RICHARD M. FAIRBANKS FOUNDATION

RTI INTERNATIONAL

Prevention Matters
Year 1 Evaluation Report

November 25, 2019

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Executive Summary

On an average day in Marion County, Indiana, one person dies from an accidental drug overdose,[1] two people are diagnosed with lung cancer,[2] and there are two car crashes 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, launched by the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation, 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 about 180 schools to provide students with an array of programs that have been proven, through research, to improve substance use and social and emotional outcomes.

The Foundation is working with RTI International to document which programs grantees are implementing, how they are implementing them, and how implementation relates to short-term student outcomes. This work will help grantees hone their implementation, as well as inform the resources and supports that the Foundation may wish to provide to its grantees moving forward.

[1] https://blogs.iu.edu/speaindy/2018/05/17/drug-overdose-deaths-continue-to-rise-in-marion-county/
[2] http://indianacancer.org/resources/marion.pdf
[3] https://trafficsafety.iupui.edu/crash-fact-books/Crash%20Fact%20Book_2017_Final%20Lo%20Res.pdf
[4] https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/index.asp
[5] For more information about the initiative, see https://www.rmff.org/preventionmatters/.

Evaluation Methodology

In the first year of the *Prevention Matters* evaluation, we collected three complementary sets of data to help describe implementation of the initiative. We conducted a Web-based survey of directors from 26 *Prevention Matters* grant projects, telephone interviews with a sample of 10 grant directors, and a Web-based survey of 1,149 program implementers.[6]

We also laid the groundwork for evaluating the impact of *Prevention Matters* on student outcomes by compiling historical school-level data on academic achievement, student behavior, and standardized testing from the Indiana Department of Education. In addition, we began establishing processes for compiling grantee-collected data.

What We Learned

Programming

In the first year of *Prevention Matters*, 27 grantees and about 1,800 implementers delivered 11 different prevention programs in 103 schools. The most commonly implemented programs were Second Step and LifeSkills Training. During the time period when they were implementing, most implementers implemented program content or lessons at least once per week; nearly a quarter implemented daily.

Implementers

All program implementers were school staff (as opposed to staff from an outside organization), and most were general education teachers. About a quarter of implementers had previously implemented their *Prevention Matters* programs, and about a quarter had implemented another prevention or social-emotional learning (SEL) program.

Training and Oversight

Grant directors reported that they were providing implementer training for all *Prevention Matters* programs. About two-thirds of implementers reported having participated in training. Training rates were higher among grantees with a smaller number of schools and implementers.

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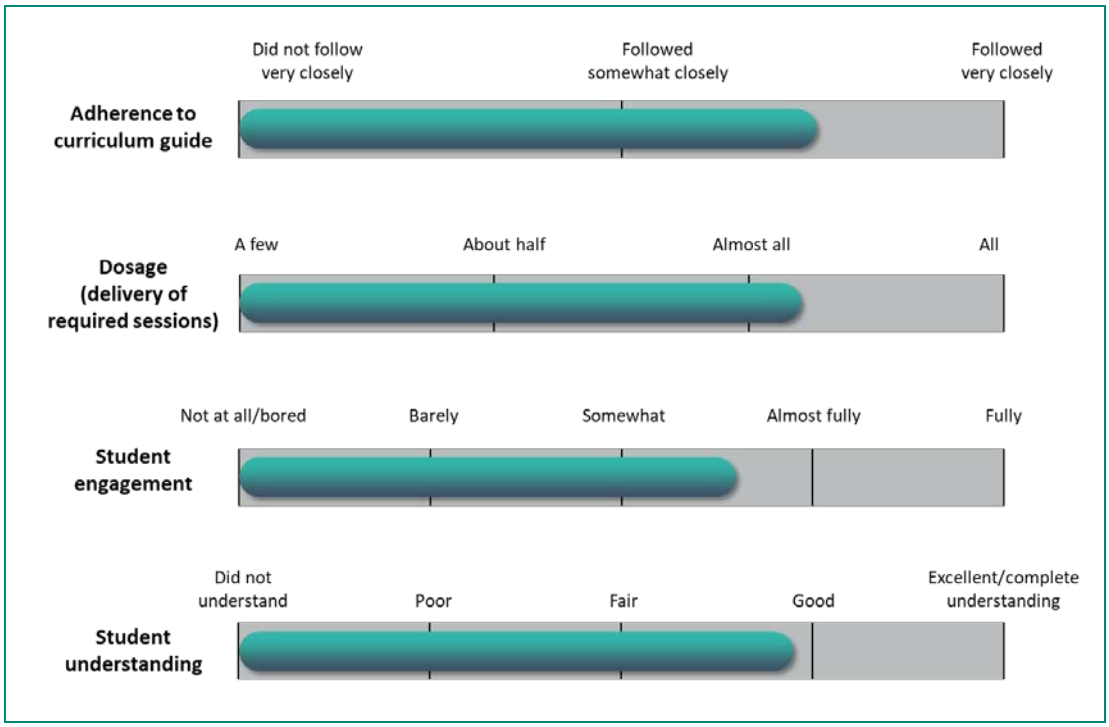
[6] The Foundation awarded implementation grants to 29 grantees. The sample for surveys described in this report includes the 27 grantees who began implementation during Year 1 (2018-2019 school year).

Most grantees offered program education (either training or an introduction to program content or messages) to school staff other than implementers, such as administrators, custodial or food service staff, or bus drivers. Some also offered program education to nonschool staff such as before-and-after-school care providers, health care providers, or clergy.

Most grant directors reported that they planned to monitor implementation via observation or implementer forms. However, at the time of their survey, fewer than half of implementers reported having been observed or asked to report implementation information.

Implementation Quality

This evaluation defined implementation quality as adherence to program content and methods as outlined in a curriculum manual, giving students sufficient exposure to programming, and having students who are interested in and understanding the programming. As shown in the chart that follows, implementation quality tended to be positive; however, there is still room for improvement as *Prevention Matters* moves into its second year.



Implementers who were more enthusiastic about their programs and who experienced fewer barriers to implementation—such as lack of time, missing materials, and student and implementer discomfort with program topics—tended to have higher implementation quality. These factors may represent important opportunities for strengthening implementation quality.

Implementers who had previous experience with prevention programs, either their *Prevention Matters* curricula or other substance use prevention or social-emotional learning programs, were less likely to follow their curriculum manual very closely, and they made more adaptations, than inexperienced implementers. It will be important to prevent curriculum drift as *Prevention Matters* heads into its second year, when many more implementers will have previous experience.

Implementation Challenges and Facilitators

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.

Grant directors commonly identified teacher initiative as an implementation facilitator. It was helpful to have teachers who were enthusiastic, proactive, and collaborative.

Early Successes

When asked to identify their biggest success in Year 1, grant directors most commonly mentioned completing training and getting the program off the ground; getting teacher buy-in; and implementing the programs, especially in a seamless or widespread manner.

Also, on average, grantees are beginning to work toward sustainability. Many have discussed and made tentative plans for sustainability, and some have secured supplemental funding for *Prevention Matters* programs.

Next Steps

In Year 2 of the *Prevention Matters* evaluation, RTI will begin assessing the impact of *Prevention Matters* on student outcomes. We will start compiling grantee-collected data and will have access to 2018–2019 school administrative data (i.e., first year of data after the *Prevention Matters* launch). We will also begin

conducting observations of program implementation to provide an outside perspective on implementation quality.

In addition, we will be able to examine how initiative implementation is beginning to change over time. Does implementation get easier? Do new challenges emerge? Does implementation quality increase as implementers gain experience? Have grantees moved closer to sustainability? This information will be critical for informing the Foundation's efforts to support grantees in Year 3, as well as for helping future funders better prepare for the lifecycle of a multiyear prevention initiative.

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 about 180 schools to provide more than 77,500 students with an array of programs that have been proven, through research, to improve substance use and social-emotional outcomes.

In January 2018, the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation launched *Prevention Matters*, a $12-million grant initiative to help Marion County, IN, 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; archdioceses 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.

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. The Foundation awarded 5 additional implementation grants in December 2018 to support program implementation through the 2021–2022 school year.[2]

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 resources and supports that the Foundation may wish to provide to its grantees in the future.

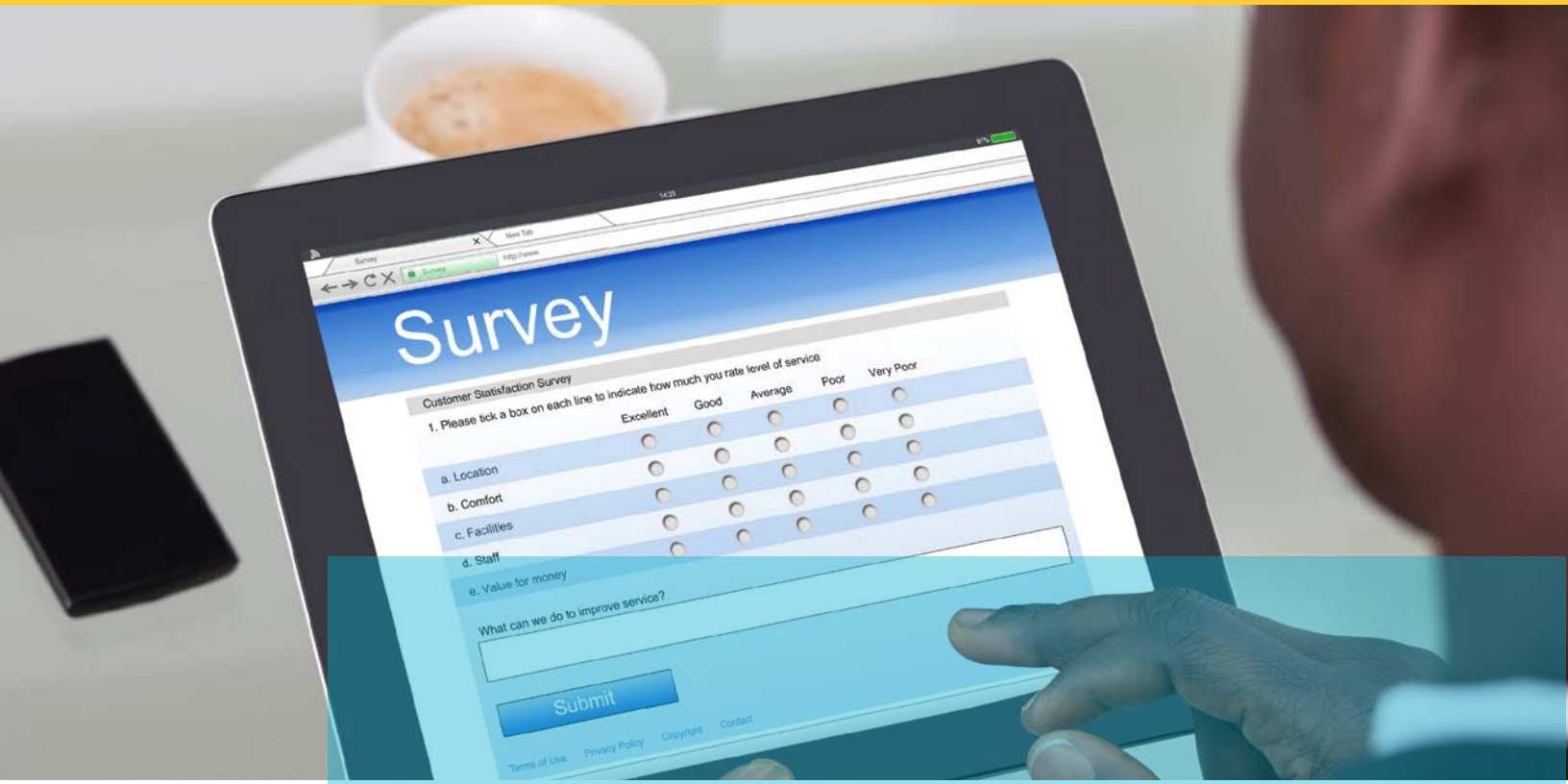
In Year 1, RTI collected data to help describe implementation of the initiative, including a Web-based survey of *Prevention Matters* grant directors, telephone interviews with a subset of grant directors, and a Web-based survey of program implementers. We also laid the groundwork for evaluating the impact of *Prevention Matters* on student outcomes by compiling historical school-level data on academic achievement, student behavior, and standardized testing from the Indiana Department of Education and by establishing processes for compiling grantee-collected data.

The purpose of this report is to share what RTI has learned about the first year of *Prevention Matters* implementation.

In the Methodology section of this report, we provide more detail on the evaluation methods RTI used. In the Learning About Implementation and

[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.
[2] The sample for surveys described in this report includes the 27 grantees who began implementation during Year 1 (2018–2019 school year).

Learning About Impact sections, we discuss what RTI learned about *Prevention Matters* processes and outcomes. In the Lessons Learned section, we summarize Year 1 findings that can be used to help strengthen *Prevention Matters* and similar school-based prevention initiatives.



Methodology

This section describes the methodology used for the *Prevention Matters* evaluation. The evaluation includes six data sources: annual surveys of grant directors and of program implementers, telephone interviews with grant directors, school-level administrative data from the Indiana Department of Education, observations of program implementation, and information from grantees' required data collection activities. This Year 1 report describes findings from the grant director and implementer surveys, grant director interviews, and Indiana Department of Education data.

1 Grant Director Surveys

RTI conducted a 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.

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

Twenty-six grantees planned to implement programming in the 2018–2019 school year (all 24 Round 1 grantees and 2 Round 2 grantees). In January 2019, directors of all 26 of these grant projects completed the grant director survey.

2 Implementer Surveys

RTI conducted a Web-based survey of *Prevention Matters* program implementers. Topics for this survey included self-assessments of implementers' implementation quality, barriers to and facilitators of program implementation, training received, integration of programming into existing curricula/activities, and any partners involved in implementation.

RTI grantee liaisons collaborated with grantee staff to obtain e-mail addresses for current program implementers. Each implementer then received an e-mail with a personalized link to participate in the survey. We expected the survey to take about 30 minutes to complete.

In Year 1, RTI conducted an experiment to determine whether offering implementers an incentive to complete their survey would improve response rate.

For implementers from a random half of grantees, their survey invitation mentioned a $10 incentive for participating. The remaining implementers did not learn about the incentive until after the survey closed.

We found that, although knowledge of an incentive boosted the response rate in the first week of the survey, differences between the two incentive conditions went away after getting grant directors' assistance with implementer follow-up in the last few weeks of the survey period.

The Year 1 implementer survey was open from March 4 to April 19, 2019. RTI sent survey invitations to 1,810 valid[3] implementers representing 27 grantees.[4] RTI sent automated reminders to nonresponders at three points during the survey period and then sent a request to grant directors to follow up with their implementers to encourage them to respond.

A total of 1,149 implementers opened the survey. A small portion of implementers (63 implementers; 5.5%) who opened the survey completed no, or very few, questions.[5] Thirty-nine implementers (3.3%) reported that they were not implementing, or planning to implement, any programs on the lists that grant directors provided, and they were immediately exited from the survey.[6] These implementers were dropped from analysis, resulting in an analytic sample of 1,047 implementers.

3 Grant Director Interviews

RTI conducted 60-minute telephone interviews with a sample of grant directors. These interviews involved a more 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.

In Year 1, RTI interviewed 10 grant directors. We selected these directors on the basis of their implementation timing (early or late in Year 1),[7] the number of schools they served, the type of schools served (public [including charter] or private [including parochial]), and the programs implemented.

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[3] Over the course of the survey, we learned that grant directors named a small number of individuals who were not, in fact, implementing *Prevention Matters* programming. We removed these individuals from the invitation count.
[4] In the time period following the grant director survey, we learned that one additional grantee was planning to implement programming in Year 1.
[5] An additional 45 implementers completed some questions but did not officially submit their survey responses; we included their responses when available.
[6] An additional 4 implementers completed a substantial portion of the survey but then went back and changed their program response to "none of these." We included any responses these implementers provided in analyses.
[7] Despite our having selected a sample based on implementation timing, interviews revealed that implementation timing changed for a quarter of the grantees in our sample, such that all but two were classified as late implementers. Therefore, we did not examine the role that implementation timing had on the interview topics.

4 School Administrative Data

RTI compiled school-level administrative data from schools being served by *Prevention Matters*. We also compiled data for schools in Lake (i.e., Chicago suburbs) and Allen (i.e., Fort Wayne) counties to compare what happened during the same time period in demographically similar counties that are not served by *Prevention Matters*. RTI will eventually use these data, from both before and during *Prevention Matters*, to examine whether there are shifts in historical patterns of school-level outcomes when *Prevention Matters* is first implemented and whether these trends look different from trends among schools not receiving *Prevention Matters* programming.

RTI obtained administrative data from the Indiana Department of Education for graduation; grade retention; attendance; absences; suspensions and expulsions; dropout; and scores on the ISTEP,[8] IREAD, ACT, and SAT. In the future, RTI will request school data for each year of the *Prevention Matters* initiative (i.e., 2018–2019, 2019–2020, 2020–2021, 2021–2022). However, planned analyses also require historical data from before *Prevention Matters* began, so RTI has obtained data from the 5 years preceding implementation (2013–2014 through 2017–2018).

5 Future Activities

5.1 Observations

RTI will observe a sample of program sessions in Years 2 and 3. A trained RTI observer will answer questions about topics including adherence to the program content/model, implementer skill, participant engagement, and barriers to session implementation.

Early in Year 2, RTI will work with the Foundation to determine what research question we will answer with the observations, which will inform the grantees, schools, and implementers who are recruited for observation.

Across all Round 1 and Round 2 grantees, RTI has planned to observe 112 implementers over 2 years, with approximately six observations of each implementer. RTI will work with grantees, schools, and implementers to schedule these observations.

[8] In 2019, ILEARN replaced ISTEP. We will use ISTEP data to examine pre-*Prevention Matters* trends and ILEARN data to examine changes after *Prevention Matters* implementation.

5.2 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.

In Year 1, RTI reviewed each grantee's data collection plans. RTI identified the constructs that grantees most commonly measured and then worked with the Foundation to identify 12 constructs for which RTI will ask grantees to submit data (see sidebar). For each of these constructs, RTI will request that grantees submit a school-level summary statistic (e.g., mean and standard deviation, percentage, count) from each round of data they collect, using a spreadsheet template.

RTI will compile grantee data for 12 constructs:

- Curriculum adherence
- Student curriculum knowledge
- Alcohol use
- Marijuana use
- Opioid or prescription drug use
- Tobacco use
- Vaping
- Perceived risk of harm from substance use
- Personal substance use norms
- Depressive symptoms
- Disciplinary incidents other than suspensions/expulsions
- Social-emotional competence

In May 2019, RTI pilot-tested the data submission process with four grantees. We conducted a training webinar, provided grantees with guidance materials, and asked grantees to attempt to submit at least some of their data. After this process, we conducted a webinar to obtain grantee feedback. We are currently using this feedback to refine our process and materials, and we plan to deliver revised training and materials to all *Prevention Matters* grantees in fall 2019.

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 us to analyze evaluation measures even though they will vary somewhat from grantee to grantee.

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 1, the quality of that implementation, and challenges that grantees and their implementers experienced. It concludes with a discussion of early grantee efforts to promote the sustainability of their models.

1 Implementation Models

In this section, we describe the following aspects of grantees' implementation models: organizational structure, programs implemented, grades served, implementation settings, implementation schedules, implementer training and support, implementation monitoring, program integration and coordination, partnerships, and parent involvement.

1.1 Organizational Structure

Grantees created a variety of organizational structures to coordinate program implementation. In their interviews, a few grant directors described a system in which one staff person was primarily responsible for daily implementation oversight. Perhaps not surprisingly, all of these grantees commented on the challenges associated with limiting this responsibility to one person—mainly that **implementation oversight was too much work for a single individual**. Some of these grantees made midyear adjustments or plans to spread the work across additional people. One such grantee, a single-site grantee, reflected that implementation was "more than we expected" and, if given the opportunity to do something differently, would ask for more people to be involved in planning and implementation.

Other grantees—all multisite, but from a mix of large and small organizations—involved multiple people in managing implementation and reported that it worked well. They also described shared management as being less challenging than having a single implementation point person. Recognizing the need to establish points of contact in each building, one multisite, public school grantee created an implementation team comprising teachers from each grade level and school building. This grant director planned for the teachers on the team to meet regularly, serve as liaisons between the implementers and the grant director, and assist in conducting program fidelity checks. Another multisite, public school grantee described a system of building-level program "champions" who served as points of contact for implementers.

1.2 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.[9] Ultimately, grantees chose to implement 11 programs in Year 1, which are shown in the table below. **The most commonly implemented program was Second Step, followed by LifeSkills Training.** Individual grantees implemented 1, 2, or 3 programs.

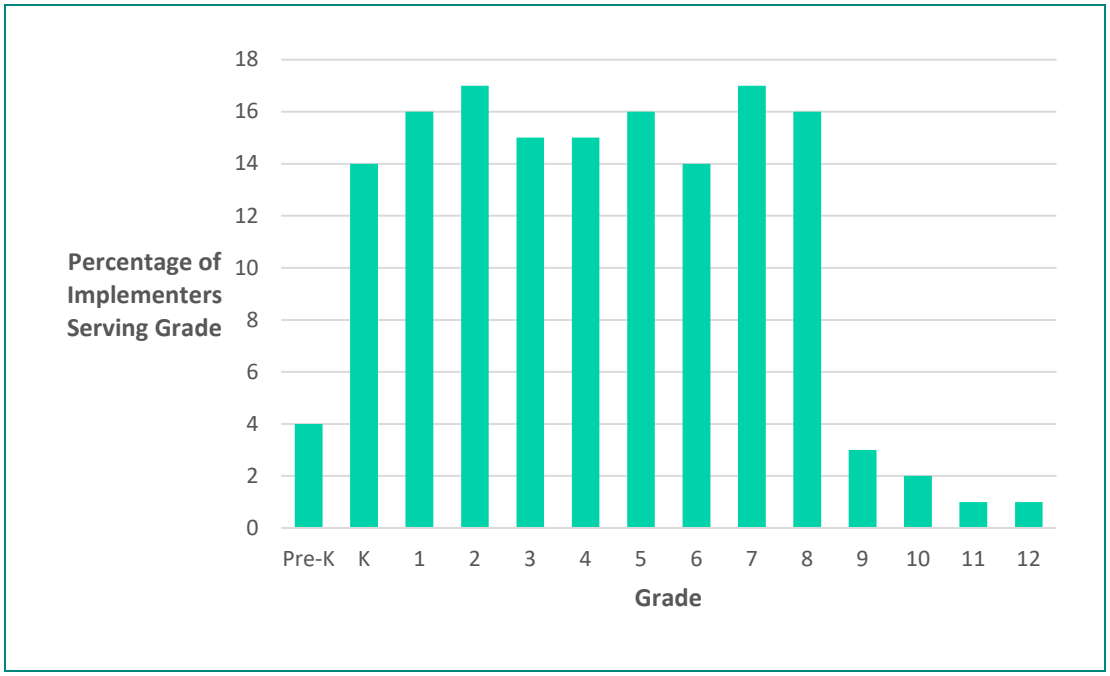
Program[a]	Number Implementing			
	Grantees	Schools[b]	Implementers[b]	
			Primary[c]	Additional[d]
Conscious Discipline	3	14	20	20
Curriculum-Based Support Group	2	6	8	10
Good Behavior Game	2	3	9	8
LifeSkills Training	7	20	62	21
PATHS	1	1	4	0
Positive Action	2	5	8	10
Project Toward No Drug Abuse	2	1	1	1
Ripple Effects	2	7	11	99
Second Step: Elementary	13	53	632	90
Second Step: Middle	14	37	279	50
Too Good for Drugs	2	3	9	2

[a] One grant director and 14 implementers reported implementing an additional program not on this list. These included Health Ed Pros, Kindness Challenge, Leader in Me, MindPlay, MindUP, Mind Yeti (a program implemented in conjunction with Second Step), Peace Learning Center Restorative Practices, Respectful Ways, or a social-emotional learning curriculum created by the school. Forty-three implementers reported implementing none of the programs on this list. [b] Among Implementer Survey respondents. Actual number of implementers is typically higher because of survey nonresponse. [c] Twenty-three implementer survey respondents reported a primary program other than a program that their grant director reported implementing as part of *Prevention Matters*. Of these, 10 reported implementing the correct program as an additional program. In the interest of providing a complete picture of all interventions implemented, we retained all 23 of these implementers in analysis. [d] About one-quarter of implementers (28%) 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.

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

1.3 Grades Served

Each elementary and middle school grade was served by a similar number of implementers. However, as shown below, relatively few implementers delivered programming to Pre-K or high school students.



In their interviews, grant directors commonly reported an evolution in their plans for which grades their grant would serve. **Numerous grantees reported implementing in fewer grades than initially expected.** The reasons for this change varied. A few grantees reported that the programming was easier to integrate into some grades' curricula but harder to integrate into other grades. For example, one charter school grant director said that it was more difficult to implement programming as part of the middle school grades' curricula. As a result, this grantee and others delayed implementation for the grades that required more implementation planning.

Grant directors also reported implementing in fewer grades than originally planned because implementers for certain grades experienced more challenges. In response, grantees provided these implementers with more time to figure out how to share the prevention curriculum with students.

One charter school grantee reported that it implemented with more grades than it had initially planned. This grantee had planned to include 4th- and 5th-graders and later decided to implement among all students in K–5th grades. The grant

director explained that this shift was due to its concern that *Prevention Matters* funding was not guaranteed for Year 2, though the Foundation has described this to grantees as a 3-year implementation grant. Given this uncertainty, the grantee reasoned that broader implementation would ensure that at least some prevention efforts reached students, even if only for a short period of time.

1.4 Implementation Settings

During their interviews, grant directors described where and when programming took place. Some grantees implemented prevention programming within a specific class or subject. For example, two public school grantees implemented their *Prevention Matters* programming as part of team-building-oriented classes such as their community circle and resource times. These classes were already part of students' schedules, and grant directors described integrating components of the prevention programming into these special subject classes as fairly easy.

For a few grantees, implementation setting varied by grade; one multisite grantee left this decision to schools and teachers at each grade level. Some grades had one teacher implement the prevention programming during a specially designated class, whereas other grades used existing classes such as homeroom or resource time to have all teachers for that grade implement the prevention program.

A few grantees designated a specific time in the school day for their prevention programming. This time was identified before the school year started so that students could receive prevention programming as soon as the school year began. One grant director at a charter school said that before being hired to lead the program "[a designated time for it] was built into the schedule time before school started. [The school board] understood how important social-emotional learning [was]." Grant directors emphasized that having a consistent time in the day for program implementation meant that teachers were more likely to implement the program and do so with fidelity.

However, grant directors also experienced challenges with finding a time for programming. They sometimes had difficulty changing the classroom structure to accommodate the prevention programming. A few grant directors said that trying to implement prevention programming in high schools was particularly challenging because high school students have a larger workload and less flexibility in the coursework that needs to be covered before they can graduate.

1.5 Implementation Schedules

Grantees varied in the timing with which they began implementation. In their interviews, some grant directors reported introducing programming to all students or schools at once. Other grant directors reported introducing programming incrementally, such as staggering by grade level or by starting with one program and adding a second program later.

For some grantees, the decision to stagger implementation was intentional. For several others, it was driven by unanticipated factors, including delays in receiving funding and scheduling training, or by the nature of the program being implemented. One single-site grantee that used an incremental implementation approach found that approach helped to maximize implementer buy-in, explaining,

> *It also helps to have more experts in the building, starting with a few grades at first and then expanding to the [other grades]. It helped us to work out some kinks, get some experts and some traction in the school for it before it rolled into the [other grades]…. So it went really well having that and having those experts because then it wasn't just [staff member] saying, "Hey, here is the program," [the staff member] is able to pull in people in the building who have taught it, that can say, "Hey, this is awesome, and this is what this can do," and that really helps. Because teachers tend to listen to teachers more than they listen to others.*

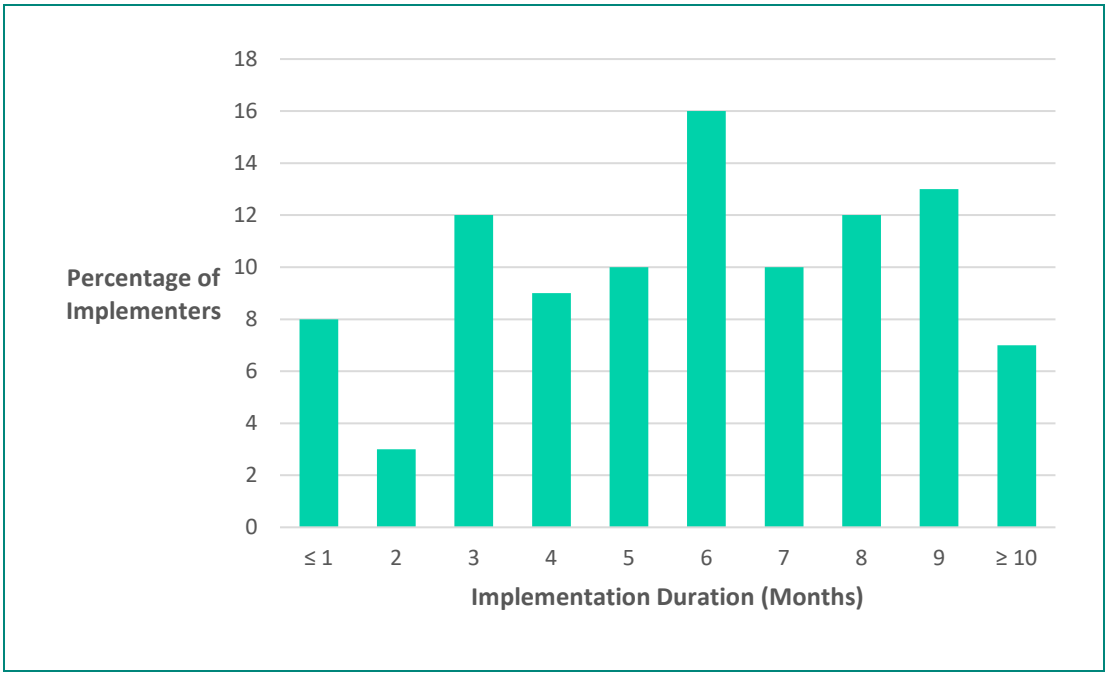
Many grant directors reported that they experienced delays in implementation. For these grantees, implementation took longer or started later than initially expected. Some grant directors said that they experienced less than a semester's delay in their implementation, whereas a larger number of grantees stated that they were delayed a full semester (3–4 months).

Most grantees said that initial training requirements created their delays. Grantees had to wait until their staff were trained by specific trainers, and scheduling these trainings promptly after award proved challenging for many. The director of a single-site grantee revealed that by the time they implemented "We're in the middle of a school year, so we've had to re-evaluate how to best implement with the least amount of disruption."

One grantee whose timeline changed was able to implement faster than anticipated. This multisite grantee provided programming to all schools at once, rather than implementing in a staggered manner as planned.

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 (83%) delivered program lessons or content at least once per week; nearly a quarter (24%) of implementers implemented lessons daily.** 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, but **the average duration was 5–6 months.**



We calculated an intensity measure designed to approximate the total number of sessions that each class of students received.[10] Duration intensity ranged from a single session to 200 sessions (i.e., daily implementation for 10 months or more), with a median of 32 sessions.

We then examined implementation frequency, duration, and intensity by program, and compared that to the intended number of sessions in the program. **On the whole, for the programs that had a discrete number of sessions, the intended number of sessions tended to correspond fairly closely to the average intensity we calculated.** The one exception was for Positive Action: Implementers reported about the right intensity for implementation with

[10] This measure was calculated by multiplying implementation frequency (daily = 20, every other day = 10, weekly = 4, every other week = 2, monthly = 1) by the implementation duration (number of months).

7th- and 8th-graders (70 sessions required) but fell well short of the 140 sessions required for students in kindergarten through 6th grade.

Grantees implemented two programs, Conscious Discipline and the Good Behavior Game, that are focused on changing whole school practices rather than implementing dedicated lessons with students. As expected, implementers most commonly reported implementing these programs daily. However, the average reported duration of implementation was 4 months, whereas we would have expected to see implementation across an entire 9- or 10-month school year. It is possible that this shortened duration was due to grantees' not being prepared to start implementing at the beginning of the school year but, unfortunately, we do not have data to directly examine this possibility.

Program	Number of Annual Sessions in Program	Recommended Frequency of Session Implementation	Most Common Implementation Frequency	Mean Implementation Duration, in Months	Mean Number of Annual Sessions Delivered (Estimated)
Conscious Discipline	Non-curricular school practice[a]		Daily or weekly	4	46
Curriculum-Based Support Group	10–12	1–2/week	Weekly	4	14
Good Behavior Game	Non-curricular school practice[a]		Daily	4	46
LifeSkills Training	Elementary school: 8 Middle school: 5–15	Intensive: 2–3/week Extended: 1/week	Weekly	3	20
PATHS	36–52 lessons	Two or more/week	*	*	*
Positive Action	K–6th grade: 140 7th and 8th grades: 70	Daily	Daily or weekly	5	64
Project Toward No Drug Abuse	12	3/week (preferred); 2/week (permitted)[b]	*	*	*
Ripple Effects	Varies depending on student needs		Weekly	4	23
Second Step: Elementary	22–25	1/week[c]	Weekly	6	57
Second Step: Middle	26	1/week[d]	Weekly	6	43
Too Good for Drugs	10	1/week	Weekly	3	14

* To protect respondent privacy, we have not reported values for programs with fewer than 5 reporting implementers. [a] Implemented daily. [b] Three times a week is preferred; however, if more time is needed, the implementer may deliver twice per week. [c] With daily reinforcement and take-home activities. [d] Plus advisory activities.

1.6 Implementers

In their surveys, all implementers reported working for their schools, not an outside organization. **Most were either general education teachers teaching multiple subjects (60%) or general education teachers teaching a single subject other than physical education, health, or wellness (21%).**

On average, implementers had been a teacher, instructor, or program facilitator for 12 years (range = 1 to 50 years).

In the implementer survey, **28% of respondents reported that they had implemented their *Prevention Matters* program before the current school year**, with an average of 4 years of previous experience (range = 1 to 15 years). **About a quarter of implementers (26%) also said that they had previously taught a program focused on SEL or the prevention of risk behaviors like substance use, sexual risk behavior, or violence.** They had an average of 5 years of previous experience with these programs (range = 1 to 29 years).

About half of implementers (45%) reported that other types of school staff assisted them with program implementation. As shown in the table that follows, the most commonly reported implementation assistants were social workers, guidance counselors, and prevention or intervention specialists.

Implementer Received Implementation Assistance from…	Percentage of Implementers
School social worker	15
Guidance counselor	13
School prevention or intervention specialist	12
School/student resource officer	5
School psychologist	3
School nurse	1
Other[a]	12
None of these	55

[a] "Other" most commonly included administrators, advisory staff, grant or curriculum leaders, support service staff (e.g., special education, English as a second language, student support, speech therapy), and specials teachers (e.g., health, physical education, technology, enrichment, music).

In their interviews, grant directors frequently discussed involving other staff, such as counselors and administrators, in program implementation. One director of a multisite grant highlighted the breadth of staff and community partners trained to deliver programming through the grant. This grantee employed a holistic approach, offering training to multiple teachers, administrators, the school resource officer, an instructional coach, and the director of an affiliated community coalition, who are now able to fill in when teachers are unavailable. At another multisite organization, the grant director herself was also a program implementer.

1.7 Implementer Training and Support

1.7.1 Grant Director Reports

Training format. In their surveys, for each program that grant directors reported implementing, they reported training details. This resulted in 51 sets of training details across grantees and programs. **Grant directors reported that they were providing implementer training for all programs.** The most common type of training was in-person training (49%), followed by virtual training with a live trainer (31%) and self-study training that involved no trainer interaction (16%).

For the majority of programs reported in grant director surveys (63%), grantees planned to require implementer participation in follow-up training, like boosters or annual recertifications. However, for many programs (29%), grantees did not yet know whether they would require follow-up training.

In their interviews, grant directors discussed factors underlying their decisions about the format and timing of training and other implementer supports. They noted how **it was challenging to offer in-person implementer training and other supports without interrupting the school day or curriculum.** Some grantees provided in-person implementer support after school hours, over the weekend, and during the summer to avoid needing substitute teachers or disrupting the school day. Other schools relied on virtual platforms such as webinars and online trainings that implementers could access during their preparation and grading time and other nonteaching times.

Trainers. Grant director surveys showed that, **for programs that involved a trainer, about two-thirds involved training by either the program developer or vendor (51%), a certified trainer within the grantee organization (9%), or a certified trainer from elsewhere in the community (7%)**. The remaining trainings (33%) were conducted by someone without an official certification.

In their interviews, grant directors discussed relying on internal and external individuals to train and support implementers. For example, at one multisite public school grantee, the grant director trained implementers. This grant director described these trainings as a challenge: "I am the lone ranger for all of our schools across the district implementing the [training] curriculum." Other grantees offered on-site trainings, webinars, and online trainings for implementers conducted by topical experts such as individuals knowledgeable in SEL. Some grantees used

curriculum developers, such as staff from LifeSkills Training, to train their implementers.

Benefits and challenges. Grant directors described the implementer supports as effective and helpful. A charter school grant director described the implementer trainings as helping implementers feel less overwhelmed.

Although grant directors described training in a mostly positive light, some grant directors also revealed challenges they encountered. For example, one grant director highlighted that the individual who conducted its trainings did not emphasize maintaining fidelity to the program's curriculum. In these schools, implementers ended up selecting program components and lessons that resonated with them and not implementing the full curriculum.

Another grant director reported that during the first year of implementer training, " [Grant directors] wanted to teach them how to use [the curriculum], but [implementers] didn't necessarily get to see the big picture of why [they were learning drug prevention and social-emotional learning concepts]." For this school, the next year offered an opportunity to revise the implementer training and ground it in the "bigger picture" of why and how concepts such as SEL are so important to integrate into the classroom.

Other implementer supports. Grant directors also described supports beyond training. A few grantees created school champions aimed at reinforcing self-care techniques that were designed to help implementers handle difficult curriculum topics such as trauma and complex family relationships. One grant director at a public school disclosed, "As students strengthen [through the program], they also struggle. And so do [the implementers]."

One grantee set up listening sessions so that implementers could share their experiences and challenges in implementing.

Other grantees provided trainings to all school staff on topics that were addressed as part of their prevention programming, such as SEL. As one public school grant director said,

> *A success is that we had our first social-emotional learning [all-teacher training], we call it an extravaganza, in February. It was on a Saturday. About 175 [or] 150 teachers came. They didn't get paid, but they came. It was great.*

Among some grantees, additional implementer supports included simple messages or assessments designed to enhance implementation. For example, one charter school grant director noted that the school supported implementers by providing ongoing announcements and reminders that "emphasiz[ed the curriculum], and emphasize[d] it, and re-emphasiz[ed] it." Another grant director highlighted that their implementer support incorporated pre-post student surveys to monitor fidelity and implementation and to inform implementers in their implementation of future lessons.

1.7.2 Implementer Reports

As shown in the table that follows, **62% of implementers reported participating in some sort of training in (or in the summer preceding) the 2018–2019 school year**, with in-person training being the most common format. More than a third of implementers (38%) reported having never participated in a training for the program.

We examined whether certain factors were associated with training participation. We hypothesized that **grantees with more implementers and schools might have difficulty scheduling and monitoring training and enforcing training participation**. The data supported this hypothesis, as shown in the second table that follows.

Implementer Participation in Training (Summer 2018 or 2018–2019 School Year)	Percentage of Implementers
Yes	62
In-person	27
Self-study	14
Live virtual	11
Other	8
No, but I participated in a training prior to the current school year	9
No, I have never participated in a training for this program	38

Grantee Size Metric	Mean Among Grantees with:		
	Fewer Than 70% of Implementers Trained (9 Grantees)	70%–90% of Implementers Trained (10 Grantees)	More Than 90% of Implementers Trained (8 Grantees)
Number of implementers[a]	120 implementers	63 implementers	12 implementers
Implementer: School ratio[b]	13 implementers per school	19 implementers per school	6 implementers per school
Total number of schools[a]	6 schools	3 schools	3 schools

[a] Negative correlation but not statistically significant, likely due to small sample size (n = 27). [b] No correlation.

We also hypothesized that implementers who had not yet begun implementation at the time of the survey might be less likely to have participated in training because their training was scheduled to happen after the survey. Indeed, we found that only 19% of those who had not begun implementation had completed training, compared with 63% of those who had begun implementation. However, it is important to note that, among implementers responding to the questions about training and implementation timing, less than 3% had not yet begun implementation, so very little of the overall training shortfall can be attributed to late implementers.

Of the implementers who reported training participation in their survey, most (86%) said that they participated in their initial training before they began implementing programming. However, 13% responded that they received their initial training after they began implementing.

1.8 Implementation Monitoring

Both grant directors and implementers reported on implementation monitoring.

1.8.1 Grant Director Reports

In their interviews, some grant directors stated that because of implementation delays, they had not finalized how they planned to monitor implementation quality and fidelity. Among those grantees with a plan, grant directors reported a few different methods for monitoring implementation:

- **Grantees most commonly discussed using observations to monitor implementation quality and fidelity.** Some grant directors reported that they themselves were conducting the observations. One multisite grantee described visiting some classrooms to do short observations. The grant director, with help from the principals, would fill out a short form during the observations and then discuss the form with the implementers afterward.
- A few grantees reported that they had already begun conducting observations, whereas a grant director at a single-site school reported that grant staff were planning to conduct observations but had not started yet.
- A few grantees monitored lesson completion to assess implementation progress. Grant directors emphasized that lesson completion was less time-consuming and labor-intensive to collect than observations. For example, one grant director had implementers report when lessons were being completed and how long it took for the implementer to complete each lesson. The grant director would review the time spent on the curricula across implementers to assess implementation quality and progress.
- A few grantees said that they were using or planning to use surveys to monitor implementation or implementation progress.

- Finally, a few grant directors reported that they had assigned a point person to monitor implementation, as well as provide support to the implementers. This point person was responsible for conducting observations, discussing challenges or successes with implementers, and reporting back to the implementation team.

In the grant director survey, **about half of grantees (54%) reported that they had already observed at least some program implementation. Another 38% of grantees had not yet observed but still planned to.**

Of those grantees who had observed or planned to observe program implementation, most (88%) had trained, or planned to train, their observers. The most common forms of training were implementer training for the program they would be observing (54% of grantees who were planning to conduct observer training) and general training (i.e., not specific to the program) on conducting classroom observations (63%).

Most grantees who had observed or planned to observe (70%) planned to observe all of their implementers, as opposed to a subset. Also, **most grantees doing observations (92%) reported that they had already provided, or planned to provide, feedback on their observations.**

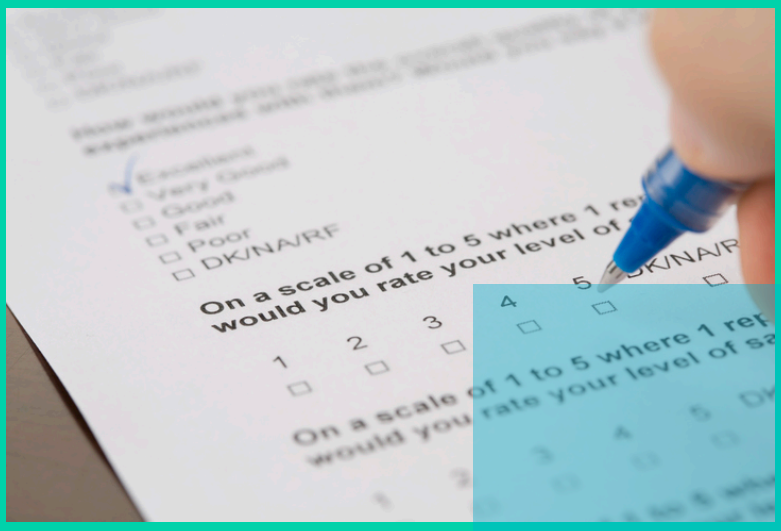
Most grantees reported that their organization required all (69%) or some (8%) of their *Prevention Matters* implementers to report information about their program implementation. Of those 20 grantees, all but 2 reported that they planned to provide feedback to at least some implementers on their implementation reporting.

We asked all grant directors who reported monitoring implementers (either through observations or self-reported information) whether and how their organizations followed up with implementers found to have unsatisfactory implementation. Forty-two percent (11 grantees) said that they provided (or planned to provide) follow-up training. Eleven grantees also reported that they collected (or planned to collect) additional data from those implementers to monitor improvements. Several grantees responded to an open-ended question about other follow-up strategies; reported strategies included some sort of one-on-one conversation or coaching (4 grantees), doing modeling or observation (2 grantees), or integrating implementation feedback into teacher evaluations (1 grantee). Only 2 grantees responded that they had not followed up with unsatisfactory implementers and did not plan to.

1.8.2 Implementer Reports

Among those implementers who had begun implementation for the year, most (67%) reported that they could not recall anyone from the *Prevention Matters* project, like a grant director or program trainer, observing their implementation. However, among those who were observed, more than half (62%) reported getting feedback on this observation.

Just under half of implementers (48%) reported that someone from their *Prevention Matters* project asked them to report information about their implementation. Of those who reported implementation information, about half (55%) received feedback on the information they reported.



1.8.3 Agreement between Grant Director and Implementer Reports

To assess agreement between grant director and implementer reports of monitoring, we calculated the percentage of implementers who fell into each of four categories:

- Implementer and their corresponding grant director both reported that the grant project monitored implementation (i.e., consistent reports),
- Implementer reported that they were not monitored but their corresponding grant director reported implementation monitoring (i.e., inconsistent reports),
- Implementer reported that they were monitored but their corresponding grant director did not report implementation monitoring (i.e., inconsistent reports), and
- Implementer and their corresponding grant director both reported that the grant project did not monitor implementation (i.e., consistent reports).

We calculated these percentages both for observations and implementer self-reports (e.g., fidelity forms).

As shown in the chart that follows, for both observations and implementer self-reports, the largest group of implementers was those who were not monitored but whose grant director reported implementation monitoring. In other words, **for about half of implementers, there was no evidence that the monitoring reported by grant directors had taken place by the time of the implementer survey.**

		Implementer reported observations	
		Yes	No
Implementer's grant director reported observations	Yes	20%	51%
	No	12%	17%

		Implementer reported self-reports	
		Yes	No
Implementer's grant director reported self-reports	Yes	44%	45%
	No	4%	7%

We found that, as with training participation, agreement on implementation monitoring was related to grantee size. Implementers whose reports of monitoring were consistent with those of their grant director tended to come from grant projects with fewer implementers and (for self-report monitoring) fewer schools than did implementers whose reports did not match those of their grant director.

1.9 Program Integration and Coordination

During their interviews, **some grant directors emphasized that their *Prevention Matters* initiative and programming was integrated schoolwide.** These schools often trained all staff in the prevention curriculum and would discuss principles of the programming throughout all subjects and classes. For example, one private school grantee used existing weekly, schoolwide meetings to deliver prevention lessons to students. After these weekly meetings, teachers would use classroom time to reinforce messages and lessons presented during them.

Grant directors also highlighted that some prevention principles were already being taught before their *Prevention Matters* programming began, which made integration of the new curriculum easier. One private school grantee reported, "For our students, that life social skills piece is critical to their development, so we had a strong foundation of that happening already in the school, and [the *Prevention Matters* programming] was just a complement to that."

In their survey, grant directors reported on whether and how non-implementing staff participated in some form of program education. Specifically, they reported on

- whether school staff other than implementers (e.g., teachers not implementing the program, administrators, custodial or food service staff, bus drivers) participated in program training;
- if they did not participate in a formal training, whether schools shared program content or messages with school staff other than implementers;
- whether nonschool staff working with students outside of school hours (e.g., before-and-after-school care providers, health care providers, clergy) participated in program training; and
- if they did not participate in a formal training, whether schools shared program content or messages with nonschool staff.

All but two grantees (92%) delivered some sort of program education to non-implementing school staff. Sixteen grantees (62%) provided training to these staff, and 8 grantees (31%) shared program messages with these staff.

Half of grantees delivered program education to non-school staff. Six grantees (23%) provided training to these staff, and 7 grantees (27%) shared program messages with these staff.

In their interviews, some grant directors also described supporting and training non-implementers to promote implementation and curriculum integration.

Implementer survey data reveal that among classroom teachers who had begun implementing programming, about a third (31%) had used program lessons to replace instructional content they would have had to deliver anyway. **Almost all implementers (90%) said that they referenced program content or messages with students at times other than when they were delivering programming.**

Implementers reported on several ways of integrating school support services into programming. About a quarter of implementers (27%) reported mentioning school health services during program implementation, and 40% reported mentioning school mental health or counseling services. However, more than half of implementers (56%) mentioned neither.

1.10 Partnerships

RTI reviewed implementation grant applications to determine the types of partners grantees planned to work with and the functions grantees expected that partners would serve. We then developed closed-ended questions for the grant director survey around partner types and functions. **On average, grantees reported having one or two types of partner organizations. The most commonly selected partner types were mental and behavioral health professionals and organizations (15 grantees; 58%) and health care professionals or organizations (7 grantees; 27%).**

As shown in the table that follows, it was most common for partners to provide mental health and medical services to program participants, as well as services for their family members.

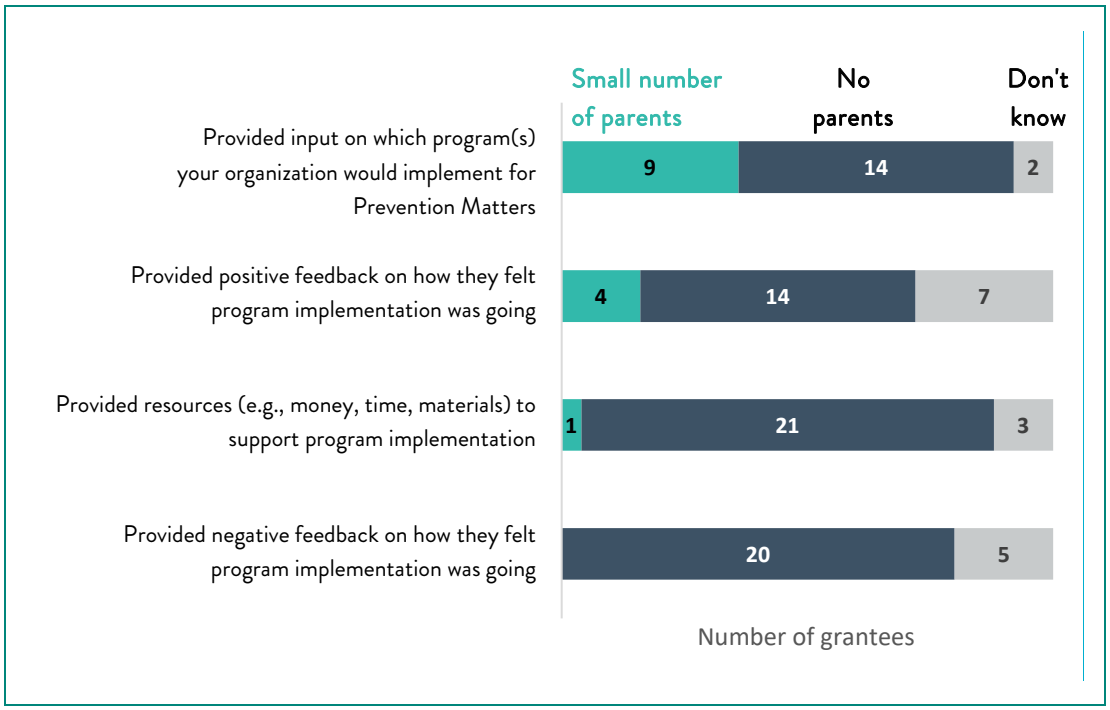
Resources Provided by Partners	Number of Grantees
Provided mental health services to *Prevention Matters* program participants	12
Provided services for parents or other family members of *Prevention Matters* program participants	10
Reinforced *Prevention Matters* program messages/lessons with students	8
Provided medical/health services to *Prevention Matters* program participants	7
Assisted with decision-making or problem-solving for *Prevention Matters* project	6
Provided additional information/instruction to school staff to supplement *Prevention Matters* program training	6
Supported *Prevention Matters* data collection, analysis, or reporting	6
Presented additional information/lessons to students to supplement *Prevention Matters* programs	5
Identified students to participate in *Prevention Matters* programs that target at-risk students	4
Provided staff to implement *Prevention Matters* programs	4
Provided substance abuse services to *Prevention Matters* program participants	4
Shared lessons learned and best practices from *Prevention Matters* program implementation	4
Provided funding to supplement *Prevention Matters* funding	3
Trained or provided technical assistance to staff on the *Prevention Matters* programs	2

During their interviews, we heard multiple grant directors describe receiving support from partner organizations, primarily in two forms: (1) guest speakers from law enforcement or mental health organizations and programs and (2) services that reinforced the schools' prevention programming messages outside the classroom setting. Grantees receiving support were split fairly evenly across these two types of support.

One grantee, who began implementation early in the fall, explained that they intentionally refrained from involving partners in the first year to give themselves the time they needed to "get their feet wet" with program implementation.

1.11 Parent Involvement

Parent involvement in programming appeared to be relatively low. In response to the grant director survey question about partner types, only two grantees reported partnering with parent, family, or caregiver groups or representatives. When asked about specific forms of involvement, as shown in the chart below, a minority of grant directors reported that a small number of parents had provided input, feedback, or resources for *Prevention Matters* programming.



Grant directors responded as to whether schools provided parents with information and activities to reinforce program messages at home. **For most programs, grantees reported that parents received information once (31%) or two or more times (47%).**

Although parents did not appear to have extensive involvement with *Prevention Matters*, during their interviews, **several grant directors stated that they had either introduced the program to parents at a kick-off event or planned to involve parents more in Year 2.** One such grantee from a single-school

organization underscored the importance of "making sure the families are involved and aware of what we're covering because we have found that a wraparound approach with our student population is almost always the best approach."

2 Implementation Progress

Most implementer survey respondents were in the middle of *Prevention Matters* program implementation at the time of the survey. Eleven percent of respondents had finished implementing with all of their students, and 3% of implementers had not yet started implementation.

During the grant director interviews, we discussed grantees' implementation progress and the ways in which they were monitoring this progress. Numerous grant directors discussed their implementation speed. For example, some grantees reported that implementation was progressing faster than expected. Conversely, one multisite grantee reported that its sites' implementation was progressing more slowly than expected. This grantee said that it is more difficult to "change the processes you have in place the entire school year," so rather than implementing in January, they decided to wait until after spring break to implement so that they could take advantage of the natural break in the school year. A few grantees stated that their implementation was progressing as planned. One multisite grant director reported that implementation progress differed across implementers, with some implementers having implemented all lessons and others having only implemented part of the programming.

One public school grant director explained that, after receiving feedback about implementation progress from the implementers, they realized that some implementers were overwhelmed by the new curriculum and the need to balance it with other administrative procedures. These implementers required additional support, so the school decided to slow down implementation for them.

Grantees also noted that monitoring implementation progress was somewhat of an iterative process. Many grant directors reported that they had had multiple meetings (with leadership, implementers, or both) since beginning implementation. Grantees used these meetings to learn more about implementers' progress, as well as to adjust aspects of implementation as needed. For example, one multisite grantee reported that leadership and implementers were meeting once a month to learn about what was going well, assess implementers' capacity

to implement a new curriculum, and examine whether implementers needed more support and what type of support they would find beneficial.

2.1 Implementation Facilitators

Grant directors described a number of contextual factors that facilitated implementation progress. (Implementation challenges are described separately, in Section 4.)

Teacher initiative appeared to be an important implementation facilitator. Multiple grant directors described teachers who "jumped on board," were "proactive in learning about the material," and who collaborated to create implementation schedules and materials or activities to aid in implementation.

Additional facilitators of implementation progress, each listed by one grantee and organized below by type of implementation facilitator, included the following:

Facilitators related to *the implementation team* included

- having grant leaders who are task-focused and results-oriented,
- having a grant director with experience leading this type of initiative,
- having a staff member whose time was dedicated to support implementation, and
- being flexible in response to implementation changes.

Facilitators related to *training and materials* included

- receiving program materials quickly from the program developer;
- ordering materials for each implementer, rather than having to make copies; and
- partnering with other grantees to share lessons learned and costs associated with training.

Facilitators related to *scheduling* included

- having designated time in the school day for SEL instruction.

Facilitators related to *support for the program* included

- involving multiple stakeholders early in the planning process,

- obtaining school buy-in to integrate the prevention curriculum and facilitate a consistent implementation timeline, and
- receiving support from the *Prevention Matters* technical assistance team.

3 Implementation Quality

For the purposes of this evaluation, we have defined implementation quality as implementation *fidelity*. Implementation fidelity reflects the degree to which programs were delivered as the program developer intended. The *Prevention Matters* evaluation is examining 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, **grant directors said that implementation quality sometimes varied across implementers;** some implementers maintained complete fidelity to the curriculum, whereas others implemented with partial fidelity. Those implementing with partial fidelity were doing so for a multitude of reasons. Some implementers implemented only the pieces of the curriculum that they liked or understood. Others faced issues (such as student behavior or discipline) that made it more difficult for them to implement with complete fidelity.

3.2 Implementer Reports of Implementation Quality

As part of their survey, implementers who had begun implementation (96%) reported on how closely they followed the curriculum guides in teaching program lessons.[11] **About half of implementers reported following the curriculum guide very closely (i.e., teaching the material as specified in the guide; 51%). Another**

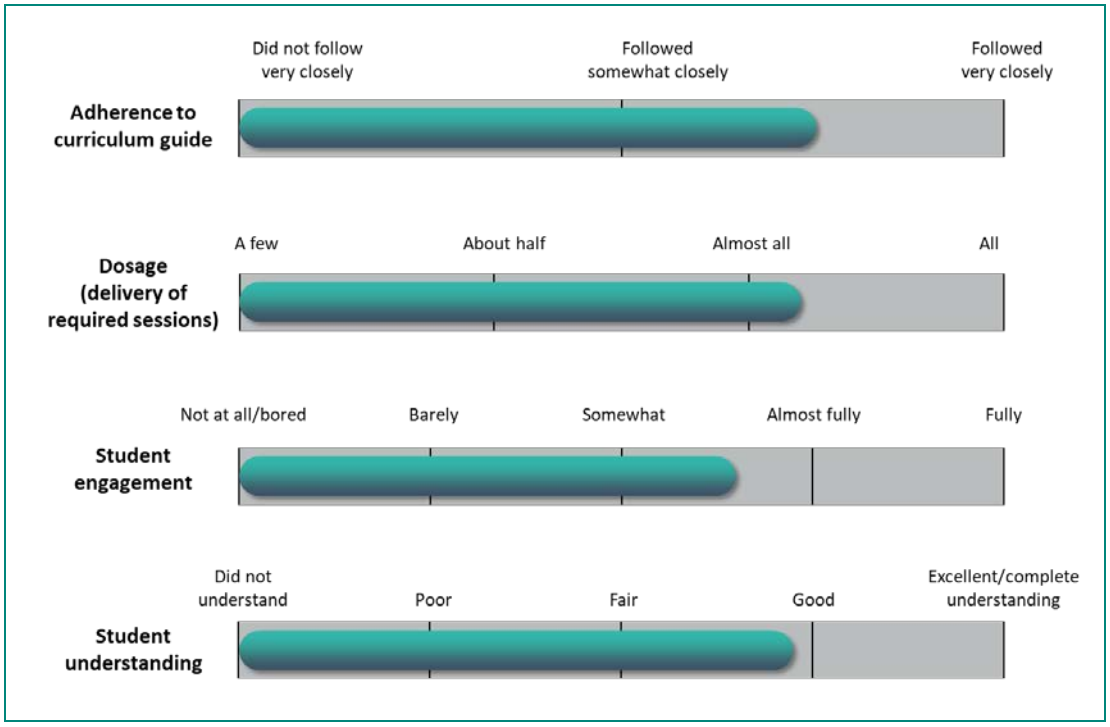
[11] We excluded implementers who said that they did not use a curriculum guide (n = 22) from these analyses.

43% reported following the curriculum guide somewhat closely (i.e., sometimes adapting the material as appropriate).

The 192 implementers (19%) who had finished implementing programming with at least some students responded about the proportion of required sessions that they delivered with their classes.[12] **About half of respondents reported that they implemented all required sessions with all classes (45%). Another third of respondents reported implementing almost all required sessions (37%).**

Implementers who had begun implementation 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 the chart that follows.



[12] We excluded implementers who reported that they didn't know how many or which sessions were required (n = 9) or that their program did not have required sessions (n = 5) from these analyses.

We next examined whether there were any differences in fidelity across curricula. **Overall, fidelity was fairly similar across programs.** As shown in the table that follows, there were 36 fidelity values (9 programs x 4 indicators), and only 8 of these were significantly different from the initiative-level average. Six of these 8 differences were for Second Step:[13] The elementary school version had higher-than-average participant engagement and understanding, but lower-than-average implementer adherence. The middle school version of Second Step had the exact opposite pattern, with low participant engagement and understanding but high adherence.

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 programs; ↓ = significantly lower than mean for all programs. * To protect respondent privacy, we have not reported values for programs with fewer than 5 reporting implementers.

[13] This finding may be driven by issues of statistical power. Second Step was the most commonly implemented program. The relatively large number of implementers reporting on this program increases the statistical power to find any differences between Second Step and the other programs.

3.3 Adaptations

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

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. **Just under half of grantees (11 grantees; 42%) asked their implementers to make changes. The most common change was presenting additional activities or lessons that were not part of the program (4 grantees; 15% of all grantees and 36% of those making changes).**

Those implementers who said in their survey that they followed a curriculum guide "somewhat closely" or "not very closely" were asked to report the types of changes they made. As shown in the table that follows, **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.** Interestingly, about 1 in 5 implementers who reported following the curriculum guide somewhat closely or not very closely also reported making no changes.

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

"The percentage of implementers is calculated among those who reported following a curriculum guide "somewhat closely" or "not very closely."

Those implementers who reported making changes from the curriculum manual reported the reasons for these changes. As shown in the table that follows, **the most commonly reported reasons for making changes clustered around two themes: increasing student engagement** (including efforts to increase student understanding and minimize disruptive behavior) **and adjusting for available time** (most often not having enough time, but sometimes having extra time).

Reason for Making Curriculum Change	Percentage of Implementers
I wanted to increase student engagement.	55
We didn't have enough time.	47
I wanted to increase student comprehension/retention.	46
I wanted to minimize disruptive behavior.	29
We had extra time.	13
Program content or language was not culturally appropriate for my students.	10
I did not have needed equipment or materials.	7
I forgot or made a mistake.	6
My school/organization leadership directed me to make changes.	5
I disagreed with program messages/content/format.	2
Other	3

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

Grant directors also discussed implementer adaptations in their interviews. **Grant directors saw adaptations as a way for implementers to engage with and "own" the curriculum that they were teaching.** Adaptations included providing visual aids, changing the format of lesson plans, changing the wording of certain lessons, or adding hands-on activities to lessons to help students better engage in activities. In one interview, the director of a public school grant reported that implementers used extra materials, such as YouTube videos and newspaper clippings, to augment their *Prevention Matters* curriculum. These additional items aimed to offer students real-world examples of how to prevent drug use and an opportunity to reflect on lessons.

Grant directors also reported that implementers were tailoring lessons to their students' needs. For example, one grant director said that implementers worked with some students who had special needs, so the implementers revised their lesson plans to ensure that their students could understand and interact with the curriculum.

3.4 Predicting Implementation Quality

Next, we used multilevel regression models to determine which factors were associated with the different components of implementation quality, including close adherence to the curriculum guide, number of changes made to the program, student engagement, and student understanding. These models included all predictors within the same model, so our findings represent the unique contribution of each factor after accounting for all of the other factors.

The factors that had a significant association with implementation quality are detailed in the table that follows. Of particular note:

- Some aspects of general classroom climate, including student satisfaction and difficulty of the class, appeared to have spillover effects for students' engagement with and understanding of *Prevention Matters* programming.
- Implementers who had taught a program previously—either their current *Prevention Matters* program or another substance use prevention or SEL program—reported lower program adherence. They were less likely to report having followed their curriculum guide "very closely," and they reported making a greater number of changes to the program.

  Interestingly, we also found that implementers who reported teaching another program for *more years* reported making *fewer* curriculum changes. An examination of the data suggested that, although implementers with one or more years of previous experience were slightly more likely than implementers with no experience to make changes at all, as implementers gained more experience, they appeared to fall into two categories: those who made no curriculum changes and those who made many changes.
- Implementer enthusiasm was a robust predictor of implementation quality. Implementers who reported that they had more enthusiasm about teaching their *Prevention Matters* program were more likely to

report following the curriculum guide closely, they made fewer changes to the program, and they reported greater student engagement and understanding.

- Implementation barriers was another robust predictor. Implementers who reported more barriers—such as lack of time, missing materials, and student and implementer discomfort with program topics—were less likely to report following the curriculum guide closely, made more changes to the program, and reported lower student engagement and understanding.
- Interestingly, training did *not* have an association with any of the indicators of implementation quality.

Predictor	Implementation Quality Outcome			
	Followed Curriculum Guide Closely	Number of Changes Made	Student Engagement	Student Understanding
Macro Level				
Number of organizational policy barriers that limit ability to deliver prevention programming[G]		Implementers whose grant directors reported more policy barriers reported more changes		
Nonsignificant predictors: Number of organizational policies requiring substance use prevention, SEL, or evidence-based programming[G], Received outside funding[G]				
School Level				
SEL programs align with school mission[I]		Implementers who agreed that SEL programming aligned with their school's mission reported more changes		
Classroom climate—Student satisfaction[I]			Implementers whose students were more satisfied with their classroom reported higher student engagement in programming	Implementers whose students were more satisfied with their classroom reported higher student understanding of programming
Classroom climate—Difficulty[I]				Implementers whose students found classroom content more difficult reported lower student understanding of programming

Predictor	Implementation Quality Outcome			
	Followed Curriculum Guide Closely	Number of Changes Made	Student Engagement	Student Understanding
Leadership capacity for substance use prevention and SEL[I]			Implementers who reported higher leadership capacity reported lower student engagement	
Leadership capacity for substance use prevention and SEL[G]		Implementers whose grant directors reported greater leadership capacity reported more changes		
Resources for program implementation[I]		Implementers who reported more resources reported fewer changes		
Nonsignificant predictors: Substance use prevention programs align with school mission[I]; Classroom climate—Peer relations[I]; Classroom climate—Competitiveness[I]; Number of areas, out of 5, in which leadership was involved[G]; number of students in the school				
Implementer Level				
Implementer reporting[I]				Implementers who were asked to report information on their program implementation and who received feedback on that information reported higher student understanding of programming than implementers who were asked to report information on their program implementation and did not receive feedback

Predictor	Implementation Quality Outcome			
	Followed Curriculum Guide Closely	Number of Changes Made	Student Engagement	Student Understanding
Implementer self-efficacy to implement programming effectively[l]	Implementers with greater self-efficacy were more likely to follow the curriculum guide closely		Implementers with greater self-efficacy reported higher student engagement	Implementers with greater self-efficacy reported higher student understanding
Taught program previously[l]	Implementers who had previously taught the program were less likely to follow the curriculum guide closely	Implementers who had previously taught the program reported more changes		
Taught other substance use prevention or SEL programs previously[l]	Implementers who had previously taught other programs were less likely to follow the curriculum guide closely	Implementers who had previously taught other programs reported more changes		
Number of years teaching other programs[l]		The more years implementers had taught another program, the fewer changes they reported		
Believe students will benefit from substance use programming[l]				Implementers with stronger belief that their students would benefit from substance use prevention programming reported greater student understanding of program

Predictor	Implementation Quality Outcome			
	Followed Curriculum Guide Closely	Number of Changes Made	Student Engagement	Student Understanding
Enthusiasm about teaching program[I]	Implementers who were more enthusiastic about the program were more likely to follow the curriculum manual closely	Implementers who were more enthusiastic about the program reported fewer changes	Implementers who were more enthusiastic about the program reported higher student engagement	Implementers who were more enthusiastic about the program reported greater student understanding
Utility of technical assistance (TA) from Education Development Center (EDC)[G]		Implementers whose grant directors found EDC TA more useful reported fewer changes		
Grade of student being taught[I]		Implementers who served lower grades reported more changes	Implementers who served lower grades reported higher student engagement	
Implementation intensity[I]		Implementers who implemented a greater number of sessions reported more changes		
Number of implementation barriers (out of 7)[I]	Implementers who reported more barriers were less likely to follow the curriculum manual closely	Implementers who reported more barriers reported more changes	Implementers who reported more barriers reported lower student engagement	Implementers who reported more barriers reported lower student understanding
Nonsignificant predictors: Number of previous years teaching program[I], Believe students will benefit from SEL programming[I], Value program fidelity[G], Participation in program training[I], Implementer voice in program planning[G], Implementer voice in program planning[I], Received technical assistance from program developers[G], Implementer observation[I]				

SEL, social-emotional learning. [G] Reported in grant director survey, [I] Reported in implementer survey.

Our sample size for testing predictors of having implemented all curriculum sessions was limited because of the relatively small number of implementers who had completed curriculum implementation and were, therefore, eligible to answer this outcome question. Therefore, we were able to examine only bivariate associations between predictors and session completion; we were unable to estimate multivariate regression models.

As shown in the table that follows, the significant predictors of completing all curriculum sessions included

- having more organizational policies requiring substance use prevention, social-emotional learning, or evidence-based programming;
- having more previous experience with program implementation;
- having a grant director who perceived that the technical assistance they received was useful; and
- having more resources for prevention.

Predictor	Implemented All Curriculum Sessions
Macro Level	
Number of organizational policies requiring substance use prevention, social-emotional learning, or evidence-based programming[G]	Implementers whose grant director reports a greater number of policies are more likely to have delivered all sessions
Nonsignificant predictors: Number of organizational policy barriers that limit ability to deliver prevention programming[G]; Number of organizational policies requiring substance use prevention, social-emotional learning, or evidence-based programming[G]; Received outside funding[G]	
School Level	
Nonsignificant predictors: Substance use prevention programs align with school mission[I]; Classroom climate—Peer relations[I]; Classroom climate—Competitiveness[I]; Number of areas, out of 5, in which leadership was involved[G]; Classroom climate—Student satisfaction[I]; Social-emotional learning programs align with school mission[I]; Classroom climate—Difficulty[I]; Leadership capacity for substance use prevention and SEL[I]; Leadership capacity for substance use prevention and SEL[G]; Resources for program implementation[I]	
Implementer Level	
Number of years teaching program[I]	Implementers who report more years teaching the program are more likely to have delivered all required sessions
Utility of technical assistance (TA) from program developers[G]	Implementers whose grant director rated the TA provided by program developers as more useful are more likely to have delivered all required sessions
Utility of technical assistance (TA) from Education Development Center (EDC)[G]	Implementers whose grant director rated the TA provided by EDC as more useful are more likely to have delivered all required sessions
Resources for program implementation[I]	Implementers who reported more resources are more likely to have delivered all required sessions
Nonsignificant predictors: Number of previous years teaching other programs[I], Believe students will benefit from SEL programming[I], Participation in program training[I], Implementer voice in program planning[G,I], Received technical assistance from program developers[G], Taught program previously[I], Implementer self-efficacy to implement programming effectively[I], Taught other substance use prevention or SEL programs previously[I], Believe students will benefit from substance use programming[I], Enthusiasm about teaching program[I], Grade of student being taught[I], Implementation intensity[I], Number of implementation barriers (out of 7), Implementer reporting[I], Implementer observation[I]	

SEL, social-emotional learning. [G] Reported in grant director survey, [I] Reported in implementer survey.

3.5 Early Successes

In the grant director survey and interviews, we invited grant directors to share information about their biggest *Prevention Matters* success to date (some grant directors listed more than one success). Successes generally fell into several broad categories. Based on the survey, the main categories of successes included

- completing training and getting the program off the ground (9 grant directors);
- obtaining teacher buy-in (7);
- implementing the program, especially in a seamless or widespread manner (7);
- obtaining the *Prevention Matters* grant funds (3); and
- observing initial outcomes among students (2).

Other successes highlighted by grant directors in the survey included improving the school's overall curriculum with *Prevention Matters*-funded programming; adopting common social-emotional learning vocabulary across the school; hiring needed staff; and, as a private school grant director commented, having the ability to point to "deficits in our school in terms of preventing negative behaviors."

In grant director interviews, **school staff commitment to the effort was the most commonly cited key to early success.** One public school grantee related that its team was successful because "they were passionate about the purpose behind it. Just having a good team that cares about our students." Another multisite grant director highlighted the team's commitment to the program by noting,

> *We do lose students to drugs. [I think this] type of programming is so important, and especially to get it started in the middle schools.... It's addressing this on a deeper level than 'just say no to drugs' or that type of thing [that] is very beneficial.*

Grant directors listed several other factors that contributed to these successes. Some grant directors described the technical assistance they received from the grant as being important to successful implementation. One grantee believed that early efforts to build buy-in among implementers were key. Other grantees pointed to the benefit of hiring dedicated staff to support the grant.

4 Challenges

In their surveys and interviews, grant directors identified a wide variety of implementation challenges. Most challenges centered around broad implementation and administrative issues. Other challenges were tied to finances or school and district policies. We present the broad implementation challenges and then present separate subsections of financial- and policy-related challenges and barriers.

Grant directors highlighted general implementation challenges, such as **limitations implementing efficiently across multiple sites.** One grant director at a multisite grantee found it challenging to oversee, coordinate, and maintain consistent implementation across schools because the schools had different daily schedules and many individuals to coordinate. The grantee addressed this challenge by increasing the frequency of communication with staff across sites. Other grantees reallocated their funding to hire more staff to enhance communication and coordination across sites.

Grant directors described **challenges due to receiving the notification of a grant award shortly before the school year began.** This made implementation more difficult. One grant director said,

> *Had I known the amount of work it would take… it might have been better to work through it in the summer and start at the beginning of a school year rather than when [the school year had] already started.*

Grant directors also highlighted **challenges related to staffing and training logistics.** They had limited time to schedule and coordinate training, which made it difficult to find a time when both trainers and implementers were available. Grant directors addressed these challenges by offering multiple training times for staff. Grant directors also noted that some prevention programs proved more challenging and took longer to implement than originally planned. One grantee's prevention programming required schoolwide implementation, rather than delivery of a discrete set of lessons; this larger program implementation scope necessitated additional preparation time.

Grantees faced **ongoing staffing challenges.** They were short-staffed even before receiving a *Prevention Matters* grant, and implementing new programming stretched their staff even more thinly. As mentioned previously, some grantees had only one person who was responsible for implementation, which slowed

implementation progress. To this end, a few grantees made efforts to identify staff who were able to take on additional roles in order to alleviate burdensome workloads on individual team members.

Grant directors **described challenges ensuring that intervention content and quality were consistent across sites and schools;** we explore this topic in more detail in the implementation quality section of this report.

Several grantees described **administrative challenges.** For example, a few grant directors highlighted that they misunderstood when the Foundation expected them to begin implementation, and their confusion subsequently led to implementation delays. Several had limited administrative support, which in turn limited the overall efficiency of their implementation efforts and their ability to address administrative grant needs. Some grantees hired additional staff to offset burdensome workloads, prevent staff burnout, and improve workflow. Some identified passionate people within current staffs to take on additional roles and reinforce timelines for implementation and administrative deadlines. For example, one multisite grant director created a leadership administrative team at each building/school and maintained a clear list of programmatic next steps and training needs.

Finally, a few grantees reported **confusion surrounding who was responsible for providing technical assistance to grantees and miscommunications about what programs were being implemented,** which reduced efficiency and made it difficult for grantees to adhere to deadlines.

4.1 Financial Challenges

Grant director surveys and interviews showed that **few grantees faced major financial barriers.** One private school grant director said, "The [*Prevention Matters*] funding has provided what we've needed to be able to launch where we are, and as far as we can tell, we'll be able to get it fully launched."

Some grant directors described challenges related to limited funding and handling budget reductions put in place during the initial grant securing process. For example, one multisite grantee did not understand how much would be funded and therefore failed to ask for an appropriate amount of funding when applying for the grant. Some grantees also disclosed that they did not include non-programming-related items such as evaluation services and guest speakers in

their original budget.[14] Thus, these grantees had to identify additional funding sources for these non-programming-related items.

Some grant directors also shared ways in which they combatted financial challenges. One single-site grantee highlighted the benefits of partnering with other schools to share costs and potentially bring in new staff. Although the school was not able to execute this idea, the grantee observed that "small schools are comfortable joining forces" and emphasized that coordinating training for multiple schools implementing the same program could help spread out and reduce total costs.

4.2 Policy Challenges

During the grant director survey, we presented grant directors with a list of seven potential policy challenges and asked them to say whether and by how much those challenges limited their organizations' ability to deliver prevention programming to students.

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 across all grant directors and barriers, grant directors used the "major barrier" response option only twice; **policy barriers were almost always classified as being "minor."**

[14] The Foundation did not cover guest speakers because they did not align with the initiative's goal of supporting evidence-based prevention programs. The Foundation did not cover evaluation services that overlapped with the initiative-wide evaluation from RTI.

Policy Barrier	Number of Grantees
Policies mandating academic activities/benchmarks that, in turn, limit the amount of time available for prevention programs	12
Policies mandating school schedules (e.g., start/end dates, start/end times) that limit the amount of time available for prevention programs	10
Policies that restrict what data can be collected or used for program monitoring and evaluation	5
Policies that allow individual students (or their parents) to opt out of prevention programming	4
Policies that limit ability to apply for, request, or use funding for prevention programming	3
Policies that limit what prevention content can be taught in schools	2
Policies that limit administrators' ability to require teacher involvement in prevention programs	0

Grant director survey and interview feedback highlighted specific policy issues that the directors encountered. For example, one public school grantee highlighted that extensive state and federal government expectations made it challenging to introduce new curricula— such as those tied to the *Prevention Matters* grant—in the middle of the year. Another school aiming to implement with its high school students found that high school education requirements limited students' availability to participate in additional coursework, such as prevention programming.

In addition, a grant director at a private school worked to fit its prevention programming into the school's principles. For these sites, implementers reviewed and revised the messaging to ensure that it coincided with the school's overall doctrine.

A consistent policy challenge faced by numerous grantees was tied to the variance in school schedules; several grant directors noted that not having the ability to work around policies dictating class times and other aspects of the school day impeded their implementation efforts.

Although some grantees faced challenges, other grantees shared policy measures that had a positive or neutral impact on the rollout of their implementation efforts. For example, one private school grantee attributed its minimal policy

issues to the small size of its student body and school administrative body; both enabled the school to have greater implementation flexibility.

4.3 Implementation Challenges

In their survey, we presented implementers with a list of seven issues that might interfere with their ability to implement program sessions and asked whether each challenge had been an issue for them. On average, implementers reported experiencing two or three challenges. **The most common implementation challenges were not having enough time (68% of implementers), having other more pressing demands (51%), and students' having difficulty with some part of the session (48%).**

Implementation Challenges	Percent of Implementers
I did not have enough time.	68
There were other more pressing demands during session time.	51
Some part of the session was difficult for students (e.g., role plays).	48
Students did not appear to understand the sessions.	29
Students were uncomfortable discussing some of the topics.	26
I did not have the needed materials.	18
I was uncomfortable discussing some of the topics.	9

5 Sustainability

In their interviews, nearly all grant directors shared their plans for sustaining programming after *Prevention Matters*. **Grantees appeared to be at different stages of sustainability planning.** Some were only beginning informal or brainstorming conversations about sustainability, whereas other grantees were further along. For example, two grantees were actively engaging the community in fundraising and policy change efforts with sustainability in mind, and another grantee had had formal conversations with its school board on this topic. One private school grant director commented that it was difficult to plan for sustainability while immersed in implementation and data collection.

Some grantees reported that they wove sustainability into their initial planning for the grant. When asked about steps they had taken to sustain their program after *Prevention Matters,* two grantees mentioned that they had purchased 5-year licenses for their prevention programs with an eye toward maintaining programming for at least the first 2 years after their grant funding ended. One multisite grantee consciously chose a program that it believed it could financially sustain after the grant was over. Another multisite grantee was able to integrate social-emotional learning, a critical aspect of its programming, into its school system's strategic plan, which helped facilitate its program implementation and enhance the likelihood of sustainability.

Grantees' sustainability efforts were often divided between grantees who prioritized meeting the material needs of maintaining the program, such as purchasing additional workbooks, and grantees who prioritized garnering support among school leaders.

One director of a public school grant also prioritized creating a social-emotional learning framework to enhance sustainability, explaining,

> *The biggest component of sustainability is if indeed we build a social-emotional learning framework that is of value to [the schools]. [Our selected prevention program] and the work of Prevention Matters is just a part of that. It's really developing that framework.... But what does it really mean and what is it going forward? What is my buy-in to really, again, where SEL, to use the expression, is not another thing on their plate, it IS the plate? How do I get there? When we arrive at those answers and those responses, that's what sustainability will do for us—when it's really a part of the fabric of their school culture, and climate, and academic platform.*

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

- No discussion (1)
- Limited discussion with no clear plan (2)
- Discussion with tentative plan (3)
- Discussion with firm plan (4)
- Executed plan (5)

As shown in the table that follows, **for many areas of sustainability planning, grantees fell just below the level of discussion with a tentative plan** (i.e., mean score between 2.6 and 2.9). However, two items had scores that fell outside of this range. Grantees had gotten farther along with plans to determine the funds needed to sustain *Prevention Matters* programs (mean score of 3.2), and they had not gotten as far with plans to turn over program ownership to the communities or schools (mean score of 2.0).

Area of Sustainability Planning	Mean Score
Determine the funds needed to sustain *Prevention Matters* programs	3.2
Determine how the program aligns with the mission and goals of potential future stakeholders	2.9
Identify key stakeholders who might support the program	2.8
Make the program a line-item in the budget of your organization, schools, or community	2.8
Present outcome data to potential stakeholders (e.g., school board members, principals, parents)	2.7
Secure funds by applying for additional grants	2.7
Discuss with local leaders how the program relates to the community's overall prevention needs	2.6
Secure funds from sources other than grants	2.6
Turn over ownership of the program to the community, schools, or other organizations	2.0

In their surveys, **six grant directors (24%) reported that their *Prevention Matters* programs were funded by sources beyond the Foundation.** Funding sources included

- federal or state government funding (Title I, Title IIA, Title IV, or McKinney Vento grants; 4 grantees),
- Lilly Endowment Counseling Initiative grants (2),
- school entities (e.g., public school corporation, individual school [2]), and
- individual donations or fundraising (1).

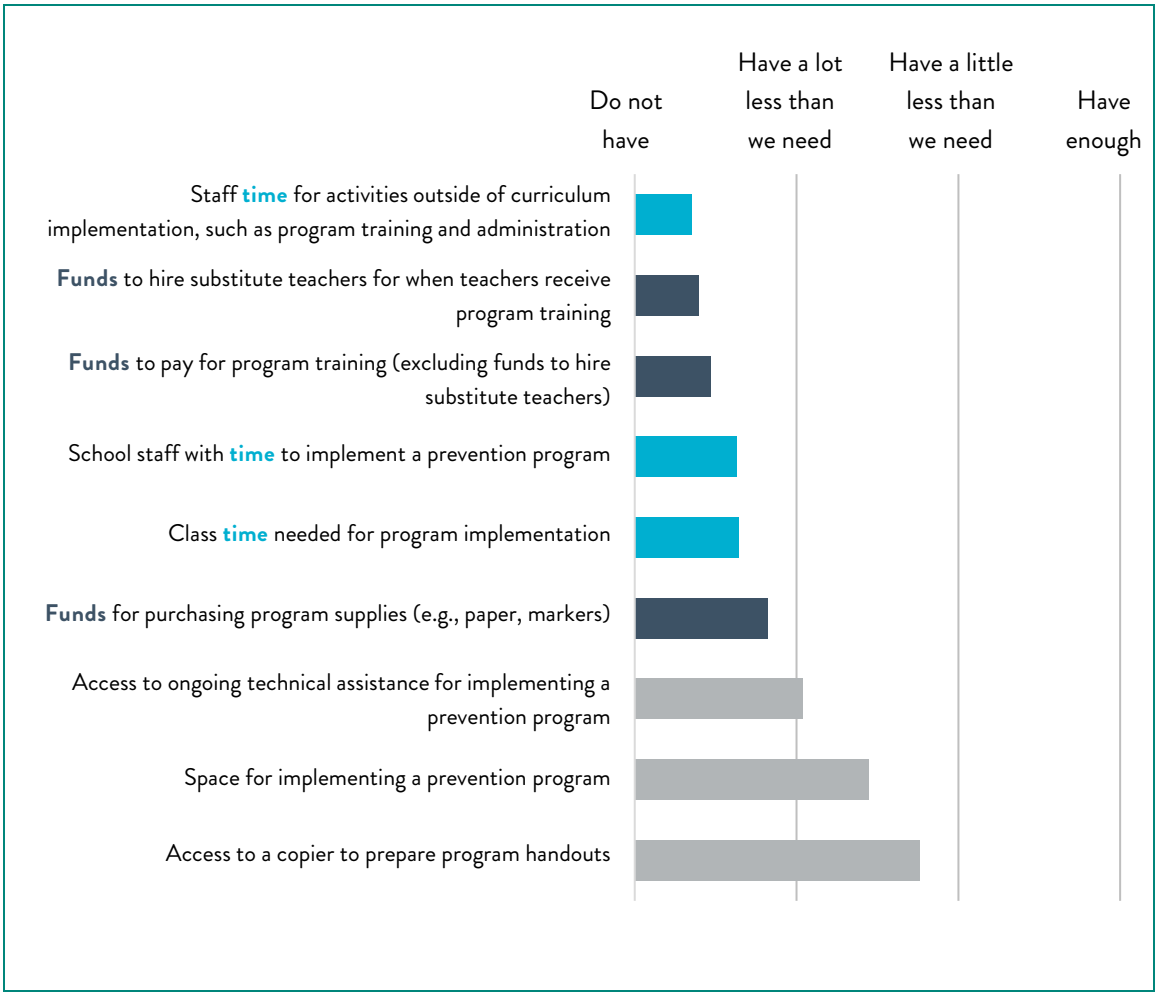
Among the grantees who received additional funding, the average amount of funding received in the 2018–2019 school year was $87,000 (range = $14,000 to $155,000). This represented an average of 28% of these grantees' *Prevention Matters* funding (range = 6% to 108%).

During the grant director interviews, we also discussed leveraging other resources. Although only one grantee mentioned receiving direct financial support from another source for its prevention programming, two others received in-kind fundraising support that included grant writing. One multisite grantee described a community coalition's efforts to raise funds to enhance and sustain its

prevention programming; this coalition emphasized the need for the whole community to take part in supporting its kids.

Several grantees aspired to better integrate outside funding sources into their work in the coming years. One private school grant director remarked, "I think that's our biggest thing, is moving forward, how to get outside resources to continue when our [grant-funded] implementation time is up."

In their survey, we presented implementers with a list of nine resources that are needed to support program implementation and asked them to report whether their school currently had enough of each. As shown in the graph that follows, implementers reported that **their biggest resource shortfalls were in the areas of time and funding**.



Learning about Impact

RTI is preparing to assess the impact of *Prevention Matters* using grantee-collected data and school administrative data. However, data for the time period after the *Prevention Matters* launch will not be available until late 2019; we will analyze these data as part of the Year 2 annual evaluation report. In this section, we discuss our preparation for these future impact analyses.

1 School-Level Administrative Data

RTI obtained school-level administrative data for 15 variables related to student achievement, behavior, and standardized testing. We examined trends for the 5 years before *Prevention Matters* implementation among schools served by *Prevention Matters*, as well as in Allen County and Lake County schools. As shown in the table that follows, for 9 of the 15 variables, the trend lines for *Prevention Matters* schools were comparable to those of Allen and Lake County schools; for a 10th trend line, the lines were parallel. In other words, **more often than not, historical levels of school-level outcomes were fairly similar between *Prevention Matters* and the comparison schools. This increases the likelihood that any difference in trends after the implementation of *Prevention Matters* will be due to *Prevention Matters* rather than pre-existing differences.**

Outcome	Trend, 2013–2014 to 2017–2018		Differences in Levels and Trends
	Prevention Matters Schools	Allen County and Lake County Schools	
Achievement			
Graduation	Stable	Stable	No significant differences
Grade retention	Decreasing	Stable	*Prevention Matters* schools started with a higher rate of grade retention than Allen and Lake County schools, but their rate fell over time
Behavior			
Attendance	Decreasing	Decreasing	No significant differences
Excused absences	Stable	Increasing	Allen and Lake County schools started with a higher average number of excused absences than *Prevention Matters* schools, and their absences increased over time
Unexcused absences	Increasing	Increasing	No significant differences

Outcome	Trend, 2013–2014 to 2017–2018		Differences in Levels and Trends
	Prevention Matters Schools	Allen County and Lake County Schools	
In-school suspension	Increasing	Stable	Allen and Lake County schools have higher rates of in-school suspensions than *Prevention Matters* schools; however, rates are increasing in *Prevention Matters* schools
Out-of-school suspension	Increasing	Stable	No significant differences
Expulsion	Stable	Stable	*Prevention Matters* schools have lower rates of expulsion than Lake and Allen County schools
School dropout (cohort)	Stable	Stable	No significant differences
School drop out (annual)	Stable	Stable	No significant differences
Standardized testing			
ISTEP (grades 3–8) Passing both math and English	Decreasing	Decreasing	*Prevention Matters* schools have a lower percentage of passing students than do Allen and Lake County schools Passing rates are also dropping more steeply among students at *Prevention Matters* schools
ISTEP (grade 10) Passing both math and English[a]	Stable	Stable	No significant differences

Outcome	Trend, 2013–2014 to 2017–2018		Differences in Levels and Trends
	Prevention Matters Schools	Allen County and Lake County Schools	
IREAD[a]	Decreasing	Decreasing	Students at Allen and Lake County schools score higher on IREAD than *Prevention Matters* schools Although passing rates are dropping among both groups of schools, they are dropping more steeply for *Prevention Matters* schools
ACT[b]	Stable	Increasing	No significant differences
SAT[b]	Increasing	Increasing	No significant differences

[a] Indiana first administered the IREAD and the 10th grade ISTEP in 2016, so these trends are for 2015–2016 to 2017–2018.
[b] ACT and SAT data are currently available only through 2016–2017, so these trends are for 2013–2014 to 2016–2017. Also, the Indiana Department of Education has not yet provided ACT or SAT data for private schools, so they are excluded from these analyses.

2 Grantee-Collected Data

As described in the Methodology section, **RTI will begin compiling information from grantees' project-level data collections in fall 2019.**

During their interviews, grant directors discussed their data collection efforts. They said that they were already beginning to measure and see the impacts of the prevention programming on their students. Many grantees reported that they planned to examine school discipline data such as school absences. Most grantees planned to administer surveys to student participants to assess both their knowledge gained through the curricula and changes in their behavior that reflect the curricula. These grantees planned to use surveys they would create themselves or standard surveys such as the Indiana Youth Survey. All grantees that planned to use student data to assess impact had not begun examining these data at the time of the interview.

Grant directors also discussed assessing student engagement in several different ways. A few grantees said that they noticed positive student engagement in the discussions that students were having within classes. One multisite grant director reported that students "were open" in their discussions and were able to "open up [once] they [knew] they wouldn't be sent to the dean because they tried a Juul [electronic cigarette]." Grantees also stated that they were observing positive student engagement through feedback from the students themselves. For example, students reported that certain lessons were helpful or were "striking a chord." Furthermore, one public school grantee noted that students implemented what they had learned in their lessons, even outside of their classrooms.

Lessons Learned

In the previous sections, we identified a number of lessons that can help to strengthen *Prevention Matters* in Year 2. 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).

***Prevention Matters* grantees needed multiple individuals to coordinate program implementation.** The workload was too great for a single individual, even for single-school grantees. We recommend that future funders of similar initiatives encourage their applicants to plan and budget for multiple individuals to share implementation oversight responsibilities.

Many grantees experienced delays in implementation. Grant directors attributed this to challenges such as funding notification coming very close to the beginning of the school year, difficulties with scheduling implementer training, and implementer challenges with balancing program implementation with their other responsibilities. For future initiatives, some of these challenges might be alleviated if funders awarded the initial year of implementation funding earlier in the calendar year.

More than one-third of implementers did not receive program training. Despite grant directors' reporting that implementers of all *Prevention Matters* programs had received or would receive training, a large number of implementers reported not receiving training at all or receiving their initial training after they began implementation. It is unclear whether this discrepancy is due to social desirability on the part of grant directors, a lack of grant director awareness of what training had or had not taken place, challenges with getting implementers to comply with training requests, or implementer difficulty with recalling training experiences. We strongly recommend that the Foundation and contracted technical assistance consultants explore possible explanations for this discrepancy so that they can be addressed and training can be more consistent.

Larger grantees had lower rates of implementer training. It is possible that larger grantees experience additional challenges with scheduling and monitoring a large volume of implementers. It is also possible that implementers from large grant projects feel less personal connection to the grant and grant leadership, resulting

in a reduced sense of obligation to comply with training requests. Again, we recommend further exploration of this finding.

Interestingly, having received training did not appear to be related to implementation quality. It is unclear whether this finding shows a true lack of association (e.g., curriculum materials alone are sufficient support for quality implementation) or whether those who have not received training are not in a position to accurately judge implementation quality. RTI can potentially explore issues of training and implementation quality using our planned implementation observations.

Many implementers had not been monitored by the time of the implementer survey. Most grant directors reported that they monitored or planned to monitor their implementers. However, fewer than half of implementers reported that someone had observed them or asked them to report information about their implementation. Given that the majority of grantees who planned to monitor intended to monitor all of their implementers (as opposed to a subset), this finding is not entirely explained by grantee plans to monitor only a subset of implementers.

There are multiple potential explanations for this finding. In some cases, this could be a function of implementation still being in progress at the time of the implementer survey (i.e., monitoring will happen, but it has not happened yet). It is possible that monitoring is not visible to implementers, such as when grantee staff check to see whether implementers have accessed Second Step modules online. Similarly, implementers may not always recognize monitoring; for example, teachers may not realize that a principal observation is for *Prevention Matters* rather than a routine observation of their instruction. Finally, there might be a disconnect between the monitoring that grant directors think is happening and the monitoring that is actually happening. We recommend that the Foundation and contracted technical assistance consultants explore the reasons for this discrepancy and assist grantees with overcoming any barriers to monitoring.

To date, *Prevention Matters* appears to be partially integrated within schools. Most grantees offer some sort of program education to school staff beyond implementers, and many offer program education to nonschool staff. Almost all implementers report referencing program content or messages outside of program sessions. However, there is still room for growth with referencing school

support services within programs and with involving parents in program planning.

Lack of time for prevention program delivery is a problem. Grant directors report that lack of time is a problem. Implementers also say that lack of time is a barrier, a resource where they fall short, and a reason that they sometimes adapt programming. This frequency suggests potential technical assistance needs in identifying curricula that align with available time and in finding ways to make enough time for prevention programs.

Implementation quality tended to be positive but still had room for growth. Average implementation frequency and intensity tended to be close to what was required for most programs. Most implementers reported following their implementation guide somewhat closely or very closely. Students were somewhat engaged in programming and had good (but not excellent/complete) understanding. The Foundation, technical assistance consultants, and grantees should consider offering support for boosting implementation quality in future years, perhaps in the form of booster trainings for returning implementers.

The most robust predictors of implementation quality were implementers' previous experience with prevention curricula, implementers' enthusiasm about *Prevention Matters* programs, and implementer-reported implementation barriers. Implementers who had previous experience with prevention programs, either their *Prevention Matters* curricula or other substance use prevention or social-emotional learning programs, reported less adherence to curriculum manuals and more adaptations. Implementers may not have been held to strong fidelity standards in their previous work, or they may have become more comfortable with going "off-book." We recommend that grantees work to find ways to prevent curriculum drift among experienced implementers, particularly as *Prevention Matters* heads into its second year, when many more implementers will have previous experience.

There are a number of possible explanations as to why implementer enthusiasm might be linked to implementation quality. Enthusiastic implementers may be more motivated to adhere to program materials, and their enthusiasm may cause students to be more engaged. Alternatively, it is possible that enthusiasm develops as the result of seeing the positive effects of high-fidelity implementation in the classroom.

Finally, implementation barriers, including lack of time and student difficulty with program sessions, was related to lower adherence, more adaptation, and

lower student engagement and comprehension. Targeted technical assistance around these issues may yield higher-quality implementation.

Grantees are at different stages of sustainability planning. On average, grantees were at the stage of having discussed different aspects of sustainability and having made a tentative plan for moving forward. Grantees were farthest along with determining the funds needed to support *Prevention Matters,* and a small subset of grantees had secured funding beyond that from the Foundation. As the initiative moves closer to completion, it will be critical for grantees to begin solidifying and executing their sustainability plans.

2 Additional Lessons Learned from Grant Directors

During their interviews, RTI asked grant directors for advice to schools considering implementing similar prevention programs, as well as for reflections on their implementation processes. They provided a variety of suggestions, which can be organized into four categories.

Building buy-in with stakeholders early was the first and most frequent category of advice. Grantees from public and private schools, large and small, emphasized building buy-in with teachers, leadership, or parents. For example, one public school grantee recommended building buy-in with teachers by speaking with them early in the implementation process and stressing the "why" for focusing on social-emotional learning. Another public school grant director suggested that grantees build leadership buy-in by "invest[ing] some personal time with district-level administrators talking about drug prevention," and, again, emphasizing the "why." Given that many administrators and teachers are focused on preparing students for tests and face real limits on their time, this grant director stressed the importance of framing social-emotional learning initiatives as part of educating the "whole child," which may ultimately result in better academic outcomes.

Spending adequate time on training teachers, especially early in the process, was the second category of advice. One multisite grantee suggested, "If you have the time, spend a significant amount of time in training with teachers," adding that it is challenging to count on implementers to teach themselves.

Grant directors also acknowledged the importance of taking full advantage of the technical assistance offered through the Foundation. A few grant directors

emphasized the helpfulness and comprehensiveness of the technical assistance. One multisite grantee recommended always having a staff member attend webinars, especially implementers and other staff involved in data collection and analysis. Another grant director shared a perception that the level of support provided through *Prevention Matters* has been unusually high.

The remaining grantee feedback, the fourth "category," was a collection of disparate pieces of advice and insights. For the most part, this feedback built on themes that are outlined in other sections of the report:

- Spread out implementation planning: "I don't think you can do it all up front. Stage it out. Make sure you build in the train-the-trainers for that sustainability piece and because it creates additional buy-in."
- Stick to your plans and be prepared to defend them: "Be prepared to continually advocate on behalf of what you've written."
- Have a staff person whose time is dedicated to supporting the grant.
- Have conversations early in the process about who will manage the grant if it is awarded.
- Reach out to fellow grantees to identify collaborators and potential partners.
- Implementing the prevention programming at a consistent time each day can help ensure the program is implemented and is done with fidelity.

The lessons learned in Year 1 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 social-emotional learning and prevent substance use.