

# Supporting the Academic, Behavioral, and Social Development of Students in Tennessee Schools:

## Findings from a Statewide Survey



*This guide was produced by Project Support & Include at Vanderbilt University—one of seven projects across the state funded by the Tennessee Department of Education to provide training and technical assistance to schools as they address the academic, social, and behavioral needs of students. This brief was authored by Lauren Magill, Kathryn Germer, Abbie Jenkins, Steven Greiner, Benjamin Cabeza, Lindsay Bell, Erik W. Carter, Kathleen Lynne Lane, and Wendy P. Oakes. 04/2013*

Students come to school with a wide range of academic, behavioral, and social strengths and needs. To serve these students most effectively, schools need a carefully crafted plan aligning supports and services in ways that address these individual differences. Where might your school start? This brief guide illustrates an approach that increasing numbers of Tennessee schools are adopting to meet the diverse needs of students. It also presents findings from a statewide survey focused on how Tennessee schools are currently addressing the strengths and needs of their students.

### WHAT IS A CI3T MODEL?

A comprehensive, integrated, three-tiered (CI3T) model of prevention is a proactive approach to meet the academic, behavioral, and social needs of students. The CI3T model aims to prevent and respond effectively to the development of learning and behavioral challenges through tiers of support. A school-based team—which is representative of the entire school's staff and includes at least one

administrator with the authority to make changes—creates and leads implementation of the CI3T model based on the unique needs and culture of its school. In the next section, we describe the three tiers of support constituting these plans and address some of the logistics of teaching, reinforcing, and monitoring a CI3T plan.

### TIERS OF PREVENTION TO DIFFERENTIATE SUPPORT

#### Primary Support

Primary prevention—often called Tier 1 supports and interventions—focuses on the needs of all students with the goal of preventing academic and behavioral challenges before they ever emerge. Approximately 80% of students are likely to respond to this first level of support. Examples of primary prevention programs include providing instruction linked to the district and the Common Core State Standards, a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework, Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, The Incredible Years, and other validated social skills/character education curricula.

#### Secondary Support

Secondary prevention—often called Tier 2 supports and interventions—involves delivering more focused academic, behavioral, and/or social interventions to students for whom primary prevention was insufficient. The goal of secondary prevention is to reverse emerging academic, behavioral, and/or social skills challenges. Approximately 10-15% of students in a typical school are likely to require this level of support. Secondary prevention efforts usually involve specialized intervention groups or low-intensity supports designed to address students' acquisition (can't do), fluency (trouble doing), or performance (won't do) deficits. Examples of secondary prevention supports might include small-group social skills or reading instruction, behavior contracts, or self-monitoring plans.



For more information about the technical assistance project funded to support schools in your region, please see page 11 of this guide.



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### **Tertiary Support**

Tertiary prevention—often called Tier 3 supports and interventions—entails implementing specialized, individualized systems for students who are at heightened risk for school failure because the school's primary or secondary intervention efforts have not sufficiently met their learning and behavioral needs. The goal of this level of prevention is to reduce harm. Approximately 5-7% of students in a school may require this level of support. Examples of tertiary prevention are functional assessment-based interventions, multi-systemic therapy, and one-to-one academic tutoring.

## **COMPONENTS OF THE THREE TIERS**

### **Academic Component**

The academic component of the CI3T model is based on content learning activities for developing skills and knowledge in English language arts, mathematics, the sciences, social studies, foreign languages, the arts, trades, athletics, and technology. Using validated curricula adopted at the district level to meet the increased rigor of the Common Core State Standards, teachers should continue to differentiate instruction to meet all students' needs. Standards provide a road map for teachers to develop lessons so students progress towards the goals of readiness for post-

secondary or workplace pursuits. The Common Core State Standards guide educators to coordinate instruction within and across grade levels. Instruction is informed by practices of regularly benchmarking student performance and closely monitoring students' progress toward the benchmark goals. Interventions are available when additional or more specialized instruction is needed for students to meet grade-level standards. Administrators ensure teachers have access to professional development and resources, and instruction adheres to expectations of quality.

### **Behavioral Component**

The behavioral component of the CI3T model is the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework. This behavioral component should be customized based on the school's values, needs, goals, and mission. As a community, schools select three to five positively stated behavioral expectations (e.g., be respectful, be responsible, give best effort) and define how each expectation is met across all of the school settings in which students spend their time (e.g., cafeterias, classrooms, athletic venues, hallways, buses). School-wide reinforcement systems are established so all adults can acknowledge students meeting expectations. Behavioral data (e.g., universal screeners, office discipline referrals, attendance) are used in conjunction with academic data (e.g., curriculum-based measures, report card grades, grade point averages) to determine if and when intervention is needed beyond the primary plan. Consideration of a student's access to the school-wide primary plan should be considered when determining the need for interventions (i.e., secondary or

tertiary supports). For example, is the primary PBIS plan being implemented as intended? Is the student accessing behavioral instruction and reinforcement for meeting expectations?

### **Social Component**

The social component of the CI3T model is the instruction of global and targeted social skills using any research-based social skills or character education curriculum. School teams should consider whether the desired social skills or character traits are important for students to be successful when they are selecting a curriculum change to teach to all students at the primary level to all students. The chosen curriculum should address prevalent school-wide issues and goals. For example, if bullying is a concern at the school, a research-based bullying prevention program should be used to address this need. School teams examine data such as school climate surveys and office discipline referrals to determine needs. Then, research-based programs are selected to target the identified issues. The same data used to determine the need for the programs should be monitored to evaluate the programs' effectiveness. As in the academic and behavioral domains, some students will need additional instruction in the form of secondary and tertiary interventions. Schools should consider research-based programs with provision for small-group interventions. Administrators, again, are responsible for ensuring educators receive the needed professional development and resources to implement the social skills instruction and interventions. Ideally, the same social skills primary curriculum should be used by all schools within a district to



encourage consistency across the age span and facilitate transitions for students who change schools within the district.

## LOGISTICAL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

### Teaching the Plan

The CI3T plan should be taught to all key stakeholders. Prior to the beginning of the academic year, the school leadership team should introduce the plan to all faculty and staff, including teachers, cafeteria staff, bus drivers, custodial staff, parent volunteers, and paraprofessionals. During the first week of school, the plan is presented to students and expectations are explicitly taught for all settings throughout the school. Common methods of teaching the plan include having kick-off assemblies, displaying expectation posters, showing video clips featuring students describing elements of the plan, or reciting the primary plan mottos. In addition, a catchy name for school expectations and reinforcement systems—such as “Dragon Traits” and “Dragon Dollars” for a school with a dragon as the mascot—creates a common language across the school when referring to the CI3T plan. After the initial rollout, teaching the plan continues throughout the school year through mini-lessons designed

to remind students of school-wide academic, behavioral, and social expectations.

### Reinforcing the Plan

Reinforcement is provided to all stakeholders (e.g., students, faculty, and staff) whenever they display the school-wide expectations. Many schools design and distribute some type of ticket to give to students whenever they meet expectations. To maximize the impact, the reinforcement system should always be paired with behavior-specific praise (e.g., “Great job raising your hand.” or “Thank you for being on time.”). When designing this reinforcement system, consideration of what motivates students and adults is absolutely essential. For example, reinforcement could include providing tangible rewards (e.g., school supplies or lottery items for students; gift cards or lunch for adults) or non-tangible rewards (e.g., principal-for-a-day or time with friends for students; jeans day or additional planning time for adults). The variety of options allows each school the freedom to select reinforcement strategies consistent with the school’s budget, students’ interests, and teachers’ capacity.

### Monitoring the Plan

The CI3T plan should be monitored along three dimensions: student responsiveness, opinions of stakeholders (social validity), and level of implementation (treatment integrity). Student responsiveness is measured by analyzing student- and school-level academic, behavioral, and social data collected as part of regular school practice. In addition to results from academic and behavior screeners, CI3T leadership teams might also consider monitoring office discipline referrals, grade

point averages, course failures, and referrals to counseling. These multiple sources of data can be used together to identify students who may need secondary and tertiary supports and to monitor the responsiveness to the interventions being delivered. Social validity involves assessing stakeholders’ opinions about the goals, procedures, and outcomes of the CI3T plan. These measures indicate the level of “buy-in” of faculty and staff, and are related to their level of participation. Treatment integrity describes the level of actual school-wide participation in the plan as it is written. Monitoring treatment integrity can be conducted using self-reports of faculty and staff as well as direct observations. Information collected from monitoring social validity and treatment integrity is used by the CI3T leadership team to revise and improve the plan between academic years. To ensure the fidelity of implementation, changes to plan components should only be made between years rather than in the middle of a school year.

## WHAT DIFFERENCE MIGHT THIS APPROACH MAKE IN YOUR SCHOOL?

When implemented thoughtfully and with fidelity, a CI3T model may result in improved academic and behavioral outcomes for all students. For example, schools implementing a CI3T model may see improved academic performance, as measured by grade point averages or course failures, and a decrease in problem behaviors, as measured by office discipline referrals and behavior screening tools. In addition, by explicitly teaching students what is expected of them, teachers may find they have more instructional time as behavioral incidents diminish.

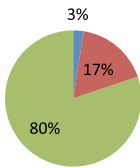


## LEARNING FROM TENNESSEE SCHOOLS

During Spring 2012, we surveyed administrators across the state of Tennessee to (a) learn about the extent to which schools were implementing components of school-wide support models, and (b) find out what schools might need—in terms of training, information, or other resources—to do this well. We sent survey invitations to 876 randomly selected school principals across the state. They had the option of completing a paper or electronic copy of the survey. Although the survey could be completed by any administrator at the school, we asked that only one survey be completed. Ultimately, we received responses from administrators representing 365 schools (42% of all invited schools). In the following sections of this guide, we highlight basic findings from the survey. This information can be used to reflect on the extent to which your school is already implementing various aspects of these models.

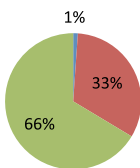
## HOW ARE TENNESSEE SCHOOLS IMPLEMENTING ASPECTS OF THREE-TIERED MODELS?

This survey section addressed 25 different elements of comprehensive, integrated, three-tiered (CI3T) school-wide models schools might be implementing. We asked respondents to rate the extent to which their school was currently implementing each of these elements on a five-point scale. Below, we list in **bold** the 25 elements as they were worded on the survey and include a brief description. In this guide, *not at all implemented* refers to a rating of 1, *a little or somewhat implemented* refers to a rating of 2 or 3, and *substantially or fully implemented* refers to a rating of 4 or 5.



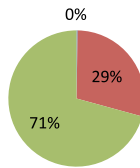
### 1. We have a common curriculum for core academic areas.

A common curriculum includes coordinated instruction both within and across grade levels. Using a common curriculum “levels the playing field” by ensuring all students are exposed to similar educational experiences.



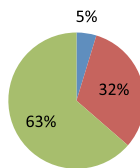
### 2. We have instruction linked to the district and Common Core State Standards.

Instruction linked to the district and Common Core State Standards follows clear and consistent goals for student learning. Linking instruction to standards also provides teachers with guidance on the specific knowledge and skills their students should acquire.



### 3. We have differentiated instruction for academic tasks.

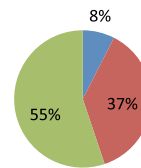
Differentiated instruction involves recognizing students’ individual strengths and needs when determining what to teach, how to teach, and how to measure student learning. Differentiated instruction encourages student learning by increasing engagement and motivation levels.



### 4. We have a school-wide character education plan.

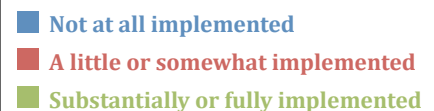
In accordance with Tennessee state law (TCA 49-6-1007), public schools must provide character education. A character education plan should include an evidence-based program implemented throughout the district to facilitate consistency. A school-wide character education plan

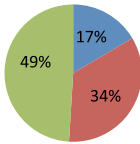
promotes the development of traits associated with civic virtue (e.g., honesty, kindness, equality).



### 5. We have monthly (minimum) instruction in the character education plan.

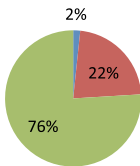
Simply identifying a school-wide character education plan does not ensure students will acquire and maintain the desired character traits. Regular instruction in the character education plan should be incorporated into instructional activities. Stop-drop-teach lesson plans, where all teachers teach a character education lesson at a designated time, facilitate direct instruction of character traits.





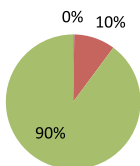
### 6. We have a School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a tiered framework designed to provide progressively more intensive behavioral supports at each level. The PBIS framework is developed by a school-site team to address the unique values and needs of a school community.



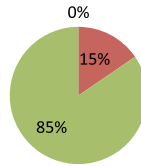
### 7. We have school-wide expectations for all key settings.

School-wide expectations explicitly outline the expected behaviors in a variety of settings (e.g., classrooms, cafeteria, restrooms, hallways). Clearly defined expectations provide consistency for students throughout the campus.



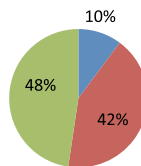
### 8. We have an established discipline plan for responding to rule infractions that do occur.

An established discipline plan provides teachers with guidelines when reacting to students having difficulty meeting expectations. A school-wide discipline plan promotes consistency among all faculty and staff.



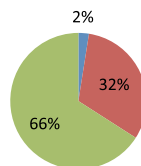
### 9. We have individual classroom management systems in addition to school-wide systems.

Individual classroom management systems refer to academic, behavioral, and social supports put in place to address the demands and expectations of a unique classroom environment. For these systems to be most effective, they should align with school-wide systems.



### 10. We have instruction in school-wide behavioral expectations (at least once per month).

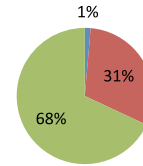
Simply identifying school-wide expectations does not ensure students will acquire and maintain the desired behaviors. Regular instruction (at least monthly) in behavioral expectations should be incorporated into instructional activities.



### 11. We have a system for students to receive reinforcement for meeting expectations.

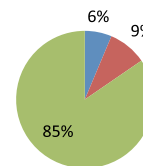
When students meet academic, behavioral, and/or social expectations, receiving tangible or non-tangible reinforcement paired with behavior-specific praise strengthens the future probability of the desired behavior. When students are acquiring these skills, they should be given

higher rates of reinforcement. The rate of reinforcement can become intermittent as students demonstrate fluency in expected behaviors.



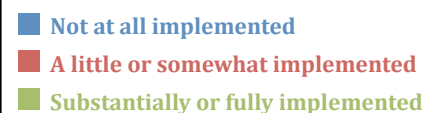
### 12. We have adults providing behavior-specific praise when allocating reinforcers.

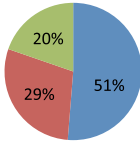
Behavior-specific praise clearly identifies the action being rewarded (e.g., "Thank you for holding the door open for your classmates." or "Wow, you've done an excellent job carefully tracing your name."). Pairing a reinforcer with behavior-specific praise strengthens the future probability of the desired action.



### 13. We have academic screening of all students to benchmark progress (at 3x per year).

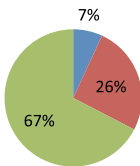
Academic screening is used to monitor the progress of students' learning. Examples of these measures may include AIMSweb (Harcourt, 2008), DIBELS (Kaminski & Good, 1996), and curriculum-based measures (CBM). Regular academic screening of students informs instruction and can proactively identify students who may need additional supports.





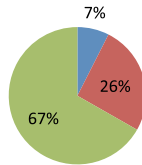
**14. We have behavior screening of all students to monitor progress (at 3x per year).**

Behavior screening is used to measure the level of risk exhibited by students' behavior. Examples of these measures may include the Student Risk Screening Scale (Drummond, 1994), the Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders (Walker and Severson, 1992), and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997). Regular screening of students' behavior can proactively identify students who may need additional supports.



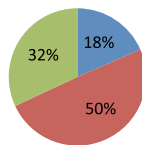
**15. We have monthly team meetings to examine data and address implementation issues.**

During monthly meetings, school-site team members convene to look at student-level academic, behavioral, and social data to determine students in need of additional supports. Teams also discuss logistical issues related to implementation, such as school-wide reinforcement systems, behavioral expectations, and stakeholder opinions.



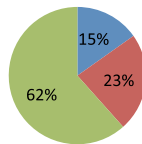
**16. We have Tier 2 support (also called secondary support) for academic issues.**

Tier 2, or secondary support, for academic issues are typically small-group interventions for students with similar needs. These interventions are intended to reverse existing academic deficits.



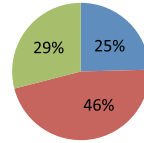
**17. We have Tier 2 support (also called secondary support) for behavioral or social issues.**

Tier 2, or secondary support, for behavioral or social issues are typically small-group interventions for students with similar needs. These interventions are intended to reverse existing behavioral or social deficits.



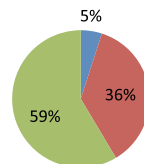
**18. We have Tier 3 support (also called tertiary support) for academic issues.**

Tier 3, or tertiary support, for academic issues are typically one-to-one interventions for students with the highest level of need. These interventions are intended to reduce existing academic deficits.



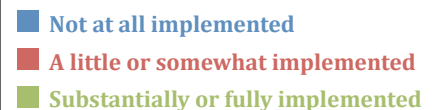
**19. We have Tier 3 support (also called tertiary support) for behavioral or social issues.**

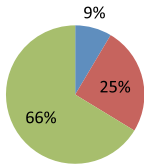
Tier 3, or tertiary support, for behavioral or social issues are typically one-to-one interventions for students with the highest level of need. These interventions are intended to reduce existing behavioral or social deficits.



**20. We have a range of reinforcers for rewarding students who meet expectations.**

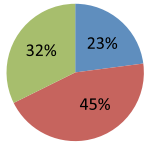
A range of reinforcers may include both tangible and non-tangible rewards for students who meet expectations. What individual students find reinforcing will vary and school teams should consider offering options that allow students to access or avoid attention, gain activities/tangibles, and enjoy sensory experiences.





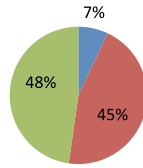
**21. We have a method of analyzing academic data to identify students for Tier 2/3 supports.**

Using academic screening tools in conjunction with additional sources of data, such as course failures and grade point averages, school teams identify students for more targeted supports. These decisions are systematic and data-driven, rather than based solely on individual teacher referral.



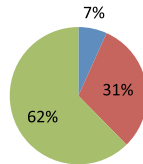
**22. We have a method of analyzing behavioral data to identify students for Tier 2/3 supports.**

Using behavior screening tools in conjunction with additional sources of data, such as office discipline referrals, school teams identify students for more targeted supports. These decisions are systematic and data-driven, rather than based solely on individual teacher referral.



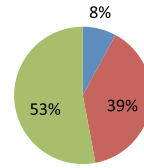
**23. We have a method of gathering information from stakeholders on the primary program.**

Information regarding stakeholder opinion on the primary program's goals and procedures, including feasibility and effectiveness, should be regularly assessed. If stakeholders do not "buy in" to the program, it is unlikely they will implement the plan as intended.



**24. We have a method of ensuring the primary (Tier 1) program is implemented as planned.**

Information regarding stakeholder implementation of the primary program as planned should be regularly collected. Multiple aspects of implementation including teaching, reinforcing, and monitoring the program should be evaluated to determine the degree to which the program is being implemented with fidelity.



**25. We have a feedback procedure for modifying the plan annually.**

Stakeholder opinions of the plan, as well as stakeholder implementation of the plan, should inform annual plan modifications. It is important that plan modifications be made between academic years (i.e., during the summer) and not during the school year.

■ Not at all implemented  
 ■ A little or somewhat implemented  
 ■ Substantially or fully implemented



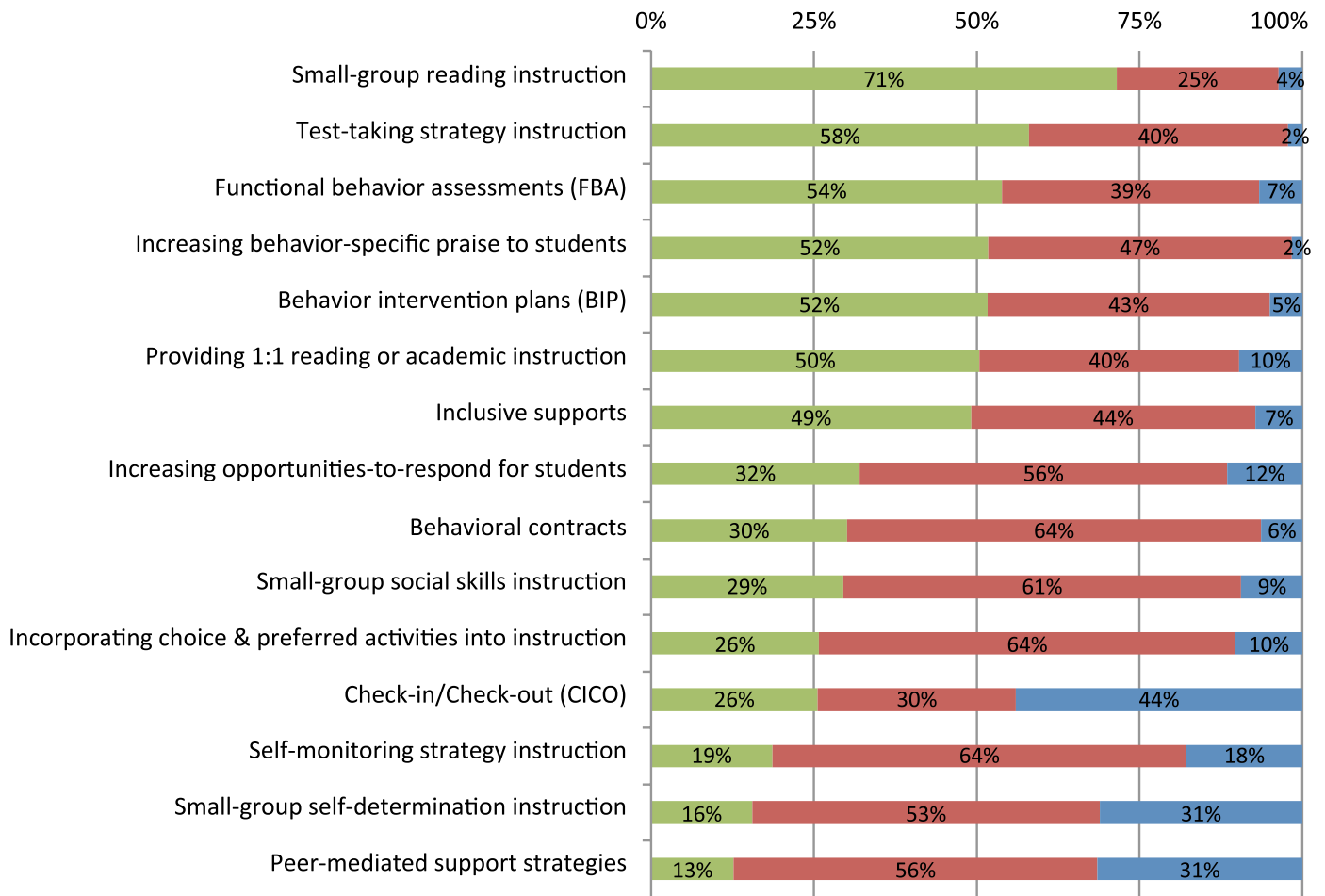


## WHAT EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES AND SUPPORTS ARE BEING IMPLEMENTED IN TENNESSEE SCHOOLS?

In the next section of the survey, we listed 15 educational practices and supports school staff might implement as part of a CI3T model of support at Tier 1, 2, or 3. We asked administrators to rate the extent to which staff at their school were *currently* implementing each approach using a five-point scale. The graph below shows the extent to which Tennessee schools reported implementing each approach at the time of the survey. In this guide, *not at all implemented* refers to a rating of 1, *a little or somewhat implemented* refers to a rating of 2 or 3, and *substantially or fully implemented* refers to a rating of 4 or 5.

In addition, we asked administrators to rank the top three areas that they would prioritize for professional development in the next school year based on their understanding of the needs of their students and faculty. The three areas showing up most frequently on this list were: (1) small-group reading instruction, (2) test-taking strategy instruction, and (3) incorporating choice and preferred activities into instruction.

Percentage of Schools

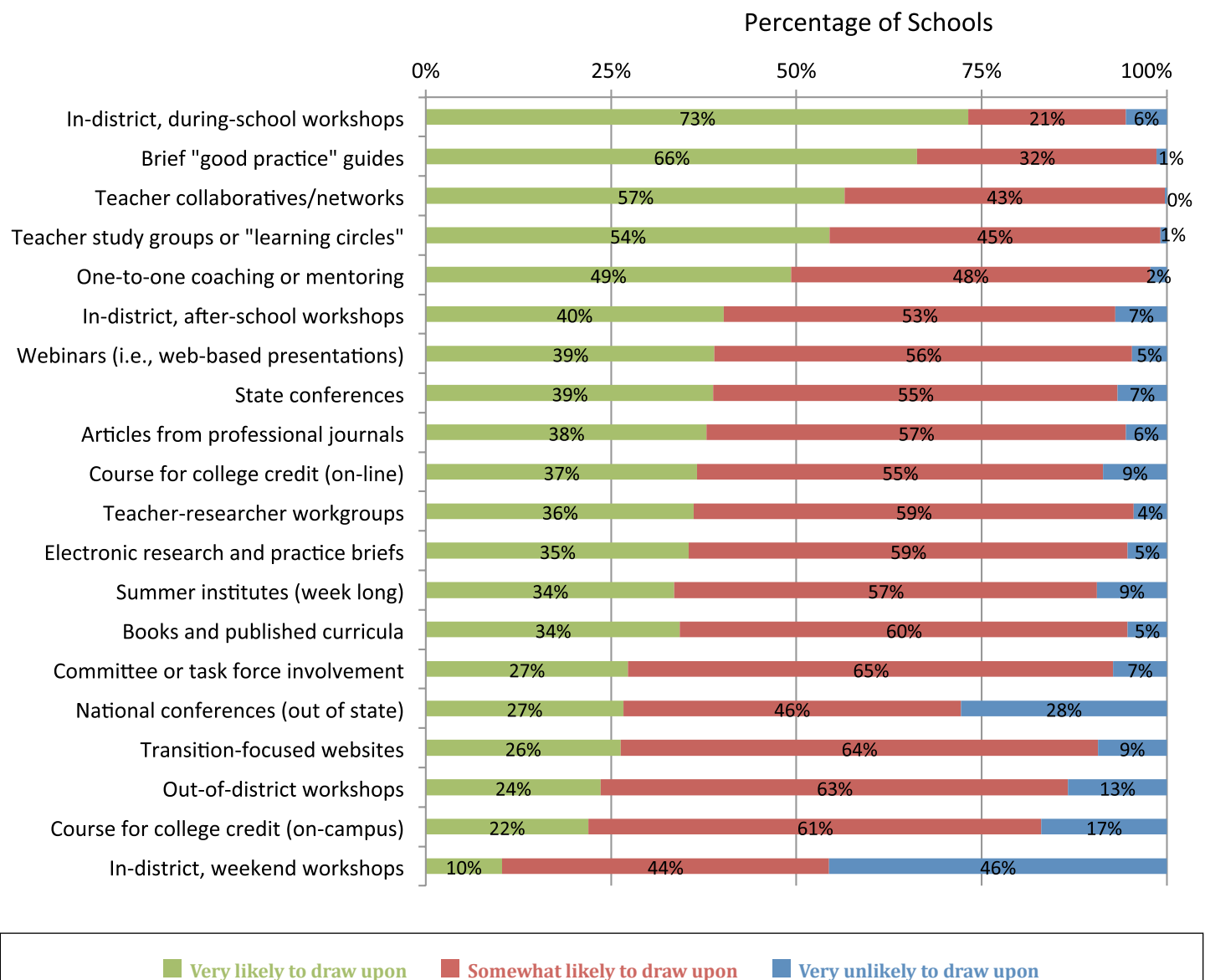


■ Substantially or fully implemented ■ A little or somewhat implemented ■ Not at all implemented



## WHAT POTENTIAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING AVENUES DO ADMINISTRATORS VIEW AS MOST PROMISING IN TENNESSEE SCHOOLS?

In the final section of the survey, we listed 20 potential avenues for providing information and training to teachers on the practices and supports from the previous section. We asked administrators to indicate how likely their school staff would be to draw upon each avenue for resources, information, and/or training for learning about these topics to support students, *assuming each approach was actually available*. We sought to better understand which professional development avenues would be most valued and used by Tennessee teachers. The graph below shows administrators' perception of the likelihood that staff at Tennessee schools would access each type of professional development if it were made available. Participants used a five-point rating scale. In this guide, *very unlikely to draw upon* refers to a rating of 1, *somewhat likely to draw upon* refers to a rating of 2 or 3, and *very likely to draw upon* refers to a rating of 4 or 5.





## ONLINE RESOURCES RELATED TO MODEL COMPONENTS

### Academic Component:

- *The National Center on Response to Intervention*  
[www.rti4success.org](http://www.rti4success.org)
- *The Common Core State Standards – TN Core*  
[www.tncore.org](http://www.tncore.org)

### Behavioral Component:

- *OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports*  
[www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)

### Social Component:

- *Social Skills Improvement System (SSiS)*  
[www.pearsonassessments.com/pai/ca/RelatedInfo/SSISOverview.htm](http://www.pearsonassessments.com/pai/ca/RelatedInfo/SSISOverview.htm)
- *Positive Action*  
[www.positiveaction.net](http://www.positiveaction.net)
- *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*  
[www.violencepreventionworks.org](http://www.violencepreventionworks.org)

- *The Incredible Years*  
[www.incredibleyears.com](http://www.incredibleyears.com)

## FOR FURTHER READING

Algozzine, B., Daunic, A. P., & Smith, S. W. (2010). *Preventing problem behaviors: Schoolwide programs and classroom practices* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Lane, K. L., Kalberg, J. R., & Menzies, H. M. (2009). *Developing schoolwide programs to prevent and manage problem behaviors*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Lane, K. L., Menzies, H. M., Oakes, W. P., & Kalberg, J. R. (2012). *Systematic screenings of behavior to support instruction: From preschool to high school*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Lane, K. L., Menzies, H., Bruhn, A., & Crnabori, M. (2011). *Managing challenging behaviors in schools: Research-based strategies that work*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

## SELECTED RESEARCH STUDIES

Fuchs, D., & Fuchs, L. S. (2006). Introduction to response to intervention: What, why, and how valid is it? *Reading Research Quarterly*, 41, 93-99.

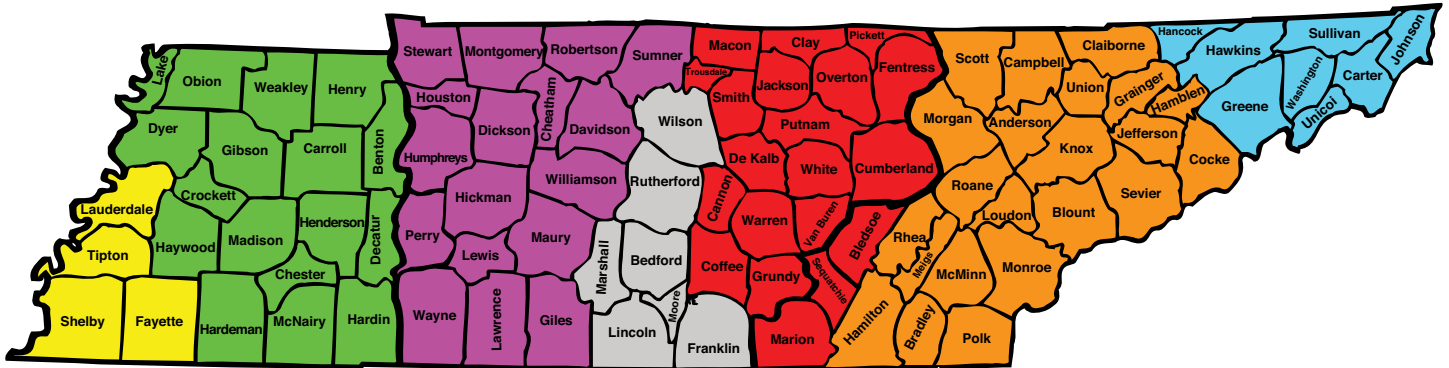
Lane, K. L., Kalberg, J. R., Bruhn, A. L., Driscoll, S. A., Wehby, J. H., & Elliott, S. (2009). Assessing social validity of school-wide positive behavior support plans: Evidence for the reliability and structure of the Primary Intervention Rating Scale. *School Psychology Review*, 38, 135-144.

Sugai, G., & Horner, R. H. (2002). Introduction to the special series on positive behavior support in schools. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 10, 130-135.

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## CI3T TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECTS BY REGION: 2012-2015

The Tennessee Department of Education has provided funding to seven projects to provide training and technical assistance to schools as they address the academic, social, and behavioral needs of students within comprehensive, integrated, three-tiered (CI3T) models of prevention. To locate the project assigned to your region, see below.



### UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS (RISE):

Dr. William Hunter  
Email: wchunter@memphis.edu  
Phone: 901.678.4932

### UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS, LAMBUTH CAMPUS:

Dr. Renee Murley  
Email: reneelee@memphis.edu  
Phone: 901.678.5087

### VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY:

Abbie Jenkins  
Email: abbie.jenkins@vanderbilt.edu  
Phone: 615.343.0706

### MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY:

Dr. Zaf Khan  
Email: zkhan@mtsu.edu  
Phone: 916.904.8429

### TENNESSEE TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY:

Dr. Helen Dainty  
Email: hdainty@tntech.edu  
Phone: 931.372.3116

### UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE:

Dr. Tara Moore  
Email: Tara.moore@utk.edu  
Phone: 865.974.2760

### EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY:

Dr. Leia Blevins  
Email: blevinl@etsu.edu  
Phone: 423.439.7547  
or  
Dr. James Fox  
Email: foxj@etsu.edu  
Phone: 423.439.7556

