WHEN DO SCHOOLS RECEIVE TIER 2 AND 3 PBIS TRAINING?

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Purpose
The purpose of this evaluation brief is to identify the average time between initial PBIS training at each tier and identify criteria state-level leadership teams used to determine readiness for Tier 2 and 3 training. The sample included 2,488 U.S. schools across five states that were trained between the 2005-06 and 2018-19 school years. Findings indicated that the average time between Tier 2 and 3 training was shorter compared to Tier 1 and Tier 2. In addition, state-level leadership teams used a variety of policies and procedures for determining school readiness for training at Tiers 2 and 3.
Introduction

The successful scale up of PBIS relies on strong implementation efforts by statewide technical assistance providers (e.g., state-level leadership teams, regional technical assistance networks; Bradshaw et al., 2012; Lindstrom Johnson et al., 2020; Nese et al., 2018). These efforts include coordinating with and providing support to district and school leadership teams to scale up Tier 2 and 3 PBIS implementation and increase the number of schools implementing across districts. Scaling is enhanced when district and school teams have the leadership, funding, political support, and technical assistance (training, coaching) from state-level leadership teams (Lindstrom Johnson et al., 2020).

When scaling within schools, state-level leadership teams play key roles in providing guidance to district and school teams on when to implement their PBIS tiers (i.e., provide initial training for each tier; Nese et al., 2018). Although recent research has confirmed that staggering implementation (delaying implementation) of advanced tiers is predictive of stronger implementation (Kittelman et al., 2022), less is known about the average time between implementation of these advanced tiers within schools and across states. Therefore, this evaluation brief sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the average time between training in Tier 1 and training in Tier 2?
2. What is the average time between training in Tier 2 and training in Tier 3?
3. What is the average time between training in Tier 1 and training in Tier 3?
4. What criteria do state-level leadership teams use to determine school readiness for Tier 2 and 3 training?

Method

State and School Characteristics

The total sample included 2,488 U.S. schools across five states that received initial PBIS training across at least two tiers (Tiers 1 and 2, Tiers 2 and 3, or Tiers 1 and 3) between the 2005-06 and 2018-19 school years. Four states were located in the Midwest region of the U.S., and one state was located in the Southeast region. Of the schools, 64% were elementary, 17% were middle, 13% were high, 2% were labeled as “other” (e.g., K-8, K-12), and 4% of schools were unidentified/missing. For school type, 94% were regular schools (i.e., public schools, charter schools),
2% were alternative/other schools, less than 1% were special education schools and vocational schools, and 4% were unidentified/missing. The average percent of students on free and reduced-price meals (FRL) was 56% (SD = 23%), and 68% were Title I schools, with 19% unidentified/missing. For school locale, 35% were in suburban areas, 26% were in rural, 18% were in cities, 18% were in towns, and 4% were unidentified/missing.

**Procedures**

To answer the evaluation questions, the authors obtained training records from state-level leadership teams (either at the state educational agency or serving as a contracted technical assistance provider) indicating the year when each school in their state was provided initial PBIS training at each tier. To be included in analyses, schools needed to have received initial training on at least two PBIS tiers between the 2005-06 to 2018-19 school years to examine time between training. Trainings at different tiers could have occurred in the same (e.g., school team received Tier 2 and 3 training in 2016-17) or a following school year (e.g., school team received Tier 1 in 2016-17 and Tier 2 in 2018-19). The first date of reported training at each tier represented each school’s first PBIS training. The authors obtained school demographic data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) for the 2018-19 school year (final year of study eligibility).

**Results**

1. **What is the Average Time Between Training in Tier 1 and Training in Tier 2?**

   The average time from initial Tier 1 to Tier 2 training for schools across the five states was 2.48 years (SD = 2.11). As shown in Table 1, average time ranged from 1.03 (State 1) to 6.16 (State 3) years. Figure 1 shows the patterns of time between Tier 1 and Tier 2 trainings within each state. As seen in the figure, there were distinct differences in training time across states.

**Table 1. Descriptive Information About the Time (Years) Between Initial Tier 1, 2, and 3 Trainings for Schools Across Five States**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Tier 1 to Tier 2</th>
<th></th>
<th>Tier 2 to Tier 3</th>
<th></th>
<th>Tier 1 to Tier 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
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<td>State 1</td>
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<td>0.20</td>
<td>760</td>
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<tr>
<td>State 3</td>
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<td>6.16</td>
<td>4.42</td>
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<td>443</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1. Time Between Initial Tier 1 and Tier 2 Trainings
2. What is the Average Time Between Training in Tier 2 and Training in Tier 3?

The average time from initial Tier 2 to Tier 3 training across states was 0.80 years (SD = 1.51). Average time ranged from 0.11 (State 1) to 2.81 (State 2) years (see Table 1 and Figure 2). Schools in three of the five states had most schools begin Tier 3 training within a year of Tier 2 training.

Figure 2. Time Between Initial Tier 2 and Tier 3 Trainings
3. What is the Average Time Between Training in Tier 1 and Training in Tier 3?

The average time from initial Tier 1 to Tier 3 training across states was 2.80 years (SD = 2.74). Average time ranged from 1.13 (State 1) to 6.43 (State 3) years (see Table 1 and Figure 3). As seen in the figure, except for State 1, most schools had 5 or more years between Tier 1 and Tier 3 trainings.

Figure 3. Time Between Initial Tier 1 and Tier 3 Trainings
4. What Criteria do State-Level Leadership Teams Use to Determine School Readiness for Tier 2 and 3 Training?

All five state-level leadership teams described the importance of having Tier 1 systems in place prior to providing training at Tiers 2 and 3. Three state-level leadership teams had formal readiness criteria for guidance in determining when to provide initial training at Tiers 2 and 3. A fourth state-level leadership team described these decisions as being individualized for each school’s technical assistance needs. A fifth state-level leadership team (State 1) described using a planned sequence that includes providing all schools with Tier 1 training in Year 1 and all schools with Tier 2 and 3 training in Year 2 of implementation.

TIER 2 READINESS

For Tier 2 trainings, readiness criteria included a variety of the following:

- Having a Tier 1 school team trained and active
- Implementing Tier 1 with fidelity (e.g., 70% on Tiered Fidelity Inventory [TFI]; Algozzine et al., 2014) for 1 to 2 years
- Demonstrating positive effects of Tier 1 implementation on student outcomes (e.g., 80% of students with 0 to 1 office discipline referrals)
- Having Tier 1 classroom systems in place (e.g., defining, teaching, acknowledging student behaviors) and used by school personnel
- Implementing and using a data collection and decision systems, such as School-wide Information System [SWIS; https://www.pbisapps.org/products/swis], to examine school-wide student outcomes (e.g., office discipline referrals)

In addition, some of the Tier 2 readiness guides also included questions for school teams to consider prior to Tier 2 training. Examples included asking school teams to (a) document what Tier 2 practices may already be in place (e.g., Check-In/Check-Out, mentoring, social/emotional skills groups) and whether they use progress monitoring data from the Tier 2 practices (e.g., daily behavior report card, office discipline referral data), (b) identify whether they have Tier 2 team members selected and those members have different roles and expertise (e.g., administrator, member who can serve on both Tier 1 and 2 teams, member with behavior expertise), and (c) identify whether school teams have access to district-level support for Tier 2 implementation.

TIER 3 READINESS

For Tier 3 trainings, readiness criteria included a variety of the following:

- Implementing Tier 1 with fidelity for 1 to 2 years and Tier 2 with fidelity for at least 1 year (or assessing Tier 2 fidelity)
- At least 1 to 2 Tier 2 interventions being implemented
- School personnel trained in implementing Tier 2 interventions
- School teams engaging in conversations related to disaggregating student-level data
- Families included in the Tier 2 intervention process (e.g., informed and regularly updating on student progress)
• Having systems for identifying and referring students for Tier 2 intervention

• School teams using a brief function-based process when problem solving for individual students (e.g., adjust, fade, or continue intervention) and identifying function of problem behaviors

Similar to Tier 2, some state-level leadership teams included guiding questions during the Tier 3 readiness process to evaluate individual needs of school teams prior to Tier 3 training. Guiding questions included asking teams about (a) topics on data collection and decision making (a data system and decision rules for monitoring, decision making, or evaluation), (b) process for identifying and referring students for intervention, (c) assessing quality of intervention (evaluating technical adequacy), and (d) ongoing professional development (access to district support).

**Discussion**

The purpose of this evaluation brief was to identify the average time between initial Tier 1, 2, and 3 trainings across five states, each of which had strong state-level leadership teams. The authors also summarized readiness criteria state-level leadership teams use to determine when schools are ready to receive initial training at Tiers 2 and 3. As shown in Table 1, timing between initial trainings varied considerably across states for Tier 1 to 2 (1.03 – 6.16 years), Tier 2 to 3 (0.11 – 2.81 years), and Tier 1 to Tier 3 (1.13 – 6.43 years). These differences are likely the result of the different policies and readiness criteria state-level leadership teams used to identify when school teams were ready for implementing additional tiers.

In addition to differences across states, data indicate that schools on average begin Tier 3 training after Tier 2 training (0.80 years) much sooner than Tier 2 training after Tier 1 training (2.48 years). One explanation for this could be the additional effort from school teams required to implement Tier 1 behavior systems compared to implementing Tier 2 and 3 behavior systems afterwards. For example, as indicated in the Tier 2 readiness criteria, several state-level leadership teams require Tier 1 systems to be implemented with fidelity (e.g., 70% fidelity on TFI) and demonstrating improved school-wide student outcomes (e.g., 80% of students have 0 to 1 office discipline referrals) prior to Tier 2 training. For Tier 3 readiness criteria, fidelity and student outcome benchmarks were not as stringent. For example, more emphasis is placed on school teams and other school personnel implementing some Tier 2 interventions and school teams engaging in team-oriented individual student problem solving (e.g., improving, continuing, or fading Tier 2 interventions for students). Last, although staggering training for Tier 2 and 3 systems is associated with stronger implementation (Kittelmann et al., 2022), district and school leadership teams must continue to support individual students requiring more support than Tier 1 provides. It is important that delaying training for advanced behavior systems does not mean delaying providing supports to individual students.
Conclusion

Research shows that determining the optimal timing for when to scale up (stagger) each PBIS tier is critical for ensuring successful implementation and student outcomes (Kittelman et al., 2022). This evaluation brief examined the average time between trainings at Tiers 1, 2, and 3 and examined readiness criteria used for determining when to provide initial training at Tiers 2 and 3. As described in this brief, the timing of when school teams were trained at the advanced tiers varied considerably across states and variation was likely the result of policies and readiness criteria used by state-level leadership teams.
References


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