Vermont Multi-tiered System of Supports (VTmtss) Survey Report

2021-2022

Response to Title 16 V.S.A. §2904

September 12, 2022

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Vermont Multi-tiered System of Supports (VTmtss)

The **VTmtss Framework** articulates the components of an effective school system that are necessary to provide each and every student with the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional supports and services they need to succeed. The framework provides a systemic approach to decision making for excellence and equity within a culture of continuous improvement.

More information about VTmtss is available on the [Vermont Multi-tiered System of Supports](#) webpage.

What is the VTmtss Survey?

The Vermont Multi-tiered System of Supports (VTmtss) Survey provides the Agency of Education with the data to fulfill legal requirements in [16 V.S.A. § 2904](#). This statute states: "Annually, each superintendent shall report to the Secretary in a form prescribed by the Secretary, on the status of the educational support systems in each school in the supervisory union."
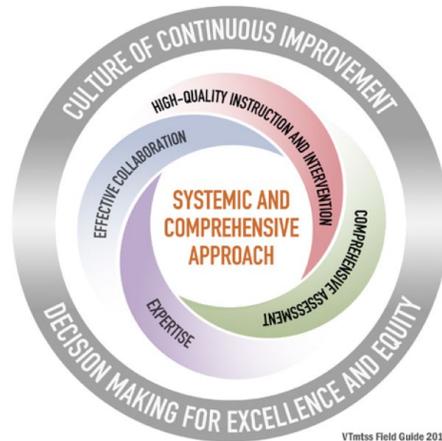
The data is used to facilitate priority setting and supports provided by the Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) to the field. Applications include:

- Informing the AOE of the need for professional learning opportunities, technical assistance, and resources to support Supervisory Unions and School Districts (SU/SDs) to implement a tiered system of supports, and

- Informing the identification and provision of technical assistance supporting Vermont's implementation of Act 173 and Education Recovery needs.

Response Rate

This year's submission rate was 93 percent representing 278 schools across 52 Supervisory Unions and Supervisory Districts (SU/SD).

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VTmtss Survey Summary

VTmtss Field Guide 2019

Act 117 - VSA Title 16, Section 2904, requires that each superintendent shall provide, annually, to the Vermont Secretary of Education the status of the educational support systems in each school in the supervisory union. Out of the 300 principals throughout the state, 278 completed the survey in May of School Year 2021-2022. This year's survey measures the extent to which school leaders report incorporating the VTmtss Framework component characteristics in their school systems to build systemic capacity for providing access to high-quality instruction and interventions to all students. Most questions in this year's survey are new, providing baseline data to build upon in future school years. We anticipate using these same questions for the VTmtss Survey 2022-2023 collection.

This report consists of quantitative and qualitative data on various systemic and comprehensive approaches to developing equitable and cohesive school systems aligned to the components of the VTmtss Framework. The analysis within this report did not control for factors such as school size or grade band. These summaries intend to serve as analyses of general best practice and recommendations for all public K-12 schools regardless of any additional variables about each indicator. The VTmtss Team will explore the relationship between other factors and this data in the coming year to determine how to best support improvement of these practices within schools and supervisory unions.

The questions within this report are listed in the same order in which they were asked on the VTmtss Survey. Each question is followed by a brief explanation of the purpose of measuring the indicator(s), a visual depiction of the data, and an analysis offered regarding the relevance of the data. Principals are encouraged to compare their survey results to these state results, and superintendents may request district-level data from the VTmtss Team by contacting Caitlin.Chisholm@vermont.gov.

The key findings for the 2021-2022 VTmtss Survey include:

1. Most principals report using many systemic and comprehensive approaches to enhancing instruction and intervention, as recommended by the VTmtss Framework.
2. Intention and action around mental health and social-emotional indicators appear to have increased since last school year.

3. Many principals reported that their Educational Support Teams (EST) have a variety of expertise available for planning and sustaining academic or social-emotional intervention plans.
4. The number of students having EST plans that carry over from year to year suggest the use of a long-term case management model, rather than a short-term, goal-specific model promoted by the Agency of Education.
5. For many indicators involving student engagement, fewer than half of reporting principals indicated student voice in decisions around intervention plans, instruction, or the school system.
6. There is varied reporting by principals of families' engagement in schools, with many reporting some level of involvement of families, yet fewer reporting meaningfully engaging families in all decisions regarding students or school.

The VTmtss Team will focus on the following three topics because of this year's survey data:

1. expanding and improving district-level EST oversight.
2. authentic inclusion of families in decisions impacting their students and school, and
3. developing cultures of effective collaboration that includes and respects students' voices.

Vermont Multi-Tiered System of Supports Survey Findings

Questions 1 through 5 asked for principal and superintendent contact information, school name, total student population and grade span of the school.

Questions 6-11 Collaborative Development of System Expertise

Question 6: Select all staff members that are involved with the creation of the master schedule before the beginning of the school year.

A lack of strategic scheduling can contribute to educators feeling that there is not enough support for students' needs, and that more staff are required to provide that support. Collaborative and strategic scheduling increases leaders' ability to create and sustain strategic grouping and reduces the amount of 1:1 support needing to take place. These outcomes are more likely to take place when key experts can inform leaders of their time available throughout the school year, which ultimately improves students' access to high-quality supports and interventions (District Management Group: Expanding and Strengthening Best-Practice Supports, p. 50).

Collaboration on School Master Schedule
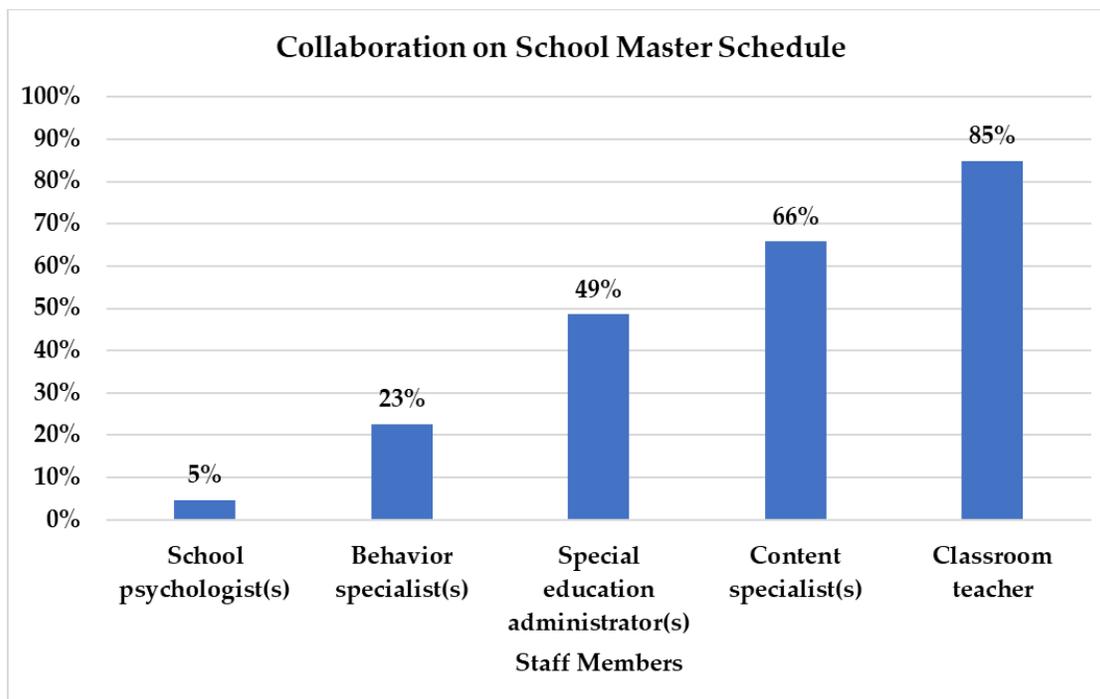
Although a variety of factors could have influenced staff availability, most Vermont principals reported including at least one classroom teacher (85%) or a content specialist (66%) when creating the school master schedule, and many reported some combination of these or other staff (see appendix, table 1). Only 49% of leaders reported the inclusion of special education administrator(s) in their master schedule design process. Research suggests special educator insight in this process is beneficial for reducing the amount of time students are pulled from core instruction, as they are aware of scheduling guidelines or their own availability for developing effective intervention blocks (District Management Group: Expanding and Strengthening Best-Practice Supports, p. 50). Additional information on this indicator can be found at District Management Group and Agency of Education Elementary Scheduling Website with resources about collaborative scheduling and professional learning opportunities.

Question 7: Select from the following individuals, who would always be represented in your school's Educational Support Team.

Educational Support Teams (EST) membership should always represent a variety of roles during EST meetings. This can include an administrator, teachers, special educators, or other relevant staff such as behavioral or academic interventionists, counselors, and psychologists. Family, student, and student advocates' perspectives should be included even when they are not able to be physically present. Doing so will increase the team's comprehensive understanding of any student need, inform high-quality short-term intervention plans, and reduce bias when reviewing student needs during EST meetings.

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Individuals Always Represented in Educational Support Team (EST) Meetings

Individual	Percentage
Classroom teacher	97%
School administrator	96%
Relevant academic specialist	88%
Relevant behavior specialist	78%
Families	61%
School psychologist	31%
Students	18%

More than 75% of Vermont principals reported that there is at least a teacher, administrator, and/or an academic or behavioral specialist always represented in EST meetings (see appendix, table 2). Yet fewer than 75% reported the representation of families (61%), psychologists (31%), and/or students (18%). Ensuring that families and students are treated as primary stakeholders in decisions that impact their learning and personal goals can result in better achievement outcomes, a culture of trust, positive behavioral interactions between students and staff, and increased social capital for students (Family Engagement Toolkit and Self-Assessment, p. 4) School leaders can use the EST Plan Template Form to keep track of how families, students, and other staff are represented in EST meetings. For more information on engaging families in key decisions, the Vermont Family Engagement Toolkit and Self-Assessment has self-assessment tools, resources and more information on supporting the success of all students through building sustained and trusting relationships with families and enhancing a school system's capacity to do so.

Question 8: According to your school's master schedule, how often is the Educational Support Team designated to meet throughout the year?

The AOE recommends that Educational Support Teams (EST) meet at least twice per month to both regularly assess students who are referred to EST in an efficient manner and to continuously review the progress of students who may already be on an EST plan. Reviewing EST data frequently also allows the team to recognize any patterns arising from student data that can inform areas in need of improvement and inform the school or district's continuous improvement plan (CIP) and resource needs.

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Educational Support Team Meeting Frequency

Meeting Frequency	Percentage
At Least Once Per Month	13%
EST is not part of schedule	17%
At Least Twice Per Month	70%
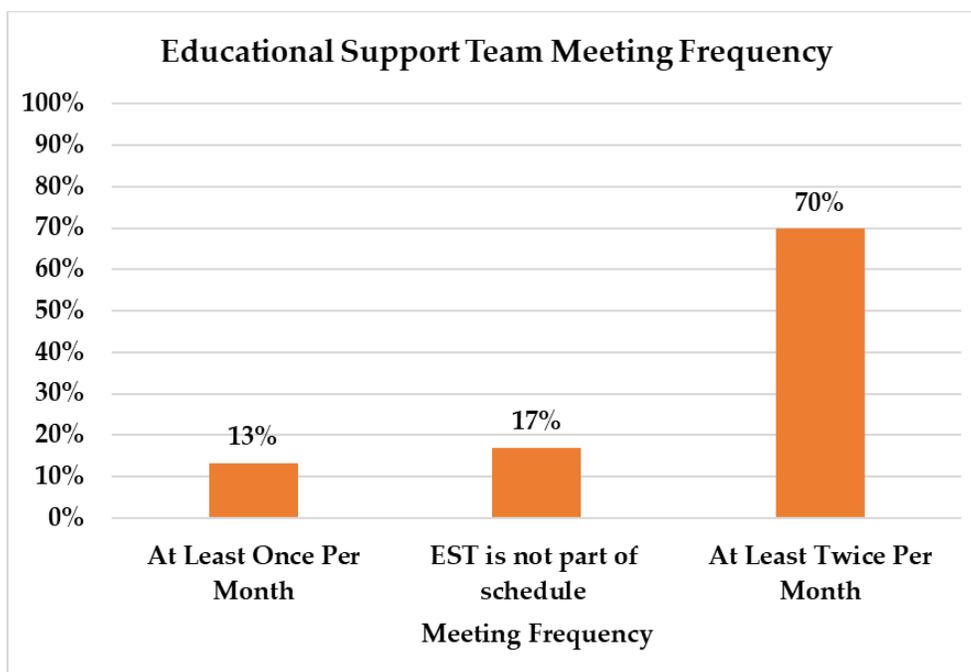
Although 17% of schools reported that their EST is not part of their master schedule, it is useful to embed time for EST meetings within the schedule to avoid any time-related conflicts that may arise throughout the year. Most VT school leaders reported that EST meetings are scheduled to meet at least twice per month (70%) with 13% reporting their EST is scheduled to meet less often. Leaders who are interested in learning more about the characteristics of productive and efficient EST teams are welcome to review the Educational Support Team: A Deeper Look guidance document or fill out the VTmtss Technical Assistance Form for additional consultation or support.

Questions 9 and 10: Responsive Decision Making - Academic and Social Emotional EST Plans

Question 9. When an academic intervention plan has been developed for a student by your school's Educational Support Team (EST), select the following outcomes that would always occur.

Question 10. When a SEL/behavioral intervention plan has been developed by your school's Educational Support Team (EST), select the following outcomes that would always occur?

Although a school's Educational Support Team (EST) would review referrals regarding academic and social-emotional needs, this indicator was divided into two separate questions to measure any potential differences in systemic approaches to enhancing EST plans. Principle 8 of the VTmtss Framework states that the foundation for effective problem-solving and instructional decision-making is a dynamic, positive, and productive collaboration among students, families, and professionals. Taking a systemic approach to decision-making for excellence and equity within a culture of continuous improvement enhances the quality of EST

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interventions through aligning and coordinating the details of the plan with various individuals throughout the school and community in a sustained and intentional manner. This approach promotes the ability for EST to also identify any areas in need of systemic improvement.

Systemic and Comprehensive Approach to Academic and Social Emotional Educational Support Team Intervention Plans
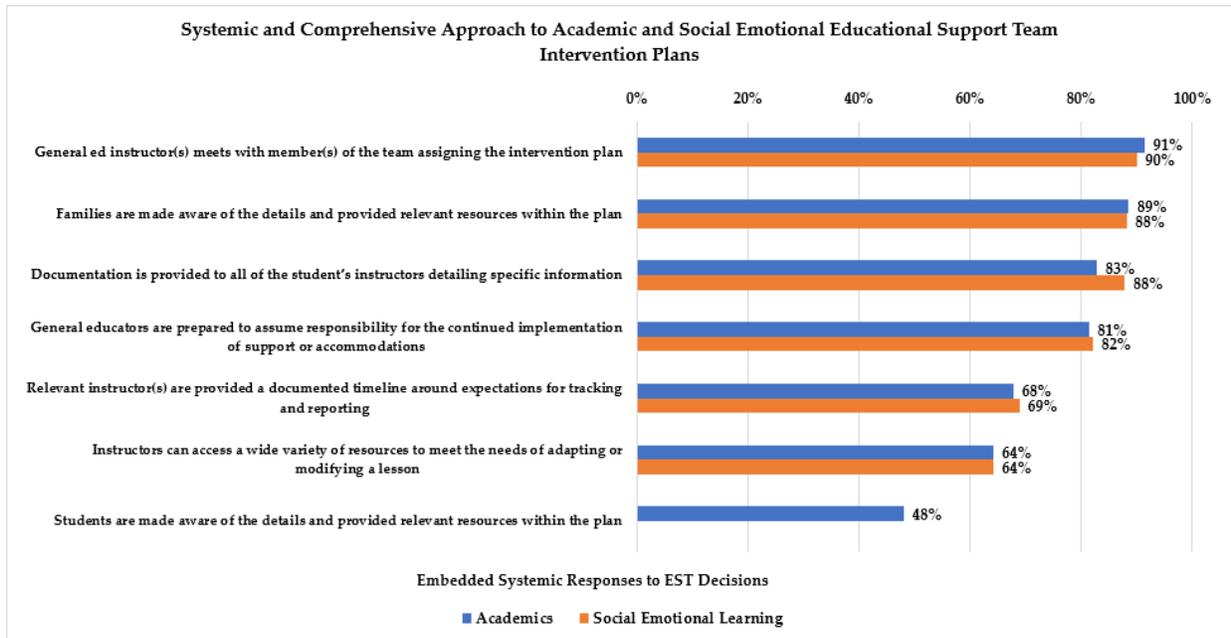
More than half of all VT school leaders reported using at least one of each of the systemic approaches to enhance either academic or social-emotional (SEL) interventions (see appendix, table 4). This data indicates approximately 88% of principals reported that families are made aware of details and provided resources regarding both SEL and academic EST plans, but only 48% reported that students are provided the same details or resources for academic supports (Data is unavailable for SEL supports for this indicator). An essential element of effective collaboration is the relationship developed between students and educators through providing them with relevant resources and information pertaining to their learning, so that they may have an active voice and choice in their learning and goal setting (VTmtss Field Guide, p. 32) For leaders interested in improving systemic supports to engage students in their interventions, the Educational Support Team (EST) Practice Profile offers a continuum of best practices for developing high quality academic and social emotional intervention plans.

Question 11: Select from the following data sources, which data your Educational Support Team often reviews during intervention meetings.

The more consequential a decision is for a student, the more critical it is that Educational Support Teams (EST) have a comprehensive and balanced view of any student's performance as well as a clear process for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting student data. Intentional monitoring of student progress by an EST supports decision making around instructional changes, intervention outcomes, or the need for more support. To reduce bias and further inform personalized needs of students, the use of qualitative student or family data is a critical aspect of EST processes and helps to build a culture of trust for family and students. Maintaining a comprehensive data system allows for reliable, valid, and culturally responsive

consideration of individual student needs as well as analytics that may inform the improvement needs of the school system.

Data Always Used by Educational Support Teams
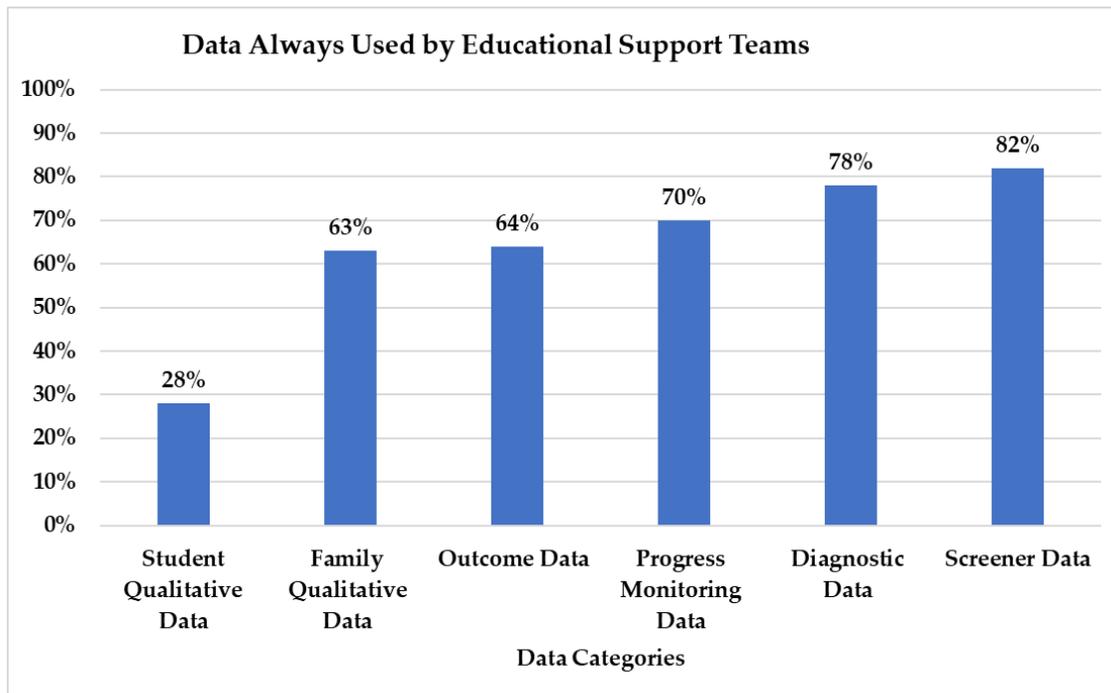
Most Vermont leaders reported that their EST uses a variety of data for decision making. More than 60% of leaders report their school's EST uses some variety of data to inform decisions including different kinds of outcome data, progress monitoring data, diagnostic data, screener data and/or family related data (see appendix, table 5). The fewest number of principals reported that student qualitative data was always reviewed by the EST team. Although there may be other factors influencing the use of student qualitative data, it is beneficial for students for students to engage collaboratively in their goal setting processes and be treated as a decision-making partner in their own learning. Developing a comprehensive and balanced assessment system is a part of taking a systemic approach to enhancing EST processes and outcomes, and therefore are aligned to the integrated and interrelated components of the VTmtss Framework. Leaders can reflect on how their system promotes a balanced data system in their EST as well as other key indicators through use of the Educational Support Team: Making Connections with VTmtss Tool or by reading the AOE guidance document Essential Components for Ensuring Local Comprehensive Assessment Systems are Culturally Relevant and Equitable.

Questions 12-20: Educational Support Team (EST) Plan Indicators

Question 12: How many active Educational Support Team (EST) plans are still in place from last school year?

Question 13: For how many students was a request for assistance made to the Educational Support Team (EST) for the first time this year?

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Question 14: Of the students in Question 13, who received a request for assistance made to the EST for the first time, how many received an EST plan?

Question 15: Of the students in Question 14, who received a request for assistance made to the EST for the first time, how many of these initial plans include at least one academic support? (Data not represented within this report)

Question 16: Of the students in Question 14, who received a request for assistance made to the EST for the first time, how many of these initial plans include at least one behavior/SEL support? (Data not represented within this report)

Question 17: Of the students in Question 14, who received a request for assistance made to the EST for the first time, how many had a Section 504 plan developed for the first time this school year?

Question 18: Of the students in Question 14, who received a request for assistance made to the EST for the first time, how many received a request for assistance for special education evaluation for the first time this school year?

Question 19: Of the students in Question 18, who received a request for assistance made to the EST for the first time, how many had Individualized Education Programs (IEP) developed for the first time this school year?

Question 20: Out of all current EST plans, how many were completed this school year?

Unlike plans that offer students individualized long-term support (such as an individualized education program or a Section 504 plan), EST plans are typically intended to address short-term, specific academic or social-emotional skill(s). Data relating to the outcomes of a student's EST plan should be regularly reviewed to determine the continuation of, change in, or successful completion of its goals.

Educational Support Team (EST) Plans Completed in School Year 2021-22

Students Receiving Initial Support Services in School Year 2021-2022 and 2020-2021
N=3920
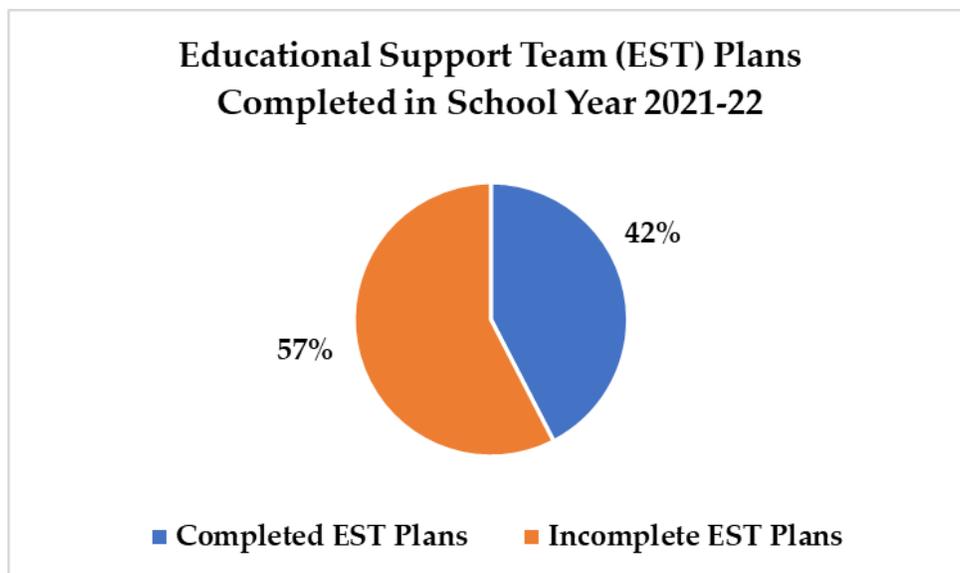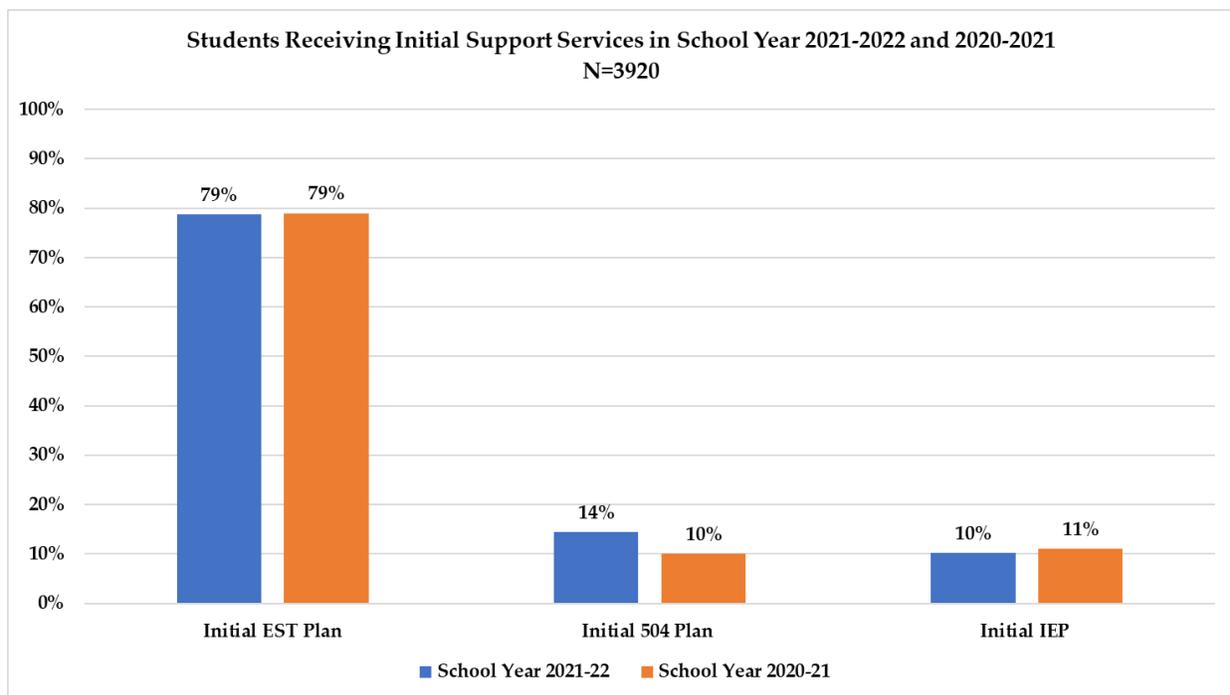
The educational support team (EST) plan is intended to address an immediate student need as well as to improve the capacity of the general education system to meet the students' future needs. During the 2021-2022 school year, fewer than 50% of all active EST plans were completed by the end of the school year. This suggests that in many cases the EST is providing longer-term case management rather than targeted interventions. The VTmtss Team is going to continue to investigate this indicator further through collecting additional data. Current related guidance to this indicator includes the Educational Support Team Plan Form and Educational Support Team (EST) Practice Profile, which guides leaders with systemic capacity building for creating targeted plans that can be monitored in a collaborative and sustained manner.

Question 21: Which of the following opportunities are embedded within your school system to enhance any interventions provided to students (with or without an IEP) who find themselves struggling academically in their core classroom?

Preparing a school system to take a systemic approach to equitably providing all students with high quality learning opportunities and layered supports involves aligning and coordinating instruction and interventions across all settings. Doing so promotes a school's ability to provide supports which are evidence-based and tailored around a student's unique background or personal goals. Building systemic capacity in a coordinated manner promotes decision making that is data-driven and reliable, continuously monitored, provided by experts within their field, and that supplements core instruction rather than supplanting it.

Alignment and Coordination of Instruction and Interventions - Systemic Approach

Category	Percentage
Extra time embedded in their weekly or daily schedule to receive support in addition to core instruction within the school day	90%
The students' data is provided to relevant collaborative school team for a consultation	88%
Family is involved with making decisions around support	85%
Intervention instruction delivered from a content specialist on the specific standard or skill identified as needing support	75%
Additional support made available in the classroom where a student may be struggling	74%
Family is immediately made aware of the student being identified as struggling	70%
Student receives 1-1 consultation with their instructor(s) to discuss personalized needs and supports	65%

Systemic Approaches to Instruction and Intervention

More than half of VT school leaders reported using at least one or some combination of all the listed systemic approaches to enhancing academic interventions (see appendix, table 8). The approach selected by most leaders was to provide extra time for students in their schedule to receive additional supports (90%), which is useful for reducing the number of students being pulled out of their core classroom when they may need supplemental instruction or supports.

Although 85% of leaders reported that families are *involved* with decisions around academic supports, fewer leaders reported that families are *immediately* made aware when students are identified as struggling academically (70%). Research suggests that families should be considered as decision making partners with educators, so that they can be advocates for their children and also provide useful information about students' needs or personal context (Engaging Families to Transform Education by the Carnegie Corporation of NY, 2018).

The systemic approach to enhance interventions reported by the fewest leaders was that students receive 1-1 consultations with instructor(s) to discuss their personalized needs and supports (65%). These results are similar to that of question 9, where the fewest leaders reported that resources are provided directly to students with EST plans.

Research has shown that when schools emphasize strong partnerships between staff and students by valuing their unique voices and insights and including them in decisions about their own goals or learning, a culture of trust forms where students feel respected as the primary stakeholders in their learning (VTmtss Field Guide, p. 18)

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*There were two options not included in this graph due to language errors within the original question (see appendix, table 8).

Question 22: Which of the following opportunities are embedded within your school system to enhance any interventions provided to students (with or without IEP) who find themselves with an SEL need or struggling with regulating behavior in their classroom?

Providing inclusive interventions to support students' social and behavioral functioning often improves academic performance, and vice versa. In addition, leveraging a culture of effective collaboration (the expertise of students, community members, family, and staff) promotes a respectful and caring community that can support *all* students (District Management Group: Expanding and Strengthening Best-Practice Supports, p. 6)

Systemic Approaches to Social Emotional Supports

Category	Percent
Family is involved with making decisions around support	90%
All educators are informed of interventions to support students' SEL or behavioral needs in the classroom	89%
Student has scheduled access to an identified staff member for check-in or other support	87%
The students' data is provided to the relevant collaborative school team for a consultation	86%
Opportunity for student to discuss needs and request supports from the relevant staff member	78%
Family is immediately made aware of the student being identified as struggling	78%
Designated point person(s) tracks data on the progress of the specific SEL intervention	74%

Although this indicator is similar to question 21, it focuses on several different approaches to systemically enhancing social-emotional (SEL) supports. As in question 21, more than half of school leaders reported using at least one, if not some combination, of the systemic approaches to enhancing SEL interventions (see appendix, table 9).

The most leaders reported that they involve families with making decisions around SEL supports (90%), though fewer leaders reported that families are immediately made aware when students are identified as struggling (78%). The fewest leaders reported the use of a designated point person to track the timeline of an SEL intervention (74%) for this indicator. This is like the results of question 10, which indicated that the fewest leaders also reported educators receiving either documented resources (64%) or

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timelines (69%) relating to any social-emotional support plan developed by an educational support team. The VTmtss System Screener is a tool for leaders to reflect on leveraging or improving component(s) to enhance their systemic and comprehensive approach to address a need or support an identified goal.

Question 23: Select from the following data sources, which data general educators in your school often review to inform their lesson plans.

Multiple, varied, and recurring data sources enhance instructional planning and inform systemic improvement needs by capturing approaches to differentiated instruction, students' ongoing progress, or individual needs (VTmtss Field Guide, p. 42). Students and families should also work collaboratively with instructors to consider their different learning needs or personalized goals to make equitable and culturally responsive classroom decisions and develop trusting relationships between educators and these stakeholders (VTmtss Field Guide, p. 40).

Data Used to Inform Lesson Plans

Data Source	Percentage
Staff observations of student behavior	90%
Ongoing formative progress monitoring data	88%
Students' IEP plans	87%
Interim or periodic benchmark assessments	84%
Students' Section 504 plans	81%
Summative assessments compared to benchmark/standard	81%
Proficiency-based assessments	74%
Universal screening	70%
Family provided qualitative data	46%
Student provided qualitative data	45%

More than half of VT principals reported their teachers using some combination of data to inform their lesson (see appendix, table 10). Less than half reported teachers use family-provided (46%) or student-provided (45%) qualitative data to inform lessons. It is useful to seek input from these primary stakeholders so that unique needs can be more easily identified, and culturally responsive decisions can be made using reliable information. Identifying the various purposes for data, can support leaders with understanding necessary improvements or

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additional assessments needed. Pages 43-49 of the VTmtss Field Guide details the various purposes for different data sources, and the [Local Comprehensive Assessment Systems in School District Systems Act 173 Technical Guidance](#) aligns the elements of a LCAS with the VTmtss Framework components to support with system improvement efforts.
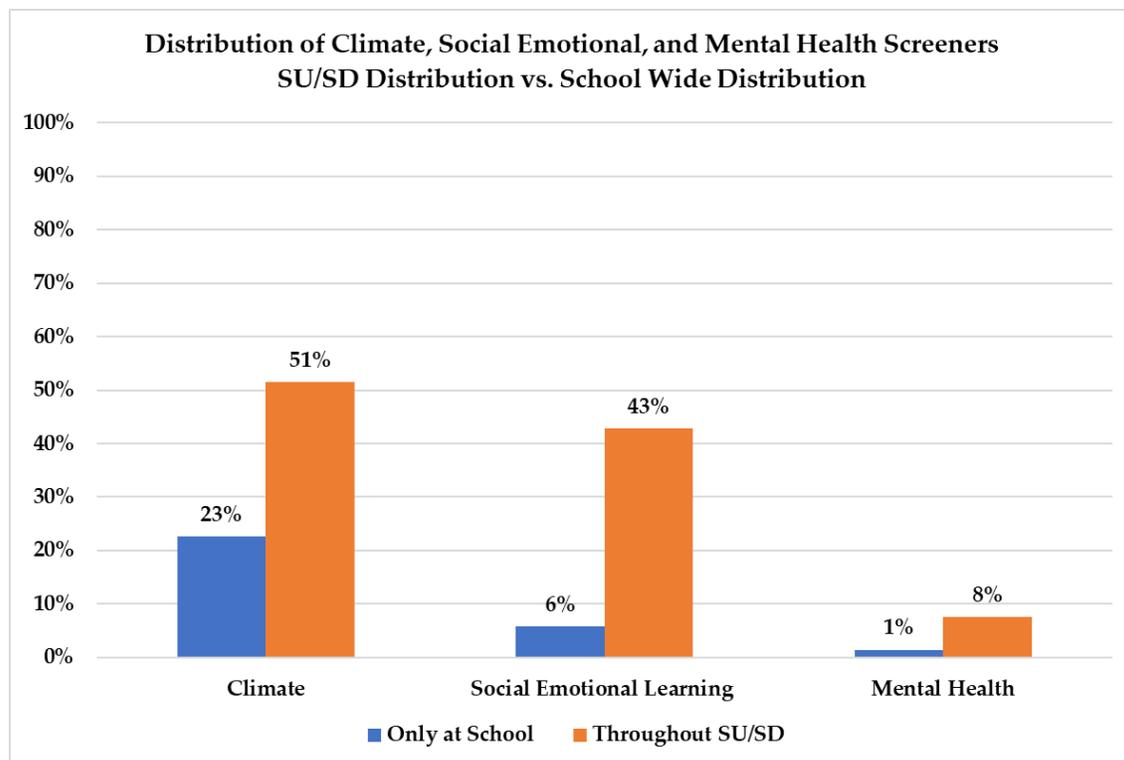
Questions 24-26: Climate, SEL, Mental Health Data Collection

Question 24: Does your school administer a universal climate screener? 24-26b. How are these screeners administered? 24-26c. What are the names of the screeners?

Question 25: Does your school administer a universal Social-Emotional screener? 25-25b. How are these screeners administered? 25-25c. What are the names of the screeners?

Question 26: Does your school administer a universal Mental Health screener? 26-26b. How are these screeners administered? 26-26c. What are the names of the screeners?

Screening students informs decisions around universal instruction, personalized learning needs, identifying students who are struggling, and noticing patterns or unanswered questions about individuals or groups of students ([VTmtss Field Guide](#), p. 43). Including mental health, climate, and social-emotional screener data in a school or district's comprehensive and balanced assessment system provides leaders with additional important information regarding how well their school system addresses the perceptions, relationships, sense of safety, well-being, and respect experienced by its students.

Distribution of Climate, Social Emotional, and Mental Health Screeners SU/SD Distribution vs. School Wide Distribution

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These questions were new to the VTmtss Survey this year, serving as baseline data for the Agency of Education to learn more about the current use of climate, social-emotional, and mental health screeners used by districts or schools. It is noteworthy that for each of the three screeners listed, most VT leaders indicated that the screeners are distributed throughout a district or supervisory union, allowing for a more equitable distribution of resources. To request a list of the screeners most often used by schools or districts, contact Caitlin Chisholm at Caitlin.Chisholm@vermont.gov. For more information about developing capacity to improve school climate, visit the Agency of Education's School Climate Webpage.
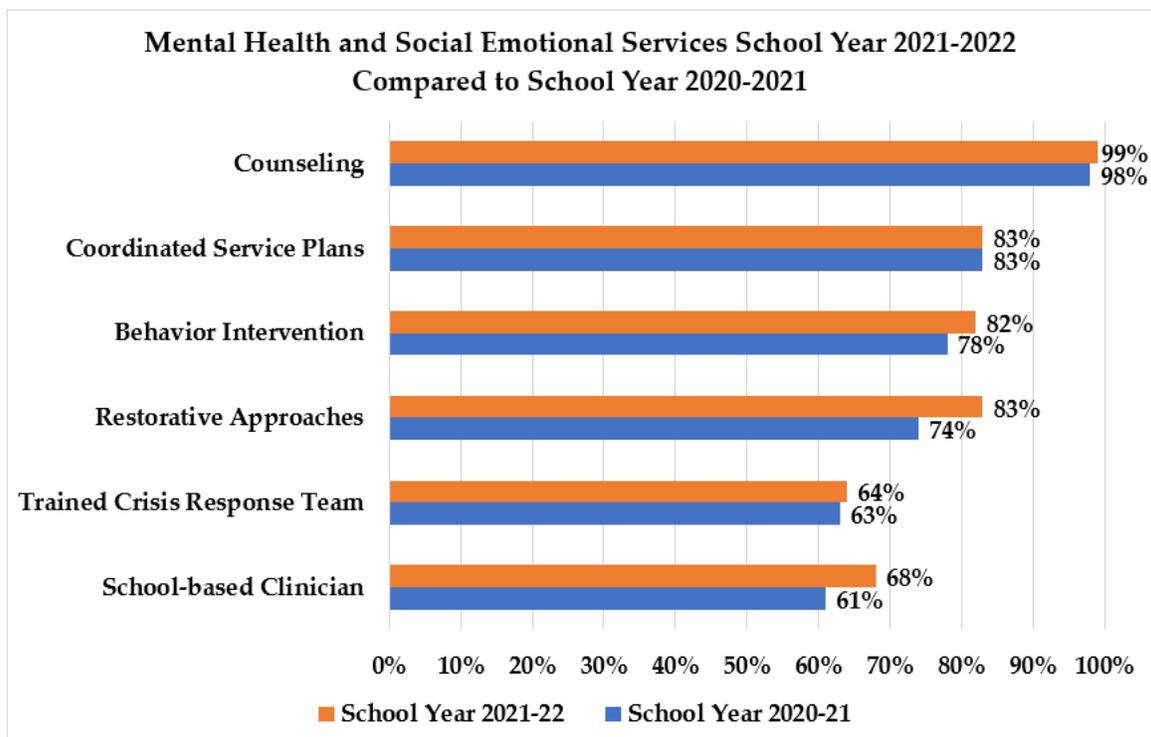
Questions 27-29: Mental Health Services

Question 27: Which of the following Mental Health and Social Services and Supports are part of your school's multi-tiered system of support?

Question 28: Funding sources for mental health services.

Question 29: Does your school have a memorandum of understanding with your local designated mental health agency or other local health and mental agency providers?

Schools can augment their work by creating partnerships with agencies and community members who can support students and families as needed. Community service providers, medical and mental health support agencies, post-secondary institutions, professional organizations, and businesses are often eager to offer specific supports or resources. Programs or frameworks that promote positive classrooms and school cultures through teaching proficiencies and competencies in areas of social-emotional wellbeing can both proactively prevent disruptive behavior and improve academic outcomes for students (VTmtss Field Guide, p. 27).

Mental Health and Social Emotional Services School Year 2021-2022 Compared to School Year 2020-2021

Service	School Year 2021-22	School Year 2020-21
Counseling	99%	98%
Coordinated Service Plans	83%	83%
Behavior Intervention	82%	78%
Restorative Approaches	83%	74%
Trained Crisis Response Team	64%	63%
School-based Clinician	68%	61%

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Memorandum of Understanding with Local Designated Mental Health Agency or Other Local Health Providers

41%

59%

■ No ■ Yes
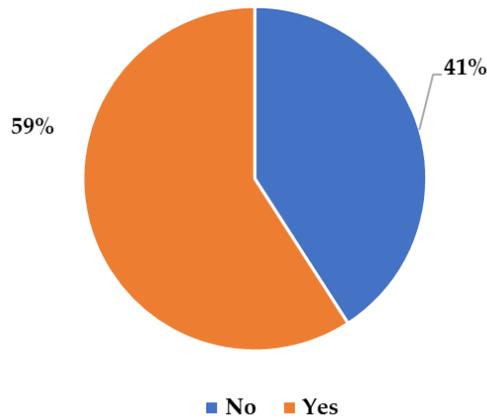
Mental Health and Social Emotional Funding Sources School Year 2021-2022 Compared to School Year 2020-2021

Local/School Budget	89% / 88%
Medicaid	64% / 57%
State Special Education	56% / 54%
Title 1	53% / 45%
IDEA	39% / 30%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ SY21/22 ■ SY20/21
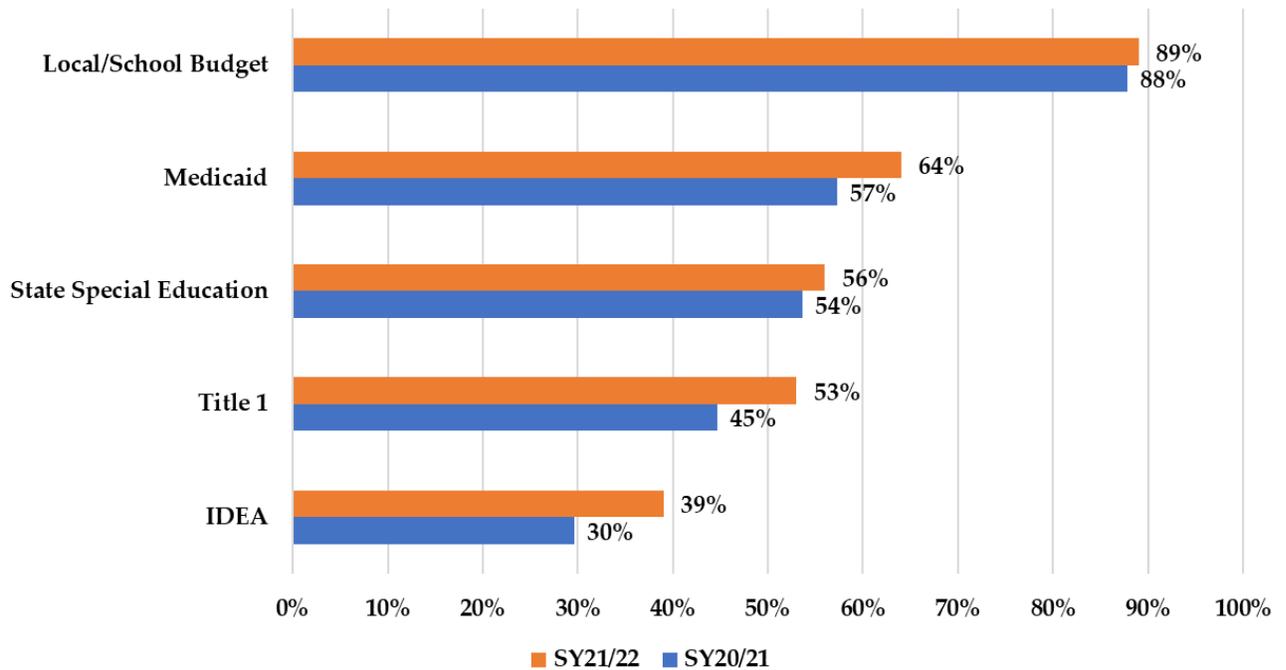
The top five mental health and social-emotional offerings and their funding sources remain the same from the 2020-2021 school year to this year's reporting. The data showed an increase in the number of leaders reporting the mental health and SEL services they offer and their funding sources for all but one of the mental health and social emotional learning (SEL) services and funding sources (see appendix, table 12

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and [table 13](#)). The use of restorative approaches had the highest increase of 9% from last school year to this year, and there was a 5% increase in the percent of principals reporting a memorandum of understanding with a local mental health agency. The [SELVT](#), [PBIS Vermont](#), and [CASEL](#) offer resources and training to support improving and expanding SEL practices.

Question 30: How frequently do general educators in your school have the time intentionally embedded in their schedule to do the following:

*a. Meet with an **intervention specialist** to inform their lesson plans*

*b. Meet with a **special educator** to inform lesson planning*

*c. Discuss the details **of a paraprofessional's responsibility** or role in supporting students*

*d. Share best practices **with another grade level or content area general educator***

*e. Discuss the **progress of a student with a family member***

*f. Discuss the **progress of a student with that student***

When diverse stakeholders collaborate purposefully and effectively around curriculum, instruction, and their learning, academic, behavioral, and social-emotional outcomes are likely to improve for all students. Increased collaboration leads to teachers receiving access to expanded resources, greater professional satisfaction, and an increase in positive interactions between students and teachers that increase student achievement and personal growth as well ([VTmtss Field Guide](#), p. 15).

Frequency of General Educator Collaboration

Collaboration Partner	More than 4 Times Per Year
Special Educator	85%
Student	80%
Intervention Specialist	79%
Another Teacher	78%
Paraprofessional	77%
Family	51%

■ More than 4 Times Per Year

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More than 70% of schools reported that their general educator meets frequently with at least one or some combination of various individuals (see appendix, table 15). Fewer leaders reported general educators collaborating more than four times per year with families (51%). It is beneficial to build capacity within a school system for meaningful collaboration opportunities to be developed with families and for authentic connections to be made between families and educators. When schools engage with families by asking questions, listening, intentionally empowering, sharing perspectives and key information, codesigning, co-implementing, and co-involvement in assessments and solutions, then improvements in student achievement and positive changes in school systems are likely to increase (Engaging Families to Transform Education by the Carnegie Corporation of NY, 2018).

Question 31: Which of the following needs-based professional learning opportunities are available in your school?

Building a culture of expertise involves creating infrastructure and opportunities within a school system so that learning can happen continuously for all staff members within their daily work schedule. By embedding various learning opportunities where diverse experts, both inside and outside of school, regularly share their experiences and insights, leaders can better serve the learning needs of staff in a relevant, regular, and intentional manner. Researchers have identified that when learning opportunities are embedded within schools and targeted to serve different needs, there is an increased ability to improve or refine teachers' skillsets (VTmtss Field Guide, p. 55).

Percentage of Schools Reporting Needs Based Professional Learning Opportunities

- Mentorships — 83%
- Ongoing coaching — 75%
- Professional Learning Communities — 72%
- Content-specific discussion and study groups — 58%
- Peer observation — 40%
- Action research — 10%
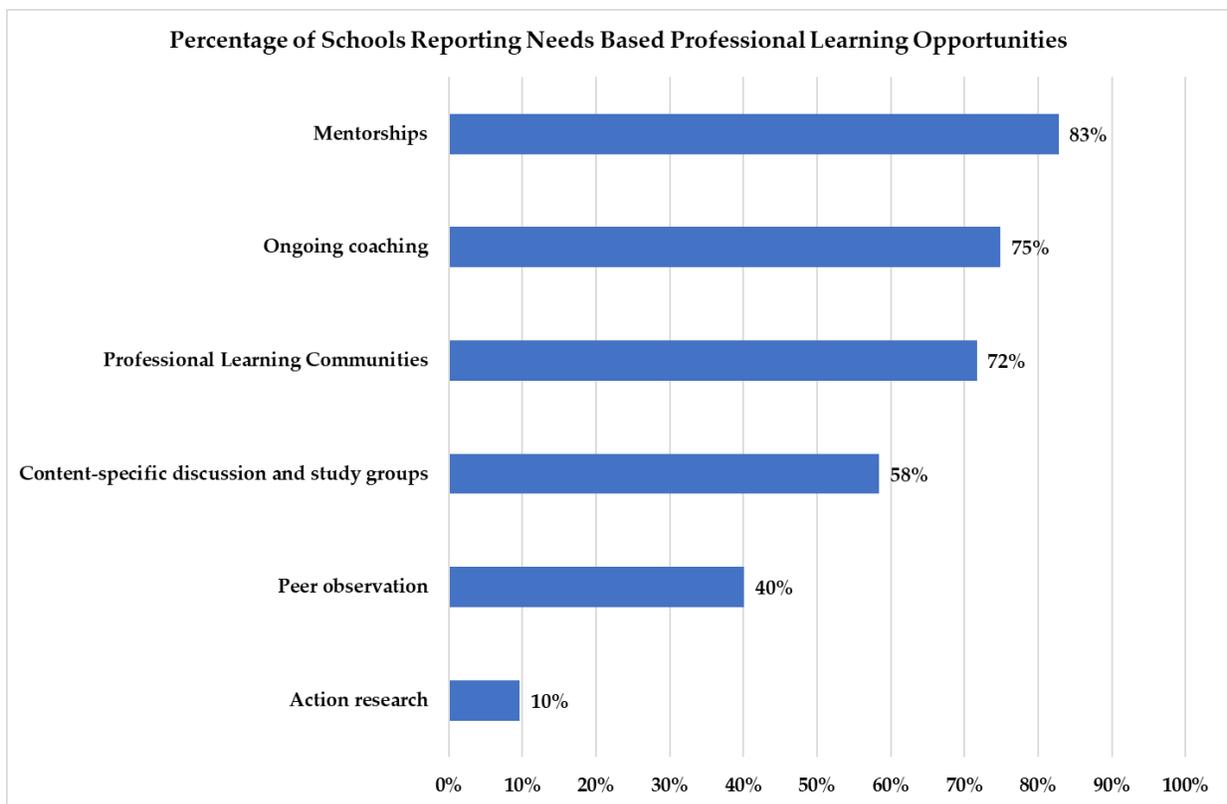
The needs-based professional learning opportunity reported by most principals as available to their school staff was mentoring (83%). More than half reported the availability of ongoing coaching, professional learning communities, or content-specific discussion groups (see appendix, table 16). This finding aligns with the Vermont Education Quality Standard 2121.3 NB PL, stating that "mentoring should be a part of each supervisory union's professional learning system". The standard also suggests that beyond mentoring, a variety of learning opportunities should be available to meet the different needs of staff or the system itself, such as providing necessary learning opportunities to new staff members. For leaders interested in learning more about the elements of needs-based professional learning development, the Needs-Based Professional Development in School District Systems: Act 173 Technical Guidance has additional information and resources to support the implementation or improvement of this Act 173 lever for creating more high-quality and equitable learning opportunities for all students.

Question 32: Select the ways professional learning opportunities are determined for educators at your school.

According to the Vermont Education Quality Standard 2121.3 NB PL, "schools' professional learning system shall be aligned with its staff evaluation and supervision policies, Continuous Improvement Plans, and district or union goals. To achieve this, research shows it is beneficial to develop a professional learning system so that all staff can receive support from appropriate expertise they need as they need it. To do this, leadership should ensure infrastructure and necessary planning is in place to promote collaborative learning to occur both inside and outside of school by first identifying aspects of a school's unique context that might create better conditions for increased expertise and then creating targeted action plans that can effectively meet the various needs of professional learning (VTmtss Field Guide, p. 55).

Methods Used to Determine Professional Learning Needs

Method	Percentage
Professional Learning is determined based on its alignment to SMART goals in the school's theory of improvement such as Continuous Improvement goals, grant-based planning, etc.	77%
Opportunities are determined by regular administrator observations of all teachers' classrooms	56%
Regular review of school-wide, disaggregated data, determines coaching needs around specific skills	55%
Student data informs individual professional learning needs of staff	47%
Intervention specialists provide coaching as they determine necessary on an individual basis for staff members	46%
All general educators have customized professional learning embedded into their schedule	32%

The method for determining professional learning needs reported as utilized by most leaders was aligning professional learning to SMART goals within their continuous improvement plan (CIP) (77%), which aligns with the expectations of VT Education Quality Standard 2121.3 NB PL. Less than 60% of leaders reported using any of the other five professional learning identification methods (see appendix, table 18). For a list of context-specific considerations for creating a needs-based professional learning system see page 55 of the VTmtss Field Guide. Additionally, The Act 173 Needs-based Professional Development: Making Connections with VTmtss offers a systems-level self-assessment to support this work.

Question 33: Who do paraprofessionals meet with at least weekly to determine how they are going to best serve the students to whom they are assigned?

Research shows that students are more successful when authentically engaged in core learning activities with their peers and general educator. Reconsidering paraprofessional roles, or the amount of time available for them to collaborate with other staff, are steps toward increasing the amount of time any student can spend within universal school settings. Systems-wide coordination of general and special education efforts allows all staff to engage in a systemic approach, thus enhancing collaborative best practices (District Management Group: Expanding and Strengthening Best-Practice Supports, p. 45-47).

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Fequent Collaboration Between Paraprofessionals and Other Staff

Special educator working with a student (if applicable)	89%
Students' general educators	66%
Behavior specialist assigned to a student	33%
Mental health professional	11%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Most principals reported that paraprofessionals meet with special educators every week (89%). Many principals also reported that paraprofessionals meet regularly with general educators (66%) regardless of the paraprofessional's assigned role with a student or group of students and reported some combination of professional roles meeting weekly with paraprofessionals (see appendix, table 18).

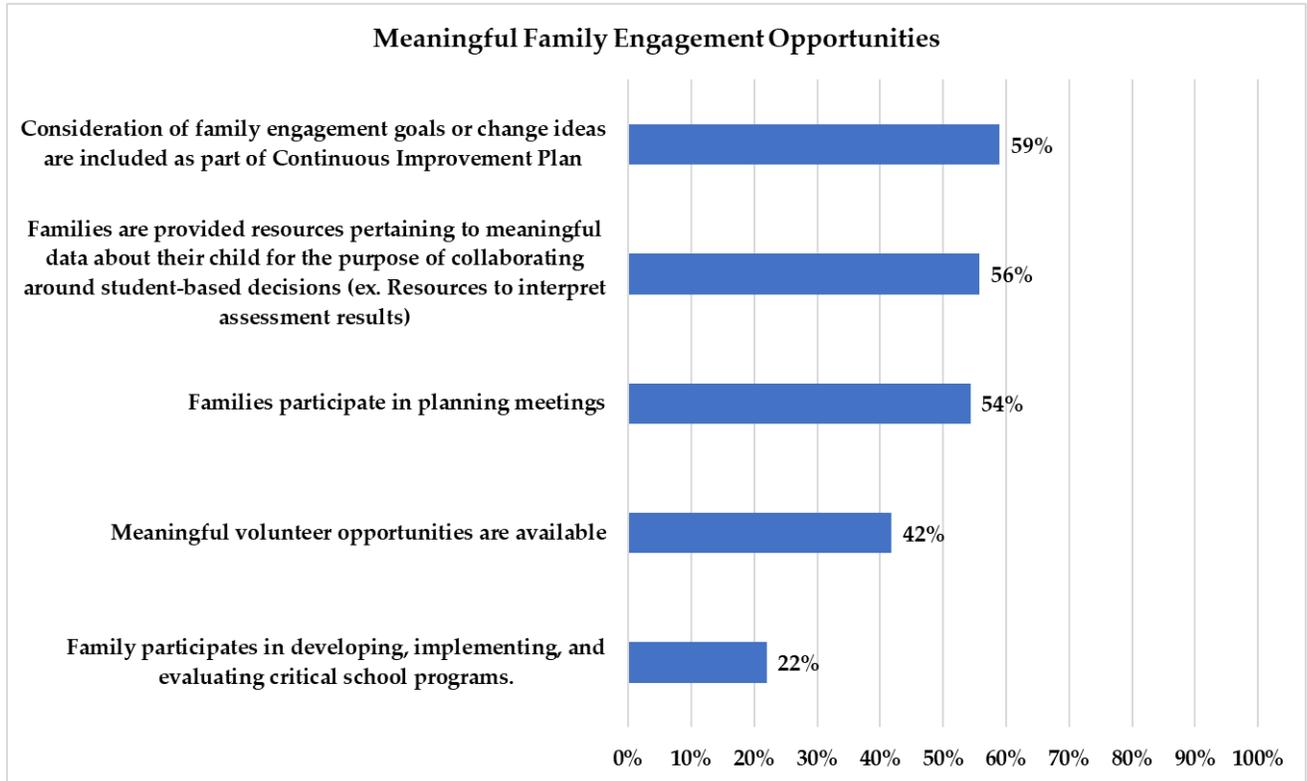The goal is a model that provides paraprofessionals with:

- time to meet frequently with both general and special educators to learn content, ask questions, and share observations.
- opportunities to engage in collaborative instructional arrangements, supported by those with content and behavior expertise.
- professional learning embedded within the school day with peers and the broader school staff to support a systemic expectations for supporting students.

Within this model, roles and responsibilities of varied specialists shift to leverage the joint expertise each brings to students' learning.

Question 34: Which opportunities has your school made available throughout the year for meaningfully engaging families in decisions regarding the school?

Shared power and responsibility mean that families, school staff, and community members are partners in school planning, leadership, and decision-making. Students whose families are meaningfully and intentionally involved in their education, regardless of their income or background, were more likely to regularly attend school, improve grades and assessment

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outcomes, advance to the next class level, increase social skills and positive behaviors, and graduate from secondary and post-secondary education. Research shows that contributors to successful and sustained family engagement include activities that support learning and development and place an emphasis on participation, communication, collaboration, and empowerment for families (VT Family Engagement Toolkit and Self-Assessment, p. 87).

Meaningful Family Engagement Opportunities

Category	Percentage
Consideration of family engagement goals or change ideas are included as part of Continuous Improvement Plan	59%
Families are provided resources pertaining to meaningful data about their child for the purpose of collaborating around student-based decisions (ex. Resources to interpret assessment results)	56%
Families participate in planning meetings	54%
Meaningful volunteer opportunities are available	42%
Family participates in developing, implementing, and evaluating critical school programs.	22%

The family engagement practice most principals reported using is "the consideration of family engagement goals or change ideas within the continuous improvement plan (CIP) (59%)". More than half of Vermont schools also reported "providing resources about meaningful data about the child to inform family involved student-based decisions" and that they include families in planning meetings (see appendix, table 19). Less than half of responding principals reported making meaningful volunteer opportunities available to families (42%) such as making time for families to share unique experiences or knowledge or inquiring about what families may want to share with their school. Even fewer principals reported that families participate in developing, implementing, or evaluating critical school programs (22%) such as establishing and engaging advisory committees for problem-solving or policy drafting activities as well as other relevant system-wide decisions. Families can provide critical input and insights into decision-making processes and can serve as champions for schools or districts. When asked about access to various types of school coordinators, family engagement coordinators was reported by the fewest principals as being available (see appendix, table 20).

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Building capacity to improve the meaningful inclusion of families may involve professional activities for those that do not yet have capacity-building skills related to their new leadership role in addition to establishing organizational conditions that enable staff members to build relational trust and respect with families. The VT Family Engagement Toolkit and Self-Assessment includes various self-assessment tools, strategies, and action planning resources related to the Vermont Family engagement core principles such as principle 4, "sharing power and responsibility" and principle 7, "ensuring sustainability," and others that can support building capacity to engage families in meaningful and authentic ways.

Conclusion

We are grateful to the large percentage of principals who responded to this survey as it offers a state perspective of efforts to expand and improve the delivery of services to K-12 students in Vermont.

The data compiled from this survey will inform future professional learning and technical assistance opportunities provided by the VTmtss Team, in collaboration with our colleagues, to support the SU and school leadership.

For more information about a multi-tiered system of supports, or to request assistance, please reference the VTmtss webpage, or contact Tracy Watterson, VTmtss Program Manager, tracy.watterson@vermont.gov.

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Appendix

Table 1

Question 6: Select all staff members that are involved with the creation of the master schedule before the beginning of the school year. Select all that apply.

Staff Role	Percentage of Principals
School psychologist(s)	5%
Behavior specialist(s)	23%
Special education administrator(s)	49%
Content specialist(s)	66%
Classroom teacher	85%

Table 2

Question 7: Select from the following individuals, who would always be represented in your school's Educational Support Team. Select all that apply.

Stakeholder Options	Percentage of Principals
Students	18%
School psychologist	31%
Families	61%
Relevant behavior specialist	78%
Relevant academic specialist	88%
School administrator	96%
Classroom teacher	97%

Table 3

Question 8: According to your school's master schedule, how often is the Educational Support Team designated to meet throughout the year? Select one.

Frequency of Educational Support Team Meetings	Percentage of Principals
At Least Once Per Month	13%
EST is not part of schedule	17%
At Least Twice Per Month	70%

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Table 4

Question 9: When an academic intervention plan has been developed for a student by your school's Educational Support Team, which of the following outcomes would always occur? Select all that apply.

Question 10: When a SEL (social emotional learning)/behavioral intervention plan has been developed by your school's Educational Support Team (EST), select the following outcomes that would always occur? Select all that apply.

Best practices for enhancing educational support team academic and social emotional interventions systemically and comprehensively	Principals reporting for Academic Indicator	Principals reporting for SEL Indicator
General ed instructor(s) meets with member(s) of the team assigning the intervention plan to discuss the details of the intervention	91%	90%
Families are made aware of the details and provided relevant resources within the plan	89%	88%
Documentation is provided to all of the student's instructors detailing specific information regarding the intervention plan	83%	88%
General educators are prepared to assume responsibility for the continued implementation of support or accommodations at the completion of an intervention plan	81%	82%
Relevant instructor(s) are provided a documented timeline around expectations for tracking and reporting on intervention data	68%	69%
Instructors can access a wide variety of resources to meet the needs of adapting or modifying a lesson according to the intervention plan	64%	64%
Students are made aware of the details and provided relevant resources within the plan	48%	N/A

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Table 5

Question 11: From the following data sources, which data do your Educational Support Team often review during intervention screenings? Select all that apply.

Type of Data Educational Support Teams Always Review	Percent of Principals
Student Qualitative Data	28%
Family Qualitative Data	63%
Outcome Data	64%
Progress Monitoring Data	70%
Diagnostic Data	78%
Screener Data	82%

Table 6

Question 12: How many active Educational Support Team (EST) plans are still in place from last school year?

Question 14: Of the students in Question 13, who received a request for assistance to EST for the first time this school year, how many received an EST plan?

Question 20: Out of all current EST plans, how many were completed this school year?

New Plans in School Year 2021/2022 and Plans Carried Over From School Year 2020/2021	Plans Completed School Year 2021/2022
Completed EST Plans	42%
Incomplete EST Plans	57%

Table 7

Question 14: Of the students in Question 13, who received a request for assistance to EST for the first time this school year, how many received an EST plan?

Question 17: Of the students in question 14, who received an EST plan for the first time this year, how many had a Section 504 plan developed for the first time this year?

Question 19: Of the students in question 18, who were recommended for special education evaluation, how many had an individualized Education Program (IEP) developed for the first time this school year?

Types of Student Support Plans	School Year 2021-2022	School Year 2020-2021
Initial EST Plan	79%	79%
Initial 504 Plan	14%	10%
Initial IEP	10%	11%

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Table 8

Question 21: Which of the following opportunities are embedded within your school system to enhance any interventions provided to students (with or without an IEP) who find themselves struggling academically in their core classroom? Select all that apply.

Systemic Approaches to Academic Supports	Percent of Principals
Student is provided immediate 1-1 time with a school administrator to discuss the variety of supports available within the school or community to support their needs	28%
Student and educator consult personalized learning plans to better inform supporting their needs	31%
Student receives 1-1 consultation with their instructor(s) to discuss personalized needs and supports	65%
Family is immediately made aware of the student being identified as struggling	70%
Additional support made available in the classroom where a student may be struggling	74%
Intervention instruction delivered from a content specialist on the specific standard or skill identified as needing support	75%
Family is involved with making decisions around support	85%
The students' data is provided to relevant collaborative school team for a consultation	88%
Extra time embedded in their weekly or daily schedule to receive support in addition to core instruction within the school day	90%

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Table 9

Question 22: Which of the following opportunities are embedded within your school system to enhance any interventions provided to students (with or without IEP) who find themselves with an SEL need or struggling with regulating behavior in their classroom? Select all that apply.

Systemic and Comprehensive Approaches to Enhancing Social Emotional Related Supports or Interventions	Percent of Principals
Designated point person(s) tracks data on the progress of the specific SEL intervention	74%
Family is immediately made aware of the student being identified as struggling	78%
Opportunity for student to discuss needs and request supports from the relevant staff member	78%
The students' data is provided to the relevant collaborative school team for a consultation	86%
Student has scheduled access to an identified staff member for check-in or other support	87%
All educators are informed of interventions to support students' SEL or behavioral needs in the classroom	89%
Family is involved with making decisions around support	90%

Table 10

Question 23: Select from the following data sources, which data general educators in your school often review to inform their lesson plans. Select all that apply.

Types of Data Used to Inform Lesson Plans	Percent of Principals
Student provided qualitative data	45%
Family provided qualitative data	46%
Universal screening	70%
Proficiency-based assessments	74%
Summative assessments compared to benchmark/standard	81%
Students' Section 504 plans	81%
Interim or periodic benchmark assessments	84%
Students' IEP plans	87%
Ongoing formative progress monitoring data	88%
Staff observations of student behavior	90%

Table 11

Question 24: Does your school administer a universal SEL Screener?

Question 25: Does your school administer a universal Mental health screener?

Question 26: Does your school administer a School Climate Survey?

Distribution Method of Screeners Reported by Principals	Climate Screeners	Social Emotional Learning Screeners	Mental Health Screeners
Only at School	23%	6%	1%
Throughout SU/SD	51%	43%	8%

Table 12

Question 27: Which of the following Mental Health and Social Services and Supports are part of your school's multi-tiered system of support? Select all that apply.

Top Five Mental Health or Social Emotional Services Reported by Principals	School Year 2020-2021	School Year 2021-2022
School-based Clinician	61%	68%
Trained Crisis Response Team	63%	64%
Restorative Approaches	74%	83%
Behavior Intervention	78%	82%
Coordinated Service Plans	83%	83%
Counseling	98%	99%

Table 13

Question 28: Does your school have a memorandum of understanding with your local designated mental health agency or other local health and mental agency providers?

Principals reporting their school having a memorandum of understanding with local designated mental health agency or other local health and mental agency providers	Percent of Principals
No	41%
Yes	59%

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Table 14

Question 29: Funding sources for mental health services. Select all that apply.

Top Five Mental Health and SEL Funding Sources Reported by Principals	IDEA	Title 1	State Special Education	Medicaid	Local/School Budget
School Year 2020-2021	30%	45%	54%	57%	88%
School Year 2021-2022	39%	53%	56%	64%	89%

Table 15

Question 30 a-f: How frequently do general educators in your school have the time intentionally embedded in their schedule to do the following?

Individuals reported to collaborate with general educators on a weekly basis	Percent of Principals
Family	51%
Paraprofessional	77%
Another Teacher	78%
Intervention Specialist	79%
Student	8%
Special Educator	85%

Table 16

Question 31: Which of the following needs-based professional learning opportunities are available in your school? Select all that apply.

Needs-based professional learning opportunities available in schools	Percent of Principals
Action research	10%
Peer observation	40%
Content-specific discussion and study groups	58%
Professional Learning Communities	72%
Ongoing coaching	75%
Mentorships	83%

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Table 17

Question 32: Which of the following professional development (PD) learning are determined for educators at your school. Select all that apply.

Methods for determining needs-based professional learning opportunities	Percent of Principals
All general educators have customized professional learning embedded into their schedule	32%
Intervention specialists provide coaching as they determine necessary on an individual basis for staff members	46%
Student data informs individual professional learning needs of staff	47%
Regular review of school-wide, disaggregated data, determines coaching needs around specific skills	55%
Opportunities are determined by regular administrator observations of all teachers' classrooms	56%
Professional Learning is determined based on its alignment to SMART goals in the school's theory of improvement such as Continuous Improvement goals, grant-based planning, etc.	77%

Table 18

Question 33: Who do paraprofessionals meet with at least weekly to determine how they are going to best serve the students to whom they are assigned? Select all that apply.

Different staff members who frequently collaborate with paraprofessionals	Percent of Principals
Mental health professional	11%
Behavior specialist assigned to a student	33%
Students' general educators	66%
Special educator working with a student (if applicable)	89%

Table 19

Question 34: Which opportunities has your school made available throughout the year for meaningfully engaging families in decisions regarding the school? Select all that apply.

Meaningful Family Engagement Opportunities	Percent of Principals
Family participates in developing, implementing, and evaluating critical school programs.	22%
Meaningful volunteer opportunities are available	42%
Families participate in planning meetings	54%
Families are provided resources pertaining to meaningful data about their child for the purpose of collaborating around student-based decisions (ex. Resources to interpret assessment results)	56%
Consideration of family engagement goals or change ideas are included as part of Continuous Improvement Plan	59%

Table 20

Question 35: Answer the following questions for your school, if applicable.

Types of coordinators available in schools	Number of principals reporting access to a coordinator
Family Engagement Coordinator	89
Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Coordinator	183
Educational Support Teams (EST) Coordinator	234
Section 504 Coordinator	228
Behavioral Coordinator	157
Designated Employee (Harassment, Hazing, and Bullying)	266

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