OSDE is committed to strengthening and increasing family and community engagement to support student learning. OSDE’s vision is to ensure each student in Oklahoma has access to a high-quality public education that inspires deep learning and leads to success.
The Educational Training, Evaluation, Assessment, and Measurement (E-TEAM) at The University of Oklahoma is conducting an external evaluation of B.I.S.S. (Behavioral Intervention Services in Schools), an initiative of the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) and the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (ODM-HSAS), Oklahoma Systems of Care (OKSOC). B.I.S.S. provides comprehensive and integrated school-based support to students and school staff through professional learning for school staff, universal preventive measures for all students, targeted services and supports for students in need, and intensive services and supports for students at risk of failure. The following report discusses interim findings for B.I.S.S. from its inception during the fall semester of 2015 through the end of the spring semester of 2017.

Background

OKSOC, administered by the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (ODMHSAS), provides services to children and youth experiencing serious emotional disturbance. OKSOC supports, maintains, and grows local systems of care communities by providing infrastructure, training and technical assistance, and staff professional development.

OSDE is committed to strengthening and increasing family and community engagement to support student learning. OSDE’s vision is to ensure each student in Oklahoma has access to a high-quality public education that inspires deep learning and leads to success.

In the fall of 2015, the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) and the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (ODM-HSAS) Oklahoma Systems of Care (OKSOC) began working together to provide school-based supports in a systems level intervention for students’ enhanced mental health to improve students’ academic and behavioral outcomes. This partnership, called B.I.S.S., is founded on the belief that “Mentally healthy students are more likely to go to school ready to learn, actively engage in school activities, have supportive and caring connections with adults and young people, use appropriate problem-solving skills, have nonaggressive behaviors, and add to positive school culture (School-Based Supports, 2017).” B.I.S.S. has been designed to be implemented in school settings for children and youth with complex emotional and behavioral needs. B.I.S.S. focuses on setting clear expectations for behavior, identifying students at risk for behavioral problems, and providing teachers and schools with the practices and interventions necessary to encourage and promote positive behavior. B.I.S.S.
provides early identification of behavioral health issues; assessment and referral for treatment; professional learning for school staff in early detection and response to behavioral health issues; and embedded Behavioral Health Aides in schools.

The first year of the project consisted of laying a strong foundation, outlining an agreed upon philosophy, and determining strategies to enhance the project’s implementation. OKSOC and OSDE leadership determined to adopt a pilot approach to guide a continuing rollout of implementation at additional schools. Pilot schools were recruited to participate based on enthusiasm of school staff and their readiness to implement; students in need; and partnerships in place with OKSOC providers. B.I.S.S. was launched in 5 pilot schools located in Custer, Oklahoma, Pittsburg, and Pontotoc counties.

Behavioral Intervention Services in Schools (B.I.S.S)
Schools

Edwards Elementary School in Oklahoma City, OK.
Greystone Upper Elementary School in Oklahoma City, OK.
Hoover Elementary School in Bartlesville, OK.
Konawa Elementary School in Konawa, OK.
Parker Intermediate School in McAlester, OK.
Richard Kane Elementary School in Bartlesville, OK.
Southwest Elementary School in Clinton, OK.

Behavioral Intervention Services in Schools (B.I.S.S)
OKSOC Providers

B.I.S.S. uses a Systems of Care approach to bring together schools, families, and communities to address non-academic barriers to student achievement, including social and emotional well-being. ODMH-SAS facilitated meaningful partnerships between pilot schools and OKSOC providers in each pilot school’s community, establishing and strengthening collaborative relationships between and among school staff, students, families, and provider staff. The partnering OKSOC providers committed to learning their partner schools’ culture, defining barriers to implementation, discerning processes and procedures, addressing current demands, anticipating future needs, and working toward continuing and indelible change.

- CREOKS Behavioral Health Services in Pittsburg County.
- Grand Lake Mental Health Center in Washington County.
- Multi County Counseling, Inc. in Seminole County
- North Care in Oklahoma County
- Red Rock Behavioral Health Services in Custer County
- Red Rock Behavioral Health Services in Oklahoma County

Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews with leadership and staff from ODMHSAS, OKSOC providers, pilot school staff, and participating family members were conducted by phone in April, May, and June, 2017. Thirty-seven (37) participants provided in-depth responses in discussing their insights about the goals and accomplishments of B.I.S.S. to date, the continuing work taking place within their respective schools, and the perceived changes in their schools around the outcomes and indicators identified by ODMHSAS, OSDE, and the pilot schools. Throughout this report, the insights of these stakeholders are used to highlight the implementation process and outcomes to date.

Multidisciplinary Team (MDT)

Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDT) provide the foundation and leadership for the B.I.S.S. implementation at each pilot school. MDTs are comprised of pilot school staff and OKSOC local provider staff, including the Project Director from the school’s partnering community mental health agency, the embedded Behavioral Health Aide, school principal, assistant principal, school counselor, therapist, school-based social worker and special education teacher(s). Each pilot school’s MDT developed individualized systems at their school to support the school-wide implementation of B.I.S.S. and provide guidance in the development and review of school-wide policies, procedures, culture, and supports. In addition, each MDT

“At the beginning of the school year, one student had 20 referrals. We didn’t have anything in place to help him. He was in this vicious cycle of referrals and suspension, referrals and suspensions. Now we have a plan to break this cycle and we are working the plan. That student is setting goals for staying in school.”
B.I.S.S. utilizes a school-wide structural framework with a 3-tiered intervention for identifying and addressing academic and behavioral issues for students. The goal of a tiered approach is to create a school culture and behavioral supports that encourage and improve academic, behavioral, and social outcomes for all students. This allows for a continuum of supports to be provided based on the identified risk, character, and severity of students’ issues and needs.

At Tier 1 are universal supports. The MDT supports the school-wide plan and provides guidance in the development and review of school-wide policies and procedures to create, enhance, and sustain a positive environment for students and teachers alike. The purpose of Tier 1 supports is to maximize learning, prevent behavioral issues, and increase positive student/teacher interactions. Tier 1 supports all students.

At Tier 2 are targeted supports. The MDT supports teachers in early identification of potential issues and assists students and families with referrals and resources to meet their immediate needs. The purpose of Tier 2 supports is to decrease opportunities for high-risk behavior and to establish prosocial behaviors. Tier 2
supports students at risk of experiencing poor academic and social outcomes because of behavioral issues.

At Tier 3 are intensive supports. The MDT supports a team-based planning process involving the identified student, their family members and natural supports, and the community. The purpose of Tier 3 supports is to reduce the frequency and intensity of behavioral issues and to provide alternative behaviors that are appropriate and effective. Tier 3 services may include therapy, medication management, care coordination, wraparound, family support, and after school programs. Tier 3 supports students in need of intensive services.

School Support

OKSOC provider staff support schools to enhance effective classroom management and preventive school discipline, including data for informed decision-making and effective ongoing professional development. Providing connections beyond the classroom, schools are also supported through OKSOC’s community partnerships and resources at the national, state, and local levels. Behavioral Interventions include:

- Crisis Stabilization—Response Team intervenes, assesses, and implements a stabilization plan and assists the family in accessing long(er) term interventions.
- Individualized Treatment Services—OKSOC develops a comprehensive, strengths-based individualized plan to meet the student’s needs and address their challenges, including:
  - Therapy
  - Care Management
  - Rehabilitation Services
  - Treatment Groups
  - Wraparound
- Family Support—OKSOC supports students by engaging their families as partners in helping students achieve positive behavioral and academic outcomes.
- After School Programming—Response Team provides structured opportunities for social interaction, skill-building, and recreation.

Professional Learning

B.I.S.S. focuses on the needs and direction of the individual schools implementing the pilot to support ongoing growth of all staff and positive academic and behavioral outcomes for students. OKSOC Providers offer strategic, targeted, long-term professional learning grounded in content. Teachers and other school staff work collaboratively with each other and with OKSOC providers to enhance their knowledge and skills directly related to students’ behavioral health needs. Teachers and other school staff have participated in professional learning opportunities on aspects of children’s behavioral health issues, including serious emotional disturbances; evidence-based behavioral interventions; and positive academic, social, and emotional outcomes. Feedback from teachers regarding these professional learning opportunities includes:

- Now I know how to avoid the power struggle and help students be successful.
- I’ve learned tools and strategies to deescalate behavior, and I feel more equipped to deal with those behaviors.
- Teachers are not professionally trained in mental health, and we don’t always understand what a child is going through or what they are struggling with. SOC helps with those challenges.
- B.I.S.S. has given teachers that peace of mind of having someone in the building that can give advice, feedback, support, and immediate help when students are in crisis.

Embedded Behavioral Health Aides (BHA)

Behavioral Health Aides (BHA) are embedded in the B.I.S.S. pilot schools. The role of the BHA is complex and includes working with students, teachers and other school staff, and caregivers and other family members. The embed model enhances communication, collaboration, and partnership between school staff and families and between school staff and OKSOC provider staff; facilitates referrals for services to families; and provides pooled resources for students with complex psychosocial needs. The embed model provides a key demonstration of the collaboration between OSDE and OKSOC to front-line teachers,
principals, and other school staff and provides them with crucial support.

BHAs provide services and supports, including:

- Life skills training
- Training and teaching of children and their families on:
  - Behavioral, interpersonal, communication, self-help, safety, substance use decisions, and daily living skills.
- Support and reinforcement of skills learned through the process
- Development of specific problem solving skills, coping mechanisms, and strategies for symptom/behavior management
- Assistance understanding crisis plans and their plan of care
- Training on medications or diagnosis
- Assistance interpreting choice offered by service providers
- Assistance understanding mental health policies, procedures and regulations
- Life skills training (in home, school or community settings)

Tier 1 (universal) supports can be seen throughout the school’s communal areas, such as the hallways and lunch room, where the BHA maintains a proactive presence to help students be assured of their safety; proceed orderly; remain calm, collected, and composed; and engage fully in their learning.

Tier 2 (targeted) and Tier 3 (intensive) supports can be seen in direct interventions with students to address specific challenges and build skills for coping, social connections, alternative behaviors, self-care, and wellness. BHAs provide services and supports to students at the time and place students need them. BHAs work with school staff in providing technical assistance on behavioral concerns; access and referral to services; treatment planning; crisis stabilization and management; and developing and maintaining family and community involvement and partnerships. In addition, BHAs are a key component of the team helping teachers implement the components of B.I.S.S..

BHAs also provide on-site assistance to school staff in the form of consultations and referrals to enhance access to services.

BHAs work with students in social interactions, negotiating peer relations, verbalizing emotions and needs, appropriate and inappropriate behaviors, role modeling, coping skills, and stress management. BHAs talk with teachers to identify issues a student may be having in class and then contact parents to identify issues a student may be having at home and discover the parents’ perceptions of the student’s school situation. BHAs also talk to students to learn more about the student’s perceptions of their experiences. This work is a direct result of the individualized plan developed by the MDT.

In addition, BHAs support parents in learning new behavioral management skills. Teachers feel the embedded model with its holistic approach helps to ensure parent involvement and increase the supports around students. Parents and school staff alike describe their appreciation of the BHA for serving as a bridge between school and home. In consequence, parents report that they feel more hope about their children’s future and also feel more a part of the school family. Parents report:

- Anytime that my son has needed to meet with [the BHA], she has been there for him.
- I am impressed with how understanding [OKSOC provider] staff and how quick they are to be resourceful.
- This is the first year I haven’t been afraid to go to a parent/teacher conference.
- If [my son] feels like he is getting worked up, he can go talk to [the BHA].
- The communication with the school has gotten a lot better. Having the advocate for your kid really helps out and I feel like everybody can hear both sides of the situation.
- It has helped our son out a lot and it is helping the school out a lot more. As a parent we aren’t has frustrated at the teacher and we feel like with have an advocate for our kid.

BHAs work with teachers in training, coaching, and modeling strategies and behaviors to employ with individual students, including trauma-informed care, behavioral management skills and techniques. Several teachers and principals reported that embedded BHAs have become “one of us” and participate in school staff meetings, parent/teacher nights, and meetings between principals, teachers, and parents. Principals and teachers also report that, since BHAs...
are not school staff, students seem more inclined to talk to the BHA and see them as being “someone who can help”. BHAs are “everywhere and anywhere the student may be having problems…the hallway, the cafeteria, the playground, at PE or Music or wherever.”

School staff—principals and teachers—discussed feeling better supported to provide services and supports to students and improved relationships students and parents. Some examples of their responses are below:

- BHAs aren’t just observers; they interact with kids.
- This project gets services to the kids that need help where they need the help—at school. [Our BHA] comes to them and works with them here at school. If my students had to leave and go somewhere to get help, it wouldn’t happen.
- My relationship with my students’ parents has strengthened because of this project.
- Wraparound has been phenomenal with the families and instrumental in helping us communicate with the families.
- I wish I could have our BHA every day all day!
- We have a kindergartener who was sent home all the time before working with the BHA. The BHA stops by every day to check in, and now that student hasn’t been sent home in months.
- This project not only helps students academically, but socially as well. Sometimes kids are isolated because of their behavior. Our BHA helps students learn strategies to be successful—how to calm themselves down, how to keep boundaries, how to use words instead of getting physical, and how to solve problems.
- Our team has gotten stronger!
- We have more buy-in from parents.
- This program is wonderful. It needs to be in every high risk school.
- Our BHA is a walking resource!

Discussion

Changing behaviors and outcomes is intended to lead to a cultural shift for each school where each school’s MDT—school staff, students, and parents and OKSOC provider staff—works together to define their desired school culture, decide how to go about getting it, and determine how they will know they have succeeded. This cultural shift from reactive to proactive with the adoption of alternative responses along a continuum of supports for students’ behavioral issues is a long-term outcome that will require continued and ongoing effort.

ODMHSAS staff and OKSOC provider staff are planning for the long-term sustainability of the B.I.S.S. model with one staff member saying, “This is such a needed service and, as our funding decreases for education and mental health, I think partnerships like these are key to the success of students as well as supporting teachers and school systems as we all try to figure out how to work within our relative budgets.”

The leadership of the Multi-Disciplinary Teams has been instrumental in building a foundation for B.I.S.S. and will continue to be instrumental in its sustainability and success. The shared philosophy and vision developed by these leadership teams at each pilot school provided support for teachers and Embedded BHAs throughout implementation.

Each pilot school provided a safe and supportive environment for students and their families to access early intervention and treatment. The value and efficacy of the work happening throughout the pilot schools is evident in the responses from leadership and staff. As previously noted, significant progress has been made in shifting the culture. The Embedded Behavioral Health Aides are an innovation which will fuel further progress. The collaborative, coordinated responses inherent throughout B.I.S.S. have resulted in better communication between schools and families. The key informant interviews attest to a less easily quantified result of B.I.S.S.—improvements in school climate and teacher and parent perceptions around students’ behavioral issues.

Though B.I.S.S. has less than a year of implementation, the work has already resulted in improved school climate; increased parent/teacher communication; increased teacher perceptions of support; increased teacher awareness of de-escalation and disruptions; and increased teacher awareness of mental health, substance use, and trauma.

Projected long-term outcomes of include school-wide prevention efforts, strategic intervention efforts in place for at-risk students, and intensive supports in place for in-need students. Attaining these long-term outcomes will require continued commitment, buy-in, and follow-through from school and OKSOC provider staff.
Edwards Elementary School is a relatively small school serving 290 students during the 2015-2016 academic school year (OSDE, 2016). It is located in Oklahoma City, the capital of Oklahoma. Oklahoma City is the largest city in Oklahoma with over half of the population (53.8%) being Caucasian (City Data, 2015). Edwards Elementary School’s population is predominantly African American, representing 82% of the student population (OSDE, 2016).

Edwards Elementary serves students in pre-k-6th grade. Eighteen certified classroom teachers (OSDE, 2017) and four teaching assistants account for the teaching staff at Edwards Elementary (OSDE, 2016).
The graph below shows the percentage of students who scored proficient or above in math in 3rd-6th grades during the 2015-2016 school year. For Edwards Elementary School, proficiency levels for math were the highest in 5th and 6th grades (33%) and lowest in 4th grade (23%).

(OEQA, 2016)

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The graph below shows the percentage of students who scored proficient or above in reading for 3rd-6th grades for the 2015-2016 school year. For Edwards Elementary School, proficiency levels for reading were the highest in 5th grade (42%) and lowest in 4th grade (20%).

(OEQA, 2016)
Hoover Elementary School is located in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, which is in Washington County. Hoover Elementary’s student population is predominately Caucasian (49%) (OSDE, 2016). Bartlesville’s population is also largely Caucasian, representing 74% of the population in Bartlesville (City Data, 2015).

Hoover Elementary school serves 470 students in pre-k-5th grade (OSDE, 2016). There are thirty-one certified classroom teachers at Hoover (OSDE, 2017). There were no assistant teachers or classroom aides reported for the 2016-2017 school year (OSDE, 2016).
Math Proficiency

The graph below shows the percentage of students who scored proficient or above in math for 3rd-5th grades during the 2015-2016 school year. For Hoover Elementary School, proficiency levels for math were the highest in 4th grade (93%) and lowest in 3rd grade (68%).

% Proficient in Math

3rd Grade 4th Grade 5th Grade

(OEQA, 2016)

Reading Proficiency

The graph below shows the percentage of students who scored proficient or above in reading for 3rd-5th grades during the 2015-2016 school year. For Hoover Elementary School, proficiency levels for reading were all 77% for 3rd through 5th grades.

% Proficient in Reading

3rd Grade 4th Grade 5th Grade

(OEQA, 2016)
Konawa Elementary School is located in Konawa, Oklahoma, which is in Seminole County. Konawa Elementary’s student population is largely a mix of American Indian (39%) and Caucasian (54%) children (OSDE, 2016). The general population in Konawa is similar to that of Konawa Elementary, with 32% of the population being American Indian and 61% being Caucasian (City Data, 2015).

Konawa Elementary school serves 311 students in pre-k-5th grade (OSDE, 2016). There are twenty-one certified teachers at Konowa (OSDE, 2017), one teaching assistant, and six classroom aides (OSDE, 2016).

- 80% of parents attended parent/teacher conferences (OEQA, 2016)
- 3% of students suspended for less than 10 days (OEQA, 2016)
- 81% of students eligible for free or reduced lunch (OEQA, 2016)
- 84% of 5th grade students scored proficient in social studies
- 75% of 5th grade students scored proficient in science (OEQA, 2016)
Math Proficiency

The graph below shows the percentage of students who scored proficient or above in math for 3rd-5th grades during the 2015-2016 school year. For Konawa Elementary School, proficiency levels for math were the highest in 4th grade (87%) and lowest in 3rd grade (76%).

(OEQA, 2016)

% Proficient in Math

Reading Proficiency

The graph below shows the percentage of students who scored proficient or above in reading for 3rd-5th grades during the 2015-2016 school year. For Konawa Elementary School, proficiency levels for reading were highest in 5th grade (78%) and lowest in 3rd grade (71%).

(OEQA, 2016)
Parker Intermediate Center
McAlester, Oklahoma

Parker Intermediate Center is located in McAlester, Oklahoma, which is in Pittsburg County. Parker Intermediate has a diverse population of 419 students, with 49% of the student population being Caucasian, 17% American Indian, and 14% Hispanic (OSDE, 2016). This is slightly different than the overall population in McAlester which is largely Caucasian (65%) (City Data, 2015).

Parker Intermediate serves children in 5th-6th grade. The teaching staff at Parker Intermediate is comprised of twenty-four certified teachers (OSDE, 2017), three teaching assistants, and five classroom aides (OSDE, 2016).

67% of parents attended parent/teacher conferences (OEQA, 2016)

12% of students suspended for less than 10 days (OEQA, 2016)

73% of students eligible for free or reduced lunch (OEQA, 2016)

59% of 5th grade students scored proficient in social studies (OEQA, 2016)

49% of 5th grade students scored proficient in science (OEQA, 2016)
The graph below shows the percentage of students who scored proficient or above in math for 5th and 6th grades during the 2015-2016 school year.

Math Proficiency

% Proficient in Math

65%  79%

5th Grade  6th Grade

(OEQA, 2016)

The graph below shows the percentage of students who scored proficient or above in reading for 5th and 6th grades during the 2015-2016 school year.

Reading Proficiency

% Proficient in Reading

65%  67%

5th Grade  6th Grade

(OEQA, 2016)
Parker Intermediate Center is located in McAlester, Oklahoma, which is in Pittsburg County. Parker Intermediate has a diverse population of 419 students, with 49% of the student population being Caucasian, 17% American Indian, and 14% Hispanic (OSDE, 2016). This is slightly different than the overall population in McAlester which is largely Caucasian (65%) (City Data, 2015).

Parker Intermediate serves children in 5th-6th grade. The teaching staff at Parker Intermediate is comprised of twenty-four certified teachers (OSDE, 2017), three teaching assistants, and five classroom aides (OSDE, 2016).

- 67% of parents attended parent/teacher conferences (OEQA, 2016)
- 12% of students suspended for less than 10 days (OEQA, 2016)
- 73% of students eligible for free or reduced lunch (OEQA, 2016)
- 59% of 5th grade students scored proficient in social studies (OEQA, 2016)
- 49% of 5th grade students scored proficient in science (OEQA, 2016)
Math Proficiency

The graph below shows the percentage of students who scored proficient or above in math for 5th and 6th grades during the 2015-2016 school year.

- % Proficient in Math
- 5th Grade: 65%
- 6th Grade: 79%

(OEQA, 2016)

Reading Proficiency

The graph below shows the percentage of students who scored proficient or above in reading for 5th and 6th grades during the 2015-2016 school year.

- % Proficient in Reading
- 5th Grade: 65%
- 6th Grade: 67%

(OEQA, 2016)
Southwest Elementary School
Clinton, Oklahoma

Southwest Elementary School is located in Clinton, Oklahoma, which is in Custer County. The population in Clinton is predominately Caucasian (City-Data, 2015); however, the majority of the students at Southwest Elementary is Hispanic, representing 53% of the student population (OSDE, 2016).

Southwest Elementary School serves second, third, and fourth grade students. For the 2016-2017 school year there were 486 students enrolled (OSDE, 2016). The teaching staff at Southwest is comprised of thirty-one certified classroom teachers, five teaching assistants, and four classroom aides (OSDE, 2016).

- 95% of parents attended parent/teacher conferences
- 47% of third grade students proficient or above in math
- 56% of fourth grade students proficient or above in math
- 73% of third grade students proficient or above in reading
- 53% of fourth grade students proficient or above in reading
- 3% of students suspended for less than 10 days
- 85% of students eligible for free/reduced lunch

(OSDE, 2016)
Taft Elementary School is located in Enid Oklahoma, which is in Garfield County. Taft serves a diverse population of 333 students, with the majority of students being Caucasian (55%) and Hispanic (28%) (OSDE, 2016). Taft’s population is somewhat reflective of Enid’s general population, which is predominately Caucasian (74%) and Hispanic (13%) (City Data, 2015).

Taft Elementary School serves children in pre-k through 5th grade. There are 36 certified teachers at Taft (OSDE, 2016) and 2 teaching assistants (OSDE, 2016).

- 98% of parents attended parent/teacher conferences (OEQA, 2016)
- 3% of students suspended for less than 10 days (OEQA, 2016)
- 76% of students eligible for free or reduced lunch (OEQA, 2016)
- 86% of 5th grade students scored proficient in social studies (OEQA, 2016)
- 61% of 5th grade students scored proficient in science (OEQA, 2016)

*Other consists of American Indian (3%), African American (2%), Asian (1%) and Pacific Islander (4%) (OSDE, 2016)
The graph below shows the percentage of students who scored proficient or above in math for 3rd through 5th grades during the 2015-2016 school year. The highest level of proficiency in math was in 4th grade (84%) and the lowest was in 5th grade (61%).

% Proficient in Math

(OEQA, 2016)

The graph below shows the percentage of students who scored proficient or above in reading for 3rd through 5th grades during the 2015-2016 school year. Students showed the highest levels of reading proficiency in 3rd and 5th grades, both at 88% proficient or above.

% Proficient in Reading

(OEQA, 2016)
Resources


