

Safe and Supportive Schools (S3)

GRANT DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

S3 Grantee Profile | South Carolina Department of Education

National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments



Safe Supportive Learning

Engagement | Safety | Environment



Highlights

The primary school climate improvement goal of South Carolina's four-year¹ Safe and Supportive Schools (S3) grant, known as the South Carolina School Climate Initiative (SCSCI), was to reduce high rates of drug- and violence-related behavior in 23 schools across 13 school districts. From fall 2010 to spring 2014, 74 percent of schools with fully implemented interventions and sufficient data reported a decrease in student alcohol use; 43 percent reported a decrease in harassment or bullying on school property; 65 percent reported improved school safety scores; and 61 percent reported a reduction in the number of suspensions due to violence without serious injury.

How Did They Do It?

The SCSCI worked with participating districts and schools to use annual school climate survey data, as well as discipline, incident, and other administrative data, to choose and implement interventions tailored to those districts' and schools' specific populations and needs. Grant activities paid special attention to expanding statewide data efforts by improving and integrating diverse data sources into one holistic system. In addition to focusing on increasing data collection and analysis capacity, the SCSCI prioritized building local school- and district-level capacity for preventing youth violence and substance use. The SCSCI intervention specialists used individualized plans to assist schools in assessing their school safety and climate needs.

School Participation

To determine eligible schools, SCDE staff reviewed statewide data for the approximately 200 high schools in the State, including school dropout data, graduation rates, suspension and expulsion data, and overage graduation rates.² Forty-six schools were identified as having an at-risk learning environment and invited to participate in the SCSCI. Of the 46 invited, 23 accepted the invitation.

¹ 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."

² The term "over-age" was reported by South Carolina but not defined. We interpret this to mean students who graduate older than age 18. See also https://nces.ed.gov/programs/statereform/tab5_1.asp for maximum age limits by state.

What's in this profile?

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SCSCI Grant Year 4 Demographics (School Year 2013–14)

This section provides descriptive information about participating LEAs³ and schools and the demographics of the students they served. See also Appendix A for a list of SCSCI S3 participating districts and schools.

Number of districts served: 13

Number of schools served: 23

- 4 middle/high schools (2 grades 6–12; 2 grades 7–12)
- 19 high schools

School size: Range: 210–1,998 students; average: 886 students

Total number of students served by SCSCI schools: 20,386

Participating schools' student demographics

*Race and ethnicity:*⁴

- 39 percent White
- 57 percent Black
- 7 percent Hispanic
- 1 percent Asian/Pacific Islander
- 1 percent American Indian/Alaskan
- 2 percent two or more races

Other student demographics:

- 68 percent free- and reduced-price-lunch eligible
- 13 percent with individualized education programs (IEPs)⁵

Source: NCES Common Core of Data (CCD)
(<http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/index.asp>)

Key Partners

The SCSCI 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. The SCSCI had many partners that played an integral role. These included:

- **U. S. Attorney's Office**, which cosponsored regional [Safe Schools Seminars](#) with SCDE.
- **South Carolina Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Council**, which provided training on alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (ATOD) and their trends and served on the SCSCI advisory council.
- **South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED)**, which provided trainings on active shooters and student reunification.
- **South Carolina Department of Education, Offices of Health and Nutrition, Exceptional Children, School Facilities, and Research**, which served on the SCSCI advisory council and provided data to assist in choosing schools for grant implementation.
- **WestEd**, which provided staff trainings on the value of data and how to monitor response rates and also conducted site visits and assisted with the evaluation of project outcomes.

³ 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*).

⁴ Percentages were calculated by dividing the reported number of students in a given demographic by the total reported enrollment. Due to data reporting inconsistencies, totals may not equal 100 percent.

⁵ The percentage of students with IEPs is based on S3 district-level statistics, as this detail was not available at the school level.



Project Components

Infrastructure Development

To the extent possible, the SCSCI grant built upon existing State student support efforts while also funding significant operational and infrastructure development. Over the course of the grant period, the SCSCI enhanced its infrastructure by developing the Incident Management (IM) module within PowerSchool, South Carolina's statewide student information system. This module collected data measuring violent incidents without injury, bullying, and other school infractions.

School Climate Measurement

The SCSCI 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 over time. The following describes the SCSCI's measurement tools.

Administrative Data

Administrative, attendance, truancy rate, suspension, and expulsion data were furnished through [PowerSchool](#).

Surveys

The SCSCI administered surveys annually, each spring, during school years 2011–12 through 2014–15 to students, parents, and teachers.⁶ The student survey was called the South Carolina High School Student Survey/Abbreviated Youth Risk Behavior Survey. It was created by combining the SC Abbreviated Youth Risk Behavior Survey (AYRBS) and the SC Annual School Climate Education Oversight Committee (EOC) Survey. This modified version of the two surveys comprised the 44-item EOC survey and 32 items from the YRBS to assess six categories: three priority health risk behaviors and three school climate indicators (safety/violence, bullying, substance use, learning environment, social/physical environment, and home-school relationships).

SCSCI surveys:

- [South Carolina High School Student Survey/Abbreviated Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#)
- [Teacher survey](#)
- [Parent survey](#)

Schools were given the choice of administering the surveys online or using a paper-and-pencil format. To improve upon low initial response rates and reduce instances of incomplete data, the SCSCI intervention specialists assisted schools with survey administration.

Student surveys used passive consent (i.e., families were notified of the upcoming survey and given the option for their child to opt out). Parent consent forms were translated into Spanish. The response rate goal was 70 percent for students, which was surpassed with an average response rate of 72.6 percent over the four years of survey administration.

⁶ The 2012–13 school year was considered the baseline year, as SCSCI's implementation of interventions did not begin until that year. In order to better document grant impact, data collection continued into the no-cost extension year (2014–15).



Each school was also responsible for administering both the 80-item **Report Card: Teacher Survey** and the 57-item **South Carolina Parent Survey**, with assistance from the SC Department of Education's Office of Research.

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 learning and success in school. The scores are used to facilitate comparisons between participating SCSCI schools. The following summarizes the SCSCI school safety score.

- *Name of score:* South Carolina School Climate Score (SC-SCS)
- *Formula:* Scores were based on the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (EOC) survey for students and school-level discipline referral incidence data. Survey and referral incidence measures accounted for 85 percent and 15 percent of the total SCS, respectively. Scores ranged from 0 to 100, with high scores representing a more positive school climate. The SC-SCS was calculated by computing the average of three equally weighted domains: safety, environment, and engagement. The three domains had the following subdomains and associated measures:
 - Engagement
 - Relationship Quality (3 survey items)
 - Home-School Relationships (7 survey items)
 - Low Truancy (3 truancy incidence indicators)
 - Safety
 - Perceived Safety (3 survey items)
 - Physical Safety (16 incidence indicators)
 - Low Crime Incidence Rate (12 incidence indicators)
 - Low Fighting Incidence Rate (2 incidence indicators)
 - Low Bullying Incidence Rate (2 incidence indicators)
 - Environment
 - Physical Environment (4 survey items)
 - Learning Environment (5 survey items)
 - Disciplinary Environment (5 survey items/2 incidence indicators)
 - Positive Student Behavior (2 survey items)
 - Rule Clarity/Fairness (3 survey items)
 - Low Suspension Incidence Rate (1 incidence indicator)
 - Low Expulsion Incidence Rate (1 incidence indicator)
- *Hyperlink:*
 - Explanation: http://ed.sc.gov/scdoe/assets/file/programs-services/191/documents/SC_ClimateScoreExplanation.pdf
 - Spring 2012 scores: <http://www.ed.sc.gov/districts-schools/school-safety/sc-school-climate-initiative/>
- *Change over time:* Change in school safety scores is reported in the Results section with other Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) data.

The SCSCI administered annual surveys, calculated safety scores, and generated school-level reports for each participating school beginning in September 2012 and annually thereafter, through the 2014–15 no-cost extension year.



Interventions: Frameworks, Programs, Practices, and Strategies

The SCSCI collaborated with SCDE, school districts, and schools to select key, targeted interventions based on needs identified by their data. The SCSCI used survey data collected each spring and the most recent administrative data to inform the selection and implementation of a variety of interventions and approaches (see Table 1). The specific frameworks, programs, practices, and strategies were tailored to the needs of each school and district.

Table 1. Intervention frameworks, programs, and practices

Frameworks
• Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) (14)
Programs
• Botvin LifeSkills Training* (10) • Brief Strategic Family Therapy (BSFT) (22) • Capturing Kids’ Hearts* (4) • Check and Connect (7) • High Schools That Work (18) • Olweus Bullying Prevention (11) • Project Achieve (22) • Talent Development High School (22)
Practices
• Mentoring (specifically, 100 Black Men of America and Concerned Black Men National)

Note: * indicates a program that is classified as an evidence-based program (EBP), meaning that 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, SCSCI S3 implemented a number of strategies to engage different groups affected by school climate.

- **State, district, and school leadership** was engaged through the use of school climate data with leadership teams at the school and district levels. All were invited to attend a statewide educators’ meeting, which offered a session specific to the grants that were offered to them (i.e., budget updates). All principals stated that they shared the information widely, including with administration teams, school climate teams, school improvement councils, principal advisory committees, department heads, and guidance counselors, as well as at student/parent meetings and parent advisory committees. Principals reported that sharing the information with staff and others led school teams to have discussions to identify strengths and weaknesses and to determine the perceptions students and parents had about their school. Goals were set accordingly, and many have posted the school climate data on their school Web sites, along with good news, accomplishments, and celebrations.
- **Staff** were engaged through training and professional development to build their capacity to support a positive school climate. In the spring of 2015, eight principals indicated that they had focused on building staff capacity through training/professional development and providing attendance at conferences and expected to be able to sustain many practices this way. SC intervention specialists provided one-on-one technical assistance (TA) to schools upon request (i.e., to principals, PBIS teams, survey coordinators, teachers) to promote buy-in and to those entering discipline data to ensure accuracy. The SCSCI also provided TA around grant administration and program selection.



- **Student voice** was empowered through the implementation of programs aimed to improve students' experience at school. For example, most schools implemented PBIS, Olweus Bullying Prevention, High Schools That Work, and Botvin LifeSkills.⁷ Principals reported that the results of these efforts led to higher expectations for students, an increased sense of pride, improved attitudes, and greater buy-in of students and staff. A quote from one principal illustrates this:

The biggest change we've seen is that our students feel more secure on campus. Staff attitudes seem to have improved as well. Relationships between students and staff are stronger than they used to be. This is something you can see and feel on campus.

Principals also reported an increase in graduation rates, improvement in students' academic achievement, and an increase in students receiving scholarships. Many of the programs implemented during this grant also included a way to recognize the students in a positive way, which led to improved student-staff relationships in the school. The SCSCI offered TA on listening circles, and one school participated. Furthermore, schools had students review data.

- **Family and community partnerships** were promoted through organizations on campus. School staff and leadership made direct efforts to increase interactions with parents. For example, one principal greeted all parents when they dropped students off. Furthermore, SCSCI schools partnered with the following community individuals, organizations, and businesses:

- National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, Lions Club (South Florence High School);
- Alumni Association (Wilson High School);
- Burke Foundation, including retired educators/professionals, friends of Burke alumni, district representatives, and the mayor of Charleston (Burke High School);
- Air Force and police (R. B. Stall High School);
- Counseling services from the local university (R. B. Stall High School);
- Community Breakfast Club (EAU Claire High School);
- Retirement home residents for Community Mentoring Programs (Branchville High School); and
- Michelin (Woodmont High School).

Training, Coaching, and Technical Assistance

Professional development supports such as training, coaching, and technical assistance 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, and 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. Table 2 provides a list of training SC S3 provided.

⁷ A number of additional programs were also implemented throughout the grant but varied by school.



Table 2. Trainings conducted, by school year⁸ and trainer, with selected detail

Training Topic	SY 2010–11	SY 2011–12	SY 2012–13	SY 2013–14	SY 2014–15	Trainer	Notes
Regional trainings on identity trends in school data			✓			Dr. Dietsch & Dan Mello (WestEd)	
PBIS training			✓	✓	✓	Multiple trainers	
Research to Practice/summer institute			✓			Olweus trainers	
Botvin LifeSkills						Certified LifeSkills trainers	Ongoing training
Webinars ⁹	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Violence prevention and Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs (ATOD)					✓	Not reported	Marijuana-focused training for SC coordinators, principals
Family involvement				✓		NCSSLE ¹⁰	
School climate strategies			✓			NCSSLE	
Regional Safe Schools Seminars ¹¹	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Various presenters	Annual convenings were held for districts statewide

Note: ✓ = event occurred during or throughout the school year.

Coaching and Technical Assistance Model

The SCSCI provided ongoing technical assistance and training across a variety of topics, including the selection and implementation of effective, research-based programs, as well as survey administration. Furthermore, the SCSCI provided rigorous trainings. The two SCSCI statewide intervention specialist/coaches served 11 to 12 schools each. The coaching model provided services in four formats:

1. Just-in-time training (provided immediately, when people need it);
2. Multimedia training;
3. Hands-on training (including school visits and coach participation in community activities); and

⁸ School year was considered September–August, in order to align with the grant.

⁹ Webinars on topics such as school safety plans, coding discipline incidents, bullying prevention, and SC school safety regulations were offered every six months.

¹⁰ NCSSLE = National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, the ED-funded technical assistance center charged with supporting S3 grantees.

¹¹ Regional Safe Schools Seminars (SCDE cosponsors this training with the U.S. Attorney’s Office, District of Columbia, each March).



4. Ongoing rigorous training on such topics as data mapping, goal setting, and data discovery activities.

Once hired, the intervention specialists became a huge part of the program's success. The SCSCI tracked their coaching activities during weekly staff updates. The intervention specialists visited each of their respective schools one to two times a week. They attended school safety team meetings, assisted with collection and analysis of PowerSchool data, monitored program budgets, assisted with program implementation and fidelity, provided trainings, assisted with survey administration, and attended afterschool programs.

Additionally, the SCSCI established an advisory council and the following three work groups.

- **Learning environment work group**, which identified research-based components such as academic, behavior, health, and learning supports for each school's Learning Environment Action Plan (LEAP);
- **Intervention work group**, which identified research-based interventions to be utilized; and
- **Data work group**, which was responsible for collecting and assessing data needs for the SCSCI.

The SCSCI advisory council comprised SCDE staff, educators, school district personnel, and community State partners. The council initially met quarterly to provide recommendations and oversight for the grant, but once the programs became established and the intervention specialists were hired, the face-to-face meetings became less frequent. The project coordinator continued to keep the council informed of the program's progress and communicated via email and conference calls as needed.

Product Development and Dissemination

To support training, TA, and program implementation, S3 grantees developed many unique products. These included 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 districts that took an interest in the work being done (both participating S3 districts and other districts). Key products generated by the SCSCI S3 grant include:

- A [Web site](#) detailing the work of the SCSCI.
- "Creating a Safe, Supported Learning Environment Planning and Implementation Guide" (in review), which enabled schools that did not participate in the SCSCI to generate a safety score. It also provided access to resources for developing and maintaining a healthy and safe school climate.
- One-page reports that communicated each school's standings on the GPRA outcome measures. These reports provided schools with an "at a glance" understanding of how they were doing on the core indicators.
- SCSCI Sustainability/Community Involvement Webinar, which provided strategies for building community relationships and effectively utilizing community partners for sustaining safe school efforts (contact project director for a copy).
- A [monitoring tool](#), created by SCSCI intervention specialists, that was used during site visits. This form requested information about surveys, trainings, and programs that the school was using. Every SCSCI school was required to complete this monitoring tool annually and maintain it over the life of the grant.



Results

Monitoring and evaluation activities examined all the data that had been collected, in order to determine how the SCSCI's efforts impacted 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.

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. The S3 GPRA 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 students who reported:

- Alcohol use in the past 30 days (GPRA measures a and b); and
- Harassment or bullying (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).¹²

GPRA Performance Summary

At the end of the grant period, the 23 intervention schools that had fully implemented¹³ their selected interventions reported the following successes (see also Figure 1):

- Seventy-four percent reported reductions in student-reported alcohol use;
- Forty-three percent reported a reduction in harassment or bullying on school property;
- Sixty-five percent improved their SC-SCS school safety score; and
- Sixty-one percent reported a reduction in student suspensions for violence without injury.

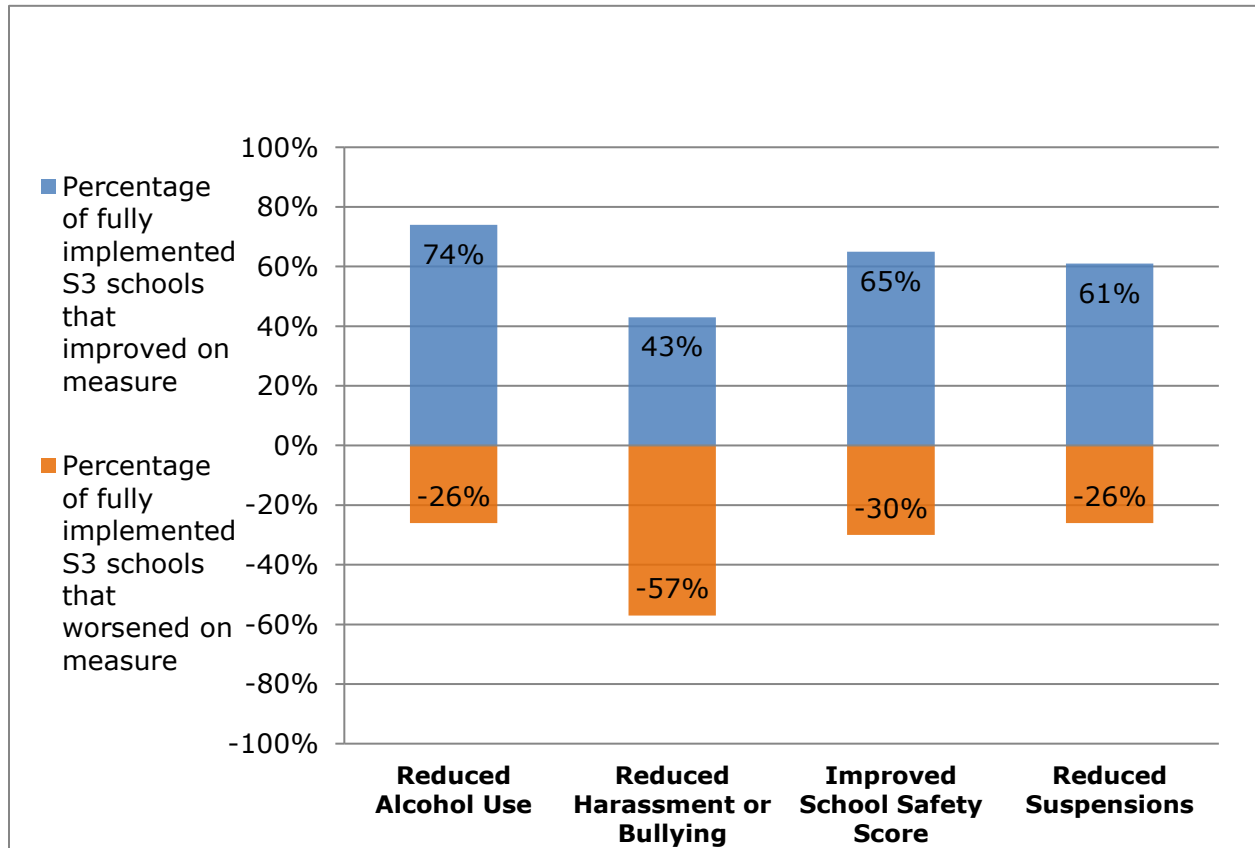
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¹² Readers should note that suspension data, in particular, may be affected by changes in State policies during the course of the S3 grant period that may be unrelated to S3 programming.

¹³ Generally, for S3 grantees, 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.



Figure 1. South Carolina GPRA results baseline (2012–13) to final year (2014–15)



Note: The baseline year for the SCSCI was 2012–13 because schools began implementing interventions in the middle of that school year. The final year is 2014–15 because final data were collected during the no-cost extension year of the grant. School safety scores are based on 22 (out of 23) schools, as one school had insufficient discipline data to calculate change between years. Twenty-one schools provided data to calculate the change in suspensions over time. Detail may not sum to 100 percent due to schools that experienced no statistically significant change or had missing data.

The SCSCI reported that, for harassment or bullying on school property, the aggregate GPRA measure represented very small changes over time (e.g., less than 1 percentage point change in self-reported bullying at each school). While any increase or decrease on the GPRA measures, regardless of the magnitude of change, was calculated for each school, the SCSCI felt that the changes were not meaningful or significant.

The SCSCI also reported that decreases or worsening on GPRA indicators were likely attributed to schools adopting more well-defined coding mechanisms for discipline policies and increased awareness of bullying behaviors among staff and students after exposure to the Olweus program, which led to a more comprehensive definition of issues and increased reporting of bullying behaviors.



Additional Analyses

During the 2014–15 school year, the SCSCI evaluation team interviewed 22 principals from participating schools about program effectiveness, sustainability of interventions, and challenges going forward.

Evaluators: WestEd (Dan Mello, Barbara Dietsch, and Sarah Guckenbug)

Analysis approach: Qualitative information was collected from 22 principals, who participated in a telephone survey regarding the programs they implemented, their perception of program effectiveness, challenges they faced, strategies they used, how they used survey and other student data, their plans for sustainability, and what they would most like to tell others about their efforts.

Summary of findings: Phone interviews with principals found that the number of schools implementing each program remained mostly consistent across all three years (see the Interventions section for more information about programs). Additionally, principals were asked to rate the effectiveness of the programs on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 = not effective at all; 5 = very effective); most of the programs were rated between 3.5 and 4.6. For more information, see the Special Feature.

Overall, both quantitative and qualitative results from the principal survey demonstrated that schools embraced the concept of building positive school climates. Each school selected a different path to implementing positive school climate, and some were more successful than others in improving their School Climate Score Index. There was a wide range of scores among schools. On a scale of 0 to 100, the average across all schools hovered around 65 points for the overall index score. The largest improvements were seen in the Safety domain, particularly the Bullying subdomain (assessed by incidents of suspensions for bullying). The bullying subdomain was the driver for the overall change in the Safety domain. The SCSCI evaluators attributed some of this to more well-defined coding for the discipline policies for bullying after schools were exposed to the Olweus program.

Reports about analyses:

- Final Evaluation Report (in review); and
- SCSCI [Principal Report](#) (and [interview protocol](#)) (Dietsch, Guckenbug, & Hurley, 2016).

Special Feature Principal Perspectives at Grant Conclusion

“The students haven’t changed. The environment has changed.” (SC high school principal)

“The biggest change we’ve seen is that our students feel more secure on campus. Staff attitudes seem to have changed too. Relationships between students and staff are stronger than they used to be. This is something you can see and feel on campus.” (SC high school principal)

These reactions from interviews with 22 of the 23 SCSCI school principals are just a sampling of the many tangible improvements to school climate and student success attributed to the work of the SCSCI. The SCSCI school principals noted many significant positive changes supported by the grant. For example:

- Schools created safe zones where students could be observers/reporters of potential incidents without fear of repercussions.
- School guidance counselors began actively using school climate data to guide advisory



lessons.

- Changes were made to discipline codebooks.
- Schools collaborated with SROs to implement alcohol awareness sessions.
- Bilingual counselors, teachers, and parent advocates were hired.
- Blackboard (online) was used to connect with parents and improve parent relationships with high schools.

Principals also reported specific positive outcomes:

- Positive recognition of students and staff increased.
- Fights, incidents of violence, referrals, dismissals, and dropouts all decreased.
- Student pride, improved staff attitudes, and greater parental involvement accompanied the higher student behavioral and academic expectations.

The SCSCI principals shared a strong commitment to sustain school climate work beyond the life of the grant. All of the principals pledged a commitment to continue collecting school climate data and holding school climate team meetings with staff and students. Schools and districts made commitments to fund the programs and trainings started by the SCSCI. More than half planned to continue mentoring programs (e.g., by connecting with retirement homes and former educators to recruit mentoring volunteers), PBIS, Olweus, and High Schools That Work. Some sought grants (e.g., [21st Century Community Learning Center grants](#)) and funding from community organizations. Even without additional financial support, the SCSCI experience left these principals highly motivated to continue working on school climate improvements as a routine part of school management.

Lessons Learned

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

- The SCSCI experienced initial difficulty motivating schools to utilize training and coaching as vehicles for making effective change. The SCSCI was able to overcome this challenge and increase attendance at training events by sending out reminders, conducting regional trainings and webinars that minimized travel time, and replicating training with individual school coordinators.
- During the first year of survey implementation, response rates were low. The SCSCI experienced technical problems with their network as well as obstacles related to lack of ownership at the school level regarding the surveys. Intervention specialists and coaches then had to spend additional time working with school staff. These specialists worked to ensure that the surveys were administered properly and then packaged with accurately completed transmittal forms to send back to the evaluator. The following changes resulted in dramatic increases in student and staff response rates:
 - Increased training for schools (WestEd provided training on the value of data and how to monitor response rates, and the intervention specialists worked individually with each school to support their survey administration to ensure high participation rates);
 - Increased time allotted for survey completion;
 - Increased survey accessibility by offering both online and paper formats; and
 - Weekly participation updates reported by the evaluator, which allowed for immediate followup.



- The SCSCI schools were not allowed to use school climate funds to purchase safety equipment (metal detectors, walkie-talkies, hiring school resource officers [SROs]) and also had difficulty designating time for administrators to attend training events related to school safety. In retrospect, it would have been a good idea to outline in detail the expectations and the budget limitations before the schools received funding.
 - Coordination at the district level on program selection was sometimes difficult (e.g., the district may promote a different bullying program than what the school planned to implement, and the district's programs trumped the schools' programs).
 - The SCSCI found it very effective to allow schools to choose different interventions based on each school's specific needs. When given the flexibility, schools chose to supplement, renew, and continue academic and behavioral support programs and practices that were already in place (e.g., PBIS). Participating schools also reported that introducing new programs and practices in coordination with enhancing existing support was a factor of success.
 - In hindsight, the SCSCI expressed that it would have been beneficial to:
 - Meet with schools at the start of the grant to explain what the S3 initiative was (i.e., not punitive—an opportunity to get schools where they need to be and increase positive outcomes); and
 - Hire coaches/intervention specialists with a school background.
 - The SCSCI found it important to empower adults to connect with young people. It recommended providing professional development for all teachers regarding effective classroom management strategies. Only one school took advantage of having WestEd conduct a student listening circle with positive feedback. In hindsight, principals found that it would have been valuable to engage students earlier.
 - The SCSCI found that, for schools using PBIS, it was important to:
 - Encourage schools to develop clear and specific plans for implementing multitiered systems of support that provide standardized methods for identification, referral, and follow up for students in Tiers 2 and 3;
 - Train staff on all Tier 2 interventions; and
 - Engage community partners for Tier 3 interventions.
- Schools should be sure that there are coherent systems, forms, and processes in place and that all the staff are trained on how to identify and refer when they have a concern about a student.
- The SCSCI recognized the importance of providing support for teachers and consistency for students across classrooms by training all teachers in a PBIS-recognized classroom management program and standardizing classroom management strategies. This was especially important for students in high schools who had five to six different teachers each day.

Sustainability and Scaling Up

By the close of the grant, the SCSCI had some elements in place that would allow them to continue school climate improvement efforts. Specifically:

- Some schools indicated that they would continue administering the school climate portion of the survey because it is a State requirement for students and parents, and some of the items appear on their school report cards.
- School climate teams were trained on how to find and apply for grants, including how to incorporate the work of current partners as well as strategies for seeking new partners (e.g., faith-based and other local organizations).
- An intervention specialist worked with S3 schools during the 2014–15 school year to sustain the survey administration and data collection using the abbreviated YRBS and EOC surveys.



Contact Information

For more information about the SCSCI, please refer to the information below.

Grant holder: South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE)

WestEd consultants: Dan Mello, dmello@wested.org; Barbara Dietsch, bdietsc@wested.org; Sarah Guckenburg, sgucken@wested.org

Web site: <http://www.ed.sc.gov/districts-schools/school-safety/sc-school-climate-initiative/>.ed.sc.gov/districts-schools/school-safety/sc-school-climate-initiative/

Project director: Kimberly Smith, Program Director, KWSmith@ed.sc.gov

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 South Carolina Participating Districts and Schools

Participating Districts	Participating Schools
1. Aiken	1. Midland Valley High School 2. Wagener-Sally High School
2. Bamberg	3. Denmark-Olar High School
3. Charleston	4. North Charleston High School 5. R. B. Stall High School 6. St. John's High School 7. Burke High School 8. West Ashley High School
4. Colleton	9. Colleton County High School
5. Dorchester	10. Woodland High School
6. Florence	11. South Florence High School 12. Wilson Senior High School
7. Greenville	13. Woodmont Senior High School
8. Jasper	14. Ridgeland-Hardeeville High School
9. Laurens	15. Laurens District 55 High School
10. Oconee	16. Tamasee-Salem Middle and High School*
11. Orangeburg	17. Branchville High School
12. Richland One	18. C. A. Johnson High School 19. Columbia High School 20. Lower Richland High School 21. Eau Claire High School 22. W.J. Keenan High School
13. York	23. Rock Hill High School

* This school has closed since the S3 grant concluded.