

# CONNECTICUT SCHOOL CLIMATE TRANSFORMATION GRANT

*Development of a Statewide Multi-Tiered Behavioral Framework*

## SUMMATIVE REPORT



June 2019

Prepared by: LEARN

# Summative Report

Connecticut School Climate Transformation Grant (CT SCTG) 2014-2019:

Development of a Statewide Multi-Tiered Behavioral Framework

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Collaborating Partners:



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview.....	3
Connecticut SCTG Program.....	3
NEPBIS Training of Trainers (TOT) Program.....	4
Statewide SWPBIS Needs Assessment.....	4
Coordination and Alignment.....	5
School Cohort Model.....	6
Evaluation Methodology.....	8
Impact on Statewide Capacity.....	11
NEPBIS Training of Trainers (TOT) Program.....	11
Statewide SWPBIS Needs Assessment.....	15
Coordination and Alignment.....	20
Impact on LEA Capacity.....	23
School Cohort Model.....	23
Summary.....	30

## OVERVIEW

The School Climate Transformation Grant (SCTG) was a five-year, competitive, federal award that was established by the U. S. Department of Education’s Office of Safe and Healthy Students. The purpose of the SCTG was to provide funds to state educational agencies (SEAs) in order to develop, enhance, or expand statewide systems of support available for local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools in implementing an evidence-based, multi-tiered behavioral framework for improving learning conditions and behavioral outcomes for students. In October of 2014, 12 states and 71 districts across the country were awarded SCTG funds. At that time, the Connecticut State Department of Education was one of 12 SEAs awarded the five-year, state-level grant (2014-2019).

### Connecticut SCTG Program

The Connecticut School Climate Transformation Grant (SCTG) was a collaborative effort led by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), along with the State Education Resource Center (SERC), and the Center for Behavioral Education and Research (CBER) at the University of Connecticut. The project aimed to build on the state’s strong Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) foundation in order to enhance capacity to implement multi-tiered behavioral frameworks (MTBFs). The CT SCTG strove to develop the capacity of the state’s technical assistance providers, educational leaders, and community members to support the use of SWPBIS, a systematic, three-tiered approach to meeting the behavioral and learning needs of all students. The grant adopted three overarching goals that focused on improving both state and local capacity to implement a MTBF in Connecticut. The goals included:

TABLE 1: CONNECTICUT SCTG PROJECT GOALS

GOAL 1	<b>Build the CSDE’s capacity</b> for supporting the sustained and broad-scale implementation of a MTBF
GOAL 2	<b>Enhance LEA capacity</b> for implementing and sustaining a MTBF by providing training and technical assistance to LEAs
GOAL 3	<b>Coordinate CSDE efforts</b> with appropriate federal, state, and local resources in order to align statewide improvement efforts focused on school climate

Four elements of grant activity were identified to meet the goals of the grant. The elements were included as part of the state’s original grant application, with subsequent planning, refinement, and preparations occurring over the course of the grant. Each grant element is discussed in more detail in the following sections.

## Grant Element #1: NEPBIS Training of Trainers (TOT) Program

*To increase the number of high-quality trainers available to provide technical assistance and coaching on the implementation and sustainability of an evidence-based, multi-tiered behavioral framework in Connecticut.*

The Northeast Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports Training of Trainers (NEPBIS TOT) program is a comprehensive training model designed to cultivate new, incoming trainers, and to strengthen the understanding and skills of current experienced trainers in supporting sustainable implementation of a MTBF. The two-year training series was led by CBER and included a combination of on-site training and team-based training events, as well as conference and networking activities. SWPBIS training materials (e.g., school workbook, training slides, training manual) were developed by CBER and served as the foundation for the training. In addition, an observation rubric for evaluating the quality of training provided by participants, the Direct Observation of Training Quality (DOT-Q), was piloted and refined as part of the NEPBIS TOT. During the first two years of the TOT (2015-2016 and 2016-2017), two distinctive training tracks were available to differentiate support for new trainers versus experienced trainers. The TOT model for new trainers included increased opportunities for direct training and support; whereas, the model for experienced trainers involved a reduced time commitment and placed more emphasis on on-site coaching and experiential learning through attendance at conferences. CBER researchers noted that DOT-Q data gathered from participants in the experienced trainers track was insufficient in making decisions regarding training quality. Therefore, beginning in 2017, the TOT model was modified to ensure that all participants completed the same training experiences. The current TOT training model is outlined in Table 2 below:

TABLE 2: NEPBIS TRAINING OF TRAINERS MODEL

Year 1	Year 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 6 days of on-site training at UConn</li><li>• 3 days of observing and supporting team-based training events at training sites</li><li>• 1 Northeast PBIS conference</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3 days of on-site training at UConn</li><li>• 3 days of leading and facilitating team-based training events at training sites</li><li>• 2 Northeast PBIS conferences</li></ul>

Educators from LEAs, regional educational service centers (RESCs), and SERC who met specific readiness requirements (e.g., school-based experience, theoretical foundation, educational coursework, training background) were eligible to apply. Priority was given to Connecticut applicants; however, applicants located in any of the ten northeast states serviced by the Northeast PBIS network were welcome to apply. Individuals who successfully completed the program were endorsed as Northeast PBIS Trainers. Three cohorts of TOT participants are anticipated to be endorsed by the fall of 2019. Additionally, a fourth cohort of participants began the program in the fall of 2018, and efforts are currently underway to recruit a fifth cohort. The fourth and fifth cohorts are not funded by the grant, but speak to the sustainability of the program.

## Grant Element #2: Statewide SWPBIS Needs Assessment

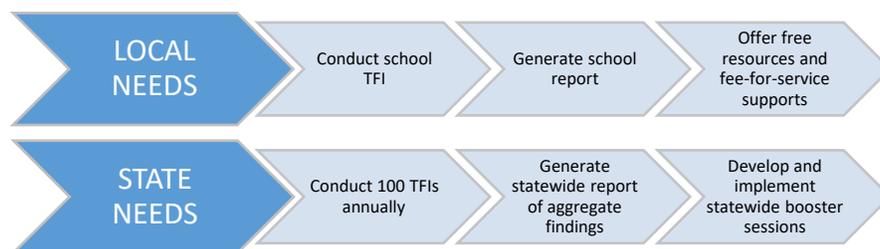
*To evaluate the current status of SWPBIS implementation in schools throughout the state in order to determine areas of strength and need.*

Since 2000, 470 schools from 107 school districts in Connecticut have received training in SWPBIS from either SERC, one of the RESCs, the Connecticut State Personnel Development Grant (CT SPDG), or a

combination thereof.<sup>1</sup> This has resulted in a strong SWPBIS foundation in the state of Connecticut, along with varying levels of implementation throughout schools and districts. The SCTG sought to measure current levels of implementation in order to summarize the fidelity of SWPBIS statewide. The Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) was selected as a tool to utilize in conducting the needs assessment. The TFI is a valid, reliable, and efficient instrument developed by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to measure the extent to which school personnel are implementing the core features of SWPBIS at all levels (i.e., Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III).<sup>2</sup>

Any Connecticut school that had completed three years of SWPBIS training was eligible to schedule a grant-funded TFI. The TFI administration typically lasts about three hours and was facilitated by a trained external consultant. The process involved a building walkthrough utilizing a SWPBIS tool and a TFI administration, as well as an action-planning session. The results were meant to guide the implementation and sustainability of SWPBIS practices both locally and statewide by providing a knowledge base from which targeted technical assistance could be developed and implemented. The CT SCTG aimed to conduct a minimum of 300 TFIs by the end of the grant period, or roughly 100 TFIs in each of three years.

FIGURE 1: USING THE TFI TO IDENTIFY LOCAL AND STATE NEEDS



### Grant Element #3: Coordination and Alignment

*To build a system of collaboration across the state of Connecticut in order to integrate initiatives, policies, and grants focused on positive school climate and safety efforts.*

The CT SCTG has been committed to work in partnership with other related initiatives currently in progress throughout the state to address school climate, school safety, and mental health needs in a more comprehensive manner. Consultants from the CSDE and SERC comprised the CT SCTG Management Team and served as the leaders of these efforts, working within and across their respective organizations, along with other stakeholder groups to effectively leverage existing supports in the state.

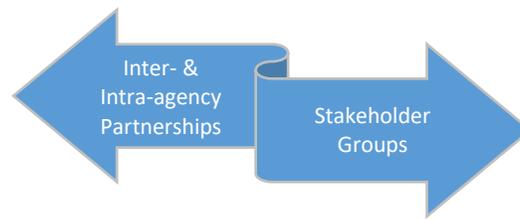
This grant element was flexible, as the CT SCTG Management Team adapted its specific outreach efforts annually in response to changing needs, initiatives, and priorities. SERC technical assistance providers worked with CSDE consultants to more effectively align their CT SCTG support with

<sup>1</sup> State Education Resource Center (2015). *Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports: Data Report and Summary 2014-2015*. [www.ctserc.org/pbis](http://www.ctserc.org/pbis).

<sup>2</sup> Algozzine, B., Barrett, S., Eber, L., George, H., Horner, R., Lewis, T., Putnam, B., Swain-Bradway, J., McIntosh, K., & Sugai, G. (2017). *School-wide PBIS Tiered Fidelity Inventory*. OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org).

complementary initiatives occurring in the CT SCTG districts. CSDE consultants met annually to discuss potential opportunities to collaborate on projects related to school climate, MTBF, health, and school safety. This collaboration led to the development of a crosswalk document that summarizes supports currently offered by the CSDE to address those initiatives. CT SCTG Management Team members served as active members of the Connecticut PBIS Collaborative, which serves as a state-level leadership team for advancing PBIS training, implementation, and evaluation systems in the state. Finally, a Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative was established to engage a variety of stakeholders in discussions around school discipline, policy, and disproportionality.

FIGURE 2: CT SCTG COORDINATION AND ALIGNMENT



### Grant Element #4: School Cohort Model

*To establish six model sites as exemplars of PBIS implementation through site-based coaching and technical assistance, as well as to improve school climate and student behavior outcomes at each of the sites.*

Lastly, the CT SCTG provided support with implementation of a MTBF to six Connecticut schools over the course of the grant. Any Connecticut public school (grades Pre-k through 12) not currently implementing PBIS was eligible to apply for the CT SCTG School Cohort Model. Schools in Alliance districts (the 30 lowest-performing school districts in the state) were given priority, as well as those designated as low-performing, high poverty, and/or persistently low-achieving, as defined by the Federal Register. Three schools (Cohort A) were chosen in 2015-2016, and three additional schools (Cohort B) joined in 2016-2017. Schools were asked to complete three years of training for a total of 24.5 days of support, moving from foundational Tier I concepts in Year 1 to more individualized Tier III concepts in Year 3. The majority of the support was provided by SERC consultants as on-site training and technical assistance to school-based behavior leadership teams.

TABLE 3: SCHOOL COHORT MODEL PD DESIGN

Year	Days	Focus
Year 1	10.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team training and TA regarding Tier I systems (8 days)</li> <li>• Training and implementation of the Welcoming Walkthrough (1 day)</li> <li>• SWIS training (half day)</li> <li>• Pre- and post-administration of the TFI (1 day)</li> </ul>
Year 2	7.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data review and planning for Tier I systems and practices, as well as team training for Tier II systems and practices (6 days)</li> <li>• SWIS training (half day)</li> <li>• Post-administration of the TFI (half day)</li> <li>• Review and planning of Welcoming Walkthrough data (half day)</li> </ul>
Year 3	6.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data review and planning for Tier I and Tier II systems and practices, as well as team training regarding Tier III systems and practices (5 days)</li> <li>• Implementation of a post-Welcoming Walkthrough (1 day)</li> <li>• Post-administration of the TFI (half day)</li> </ul>

Participating schools were given end-of-project goals to guide SWPBIS fidelity, school climate, student behavior, and family engagement outcomes. As a result of improved school- and student-level outcomes, these schools were expected to increase visibility, support, and capacity for implementation of MTBFs in their districts. At the conclusion of their CT SCTG participation, schools were encouraged to seek recognition as a CT PBIS Model School, with criteria for recognition based on effective application of key features as outlined by the National Technical Assistance Center on PBIS.

## EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The CSDE contracted with Glen Martin Associates (GMA), an independent consulting firm, to conduct an external evaluation of the CT SCTG during the first three and a half years of the project. On December 31, 2017, GMA ceased business operations. The CSDE subsequently sought the services of LEARN, a RESC in southeastern Connecticut, to serve as the project evaluator for the remainder of the grant. LEARN assumed responsibilities of project evaluator for the CT SCTG beginning in September 2018. The evaluation teams with both GMA and LEARN have sought to answer three key questions over the course of the five-year project:

- ❖ To what extent did the CT SCTG **increase the CSDE’s capacity** for supporting the sustained and broad-scale implementation of a multi-tiered behavioral framework (MTBF)?
- ❖ To what extent did the CT SCTG **coordinate CSDE efforts** with appropriate federal, state, and local resources in order to align statewide improvement efforts focused on school climate?
- ❖ To what extent did the CT SCTG **enhance LEA capacity** for implementing and sustaining a MTBF?

Table 4 provides a brief overview of the quantitative and qualitative data collected and analyzed over the course of the project. The findings in this summative report are derived from these data sources. Results from these data sources have also been reported annually to project leaders, both informally and as part of data briefs, to provide formative feedback to guide project implementation.

TABLE 4: EVALUATION DATA SOURCES

<b>TOT Focus Group</b> In April 2016, two focus groups were conducted with the first NEPBIS TOT cadre to gather information about participants’ experiences, as well as feedback regarding successes and challenges related to implementation of the TOT concepts. One group included 5 participants from the new trainer cohort, and the second group included 5 participants from the experienced trainer cohort. Each group lasted approximately 45 minutes.
<b>TOT Participant Survey</b> TOT participants from the first two cohorts were asked to complete an online survey in June 2017 to gather feedback regarding the TOT’s impact on their skills and experiences, as well as their general impressions of the TOT’s ability to impact the state’s capacity for implementing MTBFs. Participants from the second and third cohorts were asked to complete the online survey in November 2018. A total of 35 TOT participants responded to the first survey (83% response rate; 20 respondents from CT), and 16 TOT participants responded to the second survey (44% response rate; 8 respondents from CT).
<b>Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI)</b> As part of the CT SCTG needs assessment and the school cohort model, the TFI was used to measure the extent to which school personnel were applying the core features of SWPBIS. TFI data were collected over the course of the grant (2015-2019) by trained facilitators and entered into the PBIS Assessment online platform.

### **Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory**

The Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory was conducted in December 2015 to assess collaboration and coordination among members of the PBIS Collaborative. The inventory is a research-based tool that includes 40 items grouped into six categories.<sup>3</sup> A total of 12 members responded to the online inventory, reflecting a 67% response rate.

### **Project Leader Interviews**

Phone interviews were conducted in September 2017 and May 2019 with CT SCTG project leaders and partners to gather their perspectives regarding the successes and challenges of implementation efforts. Interviews were conducted with a representative from the CSDE, SERC, and CBER.

### **Multi-Tiered Behavioral Framework (MTBF) Coordination Document Review**

A variety of MTBF coordination materials were reviewed to assess progress towards aligning the grant's efforts with statewide improvement efforts already in place. This included meeting notes and attendance data from CT SCTG Alignment meetings, the CSDE Annual School Climate Convening, the CT PBIS Collaborative, and the Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative, as well as work products of these groups.

### **School Satisfaction Survey**

An online survey was developed and conducted to gather feedback regarding school participants' perceptions of the grant's on-site support. The survey included Likert-type items and open-ended questions. The survey was conducted in May 2016, May 2017, and October 2018 with Cohort A leadership teams and in May 2017, October 2018, and May 2019 with Cohort B leadership teams. The response rate was 77% in 2016, 90% in 2017, 100% in 2018, and 91% in 2019.

### **Georgia School Climate Survey Suite**

The Georgia School Climate Survey Suite, available on PBISApps, was used by the cohort schools to measure the perceptions of school personnel, parents, and students regarding school climate.<sup>4</sup> Both cohorts administered the Georgia School Personnel Survey and the Georgia Parent Survey as pre- and post-measures, as well as the Georgia Brief Student School Climate Inventory – CT Version annually.

### **Welcoming Walkthrough**

The Welcoming Walkthrough was used by cohort schools to measure family engagement. The Walkthrough is a three-hour collaborative data-collection process that is facilitated by an external consultant along with participation from school staff, family, and the community. The tool assesses four aspects of how inviting a school is perceived (i.e., physical environment, schoolwide practices and policies, welcoming school staff, and written materials) using indicators rated on a 4-point rating scale. The Welcoming Walkthrough was utilized as a pre-/post-measure in all six schools.

### **School-Wide Information System (SWIS)**

Data concerning student behavior were collected and input into the School-Wide Information System (SWIS) on a monthly basis at all CT SCTG participating schools. Data included schoolwide office discipline referral (ODR) trends and schoolwide suspension and expulsion patterns. Two of the three Cohort A schools and all three Cohort B schools consistently collected SWIS data over the course of the project.

<sup>3</sup> Mattessich, P., Murray-Close, M., & Monsey, B. (2001). *Collaboration: What Makes It Work* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). St. Paul: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

<sup>4</sup> One Cohort B school used a different suite of surveys from Panorama Education for the first four years of the grant and the Georgia School Climate Survey suite for the final year of the grant.

The remainder of this report summarizes key findings that have emerged from the external evaluations of the CT SCTG conducted by both GMA and LEARN over the course of the five-year project. Findings regarding the grant's impact on statewide MTBF capacity, as well as the grant's impact on LEA's capacity for implementing a MTBF, are presented.

# IMPACT ON STATEWIDE CAPACITY

Evaluation Questions	To what extent did the CT SCTG <b>increase the CSDE’s capacity</b> for supporting the sustained and broad-scale implementation of a multi-tiered behavioral framework (MTBF)?
	To what extent did the CT SCTG <b>coordinate CSDE efforts</b> with appropriate federal, state, and local resources in order to align statewide improvement efforts focused on school climate?

The CT SCTG has played an integral role in significantly increasing the CSDE’s capacity for supporting the broad-scale implementation of a multi-tiered behavioral framework (MTBF). To date, the NEPBIS TOT program has endorsed 16 high-quality trainers who can deliver effective and meaningful PBIS support to schools and districts in Connecticut, with an additional 7 trainers expected to receive endorsement by the fall of 2019. TOT participants have consistently provided positive feedback on the program, reporting that it has increased their knowledge of PBIS, as well as their desire to provide PBIS coaching and support. The project has also successfully conducted a needs assessment of MTBF in more than 175 schools in the state, providing important information on the current status of PBIS implementation in Connecticut. This information has been utilized to drive professional development and support provided to schools. Finally, the CT SCTG Management Team has worked to align the grant with efforts already in progress in the state related to school climate and safety.

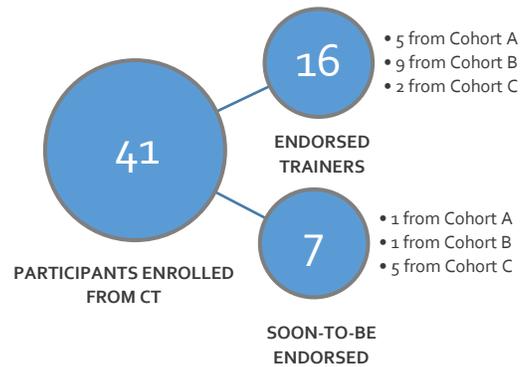
## NEPBIS Training of Trainers (TOT) Program

*To increase the number of high-quality trainers available to provide technical assistance and coaching on the implementation and sustainability of an evidence-based, multi-tiered behavioral framework in Connecticut.*

The NEPBIS TOT has taken significant strides to expand the number of trainers in the state who can deliver high-quality, effective PBIS supports to schools and districts. A number of Connecticut trainers have received endorsement as a Northeast PBIS Trainer, and several more are expected to receive endorsement in the near future.

The NEPBIS TOT program has enrolled three cohorts in the two-year training series as part of the CT SCTG – Cohort 1 in 2015-2016, Cohort 2 in 2016-2017, and Cohort 3 in 2017-2018. A total of 68 individuals have enrolled in the NEPBIS TOT, with 60% (n = 41) from Connecticut. As shown in Figure 3, participants were fairly evenly split amongst the three cohorts. Most participants were employed by SERC, a RESC, or a local school district. Retention has been moderate, with about 63% of Connecticut participants remaining in the program.

FIGURE 3: CONNECTICUT PARTICIPATION IN THE NEPBIS TOT PROGRAM



Note: The number of endorsed trainers along with the soon-to-be endorsed trainers does not equal the number of participants enrolled because 18 participants withdrew from the program before obtaining endorsement.

In addition to the Connecticut participants illustrated above, six additional, out-of-state, TOT participants were endorsed, and ten out-of-state participants expect to receive endorsement by the fall of 2019. Project leaders have viewed this approach as an opportunity for Connecticut to take on a leadership role in the northeast region, perhaps serving as a model for other regions who are seeking to develop high-quality MTBF trainers.

Participants consistently reported that the NEPBIS TOT program significantly increased their competence in delivering high-quality PBIS training, and has furthered their interest in seeking opportunities to provide PBIS coaching and support to other educators.

The CT SCTG expected not only to increase the number of PBIS trainers in Connecticut, but to ensure that trainers are well-prepared to deliver high-quality support. The TOT program proved to be a valuable tool in that endeavor. Project leaders noted the rigorous training process and centering on high-quality, standardized training materials developed by CBER as particular strengths of the program. Evaluation data suggests that the majority of TOT participants felt that the series prepared them well to provide PBIS training and support. Both new and experienced participants indicated that the program increased their knowledge and skill level, as well as their confidence in delivering training. Participants expressed particular appreciation for the opportunity to learn from knowledgeable members of the PBIS community at CBER, as well as opportunities to partner with more experienced coaches during co-training activities, access resources and supports, and develop meaningful connections within the PBIS community.

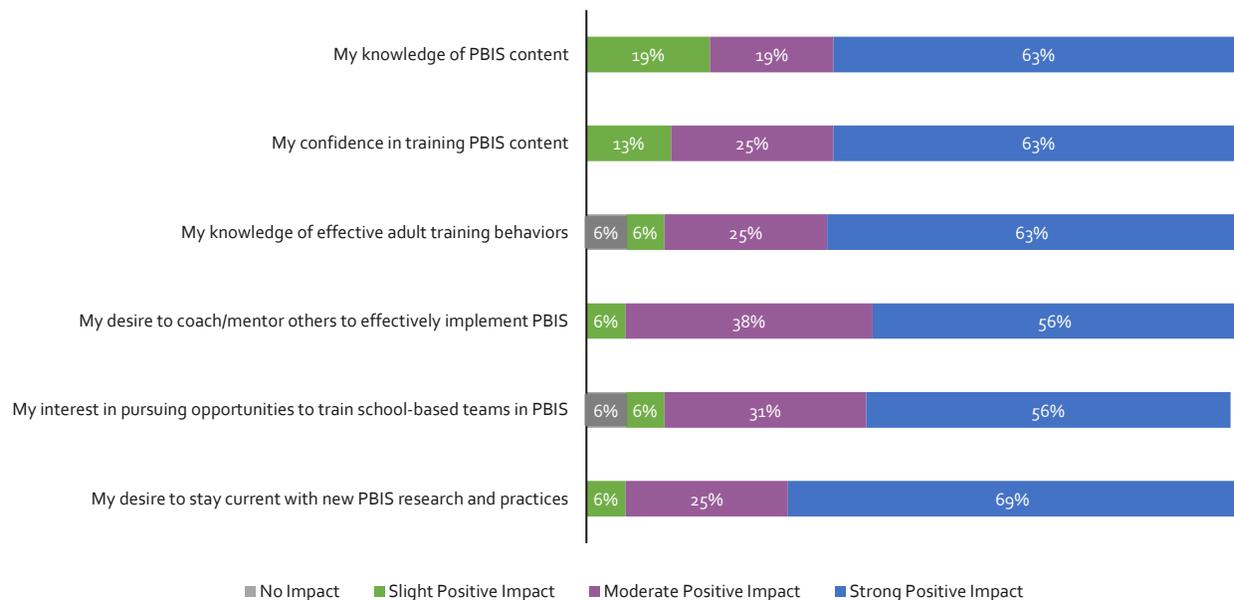
I felt very lucky to be able to be trained by brilliant minds in the PBIS world. I have improved my confidence immensely around PBIS, behavior, and training behaviors in general. I hope this program continues to allow others to gain this knowledge.

The knowledge provided through the TOT meets my interests and desires to effectively impact the implementation of PBIS in my district.

~ TOT Participants

Results from a recent survey conducted in the fall of 2018 (n=17) provided further evidence of the positive impacts of the TOT program on participants. Respondents were asked to rate the degree of impact the program had on a variety of areas using a four-point scale, with 1 = *No impact* and 4 = *Strong positive impact*. As seen in Figure 4, the majority of respondents (82% to 87%) rated the program as having a *moderate* or *strong positive impact* on a number of areas, with most respondents selecting a *strong* rating. Over two-thirds of respondents (69%) indicated that the program had a *strong positive impact* on their desire to stay current with new PBIS research and practice, and over half of respondents (56%) noted a *strong positive impact* on their interest in pursuing opportunities to train school-based teams in PBIS. A significant number of respondents (63%) indicated that the TOT program had a *strong positive impact* on both their knowledge of PBIS content as well as their confidence in training PBIS.

FIGURE 4: IMPACT OF NEPBIS TOT PROGRAM ON PARTICIPANTS (N=17)



The NEPBIS TOT has made considerable progress towards the development of systems to measure trainer quality, with the potential for these systems to make a significant impact on the field.

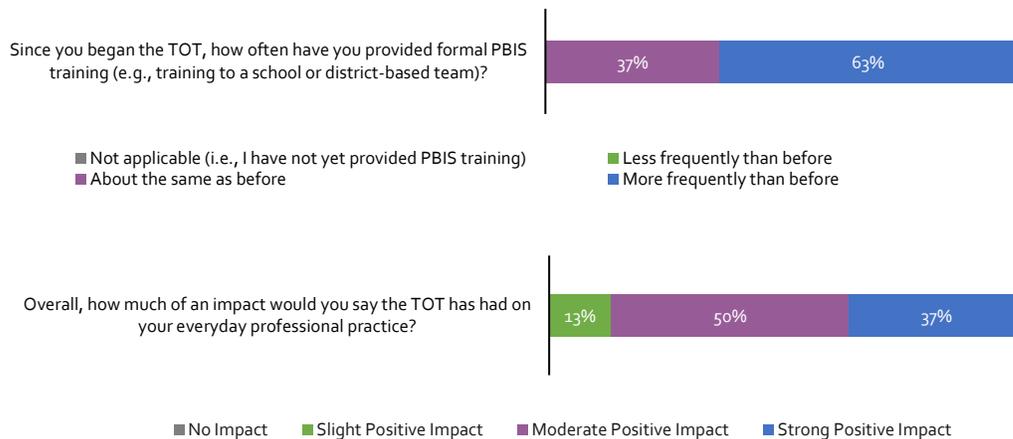
An observation rubric for identifying high-quality trainers, the Direct Observation of Training Quality (DOT-Q), was piloted as part of the TOT program. TOT leaders utilized data from this tool to assess trainer quality, as well as to evaluate participants' completion of TOT requirements, such as homework assignments and submission of training videos. TOT leaders have invested significant time and effort in both the development of the DOT-Q, as well as the refinement of the tool. They have conducted literature reviews, utilized observations of expert trainers to identify key trainer behaviors, and made modifications to the rubric descriptions to ensure that scoring is valid and reliable across observers. They are currently in the process of developing exemplar training videos to supplement the DOT-Q. The overall scoring process has been revised over the course of the grant to ensure that trainers are given multiple opportunities to demonstrate their skills (e.g., averaging DOT-Q scores across multiple video clips). These efforts have been important in ensuring that endorsement decisions are data-driven and equitable. Additionally, systems to monitor post-endorsement quality have been developed.

Currently, endorsed trainers are required to submit evidence every two years to demonstrate that they have trained at least one school which, as a result of the training, is implementing PBIS with fidelity.

The NEPBIS TOT has resulted in notable changes in TOT participants' everyday work, with Connecticut participants communicating cautious optimism regarding the TOT's ability to impact the state's capacity to build and enhance a statewide network of PBIS trainers.

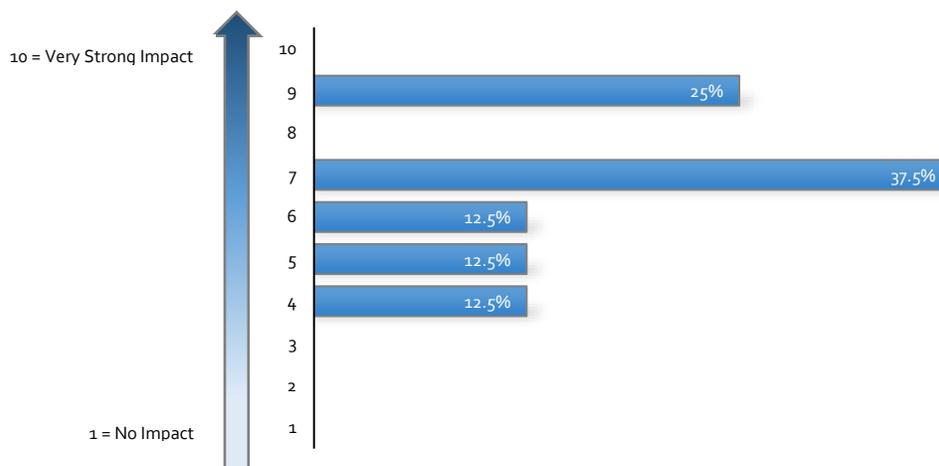
On a recent survey, TOT respondents were asked to assess the degree of impact the program has had on both the amount of formal PBIS training they are currently providing to schools and districts in the state, as well as on their day-to-day practices in general. As illustrated in Figure 5, almost two-thirds (63%; n=5) of Connecticut respondents indicated that they are providing PBIS training *more frequently than before*. Additionally, the majority (87%; n=7) of respondents indicated that the TOT program has had a *moderate or strong positive impact* on their everyday professional practice. Respondents noted a number of specific ways the program has impacted their daily practice, such as increased effectiveness as a trainer in working with student populations with challenging behavior, greater opportunities to engage in conversations around PBIS and racial equity, and more leadership opportunities at the district and state levels.

FIGURE 5: IMPACT OF TOT ON TRAINING FREQUENCY AND EVERYDAY PRACTICES IN CT (N=8)



When asked how much impact the TOT program will have in the next 3-5 years in building and enhancing a statewide network of trainers who can provide PBIS training and coaching to districts, the majority of responses from Connecticut participants suggested cautious optimism. On a scale of one to 10, with 1 = *No impact* and 10 = *Very strong impact*, almost two thirds of respondents selected a "7" or above (see Figure 6).

FIGURE 6: IMPACT OF TOT ON BUILDING AND ENHANCING A STATEWIDE NETWORK OF TRAINERS (N=8)



While a number of strengths were noted by project leaders and on survey comments, such as high-quality learning experiences and the promotion of consistent implementation practices, challenges with respect to the TOT program were noted as well. While some participants felt that the training content was somewhat repetitive, others felt that it was rushed and wished for more time to focus on content knowledge. Project leaders noted that TOT participants came to the program with a broad range of background knowledge and experiences, from school-based staff with little prior knowledge of PBIS, to consultants who already supported PBIS implementation in some capacity. The notable variability amongst background knowledge created challenges in differentiating the program to meet the needs of all participants. TOT leaders responded by providing participants with additional time and support as needed. Additionally, the program was described as time-intensive by some, and the completion of training videos was noted to be a significant barrier in attaining endorsement. Staff employed by districts found it particularly difficult to find opportunities within their role to complete the videos due to time constraints and competing responsibilities. Whereas, participants employed as consultants were generally more successful in attaining endorsement. Finally, a number of participants reported challenges with finding new opportunities to implement PBIS due to limited funding and decreased interest at the LEA level. They expressed concern that if fewer districts are wishing to implement PBIS or have the means to do so, there is less of a need for trainers as well.

### Statewide SWPBIS Needs Assessment

*To evaluate the current status of SWPBIS implementation in schools throughout the state in order to determine areas of strength and need.*

The CT SCTG project has successfully conducted 175 grant-funded TFIs to gather information on MTBF implementation as part of a statewide needs assessment

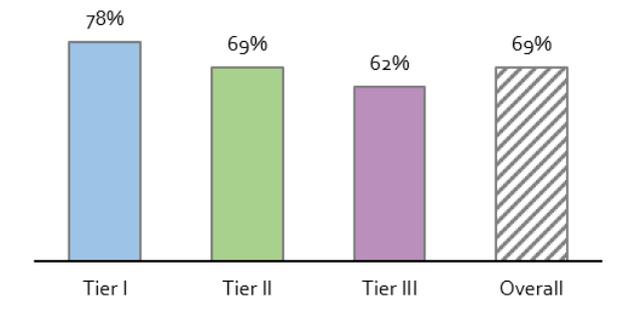
As illustrated in Table 5, 175 TFIs were conducted in 46 districts across the state as part of the statewide needs assessment. Over two-thirds (68%) of the schools were located in an Alliance District (the lowest 30 performing districts in the state), with the TFI process reaching more than one half (55%) of Alliance districts. Most participating schools (51%) were elementary schools. Initial training dates for SWPBIS varied, with almost three-fourths of schools (73%) receiving their first year of training sometime between the fall of 2007 and the spring of 2013.

TABLE 5: CT SCTG-FUNDED TFIS CONDUCTED

GRANT-FUNDED TFIS			
Schools	175	% of Schools in Alliance District	68%
Districts	46	% of CT Alliance Districts Reached	55%
GRADE LEVEL		TRAINING CADRE	
Elementary	51%	Before 2007	12%
PreK-8	11%	Fall 2007 – Spring 2009	28%
Middle	15%	Fall 2009 – Spring 2011	20%
High School	14%	Fall 2011 – Spring 2013	25%
Other	7%	After Fall 2013	8%

The TFI is comprised of three sections (i.e., Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III) and includes ten subscales and 45 items. Each item is rated on a scale from 0 to 2, where 0 = *Not implemented*, 1 = *Partially implemented*, and 2 = *Fully implemented*. Overall, TFI data indicated that Connecticut schools are implementing SWPBIS with good fidelity, especially at Tier I, with an average score of 78%. As indicated in Figure 7, average levels of implementation were somewhat lower for Tier II and Tier III, with Tier II averaging 69% and Tier III averaging 62%.

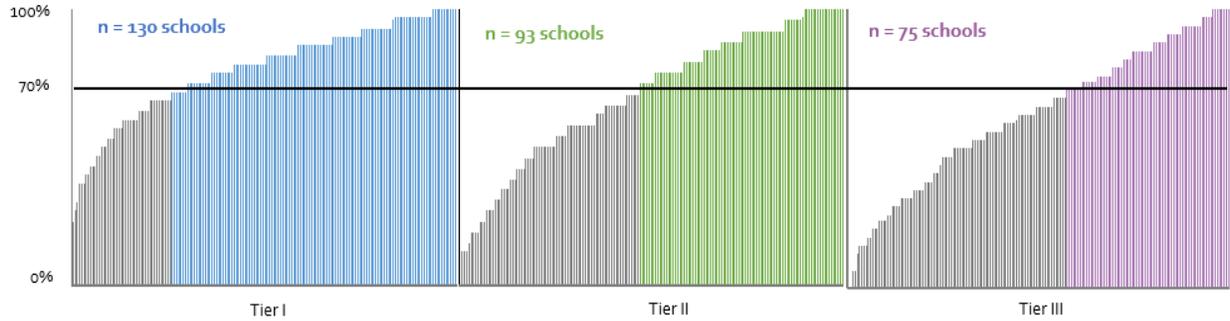
FIGURE 7: TFI SCALE SCORES AND OVERALL SCORE



Similar patterns were evident when data was disaggregated by school. Although a specific criterion for each tier of the TFI has yet to be empirically established, a score of 70% is generally accepted as the baseline level of implementation that will result in improved student outcomes.<sup>5</sup> As shown in Figure 8, 74% of schools (n=130) earned scores of 70% or above for Tier I, 53% of schools (n=93) earned scores of 70% or above for Tier II, and 43% of schools (n=75) earned scores of 70% or above for Tier III. Overall, TFI scores reflected a wide variety of implementation levels across the state.

<sup>5</sup> Algozzine, B., Barrett, S., Eber, L., George, H., Horner, R., Lewis, T., Putnam, B., Swain-Bradway, J., McIntosh, K., & Sugai, G. (2017). *School-wide PBIS Tiered Fidelity Inventory*. OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org).

FIGURE 8: SCHOOL-LEVEL TFI RESULTS

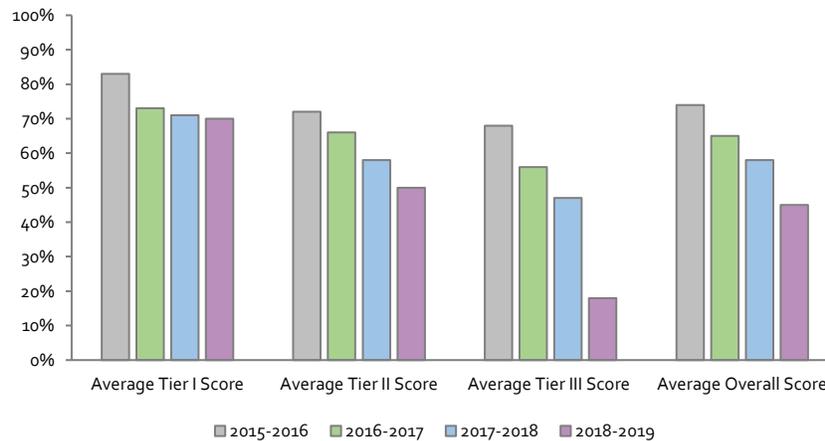


Note: A score of 70% on the TFI is generally accepted as the baseline level of implementation that will result in improved student outcomes.

The statewide needs assessment has provided important information in the identification of areas of strength and need with regards to PBIS implementation within Connecticut schools, and this information has informed professional development at both the local and statewide levels.

According to SCTG project leaders, the TFI process generated valuable discussions around PBIS within school teams, and TFI action plans helped to guide teams in improving PBIS implementation at the local level. On a statewide level, project leaders reported that the 175 TFI assessments resulted in a better understanding of the current status of SWPBIS implementation in the state. Areas of strength were identified primarily within Tier I, and areas in need of improvement were identified primarily within Tiers II and III. As shown in Figure 9, Tier I scores were consistently higher across the project, followed by Tier II scores, and Tier III scores. Of interest, average TFI scores decreased each year over the course of the project, with overall scores averaging 74% in 2015-2016 in comparison to 45% in 2018-2019. Project leaders noted that schools that participated in the TFI during the first year had generally received technical assistance to initiate implementation of SWPBIS more recently and were interested in timely feedback on their implementation. Whereas, more time had passed between receiving technical assistance and the TFI assessment in schools who participated in subsequent years. This information highlights the importance of planning for and supporting sustainability in implementation.

FIGURE 9: TFI RESULTS OVER TIME



Project leaders discussed how these data have generated discussions within the CSDE and SERC about supporting schools in moving beyond Tier I to developing an integrated continuum of supports. As a result of these discussions and analysis of the TFI data, SERC created booster sessions offered to educators in the TFI schools and districts. As seen in Table 6, 7 sessions have been provided by SERC, reaching a total of 291 educators. These booster sessions have helped to address areas of need identified by the TFI, thus promoting a system of support for PBIS implementation throughout the state. Additionally, SERC is in the process of developing online modules which will be publically available to address the following topics: Critical Features of Tier II, Matched to Student Need, Student and Family Involvement in Support Planning, Comprehensive Support Plans, and Hypothesis Statements.

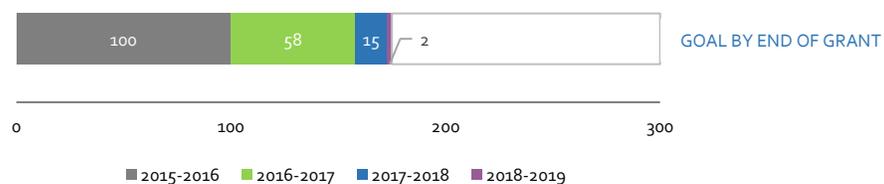
TABLE 6: BOOSTER SESSIONS OFFERED

Title of Session	Date	# Attendees
Classroom Practices: Embedding the Language of Your Expectations in Praise and Correction 1	December 2016	16
Tier II Decision Rules and Screening Tools	February 2017	21
Building a Bridge Between Tier II and Tier III Interventions	March 2017	26
Tier I Classroom Behavior Management Strategies	March 2017	38
Universal Classroom Behavior Management	March - May 2019	70
Restorative Practices in MTSS	March 2019	60
Restorative Practices in MTSS	April 2019	60

CT SCTG project leaders focused efforts on demonstrating how the PBIS framework can complement other schoolwide interventions and initiatives, as well as on identifying additional tools to support implementation of a MTBF.

The CT SCTG project expected to conduct 100 TFIs in 2015-2016, 100 in 2016-2017, and 100 more over the remainder of the grant. However as shown in Figure 10, the project fell short of this goal beginning in 2016-2017, with only 58 TFIs conducted. Even with steady recruitment efforts, the CT SCTG Management Team found it difficult to identify schools willing to participate. As noted above, project leaders felt that recruitment was more challenging in the second year because they had already assessed schools that had recently been trained in SWPBIS, noting that these schools tended to be more eager to receive feedback regarding their MTBF implementation.

FIGURE 10: NUMBER OF TFIs CONDUCTED



According to project leaders, time and resources were mentioned as two reasons why schools declined to participate. However, a more significant challenge seemed to be the movement away from PBIS in

schools and districts in Connecticut, in favor of using other school-based social and emotional approaches, such as restorative practices and RULER. In response to this challenge, project leaders reported that they made deliberate changes in how they marketed the TFI process to schools, changing the focus from how the process could provide information regarding *PBIS* implementation to how it could provide feedback on implementation of *multi-tiered systems of supports* (MTSS). Additionally, project leaders shared that when discussing PBIS with schools, they presented it as a framework that could work in conjunction with other initiatives in the district, as opposed to serving as a stand-alone program. Finally, when engaging in action planning with districts, project leaders included discussion related to academic interventions to ensure that all areas of MTSS were addressed in the process.

During the summer and fall of 2017, the CT SCTG Management Team analyzed the data from the 58 TFIs conducted over the course of the 2016-2017 school year. The observed patterns and gaps were consistent with the data collected from the 100 TFIs during the 2015-2016 school year. The CT SCTG Management Team concluded that the results did not demonstrate new or unique needs. Based on that conclusion, the CT SCTG Management Team, in collaboration with the federal project officer, researched and reviewed other tools and processes that support schools in the installation, implementation, and sustainability of a MTBF. Additionally, they reviewed the work outlined by the Connecticut State Board of Education's document, *Ensuring Equity and Excellence for All Connecticut Students: The Connecticut State Board of Education's Five-Year Comprehensive Plan 2016-21*, and identified a number of areas related to improving systems of support for students. The CT SCTG Management Team subsequently selected several measures created by the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) to deploy as a facilitated process at the district and school levels to achieve outcomes identified in the CSDE document. In February 2019, training was provided for 29 employees from the CSDE, SERC, and RESCs (i.e., LEARN) in utilizing the NIRN Hexagon Tool, a measure that was designed to assess fit and feasibility when identifying and selecting new programs and practices to implement.<sup>6</sup>

With the alignment of the project to the *Five-Year Comprehensive Plan 2016-21*, the CT SCTG Management Team reviewed statewide discipline data to identify areas where the implementation or ongoing support of an MTBF could assist in the reduction of exclusionary discipline practices. A number of subgroups were identified, particularly districts that continued to utilize suspensions in grades PK-2 where Connecticut State Law severely restricts the practice, and in Public Charter Schools where suspension rates were commonly more than twice the state average. Sixteen districts and 11 charter schools that utilized exclusionary discipline practices at high rates were identified. The CSDE partnered with the Office of Early Childhood to offer a joint convening and subsequent webinar in the fall of

2017 around the use of exclusionary discipline practices in early childhood through grade two

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Exclusionary school discipline practices have a disproportionately adverse effect on students with disabilities, students of color, and low-income students. Black and Hispanic students, and students with disabilities, are especially vulnerable to being excluded from school as a result of implicit bias. Students who have been expelled or suspended are as much as ten times more likely to drop out of high school, experience academic failure and grade retention, hold negative school attitudes, and face incarceration. Reducing unnecessary suspensions and expulsions in Connecticut public schools is a critically important step in addressing achievement disparity.

~ Project Leader

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<sup>6</sup> Metz, A. & Louison, L. (2018). *The Hexagon Tool: Exploring Context*. Chapel Hill, NC: National Implementation Research Network, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Based on Kiser, Zabel, Zachik, & Smith (2007) and Blase, Kiser & Van Dyke (2013).

for the districts. The convening was attended by 94% (n=15) of the identified districts. Grant-funded TFIs and action planning support were offered to assess their current MTBF. The CSDE also partnered with the Turnaround Office, the Office of Student Supports, and SERC to host a joint convening in June 2018 which was attended by 73% (n=8) of the identified charter schools. Individualized technical assistance was provided, and a protocol for providing support to schools and/or districts that meet specific criteria for use of exclusionary discipline practices was developed. Feedback gathered from surveys indicated that participants found the convening to be informative and productive, with several participants noting that they appreciated the individualized attention provided to their school. Project leaders reported that they found this work with exclusionary discipline practices to represent a significant step in addressing the achievement gap in Connecticut, as students of color are often more vulnerable to such practices as a result of the effects of implicit bias. Additionally, as a result of this work, six of the identified charter schools will be receiving technical assistance in establishing SWPBIS during the 2019-2020 school year.

## Coordination and Alignment

*To build a system of collaboration across the state of Connecticut in order to integrate initiatives, policies, and grants focused on positive school climate and safety efforts.*

As a result of the CT SCTG, positive steps have been taken to build systems of collaboration for aligning school climate improvement efforts and for efficiently leveraging existing supports in the state.

As noted earlier in this report, the coordination and alignment element of the CT SCTG was the least defined element, with the Management Team continually updating and refining their collaboration efforts to adjust to changing priorities and initiatives within the state. While success in this area was less tangible, project leaders described a number of accomplishments that have led to progress with building better systems of collaboration regarding school climate efforts. A snapshot of these successes and corresponding challenges are described below, organized by the four major activities that were undertaken.

**CSDE Annual Convenings:** *CSDE educational consultants participated in annual convenings to work on various school climate, MTBF, health, and school safety grants.*

Over the course of the grant, CSDE Annual Convenings promoted increased awareness of various initiatives across the CSDE consultants, and sparked conversations between consultants around collaboration in supporting districts. These connections led to the development of a crosswalk document which was most recently updated in 2018, that identifies the supports currently offered by the CSDE to LEAs across the state to address areas such as school climate, MTSS, and mental health. Project leaders noted that the CSDE Annual Convenings occurred during the first four years of the grant and concluded in 2018, when efforts were refocused on establishing a School Discipline Collaborative.

**Alignment Meetings:** *Regular meetings occurred between SERC TA providers and CSDE consultants to more effectively align CT SCTG support with complementary initiatives occurring in the CSDE.*

Regular “alignment” meetings provided valuable opportunities for CSDE and SERC consultants to provide feedback to each other and to collaborate in developing ways to support SWPBIS implementation in the state. CT SCTG leaders noted specific examples of positive outcomes of this collaboration, including a stronger connection between the CT SCTG and the CT Safe Schools/Healthy

Students (SS/HS) grant. This resulted in SCTG TFIs being conducted in SS/HS schools. Additionally, alignment meetings served as an impetus for CT SCTG technical assistance providers to receive training in complementary initiatives, such as restorative practices and the Team-Initiated Problem Solving (TIPS) process. Most recently, these meetings led to the alignment of the CT SCTG with the *CSDE Five-Year Comprehensive Plan 2016-21*, which has resulted in partnerships with the Office of Early Childhood, the Turnaround Office, and the Office of Student Supports to address suspensions and expulsions in high-risk districts and charter schools; the development of a protocol for discipline data review and action planning; as well as the establishment of a Scientific Research-Based Intervention (SRBI) Advisory Council. Overall, project leaders felt the alignment meetings provided meaningful opportunities for the CT SCTG Management Team to be more explicit and targeted with the grant's LEA support.

**Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative:** *Stakeholders with a diverse range of expertise in the fields of education, law, public policy, youth development, and community leadership met to discuss school discipline policy, systems, and disproportionality.*

The Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative was initially conceptualized as a result of discussions during CSDE Annual Convenings that identified a need to address school discipline policies and practices. It was established to address alignment of school discipline policy with other related initiatives, to make meaningful connections across systems regarding policy development, and to address challenges related to transitions in state government. The broad overarching goal of the Collaborative is to advise the Commissioner of Education and State Board of Education on strategies for transforming school discipline in Connecticut, ultimately leading to a reduction in the overall and disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline in Connecticut schools. The Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative is comprised of individuals representing a variety of sectors, including education, government, law, research, and community-based organizations. Meetings were held in October 2018, February 2019, and May 2019, and involved presentations facilitated by representatives from higher education, sharing of Connecticut school discipline data, and discussions around school discipline policy and practices. In addition, opportunities were provided for local school districts to share information on their approaches to addressing disproportionality through school discipline practices. Members of the Collaborative provided feedback on a *Position Statement on Reducing Disproportionality in Suspensions and Expulsions (Exclusionary Discipline)* that was adopted by the State Board of Education in February 2019. The CSDE is also currently working with members of the Collaborative to provide support to districts in addressing classroom discipline practices in grades PK-2, to develop an implementation tool to assist districts with the practical application of the responsibilities outlined in the *Position Statement*, and to work collaboratively with SERC to create a series on evidence-based classroom management strategies. The Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative has made considerable progress

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With the Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative, the CSDE has worked to promote and advance a systemic approach to positive and preventive school discipline by addressing districts' philosophies, policies, systems, practices, and structures.

~ Project Leader

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in engaging a variety of stakeholders to promote positive school discipline. Project leaders are hopeful that through continued work, a systemic approach will ultimately lead to a significant reduction in the use of exclusionary discipline practices in Connecticut.

**PBIS Collaborative:** *CT SCTG Management Team members served as active members of the CT PBIS Collaborative, which functions as a state-level leadership team for advancing PBIS training, coaching, and evaluation systems in the state.*

Finally, project leaders felt the involvement of CT SCTG Management Team members on the PBIS Collaborative was beneficial in helping the Collaborative to move forward with a more focused agenda and set of intended outcomes. Results of a survey conducted during the 2015-2016 school year promoted constructive discussions around identified strengths (e.g., communication, purpose and vision, and leadership) and potential weaknesses (e.g., decision-making processes, trust, and diverse representation) of the collaboration.<sup>7</sup> Project leaders felt the CT SCTG involvement helped the group to gain momentum, and reported that the Collaborative made significant progress during the 2015-2016 school year on an ambitious effort to develop a five-year CT PBIS Strategic Plan. However, according to project leaders, this work later slowed as a result of shifting priorities in the state, including reluctance on the part of the CSDE to promote a single framework. Currently, the PBIS Collaborative is planning to reconvene when current TOT members have completed training so that they may participate in the group. Project leaders were cautiously optimistic that the Collaborative can continue to be central in supporting multi-tiered systems in Connecticut.

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<sup>7</sup> The survey conducted was the Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory (Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001).

# IMPACT ON LEA CAPACITY

## Evaluation Question

To what extent did the CT SCTG **enhance LEA capacity** for implementing and sustaining a MTBF?

The CT SCTG recruited six model schools to participate in the project and provided on-site support to each school over the course of three years. The professional development and technical assistance provided by SERC was well-received by school leadership teams, with team members indicating that they appreciated the opportunity to learn PBIS systems and practices from SERC's experienced technical assistance providers.

Data from the TFI indicated that, over the course of the grant, participating schools demonstrated significant growth, most notably with Tier I practices. Most schools also displayed a decreasing trend in ODRs and the use of in-school suspension.

## School Cohort Model

*To establish six model sites as exemplars of PBIS implementation through site-based coaching and technical assistance, as well as to improve school climate and student behavior outcomes at each of the sites.*

Six schools from Alliance Districts were selected as model sites, and each site received professional learning and technical assistance over the course of three years to implement a MTBF.

The CT SCTG selected six schools to participate in the school cohort model, which included three Cohort A schools beginning in 2015-2016 and three Cohort B schools beginning in 2016-2017. As seen in Table 9, the six schools were located in six different districts, all of which were Alliance districts. Three of the schools were elementary schools, two were middle schools, and one was a high school. Both cohorts received a total of three years of on-site technical assistance over the course of the project. By the end of the project, all six schools will have received at least 24.5 days of technical assistance, as was planned.

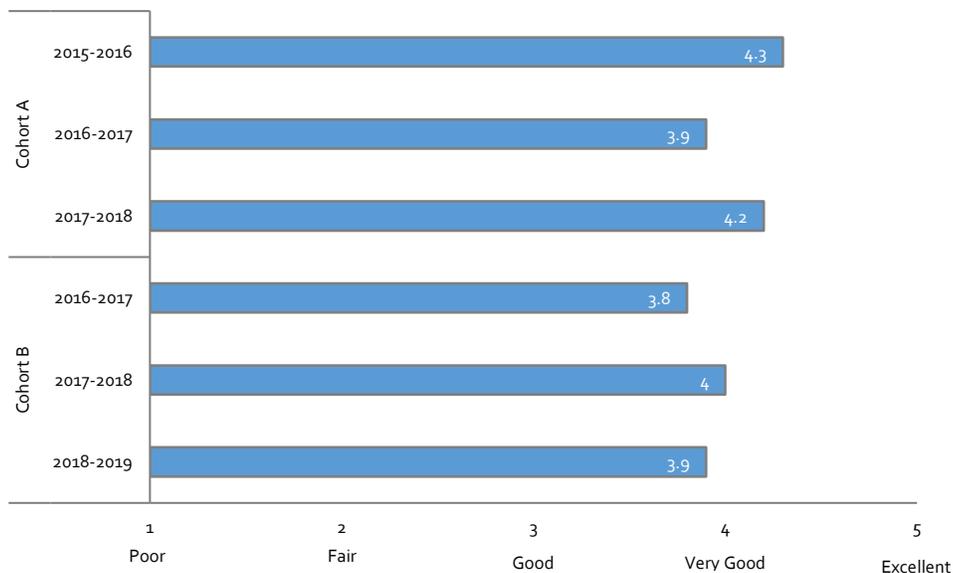
TABLE 7: PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS AND ON-SITE SUPPORT PROVIDED

	DISTRICT	SCHOOL	GRADE(S)	NUMBER OF ON-SITE DAYS		
				YEAR 1 (TARGET : 10.5 DAYS)	YEAR 2 (TARGET: 7.5 DAYS)	YEAR 3 (TARGET: 6.5 DAYS)
COHORT A 2015-2016	Bridgeport	Wilbur L. Cross School	PK-8	9.3 days	9 days	9.5 days
	Middletown	Keigwin Middle School	6	11.7 days	8 days	8.5 days
	Naugatuck	Naugatuck High School	9-12	11.7 days	8 days	8 days
COHORT B 2016-2017	Ansonia	John C. Mead School	PK-6	9 days	8 days	7.5 days
	East Hartford	Franklin H. Mayberry School	PK-6	10.5 days	8.5 days	8 days
	Danbury	Westside Middle School	6-8	12 days	7.5 days	8 days

School leadership teams consistently reported that the on-site technical assistance provided through the CT SCTG was high quality and effective and indicated that the support increased their understanding of and ability to implement a PBIS framework.

School leadership teams were asked to rate the overall quality of the on-site training provided through the CT SCTG as a part of end-of-year surveys. Both cohorts participated in the surveys three times, at the end of each year of support. As illustrated in Figure 11, average ratings of on-site training consistently fell around the *Very Good* indicator. Cohort A teams communicated strong satisfaction with the quality of TA provided in the first year, with an average rating falling between *Very Good* and *Excellent*. Average ratings for Cohort A decreased a bit in the second year, but then rose again in the third year. Cohort B teams rated their TA somewhat lower than Cohort A teams in the first year. Average ratings increased in the second year and then decreased slightly in the third year.

FIGURE 11: OVERALL RATINGS OF TA BY COHORT AND YEAR



School teams rated the quality of various characteristics of the training sessions using a five-point scale where 1 = *Not at all*, 2 = *Very little*, 3 = *Somewhat*, 4 = *Quite a bit*, and 5 = *To a great extent*. Table 8 shows the mean ratings for select items for Cohort A and Cohort B. As indicated, ratings were high, with all items receiving a mean rating of 4.0 or higher. Team members consistently reported that training sessions were well connected and logically sequenced, individualized to meet the needs of the school, and increased their knowledge and understanding of the implementation of a PBIS framework. They also indicated that the on-site support provided information and resources that teams used in their daily practice and assisted the teams with turn-keying PBIS knowledge to other school staff members. Patterns similar to those seen in overall ratings were evident in that Cohort A ratings were quite high in the first year, decreased in the second year, and then increased in the third year. Cohort B ratings remained relatively stable in some areas (i.e., visits were well-connected and logically sequenced and assisted our team in turn-keying the knowledge and expertise); whereas, they increased over time in other areas (i.e., visits were appropriately differentiated, increased my understanding of PBIS, and provided information that my team will use in everyday practice).

TABLE 8: MEAN RATINGS OF SURVEY ITEMS BY COHORT AND YEAR

THE VISITS HAVE...	COHORT A			COHORT B		
	2016	2017	2018	2017	2018	2019
Been well connected and logically sequenced.	4.7	4.1	4.5	4.2	4.3	4.2
Been appropriately differentiated and individualized to our school's particular context.	4.6	4.2	4.4	4.3	4.4	4.5
Increased my knowledge and understanding of implementation of a PBIS framework.	4.7	4.4	4.6	4.0	4.4	4.5
Provided information that our team used or will use in our everyday practice.	4.7	4.1	4.4	4.2	4.4	4.4
Assisted our team in turn-keying the knowledge and expertise to other school staff.	4.2	4.1	4.3	4.2	4.3	4.3

School team members also provided written comments as part of the annual surveys, and overall, the comments illustrated the participants' satisfaction with the CT SCTG support. Team members frequently discussed the effectiveness of the technical assistance providers, describing them as knowledgeable and supportive. They also communicated their appreciation for having time to meet as a team, differentiation of the framework for their particular setting, and noticing tangible positive effects on climate and morale in their schools as a result of the training. Limitations with time and resources were frequently noted to be barriers, as well as challenges with commitment and follow through from staff and administration. Several examples of respondents' comments are provided in Table 9.

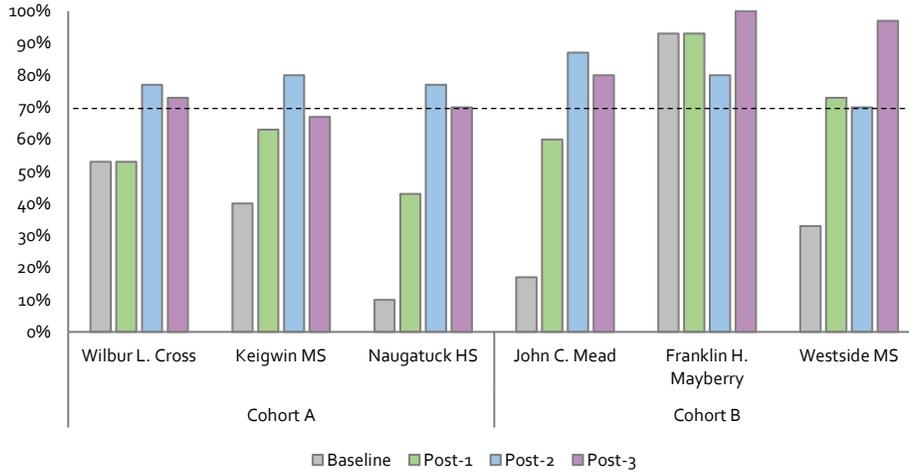
TABLE 9: PARTICIPANT COMMENTS REGARDING THE MOST EFFECTIVE ASPECTS OF TA

❖ <i>One strength is the use of research-based strategies that we then implement in our unique school setting. Not every school has the same challenges, so it is vital that what we use is flexible and not a simple one size fits all approach. The trainers are incredibly patient with the learning process.</i>	❖ <i>There has been consistent support of ideas and efforts put forth from the team along with ongoing thought-provoking discussions pertinent to the tasks at hand.</i>
❖ <i>I was extremely impressed by the positive impact it had on student climate but even more so by its impact on staff morale!</i>	❖ <i>It has been helpful to look at discipline differently. It's not about the punishment, but more about correcting the behavior and rewarding good behavior and actions.</i>
❖ <i>Analyzing real time data has assisted us in making data-driven decisions to improve or revise our practices.</i>	❖ <i>Having time to learn and work as a team within our school setting to design and implement the PBIS framework has been invaluable.</i>

CT SCTG schools demonstrated growth in Tier I practices as measured by the TFI, with most schools implementing Tier I PBIS practices with fidelity by the end of their on-site technical assistance. SCTG schools also made significant growth with implementation of Tier II and Tier III practices, though fewer schools reached optimal levels of fidelity.

The TFI was conducted four times in all schools at the following times: baseline, end of Year 1 (post-1), end of Year 2 (post-2), and end of Year 3 (post-3). Tier I systems and practices are considered to be implemented with fidelity as indicated by a score of 70% or above on the TFI. It was expected that by the post-2 administration that all schools would be implementing Tier I with fidelity. As indicated in Figure 12, all schools received a score of 70% or above on the Tier I scale of the post-2 administration of the TFI, thus meeting expectations. Additionally, most schools (n=5; 83%) maintained a score of 70% or above on the Tier I scale at the end of Year 3.

FIGURE 12: TIER I TFI SCALE SCORES BY SCHOOL



With respect to Tier II and Tier III systems and practices, fewer schools met scores of 70% or above by the end of their on-site technical assistance. More specifically, 50% (n=3) of schools met the threshold score for Tier II, and 17% (n=1) of schools met the threshold score for Tier III by the end of Year 3. This information speaks to the significant investment of time needed to establish implementation of a MTBF with fidelity.

TABLE 10: TIER II AND TIER III TFI SCALE SCORES BY SCHOOL

	School	Tier II				Tier III			
		Baseline	Post-1	Post-2	Post-3	Baseline	Post-1	Post-2	Post-3
COHORT A	Wilbur L. Cross	73%	69%	88%	92%	50%	41%	82%	85%
	Keigwin MS	30%	50%	35%	35%	38%	35%	59%	21%
	Naugatuck HS	23%	15%	35%	42%	6%	24%	44%	50%
COHORT B	John C. Mead	0%	0%	31%	69%	0%	53%	68%	32%
	Franklin H. Mayberry	92%	42%	77%	100%	88%	38%	35%	62%
	Westside MS	35%	27%	58%	77%	21%	12%	38%	47%

Participating schools collected school climate data from key stakeholders, and these data helped to drive discussions and support provided during CT SCTG on-site sessions.

Cohort A and Cohort B schools conducted school climate surveys with students annually in order to identify areas in need of support, as well as to measure improvements. All schools, with the exception of Franklin H. Mayberry School in years 1 and 2, utilized an adapted version of the Georgia Brief Student School Climate Inventory.<sup>8</sup> School climate surveys with families and staff were conducted during the first and third years using the Georgia Parent Survey and the Georgia School Personnel Survey. Franklin H. Mayberry School used a different suite of student, staff, and family surveys from Panorama Education during years 1 and 2, and surveys from the Georgia School Climate Suite during year 3. Items

<sup>8</sup> Wilbur L. Cross, John C. Mead, and Franklin L. Mayberry completed the elementary version. Naugatuck HS and Westside MS completed the middle/high school version. Keigwin MS completed the middle/high school version in Year 1, and the elementary version in Years 2 and 3. A comparison of this schools mean ratings should be interpreted within this context.

on the Georgia School Climate surveys are rated on a four-point scale where 1 = *Strongly disagree*, 2 = *Somewhat disagree*, 3 = *Somewhat agree*, and 4 = *Strongly agree*. Mean scores for student, staff, and family surveys are illustrated in Table 11 below. As indicated, mean scores remained relatively stable across the project, with overall changes in scores ranging from -0.2 to +0.2.

TABLE 11: SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEY DATA

	School	Student Mean Survey Scores			Staff Mean Survey Scores		Family Mean Survey Scores	
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 1	Year 3	Year 1	Year 3
COHORT A	Wilbur L. Cross	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.5	2.6	3.4	N/A
	Keigwin MS	3.2	3.1	3.0	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.3
	Naugatuck HS	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.9	3.1	3.1	3.2
COHORT B	John C. Mead	3.1	2.9	2.9	3.0	2.9	3.3	3.2
	Franklin H. Mayberry	N/A	N/A	3.0	N/A	3.1	N/A	3.4
	Westside MS	3.1	3.0	3.0	3.6	3.4	3.4	3.4

N/A indicates that the school did not collect the data using the specified instrument

Table 12 provides a snapshot of specific items on student surveys that were rated low (<3) during all three administrations, as well as those that were rated high (>3). As indicated, lower rated items generally focused on the behavior and responses of other students; whereas higher rated items tended to relate to staff behavior and school policy.

TABLE 12: EXAMPLES OF ITEMS RATED CONSISTENTLY LOW OR CONSISTENTLY HIGH

School	Lower Rated Items (Mean Ratings Consistently <3.0)	Higher Rated Items (Mean Ratings Consistently >3.0)
Wilbur L. Cross	Students treat each other well.	My school wants me to do well.
	Students in my class behave so that teachers can teach.	My school has clear rules for behavior.
Keigwin MS	Students in my class behave so that teachers can teach.	My school has clear rules for behavior.
	Students in this school respect differences in other students (for example, if they are a boy or girl, where they come from, what they believe).	My parents or the people who take care of me feel welcome at my school.
Naugatuck HS	Students at this school will try to stop students from insulting or making fun of others.	Teachers treat me with respect.
	There are groups of students in my school who exclude others and make them feel bad for not being a part of the group.	My parents/guardians are made to feel welcome at this school.
John C. Mead	I feel like I do well in school.	Teachers treat me with respect.
	Students treat each other well.	In my school, there are clear rules against hurting other people (for example, hitting, pushing, or tripping).
Westside MS	Students are frequently recognized for good behavior.	My school sets clear rules for behavior.
	There are groups of students in my school who exclude others and make them feel bad for not being a part of the group.	Teachers treat me with respect.

Additionally, all six schools conducted the Welcoming Walkthrough as a pre- and post-measure. The Welcoming Walkthrough is a self-assessment process where staff, families, and the community rate the schools' invitingness. Results of the school climate surveys and Welcoming Walkthroughs were

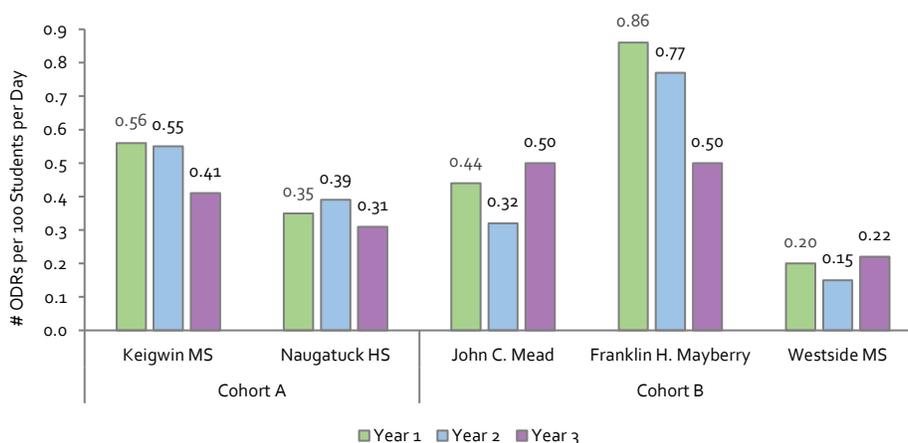
discussed during CT SCTG on-site meetings to help each school determine targeted areas of focus moving forward.

Improvements in school climate were also measured by student behavior outcomes. Pre-post data on office discipline referrals and suspensions indicate that most schools exhibited notable improvement in these areas.

Student behavioral outcomes served as an additional measure of school climate. CT SCTG schools monitored this information with the School-Wide Information System (SWIS), an online platform that tracks the schools’ office discipline referrals (ODRs), in-school suspensions (ISSs), and out-of-school suspensions (OSSs).

As indicated in Figure 13, analysis of ODR data over the course of the project indicates that outcomes were generally favorable, with the majority of schools (n=3; 60%) demonstrating an overall decrease in ODRs per 100 students per day. Franklin H. Mayberry School, in particular, demonstrated a significant and incremental decrease in ODRs each year over the course of the project, with a 42% overall decrease in ODRs evident when Year 1 is compared to Year 3. In contrast, John C. Mead School and Westside Middle School demonstrated slightly increasing or stable trends in ODRs.

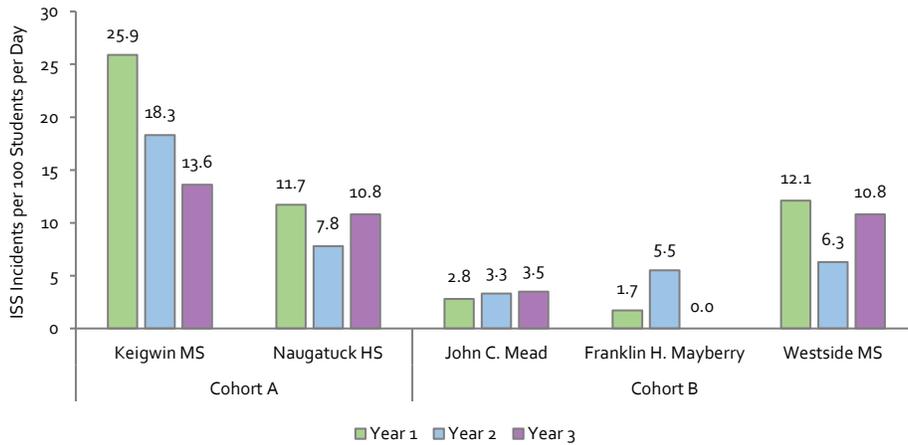
FIGURE 13: ODRs PER 100 STUDENTS PER DAY



Wilbur L. Cross School did not consistently use SWIS; therefore, data is not available.

As illustrated in Figure 14, analysis of ISS incidents over time also indicated favorable outcomes over the course of the project. Most schools (n=4; 80%) demonstrated an overall decreasing trend in ISS incidents per 100 students per day over the course of the project. A slight increasing trend in ISS incidents was evident for just one school (John C. Mead School).

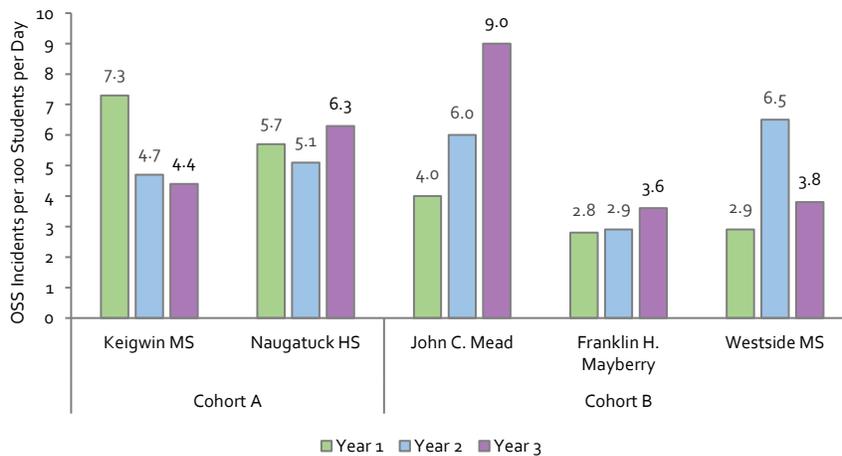
FIGURE 14: ISS INCIDENTS PER 100 STUDENTS PER DAY



Wilbur L. Cross School did not consistently use SWIS; therefore, data is not available.

According to Figure 15, analysis of OSS data was somewhat less favorable, with 4 out of 5 schools (80%) demonstrating an increasing trend in OSS incidents per 100 students per day over the course of the project. An overall decreasing trend in OSS incidents was only evident for Keigwin Middle School; however, the change was significant, with incidents decreasing by 40% over the course of the project.

FIGURE 15: OSS INCIDENTS PER 100 STUDENTS PER DAY



Wilbur L. Cross School did not consistently use SWIS; therefore, data is not available.

When reflecting on the School Cohort Model, project leaders noted that providing training on-site provided invaluable opportunities to see the schools in action, thus potentially leading to more individualized and effective support. The importance of supporting the schools in building their teams, as well as arranging common planning time for Tier I and advanced tiers groups was highlighted. Finally, specific factors, such as administrator participation and dedication to the process, as well as flexibility in the scheduling of training, were noted to be important factors related to the success of the model.

## SUMMARY

The CT SCTG project represents a five-year, significant and strategic effort to positively impact school climate and behavioral outcomes of students in Connecticut schools. Specific strategies were utilized to promote capacity at both the state and LEA levels to implement and sustain MTBFs in schools and districts. This included a strategic effort to increase the number of high-quality MTBF trainers in the state, to collect statewide data on the sustainability of PBIS, to build a system of collaboration within and across state agencies, and to assist a small number of schools in initiating implementation of SWPBIS. In planning for sustainability after the conclusion of the grant, all project activities, with the exception of the TOT program, will receive continued funding under Indicator 4 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

The CT SCTG has played an integral role in significantly increasing the CSDE's capacity for supporting the broad-scale implementation of a multi-tiered behavioral framework (MTBF). To date, the NEPBIS TOT program has endorsed 13 high-quality trainers who can deliver effective and meaningful PBIS support to schools and districts in Connecticut, with an additional 10 trainers expected to receive endorsement in the near future. TOT participants have consistently provided positive feedback on the program, reporting that it has increased their knowledge of PBIS, as well as their desire to provide PBIS coaching and support.

The project successfully conducted a needs assessment of MTBF in more than 175 schools in the state, providing important information on the current status of PBIS implementation in Connecticut. According to results of the assessment, levels of implementation across the state are somewhat variable, highlighting the importance of planning for and supporting sustainability. Tier I practices throughout the state are generally strong, with Tier II and Tier III representing areas of greater need. This information has been utilized to drive professional development and support provided to schools.

The CT SCTG Management Team worked to align the grant with efforts already in progress in the state related to school climate and safety. Through this work, the use of exclusionary discipline practices across the state was highlighted as an area of need. Support was provided to identified charter schools and districts to promote the reduction of such practices. A Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative was established to engage a variety of stakeholders in discussions around school discipline, policy, and disproportionality. Additionally, the CSDE developed a position statement entitled, *Reducing Disproportionality in Suspensions and Expulsions (Exclusionary Discipline)*, which was board-approved and distributed to all superintendents throughout the state.

Finally, the CT SCTG project successfully established a MTBF in six model sites. The professional development and technical assistance provided was well-received by school leadership teams. Over the course of the project, schools demonstrated significant growth, most notably with Tier I practices, as well as a reduction in office discipline referrals and in-school suspensions. In sum, the CT SCTG has taken great strides in supporting and promoting implementation of MTBFs across the state, while actively planning for sustainability and adapting the approach and framework to align with competing initiatives and relevant areas of need. The CT SCTG project has created actionable tools, systems, and processes that will continue to assist Connecticut schools in utilizing MTBFs to support the learning of all students.