Status of High School PBIS Implementation in the U.S.

Freeman, J., Wilkinson, S., Vanlone, J.

Implementation of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is expanding nationally with promising outcomes at the high school level, suggesting that PBIS may be an effective approach for addressing behavior problems, improving attendance, and enhancing school climate (Bradshaw et al., 2014; Bohanon et al., 2012; Bohanon et al., 2006; Bohanon-Edmonson, Flannery, Eber, & Sugai, .2004; Flannery, Fenning, Kato, & McIntosh, 2011; Freeman et al., 2015). When implemented with fidelity, PBIS serves as an organizing framework for high school social skills instruction, violence prevention, and bullying programs (Bradshaw, 2013).

Despite these promising outcomes, high schools appear to be adopting and implementing PBIS at a slower rate than elementary schools and may struggle to maintain implementation fidelity over time (Flannery, Frank, Kato, Doren, & Fenning, 2013; Swain-Bradway, Pinkney, & Flannery, 2015). A variety of factors may contribute to the slower rate of adoption in high schools including the physical size of the campus, larger student populations, and compartmentalized operations (Flannery et al., 2013). Given these factors, it is important to understand the status of PBIS implementation in high schools. The purpose of this evaluation brief is to provide a description of the current state of PBIS implementation in US high schools, as reflected by data collected by the National PBIS Technical Assistance Center. Specifically, we answer the following five questions:

1. How many and what percent of high schools are implementing PBIS?

2. What is the geographic distribution of high schools implementing PBIS?

3. How do school characteristics of PBIS high schools compare to national averages?

4. How are high schools measuring implementation fidelity?

5. What are average student outcomes in high schools implementing PBIS?

Sample

We used counts of schools reporting data to the OSEP PBIS Technical Assistance center to address question 1. To address questions 2-5 we reviewed the most recent data for which demographic information was available. We merged data from data compiled over the 2013-2014 school year by SWIS and PBISApps and 2014-2015 data from Maryland and Florida. This overall sample includes data collected from 1668 high schools in 34 states and the District of Columbia. The average reported student enrollment for each high school was 905 students, with a range of 2 to 3,255 students. The following table describes the specific data obtained from each of these sources. These data were used to answer questions 2-6.

Table 1
Data Sources and Sample Characteristics

Data	Source	Number of schools	Description
Location	SWIS/PBISApps Florida Maryland	N=1668	State location of high schools implementing PBIS
Enrollment	SWIS/PBISApps Florida Maryland	N=663	Number of students enrolled in schools
Socioeconomic Status	SWIS/PBISApps Florida Maryland	N=612	Student eligibility for free and reduced lunch
Race/Ethnicity	SWIS/PBISApps Florida Maryland	N= 460	Racial and ethnic demographics of student population
Fidelity Measures	SWIS/PBISApps Florida Maryland	N=1391	PBIS implementation fidelity measures (e.g., BoQ, SAS, SET, TIC)
Student Outcomes	SWIS/PBISApps Florida Maryland	N=464	Student Office Discipline Referrals

Results

1. How Many and What Percent of High Schools are Implementing PBIS?

The number of high schools implementing PBIS has risen from 2595 in 2013 to 3138 in 2016. 13% of all PBIS schools (K-12) are high schools. High schools represent approximately 34% of all US schools. 7% of all high schools in the US are implementing PBIS. These numbers represent the number of high schools implementing PBIS in partnership with the PBIS Center or reporting data to the national center, and therefore may be an underestimate of actual PBIS implementation in high schools.

Figure 1
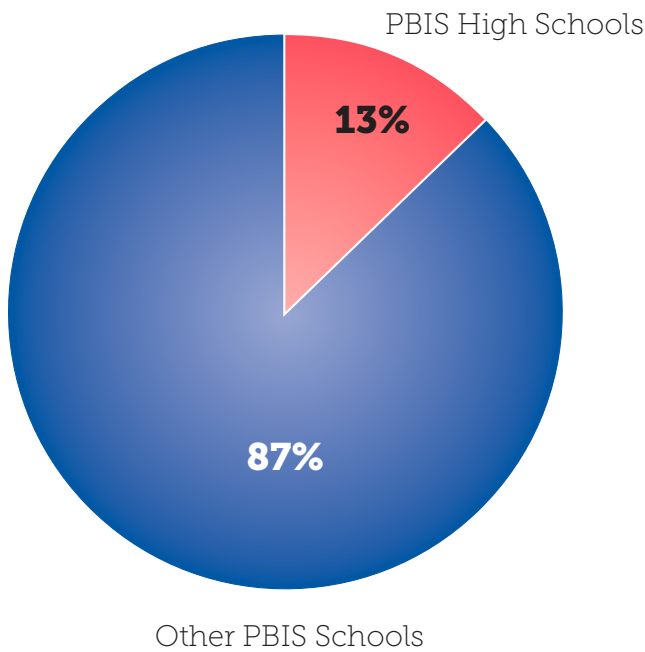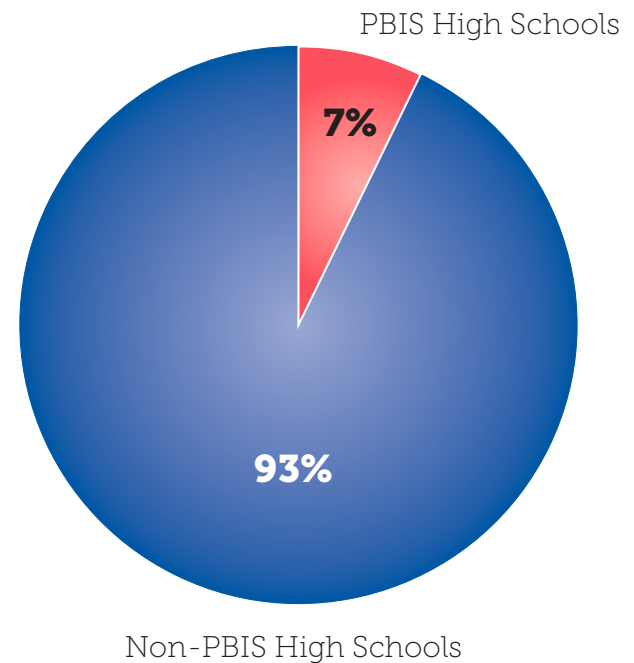*High Schools Implementing PBIS*
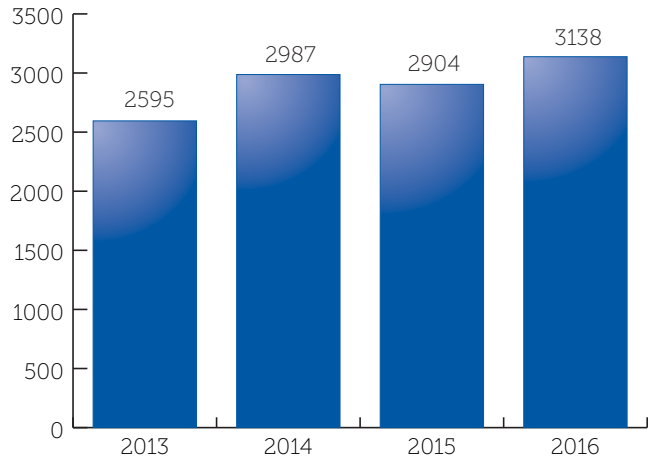
Figure 2
Schools Implementing PBIS

PBIS High Schools

13%

87%

Other PBIS Schools

Figure 3
U.S. High Schools

PBIS High Schools

7%

93%

Non-PBIS High Schools

2. What is the Geographic Distribution of High Schools Implementing PBIS?

Thirty-five of the fifty states and the District of Columbia have reported high schools currently implementing SWPBIS. The number of high schools implementing PBIS varies across states from fewer than five high schools (i.e., Alaska, Arkansas, Idaho, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Nebraska, New York, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Utah, Virginia, Vermont, and D.C.) to states with over 30 implementing high schools (i.e., Florida, Maryland, Wisconsin)

Geographic Distribution of High Schools Implementing PBIS
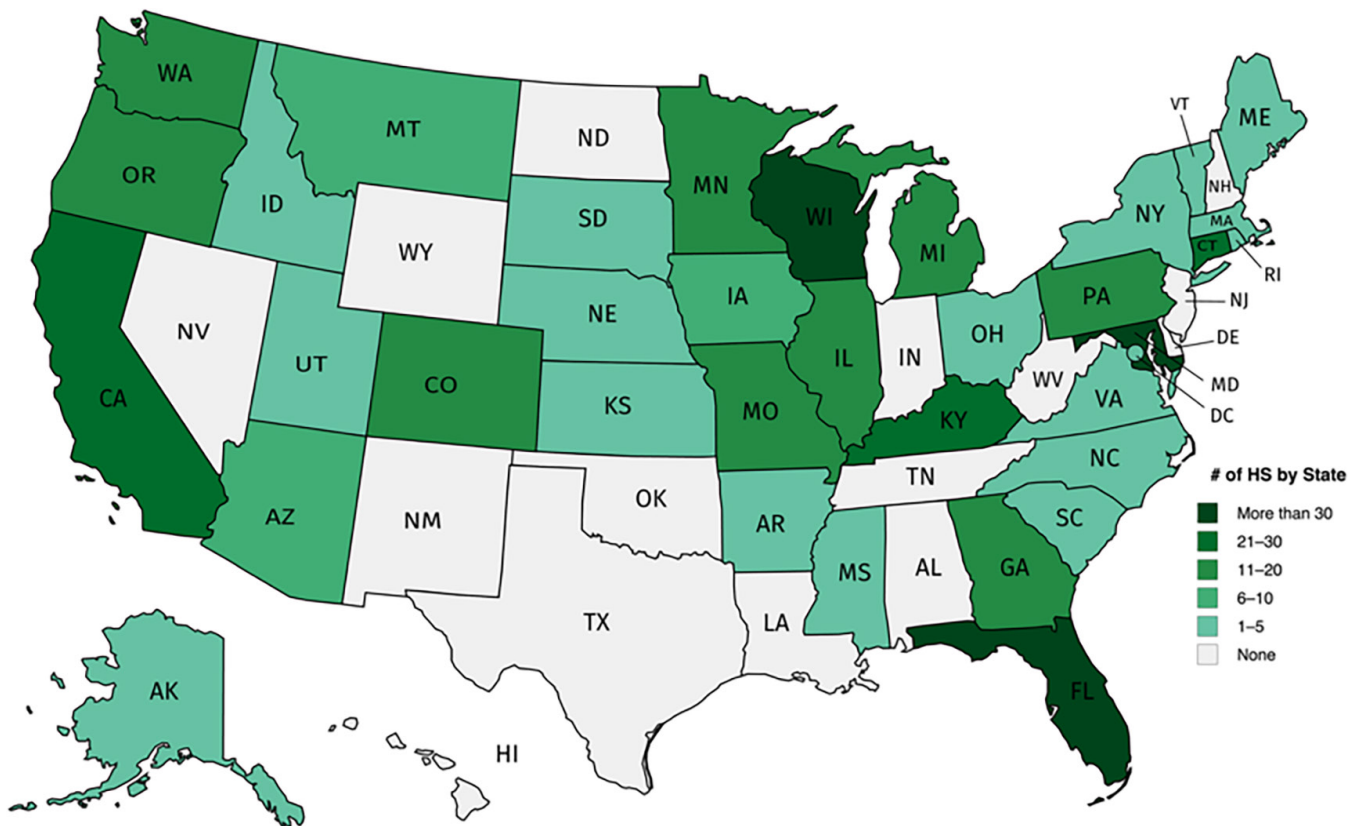
3. How Do School Characteristics of PBIS High Schools Compare to National Averages?

In high schools implementing PBIS 55.4% of students are white, 19% are Black, 16.8% are Hispanic, 2.7% are Asian/Pacific Islander, 2.9% are American Indian, and 2.8% are Multi-Racial. Nationally, 50.3% of student are white, while 15.6% are black, 24.9% are Hispanic, 5.2% are Asian/Pacific Islander, 1.0% are American Indian, 3.0% are Multi-Racial.

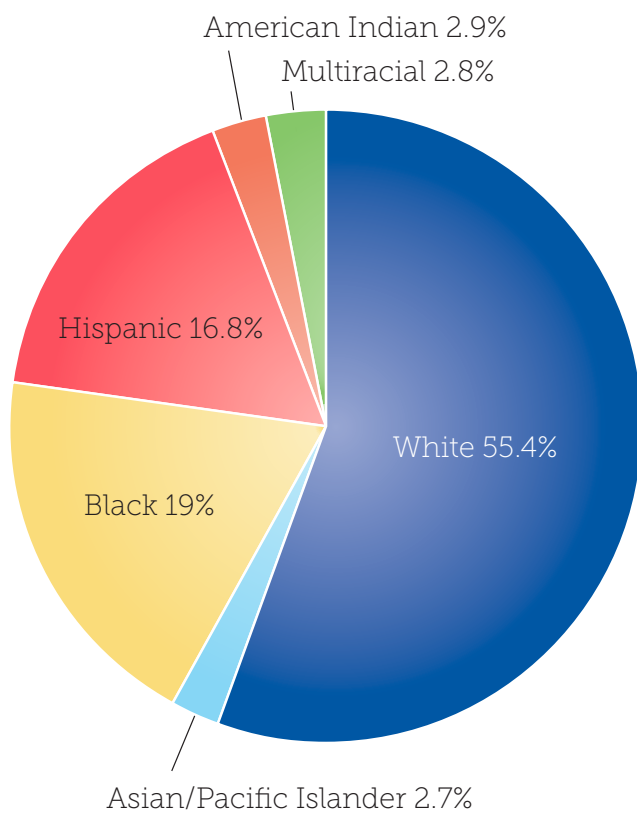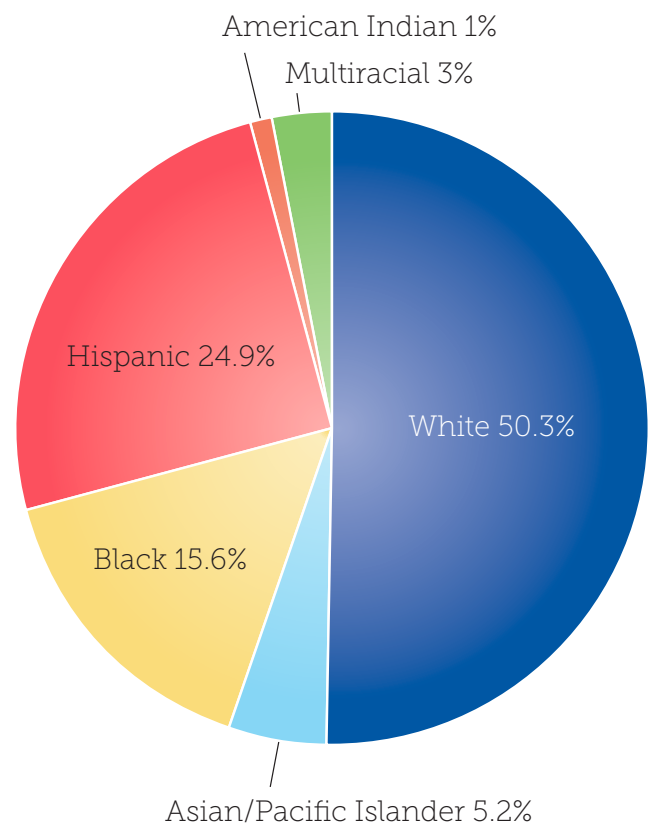**Figure 4**
PBIS High School Data: Race/Ethnicty

American Indian 2.9%
Multiracial 2.8%
Hispanic 16.8%
White 55.4%
Black 19%
Asian/Pacific Islander 2.7%

Figure 5
National High School Data: Race/Ethnicty

American Indian 1%
Multiracial 3%
Hispanic 24.9%
White 50.3%
Black 15.6%
Asian/Pacific Islander 5.2%

48.2% of students attending high schools that are implementing PBIS are not eligible for free or reduced lunch, while a total of 51.8% are eligible for free and or reduced lunch. Nationally, 51.9% of students are not eligible for free or reduced lunch, while 48.1% are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Figure 6
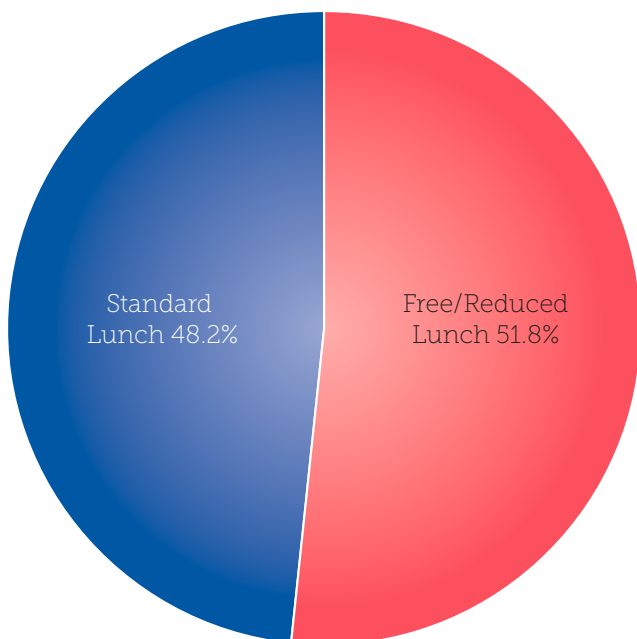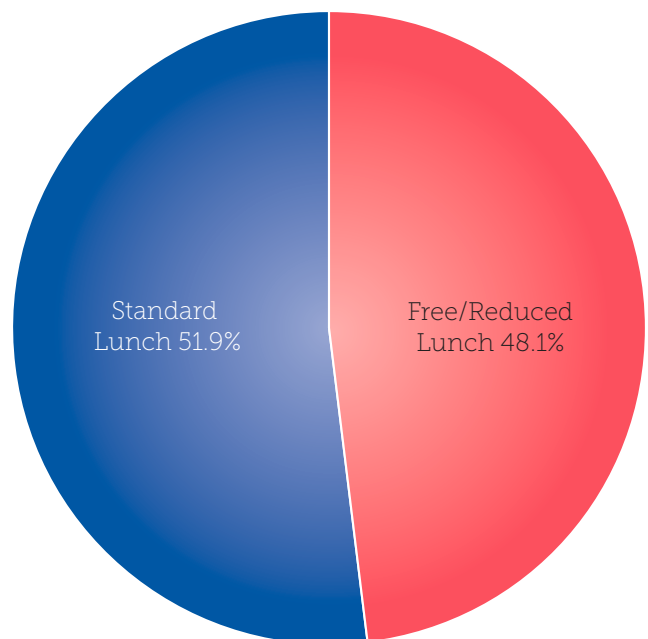*PBIS High School Data: Percent Free/Reduced Lunch*

Standard Lunch 48.2%

Free/Reduced Lunch 51.8%

Figure 7
National High School Data: Percent Free/Reduced Lunch

Standard Lunch 51.9%

Free/Reduced Lunch 48.1%

4. How are High Schools Measuring Implementation Fidelity?

Fidelity measures included the Benchmarks of Quality (BOQ), the Self-Assessment Survey (SAS), the Team Implementation Checklist (TIC), and the School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET). Of reporting schools for each measure, 69.3% met fidelity of implementation on the BOQ, 54.5% met fidelity of implementation on the SET, 33.6% met fidelity of implementation on the TIC, and 23.1% met fidelity of implementation of the SAS.

Note: Sums to >100% of schools. 26 schools reported all 4 fidelity measures 1185 schools reported a combination of 2 fidelity measures

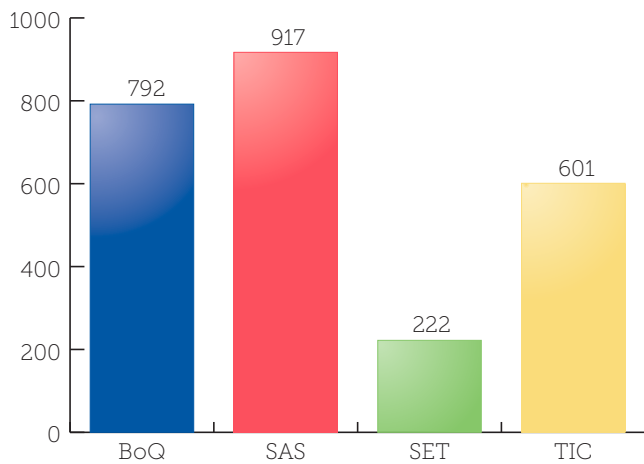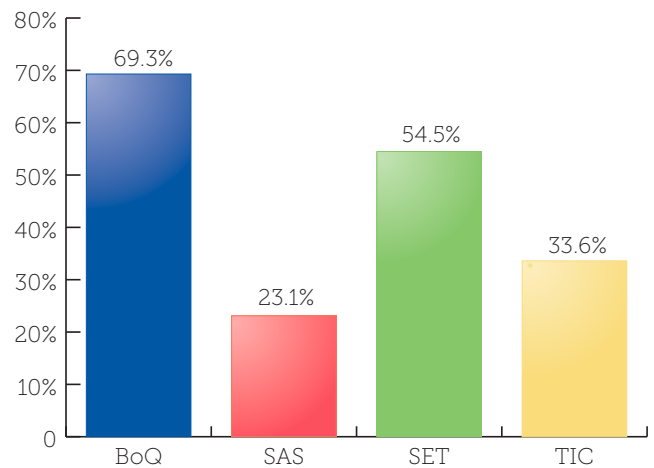### Figure 8
Fidelity Measures Reported
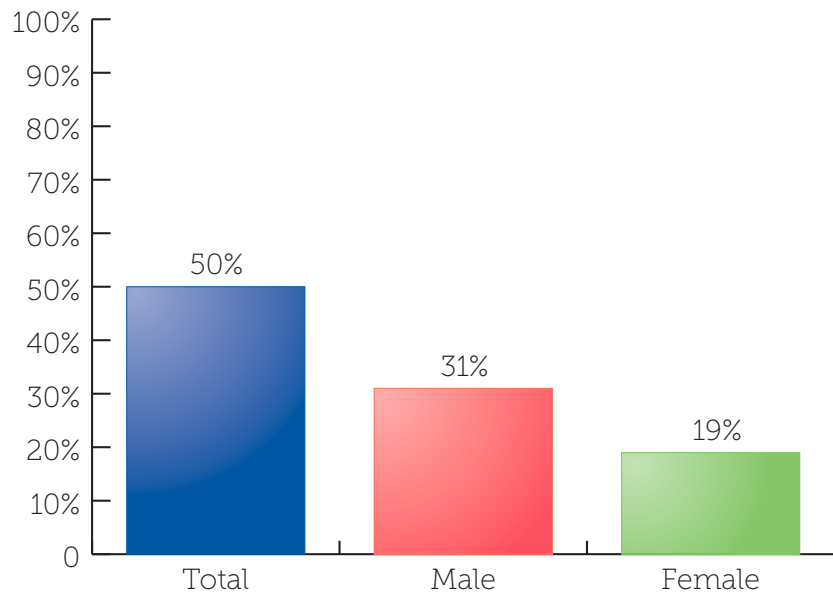

Figure 9
Percent of Schools Meeting Fidelity by Measure

5. What are Average Student Outcomes in High Schools Implementing PBIS?

In schools implementing PBIS, an average of 232 students across 328 schools received one or more ODR per year. The median number of ODRs per day per 100 students is .668 (n = 329; mean = 3.06).

Figure 10
Percent of Students Receiving at Least One ODR

Summary and Implications for Practice

This evaluation brief provides a picture of the status of PBIS implementation across the United States. According to data reported to the OSEP PBIS Technical Assistance Center, we know that PBIS is being implemented in 3138 high schools across 35 states, representing approximately 7% of total U.S. high schools. The racial and ethnic breakdown of high school PBIS student population is fairly consistent with the national breakdown, with white and black students making up slightly more and Hispanic students making up slightly less of the student population in PBIS schools. Additionally, depending upon the fidelity measure being used, between 23% and 69% of schools reporting are meeting fidelity. Finally, high schools implementing PBIS issued a median of .668 ODRs per 100 students per day.

As implementation of PBIS in high schools continues to grow, high school leadership teams, coaches, and trainers will need to continue to consider the contextual and culture fit of the core features of PBIS to the high school context. Results from this evaluation brief can be used to answer questions regarding the extent to which PBIS is being implemented in the high schools setting and how early adopting high schools compare to national averages in terms of enrollment, demographics and location. This information can be used both to guide the development of training and technical assistance networks and support the interpretation of research findings in the context of the full sample of high schools implementing PBIS.

References

Bohanon-Edmonson, H., Flannery, K.B., Eber, L., & Sugai, G. (2004) Positive Behavior Support in High Schools: Monograph from the 2004 Illinois High School Forum of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. University of Oregon unpublished manuscript.

Bohanon, H., Fenning, P., Carney, K. L., Minnis-Kim, M., Anderson-Harriss, S., Moroz, K. B., & Pigott, T. D. (2006). Schoolwide application of positive behavior support in an urban high school: A case study. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions,* 8, 131–145.

Bohanon, H., Fenning, P., Hicks, K., Weber, S., Their, K., Aikins, B., Irving, L. (2012). A case example of the implementation of schoolwide positive behavior supports in a high school setting using change point test analysis. *Preventing School Failure*, 56, 91–103.

Bradshaw, C. P., Debnam, K. J., Lindstrom Johnson, S., Pas, E. T., Hershfeldt, P., Alexander, A., Barrett, S., & Leaf, P.J. (2014). Maryland's evolving system of social, emotional, and behavioral interventions in public schools: The Maryland Safe and Supportive Schools Project. *Adolescent Psychiatry,* 4, 194–206.

Bradshaw, C. P. (2013). Preventing bullying through Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS): A multitiered approach to prevention and integration. *Theory Into Practice*, 52, 288–295.

Flannery, K. B., Fenning, P., Kato, M. M., & McIntosh, K. (2014). Effects of school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports and fidelity of implementation on problem behavior in high schools. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 29, 111–124.

Freeman, J., Simonsen, B., McCoach, D.B., Sugai, G., Lombardi, A., Horner, R. (2015). Relationship between school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports and academic, attendance, and behavior outcomes in high schools. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 18, 41–51. doi: 10.1177/1098300715580992

Swain-Bradway, J., Pinkney, C., & Flannery, K. B., (2015). Implementing schoolwide positive behavior interventions and supports in high schools: Contextual factors and stages of implementation. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 47, 245–255.