RICHARD M. FAIRBANKS FOUNDATION

RTI INTERNATIONAL

Prevention Matters
Year 2 Evaluation Report

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Executive Summary

On an average day in Marion County, Indiana, one person dies from a drug overdose,[1] two people are diagnosed with lung cancer,[2] and there is one car crash involving alcohol.[3]

However, on that same day, there is also great opportunity: about 175,000 students walk into classrooms in more than 300 public, private, charter, and parochial schools.[4] If these students are equipped with the right knowledge, skills, and resources, they will increase their chances of having a future in which they are healthy and thriving.

***Prevention Matters* is a $12 million grant initiative, funded by the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation and launched in 2018, to help Marion County schools identify, implement, and sustain evidence-based substance use prevention programs**.[5] Over the course of 4 years, *Prevention Matters* will allow schools to provide students with an array of programs that have been proven, through research, to help students avoid substance misuse.

The 2019–2020 school year represented Year 2 of the *Prevention Matters* initiative. Most grantees worked to build on their first year of implementation, and some implemented programming with students for the first time. All grantees were also faced with implementation challenges stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.

[1] https://blog.oneill.iupui.edu/2019/07/22/2018-overdose-deaths/
[2] https://www.in.gov/isdh/files/Indiana%20Cancer%20Facts%20and%20Figures%202018.pdf
[3] https://trafficsafety.iupui.edu/county/2018/County%20Profile%20Book_2018_Final.pdf
[4] https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/index.asp; https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/privateschoolsearch/
[5] For more information about the initiative, see https://www.rmff.org/preventionmatters/.

RTI International, the contracted *Prevention Matters* evaluator, continued to document which programs grantees implemented, how they implemented them, and whether programs have influenced student outcomes. This work will help grantees hone their implementation as well as inform the field of school-based substance prevention efforts more broadly.

Evaluation Methodology

In Year 2 of the *Prevention Matters* evaluation, RTI collected three complementary sets of data to help describe implementation of the initiative:

- a Web-based survey of directors from all 27 *Prevention Matters* grant projects,
- telephone interviews with a sample of 10 grant directors, and
- a Web-based survey of 1,690 program implementers.

RTI also undertook two activities to assess the impact of *Prevention Matters* on student outcomes. RTI compiled and analyzed school-level data on academic achievement, student behavior, and standardized testing from the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE). RTI also compiled and analyzed grantee-collected data on substance use and associated risk and protective factors.

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 included the use of mostly self-reported data and the implementer survey response rate (56% in Year 2). In addition, school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic prevented RTI from collecting classroom observations planned for Year 2, and they complicated the interpretation of Year 2 data.

What We Learned

Strengths and Growth

- In Year 1 of *Prevention Matters*, 27 grantees and about 1,800 implementers delivered 11 different prevention programs to approximately 44,764 students in 103 schools. Grantees extended their reach in Year 2, with 27 grantees and 3,033 implementers delivering 11 different prevention

programs to approximately 75,625 students (including some who were also served in Year 1) in 144 schools. About half of Year 2 implementers had implemented *Prevention Matters* programming in Year 1.

- Seventy percent of implementers reported having participated in training in Year 2, up from 62% in Year 1. However, there continues to be an apparent disconnect between training as reported by implementers and grant directors; grant directors reported that they were offering implementer training for 98% of *Prevention Matters* programs.
- Grantees were able to progress further with implementation in Year 2 than they did in Year 1. They implemented for a longer duration, across an average of 6–7 months in Year 2, as compared to 5–6 months in Year 1. More implementers had completed implementation with all students at the time of their survey: 57% in Year 2, compared with 11% in Year 1. Among the Year 2 implementers who did not expect to finish implementation by the end of the school year, most attributed this to school closures related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Grantee monitoring efforts, as reported by implementers, improved from Year 1 to Year 2. A higher proportion of implementers were observed (43% of implementer survey respondents in Year 2, up from 33% in Year 1), and a higher proportion of implementers were asked to submit implementation information (68% of implementer survey respondents in Year 2, up from 48% in Year 1).
- There were some promising signs of impact in both grantee-collected data and grant director anecdotes. In particular, Year 1 grantee-collected evaluation data showed improvements in student curriculum knowledge and social-emotional competence from participant pretest to posttest.

Areas for Improvement

- Overall, most implementation quality metrics, including adherence, dosage, and student engagement, dropped from Year 1 to Year 2. However, when Year 2 implementers were limited to those who had completed all implementation by the time of their survey, there was evidence of increases in dosage and student understanding. This suggests that there may be something systematically different about implementers who

complete implementation that accounts for both their implementation progress and quality.

- Four out of every five implementers made some sort of change to programming from what appeared in a curriculum guide. This was most often done to improve student engagement. It is possible that many of these adaptations were appropriate or even recommended by technical assistance providers or program developers. RTI did not collect data that could speak to this possibility, but this finding underscores the importance of grantees' monitoring implementation, including the nature of program adaptations, and addressing any problematic adaptations that occur.
- Lack of time and staff turnover were identified as barriers to successful program implementation, as was true in Year 1.
- Sustainability scores decreased from Year 1 to Year 2 for grantees that were in their second year of implementation. This drop was not statistically significant, but it was not an *increase*, which is the ideal progression in sustainability.

COVID-19 Pandemic

- Grantees had varying responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some were not able to complete implementation, some were able to transition to remote implementation, and some enlisted school counselors to take over implementation from overburdened classroom teachers.

Next Steps

In Year 3 of the *Prevention* Matters evaluation, RTI will continue to assess the implementation and impact of the initiative through surveys, interviews, and outcome data from IDOE and grantees. This will allow us to describe grantees' implementation as they move closer to the end of their grant period and to examine whether changes from Year 1 to Year 2 are part of larger trends.

Introduction

This section provides an overview of *Prevention Matters*. The Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation's *Prevention Matters* initiative is an important investment in the health and well-being of Marion County residents. Over the course of 4 years, *Prevention Matters* will allow schools to provide students with an array of programs that have been proven, through research, to prevent substance use and improve social-emotional outcomes.

In January 2018, the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation launched Prevention Matters, a $12 million grant initiative to help Marion County, Indiana, schools 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] These planning grants funded organizations to identify the most appropriate evidence-based substance use prevention programs for their students and to develop plans for effective and sustainable implementation.

About Marion County

Population: 964,582

County seat: Indianapolis

Racial/ethnic composition:

White, not Hispanic/Latino – 54%

Black/African American – 29%

Hispanic or Latino – 11%

Foreign-born: 9%

Living in poverty: 17%

Source: https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/marioncountyindiana

In July 2018, the Foundation awarded implementation grants to 24 planning grant recipients to support program implementation for the 2018–2019, 2019–2020, and 2020–2021 school years (Round 1 grantees). The Foundation awarded five additional implementation grants in December 2018 to support program implementation through the 2021–2022 school year (Round 2 grantees). In summer 2019, one Round 1 grantee and one Round 2 grantee withdrew from the initiative, resulting in 27 grantees' being funded for the 2019–2020 school year.

RTI International is the contracted evaluator for the Prevention Matters initiative. RTI's role is to examine the nature and quality of program implementation and to evaluate the impact of Prevention Matters programs on student outcomes.

This work will help grantees hone their implementation as well as inform the field of school-based substance use prevention efforts more broadly.

[1] Innovation Network schools are public schools that are within the Indianapolis Public Schools district but operate with the authority to make decisions about all aspects of their school, both academic and operational.

In Year 1 of *Prevention Matters* (2018–2019), 27 grantees and about 1,800 implementers delivered 11 different prevention programs to approximately 44,764 students in 103 schools. About two-thirds of implementers reported having participated in program training; fewer than half reported that grantee staff monitored their implementation. Many grantees experienced implementation delays, which stemmed from challenges such as difficulties scheduling implementer training. Both grant directors and implementers also noted that a lack of time for prevention program delivery was a challenge.

For the purposes of this evaluation, implementation quality is defined as implementation fidelity, including adherence to program contents and methods, dosage, and participant engagement. Year 1 implementation quality tended to be positive; however, there was still room for improvement. Quality tended to be higher for implementers who reported being more enthusiastic about their programs and who experienced fewer barriers to implementation. Grant directors also noted that it was helpful to have teachers who were enthusiastic, proactive, and collaborative.

After publication of the Year 1 evaluation report, the Foundation and its technical assistance contractor, EDC, met to review lessons learned and tailor technical assistance support in Year 2 to improve implementation. The Foundation and EDC also shared Year 1 evaluation findings with all 27 grantees to inform their own internal planning for staffing, curriculum design, and training.

In Year 2 (2019–2020), RTI collected data to help evaluate implementation of the initiative, including a Web-based survey of *Prevention Matters* grant directors, telephone interviews with a subset of grant directors, and a Web-based survey of program implementers. RTI also continued collecting data to assess the impact of *Prevention Matters*, including school-level data on academic achievement, student behavior, and standardized testing from the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE), as well as summary statistics from the monitoring and evaluation data that grantees collected for their own purposes. RTI had planned to conduct observations of program implementation in spring 2020; however, these were cancelled when schools closed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This report shares what RTI has learned about Year 2 of Prevention Matters implementation.

The **Methodology** section of this report provides more detail on the evaluation methods RTI used. The **Learning About Implementation** and **Learning About Impact** sections discuss what RTI learned about *Prevention Matters* processes and

outcomes. The **Lessons Learned** section summarizes Year 2 findings that schools and funders can use to help strengthen *Prevention Matters* and similar school-based prevention initiatives.

Note on the COVID-19 Pandemic

On March 12, 2020, in response to the emerging COVID-19 pandemic, Indianapolis mayor Joe Hogsett ordered all Marion County school buildings, public and private, to be closed. School buildings remained closed through the end of the school year.

Schools' shifts to online instruction 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. The Foundation and EDC provided grantees with a table summarizing this guidance and these resources.

RTI's ability to study the implications of the pandemic varied by evaluation activity. The last grant director survey was completed on March 18, 2020. Therefore, grant director survey responses all related to original, pre-pandemic implementation plans. However, RTI was able to include pandemic-related questions in the implementer survey and grant director interview protocol. RTI also cancelled observations of program implementation, which had been planned for spring 2020.

RTI expects that the pandemic will continue to be a central issue in the *Prevention Matters* evaluation. RTI will continue to include questions about the pandemic in upcoming surveys and interview protocols, which will reveal more information about the impact of the pandemic on prevention programs.

Pandemic-related school closures will also complicate the accurate assessment of initiative outcomes. Many grantees cancelled spring 2020 data collections, which limits the amount of Year 2 grantee-collected data that will be available for future analyses. It is also likely that school closures influenced IDOE metrics (e.g., attendance, suspensions, expulsions), which may make it difficult to interpret shifts in these data.

Methodology

This section describes the methodology used for the *Prevention Matters* evaluation. The evaluation includes five data sources: annual surveys of grant directors and of program implementers, telephone interviews with grant directors, school-level administrative data from the IDOE, and information from grantees' required data collection activities. RTI had planned to conduct observations of program implementation in spring 2020; however, these observations were cancelled because of school closures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, with the exception of IDOE data and some grantee-collected data, Year 2 data are self-reported by grant directors, implementers, and students.

1 Grant Director Survey

RTI conducted the second annual Web-based survey of *Prevention Matters* grant directors. Topics for the survey included implementation model (e.g., training approach, partnerships), barriers to and facilitators of program implementation, and sustainability. Most questions were asked in relation to the overall grant project. However, the questions about program training model and provision of program information and activities to parents were asked for each program that the grant director reported implementing.

Each grant director received an email invitation to participate in the survey, along with a personalized link. RTI expected the survey to take about 30 minutes to complete.

In March 2020,[2] directors of all 27 grant projects completed the grant director survey.

2 Implementer Survey

RTI conducted the second annual Web-based survey of *Prevention Matters* program implementers. Topics for this survey included implementation quality, barriers to and facilitators of program implementation, training received, and monitoring that occurred. Some of these questions (e.g., those focused on implementation quality) were asked specifically about the program that the implementer reported delivering. Implementers who reported delivering multiple programs were asked to respond about the program they implemented with the most students.

RTI collaborated with grantee staff to obtain email addresses for current program implementers. Each implementer then received an email with a personalized link to participate in the survey. RTI expected the survey to take about 20 minutes to complete.

The Year 2 implementer survey was open from May 13 to June 3, 2020. RTI sent survey invitations to 3,033 implementers representing all 27 grantees. RTI sent

[2] Note on data collection timing: In Year 1, RTI collected grant director surveys in January and implementer surveys and grant director interviews in March and April. The Foundation requested that these data collections occur later in the school year in Year 2, so that the data reflected as much of the school year as possible. Therefore, when comparing Year 1 and Year 2 survey and interview results, it is important to keep in mind that some differences may be due, at least in part, to differences in data collection timing.

automated reminders to nonresponders twice during the survey period and sent a request to grant directors to follow up with their implementers to encourage them to respond.

A total of 1,729 implementers opened the survey (57% open rate). A small portion of implementers (12 implementers; 0.7%) who opened the survey completed no, or very few, questions.[3] Sixteen implementers (0.9% of those who opened the survey) reported that they were not implementing, or planning to implement, any programs that grantees were known to be implementing, and the survey immediately closed for them. These implementers were not included analyses. Fourteen implementers (0.8% of those who opened the survey) reported implementing a different primary program than was reported by their grantee. Of those, three reported a secondary program that matched grantee reporting. These three implementers were excluded from of program-specific items but were included elsewhere. The remaining 11 implementers did not match with their grantee on any primary or secondary program and were dropped from analysis. These exclusions[4] resulted in an analytic sample of 1,690 implementers for general items and 1,687 implementers for program-specific analyses.

Survey response rates by primary program implemented are shown in Table 1. It is important to note that implementers of Second Step make up 84% of all implementers and 82% of implementer survey respondents. Therefore, implementer survey results are heavily weighted toward Second Step implementation and may not fully reflect implementation of other programs.

[3] An additional 66 implementers completed some questions but did not officially submit their survey responses; RTI included their responses when available.

[4] This is slightly different from how the implementer survey sample was defined in the Year 1 evaluation report. In Year 1, RTI retained 4 implementers who selected "None" for their program after completing some survey questions, 13 implementers whose programs implemented did not match those of their grantees, and 10 implementers whose secondary programs matched their grantees' programs. For the Year 2 report, to maximize comparability between the Year 1 and Year 2 implementer survey samples, we updated the Year 1 sample to exclude 17 respondents from all analyses and another 10 respondents from program-specific analyses. This may result in minor differences in some Year 1 implementer survey results across the Year 1 and Year 2 evaluation reports.

Table 1. Year 2 Implementer Survey Response Rate, by Program

Program	Implementers Invited	Implementers Responding	Response Rate
Conscious Discipline	219	120	54%
Curriculum-Based Support Group	16	6	38%
Good Behavior Game	3	4	133%[a]
LifeSkills Training	177	138	79%
PATHS	14	11	79%
Positive Action	5	3	60%
Project Toward No Drug Abuse	4	0	0%
Ripple Effects	46	21	46%
Second Step[b]	2,543	1,382	54%
Too Good for Drugs	6	2	33%
Other	n/a	3	n/a
Total	**3,033**	**1,690**	**56%**

[a] Response rate larger than 100% indicates either that a grant director provided an incorrect program for one or more implementers or that one or more implementers selected an incorrect program in their surveys.
[b] Includes both Second Step Elementary and Second Step Middle.

3 Grant Director Interviews

RTI conducted 60-minute telephone interviews with a sample of 10 grant directors in Year 2. RTI selected a diverse sample of grantees that varied based on the number of schools included in their grant-funded prevention programming, the type of schools (public [including charter] or private [including parochial]), and the prevention programs implemented. Each year RTI selects a new group of grant directors to interview in order to interview all grant directors by the end of the evaluation. Thus, the Year 2 grant directors interviewed were different from the 10 who participated in Year 1 interviews.

Interviews involved an in-depth exploration of the topics covered in the grant director survey, including implementation approaches and timeline, financial and policy barriers and facilitators, key implementation facilitators and barriers, and sustainability progress. Interviews examined implementation during both grant

years and not just the second year of the grant. This year, RTI added two questions about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on grant implementation.

4 School Administrative Data

RTI obtained administrative data from IDOE for graduation; grade retention; attendance; absences; suspensions and expulsions; dropout; and scores on the ISTEP+, ILEARN,[5] IREAD-3,[6] ACT, and SAT for the 2013–2014 through 2018–2019 school years. RTI compiled these data for schools in which students in at least one grade are being served by *Prevention Matters*,[7] as well as for all schools in Lake (i.e., northwest Indiana, adjacent to Illinois) and Allen (i.e., Fort Wayne) counties, to compare what happened during the same period in demographically similar counties that are not served by *Prevention Matters*.

RTI used these data to examine whether there were shifts in historical patterns of school-level outcomes when *Prevention Matters* was first implemented and whether these trends look different from trends among schools not receiving *Prevention Matters* programming.

5 Grantee-Collected Data

Grantees collected at least one measure of program implementation and one measure of program outcomes as part of their *Prevention Matters* project. Some measures were annual, and some were collected via pretest (beginning of Year 1) and posttest (end of Year 1). In the Year 2 evaluation, RTI used these data to examine changes in these measures across Year 1 (Year 1 pretests compared to Year 1 posttests). In future years, RTI will also assess whether and how target outcomes changed from year to year.

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[5] Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress-Plus (ISTEP+) and Indiana Learning Evaluation Assessment Readiness Network (ILEARN) are statewide standardized tests. ISTEP+ assesses mastery of math and English standards in grade 10, and prior to 2019, in grades 3–8. In spring 2019, ILEARN replaced the ISTEP+ for grades 3–8. ILEARN assesses student achievement and growth in multiple subject areas for grades 3–8; the *Prevention Matters* evaluation uses English and math scores. RTI used ISTEP+ grade 3–8 data to examine pre-*Prevention Matters* trends in the Year 1 evaluation report and will use ILEARN data in the Year 3 and Year 4 reports to examine changes after *Prevention Matters* implementation.

[6] The Indiana Reading Evaluation and Determination (IREAD-3) assesses foundational reading standards for third-grade students statewide.

[7] Although *Prevention Matters* data are drawn only from schools receiving *Prevention Matters* programming, the measures themselves may not reflect the specific students who received *Prevention Matters* programming at that school. For example, a grantee may be serving only ninth graders, but ACT/SAT data from all students at the school are included in analysis.

In Year 1, RTI reviewed each grantee's data collection plans. RTI identified the topics that grantees most commonly measured and then worked with the Foundation to identify 12 topics (termed "domains" within the evaluation) for which RTI would ask grantees to submit data (see Table 2).

RTI piloted the grantee data submission process with four grantees. In August 2019, RTI asked all grantees that collected data in Year 1 (Round 1 grantees, plus one Round 2 grantee) to submit a school-level summary statistic (i.e., mean and standard deviation, percentage, count) from each round of data they collected in Year 1, using a spreadsheet template.

As of spring 2020, 24 grantees (23 Round 1 grantees, one Round 2 grantee) submitted Year 1 summary statistics for 113 schools. Counts of grantees and schools by domain appear in Table 2.

Table 2. Year 1 Grantee Data Submitted

Domain	Number Submitting Any Year 1 Data		Number Submitting Year 1 Pretest and Posttest Data	
	Grantees	Schools	Grantees	Schools
Curriculum adherence	22	90	0	0
Student curriculum knowledge	8	34	8	16
Substance use				
Alcohol	4	14	1	1
Marijuana	3	12	0	0
Opioid or prescription drugs	2	6	0	0
Tobacco	4	14	1	1
Vaping	2	11	0	0
Perceived risk of harm from substances	6	27	4	7
Personal substance use norms	5	21	4	8
Depressive symptoms	4	20	2	4
Disciplinary incidents other than suspensions or expulsions	20	59	0	0
Social-emotional competence	12	52	9	21

Having a single year of grantee-submitted outcomes data limits the analyses that can be conducted this year. However, RTI was able to conduct analyses of two domains for which there were a sufficient number of pairs of pre- and posttest data: student curriculum knowledge and social-emotional competence.

RTI calculated a change score for each outcome to represent the difference between the pre- and posttest values. RTI then estimated general linear models predicting change between the two time points as a function of the pretest value for each school.

In future years, RTI will use meta-analysis to combine and analyze the summary statistics that grantees submit. The meta-analysis framework treats each grantee as if it conducted a separate study of whether *Prevention Matters* affected outcomes; this approach will allow for the analysis of evaluation measures even though they will vary somewhat from grantee to grantee.

6 Observations

The original *Prevention Matters* evaluation plan included observations of a sample of program sessions in Years 2 and 3. RTI hired and trained Indianapolis-area observers in February 2020 in preparation for starting observations in March. RTI also obtained implementation schedules and implementer lists from each grantee and selected a random sample of 191 implementers to approach for observations. However, because of school closures for the COVID-19 pandemic, RTI was unable to conduct observations.

Because of ongoing adaptations to program implementation in light of COVID-19, Year 3 observations will likely be replaced by different data collection activities, such as focus groups or additional interviews.

7 Methodological Limitations

For any evaluation, the data collection and analysis methods have limitations. For the *Prevention Matters* evaluation, these limitations included:

- **Self-reported data.** With the exception of administrative data from IDOE and some grantee-reported data, all data were reported by grant directors, program implementers, or program participants. Depending on factors like a respondent's interpretation of a question, their perception and memory of a situation, and their desire to provide responses that portray

themselves in a positive way, self-reported data may not always align with objective reality. Unfortunately, self-report is often the most efficient way (as with student substance use) or only way (as with opinions or attitudes) to capture certain information.

- **Implementer survey response rate.** Just over half of implementers responded to the invitation to complete the Year 2 implementer survey. To the extent that the implementers who responded are different from the implementers who did not respond, the survey results in this report may not fully reflect the experiences of all implementers.
- **Large number of Second Step implementers.** Although *Prevention Matters* grantees implemented 11 different programs, implementers of Second Step Elementary and Second Step Middle made up 84% of all implementers and 82% of implementer survey respondents. Similarly, an estimated 82% of *Prevention Matters* students participated in Second Step. Therefore, the results are heavily weighted toward Second Step implementation and may not fully reflect implementation of the other programs.
- **COVID-19 as a confounder.** In any evaluation, there is a risk that events external to the evaluated program will make it difficult to interpret data collected after that event. In other words, those events can be *confounded* with the program and its potential impact on participants. The COVID-19 pandemic is arguably the single biggest confounder that school-based evaluation research has ever had to face. One cannot be sure how Year 2 data would have been different in the absence of COVID-19, nor can one completely disentangle whether shifts in data from Years 1 to 2, and Years 2 to 3, are the result of program-driven change, COVID-19, or something else altogether.

Learning About Implementation

This section describes the implementation models that grantees used for their *Prevention Matters* efforts. It goes on to describe the implementation progress that grantees made in Year 2, the quality of that implementation, and challenges that grantees and their implementers experienced. It concludes with a discussion of grantees' efforts to promote the sustainability of their models.

1 Implementation Models

This section describes the following aspects of grantees' implementation models: programs implemented, grades served, implementation settings, implementation schedules, implementer training and support, implementation monitoring, program integration and coordination, partnerships, and parent involvement.

1.1 Programs Implemented

The Foundation provided *Prevention Matters* planning grantees with a list of 25 evidence-based substance use prevention and social-emotional learning (SEL) programs that they could implement for the initiative.[8] Grantees implemented 11 of these programs in Year 1 and Year 2, as shown in Table 3. **The most commonly implemented program was Second Step, followed by LifeSkills Training.** Individual grantees implemented one, two, or three programs.

1.2 Students Served

The Foundation's administrative records show that **grantees reached approximately 75,625 students in Year 2**. Although many of these students were likely served in Year 1, the increase from the Year 1 estimate (44,762) indicates that at least 30,000 students received *Prevention Matters* programming for the first time in Year 2.

Each elementary and middle school grade was served by a similar number of implementers. However, as shown in Figure 1 below, relatively few implementers delivered programming to Pre-K students (who did not fall within the *Prevention Matters* K–12 target population) or high school students.

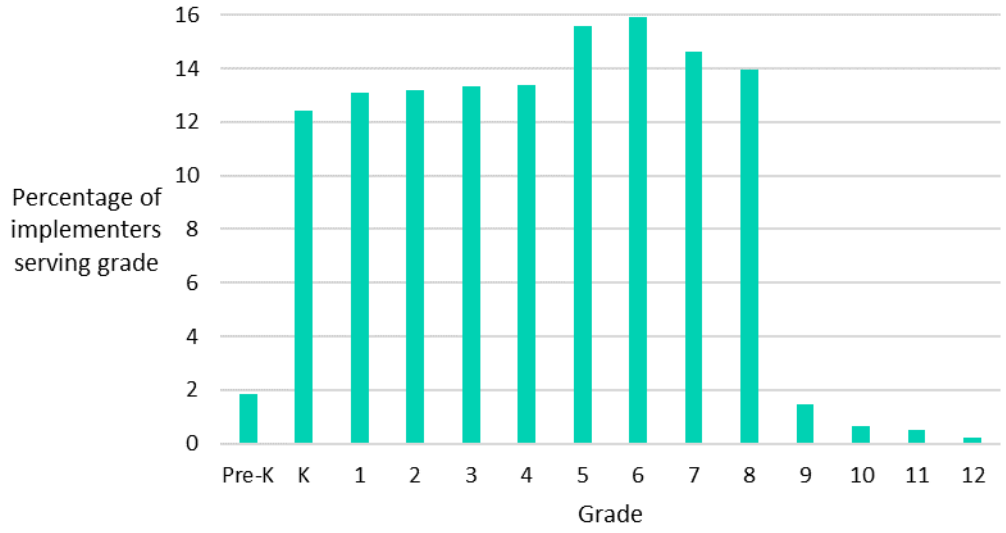
[8] To learn more about these curricula, see http://rmff.org/preventionmatters.

Table 3. Number of Implementing Grantees, Individuals, and Schools, by Program

Program	Number Implementing			
			Implementers[a]	
	Grantees	Schools[b]	Primary[b]	Additional[c]
Conscious Discipline	3	11	120	9
Curriculum-Based Support Group	2	2	6	6
Good Behavior Game	1	2	4	2
LifeSkills Training	7	21	138	3
PATHS	1	1	11	0
Positive Action	2	3	3	2
Project Toward No Drug Abuse	1	1	0	1
Ripple Effects	3	12	21	61
Second Step: Elementary	16	94	968	27
Second Step: Middle	15	61	414	13
Too Good for Drugs	2	2	2	0
Other	n/a	n/a	3[d]	7[e]

[a] Among implementer survey respondents. Actual number of implementers is typically higher because of survey nonresponse.
[b] Fourteen implementer survey respondents reported a primary program other than the program that their grant director reported implementing as part of *Prevention Matters*. Of these, three reported implementing the correct program as an additional program. Cases for which there was no match between implementer and grantee (n = 11) were dropped from analysis. The three cases in which the correct program was listed as an additional program were included in analyses of non-program survey items but dropped from analyses pertaining to program specifics.
[c] A small number of implementers (7%) reported implementing more than one *Prevention Matters*-funded program. In the implementer survey, any questions that ask about experiences with a single program ask the respondent to focus on the one program that they implemented with the most students.
[d] These included "Bullying," "Second Steps" (grade level unspecified), and "Special Education Inclusion Teacher."
[e] These included MindUP, mindfulness, peer mentoring, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, Restorative Practices, Responsive Classroom, and Zones.

Figure 1. Percentage of Implementers Serving Each Grade



Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% because implementers selected all grades with which they implemented.

1.3 Implementation Settings

Many *Prevention Matters* programs are designed to be delivered via full-class instruction. Others are intended to be used with small groups.

In their interviews, most grant directors shared that implementation occurred in a student's primary classroom or during a regular class period, such as study hall, health, or physical education. Often at these schools, multiple teachers were trained and delivered the program in their individual classrooms.

Other settings and approaches described by grant directors included one grantee whose counselors offered supplemental activities to support classroom teachers' lessons and one grantee that trained several implementers to deliver a program to small groups of students referred by their teachers.

Depending on the program being implemented, teachers either implemented a series of distinct lessons or incorporated specific SEL techniques and approaches throughout the day.

1.4 Implementation Schedules

In their surveys, implementers reported on what happened with implementation schedules after programs launched. During the time span when they were

implementing programming, **most implementers (84%) delivered program lessons or content at least once per week. The most common frequency was 2–3 days per week.** This is generally consistent with the recommended session frequencies for *Prevention Matters* curricula.

The length of time over which implementers delivered programming to a specific group of students was quite variable, in large part because the curricula vary widely in the number of required sessions (8–140) and the recommended frequency of implementation (daily to weekly). That being said, **the average duration was 6–7 months.** This is an increase over the Year 1 average of 5–6 months.

RTI calculated an intensity measure designed to approximate the total number of sessions that each class of students received.[9] Estimated sessions implemented ranged from a single session to 200 sessions (i.e., daily implementation for 10 months or more), with a median of 40 sessions.

The number of sessions was related to implementation progress in the expected direction. Implementers who had completed implementation with all students at the time of the survey implemented a median of 60 sessions, as compared to 34 sessions for implementers who had completed implementation with some but not all students and 32 sessions for implementers who had not completed implementation with any students.

RTI then examined implementation frequency, duration, and intensity by program and compared these with the intended number of sessions in the program, as shown in Table 4. Noteworthy findings include the following:

- For every program with enough data, with the exception of Conscious Discipline, the estimate of average number of annual sessions delivered met or exceeded the number of annual sessions contained in that program. For Second Step, the fact that the estimated sessions implemented far exceeds the number of sessions in the program may be a function of discrepancies in whether reinforcement and advisory activities count as "sessions." As shown in Section 3.3, adding content was among the more common implementation adaptations and may have resulted in more sessions in a program. Alternatively, it is possible that implementer reports of frequency or duration were inaccurate.

[9] This measure was calculated by multiplying implementation frequency (daily = 20, 2–3 days per week = 10, weekly = 4, every other week = 2, monthly = 1, every other month = 0.5) by the implementation duration (number of months).

- The recommended implementation frequency for LifeSkills Training is at least once per week, which, with the number of lessons, would take 5–15 weeks. However, the most commonly reported implementation frequency was every other week, and the average implementation duration was 5 months. This suggests that LifeSkills implementers stretched program delivery over a longer period than the program developer recommends.
- Conscious Discipline is focused on changing whole-school practices rather than implementing dedicated lessons with students. As expected, implementers most commonly reported implementing Conscious Discipline daily. However, the average reported duration of implementation was 6 months, whereas implementation would have been expected to occur across an entire 9- or 10-month school year. Implementers did not report more details on their implementation schedules, but it is possible that they began Conscious Discipline implementation later in the school year rather than at the beginning or that they stopped implementation when schools were closed because of COVID-19.
- In general, with the exception of LifeSkills Training, implementation frequency and duration were higher in Year 2 than they were in Year 1. In Year 1, many grantees reported unanticipated delays in program start-up; it is possible that this was less of a problem in Year 2.

Grant director interviews supported implementer reports about implementation schedules. Although grantees delivered prevention program lessons using a variety of schedules, grant directors most commonly described implementing using a weekly schedule. Several grantees increased the frequency at which students received programming by supplementing classroom lessons with additional activities to reinforce learning. For example, students at one school completed weekly, 30-minute lessons in class; attended a monthly, whole-school assembly focused on SEL; and met weekly in multigrade groups to do activities that built on lessons delivered in class that week. In establishing this schedule, the grant director's goal was to find ways to make the prevention curriculum more interactive, engaging, and a part of the students' daily routine.

Table 4. Implementation Frequency, Sessions, and Duration, by Program and Year

Program	Recommended Frequency of Session Implementation	Number of Annual Sessions in Program	Year	Most Common Implementation Frequency	Mean Implementation Duration, in Months	Mean Number of Annual Sessions Delivered (Estimated)
Conscious Discipline	Noncurricular school practice[a]		Year 1	Daily or weekly	4	46
			Year 2	Daily	6	70
Curriculum-Based Support Group	1–2/week	10–12	Year 1	Weekly	4	14
			Year 2	Weekly	6	37
Good Behavior Game	Noncurricular school practice[a]		Year 1	Daily	4	46
			Year 2	*	*	*
LifeSkills Training	Intensive: 2–3/week Extended: 1/week	Elementary school: 8 Middle school: 5–15	Year 1	Weekly	3	20
			Year 2	Every other week	5	16
PATHS	2 or more/week	36–52 lessons	Year 1	*	*	*
			Year 2	*	*	*
Positive Action	Daily	K–6th grade: 140 7th and 8th grades: 70	Year 1	Daily or weekly	5	64
			Year 2	*	*	*
Project Toward No Drug Abuse	3/week (preferred); 2/week (permitted)[b]	12	Year 1	*	*	*
			Year 2	*	*	*
Ripple Effects	Varies depending on student needs		Year 1	Weekly	4	23
			Year 2	2–3/week	6	45
Second Step: Elementary	1/week[c]	22–25	Year 1	Weekly	6	57
			Year 2	2–3/week	6	64

Program	Recommended Frequency of Session Implementation	Number of Annual Sessions in Program	Year	Most Common Implementation Frequency	Mean Implementation Duration, in Months	Mean Number of Annual Sessions Delivered (Estimated)
Second Step: Middle	1/week[d]	26	Year 1	Weekly	6	43
			Year 2	2–3/week	7	54
Too Good for Drugs	1/week	10	Year 1	Weekly	3	14
			Year 2	*	*	*

* To protect respondent privacy, RTI has not reported values for programs with fewer than five reporting implementers or one reporting school.
[a] Implemented daily.
[b] Three times a week is preferred; however, if an implementer needs to spread delivery out over a longer time period, they may deliver twice per week.
[c] With daily reinforcement and take-home activities.
[d] Plus advisory activities.

Some grantees introduced programming to all students simultaneously, whereas others chose to begin programming with students one school, grade level, or student group at a time. One grant director whose organization staggered its introduction of programming reflected, "We rolled it out a little bit slower than I think some school districts have done, and I really liked the way we did it because we didn't [take] on too much."

Grant directors discussed changes to their plans for program rollout. Two grantees implemented their programs with fewer schools than planned after some school leaders did not receive sufficient support from teachers and staff at those schools. "There was just a lot of pushback from the teachers and no directive from the principal," conceded one of the grant directors. In contrast, two interviewed grant directors capitalized on staff enthusiasm for their programs and implemented the program with more students than planned. As one grant director said, "When you have a great curriculum, you obviously want to expose as many students to that as possible."

Some grant directors discussed changes from the planned timing of program implementation. Staff turnover drove implementation delays among multiple grantees. As one grant director noted, "It almost always comes back to staff turnover. I'm struggling to think of an example where that wasn't the impetus."

Two other grant directors described unexpected delays in Year 1 that led to implementation changes. One delay arose from the timing of the Foundation's initial funding distribution; grantees did not receive initial grant funds until summer 2018. One grant director during the Year 2 interviews highlighted that this funding distribution timeline left them with insufficient time to plan for implementation. As a result, implementation was delayed to the end of the first quarter of the school year. Another delay arose when one grantee tried to schedule curriculum training with the program developer and the developer could not provide the training until halfway through the year.

Conversely, one multi-school grantee adjusted its implementation plan to deliver the program to students ahead of schedule. The grant director recounted that the grantee had planned to add schools in three phases but instead began implementing in all schools at once, explaining, "When we were awarded the grant, and I presented to the principals, everybody really felt like they needed to do it."

Two grant directors reported that they adjusted their implementation schedules after studying their program data and observing implementation. Both grant directors made schedule changes, like establishing consistent implementation

times each week, that they thought would enhance program delivery and outcomes. One grant director also combined classrooms and selected stronger, more enthusiastic implementers to teach all students, rather than relying on all teachers.

1.5 Changes to Implementation Due to COVID-19 Pandemic

On March 12, 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic closed schools in Marion County. Like all school curricula and programs, *Prevention Matters* implementation was affected. The evidence base for most *Prevention Matters* programs assumes an in-person instruction model. Grantees worked with program developers and school leads to adapt as best as they could under the unprecedented circumstances. However, it is important to note that even following developers' guidance on adaptation does not guarantee impact on student outcomes.

For some schools, the pandemic reinforced the need for and use of SEL techniques. As one grant director described it: "Some of the [*Prevention Matters*-funded program] lessons, as they were learning them,... helped the students actually cope with what they're dealing with as far as the social restrictions and so forth and anxiety and perseverance."

Other grant directors described the added work and resources required to move the programming to a remote learning platform. For some grant directors and schools, this transition to remote learning was seamless. For example, one grant director said, "[Our school is] staying on target, it's just our e-learning, we had to adapt that schedule and when our lessons were taught through e-learning, but the lessons are done. For example, our school, we are finishing up at the end of this week, and our lessons are done, and our surveys are done." Among grantees that successfully relied on remote learning platforms, some used implementers' creativity to adapt the program and engaged students by using technology such as Google Meet or Hangout or by prerecording sessions and posting them on YouTube.

Some grant directors described implementation in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic as too challenging to continue. For these grant directors, challenges included lack of technology access, lack of implementer enthusiasm or comfort delivering lessons virtually, and problems monitoring implementation fidelity in a virtual environment.

The lack of implementer enthusiasm and time led a few schools to change who implemented the programming after the pandemic closed schools. For example, at one school, the grant director noted that counselors took the teachers' role and implemented Second Step lessons virtually. Also, as highlighted in Section 1.11, some schools relied on parents to implement, or encourage their children to engage in, the programming.

One grant director interviewed reported that the school did not continue its prevention programming once schools closed; instead, it replaced SEL with wellness checks to ensure that students were mentally and physically safe while the stay-at-home orders were in place. Another grant director reported using the sudden virtual learning experience in the spring of 2020 to help plan how to offer programming using a more effective virtual format in the fall of 2020.

1.6 Implementers

1.6.1 Roles

In their surveys, all implementers reported working for their schools, not an outside organization. **Most were either general education teachers teaching multiple subjects (65%) or general education teachers teaching a single subject other than physical education, health, or wellness (24%).**

Interviews with grant directors supported the survey's findings that most implementers were classroom teachers. Some grantees highlighted that their implementers were general education teachers, whereas others relied on an SEL coach, specialist, interventionist, or specials teacher to deliver their prevention programming. One grant director described implementing a hybrid staffing approach in which general education teachers delivered the main prevention program lessons and a counselor reinforced the lessons. According to this grantee, "Teachers do [their] routines and rituals and then our counselors are doing kind of supplemental lessons."

Occasionally, one teacher or staff person served as the lead implementer for the school, and all students being served by the program received programming from that implementer on a rotating (e.g., weekly) basis. For example, an SEL coach delivered lessons to students and provided classroom teachers with program materials and guidance to supplement these lessons. The grant director for this school explained the motivation for this approach:

> We knew that in the past we'd been asked as teachers [by the grant leadership] to implement some type of social-emotional curriculum, and you get a big kit of stuff, and then it's like one more thing that's added onto your plate and you're expected to sort of figure it out and work it into your day.... We're just doing it a little bit differently, knowing that's how we can commit to the fidelity. That's how we can ensure that it's being taught, and all students are receiving it. And then really turning the teachers into those reinforcers, which is something that is manageable to them and helps them feel like they still have a voice. They can reap the benefits in their classroom based on what the kids are experiencing in social-emotional class.

1.6.2 Experience

In the implementer survey, **about half of respondents (48%) reported that they had implemented their *Prevention Matters* program before the current school year**, with an average of 2 years of previous experience (range = 1 to 27 years). Among those implementers with previous experience, almost all (94%) had implemented the program at their current school or school corporation during the 2018–2019 school year.

About a quarter of implementers (22%) said that they had previously taught another program focused on SEL or the prevention of risk behaviors like substance use, sexual risk behavior, or violence.

1.7 Implementer Training and Support

1.7.1 Grant Director Reports of Training and Support

Training format. In their surveys, for each program that grant directors reported implementing, they reported information about whether they offered training to new implementers of that program and, if so, how those implementers were trained. Across the 27 grantees, grant directors described a total of 53 different training plans for new implementers. **Grant directors reported that they were providing training for new implementers of all but one program.** The most common type of training was in-person training (47%), followed by self-study training with no trainer interaction (25%) and virtual training with a live trainer (19%).

The 23 Round 1 grantees reported on any follow-up training, such as boosters or annual recertifications, that they provided to returning implementers in Year 2. **About half of grantees (11 grantees; 48%) reported requiring follow-up training.** These grantees indicated that they provided follow-up training because they wanted to remind implementers of information they might have forgotten from their initial training (8 grantees) or provide supplemental or advanced information that built on information from their initial training (6 grantees).

Among the four Round 2 grantees, one reported that it offered, or planned to offer, follow-up trainings. The remaining three grantees were undecided.

In line with the grant director survey findings, nearly all interviewed grant directors reported that implementers had some type of training. Grant directors emphasized that the need to support implementers through training or coaching

as they delivered a new curriculum was an important lesson learned. Moreover, grant directors described providing implementer support for new and returning implementers. Grant directors also reported that implementers participated in in-person or online trainings during Year 1 of the grant; in Year 2, new staff received training, and some staff who had already been trained in Year 1 received refresher training. Grant directors described implementer trainings that included full online curriculum certifications, refresher modules, coaching sessions, and self-study. Some grantees supplemented implementer trainings with coaching, peer support, and sending implementers to *Prevention Matters* affinity groups where they could ask other implementers practical questions.

Most grant directors indicated that they believed implementers found trainings to be helpful. However, implementer trainings were not without challenges. A few grant directors shared that ensuring that implementer trainings were held was challenging for some schools. For example, for one multi-school grantee, implementer training videos were cut short by some principals and the remaining training was shown a couple weeks after the first component. Although this grantee did address this delayed training, initially implementers at these schools lacked comprehensive and cohesive training needed to deliver the prevention programming.

Trainers. Grant director surveys showed that, **for new implementer training that involved a live trainer, about two-thirds involved training by either the program developer or vendor (34%) or a certified trainer within the grantee organization (29%).** The remaining trainings (37%) were conducted by someone without an official certification.

In their interviews, grant directors described relying on a broad mix of trainers. Most grantees relied on program developer trainers to train their staff either in person or online. Some schools relied on a train-the-trainer model whereby one staff member participated in the program developer training and then used developer materials to provide a similar training to other teachers or staff at their school. One school hired an external consultant to train staff.

Other supports. Regardless of implementer type, many teachers benefitted from the support of SEL "planners," "coaches," or "champions," a mix of hired and existing staff designated as coordinators or implementation supporters. These staff members helped generate enthusiasm for the program and ensure consistent implementation across teachers by offering guidance and feedback. One grant director shared, "One person on a grade level more or less tees up the rest of the team to teach a Second Step lesson. They make all the copies. They get all of the materials ready for the lessons and then disburse those to teachers on grade level." Building-level champions or SEL coaches also served as liaisons to or proxies for grant directors who, because of competing demands on their time, were often unable to be physically present in classrooms and buildings for all lessons, especially at multisite grantees.

1.7.2 Implementer Reports of Training and Support

As shown in Table 5, 78% **of first-time implementers reported participating in some sort of training in (or in the summer preceding) the 2019–2020 school year**, with in-person training being the most common format. Sixty-two percent of implementers returning from Year 1 also reported participating in training for Year 2.

It is worth noting that this seems to fall short of the findings from the grant director survey, where grant directors reported providing training for all but one

program. There are several possible explanations for this finding. Grantees may have fallen short of their training goals and not reached all of the implementers they intended. Grantees may have *offered* training but not *required* the training for some or any implementers. An implementer may have participated in a training but, because of how the activity was framed (e.g., calling it "professional development"), they may not have recognized that it was a curriculum training. Unfortunately, data are not available to formally explore these potential explanations.

Eighteen percent of implementers reported having never participated in a training for the program. This is lower than Year 1, in which 38% of implementers had never participated in a training.

- Like in Year 1, implementers from smaller grantees were more likely to have participated in training than implementers from larger grantees:
- For grantees with 1–8 implementers, 91% of all implementers reported participating in training in Year 2.
- For grantees with 9–24 implementers, 77% of all implementers reported participating in training in Year 2.
- For grantees with 25 or more implementers, 71% of all implementers reported participating in training in Year 2.

Table 5. Training Participation

Implementer Participation in Training	Year 1 Implementer Survey (Training in summer 2018 or 2018–2019 school year)	Year 2 Implementer Survey (Training in summer 2019 or 2019–2020 school year)		
	Percentage of Implementers	Percentage of All Implementers	Percentage of First-Time Implementers	Percentage of Returning Implementers
Yes	62	70	78	62
In person	27	35	36	35
Self-study	14	23	27	18
Live virtual	11	16	19	12
Other	8	5	4	6
No, but I participated in a training prior to the current school year	9	12	5	20
No, I have never participated in a training for this program	38	18	18	18

1.8 Implementation Monitoring

Both grant directors and implementers reported on implementation monitoring.

1.8.1 Grant Director Reports of Monitoring

In their interviews, grant directors shared that they monitored program implementation in several ways. At some schools, grant directors asked implementers to track and report on their own lesson plans and lesson delivery. Most grant directors conducted observations of implementers delivering lessons, occasionally with the help of other staff. At least one grantee asked its implementers to observe each other, with the grant director noting, "It's one thing to know the curriculum and teach the curriculum… but it's [another] thing when

you have observation. So, we have [implementers] switch off and observe each other so they know what it looks like to be on the opposite side."

Implementation monitoring helped grant directors ensure lessons were delivered, observe how implementers and students engaged with the program, and identify areas for improvement. Numerous grant directors shared positive feedback about their experience monitoring their prevention program implementation. One grant director shared, "My favorite part [of my grant director role] is the observations because I can see firsthand what's happening in the classroom; and our implementer at [the school], he's outstanding. He really blows me away."

Another grant director noted that observations provided a way of identifying common misconceptions and areas that need to be worked on with staff. After observations, this grant director held individual meetings with teachers to share feedback: "There's nothing stronger than being able to have those one-on-one conversations with a teacher.... It's been a very powerful tool for us."

In addition to monitoring implementation progress, a few grant directors sought feedback from implementers about their experience of implementing the program. For example, one grant director held meetings with school counselors to ask about their needs and challenges. Another sent regular emails to check in with implementers. Two grant directors mentioned surveying implementers to gather feedback; one shared that implementers were at first reluctant to identify themselves on the surveys, fearing that giving an honest appraisal of their challenges might result in repercussions. The grant director worked with implementers to ensure they understood that feedback would only be used to improve teachers' and students' SEL experience.

In the grant director survey, 74% of grantees reported that they had already observed at least some program implementation. Another 15% of grantees had not yet observed implementation but planned to do so. This is similar to Year 1, in which 92% of grantees had observed or planned to observe.

Of the 24 grantees who had observed or planned to observe program implementation, all but one (96%) had trained, or planned to train, their observers. This is a slight (but not statistically significant) increase over Year 1 (88% having trained or planned to train).

Most grantees that had observed or planned to observe implementation (89%) planned to observe all implementers, as opposed to a subset. Additionally, **most grantees conducting observations (83%) reported that they had already**

provided, or planned to provide, feedback on at least some of their observations. This is a slight (but not statistically significant) decrease from Year 1, in which 92% of grantees had provided, or planned to provide, feedback.

Most grantees reported requiring all (81%) or some (7%) of their *Prevention Matters* implementers to report information about their program implementation. This is a slight (but not statistically significant) improvement over Year 1, in which 77% of grantees required all or some of their implementers to report implementation information.

Of those 24 grantees requiring reports of implementation information, 21 (88%) reported that they planned to provide feedback to at least some implementers on their implementation reporting. This is similar to the Year 1 figures (18 of 20 grantees; 90%).

RTI asked grant directors whether and how their organizations followed up with implementers found to have unsatisfactory implementation. All 27 grant directors planned to follow up. As shown in Table 6, **the most common types of follow-up were mentoring or coaching and follow-up training.**

Table 6. Monitoring Follow-up Methods

Follow-up Method	Number of Grantees
One-on-one or group mentoring or coaching	13 (48%)
Follow-up training	10 (37%)
Observation of high-quality implementation by peers or mentors	5 (19%)
Collect additional data to monitor improvements	5 (19%)
Other	5 (19%)

1.8.2 Implementer Reports of Monitoring

About half of implementers reported that someone from the *Prevention Matters* project, like a grant director or program trainer, had observed their implementation (43%) or planned to observe their implementation (4%). This is a statistically significant increase from Year 1, in which only 33% of implementers could recall being observed.

Among those who had not been observed and who were not aware of plans to be observed, 38% said that one or more of their colleagues had been observed. This suggests that, at some schools, grantees may have observed only a subset of implementers.

Of those implementers who were observed, about two-thirds (69%) reported getting feedback on this observation. This is a statistically significant increase from the 62% of observed implementers in Year 1 who received feedback.

About two-thirds of implementers (68%) reported that someone from their *Prevention Matters* project asked them to report information about their implementation. As with observations, this was a statistically significant increase from Year 1 (48%).

Of those who reported implementation information, less than half (42%) reported receiving feedback on the information they reported. This was a drop from the 55% who reported receiving feedback in Year 1, although the drop was not statistically significant (p = .0503).

1.9 Program Integration and Coordination

In their interviews, grant directors noted that integrating a program into the school helped them implement and even sustain their program efforts. As one grant director described it:

> **Make sure, in any way possible, it can be as much of the "how we do school" rather than a program add-on or an initiative. If anyone's calling it an initiative or a program or a grant, you failed, because no one sees it as core to what we do, which means it's always something that will get cut whenever it gets looked at in a budget in the future.**

During their interviews, some grant directors emphasized that they integrated their *Prevention Matters* programming by establishing classroom learning routines. Several schools hosted school-wide assemblies and meetings throughout the school year in order to deliver prevention lessons to students and reinforce program materials through interactive and engaging activities. These schools often trained all staff in the prevention curriculum and discussed the principles of the programming in numerous school settings. As a result, these trainings gave teachers and students the opportunity to use the language of their respective programs more regularly throughout the school day. One grant director spoke of learning "that teaching something in the classroom is only one part of the school day, [and] you have to have every staff member speaking the same language" throughout school environments for principles of the programming to be truly effective.

Still, a few grant directors indicated they faced challenges finding enough time to effectively integrate their prevention programming into the school day. In these instances, academic priorities and the structure of the school day impeded effective integration. One grant director noted facing "resistance from administrators because of [the need to create] an alternate schedule to get [*Prevention Matters*] lessons delivered" during a time frame in the day when teachers originally focused on fostering school pride.

In their surveys, grant directors reported on whether and how nonimplementing school staff (e.g., teachers not implementing the program, administrators, custodial or food service staff, bus drivers) and nonschool staff working with students outside of school hours (e.g., before-and-after-school care providers,

health care providers, clergy) participated in some form of program education. Specifically, they reported on:

- whether nonimplementing school staff participated in program training;
- if nonimplementing school staff did not participate in a formal training, whether schools shared program content or messages with them;
- whether nonschool staff working with students outside of school hours participated in program training; and
- if nonschool staff did not participate in a formal training, whether schools shared program content or messages with them.

Sixteen grantees (59%) delivered some sort of program education to nonimplementing school staff. Nine grantees (33%) provided training to these staff, and 14 additional grantees (52% of those not providing training) shared program messages with these staff.

Seven grantees (26%) delivered program education to nonschool staff. Two grantees (7%) provided training to these staff, and six additional grantees (22% of those not providing training) shared program messages with these staff.

These figures are somewhat lower than those from Year 1, in which 92% of grantees delivered program education to nonimplementing school staff (statistically significant decrease) and 50% delivered program education to nonschool staff. As shown in Table 7, the decrease in training nonimplementing school staff seems to be driven by Round 1 grantees. It is possible that Round 1 grantees were less likely to provide program education in Year 2 because they had already provided it in Year 1.

Table 7. Program Education for Nonimplementing School Staff

Program Education Provided	Year 1	Year 2	
	Percentage of Round 1 Grantees	Percentage of Round 1 Grantees	Percentage of Round 2 Grantees
To nonimplementing school staff[a]	92	61	100
To nonschool staff[b]	50	36	33

[a] Difference between Round 1 grantees in Years 1 and 2 is statistically significant at $p = .01$.
Difference between Round 1 Year 1 and Round 2 Year 2 is not statistically significant.
Difference between Round 1 and Round 2 grantees in Year 2 is statistically significant at $p < .05$.
[b] No differences by round or year are statistically significant.

1.10 Partnerships

Prevention Matters grantees were not required to enter into partnerships with other organizations. However, in general, partners can be a helpful resource for prevention program delivery, and many grantees' grant applications discussed partnerships.

Grant directors reported on any outside organizations that supported their *Prevention Matters* projects during the 2019–2020 school year. **On average, grantees reported having two types of partner organizations. The most commonly selected partner types were mental and behavioral health professionals and organizations (15 grantees; 56%) and health care professionals or organizations (11 grantees; 41%).** These results were not significantly different from those of Year 1.

As shown in Table 8, it was most common for partners to provide mental health and medical services to program participants as well as services for participants' family members. This result is similar to those of Year 1.

Table 8. Resources Provided by Grantee Partners, by Year

Resources Provided by Partners	Number (Percent) of Grantees	
	Year 1	Year 2
Provided mental health services to *Prevention Matters* program participants	12 (46%)	16 (59%)
Provided medical or health services to *Prevention Matters* program participants	7 (27%)	11 (41%)
Provided services for parents or other family members of *Prevention Matters* program participants	10 (38%)	10 (37%)
Reinforced *Prevention Matters* program messages or lessons with students	8 (31%)	9 (33%)
Provided substance abuse services to *Prevention Matters* program participants	4 (15%)	8 (30%)
Provided additional information or instruction to school staff to supplement *Prevention Matters* program training	6 (23%)	6 (22%)
Assisted with decision-making or problem-solving for *Prevention Matters* project	6 (23%)	5 (19%)
Presented additional information or lessons to students to supplement *Prevention Matters* programs	5 (19%)	4 (15%)
Supported *Prevention Matters* data collection, analysis, or reporting	6 (23%)	4 (15%)
Trained or provided technical assistance to staff on the *Prevention Matters* programs	2 (8%)	4 (15%)
Identified students to participate in *Prevention Matters* programs that target at-risk students	4 (15%)	3 (11%)
Shared lessons learned and best practices from *Prevention Matters* program implementation	4 (15%)	3 (11%)
Provided staff to implement *Prevention Matters* programs	4 (15%)	2 (7%)
Provided funding to supplement *Prevention Matters* funding	3 (12%)	1 (4%)
Assisted with fundraising for *Prevention Matters* programming	not asked in Year 1	0

Consistent with survey data, many grant directors described external resources as a way to supplement prevention programming and resources beyond those funded by *Prevention Matters*. Most grant directors described modest levels of external support. These grantees put their external resources and partnerships to work in different ways. Several grantees used Title IV funds to support their prevention or SEL programming, including to purchase supplemental program supplies. One grantee maintained a partnership with a university to offer SEL training to teachers.

Two grantees established comprehensive partnerships that included multiple universities, a community center, a broad-based coalition focused on SEL, and the IDOE. One of these grantees worked with partners to help identify grants, provide staff learning resources, and embed relevant prevention messages in nonschool settings where students and families might interact and learn, such as faith institutions. The other grantee used a long-standing partnership with a community center to extend its prevention programming to students attending its after-school program.

Grant directors offered a broad range of advice and lessons learned based on their experience fostering partnerships. For example, one single-school grantee advised that when bringing in a partner to deliver supplemental training, it is critical to ensure that the training aligns with the school's prevention program. Another grant director reported taking measures to avoid becoming too reliant on any one external partner to sustain prevention programming, in an effort to avert program implementation disruptions should that partnership change. One director of a single-school grantee sought guidance on how to expand partnerships, acknowledging, "I think a huge missed opportunity for us is to loop in other community partners, to bring in speakers for our kids, to find mentoring agencies that can echo the same work we're doing in the classroom.... But, again, we're not always quite sure where to begin on that stuff."

1.11 Parent Involvement

As with partnerships, *Prevention Matters* grantees were not required to involve parents in their efforts. However, involving parents can be a way to serve students in a more comprehensive way, and some grantees chose to do this.

Consistent with parents' not being an explicit component of the *Prevention Matters* model, parent involvement in programming appeared to be relatively low. In response to the grant director survey question about partner types, only one

grant director reported partnering with parent, family, or caregiver groups or representatives. In response to an open-ended question about their biggest Year 2 *Prevention Matters* challenge, two grant directors reported that their biggest challenge was communicating relevant information to parents.

When asked about specific forms of involvement, as shown in Figure 2, few grant directors reported that parents had provided input, feedback, or resources for *Prevention Matters* programming. A notable exception was that **about half of grantees (48%) reported that parents had provided positive feedback on how they felt program implementation was going.** As shown in Figure 3, this is higher than the Year 1 figure of 16%.

Figure 2. Parent Involvement

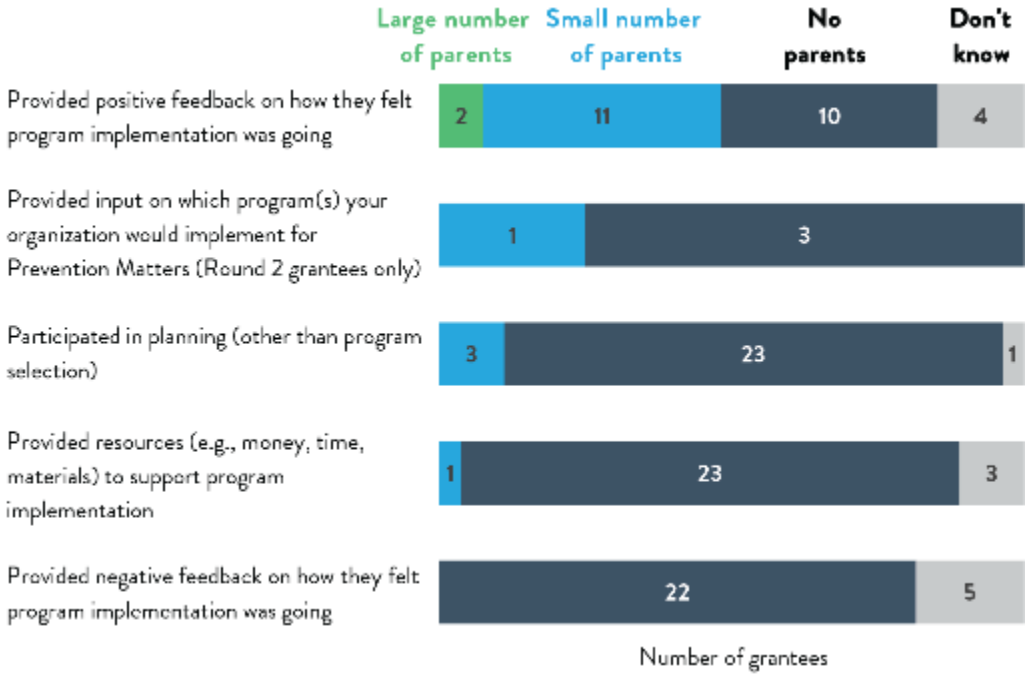
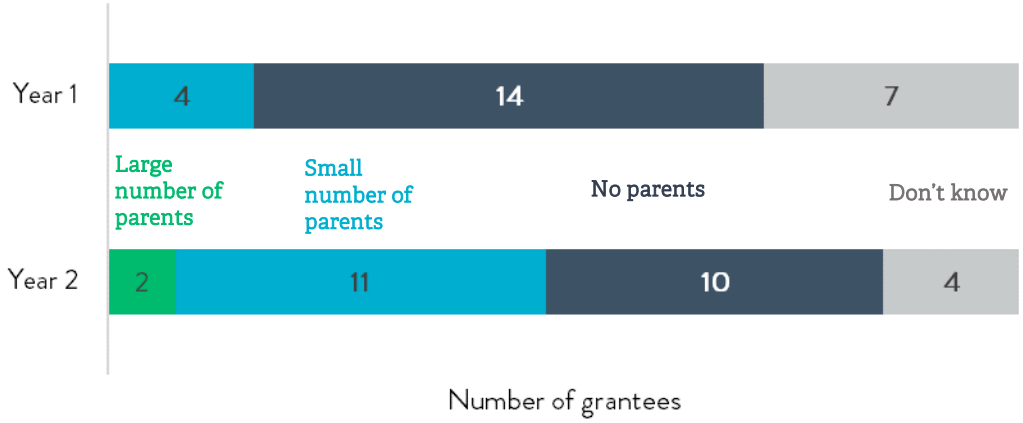


Figure 3. Parents Providing Positive Feedback on Programming



Grant directors responded as to whether schools provided parents with information and activities to reinforce program messages at home. **For more than half of programs (62%), schools provided information to parents.** Grantees intended to provide, but had not yet provided, information to parents for another 17% of programs.

Consistent with their survey responses, during interviews, most grant directors described parent involvement as minimal. Multiple grantees informed parents about the school's prevention program in a newsletter, and some shared information with parents during parent-teacher conferences.

Most grant directors who described minimal parent involvement saw it as an area for improvement. As one grant director described it, increasing parent involvement "would be a great Year 3 opportunity for us. We send home a newsletter. We brief parents at parent conferences. But we only send home a newsletter once a month, and we only meet for conferences three times a year. So, parent engagement, parent involvement in this process is very low."

Two grant directors, one from a multi-school grantee and one from a single-school grantee, described employing more comprehensive approaches to parent engagement. These grantees provided a combination of regular updates to parents, discussed students' specific SEL progress in parent-teacher conferences, sent home family-oriented SEL assignments, and provided information to parents about the skills and restorative practices used when their child was involved in a conflict at school.

Two grant directors from single-school grantees highlighted that their SEL instruction had shifted, and would continue to shift, to being parent led during distance learning. One reflected, "Parents have become the new implementers in the last 90 days [because of the COVID-19 pandemic]… and it's hard to expect parents to step in and teach the students because they have not been trained in any SEL practices." Anticipating that distance learning may continue in the fall, another grant director shared, "Part of our plan is to have training this summer with our parents,… making sure they understand that this is also a part of our program. It's not something separate; it's something the children will be responsible for."

2 Implementation Progress

More than half of implementer survey respondents (57%) had finished implementing *Prevention Matters* programming with all of their students by the time of the survey. The remainder had finished implementing with some but not all students (16%) or had not yet finished implementing with any students (27%).

In Year 1, only 11% of implementers had finished implementing with all of their students by the time they completed their surveys. The Year 2 increase may be a function of the shift in the Year 2 survey timing or of grantees' starting up more quickly in Year 2.

Among those implementers who had not yet finished implementing, most (79%) said they had been on track to complete implementation but, given school closures related to the COVID-19 pandemic, they no longer expected to finish. The remaining implementers either still expected to finish programming (2%) or had not expected to finish programming regardless of the pandemic (18%).

Nearly all of the grant directors interviewed reported that implementers completed most or all program lessons before schools closed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. As discussed in Section 1.5, some grantees shifted to offering program lessons online to complete the curriculum.

2.1 Implementation Facilitators

During the Year 2 interviews, grant directors responded to open-ended questions about their implementation progress and about facilitators, processes, or actions that allowed grant directors to implement their grant successfully. Nearly all

grant directors interviewed indicated that leadership support was a key implementation facilitator for grantees in Year 2. This support took many forms. One grant director indicated that having school board support was very beneficial. Most grant directors relied on school principals to engage teachers and even students in programming. Leaders, whether principals, implementers, or students, helped establish trust in prevention programming. To do so, these leaders put processes in place to implement the programming and even adjusted it to suit the needs of students and implementers. One single-site grantee relied on multiple leaders within the school to implement the programming: "There's three of us that are leading the building, and we are all committed to successful implementation." Another multisite grantee identified student peer leaders who worked with students in lower grades to help them develop SEL competencies and problem-solving skills.

Not all grantees had leader support; one multisite grant director interviewed described the challenges in getting in touch with school principals to obtain their buy-in.

Other implementation facilitators included ensuring implementer buy-in and creating a collaborative environment where implementers could share their lessons learned and reinforce the implementation plan.

3 Implementation Quality

For the purposes of this evaluation, implementation quality is defined as implementation *fidelity*. Implementation fidelity reflects the degree to which programs were delivered as the program developer intended. The *Prevention Matters* evaluation examines three aspects of fidelity:

- adherence to program content and methods as outlined in a curriculum manual or guide;
- dosage, or whether students received sufficient exposure to the program; and
- student engagement, including interest in and understanding of programming.

3.1 Grant Director Reports of Implementation Quality

In their interviews, several grant directors perceived that implementation quality, mainly fidelity to the prevention programming, increased in Year 2 of the grant. "In Year 2, the lessons were being taught the way they were supposed to be, in the small groups, throughout the year," one grant director shared. "Just having greater fidelity than we did in Year 1 was an indicator of quality to me." A few grant directors suspected that the increase in quality was partly attributable to implementer experience delivering the curriculum. One grant director shared, "[Program implementers] reported that just having done it once before, they felt like they knew to some extent how the students would respond to it."

Some grant directors observed that quality varied across implementers, with some implementers achieving high-quality implementation and others "rushing through [the prevention curriculum] or doing the minimum."

According to several grant directors, implementation fidelity was facilitated by an easy-to-follow curriculum, accountability measures for implementers, and high teacher energy and engagement. As the director of a single-school grantee noted, in classrooms where teachers were lively and had fun with the curriculum, students were extremely engaged and "over the moon. It was phenomenal to see."

Multiple grant directors also reported that students were engaged and seemed to enjoy the programs. However, one director from a multi-school grantee noticed that some teachers struggled to implement programming with students in 7th and 8th grades, because these students tended to be reticent. In response, this grantee shifted some discussion activities to written format by encouraging students to journal so that students could process some lessons without "having to talk about it out loud, if they weren't comfortable with that."

Some grantees were challenged to implement with fidelity, most notably when pandemic-related school closures forced implementers to stop delivering program lessons or to shift to online delivery. Other challenges during the year included limited class time for prevention programming, staff turnover, and teacher beliefs that their program needed to be altered to be age appropriate for older students. Regarding the latter, one grant director continually received feedback from the teachers of higher grade levels who thought the program was not age appropriate. The grant director acknowledged this concern and emphasized to the teachers that they needed to implement with fidelity in order to get standardized data from the first year of implementation. Another grant director echoed this need to

ensure close adherence to the curriculum manual, especially during Year 1 of implementation, telling implementers, "Stick to the script. Do it exactly, [because] we don't know if something works or doesn't work if we don't really stick with it." These two grant directors acknowledged that implementers may need to make adaptations to the curriculum in future years, based on what the organization learns during earlier implementation.

3.2 Implementer Reports of Implementation Quality

As part of their surveys, implementers reported on how closely they followed the curriculum guides in teaching program lessons before school closures for the COVID-19 pandemic.[10] **Thirty-eight percent of implementers reported following the curriculum guide very closely (i.e., teaching the material as specified in the guide). Another 50% reported following the curriculum guide somewhat closely (i.e., sometimes adapting the material as appropriate).**

[10] RTI excluded implementers who said that they did not use a curriculum guide (n = 93) from these analyses. About half of these implementers implemented Conscious Discipline (n = 46;) or Ripple Effects [n = 3], which do not have a curriculum guide. The remaining implementers implemented a program that *does* have a curriculum guide (Curriculum Based Support Group [n = 1], Life Skills Training [n = 1], Second Step: Elementary [n = 27], and Second Step: Middle [n = 15].

Implementers responded to questions about the proportion of required sessions that they delivered with their classes.[11] Among those implementers who had completed implementation with all students, **43% reported that they implemented all required sessions with all classes, and 45% reported implementing almost all required sessions.**

Implementers reported on how engaged their students were and how much they seemed to understand the program content. **On average, respondents reported that their students fell somewhere between "somewhat engaged" and "almost fully engaged" and that they had good (but not excellent or complete) understanding.**

Overall implementation quality is summarized in Table 9. Overall, there was a small but statistically significant decrease from Year 1 to Year 2 in curriculum adherence, dosage, and student engagement. However, when Year 2 implementers were limited to those who had completed all implementation by the time of their survey, a more nuanced picture emerged. Adherence still decreased from Year 1 to Year 2; however, student engagement was stable, and dosage and student understanding increased. One possible explanation for this finding is that there is something systematically different between implementers who finish earlier and those who finish later, such as organization or enthusiasm, that contributes to both implementation timing and quality. There is at least some support for this idea in the data: Implementers who had completed implementation with all students had an average enthusiasm score of 75 out of 100, whereas the remaining implementers had an average score of 69. This difference is statistically significant at $p < .001$.

[11] RTI excluded implementers who reported that they did not know how many or which sessions were required ($n = 95$) or that their program did not have required sessions ($n = 32$) from these analyses.

Table 9. Implementation Quality, by Year

Implementation Quality Metric	Means			Comparison
		Year 2		
	Year 1	All Implementers	Implementers Completing All Implementation by Time of Survey	
Adherence to curriculum guide *0 = Did not follow closely* *1 = Followed somewhat closely* *2 = Followed very closely*	1.47	1.33	1.39	Y1 → Y2 all: Statistically significant decrease ($p < .0001$) Y1 → Y2 complete: Statistically significant decrease ($p = .01$)
Dosage (delivery of required sessions) *1 = A few* *2 = About half* *3 = Almost all* *4 = All*	3.21	3.09	3.34	Y1 → Y2 all: Statistically significant decrease ($p = .0495$) Y1 → Y2 complete: Statistically significant increase ($p = .04$)
Student engagement *0 = Not at all/bored* *1 = Barely* *2 = Somewhat* *3 = Almost fully* *4 = Fully*	2.57	2.47	2.59	Y1 → Y2 all: Statistically significant decrease ($p = .003$) Y1 → Y2 complete: Difference is not significant ($p = .49$)
Student understanding *0 = Did not understand* *1 = Poor* *2 = Fair* *3 = Good* *4 = Excellent/complete*	2.86	2.87	2.99	Y1 → Y2 all: No significant change ($p = .56$) Y1 → Y2 complete: Statistically significant increase ($p < .001$)

Note. Significance testing was done via two-tailed t-tests, examining differences between pairs of mean scores.

RTI next examined whether there were any differences in fidelity across curricula. As shown in Table 10, there were 28 fidelity values (7 programs with sufficient data x 4 indicators), and 11 of these were significantly different from the initiative-level average.

It is important to note that explaining differences in programs' implementation quality can be complex. *Prevention Matters* programs serve different grade levels and have different program structures. Also, the types of schools that choose to implement one program over another may be different. In short, there are many competing factors that play into the ways in which a program is implemented.

As in Year 1, the elementary school version of Second Step had higher-than-average engagement and understanding, whereas the middle school version of Second Step had lower-than-average engagement and understanding. This may be related to grantees' general challenge of engaging middle school students; see Section 3.1.

Implementers of Conscious Discipline had lower-than-average scores on all four quality indicators. This may be a function of the quality questions' being more relevant for a curriculum-based intervention than for an intervention designed to change school practices. For example, for curriculum-based interventions, engagement and understanding are reported for the discrete times during which a program is being taught, whereas Conscious Discipline implementers may be reporting on engagement and understanding across all subjects and the whole school day.

Ripple Effects had lower-than-average scores for exposure/dosage. This is likely a function of the program format. Ripple Effects can be tailored to each student, such that it may not be appropriate for all sessions to be delivered.

Table 10. Implementation Fidelity by Program

Program	Fidelity Indicator, Difference From Initiative Mean			
	Adherence	Exposure/ Dosage	Participant Engagement	Participant Understanding
Conscious Discipline	↓	↓	↓	↓
Curriculum-Based Support Group				
Good Behavior Game	*	*	*	*
LifeSkills Training	↑			
PATHS		*		
Positive Action	*	*	*	*
Project Toward No Drug Abuse	*	*	*	*
Ripple Effects		↓		
Second Step: Elementary			↑	↑
Second Step: Middle			↓	↓
Too Good for Drugs	*	*	*	*

↑ = significantly higher than mean for all other programs.
↓ = significantly lower than mean for all other programs.
* To protect respondent privacy, values for programs with fewer than five reporting implementers or one reporting school are not reported.

3.3 Adaptations

Adapting a program to align with participants' backgrounds and needs can be a way to make lessons more engaging and effective for participants. However, adaptations that remove a program's essential ingredients have the potential to reduce effectiveness.

3.3.1 Adaptations Reported by Grant Directors

In their surveys, grant directors reported on whether their organization asked implementers to make any changes to the *Prevention Matters* curricula and, if so, what those changes were. **Half of grantees (14 grantees; 52%) asked their implementers to make changes. This is similar to Year 1, in which 44% of grantees asked their implementers to make changes.**

As shown in Table 11, **the most common changes were presenting additional activities, lessons, or content that were not part of the program** (7 grantees; 26% of all grantees and 54% of those making changes) **and repeating or reviewing program activities or lessons** (6 grantees; 22% of all grantees and 46% of those making changes)**.**

Table 11. Implementation Changes Directed by Grantees

Change Directed	Percentage of Grantees	
	Year 1	Year 2
Present additional activities or lessons that are not part of the program	16	26
Repeat or review program activities or lessons	8	22
Deliver lessons at a frequency different from what the program recommends (e.g., implement lessons on consecutive days instead of weekly)	8	15
Change program language or examples	0	11
Skip or shorten program activities or lessons	4	11
Change the order of activities or lessons	0	7
Implement with a different type of student (e.g., grade level, risk status) than what the program targets	4	7
Change the format of program activities (e.g., substituted discussion for role play, modified worksheets or homework assignments)	4	4
Other	4	7
Did not make any changes	56	48

During their interviews, grant directors described needing to make modifications or adaptations to their prevention programming so that they could improve student engagement. (This is supported by open-ended data from the grant director survey, in which three grant directors reported that their biggest Year 2 *Prevention Matters* challenge was ensuring that prevention programs were culturally competent for their student body.) For example, two grant directors remarked that their programs' materials and contents failed to meet students where they were from a relatability and cultural competency perspective,

especially for students who have endured traumatic experiences from a young age. One grant director shared that students needed to develop social-emotional competencies and skills but regularly "[dealt] with bigger issues than [the *Prevention Matters* program was] able to get at." In most of these examples, this discrepancy led grant directors and prevention staff to amend their program materials to better meet the needs of their students.

Two grant directors described how implementers made adjustments to enhance the cultural relevance of their programs. For example, a grant director of a multi-school grantee shared that a program implementer at one school revised one of the program's stories to make it more relatable to students' experiences: "The year the story was set in, and the grandfather founding the town, would've been times where black and brown individuals were slaves. Our program implementer knew that students weren't going to relate to this story and wanted to bring in an individual or bring in a story that represents them."

Three other grant directors noted that implementers adapted their programs to respond to the needs of students at different ages. Some implementers believed that older kids found program activities to be immature. One grantee's lead implementer divided some lessons in two, in part to accommodate students' short attention spans and in part to offer to students an opportunity to move around during their physical education.

3.3.2 Adaptations Reported by Implementers

Those implementers who used a curriculum guide were asked to report the types of changes they made, if any. Eighty percent of implementers reported making changes. As shown in Table 12, **the most common changes reported by implementers were skipping or shortening program activities or lessons, repeating or reviewing content, and presenting additional activities or lessons that were not part of the program.** The ranking of reasons for making changes remained completely unchanged from Year 1.

Table 12. Curriculum Changes Made by Implementers

Curriculum Change Made	Percentage of Implementers*	
	Year 1	Year 2
Skipped or shortened program activities or lessons	39	45
Repeated or reviewed program activities or lessons	35	35
Presented additional activities or lessons that were not part of the program	30	35
Changed the format of program activities (e.g., substituted discussion for role play, modified worksheets or homework assignments)	22	26
Changed program language or examples	17	18
Delivered lessons at a frequency different from what the program recommends (e.g., implemented lessons on consecutive days instead of weekly)	17	16
Changed the order of activities or lessons	17	14
Implemented with a different type of student (e.g., grade level, risk status) than what the program targets	4	3
Other	2	1
Did not make any changes	21	20

*The percentage of implementers is calculated among those who reported using a curriculum guide. Percentages sum to more than 100% because implementers could select multiple types of changes.

Those implementers who reported making changes from the curriculum manual reported the reasons for these changes. As shown in Table 13, **the most commonly reported reasons for making changes were related to increasing student engagement**, including efforts to increase student understanding and minimize disruptive behavior.

Table 13. Reasons for Curriculum Changes

Reason for Making Curriculum Change	Percentage of Implementers*	
	Year 1	Year 2
I wanted to increase student engagement.	55	66
I wanted to increase student comprehension/retention.	46	55
I wanted to minimize disruptive behavior.	29	33
We didn't have enough time, but this was not related to COVID-19.	47	19
Program content or language was not culturally appropriate for my students.	10	11
We had extra time.	13	10
We did not have enough time due to school closures for COVID-19.	Not asked in Year 1	9
I forgot or made a mistake.	6	6
I did not have needed equipment or materials.	7	5
I disagreed with program messages/content/format.	2	3
My school/organization leadership directed me to make changes.	5	2
Other	3	6

*The percentage of implementers is calculated among those who reported making curriculum changes.

3.4 Correlates of Implementation Quality

RTI examined whether training and monitoring were related to implementation quality. These results are summarized in Table 14. The table lists selected factors on which implementers differed, such as whether they participated in training or received feedback on their implementation. Then, for each of four quality indicators (engagement, understanding, adherence, dosage), the table depicts the average score (for engagement and understanding) or percentage of implementers (for adherence and dosage) for those implementers who did have the factor ("Yes" columns) and did not have the factor ("No" columns), along with an indicator of whether any differences between the "Yes" and "No" implementers were statistically significant.

The first row of the table shows that, on average, **implementers who reported participating in initial training** (training in 2019–2020 for new implementers and 2018–2019 for returning implementers) **reported higher student engagement and student understanding than did implementers who did not report participating in an initial training. They were also more likely to report having followed a curriculum guide very closely** (40% vs. 32%) **and delivering all required program sessions** (30% vs. 23%). Implementers who reported participating in a training in Year 2 (row 2) also reported higher student engagement, higher student understanding, and a greater likelihood of following the curriculum guide very closely.

There was a similar pattern for monitoring. **Implementers who indicated they had been observed** (Row 3) **and those who had self-reported implementation information** (Row 4) **reported higher engagement, understanding, adherence, and dosage than implementers who had not been monitored.**

Receiving feedback on observations (Row 5) **or self-reported implementation information** (Row 6) **was associated with higher student and engagement and understanding.** However, in three out of four tests, feedback did not have a statistically significant association with adherence or dosage.

Table 14. Implementation Quality, by Training and Monitoring

Comparison	Mean Student Engagement Score[a]		Mean Student Understanding Score[b]		Percent of Implementers Following Curriculum Guide Very Closely		Percent of Implementers Delivering All Required Sessions	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1. Implementer participated in initial training	2.52 *	2.33*	2.91 *	2.79*	40*	32*	30*	23*
2. Implementer participated in Year 2 training (initial or booster)	2.53*	2.31*	2.91*	2.79*	30*	10*	22	8
3. Implementer was observed	2.58*	2.38*	2.98*	2.79*	44*	34*	33*	24*
4. Implementer self-reported implementation information	2.67 *	2.39*	3.03*	2.87*	40*	35*	30*	23*
5. Observed implementer received observation feedback	2.67*	2.40*	3.01*	2.87*	42	46	32	35
6. Implementer who self-reported implementation information received feedback on that information	2.68*	2.45*	3.01*	2.90*	44*	37*	32	28

[a] 0 = not at all engaged/bored, 1 = barely engaged, 2 = somewhat engaged, 3 = almost fully engaged, 4 = fully engaged
[b] 0 = did not understand, 1 = poor understanding, 2 = fair understanding, 3 = good understanding, 4 = excellent/complete understanding
*Difference between "yes" and "no" is statistically significant at $p < .05$.

RTI also examined whether implementer experience was related to implementation quality. As shown in Table 15, returning implementers tended to implement more of the required sessions, and their students tended to be more engaged. New implementers tended to follow their curriculum guide more closely. However, it is important to note that, although these differences are statistically significant, they are fairly small in magnitude and may not represent practical differences in quality.

Table 15. Implementation Quality for Returning and New Implementers

Implementation Quality Metric	Means		Comparison
	Returning Implementers	New Implementers	
Adherence to curriculum guide *0 = Did not follow closely* *1 = Followed somewhat closely* *2 = Followed very closely*	1.29	1.37	Statistically significant difference ($p < .01$)
Dosage (delivery of required sessions) *1 = A few* *2 = About half* *3 = Almost all* *4 = All*	2.52	2.42	Statistically significant difference ($p = .01$)
Student engagement *0 = Not at all/bored* *1 = Barely* *2 = Somewhat* *3 = Almost fully* *4 = Fully*	2.93	2.82	Statistically significant difference ($p < .01$)
Student understanding *0 = Did not understand* *1 = Poor* *2 = Fair* *3 = Good* *4 = Excellent/complete*	3.11	3.07	No significant difference ($p = .35$)

3.5 Year 2 Successes

In their surveys, grant directors were invited to share information about their biggest *Prevention Matters* accomplishments in the 2019–2020 school year. The most commonly endorsed successes were:

- increasing student and teacher buy-in of implementation activities (5 grantees);
- implementing prevention programming consistently or completely (4);
- solidifying prevention programming within the culture of schools (3);
- establishing clearer sustainability plans and activities (3);
- expanding prevention programming by adding new schools (2);
- hosting or conducting training activities for staff (2); and
- broadening reach and retention of program content among students (2).

In grant director interviews, school staff buy-in and students' use of prevention programming language and principles were the most commonly cited examples of success. For example, two grant directors indicated they witnessed fewer instances of misbehavior from their students and observed that students were better able to manage conflicts among themselves using skills and language learned through SEL programming. One grant director mentioned, "The language of the program [is] starting to permeate the way teachers… build relationships with kids. And that's allowing [them] to be a more cohesive and positive school community."

Grant directors listed several other major accomplishments. A few grant directors indicated that implementing prevention programming in new schools was their major Year 2 accomplishment. Two grant directors pointed to their progress in establishing sustainability plans as major Year 2 accomplishments. One grant director shared, "Year 2 had allowed us to build a sustainable program, solid implementation strategy and platform for growth to maintain for years to come." One grantee indicated that their major Year 2 accomplishment was being selected to serve as a satellite training site where program developers visited and provided curriculum training for individuals outside of their school district as well as their own staff. As a training site, teachers and administrators employed by the grantee could receive curriculum training for free.

During their interviews, multiple grant directors shared anecdotes of the positive impacts their *Prevention Matters* programming had on students and the larger school community. This feedback reinforces survey findings. One grant director highlighted:

> There was a conflict in the cafeteria… and [the principal] was going over because he thought he needed to resolve it, and [the students] all told him, "Nope, we got it." And they were walking through the steps of Second Step. And so, I think that's when we know [the prevention programming] matters.

It is likely that school closures in Year 2 due to the COVID-19 pandemic influenced the volume of school absences and disciplinary issues. This makes it difficult to interpret changes in these two outcomes over multiple years. However, one interviewed grant director reported seeing improvements in both attendance rates and discipline referrals. The grant director was unsure whether those changes were a result of the prevention programming.

4 Challenges

4.1 Financial Challenges

Grant directors were mixed in terms of their perception of financial challenges. In their interviews, a few grant directors described facing major financial barriers. However, in response to an open-ended survey question about their greatest Year 2 challenge, no grant directors described financial challenges. Several grant directors also discussed financial security in their interviews. For example, one private school grant director said, "*Prevention Matters* funding has actually covered everything that we needed." Another grant director indicated that they were able to use existing staff members to implement SEL interventions and that the funding received was largely additive to existing activities and structures within schools.

Although grant directors indicated that they were adequately funded by their grants, one multisite grant director noted that additional funding could help improve program staffing by hiring a program leader at each school. This leader would be responsible for overseeing SEL activities, which would reduce the administrative load for teachers.

4.2 Policy Challenges

In their surveys, grant directors were presented with a list of seven potential policy challenges and asked to say whether and by how much those challenges limited their organizations' ability to deliver prevention programming to students.

As shown in Table 16, **the most commonly endorsed barriers were policies on academics and school schedules that limited the amount of time available for prevention programs.** However, it should be noted that it was more common for grant directors to classify policies as minor barriers than major barriers.

In Year 1, time-related policy barriers were also the most commonly endorsed. However, some Year 1 policy barriers (policies that limit what prevention content can be taught in schools, policies that restrict what data can be collected or used for program monitoring and evaluation) were not endorsed in Year 2.

Table 16. Policy Barriers Reported by Grant Directors

Policy Barrier	Number of Grantees			
	Year 1		Year 2	
	Major Barrier	Minor Barrier	Major Barrier	Minor Barrier
Policies mandating academic activities/benchmarks that, in turn, limit the amount of time available for prevention programs	1	10	3	9
Policies mandating school schedules (e.g., start/end dates, start/end times) that limit the amount of time available for prevention programs	1	9	3	4
Policies that limit ability to apply for, request, or use funding for prevention programming	0	1	0	2
Policies that limit administrators' ability to require teacher involvement in prevention programs	0	0	0	2
Policies that allow individual students (or their parents) to opt out of prevention programming	0	4	0	1
Policies that limit what prevention content can be taught in schools	0	2	0	0
Policies that restrict what data can be collected or used for program monitoring and evaluation	0	5	0	0

Grant director interviews echoed the survey findings, with half of all grant directors interviewed indicating that they faced no major policy barriers. Among those who did experience policy barriers, several described a sense of tension and difficulty implementing SEL interventions in concert with academic commitments and requirements. For example, these grant directors indicated that they had limited time to successfully implement their programming with students because mandated academic activities such as standardized testing throughout the school year impeded program scheduling. One grant director emphasized that when schedules are tight, "The first thing to get cut in an academic school day is a prevention program."

4.3 Implementation Challenges

Grant directors indicated that they experienced implementation barriers beyond those related to finances and policy. Half of grant directors interviewed, and six grant directors responding to the open-ended survey question about their biggest Year 2 *Prevention Matters* challenge, shared that they faced challenges related to the retention of their prevention programming staff and inadequate staffing in their schools. A few grant directors linked staff retention challenges to a lack of buy-in from teachers and prevention curricula planners, staff within the school who coordinate the teaching of the prevention curriculum within a grade level. Without this buy-in, grant directors believed program integration and classroom observations were not efficient.

Another grant director indicated they had difficulty maintaining grant leadership because the programming required considerable time but the grant funds they requested did not allow for a high salary.

A critical part of implementation is implementer buy-in. During the interviews, numerous grant directors highlighted that not all teachers or implementers felt comfortable teaching the SEL curriculum. Grant directors described teachers who were skeptical of the formal SEL curriculum, often because it was taking the place of a familiar school-developed SEL approach. In these cases, teachers shared with the grant directors that they were unsure whether the SEL curriculum would be effective.

To gain implementer buy-in and reduce skepticism, some grant directors engaged teachers to champion or advocate for the programming with their colleagues. One grant director highlighted, “[The implementers] were really excited about doing something with kids that was outside the scope of academics. I mean, that is what we've essentially hired them for." Other grant directors fostered excitement among teacher implementers by either giving them an opportunity to select the students who participate in the program or sharing effective lessons with colleagues. As one grant director described, "I think, again, the excitement can really have an impact with the children. [It] helps to build that capacity, to say, ‘You know what, I can do this.’" One grant director engaged school principals to “sell” the programming to their school and teachers.

4.4 Challenges Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic

In their interviews, all grant directors acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic created a unique set of obstacles for their students and staff. Many grant directors indicated that ensuring their students had sufficient resources to learn effectively and live in a healthy environment was a primary challenge of the remote learning dynamic. A few grant directors highlighted that programmatic materials such as workbooks were not available to students because they were not collected from school buildings before schools closed.

Two grantees mentioned that not all students in their communities have adequate living conditions, so ensuring availability of basic necessities such as food and safety was prioritized over prevention programming. One grant director remarked that going through with *Prevention Matters* programming felt "a little bit tone deaf when my kids are wondering where they're going to live or how they're going to eat."

Most grant directors noted that adapting in-person curricula for a virtual learning environment was a challenge. The remote learning dynamic limited the capacity to facilitate engaging discussions and role plays with students, which previously helped students retain program principles and content.

A few grant directors noted that school closures due to the pandemic caused delays in their grant plans, such as switching from one evidence-based program to another. One grant director also added that training activities were cancelled for all staff, which would delay onboarding new staff in the upcoming school year. Even the uncertainty around whether the 2020–2021 school year would take place in person or virtually caused tension among one grantee's school staff. This tension further complicated planning and implementation for this grantee.

5 Sustainability

Most grant directors interviewed expressed a desire to continue prevention programming after their *Prevention Matters* grant ends. One grant director said,

> **Our plan is to continue to implement long after the grant is done.... So eventually, we will be reaching every student because the goal is to continue to implement.**

Grant directors reported being at different stages of sustainability planning. Two of the 10 grant directors interviewed described being at the initial stages of sustainability planning. Others indicated that they had more developed sustainability plans.

Grantees focused on three areas to sustain prevention programming beyond the grant-funded time frame: continued funding, continued staff training, and availability of program materials.

Most commonly, grantees focused on identifying and securing alternative funding sources to use after Foundation funding ends. For example, some grantees made plans with their leadership to integrate at least some of the maintenance costs of prevention programming into school or school corporation budgets, especially the costs of materials. Several grantees were also working to identify grant and state funding to continue programming. Several grant directors reported looking for both internal and external funding. One grant director was confident that their prevention programming would continue "with that additional funding or without [it]."

Sustainability plans also included ensuring that staff continue to be trained to implement prevention programs. To reduce costs of external trainers who could

train new staff, several grantees identified internal trainers or planned to hold train-the-trainer events with staff before their grant ends.

A few grantees indicated that they were relying on multiyear curriculum licenses, and in some instances they ordered additional curriculum materials to continue prevention programming after the grant ended. Multiple grant directors also highlighted that their programs (Second Step and Botvin LifeSkills Training) have relatively inexpensive yearly maintenance costs after the initial start-up costs for materials. However, grant directors also noted that those same programs periodically fully reissue training materials, rather than releasing minor updates. The full reissue of materials would present a challenge to grantees, as it would require a large additional purchase at an unknown future time after their grant has ended.

A few grant directors identified administrative buy-in as an important factor to sustain schools' prevention efforts, especially if programs need internal funding. One grant director began these budget conversations with their leadership at the outset of the grant so that there was always the expectation of eventual internal funding. The grant director viewed the grant as "start-up-and-get-off-the-ground money rather than… run-the-program money."

One grant director, who was on staff at one school but was overseeing programming at multiple schools, described particular challenges to sustainability because their grant leadership did not convey authority over the other schools. In this instance, the grant director could only encourage the other schools to also engage in sustainability planning.

At the same time as grantees were working on sustainability, the COVID-19 pandemic made these efforts more challenging. One grant director expressed concern that school budget reductions due to the pandemic would decrease funding to sustain prevention programming. Another grant director shared that the school's formal sustainability planning committee was scheduled to begin in spring 2020 but was delayed because of the pandemic and school closures.

In their surveys, grant directors responded to questions about their involvement with nine facets of sustainability planning. For each, they responded on the following scale:

- No discussion (0)
- Limited discussion with no clear plan (1)
- Discussion with tentative plan (2)
- Discussion with firm plan (3)
- Executed plan (4)

As shown in Table 17, **for many areas of sustainability planning, grantees fell between limited discussion with no clear plan and discussion with a tentative plan** (i.e., mean score between 1 and 2).

RTI conducted a series of analyses to test whether sustainability scores changed for Round 1 grantees from Year 1 to Year 2, and whether Round 1 and Round 2 grantees had different sustainability scores in their first full year of funding (Year 1 for Round 1 grantees, Year 2 for Round 2 grantees).

For Round 1 grantees, the average total sustainability score, as well as most item-level scores, decreased from Year 1 to Year 2. Only one of the item-level decreases was statistically significant, but this may have been driven by small sample size (23 grantees).

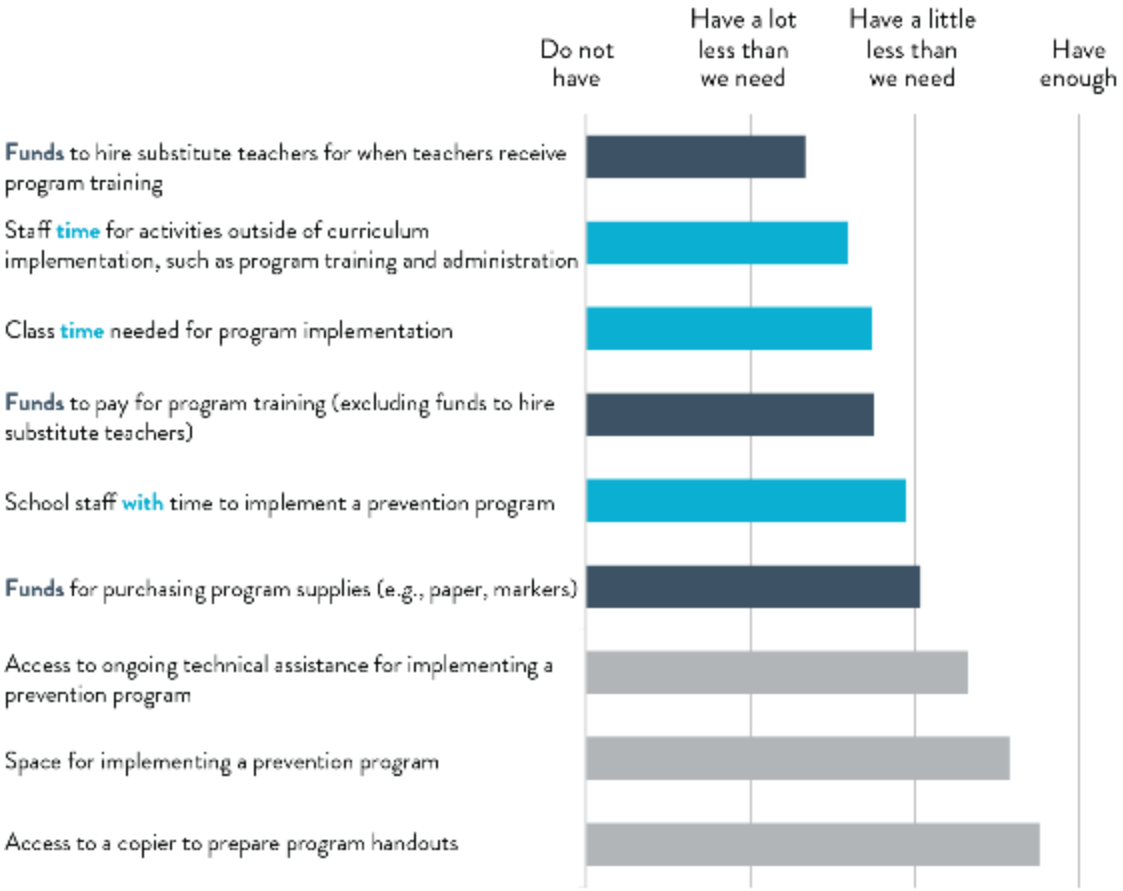
Round 1 and Round 2 grantees were comparable in their first-year total sustainability scores (2018–2019 for Round 1 grantees; 2019–2020 for Round 2 grantees). Only one item-level difference was statistically significant but, again, this may have been driven by small sample size (23 Round 1 grantees and 4 Round 2 grantees).

In their surveys, **three grant directors (13%) reported that their *Prevention Matters* programs were funded by sources beyond the Foundation.** This figure is down from six Round 1 grantees (24%) in Year 1. Year 2 funding sources included state and federal government and a school corporation or school.

Table 17. Sustainability Planning Scores, by Year

Area of Sustainability Planning	Mean Score			Comparison R1Y1 vs. R1Y2 R1Y1 vs. R2Y2
	Round 1 Year 1 (2018–2019)	Round 1 Year 2 (2019–2020)	Round 2 Year 2 (2019–2020)	
Determine the funds needed to sustain *Prevention Matters* programs	2.18	1.68	2.00	No significant differences
Determine how the program aligns with the mission and goals of potential future stakeholders	1.95	1.95	1.50	No significant differences
Identify key stakeholders who might support the program	1.86	1.59	2.00	No significant differences
Make the program a line item in the budget of your organization, schools, or community	1.76	1.73	0.75	No significant differences
Present outcome data to potential stakeholders (e.g., school board members, principals, parents)	1.64	1.32	1.25	No significant differences
Secure funds by applying for additional grants	1.62	1.09	2.00	No significant differences
Discuss with local leaders how the program relates to the community's overall prevention needs	1.67	0.77	1.50	Statistically significant decrease in Round 1 grantee score from Year 1 to Year 2 ($p = .004$)
Secure funds from sources other than grants	1.52	1.27	2.00	No significant differences
Turn over ownership of the program to the community, schools, or other organizations	.94	1.09	0	Round 1 Year 1 significantly higher than Round 2 Year 2 ($p < .001$)
TOTAL SCORE	1.66	1.37	1.53	No significant differences

Figure 4. Availability of Prevention Resources, as Reported by Implementers



6 Year 3 Plans

During the Year 2 grant director interviews, nearly all grantees described their Year 3 implementation plans. All plans aimed to offer students and implementers implementation improvements and expand effective SEL. Grant directors' plans were both broad, such as increasing awareness about mental health and SEL, and specific, such as changes to prevention curricula.

Some grant directors described relatively limited future implementation plans, such as holding a teacher-implementer training, whereas other grant directors shared major changes, such as reaching additional schools or grades.

Many grant directors described implementation changes that they planned to put in place in Year 3 aimed at improving program access, virtual implementation, and

overall program implementation. For example, one grantee reported that they planned to purchase computers and hotspots for students in urban, resource-poor areas. Another grantee planned to conduct a needs assessment to identify places to make implementation changes. Yet another grantee planned to create an implementation team to help the grant director make future implementation changes.

Learning About Impact

The *Prevention Matters* evaluation uses two sources of impact data: administrative data from the IDOE and information from monitoring and evaluation instruments that grantees collect for their own purposes. Given the timing of data collection and processing, this report focuses on data from Year 1. This section examines changes in IDOE data from 2013 through June 2019 and differences in grantees' Year 1 pre- and posttest information.

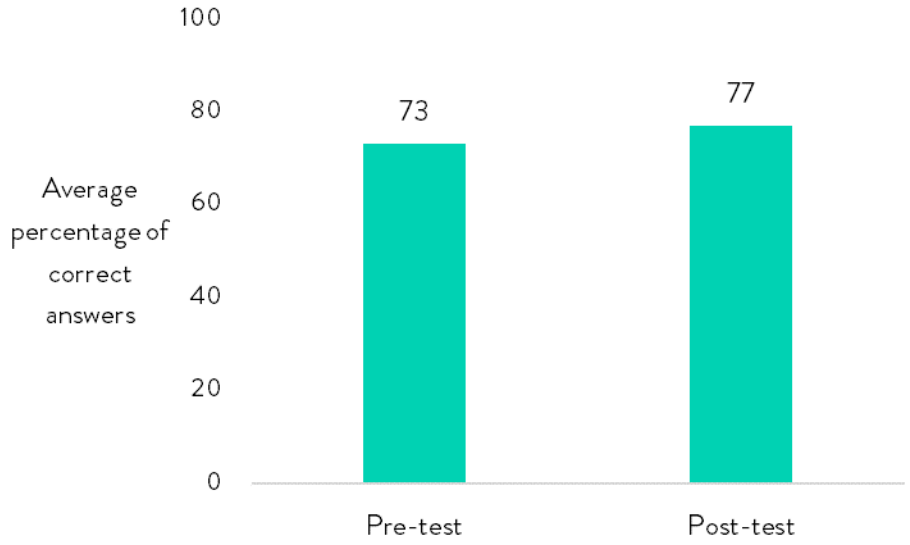
1 Grantee-Collected Outcomes Data

As noted in the Methodology section, for student curriculum knowledge, eight grantees submitted pre- and posttest summary statistics for 16 schools. For social-emotional competence, nine grantees submitted pre- and posttest summary statistics for 21 schools.

For both student curriculum knowledge and social-emotional competence, scores increased significantly from pretest to posttest in Year 1.

As shown in Figure 5, on average, students answered 73% of curriculum knowledge questions correctly at pretest. This increased to 77% at posttest.

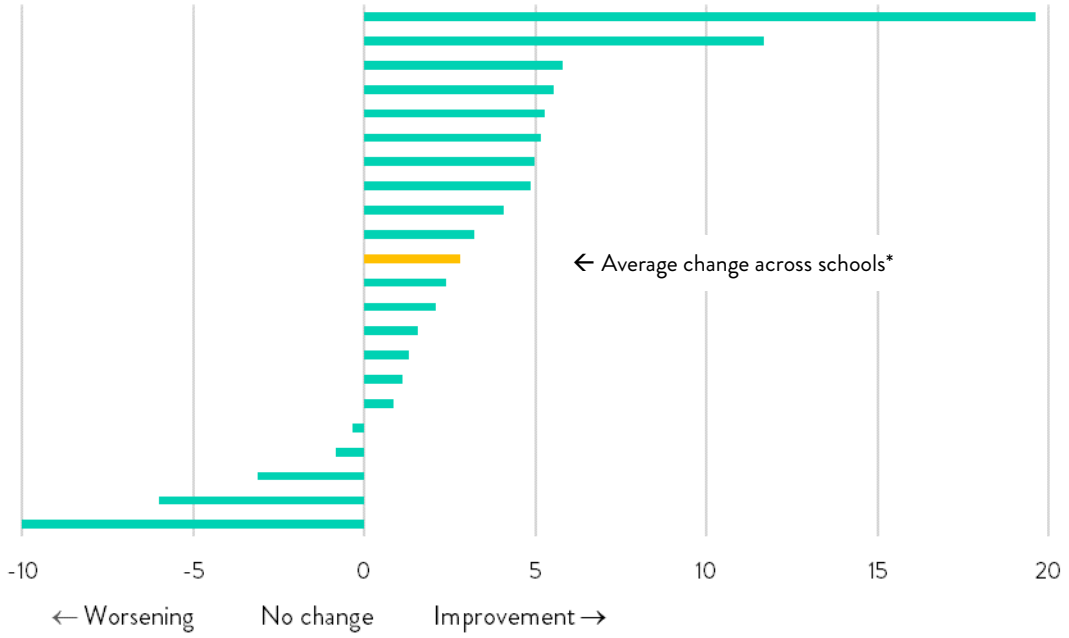
Figure 5. In Year 1, Student Curriculum Knowledge Increased From Pretest to Posttest



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

On average, students' posttest social-emotional competence scores were 3% higher than their pretest scores. Figure 6 shows the percent change for each of the 21 sets of pre- and posttest scores submitted to RTI.

Figure 6. Percentage Change in Social-Emotional Competence Scores From Pretest to Posttest, by School



*Significantly different from zero (i.e., no change) at $p < .05$.

After collecting summary statistics from grantees' Year 2 data collections (fall 2020), for domains with sufficient data, RTI expects to examine changes between Years 1 and 2.

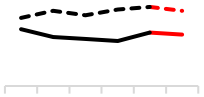
2 School-Level Administrative Data

The most recent IDOE administrative data available are from Year 1 of the *Prevention Matters* initiative (2018–2019). Therefore, for this report, analyses are limited to looking at changes from 2017–2018 to 2018–2019 and whether these were different for *Prevention Matters* schools and Allen County and Lake County schools (i.e., comparison group). Those analyses are summarized in Table 18.

For each IDOE outcome, the table describes any *statistically significant* change between the two years. It also shows small line graphs of trends from the 2013–2014 to 2018–2019 school years. Schools served by *Prevention Matters* are represented by a solid line; Lake County and Allen County schools are represented by a dashed line. The red portion of each line represents the change from 2017–2018 to 2018–2019 that was tested for this report.

For almost all outcomes, *Prevention Matters* and comparison schools either did not change from 2017–2018 to 2018–2019 or changed in comparable ways. However, there were significantly larger decreases in unexcused absences and in-school suspensions for the comparison group.

Table 18. Change in IDOE Outcomes, 2013–2019

Outcome	Change from 2017–2018 to 2018–2019[a]	Mini Graph: 2013–2014 to 2018–2019[b]
Achievement		
Graduation	Graduation rates did not change from 2017–2018 to 2018–2019 for either group	
Grade retention[c]	Retention rates decreased for both groups from 2016–2017 to 2018–2019	
Behavior		
Attendance	Attendance did not change from 2017–2018 to 2018–2019 for either group	
Excused absences	Excused absences decreased for both groups from 2017–2018 to 2018–2019	
Unexcused absences	Unexcused absences decreased for both groups from 2017–2018 to 2018–2019 Unexcused absences decreased more in comparison schools	
In-school suspension	In-school suspensions decreased for both groups from 2017–2018 to 2018–2019 In-school suspensions decreased more in comparison schools	
Out-of-school suspension	Out-of-school suspensions decreased for both groups from 2017–2018 to 2018–2019	
Expulsion	Expulsions decreased for both groups from 2017–2018 to 2018–2019	

Outcome	Change from 2017–2018 to 2018–2019[a]	Mini Graph: 2013–2014 to 2018–2019[b]
Standardized testing		
ISTEP+ (grade 10) Passing both math and English[c]	ISTEP+ passing rate did not change from 2017–2018 to 2018–2019 for either group	
IREAD-3[d]	IREAD-3 passing rate decreased for both groups from 2017–2018 to 2018–2019	

ACT and SAT data are currently available only through 2017–2018, IDOE has not yet provided dropout data for 2018–2019, the last administration of ISTEP+ (Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress-Plus) in grades 3–8 was in 2018, and the first administration of ILEARN (Indiana Learning Evaluation Assessment Readiness Network) was in 2019. Therefore, those outcomes do not appear in this table.

[a] Any changes described in this table are statistically significant at $p < .05$.

[b] Solid lines represent *Prevention Matters* schools. Dashed lines represent Allen County and Lake County schools. Red line segments represent the change from 2017–2018 to 2018–2019.

[c] Grade retention data are not currently available for 2017–2018. This row reflects change from 2016–2017 to 2018–2019.

[d] Indiana first administered the IREAD-3 (Indiana Reading Evaluation and Determination) and the 10th grade ISTEP+ in 2016, so these trends are for 2015–2016 to 2018–2019.

At this point in the initiative, the general lack of evidence for program impact in IDOE data is not surprising. Given grantees' predominant focus on elementary and middle school students, one would not expect to see impact on outcomes like high school standardized tests or graduation rates until program participants have aged into those grades. Also, many grantees are serving students in multiple grades, and signs of impact may emerge as students have been exposed to program messages across multiple years.

Beginning with the Year 3 evaluation report, RTI will be able to examine changes in IDOE data from Year 1 to Year 2, as well as whether these changes differ from pre-*Prevention Matters* trajectories and from changes in comparison schools. However, these comparisons will also be affected by data limitations stemming from COVID-19.

Lessons Learned

In the previous sections, we identified a number of lessons that can help to strengthen *Prevention Matters* in Year 3. We summarize those lessons here, as well as lessons articulated in grant director interviews.

1 Summary of Lessons Learned Across Data Sources

The data presented in this report yielded a number of insights that can be applied by schools engaging in substance use prevention efforts (including *Prevention Matters* grantees) and funders of such efforts (including the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation).

1.1 Strengths and Growth

- Seventy percent of implementers reported having participated in Year 2 training, up from 62% in Year 1. However, there continues to be an apparent disconnect between training as reported by implementers and by grant directors; grant directors reported that they were providing implementer training for 98% of *Prevention Matters* programs.

  This difference between the implementer and grant director figures may stem from the different frame of reference for their training questions (i.e., implementer level or program level). For example, a grantee may have offered training for all programs but not necessarily all implementers of those programs. Alternatively, this difference may result from issues like grantees who did not reach all intended implementers with training or implementers who did not recognize that certain professional development activities were actually program training.

- Grantees progressed further with implementation in Year 2 than in Year 1. They implemented for a longer duration, and more implementers were on track to finish implementation by the end of the school year. Among the implementers who did not expect to finish implementation, most attributed this to school closures related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Grantee monitoring efforts, as reported by both grant directors and implementers, improved from Year 1 to Year 2. More implementers were observed, and more implementers were asked to submit implementation information. However, a gap remains between the number of grant directors reporting on monitoring efforts and implementers' reports of monitoring.

- There were several factors associated with implementation quality, including training participation and receiving implementation monitoring

and feedback. This evaluation cannot determine whether training and monitoring directly caused high program quality, but it does suggest that grantees should continue to support training and monitoring for implementers.

- There were some promising signs of impact, both in grantee-collected data and grant director anecdotes. RTI will continue to examine impact as additional years of data become available.

1.2 Areas for Improvement

- Overall, most implementation quality metrics, including adherence, dosage, and student engagement, dropped from Year 1 to Year 2. However, when Year 2 implementers were limited to those who had completed all implementation by the time of their survey, there was evidence of increases in dosage and student understanding. This suggests that there may be something systematically different about implementers who complete implementation that accounts for both their implementation progress and quality. It may be beneficial to provide additional coaching and support to implementers struggling with program completion. Alternatively, schools might consider narrowing their implementer pool to those individuals who can implement in a timely and high-quality way.
- Four out of every five implementers made changes to programming from what was manualized. This was most often done to improve student engagement. It is possible that many of these adaptations were appropriate or even recommended by technical assistance providers or program developers. RTI did not collect data that could speak to this possibility, but this finding underscores the importance of grantees' monitoring implementation—including the nature of program adaptations—and addressing any problematic adaptations that occur.
- Lack of time and staff turnover were frequently identified as barriers to successful program implementation.
- Sustainability scores decreased from Year 1 to Year 2 for Round 1 grantees. This drop was not statistically significant, but it was not an *increase*, which is the ideal progression in sustainability. Anecdotally, we know that many grantees were planning to work on sustainability in spring 2020, so it is possible that COVID-19 hampered their intended sustainability work.

1.3 COVID-19 Pandemic

- Grantees had varying responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some were not able to complete implementation, some were able to transition to remote implementation by existing implementers, and some enlisted school counselors to take over implementation from overburdened classroom teachers.

2 Additional Lessons Learned From Grant Directors

Grant directors offered extensive advice regarding program delivery. Their advice can be put into three categories: program planning, implementation, and prevention approaches.

Program planning advice includes suggestions that grant directors do the following:

- Get leadership buy-in from the start.
- Take time to establish buy-in with all stakeholders: "Talk to the staff you're wanting to become the implementers. Talk to the parents, talk to the kids. Take the time to do some focus groups and interviews and things like that.... It really did inform how we were able to go into implementation because everyone felt like they had been able to give their opinions, give their feedback."
- Make sure the program selected is a good fit for the organization.
- Have a plan that connects the new program to initiatives that are already in place.

Implementation advice includes being able to do the following:

- Introduce programming slowly: "Don't jump in really fast. Give yourself some time to really understand what [and] how, and [to] plan."
- Designate someone to lead the program: "Make sure somebody owns it at the school level and that somebody is not the principal."
- Have a team implementing the program: "Don't rely on one person to be part of your implementation, and make sure that you have multiple people

that have a clear understanding of the plan, the direction that your school needs to move in, and how to actually reinforce that plan in the school."

- Learn from other schools, organizations, or implementers who have implemented the program.
- Set high expectations and establish accountability for implementers: "[Prevention programming] has to have the same level of expectation as, for example, our math curriculum."
- Explain the "why" to parents, especially when SEL programs are delivered via distance learning and require parent support.
- Have a strong staff trainer or champion to promote the program.
- Leverage partnerships and build on long-standing relationships to implement programming earlier: "We already had some of the things in place and we just built on that. That's why I think we had such good momentum and did programming straight out of the gate."
- Be prepared to make adjustments after Year 1.

Grant directors recommended that prevention approaches do the following:

- Focus on what is best for students participating in the program: "At the end of the day, if you focus on what is best for the kids, everything will fall into place."
- Consider the desired outcomes of the program: "My biggest advice would be, you need to think about what you want to accomplish with your students and as a school and use that as the framework."
- Be integrated into the school, not an "add-on": "If anyone's calling it an initiative or a program or a grant, you failed, because no one sees it as core to what we do, which means it's always something that will get cut whenever it gets looked at in a budget in the future."
- Consider that it all starts with the adults: "You have to start with the adults first. You have to start with what their beliefs are about children, what their beliefs are about discipline, what do they believe, and how do you help support them moving from a punitive model to a restorative model?"

The lessons learned in Year 2 of the *Prevention Matters* evaluation have the potential to strengthen implementation and impact of this initiative in the future, as well as to strengthen other school-based efforts to promote SEL and prevent substance use.