Safe and Supportive Schools (S3)

GRANT DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

S3 Grantee Profile | Tennessee Department of Education

Highlights

The primary school climate improvement goal of Tennessee's four-year[1] Safe and Supportive Schools (TN S3) grant was to reduce high rates of drug- and violence-related behavior in 81 schools across 20 school districts. From baseline to final year, 80 percent of schools with fully implemented interventions and sufficient data reported a decrease in student alcohol use; 74 percent reported a decrease in harassment or bullying on school property; 74 percent reported improved school safety scores; and 91 percent reported a reduction in the number of suspensions due to violence without serious injury.[2]

How Did They Do It?

TN S3 used annual school climate survey data and worked with the districts and schools to use discipline, incident, and administrative data to choose and implement interventions tailored to those districts' and schools' specific populations. Throughout the grant, TN S3 provided extensive training and technical assistance to schools to ensure successful implementation. This support was delivered in the form of onsite trainings, youth summits, and toolkit creation and dissemination. Grant activities paid special attention to developing strategies for the prevention of violence in schools, particularly for larger schools whose baseline school climate scores were much lower than smaller schools. TN S3 focused time and resources on improving systems for reporting incident-based and truancy data through a data dashboard. They also devoted tremendous supports to promoting youth engagement and empowering "youth voice" as part of the school climate improvement process.

School Participation

The selection process for participating school districts (also referred to as local educational agencies [LEAs][3]) prioritized persistently lowest-achieving schools with poor conditions for learning. TN S3 determined district and school participation based on the following criteria:

- All of the *persistently lowest-achieving high schools* (high priority schools) residing in the newly created Achievement School District (under Race to the Top) were required to participate;

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[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] TN S3 outcomes were significantly affected by changes in State requirements mandating active rather than passive consent for participation in surveys. See the Results section for more information.

[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*).

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- Districts with high schools in *Restructuring I and Corrective Action* (High Priority status) were encouraged to participate;
- All *high priority school districts* were encouraged to participate;
- Districts that had high schools with *high levels of violence and drug-related incidents* were encouraged to participate; and
- *Demographic diversity* across potential schools and districts (i.e., East Tennessee, Middle Tennessee, West Tennessee, and urban, suburban, and rural).

TN S3 Grant Year 4 Demographics (School Year 2013–14)

This section provides descriptive information about participating districts and schools and the demographics of the students they served. See also Appendix A for a list of TN S3's participating districts and schools.[4]

Number of districts served: 26 districts

Number of schools served: 101 schools

School size: Range: 104–2,201 students; average: 897 students

Total number of students served by TN S3 schools: 91,771

Participating schools' student demographics:

Race and ethnicity:[5]

- 71 percent White
- 17 percent Black
- 5 percent Hispanic
- 2 percent Asian/Pacific Islander
- 0 percent American Indian/Alaskan[6]
- 1 percent two or more races

Other school demographics:

- 47 percent free- and reduced-price-lunch eligible
- 13 percent with individualized education programs (IEPs)[7]

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

Key Partners

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

- **RANDA Solutions**, which developed a "data dashboard"[8] to organize and disseminate survey information and safety scores at the district, State, and school levels, as well as to enable online surveying.

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[4] Unlike most S3 grantees that focused just on high schools, TN S3 provided access to surveys and school climate data across a range of levels, including middle schools (grades 6–8) and schools with grade configurations such as K–8 and PK–12. Twenty-six districts and more than 150 schools used school climate data provided by this effort. However, Appendix A reports only the high schools and their corresponding districts.

[5] 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.

[6] The percentage of students who are American Indian/Alaskan is below 1 percent and therefore is reported as 0 percent.

[7] The percentage of students with IEPs is based on S3 district-level statistics because this detail was not available at the school level.

[8] TDOE was not able to sustain the dashboard beyond the life of the grant. The former TN S3 project director currently conducts survey administration in 17 districts and 108 schools on a platform called QuestionPro. For information and resources, see TDOE's school climate page: http://www.tn.gov/education/topic/school-climate

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- **Students Taking a Right Stand (STARS) Nashville,** which assembled a team of professionals to provide youth and family engagement technical assistance and training opportunities in bullying prevention and substance abuse prevention. This team also provided trainings for districts and schools on bullying prevention, restorative practices, signs and symptoms of substance abuse, and emotionally intelligent adults and their impact on school climate and culture.
- **Evaluation Management Training (EMT) Associates**, which partnered with the State on researching and developing school climate standards, school climate measurement systems, and a school climate profile formula, as well as identifying evidenced based interventions.
- **Vanderbilt University S3@VU**, which provided technical assistance to S3 pilot districts and schools, and hosted the TN Center for Safe and Supportive Schools Web site. The Vanderbilt team vetted evidence-based practices for schools and developed toolkits, resources, modules, and video examples. The team consisted of highly respected educators, administrators, researchers, and student support professionals experienced in school climate improvement, project development and evidence-based youth development and prevention.
- **Vanderbilt University Providing Support, Reaching, Educators, Parents/Students And Restoring Community with Effective Interventions (PREPARE)**, which helped develop a program to train and disseminate information to school districts to help them to advance and mature the response and recovery portion of their emergency management plan.
- **Centers of Regional Excellence (CORE Regional Offices**). These eight centers supported and collaborated with districts in assigned regions through professional development and evidence-based practice sharing. They helped analyze district data, needs assessments, and evaluation of implementation.
- **Coordinated School Health Team**, which focused on Healthy School Environment, School Counseling, and Student, Family and Community Involvement and collaborated with TN S3 on many resources and training opportunities.
- Tennessee's Race to the Top (RttT) initiative, which assisted TN S3 in using data from the Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL) Teacher Survey. TN S3 also partnered with TN-RttT on an Educator Dashboard to give schools access to real-time data on their students (still under development at the writing of this profile).
- **Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (CGTL)**, which supported the development of a Social and Emotional Learning Toolkit aligned with the teacher evaluation rubric to integrate Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) into instruction. CGTL contact Nick Yoder also visited Tennessee multiple times to train educators on SEL.
- **The Center for School Climate and Learning, Dr. Bill Preble**, who provided consultation and training for pilot districts.
- **Nancy Hepler (independent consultant)**, who helped to review the Tennessee Safe and Supportive Schools (S3) School Climate Measurement System and to evaluate the quality of the measurement system, surveys, data collection, data analyses, reports, and index formula.

Project Components

Infrastructure Development

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

- Creating a data dashboard that had the capacity to generate school-, district-, and State-level school climate reports for registered users (log-in required). The database produced instant results upon completion of survey administration. Data was accessed by registered users and was set up in a way that the registered user only had access to their school's data. The dashboard also hosted the State's education modules, an evidence-based program registry, and self-assessment tools as resources for districts and schools.[8]
- Establishing the Tennessee Center for School Climate, which functioned as a technical assistance center for districts and schools. The Center played a direct role in helping districts and schools analyze their data, determine evidence based program/practice to implement, action plan, evaluate implementation, and revise action plans when necessary. They also created toolkits, resources, and best practice videos, which are shared on their Web site and in monthly newsletters.
- Conducting Youth Engagement Summits in the fall and spring for S3 Pilot Districts. The Summits provided students with opportunities to have a voice in their schools as well as ownership in improving school climate.
- Providing professional development opportunities in bullying prevention, restorative practices, social and emotional learning (SEL), emotionally intelligent adults and their impact on culture and climate, and adolescent substance abuse. Information about Safe and Supportive Schools was shared at various State-level conferences that included Conditions for Learning Forum, School Counselors and Administrator's Leadership Institute, and Student Discipline Institute.

School Climate Measurement

TN S3 was a data-driven effort that utilized administrative and survey data to focus school climate improvement efforts, decide where to concentrate resources, and help select appropriate interventions. These data also were used to develop school safety scores to monitor change over time. The Tennessee Office of Safe and Supportive Schools oversaw the custom design and development of Tennessee's school climate measurement system, which integrates survey data collected from students, parents, teachers and other school staff, with school-based incident data measuring student attendance and behavior. The following describes TN S3's measurement tools.

Administrative Data

In January 2011, Tennessee integrated incident-based data collection and reporting for all schools in the State into the longitudinal data system that was developed in conjunction with Race to the Top. This longitudinal data system collected data on truancy as well as other serious incidents (e.g., violence and drug-related offenses) for every school in the State. Additionally, Tennessee published an annual Serious Incident Index for incidents of violence, weapons-possession, and drug-related offenses for all of the State's schools—regardless of participation in the S3 project—on the data dashboard (see the Infrastructure Development section). Administrative data on academic achievement, truancy, and incident data were accessed by schools through the data dashboard.

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Surveys

Notably, the TN S3 team developed its own Tennessee School Climate student, parent, and teacher surveys to measure aspects of school engagement, school safety, and school environment. The TN S3 team used the U.S. Department of Education's school climate model as the foundation for building a set of school climate survey instruments. The TN S3 surveys were unique in that they were custom-designed by the State, and were crafted with stakeholder input from students and educators. Through a process of vetting nine extant school climate instruments, providing opportunities for school and community input through cognitive labs, and piloting surveys, the TN S3 team created the surveys for the three different audiences. EMT Associates (see Key Partners section) provided support to the State through data cleaning and analysis to enhance the surveys.

TN S3 administered the following surveys annually each fall from 2011–2014:[9]

- **TN DOE School Climate Survey for students (elementary, middle, and high school versions)**: The high school version of the Tennessee School Climate Survey contained 93 fixed-response survey items and two open-ended questions. The middle school version captured the same measurement content with the exception of age-appropriate changes in wording. The elementary school version contained 50 fixed-response survey items. The high school and middle school surveys also included a separate survey section that enabled students to anonymously report their use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other drugs and substances in the previous 30 days. The Student School Climate Survey was implemented for 9th through 12th grade students each fall 2011–2014, 5th through 8th grade students each fall 2012–2014, and 3rd through 8th grade students in the fall of 2013 and 2014.
- **TN DOE School Climate Survey for parents:** The parent survey aligns with the student version in order to capture the parent perspective on issues of school climate. Additionally, the parent survey includes two items measuring parent's overall satisfaction with the school environment. TN S3's Parent Survey for parents of kindergarten (K) through 12th-grade students was implemented 2011–2015.
- **TN DOE Teacher School Climate Survey:** TN S3 initially used the TELL Teacher survey[10] from 2011 to 2013 before developing a State-created teacher survey. The new survey for teachers was first administered in school year 2013–14 and contained similar items to the student surveys as a way to compare and contrast youth and teacher perspectives. The development of this survey provided TN with a sustainable survey focused on the specific needs of the State with no-cost administration. The TELL Teacher survey was implemented in school years 2011–12 and 2012–13, and the TN DOE Teacher Survey was implemented in school years 2013–14 and 2014–15 for educators and staff who work with children in grades K through 12.

All surveys were made available both online and in paper/pencil format.

During the first three years of administration, between 63,700 and 84,700 students completed school climate surveys. In the final year (2014–15), only 26,600 students completed surveys. This was due to new State requirements established during school year 2013–14 mandating the use of active rather than passive parental consent for student

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[9] TN S3 was not able to administer surveys to all groups for all four years of the grant; four years of student and parent surveys and two years of the teacher survey were completed by December 2014.
[10] The TELL Teacher Survey was a part of Tennessee's Race to the Top initiative. However, it was not sustainable, due to the cost associated with its use; thus TN S3 developed its own teacher survey and began administering it in November 2013.

participation in surveys. To address this challenge, the TN Office of Safe and Supportive Schools chose to modify the school climate survey for 2015–16 by removing items measuring students' alcohol and other drug use, which resulted in the approval to administer using passive parent consent. For additional discussion on this, see Results and Sustainability sections of the TN S3 grantee profile.

School Safety Scores

The **school safety score** is a figure calculated based on a formula that uses survey data, incident data, and other data representing factors known to influence student and school success. The scores are used to facilitate comparisons between schools in the same State and for individual schools over time. The following summarizes TN S3's school safety score.[11]

- *Name of score*: Safe and Supportive Index
- *Formula:* The index uses student survey data, attendance data, graduation data, and disciplinary data (suspensions and expulsions). These indicators are mapped onto major domains of the S3 framework. The final index was comprised of a subset of 52 items from the larger student survey instrument, incorporating 9 of 13 survey measurement components. Specific components include Supportive Student Relationships, Supportive Relationships with Teachers, Supportive Relationships with School Leadership, School Connectedness, Freedom from Bullying, Physical Safety, and Freedom from Substance Abuse, Clear and Fair Enforcement of Rules and Procedures, and Academic and Challenge and Motivations. See Figures 1 and 2 for more details.
- *Hyperlink:* Not available. The school safety scores were established, adopted, and developed for public access on the dashboard[8] but in the end were not published due to controversy on how this score would be interpreted by the public. TN S3 observed that smaller schools typically had a better score than larger, more urban schools. This required them to consider how to make this information public in such a way that schools could be ranked based on their school size. Thinking on this matter was still in progress at the conclusion of the grant.
- *Change over time:* Change in school safety scores are reported in the Results section with other data.

Continued on next page.

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[11] TN S3 built its survey measurement and safety score formula "from the ground up" and was therefore not able to generate scores in the Year 1 of the grant.

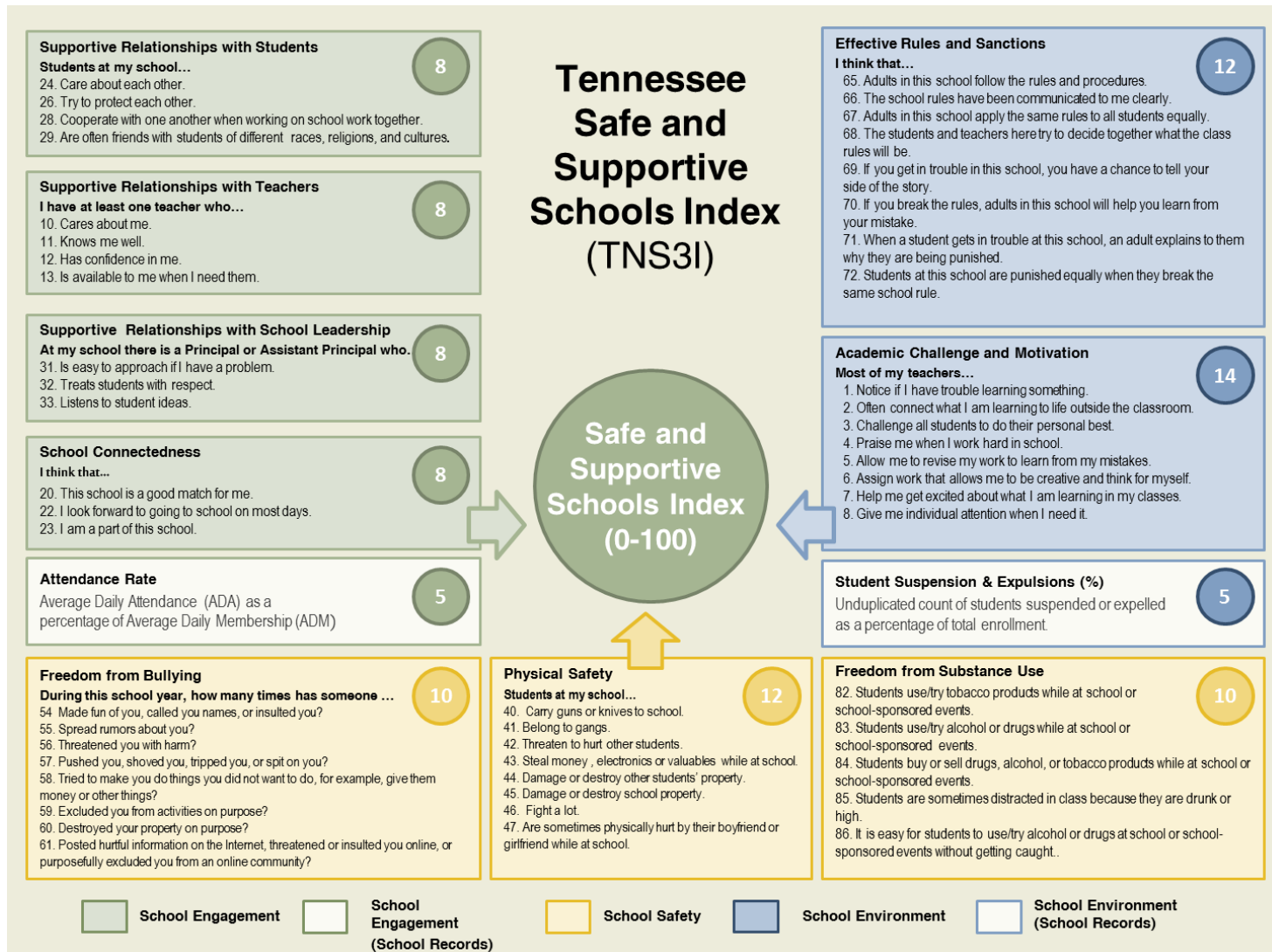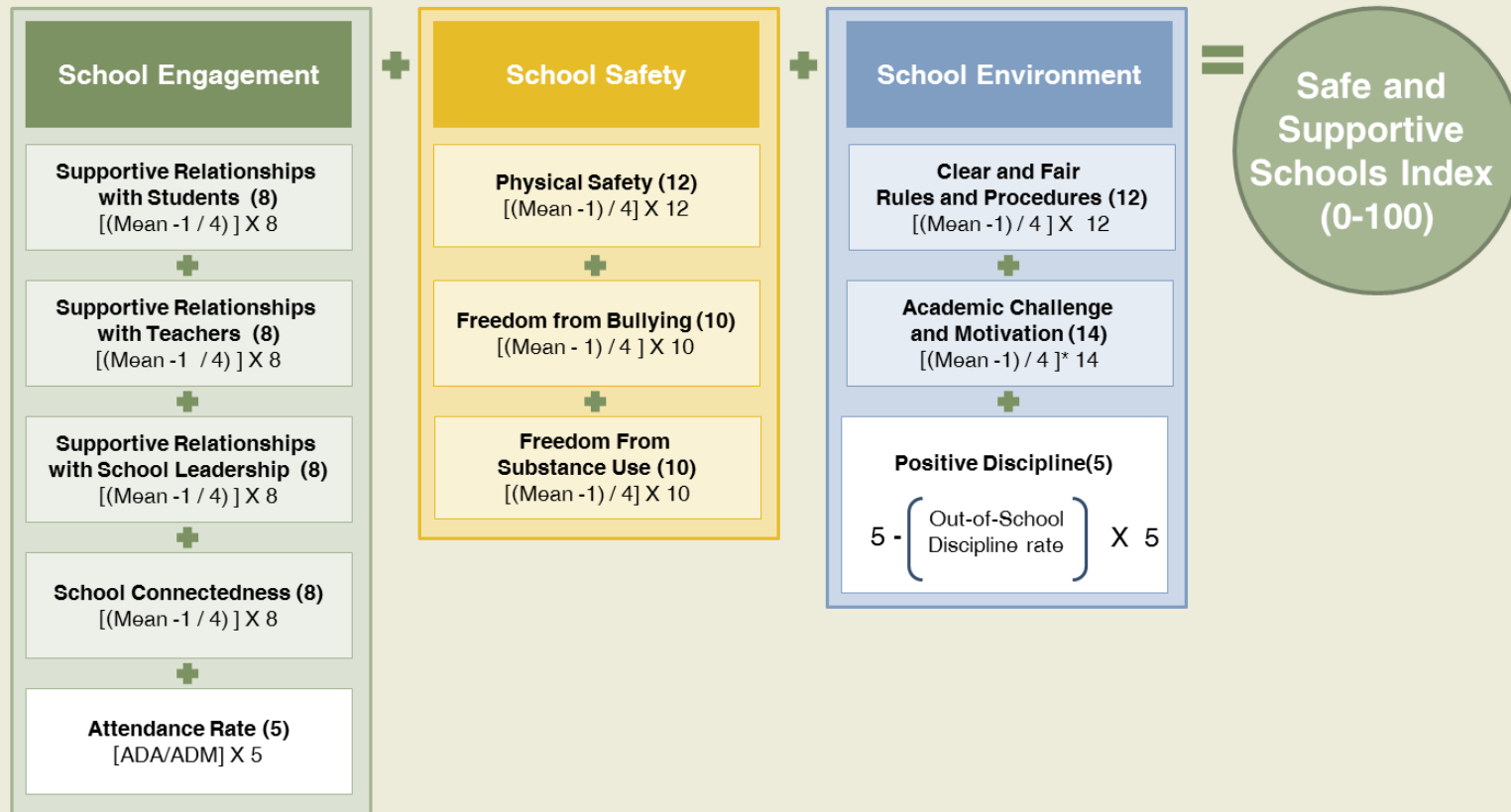**Figure 1. Data sources for Safe and Supportive Index**

Tennessee Safe and Supportive Schools Index (TNS3I)

Safe and Supportive Schools Index (0-100)

Supportive Relationships with Students — 8

Students at my school…
24. Care about each other.
26. Try to protect each other.
28. Cooperate with one another when working on school work together.
29. Are often friends with students of different races, religions, and cultures.

Supportive Relationships with Teachers — 8

I have at least one teacher who…
10. Cares about me.
11. Knows me well.
12. Has confidence in me.
13. Is available to me when I need them.

Supportive Relationships with School Leadership — 8

At my school there is a Principal or Assistant Principal who.
31. Is easy to approach if I have a problem.
32. Treats students with respect.
33. Listens to student ideas.

School Connectedness — 8

I think that…
20. This school is a good match for me.
22. I look forward to going to school on most days.
23. I am a part of this school.

Attendance Rate — 5

Average Daily Attendance (ADA) as a percentage of Average Daily Membership (ADM)

Freedom from Bullying — 10

During this school year, how many times has someone …
54. Made fun of you, called you names, or insulted you?
55. Spread rumors about you?
56. Threatened you with harm?
57. Pushed you, shoved you, tripped you, or spit on you?
58. Tried to make you do things you did not want to do, for example, give them money or other things?
59. Excluded you from activities on purpose?
60. Destroyed your property on purpose?
61. Posted hurtful information on the Internet, threatened or insulted you online, or purposefully excluded you from an online community?

Physical Safety — 12

Students at my school…
40. Carry guns or knives to school.
41. Belong to gangs.
42. Threaten to hurt other students.
43. Steal money, electronics or valuables while at school.
44. Damage or destroy other students' property.
45. Damage or destroy school property.
46. Fight a lot.
47. Are sometimes physically hurt by their boyfriend or girlfriend while at school.

Effective Rules and Sanctions — 12

I think that…
65. Adults in this school follow the rules and procedures.
66. The school rules have been communicated to me clearly.
67. Adults in this school apply the same rules to all students equally.
68. The students and teachers here try to decide together what the class rules will be.
69. If you get in trouble in this school, you have a chance to tell your side of the story.
70. If you break the rules, adults in this school will help you learn from your mistake.
71. When a student gets in trouble at this school, an adult explains to them why they are being punished.
72. Students at this school are punished equally when they break the same school rule.

Academic Challenge and Motivation — 14

Most of my teachers…
1. Notice if I have trouble learning something.
2. Often connect what I am learning to life outside the classroom.
3. Challenge all students to do their personal best.
4. Praise me when I work hard in school.
5. Allow me to revise my work to learn from my mistakes.
6. Assign work that allows me to be creative and think for myself.
7. Help me get excited about what I am learning in my classes.
8. Give me individual attention when I need it.

Student Suspension & Expulsions (%) — 5

Unduplicated count of students suspended or expelled as a percentage of total enrollment.

Freedom from Substance Use — 10

82. Students use/try tobacco products while at school or school-sponsored events.
83. Students use/try alcohol or drugs while at school or school-sponsored events.
84. Students buy or sell drugs, alcohol, or tobacco products while at school or school-sponsored events.
85. Students are sometimes distracted in class because they are drunk or high.
86. It is easy for students to use/try alcohol or drugs at school or school-sponsored events without getting caught..

Legend:
- School Engagement
- School Engagement (School Records)
- School Safety
- School Environment
- School Environment (School Records)

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Figure 2. Safe and Supportive Schools Index formula

Tennessee Safe and Supportive Schools Index (TNS3I) Formula

School Engagement +

- **Supportive Relationships with Students (8)** [(Mean -1 / 4)] X 8
- **Supportive Relationships with Teachers (8)** [(Mean -1 / 4)] X 8
- **Supportive Relationships with School Leadership (8)** [(Mean -1 / 4)] X 8
- **School Connectedness (8)** [(Mean -1 / 4)] X 8
- **Attendance Rate (5)** [ADA/ADM] X 5

School Safety +

- **Physical Safety (12)** [(Mean -1) / 4] X 12
- **Freedom from Bullying (10)** [(Mean - 1) / 4] X 10
- **Freedom From Substance Use (10)** [(Mean -1) / 4] X 10

School Environment =

- **Clear and Fair Rules and Procedures (12)** [(Mean -1) / 4] X 12
- **Academic Challenge and Motivation (14)** [(Mean -1) / 4]* 14
- **Positive Discipline (5)** $5 - \left[\text{Out-of-School Discipline rate} \right] \times 5$

Safe and Supportive Schools Index (0-100)

Explanatory Notes
ADA = Average Daily Attendance
ADM = Average Daily Membership
Out-of-school discipline rate : Unduplicated count of students who were suspended or expelled each year expressed as a percentage of total enrollment.

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Interventions: Frameworks, Programs, Practices, and Strategies

Key interventions were decided by schools upon reviewing their school climate data and completing a school climate action plan. In the school climate action plan, they identified their needs, goals, measurable objectives, evidence-based interventions, expected outcomes, evaluation method, and budget. TN S3 used survey data collected each fall and their 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 for each school and district. TN S3 partner Vanderbilt Center for Safe and Supportive Schools vetted several evidence-based programs and provided guidance on which areas of school climate each program would help improve.

Table 1. Intervention frameworks, programs, and practices

Frameworks
Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) (8)
Programs
• 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens (3) • Alcohol Edu (2) • Capturing Kids Hearts (1) • Check-In/Check-Out (Ci/Co)* (1) • Kick It Tobacco (2) • Project Based Learning (supported by CASEL Collaborating Districts Initiative) (1) • Too Good for Drugs* (3) • Move 2 Stand Bullying Prevention (7) • Olweus Bullying Prevention (15) • Rachel's Challenge (2) • STARS Student Assistance Program (SAP) (3) • Why Try? (5)
***Practices**
• Adventure Based Learning • Advisory • Building Relationships • Celebration of Differences • Community Engagement • Flex Lunch • Friend to Friend Program • Restorative Practices • Student Led Climate Crew

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

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Engagement Strategies

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

- **State, district, and school leadership** was engaged through a School Climate Oversight Team, which was convened by the Commissioner of Education to facilitate coordination across State and community stakeholders. More locally focused, a School Climate Leadership Team was also convened by the Deputy Commissioner of Education to ensure cooperation and effective project management within the Tennessee Department of Education. The School Climate Leadership Team had representation from all stakeholders, including students, parents, school staff, administrators, community members, and school leaders.

- **Staff** were engaged through trainings and technical assistance programs that clearly articulated the connection between positive school climate and academic success. Consultation was provided to schools to assist with enhancing capacity and building competencies to address the needs as experienced within each school. Additionally, monthly newsletters from the Safe and Supportive Schools Coordinator, as well as from Vanderbilt's Center for School Climate, highlighted activities, training opportunities, progress, and the success of the S3 effort in the participating schools.

- **Student voice** was empowered through biannual youth engagement summits, which provided school climate leadership workshops for students. See more details in the Training section and in the *Special Feature*. Additionally, TN S3 brought Dr. Bill Preble, the Executive Director of the Center for Climate and Learning, to speak to adults about the importance of student voice and how they can engage students in school climate improvement efforts.

- **Family and community partnerships** were promoted through sharing best practices with S3 pilot districts on ways to share their school climate data and success stories. TN S3 also helped pilot districts create videos of their work to share in the local media outlets, newsletters, social media etc. (See Product Development and Dissemination section).

Special Feature
Amplifying Youth Voice Through Youth Engagement Summits

TN S3 partnered with Students Taking a Right Stand (STARS) Nashville and the TN DOE to design and hold biannual Youth Engagement Summits. The Summits were designed to empower student leaders to take action to positively impact their school climate. Topics covered included bullying prevention, inclusion (diversity), positive social marketing, parent and youth engagement, relationship building, service learning, and substance abuse prevention. The sessions stimulated youth leaders and adults to work together to develop strategies and action plans to transform school climate.

In fall 2013, one-day Summits were held across the State for participating TN S3 schools. Following the one-day Summit, STARS provided ongoing consultative support throughout the school year. This support helped to trigger momentum, ensure smooth kick-off, encourage constant reflection and evaluation, and guide progress every step of the way. Finally, one-day follow up summits were held in spring 2014 to help youth reflect on what they learned, discuss best practices, and determine what new or continued efforts could be made for the coming school year.

Students at White County High School in Sparta, Tennessee, used the training they received at the Summit to establish a student-led "Climate Crew" to make their school "a safe and welcoming place for everyone". A video about their particular effort can be

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found here:
http://www.schooltube.com/video/5721135f476742c2816c/White%20County

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, or conducting observations and performance-feedback sessions. Technical assistance—provided by members of the school climate team or contractors—can support communities of practice among coaches or school staff, help outline training plans, conduct research to support the work, or help school climate teams address issues such as the need for adaptations to interventions.

Training

TN S3 held the following trainings for TN DOE staff, teachers, students, community members, and parents:

- **McGrath Bullying and Harassment Intake and Investigation training (October 2012),** which walked S3 District Coordinators through the processing of a complaint from initial intake through determination of appropriate action.
- **Safety Summit (January 2013),** where district-level multidisciplinary teams reviewed best practices and shared school safety strategies following the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut.[12]
- **District Survey Administration Webinars (September 2013),** which were offered at the beginning of survey administration to ensure survey administration protocols were followed, and to provide information about how to access data and reports, how to provide online survey access to parents, and how to obtain passive parental consent.
- **Olweus Training of Trainers (March 2012 and January 2014),** where STARS taught school staff to become trainers for their school district using a ten-principle model.[13]
- **Why Try? Training (June 2014),** which taught SEL principles to youth in a way they could understand and remember with the intention of improving student retention, academic performance, and school climate.
- **School Safety Specialist Training (June 2014),** which provided training and information on national and State best practices, as well as resources for school safety, security, intervention and prevention, and emergency preparedness planning.
- **Conditions for Learning Forum (May 2014 and September 2015**), where district staff learned about opportunities to collaborate in creating an environment in which students can be healthy and successful. The form was built around three focus areas:

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[12] Governor Bill Haslam and leadership from the Departments of Education, Safety and Homeland Security, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, and the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency as well as national and State leaders in the field, addressed summit participants.

[13] The ten principles are as follows: focus on the school environment; assess bullying in your school; gain support from staff and parents; establish a bullying prevention coordinating committee; train staff in prevention and understanding the difference between normal conflict and bullying; clearly establish, communicate and enforce school rules and policies; increase adult supervision in the "hot spots" for bullying; gain commitment to intervene consistently and appropriately in bullying situations; gain commitment to focus class time on bullying prevention; and continue the efforts over time.

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- o physical activity/nutrition/health education
  - o health factors that most directly impact student learning
  - o climate/safety/behavior
- **Lessons in Workplace Relationships (April 2015),** which provided participants the opportunity to identify and manage relationship breakdowns, have crucial conversations, coordinate action, achieve business results, value differences, make effective requests, design new and lasting relationships, operate in a strengths-based leadership model, and create an emotionally intelligent work environment.
- **Regional trainings and meetings (biannual),** where S3 District Coordinators, School Climate Team Members, Principals, Assistant Principals, School Counselors, and Central Office Staff were invited to topic-centered discussions.[14]
- **Youth Engagement Summits (biannual),** which provided students with training on improving youth voice and gave a platform for reporting progress and success stories. The summits equipped students with concrete skills and tools to improve school climate, gave school staff ideas of how to engage students in their school climate improvement processes, and encouraged parental involvement.
- **Student Discipline Institute (annual),** where S3 staff provided information on student supportive discipline best practices and the S3 project.
- **School Counselors and Administrators Leadership Institute (annual**), where TN S3 provided best practices in bullying prevention, fostering empathy, school climate measurement, restorative practices and SEL.
- **Tennessee Schools PREPARE Training (as requested),** which prepared staff to provide immediate effective assistance in the aftermath of a school crisis to mitigate long term emotional suffering of survivors and to restore a supportive and productive learning environment. Teams developed realistic, useful, and accessible crisis response plans for use at the time of an emergency. This training was provided on the district level as the district requested it.

Coaching and Technical Assistance Model

TN S3 developed plans for trainings and technical assistance with input from the School Climate Oversight Team and School Climate Leadership Team. The Tennessee Center for School Climate S3 at Vanderbilt University provided onsite technical assistance in schools who reached out to them for assistance. They also reached out to schools and provided technical assistance. They maintained a Web page with innovative resources and videos. They also maintained regular contact with S3 Pilot Districts through visits, meetings, phone calls, emails, and newsletters.

TN S3 launched a School Climate Specialist Academy in partnership with participating districts to develop a team of certified School Climate Specialists (SCS). These individuals were trained to use data during the development and implementation of programmatic interventions. Each district had one SCS, who attended biannual meetings on data analysis, needs assessment, selecting interventions/programs, and monitoring and evaluating progress. The SCS also had opportunities to attend all of the trainings provided by TN S3 (see Training section). Additionally, SCS submitted annual progress on their needs, goals, implementation progress, and challenges on a yearly basis.

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[14] Topics included the following: Bullying Policy to Practice, Fostering Empathy, Building Working Relationships, Core Strategies to Improve School Climate, Adolescent Substance Abuse, Emotionally Intelligent Adults: The Impact on Culture and Climate, Safe Dates: Prevention Program for Dating Abuse, Adult Culture, and Restorative Practices.

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Product Development and Dissemination

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

Note: Modules noted with an asterisk (*) are available at
http://www.tn.gov/education/topic/school-climate.

Training Presentation Modules
- *School Climate 101 Module** provides an overview of what school climate is, why it is important, and the linkages to academic outcomes.
- *Understanding Logic Models Module** provides guidance for using and understanding logic models, detailing the three main types of logic models.
- *Restorative Practices Module** presents an overview of what restorative practices are, detailing topics such as communication practices, restorative conflict circles, proactive circles, peer mediation, and community interaction.
- *Peer Mediation Module** provides a summary of what peer mediation is, the relationship between peer mediation and school violence, suspension, and bullying, and the characteristics of a successful peer mediation program.
- *Family Engagement Module** presents a toolkit for engaging families to support student success by offering background information on why family engagement is important, how schools can better engage families, best practices, and concrete "next steps" for improving family engagement.
- *School Resource Officer Module** provides information for school districts on school resource officers (SROs), detailing the SRO role, how schools can effectively prepare to onboard an SRO, and tips for training, supervising, and integrating an SRO.

Other Products
- *Tools for Improvement.* This collection of resources provides step by step guidance for the everyday logistics of improving school climate. Resources include:
  - Data Use Guidebook
  - How to Identify and Solve Problems
  - Gap Analysis (to support problem solving)
  - How to Keep Messaging Consistent Across School Community
  - How to Create a Logic Model
  - How to Create an Action Plan
  - How to Run Effective Meetings
  - Guide to Hosting Student and Family Events
  - How to Use Social Media
  - Giving Recognition to Members of School Community
  - Fundraising
  - Leadership Transition and Sustainability
- *School Climate Improvement Checklist*
- *Engagement Checklist*
- *Safety Checklist*
- *Environment Checklist*
- *Incorporating Social and Emotional Learning into Classroom Instruction and Educator Effectiveness: A Toolkit for Tennessee Teachers and Administrators*. The toolkit is

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currently in development and will include a module for each of the ten teaching practices, plus an overview module, to support successful integration of SEL in the classroom. Refer to the [TDOE School Climate Web page](#) for more information.

Other Planning and Reporting Resources:

- *School Climate Improvement Process** outlines a five-step school improvement process to help guide schools through the critical steps of initiating, planning, tracking, and evaluating school climate interventions.
- *Youth School Climate Action Planning** is a tool used at the TN Youth Engagement Summit to guide reflection, goal setting, and action planning.

Videos:

- [Hendersonville High Advisory Impact on School Climate](#) documents a **student engagement** aspect of Hendersonville High School's school climate efforts. "Advisory" is a school period during which students from diverse backgrounds and social groups gather together to discuss both personal and school climate issues. The video highlights the positive influence on bullying, student–student, and student–teacher relationships.
- [Henry County Schools YES Committee](#) highlights the importance of **student voice** as part of school climate efforts. The video documents the progress of the student group, "YES," which was created as a result of their participation in the Student Youth Engagement Summit.
- [Campbell County High Flex Lunch](#) presents how "FLEX Lunch[15]" **promotes student engagement and builds relationships** by having all students eat lunch during the same period. As a result of the effort students are also able to participate in activities such as cooking, chorus, music, and ROTC together during the school day.
- [White County High School Climate Crew](#) presents the important impact of a new student group, "climate crew," on **student relationships, character education, and safety**. The group emerged as a result of a traumatic incident and as a response to school climate survey data. The group's goal is to make the school a "safe and welcome place for everyone."
- [Maplewood High Strengthening Connections](#) documents the powerful impact the school's principal has had on the **school's safety, student–student relationships, student–teacher relationships, and student engagement**. In partnership with the dean of students, the principal has transformed connections between school, students, and community.
- [The Importance of Building Relationships](#) This video, S3@VU, explores the importance of **relationships between teachers and students**.
- [Saving Lives: Safe and Supportive Schools](#) details how four Tennessee high schools in a variety of settings have made great strides in increasing **school supports for students, increasing school safety, and providing positive learning environments**
- [Anderson County Schools Adventure-Based Learning](#) describes how, through outdoor adventure-based learning, students have opportunities to get out of their comfort zones through character education and team-building activities that build **self-confidence and self-esteem**.
- [Lawrence County Friend to Friend Program](#) shows the ways that Lawrence County Schools has created a culture of adults working together across the system that is making a difference in **student achievement**. The Friend to Friend program breaks

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[15]FLEX Lunch (Flexible Learning EXperience) is a school-wide one hour lunch period during which all students eat, with the intention of building student relationships across grades. Additionally, during FLEX lunch students have the opportunity to participate in various instructional and extracurricular programs.

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down barriers to building relationships among students as well as staff, and between staff and students.

- Dobyns-Bennett High School BUDS Program presents the story of Dobyn's Bennett High School, where there is a sense of mutual **respect and relationship building** spreading throughout the school. The BUDS program and Sparkle Squad allow students to celebrate their differences as well as their successes contributing to a safe and respectful learning environment.
- Metro Nashville Public Schools and Hamilton County Schools Youth Court Initiative highlights the Youth Court Initiative's efforts to create a **safe and respectful environment in schools** through Restorative Justice Practices. Restorative Justice Practices allow students to learn from their mistakes, make amends, and repair harm done through their behavior.

Results

Monitoring and evaluation activities examined all the data that had been collected in order to determine how TN S3'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. S3 GPRAs 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:
- Student-reported alcohol use in the past 30 days (GPRA measures a and b); and
- Student-reported harassment or bullying on school property (GPRA measures c and d).

Improvement or worsening of:
- School safety scores (GPRA measures e and f).

An increase or decrease in the number of:
- Suspensions for violence without injury (GPRA measures g and h).[16]

GPRA Performance Summary:

At the end of the grant period, the 35 participating schools that had fully implemented[17] their selected interventions reported the following successes (see also Figure 3):
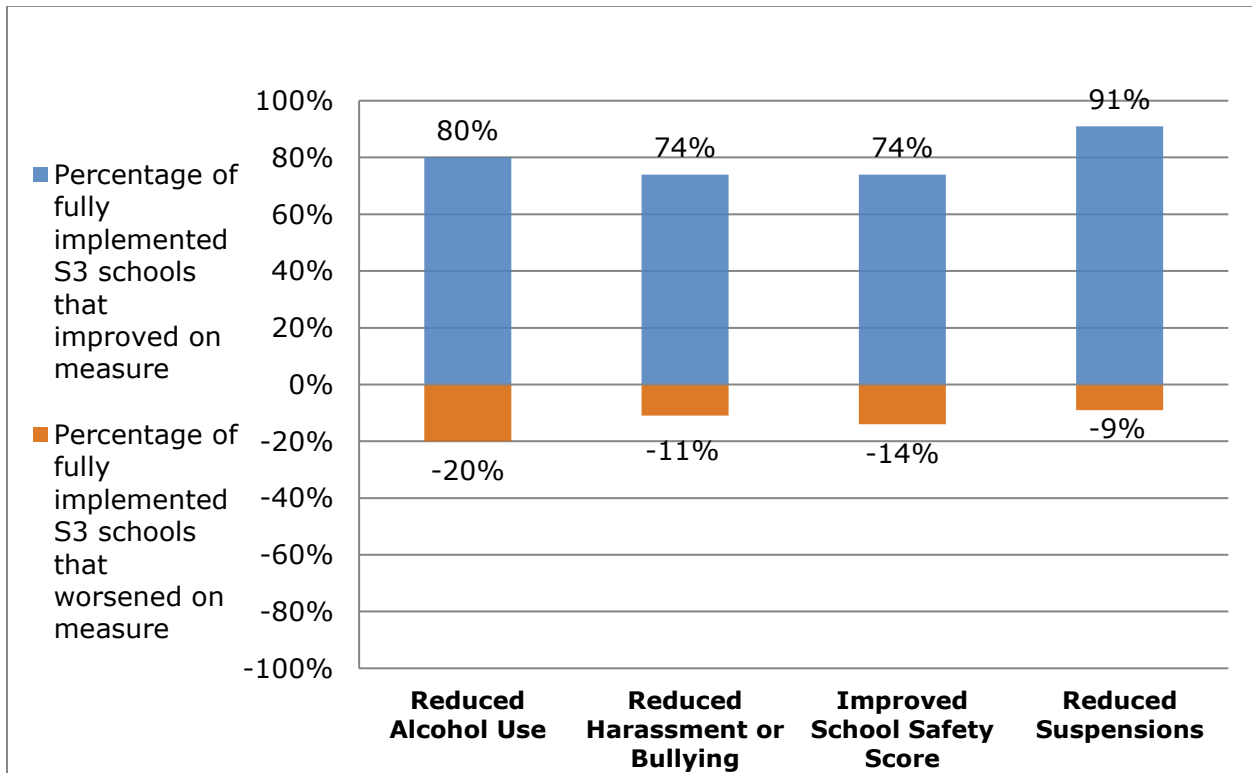- 80 percent reported reductions in student-reported alcohol use.
- 74 percent reported a reduction in harassment or bullying on school property.
- 74 percent improved their Safe and Supportive Index school safety score.
- 91 percent reported a reduction in student suspensions for violence without injury.

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

[17] 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.

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Figure 3. Tennessee GPRA Results Baseline (2011–12) to Final Year (2013–14)

Notes: Detail may not sum to 100 percent due to schools that experienced no statistically significant change or that had missing data. In addition, TN S3 was unable to calculate four years of results for any GPRA indicator due to measurement challenges. Because of low response rates in 2011–12, the Baseline Year for the student-reported alcohol use GPRA measure is 2012–13. For harassment and bullying on school property, no comparisons can be made after 2012–13 due to changes in the Bullying measure. For school safety scores, no comparisons can be made after 2012–13 because of an adjustment to the school safety score calculation. For suspensions, three years of data are reported (2011–12 through 2013–14).

TN S3 reported that decreases or worsening on GPRA indicators was attributable to changes in the 2013–14 State requirements mandating active rather than passive consent for participation in surveys, which caused survey response rates at the school level to decline considerably from previous years, limiting the comparability of data over time.

Additional Analyses

Data analysts: [EMT Associates, Inc](#).[18]

Analysis approach:

TN S3 explored the following research question—*What does TN S3 school climate data tell us about the relationship between student academic achievement and perceptions of school climate?* They used a statistical method known as "one-way analysis of variance" (ANOVA), a technique used to compare the means (or averages) of three or more samples. TN S3

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[18] TN S3 did not perform an implementation evaluation. However, EMT Associates constructed their survey and performed data collection and analysis. EMT was also a sub grantee on an IT contract to build the TN S3 Dashboard (which is no longer operational).

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assessed differences in perceptions of school climate across three achievement groups, or groups of students divided by self-report of grades they typically earned in school.

Summary of findings:

Differences across achievement groups were significant for both middle school and high school students. Students who perform better academically also had more positive perceptions of the climate in their middle schools and high schools. These differences were observed across all school climate measures, with the exception of *Freedom from Substance Abuse* among both middle school and high school students, and *Supportive Relationships with School Leadership* among middle school students (see Figure 1 for more information on other measures assessed). These findings offered further support for the connection between academic success and how students perceive their school relationships and levels of engagement, their physical and emotional safety, and the physical, academic, and behavioral environment in their schools.

Reports about analyses:

- Annual Reports from the Office of Safe and Supportive Schools: Available at https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/education/data/department-reports.html .
    - 2014–15 Report
    - 2013–14 Report
    - 2012–13 Report
    - 2011–12 Report
    - 2010–11 Report

Lessons Learned

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

- TN S3 had various challenges getting schools fully on-board with the concept of school climate and potentially implementing new efforts. In order to remedy this dilemma, TN S3 communicated the clear connections between positive school climate and academic success and emphasized that the school climate effort went hand in hand with other statewide efforts such as reducing chronic absenteeism, integrating SEL into instruction clarifying that the TN S3 work was not an additional or increased burden.
- TN S3 experienced initial difficulties when publicly reporting school climate data on grant participating schools. From the inception of the grant, there was a great deal of controversy on how schools would be perceived and how data would be interpreted by the public. TN S3 also noticed that smaller schools typically scored better than larger, more urban schools. This finding required TN S3 to consider how to publicize the information in a way that schools could not be ranked by their size. Training provided to the TN S3 districts to help them communicate their data to their communities as well as their successes in improving school climate. TN S3 also helped schools with highlighting their successes in videos distributed through newsletters, blogs, and Web sites, as well as aired on local new stations.
- District staff turnover was a challenge TN S3 had to repeatedly overcome throughout the grant period. TN S3 addressed this problem by scheduling trainings every spring and fall that were held regionally. Also, modules were developed and posted in the Web site so S3 districts could use the materials at convenient times for them.
- TN S3 experienced difficulties during the survey administration process. Some districts did not participate in the survey administration training and subsequently did not follow correct protocols and procedures. TN S3 solved this problem by developing a specific Memorandum of Understanding concerning survey

administration training and increased detail regarding specific procedures, and asking all participating districts to review and accept the agreement.

- TN S3 found success in maintaining clear and constant communication with the participating schools. They created monthly newsletters which featured the exciting projects and progress being accomplished in districts across Tennessee.

Sustainability and Scaling Up

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

- TN S3 established the Center for School Climate which will continue to serve schools and districts well beyond the life of the grant as a resource center. The center, in conjunction with the school leadership and oversight teams, serves as State infrastructure for measuring and addressing school climate. The center houses an evidence-based program registry, housed on the Center for School Climate's Web site (which will be maintained and available for all districts in the State) and the school climate measurement system.
- TN S3 required all participating districts to establish a local sustainability plan for the purposes of continuing the project activities past the grant period. The success of the sustainability plans depended on whether district leadership took ownership of the program. Significant turnover on the part of superintendents was also a factor.
- The Tennessee School Climate Survey has continued to be sustained beyond the S3 grant funded period, and has been incorporated as an important measurement tool supporting other federally funded school-based initiatives. Parent consenting issues were addressed by removing items measuring students' self-reported alcohol and other drug use, which resulted in the approval to administer using passive parent consent beginning in 2015–16.

Contact Information

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

Grant holder: Tennessee Department of Education
Web site: https://www.tn.gov/education/health-and-safety/school-climate.html
Project director: Kimberly Daubenspeck, kimberly.daubenspeck@tn.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.

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Appendix A: List of TN Participating Districts and Schools

Participating Districts	Participating Schools
1. Alvin C York Institute	1. Alvin C. York Institute
2. Anderson County	2. Clinton High School 3. Anderson County High School
3. Campbell County	4. Campbell County High School 5. Jellico High School
4. Claiborne County	6. Claiborne High School 7. Cumberland Gap High School
5. Davidson County	8. Antioch High School 9. Cane Ridge High School 10 Glencliff High School 9. Hillwood High School 11. Hillsboro High School 12. Hume-Fogg High School 13. Hunters Lane High 14. John Overton High School 15. Maplewood High School 16. McGavock High School 17. Nashville School of the Arts 18. Stratford STEM Magnet 19. Pearl Cohn High School 20. Whites Creek High School
6. Dickson County	21. Creek Wood High School 22. Dickson County High School
7. Dyersburg City	23. Dyersburg High School
8. Franklin County	24. Franklin County High School 25. Huntland School
9. Gibson County Special School District	26. Gibson County High School 27. South Gibson County High School
10. Giles County	28. Giles County High School 29. Richland School
11. Greene County	30. Chuckey Doak High School 31. North Greene High School 32. South Greene High School 33. West Greene High School

Participating Districts	Participating Schools
12. Hamilton County	34. Brainerd High School 35. Central High School 36. Chattanooga Girls Leadership Academy 37. Chattanooga High Center for Creative Arts 38. Chattanooga High Center for Arts and Sciences 39. East Hamilton School 40. East Ridge High School 41. Hamilton County High School 42. Hixon High School 43. Howard School of Academics and Technology 44. Ivy Academy 45. Lookout Valley Middle/High School 46. Middle College High School at Chattanooga State Community College^ 47. Red Bank High School 48. Sale Creek Middle/High School 49. Sequoyah High School 50. Signal Mountain Middle/High School 51. Soddy Daisy High School 52. STEM High School 53. Tyner Academy
13. Hawkins County	54. Cherokee High School 55. Clinch School 56. Volunteer High School
14. Haywood County	57. Haywood County High
15. Henry County	58. Henry County High School
16. Kingsport City	59. Dobyns-Bennett High School
17. Knox County	60. Austin East High 61. Bearden High School 62. Carter High School 63. Dr. Paul L. Kelley Volunteer Academy 64. Farragut High School 65. Fulton High School 66. Gibbs High School 67. Halls High School 68. Hardin Valley Academy 69. Karns High School 70. L N STEM Academy 71. Powell High School 72. South Doyle High School 73. West High School
18. Lawrence County	74. Lawrence County High School 75. Loretto High School 76. Summertown High School
19. Lincoln County	77. Lincoln County High School 78. Lincoln County Ninth Grade Academy

Participating Districts	Participating Schools
20. Madison County	79. Jackson Central-Merry Early College High 80. Liberty Technology Magnet High School 81. Madison Academic Magnet High School 82. South Side High School
21. Putnam County	83. Cookeville High School 84. Monterey High School 85. Upperman High School
22. Roane County	86. Harriman High School 87. Midway High School 88. Oliver Springs High School 89. Rockwood High School
23. Sumner County	90. Beech Sr. High School 91. Gallatin Senior High School 92. Hendersonville High School 93. Portland High School 94. Station Camp High School 95. White House High School
24. Trenton SSD	96. Peabody High School
25. White County	97. White County High School
26. Wilson County	98. Lebanon High School 99. Mt. Juliet High School 100. Watertown High School 101. Wilson Central High School

^ *This school has changed names or merged with another school since the S3 grant concluded.*

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