Scaling up School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports:

The Experiences of Seven States with Documented Success

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Scaling of evidence-based practices in education has received extensive discussion but little empirical evaluation. We present here a descriptive summary of the experience from seven states with a history of implementing and scaling School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) over the past decade. Each state has been successful in establishing at least 500 schools using SWPBIS across approximately a third or more of the schools in their state. The implementation elements proposed by Sugai, Horner, Algozzine et al. (2010) and the stages of implementation described by Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, and Wallace (2005) were used within a survey with each element assessed at each stage by the SWPBIS coordinators and policy makers in the seven states. Consistent themes from analysis of the responses were defined and confirmed with the surveyed participants. Results point to four central areas of state “capacity” as being perceived as critical for a state to move a SWPBIS to scale (administrative leadership and funding, local training and coaching capacity, behavioral expertise, and local evaluation capacity), and an iterative process in which initial implementation success (100-200 demonstrations) is needed to recruit the political and fiscal support required for larger scaling efforts.
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Educators continue to search for the processes by which states can "take to scale" innovative practices that have been documented as effective and feasible in smaller demonstrations (Bertram, Suter, Bruns, & O'Rourke, 2010; Fixsen et al., 2005). As a field, educators are far better at describing and documenting small scale success than producing broad and sustained systems change (Adelman & Taylor, 2003; Fixsen, Blase, Duda, Naom, & Van Dyke, 2010). Our purpose here is to describe the scaling experiences of seven states that have been successful in implementing School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) with at least 500 schools (and approximately a third of the schools in their state) over the past decade. The primary question under consideration was identification of the key variables that were perceived as essential for implementing SWPBIS at a scale of social significance. We used the stages of implementation defined by Fixsen and his colleagues (Fixsen, et al., 2005; Fixsen, Blase, Horner & Sugai, 2009), and the elements of the SWPBIS implementation as defined by Sugai, Horner, Algozzine et al., (2010) to examine variables that may prove instructive for states wishing to scale up SWPBIS, and/or other educational innovations.

School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS)

School-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports is a set of intervention practices and organizational systems for establishing the social culture and intensive individual behavior supports needed to achieve academic and social success for all students (Sugai, Horner & Lewis, 2009). The approach draws directly from community health prevention efforts (Walker et al., 1996) and emphasizes implementation of interventions with multiple tiers of intensity. The first tier, primary prevention, focuses on support for all students before behavioral errors develop, and emphasizes (a) defining and teaching 3 to 5 school-wide behavioral expectations, (b) rewarding appropriate behavior on a regular
schedule, (c) minimizing the natural rewards available for inappropriate behavior, (d) establishing a continuum of formal and predictable consequences for problem behavior, and (e) collecting and using data about student behavior to guide on-going decision-making (Scott, Anderson & Alter, 2011; Sugai & Lewis, 1999; Sugai et al., 2009). The second tier, secondary prevention, includes highly efficient interventions that are implemented similarly for groups of students who are not responding to the primary prevention procedures (McCurdy, Kunsch, & Reibstein, 2007). Examples of secondary prevention approaches include First Step to Success (Walker, et al., 2009; Walker, Severson, Feil, Stiller & Golly, 1998), Check-in/Check-out (Crone, Hawken & Horner, 2010), Check and Connect (Anderson, Christenson, Sinclair, & Lehr, 2004), and Social Skills Clubs (Lane et al., 2003; Powers, 2003). The third tier of support, tertiary prevention, typically involves individualized support that is developed based on academic, social and medical assessment of specific students (Crone & Horner, 2003; Scott & Eber, 2003; Scott et al., 2011).

SWPBIS is not a formal curriculum but a 2-3 year framework for establishing district and school capacity for adopting a set of organizational systems and specific practices that make up effective and preventive behavioral interventions. The core features of SWPBIS are not new. In fact they draw from several decades of systematic research, demonstration and innovation in education, mental health and behavior analysis (Biglan, 1995; Colvin, Kame’enui, & Sugai, 1993; Gottfredson, Gottfredson, & Hybl, 1993; Knoff, 2000; Mayer, 1995; Mayer & Butterworth, 1979; Nelson, 1996; Sailor, Dunlap, Sugai, & Horner, 2009; Sprick, Garrison, & Howard, 1998; Wilson, Gottfredson, & Najaka, 2001). During the past five years implementation of SWPBIS has been increasingly influenced by recommendations from implementation science (Fixsen et al., 2005; Fixsen et al., 2009). The real contributions of SWPBIS lie in (a) focusing on the whole school as the unit of analysis, (b) emphasizing multiple tiers of support in which a student’s needs are assessed regularly, support levels are tied to need, and supports are
delivered as early as possible, (c) tying educational practices to the organizational systems needed to
deliver these practices with fidelity and sustainability and (d) using data for active and cyclical decision-
making (Sugai et al., 2009).

Schools choosing to implement SWPBIS begin the process with a self-assessment to determine
what core elements of the framework are already in place, and then they select an implementation plan
that builds on their existing strengths. Typically, school teams (including the school administrator)
receive 3-6 days of in-service training in each of two years, and support from a “coach” to tailor
procedures to fit their local context (Lewis, Jones, Horner, & Sugai, 2010; Sugai, Horner, Algozzine, et al.,
2010). Teams also collect data on the fidelity of their implementation both as part of the initial
implementation process, and to sustain implementation (Algozzine et al., 2009). SWPBIS has been
implemented in over 16,000 schools across the United States (Sugai, 2011) and demonstrated through
multiple research studies to be causally linked to (a) reduction in office discipline referrals, (b) reduction
in truancy and tardiness, (c) reduction in discipline recidivism, (d) increased academic performance, (e)
increased perception of school safety, and (f) improved staff turnover rates (Bradshaw, Koth, Bevans,
Ialongo, & Leaf, 2008; Bradshaw, Koth, Thornton, & Leaf, 2009; Bradshaw, Mitchell, & Leaf, 2010;
McIntosh, Chard, Boland & Horner., 2006; McIntosh, Flannery, Sugai, Braun, & Cochrane, 2008;
McIntosh, Horner, Chard, Boland & Good, 2006; Horner et al., 2009; Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010;
Safran, 2006). The broad adoption of SWPBIS is encouraging for those interested in systems change, but
16,000 schools remains only a modest proportion of the over 92,000 schools in the United States. Of
special interest for the present paper, SWPBIS has been adopted much more effectively in some states
than others. Consideration of the variables that have contributed to large scale adoption seems timely.

The framework (or “blueprint”) for implementing SWPBIS was developed in the early 1990s, and
formally implemented in Oregon starting in 1994. The initial draft of the SWPBIS Implementation
Blueprint was made available in 2002, and a revised version of the Implementation Blueprint (Sugai, Horner, Algozzine et al., 2010) was posted in March, 2010. Oregon, Illinois, Missouri and Maryland were early adopters, initiating SWPBIS implementation between 1997 and 1999. Florida, North Carolina and Colorado embraced SWPBIS implementation soon thereafter (e.g., 2000-2002).

**Implementation Elements**

Implementation of SWPBIS has been guided by two highly compatible rubrics. One comes from the initial SWPBIS efforts to work with whole-school implementation within district, region and state systems (Sugai et al., 2002). The second comes from a larger focus on implementation science, and the stages that frame adoption of any new set of practices (Fixsen et al., 2005; Fixsen, Blase, Horner & Sugai, 2010; Fixsen, Blase, & Van Dyke, 2011). The combination of implementation elements with stages of adoption framed the data collection protocol for the present study, and warrant more detailed review here.

Figure 1 is a summary of the key elements defined by Sugai, Horner, Algozzine et al., (2010) associated with implementation of SWPBIS. The heart of the process begins with a “leadership team” that has the authority, resources, and coordination FTE needed to implement the core elements of SWPBIS. Our experience was that most districts, regions or states were able to establish leadership teams, but often those teams did not have the authority to do the task they were given, or did not have the personnel needed to coordinate a complex training venture. Starting implementation with careful development of the leadership team was defined as an essential process for achieving high fidelity and high sustainability. Focusing on the leadership team required building four levels of capacity that were viewed as essential for sustained, high fidelity implementation.

**Funding for the initiative:** Define the funding source for a minimum of three years
Visibility: Define at the beginning how the effort would be described throughout the district/region/state, and how implementation and impact information would be shared on a regular basis.

Political Support: The leadership team was encouraged not to launch training efforts unless there was clear political support associated with improving student social behavior, and regular opportunities to report on progress and outcomes to the highest level of administrative authority.

Policy: The leadership team was asked to identify the district/region/state policies that supported the need to build a strong social culture in schools.

The second major emphasis within the SWPBIS implementation blueprint was the development of local school exemplars: schools that were implementing SWPBIS with fidelity and effect. Most leadership teams entered the process prepared, interested and ready to launch training to build “pilot” or “exemplar” schools. Few were ready to implement SWPBIS on a scale of real significance. In many cases the development of demonstration exemplars was a politically necessary feature for sustaining the leadership team. An important element of SWPBIS implementation, however, was to require that development of initial demonstrations occur ONLY in the context of building the local training, coaching, evaluation and behavioral expertise capacity that would be required for future scaling. This translated into emphasizing four capacity categories that were developed during the training of initial school teams:

Training Capacity: A central feature of SWPBIS implementation is development of local trainers. States are familiar with an “external expert” model of staff development, and it often is appropriate and practical to recruit external experts to train school teams. Within the SWPBIS approach to implementation, a central focus is on tying training by external experts to
establishment of local personnel who can deliver the same training. Public access to training materials, regular provision of training-of-trainer sessions, and development of local trainers as a part of the Leadership action plan facilitated this effort.

**Coaching Capacity:** External SWPBIS trainers also were expected to provide staff development for district/region/or state “coaches.” Coaching is the on-site support needed to encourage and tailor an innovation to fit the local context. Coaching is done with the local team to (a) assist the team in follow-through after training workshops, (b) assist in collection of progress monitoring data as implementation fidelity improves, and (c) assist in adapting and tailoring the practices received in training workshops to match the strengths and demands of the local context.

**Evaluation Capacity:** A central feature of SWPBIS implementation was development of local evaluation capacity so schools, districts, and state implementers could regularly assess (a) if SWPBIS was being implemented with fidelity and (b) if implementation was benefiting students (Algozzine et al., 2009; Tobin, Vincent, Horner, Rossetto Dickey & May, 2011).

**Behavioral Expertise:** Experience implementing SWPBIS has taught us that for full implementation of Tier II and Tier III procedures a district needs personnel with mastery of behavioral theory and intensive support practices. School teams typically demonstrate competence in implementation of Tier I SWPBIS practices without more highly trained personnel. As teams move to extend implementation to Tier II and Tier III practices, however, success requires access to local personnel with specific knowledge, skill and experience with behavioral interventions. Given this experience, Sugai, Horner, Algozzine et al., 2010, added development of local behavioral expertise as a part of initial SWPBIS emphasis for Leadership Teams.

**Implementation Stages**
The elements of SWPBIS implementation proved a good fit with the approach to scaling of evidence-based practices proposed by Fixsen and his colleagues (Fixsen et al., 2005; Fixsen et al., 2011). Of special value was the focus on conducting implementation of innovations within a formal set of stages (Exploration, Installation, Initial Implementation, Full Implementation, Innovation and Sustainability). A compelling theme was that premature adoption of specific practices without (a) establishing the need and policy support, and (b) building the infra-structure to support the practices is very likely to result in low fidelity adoption, poor outcomes, and rapid rejection. Simply put the message from implementation science has been that the “quality” (or effectiveness) of a practice is insufficient for large-scale adoption without attention to the stages and features of effective implementation. Focusing on the quality of the core features of any practice (literacy, numeracy, writing, behavioral support) is necessary but insufficient. Equal attention is needed to the features of effective implementation. Fixsen et al. (2011) recently crystalized this message in the equation, “Effective Interventions X Effective Implementation = Effective Educational Outcomes.” The message they offer is that if the goal is real outcomes for students, then investment in the stages and features of effective implementation needs to be as large a concern for Leadership Teams as the quality of the interventions (practices) they hope to see used. This translates, in part, to careful consideration of six stages of implementation (Fixsen et al., 2009).

**Exploration:** Effective implementation of innovative practices begins not with training, but with careful review of the need for change, examination of what options exist for achieving desired change, and determining both the feasibility of alternatives to current practices, and the comparative value of proposed versus current practices. Fixsen et al. (2005) advocate for moving forward with implementation only after key stakeholders have had the time to examine current status, consider options, and determine the feasibility and value of a new approach to
how things are done. The time needed to complete the exploration stage will vary depending on a range of organizational factors, and the extent to which there is a collective agreement that change is needed.

**Installation**: A frequently forgotten stage in implementation is the installation of organizational and structural features (e.g., policies, schedules, job descriptions) needed to allow a new practice to be implemented. The “readiness” of an organization to adopt a new innovation/practice involves not simply moving through the Exploration Stage, but building the foundations that will allow a new practice to be successful. When done well “installation” is the stage where a school identifies how to make effective practices “fit” the local social, cultural, political and geographic context. There are always multiple paths for achieving the core features of evidence-based practices, and SWPBIS is no exception. The installation stage is where a school team must define not just what is needed but how best to achieve what is needed given the strengths and challenges of the local setting.

**Initial Implementation**: The first adopters of a new practice identify the rough spots between proposed and actual implementation feasibility. Procedures that seemed clear and readily adoptable are suddenly reevaluated in the face of organizational, technical and practical barriers that may not have been obvious. Initial implementation involves documenting that a practice is possible and produces the outcomes promised. Of major importance for SWPBIS, however, initial implementation focuses NOT just on establishing exemplar demonstrations, but also on initiating investment in local capacity for (a) training, (b) coaching, (c) evaluation, and (d) behavioral expertise. A major message is that initial implementation includes establishing the capacity for expansion.
**Full Implementation**: Full adoption SWPBIS involves implementation of at least one Tier (preferably all three) with high fidelity and fluency. Full implementation for a district, region or state includes adoption by a high proportion of the schools in the area (e.g., 60%), and establishment of the training, coaching, evaluation and behavioral expertise capacity to continuously train, regenerate and improve the practices.

**Innovation and Sustainability**: The fifth and sixth stages of implementation recognize that sustained implementation is never about static repetition, but about active adaptation and continuous improvement. Schools are highly dynamic settings. Students, staff, and community are in continual flux and even the expectations that society has for schooling shift over time. Implementation of effect instructional, behavioral and organizational practices will require not just repetition of what was done before, but continual modification of “what works” to “what works better.” Key features of these stages are the need to establish on-going measures of implementation fidelity, and regular opportunities to train and update personnel on core features of the implemented practice. For SWPBIS, this translates in to annual fidelity measurement using formal evaluation measures (e.g., SET, TIC, BoQ or SAS) (Algozzine et al., 2009), and investment in the training and coaching capacity at the district/regional level for continuous staff development.

**Purpose**

The purpose of the present report is to use the experience of seven successful states to identify variables that are perceived as important for not just initial implementation of SWPBIS, but comparatively large scale implementation with fidelity and impact. The descriptive methods to achieve this purpose involved survey and interview efforts with the SWPBIS coordinators and policy personnel in seven successful states. In each case we looked at how each of the core elements of SWPBIS
summarized in Figure 1 was perceived as relevant and operative as the state moved through the stages of implementation.

**Method**

**Participants**

SWPBIS implementation is coordinated through state training and technical assistance efforts. Each state working with the OSEP TA-Center on PBIS has a coordinator who guides training activities, monitors evaluation results, and serves as the liaison with state agencies. Twice a year the PBIS coordinator for each state is asked to identify the number of schools in their state who have (a) established a school-wide PBIS implementation team, and (b) completed or initiated at least the first year of PBIS team training following materials based on the training blueprint published on the www.pbis.org website (Lewis, Barrett, Sugai & Horner, 2010). As of July, 2010 ten states indicated they had 500 or more school implementing SWPBIS. The PBIS state coordinators from seven of these states (Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, Missouri, North Carolina and Oregon) agreed to complete the State Implementation and Scaling Survey (SISS: described below). The PBIS state coordinator and at least one of his/her staff knowledgeable about the history of PBIS implementation in that state completed the information on the SISS between September 1, 2010 and March, 2011.

**Procedure**

The SISS (available at [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)) was developed specifically for this study by creating a matrix using the Fixsen et al. (2005) stages of implementation on one axis (Exploration, Installation, Initial implementation, Full Implementation, Innovation and Sustainability), and the core elements of the implementation model from the PBIS Implementation Blueprint on the other axis (Leadership Team, Funding, Visibility, Policy, Political Support, Training, Coaching, Evaluation, Behavioral Expertise, Local Demonstrations/Exemplars). Questions were developed for each cell of the resulting matrix [e.g., (1)
composition and role of the leadership team during the Exploration State, (2) change in composition, role and impact of leadership team during Initial Implementation, (3) role of leadership team in design of Innovation and Sustainability Stage).

The SISS was provided electronically to the PBIS state coordinator in each state as part of a 30 min telephone summary of the purpose of the research, the format of survey responses, and how the data would be used. Each PBIS state coordinator was asked to complete the content of the SISS within 60 days. All data were collected within 40-100 days from distribution of the survey in the Fall of 2010, with follow up clarifications completed by March, 2011.

Data generated from the SISS provided four sources of content. The first was a simple count of the number of schools adopting SWPBIS per year since initiation of the implementation through July 2010. The second source of information was a timeline of the stages of implementation as defined by Fixsen et al., (2005) to the extent that the stages matched the perceived implementation history within the state. The third source of information was the narrative developed from responding to the questions within the SISS cells. From this information it was possible to identify if and when the core PBIS implementation elements were available, and map this information to the points in time when the form of PBIS Implementation shifted, and scaling increased. The final source of information came from follow-up interview/phone conversations with the individuals who completed the SISS to review the interpretation of the state data, and obtain revisions, edits, and supplemental information that was deemed relevant.

The raw SISS content for each of the participating states is posted for review on the internet at www.pbis.org/evaluation.
Results

Descriptive Patterns

Initial descriptive summary of the implementation process for each of the seven states is provided in Figures 2-8 which detail counts of the total number of schools implementing SWPBIS per year and the self-identified stages of the implementation process. Examining these figures suggests a number of themes.

1. The seven states did not follow a common schedule of adoption. Some took much longer in early stages of implementation (e.g., Oregon, Missouri, North Carolina), and once growth in implementation began the scaling process was not always linear or consistent (e.g., Illinois, Oregon).

2. While the stages of implementation were helpful, a consistent message was that defining the stages for a state was difficult. The stages of implementation were iterative or cycling rather than linear. State personnel were continually repeating the Exploration stage as they moved from school to school, and district to district. A vision of an entire state system of education going through a coherent, linear process of implementation stages was not confirmed. Within a system as large and complex as the education infrastructure of a state, there were always parts of the system in Exploration, some dealing with Installation, some going through Initial Implementation, etc. As such the stages listed in the present summary reflect more the status of state level policy and decision-makers than the entire education academy within a state.

3. The Installation and Initial Implementation stages took different amounts of time, but typically it was not until a state was implementing SWPBIS across 100-200 schools with documented local capacity to train, coach and evaluate SWPBIS that there were shifts in how SWPBIS was implemented (i.e., shift from external trainers to internal trainers, shift from a
single source of funding to multiple sources of funding). It was the shift in implementation practices that made adoption of SWPBIS less expensive per school implementation, and more feasible for scaling up on a geographically distributed level.

Implementation Elements and Stages

Examining the role and function of PBIS Implementation Blueprint elements against the stages of implementation was informative.

Leadership team. Only Colorado started SWPBIS implementation with a defined state leadership team. The other states entered the Exploration and Installation stages with strong advocates, but with the functions of the leadership team filled in different ways. Florida and Maryland started implementation with leadership from local subcontracted specialists, and continues to implement SWPBIS well without a formal state leadership team. Oregon implementation was led initially by a grass roots leadership team formed from collaborating districts who recruited initial state support. As the number of schools using SWPBIS expanded, funding for implementation was provided at the state level, and the state department of education assumed formal leadership team roles and authority.

The functions of a state leadership team were achieved in all seven states, but not always by formally establishing a specific team with conventional state policy authority. Establishing SWPBIS as part of the state “school improvement planning” system was one important policy step. When school administrators/teams began including SWPBIS as part of their improvement goals, it became more important for a state to have a formal mechanism for supporting that area of defined improvement. In some states school-identified need prompted state action, in other states, the state leadership facilitated incorporation of SWPBIS as a school improvement focus. In five of the seven states, development of effective SWPBIS exemplars preceded development of functional leadership support.
State leadership, however, always was consistently identified as central for achieving the political and fiscal assistance needed for larger-scale implementation.

**Coordination.** All seven states began implementation with strong state advocates. These advocates typically became the coordinators who guided the initial implementation, evaluation and planning for scaling. Every state had a clearly defined and funded coordination role by 2010. The function of this role varied as states moved from Exploration to Implementation. Coordinators often managed complex training, coaching and evaluation infra-structures. Effective scaling appears to be facilitated by very adaptive coordination. The roles and skill set needed to establish initial demonstrations or pilots of a practice evolve from direct technical expertise (i.e., training and coaching) to management expertise (i.e., selecting personnel, planning distributed training, summarizing and disseminating evaluation data) as a state moves from initial pilots to coordinated scaling of implementation. North Carolina, Oregon and Missouri report a process in which highly-skilled university personnel were initially active in pilot demonstrations with more formal state personnel assuming the coordination and implementation roles as the state moved into larger scale efforts. Florida and Illinois are examples where initial implementation was led by local contracted personnel, who revised their role as the level of implementation expanded. Illinois especially describes a shift in coordination activities as the state moved into more rapid scaling, and developed a state-wide leadership team.

**Training, coaching, evaluation, behavioral expertise.** All states had strong (but comparatively small) training capacity when they entered the Exploration stage with SWPBIS. Each state had a history of being able to train administrators, specialists and school teams in educational innovations. Typically, however, states had relied on a small cadre of local trainers (or hired external trainers), and did not have extensive experience investing in distributed, local training, coaching and evaluation. Building coaching and training capacity that was geographically available throughout the state, of high quality, and
coordinated state-wide was a major barrier to scaling. One of the organizational accomplishments that each state identified as important to their ability to implement SWPBIS at scale was investment in establishing a training and coaching capacity across their geographic catchment area.

Evaluation occurred at all stages of implementation. Initially, evaluation data focused on whether the core features of SWPBIS were already in place (e.g., treatment fidelity). During Initial Implementation the focus of evaluation shifted to whether SWPBIS could be implemented with fidelity and with benefit for students. Only as states documented initial “pilot” success did the evaluation expand to implementation of SWPBIS at all three tiers of intensity and with assessment of the larger organizational systems needed for sustainability. None of the states entered the implementation process with adequate evaluation measures, data collection systems, or a community of practice skilled in evaluation protocol. Establishing this evaluation infrastructure was consistently defined as a key foundation for larger-scaling of SWPBIS implementation. The availability and use of data was emphasized by all of the seven states as a key for moving from initial implementation to broader scale implementation.

The seven states varied a great deal on the indigenous availability of behavioral expertise in schools when they started SWPBIS implementation. Having school psychologists, counselors, social workers and special educators with strong behavioral knowledge was not essential for Exploration, Installation or even Initial Implementation. As more schools became fluent at SWPBIS Tier I practices, however, they became focused on more intensive Tier II and Tier III support efforts. The resulting training and coordination demands placed a higher value on individuals with stronger behavioral training. The availability of district personnel with competence in behavioral theory and behavioral interventions governed the speed with which districts were able to adopt the multi-tiered elements of
SWPBIS. Investing earlier in the development of local behavioral expertise was suggested by two state coordinators as a strategy that may have improved the speed of their SWPBIS implementation.

**Demonstrations of exemplar schools and districts.** Initial demonstrations that SWPBIS could be implemented with fidelity and would impact student outcomes were essential for later scaling. The number of demonstration schools per stage varied from state to state. It was not uncommon, however, for 20-100 schools to serve as initial adopters without wider expansion. One theme was that as initial demonstrations (a) documented feasibility and impact, (b) a larger cohort of demonstration schools was developed, and (c) once the cohort of schools using SWPBIS effectively reach the 100-200 range there was a shift in the political will to invest in scaling. While the number of demonstration schools varied, each state reported the importance of initial demonstration success before decisions were made to invest in the training, coaching, evaluating and intervening practices needed for larger scale implementation.

**Discussion**

Reviewing the implementation narratives provided by the seven states allows an initial window into addressing the question, "what features were needed for the state to move from Installation and Initial Implementation of demonstrations to Full Implementation at a larger scale?" Three themes appear worthy of future consideration.

1. States needed a strong advocate, modest initiative funding, and indigenous training capacity to launch SWPBIS implementation. With these assets state/district coordinators were able to establish small clusters of schools that did well implementing SWPBIS with fidelity and documenting positive student impact.

2. To move from initial demonstrations to state-level scaling of SWPBIS each state was required to modify the training, coaching, evaluation and coordination associated with SWPBIS implementation.
Training became more widely available by using indigenous trainers who were geographically distributed, and able to offer training at a lower per person (e.g., per team) cost. Districts became more responsible for funding the coaching activities that were defined as essential for skills learning in training workshops to be applied in real school settings. As states moved from initial pilot demonstrations to larger scale implementation evaluation of both implementation fidelity and impact on student outcomes became more organized, coordinated and disseminated. Districts began using their local professional development resources to implement SWPBIS rather than relying on state or grant-based funding.

3. To achieve scaling of SWPBIS implementation each of the seven states was able to establish:

   a) Administrative Support

      1) Policy supporting importance of social behavior of students
      
      2) Targeted funding
      
      3) State level support (leadership team, DOE, political)
      
      4) Visibility with respect to what was happening, and the impact of the efforts

   b) Locally Available Technical Capacity in Training, Coaching, and Behavioral Expertise

      1) Local trainers with knowledge and skill in SWPBIS content
      
      2) Coaching capacity at local district level (or regional unit)
      
      3) Access to behavioral expertise to expand SWPBIS content to more intense tiers
      
      4) Formalization in the collection and use of data for decision-making

   c) 100-200 Demonstrations of Impact

      1) School-wide teams demonstrating fidelity and impact of SWPBIS
      
      2) Demonstrations of district-level implementation with cost effectiveness, and
d) Evaluation systems

1) Common system for assessing “if SWPBIS was being used” and “if SWPBIS was benefiting students”

2) Evaluation system allowed local teams to use data for continuous improvement

Conclusion

States are able to conduct large-scale implementation of SWPBIS. The common approach was to begin with pilot demonstrations. However, effective pilot efforts were most likely to lead to functional scaling only when local (state/district) capacity was established to provide training, coaching, evaluation, and technical expertise. Building local capacity was repeatedly seen as the mechanism for improving efficiency to adopt and sustain SWPBIS. Building local capacity was also seen as an important outcome for moving from Tier I SWPBIS intensity to Tier II, Tier III support levels. Scaling required leveraging local district resources to achieve what was initially demonstrated with state and/or grant funds.

An outcome that was less obvious, and worthy of further review, was the changing role of the coordination and leadership functions. SWPBIS implementation was selected, guided and nurtured by the state leadership team in one example. In other examples, there was no leadership team until the scale of implementation required broader administrative and funding support. Key implementers in these states provided initially served more as champions and direct providers of SWPBIS content in the Exploration and Installation phases. As the state built capacity, more people were able to do initial training, coaching and evaluation, there was less need for advocacy, and more need for leadership, coordination, planning and administration. States that were successful in larger scale implementation of
SWPBIS were able to find the people who could fulfill or adapt to the changing needs as scaling opportunities arose.

An important theme worthy of future testing and assessment is the finding that until a state reached 100-200 schools adopting SWPBIS they did not achieve the funding, political support, implementation capacity and infra-structure needed to shift their implementation approach from demonstration development to one that allowed larger scale implementation.

Many conceptual models have been proffered for moving effective practices to large scale adoption (Adelman & Taylor, 2011). There are few examples, however, of implementation at a scale and duration that allow even modest testing of the variables that increase the likelihood that a practice will move to a larger scale of adoption. The present findings are purely descriptive and allow no causal inference. Yet they afford in their consistency identification of variables that may be worthy of consideration in future research. The phases of implementation proposed by Fixsen et al. (2005) were a useful rubric for assessing adoption of SWPBIS, but the complexity of this seemingly straightforward model was emphasized in the state narratives. Implementation of evidence-based practices takes time, and different lengths of time depending on indigenous capacity for training, coaching, evaluation and behavioral expertise. The implementation stages are less linear than cyclical, iterative, and integrated across levels of a system (e.g., schools, districts, regions, state). In the end, however, the present data offer optimistic documentation that large-scale implementation of evidence-based practices is possible, and that variables exist for building a better understanding and improving the implementation process.
Figure 1: Core Elements of the SWPBIS Implementation Blueprint

LEADERSHIP TEAM (Coordination)

Training  Coaching  Evaluation  Behavioral Expertise

Local School/District Implementation Demonstrations

Figure 2: Number of Schools Implementing SWPBIS by Year/ Oregon
Figure 3: Number of Schools Implementing SWPBIS by Year/ Illinois

Figure 4: Number of Schools Implementing SWPBIS by Year/ Missouri
Figure 5: Number of Schools Implementing SWPBIS by Year / Maryland

Figure 6: Number of Schools Implementing SWPBIS by Year / Florida
Figure 7: Number of Schools Implementing SWPBIS by Year /North Carolina

Figure 8: Number of Schools Implementing SWPBIS by Year / Colorado
References


