2023
ANNUAL REPORT

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The Building Effective Supports for Teaching (BEST) Project reports three times a year on progress in the areas of reach, process, capacity, fidelity, and outcomes of our work in Vermont's schools. This Annual Report summarizes all activities during the 2022-2023 school year (July 2022- June 2023) including an Action Plan for Sustainability for the 2023-2024 school year. This action plan builds upon current implementation and supports future sustainability.

The BEST Project has expanded over the past year, using the MTSS framework as the structure for promoting all that we do. We have broadened our training, technical assistance, and resources to meet the growing concerns of students, staff, and families/caregivers' social, emotional, and behavioral (SEB) learning, well-being, and mental health (MH). This Annual Report now includes all of what the BEST Project offers, with PBIS as a central component.

The BEST Project is diligently engaged in strengthening and transforming our systems and practices to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion to achieve equitable outcomes for all students (Commitment to Equity).

PBIS, tailored to a school community, provides a continuum of supports that, when implemented with fidelity and with equity at the center, leads to positive academic and behavioral outcomes.

The BEST Project uses a variety of data points to track **reach** throughout Vermont, details our **process** of implementation and efforts to build **capacity**, monitor **fidelity** of implementation, and document outcomes.

In this report, we incorporate the following quantitative and qualitative data as part of the annual evaluaiton of implementation efforts.

Process

To measure the **reach** of the BEST Project in Vermont, we report on:

- **Number of schools/districts implementing or exploring PBIS**
- **Online presence**

To evaluate our **process** of training schools in Vermont:

- **Number of trainings offered by the BEST Project**
- **Number of training participants**
- **Training satisfaction rates**
- **Qualitative feedback provided from our training attendees**

To evaluate our **capacity**, we report on:

- **Number of VTPBIS TA Providers, coaches, and trainers**
- **Number of schools that have connected with a coach**
- **Special projects and grants the BEST Project works on**

To evaluate the **fidelity** to the PBIS implementation process:

- **The measures that schools are required to complete annually, are:**
    - **Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI)**
    - **Self-Assessment Survey (SAS) and/or School Climate Survey (SCS)**

To evaluate **outcomes** we report on:

- **Student Behavior Observations**
- **School Climate Survey (SCS)**
- **Self-Assessment Survey (SAS)**
- **Use of the School-wide Information System (SWIS) equity reports**
- **School Acknowledgments**

Results

In the past year, the BEST Project reached out to schools with awareness of and sensitivity to the ongoing challenges in Vermont education right now: staff turnovers, staff vacancies, and other lasting effects from the pandemic. We shared relevant information and resources. We provided technical assistance and coaching. We made professional learning opportunities accessible through virtual training – both synchronous and asynchronous – as well as in person.

Furthermore, BEST Project staff actively partnered with colleagues from the Vermont AOE VTmtss Team, the Vermont Department of Mental Health (DMH), the Vermont Restorative Approaches Collaborative, Project AWARE implementers, and Early MTSS/Pyramid Model developers/trainers. We also maintained strong partnerships with all of Vermont's supervisory unions/districts (SUs/SDs), and schools.

Results in this section reflect five categories of evaluation:

REACH

PROCESS

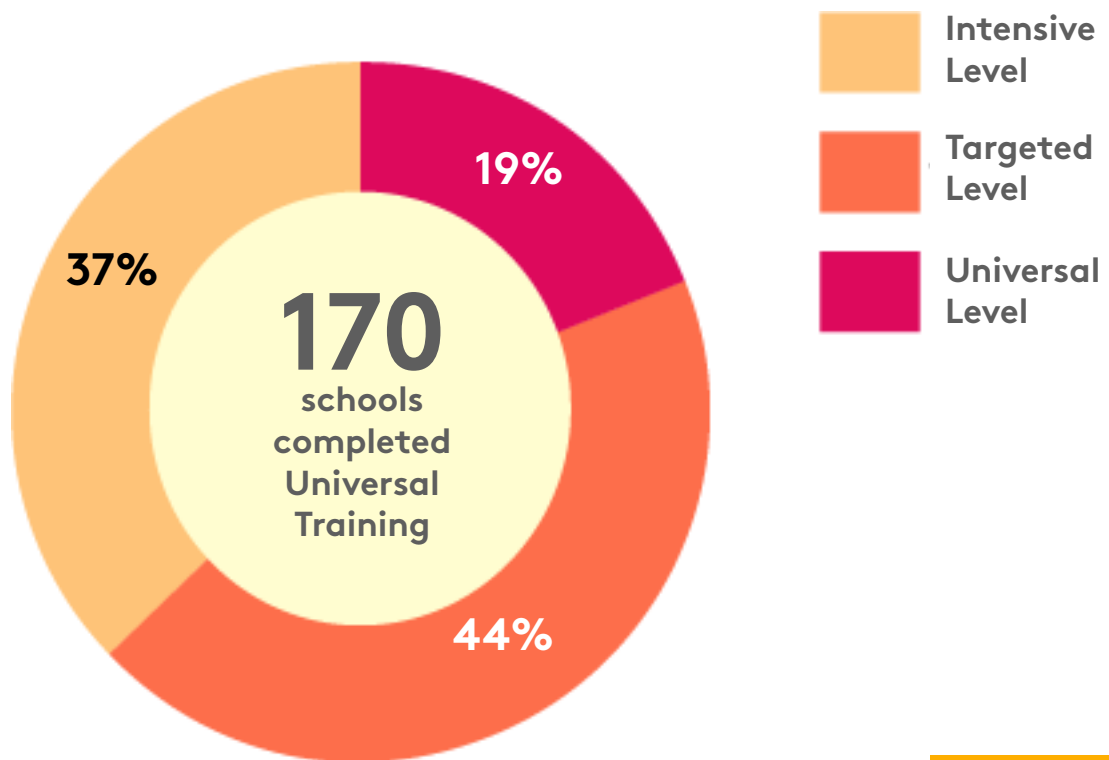## FIDELITY

CAPACITY

OUTCOMES

REACH

The BEST Project currently supports 170 schools in 50 SUs/SDs to implement PBIS with the goal of achieving social, emotional, behavioral, and academic success for all students.

This year, the BEST Project offered VTPBIS Core Trainings in March and at the 2023 BEST/VTmtss Summer Institute in June. As a result of both professional learning opportunities, two new schools received training at the Universal Level, 10 schools received training at the Targeted Level, 15 schools received training in Refreshing, Enhancing, and Deepening Universal PBIS, and six schools received training at the Expanding and Enhancing Targeted Level Interventions.

All VTPBIS schools start their implementation journey by attending the Universal training to implement practices developed to support *all* students. Once these practices are in place with fidelity, schools decide to advance in developing Targeted and Intensive systems and interventions to support students with greater needs.

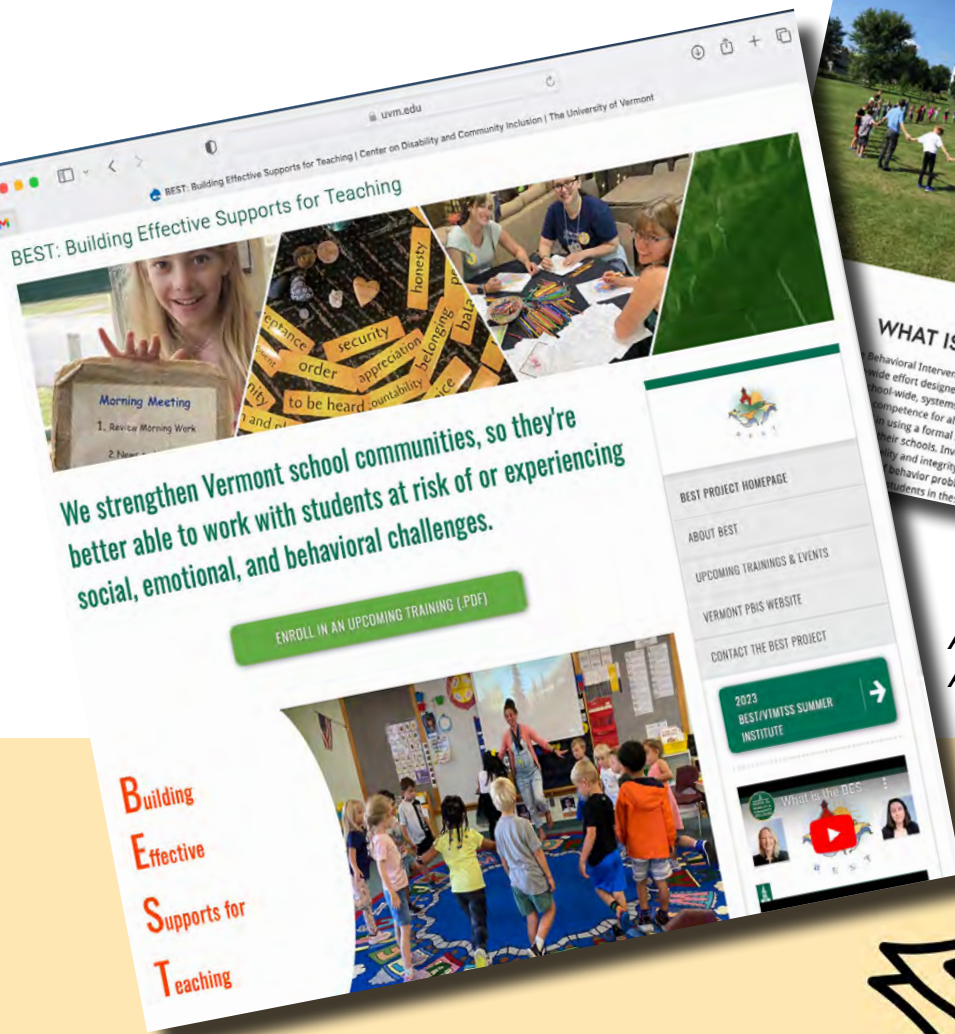While all 170 schools have completed the Universal Training, 19% have opted to stay at the Universal Level, 44% have moved on to receive training at the Targeted Level, and 37% have received training to implement individualized interventions at the Intensive Level.

Figure 1: Schools by Level of Implementation

37%

19%

44%

170
schools completed Universal Training

Intensive Level

Targeted Level

Universal Level

Online Presence

The BEST Project reached a large audience through a twice-monthly newsletter (BEST Project Updates) and monthly reminders (VTPBIS Monthly Reminders) sent out through MailChimp and websites.

Above, PBISVermont.org.
At left, go.uvm.edu/thebestproject

2023:

# of email subscribers:

1,920

of *BEST Project Updates* sent:

31

of *VTPBIS Monthly Reminders* sent:

12

of website visitors:

16,378

of website views:

37,191

REACH

The BEST Project activities of the past year adhered to the goals that were established in the SY 23 Action Plan for Sustainability. We list specific goals and action steps from the 2022-2023 school year below.

GOAL 1
Continue centering equity in PBIS

We continued our focus on centering equity within PBIS. While we maintained our VTPBIS Commitment to Equity and took pride in our accomplishments this year, we also recognized that there will always be more work to do in this area.

During this past year, we prioritized and ensured equity that the Team centered equity in both professional learning *for* the Team and *by* the Team in the following ways:

- The State Team shifted language to be more culturally responsive and inclusive.

- Training evaluation surveys assessed whether or not participants felt trainings addressed diversity, equity, and inclusion issues. Please refer to the graphs under the heading BEST/VTmtss Summer Institute.

- BEST/VTmtss Summer Institute featured both a keynote and a strand on equity. In addition, the four VTPBIS strands centered on equity within the training.

- All trainers embedded equity considerations into professional learning opportunities for schools, such as Access, Representation, Meaningful Participation, and High Outcomes.

- We created and shared additional Resources on enhancing student and family/caregiver voice with schools.

- We supported Vermont schools using SWIS (School-wide Information System) in assessing disproportionality in school discipline using SWIS equity reports.

- Many districts and schools adapted their PBIS Framework to include an equity lens and continue to prioritize this work.

> *"We are lucky to work in an atmosphere in which school improvement is the norm, and folks talk about what they see and what they wish they saw habitually. These conversations often uncover our implicit biases."*
>
> *—NewBrook Elementary*

"We are lucky to work in an atmosphere in which school improvement is the norm, and folks talk about what they see and what they wish they saw habitually. These conversations often uncover our implicit biases."

—NewBrook Elementary

"Our two state-level PBIS coaches ensured that diversity, equity, and inclusion was a common theme throughout our work this past year. Additionally, when analyzing data, our Universal team (and the whole staff on our two data days) looked at diversity, equity, and inclusion as a lens through which we viewed data... One in six students at [our school] identify as Abenaki, which has been a historically marginalized population. We have been particularly mindful to analyze days comparing this subgroup and to think about behavior supports that might be necessary as well as creating an awareness of staff. As a result of the higher than average number of referrals from this group, we have added supports such as art therapy (a preferred Abenaki strategy) to our repertoire."

—Swanton Elementary School

"[We] accessed the school DEI coach on several occasions to review specific situations or events that had occurred to get feedback and guidance on equitable practices. Our DEI coach was also a member of the PBIS targeted team, and gave important and necessary perspectives to ensure equitable discipline practices were being followed."

—Allen Brook School

PROCESS

GOAL 2
Ensure Access to Relevant and Accessible Resources and Trainings

The BEST Project offered a comprehensive calendar of in-person and online Professional Learning events to meet the multiple and diverse needs of schools during this time. We made sure that all training materials were relevant and accessible.

This year, 1,047 participants attended 23 relevant learning events, and reported a high level of satisfaction, with an average participation satisfaction rate of 96.7% highly satisfied or satisfied.

Here is a list of accomplishments connected to this goal:

- Training evaluation surveys assessed whether or not participants felt trainings were accessible. Please refer to the graphs under the heading BEST/VTmtss Summer Institute.

- BEST Project staff actively participated in professional development on creating accessible resources and training materials.

- We embedded social-emotional learning and wellness learning opportunities in several trainings, ensuring inclusion for all.

- We provided webinars and in-person events to promoted the use of assessment and fidelity tools as well as student outcomes measures such as the TFI and School Climate Surveys.

- We continued to share accessible resources.

- We produced informational videos to help people access our materials through multiple formats.

23 trainings

1,047 participants

96% Highly Satisfied/ Satisfied

PROCESS

New Learning Opportunities

This past year, new offerings included:

REP
Resilience Education Program

A webinar on the [Resilience Education Program (REP)](#), a targeted intervention for students at risk for internalizing concerns, such as depression and anxiety.

3

[New strands at the BEST/ VTmtss Summer Institute:](#)

- *Experiential, Brain-based Approaches to Learning*
- *Vermont Early MTSS - Pyramid Model Implementation,* and
- *Proactive and Responsive De-escalation Strategies.*

[And many new workshops at the Institute!](#)

Annual VTPBIS Forum

The [Annual VTPBIS Forum](#) is the keystone professional development activity of the fall.

This past year, over 101 people from 56 schools attended this October event to share, collaborate with colleagues, and learn new ideas.

Gertrude Chamberlin principal Holly Rouelle delivered a very well-received and inspiring [keynote presentation](#) titled "Connections, Care, and Commitment – A PBIS Team Approach to Student and Staff Success."

The Forum offered participants 16 workshop sessions on a variety of topics and five Q+A sessions.

> *"This was very powerful for me in my new role in the district and gave me knowledge and confidence to move forward."*

"This session was so rejuvenating and therapeutic. Just what I needed for self-care."

"It was super helpful and eye-opening to see all the connections being made with PBIS and mental health."

PROCESS

The annual BEST/VTmtss Summer Institute

is the most significant professional development event of the year, providing four days of learning and sharing of evidence-based practices within a VTmtss Framework. This year's theme was "Nourishing our Roots: Deepening and Strengthening our Systems of Support for the Well-being of All."

381
participants

56
school teams

"The BEST conference is consistently the best conference. I have never attended and felt in any way disappointed or underserved in terms of learning opportunities. I'm very excited to attend next year."

PROCESS

The BEST Project collects evaluation data on the extent to which participants find the Summer Institute accessible and inclusive of content relevant to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Data over the years shows increased satisfaction in both of these areas. See Figures 2 and 3, right.
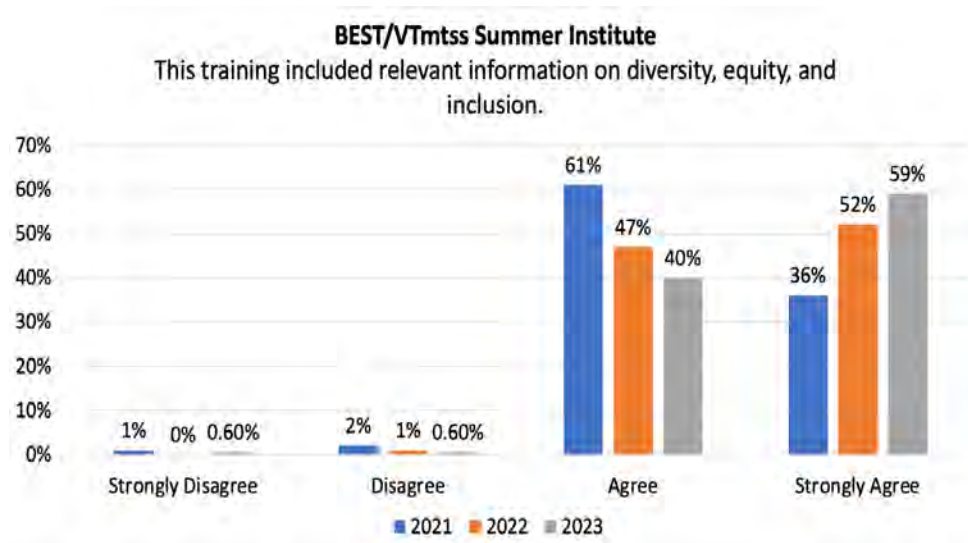
Figure 2 shows how participants responded to the statement, "This training included relevant information on diversity, equity, and inclusion" over a three-year timeframe. The scale covers: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree.

In SY21, 1% of BEST/VTmtss Summer Institute 1% of participants responded Strongly Disagree, 2% responded Disagree, 61% responded Agree, and 36% responded Strongly Agree.

In SY22, no one responded Strongly Disagree, 1% chose Disagree, 47% Agreed, and 52% Strongly Agreed.

In SY23, .6% responded Strongly Disagree, .6% responded Disagree, 40% responded Agree, and 59% responded Strongly Agree.
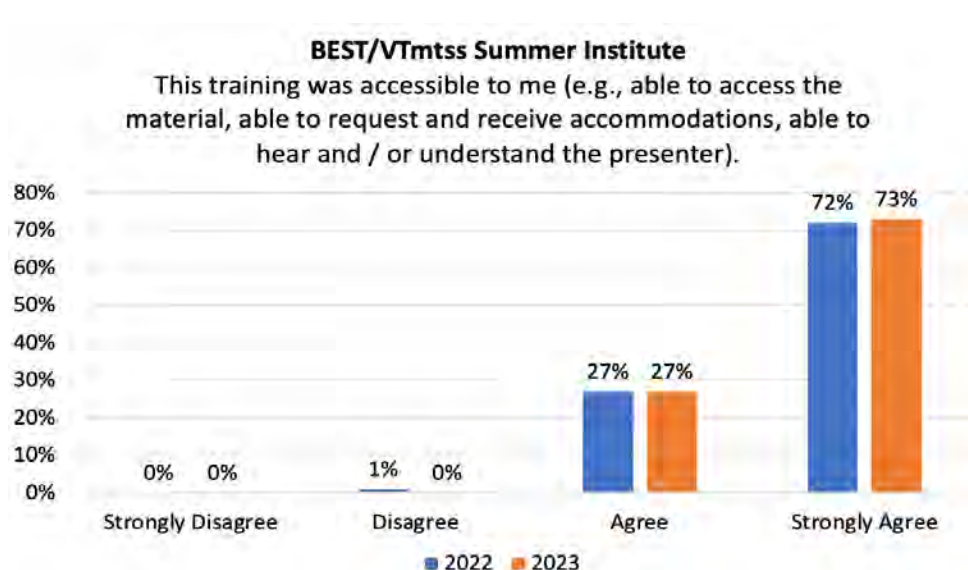
Figure 2

BEST/VTmtss Summer Institute
This training included relevant information on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
2021	1%	2%	61%	36%
2022	0%	1%	47%	52%
2023	0.60%	0.60%	40%	59%

Figure 3

BEST/VTmtss Summer Institute
This training was accessible to me (e.g., able to access the material, able to request and receive accommodations, able to hear and / or understand the presenter).

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
2022	0%	1%	27%	72%
2023	0%	0%	27%	73%

Figure 3 shows how participants responded to the statement: "This training was accessible to me" over two years. The scale was again Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree.

In SY22, none of the BEST/VTmtss Summer Institute participants responded Strongly Disagree, 1% responded Disagree, 27% responded Agree, and 72% responded Strongly Agree. In SY3, no one responded Strongly Disagree or Disagree, 27% responded Agree, and 73% responded Strongly Agree.

PROCESS

Feedback from BEST/VTmtss Summer Institute Participants

"There is so much learning that is obtained through in-depth training like this when you have the time to really dive in. Thank you for providing the information, time, and guidance to feel like I am leaving here today with knowing more ways to support my students individually and as a whole to have an environment where growth can be seen."

"I appreciate it all! I loved the overview, the tools, the time to process the tools, and the focus on implementation."

"I really liked how the trainers presented information to us and then gave us team time to apply that learning to a plan that we can implement in our school."

"Having time as a team to talk amongst ourselves about what was being discussed and presented by the speakers was very helpful.

Additionally, being able to speak and connect with colleagues from other schools to hear about what they are doing and how they have been implementing PBIS in their schools was helpful as well."

"The presenters were both engaging and able to answer all questions."

PROCESS

CAPACITY

The BEST Project has actively built the capacity to support SUs/SDs and schools by designing a system of supports that meet schools where they are. The system has embedded opportunities for feedback loops for continuous improvement and sustainability.
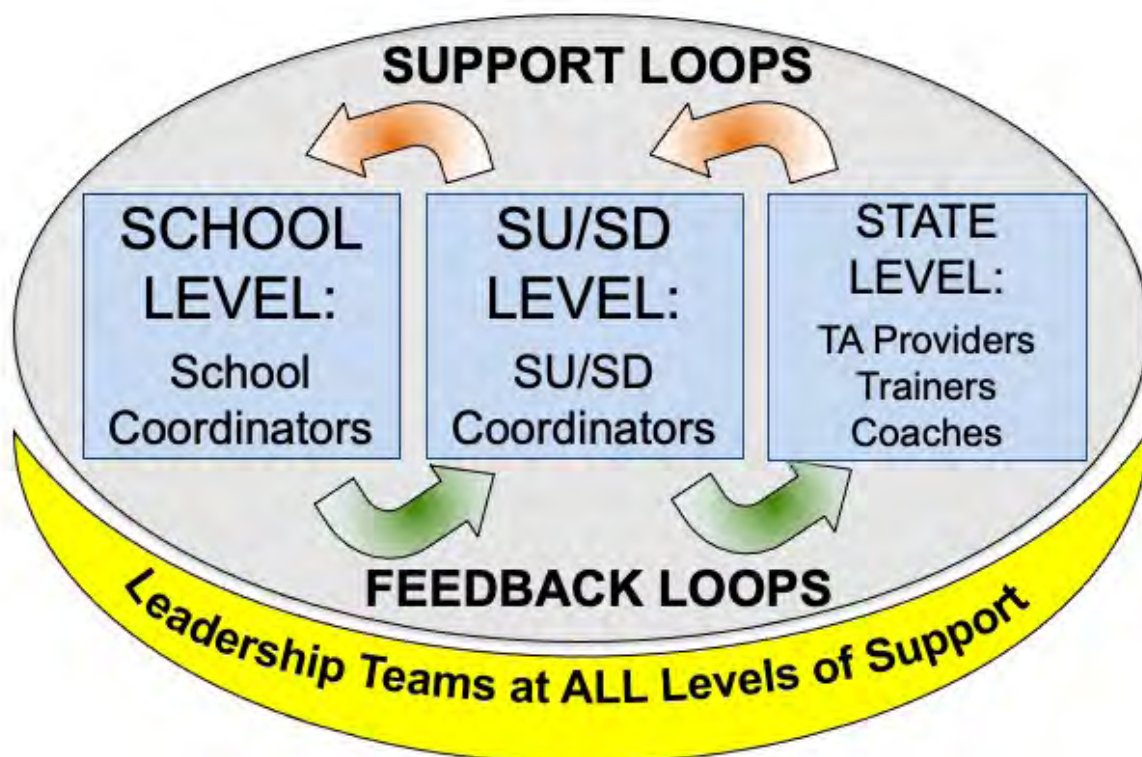
We intentionally strive toward increased use of technical assistance (TA) and coaching, both on-site and virtually.

In VTPBIS Systems of Support, leadership teams at three different levels take part in feedback and support loops.

At the school level, school coordinators provide feedback to coordinators at the SU/SD level; SU/SD coordinators in turn provide feedback to TA Providers, Trainers, and Coaches at the State level.

This feedback guides TA Providers, Trainers, and Coaches in offering support to SU/SD coordinators who in turn support school coordinators, thus completing the system of support loops.

Figure 4: VTPBIS Systems of Support

CAPACITY

Technical Assistance, Training, and Coaching

VTPBIS Technical Assistance Providers (TA Providers) navigate the process of exploring, implementing, and sustaining PBIS for schools and SUs/SDs. They offer this support through technology and/or 1-2 visits to the school. Our five TA Providers send VTPBIS Monthly Friendly Reminders to VTPBIS School, SU/SD coordinators, and administrators about topics relevant to their role. TA Providers also increase support around pre-training readiness to enhance schools' ability to build collective ownership among the school community.

Other TA support topics include data and evaluation support, current changes in PBIS, new leader orientation, system improvement, the identification of evidence-based practices, and implementation.

Sometimes SUs/SDs/schools determine that they need more in-depth coaching.

In 2022-2023, 10 VTPBIS State-Approved Coaches were available to support the fidelity of PBIS evidence-based practices and the development of local implementation capacity. This past year, 23 VTPBIS schools pursued coaching, up from 17 last year. Coaching topics included leadership support in promoting fidelity, providing support on overcoming implementation dips, PD on the revitalization of PBIS core features, supporting new administrators, coordinators, and specific data requests for assistance.

"[Our coach] was AMAZING at pointing us in the right direction, looking at our current work and providing suggestions, understanding the current state of our school, and acknowledging what was going right. I also appreciate that she held us accountable and pushed us to be better."

"[Our coach] is a wealth of information and any school would benefit from her guidance and observations. We'd love for her to be here always!"

"[Our coach] was critical to reaching our PBIS goal this past year."

CAPACITY

The BEST Project has a strong cohort of trainers that have expertise in all layers of the MTSS Framework as it relates to social, emotional, behavioral learning and well-being.

These trainers receive ongoing support to continue to develop relevant content.

To sustain the delivery of high-quality professional learning opportunities and to be responsive to local and statewide needs, the BEST Project engaged in the following activities:

- Organized monthly meetings with TA Providers to review data, examine relevant research, and identify strategies to gather input from the field.

- Hosted three state leadership team meetings with critical partners to collaborate on interagency initiatives and align efforts to disseminate information to the field regarding best practices in supporting the social, emotional, and behavioral (SEB) learning of all.

- Convened a group of state-wide trainers to explore best practices for professional development and discussed how to expand the capacity of trainers within the state.

- Remained abreast of legislative priorities and changes affecting the social, emotional, and behavioral (SEB) learning and mental health of all.

- Attended relevant professional development opportunities such as the Northeast PBIS Leadership Forum in Groton, CT, where BEST Project Co-Directors presented on Cultivating Collective Ownership and represented Vermont as members of the Northeast PBIS Advisory Group and the National State PBIS Leaders Network.

CAPACITY

Additional Projects

The BEST Project continued to successfully apply for grants that enhanced and expanded our work. The following highlights other projects.
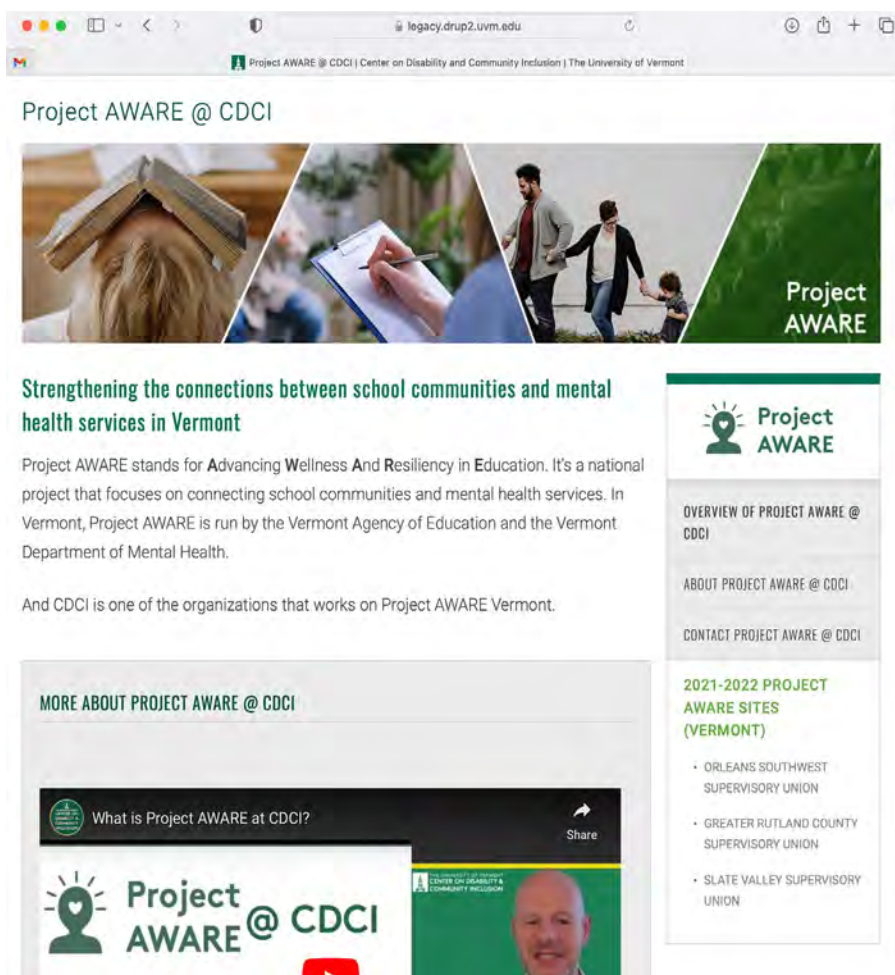
Project AWARE

As part of Project AWARE, a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) grant awarded to the AOE, the BEST Project continues to support three supervisory unions in building an Interconnected Systems Framework.

With consultation and support from national PBIS experts, VTPBIS provides training, technical assistance, and coaching on strategies to enhance PBIS with mental health support across the home, school, and community.

The three LEAs participating in Project AWARE have established District Community Leadership Teams (DCLTs) to:

1. identify and manage priorities for change;
2. develop and adapt roles of mental health clinicians to meet the needs across a continuum of supports; and
3. integrate student and family/caregiver voice into their existing systems.

At the conclusion of the project, DCLTs and schools are considering which elements of Project AWARE they want to sustain and how they will do so.
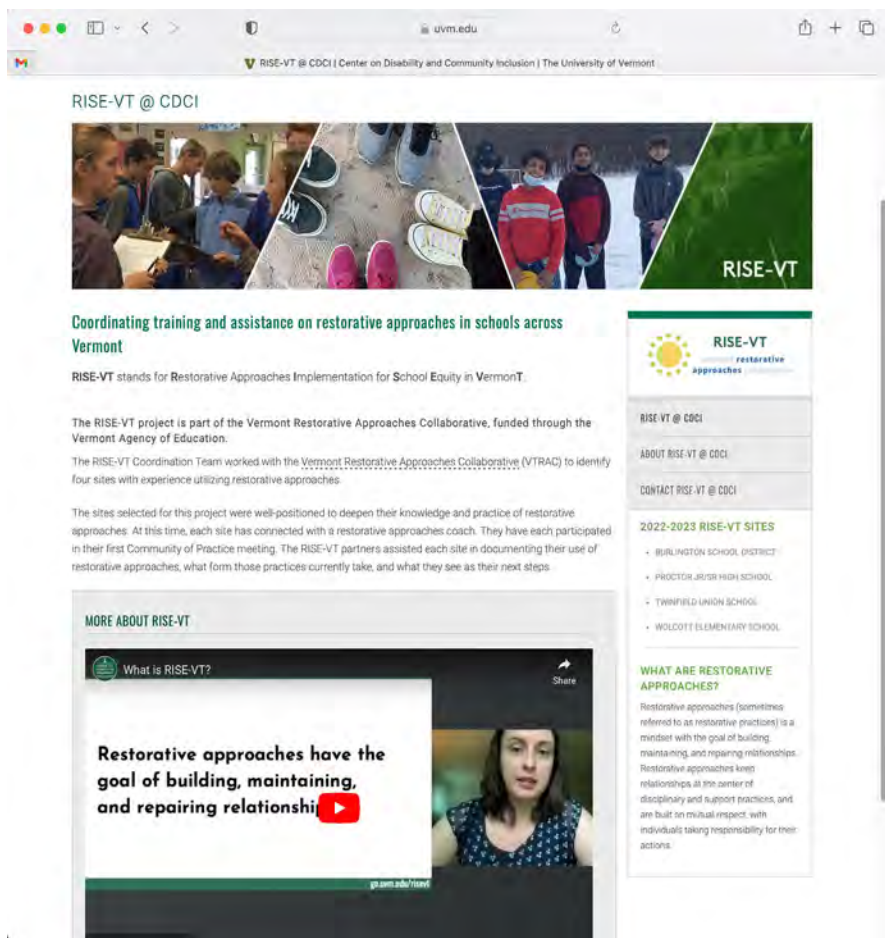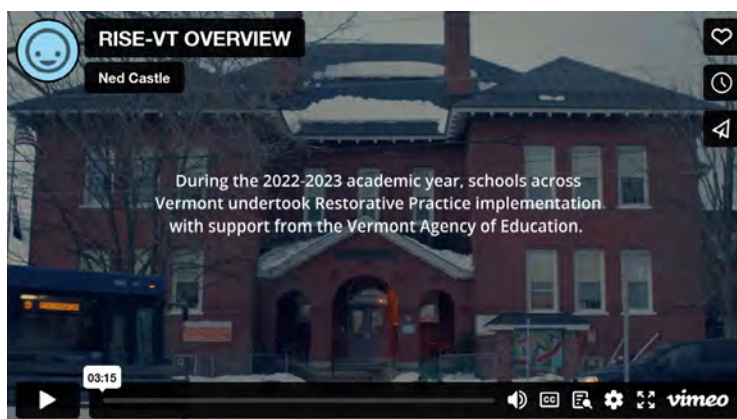
CAPACITY

RISE-VT

The BEST Project, in collaboration with UP for Learning, coordinated the delivery of training and technical assistance on Restorative Approaches (RA) in schools and school districts.

The project, RISE-VT (Restorative Approaches Implementation for School Equity in Vermont), funded by the Agency of Education (AOE), officially began on November 22, 2021, and the work concluded in January 2023.

More details about the project's accomplishments can be found in the final report (.pdf).

Products of this work include e-learning modules, videos from Vermont schools, a directory of restorative approaches trainers and coaches, and an updated website.

Above: As part of the RISE-VT work, the project produced a series of six videos showcasing restorative approaches work in schools across Vermont, including Twinfield Union High School, Proctor Jr/Sr High School, Wolcott Elementary and Hunt Middle School.

CAPACITY

VERMONT
EARLY MTSS
@ CDCI

Early Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

Starting in July 2022, the AOE is funding Pyramid Model professional development, technical assistance, and coaching opportunities for Universal Pre-K (UPK) sites. This is part of the Early Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) scale-up across Vermont.

The BEST Project has partnered with the national Pyramid Model Consortium (PMC) and local Pyramid 802 Plus coaches to carry out this work.

The project aims to promote policies and practices that advance equity, diversity, and the full inclusion and participation of each and every child enrolled in a public or private UPK classroom. Administrators, educators, and providers will increase their knowledge and skills through professional development to establish systems necessary to ensure high-fidelity implementation of evidence-based practices to support young children's social and emotional wellness, competence, and confidence. This professional development will build capacity at the state, regional, and local levels to promote scale-up and ultimate sustainability.

The project involves establishing a State Early MTSS Leadership Team, providing support and input from the Accountability and Continuous Improvement System (ACIS) team at the AOE, delivering professional development for administrators, educators, and providers, and providing technical assistance and coaching.

The BEST Project is also involved in introducing the Pyramid Model Implementation Data System (PIDS) which will play a critical role in scaling-up and sustaining the Pyramid Model in Vermont.

The BEST Project will work to intentionally align the Early MTSS/Pyramid Model and school-age PBIS.

To learn about current best practices in early education, BEST Project staff attended this year's National Training Institute (NTI) Conference.

PMC recently awarded an additional subcontract to the BEST Project to bring Early MTSS/Pyramid Model practices to Part C providers under the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) award. The project launched in May of 2023 and will continue into 2025.

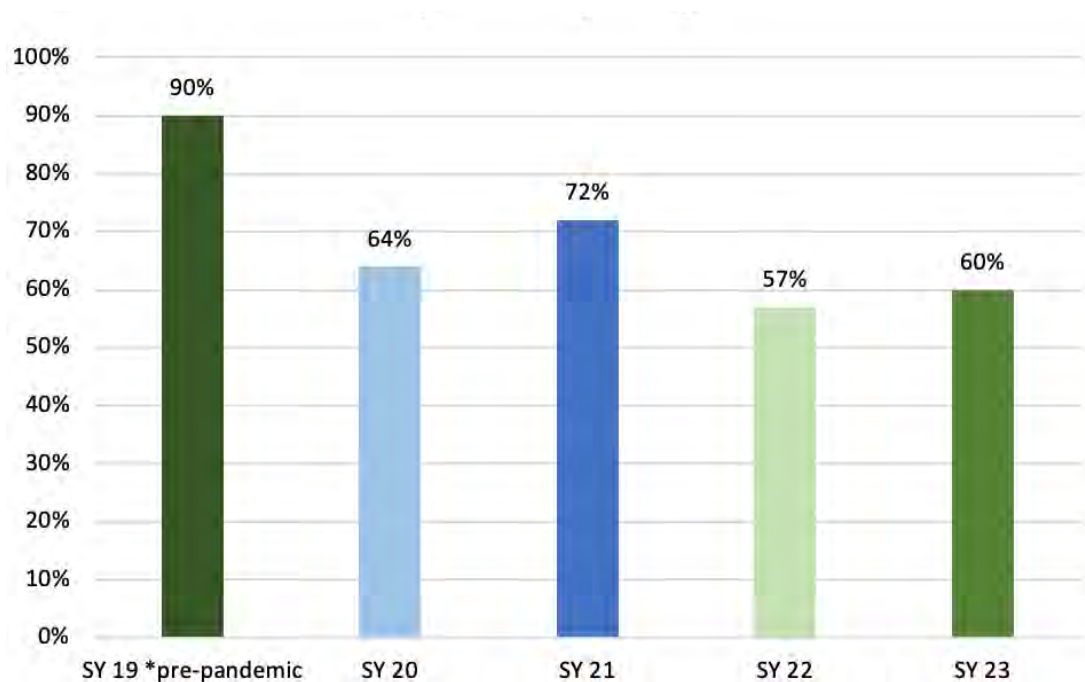CAPACITY

Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI)

Schools complete the Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) each year to efficiently assess PBIS implementation fidelity. School teams can use the TFI to assess fidelity at one, two, or all three tiers of PBIS implementation.

Schools must complete the TFI at each tier they are currently implementing.

Although we have not reached our pre-pandemic completion rate, VTPBIS schools continued to complete fidelity tools.

Many schools reported that they used the TFI assessment to celebrate accomplishments and identify areas needing improvement to develop comprehensive action plans.

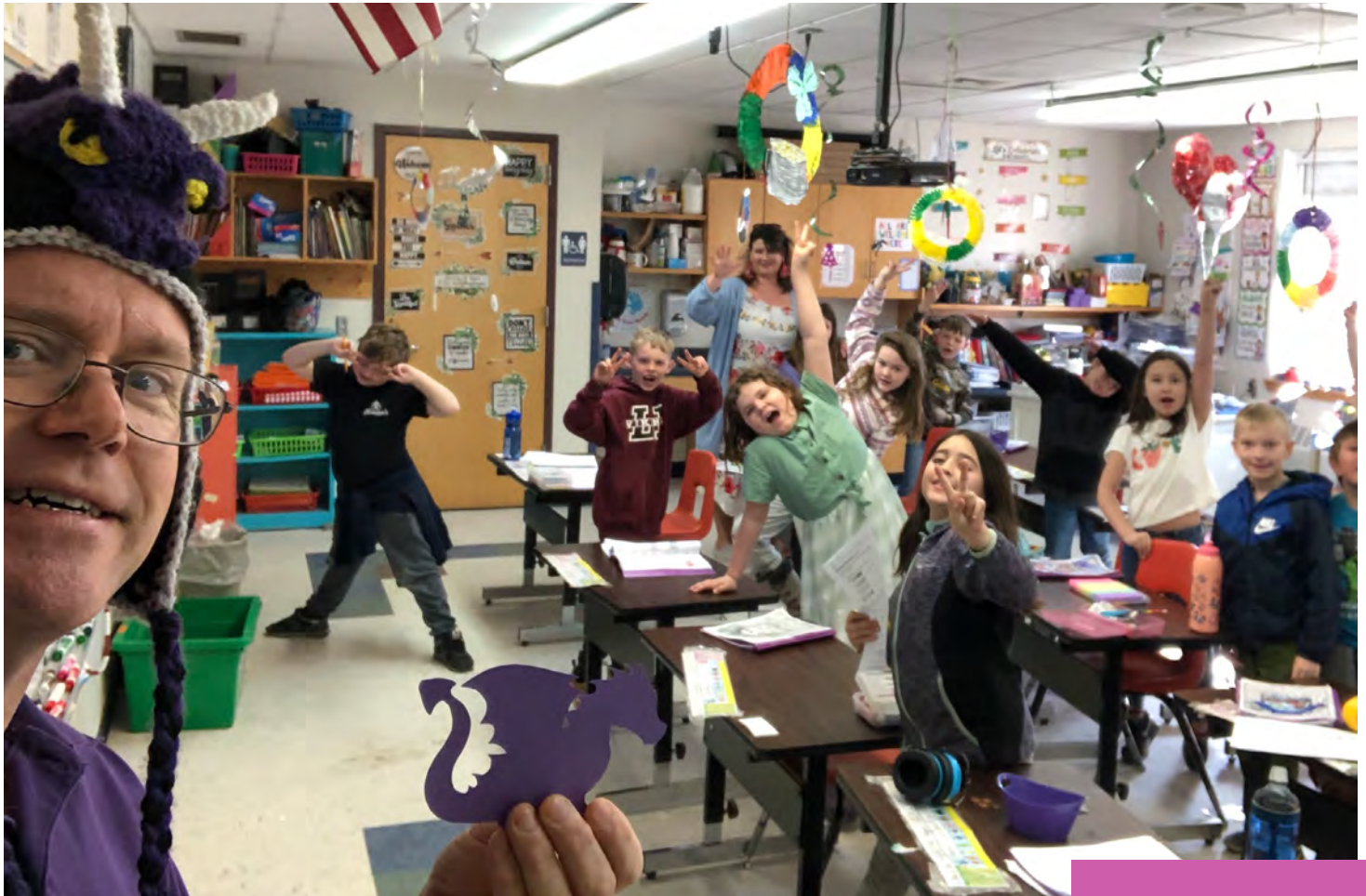*Figure 5: Tiered Fidelity Inventory Completion Rates*

In SY19, before the pandemic, 90% of schools completed the TFI. In SY20, the rate fell to 64%, and then increased to 72% in SY21. However, SY22 saw another drop in rates, down to 57%. This year, 102 (60%) of VTPBIS schools completed Tier I of the TFI.

On average, across the schools who completed the TFI, the highest rated items ("fully in place") at Tier 1 were:

- **Behavioral Expectations (Agreements):** The school has five or fewer positively stated behavioral expectations (agreements) and examples by setting/location for student and staff behaviors (i.e., school teaching matrix) defined and in place; and

- **Fidelity Data:** Tier 1 team reviews and uses school-wide fidelity (Self-Assessment Survey (SAS), Tiered Fidelity Inventory) data at least annually.

The lowest rated items ("not in place") on Tier 1 were:

- **Team Composition**: Tier 1 team includes a Tier 1 systems coordinator, a school administrator, a family member, and individuals able to provide (a) applied behavioral expertise, (b) coaching expertise, (c) knowledge of student academic and behavior patterns, (d) knowledge about the operations of the school across grade levels and programs, and for high schools, (e) student representation; and

- **Student/Family/Community Involvement:** Stakeholders (students, families, and community members) provide input on universal foundations (e.g., expectations, consequences, acknowledgments) at least every 12 months.

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Self-Assessment Survey (SAS) and/or School Climate Survey

Schools use the Self-Assessment Survey (SAS) to measure staff perceptions of the implementation status and improvement priority for school-wide, classroom, non-classroom, and individual student systems.

In the past year, given the option of completing the SAS and/or a school climate survey, 67 schools (39%) chose to complete the SAS.

Overall, 89 VTPBIS schools (52%) completed either the SAS, a school climate survey, or both. You can find outome data related to the School Climate Survey in the Outcomes section.

The BEST Project redesigned the VTPBIS Refreshing, Enhancing, and Deepening training to support schools in improving overall TFI and SAS/SCS scores.

The SY 24 Action Plan for Sustainability reflects these priorities.

"With our SAS results, we decided that we need to support our staff more with understanding the "why" for our PBIS practices. We have had all staff complete the mico-learning activity and will be reviewing it during our first staff meeting."

—Guilford Central School

"We learned that our PBIS team places the bar high for our school. While we are happy with the sustained efforts of our supportive school community and how far we've come in the decade we've been refining our PBIS practices, we had no trouble identifying areas where we still need to improve."

—Orchard School

FIDELITY

PBIS Works

Research shows that students, staff, and families/caregivers benefit when schools implement evidence-based practices within a PBIS framework.

Figure 6: Why Implement PBIS?

Improved Student Outcomes	Reduced Exclusionary Discipline	Improved Teacher Outcomes
↑ academic achievement ↑ prosocial behavior ↑ attendance ↑ emotional regulation ↑ social & academic outcomes for students with disabilities ↓ bullying behaviors ↓ rates of drug/alcohol abuse	↓ referrals ↓ suspensions ↓ restraint and seclusion ↓ racial inequities	↑ teacher efficacy & wellbeing ↑ teacher-student relationships ↑ student engagement & instructional time ↑ school culture & organizational health ↑ climate & safety

← When Implementing Positive Interventions & Supports with Fidelity →

References

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Bradshaw, C., Reinke, W., Brown, L., Bevans, K., & Leaf, P. (2008). Implementation of school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) in elementary schools: Observations from a randomized trial. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 31, 1-26.

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Simonsen, B., Britton, L., & Young, D. (2009). School-Wide Positive Behavior Support in an Alternative School Setting. Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions. https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300708330495

For a full list of citations related to PBIS Outcomes, visit References for the Evidence of PBIS.

In Vermont, the BEST Project looks at both quantitative and qualitative data to guide action planning. We looked at data showing student outcomes as well as teacher outcomes.

For this report, we chose not to compare outcomes across recent years due to the lasting effects of the pandemic. Instead, we are using this data to develop our Action Plan for the SY 24 school year. At the time of this report, state-level data on exclusionary discipline was unavailable. We aim to present outcomes-based exclusionary discipline data in a future report.

Student Outcomes

Behavior Observations

The BEST Project reviews the "major" interfering behaviors as reported on Behavior Observation and Data Forms (BODFs) (formerly called Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) in School-wide Information System (SWIS)).

In SY'23, the most frequently occurring major interfering behaviors are:

- Physical Aggression
- Defiance/Insubordination/Non-Compliance, and
- Abusive Language/Inappropriate Language/Profanity.

The behaviors listed align with what we are hearing from the field.

As a result, the BEST Project will prioritize professional development in proactive de-escalation strategies, relationship building, and social, and emotional learning in the 2023-2024 BEST/VTPBIS Professional Development Calendar (.pdf).

Additionally, the SY 24 Action Plan for Sustainability will prioritize student voice and input to further advance the reduction of these interfering behaviors.

School Climate

Schools implementing PBIS with fidelity will see improvements in school climate, as reported by staff, students, and families.

This year, the BEST Project encouraged schools to complete a school climate survey and provided training on a free online survey housed in PBIS Assessment. Some districts/schools created their own school climate survey or used another existing survey.

At least 33 VTPBIS schools completed a school climate survey for either staff, students, or families this year. (An additional 11 schools completed other versions of a school climate survey with scores unavailable to us).

Students rated their agreement with items on a scale of Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (4).

Based on school climate survey data from 22 elementary schools and 11 middle/high Schools, the chart below shows that on average, on a rating scale of 1-4, elementary school climate mean scores were 3.02, and middle/high school mean scores averaged 2.8.

The highest-rated elementary school climate survey items were:

- My school wants me to do well (3.6)
- There is an adult at school who will help me if I need it (3.4)

The lowest-rated elementary school climate survey items were:

- Students in my classroom behave so teachers can teach (2.4)
- I like school (2.6)

The highest rated middle/high school climate survey items were:
- I know an adult I can talk with if I need help (3.3)
- Teachers treat me with respect (3.2)

The lowest rated middle/high school climate survey items were:
- I feel my school has high standards for achievement (2.5)
- I like school (2.5)

OUTCOMES

Staff Outcomes

Self-Assessment Survey

In 2022-2023, staff perceived school-wide systems to be in place at an average of 55%.

The BEST Project will continue to support VTPBIS schools to strengthen their implementation by promoting our newly revised training to refresh, enhance, and deepen PBIS. It will include follow-up coaching.

School Climate Survey

This past year, 25 schools administered the personnel version of the PBIS School Climate Survey to get an understanding of how staff perceive school climate.

Staff rated their agreement with items on a scale of Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (4).

The overall mean scores for the personnel survey were 3.1.

The highest-rated personnel school climate survey items were:

- I get along well with other staff members (3.6)
- I feel safe when entering and leaving my school building (3.6)

The lowest-rated personnel school climate survey items were:

- Students at my school demonstrate behaviors that allow teachers to teach, and students to learn (2.3)
- At this school, parents frequently volunteer to help on special projects (2.4)

OUTCOMES

School Outcomes

Annual Acknowledgements

In previous years, the VTPBIS State team determined which schools were eligible for VTPBIS Merit and Exemplar status based on TFI completion and scores.

This year, the VTPBIS State Team invited VTPBIS schools that completed the TFI to nominate their school for an Annual Acknowledgement. Specifically, schools provided evidence of how they sustained their PBIS systems, data, and practices.

Schools were also encouraged to share data related to positive student social/emotional/behavioral/academic outcomes, including any information related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

This year, we recognized 43 schools that nominated themselves for their efforts. Schools receiving VTPBIS Annual Acknowledgement have two stars next to their school name on the last page of this report.

"We've learned that giving students an increased voice in school climate often brings more joy than we anticipated. The creation of our student council has allowed for students to feel more included in not only our PBIS efforts but also in our school community. We will continue to offer opportunities for student voice to be at the center of our work."

—Dothan Brook School

"Our school students and staff were particularly interested in PBIS this year, in part because we built it together. I believe that this process has made PBIS feel less like "tokens and celebrations" and more like a collaborative and cohesive effort in which we all have agency."

—Rick Marcotte Central School

VERMONT PBIS
School of Recognition

The University of Vermont

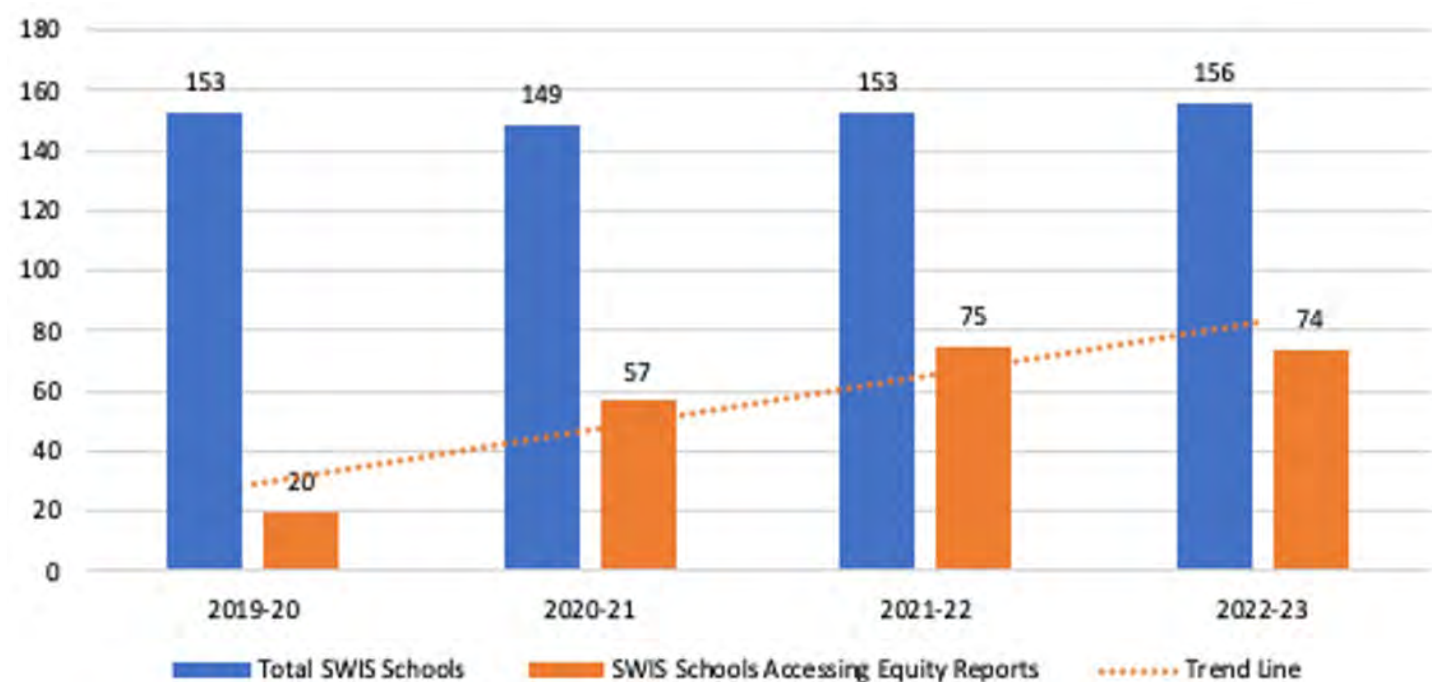VERMONT AGENCY OF EDUCATION

OUTCOMES

Equity Outcomes

The School-Wide Information System (SWIS) has a report that enables schools to examine disaggregated data and creates interpretive sentences for each graph to tell schools their data story.

Schools using SWIS can disaggregate by students' IEP status, gender, English Language Learner status, and race/ethnicity to uncover any areas of disproportionality.

Schools are increasingly accessing these reports, as shown in Figure 7.

In the 2019-2020 school year only 13% of Vermont schools using SWIS accessed equity reports, compared to 47% in 2022-2023.

Figure 7: Vermont Schools That Accessed Equity Reports in SWIS

In SY20, of 153 schools using SWIS, only 20 accessed the reports. In SY21, 149 schools used SWIS, but 57 of them accessed the reports. In SY22, of 153 schools using SWIS, 75 accessed the equity reports.

This year, 156 schools used SWIS, and 74 of them accessed the equity reports. This data shows how schools are increasingly using these reports.

OUTCOMES

Summary & Recommendations

Over the past few years, despite the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the BEST Project has consistently delivered high-quality training, technical assistance, and coaching support to Supervisory Unions/Supervisory Districts and schools across Vermont in implementing and sustaining evidence-based practices within a Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework.

The BEST Project and VTPBIS State Team are actively building Vermont schools' capacity to support all students, including those at risk of or who experience social/emotional/behavioral challenges, amids growing concerns about the well-being (W) of students and families/caregivers, as well as the increased awareness of and need for mental health (MH) support. To address the diverse needs of Vermont's schools, the BEST Project will continue to prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion, enhance the use of evidence-based practices with a focus on high rates of implementation fidelity, and expand the PBIS framework to include the integration and alignment of SEB/W/MH and Early Childhood. Furthermore, the BEST Project and VTPBIS State team are promoting the concept of excelling in a few key areas that will significantly enhance student outcomes The BEST Project has developed the following SY 24 Action Plan for Sustainability with input from national, state, and local partners and voices from the field.

"It is our pleasure to continue with school-wide efforts at every grade level in our school and we are proud to be part of Vermont PBIS. We value the time and effort that the BEST Project puts into their support of progress for schools across the state."

SY 24 Action Plan for Sustainability

GOAL 1:

Center diversity, equity, and inclusion

- Define the mission, vision, and membership of State Team to be more inclusive, culturally responsive, and equitable.
- Increase State Team capacity to support schools in using data to assess disproportionality interpreting ethnicity data for decision-making.
- Prioritize and increase professional learning on DEI for VTPBIS TA Providers, Trainers, and Coaches
- Assess outcomes for students with disabilities and create an action plan for equitable outcomes.
- Use equity constructs to guide the development of new and existing professional learning opportunities with a focus on including the voices of all students, families/caregivers, and staff.
- Create a communication and dissemination plan to share information about equitable systems, policies, and practices within an MTSS framework.

GOAL 2:

Increase and improve the use of effective practices at high rates of implementation fidelity

- Support existing VTPBIS schools in achieving or maintaining implementation fidelity through increased coaching, training, and TA.
- Revise the annual VTPBIS recognition system to honor the hard work and effort SUs/SDs and schools are engaging in to develop positive, predictable, effective, and equitable learning communities.
- Specifically promote "What's New in PBIS" through coaching, training, and TA.
- Expand inventories of effective interventions at all tiers and share them with SUs/SDs and schools through training and coaching.
- Prioritize student voice and input to further promote the reduction of frequently occurring interfering behaviors.
- Prioritize proactive de-escalation strategies, relationship building, and social, emotional learning in the 2023-2024 Professional Development Calendar.

GOAL 3:

Enhance schools' capacity to include & align social-emotional behavior, wellbeing, mental health, and early childhood within a PBIS framework

- Collaborate with essential state and local partners on the integration and alignment of social, emotional behavioral learning and wellbeing and mental health within MTSS.
- Enhance support for early childhood grant-funded sites in integrating Pyramid Model practices and PBIS.
- Increase TA and coaching support for schools to organize their interventions aligning or integrating them within the overarching PBIS or VTmtss framework.
- Provide professional learning on the integration of mental health systems, data, and practices with the PBIS Framework
- Offer professional learning on integrating multiple data sources to support alignment and action planning.

GLOSSARY

The following definitions came from the [PBIS Implementation Blueprint](#) (.pdf) and the [PBIS Evaluation Blueprint](#) (.pdf).

Behavior Observation Data Form (BODF) - Recording of the details of a major or minor interfering behavior by a student that was observed by an educator for purposes of providing support to the student, if needed. This is Vermont's term for the national PBIS term, office discipline referral.

Capacity - Capacity sections of the report typically document two aspects of the initiative: (a) Structures for Supporting PBIS Implementation and (b) Formal Measurement of Capacity.

Coaching - Job-embedded professional learning provided to support implementation of new skills and practices. Frequently involves modeling, observing, and/or providing performance feedback.

Constructs - The systematic arranging of ideas or terms.

Data - Information that is used to select, monitor, and evaluate outcomes, practices, and systems.

Department of Mental Health (DMH) - The Department of Mental Health resides under the Agency of Human Services and has the same critical mission in mind: to improve the conditions and well-being of Vermonters and protect those who cannot protect themselves. The Individuals and families that the Department of Mental Health (DMH) supports in Vermont's communities want the same things we all want; safe homes, close friends, loving relationships, good health and something meaningful to do each day.

Disproportionality - Disproportionality refers to a group's representation in a particular category that exceeds expectations for that group, or differs substantially from the representation of others in that category. Special education disproportionality has been referred to as the extent to which membership in a given group affects the probability of being placed in a specific disability category. Disciplinary disproportionality encompasses the disproportionately high rates at which students from certain racial/ethnic groups are subjected to office discipline referrals, suspensions, school arrests, and expulsion.

District Community Leadership Team (DCLT) - A District Community Leadership Team is a group of individuals who come together to provide leadership and coordination for various community-related initiatives and activities within a specific district or geographical area. This team typically consists of representatives from different sectors of the community, such as local government officials, community organizations, businesses, schools, and residents.

Evidence-based Practices (EBPs) - Interventions, strategies, and techniques supported by empirical evidence of their effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, and durability. See the What Works Clearinghouse to assist in selecting EBPs.

Fidelity - Fidelity refers to the degree in which an intervention or practice is delivered as intended. Fidelity can be measured and compared to previous or future efforts to deliver the intervention or practice.

Interconnected Systems Framework (ISF) - Guidance on the interconnection of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and School Mental Health (SMH) systems to improve educational outcomes for all children and youth, especially those with or at risk of developing emotional/behavioral challenges. ISF blends education and mental health systems and resources toward prevention and intervention within a team-based, collaborative multi-tiered framework, allowing for greater efficiency and effectiveness.

Local Education Agency (LEA) - A public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a State for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a State, or for a combination of school districts or counties as are recognized in a State as an administrative agency for its public elementary schools or secondary schools.

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) - The practice of providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals and applying child response data to important educational decisions (Batsche et al., 2005). An integrated MTSS is the integration of several MTSSs into one coherent strategically combined system meant to address multiple domains in content areas in education (McIntosh and Goodman, 2016).

Outcomes - Academic and behavior targets or indicators that are specified, endorsed, emphasized, and monitored because of their social and education significance.

Partners - Any individuals who will be affected by or make decisions regarding implementation within an organization. These vary by context (state, district, school) but typically include (but not limited to) students, families, educators, administrators, community groups, and agencies.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) - An evidence-based multi-tiered framework for implementing evidence-based practices to support improved social, emotional, behavioral (SEB), and academic outcomes for all student groups through systems and data-based decision making.

Process - The Process section reports the actions taken to support the PBIS initiative during the evaluation period.

Professional Learning/Professional Development (PD) - A systematic process of support for all staff that can include face-to-face training, observation, coaching, resource banks of materials, communication plans, or virtual supports to help educators establish and sustain evidence-based practices.

Reach - Reach questions are intended to identify who is participating in PBIS and are affected by it.

Restorative Approaches - Restorative approaches build healthy school climates by creating space for people to understand one another and develop relationships. When things go wrong, restorative approaches create space to address needs, repair relationships, and heal.

School Climate Survey (SCS) - The School Climate Survey Suite is a set of four multidimensional surveys to measure student, teacher, administrator, faculty, and family/caregiver perceptions of school climate.

School District (SD) - Town school districts, union school districts, interstate school districts, city school districts, unified union districts, and incorporated school districts, each of which is governed by a publicly elected board.

School Year (SY) - A school year is a specific period of time during which educational institutions, such as elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and universities, organize and conduct their academic activities.

Schoolwide - Refers to extending support to all students and adults in all settings in a school or organization (e.g., agency). A schoolwide approach is also referred to as providing a full continuum of support (Tiers 1, 2, 3).

Self-Assessment Survey (SAS) - The survey examines the status and need for improvement of four behavior support systems: (a) school-wide discipline systems, (b) non-classroom management systems (e.g., cafeteria, hallway, playground), (c) classroom management systems, and (d) systems for individual students engaging in chronic problem behaviors.

Supervisory Union (SU) - A Supervisory Union is an entity that oversees and administers Vermont's public schools. Supervisory Unions provide essential services to schools, including developing curriculum, providing special education, and administering school meals programs. Supervisory Unions also provide financial administration and data management for public schools.

Systems - Support infrastructure that is needed to enable the accurate and durable implementation of practices, efficient use of data, and achievement of outcomes. Technical Assistance/TA Providers – Process of providing support to an organization with an identified problem or need. TA providers are available to help Supervisory unions and schools navigate the process of exploring, implementing, and sustaining VTPBIS. Support is available through technology (i.e., online meetings) and up to two site visits per year.

Tier 1 (Universal) - Preventing the development of new cases (incidence) of unwanted behaviors by establishing a core foundation of high-quality learning environments for all students and staff and across all settings (i.e., schoolwide, classroom, and non-classroom).

Tier 2 (Targeted) - Reducing the number of existing cases (prevalence) of unwanted behaviors that are presenting high-risk behaviors and/or not responsive to primary intervention practices by providing more focused, intensive, and frequent small group-oriented responses in situations where unwanted behavior is likely.

Tier 3 (Intensive) - Reducing the intensity and/or complexity of existing cases (severity) of unwanted behavior that are resistant to and/or unlikely to be addressed by primary and secondary prevention efforts by providing the most individualized responses to situations where unwanted behavior is likely.

Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) - An assessment that provides a valid, reliable, and efficient measure of the extent to which school personnel are applying the core features of school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports (SWPBIS).

Vermont Multi-Tiered System of Support (VTmtss) - VTmtss is a systemic approach to decision-making for excellence and equity within a culture of continuous improvement that focuses on successful outcomes for all students. VTmtss is Vermont's approach to unifying a progressive system of supports, personalization, flexible pathways, and proficiencies.

The BEST Project

receives funding from the Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) and is supported by the Center on Disability and Community Inclusion (CDCI) at the University of Vermont (UVM).

go.uvm.edu/thebestproject

Accessibility

This year we've made the annual report available as this fully accessible report, and as downloadable audio (.mp3). We've also included a glossary.

Let us know if these things are helpful!

Image credits

State Team Members

(as of June 2023)

- **BEST:** Anne Dubie, Cassandra Townshend, Amy Wheeler-Sutton

- **AOE:** Laura Greenwood, Tracy Harris, Josh Souliere, Meg Porcella, Tracy Watterson

- **VTPBIS State TA Providers & Coaches:** Ken Kramberg, Sherry Schoenberg, Chantelle Albin, Kym Asam, Amanda Babcock, Lauralee Keach, Jon Kidde, Rebecca Lallier, Jeremy Tretiak, Gregg Stoller

- **DMH:** Marianna Donnelly

VERMONT PBIS

THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT
CENTER ON DISABILITY & COMMUNITY INCLUSION

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VTPBIS in VT

PBIS is in 170 schools in 50 supervisory unions and districts as of June 30, 2023.

**Albany Community School
**Alburgh Community Ed Center
**Allen Brook School
Arlington Memorial Middle/High School
Bakersfield Elementary School
Barnet Elementary School
Barre City Elementary & Middle School
**Barre Town Middle & Elementary School
Barstow Memorial School
*Barton Graded School
Beeman Elementary
Bennington Elementary School
Benson Village School
Berlin Elementary School
BFA Fairfax
Bingham Memorial Elementary School (Cornwall)
Blue Mountain School
Braintree Elementary School
Brewster Pierce Elementary School
Bridport Central School
Brighton Elementary School
Bristol Elementary
Brookfield Elementary School
**Brookside Primary School
Brownington Central School
**Burke Town School
C.P. Smith
Cabot School
Calais Elementary School
Canaan Schools
**Castleton Elementary School
Champlain Elementary
**Charleston Elementary
Charlotte Central School
Chelsea Public School
Chester-Andover Elementary
Clarendon Elementary School
Concord School
Coventry Village School
Craftsbury Schools
Currier Memorial School
Danville School

Derby Elementary School
Dorset School
**Dothan Brook School
Doty Memorial School
East Montpelier Elementary School
Eden Central School
Edmunds Elementary School
**Fair Haven Grade School
Fair Haven Union High School
**Fairfield Center School
Ferrisburgh Central School
Fletcher Elementary School
Flood Brook School
Folsom Education & Community Center
**Founders Memorial School
Georgia Elementary & Middle School
**Gertrude Chamberlin School
*Grafton Elementary School
Grand Isle School
Green Street School
**Guilford Central School
**Hardwick Elementary School
Hartland Elementary School
Highgate Elementary
Hinesburg Community School
Hyde Park Elementary School
Integrated Arts Academy at H.O. Wheeler Elementary
Irasburg Village School
J.J. Flynn Elementary
Jamaica Village School
Jericho Elementary
**JFK Elementary
Johnson Elementary
**Killington Elementary
Kurn Hattin
**Lakeview Elementary School
Lamoille Union Middle School
Lincoln Community School
**Lothrop Elementary School
Lowell School
Lyndon Town School
Malletts Bay School
Manchester Elementary School
**Marion Cross School
Middletown Springs Elementary School
**Millers Run School
Milton Elementary School
Missisquoi Valley UHSD
**Molly Stark Elementary School
Monkton Central School
Monument Elementary School
Morristown Elementary School
**Mt. Abraham Union Middle/High School
Mt. Anthony Union High

School
Mt. Anthony Union Middle School
Neshobe Elementary School
**NewBrook Elementary
Newport Town School
North Country UJHS
North Hero
Northeast Primary
Northfield Elementary School
Northfield Middle High School
**Northwest Primary School
Oak Grove School
Orange Center School
**Orchard School
Orleans Elementary
Orwell Village School
**Ottauquechee School
Otter Creek Academy (Leicester, Sudbury, Whiting)
**Otter Valley Union HS
Peacham Elementary School
**Peoples Academy Middle Level
Porters Point School
Poultney Elementary School
Pownal Elementary
Proctor Elementary School
Putney Central School
Randolph Elementary School
Reading Elementary
Richmond Elementary
**Rick Marcotte Central School
Ripton Elementary School
**Riverside Middle School
Robinson Elementary School
Rochester Stockbridge Unified District
**Rutland Intermediate School
Salisbury Community School
Shaftsbury Elementary
*Sharon Elementary
**Shelburne Community School
**Sheldon Elementary School
St. Albans Town Educational Center
Stowe Elementary School
**Summit Street School
Sunderland Elementary School
Sustainability Academy @ Lawrence Barnes

Sutton Village School
**Swanton School
**Thetford Elementary School
Thomas Fleming School
Townshend Elementary
Tunbridge
Twinfield Union School
Union Elementary School
Union Memorial School
Vergennes Union Elementary School
Vergennes Union High School
**Vernon Elementary
Waitsfield School
Walden School
Wardsboro Elementary School
Washington Village School
**Waterville Elementary School
Wells Village School
Westford School
**White River Valley Elem - Bethel Campus
**White River Valley Elem - South Royalton Campus
White River Valley Middle School
Wilder School
Williamstown Elementary
Williamstown Middle/High School
Williston Central School
Windsor School
Wolcott Elementary School
**Woodbury Elementary School
**Woodstock Elementary School

KEY

* New VTPBIS Schools

** These schools nominated themselves and were recognized for maintaining and sustaining the PBIS framework during the 2022-2023 school year.