Prevention Matters Initiative

In January 2018, the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation (the Foundation) launched *Prevention Matters,* a $12 million grant initiative to help schools in Marion County, Indiana, identify, implement, and sustain evidence-based substance use prevention programs.

In March 2018, the Foundation awarded 44 planning grants to Marion County school corporations; archdiocese deaneries; charter school networks; private school organizations; and individual, single-site charter, private, and Innovation Network schools.[1] Organizations used these planning grants to identify the most appropriate evidence-based substance use prevention programs for their students from a list curated by the Foundation[2] and to develop plans for effective and sustainable implementation. Although schools' prevention programs varied, at their core, the evidence-based prevention programs included in this curated list taught students resiliency skills—such as conflict resolution and decision-making—that aim to help them avoid substance use.

The Foundation awarded implementation grants to 29 planning grant recipients later in 2018 to support three years of program implementation. In summer 2019, two grantees withdrew from the initiative, resulting in 27 grantees. Each grant was led by a grant director, who oversaw prevention program implementation in as many as 38 schools across Marion County. Implementers at each school were responsible for delivering the prevention programming to students, either as separate lessons or integrated into existing lessons.

Impact of COVID-19 on *Prevention Matters*

In March 2020, Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett ordered all Marion County school buildings, public and private, to close because of the COVID-19 pandemic. School buildings remained closed through the end of the school year.

Schools shifted to virtual instruction, which required grantees to modify their *Prevention Matters* implementation strategies. The Foundation engaged program developers to gather guidance and resources for implementing remotely and for involving families in programming.

During the 2021–2022 school year, all *Prevention Matters* schools provided in-person learning; a few offered live/synchronous virtual learning for students exposed to COVID-19 who could not attend school or during select times when the COVID-19 rates were too high. However, the impact of COVID-19 was far less in this final year of the grant than in the 2019–2020 and 2020–2021 school years.

Although the *Prevention Matters* initiative was originally intended to conclude after three years, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Foundation offered all grantees a chance to apply for

[1] Innovation Network schools are public schools in the Indianapolis Public Schools district that operate with the authority to make decisions about all aspects of their school, both academic and operational.
[2] The Foundation contracted with prevention experts at the Indiana Prevention Resource Center at Indiana University Bloomington (https://iprc.iu.edu/) to develop the list of evidence-based programs.

additional funds to continue their initiatives for a fourth year. Twenty-four grantees continued implementation during the 2021–2022 school year and reached an estimated 69,622 students. In Year 4, grantees built on the implementation momentum gained in Year 3 when schools reopened for in-person learning. Grantees also focused on planning for sustainability.

Evaluation Methodology

RTI International was contracted by the Foundation to conduct an independent, mixed-methods evaluation of the *Prevention Matters* initiative. Table ES-1 provides an overview of the data collected and analyzed and the methods used in the evaluation.

Table ES-1. Overview of *Prevention Matters* Evaluation Methodology, Years 1–4

Research Aims	Data Source	Sample Size[a]	School Years Included in This Report	Analytic Approach
1. What did grant directors do to implement their prevention programming in schools?	Grant director survey	Survey: 24 grant directors	2018–2019 (Year 1) 2019–2020 (Year 2) 2020–2021 (Year 3) 2021–2022 (Year 4)	Survey: Frequencies Two-tailed t-tests χ^2 test
2. How did implementation progress?	Grant director interviews	Interviews: 10 grant directors	Interviews: 2021–2022 (Year 4)	Interviews: Deductive and inductive coding in NVivo
3. What role and experiences did implementers have implementing prevention programming?	Implementer survey	1,742 program implementers	2018–2019 (Year 1) 2019–2020 (Year 2) 2020–2021 (Year 3) 2021–2022 (Year 4)	Survey: Frequencies Two-tailed t-tests χ^2 test
	Classroom observations	135 in-person and virtual	Observations: 2021–2022 (Year 4)	Observations: Frequencies
4. Are the prevention programs implemented with high quality with a focus on curriculum adherence, dosage, and student engagement and understanding?	Implementer survey	1,742 program implementers	2018–2019 (Year 1) 2019–2020 (Year 2) 2020–2021 (Year 3) 2021–2022 (Year 4)	Surveys: Frequencies Two-tailed t-tests χ^2 test Grantee-collected data: Pre-post school-level–matched data Meta-analytic approach for analysis
	Grantee-collected data	Varied by year and measure		
	Grant director survey	24 grant directors		
	Classroom observations	135 in-person and virtual	2021–2022 (Year 4)	Observations: Frequencies

Research Aims	Data Source	Sample Size[a]	School Years Included in This Report	Analytic Approach
5. How did prevention programming affect students' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors?	Grantee-collected data	Varied by year and measure	2018–2019 (Year 1) 2019–2020 (Year 2) 2020–2021 (Year 3) 2021–2022 (Year 4)	Disciplinary action measures are examined annually All other variables are pre-post school-level–matched data Meta-analytic approach for analysis
6. How did substance use and substance-use correlates[b] change during the time frame that *Prevention Matters* was implemented?	INYS	5 grantees, 28 participating schools	2018–2019 (Year 1) 2019–2020 (Year 2) 2021–2022 (Year 4)	Year-to-year Meta-analytic approach Pairwise school-level comparison
7. How did prevention programming affect students' achievement and behavior?	IDOE	Varies based on the outcome and the year	Pre-intervention years: School years 2013–2014 through 2017–2018 Intervention years: 2018–2019 (Year 1) 2019–2020 (Year 2) 2020–2021 (Year 3) 2021–2022 (Year 4)	Interrupted time series models with comparison group schools
8. How did prevention programming affect students' academic proficiency?	IDOE ILEARN data	Varies based on the outcome and the year	Pre-intervention years: School years 2015–2016 through 2017–2018 Intervention years: 2018–2019 (Year 1) 2020–2021 (Year 3) 2021–2022 (Year 4)	Interrupted time series models with comparison group schools

Note. IDOE, Indiana Department of Education; ILEARN, Indiana Learning Evaluation Assessment Readiness Network; INYS, Indiana Youth Survey.

[a] Unless otherwise noted, sample size refers to the Year 4 sample only.

[b] Correlates of substance use are reported as perceived risk of harm and personal substance use norms. Perceived risk of harm measures factors like how likely students think they or others are to experience negative outcomes if they engage in substance use. Personal substance use norms measure the extent to which students feel it is wrong to use substances.

In Year 4 of the *Prevention Matters* evaluation, RTI collected four complementary data sets to help describe implementation of the initiative:

- A web-based survey of directors from 24 *Prevention Matters* grant projects
- Telephone interviews with a sample of 10 grant directors
- A web-based survey of 1,742 program implementers
- In-person and virtual classroom observations (135 total) with 12 selected grantees at 72 schools

RTI also compiled and analyzed three data sets to assess the impact of *Prevention Matters* on student outcomes: (1) grantee-collected data on substance use and associated risk and protective factors; (2) school-level data on substance use and associated risks from the Indiana Youth Survey (INYS); and (3) school-level academic achievement, student behavior, and standardized testing from the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE).

Unlike previous annual evaluation reports, the Year 4 *Prevention Matters* evaluation examines data from Year 4 and compares them to Year 3 data, and in some instances to data from Years 2 and 1. The goal of this report is to summarize and offer a broad comparison of grantees' progress over the duration of the grant initiative.

Methodological Limitations

It is important to note that the data collection and analysis methods for any evaluation have limitations. For the *Prevention Matters* evaluation, limitations include the use of mostly self-reported data. Additionally, measures derived from INYS data and IDOE data are reported for all students in a school, regardless of whether they participated in *Prevention Matters*, and the INYS data reflect only a small portion of *Prevention Matters* schools (28 schools). Furthermore, although the evaluation examines impact by measuring changes in student outcomes, the analysis of changes in student outcomes is not designed to establish causation. Last, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, schools moved between virtual and in-person learning multiple times during Years 2, 3, and 4. The resulting changes in learning mode complicated the collection and interpretation of data for Years 2 and 3.

Implementation

1.1 Prevention Programs. The Foundation provided *Prevention Matters* planning grantees with a list of 25 evidence-based substance use prevention programs that they could implement for the initiative. Grantees each implemented one or two of the programs from this list. Table ES-2 shows the nine prevention programs that grant directors reported implementing in Year 4.[3] Across all grantees, grant directors reported implementing a total of 41 programs.

Table ES-2. Number of Implementing Grantees by Program, Year 4

Program	Grantees[a] (N = 24)
Conscious Discipline	2
Curriculum-Based Support Group	2
Good Behavior Game	1
Botvin LifeSkills Training	7
PATHS	1
Positive Action	1
Second Step Elementary	13
Second Step Middle	11
Too Good for Drugs	2
Other[b]	1
Total	41

Note. PATHS = Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies.

[a] As reported in the grant director survey. Actual number of programs offered may be higher because respondents may not have reported on all *Prevention Matters* programs offered by their organizations.

[b] One grantee reported "Other" as a way of characterizing its organization's alternative implementation model. This grantee did not implement a program other than the nine approved programs included in the table.

1.2 Type of Instruction. Many *Prevention Matters* programs are designed to be delivered via full-class instruction. Others are intended to be used with small groups. Across all four years of the grant, grant director interviewees described a variety of implementation approaches and settings. All grant directors indicated that they delivered programming in person during Year 4.

1.3 Role of Implementers. Implementers' roles in the school, along with their prior experience teaching, could influence the quality of program implementation and the integration of program lessons into other subjects or topics. Across all four years of the initiative, the most common role listed by implementers in their surveys was general education teacher of multiple subjects, followed by general education teacher of a single subject other than physical education, health, or wellness. In Year 4, these percentages were 71% and 21%, respectively. Most implementers (83%) had some experience delivering their specific prevention program before the 2021–2022 school year.

1.4 Program Integration, Coordination, and Alignment. Many grant directors perceived that integrating *Prevention Matters* programming more thoroughly into the school community was important for building sustainability and achieving positive student outcomes. Another avenue for integrating prevention programs more fully within a school was to expand the recipients of

[3] Grantees selected 10 total options focusing on nine programs.

program training to include non-implementing staff who regularly interact with students. In Year 1, when grantees were implementing programs for the first time, 92% of grant directors provided this type of education to non-implementing staff. By Year 4, more than half (58%) of grantees continued to offer training to non-implementing staff. The majority of grantees (100% in Year 1 and 88% in Year 4) agreed that substance use prevention programming was consistent with their organization's mission. Furthermore, some grant directors interviewed described the important role *Prevention Matters* content played during the pandemic, particularly during Years 2 and 3. These grant directors described the lessons' focus on problem-solving and emotional regulation skills as critical to helping teachers and students face pandemic-related challenges.

Implementers reported a significant increase in how often they referenced program content with students outside of their designated prevention program class time—that is, in how frequently they integrated *Prevention Matters* programming more thoroughly into the school community. In Year 4, almost a third (32%) of implementers reported often mentioning *Prevention Matters* content with students outside of the program; in Year 1, only 29% of implementers often mentioned this content. Furthermore, in Year 4, more implementers strongly agreed or agreed that social-emotional programming was consistent with their school's mission than in Year 1 (92% and 89%, respectively).

1.5 Implementation Progress. By Year 4, implementation progress included numerous successes and was dotted with only a few challenges—some of which were experienced during all four years of implementation. In that final year, 93% of implementers reported that they had already completed or expected to complete program session implementation by the end of the year (compared to 88% in Year 3).[4] Some grant directors interviewed in Year 4 agreed with this assessment.

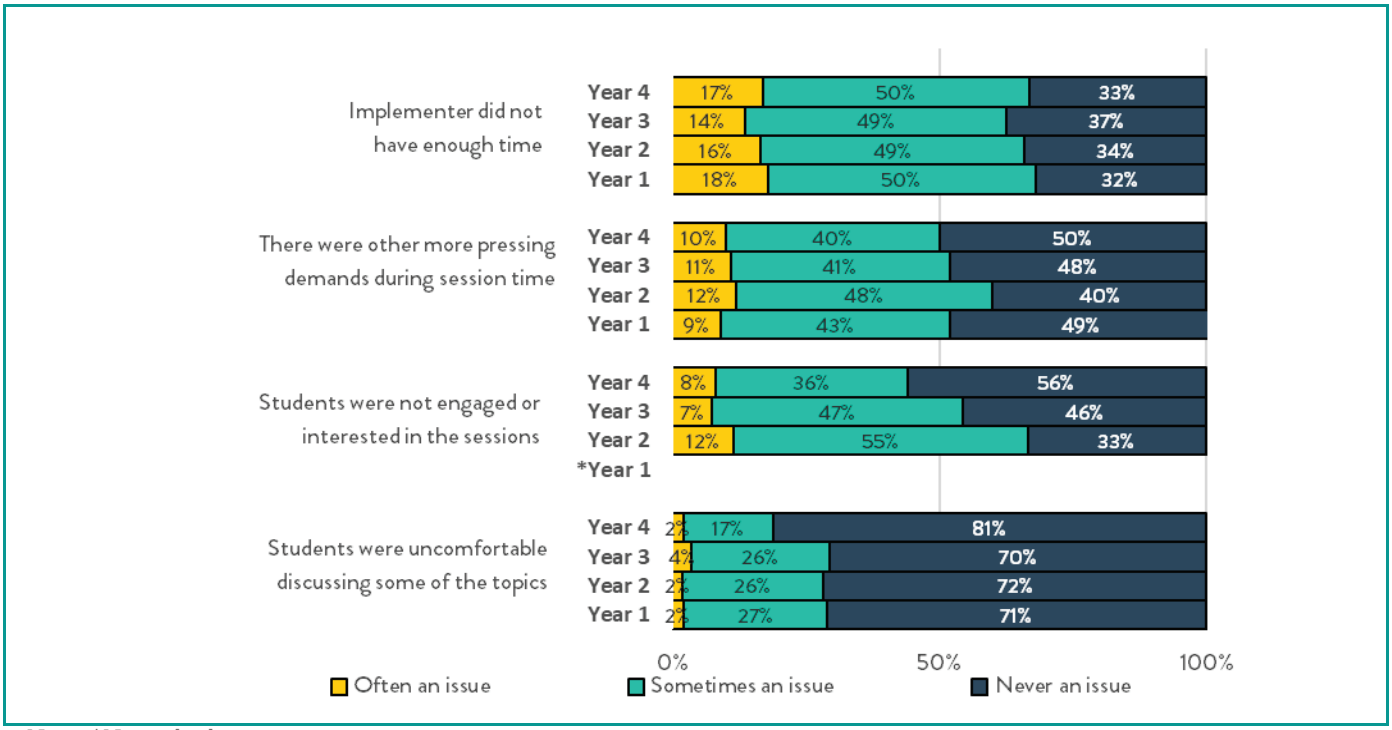
Other grant directors described improvements in their implementation approach and program delivery over the four years of the grant. Staffing was the most common implementation facilitator mentioned by grant directors who were interviewed. More specifically, staffing consistency—having the same staff teach the program for multiple years—helped the program gain momentum in many schools. (At the same time, however, grant directors in their interviews and survey [22%, n = 4] indicated that heavy staff turnover was a key implementation barrier.)

Figure ES-1 summarizes implementers' perceived implementation challenges that were not specifically related to COVID-19,[5] taken from the implementer survey. In Year 4, two-thirds of implementers either sometimes (50%) or often (17%) felt they did not have enough time to implement. These responses are similar to those in Year 1 (68%) and a slight increase from those in Years 2 and 3 (65% and 63%, respectively). In a similar vein, half of Year 4 implementers either

[4] The implementer survey was fielded during an earlier time frame in Year 1 than in Years 2, 3, and 4. This change in time frame could account for some differences when data are compared across years.
[5] The COVID-19 pandemic took place during Years 2, 3, and 4 of the *Prevention Matters* initiative and affected school context and implementers' experiences.

sometimes (40%) or often (10%) felt there were other, more pressing demands during session time. These responses reflect a decrease from Year 1 and Year 2 (52% and 60%, respectively).

Figure ES-1. Frequency of Implementation Issues, Comparing All Four Years



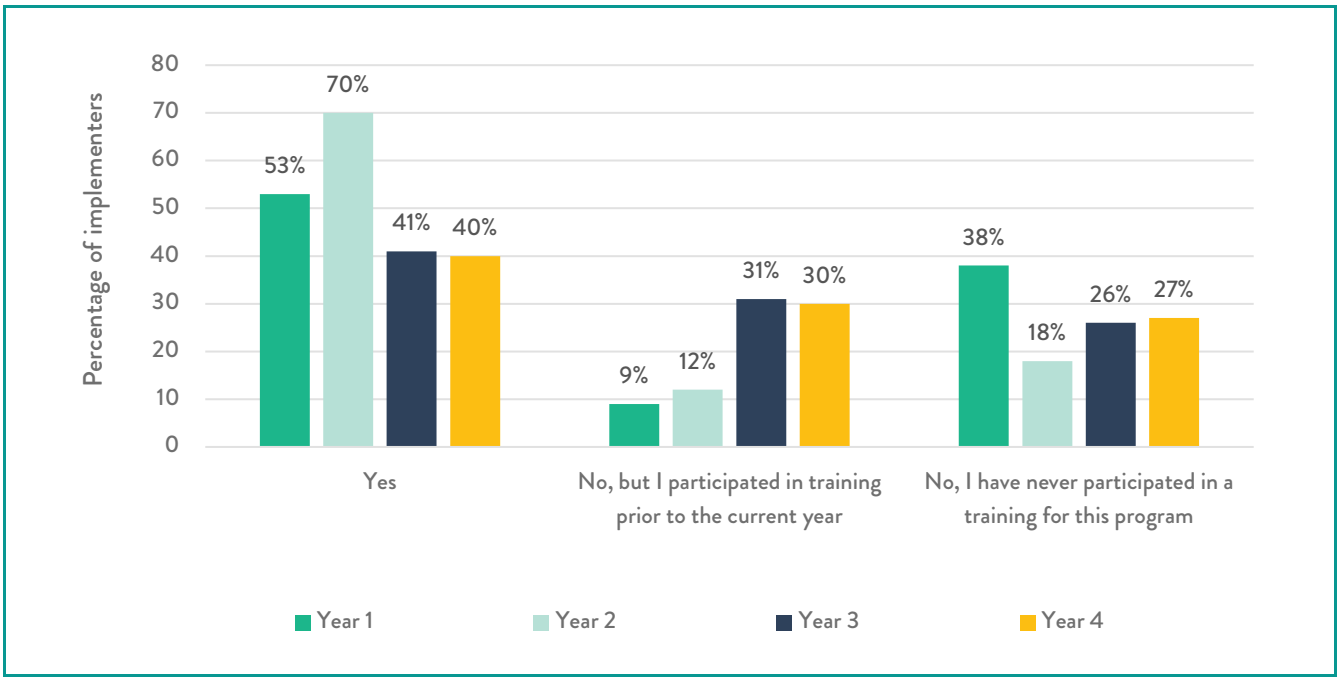
Note. *Not asked.

Implementer feedback also highlighted the pressure of competing demands for limited time—including class time and training time—for *Prevention Matters* programming. Specifically, the percentage of implementers who said they had enough or a little less than enough time to implement their programs decreased significantly, from 73% in Year 3 to 68% in Year 4. Grant directors echoed implementers' concerns and indicated that fitting programming into their schedules when faced with competing demands—such as meeting academic goals, holding physical education classes, or providing students with morning meals—was a challenge.

1.6 Implementer Training and Implementation Quality. The evidence basis for the prevention programs that grantees selected assumed that the programs would be implemented as designed. As a result, RTI's evaluation examines implementation quality using measures of curriculum adherence; dosage, or whether students received sufficient exposure to the program; and student engagement in the programming.

Training was one method for ensuring implementation quality among implementers. Figure ES-2 shows the percentage of implementers who received program training in each of the four evaluation years. The percentage of implementers who at the time of the survey reported never having received program training remained consistent in Years 3 and 4 (26% and 27%) but was lower than in Year 1 (38%).

Figure ES-2. All Implementer Reports of Training, Years 1–4



Grant directors also observed implementers to assess quality and fidelity of implementation. Across all four years, at least half of grant directors reported that someone from grant leadership had observed at least some program implementation.

1.6.1 Student Engagement. A key implementation quality measure is student engagement with the *Prevention Matters* curriculum. During all four years of the grant, student engagement remained consistent, with implementers reporting that 50–56% of students were fully or almost fully engaged in the programming (Table ES-3).

Table ES-3. In-Person Student Engagement, Years 1–4

In-Person Student Engagement	Percentage of Implementers			
	Year 1 % (n = 965)	Year 2 % (n = 1,633)	Year 3 % (n = 1,497)	Year 4 % (n = 1,624)
Fully	11	9	11	9
Almost fully	42	41	45	43
Somewhat	40	40	37	40
Barely	5	9	5	6
Not at all/bored	1	2	2	2

As highlighted in Figure ES-1, in Year 4, fewer implementers reported sometimes (36%) or often (8%) having an issue with students who were not engaged or interested in the sessions than in Year 3 (47% sometimes, 7% often) or Year 2 (55% sometimes, 12% often). Only 19% of Year 4 implementers reported that students were sometimes (17%) or often (2%) uncomfortable discussing some of the prevention topics. This was a considerable decline from Year 1, when 29% of implementers reported students were sometimes (27%) or often (2%) uncomfortable discussing some topics. Furthermore, RTI classroom observations of student engagement showed that students clearly participated in discussions in 65% of observed classes, participated in one or more classroom activities in 87% of observed classes, and worked well with their peers in 88% of the observed classes. Nevertheless, from Year 3 to Year 4, implementers reported a statistically significant decline in student engagement (from 2.58 to 2.50). Table ES-4 illustrates this decline.

Table ES-4. Student Engagement in Years 3–4, Overall and by Implementer Training Participation and Experience

Students' Mean Scores, as Reported by Implementers	Year 3 (n = 1,490)	Year 4 (n = 1,624)	Implementer Participated in Training in Year 4 (n = 1,625)		Returning Implementers in Year 4	New Implementers In Year 4
			Yes	No		
Engagement[a]	2.58	2.50†	2.58*	2.31	2.54^	2.33

Note. [a] Student engagement included in-person instruction only. 0 = not at all engaged/bored, 1 = barely engaged, 2 = somewhat engaged, 3 = almost fully engaged, 4 = fully engaged. Data in this table include the second decimal place to differentiate the mean scores in Years 3.
*Statistically significant at $p < .05$ between implementers who participated in training and those who did not.
†Statistically significant at $p < .05$ between Year 4 and Year 3 implementer survey responses.
^ Statistically significant at $p < .05$ between returning and new implementer survey responses.

Table ES-4 also shows that student engagement was significantly associated with implementer training in Year 4. Implementers who participated in training reported significantly higher student engagement (2.58) than did implementers who did not participate in training (2.31). Furthermore, in Year 4, returning implementers were significantly more likely than new implementers to engage students (2.54 and 2.33, respectively).

1.6.2. Implementation Fidelity. RTI examined differences in fidelity across curricula and modes of delivery. Table ES-5 shows four fidelity measures for each of five *Prevention Matters* programs with sufficient data. Implementers of Second Step in elementary grades, the largest group of implementers, had higher-than-average scores across all fidelity indicators, whereas implementers of Second Step in middle schools, the second largest group of implementers, had lower-than-average scores for participant engagement and understanding. Also, implementers of Conscious Discipline had lower-than-average scores across all fidelity indicators. It is possible that the fidelity questions were more relevant for a curriculum-based intervention than for an intervention like

Conscious Discipline, which is designed to change school practices and does not have discrete lessons. For example, for curriculum-based interventions, student engagement and understanding are reported for the discrete times during which a program is being taught, whereas Conscious Discipline implementers may be reporting on student engagement and understanding across all subjects and the entire school day.

Table ES-5. Implementation Fidelity by Program, Year 4

Program	Fidelity Indicator, Difference from Mean of All Other Programs			
	Curriculum Adherence[a]	Expected Completion	Student Engagement[b]	Student Understanding[b]
Conscious Discipline	↓	↓	↓	↓
Botvin LifeSkills Training	—	—	—	—
PATHS	—	↓	—	—
Second Step Elementary	↑	↑	↑	↑
Second Step Middle	—	—	↓	↓

Note. PATHS = Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies. To protect respondent privacy, values for programs with only one reporting school or fewer than five reporting implementers are not reported. As such, Curriculum-Based Support Group, Good Behavior Game, Ripple Effects, and Too Good for Drugs were excluded.

↑ = Significantly higher than mean for all other programs.

↓ = Significantly lower than mean for all other programs.

— = No difference between the mean of the measure for the given program and the mean for other programs.

[a] Curriculum adherence was measured as the percentage of lessons in the curriculum that implementers administered in their classrooms.

[b] To allow for the most accurate comparison to previous years, in Years 3 and 4 student engagement and understanding were included only during in-person instruction.

In Year 4, RTI field staff conducted 135 classroom observations in randomly selected *Prevention Matters* classrooms—where lessons-based programs were implemented—to obtain general measures of implementation quality, including effective teaching strategies. Table ES-6 presents these data. Overall, conveying the objective of the lesson was clearly evident for 80% of observations and partially evident for 9%. Furthermore, explaining concepts clearly and coherently was clearly evident for 91% of observations and partially evident for 9%. Conversely, implementers clearly related the content to students' experience in 30% of observations, but this strategy was not evident in 44% of observations in which it would have been applicable. Using wait times was clearly evident in 12% of observations and not evident in 39% of observations in which it would have been applicable. Thus, most *Prevention Matters* implementers who were observed were more likely to convey the objectives of the lesson and explain concepts clearly and coherently than they were to relate content to students' experiences or use wait times. These teaching strategies that were less evident could be areas of focus for future implementer training.

Table ES-6. Observed Use of Teaching Strategies

Effective Teaching Strategies†	n	Clearly Evident %	Partially Evident %	Not Evident %
Conveys objective of lesson	132	80	9	11
Explains concepts clearly and coherently	135	91	9	0
Relates content to students' experiences	135	30	27	44
Uses wait time	130	12	48	39

Percentages for clearly evident, partially evident, and not evident were calculated after not applicable responses were removed from the total. n = number of observations after removal of not applicable responses.
† Not all percentages add to 100% because of rounding.

Sustainability

For most grantees, *Prevention Matters* grant funding ended in Year 4. Understanding grantees' future prevention programming plans offers insights into the sustainability of the Foundation's efforts. Grant directors indicated that among the 41 programs implemented by grantees in Year 4, 78% of these programs (32 programs) will definitely continue. Only one program will not continue after *Prevention Matters* funding ends. Furthermore, grant directors were asked about their involvement with nine facets of sustainability planning. These data were used to calculate a sustainability planning index that ranged from 0 to 4, with 4 being high. In Year 4, grant directors reported an increase from Year 1 (1.99 and 1.65, respectively) in sustainability planning across all nine areas (Table ES-7). Also, grant directors scored their determination of how their program aligns with the mission and goals of potential future stakeholders significantly more highly in Year 4 than in Year 1 (2.59 and 1.92, respectively).

Table ES-7. Sustainability Planning Scores, Years 1 and 4

Area of Sustainability Planning	Year 1	Year 4
Determine the funds needed to sustain *Prevention Matters* programs	2.17 (n = 24)	2.52 (n = 23)
Determine how the program aligns with the mission and goals of potential future stakeholders	1.92 (n = 24)	2.59* (n = 22)
Identify key stakeholders who might support the program	1.83 (n = 23)	2.52 (n = 21)
Make the program a line item in the budget of your organization, schools, or community	1.82 (n = 23)	2.35 (n = 20)
Present outcome data to potential stakeholders (e.g., school board members, principals, parents)	1.71 (n = 24)	2.19 (n = 21)
Secure funds by applying for additional grants	1.65 (n = 23)	1.86 (n = 22)
Discuss with local leaders how the program relates to the community's overall prevention needs	1.61 (n = 23)	1.71 (n = 21)
Secure funds from sources other than grants	1.57 (n = 23)	2.00 (n = 21)
Turn over ownership of the program to the community, schools, or other organizations	1.00 (n = 23)	1.39 (n = 23)
Total score	1.65	1.99

Note. Grant directors' responses to their survey were used to calculate a sustainability planning index that ranged from 0 to 4, with 4 being high.
* Indicates change was statistically significant ($p \leq .05$) in comparing Year 4 to Year 1.

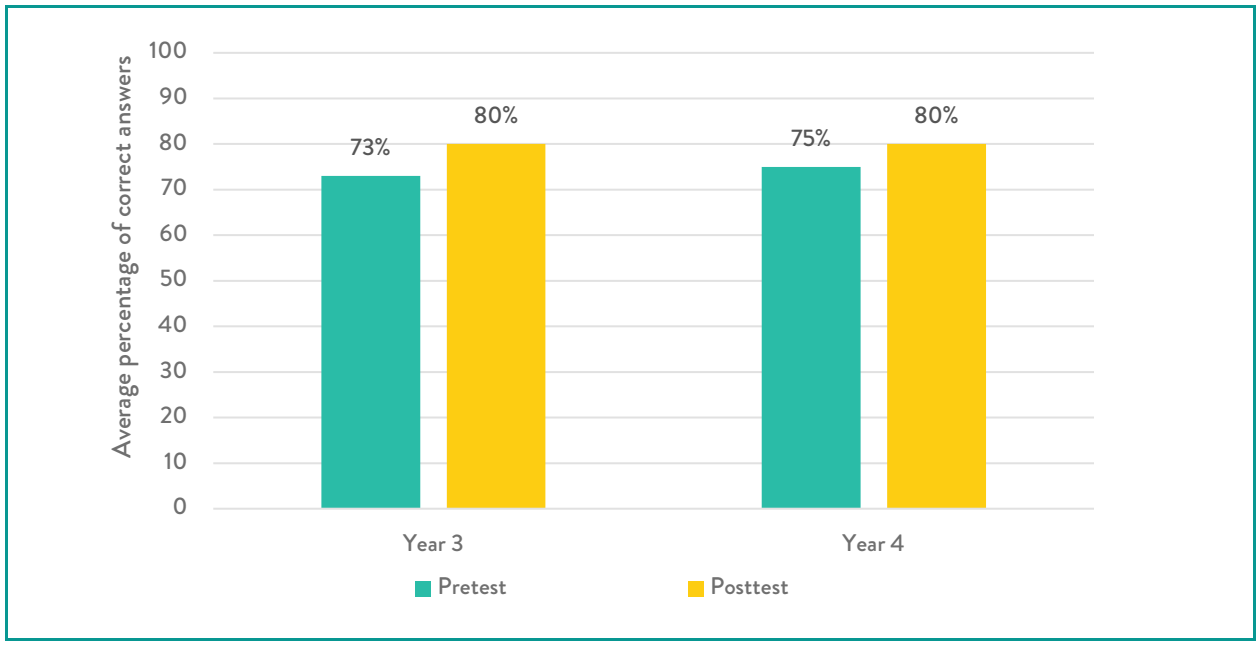
Among implementers surveyed, sustaining the program lessons into the future was positively correlated with three measures that examined the program fit at the schools and with eight measures of perceived program impact. Compared to implementers who did not wish to continue implementing or who were unsure about continuing, those who wanted to continue their programs reported significantly better ratings on these 11 metrics.

Impact

To measure the impact of *Prevention Matters* programming, RTI examined pretest and posttest data collected by grantees. Students participating in *Prevention Matters* programs had a significant increase in curriculum knowledge in Years 3 and 4 after completing their school's prevention program. As shown in Figure ES-3, on average, students answered 73% of curriculum knowledge questions correctly at pretest in Year 3 and 75% at pretest in Year 4. At posttest in Years 3 and 4, the

percentage of correct responses to curriculum knowledge questions had statistically significantly increased, to 80%.

Figure ES-3. Student Curriculum Knowledge Increased from Pretest to Posttest in Years 3–4



Note. Difference between pretest and posttest is statistically significant ($p < .05$).

Table ES-8 presents implementers' perceptions of students' understanding, measured using a mean score of 0 to 4, with 4 being excellent or complete understanding. Unlike student curriculum knowledge, according to implementers, the mean scores for student understanding decreased significantly from Year 3 to Year 4 (3.00 and 2.91, respectively). Despite this decline, these data show that student understanding was significantly associated with implementer training in Year 4. Implementers who participated in training reported significantly higher student understanding (2.96) than did implementers who did not participate in training (2.79). Furthermore, in Year 4, returning implementers were significantly more likely than new implementers to have students understand the materials (2.95 and 2.72, respectively).

Table ES-8. Student Understanding in Years 3–4, Overall and by Implementer Training Participation and Experience

Students' Mean Scores, as Reported by Implementers	Year 3 (n = 1,490)	Year 4 (n = 1,624)	Implementer Participated in Training in Year 4 (n = 1,625)		Returning Implementers in Year 4	New Implementers in Year 4
			Yes	No		
Understanding[a]	3.00	2.91†	2.96*	2.79	2.95^	2.72

[a] Student understanding included in-person instruction only. 0 = did not understand, 1 = poor understanding, 2 = fair understanding, 3 = good understanding, 4 = excellent/complete understanding. Data in this table include the second decimal place to differentiate the mean scores in Years 3.

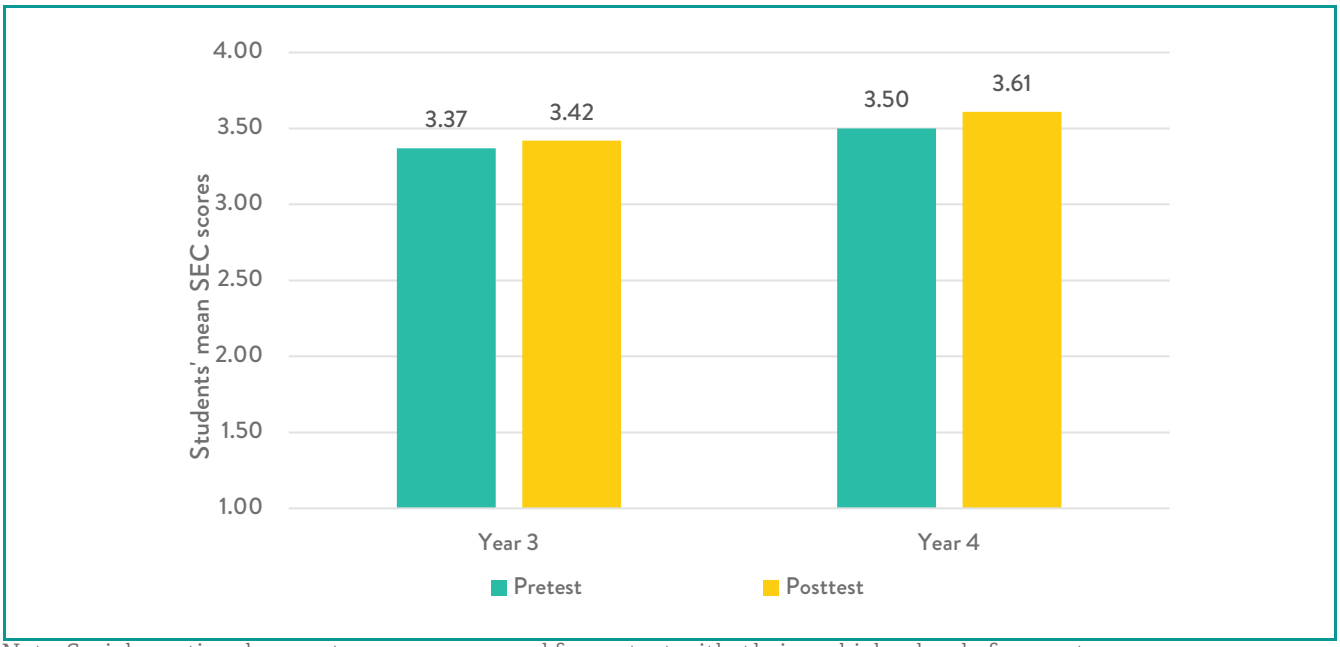
*Statistically significant at $p < .05$ between implementers that participated in training and those that did not.

† Statistically significant at $p < .05$ between Year 4 and Year 3 implementer survey responses.

^ Statistically significant at $p < .05$ between returning and new implementer survey responses.

Students' social-emotional competence increased significantly after participation in *Prevention Matters* programming. Furthermore, research links such competence to reduced substance use and increased self-confidence. Social-emotional competence scores, which range from 1 to 5, increased significantly from pre- to posttest in Year 3 (mean score at pretest, 3.37; at posttest, 3.42) and Year 4 (3.50 and 3.61, respectively; Figure ES-4).

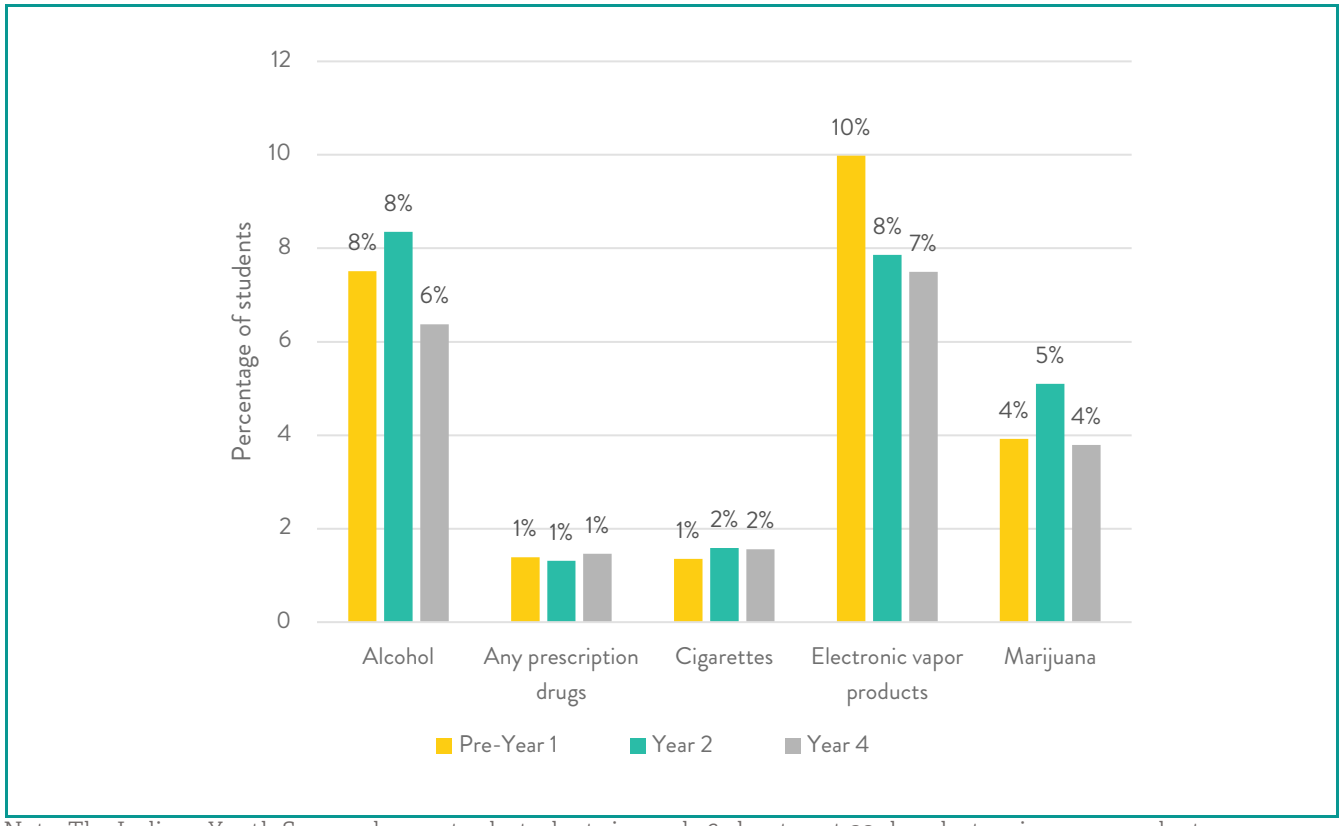
Figure ES-4. Students' Mean Social-Emotional Competence Scores, Pretest to Posttest, in Years 3–4



Note. Social-emotional competence scores ranged from 1 to 5, with 5 being a higher level of competency. The difference between pretest and posttest is statistically significant ($p < .05$).

To measure substance use, RTI used INYS student self-reports of past-30-day use of each of five different substances. Figure ES-5 shows the changes from 2018 (Pre-Year 1) to 2020 (Year 2) and then to 2022 (Year 4) in the percentage of students who reported having used each substance in the 30 days before completing the INYS. These percentages reflect all students who attend the 28 *Prevention Matters* grantee schools, not just those receiving a *Prevention Matters*–funded program. Across the substances examined over these three time periods, only students' self-reported alcohol use decreased during the *Prevention Matters* initiative; alcohol use decreased from 8% in 2020 to 6% in 2022, which was statistically significant.[6]

Figure ES-5. Percentage of Students in 28 *Prevention Matters* Schools Who Reported Past-30-Day Substance Use, Pre-Year 1, Year 2, and Year 4



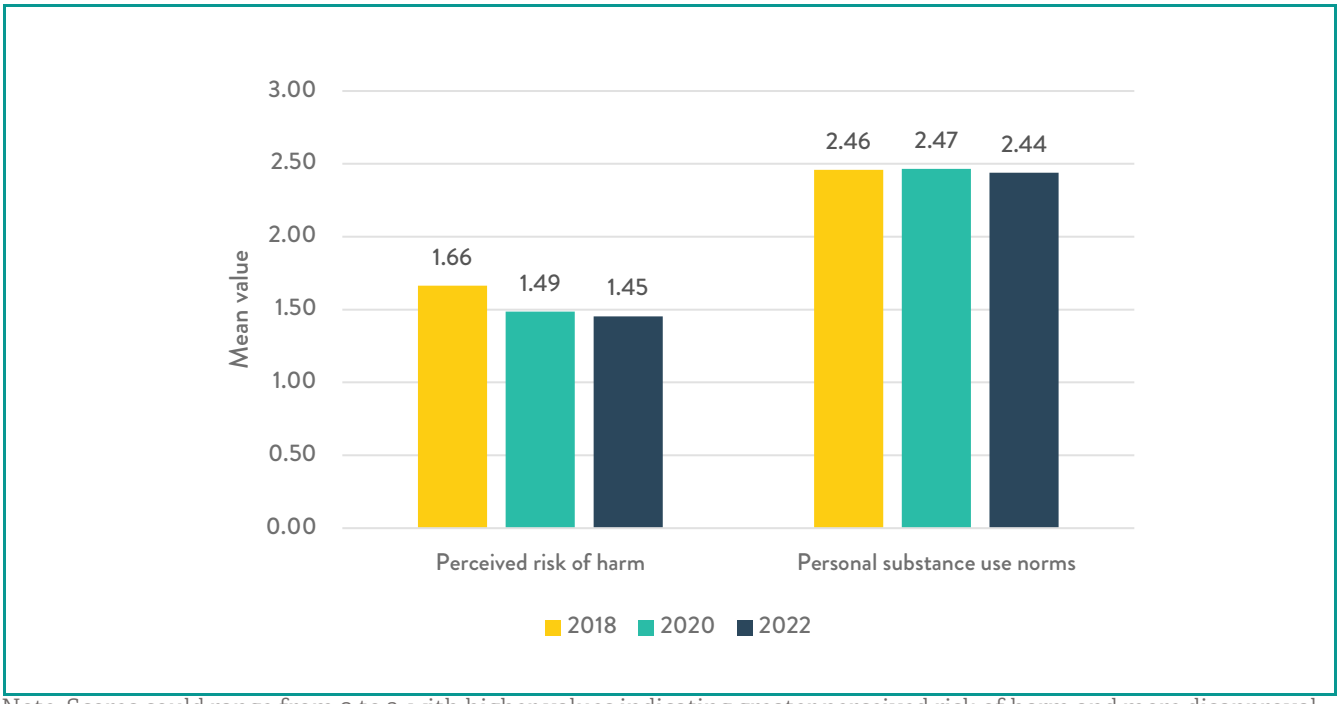
Note. The Indiana Youth Survey does not ask students in grade 6 about past-30-day electronic vapor product use.
Source: Indiana Youth Survey, https://inys.indiana.edu/.

Figure ES-6 shows data measuring two INYS-derived correlates of substance use: perceived risk of harm from substance use and personal norms related to substance use. Scores could range from 0 to 3. Perceived risk of harm measures factors like how likely students think they or others are to experience negative outcomes if they engage in substance use. Contrary to the goal of the *Prevention Matters* initiative, RTI found that students consistently rated the use of substances less risky in 2020 and 2022 than in 2018 before the initiative began. Personal substance use norms measure the extent to which students feel it is wrong to use substances. Among students at schools

[6] The number of students using electronic vapor products varied considerably across the years, which made it difficult to assess statistical significance.

where *Prevention Matters* programming was offered, there was no significant change to students' personal substance use norms across the grant period. Thus, during or after the time frame in which the *Prevention Matters* initiative was implemented, no change was observed in students' feelings that using substances would be wrong.

Figure ES-6. Mean Value of Correlates of Substance Use, *Prevention Matters* Students in Grades 6–12, Pre-Year 1, Year 2, and Year 4



Note. Scores could range from 0 to 3, with higher values indicating greater perceived risk of harm and more disapproval of use.
Source: Indiana Youth Survey, https://inys.indiana.edu/.

Lessons Learned

In Year 4, grant directors provided advice to individual implementers, and schools that implement these types of programs in the future. These suggestions are summarized in Table ES-9 in three main categories: program planning, implementation strategies, and collaboration as part of their grant implementation.

Table ES-9. Grant Director Advice for Future Grantees, Year 4

Program Planning	Implementation Strategies	Collaboration as Part of Their Grant Implementation
Set clear implementation roles and expectations. If everyone's role is defined and there is a program timeline, then staff have a clear goal to work toward and can be more proactive in achieving it.	Make sure to obtain buy-in from all parties involved, because support from all levels of implementation is important.	Communicate with other schools and partners. Learn from them, especially about how to budget and train staff, and share tips with them. Doing so was particularly rewarding for the grant directors and it helped strengthen their programs.
Focus on staff retention. Although grant directors could not control staff turnover, they stressed that having a stable group of staff in the program was important for implementation progress.	Emphasize training teachers and getting them involved. Ensure that all staff are prepared, and train them as a team. One grant director said, "[Training] with others helps generate excitement and generate conversation."	Recognize that a collaborative approach and the ability to learn from mistakes are important. "I think sometimes schools hesitate to reach out to others, but you can learn from others' mistakes," one grant director said.

Conclusion

During the four years of the *Prevention Matters* initiative, grantees showed implementation growth, strength, and impact. Evidence of this progress includes the following:

- At the Year 4 survey, most implementers reported that they had already completed or expected to complete their program sessions
- Significantly more implementers reported integrating *Prevention Matters* programming more thoroughly into their school community in Year 4 than in Year 1
- Nearly three-quarters of Year 4 implementers had received training for the prevention program that they were delivering
- Across all four years of the initiative, half of implementers reported that students were fully or almost fully engaged in the programming
- Students' curriculum knowledge increased, students' social-emotional competence improved, and self-reported alcohol use decreased
- Seventy-eight percent of programs will definitely continue after the end of *Prevention Matters* funding

Despite this implementation progress and these impacts, RTI's evaluation highlights the following areas for improvement and future research and funding:

- Reducing turnover of implementers and, among some grantees, grant directors
- Identifying ways to reduce the competing demands that challenged grant directors' and implementers' ability to implement their prevention programming and fit prevention programming into their schedules
- Providing implementers more time to implement their prevention programming
- Training the quarter of implementers who never participated in training for their prevention programming
- Identifying ways to use prevention programming to change students' perceptions that using substances is wrong