

Spotlight

BRIEFS

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What are the Spotlight Briefs?

The SPA Spotlight Briefs are generated by a group of Technical Assistance and Dissemination (TA&D) Network Collaborators, coordinated through the Student Performance and Achievement (SPA) Priority Team of the Regional Resource Center Program (RRCP). This brief was jointly produced by the Systems and Improvement Planning (SIP) and the SPA Priority Teams.

The briefs highlight promising state and local-level practices that have been shown to impact OSEP Part B performance indicators 1 and 2 (Graduation and Dropout Rates, 3 (Statewide Assessment), and 14 (Secondary Transition and Post-School Outcomes).

This brief is intended to provide State Education Agency (SEA) and Local Education Agency (LEA) educators with a brief overview of key components of Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MiBLSi), a project designed to help schools develop schoolwide support systems in reading and behavior.

For more information, visit MiBLSi web site at <http://miblsi.cenmi.org>

Spotlight on: MiBLSi

Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MiBLSi) is helping districts and schools improve both student behavior and academic performance. Additionally, participating schools are showing, on average, 21% reductions in special education referrals and 26% reductions in identification rates, particularly between the first and second years of implementation.

The initiative grew out of an understanding of the important linkages between students' behavior, availability to learn, and academic achievement. Partnering with Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)-funded Centers such as the Technical Assistance Center for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and the State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices (SISEP) Center, the Michigan Department of Education launched the Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MiBLSi) to help districts and schools develop integrated schoolwide systems of support for reading and behavior. MiBLSi is supported with Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) funds and has been implemented in over 5300 schools in the past eight years.

Data has confirmed that, when schools implement the model with fidelity, they are more likely to experience improvements in academic and behavioral outcomes. As disruptive behavior decreases, schools are free to address instructional needs, resulting in increased reading achievement. Additional data from participating Michigan schools, indicates that:



- 10% average reduction in the rate of major discipline referrals per year.
- 3% average reduction **each year** of students requiring intensive reading supports.
- 7% more students meeting or exceeding standards on Michigan Education Assessment Program reading component based on a sampling of schools that implement positive behavior support with fidelity.
- 5% increase (average) **each year** in students scoring at grade level based on Curriculum-Based Measurement reading assessments.

What is MiBLSi?

- Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Supports Initiative (MiBLSi) works with intermediate school districts (ISDs) and local school districts to implement a district-wide, integrated reading and behavior Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)/Response to Intervention (RtI).
- MiBLSi is a school improvement model consistent with Michigan's School Improvement Framework and was developed from the scientific research base of Applied Behavior Analysis, the findings of the National Reading Panel report, and the National Research Council.
- The behavioral component of MiBLSi is Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).
- MiBLSi builds local capacity by providing ongoing support, training, and technical assistance to district and school staff.
- MiBLSi is funded under IDEA through the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education. Additional funding was provided through Michigan's State Personnel Development Grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs.

How Does MiBLSi Work?

The mission of MiBLSi is to assist schools and districts in developing tiered support systems that help students become better readers with social skills necessary for success. In order to achieve this mission, MiBLSi creates capacity for an integrated, K-12 Behavior and Reading Multi-Tiered System of Support that focuses on evidence-based practices implemented with fidelity, sustainability, and data-based decision making at all levels of implementation support.

In order to participate in MiBLSi, ISDs/districts must submit an application and then be selected. Preference is given to intermediate school districts that can leverage resources and assist in building local capacity for a sustainable implementation model. District-wide implementation does not mean that every school must implement the model, but that the district shares ownership in collaboration with MiBLSi to ensure that implementation efforts are supported and sustained.

District and school personnel participate in MiBLSi training sessions in three phases: (I) Foundations, (II) Implementation, and (III) Sustainability. Each phase typically requires one year of work and support from the project. During Foundations (Phase I), principals and coaches receive an introduction to MiBLSi as well as training in PBIS and schoolwide reading interventions. They also learn about the set-up of data systems including DIBELS, AIMSweb, and SWIS and begin to conduct data reviews.

In Phase II (Implementation), participants receive training in targeted behavior support, strategic reading support, and intensive behavior and reading supports. They also engage in a targeted and intensive systems review, and a data review during the Fall, Winter, and Spring. Phase III (Sustainability) also includes comprehensive data reviews. In Phase III, schools continue to review data to guide implementation as well as access additional technical assistance through MiBLSi.

With the new district model, MiBLSi works with school districts to develop local capacity to support school teams through the phases listed above. Examples of local capacity include coaches, trainers, content experts, and district level implementation teams to coordinate and manage the implementation process for the district.

Integrated Model of Behavioral and Reading Supports

Schools participating in MiBLSi focus on the development and implementation of integrated schoolwide approaches that simultaneously address reading and behavior. MiBLSi and collaborating school staff have found that the use of an integrated approach allows reading and behavioral intervention components to positively influence each other. As reading improves, students may be less likely to engage in escape behaviors that can impede instruction. Moreover, instructional time increases as teachers spend less time addressing problem behaviors. According to one Michigan principal, students and teachers "spend less time in the office and more time in the classroom". Schools focusing on improved behavior and reading experience greater gains in literacy skills than achieved with a reading-only model. Research supporting the use of the integrated approach is available on MiBLSi's website at:

<http://miblsi.cenmi.org/Home/WhyBehaviorandReading.aspx>

Schools have found that the use of an integrated model is beneficial because there are similarities in how behavior and reading supports are implemented at the school level. For example, both are similar in their use of:

- *a continuum of support;*
- *action planning guided by a team;*
- *the problem solving process (e.g., identification of need based on data);*
- *the use of data for program development, progress monitoring, and evaluation; and*
- *reliance on evidence-based practices.*

Comprehensive System of Supports Multi-Tiered Support Model

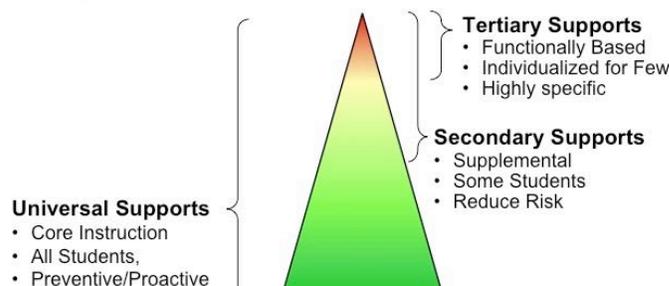
MiBLSi has created a sustainable and scalable statewide system of support that reaches from the classroom to the Michigan Department of Education. The initiative partnered with several Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)-funded centers such as the Technical Assistance Center for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and the State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices (SISEP) Center. The support the Michigan Department of Education receives from these Centers includes professional development, coaching, and other technical assistance activities.

Support begins at the school level where Building Leadership Teams provide guidance and coordination of schoolwide implementation efforts. A Building Leadership Team increases the likelihood of sustainability because a team can continue on even if one or two members change over time. A school's Building Leadership Team is supported by District/Regional Leadership Teams that promote funding, visibility, and political support around the initiative. The District/Regional Team works to ensure the development of vision, professional development, coaching, resource allocation, and technical assistance in the areas of behavior and reading supports. District Intensive Teams are also available from the local school district to develop intensive, individualized programs of support for students with significant difficulties that involve specialized skills beyond the capacity of staff within the school. On a statewide level, MiBLSi provides regional technical assistance for district teams and technical assistance for building teams including training, coaching and information dissemination.

MiBLSi uses a three-tier model that focuses on prevention as well as intervention. Schools do not wait for students to fail, rather they proactively screen for risk and implement instruction interventions that support student success and reduce the risk of reading and academic difficulties. The universal supports provided in Tier 1 are the core programs and strategies (reading and math) provided to all students within the school building in order to promote successful student outcomes. By meeting the needs of most students through effective instruction and behavior support, fewer students require more intensive supports. This results in a more valid, manageable, and cost effective system of supports at the secondary and tertiary levels.

Secondary supports are provided in Tier 2 and include additional programs and strategies provided to students who require supports in addition to universal supports. Programs and strategies that make up the secondary supports can be described as packaged programs (commercial or created at the school) in which students are placed based on identified need.

Tertiary supports are the intensive programs and strategies provided to students who require individualized supports in addition to universal and secondary supports. The purpose of tertiary supports is to reduce the severity of academic or behavior problems. Programs and strategies that make up the tertiary supports can be described as intensive programs that are highly individualized around a student's specific needs.



Representation of All Students

School administrators in Michigan have provided very positive feedback regarding MiBLSi and the implementation of the schoolwide reading and behavior supports. Many of these comments are recorded in videos available on the MiBLSi website and a few are included below:

"MiBLSi has changed how we do business at our school. We look at data to evaluate a core reading program and see if instruction is working."

"Parents and others in the community have noticed an improvement in their kids and in the atmosphere of the school."

"This is the single best program we have ever implemented with the most dramatic impact on our school culture we have ever witnessed."

"Students are more on task, learning more and just generally focused in every respect."

"94% of our fifth graders improved reading fluency."

"Office discipline referrals are down 54%."

Lessons Learned:

From MiBLSi Leadership Staff

When asked about lessons they have learned in implementing MiBLSi and advice that they would give to other states interested in developing a similar initiative, the project's Leadership staff shared the following:

1. Base your initiative on successful, evidence-based interventions and models

When developing state, regional, or school initiatives, it is important to study the evidence-based models and practices that are currently available to determine if they appropriately address your area of concern. There is no need to re-create the wheel. Working with the OSEP-funded PBIS Center, Michigan adopted Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to address the behavioral component of MiBLSi's integrated approach and recommendations from the National Reading Panel report to develop the reading component. MiBLSi uses PBIS data tools such as SWIS (Schoolwide Information System) and other project data such as Team EBS Checklists to inform implementation and document outcomes. They also use assessment tools such as DIBELS and AIMSweb in their reading component.

2. Start Small and then "scale-up" the initiative

Invest the state's efforts in a small group of schools or districts, depending on the focus of the initiative, and then increase the number of sites incrementally. During the early stages of implementation, it is impossible to provide the intensive supports needed to staff in a large number of schools or districts. In 2000, MiBLSi began implementing its integrated reading initiative in five elementary schools which served as model sites. To date, MiBLSi has supported 530 schools. State staff feel that their gradual rollout with an initial focus on a small number of sites has helped them grow the initiative in a sustainable way.

3. Establish model demonstration sites

This initial focus on a small number of schools or districts will allow you to set up model demonstration sites that are successfully implementing the selected practices. School and district staff can then visit the demonstration sites to see firsthand the practice being implemented, and they can also talk to teachers and leadership staff to address any questions or concerns that they may have.

4. Training alone does not work

Any initiative that focuses solely on professional development is not likely to succeed. Rather, professional learning should be just one component of a comprehensive support program that focuses on building local capacity and that supports effective practices through model demonstration sites, school and district leadership teams, district implementation teams, data collection and analysis, and coaching.

5. Use existing structures

Schools should use existing teams/committees as much as possible. Rather than creating new supports for MiBLSi, state organizers encourage local staff to view the project as a way to enhance current activities in school improvement and Response to Intervention. They suggest embedding MiBLSi activities into current initiatives (i.e., school improvement, safe schools, character education, etc.). For example, in some schools, the school improvement team and the MiBLSi Building Leadership Team are the same team. In other schools, members are shared across the two teams. Minimally, there should be alignment, communication and collaboration across school improvement and MiBLSi.

At the state level, the Michigan Department of Education worked to integrate MiBLSi into their broader statewide system of support and school improvement framework. In this way, they are modeling for those at the local level the importance of bridging the special and general education divide and the criticalness of braiding together improvement efforts.

6. Have a good data system

Having access to appropriate and reliable data is critical to any initiative. Without reliable data, it is very difficult to measure progress and make revisions during implementation. Michigan has adopted many of the data collection and analysis tools currently available including DIBELS, AIMSweb, SWIS and other project data systems such as PBIS assessments. When data collection tools have not been readily available, MiBLSi has created its own. For example, MiBLSi is in the process of creating district level evaluation tools to measure the implementation of district level supports and processes.

Resources



For additional information on MiBLSi, please consult:

Michigan Integrated Behavior and Learning Support website
<http://miblsi.cenmi.org>

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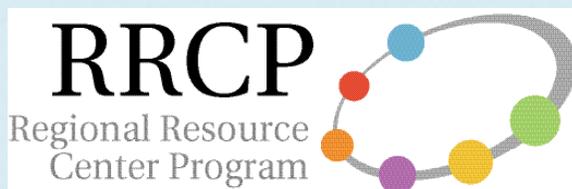
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Technical Assistance Center for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
<http://www.pbis.org>

Priority Teams

Student Performance and Achievement
Systems & Improvement Planning

This Spotlight Brief is developed and distributed by the Student Performance and Achievement Priority Team and the Systems and Improvement Planning Priority Team. The teams are comprised of members from the Regional Resource Center Program (RRCP), the Data Accountability Center (DAC), the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC), and the Regional Parent Technical Assistance Centers (PTACs).



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