

Spring 2023 Report

Introduction

The Building Effective Supports for Teaching (BEST) Project reports three times a year on its progress in the areas of reach, process, capacity, fidelity, and outcomes of its work in Vermont's schools. This report covers January 1, 2023, through June 30, 2023.

Previously, this report focused solely on systems, data, and practices of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). However, due to growing concerns about students, staff, and families/caregivers' social, emotional, and behavioral (SEB) learning and well-being, as well as the increased awareness and need for mental health (MH) support, these reports will now expand to include all of what the BEST Project offers. All training, technical assistance, and coaching is still offered within a PBIS framework for the highest chance for sustainability. The BEST Project continues to foster collaborative relationships with schools and community partners and recognizes the intersectionality of various SEL initiatives,

programs, and practices. This report and the new BEST Project/VTPBIS logo reflect this intentional connection.

Process

Within this report, we include the following quantitative and qualitative data as part of the evaluation of implementation efforts:

- To measure the **reach** of the BEST Project in Vermont, we report on:
 - Number of schools/districts implementing or exploring PBIS
- To evaluate our **process** of training schools in Vermont, we report on:
 - Number of trainings offered by the BEST Project
 - Number of training participants
 - Training satisfaction rates
 - Qualitative feedback provided from our training attendees
 - New resources created or curated by the BEST Project
- To evaluate our **capacity**, we report on:
 - Number of VTPBIS TAs, coaches, and trainers
 - Number of schools that have connected with a coach
 - Special projects and grants the BEST Project works on
- To evaluate the **fidelity** to the PBIS implementation process, we report on:
 - The measures that schools are required to complete annually, which are:
 - Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI)
 - Self-Assessment Survey (SAS) and/or School Climate Survey (SCS)
 - These measures will be reported on in the BEST/VTPBIS Annual Report.
- To evaluate **outcomes**, we report on:
 - Use of the School-wide Information System (SWIS) equity reports
 - Current context of challenges related to assessing outcomes and state-wide acknowledgments

Results

Educators have just closed out their fourth year of pandemic teaching. Throughout the pandemic, the BEST Project has strived to meet schools where they are and provide relevant professional development opportunities to meet the needs of schools during these challenging times. VTPBIS Technical Assistance providers and coaches have also been actively helping meet the unique needs identified by schools. We continue building our capacity through collaboration with colleagues in restorative approaches, Project AWARE, and Early MTSS/Pyramid Model.

Reach

The BEST Project currently supports [167 schools in 49 Supervisory Unions/Districts \(SU/SDs\)](#) to implement PBIS with the goal of achieving social, emotional, behavioral, and academic success for all students. This spring, several schools engaged in the March VTPBIS Core Trainings and June VTPBIS Core Trainings at the 2023 BEST/VTmtss Summer Institute. As a result of both professional learning opportunities, two new schools received training at [Universal Level](#), 10 schools received training at the [Targeted Level](#), 15 schools received training in [Refreshing, Enhancing, and Deepening Universal PBIS](#), and six schools received training at the [Expanding and Enhancing Targeted Level Interventions](#).

A participant at the March VTPBIS Core Trainings said this, “Having time as a team to talk amongst ourselves about what was being discussed and presented by the speakers was very helpful. Additionally, being able to speak and connect with colleagues from other schools to hear about what they are doing and how they have been implementing PBIS in their schools was helpful as well.”

Another participant said, “There is so much learning that is obtained through in-depth training like this when you have the time to really dive in. Thank you for providing the information, time, and guidance to feel like I am leaving here today

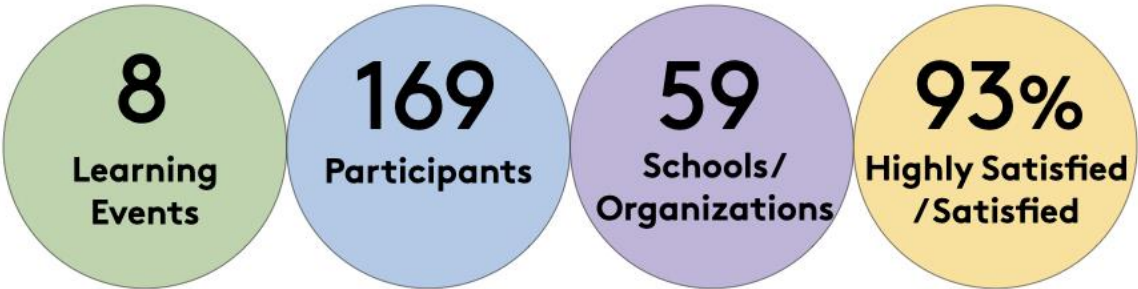
with knowing more ways to support my students individually and as a whole to have an environment where growth can be seen.”

The photo below is a group photo of the following schools that attended the March Targeted Training: Townshend Elementary, First Branch, and Rutland Intermediate School.



Process

The BEST Project is charged with developing and delivering high-quality professional learning opportunities in PBIS systems, data, and practices, along with other social, emotional, and mental health topics. All participants are asked to complete a post-learning evaluation to measure their satisfaction. The BEST Project and the presenter(s) review the data from each learning event as part of our continuous improvement process. These events consistently yield very high rates of participant satisfaction.



This spring, 169 participants representing 59 schools/organizations have attended eight learning events with an average participant satisfaction rate of 93% highly satisfied or satisfied. Professional learning opportunities and topics can be viewed on the [VTPBIS calendar](#).

New offerings this spring included a webinar on the [Resilience Education Program \(REP\)](#), a targeted intervention for students at risk for internalizing concerns, such as depression and anxiety; three new [strands at the BEST/VTmtss Summer Institute](#): Experiential, Brain-based Approaches to Learning; Vermont Early MTSS - Pyramid Model Implementation; and Proactive and Responsive De-escalation Strategies; and many [new workshops at the Institute](#).

The keystone professional development activity of the Spring was the [BEST/VTmtss Summer Institute](#). Over 330 people from 56 teams attended this four-day event to share and learn new ideas. Results from the Institute will be shared in the BEST/VTPBIS Annual Report.

To sustain the delivery of high-quality professional learning opportunities and to be responsive to local and statewide needs, the BEST Project meets with technical assistance providers monthly to review data, examine relevant research, and identify strategies to gather input from the field. The BEST Project also hosted three state leadership team meetings with a variety of invested partners/stakeholders to collaborate on interagency initiatives and align efforts to disseminate information to the field regarding best practices in supporting the social, emotional, and behavioral (SEB) learning of all. In preparation for the BEST/VTmtss Summer Institute, the BEST Project has held two Summer Institute Planning Committee meetings.

The BEST Project also convenes a group of state-wide trainers to discuss best practices for professional development and how to expand the capacity of trainers within the state. BEST Project staff stay current with active legislative priorities and changes that affect SEB learning and mental health. They also stay current by attending relevant professional development opportunities such as the

[Northeast PBIS Leadership Forum](#) in Groton, CT, where BEST Project Co-Directors presented on [Cultivating Collective Ownership](#). They are also active members of the Northeast PBIS Advisory Group and the National State PBIS Leaders Network.

Capacity

Technical Assistance and Coaching

With five [Technical Assistance \(TA\) providers](#), schools and SU/SDs have timely access to support and resources. TAs connect with their region's SU/SD and School Coordinators through a monthly Friendly Reminder email. This practice promotes connections between TAs and school teams and supports the sustainability of effective PBIS implementation.

TAs provided a variety of supports for schools, including Learning Walks and support in planning for and completing annual PBIS assessments. The on-site Learning Walk aims to do an in-depth assessment of the current level of PBIS fidelity with action planning to strengthen and sustain PBIS.

TAs also completed a time study in March where they tracked every contact they had with a school/SU/SD. This spring, TAs had 65 contacts with schools/SUs/SDs, totaling 1,233 minutes (or 20.6 hours) of TA provided to 316 (duplicated) educators from 32 different schools/SUs/SDs. These contact hours represent support and information provided through various formats, including email, phone, virtual meetings, and in-person meetings. Topics of interest varied across the schools/SUs/SDs. The two most frequently covered topics were SWIS/PBIS Apps support and training readiness support.

Some schools and SU/SDs help bridge the gap between professional learning and PBIS implementation by working with one of the nine [VTPBIS coaches](#). This year, at least 23 schools have contacted coaches to develop a scope of work that will help them improve PBIS systems, data, and practices. While we are not yet to pre-pandemic numbers of schools accessing coaching, this number continues to grow each year as schools continue their recovery.

RISE-VT

The BEST Project, in collaboration with UP for Learning, coordinated the delivery of training and technical assistance on Restorative Approaches (RA) in schools and school districts (SDs). The project, RISE-VT (**R**estorative Approaches **I**mplementation for **S**chool **E**quity in Vermont), funded by the Agency of Education (AOE), officially began on November 22, 2021, and the work concluded in January 2023. More details about the project's accomplishments can be found in the [final report](#). Products of this work include [e-learning modules](#), [video from Vermont schools](#), a [directory of restorative approaches trainers and coaches](#), and an [updated website](#).

Project AWARE

As part of Project AWARE, a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) grant awarded to the AOE, the BEST Project continues to participate in a project to support three supervisory unions in building an Interconnected Systems Framework. With consultation and support from national PBIS experts, VTPBIS provides training, technical assistance, and coaching on strategies to enhance PBIS with mental health support across the home, school, and community. The three LEAs participating in Project AWARE have established District Community Leadership Teams (DCLTs) to 1) identify and manage priorities for change; 2) develop and adapt roles of mental health clinicians to meet the needs across a continuum of supports; and 3) build student and family voice into their existing systems. As the project comes to a close, DCLTs and schools are considering which elements of Project AWARE they want to sustain and how they will do so.

Early Multi-Tiered System of Supports (Early MTSS)

Beginning in July of 2022, the BEST Project has partnered with the national Pyramid Model Consortium (PMC) and local Pyramid 802 Plus to provide Early MTSS Professional Development, funded by the AOE. The project involves establishing a State Early MTSS Leadership Team, providing support and getting input from the Accountability and Continuous Improvement System (ACIS) team

at the AOE, providing professional development for administrators, educators, and providers, along with providing technical assistance and coaching. The BEST Project is also involved in the introduction of the Pyramid Model Implementation Data System (PIDS) that will be critical to the scale up and sustainability of the Pyramid Model in Vermont. The BEST Project has an intentional eye on alignment between Early MTSS/Pyramid Model and school-age PBIS. In order to learn about current best practices in early education, BEST Project staff attended this year's [NTI Conference](#).

The BEST Project was also recently awarded an additional subcontract with PMC to bring Early MTSS/Pyramid Model practices to Part C providers under the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) awarded to the AOE. The project launched in May and will continue into 2025.

Fidelity

All VTPBIS schools are expected to complete fidelity assessments at least once per year. This spring, schools were asked to complete the [Tiered Fidelity Inventory \(TFI\)](#) at each level of implementation. The TFI is an efficient and effective validated measure to assess the fidelity of core PBIS features at all three tiers. Categories of the assessment include Teams, Implementation, and Evaluation. Results will allow school leadership teams to prioritize actions for change. Two schools in Vermont piloted the TFI 3.0, which aligns with current training and guidance, specifically with respect to equity, mental health and wellness integration, and classroom support. The BEST Project learned more about the TFI 3.0 at the Northeast PBIS Leadership Forum and is excited for other schools to experience the new TFI when it is released.

Schools have a choice between completing the [Self-Assessment Survey \(SAS\)](#) or the [School Climate Survey](#) (or both, if they prefer). The SAS is intended to assess staff perceptions around what PBIS features are in place and which areas are needed for improvement. The School Climate Survey can be administered to staff, students, and/or families. It measures school connectedness, school safety,

peer/adult relationships, and more. Robust data from the School Climate Survey can be used by school teams as a check-in to understand to what extent staff, students, and families feel connected and engaged in their learning environments, despite the ongoing stressors in education.

The results of the TFI, SAS, and/or School Climate Survey are used by schools to develop an annual action plan for PBIS sustainability. Aggregated results will also help guide the professional development offerings of the VTPBIS State Team. These results will be published in the BEST/VTPBIS Annual Report.

Outcomes

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the BEST Project has grappled with determining the most accurate way of assessing PBIS-related outcomes. According to the [PBIS Evaluation Blueprint](#) published by the National Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, schools implementing PBIS with fidelity should show desired changes in student outcomes such as discipline rates, academic achievement, graduation rates, SEB outcomes, student satisfaction, equity, staff retention, etc. Since 2020, while we have encouraged completing the TFI (see above), completion rates are lower than pre-pandemic. In an effort to encourage schools to complete the assessment rather than worry about a low score reflecting poorly on them, the BEST Project has not published TFI scores for schools since 2020.

Therefore, it is difficult to determine which schools are implementing with fidelity and even more difficult to determine whether their strong PBIS implementation is leading to desired student outcomes. Decision rules regarding discipline rates vary greatly between schools (i.e. what is considered a “minor” behavior in one school may be considered a “major” behavior in another). Due to the impacts of the pandemic, academic achievement scores are also difficult to use effectively to determine differences between schools, as there are so many variables at play. While student, staff, and family/caregiver satisfaction can be examined through the use of a school climate survey, not all schools/SU/SDs use the same survey, so

it is difficult to compare scores across schools. Our most helpful information about outcomes is generated through the use of our Annual Acknowledgements process. Self-reported SEB and academic outcomes are collected from schools that choose to complete the application, and results will be reported on in the BEST/VTPBIS Annual Report. The BEST Project will be reexamining the method for determining which schools are still actively implementing PBIS this summer. The Team recognizes schools are still experiencing the effects of the pandemic, and we want to ensure that schools are implementing to the best of their ability. The Team will be considering which outcome measures are relevant to report.

Centering Equity

PBIS is not fully implemented with fidelity until it is culturally responsive. VTPBIS schools continue to focus on centering equity across all features and tiers of PBIS implementation with the help of the [PBIS Cultural Responsiveness Field Guide](#). Each VTPBIS Core Training also trains schools to use a critical eye in examining all of their systems, data, and practices with equity in mind.

The School-Wide Information System (SWIS) now has a reporting option that allows schools to look at disaggregated data and creates interpretive sentences for each graph to tell schools their data story. They can disaggregate by students' IEP status, gender, English Language Learner status, and race/ethnicity to uncover any areas of disproportionality. Schools are increasingly accessing these reports. This number will be reported in the BEST/VTPBIS Annual Report.

Summary and Recommendations

The following chart details the current status of the SY 23 VTPBIS Action Steps for Sustainability identified in the [2022 VTPBIS Annual Report](#):

SY 23 Goals	Status & Action Steps
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<p>1. Center equity within PBIS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The BEST Project continues to ensure that equity is centered in both professional learning <i>for</i> the Team and <i>by</i> the Team for educators. ● Following each training, participants complete evaluation surveys to assess whether or not they felt the training addressed diversity, equity, and inclusion issues. The VTPBIS State Team and presenters analyze these results to make improvements for the future. ● We have finalized suggested language changes that reflect our evolution in thinking about the work and continue to share these suggestions and the reasons behind them during trainings. ● The BEST/VTmtss Summer Institute featured both a keynote and strand on equity. The opening keynote was presented by Dr. Sharla Horton-Williams and Dr. Toni Harrison-Kelly from School Leadership for Social Justice was titled, “Start Here. Start Now.” It explored the concept of equity in education and laid out a clear path forward for those who are ready to jump in for the first time. It also provided encouragement and resources for those who are ready to go deeper. They also led a strand called Everyday Equity: Achieving Equity in Your School “Every Day in Every Way”.
<p>2. Ensure access to relevant and accessible resources and trainings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 8 trainings were offered, reaching 169 participants. ● BEST Project staff attended CDCI-hosted professional development on accessible resources and trainings. ● Training participants complete evaluation surveys to assess accessibility of the training. Results will be analyzed for improvement.

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