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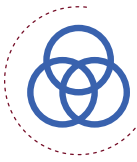
**PBIS**

Positive Behavioral  
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# DO STATE RECOGNITION SYSTEMS FACILITATE PBIS SCALE-UP?

ANGUS KITTELMAN, HALEY CERDAN, & KENT MCINTOSH

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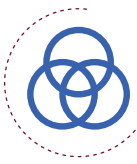


# Do State Recognition Systems Facilitate PBIS Scale-Up?

**Authors** Angus Kittelman  
Haley Cerdan  
Kent McIntosh

## Purpose

In this evaluation brief, we examined whether and how state recognition systems may contribute to the scale up of schools implementing PBIS with fidelity at Tiers 1, 2, and 3. The sample included five U.S. states with schools implementing PBIS from the 2017-18 to 2023-24 school year. Three states created school recognition systems, one had a district recognition system, and one did not have any recognition systems. The states with recognition systems were more successful in scaling up PBIS across the tiers over time, and dropping the requirement to reach a fidelity criterion was associated with more—*not fewer*—schools implementing with fidelity.



## Introduction

State technical assistance providers play a large role in the successful implementation and scale up of PBIS (Kittelman et al., 2022). This collaboration with external, state support has demonstrated to improve capacity for implementation of PBIS and help divide the implementation responsibilities across a variety of individuals within school, district, and state leadership teams (Bradshaw et al., 2012; Horner et al., 2014; Nese et al., 2018). Moreover, research has shown that collaboration with state technical assistance providers can support PBIS implementation across Tiers 1, 2, and 3 (Kittelman et al., 2022), demonstrating the value of establishing and maintaining state PBIS technical assistance teams.

As a way to evaluate and highlight exemplar schools implementing PBIS with fidelity, many state PBIS teams have developed and utilized state recognition systems. Previous literature has highlighted that using state recognition systems include the following benefits: (a) encouragement to implement PBIS and collect and use data, (b) local demonstration examples of implementing PBIS with high fidelity, (c) development of a structured and consistent way to evaluate PBIS, and (d) commitment to PBIS that could potentially encourage further sustainability and support from administration across levels (Noltemeyer et al., 2018). These recognition systems typically include some degree of levels (e.g., bronze, silver, gold, platinum levels), acknowledgement of progress (e.g., celebration ceremonies), fidelity data submission (e.g., SAS, SET, and/or TFI across the tiers), and additional requirements (e.g., active PBIS teams, completion of

### Key Takeaways

- State leadership teams use recognition systems to identify and highlight exemplar schools and districts.
- Criteria used in state recognition systems often include assessing fidelity, meeting fidelity criterion levels, and submitting student and/or school outcome data.
- The percent of schools implementing at fidelity at Tiers 1, 2, 3 increased over time in states that used school recognition systems.
- Recognizing schools for *assessing* fidelity across the tiers may be as or more effective at scaling PBIS than recognizing schools for *meeting* fidelity criteria.

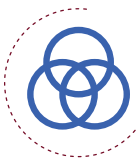
training modules, submission of student outcomes data, improved student outcomes; Gage et al., 2019; Noltemeyer et al., 2018). Although specific features of recognition systems vary across states, each system can be used to evaluate the fidelity of PBIS in schools.

**Evaluation question: can state recognition systems influence the scale up of PBIS with fidelity at Tiers 1, 2, and 3?**

## Method

### States

The sample included five U.S. states that received intensive technical assistance efforts from the Center on PBIS from the 2018-19 to the 2023-24 school years. Of the five states, two were located in the West, two in the Northeast, and one in the Southeast region of the U.S. According to data from the National



Center for Education Statistics (NCES) for the 2017-18 school year, the total number of K-12 schools in each state ranged from 2,982 in 788 school districts (State 1), 2,425 in 334 school districts (State 2), 2,307 in 232 school districts (State 3), 708 in 21 school districts (State 4), and 599 in 271 school districts (State 5). During the 2017-18 school year, the number of schools implementing PBIS across the five states ranged from 118 (State 5) to 1,158 (State 3).

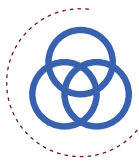
## Procedures

Implementation fidelity data were collected from schools using the Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI; Algozzine et al., 2014), and state recognition criteria data were obtained from state leadership team members. Three of the five states had their own state recognition system and criteria. State 5 used a regional recognition system that provided only district (not school) recognition, and State 2 did not have a recognition system. Table 1 provides a summary of the highest level of recognition criteria used across the states and how these criteria levels changed over the seven years.

As shown in Table 1, it was common for recognition criteria to include submitted fidelity data, meeting fidelity criterion across the tiers, and submitting student/school outcome data. State 3 had the most comprehensive criteria needed for state recognition, including participating in statewide trainings (e.g.,



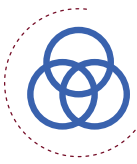
Tier 1, classroom), assessing all three tiers multiple times per year, conducting walkthroughs and product reviews, developing action plans, and providing evidence of improved student outcomes. Interestingly, beginning during the 2021-22 school year, State 3 removed school fidelity criterion requirements but began requiring that fidelity data be submitted from all three tiers. Both States 4 and 1 prioritized schools assessing fidelity across all three tiers, reaching fidelity, and submitting student outcome data (Table 1). In addition, school teams in State 4 were also required to submit summaries on how they used data for decision making and obtain letters of support from the district and community.



**Table 1. Highest Level of Recognition Criteria Across States and Years**

State	Data	2017-18			2018-19			2019-20			2020-21			2021-22			2022-23			2023-24		
		T1	T2	T3	T1	T2	T3	T1	T2	T3	T1	T2	T3	T1	T2	T3	T1	T2	T3	T1	T2	T3
State 1	Fidelity submitted	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
	Fidelity at criterion	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
	Student Outcome		•			•			•			•			•			•			•	
State 2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
State 3	Fidelity submitted	•	•		•	•		•	•					•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
	Fidelity at criterion	•	•		•	•		•	•					•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
	Student Outcome		•			•			•*						•†			•†			•†	
State 4	Fidelity submitted	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
	Fidelity at criterion	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
	Student Outcome		•			•			•			•			•			•			•	
State 5	Fidelity submitted	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Data submitted: District fidelity  Fidelity: ≥ 50% schools at Tier 1 fidelity		

Notes: T1=Tier 1; T2=Tier 2; T3=Tier 3; \*=recongized for no corporal punishment; †=recongized for no corporal punishment and no persistently dangerous designation; —=No state recognition system for schools. State 3 did not have a state recognition system during the 2020-21 school year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. State 5 began participating in a district recognition program through a regional PBIS network beginning 2023-24.

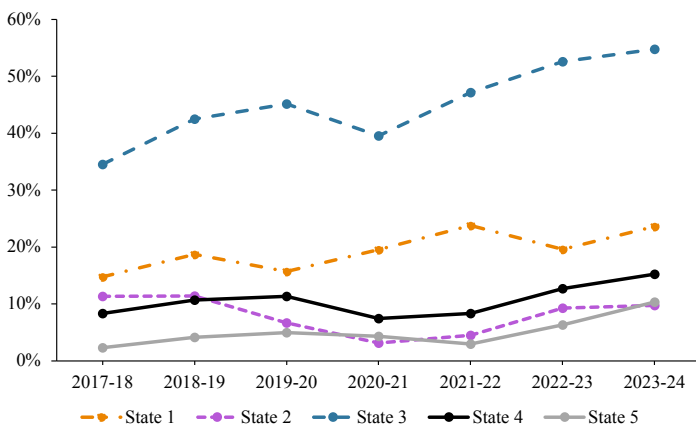


## Results

### Schools Implementing Tier 1 Systems with Fidelity

As seen in Figure 1, States 1, 2, and 3 had a greater percentage of schools implementing at Tier 1 fidelity during the 2017-18 school year. However, the percentage of schools implementing with Tier 1 fidelity increased over the seven years of implementation for States 3 and 1 but decreased for State 2 (see Figure 1). The percentage of schools implementing at Tier 1 fidelity in States 4 and 5 were lower and stayed consistent across the years, with minimal increases during the last two years of implementation (2022-23 and 2023-24 school years).

**Figure 1. Percentage of Each State's Schools Implementing Tier 1 PBIS with Fidelity Over Time**

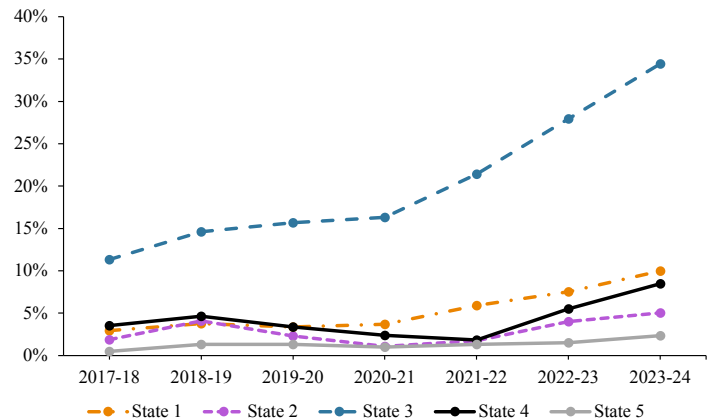


Note. Y-axis adjusted to assist in interpreting patterns.

### Schools Implementing Tier 2 Systems with Fidelity

Compared to the other states, State 3 had a larger percentage of schools implementing Tier 2 systems with fidelity during the 2017-18 school year. Across implementation years, the percentage of schools increased for both States 1 and 3 and decreased for State 2 between the 2019-20 and 2021-22 school years (see Figure 2). The other two states had a smaller percentage of schools implementing PBIS at Tier 2 with fidelity, and these percentages stayed consistent across the years.

**Figure 2. Percentage of Each State's Schools Implementing Tier 2 PBIS with Fidelity Over Time**

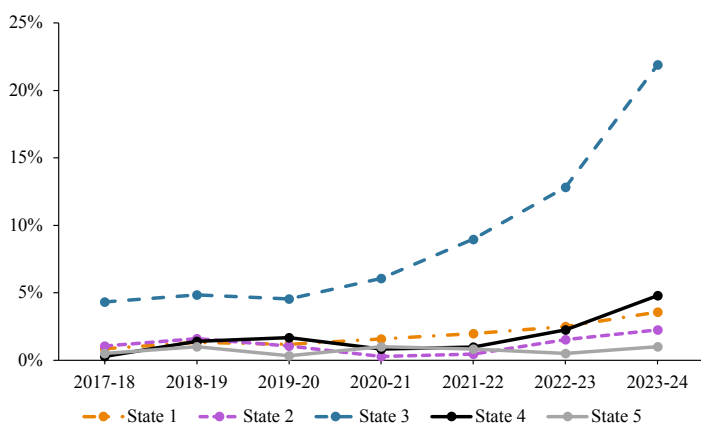


Note. Y-axis adjusted to assist in interpreting patterns.

## Schools Implementing Tier 3 Systems with Fidelity

Similar to Tier 2, more schools were implementing Tier 3 systems with fidelity in State 3 compared to the other four states. After the 2020-21 school year, there was an increase in the percent of schools implementing Tier 3 systems with fidelity, except for State 5 (see Figure 3). However, State 3 had the largest increase from the 2017-18 to the 2023-24 school years, followed by State 1. The other three states had consistently lower percentages of schools implementing Tier 3 systems with fidelity.

**Figure 3. Percentage of Each State's Schools Implementing Tier 3 PBIS with Fidelity Over Time**



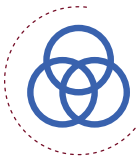
Note. Y-axis adjusted to assist in interpreting patterns.

## Discussion

This evaluation brief explored whether state recognition systems influence the scale up of PBIS with fidelity at Tiers 1, 2, and 3 across five states. To study these implementation patterns, we examined the percentage of schools within each of the five states

that scaled up PBIS with fidelity (Tiers 1, 2, 3) from the 2017-18 to 2023-24 school years. We then reviewed and summarized the school (States 1, 3, 4) and district recognition criteria (State 5) developed and used by state or regional leadership teams during those school years.

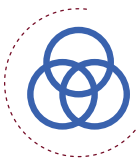
Results showed that there were higher percentages of schools scaling up PBIS over time within states that utilized school recognition systems, especially for Tiers 1 and 2 (States 1, 3, 4). Interestingly, the state that relaxed the requirement of schools meeting a fidelity criterion as part of their recognition system (e.g.,  $\geq 70\%$  Tier 1 TFI score) had the largest percentage of schools scaling up PBIS with fidelity over time (State 3). One possible explanation for this increase is that school teams in State 3 were able to accurately assess whether they were reaching Tier 1, 2, or 3 implementation fidelity, without the pressure to intentionally or unintentionally overestimate their implementation fidelity scores for the sake of meeting school recognition criteria. If school teams overestimate their implementation fidelity scores, they may incorrectly conclude that PBIS is not effective, when really it is not implemented, leading to abandonment. In addition, they may need to spend additional resources re-training and coaching school personnel on Tier 1 PBIS because they moved too fast in implementing the advanced tiers. It is important that school leadership teams implement Tier 1 with fidelity first because the quality of Tier 1 implementation is predictive of quality of implementation at the advanced tiers (Kittelman et al., 2022).



## Conclusion

State recognition systems can be useful for encouraging PBIS implementation efforts, identifying model exemplar schools and districts, and for celebrating improvements in implementation outcomes (e.g., higher fidelity scores, improved student outcomes; Noltemeyer et al., 2018). The purpose of this evaluation brief was to examine whether state recognition systems influence the scale up of PBIS with fidelity at Tiers 1, 2, and 3 over time. As shown in this brief, schools in states that used state recognition systems had higher percentages of schools implementing with fidelity across the tiers. In addition, removing the requirement to implement PBIS at fidelity did not seem to negatively affect (and may have increased) the number of schools implementing PBIS with fidelity.





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