behavioral Modeling (BM) and Meta-Emotional Reflection (ME), thereby more directly capturing the instructional mechanisms of PBIS (modeling and practice) and students' reflective awareness of emotional and motivational processes during social interaction.

The purposes of this paper are threefold. First, we describe the theoretical and methodological foundations of PBIS-RISE as an assessment approach aligned with PBIS and integrated three-tiered prevention models (Lane et al., 2015). Second, we present the PBIS-RISE Generator as a practical tool for teachers and school teams that reduces the burden of questionnaire design while preserving local cultural coherence. Third, we describe the generator's workflow, including quality assurance steps and teacher review, using the tool's process flowchart as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1
PBIS-RISE Generator Workflow



Literature Review and Related Work

The development of PBIS is best understood within the broader evolution of school discipline practices. Historical accounts describe a shift from punitive and exclusionary approaches toward preventive, instructional, and systems-oriented models. In this trajectory, discipline is reframed from "consequence delivery" to "behavior instruction and environmental design," with a focus on equity, predictability, and skill building. The article "The Evolution of Discipline Practices: School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports" situates PBIS within this movement and emphasizes the importance of schoolwide systems that create consistent social expectations and reinforcement across settings (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

PBIS is commonly operationalized as a multi-tiered system of supports. Tier 1 provides universal prevention for all students by teaching and reinforcing common expectations and creating predictable environments. Tier 2 delivers targeted interventions for students at risk, often through small-group supports, check-in/check-out, or targeted social skills instruction. Tier 3 provides intensive individualized supports based on functional assessment and comprehensive planning. Lane and colleagues argue that comprehensive prevention models require coherence across tiers, including screening, progress monitoring, and systems to connect data to instructional action (Lane et al., 2015). This view is relevant to PBIS-RISE because a feasible comprehension measure can function as both a Tier 1 instructional check and a Tier 2/Tier 3 data point to clarify whether difficulties reflect skill deficits, performance deficits, or contextual barriers.

Expectation matrices are core PBIS tools because they make social behavior teachable and observable. Lane et al. (2019) describe how expectation matrices can be derived from staff input using the Schoolwide Expectations Survey for Specific Settings, producing setting-specific behavior statements that are relevant and "doable." Royer et al. (2021) provide descriptive properties of this survey approach and demonstrate how staff expectations differ across settings, underscoring the importance of context-specific behaviors. Earlier work by Lane et al. (2004) similarly identified social skills and behavioral expectations that teachers consider necessary for student success in elementary school, supporting the premise that expectations can be systematically articulated and assessed.

Research also highlights that PBIS implementation is context dependent. In high schools, for example, schools face challenges such as complex schedules, diverse staff roles, and adolescent developmental needs. Flannery and colleagues report early lessons from high school PBIS implementation, emphasizing the need for strong leadership, consistent systems, and feasible routines that staff can maintain (Flannery et al., 2009). In alternative education settings, systematic reviews indicate variability in Tier 1 PBIS implementation and call for tools that support fidelity and feasible data collection (Grasley-Boy et al., 2020). These findings suggest that tools like PBIS-RISE should be designed to be low burden and adaptable across diverse school structures.

Teacher outcomes are a central concern because PBIS relies on consistent adult practice. Houchens et al. (2017) examined how PBIS implementation relates to teachers' perceptions of teaching conditions and efficacy, highlighting the practical importance of tools that support teachers rather than adding workload. Similarly, contemporary PBIS scholarship emphasizes equity and inclusion, including the involvement of students with complex support needs. Zagona et al. (2024) discuss educators' perceptions of including students with complex support needs in PBIS and the role of equity-oriented capacity building, implying that assessment tools should be accessible, flexible, and sensitive to diverse learners.

In the behavioral assessment literature, Chafouleas et al. (2012) emphasize that school-based behavioral assessment should be purposeful, technically adequate, and instructionally useful. When the target is a teachable routine (such as a matrix behavior), assessment can be designed as a curriculum-based check that informs reteaching. However, creating such tools requires time and measurement expertise. Generative AI offers potential assistance with item drafting and personalization. Luckin (2018) argues that AI can expand human intelligence in education when used to augment professional decision-making rather than automate it. Arslan et al. (2024) review opportunities and challenges for using generative AI to personalize educational assessment, highlighting the promise of tailored assessment along with the need for safeguards and human oversight. PBIS-RISE is positioned within this emerging space: it is an AI-assisted assessment generator designed around strong constraints and teacher review.

From PBIS-KBVE to PBIS-RISE: Expanded Measurement Model

PBIS-RISE builds on the PBIS-KBVE questionnaire, a tool designed to assess students' learning outcomes from PBIS lessons by measuring not only rule knowledge but also value and emotional associations. As described in Chifari et al. (2025) the PBIS-KBVE questionnaire addresses to students approximately 7 to 12 years old, composed of 36 items distributed across four subscales. Behavioral Comprehension (BC) measures whether students can identify which behavior corresponds to an expectation within a given setting. Behavioral Generalization (BG) measures whether students can extend expected behaviors to situations that are similar but not identical to those taught. Behavioral Values (BV) measures whether students can connect behaviors to the intended value (for example, "keeping the classroom tidy" linked to responsibility). Emotions (E) measures which emotions students associate with performing learned behaviors (for example, pride, happiness, anxiety), reflecting the idea that emotional experience can reinforce or interfere with behavioral learning.

PBIS-RISE retains the central insight that behavioral learning in PBIS is both cognitive and affective, and that student understanding can be decomposed into interpretable dimensions. At the same time, PBIS-RISE extends the construct map to better capture instructional mechanisms that PBIS relies on and to support reflective, student-centered assessment. Specifically, PBIS-RISE adds two dimensions: Behavioral Modeling (BM) and Meta-Emotional Reflection (ME). Behavioral Modeling focuses on recognition and selection of appropriate modeled behavior. It asks students to identify which of several described actions best demonstrates an expectation, or to choose how they would model the expectation for a peer. Meta-Emotional Reflection prompts students to reflect on how emotions influence their choices, how they might regulate emotions to meet expectations, and how they interpret others' emotional cues in social situations. In PBIS terms, BM directly aligns with modeling and practice routines used in teaching expectations, while ME aligns with the reflective dialogue often used to deepen internalization of values and prosocial identities.

The inclusion of BM is motivated by the observation that PBIS instruction frequently uses modeling, role play, and feedback, especially when teaching setting-specific expectations to younger students and when supporting learners who benefit from concrete exemplars. Yet many classroom comprehension checks focus on declarative knowledge (naming an expectation) rather than recognition of modeled examples (identifying what the expectation looks like in action). BM items provide a bridge between knowing and doing: they can reveal whether students can discriminate between correct and incorrect examples that are plausible in real contexts. This dimension is particularly relevant in settings where misinterpretations are common, such as hallways, cafeterias, and digital communication, where small differences in behavior can matter.

The ME dimension is motivated by the role of affect in behavioral performance and by the growing emphasis on integrating PBIS with social-emotional learning. Emotional association (E) in PBIS-KBVE captured the emotions linked to behaviors, but it did not explicitly assess reflective awareness of emotional processes. ME seeks to assess whether students can anticipate emotional triggers, recognize when emotions might lead them away from expected behaviors, and select strategies to stay aligned with expectations. This dimension supports a preventive stance: if a student can articulate that anger makes it hard to "use respectful words" and can identify a coping strategy, the school can teach and reinforce that strategy as part of Tier 1 lessons or targeted supports.

PBIS-RISE is intended as a formative assessment model rather than a finalized standardized test. Because the generator produces school-specific items from local matrices, validation should focus on construct representation, response processes, and the interpretability of dimension-level results rather than on a fixed item set. This orientation aligns with comprehensive tiered prevention models that connect assessment to action. For example, if a class shows high BC but low BG for "responsibility in the cafeteria," the team can reteach generalization strategies and provide additional practice in that setting. If results indicate low BV, the school can strengthen the explicit teaching of "why" expectations matter and connect behaviors to the school's shared values. In this way, PBIS-RISE supports instructionally meaningful inferences that can inform reteaching at Tier 1 and targeted supports at higher tiers (Lane et al., 2015; McIntosh & Goodman, 2016).

The PBIS-RISE Generator: Tool Overview and Design Principles

The PBIS-RISE Generator was engineered through an iterative "GPT Builder" design process in which the target users' instructional requirements were progressively translated into a stable set of generation rules and prompt constraints. In this configuration, the tool takes as its primary input a school's Behavioral Expectations Matrix, structured with settings in rows (e.g., Classroom, Hallway, Bathroom, Playground, Gym) and values in columns (e.g., Respect, Responsibility, Safety), with each cell listing one or more observable expectations. The generator performs a semantic-structural extraction of all expectations and then deduplicates repeated behaviors that appear across multiple matrix cells, ensuring that the final instrument contains one and only one section per distinct expectation. Each section is explicitly labeled in the format "RULE: <behavioral expectation>", thus preserving traceability between questionnaire items and the school-defined matrix language while keeping the output consistent and scalable across schools.

At the item-design level, PBIS-RISE implements a fixed, theory-aligned template that produces six question types per rule, balancing cognitive understanding with behavioral enactment and affective reflection. The first four questions are multiple-choice and intentionally include a social desirability alternative to distinguish genuine knowledge from normatively "good-sounding" responding: (1) Behavioral Knowledge ("What does … mean?"), (2) Behavioral Modeling ("What should you do to … at school?"), (3) Generalization (transfer beyond school), and (4) Value Linkage, where one option correctly matches a matrix value, one is socially desirable, and one represents a counter-value/disvalue that minimizes responsibility and impact on others. The final two questions capture emotional processes through a 4-point Likert intensity scale across nine emotions (e.g., joy, fear, sadness, anger, pride, calmness): (5) emotions when performing the expected behavior, and (6) emotions when noticing others do not perform it—explicitly intended to probe empathic awareness, internal conflict, and indirect internalization of the rule (a component that conceptually anticipates meta-emotional reflection). Across all outputs, PBIS-RISE enforces clear, simple English suitable for both primary and lower-secondary students, and it is constrained to generate expectation-specific items (no placeholders), automatically rephrasing matrix wording into child-friendly language when needed.

Questionnaire Generation Workflow

The PBIS-RISE Generator follows a structured workflow that operationalizes a "stable blueprint, local instantiation" approach. The process is implemented as a sequence of conversational steps and internal prompts that constrain generation and support quality assurance. Figure 1 provides the flowchart representation of the workflow that can be summarized as six steps.

Step 1: Matrix acquisition and normalization. The user provides the school's expectation matrix by pasting text, entering a table, or describing settings and behaviors. The system identifies settings (often the rows), expectations/values (often the columns), and the behaviors embedded in each cell. When a cell contains multiple behaviors, the generator can parse them into atomic behaviors so each item can target a single, observable action. Normalization is essential for later checks because it defines the vocabulary that the generator is allowed to use.

Step 2: Context specification. The user selects parameters such as school level, target language variety, and administration format (paper, web survey, or learning platform). The user also chooses which settings to include and can prioritize settings based on school goals or recent discipline patterns. This mirrors PBIS data cycles in which teams select focus areas based on patterns in behavioral indicators and then plan instruction accordingly (Horner et al., 2010).

Step 3: Item blueprint instantiation. The generator creates an item plan specifying the number of items per dimension, distribution across settings, and response formats. For example: BC items ask students to select the behavior that best matches an expectation in a given setting; BM items present short vignettes of peer behavior and ask which action models the expectation; BG items present novel but related scenarios requiring transfer; BV items ask students to identify which value is supported by a behavior; E items ask students to identify likely emotions associated with successful performance; and ME items prompt students to reflect on emotional triggers and regulation strategies in relation to expectations. The blueprint step is critical for ensuring balanced coverage and preventing overgeneration.

Step 4: Draft item generation with constraint prompts. Using the blueprint, the model drafts items while referencing only the matrix-derived behaviors and settings. Each item includes a stem and response options. Objective items include an answer key; reflective items include suggested scoring guidance or teacher discussion prompts. Distractors are designed to be plausible but incorrect, based on common confusions (e.g., confusing "walk calmly" with "run to be faster" in the hallway). Constrained templates help ensure that items are age-appropriate and that distractors do not introduce new behavioral expectations.

Step 5: Internal quality checks. The system applies verification prompts to detect inconsistencies: missing dimensions, repeated items, drift from the matrix, and answer-key mismatches. It also checks length constraints and reading level. These checks are designed to reduce LLM-related risks while keeping the workflow efficient. The output is revised when issues are detected, producing a second draft that better matches the matrix and the blueprint.

Step 6: Teacher review and export. The final step is teacher review. Educators can edit items for clarity, replace examples that may not fit their context, and adjust language for accessibility. The generator provides an export-ready version that can be copied into a word processor or survey platform. This human review step is essential: it ensures cultural coherence, supports inclusive practice, and maintains the ethical framing that results are used for instruction rather than discipline.

Benefits for Teachers and Potential for Broad Diffusion

A primary practical contribution of PBIS-RISE is reducing the time and expertise required to create assessment instruments aligned with local PBIS matrices. Teachers already invest substantial effort in PBIS implementation, including teaching expectations, collecting data, and participating in team problem solving. When assessment tools are not readily available, the additional burden of creating questionnaires can lead schools to rely only on referrals or informal checks. PBIS-RISE addresses this bottleneck by automatically producing items anchored to the matrix and organized by interpretable dimensions. In practice, this can shift effort from drafting to reviewing and using results for instruction.

The tool also supports consistency across classrooms and across time. If teachers develop their own informal comprehension checks, item quality and alignment can vary, and results may not be comparable across classes. PBIS-RISE provides a shared blueprint that can standardize how understanding is assessed while allowing local instantiation through the matrix. Consistency matters because PBIS outcomes depend on fidelity and coherent systems, particularly in complex settings such as high schools where routines are harder to standardize (Flannery et al., 2009). A common assessment structure can also support staff discussions during PBIS team meetings by providing a shared language for interpreting results (e.g., “generalization is low in the cafeteria”).

Teacher working conditions and efficacy are plausible benefit pathways. Houchens et al. (2017) reported that PBIS implementation can be associated with improvements in teachers’ perceptions of teaching conditions and efficacy. PBIS-RISE is not expected to directly change conditions, but it can make essential PBIS routines more feasible. For example, it can generate short, repeatable assessments that teachers can administer after reteaching lessons, enabling visible evidence of progress. Such feedback can strengthen teacher sense of impact and can support collective efficacy when results are shared at the team level.

Broad diffusion is supported because the generator operates on matrices that schools already use. This makes PBIS-RISE portable across jurisdictions and languages without imposing a single standardized rule set. The approach is well suited to international contexts, where behavioral norms and school routines differ and translation of standardized instruments may reduce local relevance. Because PBIS-RISE uses the matrix as its content anchor, it can generate culturally coherent items in the language and examples used locally, while maintaining the same six-dimension blueprint for interpretability.

Finally, the generator can support inclusive PBIS practice. Tools that are flexible in format can better accommodate students with diverse needs. In line with equity-oriented PBIS discussions, including work on students with complex support needs (Zagona et al., 2024), PBIS-RISE can be adapted to include simpler language, pictorial supports (when implemented in an external platform), or alternative response formats. This flexibility is important for ensuring that assessment results reflect understanding rather than barriers in reading or communication. In addition, by focusing on understanding of expectations rather than on "problem behavior," the tool can support a more strengths-based and instructional approach to behavior support.

Discussion

PBIS-RISE illustrates how generative AI can be used responsibly in education when it is framed as an augmentation tool rather than an automation tool. The generator demonstrates a practical compromise: it uses AI to draft items and structure assessments, but it employs constraints, verification, and teacher review to preserve instructional alignment and ethical use. This approach responds to concerns in the AI-in-assessment literature about hallucinated content, bias, and opaque decision-making (Arslan et al., 2024), while still leveraging the efficiency advantages that motivate adoption.

From a PBIS implementation perspective, PBIS-RISE targets an under-assessed component of practice: whether students understand the expectations that schools invest time in teaching. Office discipline referrals and other behavioral indicators are important, but they can reflect performance, context, or opportunity rather than comprehension. A brief comprehension check can function as a leading indicator, guiding preventive reteaching before problems escalate. In addition, the inclusion of Behavioral Modeling and Meta-Emotional Reflection aligns assessment with instructional routines and with the integration of PBIS and social-emotional learning. Modeling items can reveal whether students can discriminate correct examples in realistic situations. Meta-emotional reflection items can open instructional dialogue about emotional triggers, regulation strategies, and empathy, connecting expected behaviors to lived experiences.

At the same time, important research questions remain. First, psychometric work is needed to evaluate the quality of generated instruments. Because items differ across schools, evaluation should emphasize content validity (alignment with matrix and construct definitions), response processes (whether students interpret items as intended), and the stability of dimension-level interpretations over time. Second, implementation studies should examine how teachers use results. Do generated assessments lead to more systematic reteaching? Do PBIS teams integrate results into tiered decision-making as intended? Third, equity studies are needed to ensure that item language and formats do not disadvantage particular student groups and that results are interpreted in ways that promote support rather than labeling.

Finally, PBIS-RISE should be understood as a component within a broader PBIS data system. PBIS outcomes depend on leadership support, coaching, and consistent routines (Flannery et al., 2009; Horner et al., 2010). Tools can support these routines, but they cannot substitute for organizational commitment. PBIS-RISE aims to lower barriers to formative assessment so that PBIS teams can more easily complete the instructional cycle: teach expectations, check understanding, reteach when needed, and use data to sustain implementation. In alternative or high-need settings, where staff time is limited and data systems are strained (Grasley-Boy et al., 2020), the value of low-burden tools may be particularly high.

Conclusion

This paper introduced PBIS-RISE, a GPT-powered questionnaire generator designed to assess student understanding of behavioral expectations in schoolwide PBIS systems. Building on the PBIS-KBVE tool, PBIS-RISE expands the measurement model to six dimensions: Behavioral Comprehension, Behavioral Modeling, Behavioral Generalization, Behavioral Value Association, Emotional Association, and Meta-Emotional Reflection. The generator uses a school's own expectation matrix as the content anchor, ensuring cultural coherence and local relevance while maintaining a stable blueprint that supports interpretability and comparability.

PBIS-RISE offers a replicable model aligned with PBIS foundations and comprehensive tiered prevention frameworks. By generating customized questionnaires directly from each school's matrix, the tool can reduce teacher workload, enhance consistency in behavior-related assessment, and support data-driven decisions about reteaching and tiered supports. Future work will focus on multi-site validation studies, usability evaluations with teachers and students, and the development of accessibility-focused output formats (for example, pictorial supports and simplified language variants) to maximize equity and inclusion across diverse school contexts.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this work, the authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) to assist in scientific writing and language refinement. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of the published article.

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