

# Safe and Supportive Schools (S3)

GRANT DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

**S3 Grantee Profile | Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction**

National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments



Safe Supportive Learning

Engagement | Safety | Environment



## Highlights

The primary school climate improvement goal of Wisconsin's four-year<sup>1</sup> Safe and Supportive Schools (WI S3) grant was to reduce high rates of drug- and violence-related behavior in 55 high schools across 19 school districts. From baseline to final year, 55 percent of schools with fully implemented interventions reported a decrease in student alcohol use; 45 percent reported a decrease of harassment or bullying on school property; 87 percent reported improved school safety scores; and 47 percent reported a reduction in the number of suspensions due to violence without serious injury.

### *How Did They Do It?*

WI S3 worked with districts and schools to use Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) data and student discipline (suspension/expulsion) data to drive school-based decisions on the selection of interventions for the districts' and schools' specific populations. Grant activities paid special attention to the disproportionately negative treatment of and outcomes for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) and American Indian students. The Wisconsin YRBS instrument included a disaggregation feature that allowed S3 teams to complete a more detailed analysis of student needs in their schools. This disaggregation allowed for specific data to be analyzed by grade, gender, race, and sexual orientation. One of the highlights of this project was the progress most WI S3 schools made around policy changes, frequently eliminating "zero tolerance" discipline approaches.

## School Participation

Participating school districts (also referred to as local education agencies [LEAs]<sup>2</sup>) were selected based on student discipline data over the course of three consecutive years prior to the grant. Wisconsin high schools with the highest numbers of combined suspensions and expulsions came from seven of the largest districts statewide. An additional 12 districts were invited to participate based on having the highest rates of combined suspensions and expulsions over the three-year, pre-grant period. Selected districts included 85 percent of the persistently lowest performing schools in Wisconsin, with

<sup>1</sup> While the S3 grant funded all of the grantees for four years, grant activities extended into a fifth year. This profile summarizes activities reported by grantees across all years in which they were actively working with participating districts and schools to improve school climate. However, the Results section presents data only on schools that achieved "full implementation."

<sup>2</sup> Grants were awarded to State education agencies (SEAs), and S3 States partnered with a selection of local education agencies (LEAs) or school districts and participating schools. In these profiles, consistent with grantees' use of terminology, we use the term *districts* (in lieu of *LEAs*).

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the highest rates of dropouts, habitual truants, suspensions and expulsions and of students performing below proficiency on standardized tests. While 55 high schools participated in the grant, a number of schools initially involved were closed<sup>3</sup> or reorganized over the course of the four years.

## WI S3 Grant Year 4 Demographics (School Year 2013–14)<sup>4</sup>

This section provides descriptive information about participating districts and schools and the demographics of the students they served. See also Appendix A for a list of WI S3's participating districts and schools.

**Number of districts served:** 19 districts

**Number of schools served:** 55 schools<sup>5</sup>

- 45 9th–12th-grade schools
- 5 6th–12th-grade schools
- 2 PK–12th-grade schools

**School size:** Range: 122–2,177 students; average: 1,142 students

**Total number of students served by WI S3 schools:** 59,364

### Participating schools' student demographics

#### *Race and ethnicity:*<sup>6</sup>

- 43 percent White
- 30 percent Black
- 19 percent Hispanic
- 5 percent Asian/Pacific Islander
- 1 percent American Indian/Alaskan
- 2 percent two or more races

#### *Other student demographics:*

- 58 percent free- and reduced-price-lunch eligible
- 90 percent with individualized education programs (IEPs)<sup>7</sup>

**Source:** NCES Common Core of Data (CCD)

(<http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/index.asp>)

## Key Partners

WI S3 forged partnerships that were essential to the implementation of the S3 grant. These partnerships complemented the work of grant staff by promoting collaborations across interrelated student service divisions and with community partners. WI S3 had many partners that played an integral role. These included:

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<sup>3</sup> Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) had six schools that closed over the course of the project: African American Immersion High School, Northwest Secondary School, PLI, SUPAR, WORK Institute, and WI Career Academy.

<sup>4</sup> Demographic data for the 2013–14 school year were unavailable via the NCES Common Core of Data and the WI DPI district Web site for two participating high schools: Advanced Language & Academic Studies (ALAS) High School and the School of Career and Technical Education. Data from the 2012–13 school year were used to calculate demographic totals provided.

<sup>5</sup> Of the 55 schools, three did not fully implement interventions. Thus, school demographic data and GPRA results are reported for the 52 schools that finished providing interventions. Demographic data also exclude seven charter and academy schools within the S3 school districts that completed the YRBS questions in the first and last years of the project. WI S3 referred to these as “control” schools; however, no comparison information was provided between these schools and the participating S3 schools. See the Special Feature for more information.

<sup>6</sup> Percentages were calculated by dividing the reported number of students in a given demographic by the total reported enrollment across all participating schools.

<sup>7</sup> The percentage of students with IEPs is based on S3 districtwide statistics as this detail was not available in CCD at the school level.



- [Wisconsin Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports \(PBIS\) Network](#), which operates within the Wisconsin Response to Intervention (RtI) Center with a specific focus on behavior.
- [WI Special Education Team](#), which led the collaboration with Wisconsin Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Network at the State level and attended meetings and training with S3 staff.
- [Wisconsin Safe and Healthy Schools \(WISH\) Center](#), which provided trainings related to freshmen transition supports, restorative practices, and so on.
- [Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools](#) (GSafe), which provided training to staff at S3 high schools to create professional learning communities focused on creating safe places for all students.
- [Diverse and Resilient](#), which conducted community readiness assessments to help S3 teams determine levels of support and resistance to creating policies and programs for keeping sexual minority youth safe in schools.
- [Marshfield Clinic Center for Community Outreach](#), which used a model developed by the Great Lakes Intertribal Council for consultants in this project to focus on creating culturally responsive classrooms and practices in schools with high populations of American Indian students.
- [The University of Wisconsin's Population Health Institute](#) (WI S3 evaluation partner), which completed detailed analyses aimed at identifying the most impactful strategies and conditions for creating or improving safe schools.
- [ScholarCentric](#), which helped facilitate the completion of the [Success Highways Resiliency Assessment](#) of middle school youth transitioning to high school to identify students with need for additional supports.

## Project Components

### Infrastructure Development

To the extent possible, S3 grants built upon existing State student support efforts while also funding significant operational and infrastructure development. Over the course of the grant period, WI S3 enhanced its infrastructure by:

- Hiring staff using multiple funding sources to minimize the likelihood of position elimination;
- Developing a disaggregation feature for the Online Youth Risk Behavior Survey (OYRBS) system (see the Surveys section for further information);
- Establishing a high school cohort in the PBIS training process. Previously high school teams participated in trainings with staff from elementary and middle schools. The S3 project created a protocol for conducting exclusive trainings for high school staff; and
- Focusing policy work on the rejection of “zero tolerance” discipline approaches and embracing a Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) philosophy.

### School Climate Measurement

WI S3 was a data-driven effort that utilized administrative and survey data to focus school climate improvement efforts, decide where to concentrate resources, and help select appropriate interventions. These data also were used to develop school safety scores to monitor change at the building level over time. The following describes WI S3's measurement tools.



### Administrative Data

Administrative data on attendance and disciplinary actions were furnished through the [Wisconsin Information System for Education](#). School discipline reports were generated and included cumulative totals of all out-of-school suspensions and expulsions for each high school involved in the project.

### Surveys

Wisconsin administered a student survey annually each spring from 2011–14. The [Wisconsin Online Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#) (OYRBS) is a 63-item questionnaire that assessed student self-reports of health behaviors, attitudes and perceptions, and protective factors. The OYRBS was administered in the S3 high schools each year over the four years of the project and collected data from all freshmen and juniors in the school. A sample questionnaire form can be accessed [here](#).<sup>8</sup>

### School Safety Scores

The **school safety score** is a figure calculated based on a formula that uses survey data, incident data, and other data representing factors known to influence student and school success. The scores are used to facilitate comparisons between schools in the same State and for individual schools over time. The following summarizes WI S3's school safety score.

- *Name of score:* Index of Student Behavior and School Environment (ISBSE)
- *Formula:* The ISBSE is compiled from an equation using data from the Online Youth Risk Behavior Survey (OYRBS) and a behavior score. The OYRBS score is the average of nine questions based on violence, alcohol and other drug abuse (AODA), safety issues, and school climate. The behavior score consists of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions divided by the total school enrollment and converted to a rate per 1,000 students. The behavior score and the OYRBS average of nine key indicators each make up 50 percent of the total index. Individual school scores and the total State average are available in this index. Lower scores are desirable. For additional information on the development of the ISBSE, see Kuo and Moberg, 2016 (listed in the Results section).
- *Hyperlink:* <http://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/safe-schools/safe-and-supportive> (refer to the ISBSE subsection). For school-level reports, refer to: <http://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/safe-schools/safe-and-supportive/indices>
- *Change over time:* Changes in school safety scores are reported in the Results section with other Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) data.

### **Interventions: Frameworks, Programs, Practices, and Strategies**

Key interventions were decided at the local level through a comprehensive planning process. WI S3 used data from surveys of high school students each spring to inform the selection and implementation of interventions and approaches (see Table 1) based on data and needs in all the districts. WI S3 provided a list of evidence-based programs (EBPs)<sup>9</sup> from which participating schools could select:

<http://sspw.dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sspw/pdf/s3ebprograms.pdf>. WI S3 also

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<sup>8</sup> The linked document is titled "Wisconsin Safe and Supportive Schools High School Survey Questionnaire"; however, this was not the official name of the WI S3 survey. WI S3 used the term "Online YRBS/OYBRS" with subgrantees and in its reporting when referring to the S3 survey in order to distinguish it from the different modules and versions that were available through the WI DPI Web site.

<sup>9</sup> EBPs are defined as programs with research demonstrating effectiveness for specific purposes or populations.



utilized a What Works, Wisconsin Research to Practice brief<sup>10</sup> to inform evidence-based program selection. Table 1 shows the most frequently used interventions implemented by WI S3 and the number of schools or districts using each (as noted).

**Table 1. Intervention frameworks, programs, and practices**

<b>Frameworks</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) (90 percent of schools in 18 districts; exact number of schools not provided)<sup>11</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Programs</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom Organization and Management Program (COMP; Tier I)* (<a href="#">validated</a> by the U.S. Department of Education National Diffusion Network) (14)</li> <li>• Life Skills Training (LST; Tier 1)* (9)</li> <li>• Link Crew Freshman Transition Supports (Tiers 1 and 2) (19)</li> <li>• Motivational Interviewing (Tiers 2 and 3)* (7)</li> <li>• <a href="#">PREPARE model</a> (National Association of School Psychologists [NASP]; Tier 1)</li> <li>• Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) (Tiers 2 and 3) (9)</li> <li>• ScholarCentric Success Highways Surveys &amp; Curriculum (Tiers 1 and 2) (3)</li> <li>• American Indian Student Achievement Initiative (AISII) (3)</li> </ul>
<b>Practices</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restorative practices (Tiers 1, 2, and 3) (31)</li> <li>• Gay Straight Alliances (Tiers 1 and 2) (9)</li> </ul>

Notes: \* indicates a program that is classified as an evidence-based program (EBP), meaning it is found on the [National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices](#) (NREPP) or the [What Works Clearinghouse](#); the number of schools using each intervention is noted in parentheses.

### Engagement Strategies

In addition to frameworks, programs, and practices, WI S3 implemented a number of strategies to engage different groups affected by school climate.

- **State, district, and school leadership** was engaged through communications from the office of the State superintendent related to terms and conditions for grant awards as well as requirements for data collection and analysis.
- **Staff** were involved through the development of school teams to promote school-level ownership and decision making for the effort. A specific community of practice was established and maintained through the entirety of the project. An annual summer institute was held to explore best practices and to provide an opportunity for review of data and completion of upcoming work plans and budgets. An ongoing Web-based virtual meeting was held with key project staff from all S3 schools on a monthly basis.
- **Student engagement** was empowered through the annual collection of student experiences, attitudes, and perceptions via administration of the Online Youth Risk Behavior Survey (OYRBS). Also, several student-focused, subgroup-specific initiatives, including the American Indian Student Achievement Initiative (AISAI) with a large number of American Indian students. An additional initiative included supporting sexual minority youth through the establishment of Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs), professional learning communities, and community readiness assessments. Furthermore, at the local level,

<sup>10</sup> O'Connor, C., Small, S. A., & Cooney, S. M. (2007). [Program fidelity and adaptation: Meeting local needs without compromising program effectiveness](#). *What Works, Wisconsin Research to Practice Series*, 4. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin–Madison/Extension.

<sup>11</sup> WI S3's efforts were grounded in the PBIS behavioral framework, providing tiered supports for students at different levels of risk. More than 90 percent of participating districts used this framework. The grant underwrote the costs of their State training center providing high school–specific PBIS trainings (in lieu of blending with training sessions for elementary school audiences).



numerous peer-to-peer support measures were put in place including Link Crews, Teen Courts, and Restorative Practices.

- **Family and community partnerships** were promoted through local-level efforts to engage parents and community partners to support safe and healthy school environments. The “Like a Cane” campaign (the Hurricanes being the district’s mascot) was designed to engage students at the high school level, although the phrase is now used to engage the entire Hayward, Wisconsin, community. As part of a community engagement effort, the school developed partnerships with local businesses expressing its catchphrase “Like a Cane.” The effort was also a fundraiser for the district as businesses purchased banners to express their support for the Hayward schools.

## Training, Coaching, and Technical Assistance

Professional development supports such as training, coaching, and technical assistance (TA) let staff know that school climate is a priority. Training helps staff develop the skills needed to understand the issues, use data to guide their work, and effectively implement intervention(s) with fidelity. Coaches can provide a range of supports such as keeping school climate and student support materials up to date, mentoring staff about policies and practices, or conducting observations and performance-feedback sessions. Technical assistance—provided by members of the school climate team or contractors—can support communities of practice among coaches or school staff, help outline training plans, conduct research to support the work, or help school climate teams address issues such as the need for adaptations to interventions.

### Training

Wisconsin held the following face-to-face gatherings for S3 project staff:

1. [Building the Hearts of Successful Schools](#) conference, held in December 2015. This conference provided workshops on various topics, including Creating Trauma-Informed Classrooms; PREPaRE: A Crisis Response Process for Schools; School SBIRT: Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment; and Teaching Sexual Health Education Accurately, Comfortably, and Effectively;
2. Annual Summer Institute, held in [2011](#), [2012](#), [2013](#), [2014](#), and [2015](#). The topics covered varied each year, but common objectives for the institute were to understand timelines and procedures, explore schoolwide policy and practices to address identified school climate needs, and identify needs that emerged from the data related to S3 outcomes; and
3. Annual site visits (no detail provided).

### Coaching and Technical Assistance Model

A team of three consultants at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (WI DPI) oversaw the S3 implementation in the participating districts. WI S3 overcame travel and logistical challenges by locating trainings on a regional basis and by offering technical assistance through electronic and distance learning methods. On-site TA visits were conducted annually, and TA calls were conducted monthly with project coordinators and staff in each district. WI S3 also contracted with specific strategy trainers from the [Wisconsin Safe and Healthy Schools Center](#), [ScholarCentric](#), [Boomerang](#), [GSafe](#), and [Diverse and Resilient](#). WI S3 created a community of practice by hosting regular (monthly or semimonthly) “live meetings” via webinar (utilizing the [Blackboard Collaborate](#) tool).

## Product Development and Dissemination

To support training, technical assistance, and program implementation, S3 grantees developed many unique products. These include theoretical and logic models, administrative guides, reference manuals, toolkits, videos, reports, Web pages, briefs, workbooks, fact sheets, rating forms, readiness and implementation checklists, and peer-reviewed journal articles. In addition, grantees developed and offered many training presentations and webinars. These resources were shared broadly among participating LEAs and other districts that took an interest in the work being done. Key products generated by the WI S3 grant include:

- [Discipline, Suspensions, and Expulsions](#), a Web page focused on reducing “reactive discipline” and strategies to ensure safe learning environments;
- [Wisconsin’s Vision for Response to Intervention](#) (RtI), a Web page providing a description and resources related to providing a multilevel system of support;
- [S3 Incentives Guidance](#) document written to assist schools in determining the appropriate amount of S3 funding to spend on incentives or acknowledgments for their PBIS program;
- [Wisconsin Success Stories](#) report and [video](#), products describing in detail the best practices adopted by one or more S3 districts during this project, specific case studies from individual high schools, and the impact of select strategies; and
- Wisconsin S3 [Web page](#) detailing grant activities, results, and sustainability efforts.

## Results

Monitoring and evaluation activities examined all the data that had been collected in order to determine how WI S3’s efforts affected school climate in participating districts and schools. Outcome data included survey data, behavioral incident reports and other disciplinary action data, attendance data, and student academic performance. S3 grantees performed a variety of analyses to demonstrate the results of their work. The following sections provide details on reporting requirements as well as additional analyses or evaluations that were performed by WI S3.

### Government Performance and Results Act Results

The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA) requires all federal grantees to demonstrate their effectiveness on a grant-specific set of indicators. S3 grantees reported annually on four GPRA measures. S3 GPRA measures included the percentage of S3 participating schools implementing interventions that, over the four years of the grant, experienced:

An increase or decrease in the percentage of schools that reported:

- Student-reported alcohol use in the past 30 days (GPRA measures a and b); and
- Student-reported harassment or bullying on school property (GPRA measures c and d).

Improvement or worsening of:

- School safety scores (GPRA measures e and f).

An increase or decrease in the number of:

- Suspensions for violence without injury (GPRA measures g and h).<sup>12</sup>

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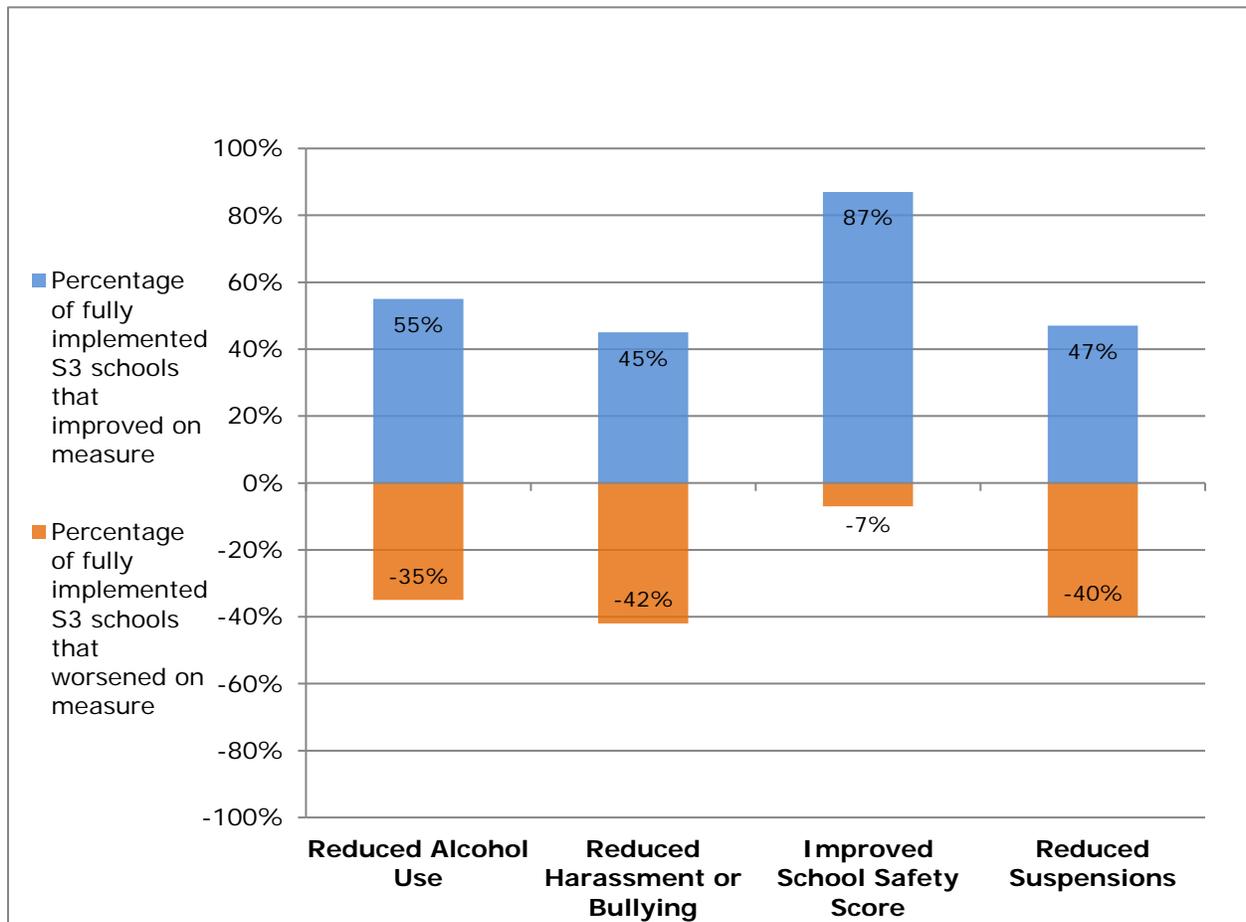
<sup>12</sup> Readers should note that suspension data, in particular, might be affected by changes in State policies during the course of the S3 grant period that may be unrelated to S3 programming.

GPRA Performance Summary

At the end of the grant period, the 52 participating schools that had fully implemented<sup>13</sup> their selected interventions reported the following successes (see also Figure 1):

- Fifty-five percent reported reductions in student-reported alcohol use;
- Forty-five percent reported a reduction in harassment or bullying on school property;
- Eighty-seven percent improved their ISBSE school safety score<sup>14</sup>; and
- Forty-seven percent reported a reduction in student suspensions for violence without injury.

**Figure 1. Wisconsin GPRA results baseline (2010–11) to final year (2013–14)**



Note: A number of high schools in the Milwaukee Public School District (MPS) were either closed or reorganized over the course of the project. Seven schools from four districts (Milwaukee, Racine,

<sup>13</sup> A school was considered “fully implemented” if the majority of programmatic interventions in the school were fully implemented as planned and the remainder of programs were close to being implemented and/or would be finished by the end of the school year.

<sup>14</sup> “The statewide baseline average ISBSE score for project schools after the first year of the grant’s implementation stood at 217.85. After year four, the average ISBSE score was 127.71, a 41 percent improvement” (*WI S3 Success Stories*).



Kenosha, and Janesville) were part of data collection in Year 1 and the final year of activity as part of a “control group” but were not included in the GPRA analyses as none of them implemented interventions. Detail may not sum to 100 percent due to schools that experienced no statistically significant change or that had missing data.

WI S3 reported that decreases or worsening on GPRA indicators were likely attributable to significant student mobility in the State’s largest school district. Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) allows significant choice, which results in students attending several schools over their high school years. Additionally, reorganization of schools in MPS led to a number of S3 high schools being closed. These factors contributed to S3 high schools having difficulty establishing efforts and generating momentum behind their school climate transformation efforts.

## Additional Analyses

WI S3 also performed a rigorous evaluation comparing participating schools to similar schools that did not participate in S3.

*Evaluators:* University of Wisconsin’s [Population Health Institute \(UW-PHI\)](#)

*Analysis approach:*

UW-PHI analyzed school- and student-level data in order to document and report progress in school safety and environment performance. The student-level outcomes were measured by annual S3 OYRBS surveys from 2011–14. The school-level outcomes were derived from annual data routinely reported by all Wisconsin public schools to the Department of Public Instruction. Participating S3 schools (“treatment schools”) were compared with other schools (“control schools”) with similar enrollment and other characteristics. Evaluators assessed perceptions of school safety, climate, commitment to school, and negative behaviors (violence, bullying, and alcohol and other drug abuse [AODA]). Additionally, they assessed school-level data on suspensions, academic testing results, graduation rates, and program implementation. Evaluators took into account student differences such as poverty status, race/ethnicity, and English language learner status.

*Summary of findings:*

Over the four years studied, in the S3 student self-reported (OYRBS) data, there was significant change in the desired direction (i.e., a reduction of negative behavior or perceptions) on **experience of violence, alcohol and drug use, bullying and harassment, and general perception of safety**. Changes on the dimensions of student commitment to academics and perception of school discipline moved in an undesirable direction, while overall perception of school climate and support did not change significantly.

Notably, treatment schools reduced **suspension rates** from an average of 25.4 percent of students to 11.2 percent of students suspended annually. This 14 percentage point reduction was considerably more than that in the comparison high schools (reduced from 8.9 to 7.1 percent) or statewide (reduced from 9.1 to 5.7 percent). In addition, the duplicated rate of suspensions in S3 schools (total number of suspensions during the school year divided by total enrollment) averaged 74.1 percent in the 2009–10 baseline year and was reduced to 30.3 percent in the 2012–13 school year. The numbers suggest that the typical student was suspended about three–times in the initial year and only twice in the 2012–13 school year.

Significant reductions in suspension rates reflected changes in administrative behaviors of school officials and district policy. Given these and other findings, the research team concluded that student perceptions and behaviors appeared to be more resistant to change than administrative behaviors. WI S3 reflected that the large reductions in suspensions and



expulsions came as a result of policy changes calling for a different approach to behavioral misconduct. The requirements to use different approaches to engaging students shifted mindsets among school administrators and staff about whether to apply punitive discipline. The significant reductions in out-of-school disciplinary actions far outpaced the modest changes in indicators that came for student self-reports of behaviors related to alcohol and other drug (AOD) use and bullying/harassment incidents. While not diminishing the modest changes made around the self-report indicators, the policy changes that came from adopting PBIS and restorative practices contributed to the phenomenal drop in out-of-school discipline.

The evaluation team also reported that analysis of the effectiveness of various approaches to intervention was difficult because, in the end, there was no fixed pattern or set of interventions implemented consistently and with fidelity in multiple schools. However, exploratory analyses of the 885 programs, strategies, and frameworks implemented in participating schools and found mixed associations. There was significant variation in the number of programs used by schools, with schools employing, on average, 18 different programs and strategies across the 4-year project, with a standard deviation of 7 programs. Schools using more programs had greater improvements in perceptions of safety and fair discipline, but had increases in suspension rates, compared to schools using fewer programs. The evidence-base of programs was significantly related to observed outcomes. **Evidence-based programs** (8 percent of implemented programs) were associated with increases in high school graduation rates, but also increased suspension/expulsion rates. **Structured programs** (43 percent of implemented programs), defined as programs with training and technical supports but with little or no empirical evidence of effectiveness, were associated with decreased suspension/expulsion rates and improved perceptions of school climate and safety, but were also associated with decreased reading scores and decreased attendance. Schools using PBIS generally had improved attendance rates, but also had increases in student reported violence, bullying, and harassment.

*Reports about analyses:*

- [Wisconsin Success Stories](#)
- Kuo, D., & Moberg, D. P. (2016) [Wisconsin Safe and Supportive Schools \(S3\): External evaluation report summary](#). University of Wisconsin Madison Population Health Institute.

**Special Feature**  
**Findings from Disaggregated Data in WI S3 Quasi-Experimental Evaluation**  
**(excerpted from Kuo & Moberg, 2016)**

In partnership with WI S3, the University of Wisconsin's [Population Health Institute](#) performed a sophisticated evaluation method: a quasi-experimental study. Notably, the study used multivariate regression multilevel modeling (MLM) to examine four waves of sequential cross-sectional student data (annual n~ 22,000) nested within S3 schools (n~55). Comparison schools (n~64)<sup>15</sup> were selected through a statistical matching technique called propensity score analysis. School-level outcomes were derived from annual administrative and academic data routinely reported by all Wisconsin public schools to the Department of Public Instruction.

In addition to the major findings reported in the Additional Analyses section of this summary, deeper analysis found that individual-level student perceptions of school climate and safety were

<sup>15</sup> Wisconsin's 64 "comparison" schools were distinct from the seven "control" schools mentioned in the School Participation section. The 64 comparison schools did not complete the school climate survey. Data collection from the seven "control" schools was not uniform and the selection was not random, so to avoid biasing the results, Wisconsin decided not to report the data from these schools.

associated with student gender (females more positive), race (Black students more positive), grade level (9th grade more positive than 11th), and GPA (better perceptions and behaviors as GPA rose). Also, as school size increased and with higher suspension rates, student perceptions became more negative. Students in schools with higher percentages of Black and Hispanic students had more positive overall perceptions and behaviors than schools with higher proportions of non-Hispanic White students. WI S3 theorized that the seemingly contradictory findings may result from structural differences in schools where the majority of students are Black and Hispanic. Relative to non-Hispanic White students in similar settings (large, urban, low income, high percent minority), Black and Hispanic students are overall more positive in their perceptions and behaviors.

WI S3 also looked at the relationship over time between student-level information and school-level administrative actions (e.g., suspensions) using Multiple Indicators Multiple Causes (MIMIC) modeling. They found that schools with a higher percent of Black students had higher suspension rates. WI S3 reported that the role of student race as a factor in increasing suspension rates needs further attention. Experience (and fear) of violence by students was also significantly associated with suspension rates in WI S3 models and was a stable predictor over the three years examined. These data suggest that, with the exception of serious violent behavior, suspension rates are not predicted or explained by student perceptions and behavior but are related independently to student racial composition, even after adjusting for other variables.

## Lessons Learned

As with any pilot program, WI S3 experienced its share of implementation challenges and learning opportunities. The following notable issues may be of interest to others:

- In order for a school climate project to have optimal benefits, a commitment must be made by the building administrator. Because this type of commitment influences all of the adults that come in contact with students, the example and directive must start at the top. In WI S3 schools, several buildings had multiple administrator changes over the four years of the project. These schools saw the least amount of progress and, in some cases, actually regressed. This was similarly true for the project coordinator roles where the principal was not the actual project director. To establish consistent policies and to build a positive school climate, there needs to be stability for students in both the adults that are serving them and the facilities and programs in which they are being educated.
- School staff turnover resulted in knowledge gaps among new staff not trained in interventions. This affected the grant by having repeated starts and stops in program strategies at high schools where there were one or more changes in building principal or building coordinator. This was especially acute in Milwaukee where significant reorganization of schools resulted in changes in student body makeup and principal assignments.
- The most impactful strategy employed was selecting schools due to their consistently high punitive discipline rates. These schools needed to revise their approach to engaging students to meet their mission of educating all students. This was accomplished through a conscious effort to change interactions based upon new adult attitudes toward students and their behaviors. Additionally, a strong commitment from S3 project schools to adopting a PBIS framework complemented the policy of positive student engagement and support and led the way.
- When WI DPI limited the percentage of funds that could be utilized on security hardware and School Resource Officer (SRO) outlays, school teams focused more on the strategies that stood the best chance of bringing true safety to their buildings, students, and staff.
- Spending and revenue caps were imposed on public school districts by the Wisconsin State Legislature, resulting in limited ability to expend local funds on school safety



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and school climate efforts. Having a dedicated resource and a requirement to focus on this important aspect of education not only created safer school environments, as measured by reduced suspensions and expulsions, but also resulted in improved and increased engagement with students. This was largely accomplished through the implementation of a PBIS framework and corresponding policy changes.

### Sustainability and Scaling Up

By the close of the S3 grant, WI S3 had left the State in a strong position to continue school climate improvement efforts. Specifically:

- Each participating district had developed a local sustainability plan to allow for data collection and analysis and the selection and implementation of evidence-based interventions to continue.
- All critical district staff had been trained in targeted interventions, including Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral to Treatment (SBIRT), Classroom Organization and Management Program (COMP), Restorative Practices, and Link Crew, and in using a PBIS framework.
- WI leveraged the accomplishment of the S3 grant to win additional funding, including:
  - National Institutes for Justice (NIJ) research grant around school safety and antibullying strategies, grounded in PBIS Tier 1, with middle schools;
  - Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) State and Community Pilot Grant (SAMHSA) focused on improving high school mental health access;
  - Project Aware (SAMHSA) grant focused on Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA);
  - School Climate Transformation Grant (SCTG) to advance PBIS framework to Tiers 2 and 3; and
  - Smaller grants to help support emergency management operations and plans.

### Contact Information

For more information about WI S3, please refer to the information below.

*Grant holder:* Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (WI DPI), Office of Student Services, Prevention and Wellness

*Web site:* <http://dpi.wi.gov/sppw/safe-schools/safe-and-supportive>

*Project director:* Steve Fernan, [steven.fernand@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:steven.fernand@dpi.wi.gov), (608) 266-3889

S3 Grantee Profiles were prepared for each of the 11 S3 grantees as part of the S3 Descriptive Study (S3DS). The profiles provide detailed information about how each S3 grantee approached and executed their grant, including how intervention schools were selected, key data collection tools and activities, use of programmatic interventions and related supports, products created, findings from their data, lessons learned, and plans for sustainability of their school climate improvement work. The 11 S3 grantee profiles and a cross-grantee executive summary can be accessed here:

<https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/state-grantees/safe-and-supportive-school-s3-grants>.

Grantee profile published on June 4, 2018.



## Appendix A: List of Wisconsin Participating Districts and Schools

Participating Districts	Participating Schools
1. Bayfield	1. Bayfield High School
2. Beloit	2. Beloit High School
3. Bowler	3. Bowler High School
4. Brown Deer	4. Brown Deer High School
5. Green Bay	5. East High School 6. Preble High School 7. Southwest High School 8. West High School
6. Greenfield	9. Greenfield High School
7. Hayward	10. Hayward High School
8. Horicon	11. Horicon High School
9. Janesville	12. Craig High School 13. Parker High School
10. Kenosha	14. Bradford High School 15. Harborside Academy 16. Indian Trail High School 17. Reuther Central High School 18. Tremper High School
11. Madison	19. East High School 20. LaFollette High School 21. West High School
12. Maple	22. Northwestern High School
13. Milwaukee	23. ALAS High School 24. Bay View High School 25. Audubon High School 26. Bradley Tech High School 27. Conservatory of Lifelong Learning 28. Hamilton High School 29. High School of the Arts 30. Milwaukee School of Languages 31. James Madison Academic Campus 32. King International High School 33. MacDowell Montessori School 34. Morse-Marshall HS <sup>^</sup> 35. Pulaski High School 36. Reagan College Prep High School 37. Riverside High School 38. Obama School of Career and Technical Education 39. South Division High School 40. Vincent High School 41. Washington High School of Information Technology
14. Mukwonago	42. Mukwonago HS
15. Racine	43. Case High School 44. Horlick High School 45. Park High School



**S3 Grantee Profile**  
**Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction**

<b>Participating Districts</b>	<b>Participating Schools</b>
16. St. Francis	46. St. Francis High School
17. Superior	47. Superior High School
18. Suring	48. Suring High School
19. West Allis-West	49. Central High School 50. Nathan Hale High School
School District Unknown <sup>^</sup>	51. Community School 52. Memorial High School

<sup>^</sup> This school has changed names or has split since the S3 grant concluded.

<sup>~</sup> School district information is not available using existing documents and records.

Note: 55 intervention schools were part of WI S3, however three did not fully implement interventions, thus only the 52 schools that fully implemented interventions are listed here.