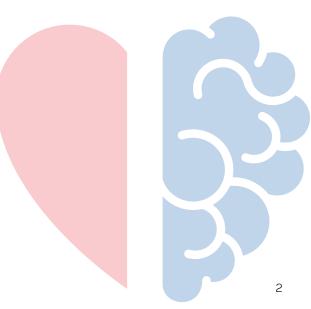


Tier 3 Behavior Intervention Guide for School Leaders

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An alarm is sounding – according to a recent APA survey, almost half of all teachers reported a desire to change jobs due to safety and climate concerns. Many schools are overwhelmed with the surge of mental health needs and challenging behaviors, leaving school leaders wondering what they can do to address student needs while supporting teacher well-being.

I've been there, and although building a system of intensive behavior support for students who need it (and their teachers!) is a long game, it IS possible, and absolutely worth the investment. All student growth is exciting to see, but my most meaningful experiences as an educator were those where a child went from being unable to function safely, make friends, or participate in learning, to then getting the support they needed to become a thriving member of the school community.

This guide will touch on the critical elements of an effective intensive behavior support system from a school leader's perspective, along with practical tips and recommended resources to explore. Don't miss the section on making Tier 3 behavior intervention actually practicable amidst the many day-to-day challenges of running a school or district..

practicable [prak-ti-kuh-buhl]

adjective

- 1. capable of being done, effected, or put into practice, with the available means; feasible:
 - a practicable solution.

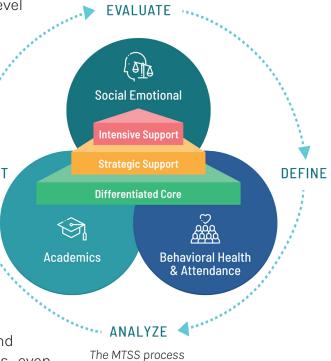
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Where Does Intensive Behavior Intervention Fit in MTSS?

Intensive intervention refers to the highest level of individualized support offered along the continuum of interventions in a Multi-Tiered System of Supports for Behavior (MTSS-B), also called "Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports" or PBIS.

These levels of support are often referred to as: Tier 1-Universal (prevention, instruction, and differentiation for all students), Tier 2-Strategic (targeted skill-building and support), and Tier 3-Intensive (individualized behavior plans with wrap-around services).

An organized system of universal, targeted, and intensive behavior interventions, along with a data-driven continuous improvement cycle, enables schools to be both preventative and responsive to the behavior needs of all students, even those with very challenging behavior.



Critical MTSS-B / PBIS Features:

- · Clear behavior expectations and positive school climate
- · Effective classroom management
- · SEL and behavioral screening
- · A continuum of interventions for students in need of additional behavior support
- · Regular progress monitoring
- · Data-driven decision-making

All students deserve a safe and supportive school climate with clear expectations and positive reinforcement, but for students who struggle with behavior, this foundation is absolutely essential.

Tier 1 universal supports provide a consistent structure that prevents many behavioral problems in the first place and allows for easier identification of students who truly need strategic or intensive help. Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention programs can then offer additional layers of support, with an increase in the intensity of instruction, feedback, and reinforcement around behavioral expectations.

Without a solid foundation of universal and strategic supports, the "need" for Tier 3 intensive behavior interventions may quickly overwhelm any system you implement. Even worse, students may struggle to improve without the positive climate, strategic skill-building, and orderly, predictable systems that PBIS provides throughout the school, despite efforts to provide intensive intervention.

Resources:

➡ GUIDE: Tier 2 Behavior Intervention Guide

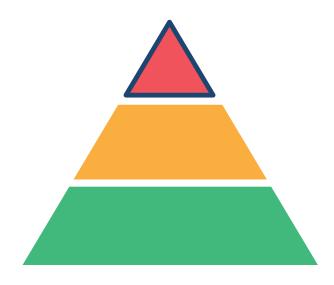
ON-DEMAND WEBINAR: Using Proactive and Preventive Behavioral Strategies in MTSS

Common Characteristics of Students With Intensive Behavior Needs

Students with very disruptive or dangerous behaviors are hard to miss. This is certainly true of those students with aggressive "externalizing" behaviors. Keep in mind, though, that,

students who are so withdrawn (or absent altogether) that they are not able to access instruction are also in need of intensive behavior support.

Students who exhibit missing social, emotional, or behavior skills or who exhibit chronic severe misbehavior or withdrawal should be identified through a screening process and decision



rules, typically by the campus Tier 3 Behavior Intervention Team (or combined Tier 2 / 3 Behavior Team.) Almost always, these students also have academic deficits, either because their behavior has prevented access to instruction, or because their experience of academic failure is a driver of their misbehavior, especially at the secondary level.



Behavior support that is paired with needed academic support is more likely to be effective, especially for secondary students. A whole-child approach allows educators to better understand, prioritize, and collaborate around student needs.

Behaviors that indicate a need for intensive support:

- Verbal aggression
- · Physical aggression
- Elopement
- Chronic withdrawal or isolation
- Chronic truancy

Most of these behaviors cause students to show up as "frequent flyers" in data trends for referrals, suspensions, attendance, and staff requests for assistance. Picture the students with very challenging behavior on your campus...many or most teachers on the campus will know exactly who they are. However, if the behavior is "internalizing" and not causing disruption, such as withdrawal or isolation, the student may fall through the cracks. Social, emotional, and behavioral screening is a must to catch these students and provide the support they need to be successful in school.

Resources:

- **→ GUIDE:** The Social Emotional Learning Guide: SEL within MTSS
- → GUIDE: <u>Using Early Warning Indicators (EWIs) to</u>
 Prevent Student Drop-Out
- → ON-DEMAND WEBINAR: Best Practices for Using SEL Data in MTSS Branching Minds and the DESSA

MTSS vs. Special Education for Students With Behavioral Problems

Behavior intervention within an MTSS is available to all students, regardless of disability status. Students in both the general education and special education population benefit from universal, strategic, and intensive behavior interventions as needed. Special education services, on the other hand, are reserved for students who have been officially identified as having a disability and who need a specialized instruction plan. When a disability related to behavior is suspected, MTSS intervention data can provide a vital source of information during the special education referral and planning process for that student. The goal of an MTSS, together with Special Education, is to provide a full continuum of supports such that all students, including those with behavioral challenges and disabilities, can thrive in school.

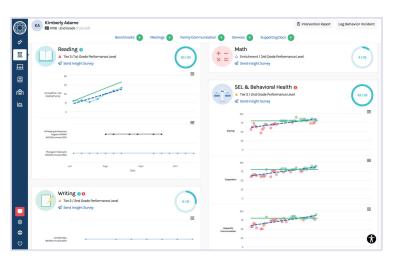


How to Build a Tier 3 Behavior Intervention System

It is important to consider the systems that support staff behavior along with the practices/ interventions that support student behavior. Without an underlying framework for teaming, data collection, and problem-solving, it is unlikely that individual student behavior plans will be carried out successfully or that the overall intervention program will be sustainable. (www.PBIS. org)

The School-Wide PBIS Tiered Fidelity Inventory (Algozzine et al., 2019) is a freely available rubric for both systems and individual student planning. Here are important system features for Tier 3 intervention:

Tier 3 Behavior Intervention Team (or combined Tier 2 & 3 Team): Includes staff members with applied behavioral expertise, administrative authority, multiagency or wrap-around services supports, knowledge of students, and the operations of the school across grade levels and programs including academic intervention. This team will oversee the Tier 3 program, ensure that student plans are carried out, monitor data, and schedule individual



Student Overview in Branching Minds

student support team meetings as needed.

- **Screening:** The Tier 3 team uses universal and targeted screening data along with additional data such as office discipline referrals, Tier 2 intervention data, academic progress, absences, teacher/ family/student nominations, to identify students who require Tier 3 supports.
- Individual Student Support Teams: These are multi-disciplinary teams unique to each student that will design and implement the behavior intervention plan. These teams include school staff, family members and other natural supporters, wrap-around service providers, and the student when possible. Student perspective is vital in creating a plan that works, even if the student is not ready to participate in a team meeting.



Recommended Reading: Lost at School: Why Our Kids with Behavioral Challenges are Falling Through the Cracks and How We Can Help Them



For continued buy-in, teachers need to be regularly informed of progress, successes, and changes in the Tier 3 behavioral intervention program as appropriate. This is an outward recognition that behavior intervention is a team effort and that everyone has a role to play in creating a safe and supportive school

- Staffing: Each student with a behavior support plan needs an assigned person to coordinate and facilitate that plan. Intensive behavior plans typically require a high level of coaching, data collection, family communication, and more – it is the job of the plan coordinator to ensure consistency and fidelity of implementation. See more on staffing for behavior below.
- Professional **Development:** All staff need basic understanding of how to help students with challenging behavior and how the Tier 3 behavior program is structured on their campus. Those who work directly with students with Tier 3 behavioral intervention plans need to be trained in their specific responsibilities. A formal process for teaching and coaching staff on all aspects of intervention delivery must be created to ensure that plans are implemented with fidelity.

Designing Individualized Behavior Support Plans

Individualized behavior support plans must be comprehensive in nature in order to be effective for students with really challenging behavior. That doesn't mean that you will try to fix everything at once! In fact, that might be the least effective thing to do. Instead, it means that whatever behavior the team decides is most important to tackle first, there is a comprehensive plan to help the student change that behavior.

A comprehensive behavior support plan includes:

Mypothesis statement: If the behavior is the smoke, the underlying cause of the behavior is the fire. Address the fire, not the smoke! The "hypothesis statement" is the team's best guess as to what factors are triggering a specific behavior and causing it to continue. Everyone on the team should have some basic training in determining the function of behavior, and at least one person on the team, such as a behavior specialist or school psychologist, should have significant training and expertise to help guide the discussion and provide a clear, operational definition of the problem.



Recommended Reading: The Behavior Code: A Practical Guide to Understanding and Teaching the Most Challenging Students.

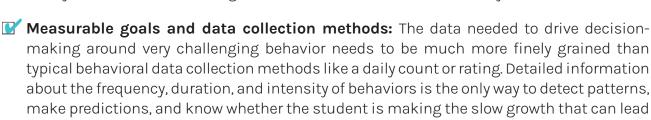
Preventive and proactive strategies for teaching and reinforcing new skills:

This is the meaty part of the plan involving direct services to the student.

The team will ask:

- What can we change in the environment to make the behavior less likely to occur?
- · What new skills and coping strategies does the student need to learn, and how will we teach those skills?
- · How will we motivate the student to use their new skills?
- Consequence planning: While consequences are necessary and a part of life, it is common for consequences to actually reinforce the behavior and make it worse. For example, suspending a student who hates school from school is more likely to increase that behavior than decrease it! Determine how consequences can be used or modified to have a positive impact on behavior going forward, such as incorporating restorative practices, community and campus service, mediation, and diversion courses.
- Wrap-around services: Students with intensive needs typically require outside service providers to coordinate with the work being done by school staff. This includes mental health providers, medical professionals, homeless services, case management, or other community supports.
- Natural supports: Family and community members are a vital link to the child's life outside the school setting and can help provide the connection and consistency needed for the student to "generalize" newly learned skills, that is, to take their new strategies and apply them

widely across different settings in the school, home, and community.





"Unofficial" consequences like a teacher arguing with the student in front of peers can undermine behavior change. Mindful planning for how staff will respond to student moment and as part of the school discipline code the problem worse.

to big changes over time.

- 🗹 A safety plan: How will staff organize to keep this student safe, and how will staff respond in the moment to known dangerous behaviors such as aggression and elopement? In addition to the general campus safety plan, an individualized behavior plan should have a plan for both preventing and responding to specific student behaviors, including deescalation and emergency procedures to keep the student, peers, and staff safe.
- Marking An action plan: Who, what, where, when...HOW? It's the details and the follow-up that will make or break the plan. Include information about specifics in the written plan itself, or if available, make use of your district's MTSS software. An MTSS platform makes it far easier to have plans accessible, assign tasks, and track both plan implementation and student progress. In my case, the Branching Minds platform allowed me to monitor Tier 3 plans at a glance and quickly see where plans were either missing or not being monitored.



Free Downloadable Resource:

- Appendix: Tier 3 Behavior Support Plan Template
 - PDF version
 - Editable Google Doc version



Staffing for Behavior Intervention

Many schools do not have adequate behavioral staff or expertise, although this is changing as campus and district leaders recognize and prioritize behavior support as crucial to improving student outcomes, school safety, and staff retention. When there is a pattern of significant misbehavior, and any time that behavior is very disruptive and dangerous, teachers can not and should not be expected to manage on their own. They need the support of a team, and when it comes to intensive intervention, teachers need direct support from someone with the time and expertise to actually help.

Depending on the size and specific needs of a particular school, a full-time interventionist for behavior may or may not be indicated, but intensive behavior intervention should be a part of someone's job description on every campus so that when the need arises, there is the capacity to provide support. District-level staff can also be extremely helpful in providing an additional set of eyes along with modeling and coaching for staff on how to provide interventions with fidelity.

A Caution With Behavior Staffing:



Unskilled or overwhelmed behavior staff may actually make things WORSE unless they are trained and protected in their role as a positive intervention support, not a hallway "heavy." You can unintentionally escalate student behavior and disciplinary removals if there is a high level of reactive, negative behavior staff interaction with students.

Instead, with appropriate staffing levels and training, behavior staff can move out of a reactive disciplinary mode and focus on what makes a lasting difference for students: a Multi-Tiered System of Supports for Behavior that provides a continuum of proactive behavioral interventions. When professional and paraprofessional staff implement research-based interventions and are on a mission to create a positive and supportive school climate, this is when you see lasting improvement and a change in mindset towards students with behavioral needs.

Resource:

→ BLOG: How To Utilize Behavior Staff Effectively in MTSS/PBIS



Behavior intervention is just hard to manage:

- · You can't always schedule it as you do an academic intervention. You need both proactive skills-instruction time along with unpredictable de-escalation and support.
- Behavior is catching, so grouping students with behavior needs together for intervention often makes things worse.
- Very challenging behavior provokes strong emotions and can lead to understandable negative reactions in staff and other students, including fight or flight.



The staff members responsible for Tier 3 Behavior intervention need protection from "emergency response" mode for issues that don't involve their specific students identified for Tier 3 support. Otherwise, consistency in implementing the behavior plan will quickly fall away, and students with Tier Here are the most important factors:

Designated staff and space

Kids with intensive behavior needs must have a predictable place and people for both planned social skills instruction and unplanned deescalation.

Interventions that are designed for and appropriate for school staff.

School is not a clinical setting, and teachers are not therapists. But school staff can absolutely provide appropriate behavior interventions that support student skill development, and can collaborate with mental health professionals to ensure students have a cohesive plan of care.



Recommended Reading: Interventions, 3rd Edition

Highly responsive monitoring and coaching

By definition, these students need significant instruction, practice, and coaching to learn new patterns of behavior. Real behavior change happens in the context where the behavior was naturally occurring (not the controlled environment of the intervention room), so students need on-thespot coaching in the classroom. Teachers typically cannot provide this level of support while leading a class, so a system for monitoring and coaching is essential. If the teacher or student needs assistance with escalating behavior and no help is available, confidence in the plan will quickly erode.

Example: A highly effective structure in several of the schools I served involved a behavior specialist and aide working as a pair to provide continuous monitoring across the school for the students involved in the Tier 3 behavior support

program. They had eyes on each of their students every 5-15 minutes all day, gathered data, stepped in and coached in the moment when needed, and staffed the behavior room for scheduled social skills lessons and unscheduled cool-downs when one of their students was in crisis. They put miles on their pedometers each day. In fact, it became a contest between behavior staff for the most steps! Teachers and students knew they could trust their team to be there when needed, and students made remarkable progress, exiting the program as new positive behaviors became habits.



Recommended Reading: PASS: A Positive Approach to Student Success

Positive reinforcement for students to use new skills

A reward is technically defined as anything that works to increase the desired behavior. If the behavior isn't improving, you haven't found a real reward yet! Some kids like tangible rewards and treats, some like free time, special privileges, sports or games; it really depends on the specific student. But whatever the reward is, be sure to pair it with positive social interaction and relationship-building activities. Students need to associate their positive behavior with personal connection and a feeling of belonging. CONTINUED

Positive reinforcement for students to use new skills, continued



A reinforcement system can be a point of contention for teachers and parents who don't want to see kids with challenging behaviors "rewarded," but keep in mind that students have developed behavioral patterns over years, and it is difficult to change without a strong incentive. Getting a taste of success along with positive social interactions can provide the momentum needed to build new habits.

Easily accessible plan details and resources

This includes the who, where, what, when, why, and how. Meetings, progress monitoring data, notes, family communications, and wrap-around service information should all be available to the staff members supporting the student. This information should also follow the student if the student changes schools or is placed in a disciplinary alternative setting for a time. Timely communication about student needs and supports in place can prevent regression in student progress and duplicated effort.

Conclusion

A system of intensive behavior intervention is working when the students involved are measurably improving, AND teachers report feeling safe and supported. Challenging behavior is, by definition, challenging and resistant to change, and there are many ways to contain, ignore, or remove students with behavior problems without actually addressing underlying needs. The concerns of staff and students should not be opposed to one another. Everyone in the school environment, students and staff, deserves a climate conducive to teaching and learning. An intensive behavior support system can help you reach that goal.



Behavior & SEL: **Supporting the Whole Child With Branching Minds**



Educators around the country are using Branching Minds to help address students' behavioral needs. Our comprehensive platform empowers school leaders, teachers, and interventionists to seamlessly integrate Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Behavioral Health assessments with academic evaluations, intervention strategies, records of behavioral incidents, progress tracking, and all pertinent correspondence. This integration equips educators with the necessary tools to make informed decisions about students'

requirements, and supports a series of actions that ca students are receiving the type and level of needed sup

"Because of Branching Minds our teachers are finally see the whole child in one place. Not just RTI for academics communication with parents, at-risk coding like homeles, with each other."

> - Pennie Graeber, RTI Coordinator Waco Independent School District • Waco, TX





Understanding Students' Social-Emotional Strengths and Challenges



Using SEL Data to Guide Decision-Making and Planning



Finding and Implementing **Evidence-Based Resources**

Learn more about how Branching Minds can help you support your students

CLICK HERE

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About the Author



Trudy Bender

Trudy Bender is the MTSS Content Manager at Branching Minds. She has extensive experience as a teacher, school psychologist, and district administrator. She previously served as the Coordinator of District Behavior Intervention for Waco ISD, where she led the district in reducing exclusionary discipline practices and disproportionality. She facilitated the implementation of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports for Behavior, including initiatives to improve school climate and universal behavior supports, provide effective Tier 2 and Tier 3 behavior intervention programs, and coordinate wrap-around services and transitional support for students in alternative disciplinary settings. Trudy built a multi-year sequence of teacher training in classroom management, behavior intervention, and peer coaching to help build capacity and address teacher turnover. She is a Restorative Discipline Facilitator and has expertise in building district and campus systems that incorporate restorative practices. She is currently part of an effort to enhance school safety by providing PBIS and restorative practices training for educators throughout Texas. Trudy is a Nationally Certified School Psychologist.

Recommended Reading

Caperton-Brown, H., Poole, J.(2009). <u>PASS: A Positive Approach to Student Success.</u> Pacific Northwest Publishing.

PASS helps school staff serve students with challenging behavior using individualized programming that incorporates best practices such as visual cuing, a high level of monitoring and coaching in the classroom setting, and detailed data collection and analysis. The PASS model helps make intensive intervention practical in the school setting.

Greene, R. W. (2014). <u>Lost at School: Why Our Kids with Behavioral Challenges are</u> Falling Through the Cracks and How We Can Help Them. Scribner.

This book argues that traditional methods of addressing behavior problems in schools are often ineffective and can lead to students feeling alienated and disengaged. The author advocates for a more collaborative approach and provides strategies for involving students in the problem-solving process.

Minahan, J., & Rappaport, N. (2012). <u>The Behavior Code: A Practical Guide to Understanding and Teaching the Most Challenging Students</u>. Harvard Education Press

This book provides strategies for working with students who exhibit challenging behaviors, such as aggression and defiance. The authors discuss the importance of understanding the underlying causes of these behaviors and provide practical strategies for addressing them. The book also includes case studies and real-world examples to illustrate the strategies in action.

Sprick, R., Coughlin, C., Garrison, M., Sprick, J. (2019). <u>Interventions (3rd. Ed.):</u> <u>Support for Individual Students with Behavior Challenges</u>. Ancora Publishing.

This book provides information on how to plan and implement evidence-based, tiered strategies to increase motivation and improve behavior. It focuses both on schoolwide systems and individual interventions to serve students with behavior challenges. All behavior strategies and interventions included are designed for the school setting.



AppendixTier 3 Behavior Support Plan

Intervention History and Summary of Student Needs					
What are the student's strengths and interests?					
Summarize Teacher Concerns *Use Insight Survey results if available					
Previous Interventions Briefly summarize what was done, effectiveness					
Does the student require academic support? If yes, describe					
How does the student describe the problem?					
What are the goals of the student/student's family?					
Context and Function of the	e Behavior				
Briefly describe the highest priority problem behavior(s):					
Provide 2-3 specific examples of this behavior:					
Possible triggers for the priority behavior (check all that apply):	☐ Independent work ☐ Unstructured time ☐ Whole group instruction ☐ Small group activities ☐ Illness, pain, discomfort ☐ Change of routine	☐ Transitions ☐ Lack of sleep, hunger ☐ Peers present ☐ After corrective consequences ☐ Hunger ☐ Other:			

Context and Function of the Behavior, continued				
Where and when do the problems tend to occur?				
What do adults and/or peers do immediately after the problem behavior occurs?				
Are there certain situations or activities that the student is motivated to avoid or escape?				
Does the student lack certain skills or an awareness of their behaviors that may be contributing to the problem?				
What strategies have helped in the past? (see intervention history)				
Hypothesis Statement				
Operational definition of the specific behavior:				
Possible function of this behavior:	Trying to get something ☐ Seeking adult attention ☐ Seeking peer attention ☐ Seeking access to activities/ tangibles	Trying to avoid something □ Avoiding non-preferred activities □ Avoiding peer interactions □ Avoiding adult interactions □ Avoiding a location Skill deficits □ Lacking awareness □ Lacking physical/ developmental ability		
SMART goal for improvement:				

Behavior Plan

Structure: What changes could decrease triggers and increase the likelihood of success? Consider function of behavior.

Removing "rewards" for problem behavior: Based on the function of behavior, how will existing reinforcement for problem behavior be addressed? For example, getting out of non-preferred tasks, avoiding adult attention, or whatever might be motivating the student to continue the problem behavior.

Skill Development: Identify replacement behaviors, social skills, and coping strategies

Data Collection: Identify specific measure and method for gathering and analyzing data.

Positive Interactions and Relationship Building: How can positive Interactions be increased for this student?

Correction Planning: What correction strategies will be used/not used?

Reward System: How will the student be motivated to change behavior? Consider function of behavior.

Safety & Support Network					
Safety Plan: How will the campus respond to dangerous behaviors in the moment?					
Natural Supports: How will family/natural supporters (mentor, coach, etc.) be involved and informed?					
Wrap-Around Supports: Contact Person for Wrap-around Supports:					
What services are currently in place?					
What additional supports are needed?					
How will communication and collaboration occur?					

Action Plan*				
Specify who, what, where, when, and how for each part of the plan. Include any resources needed.				
Task	Details			
*Note: If using Branching Minds, the active intervention plan(s) created in the platform based on this document				
Student Overview Page for referer	ner plan is needed. Attach a dated pdf or protected link of this document to the noce.			
Team Members in Attendance*				
Today Homboro III Accordance				
*Note: If using Branching Minds, S	taff Members that created this plan are documented in Meetings.			

About the Branching Minds solution:

Branching Minds is an MTSS system-level education platform that brings together innovative, easy to use technology with the latest insights from the learning sciences to help drive student and school success, while making teachers and administrators work easier and more effective. Branching Minds connects data, systems, interventions, and stakeholders so that educators, administrators, and families can work better together to support students' holistic needs.

With the Branching Minds partnership, we are gaining both a thought partner who will help us enhance all of our MTSS practices, structures and approach, and a platform that will help make the work easier and more efficient for all of our educators at CMS - from classroom teachers and support staff to school and district administrators.

— Dr. Frank Barnes Chief Accountability Officer at Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools



Branching Minds Helps Educators

Understand school health and wellness across the district Target approach to strengthen Behavior/SEL intervention practice Avoid overidentification or underreferral of student subgroups



