



RICHARD M.  
FAIRBANKS  
FOUNDATION



# *Prevention Matters: Year 4/ Final Evaluation Report*

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## Commonly Used Abbreviations

IDOE	Indiana Department of Education
ILEARN	Indiana Learning Evaluation Assessment Readiness Network
INYS	Indiana Youth Survey
IREAD-3	Indiana Reading Evaluation and Determination
PATHS	Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (curriculum)
RTI	Research Triangle Institute, d/b/a RTI International, the contracted evaluator
SEC	social-emotional competence





# 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 four years, *Prevention Matters* funded schools to provide students with an array of programs that have been proven, through research, to prevent substance use and to improve social-emotional outcomes.

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

In March 2018, the Foundation awarded 44 planning grants to Marion County school corporations; archdiocese deaneries; charter school networks; private school organizations; and individual, single-site charter, private, and Innovation Network schools.<sup>1</sup> These planning grants funded organizations to identify the most appropriate evidence-based substance use prevention programs for their students from a list curated by the Foundation<sup>2</sup> 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 (Round 1 grantees). The Foundation awarded five additional implementation grants in December 2018 to support program implementation through the 2021–2022 school year (Round 2 grantees). In summer 2019, one Round 1 grantee and one Round 2 grantee withdrew from the initiative, resulting in 27 grantees.

## Impact of COVID-19 on *Prevention Matters*

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

Schools shifted to virtual instruction, which required grantees to modify their *Prevention Matters* implementation strategies. The Foundation engaged program developers to gather guidance and resources for implementing remotely and for involving families in programming. The Foundation and its technical assistance contractor, Education Development Corporation, provided grantees with a table summarizing this guidance and these resources.

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<sup>1</sup> Innovation Network schools are public schools in the Indianapolis Public Schools district that operate with the authority to make decisions about all aspects of their school, both academic and operational.

<sup>2</sup> The Foundation contracted with prevention experts at the Indiana Prevention Resource Center at Indiana University Bloomington (<https://iprc.iu.edu/>) to develop the list of evidence-based programs.

The 2020–2021 school year began with nearly all Marion County school districts offering both in-person and virtual learning options, with specific options varying across grade levels. For instance, many schools allowed only their youngest students to resume in-person learning at the start of the year. Each school district developed a detailed reopening plan. Some plans were contingent on COVID-19 incidence rates, and others presented phase-in approaches that included hybrid scheduling (i.e., virtual learning mixed with in-person learning). Throughout the 2020–2021 school year, Marion County schools experienced a few periods during which schools switched to virtual learning in response to increases in COVID-19 rates. However, by the end of the school year, all schools were providing in-person lessons.

Because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on *Prevention Matters* implementation and learning more broadly, the Foundation offered grantees the possibility of extending their implementation to Year 4 with additional funding from the Foundation. Twenty-four grantees (21 Round 1 grantees and three Round 2 grantees) used Foundation funding to continue to implement *Prevention Matters* programming during the 2021–2022 school year.

During the 2021–2022 school year, all schools associated with the 24 grantees provided in-person learning; a few offered live/synchronous virtual learning for students exposed to COVID-19 who could not attend school or during selected times when the COVID-19 rates were too high. However, the impact of COVID-19 on school and learning was far less in this final year of the grant than in the 2019–2020 and 2020–2021 school years.

## Description of RTI's Role as Evaluator

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 and will inform the field of school-based substance use prevention efforts more broadly.

To examine changes in the implementation of *Prevention Matters* programs and their impact over the course of the initiative, this report presents data across all four years of implementation. Because of the unique impact of COVID-19 on implementation and the evaluation data, for some data this report compares Year 4 to Year 1 or Year 3; other data are reported for all four years.

## Summary of Year 3 Results

The Year 3 report presented data collected from 26 grantees and their 3,606 implementers. Ten different prevention programs were delivered to approximately 83,432 students in 159 schools in 2020–2021. Highlights from the Year 3 report include the following:

- Most implementers surveyed were on track to finish or had finished implementation of their *Prevention Matters* programming lessons for the year. Furthermore, compared with Year 2 data, Year 3 data showed a significant increase in the percentage of implementers who reported completing all their *Prevention Matters* lessons (65% in Year 3 and 57% in Year 2), an increase that is likely tied to schools resuming in-person learning for most of the school year.
- Over 90% of implementers reported following their curriculum guide somewhat closely or very closely. Moreover, at least one grant director observed increased implementation fidelity as a key grant accomplishment.
- In Year 3, sustainability planning among Round 1 grantees increased significantly over Year 2 across all areas of sustainability planning examined. Among the Round 2 grantees, sustainability planning increased or remained stable among five of the nine areas examined.
- Students' knowledge about the *Prevention Matters* curriculum increased, according to Year 2 pre- and posttest data.<sup>3</sup> Students' knowledge increased from 71% of items correct at pretest to 86% correct at posttest. Students' scores on measures of social-emotional competence (SEC) also improved. SEC refers to skills such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.<sup>4</sup> Both changes are significant ( $p < .05$ ).

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<sup>3</sup> These data have a 1-year data lag, so Year 2 data were analyzed in Year 3 and were the only data available for RTI's report in the Year 3 report.

<sup>4</sup> The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. (n.d.). *What is the CASEL framework?* <https://casel.org/sel-framework/>

- RTI's Year 3 evaluation also identified two key areas in which grantees could improve their implementation. First, implementer training for first-time and returning implementers declined 29 percentage points and 19 percentage points, respectively. Second, fewer grant directors required all or some implementers to report on their implementation progress in Year 3 (69%) than in Year 2 (89%), though this change was not statistically significant. Fewer implementers also reported being asked to share implementation progress information in Year 3 (57%) than in Year 2 (68%).

This report summarizes what RTI has learned specifically about Year 4 of *Prevention Matters* implementation and more generally about all four years of implementation. It also presents the implementation progress reported in Year 4 of the *Prevention Matters* grants and the impacts that emerged during all four years of the grant. The reported impacts of *Prevention Matters* on student outcomes are based on an analysis of grantee-reported data across the initiative, including data such as student behavior incidents and survey responses. Separate analyses explore how school-level outcomes reported by the Indiana Department of Education changed in *Prevention Matters* schools and in other similar schools in different parts of the state.

The Methodology section of this report provides more detail on the evaluation methods that RTI used. The Learning about Implementation and the Learning about Impact sections discuss what RTI learned about *Prevention Matters* processes and outcomes. The Lessons Learned section summarizes Year 4 findings that both schools and funders can use to help strengthen *Prevention Matters* and similar school-based prevention initiatives.



# Methodology

This section describes the methodology used for the *Prevention Matters* evaluation. Table 1 provides an overview of the research aims, data sources, sample size, data time frame, and analytic approaches used to examine the data included in this report. The evaluation includes seven data sources: annual surveys of grant directors, annual surveys of program implementers, telephone interviews with grant directors, school-level administrative data from the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE), classroom observations by RTI International, information from grantees' required data collection activities, and statewide student surveys. With the exceptions of IDOE data, some grantee-collected data, and RTI classroom observation data, Year 4 data are self-reported by grant directors, implementers, and students (through surveys).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Throughout the report, comparisons are made between results from Year 1 (2018–2019), Year 2 (2019–2020), Year 3 (2020–2021), and Year 4 (2021–2022). Whenever statistical significance testing was completed, the results of that testing are included.

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

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

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

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

<sup>a</sup> Unless otherwise noted, sample size refers to the Year 4 sample only.

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



## 1 Grant Director Surveys

**Data source.** RTI conducted the fourth annual web-based survey of *Prevention Matters* grant directors February 28–March 18, 2022.<sup>6</sup> Topics for the survey included implementation models (e.g., training approach, partnerships), barriers to and facilitators of program implementation, COVID-19’s impact on implementation, sustainability, and plans to continue implementing prevention programming after the end of the *Prevention Matters* initiative. Most questions were asked in relation to the overall grant project. However, the questions about program training models, provision of program information and activities to parents, and plans to continue implementing after the *Prevention Matters* initiative ends were asked for each program that the grant directors reported implementing. Many grantees implemented more than one program throughout the *Prevention Matters* initiative. For most of the analyses conducted in this evaluation, Second Step Elementary and Second Step Middle were treated as separate programs.

Each of the 24 grant directors received an email invitation to participate in the survey, along with a personalized link. RTI expected the survey to take about 30 minutes to complete. All the grant directors completed the survey.

**Analytic methods.** Using the grant director data (n = 24), RTI used SAS to calculate scale scores and produced descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, and standard deviations). RTI used two-tailed t-tests to examine differences between the mean scores for variables that were compared across years. Additionally, RTI used a chi-square test of independence to determine statistically significant associations between categorical variables.

## 2 Grant Director Interviews

**Data source.** RTI conducted 60-minute video interviews with 10 grant directors in Year 4. The sample included a diverse set of grantees who varied based on the

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<sup>6</sup> Note on data collection timing: In Year 1, RTI collected grant director surveys in January and implementer surveys and grant director interviews in March and April. The Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation requested that these data collections occur later in the school year in Year 2, so that the data would reflect as much of the school year as possible. In Years 3 and 4, data collection from grant directors followed a similar timeline as in Year 2. The Year 3 and Year 4 implementer surveys were slightly earlier than in Year 2. Therefore, when comparing survey and interview results across years, it is important to keep in mind that some differences may be due, at least in part, to differences in data collection timing.

number of sites included in their grant-funded prevention programming, the type of schools (public [including charter] or private), and the prevention programs implemented. Unlike in earlier years, about half of the grant directors interviewed in Year 4 had already been interviewed in one of the earlier years.<sup>7</sup>

Interviews involved an in-depth exploration of the topics covered in the grant director survey, with a strong focus on sustainability. Topics included implementation approaches and timeline, key implementation facilitators and barriers, sustainability planning, financial and policy facilitators, and barriers to sustainability. Also, as it did in Years 2 and 3, RTI asked questions about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on grant implementation. Interviews examined implementation during all four grant years.

***Analytic approach.*** Grant director interviews were recorded with participant consent and transcribed and coded using NVivo 12. The RTI codebook comprised deductively developed codes based on the key evaluation questions that the interviews aimed to answer. Each member of the three-person coding team participated in two rounds of “coding norming” whereby they coded the same interviews, and the coding was then compared across team members. The coding team members discussed situations when they coded the same interview differently and revised the code definitions or the coding to ensure a common understanding of and approach to coding. The coding team members conducted ongoing reviews of their peers’ coded materials. Once all interviews were coded, the coding team conducted inductive coding of each code report. The inductive coding served as the outline for writing and integrating interview data into the final report.

### 3 Implementer Survey

***Data source.*** RTI conducted the fourth and final annual 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 and activities, any partners involved in implementation, implementation monitoring, and implementers’ overall experience implementing the program throughout the funding period. Some questions (e.g., those focused on implementation quality) were asked specifically about the program that the

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<sup>7</sup> A few grant directors were not interviewed in earlier years because they replaced grant directors who had left those schools.

implementer reported delivering, whereas others were asked about the overall grant implementation and all programs delivered by implementers. Implementers who reported delivering multiple programs were asked to respond about the program they implemented with the most students.

RTI collaborated with grantee staff to obtain email addresses for current program implementers. Each implementer then received an email with a personalized link to participate in the survey. RTI expected the survey to take about 25 minutes to complete.

The Year 4 implementer survey was open from April 11 through May 17, 2022. RTI sent survey invitations to 2,973 implementers representing 24 grantees. RTI sent automated reminders to nonresponders six times during the survey period and sent a request to grant directors to follow up with their implementers to encourage them to respond.

A total of 1,811 implementers opened the survey (61% open rate). Fifty-six implementers (3.1% of those who opened the survey) reported that they were either not implementing, or not planning to implement, any programs that grantees were known to be implementing. Four implementers (0.2%) did not provide an answer to the question asking for their organization. These 60 implementers were excluded from RTI's analyses.

Twelve implementers (0.7% of those who opened the survey) reported implementing a primary *Prevention Matters* program different from what was reported by their grant director. Of those, three reported a secondary program that matched grant director reporting. These three implementers were excluded from program-specific items but were included elsewhere. The remaining nine of these 12 implementers (0.5%) did not report a primary or secondary program that matched what was reported by their grant directors and were not included in RTI's analysis. These exclusions resulted in an analytic sample of 1,742 implementers for general items and 1,739 implementers for program-specific analyses.

Survey response rates by primary program implemented are shown in Table 2. These responses include complete responses (i.e., implementers who filled out the entire survey) and partial responses (i.e., individuals who filled out some of the survey, including at minimum the required questions).<sup>8</sup> It is important to note that Second Step implementers make up 87% of all implementers who received

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<sup>8</sup> Respondents who did not complete the required questions were excluded from the analysis frame.

the survey and 84% of all implementer survey respondents. Therefore, implementer survey results were heavily weighted toward Second Step implementation and may not fully reflect implementation of other programs.

**Table 2. Implementer Survey Response Rate, by Primary Program Implemented, Year 4**

Program	Implementers Invited	Implementers Responding	Response Rate %
Botvin LifeSkills Training	44	33	75
Conscious Discipline	303	232	77
Curriculum-Based Support Group	7	3	43
Good Behavior Game	2	1	50
PATHS	16	8	50
Positive Action	1	0	0
Ripple Effects	11	2	18
Second Step <sup>a</sup>	2,586	1,458	56
Too Good for Drugs	3	2	67
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,973</b>	<b>1,739</b>	<b>58</b>

Note. <sup>a</sup> Includes both Second Step Elementary and Second Step Middle.

Table 3 shows the response rates to the implementer survey among grantees of different sizes. Implementers from smaller grantees—those with fewer than 300 implementers—were more likely to respond to the survey than those from larger grantees.

**Table 3. Response Rate by Grantee Size, Year 4**

Number of Implementers Working for Each Grantee	Number of Grantees (N = 24)	Implementer Response Rate %
Fewer than 300 implementers	19	64
300 or more implementers	5	54

**Analytic methods.** RTI used SAS to analyze the implementer survey data. RTI calculated scale scores and produced descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, and standard deviations). RTI used two-tailed t-tests to examine differences between the mean scores for variables that were compared across years. Additionally, RTI used a chi-square test of independence to determine statistically significant associations between categorical variables.

## 4 School Administrative Data

RTI obtained two types of IDOE school administrative data: (1) behavioral and academic achievement data and (2) academic proficiency data. The IDOE data examine behavior and academic achievement through measures of graduation, grade retention, attendance, absences, suspensions, expulsions, and dropouts. The IDOE data examined a pre-intervention time frame of 2013–2014 through 2017–2018 and an intervention time frame of 2018–2019 through 2021–2022 for schools that received *Prevention Matters* grants and for comparison schools in Lake and Allen Counties<sup>9</sup> that did not receive *Prevention Matters* grant funding. Data were collected based on the school year (e.g., 2018–2019). Although all four years of the *Prevention Matters* grant period are reflected in the data, COVID-19 affected the reporting of some of these data.

RTI examined academic proficiency in mathematics, reading, and language arts using students' scores on the ILEARN and IREAD-3 tests.<sup>10</sup> These tests are administered by schools throughout the state. This report presents data for the 2018–2019, 2020–2021, and 2021–2022 school years for *Prevention Matters*–funded schools and non-*Prevention Matters*–funded schools. (Scores were not available for the 2019–2020 school year because of COVID-19–related cancellations of statewide testing in spring 2020.)

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<sup>9</sup> Lake County is in northwest Indiana, near Chicago, Illinois. Allen County is in northeast Indiana and includes Fort Wayne as the county seat.

<sup>10</sup> Indiana Learning Evaluation Assessment Readiness Network (ILEARN) exams are statewide standardized tests. In spring 2019, ILEARN replaced the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress Plus (ISTEP+) for grades 3–8. ILEARN assesses student performance in multiple subject areas for grades 3–8; the *Prevention Matters* evaluation uses English/language arts (ELA) and mathematics scores. The Indiana Reading Evaluation and Determination (IREAD-3) assesses foundational reading standards for 3rd-grade students statewide.

**Analytic methods.** RTI compiled data for schools in which students in at least one grade are being served by *Prevention Matters*<sup>11</sup> and for all schools in Lake and Allen Counties to compare what happened during the same period in demographically similar counties that were not served by *Prevention Matters*. RTI used interrupted time series models to examine what shifts were evident in patterns of school-level outcomes and the impact of *Prevention Matters* programming and whether these trends looked different from trends among schools not implementing *Prevention Matters* programming.

Because of the widespread school building closures that were implemented on March 12, 2020, and remained in place until the end of the 2019–2020 school year, some data related to absences, disciplinary measures, and test scores were incomplete or not comparable to data from prior years. Given that COVID-19–related school building closures affected all Indiana counties during this period, RTI expects comparisons between Marion, Lake, and Allen Counties to remain valid. However, COVID-19 likely had effects on student outcomes, discipline, and absences, and counties may have responded in different ways to local health department guidance. The relevant data should therefore be viewed within the context of these realities.

## 5 Grantee-Collected Data

**Data source.** Grantees collected at least one measure of program implementation and one measure of program outcomes as part of their *Prevention Matters* projects. Two measures—curriculum adherence and disciplinary actions—were examined annually (collected once per project year in Years 1, 2, 3, and 4). Annual data were examined across all four years with pairwise comparisons of changes for each year (e.g., Year 1 to Year 2, Year 3 to Year 4). Contrasts focused on year-to-year changes in annual measures. The remaining outcomes were collected as pretest-posttest at the beginning and end of each year for Years 2, 3, or 4 only. In this final evaluation, RTI used these data to examine pretest-posttest changes in these measures during Years 3 and 4. Each year was examined individually. All schools with nonmissing pretest-posttest data in a particular year were included in the outcome analyses.

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<sup>11</sup> Although *Prevention Matters* data are drawn only from schools implementing *Prevention Matters* programming, the measures themselves may not reflect the specific students who received *Prevention Matters* programming at that school. For example, a grantee may be serving only 9th-graders, but IDOE data from all students at the school are included in analysis.

In Year 1, RTI reviewed each grantee's data collection plans. RTI identified the topics that grantees most commonly measured and then worked with the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation to identify 12 topics (termed "domains") for which RTI would ask grantees to submit data (see Table 4). In Year 4, one grantee added two domains assessing perceptions about peers (peer substance use norms and peer social-emotional competence).

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

Counts of grantees and schools by domain for Years 3 and 4 appear in Table 4. Table 5 shows the response by year for grantees and schools for annual measures. Reports for disciplinary incidents were inspected for consistency of reporting in the grades across years within a school. Instances of unique grade composition for a year were discarded (e.g., if a school reported incidents for grades 6, 7, and 8 for Years 1, 3, and 4 but only for grade 6 in Year 2, that school's Year 2 data were not included for analysis).

**Table 4. Grantee-Submitted Data for Available Domains with Pretest-Posttest Data, by Grantees and Schools, Year 3 and Year 4**

Domain	Number Submitting Year 3 Pretest and Posttest Data		Number Submitting Year 4 Pretest and Posttest Data	
	Grantees	Schools	Grantees	Schools
Student curriculum knowledge	7	22	9	23
Substance use				
Alcohol	1	1	1	1
Marijuana	0	0	0	0
Opioid or prescription drugs	0	0	0	0
Tobacco	1	1	1	1
Vaping	0	0	0	0
Perceived risk of harm from substances	4	15	4	5
Personal substance use norms	4	15	4	5
Depressive symptoms	2	3	1	2

Domain	Number Submitting Year 3 Pretest and Posttest Data		Number Submitting Year 4 Pretest and Posttest Data	
	Grantees	Schools	Grantees	Schools
Social-emotional competence	12	49	12	36
Peer substance use norms	0	0	1	11
Peer social-emotional competence	0	0	1	12

**Table 5. Grantee-Submitted Data for Available Domains by Grantee and Schools, Years 1–4**

Domain	Number Submitting Annual Data, Years 1–4							
	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Year 4	
	Grantees	Schools	Grantees	Schools	Grantees	Schools	Grantees	Schools
Curriculum adherence	19	83	23	117	21	123	21	127
Disciplinary incidents other than suspensions or expulsions <sup>a</sup>	14	47	19	80	22	117	18	95

Note. <sup>a</sup>Data from schools were not included if a yearly report included a grade composition that appeared only once for that school.

For ease of data processing, grantees were asked to use Excel spreadsheet templates to submit data collected from their schools. Data included program type, grades for which the program was implemented, and number of students per measure. The spreadsheets were compiled into one data set, which was cleaned in SAS. The final data preparation step was to make sure all the school measures within a domain were comparable in scaling and response type across schools.

**Analytic approach.** A meta-analytic framework based on multilevel modeling was used to estimate relevant effects (changes pre- to posttest and across school years). This methodology combined and analyzed the summary statistics that grantees submitted. The meta-analytic framework treated each grantee and school as if it conducted a separate study of whether *Prevention Matters* affected outcomes, allowing for the analysis of evaluation measures even though they varied somewhat from grantee to grantee. The meta-analytic framework



incorporated multiple sources of variability in each outcome to maximize the internal validity of the estimates of the intervention effects. These sources included overall school-level differences and study-level variance (where “study” is an assessment of the outcomes cross-sectionally within a school at pre- or posttest). Additionally, separate indicators of an overarching construct (e.g., norms about substance use) were estimated as the combined rate or level of the indicator items, treating these items as repeated measures or nested items within the larger outcome of interest.

## 6 Indiana Youth Survey

**Data source.** The INYS is created and conducted by the Institute for Research on Addictive Behavior/Prevention Insights at Indiana University Bloomington. Using student self-report, the INYS assesses the mental health and risky behaviors, such as substance use, of students in grades 6–12 across Indiana. The survey also asks students to answer multiple questions to measure correlates of these behaviors (e.g., students’ perceived risk of harm from substance use). School and school corporation participation in the survey in even-numbered years is free to and voluntary for all eligible schools in Indiana. Schools or corporations wanting to administer the survey in an odd-numbered year may pay a fee and work with Indiana University Bloomington to do so. In 2020, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, data collection was shortened. A total of 281 schools statewide participated in the 2020 INYS, a decrease of 31% from 2018, during which 407 schools participated. For the 2022 INYS, data were collected from 323 schools.

Five *Prevention Matters* grantees, totaling 27 participating schools, provided results for one or more of the 2018, 2020, and 2022 administrations of the INYS. All schools were included in analyses of year-to-year changes in INYS outcomes, contributing to comparisons for which they had nonmissing information.

The 2018 INYS was administered the spring before the *Prevention Matters* kickoff. These data may be considered a baseline measure of student substance use, mental well-being, and risk and protective factors. It is important to note, however, that not all students who are included in subsequent INYS data received *Prevention Matters* programming. Many schools sharing their INYS data offered *Prevention Matters*–funded lessons only to certain grade levels or classrooms, although INYS results are presented for all eligible (i.e., grade 6–12) students in a school. Furthermore, a maximum of five grantees (~20%) had INYS data for any one year. Consequently, results should not necessarily be considered

representative of all *Prevention Matters* grantees, nor should they be interpreted as reflecting the efficacy of the initiative.

The *Prevention Matters* evaluation uses several measures from the INYS to examine changes in relevant student outcomes over time. In Year 4, RTI collected and analyzed 2018, 2020, and 2022 INYS results. In any given year, two to five grantees and six to 27 schools were represented. Table 6 shows the number of grantees and schools with INYS data by year and outcome domain. Like the grantee-collected data, the INYS data were received in Excel spreadsheets.

**Table 6. INYS Data by Domain and Year, Pre-Year 1, Year 2, and Year 4**

Domain	2018		2020		2022	
	Grantees	Schools	Grantees	Schools	Grantees	Schools
Substance use						
Alcohol	4	25	5	27	4	19
Marijuana	4	25	5	27	4	19
Opioid or prescription drugs	4	25	5	27	4	19
Tobacco	4	25	5	27	4	18
Vaping	3	11	3	11	2	6
Perceived risk of harm from substances	4	25	4	25	3	16
Personal substance use norms	3	11	3	11	2	6
Depressive symptoms	4	25	5	27	4	19

**Analytic approach.** A meta-analytic framework based on multilevel modeling was used to estimate relevant effects (changes across school years). This methodology combined and analyzed the summary statistics captured by the INYS. The meta-analytic framework treated each grantee and school as if it conducted a separate study of whether *Prevention Matters* affected outcomes. The meta-analytic framework incorporated multiple sources of variability in each outcome to maximize the internal validity of the estimates of the intervention effects. These sources include overall school-level differences and item-level variance where separate indicators of an overarching construct (e.g., perceived risk of harm from substance use) were estimated as the overall level of the indicator items, treating

these items as repeated measures or nested items within the larger outcome of interest.

## 7 RTI Observations

**Data source.** From November 2021 through April 2022, RTI staff completed 135 observations (96% in person and 4% virtual) with 12 of the 13 grantees<sup>12</sup> where implementers were selected for *Prevention Matters* observations. Only grantees using a lesson-based curriculum were included in the random selection.

Observations were conducted in 50 schools serving elementary grades (primary), 20 schools serving middle school grades (secondary), and two high schools. Classrooms ranged from pre-K through 9th grade, with 66% of the observations occurring at the elementary school level (pre-K through 5th grade), 33% in the middle school grades (6th–8th grades), and 1% at the high school level (9th grade). In this report, RTI combined observation data for the middle school grades (6th–8th grades) and 9th grade.

RTI randomly selected implementers from grantees using lesson-based programs, regardless of school or grade level, to participate in the observations. In some instances, by the time of the observation, the implementer originally selected was no longer at the school or no longer teaching the program lessons. In those cases, another implementer who was teaching the same program at the same school was observed. The number of implementers observed per school ranged from one to eight.

Observations were conducted by local field staff with education experience. Observers participated in 1.5 days of training, which included a live coding practice at one of the schools. To ensure high interrater reliability, observers conducted paired observations initially and periodically throughout data collection. If the observers were not in agreement on an item, they discussed the item and assigned a consensus score based on this discussion. The observation team also met weekly to discuss findings and any issues that emerged.

Table 7 lists the names of the programs taught by the selected implementers and the number of times each program was observed. Second Step Elementary was

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<sup>12</sup> One selected grantee declined participation because of COVID-19–related restrictions on visitors to its buildings. By the time the restrictions were lifted, observations had already concluded.

observed the most (67% of implementers). Implementers using Second Step Middle accounted for 27% of observations and Botvin LifeSkills Training for 5%.<sup>13</sup>

**Table 7. Number of Classrooms Observed, by Program, Year 4**

Program	Number of Classrooms Observed	Percentage of Implementers Observed %
Botvin LifeSkills Training	7	5
Second Step Elementary	91	67
Second Step Middle	37	27

## 7.1 Observation Instrument: Topics and Rating Scale

The observation form used to rate the classrooms was designed by RTI to measure the quality of implementation of the *Prevention Matters* programs and was based on the dimensions of effective teaching used by Second Step and the Indiana Department of Education’s RISE Evaluation and Development System Evaluator and Teacher Handbook.<sup>14</sup> The form included multiple items for each of the following four sections: preparation, teaching strategies, classroom management, and student engagement. Two additional questions were asked: who taught the core lessons and whether anything occurred during lessons that caused significant disruptions that would invalidate the observation.

The rating scale used was “Clearly evident,” “Partially evident,” “Not evident,” and “N/A.” For the majority of the items, clearly evident was defined as the indicator’s being apparent during 75–100% of the lesson, partially evident as the indicator’s being 25–75% apparent, and not evident as the indicator’s being 0–25% apparent. N/A was used when an item was not applicable to the lesson being taught. For our analyses, if an item was not applicable for a classroom, observation data for this classroom are not included in the total number of observations; the percentages reflect only the observations during which an item was applicable in a classroom.

<sup>13</sup> The percentages add up to less than 100% because of rounding.

<sup>14</sup> Indiana Department of Education. (2012). *RISE evaluation and development system: Evaluator and teacher handbook* (ver. 2.0). <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED598259>

## 8 Methodological Limitations

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

- ***Lack of strong causal inference for student outcomes.*** The evaluation reported impact by examining student outcomes. Student outcomes based on the pre-post grantee-reported data and yearly INYS data lack comparison groups and cannot address *Prevention Matters* as a causal influence in any observed changes. Thus, changes may be the result of *Prevention Matters* or they may simply reflect changes from ongoing trends at the school, county, or state level or reflect natural variation over the course of a school year. The IDOE data incorporate a more robust quasi-experimental design (interrupted time series with intervention and comparison groups of schools), but the validity of the data is challenged by the serial cross-section nature; data collection did not examine longitudinal student data over the four years of the evaluation.
- ***Self-reported data.*** Except for administrative data from IDOE and RTI's classroom observations, all data were reported by grant directors, program implementers, or program participants (students). Depending on factors like a respondent's interpretation of a question, their perception and memory of a situation, and their desire to provide responses that portray themselves in a positive way, self-reported data may not always align with objective reality. Unfortunately, self-reporting is often the most efficient way (as with student substance use) or only way (as with opinions or attitudes) to capture certain information.
- ***Implementer survey response rate.*** Over half of implementers responded to the invitation to complete the Year 4 implementer survey (58%). Because implementers who responded are likely different from the implementers who did not respond, the survey results in this report may not fully reflect the experiences of all implementers.
- ***Large number of Second Step implementers.*** Although *Prevention Matters* grantees implemented 10 different programs, 13 of them

(54%) implemented Second Step. Implementers of Second Step Elementary and Second Step Middle made up 87% of all implementers and 84% of implementer survey respondents. Therefore, the results were heavily weighted toward Second Step implementation and may not fully reflect implementation of the other programs.

- **Limited grantee-collected data.** The amount of data that grantees submitted to measure student impact and program implementation ranged from no data to data matching 10 of the 12 measurement domains. On average in Year 4, grantees submitted data for three or four domains. Data were analyzed only if they were collected more than once and measurement remained consistent across at least two time points. In spring 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic affected many schools' abilities to collect complete data. As a result, aside from domains addressed by the biennial INYS, only changes in student curriculum knowledge, social-emotional competence, and disciplinary referrals are reported.
- **COVID-19 as a confounder.** In any evaluation, there is a risk that an event external to the evaluated program will make it difficult to interpret data collected during and after that event. In other words, that event can *confound* the program and its potential impact on participants. The COVID-19 pandemic is arguably the single biggest confounder that school-based research has ever had to face. One cannot be sure how Years 2, 3, and 4 data would have been different in the absence of COVID-19, nor can one completely disentangle whether shifts in data from Years 1 to 2 and Years 2 to 3 or even Years 3 to 4 are the result of program-driven change, COVID-19, or something else altogether.



# Learning about Implementation

This section describes the implementation models that grantees used for their *Prevention Matters* efforts. Specifically, this section examines the programs implemented, students served, implementation settings, implementation schedules, changes to implementation due to COVID-19, the implementers themselves, implementer training and support, implementation monitoring, program integration and coordination, partnerships, parent involvement, and mission alignment and leadership support.

# 1 Implementation Models

## 1.1 Programs Implemented

The Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation provided *Prevention Matters* planning grantees with a list of 25 evidence-based<sup>15</sup> substance use prevention programs that they could implement for the initiative. The 24 *Prevention Matters* grant directors reported implementing nine of these programs in 2021–2022, as shown in Table 8. The most implemented program is Second Step Elementary, followed by Second Step Middle and Botvin LifeSkills Training. Each grantee is implementing one or two of these programs. Across all grantees, grant directors reported implementing a total of 41 programs.

**Table 8. Number of Implementing Grantees by Program, Year 4**

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

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

<sup>b</sup> One grantee reported “Other” as a way of characterizing its organization’s alternative implementation model. This grantee did not implement a program other than the nine approved programs named in the table.

<sup>15</sup> The Foundation contracted with prevention experts at the Indiana Prevention Resource Center at Indiana University Bloomington (<https://iprc.iu.edu/>) to develop the list of evidence-based programs.



Grantees implemented two types of prevention programs: nearly all grantees implemented programs with a series of distinct lessons (e.g., Second Step, Botvin LifeSkills Training), while a small number implemented programs that recommended classroom management approaches that could be used throughout the day (e.g., Conscious Discipline). Implementers and schools followed the same pattern as the grantees; implementers surveyed most commonly implemented Second Step Elementary, followed by Second Step Middle. Table 9 lists how many schools and implementers acknowledged implementing each prevention program.

**Table 9. Number of Implementing Schools and Implementers by Program, Year 4**

Program	Number Implementing		
	Schools	Implementers <sup>a</sup>	
		Primary	Additional
Botvin LifeSkills Training	21	33	3
Conscious Discipline	11	232	11
Curriculum-Based Support Group	2	3	5
Good Behavior Game	1	1	2
PATHS	1	8	1
Positive Action	1	0	0
Ripple Effects <sup>b</sup>	2	2	11
Second Step Elementary	89	1,118	15
Second Step Middle	55	340	9
Too Good for Drugs	2	2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>1,739</b>	<b>57</b>

Note. <sup>a</sup> Among implementer survey respondents. Actual number of implementers is typically higher because of survey nonresponse.

<sup>b</sup> Implementers in two schools reported implementing Ripple Effects in 2021–2022 as their primary program, despite the fact that their grant director did not report implementing Ripple Effects in their grant director survey in that year.

During interviews, some grant directors described their reasons for selecting a specific prevention program. For example, one grant director said that they chose Second Step because it gave students a way to articulate emotions and skills that they were learning. Another grant director shared,

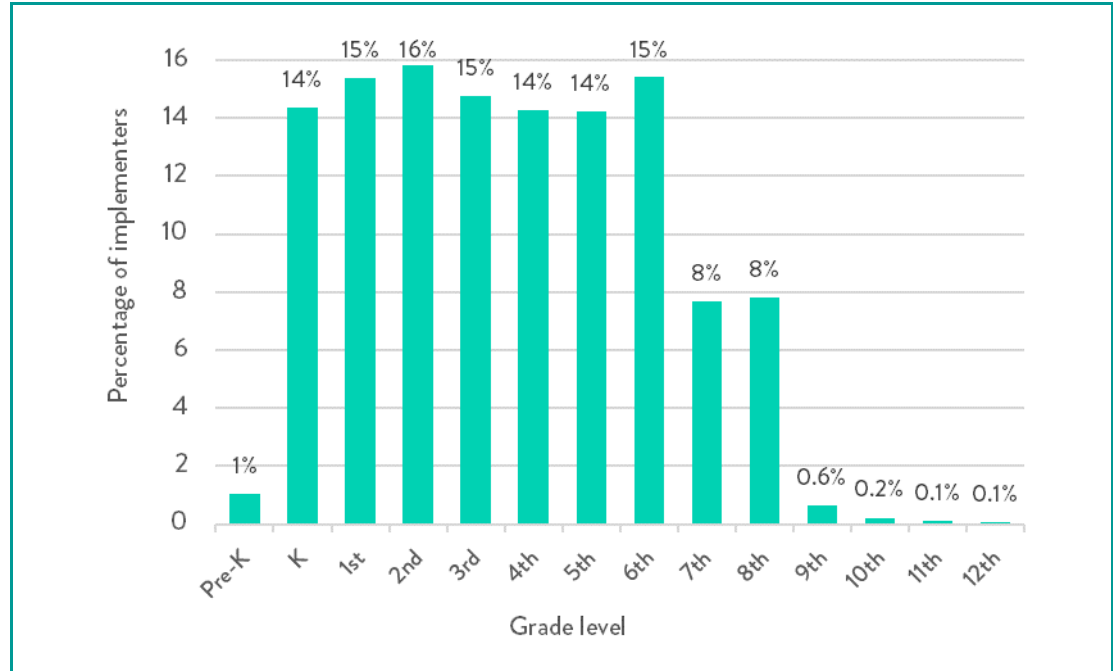
*I think the biggest thing is probably the consistency of teaching Second Step and getting that language, hearing that language. Our culture team also works closely with students who struggle behaviorally. So they tie a lot of the Second Step and restorative language together.*

## 1.2 Students Served

The Foundation's administrative records show that grantees reached an estimated 69,622 students in Year 4. This is a decrease from the Year 3 estimate (83,432). This change could be because fewer grantees participated in the grant program in Year 4 than previous years (24 vs. 27).

Implementer survey data suggest that each elementary grade was served by a similar number of implementers. Fewer implementers served students in grades 7 and 8. As shown in Figure 1, few implementers delivered programming to pre-K students (who did not fall within the *Prevention Matters* K–12 target population) or high school students.

**Figure 1. Percentage of Implementers Serving Each Grade, Year 4**



Note. Because some implementers worked with multiple grade levels, percentages do not sum to 100.

Some percentages in this graph include the tenth decimal place to show the differences in percentages by grade level.

### 1.3 Implementation Settings

Many *Prevention Matters* programs are designed to be delivered via full-class instruction. Others are intended to be used with small groups. As in prior years, grant director interviewees described a variety of implementation approaches and settings. All grant directors said that they delivered programming in person during Year 4. In their interviews, multiple grant directors reported that their schools implemented programs during a homeroom period or community or morning circle, whereas others reported reaching students with programming during physical education class. Some grant directors varied their approach by grade level. Some grant directors noted that they also continued to implement virtually in Year 4 with students who remained in remote learning. According to one such grant director, program implementation was

*really, still... all of the same components. It just is done in a virtual mode. So, I don't feel like it's changed that much. And honestly, for some of our kiddos, they feel safer sharing and participating in it because they're at their house.*

Consistent with information shared by grant directors who were interviewed, implementers reported in surveys that they delivered their programs most often through in-person instruction with a whole class (97%); live or synchronous virtual instruction with a whole class (4%) was the next most popular mode of delivery. This represents a large shift from Year 3, during which 70% of implementers reported delivering lessons using live or synchronous virtual instruction. The least common modes of delivery were hybrid instruction, in which classes are taught in person with some students and through a live virtual platform with other students (2.5%), and recorded/asynchronous instruction (1.6%). Some implementers used more than one mode of instruction in their program delivery.

### 1.4 Implementation Schedules

Information related to how frequently prevention programming is delivered can provide important context for understanding program implementation. Table 10 presents overall implementation schedule information as reported by implementers. Table 11 presents the programs implemented, their recommended frequency, implementers' actual lesson frequency, and the duration of the sessions, according to implementer survey results.

**Implementation frequency and schedules.** In Year 4 of the initiative, the most common implementation frequency reported by implementers was weekly (Table 10). Given that Second Step was the most implemented program and that the recommended implementation frequency for Second Step is once per week, this finding meets expectations (Table 11). This frequency is similar to that in Years 1 and 3 but less frequent than in Year 2. Table 11 also shows that across all program implementers, on average, lessons in Year 4 were delivered according to the recommended frequency.

Grant director interviews provided broader information on implementation frequency and implementation schedules. Most grant directors reported that their schools implemented programs on a designated day or at a designated time, often weekly. Several grant directors said that their schools implemented during a 20- to 30-minute time frame in the school day. One grant director related that the organization deliberately chose a day early in the week for implementation so that lessons could be reinforced throughout the remainder of the week.

**Table 10. Overall Implementation Schedule Information, Years 1–4**

	Annual Values			
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Most common implementation frequency	Weekly	2–3 days/week	Weekly	Weekly
Mean implementation duration, in months	5–6 months	6–7 months	7 months	7–8 months
Median total number of sessions (estimated)	32	40	36–40	36–40

**Program delivery duration.** In Year 4, the length of time during which implementers delivered programming to a specific group of students varied. This variation is likely due in large part to implementation time frames prescribed by each program’s developers (Table 11). For example, Botvin LifeSkills Training is a five- to 15-session program, depending on the students’ grade level, with the option to deliver the lessons weekly or on an intensive schedule (two or three times a week). Second Step is a weekly program consisting of 20–26 sessions, depending on students’ grade level and format (digital or paper). Conscious Discipline, in contrast, is meant to be used daily for the entire school year. Other variations in

implementation duration may reflect implementer- or school-specific scheduling challenges (e.g., staff turnover, closures) or choices (e.g., some programs have optional units that schools may add to the standard curriculum). As with all surveys, issues with recall may affect implementer reports. In Year 4, implementers delivered or expected to deliver programming for anywhere from 1 month or less (2% of implementers) to over 10 months (18% of implementers). The most common implementation duration was 9 months (24% of implementers), and the mean duration was seven to eight months. Mean duration of lesson delivery in Year 4 was statistically longer than in Year 3 (seven months) or Year 1 (five to six months). In Year 1, daily programs meant to be implemented for the full school year were delivered by only 3% of implementers surveyed. In Year 4, that percentage rose to 13%. This increase is likely one factor contributing to the lengthening overall average duration. Another potential explanation for the increasing duration may be that as prevention programs became more embedded or routine, implementers—especially of daily programs like Conscious Discipline—were able to extend the period of time during which they implemented.

***Implementation intensity.*** RTI International calculated a measure of implementation intensity for each implementer by multiplying reported implementation frequency by the reported duration. Estimated sessions implemented ranged from 0.5 session to 200 sessions, with an estimated median of 36–40 sessions. This estimated median is the same as in Year 3, but it is significantly higher than that for Year 1, in which the estimated median intensity was 32 sessions, reflecting the statistically significantly shorter duration of lesson delivery in Year 1.

Table 11 also shows that implementation frequency, duration, and intensity have increased from Year 1 to Year 4. In grant director interviews, some grant directors reported that their programs evolved over time as they were better integrated and planned out. This growth may have contributed to the increase in frequency, duration, and intensity.

**Table 11. Implementation Frequency, Duration, and Sessions Delivered, by Program Type, Years 1–4**

Program (number of Year 4 implementers)	Recommended Frequency of Session Implementation	Number of Annual Sessions in Program	Year	Most Common Implementation Frequency	Mean Implementation Duration, in Months	Mean Number of Annual Sessions Delivered (estimated)
Botvin LifeSkills Training (33 implementers)	Intensive: 2–3/week or Extended: 1/week	Elementary school: 8 Middle school: 5–15	Y1	Weekly	3	20
			Y2	Every other week	5	16
			Y3	Weekly	3	26
			Y4	Weekly	4	21
Conscious Discipline (232 implementers)	Noncurricular school practice		Y1	Daily or weekly	4	46
			Y2	Daily	6	70
			Y3	Daily	6	87
			Y4	Daily	7	99
Curriculum-Based Support Group <sup>a</sup> (3 implementers)	1–2/week	10–12	Y1	Weekly	4	14
			Y2	Weekly	6	37
Good Behavior Game <sup>a</sup> (1 implementer)	Noncurricular school practice		Y1	Daily	4	46
PATHS (8 implementers)	2 or more/week	36–52 lessons	Y4	2–3/week	7	68
Positive Action <sup>a</sup> (0 implementers)	Daily	K–6th grade: 140 7th–8th grades: 70	Y1	Daily or weekly	5	64

Program (number of Year 4 implementers)	Recommended Frequency of Session Implementation	Number of Annual Sessions in Program	Year	Most Common Implementation Frequency	Mean Implementation Duration, in Months	Mean Number of Annual Sessions Delivered (estimated)
Ripple Effects <sup>a</sup> (2 implementers)	Varies depending on student needs		Y1	Weekly	4	23
			Y2	2-3/week	6	45
			Y3	2-3/week	5	50
Second Step Elementary (1,118 implementers)	1/week	22-25 (20 sessions for digital version)	Y1	Weekly	6	57
			Y2	2-3/week	6	64
			Y3	Weekly	7	67
			Y4	Weekly	8	65
Second Step Middle (340 implementers)	1/week	26	Y1	Weekly	6	43
			Y2	2-3/week	7	54
			Y3	Weekly	7	52
			Y4	Weekly	8	51
Too Good for Drugs <sup>a</sup> (2 implementers)	1/week	10	Y1	Weekly	3	14

Note. <sup>a</sup> If only one school reported data, or fewer than five reporting implementers responded, rows have been removed.



## 1.5 Changes to Implementation due to COVID-19

Since March 2020, COVID-19 has had a significant impact on schools and their ability to implement their *Prevention Matters* programs. In previous years, grant directors reported challenges with transitioning to virtual implementation. With the return to in-person instruction, grantees shifted back to in-person implementation with most students. In their interviews, some grant directors reported having purchased online licenses, which facilitated virtual programming when needed. Furthermore, online platforms allowed some grant directors to better track lessons that have been completed. During the pandemic, implementers were able to keep track of completed lessons after the virtual shift.

In their surveys this year, implementers also reported less virtual implementation and fewer challenges associated with COVID-19. During the 2021–2022 school year, fewer than a quarter of implementers (21% of total sample; 369) reported that their schools experienced periods when learning was delivered entirely virtually (Table 12). This is a substantial decrease from Year 3 (2020–2021 school year), during which 78% of implementers spent two or more months delivering entirely virtual learning. Of the implementers who reported periods of 100% virtual learning in



Year 4, fewer than half (44%) said that they offered *Prevention Matters* lessons to their students during those periods.

**Table 12. Implementers Who Reported Some Periods of All-Virtual Learning, Year 4**

During the 2021–2022 school year, for about how many months did your school deliver virtual instruction to all students (i.e., school building was closed)? (Check one.)	Number of Implementers (n = 1,736)	Percent of Respondents %
1 month or less	260	15
2 months	15	1
3 months	4	<1
4 months	9	1
5 months	7	<1
6 months	3	<1
7 months	4	<1
8 months	14	1
9 months	14	1
10 months or more	39	2
We did not deliver virtual instruction to all students at any point in the 2021–2022 school year	1,367	79

All schools transitioned back to in-person learning; however, some schools flexed their schedules to deliver virtual instruction one day a week. Although significantly fewer implementers in Year 4 (44%) delivered *Prevention Matters* lessons to students during periods of 100% virtual learning than in Year 3 (79%), it is important to note that far fewer schools spent time in 100% virtual learning in Year 4 and the average duration in 100% virtual learning was significantly shorter, so the net effect of virtual learning on *Prevention Matters* lessons in Year 4 was small compared to that in Year 3. The average duration of virtual learning in Year 4 was less than 1 month.

In their interviews, some grant directors reported positive outcomes that resulted from COVID-19–related implementation changes. For some grantees, the

pandemic magnified the importance of prevention programming, which supports overall student well-being, as more teachers and students faced pandemic-related challenges. The pandemic also eliminated barriers to receiving district support for prevention programming for some grantees because staff and administrators could see the increasing need; it also accelerated the timeline to support students and it increased staff accountability. A grant director stated,

*COVID-19 really helped to eliminate any of those barriers, because everyone realized the need was greater than we had realized. It was important that we have consistency across 1st grade, across the whole district, because things went online. Really and truly, it just helped us, I feel, to do some things in a more urgent fashion than we probably would have before then.*

## 1.6 Implementers

In their surveys, implementers reported on their roles in their organizations. As in Years 2 and 3, the most common role listed by implementers in their surveys was general education teacher of multiple subjects (71%), followed by general education teacher of a single subject other than physical education, health, or wellness (21%). These results were significantly different from the most common role in Year 1, when 60% of implementers were general education teachers teaching multiple subjects. However, the second most common role in Year 1 (21%) was general education teachers teaching a single subject other than physical education, health, or wellness—the same percentage as in Year 4.

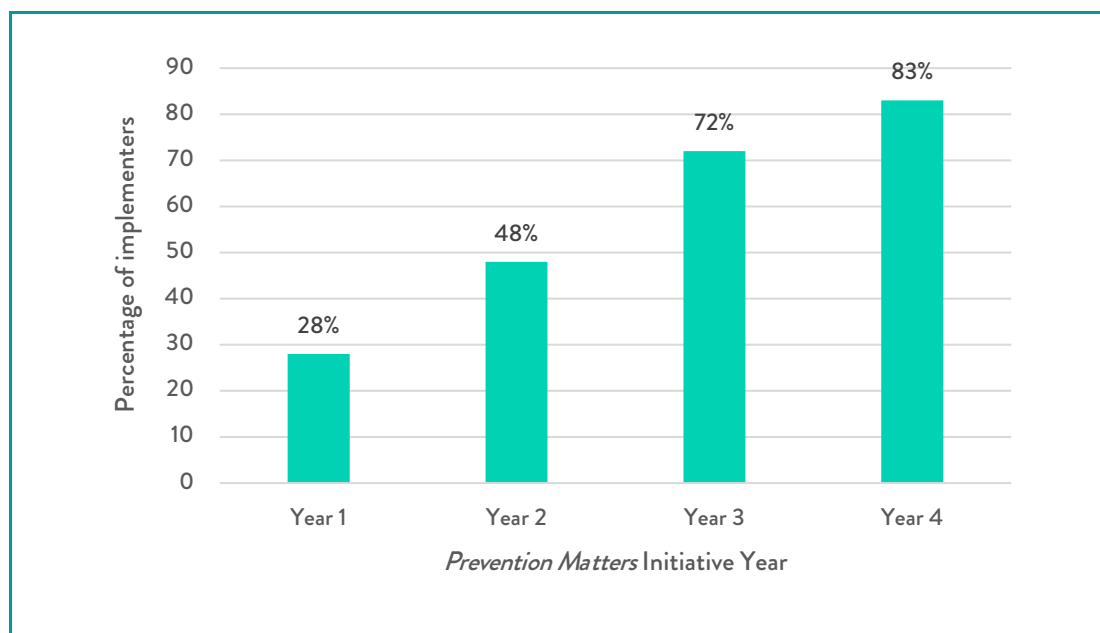
Interviews with grant directors supported the implementer survey finding that most implementers were classroom teachers. In a few schools, however, teachers, counselors, and social workers were all involved in implementing *Prevention Matters* programming. For example, one grant director who relied on teachers as primary implementers created an “advisor lead” role whereby some teachers would lead and support other implementers. The grant director explained,

*Part of that role is to look at providing additional supports for students. That's our first level of implementation support, because those advisor leads, at the elementary [level], there are three at each elementary [school]. Basically, one advisor lead supports two different grade levels. They're monitoring on a smaller level how those teachers are doing.*

Most implementers (83%) had experience delivering their specific prevention program before the 2021–2022 school year. As seen in Figure 2, this was a

substantial (and statistically significant) increase from Year 1, in which only 28% of implementers reported having delivered the program previously. This increase is an indication of the large number of teachers and other school staff who began implementing their prevention program for the first time because of their involvement with *Prevention Matters*. In fact, the percentage of returning implementers continued to grow across each of the four years of the initiative. RTI also measured implementers' average years of experience delivering the program and saw minor fluctuations across the years. In Year 4, among those with prior experience implementing their prevention program, the average duration of their experience was 2.5 years. In Year 3 the average duration of prior experience was 2 years, in Year 2 it was 2 years, and in Year 1 it was 4 years.

**Figure 2. Percentage of Implementers with Prior Experience Implementing the Prevention Program, Years 1–4**



Implementers who reported delivering their prevention program before this year (83%;  $n = 1,409$ ) were also asked whether they had delivered the program at their current school for any of the previous three years. Seventy-four percent had implemented the program at their school in the 2020–2021 school year, 64% during the 2019–2020 school year, and 23% during the 2018–2019 school year. The increase of implementers who had previously implemented the program at their school shows that as years progressed, more implementers returned from the previous year.

## 1.7 Implementer Training and Support

### 1.7.1 Grant Director Reports of Training and Support

Training and other forms of implementer assistance are critical parts of preparing implementers to deliver evidence-based prevention programs with enthusiasm, confidence, and fidelity. In their surveys, grant directors were asked to report on the training and supports that they provided implementers for each program they were offering. Grant directors were also asked whether they offered training to new implementers of each program, and, if so, how those implementers were trained. Nineteen grant directors had new implementers in Year 4, and 18 of those (95%) offered their new implementers some form of programmatic training. Most grantees implemented more than one *Prevention Matters*-funded program; in total, 41 programs were offered. Most grant directors offered training for more than one program.

Grant directors were also asked to report whether they offered training for returning implementers and if that follow-up, or “booster,” training was required. Grant directors reported that they were offering follow-up training for 24 of the 41 programs they were implementing (59%). Five follow-up training plans (21% of all follow-up training plans) stipulated that all returning implementers were required to receive booster training, and five required only some implementers to complete booster training. The remaining trainings were optional for returning implementers.

***Format of training for new and returning implementers.*** Among grantees that reported offering training for new implementers, the most common format for the training in Year 4 was in person (46% of trainings), followed by self-study training (31% of trainings). This finding represents a shift from Year 3, in which the most common training method was virtual training with a live trainer (55% of trainings). Yet, the Year 4 training format is similar to that in Years 1 and 2, when in-person training was also the most common format (49% of trainings in Year 1 and 47% of trainings in Year 2). Data collected from grant director interviews revealed that in-person training was previously curtailed by COVID-19. The return to higher levels of in-person training coincided in Year 4 with the lifting of many COVID-19–related restrictions. Similarly, the most common formats for booster training in Year 4 were in person (54%) and self-study (i.e., no interaction with a trainer; 38%).

***Trainers for new and returning implementer training.*** This year, for new implementer trainings, grantees used a trainer from the program developer or vendor (44% of trainings delivered by any type of trainer) more often than in Year 3 (24%). Twenty-eight percent of trainer-led trainings for new implementers were delivered by a certified trainer within the grantee organization, and another 28% of trainer-led trainings were delivered by someone from the grantee organization who did not have an official certification in the program. In contrast, the most common type of trainer used to deliver booster training in Year 4 was someone from the grantee organization who did not have an official certification in the program (47% of trainer-led trainings), followed by a certified trainer from within the organization (40% of trainer-led trainings) and, finally, the program developer/vendor (13% of trainer-led trainings).

***Reasons for offering follow-up training.*** Grant directors were fairly evenly divided in their rationales for offering follow-up training. Grant directors reported that follow-up trainings were offered for 17 programs because they wanted to improve implementation quality over previous years, for 15 programs because grant directors wanted to remind implementers of information they may have forgotten from their initial training, and for seven programs because grant directors intended to provide supplemental or advanced information that built on information from the initial training. Grantees could select more than one reason for offering follow-up training. No grantees offered follow-up training because they wanted to prepare implementers for program delivery in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, nor did they offer follow-up training because they did not complete their initial training.

In their interviews, grant directors discussed the supports they provided to implementers through training, technical assistance, or other approaches. Consistent with survey findings, most grant directors reported that they provided new staff with curriculum implementation training at the beginning of each year and returning staff with refresher training. A few grant directors convened summits, conferences, or professional learning communities to provide training and technical assistance to their staff. In some schools, grant directors found success designating staff to support teachers to implement the curriculum, especially when that support came from fellow teachers. At these grantees, implementers could seek guidance from a variety of personnel, including administrators, social workers, advisor leads, teacher champions, and instructional coaches.

***Perceived impact of implementer training and support.*** Most grant directors agreed that training, professional development, and other related supports were crucial to increasing implementer buy-in; trainings helped teachers understand what they were teaching and why it was important. In turn, teacher buy-in fostered student enthusiasm. As a grant director commented, *“If you’re not into the Second Step lesson, the kids aren’t going to be into the Second Step lesson. Your attitude impacts everything.”* Grant directors also noted that training completion was more likely when there was lower staff turnover and when stipends were provided. One grant director said that a big implementation success was their in-person training delivered by a live trainer: *“[The training] was very valuable because you got to feed off of each other’s personalities.... It was a dynamic that fed the excitement for the program.”*

Some grant directors noted that the structure or features of the prevention program itself can contribute to teacher satisfaction and buy-in. For example, one grant director related that teachers appreciated the tools provided by their particular prevention programs because they made implementation easier. Other implementation supports worth noting were hiring teachers who believed in the initiative’s value and disseminating information and success stories to teachers.

Some grant directors said that teachers who did not feel the program was helpful in the beginning began to see its value as time progressed. A few grant directors identified barriers to obtaining implementer buy-in, including staff turnover. When teachers are not able to stay and implement for the full year, they may not see the benefits of the program they are implementing. Some grant directors also attributed a lack of implementer buy-in to the virtual programming that emerged during the pandemic; one grant director believed that teachers felt less connected with the students during virtual learning, and one perceived that implementers found virtual trainings less engaging. One grant director described facing the challenge of lower excitement among teachers who have been implementing for a longer time. This grant director questioned whether these implementers felt as passionate about the initiative as they did when they first began teaching it.

Though they did not mention it in the Year 4 interviews, in past years’ interviews, grant directors speculated that implementer buy-in may also be cultivated by giving implementers a voice in planning and decision making about the program. In all four years of *Prevention Matters*, grant directors answered survey questions related to the extent of implementer input in key program planning and decision making. The questions varied in their wording. In Year 4, for example, 12 grant

directors (50%) reported that potential implementers “were part of the team that made decisions about which individuals would serve as program implementers.” In Year 1, nearly 70% of grant directors reported that teachers and staff were asked about “their willingness to serve as program implementers.” Thus, there seemed to be less implementer input in implementation decisions during Year 4. It is worth noting that by Year 4, many implementers were returning to program implementation for the second, third, or fourth year, so fewer grant directors may have felt it necessary to engage in a deliberate process of soliciting input regarding implementers’ willingness to implement the program.

### 1.7.2 Implementer Reports of Training and Support

Table 13 shows the percentage of implementers, both new and returning, who participated in various forms of program training in Years 1, 2, 3, and 4. The most common format reported for program training delivered during summer 2021 or the 2021–2022 school year was in person (20% of implementers). This is a change from Year 3, during which self-study training was most common (16%). The increase in in-person training may be attributed to the decrease in COVID-19 restrictions. Furthermore, in Year 4, fewer first-time implementers and more returning implementers reported receiving training than in Year 3.

**Table 13. Implementer Participation in Training by Format and Year, Years 1–4**

Implementer Participation in Training	Year 1 (training in summer 2019 or 2019–2020 school year), n = 1,012	Year 2 (training in summer 2019 or 2019–2020 school year), n = 1,667		Year 3 (training in summer 2020 or 2020–2021 school year), n = 1,851		Year 4 (training in summer 2021 or 2021–2022 school year), n = 1,739	
	% of All Implementers	% of New Implementers	% of Returning Implementers	% of New Implementers	% of Returning Implementers	% of New Implementers	% of Returning Implementers
Yes <sup>a</sup>	53	78	62	59	33	40	41
In person	27	36	35	18	11	18	21
Self-study	14	27	18	26	13	15	14
Live virtual	11	19	12	21	13	6	8
Other	8	4	6	3	2	3	3

Implementer Participation in Training	Year 1 (training in summer 2019 or 2019–2020 school year), n = 1,012	Year 2 (training in summer 2019 or 2019–2020 school year), n = 1,667		Year 3 (training in summer 2020 or 2020–2021 school year), n = 1,851		Year 4 (training in summer 2021 or 2021–2022 school year), n = 1,739	
	% of All Implementers	% of New Implementers	% of Returning Implementers	% of New Implementers	% of Returning Implementers	% of New Implementers	% of Returning Implementers
No, but I participated in training prior to the current year	9	5	20	6	42	7	36
I've never participated in training for this program	38	18	18	35	24	52	23

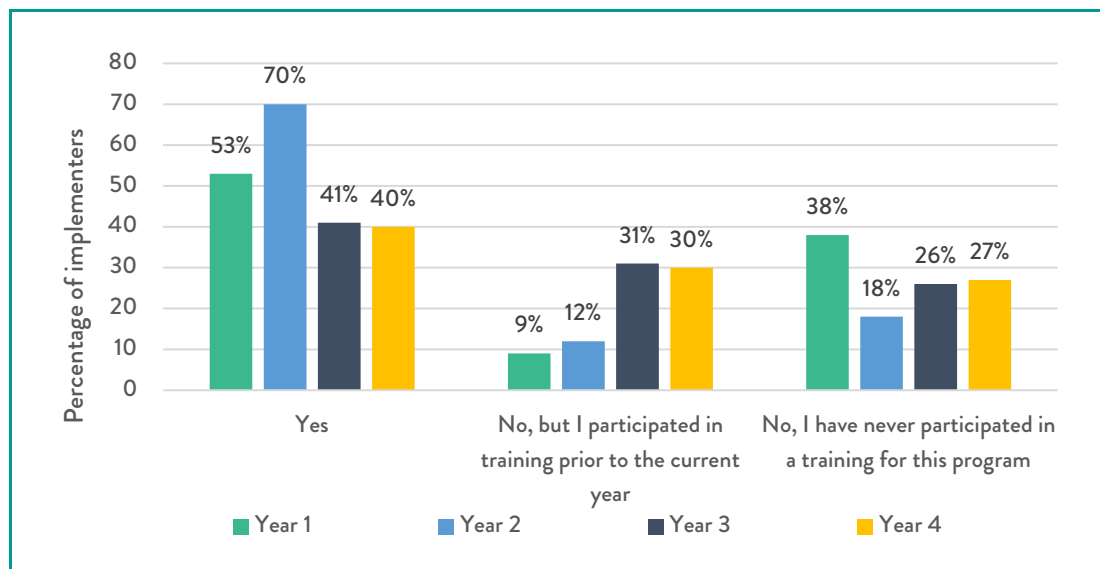
Note. <sup>a</sup> Implementers who selected Yes were able to select more than one type of training.

It is worth noting that implementer reports of training were slightly lower than reports from grant directors: 40% of implementers reported receiving training and grant directors reported offering training for 24 of 41 programs (59%). Similar to explanations in Year 3, explanations for this difference may be attributed to grantees that offered but did not require training or to implementers who did not recognize that it was a curriculum training. Unfortunately, data are not available to confirm these potential explanations.

As shown in Figure 3, the percentage of implementers who at the time of the survey reported that they had never received program training remained consistent in Years 3 and 4 (26% and 27%), but these responses were less common than they had been in Year 1 (38%). Thirty percent of implementers had previously been trained and did not participate in booster training this year. That number was higher than in Years 1 and 2 (9% and 12%, respectively) but consistent with that in Year 3 (31%).



**Figure 3. All Implementer Reports of Training, Years 1–4**



As shown in Table 14, in Year 4, implementers from grantees with fewer than 300 implementers were more likely than implementers from grantees with 300 or more implementers to have participated in training. The percentage of implementers trained remained constant from Year 3 to Year 4 across both categories of grantees—those with fewer than 300 implementers and those with 300 or more implementers.

**Table 14. Implementer Participation in Training, by Size of Grantee, Years 3 and 4**

Grantees with...	Percentage of Implementers Participating in Training	
	Year 3 (n = 1,851) %	Year 4 (n = 1,739) %
1–299 implementers	50	50
300 or more implementers	36	35



## 1.8 Implementation Monitoring

### 1.8.1 Grant Director Reports of Monitoring

Grant director interviews addressed the quality of program delivery, including program pacing, fidelity, and lesson or curriculum completion. One recurring theme was how implementers and administrators monitored this quality. Most grant directors interviewed reported that they observed prevention programming lessons to make sure teachers were on track and implementing with fidelity. Some grant directors also had follow-up conversations with the teachers whom they noticed were struggling or regularly reminded them to document progress and pace their lessons accordingly. Many grant directors also described using lesson trackers, spreadsheets, and pacing guides to help with monitoring. One grant director noted that expending the time and effort to create fidelity checklists and other tools before implementation made everything much easier in the long run.

In the grant director survey, most grantees (79%) reported that someone from grant leadership had already observed at least some program implementation (Table 15). Another 4% of grantees had not yet observed implementation but planned to do so. Grant director reports of observations, both completed and

planned, were slightly higher in Year 1 than in Years 3 and 4, but the difference was not statistically significant.

**Table 15. Grant Director Observation of Program Sessions at One or More Schools, Years 1–4**

Observation of Program Sessions	Number of Grantees (%)			
	Year 1 N = 26	Year 2 N = 27	Year 3 N = 26	Year 4 N = 24
Yes	14 (54%)	20 (74%)	21 (81%)	19 (79%)
Not yet but we plan to	10 (38%)	4 (15%)	2 (8%)	1 (4%)
No	2 (8%)	3 (11%)	3 (12%)	4 (17%)

Among the grant directors who reported that they or a member of their staff had observed or planned to observe implementers delivering lessons, most (79%) had observed or planned to observe in-person instruction. A few (4%) had observed or expected to observe hybrid instruction. For the purposes of this survey, hybrid instruction was defined as any instance of an implementer delivering lessons simultaneously to a classroom that combined in-person and remote learners. No grant directors reported observing or planning to observe live/synchronous virtual instruction or recorded/asynchronous virtual instruction.

Grant directors who planned to observe their implementers planned to observe, on average, 64% of implementers (median = 80%, 4% minimum, 100% maximum). Although the average percentage of implementers whom grant directors planned to observe decreased 14 percentage points from Year 1 to Year 4, the difference between Years 1 and 4 was not statistically significant. Grant directors had varying reasons for choosing which implementers to observe.

Among grant directors who conducted observations of implementers, a plurality (45%) used random selection to choose implementers to observe. A couple of grant directors (10%) observed implementers about whom they had concerns. One grant director (5%) chose to observe all implementers. The remaining grant directors (40%) did not provide information regarding their selection criteria for observing implementers in their schools.

Of the grantees who had observed program implementation, the most common type of training provided to the staff conducting observations was training that was specific to the prevention program being observed (55%), followed by general training on conducting classroom observations (50%). A few grant directors (15%, three grantees) selected both responses.

All grant directors (100%) who had conducted observations reported that they had already provided, or planned to provide, feedback to at least some of the implementers they had observed. This result was a slight increase over Year 3 (91%) and Year 1 (92%), but the increase was not statistically significant.

In their surveys, most grant directors reported requiring all or some of their *Prevention Matters* implementers to report information about their program implementation. The proportion of grant directors in Year 4 (83% [20]) who reported requiring all or some of their implementers to report information about their program implementation was lower than in Year 2 (89% [24]), but higher than in Year 3 (70%) and Year 1 (77%). None of these differences were statistically significant.

Of the 20 grant directors who required implementers to report on their implementation, 17 (85%) had provided feedback on those reports at the time of the survey or planned to provide feedback to some or all of their implementers. This result was a slight decrease from what grant directors reported in Year 1 (90%), Year 2 (88%), and Year 3 (94%). These differences were not statistically significant.

In the grant director survey, RTI asked whether and how organizations followed up with implementers who were found to have unsatisfactory implementation. Only one grant director reported no plans to follow up. In Year 4, grant directors said that they mainly followed up through mentoring, coaching, and follow-up training—methods similar to those they used in Years 2 and 3. Table 16 shows grant director plans for monitoring follow-up in Year 4.

**Table 16. Monitoring Follow-up Methods, Year 4**

Follow-up Method	Number of Grantees N = 24 (%)
One-on-one or group mentoring or coaching	9 (38%)
Follow-up training	6 (25%)
Observation of high-quality implementation by peers or mentors	6 (25%)
Collect additional data to monitor improvements	2 (8%)
Other	4 (17%)
We have not followed up and do not plan to	1 (4%)

Note. The percentage of grantees is calculated from those who reported using monitoring follow-up methods. Percentages sum to more than 100% because grantees could select multiple types of follow-up methods.

## 1.8.2 Implementer Reports of Monitoring

As shown in Table 17, in Year 4, more than one-third of implementers reported that someone from the *Prevention Matters* project, like a grant director or program trainer, had observed their implementation (36%) or planned to do so (3%). This result was a statistically significant increase over those from Year 3 (34% had been or expected to be observed) and Year 1 (33% had been observed). It was also a statistically significant decrease from Year 2 (48% had been or expected to be observed).

**Table 17. Implementation Observed in Years 1–4, as Reported by Implementers**

Implementation was observed in the [current] school year	Year 1 (n = 936) %	Year 2 (n = 1,605) %	Year 3 (n = 1,693) %	Year 4 (n = 1,614) %
Yes	33	44	30	36
Yes, once	17	19	17	23
Yes, multiple times	16	25	13	13
Not yet, but there are plans for me to be observed	N/A	4	4	3
No, or not that I can recall	67	52	66	61

The largest proportion of implementers to report having been or expecting to be observed occurred in Year 2. It is worth noting that the implementer survey was delivered later in the school year during Year 2, which may have allowed more time for observations to be completed.

The most common type of instruction observed was reported to be in-person instruction (92%), which was similar to the level of in-person observation reported before the pandemic. Observation of live/synchronous virtual instruction and observation of recorded/asynchronous instruction were each reported by 3% of implementers, and 1% reported being observed while conducting hybrid instruction. This contradicts the data from the grant director survey indicating that no grant directors reported observing or planning to observe live/synchronous virtual instruction or recorded/asynchronous virtual instruction. Implementer feedback may reflect someone other than the grant director such as department head or school principal or fellow teacher observing the implementers or response bias.

As shown in Table 18, of those implementers who were observed, 61% reported getting feedback on this observation, which is less than in Years 2 and 3 and the same as in Year 1.

**Table 18. Implementer Reports of Feedback Received from Observations, Years 1–4**

Received Feedback from the Observation	Year 1 (n = 304) %	Year 2 (n = 693) %	Year 3 (n = 505) %	Year 4 (n = 575) %
Yes	61	69	69	61
No, or not that I can recall	39	31	31	39

More than half of implementers (56%) reported that someone from their *Prevention Matters* project asked them to report information about their implementation. The same percentage of implementers reported this in Year 3, which was an increase over Year 1 (48%). The difference between Year 1 and Year 4 was statistically significant.

In Year 4, over one-third (37%) of implementers who reported providing implementation information reported receiving feedback on that information. This result was similar to those in Year 1 (39%), Year 2 (42%), and Year 3 (40%). The difference between Year 1 and Year 4 was not statistically significant.

In the grant director survey, higher proportions of grant directors reported conducting observations and providing feedback on observations and implementation information than what implementers reported. Differences between grant director and implementer reports are expected due largely to the fact that implementers were asked about their own experiences, whereas grant directors were asked whether they observed or provided feedback at all, to any implementers. As discussed previously, grant directors reported observing only a subset of implementers, and feedback may have been provided to only some implementers or only if there was concern with what was observed or with the implementation information provided.

### 1.8.3 Correlates of Implementation Monitoring

RTI examined implementer survey results to determine whether grantee size was related to implementation monitoring.

For this analysis, grantees were divided into two size categories: those with fewer than 300 implementers (19 grantees) and those with 300 or more (five grantees). Implementers were significantly more likely to be observed if they were part of a grantee organization with fewer than 300 implementers (50% observed) than if they were part of a grantee organization with 300 or more implementers (35% observed). Grantee size also affected the likelihood that implementers would receive feedback after being observed. Implementers at small grantees were more likely than implementers at large grantees to receive feedback on observations (75% and 53%, respectively). This difference was statistically significant. Grantees with 300 or more implementers did, however, have higher rates of reporting information about program implementation (58%) than grantees with fewer than 300 implementers (51%), although this difference was not statistically significant.

## 1.9 Program Integration and Coordination

Many grant directors perceived that integrating *Prevention Matters* programming more thoroughly into their school community was important for building sustainability and achieving positive outcomes. In their interviews, grant directors named several successes with integrating prevention programs into daily

activities. Some grant directors said that, with sufficient reinforcement, *Prevention Matters* program lessons helped students to acquire skills they could apply in a variety of situations beyond the classroom.

Some strategies employed by grantees to increase integration included posting prevention program materials throughout the school building, distributing brief videos with program information to non-implementing school staff, and encouraging use of program language and strategies outside of lesson delivery periods. Some grant directors noted that since implementing *Prevention Matters* they had seen an increase in the use of program

I think something we've learned is just the importance of practicing and reinforcing the skills. I think it's one thing for kids to be able to identify things that they're learning, so they can identify the problem-solving steps that [the program] teaches easily, but it's a different thing to then demonstrate that and have those skills transfer into real-life situations. So that's something that I think we're still learning and working on, is not only knowing the skill but also demonstrating them and utilizing them in real time.

— Grant Director

language among students and staff. Grant directors shared numerous successful outgrowths of prevention programming integration: reinforcing positive behaviors, creating common curriculum across several grade levels, and taking steps toward sustaining the program for the long term.

These grantees' prevention programs have become well established within their school communities and are considered as important as most academic subjects. One grant director said, "*There are common expectations, and really, our social-emotional curriculum is now right there with our reading curriculum and our math curriculum. It is something that is expected.*" Although some grant directors described their programs as being more established in schools in Year 4 than they had been in Year 3, other grant directors (see Section 4.2, Policy Challenges) and implementers reported that their prevention programming was affected by competing school curriculum demands and insufficient time, training, and funding to conduct *Prevention Matters* programming (see Section 3.9.1, Other Resources).

Another avenue for integrating prevention programs more fully within a school is to expand the recipients of program training to include non-implementing staff from the school and members of the community who interact with students. In their surveys, grant directors reported on whether and how non-implementing



school staff (e.g., teachers not implementing the program, administrators, custodial or food service staff, bus drivers) and nonschool staff working with students outside of school hours (e.g., before- and after-school care providers, health care providers, clergy)

[It] started off as a new concept to the teachers, and definitely a different way of approaching things... [but] we've definitely seen a shift in just the way that our program as a whole view[s] things and the way the students respond to things.

— Grant Director

participated in some form of program education. Specifically, they reported on the following:

- Whether non-implementing school staff participated in program training
- If non-implementing school staff did not participate in a formal training, whether schools shared program content or messages with them
- Whether nonschool staff working with students outside of school hours participated in program training
- If nonschool staff did not participate in a formal training, whether schools shared program content or messages with them

More than half of grant directors (n = 14 or 58%) delivered some sort of program education to non-implementing school staff.

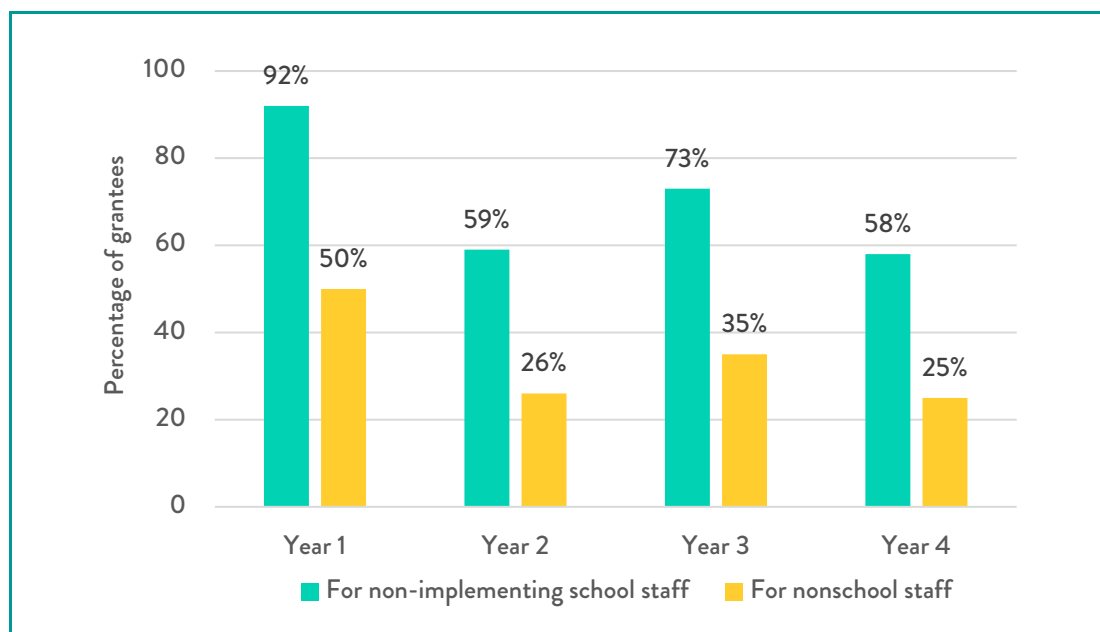
- Five grant directors (21%) provided training to school staff other than implementers. This was a decrease from Year 3, when six (23%) grantees provided training.
- Thirteen grant directors (54%) shared prevention program content or messages with these staff. This was also a decrease from Year 3, when 18 (69%) shared program messages.
- Four grant directors (17%) did both.

One-quarter of grant directors (n = 6) reported that they delivered some form of program education to nonschool staff who work with students outside of school hours.

- Four grantees (17%) provided training to nonschool staff. This was a slight decrease from Year 3 (five grantees, 19%).
- Five grant directors (21%) shared program messages with these staff. This was also a decrease from Year 3 (nine grantees, 35%).

As seen in Figure 4, the percentage of grantees delivering any type of prevention program education for non-implementing school staff and nonschool staff who work with students outside of school hours declined from Year 1 to Year 4, with a slight increase in Year 3. As with many aspects of implementation, the COVID-19 pandemic may have affected grantees' provision of program education to non-implementing staff, and in a variety of ways: some grantees may have relied more heavily on partners to support implementation as school staff contended with COVID-19–related challenges, whereas others may have found their capacity to extend education to non-implementers reduced. Anecdotally, and in the Year 4 grant director interviews, RTI learned that after nearly a year and a half of facing COVID-19–related challenges, schools in Marion County—like many across the country—grappled with staff turnover and shortages and increased student needs. This difficulty may have affected the amount of time and resources available to devote to educating partners on prevention programming.

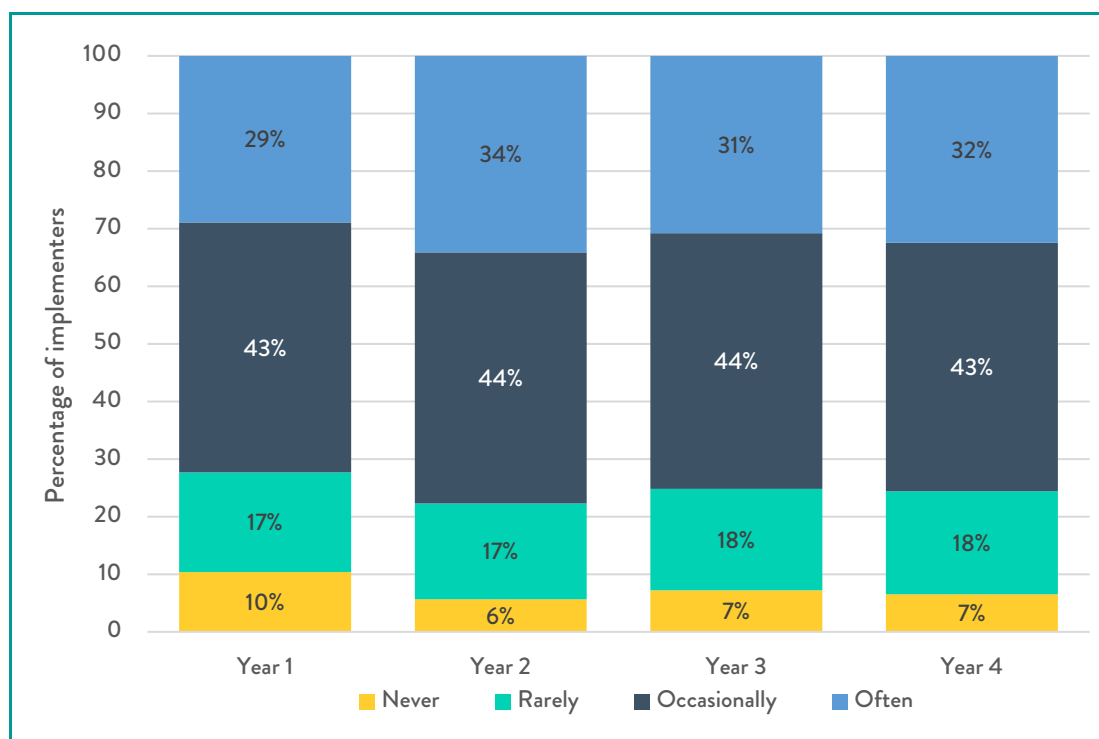
**Figure 4. Grantees Providing Program Education for Non-implementing and Nonschool Staff, Years 1–4**



When implementers were not directly implementing their *Prevention Matters* program, 93% of them reported referencing program content or messages when interacting with students, including 32% of implementers who said they referenced program content often.

Figure 5 shows the frequency with which implementers reported referencing program content across all four years of the initiative. Compared to implementers in Year 1, implementers in Year 4 were significantly more likely to reference program content or messages when interacting with students outside of the designated prevention program class time. Yet at the same time, grant directors' mention of *Prevention Matters* program education to non-implementing school staff and nonschool staff decreased. This divergence could reflect an increased awareness on the part of implementers that program integration and coordination are critical for program sustainability or a transition of this responsibility (program integration and coordination) from grant directors to implementers.

**Figure 5. Frequency of Implementers' References to Program Content Outside of Program Implementation, Years 1–4**



## 1.10 Partnerships

*Prevention Matters* grantees were not required to enter into partnerships with other organizations. However, in general, partners can be a helpful resource for prevention program delivery, and many grantees have used partnerships to help support and sustain their prevention efforts.

In their surveys, grant directors reported on any outside organizations that supported their *Prevention Matters* projects during the 2021–2022 school year, along with the types of support provided. Of the 17 forms of potential partner support listed, grantees (n = 23; one grant director did not respond to this question) reported receiving a total of 14 different types of support. As in previous years of the initiative, on average, grantees reported having one or two types of partner organizations. However, in Year 4, the mean number of partners (1.2 partners) was lower than in Years 1, 2, or 3. In Year 4, the most common partner types were mental and behavioral health professionals and organizations (nine grantees; 38%) and health care professionals or organizations (five grantees; 21%).

Table 19 summarizes the resources that grantees' partners provided during all four years of the initiative. In Year 4, the most common form of support provided was mental health services for *Prevention Matters* participants (43%), followed by medical/health services and services for parents or other family members of *Prevention Matters* program participants (30%). Although both of these forms of support decreased from Year 3 to Year 4, the following four areas remained steady or saw increases from Year 3 to Year 4:

- **Funding/fundraising.** Two grantees reported receiving supplemental funding from a partner, an increase from Years 2 and 3 (n = 1, both years), but a decrease from Year 1 (n = 3). For the first time since the launch of *Prevention Matters*, one grantee reported receiving fundraising support from a partner.
- **Substance abuse services.** Year 4 also saw a rise in the number of grantees whose partners provided substance abuse services to *Prevention Matters* participants, from four grantees (15%) in Year 3 to five grantees (22%) in Year 4. Year 2 saw the highest percentage of grantees receiving substance abuse services support (30%).

- **Shared decision-making.** Partners provided more decision-making support in Year 4, with two grantees (9%) reporting partner contributions, up from zero (0%) in Year 3.
- **Data collection, analysis, and reporting.** Partner contributions to data collection, analysis, and reporting remained steady, with two grantees (9%) receiving such support.

Across nearly all other categories, partner contributions declined from Year 3 to Year 4. Likewise, partner contributions declined in almost all categories from Year 1 to Year 4, apart from support for participant medical or health services, substance abuse services, and fundraising, which saw modest increases.

**Table 19. Resources Provided by Grantee Partners, by Year, Years 1–4**

Resources Provided by Partners	Number (Percent) of Grantees			
	Year 1 (n = 26)	Year 2 (n = 27)	Year 3 (n = 26)	Year 4 (n = 23)
Provided mental health services to <i>Prevention Matters</i> program participants	12 (46%)	16 (59%)	17 (65%)	10 (43%)
Provided medical or health services to <i>Prevention Matters</i> program participants	7 (27%)	11 (41%)	12 (46%)	7 (30%)
Provided services for parents or other family members of <i>Prevention Matters</i> program participants	10 (38%)	10 (37%)	10 (38%)	7 (30%)
Reinforced <i>Prevention Matters</i> program messages or lessons with students	8 (31%)	9 (33%)	6 (23%)	3 (13%)
Provided substance abuse services to <i>Prevention Matters</i> program participants	4 (15%)	8 (30%)	4 (15%)	5 (22%)
Provided additional information or instruction to school staff to supplement <i>Prevention Matters</i> program training	6 (23%)	6 (22%)	3 (12%)	1 (4%)
Assisted with decision-making or problem-solving for <i>Prevention Matters</i> project	6 (23%)	5 (19%)	0 (0%)	2 (9%)
Presented additional information or lessons to students to supplement <i>Prevention Matters</i> programs	5 (19%)	4 (15%)	3 (12%)	1 (4%)
Supported <i>Prevention Matters</i> data collection, analysis, or reporting	6 (23%)	4 (15%)	2 (8%)	2 (9%)
Trained or provided technical assistance to staff on the <i>Prevention Matters</i> programs	2 (8%)	4 (15%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)
Identified students to participate in <i>Prevention Matters</i> programs that target at-risk students	4 (15%)	3 (11%)	4 (15%)	2 (9%)
Shared lessons learned and best practices from <i>Prevention Matters</i> program implementation	4 (15%)	3 (11%)	1 (4%)	1 (4%)
Provided staff to implement <i>Prevention Matters</i> programs	4 (15%)	2 (7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Provided funding to supplement <i>Prevention Matters</i> funding	3 (12%)	1 (4%)	1 (4%)	2 (9%)
Assisted with fundraising for <i>Prevention Matters</i> programming	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)
Provided technology for remote instruction/learning (e.g., devices, internet access)	Not asked	Not asked	2 (8%)	2 (9%)



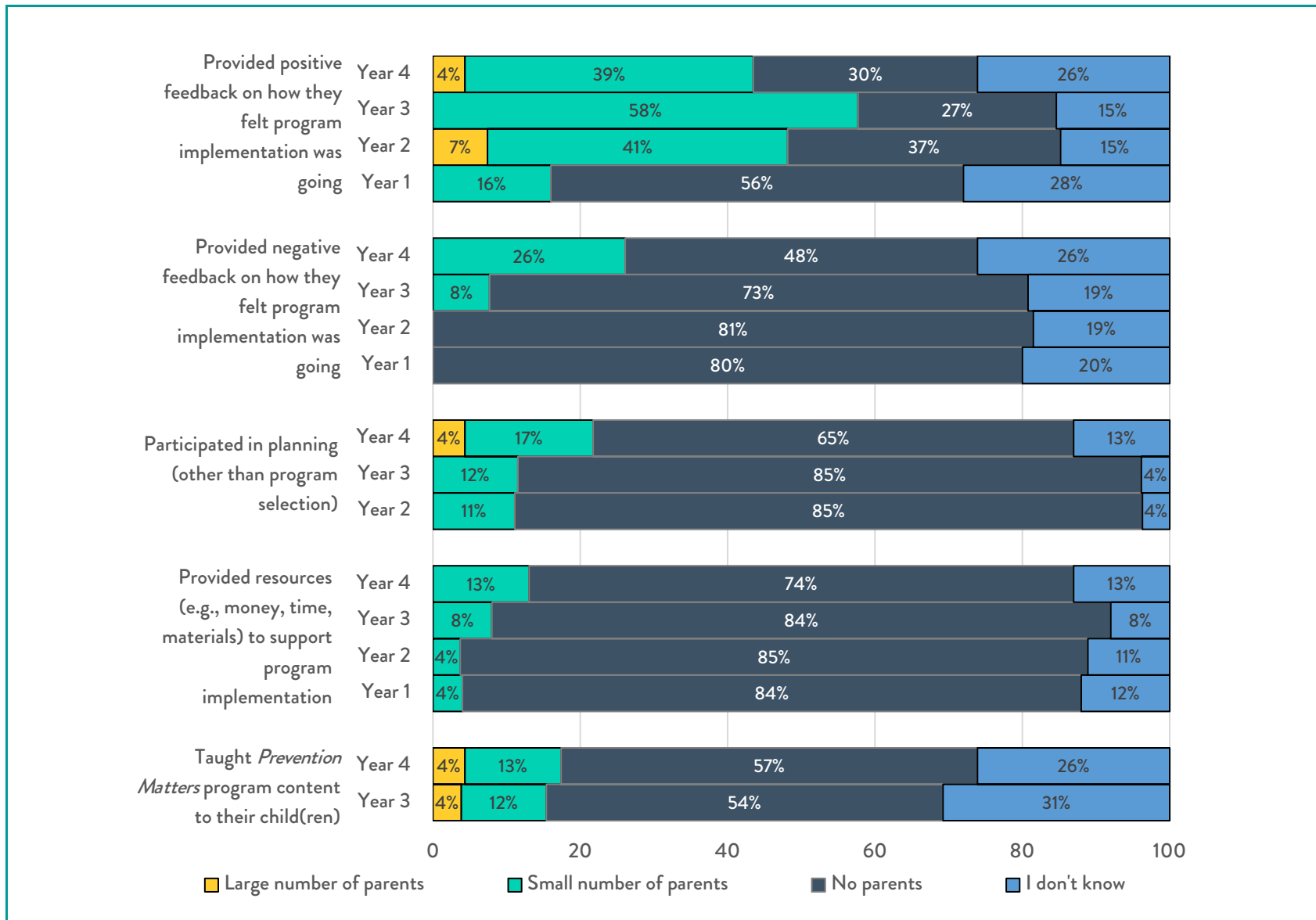
## 1.11 Parent Involvement

*Prevention Matters* grantees were not required to involve parents in their efforts. However, involving parents can be a way to serve students in a more comprehensive way. Some grantees chose to do so, though most saw parental involvement as an area of potential growth in the future.

Responses to the grant director survey suggested that parent involvement in programming was relatively low. In response to the grant director survey question about partner types, no grant directors surveyed reported partnering with parent, family, or caregiver groups or representatives.

In their surveys, grant directors reported on the ways in which they partnered with parents to support program implementation. When asked about specific forms of involvement, few grant directors reported that parents had provided input, feedback, or resources for *Prevention Matters* programming, as shown in Figure 6. Fewer grant directors in Year 4 than in Year 3 reported that parents provided positive feedback and more reported that parents provided negative feedback, though all who did so noted that the negative feedback came from a small number of parents. The latter difference was statistically significant. The six grant directors who reported receiving negative feedback from a small number of parents were slightly more likely to have had larger numbers of implementers (four of the six had >90 implementers); these grantees were a mix of public, private, and charter schools. Additionally, all of the grant directors who reported receiving negative feedback also reported receiving positive feedback from parents. More grant directors also reported that parents provided resources and participated in program planning in Year 4 than in Year 3.

**Figure 6. Percentage of Grant Directors Reporting Parent Involvement, Years 1-4**





For each program they implemented, grant directors reported on how often they provided program-related information to parents. The most frequent level of communication with parents was “once during the program” (34%). This response contrasts with that in Year 3, when the most frequent level of communication was “on two or more occasions,” reported by 49% of programs. For 10% of programs in Year 4, schools did not provide any information to parents. This is also a change from Year 3, during which schools did not provide information for 14% of programs. The highest level of parent information sharing occurred in Year 1, when grant directors reported sharing information once for 31% of programs and two or more times for 47% of programs.

Although most grant directors noted in their interviews that parents had not been as involved in the prevention programming as the grant directors would prefer, they were hopeful that this involvement would increase in future years. Some grantees did manage to involve parents; for example, multiple grant directors reported that implementers developed materials—videos, tool kits, newsletters—for students to take home and discuss with their parents. One grant director noted that sharing lessons with parents dispelled concerns about the prevention programming, commenting, “*When a parent has concerns, we just give them one of the lessons and they’re all, ‘Oh, okay. Yeah. There’s nothing wrong with this.’*” Other approaches to engage parents included having parents observe lessons and provide informal feedback, involving them in coalitions, and giving them access to an online platform that tracks and rewards student behavior. One grant director discussed earmarking funding for monthly family activities related to the prevention program.

Across grantees, the COVID-19 pandemic both curtailed and facilitated parent involvement in various ways. One grant director said that at least one planned activity to engage parents was postponed because of COVID-19 restrictions. Another relayed that staff changes, lack of internet or computer access, and limits on campus visitors put in place to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 also made it challenging to involve

**Virtual programming during COVID-19 really opened up classrooms in a way to parents that hadn’t been done before. Parents were able to actually see the lessons and see what was taking place. That did allow for input that we had not expected. All of that input was very positive. Because of that, we knew that parents support the program and wanted to keep it going.**

— Grant Director

parents. Some grant directors, however, noted that the pandemic permitted parental involvement through the increased use of virtual learning.

## 1.12 Mission Alignment and Leadership Support

In their surveys across all four years of the initiative, grant directors and implementers were asked about how well, in their perception, their prevention efforts aligned with their organizations' missions. Grant directors also reported on the levels and types of support provided to their prevention programs by their organizations' leaders.

### 1.12.1 Grant Director Reports of Mission Alignment

The percentage of grant directors who strongly agreed that *substance use prevention* programming was consistent with their organization's mission declined significantly from Year 1 (81%) to Year 4 (46%). As seen in Figure 7, the percentage of grant directors who strongly agreed or agreed decreased from a combined 100% of grant directors in Year 1 to 88% in Year 4.

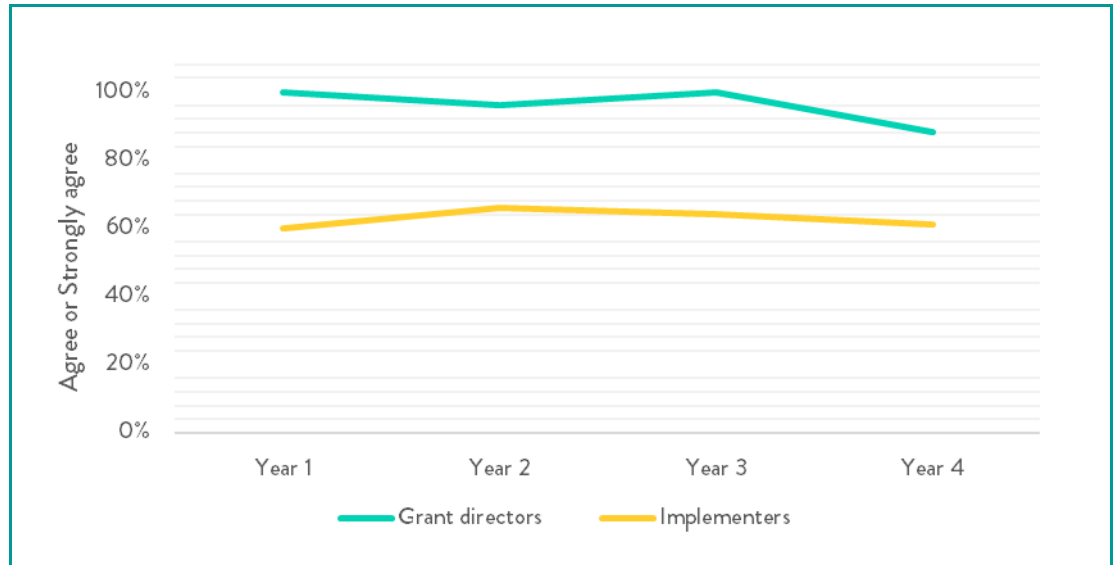
The number of grant directors who strongly agreed that social-emotional learning programming was consistent with their organization's mission also declined, though not significantly, from Year 1 (88%) to Year 4 (71%). As seen in Figure 8, the percentage of grant directors who strongly agreed or agreed decreased, though only slightly, from a combined 100% of grant directors in Year 1 to 96% in Year 4.

### 1.12.2 Implementer Reports of Mission Alignment

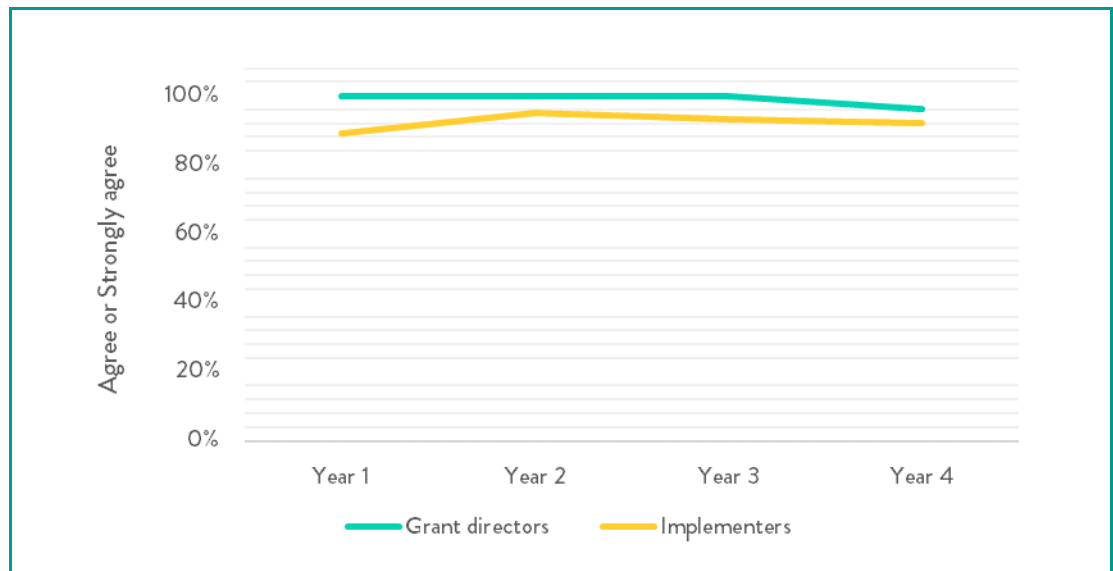
The percentage of implementers who strongly agreed that *substance use prevention* programming was consistent with their organization's mission decreased slightly, though not significantly, from Year 1 (25%) to Year 4 (24%) of the initiative. As seen in Figure 7, implementers who strongly agreed or agreed increased slightly from a combined 60% of implementers in Year 1 to 61% in Year 4, a change that was not significant.

The percentage of implementers who strongly agreed that programming to promote social-emotional learning was consistent with their school's mission increased from Year 1 (51%) to Year 4 (54%). This increase was trending toward significance ( $p = .05$ ). As seen in Figure 8, a large proportion of implementers reported that they strongly agreed or agreed in both years, increasing from a combined 89% of implementers in Year 1 to 92% in Year 4.

**Figure 7. Grant Director and Implementer Agreement with Statement: Substance use prevention is consistent with organization’s mission, Years 1–4**



**Figure 8. Grant Director and Implementer Agreement with Statement: Social emotional learning programming is consistent with organization’s mission, Years 1–4**



### 1.12.3 Grant Director Reports of Leadership Support

Grant directors were also asked to report on their organizational leaders' support of various elements of substance use prevention and social-emotional learning programming and their participation in various components of *Prevention Matters* implementation.

As seen in Table 20, in Year 4, grant directors were slightly less likely than in Year 1 to strongly agree with a set of statements related to the leaders of their organizations and those leaders' support for programming related to *Prevention Matters*. However, the decline in the overall proportion of grant directors who strongly agreed with those statements was not statistically significant. One category of leadership that showed a notable increase from Year 1 to Year 4 was the ability to obtain financial resources to promote social-emotional learning; in Year 1, 19% of grant directors strongly agreed, whereas in Year 4 the proportion of grant directors who strongly agreed rose to 48%. This change was statistically significant. Three other categories saw small increases that were not statistically significant from Year 1 to Year 4.

**Table 20. Grant Director Reports of Leadership Support, Years 1 and 4**

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. Our organization's leaders are:	Number (Percent) of Grantees Who Said Strongly Agree	
	Year 1 (n = 26)	Year 4 (n = 23)
Knowledgeable about substance use prevention.	5 (19%)	4 (17%)
Committed to preventing substance use.	17 (65%)	10 (43%)
Able to obtain the necessary financial resources for substance use prevention programming.	6 (23%)	7 (30%)
Strong advocates for substance use prevention.	13 (50%)	8 (35%)
Motivated to ensure that substance use prevention efforts are a success.	12 (46%)	10 (43%)
Supportive of staff implementing substance use prevention programming.	14 (56%) <sup>a</sup>	13 (57%)
Knowledgeable about the promotion of social-emotional learning.	14 (54%)	11 (48%)
Committed to promoting social-emotional learning.	16 (62%)	14 (61%)
Able to obtain the necessary financial resources for the promotion of social-emotional learning.	5 (19%)	11 (48%)*
Strong advocates for the promotion of social-emotional learning.	15 (58%)	15 (65%)
Motivated to ensure that efforts to promote social-emotional learning are a success.	17 (65%)	12 (52%)
Supportive of staff implementing programming to promote social-emotional learning.	16 (62%)	14 (61%)

Note. <sup>a</sup> This sub-question was missing one respondent.

\* Indicates change between years was significant ( $p < .05$ ).

In Year 4, grant directors reported that their organization's leaders participated in a similar number of *Prevention Matters* activities as they did in Year 1, though, as Table 21 shows, the mix of activities changed slightly. Fewer leaders participated in training and lesson implementation in Year 4, and more participated in observations and data monitoring. After RTI summed the total number of activities in which leaders participated, the difference between the Year 1 and Year 4 totals was not statistically significant.

**Table 21. Grant Director Reports of Leader Participation, Years 1 and 4**

During the [YEAR] school year, one or more leaders from my organization...	Number (Percent) of Grantees Who Said Yes	
	Year 1 (n = 26)	Year 4 (n = 24)
Participated in planning for/was involved in the planning phase of our <i>Prevention Matters</i> project.	24 (92%)	23 (96%)
Participated in training for <i>Prevention Matters</i> programming.	21 (81%)	18 (75%)
Implemented <i>Prevention Matters</i> programming.	16 (62%)	12 (50%)
Observed <i>Prevention Matters</i> implementation.	18 (69%)	19 (79%)
Monitored data from our <i>Prevention Matters</i> grant.	20 (77%)	21 (88%)

In interviews, most grant directors reported that their leadership was supportive of *Prevention Matters* from the beginning. Some grant directors further highlighted that their leadership was supportive from the beginning and became more supportive over time. Many grant directors attributed leadership support to their leaders' growing understanding of the importance of their prevention programming.

Leadership support for prevention programming took many forms. Some grant directors said that their leadership had prior experience or knowledge of the prevention programming being implemented and therefore supported the curriculum's implementation in the schools. Other grant directors said that they participated in regular meetings with their leadership and found these meetings helpful to enhance buy-in for these programs. During these meetings, principals and other leaders were able to share success stories, plan implementation, and

discuss the value of the program; overall, these meetings helped facilitate buy-in and increase knowledge around *Prevention Matters*. A few grant directors mentioned that it was particularly helpful if the principal who led these meetings was familiar with the curriculum.

Grant directors were grateful for high levels of leadership support for multiple reasons. A few noted that it was easier to integrate prevention programming into the classroom and the school environment with principal buy-in and involvement. Another benefit of leadership support was funding; one grant director said that they wanted to increase buy-in to ensure that principals would continue to financially support the program. Grant directors did not identify many barriers to gaining leadership support; the only consistent challenge mentioned by some was leadership turnover.

## 2 Implementation Progress

### 2.1 Grant Director Reports of Implementation Progress

In their interviews, grant directors described their implementation progress over the past four years, including what programs they implemented and in what grades. Most grantees took a progressive implementation approach, beginning implementation in one grade or school and expanding to additional grades or schools as the grant progressed.

By Year 4, grant directors were able to relate numerous implementation progress successes. For example, some grant directors mentioned that they were able to successfully deliver all their programming with consistency in Year 4. Other grant directors described improvements in their implementation approach and program delivery over the past four years of the grant. One grantee described feeling a bit challenged during the first year while trying to learn and understand the program. After collaborating with the curriculum publisher and reshaping the implementation approach, this grant director described the implementation as having “*massive growth in a lot of ways.*” Another grant director summarized an overall perspective that a few grant directors shared: “*Four years ago, we didn’t have any type of consistent [social-emotional learning] programming.... Through this program, we’re now in a very different place [because we are regularly delivering this programming].*”

## 2.2 Implementation Facilitators

In their interviews, grant directors revealed several key facilitators of their implementation progress. A few highlighted that specific program structures helped facilitate progress over time, noting their programs were user-friendly and easy to deliver in their settings. Other grant directors described specific resources that improved implementation; these resources included new tools for monitoring lesson completion, additional funding, and program materials from previous years. Staffing was the most mentioned facilitator. More specifically, staffing consistency—having the same staff teach the program for multiple years—helped the program gain momentum in many schools.

Most grant directors reflected that the pandemic slowed implementation progress in some way. One district took a proactive approach to addressing the slowed progress by forming several subcommittees, including one on mental health and wellness, to plan what the return to school would look like and to eliminate COVID-19–related implementation delays (more on the pandemic’s impact on implementation in Section 1.5).

## 3 Implementation Quality

For the purposes of this evaluation, implementation quality was defined as implementation *fidelity*, the degree to which programs were delivered as the program developer intended. The *Prevention Matters* evaluation examined 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
- Student engagement, including interest in and understanding of programming



### 3.1 Grant Director Reports of Implementation Quality

In discussing how they achieved implementation quality, grant directors described a few facilitators.

***Communication and collaboration among implementers.*** A couple of grant directors stressed the importance of communication and collaboration between staff. In one school, for example, teachers shared stories with one another about what went well in their implementation, what barriers they experienced, and how they addressed those barriers.

***Supports for implementers.*** Grant directors also described giving implementers various supports to facilitate high-quality program delivery. For example, some grantees offered teachers stipends to support and monitor implementation quality. Others provided implementers with trainings focused on professional development around classroom management, refreshers for specific programs, and check-ins with social-emotional learning coaches to ensure that teachers were knowledgeable about the programs and able to implement them effectively.

***Flexibility.*** A few grantees noted that implementing with fidelity had to be balanced with implementing with flexibility because some struggled to achieve a high level of consistency while maintaining implementer buy-in. Grantees took the approach of “*fidelity with flexibility*,” believing that there should be a balance between the two. One grant director said, “*While you want to implement with fidelity, you don’t want to be scripted.... It’s always easy for a teacher to just go through the scripted textbook.*” According to a few grant directors, giving the teachers some autonomy increased their excitement about teaching the lessons and the students’ excitement about participating in them.



## 3.2 Implementer Reports of Implementation Quality

### 3.2.1 Adherence

As part of their surveys, implementers reported on how closely they followed the curriculum guides in teaching program lessons. Nearly all implementers used a curriculum guide (93%) in Year 4. Of those who did, 44% reported following the curriculum guide very closely (i.e., teaching the material as specified in the guide). Another 50% reported following the curriculum guide somewhat closely (i.e., sometimes adapting the material as appropriate). In Years 1 and 3, over 90% of implementers very closely or somewhat closely followed the curriculum guide. In Year 2, fewer implementers indicated that they very closely adhered to the curriculum guide (38%); this decrease likely reflects COVID-19 pandemic restrictions on in-person learning. Overall curriculum adherence that year was 88%. Table 22 shows adherence across all four years of the program.

**Table 22. Curriculum Adherence, Years 1–4**

Adherence	Percentage of Implementers			
	Year 1 (n = 951) %	Year 2 (n = 1,536) %	Year 3 (n = 1,648) %	Year 4 <sup>a</sup> (n = 1,551) %
Followed very closely	51	38	41	44
Followed somewhat closely	43	50	50	50
Did not follow closely	6	12	9	6

Note. <sup>a</sup> The 7% of implementers who said that they did not use a curriculum guide were excluded from these analyses.

### 3.2.2 Dosage

Dosage can be measured by calculating the amount of programming delivered, received, or both. Each *Prevention Matters* program has a different number of sessions and recommended implementation schedules (see Table 11). In the survey, implementers were asked whether they had finished program implementation as defined by the program. In Years 2, 3, and 4, they were also asked whether they expected to complete implementation by the end of the school year.

In Year 4, more than two-thirds (69%) of implementer survey respondents had finished implementing *Prevention Matters* programming with all their students by the time of the survey. The remainder had finished implementing with some but not all students (10%) or had not yet finished implementing with any students (21%). The percentage of implementers who reported having completed the program increased over time (Table 23). The increase in implementers reporting program completion from Year 1 to Year 4 was statistically significant, as was the increase from Year 3 to Year 4 alone. Note that the implementer survey was conducted later in the semester<sup>16</sup> during Years 2, 3, and 4 than during Year 1. As such, the increases in program completion between Years 2 and 4, and Years 3 and 4, are not simply an artifact of survey timing.

<sup>16</sup> The Year 1 implementer survey was open March 4–April 19, 2019. The Year 2 implementer survey was open May 13–June 3, 2020. The Year 3 implementer survey was open April 12–May 21, 2021. The Year 4 implementer survey was open April 11–May 17, 2022.

**Table 23. Implementation Progress: Percentage of Implementers Completing Implementation, Years 1–4**

Statement	Year 1 (n = 1,008)	Year 1 vs. Year 4 <sup>a</sup>	Year 2 (n = 1,623)	Year 3 (n = 1,753)	Year 3 vs. Year 4 <sup>a</sup>	Year 4 (n = 1,648)
I have completed program implementation with all the classes or groups I teach	11%	***	57%	65%	**	69%
I have completed all sessions with some of my classes or groups but not with others	8%	N/A	16%	13%	N/A	10%
I have not completed program implementation with any of my classes or groups	81%	N/A	27%	22%	N/A	21%

Note. <sup>a</sup> Statistical significance testing was conducted only on the completed group.  
\*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Among Year 4 implementers who reported that they had not finished implementing their programming at the time of the survey, approximately two-thirds (67%) expected to finish all program sessions by the end of the school year, 22% did not expect to finish, and 11% reported that their program did not have required sessions. The percentage of implementers who expected to finish all program sessions was significantly higher in Year 4 than in Year 3, when 58% of implementers who had not finished implementing at the time of the survey expected to do so by the end of the school year. Furthermore, in Year 3, a significantly higher percentage of implementers did not expect to complete implementation (33%). Note that the numbers displayed in this paragraph are not shown in any data tables in this report.

Table 24 shows the yearly increase in the percentage of implementers who either had already completed or expected to complete implementation by the end of the school year. In Year 2, over three-quarters of those who did not expect to complete

their program sessions noted that they believed they would have completed implementation if not for COVID-19.

**Table 24. Expected Completion, Years 2–4**

Already Had Finished or Expected to Finish Implementing All Program Sessions by End of School Year	Percentage of Implementers			Year 3 Compared with Year 4 <sup>a</sup>
	Year 2 (n = 1,497) %	Year 3 (n = 1,698) %	Year 4 (n = 1,595) %	
Yes	63	88	93	***
No	37	12	7	N/A

Note. <sup>a</sup> Statistical significance testing was conducted only on the completed group.

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

RTI asked implementers to rate, on a scale of 0 (low) to 100 (high), their enthusiasm for teaching their *Prevention Matters* program. In Year 4, those who completed program implementation with all classes they taught had a higher level of enthusiasm (mean = 74) than those who completed implementation with only some of their classes (mean = 65) or those who did not complete implementation with any classes (mean = 69). This difference was even more pronounced between those who had completed or expected to complete (mean = 74) and the small group that did not expect to complete (mean = 60). Note that the numbers displayed in this paragraph are not shown in any data tables in this report.

### 3.2.3 Student Engagement

RTI measured the extent to which implementers perceived that students were engaged in two program delivery modalities—live, in-person instruction and synchronous or live virtual instruction. During the delivery of in-person program material, 52% of implementers (n = 1,624) reported that their students were either fully engaged or almost fully engaged in the program. This result was similar to that in Year 3 (56%). Table 25 shows in-person student engagement across all four years of the program. During live/synchronous virtual instruction (n = 86), 41% of implementers reported that their students were either fully engaged or almost fully engaged, which is somewhat higher than in Year 3 (28%; data not shown).

**Table 25. In-Person Student Engagement, Years 1–4**

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

### 3.2.4 Student Understanding

Most implementers perceived that students had a good understanding of content that was delivered in person or using live/synchronous virtual instruction. In-person sessions seemed to yield the greatest understanding among students; nearly 77% of implementers said that students who participated in in-person learning had either a “good” or “excellent” understanding in Year 4, whereas 66% of implementers felt that students who participated in live/synchronous remote learning had either a “good” or “excellent” understanding. Table 26 shows in-person student engagement across all four years of the program.

**Table 26. In-Person Student Understanding, Years 1–4**

In-Person Student Understanding	Percentage of Implementers			
	Year 1 (n = 968) %	Year 2 (n = 1,636) %	Year 3 (n = 1,497) %	Year 4 (n = 1,625) %
Excellent/complete understanding	14	15	23	18
Good	60	61	58	59
Fair	23	21	16	21
Poor	2	2	2	2
Did not understand	1	1	1	1

### 3.2.5 Overall Implementation Quality, by Year

Table 27 examines overall implementation quality, segmented by all implementers and implementers who had completed implementation at the time of the survey. Three quality metrics were examined: curriculum adherence, student engagement, and student understanding. Curriculum adherence was calculated using a 0-to-2 scale, and student engagement and understanding were calculated using a 0-to-4 scale. For all three sets of scales, higher means indicated higher quality.

**Table 27. Implementation Quality, by Year, Years 3 and 4**

Implementation Quality Metric	Means					
	All Implementers			Implementers Completing All Implementation by Time of Survey		
	Year 3	Year 4	Year 3 vs. Year 4	Year 3	Year 4	Year 3 vs. Year 4
Adherence to curriculum guide <i>0 = Did not follow closely</i> <i>1 = Followed somewhat closely</i> <i>2 = Followed very closely</i>	1.32 (n = 1,648)	1.37 (n = 1,551)	**	1.35 (n = 1,092)	1.41 (n = 1,095)	*
Student engagement <sup>a</sup> <i>0 = Not at all/bored</i> <i>1 = Barely</i> <i>2 = Somewhat</i> <i>3 = Almost fully</i> <i>4 = Fully</i>	2.58 (n = 1,490)	2.50 (n = 1,624)	**	2.69 (n = 1,060)	2.60 (n = 1,124)	*
Student understanding <sup>a</sup> <i>0 = Did not understand</i> <i>1 = Poor</i> <i>2 = Fair</i> <i>3 = Good</i> <i>4 = Excellent/complete</i>	3.00 (n = 1,490)	2.91 (n = 1,625)	***	3.12 (n = 1,058)	2.99 (n = 1,125)	***

Note. Significance testing was done via two-tailed t-tests, examining differences between pairs of mean scores. Data in this table are rounded to hundredths to assist in comparing mean scores in Years 3 and 4.

<sup>a</sup> To allow for the most accurate comparison to previous years, in Years 3 and 4 student engagement and understanding were included only during in-person instruction. This is the only modality examined because there was no overall measure of engagement or understanding in Year 2.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Curriculum adherence statistically significantly increased from Year 3 to Year 4 among all implementers (1.32 to 1.37) and among implementers who had completed implementation by the time the survey was fielded (1.35 to 1.41). However, there were small but statistically significant decreases in both student engagement and student understanding scores from Year 3 to Year 4 among both samples of implementers.

RTI examined the subset of implementers who had completed all implementation at the time the survey was administered. In that subset, the mean quality scores for curriculum adherence, student engagement, and understanding were higher than the same mean quality scores among all implementers.

### **3.2.6 Implementation Fidelity by Program**

RTI also examined differences in fidelity across curricula and modes of delivery. Table 28 shows that there were 20 fidelity values: four fidelity measures for each of the five *Prevention Matters* programs with sufficient data (i.e., Botvin LifeSkills Training, Conscious Discipline, PATHS, Second Step Elementary, and Second Step Middle). Several programs had fewer than five reporting implementers or one reporting school and were therefore excluded for privacy reasons. Eleven of the fidelity values are significantly different from the initiative-level average, as indicated by the red and green arrows.



**Table 28. Implementation Fidelity by Program, Year 4**

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

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

↑ = Significantly higher than mean for all other programs.

↓ = Significantly lower than mean for all other programs.

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

<sup>a</sup> Curriculum adherence was measured as the percentage of lessons in the curriculum that implementers administered in their classrooms.

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

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

Second Step was the most commonly implemented program in Year 4, with 84% of implementers who responded to the survey using a version of it at the elementary or middle school level. The large number of Second Step implementers increased the ability to detect statistically significant differences in survey responses. The elementary school version of Second Step, which accounted for 64% of responses included for analysis, had higher-than-average adherence, expected completion, and student engagement and understanding. The middle school version of Second Step, implemented by 20% of respondents included for analysis, had lower-than-average student engagement and understanding. This difference in adherence between the elementary and middle school versions of Second Step could reflect a

general challenge described by implementers around engaging middle school students; see Section 4.3.2.

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

### 3.3 Observed Implementation Quality

#### 3.3.1 Student Engagement

RTI's classroom observers examined students' level of engagement with the lesson by paying close attention to students' attention, curiosity, and interest during the lesson, as well as to cues that they were emotionally, cognitively, or behaviorally participating in the lesson. Specifically, RTI's observers rated student engagement based on three items: participating in discussions, participating in activities, and working well with peers.

***Participating in discussions.*** Examples of participation included students' responding to questions or participating in small group discussions. Students' effective participation in discussions was clearly evident in 65% of classrooms and partially evident in 31% of classrooms. In elementary classrooms, observers were almost two and a half times as likely as observers in middle-school and 9th-grade classrooms to see clear evidence of student participation (80% and 33%, respectively).

***Participating in activities.*** Examples included students' participating in role play or paired activities, doing small-group activities, or completing worksheets. Not all observed classes included classroom activities. Of those that did, students' effective participation in classroom activities was clearly evident in 87% of classrooms and partially evident in 12% of classrooms. Observers in elementary classrooms noted a higher rate of clearly evident participation in classroom activities (91%) than did observers in middle-school and 9th-grade classrooms (79%).

*Working well with peers.* Examples of working well included collaborating with or assisting other students, taking turns talking, and being respectful of the other students. Not all observed classes included lessons with the option of having students work with their peers. Of those that did, students' ability to work well with their peers was clearly evident in 88% of classrooms and partially evident in 9% of classrooms. Observers in elementary classrooms rated this factor as clearly evident 91% of the time, whereas observers in middle-school and 9th-grade classrooms noted clear evidence 81% of the time.

### 3.3.2 Student Understanding

RTI observers assessed the implementer's attention to student understanding by seeing whether questions were asked throughout the lesson to make sure students were following along. Checking for students' understanding was clearly evident in 43% of the observations and partially evident in 24% of the observations during which it was applicable (as shown in Table 36). This teaching strategy was not evident in 33% of the observations when it was applicable. This strategy was observed as clearly evident in 58% of elementary school classrooms, which was more than three times as often as in middle-school and 9th-grade classrooms (16%).

## 3.4 Adaptations

Adapting a program to align with participants' backgrounds and needs can make material more engaging and effective for participants. However, adaptations that remove a program's essential ingredients could reduce effectiveness.

### 3.4.1 Adaptations Reported by Grant Directors

In their surveys, grant directors reported on whether their organizations asked implementers to make any changes to the *Prevention Matters* curricula and, if so, what those changes were. Changes because of COVID-19 are reported in Section 1.5; this section provides information about grant directors' reports of adaptations related to factors other than COVID-19. In the fourth year, 42% of grant directors (10 grantees) reported asking their implementers to make changes. Although this percentage was lower than in Year 3 (14 grantees, or 54%), it was not statistically different. The most commonly requested change was to repeat or review activities or lessons (four grantees, or 17%). Table 29 presents the types of changes grant directors requested of implementers during Years 1, 2, 3, and 4.

**Table 29. Implementation Changes Requested by Grant Directors, Years 1–4**

Change Directed	Percentage of Grantees			
	Year 1 (n = 26) %	Year 2 (n = 27) %	Year 3 <sup>a</sup> (n = 26) %	Year 4 <sup>a</sup> (n = 24) %
Requested a change	44	52	54	42
Present additional activities or lessons that are not part of the program	16	26	35	8
Repeat or review program activities or lessons	8	22	35	17
Deliver lessons at a frequency different from what the program recommends (e.g., implement lessons on consecutive days instead of weekly)	8	15	19	8
Change program language or examples	0	11	19	0
Skip or shorten program activities or lessons	4	11	8	8
Change the order of activities or lessons	0	7	4	8
Implement with a different type of student (e.g., grade level, risk status) than what the program targets	4	7	0	0
Change the format of program activities (e.g., substitute discussion for role play, modify worksheets or homework assignments)	4	4	19	8
Other	4	7	0	0
Did not request any changes	56	48	46	58

Note. Percentages sum to more than 100% because grant directors could select multiple types of changes.

<sup>a</sup> In Years 3 and 4, grant directors were asked specifically to think about changes they requested because of factors other than COVID-19. Changes because of COVID-19 are reported in Section 1.5.

In the fourth year, 13 grant directors (54%) reported allowing their implementers to make changes to their material (Table 30). Although this number was less than in Year 3 (16 grantees, or 62%), the difference was not statistically significant. The most commonly allowed changes were to repeat or review program activities or lessons (seven grantees, or 29%); to deliver lessons at a frequency different from what the program recommended (six grantees, or 25%); and to present additional activities, lessons, or content that were not part of the program (five grantees, or 21%).

**Table 30. Implementation Changes Permitted by Grant Directors, Years 3 and 4**

Change Allowed <sup>a</sup>	Percentage of Grantees	
	Year 3 (n = 26) %	Year 4 (n = 24) %
Skip or shorten program activities or lessons	15	13
Repeat or review program activities or lessons	42	29
Present additional activities, lessons, or content that were not part of the program	31	21
Change the order of activities or lessons	19	13
Change program language or examples	27	8
Change the format of program activities (e.g., substitute discussion for role play, modify worksheets or homework assignments)	27	13
Deliver lessons at a frequency different from what program recommends (e.g., implementing lessons on consecutive days instead of weekly)	27	25
Implement with a different type of student (e.g., grade level, risk status) than what the program targets	0	4
Other	0	4
Did not allow any changes	39	46

Note. Percentages sum to more than 100% because grant directors could select multiple types of changes.

<sup>a</sup> Grant directors were asked specifically to think about changes they allowed because of factors other than COVID-19. Changes because of COVID-19 are reported in Section 1.5.

### 3.4.2 Adaptations Reported by Implementers

Implementers who used a curriculum guide were asked to report the types of changes they made, if any. Table 31 presents data on the curriculum changes that implementers reported making. Seventy-nine percent of implementers made some type of change, a result that was consistent with those in previous years. The most common changes reported by Year 4 implementers were skipping or shortening program activities or lessons (43% of implementers), repeating or reviewing content (36% of implementers), and presenting additional activities or lessons that were not part of the program (33% of implementers).

**Table 31. Curriculum Changes Made by Implementers, Years 1–4**

Curriculum Change Made	Percentage of Implementers			
	Year 1 %	Year 2 %	Year 3 %	Year 4 %
Made changes	80 (n = 758)	80 (n = 1,229)	79 (n = 1,284)	79 (n = 1,212)
Skipped or shortened program activities or lessons	39 (n = 375)	45 (n = 688)	43 (n = 700)	43 (n = 653)
Repeated or reviewed program activities or lessons	35 (n = 335)	35 (n = 531)	30 (n = 485)	36 (n = 547)
Presented additional activities or lessons that were not part of the program	30 (n = 287)	35 (n = 539)	31 (n = 511)	33 (n = 510)
Changed the format of program activities (e.g., substituted discussion for role play, modified worksheets or homework assignments)	22 (n = 205)	26 (n = 400)	26 (n = 419)	23 (n = 347)
Changed program language or examples	17 (n = 161)	18 (n = 280)	16 (n = 259)	16 (n = 255)
Delivered lessons at a frequency different from what the program recommended (e.g., implemented lessons on consecutive days instead of weekly)	17 (n = 160)	16 (n = 248)	15 (n = 252)	15 (n = 233)
Changed the order of activities or lessons	17 (n = 157)	14 (n = 211)	12 (n = 197)	11 (n = 171)
Implemented with a different type of student (e.g., grade level, risk status) than what the program targets	4 (n = 36)	3 (n = 44)	3 (n = 53)	2 (n = 36)
Other	2 (n = 15)	1 (n = 22)	2 (n = 38)	2 (n = 25)
Did not make any changes	20 (n = 192)	20 (n = 303)	21 (n = 345)	21 (n = 322)

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

The 79% of Year 4 implementers who reported making changes from the curriculum manual noted various reasons for these changes; the most common are shown in Table 32. According to the survey, implementers most commonly made changes to increase student engagement and comprehension (58% and 46%, respectively), to adapt to lack of time (50%), and to minimize disruptive behavior (31%). The reasons for making curriculum changes in Year 1 and Year 4 generally remained consistent. However, during the pandemic years (Years 2 and 3), there were more fluctuations as implementers sought to adjust the curriculum to a virtual delivery format. Also, COVID-19–related changes to school operations, such as virtual lesson delivery, may have continued to influence the implementation of *Prevention Matters* in some classrooms into Year 4.

**Table 32. Reasons for Curriculum Changes, Years 1–4**

Reason for Making Curriculum Change	Percentage of Implementers			
	Year 1 (n = 1,149) %	Year 2 (n = 1,230) %	Year 3 (n = 1,854) %	Year 4 (n = 1,212) %
I wanted to increase student engagement.	55	66	39	58
I wanted to increase student comprehension/retention.	46	55	28	46
We didn't have enough time [not specified whether related to COVID-19].	47	19	32	50
I wanted to minimize disruptive behavior.	29	33	15	31
Program content or language was not culturally appropriate for my children.	10	11	5	8
We had extra time.	13	10	10	15
I forgot or made a mistake.	6	6	4	6
I did not have needed equipment or materials.	7	5	5	6
I disagreed with program messages/content/format.	2	3	2	3
My school/organization leadership directed me to make changes.	5	2	2	1
Other	3	6	3	3
Program activities, as written, could not be implemented in a virtual setting. <sup>a</sup>	—	—	16	1

Reason for Making Curriculum Change	Percentage of Implementers			
	Year 1 (n = 1,149) %	Year 2 (n = 1,230) %	Year 3 (n = 1,854) %	Year 4 (n = 1,212) %
Technology for remote instruction was unavailable, inaccessible, or unreliable. <sup>a</sup>	—	—	4	1
We needed to maintain physical distance between students. <sup>a</sup>	—	—	21	7

Note. The percentage of implementers is calculated from those who reported making a change to their curriculum.

Percentages sum to more than 100% because implementers could select multiple types of changes.

<sup>a</sup> These items were included in the survey only in Years 3 and 4.

### 3.5 Curriculum Prioritization

Throughout the evaluation, grant directors described competing priorities between academics and prevention instruction. Although in their interviews some grant directors expressed that their prevention curriculum was as important as academics (see Section 1.9), other grant directors described finding themselves prioritizing mandated academic goals over prevention instruction. This challenge was intensified by the fact that some schools lost instruction time because of COVID-19 and were left with less time available for mandated academics. Therefore, a few grantees indicated that they felt pressure to focus more on academics than prevention programming in an effort to make up for students' academic learning loss in the COVID-19 pandemic.

Implementers were asked whether anyone told them that their program was a lower priority than instruction in academic subjects. Overall, 82% of implementers reported that no one told them that the program was lower priority. Only 1% of implementers reported that someone from their organization's *Prevention Matters* grant staff viewed their prevention programming as having a lower priority than academic subjects. Six percent of implementers personally felt that their program was a lower priority.

Subsequently, implementers were also asked whether anyone told them that their program was of equal or higher priority as instruction in academic subjects. Sixty percent of implementers reported that no one told them that the program was of equal or higher priority. About 5% of implementers reported that someone from their organization's *Prevention Matters* grant staff told them that the prevention



program had equal or higher priority. Twenty-three percent of implementers reported that someone in a general school leadership position communicated equal or higher program priority. Fourteen percent of implementers personally felt that their program was of equal or higher priority.

### 3.6 Predicting Implementation Quality

RTI examined whether training and monitoring were related to implementation quality. Table 33 summarizes the implementer survey results related to implementer training, implementer monitoring, and implementation quality. This table presents five factors: whether implementers (1) participated in training, (2) were observed, (3) reported implementation progress, (4) received feedback based on observations of their sessions, or (5) received feedback based on implementation data they submitted. These five factors were examined based on four quality indicators—student engagement, student understanding, very close adherence to the curriculum guide, and completion or expected completion of all program sessions. The table depicts the average score (for student engagement and understanding) or percentage of implementers (for adherence and completing all program sessions) for those implementers who did have the factor (“Yes” columns) or did not have the factor (“No” columns), along with an indicator of whether any differences between implementers who responded Yes or No to the question were statistically significant.

On average, compared to those who did not, implementers who reported participating in a training in Year 4 reported significantly higher student engagement (2.58 and 2.31, respectively) and student understanding (2.96 and 2.79). Although implementers who participated in training in Year 4 had a greater likelihood of following the curriculum guide very closely (45% and 41%) and completing or expecting to complete all program sessions (93% and 91%), these differences were not statistically significant.

Implementers who reported that they were observed by someone affiliated with their grant program reported significantly higher student engagement (2.62 and 2.43) and student understanding (3.01 and 2.86) than those who reported not being observed. However, there were no significant differences in following the curriculum guide very closely or completing or expecting to complete all program sessions.

A similar pattern emerged among implementers who submitted self-reported implementation information. These individuals reported significantly higher

student engagement (2.63 and 2.34, respectively), student understanding (3.04 and 2.75), and completion or expected completion of all program sessions (96% and 89%) than implementers who did not submit implementation information. However, implementers who submitted self-reported implementation information were less likely to report following the curriculum guide very closely (43% and 45%), though this difference was not statistically significant.

In summary, training and any form of monitoring (observation or self-report) resulted in significantly higher mean scores for student engagement and student understanding but (with one exception) had no significant effect on following the curriculum guide very closely or completing or expecting to complete all program sessions. The exception is that implementers who self-reported implementation information were significantly more likely to complete or expect to complete all program sessions.

**Table 33. Implementation Quality, by Training and Monitoring, Year 4**

Comparison	Implementer Participated in Year 4 Training (initial or booster) (n = 1,625)		Implementer Was Observed (n = 1,582)		Implementer Self-Reported Implementation Information (n = 1,574)		Observed Implementer Received Observation Feedback (n = 561)		Implementer Who Self-Reported Implementation Information Received Feedback on That Information (n = 842)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Student engagement, mean score <sup>a</sup>	2.58*	2.31	2.62*	2.43	2.63*	2.34	2.70*	2.49	2.73*	2.57
Student understanding, mean score <sup>b</sup>	2.96*	2.79	3.01*	2.86	3.04*	2.75	3.09*	2.91	3.10*	3.00
Percentage of implementers following curriculum guide very closely	45	41	44	44	43	45	45	43	46	41
Percentage of implementers expecting to complete all program sessions	93	91	95	92	96*	89	95	92	96	96

Note. Decimals are rounded to hundredths to assist with comparing mean scores.

<sup>a</sup> Student engagement includes in-person instruction only. 0 = not at all engaged/bored, 1 = barely engaged, 2 = somewhat engaged, 3 = almost fully engaged, 4 = fully engaged.

<sup>b</sup> Student understanding includes in-person instruction only. 0 = did not understand, 1 = poor understanding, 2 = fair understanding, 3 = good understanding, 4 = excellent/complete understanding.

\*Statistically significant at  $p < .05$  between having a variable and not having the variable.

RTI also examined whether implementer tenure in the program was related to implementation quality. Table 34 presents implementation quality metrics calculated for returning and new implementers. In Year 4, returning and new implementers were similarly likely to follow their curriculum guides (1.38 and 1.34, respectively). Returning implementers were significantly more likely than new implementers to engage students (2.54 and 2.33), have students understand the materials (2.95 and 2.72), and expect to complete all program sessions (93% and 88%). Note that in Year 3, there was no significant difference in the mean values of the measures for student engagement and student understanding for returning or new implementers (data not shown).

**Table 34. Implementation Quality for Returning and New Implementers, Year 4**

Implementation Quality Metric	Means		Comparison
	Returning Implementers	New Implementers	
Adherence to curriculum guide <sup>a, b</sup> 0 = Did not follow closely 1 = Followed somewhat closely 2 = Followed very closely	1.38	1.34	No significant difference ( $p = .35$ )
Percentage of implementers who had completed or expected to complete all program sessions by the end of the school year	93%	88%	Statistically significant difference ( $p < .01$ )
Student engagement <sup>a, b</sup> 0 = Not at all/bored 1 = Barely 2 = Somewhat 3 = Almost fully 4 = Fully	2.54	2.33	Statistically significant difference ( $p < .001$ )
Student understanding <sup>a, b</sup> 0 = Did not understand 1 = Poor 2 = Fair 3 = Good 4 = Excellent/complete	2.95	2.72	Statistically significant difference ( $p < .0001$ )

Note. <sup>a</sup> To allow for the most accurate comparison between years, in Year 4, student engagement and understanding were included only for in-person instruction.

<sup>b</sup> To enable accurate comparisons across means, decimals are rounded to the hundredth.

With the increased use of in-person training in Year 4, it is important to examine whether training type influenced implementers' enthusiasm for delivering program material or their confidence in their ability to successfully implement the program. In their surveys, in addition to reporting on the type of training they completed, implementers were asked to rate their level of enthusiasm, on a scale of 0 (low) to 100 (high), about teaching the prevention program. They were also asked a series of questions to assess their self-efficacy for delivering their prevention program. RTI calculated a mean self-efficacy score of 1–5 (low to high).

Table 35 shows that the mean level of implementer enthusiasm and self-efficacy varied somewhat according to the type of training received. Implementers who participated in virtual training with a live trainer reported the highest levels of enthusiasm. The lowest level of enthusiasm was reported by implementers who had never participated in training for their programs; this response group was used as the comparison for the analysis.

Implementer enthusiasm and self-efficacy scores were statistically significantly higher among implementers who participated in some type of training than among those respondents who never participated in a program training. These results highlight the influence that training may have on enhancing implementer confidence and enthusiasm for delivering program content. It is important to note that respondents could report completing multiple types of training or none at all.

**Table 35. Training Type and Implementer Engagement/Self-Efficacy, Year 4**

Type of Training Completed	Implementer Enthusiasm Mean Score [1–100] (SD)	Implementer Self-Efficacy <sup>a</sup> Mean Score [1–5] (SD)
I participated in <u>virtual training with a live trainer</u>	76 (23)*	3.96 (0.53)*
I participated in <u>in-person training</u>	72 (24)*	3.91 (0.54)*
I participated in <u>self-study training (i.e., no interaction with a trainer)</u>	73 (23)*	3.95 (0.50)*
I participated in <u>some other kind of training</u>	74 (27)	3.90 (0.61)
I did not participate in <u>training this year, but did previously</u>	74 (22)*	3.94 (0.51)
I have never participated in training for this program [comparison]	68 (25)	3.77 (0.52)

Note. \*Significantly higher than respondents who never participated in training for their program ( $p < .05$ ).

<sup>a</sup> Self-efficacy mean and standard deviation scores are reported to the hundredths to assist in comparison.

## 3.7 Implementing Strategies Observed by RTI

### 3.7.1 Effective Teaching Strategies

In Year 4, RTI field staff conducted classroom observations in selected *Prevention Matters* classrooms implementing selected lessons-based programs<sup>17</sup> in order to obtain general measures of implementation quality, including effective teaching strategies and classroom management. These measures of implementation quality were assessed based on how evident each of the following teaching or classroom management strategies were throughout the observed lesson: (1) clearly conveying the objective of the lesson to students, (2) relating the content to students' experiences, (3) clearly and coherently explaining the concepts of the prevention lesson, (4) using "wait time," and (5) checking for students' understanding. Table 36 summarizes the percentage of observations in which each of these strategies was used. Table 37 segments these data by elementary school and middle school and 9th grade.<sup>18</sup>

**Table 36. Observed Use of Teaching Strategies, Year 4**

Effective Teaching Strategy†	n	Clearly Evident %	Partially Evident %	Not Evident %
Conveys objective of lesson	132	80	9	11
Relates content to students' experiences	135	30	27	44
Explains concepts clearly and coherently	135	91	9	0
Uses wait time	130	12	48	39
Checks for students' understanding	123	43	24	33

Note. Percentages for clearly evident, partially evident, and not evident were calculated after the not applicable responses were removed from the total. n = number of observations after removal of not applicable responses.

†Not all percentages add to 100% because of rounding.

<sup>17</sup> Only lesson-based programs were observed, so non-lesson-based programs were excluded from this data collection.

<sup>18</sup> Elementary school included grades pre-K through 5; middle school and 9th grade included grades 6–9.

**Table 37. Observed Use of Teaching Strategies, by School Level, Year 4**

Effective Teaching Strategy†	Elementary School n	Elementary School Clearly Evident %	Middle School and 9th Grade n	Middle School and 9th Grade Clearly Evident %
Conveys objective of lesson	86	76	46	89
Relates content to students' experiences	89	33	46	24
Explains concepts clearly and coherently	89	96	46	83
Uses wait time	88	15	42	7
Checks for students' understanding	80	58	43	16

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

***Conveys objective of lesson.*** Clearly conveying the objective meant that the implementer conveyed the objective of the lesson at the start of the session in a student-friendly manner that promoted students' understanding. Overall, conveying the objective of the lesson was clearly evident for 80% of observations and partially evident for 9%. In the middle-school and 9th-grade level classrooms, conveying the objective of the lesson was clearly evident more frequently than in elementary school classrooms (89% and 76%, respectively).

***Relates content to students' experiences.*** Observations examined whether the content of the lesson was related to the students' lives, the school, the local community, or current national events. Relating the context to students' experiences was clearly evident for 30% of the observations and partially evident for another 27%. In elementary school classrooms, relating the content of the lesson was more frequently clearly evident than it was in middle-school and 9th-grade classrooms (33% and 24%, respectively). Conversely, in 44% of the overall classrooms, this strategy was rated as not evident.

***Explains concepts clearly and coherently.*** This item was rated as clearly evident when an implementer emphasized main points or main ideas during and at the end of the lesson or restated or rephrased concepts in multiple ways to increase understanding. An example of when this strategy was rated as not evident was

when students seemed confused or frequently asked for clarification. In 91% of observed classrooms, concepts from the program lessons were explained clearly and coherently (clearly evident). In elementary school classrooms, concepts were rated as clearly evident more frequently than they were in middle-school and 9th-grade classrooms (96% and 83%, respectively).

***Uses wait time.*** Waiting after asking a question gives students time to process the information given and form a meaningful response. It also potentially allows more students to participate in the discussion by giving them the needed time to formulate their answers. For five of the observations, using wait time was not able to be rated because discussion or question time was not integrated into the lessons. Among the observations for which the use of wait time could be observed, it was rated as clearly evident for 12% of the lessons, partially evident for 48% of lessons, and not evident for 39% of lessons. In elementary school classrooms, use of wait time was rated clearly evident twice as frequently as in middle-school and 9th-grade classrooms (15% and 7%, respectively).

***Checks for students' understanding.*** Evidence of checking for understanding included asking questions throughout the lesson to make sure all students were following along. In 12 classrooms, this teaching strategy was not rated because implementers ran out of time and were unable to finish their lessons, gave lessons that were activity based and did not leave time for discussion, or did not integrate discussions or questions during their lessons. In 43% of observations, checking for understanding was rated as clearly evident and in 24% of observations it was rated as partially evident. This teaching strategy was not evident in 33% of observations. In elementary school classrooms, this strategy was clearly evident almost four times as frequently as in middle-school and 9th-grade classrooms (58% and 16%, respectively).

### **3.7.2 Classroom Management**

Ratings of classroom management were based on observed approaches to managing students' behavior during the lesson. Table 38 presents four classroom management strategies: (1) ensuring that students have all materials and supplies for the lessons, (2) having routines in place to minimize the time that students are not engaged with meaningful work, (3) addressing off-task behaviors without major interruptions, and (4) facilitating the ability of students to stay on task. Table 39 segments these strategies by elementary school and middle-school and 9th-grade levels.



**Table 38. Observed Use of Classroom Management Strategies, Year 4**

Classroom Management Strategy†	Classrooms n	Clearly Evident %	Partially Evident %	Not Evident %
Students have all materials and supplies for the lesson	70	96	4	0
Routines are in place to minimize time students are not engaged with meaningful work	118	75	19	6
Off-task behaviors are addressed without major interruption	111	49	35	16
Students do not require much prompting to stay on task	111	74	15	11

Note. Percentages for clearly evident, partially evident, and not evident were calculated after the not applicable responses were removed from the total. n = number of observations after removal of not applicable responses.

† Not all percentages add to 100% because of rounding.

**Table 39. Observed Use of Classroom Management Strategies, by School Level, Year 4**

Classroom Management Strategy	Elementary School n	Elementary School Clearly Evident %	Middle School and 9th Grade n	Middle School and 9th Grade Clearly Evident %
Students have all materials and supplies for the lesson	29	100	41	93
Routines are in place to minimize time students are not engaged with meaningful work	80	84	38	58
Off-task behaviors are addressed without major interruption	75	61	36	22
Students do not require much prompting to stay on task	76	83	35	54

Note. Percentages for clearly evident were calculated after the not applicable responses were removed from the total. n = number of observations after removal of not applicable responses.

***Ensuring that students have all materials and supplies.*** For 96% of observations, having all the materials and supplies was rated as clearly evident; for 4% of observations, this strategy was partially evident. In 65 observed classrooms, discussions, not materials, were used during the lessons; therefore, this strategy could not be rated. In elementary school classrooms, the strategy was rated as clearly evident slightly more frequently than in the middle-school and 9th-grade classrooms (100% and 93%, respectively).

***Having routines in place.*** Examples of routines included ensuring that students knew where to sit for group work or large-group discussions, were able to transition quickly to those areas, knew where to access materials for the class, and knew where and how to hand in assignments. Having routines in place to minimize time students were not engaged in meaningful work was rated as clearly evident in 75% of observed classrooms. In another 19% of observed classrooms, this strategy was rated as partially evident. This item did not apply to 17% of observed classrooms because the lessons did not present opportunities to observe routines. In elementary school classrooms, this strategy was rated clearly evident over one and a half times more frequently than in middle-school and 9th-grade classrooms (84% and 58%, respectively).

***Addressing off-task behaviors.*** Classrooms were observed to see whether implementers used short phrases such as “Let’s stay focused” to redirect students to the task or activity. Of the classes with off-task behaviors, in 49% of classrooms, addressing off-task behaviors were observed as clearly evident. This classroom management strategy was partially evident in 35% of classrooms. Addressing off-task behaviors was observed almost three times more frequently in elementary school classrooms than in middle-school and 9th-grade classrooms (61% and 22%, respectively).

***Keeping students on task.*** In most classrooms, keeping students on task with little to no prompting was rated as clearly evident or partially evident (74% and 15%, respectively). In elementary school classrooms, keeping students on task was rated as clearly evident much more frequently than in middle-school and 9th-grade classrooms (83% and 54%, respectively).



## 3.8 Year 4 Successes

### 3.8.1 Grant Director Reports of Year 4 Successes

Despite the challenges that grant directors faced implementing and delivering their *Prevention Matters* programs, many of them reported major successes through open-ended survey responses and interviews. These successes fell into three main areas: program delivery, program staff, and student social-emotional learning growth.

***Program delivery.*** Overall, in their survey responses and interviews, most grant directors related their satisfaction about having delivered their *Prevention Matters* program in its entirety. Some grant directors attributed this success to the return of in-person instruction without COVID-19–related school closures. Other grant directors linked their program completion to offering implementers training before their program began.

***Program staff.*** Some grant directors emphasized that they could not have been successful with the program without the efforts of their program teams. They said that having designated implementers—as opposed to trying to engage

teaching staff who already had full class loads or lacked coaching expertise—was helpful. These teams served as coaches, trainers, and curriculum coordinators; were experts in their positions; and kept the program efficient and organized.

***Student social-emotional learning growth.*** In interviews and survey responses, some grant directors viewed students' self-awareness and their ability to be open with teachers as a significant success. These grantees had students come forward “reaching out, asking for help,... becoming aware of their own feelings in themselves.”

### 3.9 Additional Resources and Supports

In Year 4, 25% of grantees (six) reported having sources of funding for *Prevention Matters* programs in addition to funding from the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation. As shown in Figure 9, Years 1 and 4 had similar percentages of grant directors who reported receiving additional funding (24% and 25%, respectively). In Years 2 and 3, this percentage was much lower (11% and 12%, respectively).

**Figure 9. Grant Directors' Additional Funding Sources by Year, Years 1–4**

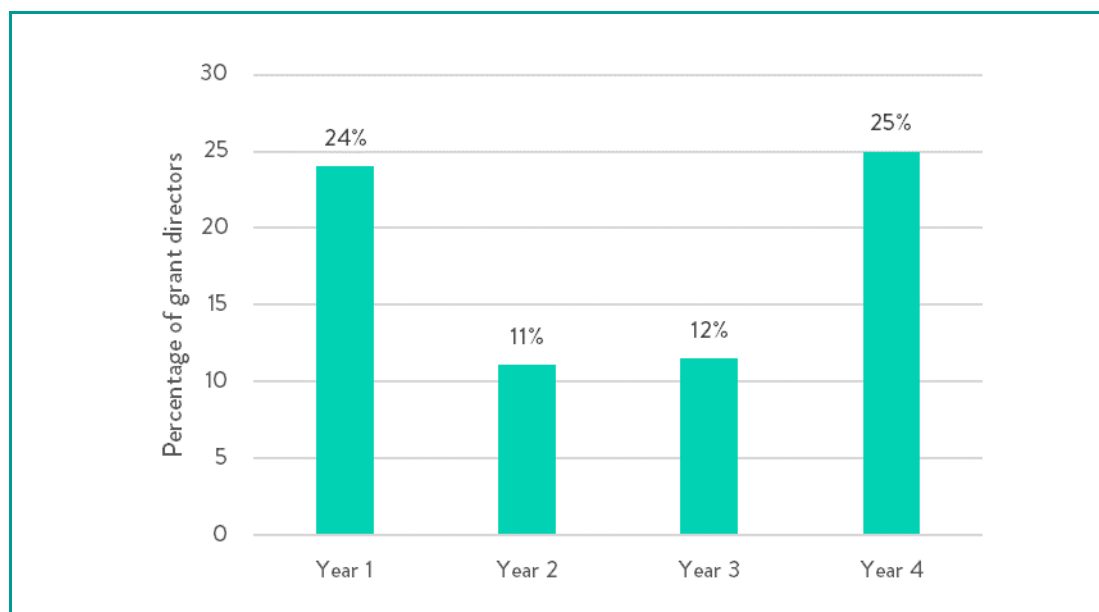


Table 40 shows the additional sources of funding the six grantees reported receiving, according to their surveys in Year 4. All noted that the federal government was an additional funding source, with three of the six grantees (50%) receiving Title IV grants, two receiving Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funding (33%), and one receiving other federal grants (17%). Other sources of funding included grants from other local funders and government funding at the state level.

**Table 40. Funding Sources in Addition to the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation, Year 4**

Funding Source	Percentage %	Number of Grantees <sup>a</sup> (n = 6)
Grants from other private funders in Indianapolis or Indiana	17	1
Federal government	100	6
Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funding	33	2
Title IV	50	3
Other federal grants	17	1
Government funding at the state level (state block grant)	17	1

<sup>a</sup> Grantees may have selected multiple funding sources.

### 3.9.1 Other Resources

Across all four years of *Prevention Matters*, implementers responded to questions on the availability of program resources. In their surveys, implementers were presented with a list of 11 resources needed to support program implementation. They were asked to report whether their school currently had enough of each resource. Responses were scored on a scale from 0 (“No, we do not have this resource”) to 3 (“Yes, we have enough of this resource”). Examining resources that were available in adequate supply and those that were lacking across the four years could reveal areas in which sustainability efforts should focus. Consistent with results from Years 2 and 3, and as shown in Figure 10, in Year 4 implementers reported that their biggest resource shortfalls were related to time and funding.

**Figure 10. Availability of Prevention Resources, as Reported by Implementers, Year 4**

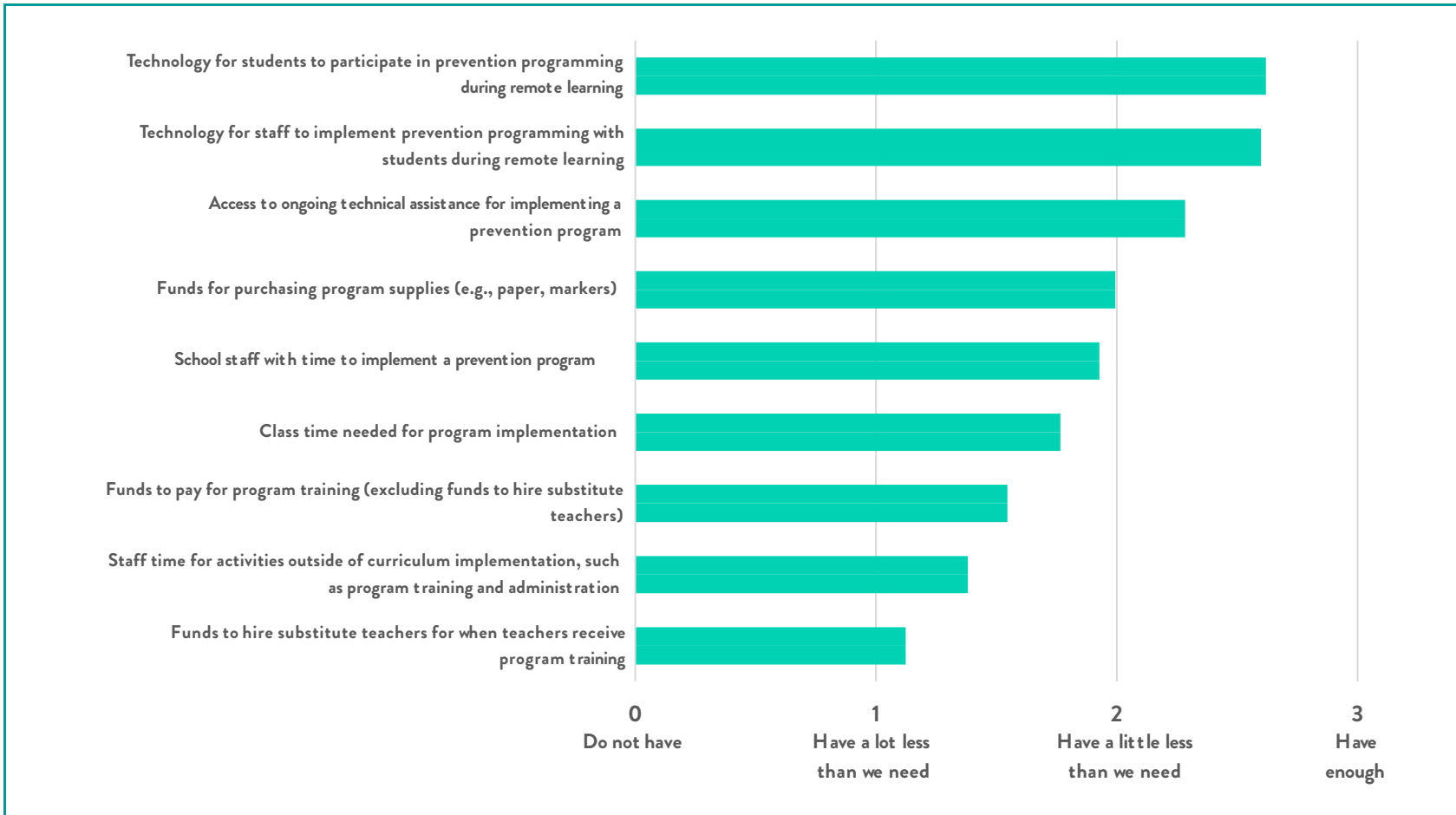


Table 41 compares implementer reports of resource availability in Years 2, 3, and 4 by examining the percentage who said they “have enough” or “have a little less than we need” of each resource. These percentages exclude those who responded “Don’t know.” All resources showed a significant decrease from Year 3 to Year 4. For example, the percentage of implementers who said they had enough or a little less than enough time to implement their programs decreased significantly from 73% in Year 3 to 68% in Year 4, and the percentage who said they had enough or a little less than enough funding to pay for substitute teachers when teachers are receiving training decreased significantly from 51% in Year 3 to 35% in Year 4. Only 59% of implementers reported that they had sufficient class time for program implementation, another significant decrease from Year 3. Anecdotal reports and information provided in grant director interviews suggest that schools continued to cope with the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on students’ academic and social-emotional development and on workforce participation (i.e., staffing, substitute teachers). Both workforce participation and students’ development conceivably affect the availability of time and resources needed to implement prevention programming.

**Table 41. Resources in Adequate Amounts, as Reported by Implementers, Years 2–4**

Resource Type	Percentage of Implementers		
	Year 2 %	Year 3 % <sup>a</sup>	Year 4 % <sup>b</sup>
School staff with time to implement a prevention program	69	73*	68*
Access to a copier to prepare program handouts	94	97*	Not asked
Space for implementing a prevention program	89	92*	Not asked
Funds to hire substitute teachers for when teachers receive program training	52	51	35*
Funds to pay for program training (excluding funds to hire substitute teachers)	59	63	51*
Funds to pay for purchasing program supplies (e.g., paper, markers)	71	76*	68*
Access to ongoing technical assistance for implementing a prevention program	82	86*	79 <sup>c</sup> *
Class time needed for program implementation	59	69*	59*

Resource Type	Percentage of Implementers		
	Year 2 %	Year 3 % <sup>a</sup>	Year 4 % <sup>b</sup>
Staff time for activities outside of curriculum implementation, such as program training and administration	52	53	43*
Technology for staff to implement prevention programs with students during remote learning	Not asked	91	89*
Technology for students to participate in prevention programs during remote learning	Not asked	92	90*

Note. \* Difference between years was statistically significant at  $p < .05$ .

<sup>a</sup> Percentages of implementers in Year 2 were compared to those in Year 3 to determine statistical significance.

<sup>b</sup> Percentages of implementers in Year 3 were compared to those in Year 4 to determine statistical significance.

<sup>c</sup> The Foundation scaled back its technical assistance support to grantees in Year 4, which may explain the reported reduction in this resource.



## 4 Challenges

### 4.1 Financial Challenges

In contrast to implementers' responses about resource limitations, no grant directors described financial challenges in response to open-ended survey questions about their greatest Year 4 challenges (both related and unrelated to the COVID-19 pandemic). This feedback is reinforced by the survey data indicating that a quarter of grant directors supplemented their *Prevention Matters* efforts with funding from sources other than the Foundation (see Section 3.9).

In Year 4 interviews, only a few grant directors reported facing financial limitations. Most who did report facing financial barriers said that grants tied to the COVID-19 pandemic were extremely helpful to reduce financial barriers and sufficiently enhance prevention programming funds.

A few grant directors noted that, although they had minor financial concerns for the program, they were committed to providing students with continued social-emotional support. One grantee developed a summer program that relied on other funding resources.

### 4.2 Policy Challenges

In their surveys, grant directors were presented with seven potential policy challenges and asked to indicate whether and to what extent each challenge limited their organizations' ability to deliver prevention programming to students.

Ten grantees (42%) did not report any policy barriers. Table 42 shows the major and minor policy barriers reported by the remaining 14 grant directors. Grant directors reported policy barriers related to COVID-19 in Year 3 more frequently than they reported any other policy barriers during Years 1, 2, or 4. Policy barriers specific to COVID-19 were less of an issue in Year 4.

The most common policy barriers reported in Year 4 were general policies (unrelated to COVID-19) mandating school schedules that limit the amount of time available for prevention programs (a minor barrier for nine grant directors) and general policies (unrelated to COVID-19) mandating school academic activities and benchmarks (a minor barrier for seven grant directors and a major barrier for one). These two policy barriers were also reported by grant directors in Year 3.

**Table 42. Policy Barriers Reported by Grant Directors in Survey, Years 1–4**

Policy Barrier	Number of Grantees							
	Year 1 (n = 26)		Year 2 (n = 26)		Year 3 (n = 26)		Year 4 (n = 23)	
	Major Barrier	Minor Barrier	Major Barrier	Minor Barrier	Major Barrier	Minor Barrier	Major Barrier	Minor Barrier
General policies (unrelated to COVID-19) mandating academic activities/benchmarks that, in turn, limit the amount of time available for prevention programs	1	10	3	9	2	6	1	7
General policies (i.e., unrelated to COVID-19) mandating school schedules (e.g., start/end dates, start/end times) that limit the amount of time available for prevention programs	1	9	3	4	1	8	0	9
Policies that limit ability to apply for, request, or use funding for prevention programming	0	1	0	2	1	0	0	3
Policies that limit administrators' ability to require teacher involvement in prevention programs	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	1
Policies that allow individual students (or their parents) to opt out of prevention programming	0	4	0	1	0	1	0	4
Policies that limit what prevention content can be taught in schools	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1
Policies that restrict what data can be collected or used for program monitoring and evaluation	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>COVID-19–Specific Policy Barriers<sup>a</sup></b>								
Policies that required school building closures and remote instruction due to COVID-19	–	–	–	–	7	11	1	3
COVID-specific policies mandating school schedules (e.g., start/end dates, start/end times) that limit the amount of time available for prevention programs	–	–	–	–	8	8	0	5
COVID-specific policies mandating academic activities/benchmarks that, in turn, limit the amount of time available for prevention programs	–	–	–	–	5	4	0	6

<sup>a</sup> Asked only in Year 3 and 4 surveys.

In their Year 4 interviews, some grant directors reported that they did not encounter policy barriers; however, for those who did, the challenges they described centered around meeting state academic benchmarks. In their interviews, grant directors said that their schools faced numerous state requirements, and finding time to fulfill them and ensure that prevention programming was implemented became a scheduling challenge. Among grantees who listed competing academic benchmarks as a policy barrier in the survey, a few clarified that since their prevention programming started, they had been very intentional with their scheduling and believed they were going to both meet their mandated academic goals and complete their prevention programming.

Some grantees noted in their interviews that COVID-19 policies such as school closures and social distancing protocols affected students, staff, and *Prevention Matters* implementation, but they expected to see these challenges dissipate as the pandemic became less of an issue. (See COVID-19–Related Challenges, Section 4.4.)

## 4.3 Implementation Challenges

### 4.3.1 Grant Director Perspectives

In an open-ended survey question, grant directors were asked about their biggest Year 4 *Prevention Matters* challenge unrelated to the COVID-19 pandemic. Of the 18 grant directors who answered this question, five (28%) noted that time and scheduling in the face of competing demands were their biggest challenges. Four (22%) grant directors reported that frequent staff transitions and turnovers were their biggest challenges. These challenges were also noted by grant directors in their interviews, along with disorganization.

*Competing demands.* Of the 18 grant directors who answered the open-ended survey question, 28% (five) said that time and scheduling in the face of competing demands were their biggest challenges. Several grant directors mentioned in their survey responses that they attempted to address this issue by setting a firm block of time in teachers' schedules for prevention programming. In their interviews, some grant directors described finding it

Our staffing has been like a revolving door almost.... Administratively, we've gone through [many] different principals during this time as well. So that has definitely caused some challenges, just because each one has different styles and different expectations for what they want to be involved in with the programming.

— Grant Director

challenging to fit their *Prevention Matters* programming into school schedules when faced with competing demands such as meeting academic goals, holding physical education classes, or providing students with morning meals.

***Staff turnover.*** Four grant directors (22%) reported in the open-ended survey question that frequent staff transitions and turnovers were their biggest challenges. These responses were echoed in the interviews; most grant directors said that heavy turnover was one of the biggest challenges they faced. In some cases, staffing turnover contributed to lack of implementer buy-in because new teachers had to be convinced of the importance of the program. Grant directors said that consistent staff turnover often perpetuated classroom instability, an issue that many hoped to resolve by offering appropriate training to incoming staff. Yet, a couple grant directors indicated in their surveys that providing adequate training to implementers to maintain the consistency of curriculum implementation was their biggest challenge.

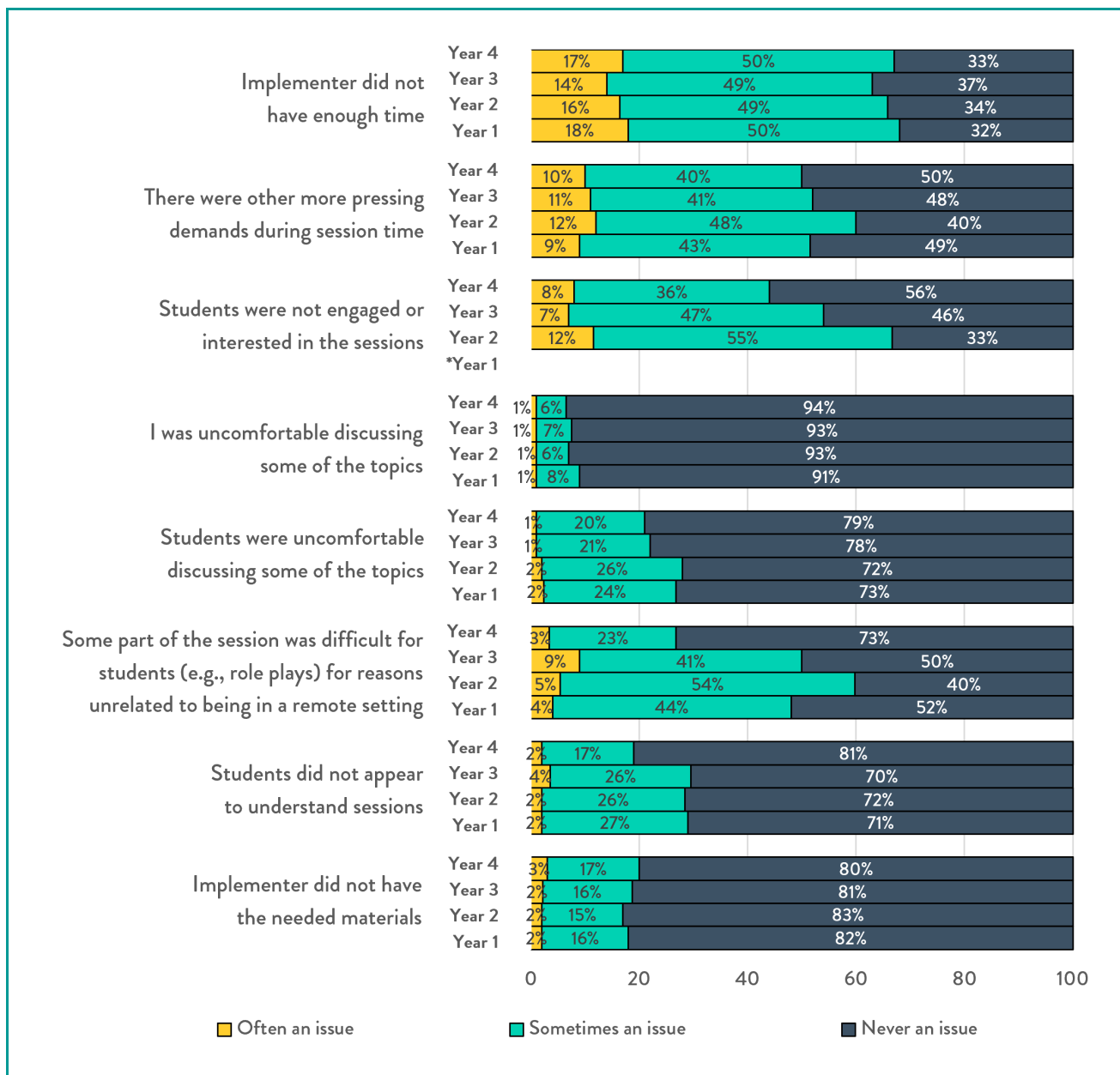
***Organizational challenges.*** In their interviews, some grant directors also mentioned feeling disorganized implementing their prevention programming. In particular, these grant directors said that a lack of clear expectations or implementation checklists made their prevention program implementation less smooth. These challenges were compounded by staff turnover, which further delayed program implementation. Clear communication and implementation checklists at the start of their grants would have helped these interviewees feel more prepared and ready for their program implementation. A few grant directors interviewed, and most of those surveyed, reported that they were working closely with any new staff to prevent this challenge from continuing or re-emerging.

All but two of the programs being implemented through *Prevention Matters* are Tier 1 programs; that is, they offer universal programming and are not designed to provide specialized or targeted supports. However, a few grant directors noted that they felt challenged to provide their students with specialized, targeted, and individualized supports (Tier 2 and 3 support).

### 4.3.2 Implementer Perspectives

Figure 11 shows implementers' perspectives on implementation challenges not specifically related to COVID-19, taken from the implementer survey.

**Figure 11. Frequency of Implementation Issues across All Four Years, by Year**



Note. Some responses do not total 100% because of rounding.  
\* Not asked.

**Time.** In Year 4, two-thirds (67%) of implementers sometimes (50%) or often (17%) felt they did not have enough time to implement. This is similar to responses in Year 1 (68%) and a slight increase from those in Years 2 and 3 (65% and 63%, respectively). Year 4 results were significantly higher than those in Year 3 (49% sometimes, 14% often). Additionally, in Year 4, half of implementers reported that

there were other, more pressing, demands during the session time. These results do not differ significantly from those in Year 3 (52%).

Results from analysis of one open-ended question asked on the implementer survey echoed these findings. At the end of their surveys, implementers were asked, “Would you like to explain any of your responses to this survey or provide us with any additional information?” Just under 300 implementers wrote in a response. RTI conducted a high-level content analysis of these responses. Having insufficient time to engage in discussions with students, as well as to prepare for and deliver the material, was one common theme to emerge from the ~300 responses. One implementer noted,

*I think that social skills are vital. The problem is that we are told that everything is important, and we do not have time or support to do what is necessary for kids that need... this. The school itself needs to have a secondary program or follow up with kids who need more support.*

Some respondents mentioned that they addressed students’ needs in response to situations as they arose throughout the day and that they found this approach more effective than trying to find time to prepare for and deliver a predetermined lesson. Other respondents recommended that program implementation schedules shift to allow for more consistent delivery, such as through a dedicated class period.

***Student engagement.*** Almost half of implementers reported sometimes (36%) or often (8%) having an issue with students who were not engaged or interested in the sessions. This result was statistically significantly lower than in Year 3 (47% sometimes, 7% often) and Year 2 (55% sometimes, 12% often).

Another common theme that emerged from the ~300 written responses to the open-ended survey question was that some implementers felt that their prevention program was not engaging for students, usually because the material was not at an appropriate level for older students, was repetitive, or, in a few cases, was not culturally relevant. Here are some examples of related comments:

- *The 5th-grade students feel like the program is too juvenile for them. They do not like the videos, songs, or topics.*
- *At the 8th-grade level, students want to have frank conversations about mental health and wellbeing. Instead, [the prevention program] waters down topics, and students feel it is condescending.*

- *I believe that social-emotional skills need to be taught in our school, however, I do not believe the curriculum is a good fit for the students at my grade level. Many of my students feel like the curriculum is too childish and too silly for their age.*

Regarding the issue of repetition, one implementer wrote,

*My only issue is that for older kids, it's really repetitive and they lose interest. They want to be talking about getting ready for middle school, about the war in Ukraine, about COVID, etc. While you can make the connections through [the prevention program], you don't have time to hit both and have meaningful discussions.*

***Comfort with topics and exercises.*** In Year 4, only 7% of implementers reported often or sometimes being uncomfortable discussing some of the topics in the program, whereas 21% of implementers reported students' being uncomfortable discussing some of the topics. Compared to those in Year 1, the implementer reports of their own or students' discomfort discussing some topics decreased significantly; 9% of implementers reported being uncomfortable themselves, and 26% of implementers reported that students were often or sometimes uncomfortable.

In Year 4, fewer implementers felt that students had difficulty with their prevention sessions than in Year 3. Over a quarter of implementers reported that some part of the session (e.g., role plays) was difficult for students for reasons unrelated to being in a remote setting. Implementers' perceptions of student difficulty were statistically significantly lower in Year 4 than in Year 3 (41% sometimes, 9% often).

***Student understanding.*** In Year 4, fewer implementers felt that students had difficulty understanding their prevention sessions than in Year 3. Less than a fifth of implementers reported sometimes (17%) or often (2%) having an issue with students who did not appear to understand the sessions they were teaching (when teachers were able to see students' reactions). This result is significantly lower than that in Year 3 (26% sometimes, 4% often).

***Materials.*** In the Year 4 survey, 20% of implementers reported sometimes or often lacking the needed materials to implement program sessions; this outcome has stayed about the same across all four years (17–20%).

## 4.4 COVID-19–Related Challenges

### 4.4.1 Overview

During the 2021–2022 school year, grantees estimated that most *Prevention Matters* programming was implemented in person. Twenty-one of the 24 grant directors reported that they mostly implemented programming in person (19 implemented entirely in person and two estimated that they conducted 10% or less of their implementation virtually). Two of the 24 grantees reported that they mostly implemented programming virtually. For one school, the method of implementation depended on grade level. Students in grade 6 who were enrolled in health and physical education received programming 100% in person. Students in grades 7 and 8 who were enrolled in health and physical education received programming 100% virtually.

### 4.4.2 Grant Director Perspectives

In Year 4, all schools were open for most, if not all, of the school year. Despite having mostly in-person learning, grant directors still encountered implementation challenges due to COVID-19. Of those who responded to the open-ended survey question about their biggest Year 4 *Prevention Matters* challenge, only two grant directors named the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in their interviews, some grant directors reported that accessibility challenges related to COVID-19, such as getting computers and internet access, were a main issue. This lack of technology accessibility was challenging and the student attendance rate decreased as a result. Other grantees noted that once schools shifted to hybrid-learning models, students who attended class remotely were at a disadvantage, one mentioning in the interview, *“It’s hard to have that classroom discussion or do a group activity; a lot of the activities, [the students] just couldn’t participate in at the same level.”*

In their Year 4 interviews, some grant directors emphasized that during Years 2 and 3 the constant shift in learning structure (online, hybrid, or in person) made it challenging for them to adjust and to reach everyone.

Grant directors also reported that both students and staff had an increase in mental health problems because of the COVID-19 pandemic. For students, the time at home and forced isolation affected their social skills once they resumed in-person instruction. A few grant directors noted that this caused more peer conflict and an increase in the number of students who needed mental health counseling



and support services. Similarly, grant directors expressed that the time in COVID-19 isolation affected them as well, one noting in the interview, “*As adults we had forgotten, okay, how do I mitigate this, how can I be proactive, how can I step in and kind of help.*” A few grant directors mentioned that staff found it harder to build relationships with other teachers and that the burnout that teachers experienced due to COVID-19 caused heavy turnover.

In addition, grant directors referenced COVID-19 policies such as school closures and social distancing protocols as hindrances to *Prevention Matters* implementation. For them, school closures meant putting their students in a vulnerable position, and one of the grantees quickly worked to reopen learning labs specifically for “*10 to 15% of [the] most fragile students, which included those students who were struggling social-emotionally.*”

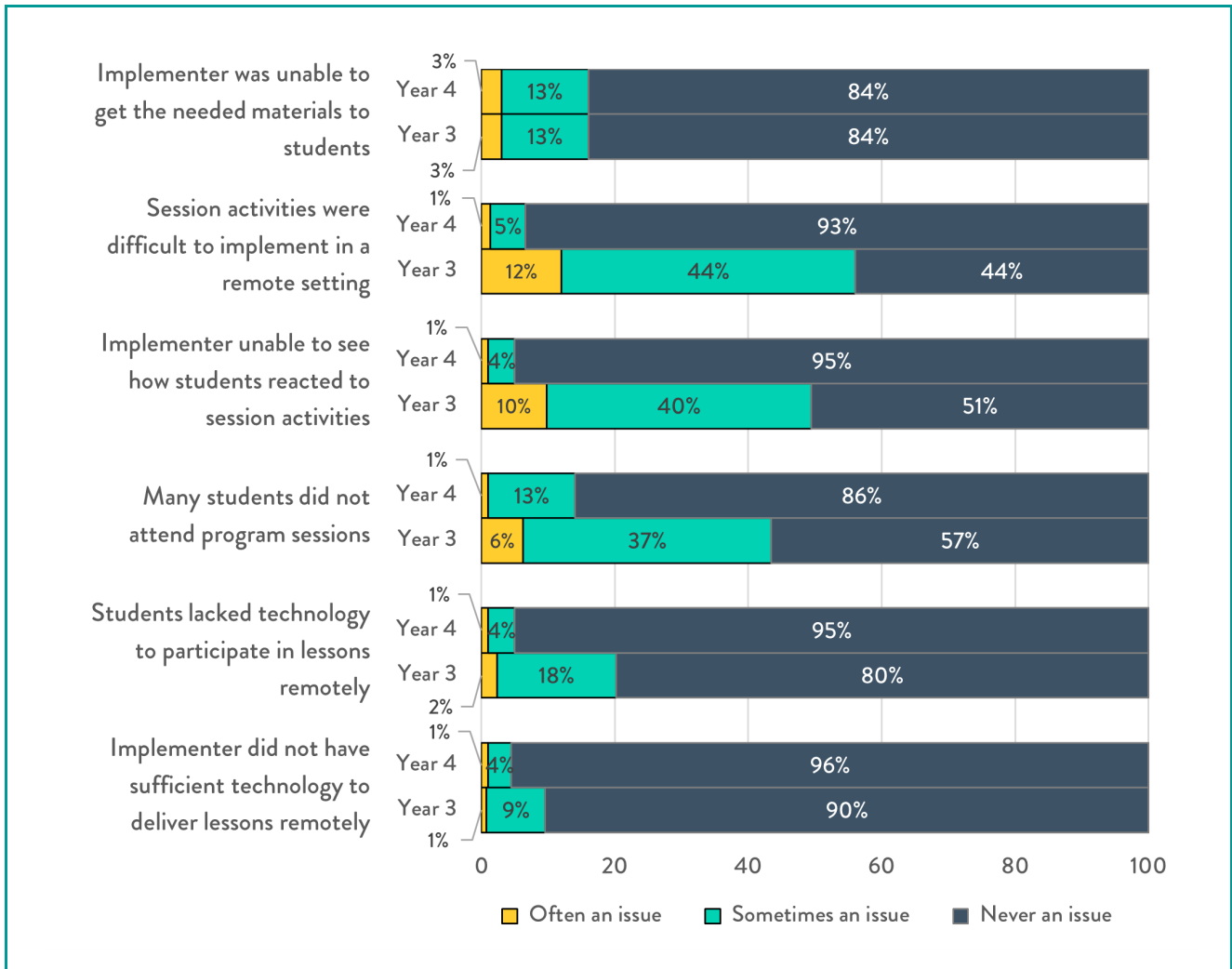
Other grantees found that when they came back to in-person instruction, social distancing protocols limited the impact of *Prevention Matters* programming because students could no longer connect on a physical level (e.g., high-fives, fist bumps). Although grant directors noted this restriction, they recognized that once COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, they would no longer face this problem.

Despite the setbacks that grant directors faced implementing their programs during COVID-19, a few emphasized in their open-ended survey responses that they were proud of their implementers for getting through the hardships and felt that these implementers had a stronger sense of the program for future implementation.

### **4.4.3 Implementer Perspectives**

Implementers continued to report challenges related to virtual or hybrid instruction. However, these difficulties seemed to be less prominent than they were in the previous year. The percentage of implementers reporting that they were unable to get the needed materials to students remained the same in Years 3 and 4 (16%). The remaining COVID-19–related challenges were all significantly lower in Year 4 than in Year 3, as seen in Figure 12. These changes are likely the result in part of an increased proportion of in-person instruction relative to other modalities. Teachers and students continuing with virtual or hybrid instruction may also have become more experienced with the process.

**Figure 12. Frequency of Implementation Issues Related to Virtual Learning, Years 3 and 4**



Note. Some responses do not total 100% because of rounding.



## 5 Sustainability

### 5.1 Planning for Sustainability

As the *Prevention Matters* initiative entered its final year, many grantees turned their attention to sustaining programming after the conclusion of financial and technical support from the grant. Accordingly, sustainability was a major theme in Year 4 grant director interviews. Many grant directors said that they had been thinking about and planning for sustainability from the beginning of the grant. A few mentioned participating in regular leadership meetings at which sustainability was discussed.

Grant directors identified priorities for ensuring the sustainability of their prevention programming. A few grant directors wanted to increase implementer buy-in, since having teachers advocate for the program would increase its longevity. Other grant directors intended to focus on leadership buy-in, because principals ultimately decide whether to continue funding the program. Some mentioned concerns about staff roles, noting that without funding they would lack support for personnel to oversee implementation. Grant directors also discussed sustainability concerns such as the cost of training and materials, the challenge of serving a rapidly growing district, the responses to staff turnover, and the cultural fit of the program.

Most grant directors focused their sustainability efforts on securing funding. Many were looking for or had already obtained financial support through additional grants. In addition to seeking external funding, many grant directors adapted or planned to adapt their organizational budgets to help sustain the program. Some grantees reported having been strategic about how they used their funds during the final year of their grant to support sustainability. They discussed incorporating some program costs, such as hiring social-emotional learning specialists and replenishing student workbooks, into the existing budget for the next school year. A few grant directors who implemented Second Step mentioned that they would continue to use their previously purchased kits and the online platform after their grant funding ended. As one grantee said, *“We are hoping to utilize the funding this year to set us up for the next year, like with supplies even, could be the next year or two, to just better be prepared to sustain us in the future.”*

Funding was not the only facilitator to sustaining prevention programming, however. Some grant directors developed procedures and documentation to ensure that program implementation would continue seamlessly after *Prevention Matters* ended. One grantee created a document detailing programming logistics so that future staff could easily continue implementation in the wake of potential personnel changes; another grant director employed an implementation rubric to support schools’ individual sustainability efforts.

Most grant directors believed that the leadership and implementer buy-in that had been cultivated was invaluable to their sustainability efforts. Some grant directors viewed the success that they had already achieved integrating the program into their school environments and their organizations’ priorities as an important component of program sustainability. One grant director even noted that the school board and superintendent were involved in advocacy efforts for prevention curricula at the state and national level: *“It truly has permeated the entire community.... I have no concerns whatsoever that [the program] will not be a priority.”* Last, grant directors described their plans to sustain their implementation quality monitoring even after their grants ended. Some intended to continue their current monitoring processes, and others said they would revisit and adjust their plans over time.

Grant directors likewise responded to survey questions about sustainability. The respondents were asked about their involvement with nine facets of sustainability planning. For each, they responded on the following scale:

- No discussion (0)
- Limited discussion with no clear plan (1)

- Discussion with tentative plan (2)
- Discussion with firm plan (3)
- Executed plan (4)

The average of grantees' scores on each of the nine sustainability domains is the basis for the calculation of a sustainability index score, which ranges from 0 to 4, with 4 being high. In general, grantee sustainability index scores have increased over time. Overall, grantees scored higher on the sustainability index in Year 4 (1.99) than in Year 1 (1.65), though this increase was not statistically significant. Table 43 shows the grantee sustainability scores related to the areas of sustainability planning.

**Table 43. Sustainability Planning Scores, by Year, Years 1 and 4**

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

Note. Grant directors' responses to their survey were used to calculate a sustainability planning index that ranges from 0 to 4, with 4 being high.

\* Indicates change was statistically significant ( $p \leq .05$ ) in comparing Year 4 to Year 1.

One specific area of sustainability planning improved significantly from Year 1 to Year 4:

- Determine how the program aligns with the mission and goals of potential future stakeholders.

## 6 Future Implementation and Perceived Impacts

In this final year of the *Prevention Matters* initiative, grant directors and implementers were asked to reflect on the past four years and share information on their plans for future implementation. In interviews, some grant directors said that they were satisfied with their current implementation and did not foresee any changes in the future. Others did plan to modify some aspects of implementation: shift the grades in which the program is implemented, give implementers more flexibility to adapt their program, or reassign staff duties. A few grantees spoke broadly about wanting to expand their programs' funding and size.

Grant directors also discussed what they considered when making the decision to continue implementing their prevention programs. Grant directors who planned to continue implementation cited facilitators such as leadership and implementer buy-in, program alignment with their schools' needs and values, and secured funding. From a practicality standpoint, a few grant directors mentioned that they already had the necessary program materials and their implementers were already trained, presumably making future implementation more straightforward and feasible. Grant directors who were unsure about whether they would continue with existing programs identified some barriers, including uncertainty about teachers' capacity to continue implementing the program and concerns about the cultural appropriateness of the prevention program for their diverse student population. For example, one grant director expressed a need to adapt the selected prevention program to make it culturally relevant to a diverse student body before continuing implementation.

Grant director survey findings on future implementation supported many of the themes from interviews. At the time of the survey, 19 of 24 grant directors (79%) reported that they "definitely" planned to continue implementing one or more of their prevention programs (for a total of 32 programs) after the end of the *Prevention Matters* initiative. One grant director said that the grantee would not continue implementing its prevention program. The remaining four grant

directors said that they might continue implementing one or more of their programs, but they were not certain. Table 44 shows the results by program offered.

**Table 44. Grantees' Plans to Continue Implementing Prevention Matters Programs, Year 4**

Program	Does your organization plan to continue implementing this program after <i>Prevention Matters</i> funding ends? n = 24					
	Yes, Definitely		Maybe		No	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Botvin LifeSkills Training (n = 7)	5	71	2	29	0	0
Conscious Discipline (n = 2)	2	100	0	0	0	0
Curriculum-Based Support Group (n = 2)	1	50	1	50	0	0
Second Step Elementary (n = 13)	12	92	1	8	0	0
Second Step Middle (n = 11)	8	73	3	27	0	0
Too Good for Drugs (n = 2)	1	50	1	50	0	0
Other programs (n = 4)	3	75	0	0	1	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>

Note. % is the percentage of grant directors currently offering each program who responded yes, maybe, or no. "Other programs" includes when a grant director selected "other" as that grantee's program, as well as programs offered by only one grantee. These are combined to protect confidentiality.

Grant directors who definitely planned to continue offering a prevention program were also asked about the specific elements that they planned to sustain (Table 45). For 18 programs (56%), grantees indicated that they did not know at the time which elements of the program would continue. Across the remaining 14 programs, grantees planned to continue delivering program lessons to students for 12 of the programs (2 of the 14 programs do not have specific lessons to deliver). For 12 programs, grantees planned to offer training for new implementers, and for seven programs, grantees planned to offer follow-up training for returning implementers. Grantees also planned to continue collecting student outcome data for nine programs. For seven programs, grantees planned to conduct classroom observations. Only four grantees reported planning to collect lesson completion and fidelity data after *Prevention Matters* ends.

**Table 45. Specific Program Elements Grantees Plan to Continue in the Future, Year 4**

Which of the following elements of [PROGRAM] will your organization continue to implement? Check all that apply. (n = 32 programs)	Number of Programs	Percent of Programs %
I don't know	18	56
Delivering program lessons to students	12 <sup>a</sup>	38
Training new implementers	12	38
Providing follow-up or refresher training for returning implementers	7	22
Collecting student outcome data	9	28
Conducting classroom observations	7	22
Collecting lesson completion and fidelity data	4	13

Note. <sup>a</sup> Two of the programs that grantees planned to continue implementing do not have lessons to deliver.

Implementers also reflected on various aspects of their schools' *Prevention Matters* programs over the past four years, as well as their perspectives about future implementation. In their surveys, implementers were asked to consider how acceptable each program had been, how well it aligned with and was received by the school community, and how successful it had been since the start of the initiative. Respondents rated their level of agreement with three statements related to program fit: 77% agreed that their program was a good fit for their students' needs, 84% that the program was compatible with their schools' culture and goals, and 70% that the program worked well with their schools in terms of logistics and scheduling.

Ninety percent of implementers said it was very important or moderately important to continue offering the program (or something similar), and three-quarters expressed a personal interest in continuing to teach the program to students, with almost half saying they were definitely interested in continuing to deliver the curriculum. Implementers were asked to rate their level of agreement (strongly agree to strongly disagree) with multiple statements about eight potential impacts they perceived their prevention programs to have on student outcomes (Table 46). Approximately three-quarters of implementers perceived that their prevention programs had a positive impact on students' self-awareness (76%) and social awareness (74%). Approximately seven in 10 implementers



perceived their prevention program to have had a positive impact on students' self-management/self-regulation (71%) and relationship skills (70%).

**Table 46. Implementer-Perceived Impacts of Their Prevention Program, Year 4**

Program Impact	Percent Strongly Agree or Agree %
This program has had a positive impact on students' self-awareness. (n = 1,605)	76
This program has had a positive impact on students' social awareness. (n = 1,603)	74
This program has had a positive impact on students' self-management/self-regulation. (n = 1,602)	71
This program has had a positive impact on students' relationship skills. (n = 1,602)	70
This program has had a positive impact on students' responsible decision making. (n = 1,606)	65
This program has had a positive impact on students' ability to cope with and respond to stressors related to COVID-19. (n = 1,602)	57
This program has reduced bullying. (n = 1,605)	44
This program has helped to prevent student substance use. (n = 1,592)	22

Note. Implementers did not have to respond to every statement; n denotes the number who responded to each one.

Less than half of implementers reported that the program had reduced bullying (44%) or prevented substance use (22%). It is worth noting, however, that a large proportion of implementers delivered *Prevention Matters* programs—such as Second Step and Conscious Discipline—that do not contain required lessons explicitly focused on substance use prevention or bullying. This difference was reflected in multiple responses to one open-ended question in the implementer survey, including one person who wrote, “*There were several questions about substance abuse, but I don’t remember ever teaching about this topic.*” Others suggested that lessons should be added to teach students refusal skills and the harms of substance use, particularly vaping. Though Second Step implementers had the option of delivering a supplemental unit related to bullying, RTI did not collect data on how many used this extra material with their students. When the analysis was limited to the survey responses of implementers delivering Botvin LifeSkills Training and Too Good for Drugs—*Prevention Matters* programs that do have required lessons focused more explicitly on substance use prevention—the

level of agreement with the statement, “[PROGRAM] has helped to prevent substance use” rose significantly, to 52%.

Most implementers also delivered programming to students in elementary grades, among whom substance use is less common.<sup>19, 20</sup> Comparing the responses of implementers who delivered programming to students in pre-K through grade 5 to those of implementers who delivered programming to students in grades 6–12, and to those who delivered programming to students in both groups, shows significant differences in perceived program impacts on substance use. Among implementers who worked with pre-K through grade 5 only, 20% agreed that the program positively affected student substance use. This percentage rose to 26% for implementers who worked with grades 6–12 only. The highest percentage of agreement with the statement that the program prevented substance use was found among implementers who delivered programming to students in both grade categories (49% agreed, although only 35 implementers were in this category). Finally, among older students, it may be more difficult for teachers and implementers to detect changes in students’ substance use behaviors than it is for them to perceive changes in students’ social-emotional competence.

Approximately 300 responses were received to the open-ended implementer survey question, “Would you like to explain any of your responses to this survey or provide us with any additional information?” Responses related to challenges and successes, as well as to recommendations for implementation. Two common themes found across the respondents were that implementers found their prevention programs to be effective, generally liked the programs they were implementing, or both. One person reflected, “*This has been a great program to teach skills to my students on how to handle situations that are similar to what they are dealing with at home and at school in a very positive way,*” another added, “*I love this program! The students really have practiced what they have learned,*” and one simply wrote, “*Very satisfied with the program. It works!*” Describing the effects of the program on the whole school community, one implementer wrote:

*I LOVE our school wide involvements with [the prevention program] and how involved our administration is (both at Central Office and at our school level). After being in education and seeing programs come and go and be unsuccessful, I see this program being treated*

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<sup>19</sup> Andrews, J. A., Tildesley, E., Hops, H., Duncan, S. C., & Severson, H. H. (2003). Elementary school age children’s future intentions and use of substances. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*, 32(4), 556–567. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15374424jccp3204\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15374424jccp3204_8)

<sup>20</sup> Richmond-Rakerd, L. S., Slutske, W. S., & Wood, P. K. (2017). Age of initiation and substance use progression: A multivariate latent growth analysis. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 31(6), 664–675. <https://doi.org/10.1037/adb0000304>

*completely different. Our building is completely on board, and you see and hear students and staff using the vocabulary and strategies everywhere in the building. We still have a lot of concerns with behavior, though, so I do feel the pandemic and society has really impacted our students negatively and it's an uphill battle. I'm just glad we have something as powerful as [this program] in our toolbox to use as we try to get through this tough time.*

Closely following these responses were those from implementers who affirmed their belief that social-emotional learning instruction is important, even if they had no comment on their particular programs or found them to be lacking. For example, one implementer wrote, “*Social emotional learning is imperative to have in the lives of our students. Especially with those that have faced significant trauma. It helps them to cope better in everyday live situations.*” Another implementer, echoing the sentiment in several comments, stated, “*I believe strongly in the implementation of a [social-emotional learning] program, but have hesitations as to the success of this specific program.*” Last, several implementers considered the skills taught by their programs to be important but felt that classroom content was not sufficient to change behaviors and attitudes among students facing multiple other influences and hardships outside of school.

## 6.1 Correlates of Future Implementation

Using grant director and implementer survey data, RTI also examined several potential correlates of future implementation.

### 6.1.1 Grant Director Perspectives

Using Year 4 grant director survey data, RTI examined the following correlates of continuing to implement *Prevention Matters* programs:

- Sustainability index score
- Level of leadership engagement in and support for *Prevention Matters* programming and goals
- Use of other funds to supplement *Prevention Matters* programs
- Number of partner supports available

***Sustainability planning.*** Grant directors who reported that they plan to continue offering one or more of their prevention programs after the end of the *Prevention Matters* initiative, on average, rated their organizations' sustainability planning

efforts higher than grant directors who did not plan to continue offering programs. However, the difference was not statistically significant.

**Leadership engagement.** Given the relationship between leadership engagement and program sustainability noted in grant director interviews, RTI examined grant director survey data to determine whether there was a relationship between the total number of activities in which an organization's leaders engaged and the grantee's likelihood of continuing program implementation. Grant directors who definitely planned to continue implementing at least one of their prevention programs reported higher average amounts of leader engagement in *Prevention Matters* activities than did those who were not planning to continue implementing programs (4.1 activities and 3.2, respectively), but the difference was not statistically significant.

**Leadership buy-in.** RTI also looked at the relationship between multiple components of leadership buy-in and the likelihood of continuing implementation. Grant directors were asked to rate their level of agreement with several statements about their organizations' leaders, such as "Our organization's leaders are supportive of staff implementing substance use prevention programming," "Our organization's leaders are committed to promoting social-emotional learning," and "Our organization's leaders are able to obtain the necessary financial resources for substance use prevention programming." RTI compared these ratings by grant directors who definitely planned to continue implementing at least one program with those for grant directors who did not plan to continue implementing. Across all categories of leadership buy-in, respondents who definitely planned to continue implementing rated leadership buy-in slightly lower (i.e., they were more likely to say they agreed than to say they strongly agreed) than those who did not plan to continue. However, only one of the differences, for responses to the item, "Our organization's leaders are committed to preventing substance use," was statistically significant.

**External funding support.** Grantees who definitely planned to continue offering at least one of their prevention programs reported a higher average number of external funding sources (1.3 funding sources on average, compared with 1.0 for those who did not plan to continue), but that difference was not statistically significant.

**Partner supports.** Grantees who definitely planned to continue offering at least one of their prevention programs reported a higher average number of supports provided by partners (2.6 on average, compared with 0.5 for those who did not plan to continue), but that difference was not statistically significant.

## 6.1.2 Implementer Perspectives

Among implementers, RTI looked at several potential correlates of implementers' perception of the importance of their school's continuing to offer prevention programming in the future and their own desire to continue delivering lessons in the future.

The following potential correlates were examined:

- Implementers' perception of how well the **program fit** their schools (three measures)
- Implementers' perception of the **program's impacts** on students (eight measures)
- Implementers' reports of having received **feedback on their implementation** (two measures)
- Implementers' participation in training (one measure)

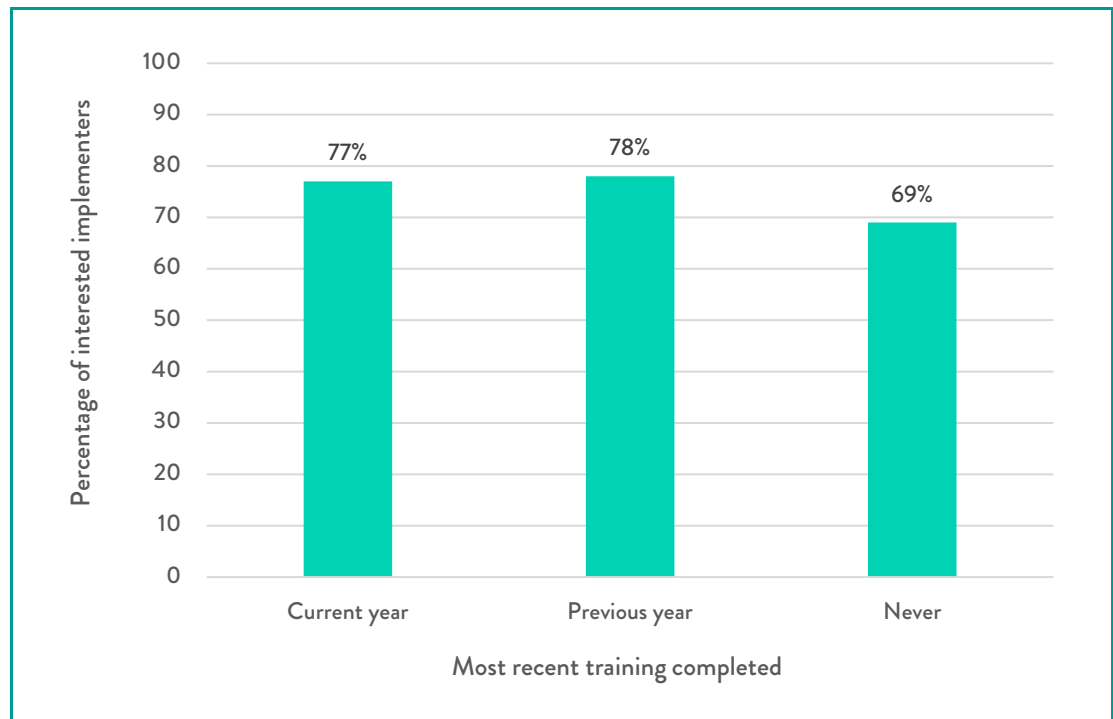
***Perceived program fit and impact.*** Implementers who considered it important for their schools to continue offering the prevention program or something similar reported significantly better ratings than implementers who said continuing the program was “of little importance” or “not important at all” on all three measures of program fit and all eight measures of perceived program impacts.

Implementers who expressed interest in continuing to deliver program lessons in the future also reported significantly better ratings on all three program fit items and all eight perceived program impact items than implementers who did not wish to continue implementing or who were unsure.

***Receiving feedback on implementation.*** An exploration of the relationship between implementer interest in continuing to implement and their receipt of feedback on classroom observations or on implementation reports submitted yielded no significant differences.

***Participating in training.*** As shown in Figure 13, implementers who expressed an interest in continuing to deliver program lessons in the future were significantly different from those who did not wish to continue implementing (or who were unsure about continuing) regarding their reports of when they participated in training. Implementers who had never received training were significantly less likely to express an interest in continuing to implement than implementers who had received training in the current or a prior school year.

**Figure 13. Correlates of Implementer Interest in Continuing to Implement the Prevention Program: Training Participation, Year 4**





## Learning about Impact

The *Prevention Matters* evaluation uses three sources of impact data: administrative data from the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE), information from monitoring and evaluation instruments that grantees collect for their own purposes, and Indiana Youth Survey (INYS) results. Given the timing of data collection and processing, this report focuses on data from Years 3 and 4. This section examines changes in IDOE data from 2013–2014 through 2021–2022; differences in grantees' Year 3 and 4 pre- and posttest information; and differences in annual measures, including INYS measures, collected in 2018, 2020, and 2022.

## 1 Grantee-Collected Outcomes Data

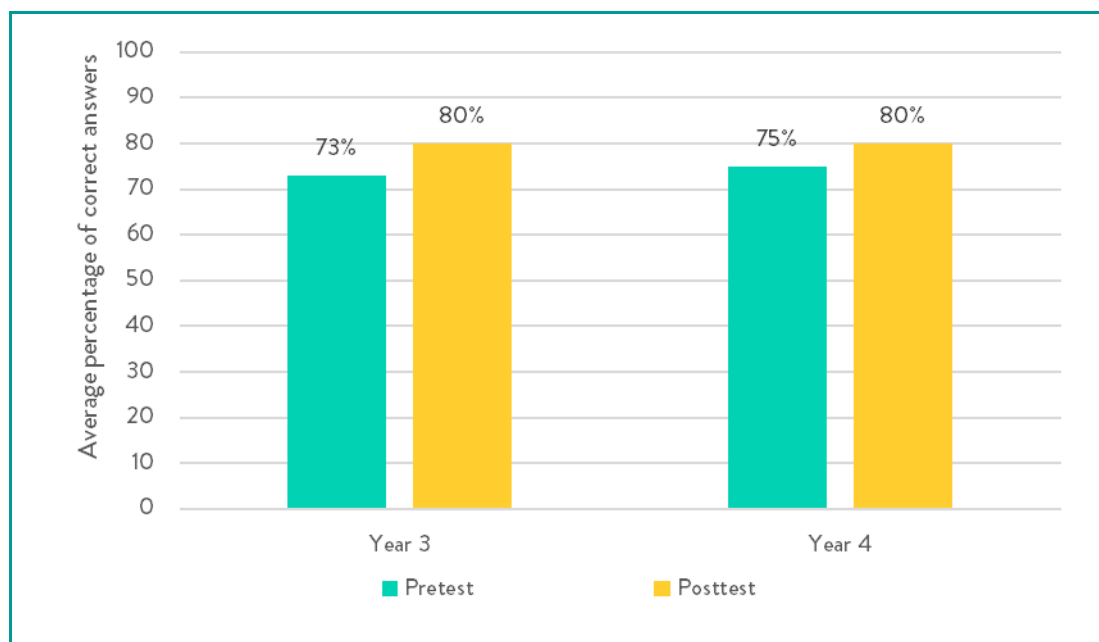
To measure the impact of *Prevention Matters* programming in the final year of data collection, RTI International examined pretest and posttest data collected by grantees during Years 3 and 4 of the *Prevention Matters* initiative and data collected annually during Years 1, 2, 3, and 4. It is important to keep in mind that many programs take three to five years of consistent implementation before resulting in measurable student impact, so even the extended series of data points in this final year may not show large differences in outcomes. Even if programs were implemented effectively, it may be too soon to see their impact on students and to determine whether students will use what they learned to make better decisions.

As noted in the Methodology section, seven grantees submitted pre- and posttest summary statistics for student curriculum knowledge for 22 schools in Year 3. In Year 4, nine grantees submitted these summary statistics for 23 schools. For social-emotional competence, 12 grantees submitted pre- and posttest summary statistics for each of Years 3 and 4: for 49 schools in Year 3 and for 36 schools in Year 4.

On average, students answered 73% of curriculum knowledge questions correctly at pretest in Year 3 (Figure 14). Correct answers increased to 80% at posttest. Year 4 showed a comparable increase, from 75% at pretest to 80% at posttest. Both increases were statistically significant.



**Figure 14. Student Curriculum Knowledge Increased from Pretest to Posttest in Years 3 and 4**

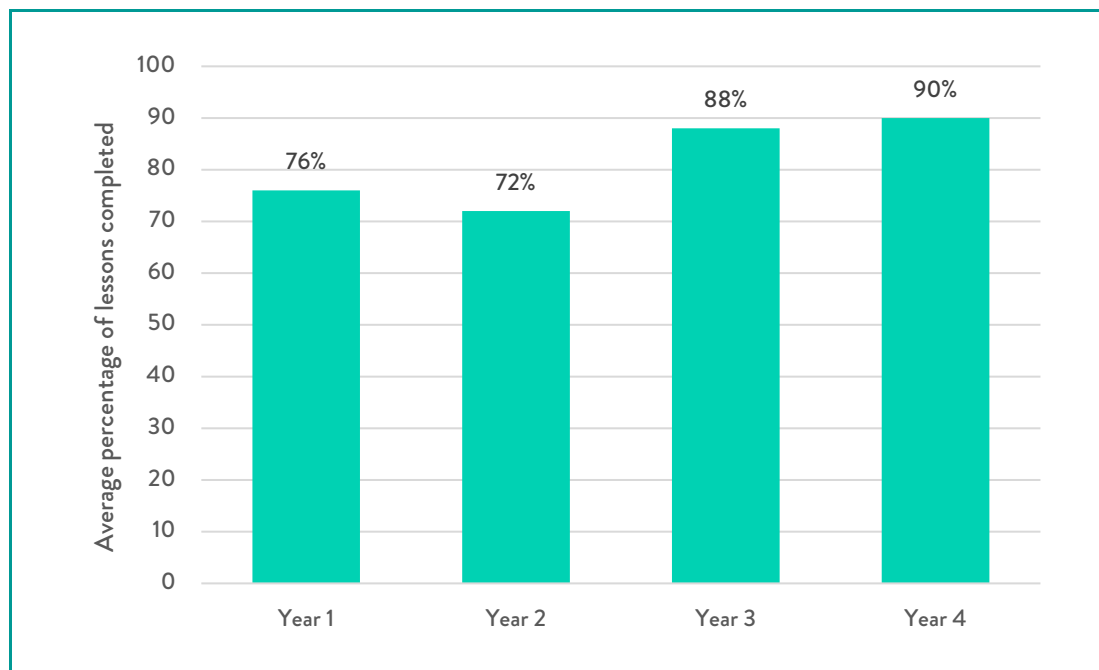


Note. Difference between pretest and posttest was statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ).

Students' Year 3 social-emotional competence scores (ranging from 1 to 5) also showed significant change from pretest to posttest (means of 3.37 at pretest and 3.42 at posttest; data not shown). Year 4 also showed significant improvement, with the mean value increasing from 3.50 to 3.61.

Peer substance use norms were measured by the percentage of students who did not think it was "okay" for their peers to smoke one or more packs of cigarettes a day, get drunk, or try drugs. This domain did not change substantially or significantly, with a mean of 0.82 at pretest and a mean of 0.79 at posttest.

During all four years of the initiative, RTI examined implementer curriculum adherence, which was measured as the percentage of lessons in the curriculum that implementers administered in their classrooms for each school. Figure 15 shows rates of curriculum adherence for all grantees' schools each year. Overall, curriculum adherence increased 14 percentage points from Year 1 to Year 4. Adherence declined (nonsignificantly) from 76% in Year 1 to 72% in Year 2. Adherence then increased significantly, 16 percentage points, to 88% in Year 3. It increased again, to 90%, in Year 4, but that increase was not statistically significant.

**Figure 15. Curriculum Adherence for Years 1–4**

RTI also looked at disciplinary referrals, which decreased slightly from 1.04 per student to 0.99 per student from Year 1 to Year 2, a nonsignificant decline. Rates dropped further during the pandemic in Year 3, to 0.54 per student ( $p < .01$ ). Year 4 referrals increased significantly ( $p < .001$ ) to about 1.16 per student, a level higher than in Year 1 or Year 2. This drop during COVID-19 school building closures, and subsequent increase after restrictions were lifted, mirrors school disciplinary trends nationwide.<sup>21</sup>

## 1.1 Indiana Youth Survey

This evaluation used data from the 2018, 2020, and 2022 INYS. Twenty-eight schools (out of the approximately 160 implementing *Prevention Matters*) provided data for one or more of the outcomes examined here. Students responding to the INYS may not have received *Prevention Matters* programming (e.g., Indianapolis Public Schools delivered Second Step to elementary and middle school students, but INYS collects data from middle and high schools). When feasible, state-level INYS data are shared to provide additional context within which to view results

<sup>21</sup> Welsh, R. O. (2022). School discipline in the age of COVID-19: Exploring patterns, policy, and practice considerations. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 97(3), 291–308.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2022.2079885>

from the *Prevention Matters* schools. Direct comparisons of the data from these *Prevention Matters* schools and from all participating schools in the state are beyond the scope of this report.

**Substance use.** The focus of the *Prevention Matters* initiative is preventing substance use among Marion County students. To try to understand student substance use trends over time, RTI compiled grantee-provided data on students' use of alcohol, marijuana, electronic vapor products, cigarettes, and prescription drugs not prescribed to the student. The measure of substance use used in the evaluation is a student's self-report on the INYS of past-30-day use of each of these substances.

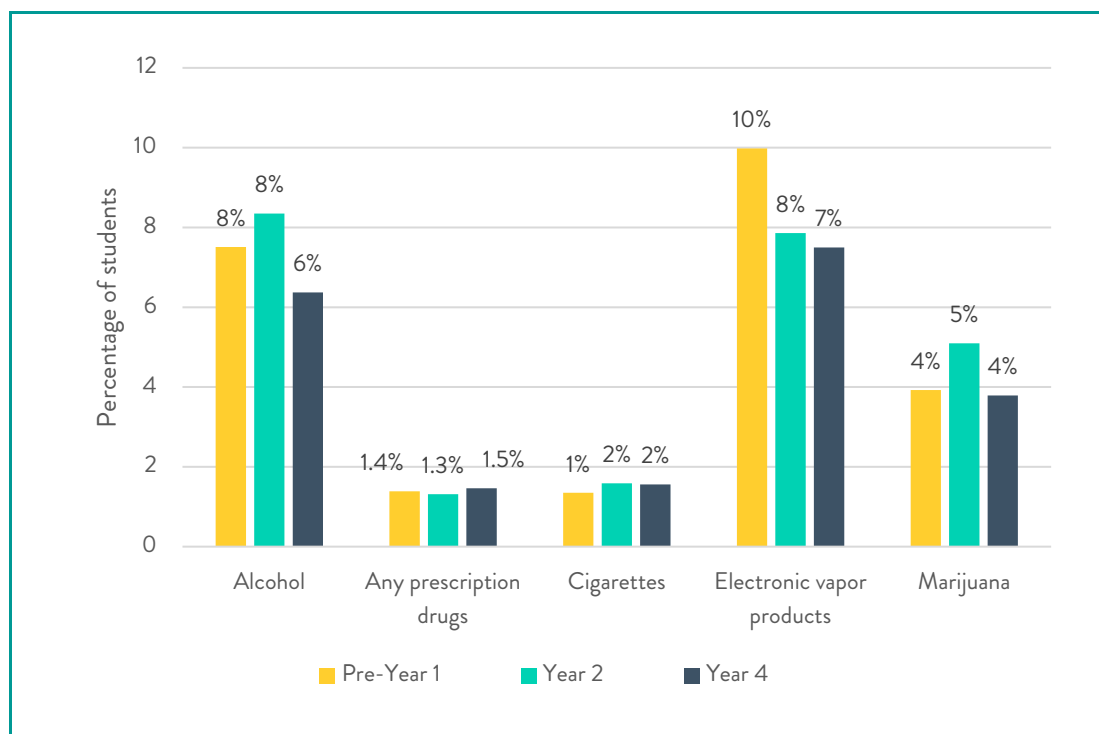
Figure 16 shows the changes from 2018 (pre-Year 1) to 2020 (Year 2) to 2022 (Year 4) in the percentage of students who reported having used each of these substances in the 30 days before completing the INYS; these percentages reflect all students who attend these 28 *Prevention Matters* grantee schools, not just those receiving a *Prevention Matters*-funded program.

- Rates of use did not differ by year for prescription drugs not prescribed to the student, cigarettes, marijuana, and electronic vapor products.
- Use of cigarettes and misuse of prescription drugs were relatively unchanged from 2018 to 2022.
- Electronic vapor use showed a consistent decrease, from 10% in 2018 to 8% in 2022, although this change was not statistically significant.<sup>22</sup>
- Rates of alcohol and marijuana use each increased in 2020 and then dropped to rates under those in 2018. The decrease in use of alcohol, from 8% in 2020 to 6% in 2022, was significant.

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<sup>22</sup> The number of students using electronic vapor products varied considerably across the years, which made it more difficult to assess statistical significance.

**Figure 16. Percentage of Students in 28 Prevention Matters Schools Who Reported Past-30-Day Substance Use, Pre-Year 1 and Year 2 and Year 4**



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

***Correlates of substance use.*** The evaluation also used INYS data to measure two correlates of substance use: perceived risk of harm from substance use and personal norms related to substance use. Perceived risk of harm measures factors like how likely a student thinks they or others are to experience negative outcomes if they engage in substance use. Research has consistently shown a relationship between lower perceived risk and increased likelihood of substance use across a range of substances and populations.<sup>23, 24</sup> Personal substance use norms measure the extent to which a student feels it is wrong to use substances. Theories of social influence<sup>25, 26</sup> have examined the links between types of social

<sup>23</sup> Center for Behavioral Statistics and Quality. (2015). *Risk and protective factors and initiation of substance use: Results from the 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health*. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Available from <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/report/risk-and-protective-factors-and-initiation-substance-use-results-2014-national-survey-drug>

<sup>24</sup> Johnston, L. D., O'Malley, P. M., Bachman, J. G., & Schulberg, H. c. (2005). *Monitoring the Future National Survey results on drug use, 1975–2004: Vol. 1, Secondary school students*. National Institute on Drug Abuse.

<sup>25</sup> Rimal, R. N., & Real, K. (2005). How behaviors are influenced by perceived norms: A test of the theory of normative social behavior. *Communication Research*, 32(3), 389–414. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650205275385>

<sup>26</sup> Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Prentice Hall.

norms and perceptions, expectations, values, consequences, and outcomes of specific behaviors, including substance use. On the basis of these theoretical constructs, researchers believe that when a higher prevalence of young people engage in a specific behavior, a subtle message is sent that such behavior is accepted and expected, which may encourage adoption of that behavior in a social setting.<sup>27</sup>

To measure perceived risk of harm, the INYS asks students, “How much do you think people risk harming themselves (physically or in other ways) if they...?”

- ...smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day?”
- ...try marijuana once or twice?”
- ...smoke marijuana once or twice per week?”
- ...take one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage (beer, wine, or liquor) nearly every day?”
- ...have five or more drinks of an alcoholic beverage once or twice a week?”
- ...use prescription drugs not prescribed to them?”

Responses to these individual items were considered simultaneously in the model as repeated measures of the underlying perceived risk measures, effectively estimating a single measure of perceived risk of harm (0 = no risk, 3 = great risk) for each year. Among students at schools where *Prevention Matters* programming was offered, perceived risk of harm from substance use decreased significantly from 2018 (mean of 1.66) to 2020 (mean of 1.49). Perceived risk decreased again from 2020 to 2022 but to a much lesser degree (mean of 1.45). The 2022 value was also significantly lower than the 2018 mean, indicating that students consistently found the use of these substances less risky in 2020 and 2022 than in 2018. On average, students in 2020 and 2022 perceived the risk of harm across all items to fall just below the midpoint between slight risk and moderate risk. These findings align with state-level findings that the percentage of students in the high-risk category of perceived norms (i.e., they perceived less risk of substance use) increased from 2018 to 2022.

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<sup>27</sup> Eisenberg, M. E., Toumbourou, J. W., Catalano, R. F., & Hemphill, S. A. (2014). Social norms in the development of adolescent substance use: A longitudinal analysis of the International Youth Development Study. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 43, 1486–1497. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-014-0111-1>

To measure personal substance use norms, the INYS asks students, “How wrong do you think it is for SOMEONE YOUR AGE to...

- ...drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whisky, or gin) regularly, that is, at least once or twice a month?”
- ...smoke cigarettes?”
- ...smoke marijuana?”

Students’ responses to these items were combined in the analysis model in a manner similar to what was done to determine the perceived risk outcome. RTI then estimated a single measure of personal norms (0 = not at all wrong, 3 = very wrong). Among students at schools where *Prevention Matters* programming was offered, there was no significant change to students’ personal substance use norms from 2018 (mean of 2.46) to 2020 (mean of 2.47), from 2018 to 2022 (mean of 2.44), or from 2020 to 2022. The INYS does not ask students in grade 6 about personal substance use norms. State-level estimates of high-risk personal norms decreased in all grades from 2018 to 2020 and again from 2020 to 2022. Figure 17 shows the changes from 2018 to 2020 to 2022 in correlates of substance use from the INYS.

**Figure 17. Mean Value of Correlates of Substance Use, *Prevention Matters* Students in Grades 6–12, Pre-Year 1 and Years 2 and 4**



Note. Higher values indicate greater perceived risk of harm and more disapproval of use.  
Source: Indiana Youth Survey, <https://inys.indiana.edu/>.

*Depressive symptoms.* The final *Prevention Matters* evaluation domain measured by the INYS is student depressive symptoms. Students at the 28 schools participating in *Prevention Matters* were asked on the INYS, “During the past 12 months, did you ever feel so sad and hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that you stopped doing some usual activities?” In 2018 and 2020, approximately 31% of students answered “yes” each year. That number increased significantly, to 38%, in 2022. These results support the observation that depressive symptoms were considerably more common in 2022 than in either 2018 or 2020 and are consistent with state-level INYS rates for 2018 to 2022.

## 2 School-Level Administrative Data

RTI used Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) data to examine changes in students’ achievement, behavior, and academic proficiency during the *Prevention Matters* implementation time frame. The analyses used a pre-intervention and intervention time frame and compared outcomes from schools that were implementing *Prevention Matters*–funded programming with comparison schools in Allen and Lake County. The intervention years were defined as the four school years during which *Prevention Matters* programs were implemented: 2018–2019 (Year 1), 2019–2020 (Year2), 2020–2021 (Year 3), and 2021–2022 (Year 4). Pre-intervention years were defined as the five years prior to *Prevention Matters* implementation (2013 – 2014 through 2017 – 2018 school years). Because of data lags, annual dropout rates and graduation rates were not available for the 2021–2022 school year (Year 4).

Table 47 presents the analyses from the school-level administrative data related to achievement and behavior. For the achievement outcomes, *Prevention Matters* schools had lower grade retention during the intervention years than during the pre-intervention years. Additionally, *Prevention Matters* schools had significantly lower retention rates than the comparison schools in the intervention period. For behavior outcomes, rates of unexcused absences were significantly higher in *Prevention Matters* schools during the pre-intervention and intervention years than in the comparison schools. *Prevention Matters* schools and comparison schools had significantly higher rates of unexcused absences in the intervention years than in the pre-intervention years. During both the pre-intervention and intervention years, rates of excused absences were significantly lower for *Prevention Matters* schools than for non-*Prevention Matters* schools.

During both the pre-intervention and intervention years, *Prevention Matters* schools had out-of-school suspension rates that were similar to those of the non-

Prevention Matters schools. During both the pre-intervention and intervention years, *Prevention Matters* schools had expulsion rates that were significantly lower than those of the non-*Prevention Matters* schools.

**Table 47. Change in Student Academic, Attendance, and Disciplinary Outcomes, 2013–2014 to 2021–2022**

Outcome	Change in Outcome Over Time	Mini Graph: 2013–2014 to 2021–2022
<b>Achievement</b>		
Grade retention	Retention rates for PM schools were significantly lower than those for non-PM schools during the intervention years. Additionally, PM schools had significantly lower retention rates in the intervention years than in the pre-intervention years.	
Dropouts <sup>a</sup>	Overall, annual dropout rates increased significantly over time. However, no significant differences between PM and non-PM schools were seen during the pre-intervention or intervention time periods. Additionally, among PM schools, there were no differences in dropout rates between the pre-intervention and intervention years.	
Graduation rate <sup>a</sup>	Graduation rates significantly decreased over time across all years and schools. No significant differences between PM and non-PM schools were seen during the pre-intervention or intervention time periods.	
<b>Behavior</b>		
Excused absences	Excused absences increased significantly over time in both PM and non-PM schools; however, during both the pre-intervention and intervention years, PM schools showed significantly lower rates of excused absences than the non-PM schools.	
Unexcused absences	Unexcused absences increased significantly over time in both PM and non-PM schools. In intervention years, PM schools had significantly higher rates of unexcused absences than the non-PM schools. Additionally, PM schools had higher rates of unexcused absences in the intervention years than in the pre-intervention years.	
In-school suspension	In-school suspensions decreased for both groups over time. In both the pre-intervention and intervention years, PM schools had significantly lower in-school suspension rates than the non-PM schools.	



Outcome	Change in Outcome Over Time	Mini Graph: 2013–2014 to 2021–2022
Out-of-school suspension	There were no significant changes in out-of-school suspension rates over time. There were no significant differences between PM and non-PM schools during either time period. Additionally, in PM schools, out-of-school suspension rates did not change from the pre-intervention years to the intervention years.	
Expulsion	There was no significant change in expulsion rates over time. During both the pre-intervention and intervention years, PM schools had significantly lower expulsion rates than the non-PM schools. Additionally, there were no differences in PM schools between the pre-intervention and intervention time frames.	

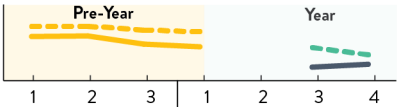
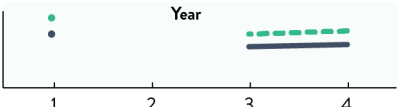
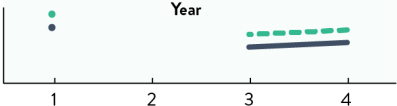
Note. For each IDOE outcome, our models are testing for the overall change over time/slope, changes between *Prevention Matters* schools and comparison schools in the pre-intervention period, change in *Prevention Matters* schools from the pre-intervention period to the intervention period, and differences between *Prevention Matters* schools and comparison schools in the intervention period. The table also shows small line graphs of trends from the 2013–2014 (Pre-Year 1) to 2021–2022 (Year 4) school years. Schools served by *Prevention Matters* are represented by a solid line; Lake County and Allen County schools are represented by a dashed line. The gold portion of each line represents the changes during the pre-intervention school years from 2013–2014 to 2017–2018. Changes described as being statistically significant were at  $p < .05$ . PM = *Prevention Matters*.

<sup>a</sup> Data from the 2021–2022 school year are not included in these measures because of a lag in data.

Table 48 shows the trend graphs for three proficiency outcomes: ILEARN ELA, ILEARN Math, and IREAD-3 for the pre-intervention time frame of 2015–2016, 2016–2017, and 2016–2017 and the intervention time frame of 2018–2019, 2020–2021, and 2021–2022. The ILEARN measures were first collected during the 2018–2019 school year. Neither ILEARN nor IREAD-3 measures were collected in 2019–2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For proficiency outcomes, schools with *Prevention Matters*–funded programming had significantly lower IREAD-3 proficiency rates, both during the intervention years compared to the pre-intervention years and compared to the comparison schools in both time periods. In the intervention years (the only years with data available), schools with *Prevention Matters*–funded programming had significantly lower ILEARN reading and mathematics proficiency rates than the comparison schools.

**Table 48. Change in Proficiency in Mathematics, Reading, and English Language Arts, 2015–2016 through 2021–2022**

Proficiency Outcomes	Change in Outcome Over Time	Mini Graph: 2015–2016 (Pre-Year 1), 2016–2017 (Pre-Year 2), 2017–2018 (Pre-Year 3); 2018–2019 (Year 1), 2020–2021 (Year 3), 2021–2022 (Year 4)
IREAD-3	<p>IREAD-3 proficiency rates significantly decreased over time for PM and non-PM schools. PM schools had significantly lower rates of IREAD-3 proficiency during the intervention years than in the pre-intervention years. Also, PM schools had significantly lower rates of IREAD-3 proficiency during the intervention years than the non-PM schools. However, during the pre-intervention years there was not a significant difference in the IREAD-3 proficiency rates for PM schools and non-PM schools.</p> <p>Data were not available for 2019–2020 school year.</p>	
ILEARN English Language Arts	<p>The percentage of students reaching proficiency in English significantly decreased over time. PM schools began with a significantly lower level of ILEARN proficiency than comparison schools did. PM schools had significantly lower rates of ILEARN proficiency rates during the intervention years than the comparison schools did.</p>	
ILEARN Math	<p>The percentage of students reaching proficiency in mathematics significantly decreased over time. PM schools showed significantly lower rates of mathematics proficiency rates in the intervention years than the comparison schools did.</p>	

Note. Schools served by *Prevention Matters* are represented by a solid line; Lake County and Allen County schools are represented by a dashed line. The gold portion of the IREAD-3 graph represents the pre-intervention school years from 2015–2016 to 2017–2018. Pre-intervention time frame data were not available for ILEARN ELA and ILEARN Math because ILEARN was first collected in 2018–2019 (Year 1). Data for 2019–2020 were not available for any proficiency outcomes, as state standardized assessments were canceled because of COVID-19. Changes described as being statistically significant were at  $p < .05$ . PM = *Prevention Matters*.



# Lessons Learned

## 1 Strengths and Growth

- Most implementers expected to complete their Prevention Matters programming. In Year 4, more than two-thirds (69%) of implementer survey respondents had finished implementing Prevention Matters programming with all their students by the time of the survey. This was a significant increase over Year 3, when 65% of implementers reported completing the program, and Year 1, when only 11% of implementers reported completing the program in all the classes.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, in Year 4, almost all returning implementers (93%) reported that they expected to complete program session implementation by the end of the school year. This was a significant increase over the 88% of new

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<sup>28</sup> The Year 1 implementer survey was fielded during an earlier time frame than it was in Years 2, 3, and 4. This change in time frame could account for some differences when data are compared across years.

implementers who said they expected to complete their sessions by the end of the year.

- Social-emotional learning programming was aligned with schools' missions over the four years of the Prevention Matters initiative. In Year 4, more than half of implementers (54%) strongly agreed that programming to promote social-emotional learning was consistent with their school's mission. This was an increase from Year 1, when 51% of implementers strongly agreed with this statement. Although the number of grant directors who strongly agreed that social-emotional learning programming was consistent with their organization's mission declined from 88% in Year 1 to 71% in Year 4, it was not a statistically significant decline. Furthermore, significantly more grant directors reported being able to obtain financial resources to promote social-emotional learning in Year 4 (48%) than in Year 1 (19%).
- Students' social-emotional competence improved significantly for the second year in a row. These scores increased significantly from pre- to posttest in Year 3 (mean scores 3.37 and 3.42, respectively) and in Year 4 (3.50 and 3.61).
- Student engagement in Prevention Matters programming remained consistent over all 4 years of the grant, with implementers reporting 50–56% of students fully or almost fully engaged in their Prevention Matters programming. Additional RTI International classroom observations of student engagement showed that students clearly participated in discussions in 65% of classrooms, participated in one or more classroom activities 87% of the time, and worked well with their peers in 88% of the observed classes.
- Year 4 ended with nearly all grant directors stating that they were in some stage of sustainability planning, with most having an executed plan. By Year 4, the grant directors surveyed reported a significant increase in the number of grantees who had determined how the program aligned with the mission and goals of potential future stakeholders, and they had identified key stakeholders who might support the program. Also, in their interviews, grant directors who planned to continue implementation cited leadership and implementer buy-in,

program alignment with the schools' needs and values, and secured funding as facilitators of ongoing implementation of prevention programming.

## 1.1 Areas for Improvement

- School resources—including class time, training time, or funding—for Prevention Matters programming decreased significantly from Year 3 to Year 4. The percentage of implementers who said they had enough or a little less than enough time to implement their programs decreased from 73% in Year 3 to 68% in Year 4, and the percentage who said they had enough or a little less than enough funding to pay for substitute teachers when teachers are receiving training decreased significantly from 51% in Year 3 to 35% in Year 4. Furthermore, only 59% of implementers reported that they had sufficient class time for program implementation, another significant decrease from Year 3 (69%). Last, in their interviews, grant directors said that fitting prevention programming into their schedules when faced with competing demands—such as meeting academic goals, holding physical education classes, or providing students with morning meals—was a challenge.
- Staff turnover was a challenge for many grantees. In the interviews, most grant directors reported that heavy turnover was one of the biggest challenges they faced. In some cases, staffing turnover contributed to a lack of implementer buy-in because new teachers had to be convinced of the importance of the program.
- According to grant directors, the alignment of substance use prevention programming with organizational missions in Year 4 was significantly lower than when the initiative began. The percentage of grant directors who strongly agreed that substance use prevention programming was consistent with their organization's mission declined significantly from Year 1 (81%) to Year 4 (46%). Even when strongly agree and agree responses were combined, this perceived alignment decreased from 100% of grant directors in Year 1 to 88% in Year 4.

## 2 Additional Lessons Learned from Grant Directors

In Year 4, grant directors provided advice to individual implementers, and schools that implement these types of programs in the future. These suggestions could be categorized into three main topics: program planning, implementation strategies, and community outreach.

Grant directors provided the following program planning suggestions:

- Set clear implementation roles and expectations. If everyone's role is defined and there is a program timeline, then staff have a clear goal to work toward and can be more proactive in achieving it.
- Focus on staff retention. Although grant directors could not control staff turnover, they stressed that having a stable group of staff in the program was important for implementation progress.
- Make sure there are enough staff implementing and with an appropriate background to teach the lessons.

Grant directors offered the following implementation strategies:

- Make sure to obtain buy-in from all parties involved, because support from all levels of implementation is important.
- Emphasize training teachers and getting them involved. Grantees recommended getting all staff involved in the program, ensuring they are prepared, and training them as a team. One grantee said, *"[Training] with others helps generate excitement and generate conversation."*

Grant directors also emphasized the importance of collaboration as part of their grant implementation:

- Some grant directors emphasized the importance of communicating with other schools. These grantees learned from other schools, especially about how to budget for the program and train staff. Furthermore, these grant directors found that sharing tips with other grant directors was particularly rewarding and that it helped strengthen their programs.

- Recognize that a collaborative approach and the ability to learn from mistakes are important. “I think sometimes schools hesitate to reach out to others, but you can learn from others' mistakes.”

