



Wisconsin RTI Center
Wisconsin PBIS Network
IDEA CFDA 84.027



2021-22

WISCONSIN RTI CENTER

IMPACT REPORT



OVERVIEW

About This Report

The last few years have provided no shortage of challenges to our schools, districts, communities, families, and students. At the Wisconsin RtI Center, we believe we have a responsibility to all learners in Wisconsin.

In particular, we have been focusing on two student groups which have been most marginalized in Wisconsin: Black students and students with individualized education plans (IEPs).



We are focused on equity for two of our state's most underserved learners: Black students and students with individualized education plans (IEPs).

What you WON'T see in this report >>

Reporting on attendance data, suspension data, or office discipline referrals (ODR)

Over the years, we have examined many different types of school systems data, including attendance data, suspension data, office discipline referrals (ODR) data, benchmark data, summative assessments, school report cards, special education enrollment and dismissal data, ACT scores, and more.

When possible, we show significance data (instead of trend data) which allows us to be more confident that the outcomes are related to the high implementation of an equitable, multi-level system of supports.

Like many states, we are temporarily discontinuing the examination of attendance data, suspension data, and office discipline referrals. There were inconsistencies in how schools and districts recorded this data during the pandemic.

What you **WILL**
see in this
report >>

Rigorous data analysis with integrity

This report provided an opportunity to look at other ways to measure the impact of the implementation of an equitable, multi-level system of supports (EMLSS).

- We learned more about what knowledge and actions push EMLSS implementation forward.
- We looked at the impact that sustained EMLSS implementation and belonging has on students.
- We also examined the impact of EMLSS implementation on participation in Advanced Placement (AP) course exams; specifically for Black students and students with IEPs.
- Additionally, schools that sustain implementation of an EMLSS show growth on their AP exam scores.

A steadfast commitment to the process of implementation

The number of schools who have been able to sustain implementation at fidelity has been impacted by the pandemic. However, this doesn't mean that an equitable, multi-level system of supports is not an effective framework. On the contrary, implementation has helped and continues to help transform our educational systems through this period of change. In addition to schools that sustained through the pandemic, we had 131 trained schools re-engage in self-assessment and 40 schools re-engage by seeking technical assistance in 2021-22.

In response, the Wisconsin RtI Center has adapted how we train and support districts and schools. We're growing and changing, just as schools and districts are growing and changing, but we remain committed to our state's vision that every child will have what they need when they need it. A equitable multi-level system of supports is the best way to ensure that every learner has access to the necessary developmental, academic, behavioral, and social-emotional supports.

Emphasis on fidelity

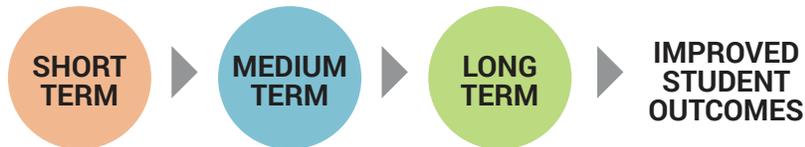
Additionally, **how** the supports are provided makes a big difference. When a school accurately and consistently implements supports as designed *and* those supports achieve their intended results, that school has reached **fidelity**. It's only after a school has reached fidelity and is sustaining for several years that we can expect to see a connection to improved student outcomes.



ENGAGEMENT AND COMMITMENT

Theory of Educational Change

It's important to deeply and honestly examine the impact of our work. For many years, we have been looking at our efforts through the lens of implementation science, recognizing that educational change occurs in stages.



1368

SCHOOLS have been TRAINED since the center was formed

SHORT TERM: The knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs of educators in the system are impacted in this stage of change.

< This is an indicator of short term change.

This information is based on the number of schools who have completed assessments (Tiered Fidelity Inventory or School-wide Implementation Review).

MEDIUM TERM: The practices and policies within the educational system are impacted in this stage of change.

This is an indicator of medium term change. >

814

SCHOOLS that have been TRAINED have ASSESSED at least ONCE in the last four years

694

SCHOOLS that have been TRAINED have ASSESSED AT FIDELITY at least once in the last four years

LONG TERM: The system itself is impacted in this stage of change.

338

SCHOOLS that have been TRAINED and have SUSTAINED AT FIDELITY

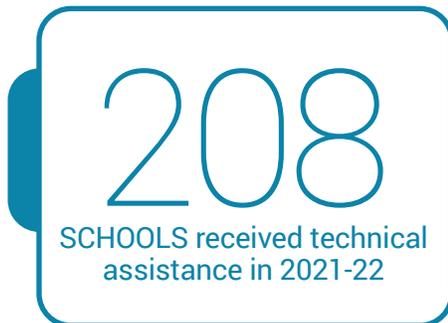
These are indicators of long term change.

The number of schools who are able to continue the work during this period of intense challenge is proof of resilience and determination.

Professional Learning in 2021-22

Wisconsin schools engage in the work of implementing equitable, multi-level systems of supports through training and assistance from the Wisconsin Rtl Center.

This past school year, we continued offering professional learning opportunities to schools and districts. Here is a brief summary of those efforts:



Emphasis on equity

In 2020-21, we provided targeted technical assistance for 63 schools and 82 districts to support them in identifying and removing systemic barriers for students who are marginalized in Wisconsin.



RECOGNIZED SCHOOLS

Recognized Schools Program in 2021-22

Our Recognized Schools program encourages schools to expand, refine, and sustain full implementation of an equitable, multi-level system of supports. By providing a picture of full implementation and recognizing schools during the implementation journey, we encourage and celebrate progress toward equitable student outcomes. In 2021-22, we were pleased to recognize 448 unique schools.



BRONZE: At full implementation/ fidelity in one content area at the universal level (tier 1) for at least one year

Number of schools at bronze:

BEHAVIOR	MATH	READING
209	49	44

SILVER: At full implementation/ fidelity in one content area at the universal level (tier 1) for at least two years and at selected (tier 2) level for at least one year

Number of schools at silver:

BEHAVIOR	MATH	READING
196	65	75

GOLD: At full implementation/ fidelity in two content areas at the universal (tier 1) and selected (tier 2) levels for at least two years

Number of schools at gold:

2 AREAS	ALL AREAS
13	4

Ensuring Implementation Has the Desired Impact: Our Research Findings

School teams self-assess their implementation using the Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) and the School-wide Implementation Review (SIR).

Our research

From 2019 to 2021, we looked at 98 schools who measured their implementation using the TFI and asked an external coach familiar with the school to independently assess the school.

In 54 schools, the external contact we collected data from scored the school the same as the school scored themselves. We considered this an **ACCURATE** self-assessment.

In 44 schools, the external contact we collected data from scored the school differently than the school scored themselves. We considered this an **INACCURATE** self-assessment.

WE LEARNED ACCURACY IS CRITICAL

The more accurately schools self-assess their implementation, the stronger the connection between implementation and student outcome changes.

Without reliable and valid assessment of fidelity, there is a danger of assuming that implementation is adequate when it is not. (McIntosh et al., 2017).



In our study, the schools with **ACCURATE** assessments saw **FEWER SUSPENSIONS** as implementation improved.



In our study, the schools with **INACCURATE** assessments did **NOT** see a change in suspensions.

Why is accuracy so important?

National research continually shows that implementation assessment scores are related to student outcomes:

Reducing the racial disparities that exist within schools

(Tobin & Vincent, 2011)

Increasing student academic scores

(Hughes & Dexter, 2014)

Decreasing office discipline referrals

(McCrary, Lechtenberger, & Wang, 2012)

Increasing attendance

(Noltemeyer et al., 2019)

OUR LEARNING

EXTERNAL FACILITATORS PROVIDE OBJECTIVITY

Teams that took a systems assessment with a facilitator had the greatest likelihood to be accurate.

School/district facilitators were the most accurate when a Wisconsin RtI Center technical assistance coordinator (TAC) explained each of the assessment items and modeled administration of the systems assessment (SIR/TFI) for them.



All correlations between the TFI and other measures were statistically significant and were stronger when the team completed the TFI with an external coach. (McIntosh et al., 2017).

School/district facilitators who had a Wisconsin RtI Center TAC explain each of the assessment items and model administration of the systems assessment (SIR/TFI) for them were

118%

more likely to be accurate than other facilitators.

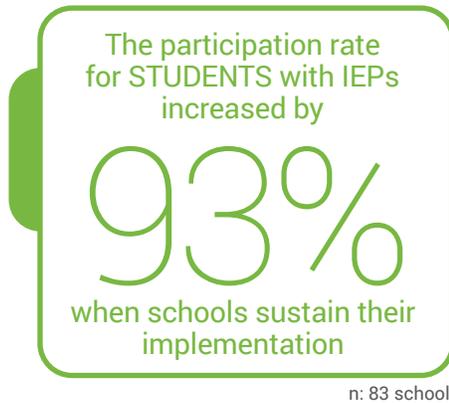
"Because research has shown that self-assessment of fidelity can be artificially inflated (Noell et al., 2005; Wickstrom, Jones, LaFleur, & Witt, 1996), it is important to ensure that results from fidelity measures are accurate; otherwise, decisions will be flawed. The TFI is intended for use by school teams with the support of an external SWPBIS coach, who facilitates the administration, ensures accuracy of scoring, and guides the team through interpreting the results."

External coaches and Wisconsin RtI Center technical assistance coordinators have high levels of content knowledge and have more refined views on implementation. Schools more closely measure implementation (or measure their implementation with greater accuracy) when they have an external coach.

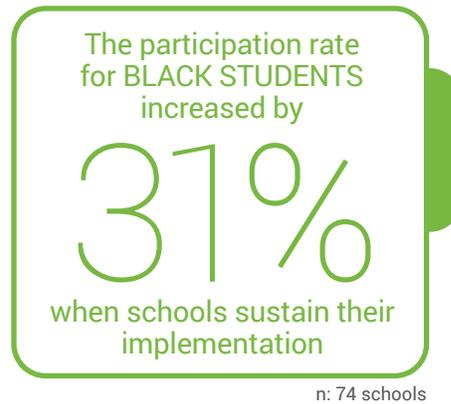
McIntosh, K., Massar, M. M., Algozzine, R. F., George, H. P., Horner, R. H., Lewis, T. J., & Swain-Bradway, J. (2017). Technical adequacy of the SWPBIS tiered fidelity inventory. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 19(1), 3-13.

SUSTAINING IMPLEMENTATION'S CONNECTION TO INCREASED PARTICIPATION ON AP EXAMS

Schools sustaining implementation significantly increase the participation of Black students and students with IEPs in Advanced Placement (AP) exams.



Additionally, other student groups saw increases in participation rates: Asian students (59% increase), Hispanic students (26% increase), and White students (39% increase).



“While more students than ever before are enrolling in college, far fewer are succeeding once they get there. Nationwide, 40 percent of college students (including 66 percent of Black college students) take at least one remedial course, where they spend time and money learning skills they were told they’d already mastered in high school.”

TNTP. (2018). The Opportunity Myth: What Students Can Show Us About How School Is Letting Them Down—and How to Fix It. https://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP_The-Opportunity-Myth_Web.pdf

SCORES ON AP EXAMS PRESENT AN OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH

Increased access to Advanced Placement exams is an important first step. As AP participation increases in sustaining schools, the next goal is increases in the scores as well. Currently, all tested groups showed decreases in the percent of test-takers who scored a 4 or 5.

Specifically, 9% fewer Black students in sustaining schools receive a 4 or 5 on the AP exam. For students with IEPs, 22% fewer receive a 4 or 5 on the exam in sustaining schools.

IMPACT ON STUDENTS

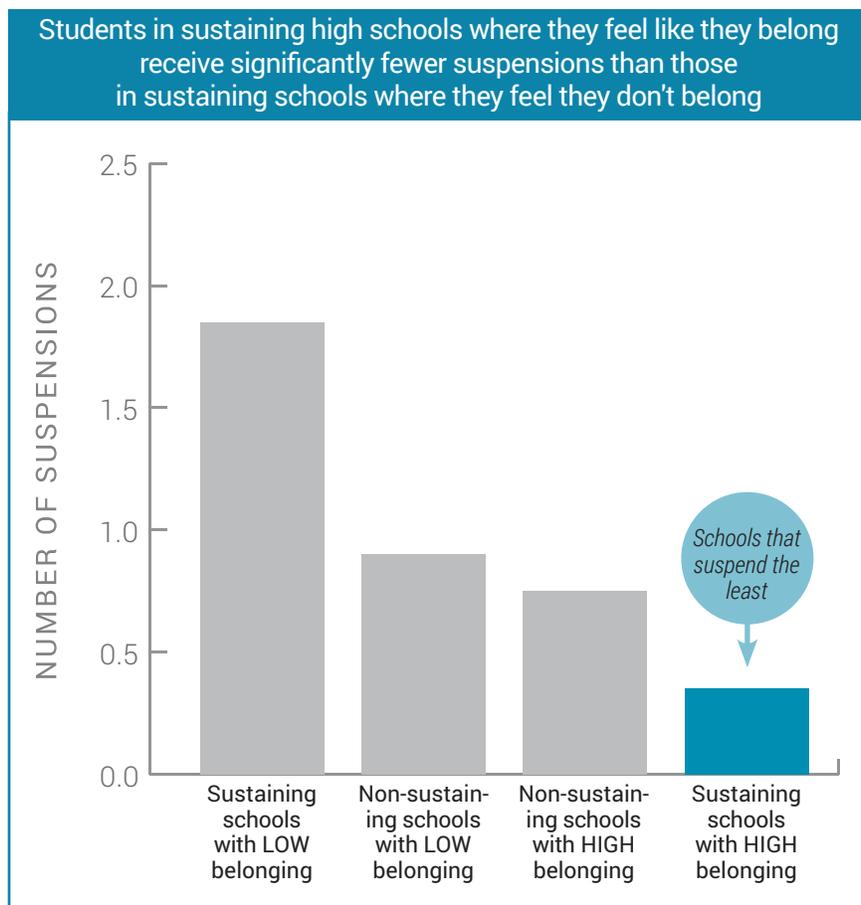
LOOKING AT THE REAL STUDENT EXPERIENCE

For an organization focused on having an impact on student outcomes, there's tremendous value in looking at data which brings us closer to the student experience. In this section, we examine the suspension and school climate data of sustaining and non-sustaining schools.

The importance of climate data

The climate data we used is from the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance (YRBS). In particular, we looked at the results from the question: 'Do you agree or disagree that you belong at your school?'

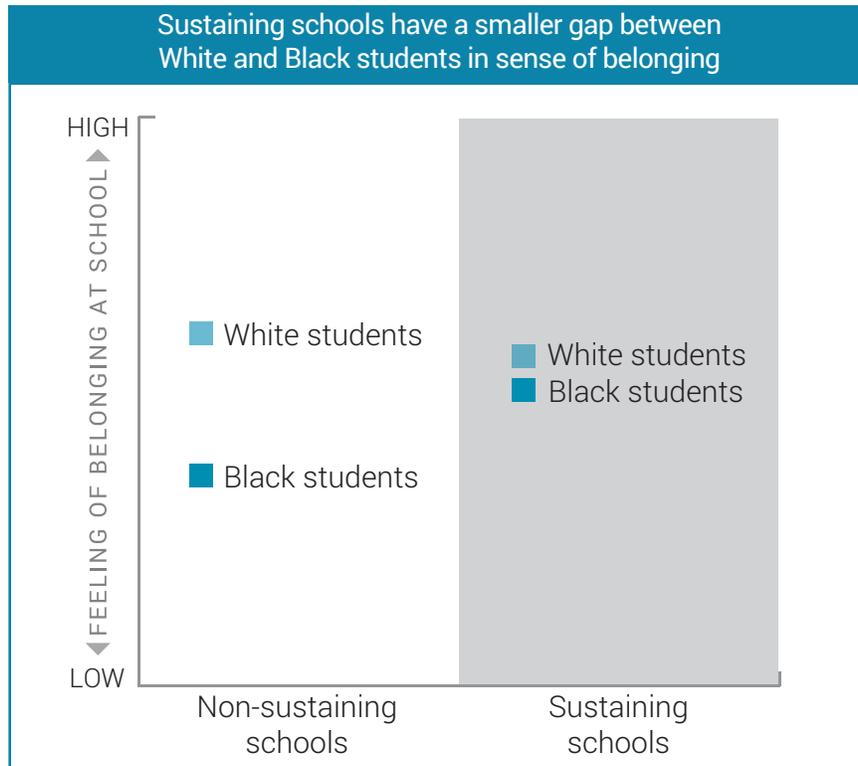
We learned that schools need to have both belonging and sustained implementation to see the best results for students.



This analysis included 29,571 students (13,044 in sustaining schools). YRBS

THE IMPACT OF BELONGING FOR BLACK STUDENTS

Taking a closer look at Black students—one of our most marginalized groups—we see there is a difference in how they feel they belong at school compared to their white peers.



This analysis included 27,084 students (10,121 in sustaining schools) YRBS

How do we interpret this data?

One of the key features of an equitable multi-level system of supports is positive culture. If a school is sustaining implementation, shouldn't students feel the impact of that positive culture?

This data serves as a reminder that schools and districts must pay attention to the quality of implementation and the experience of their students. It's important for schools to deeply examine who their system is working for and why. Inequities exist when assumptions, norms, and practices are left unchecked. The Wisconsin RtI Center's goal is to help schools and districts identify and remove barriers to systems change and we're focused on improving education opportunity and access for the students in our state who are most marginalized.

SCHOOL SNAPSHOT



**Carl Traeger
Middle
School**

**Oshkosh
Area School
District**

Carl Traeger Middle School’s (Oshkosh Area School District) overall philosophy of pushing in the same direction can be clearly seen when the leadership team shares the school’s experience of implementing an equitable multi-level system of supports. “Instead of going in our individual directions, we’ve pushed together as a whole school on each thing we’ve tackled,” Erin Cernjar, cross-categorical teacher, explained. According to Principal Jill Pascarella, there is deliberate alignment between the school goal and individual professional development goals.

The team set an ambitious school goal for the 2021-22 school year: 100% of students will show academic growth as a result of increasing engagement and meeting the needs of all students. They began by surveying staff, parents, and students to create a comprehensive understanding of what engagement looks like in every setting of school. This was valuable to teachers as they worked on lesson planning and helped them keep the school-wide goal at the forefront of their minds.

Beginning with the authenticity and honesty modeled by the leadership team, Traeger’s school culture provides an ideal environment for a focus on continuous improvement. Peer observations provided opportunities for colleagues to learn from each other. During professional development time, teachers showcased strategies of how they worked engagement into their lessons. “We all are learning from each other and that’s very empowering,” Carree VanOss, eighth-grade literacy teacher, said.

Staff at Traeger are committed to the importance of meeting the needs of all students in an inclusive general education classroom. To do this, the team has focused on universal design lesson planning and challenged themselves to deeply examine how to differentiate instruction.

The school invested in deeply training co-teaching teams to change the environment and normalize a variety of ways students access and provide information. “I think it helps students feel safer in the classroom,” Cernjar added. “When you feel safer, you’re able to make more growth.”

Teachers believe that keeping the IEP goals of students in mind benefits the whole classroom. “If we have specially-designed instruction that I know meets specific IEP goals,” Cernjar explained, “we have general education students in that classroom who have that incidental benefit of being a part of that group.”

According to their most recent report card, students with IEPs at Traeger are showing higher than expected growth in achievement.

Growth scores in English Language Arts for students at Carl Traeger Middle School		
Report card year	20-21	21-22
Students with IEPs	4.6	4.5
Students without IEPs	3.8	4.2

Traeger’s middle school students are learning about the power of having an educational goal. In the words of one student: “When I felt like I didn’t want to work on a task, it helped me to remember that I was the one that set the goal and I didn’t want to let myself down.” Teachers and students talk about student-identified strengths and areas for improvement. “Ownership for kids in middle school is key,” VanOss said.

KEY SYSTEM FEATURES:
Evidence-based practices
Continuous improvement

STAGE OF IMPLEMENTATION:

First assessed behavior (tier 1) in 2014-15, behavior (tier 2) in 2017-18

Students with IEPs show high growth in achievement. (A score of higher than 3.0 means more growth than expected.)

SCHOOL SNAPSHOT

KEY SYSTEM FEATURES:

Collaboration
Systemic implementation
Family and community engagement

STAGE OF IMPLEMENTATION:

First assessed behavior (tier 1) in 2010-11, behavior (tier 2) in 2011-12, behavior (tier 3) in 2013-14

First assessed mathematics in 2012-13.

First assessed reading in 2011-12.

Wisconsin’s framework for an equitable multi-level system of supports is flexible enough to be used in non-traditional educational settings. Maryland Avenue Montessori School (Milwaukee Public Schools) has been implementing the framework for over ten years.



Maryland Avenue Montessori School
Milwaukee Public Schools

Montessori schools are known for their holistic approach to education and their strong belief in the value of knowing each student. Collaboration among teachers at levels, but also between support teachers and administration is key. “It really makes the difference in terms of supporting students,” Principal Joseph DiCarlo said. “Using the framework provides Maryland Avenue with a way to organize their supports, which increases their effectiveness. The structure (of PBIS and RtI) helps facilitate these collaborative conversations,” he said.

Because staff often have different approaches, DiCarlo believes the framework provides common language to bridge understanding between traditional education and the Montessori method. As a result, the school is able to collect quality data. “The better records you keep, the easier it is to be able to improve,” DiCarlo said.

Family and community engagement is a huge part of the culture at Maryland Avenue. Jenni Hofschulte is the school’s community and parent engagement coordinator. She understands that communication with families is fundamental to the school’s success. “We have an enormous amount of trust with families and work hard to never breach that,” she said. “As staff, we are intentionally thoughtful and careful with the children.”

Looking at the whole child has caused Maryland Avenue Montessori to commit to equitable practices. The school began anti-bias work with staff five years ago, then did additional staff development around equity. Black history is not something that students study only during the month of February. “It’s incorporated into the work that the students do throughout the year,” the principal said. While Milwaukee Public Schools were delivering instruction virtually during the pandemic, Maryland Avenue intentionally created learning opportunities and activities for students connected to racial diversity and awareness of differences. “We’re always reaching for that center equity goal,” Jessica Bahr, school support teacher, said.

The school’s approach is having a positive impact on all their students as evidenced by their high overall achievement score (76.1) on their 20-21 report card from DPI.

Additionally, Black students at the school are seeing high academic growth above the statewide average.

Black Students at Proficient/Advanced (measured by Star)			
	17-18	18-19	19-20
Fall	29.63%	30.77%	37.93%
Spring	32.14%	30.91%	no test

Statewide average was 18.4% in 18-19; statewide average was 14.3% in 19-20.

“Everything that we do blends toward that overall goal of having a peaceful and positive community focused on learning and supporting—not just the students but each other—as much as we can,” DiCarlo said.

SCHOOL SNAPSHOT



West Middle School

Oak Creek-Franklin Joint School District

Positive school culture is vital to creating successful learning environments. Equally important is its role in continuous school improvement. At West Middle School in Oak Creek-Franklin Joint School District, positive culture and experiences for staff and students is the foundation of their work, according to Principal Megan Arens and her team.

Teacher Gina Martinelli has been at West Middle School for eight years. She described the shift in culture as a gradual process which eventually turned teacher mindsets upside down. “We all felt like we have [sic] a voice...and a shared vision of what our kids need,” she said. This collective efficacy cultivated teachers as leaders and led to staff-driven systems change.

The team realized that the existing intervention period at West was being underutilized and developed a data-driven process to proactively identify student needs. The Student Intervention Team (SIT) meets every week around collected attendance, academic data, and behavior data. “It’s a way to zero in and target all of our students so no student is falling through the cracks,” Martinelli said. “This process allows the team to be more proactive instead of reactive,” Associate Principal Sarah Sprangers added.

This data-driven process was an invaluable tool during the pandemic. As the school worked tirelessly to stay connected to students and families, SIT meetings provided opportunities to discuss how to meet learner needs, keep staff informed, and create better connections with families.

The team at West Middle School initiated a co-planning model which brings specialists and general education teachers together weekly, identifying changes to universal instruction to better match learner needs. “When I think of co-planning, I think of it as a concrete change we’re making in the whole system,” Martinelli said. “I’ve met with (specialists) ahead of time and I know what I need to do for the students I have. It makes me feel more confident,” she added.

These systemic changes have impacted student outcomes. According to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction’s 2020-21 report card for West Middle School, the growth score in English Language Arts for Black students was 3.8. White students’ growth score was 3.7. (A score of higher than 3.0 means more growth than expected.) On the most recently released report card, Black students growth score increased to 4.5.

West Middle School also saw an increase in the percentage of students who score at advanced/proficient on the Forward Exam (ELA) in 2020-21.

“We have a strong data-driven approach to looking at student growth and progress,” Sprangers said. “Underlying all of that is this commitment by all teachers that we really are responsible for elevating the academic, social-emotional growth of all of our students.”

KEY SYSTEM FEATURES:

- Positive culture
- Strategic use of data
- Strong shared leadership

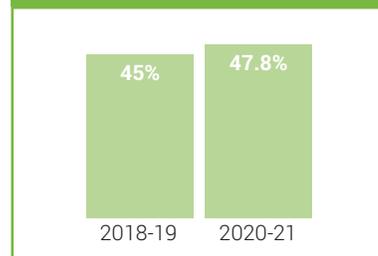
STAGE OF IMPLEMENTATION:

- First assessed behavior (tier 1) in 2012-13, behavior (tier 2) in 2014-15, behavior (tier 3) in 2016-17

- First assessed mathematics in 2015-16.

- First assessed reading in 2015-16.

More Students at Proficient/Advanced on Forward ELA



Statewide average was 33.7% in 20-21.

SCHOOL SNAPSHOT

KEY SYSTEM FEATURES:

equity, systemic implementation

STAGE OF

IMPLEMENTATION:

First assessed behavior in 2010

First assessed mathematics in 2015

First assessed reading in 2012

Clovis Grove Elementary School was featured in one of our previous annual reports. Knowing how implementation changes over time, we revisited them to see what was new and learn how their system helped them serve their community during the pandemic.

Schools are responsible for reimagining educational systems to ensure that learning opportunities are equitable for all students. It can be difficult to know how to begin, but actively reflecting on who the systems are not working for can help make the necessary changes. After sustaining implementation for some years, Clovis Grove Elementary School (Menasha Joint School District), has shifted their focus to equity and has committed resources to transformation.

First, the school examined student data deeply, set goals to reduce the risk ratios for students who are marginalized and established an equity team. The equity team developed professional learning around implicit bias and microaggressions, which led to the creation of an Upstanders Committee to continue building staff knowledge and skills. In Menasha, Upstanders are leaders or facilitators who commit to being an anti-racist conversation facilitator in their buildings. They look to bring people together in conversation to promote outcomes where students of color can thrive academically and socially in their system. The Upstanders Committee provides coaching support for individuals or for all staff.

One district support which has helped Clovis Grove's efforts is the school's equity mentor. According to Principal Tammy Richter, all schools in Menasha Joint School District have equity mentors who coach adults and students alike. Clovis Grove's mentor is available to provide individual coaching to staff upon request. Equity mentors proactively build relationships with students and their families. "It's really making a lot of changes, especially for our students who are black and African American," Richter said.

Menasha's district emphasis on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and on universal practices were valuable resources for their schools during the pandemic. Before school began, the district produced a comprehensive plan for using PBIS in a virtual learning environment. At the school-level, PBIS committees adapted the district plan to their individual buildings.

Universal practice coach Heidi Dike knew that students depend on the structure of the classroom environment, whether instruction is in person or virtual. During this time, she worked with staff to come up with ideas on how their goals could still be met. "What it came down to is remembering what our best practices were, and because we had been doing it for so long, and we knew it was important. It didn't change what we did—it just changed how we did it," she said.

Clovis Grove's focus and structure has led to continued reductions in office discipline referrals (ODRs) and better attendance for Black students. They are also seeing improvements in their academic data for Black students.

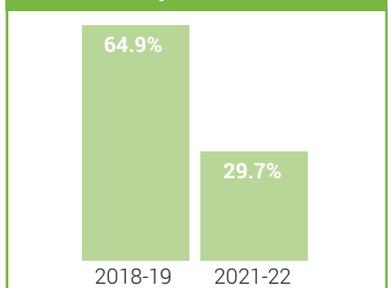
Richter believes that Clovis Grove would have had a difficult time meeting students' needs during the pandemic without both district support and their school PBIS committee. "We're part of a system," she said. "I could reach out to the district and know that's where I could get my support."



**Clovis Grove
Elementary
School**

**Menasha
Joint School
District**

High Risk Absenteeism for Black Students at Clovis Grove Reduced by More Than Half



RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP

The Wisconsin RtI Center is committed to advancing and sharing knowledge around implementation of an equitable, multi-level system of supports. We began a formal partnership with the Rural Education Research and Implementation Center (RERIC) in 2019.

Founded in 2018, RERIC researches how to promote positive educational outcomes for students, families, and schools in rural education settings (<https://reric.wisc.edu/>). The organization's mission is to increase the capacity of rural schools to use evidence-based educational approaches for maximum student benefit.



In May 2022, Rural Special Education Quarterly (RSEQ) published findings from this collaboration. Entitled *Examining Implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports in Rural Schools*, the article examines the **impact of implementation of PBIS on rural schools**.

This partnership offered a singular opportunity to transform traditional research into evidence that can be used in practice. This collaboration is producing relevant, accessible learning that deepens understanding, addresses problems of practice, and facilitates solutions.



Ultimately, we believe it will bring us closer to our goal of providing every Wisconsin learner with equitable access to a great education.

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