

Partners in
Prevention
A HEALTHCARE FOUNDATION OF LA PORTE INITIATIVE

EVALUATION YEAR 1

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview and Objectives

Partners in Prevention is a grant initiative funded by the Healthcare Foundation of La Porte (HFL). This initiative helps La Porte County, IN, schools identify and implement evidence-based programs to prevent substance use and promote social-emotional learning.

Over the course of 3 years, 11 *Partners in Prevention* grantees will provide evidence-based programming to students in Pre-K through grade 12 across 37 public and private schools.

Evaluation Overview

HFL is working with RTI International to document which programs grantees are implementing; how they are implementing them; and how implementation relates to student, teacher, and school outcomes. This work will help grantees improve the quality of their implementation, and it will suggest the resources and supports that HFL may wish to provide to its grantees in the future.

Evaluation Methodology

In Year 1 of the *Partners in Prevention* evaluation, RTI collected three complementary sets of data to help describe implementation of the initiative. We conducted a Web-based survey and telephone interviews with all grant directors. We also conducted a Web-based survey of 298 program implementers.

In addition, RTI laid the groundwork for evaluating the impact of *Partners in Prevention* on student, teacher, and school outcomes. We compiled historical school-level data on academic achievement, student behavior, and standardized testing from the Indiana Department of Education. We assessed baseline levels of teacher social-emotional competence, classroom climate, and the extent to which *Partners in Prevention* programming was embedded in schools. We also began establishing processes for compiling grantee-collected data.

Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations

The schools and communities that received *Partners in Prevention* grants generally had characteristics that primed them for success. Programming was typically consistent with school mission and policy. School leaders supported the initiative, and implementers tended to have positive attitudes about programming.

There was room for improvement in implementer training and oversight. Most implementers were fairly new to the fields of prevention and social-emotional learning, yet not all implementers received program training, were monitored, or received feedback on their implementation.

Recommendations: Identify and address barriers to training, monitoring, and feedback. Consider ways to standardize and simplify monitoring and feedback forms so that they are easy to use and applicable to multiple grantees or programs.

It is also possible that implementers do not always recognize when program training, monitoring, and feedback are happening. Consider ways to help more implementers make the connection between these activities and *Partners in Prevention* programming.

Implementation quality varied by metric. Adherence to curricula (often called fidelity) had the most room for improvement. Student engagement and understanding were stronger.

Recommendation: Implementers who did not follow curriculum guides exactly tended to adapt because they did not have enough time or they wanted to increase student engagement and comprehension. Consider, as an initiative, exploring ways to address these challenges in ways that maintain program fidelity.

Lack of time was a commonly cited challenge to the implementation of *Partners in Prevention* programming.

Recommendation: Consider the feasibility and value of strategies to conserve implementer and class time. Strategies to free up implementer time might include using dedicated implementers rather than classroom teachers and shifting some responsibilities (like assembling lesson materials) from implementers to grant staff. Strategies to free up class time might include working with program developers to explore integration of program content with core academic instruction.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic's not being an explicit focus of data collection, every grant director reported implementation challenges as a result of it. Grantees varied in how much the pandemic affected their ability to continue with programming.

Recommendations: Many program developers are thinking through the best ways to implement in a post-COVID world. Request guidance and recommendations from those developers.

For grantees implementing programs that are hard to deliver, or deliver with fidelity, under COVID restrictions, consider asking or allowing them to switch to more feasible programs.

Given that grantees varied in how much COVID affected their plans, consider offering opportunities for peer-to-peer learning that allow grantees to share their successful mitigation strategies.

Programs could be better embedded in school communities. There was room for improvement in education and involvement of non-implementing staff, parent involvement, and incorporating programming in the school environment.

Recommendation: Help grantees identify the characteristics of embedded programs. Encourage grantees to set goals related to embedding programming, and provide technical assistance on these goals.

Grantees were generally in the early stage of sustainability efforts. There has been minimal sustainability planning to date and little technical assistance provided on sustainability planning.

Recommendation: Sustainability planning will become increasingly important as grantees progress through their grants. Provide training and technical assistance on sustainability planning, focusing on discrete actions that grantees can take.

Grant directors are seeing, and sharing, examples of positive program impact on students and schools.

Recommendation: Use this early, anecdotal evidence to build enthusiasm among grantees and implementers as they continue program delivery and among stakeholders who might support grantees during and beyond *Partners in Prevention*.



INTRODUCTION

In January 2019, the Healthcare Foundation of La Porte (HFL) launched *Partners in Prevention*. This grant initiative helps La Porte County, IN, schools identify and implement evidence-based programs to prevent substance use and promote social-emotional learning (SEL).

In January 2019, HFL awarded planning grants to 12 public school districts and private schools. These planning grants funded organizations to identify the most appropriate evidence-based programs for their students and to develop plans for effective and sustainable implementation. In spring 2020, HFL awarded implementation grants to 11 planning grant recipients to support program implementation for the 2019–2020, 2020–2021, and 2021–2022 school years.

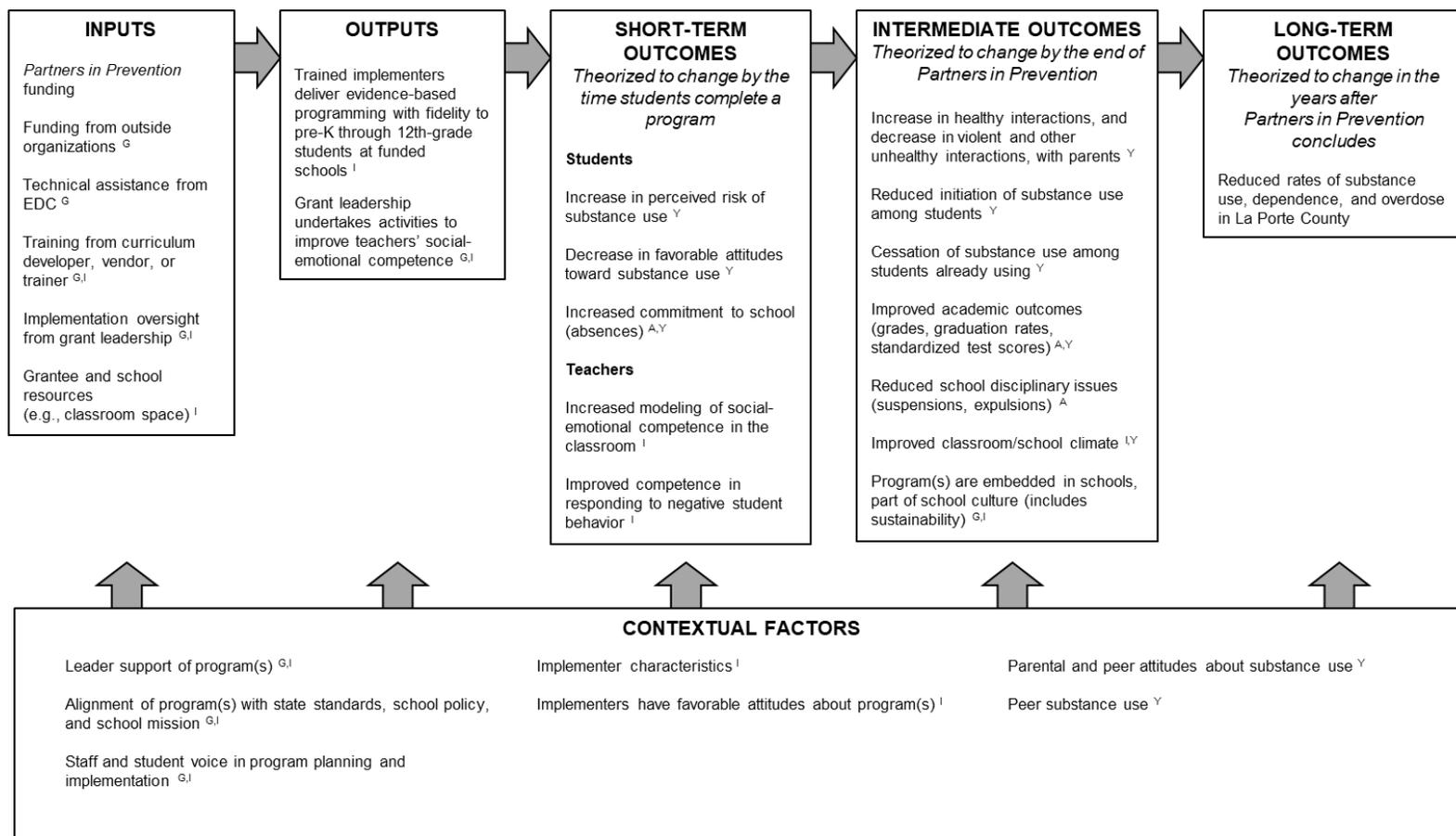
RTI International is the contracted evaluator for the *Partners in Prevention* initiative. RTI's role is to examine the nature and quality of program implementation and to evaluate the impact of *Partners in Prevention* programs on student, teacher, and school outcomes. This work will help grantees improve the quality of their implementation, and it will suggest the resources and supports that HFL may wish to provide to its grantees in the future.

The logic model on the following page shows the anticipated results of *Partners in Prevention*. The model also shows how its components align with evaluation data sources.

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

The purpose of this report is to share what RTI has learned about Year 1 of *Partners in Prevention* implementation. The **Methodology** section details the evaluation methods RTI used. The remaining sections align with the *Partners in Prevention* logic model. **The *Partners in Prevention* Context** describes the school environments in which programming is being implemented. In **Resources for *Partners in Prevention***, we document the human, financial, and capital resources undergirding program implementation. In ***Partners in Prevention* Implementation**, we detail interventions conducted with students and teachers, including the successes and challenges schools encountered. In **Did *Partners in Prevention* Work?**, we prepare for our future assessment of *Partners in Prevention*'s impact by discussing baseline data for student, teacher, and school outcomes. Finally, in **Lessons Learned**, we summarize Year 1 findings that can be used to help strengthen *Partners in Prevention* and similar school-based prevention initiatives.

Partners in Prevention Evaluation Logic Model



Measures: G = grant director survey I = implemter survey A = school administrative data (Partners in Prevention & comparison schools)
Y = Indiana Youth Survey

METHODOLOGY

Grant Director Surveys

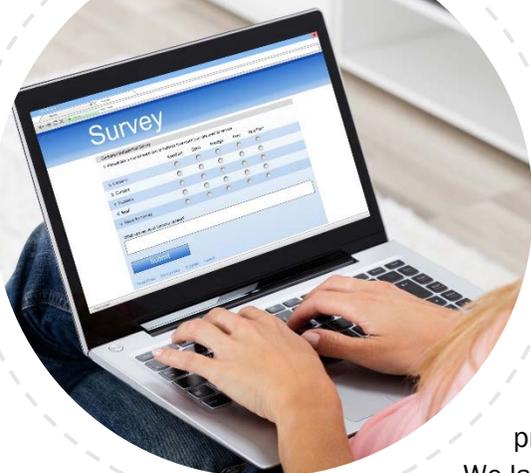
RTI conducted a Web-based survey of *Partners in Prevention* grant directors. Topics for the survey included implementation model (e.g., training approach, partnerships), barriers to and facilitators of program implementation, and sustainability.

In January 2020, RTI sent each grant director an e-mail invitation to participate in the survey, along with a personalized link. We expected the survey to take about 30 minutes to complete. All grant directors completed the survey.¹

Implementer Surveys

RTI conducted a Web-based survey of *Partners in Prevention* program implementers. Topics for this survey included preparation for program implementation, resources, leader support, program alignment with school mission, staff voice in programming, implementer attitudes about programming, details of program implementation, classroom climate, and the degree to which programming was embedded in schools.

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



The Year 1 implementer survey was open from March 4 through April 17, 2020. RTI sent survey invitations to 378 implementers across the 11 grantees. RTI sent automated reminders to nonresponders at three points during the survey period and then sent a request to grant directors to follow up with their implementers to encourage them to respond.

A total of 301 individuals opened the survey. One respondent reported that they were not implementing, or planning to implement, any of the *Partners in Prevention* programs, and they were immediately exited from the survey. We later discovered that a second respondent was not going to be implementing programming. We dropped these implementers from

¹ One grantee had two project directors; RTI surveyed both and then combined their responses. One grant director did not respond to the final third of the survey; therefore, some questions had only 10 responses.

analysis, along with a duplicated response for another implementer. These actions resulted in an analytic sample of 298 implementers.

Grant Director Interviews

RTI conducted 60-minute telephone interviews with all grant directors from March 18 to April 8, 2020.² These interviews involved a deeper exploration of the topics covered in the grant director survey, including implementation approaches and timeline, financial and policy barriers and facilitators, key implementation barriers and facilitators, sustainability progress, and lessons learned to date.

School Administrative Data

RTI compiled school-level administrative data from schools being served by *Partners in Prevention*. We also compiled data for schools in Madison County, IN, to compare what happened during the same time period in a demographically similar county that is not served by *Partners in Prevention*. RTI will eventually use these data to examine whether there are shifts in historical patterns of school-level outcomes when *Partners in Prevention* is first implemented. We will also examine whether these trends look different from trends among schools not receiving *Partners in Prevention* programming.

RTI obtained administrative data from the Indiana Department of Education for graduation; grade retention; attendance; absences; suspensions and expulsions; dropout; and scores on the ISTEP, IREAD, ACT, and SAT. In the future, RTI will request school data for each year of the *Partners in Prevention* initiative (i.e., 2019–2020, 2020–2021, 2021–2022). However, planned analyses also require historical data from before *Partners in Prevention* began, so RTI has obtained data from the 5 years preceding implementation (2014–2015 through 2018–2019).³

² One grantee had two project directors; RTI interviewed both.

³ The Indiana Department of Education did not provide 2018–2019 school dropout data; therefore, we were limited to 4 years of data for these outcomes. RTI will request 2018–2019 dropout data again in Year 2.

Future Activities

Grantee-Collected Data

Across the term of their grants, grantees are planning to collect data from students, teachers, and parents to assess the implementation and impact of their individual projects. Examples of these data collections include the Indiana Youth Survey, program pre- and post-tests, and implementation checklists. RTI will leverage statistics from grantee data sources to draw conclusions about the impact of *Partners in Prevention* across all grantees.

In Year 1, RTI reviewed each grantee's logic model and data collection plans. RTI identified the constructs that grantees most commonly measured and then worked with HFL to identify 12 constructs for which RTI will ask grantees to submit data (see below).

RTI will compile grantee data for 12 constructs:

- ❖ Perceived risk of substance use
- ❖ Favorable/unfavorable attitudes toward substance use
- ❖ Social-emotional skills
- ❖ Past-30-day use of cigarettes
- ❖ Past-30-day vaping
- ❖ Past-30-day use of marijuana
- ❖ Past-30-day use of alcohol
- ❖ Past-30-day misuse of prescription drugs
- ❖ School disciplinary issues beyond suspensions/expulsions (e.g., office referrals)
- ❖ Degree to which programs are embedded in schools
- ❖ Social and emotional well-being
- ❖ Student curriculum knowledge

For each of these constructs, RTI will request that grantees submit a school-level summary statistic (e.g., mean and standard deviation, percentage, count) from each round of data they collect, using a spreadsheet template. RTI will provide grantees with webinars, guidance documents, and one-on-one assistance to support their data submissions.

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

A Note on COVID-19

On March 13, 2020, in response to the emerging COVID-19 pandemic, La Porte County's six public school districts decided to close their school buildings. On March 19, Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb ordered all school buildings, public and private, closed. School buildings remained closed through the end of the school year.

Schools' shifts to online instruction required grantees to modify their *Partners in Prevention* implementation strategy. However, the timing of evaluation activities limited our ability to formally study the nature of these modifications:

- RTI designed and distributed the grant director survey before the diagnosis of the first U.S. COVID-19 case on January 20, 2020. Therefore, the questions and responses all related to original, pre-COVID implementation plans.
- RTI designed and distributed the implementer survey before Indiana's school closures. Seventy-six percent of respondents completed the survey before the statewide school closures on March 19; the remaining 24% completed the survey on or after March 19.
- RTI finalized the grant director interview protocol in late February 2020. Therefore, the protocol did not include questions specific to COVID-19. However, we completed all interviews after school buildings closed, and all grant directors discussed COVID during their interviews.



We expect that COVID-19 will be a more central issue in the *Partners in Prevention* evaluation in the future. RTI will be able to include questions about COVID in upcoming surveys and interview protocols, which will give us more information about the impact of the pandemic on prevention programs.

COVID-19-related school closures will also complicate our ability to accurately assess outcomes of the initiative. Many grantees cancelled spring 2020 data collections, which limits the amount of Year 1 grantee-collected data that will be available for future RTI analyses. It is also likely that school closures influenced Indiana Department of Education metrics (e.g., attendance, suspensions, expulsions), which may make it difficult to interpret shifts in these data.

THE *PARTNERS IN PREVENTION* CONTEXT

Previous studies of prevention programs have identified contextual factors that influence implementation success.⁴ In this section, we examine four of these factors: alignment, leadership, voice, and implementer characteristics.

Alignment

Grant directors and implementers responded to survey items about whether substance use prevention programming and programming to promote SEL were consistent with their organization's mission.⁵ All grant directors agreed that these types of programming were consistent with their organization's mission. Among implementers, 70% agreed that substance use programming was consistent with their schools' mission, and 94% agreed that SEL programs were consistent with it.

In their interviews, grant directors noted that alignment with the school's or district's mission was critical to a program's success. One grant director specifically noted that their selected program aligned well with their values as a faith-based school.

A majority of grant directors reported that their organization had policies consistent with requirements of the *Partners in Prevention* model. Seventy percent reported that their organization had policies requiring substance use prevention programming for students. The same percentage reported policies requiring social-emotional programming for students. Sixty percent reported policies requiring the use of evidence-based programming or practices with students.

Conversely, grant directors also provided information about any organizational policies that hindered *Partners in Prevention* implementation. As shown in the table on the following page, **about half of grant directors reported that policies limiting the time available for prevention were a barrier to *Partners in Prevention* implementation.** This finding was supported by interviews, in which some grant directors said that the most challenging school policies were those related to scheduling. For some schools, *Partners*

⁴ See, for example:

Domitrovich, C. E., Bradshaw, C. P., Poduska, J. M., Hoagwood, K., Buckley, J. A., Olin, S., ... Ialongo, N. S. (2008). Maximizing the implementation quality of evidence-based preventive interventions in schools: A conceptual framework. *Advances in School Mental Health Promotion, 1*(3), 6–28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1754730x.2008.9715730>

Forman, S. G., Olin, S. S., Hoagwood, K. E., Crowe, M., & Saka, N. (2009). Evidence-based interventions in schools: Developers' views of implementation barriers and facilitators. *School Mental Health, 1*, 26–36. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-008-9002-5>

Tibbits, M. K., Bumbarger, B. K., Kyler, S. J., & Perkins, D. F. (2010). Sustaining evidence-based interventions under real-world conditions: Results from a large-scale diffusion project. *Prevention Science, 11*, 252–262. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-010-0170-9>

⁵ Throughout this report, “organization” refers to school (for single-school grantees) or school district (for multi-school grantees).

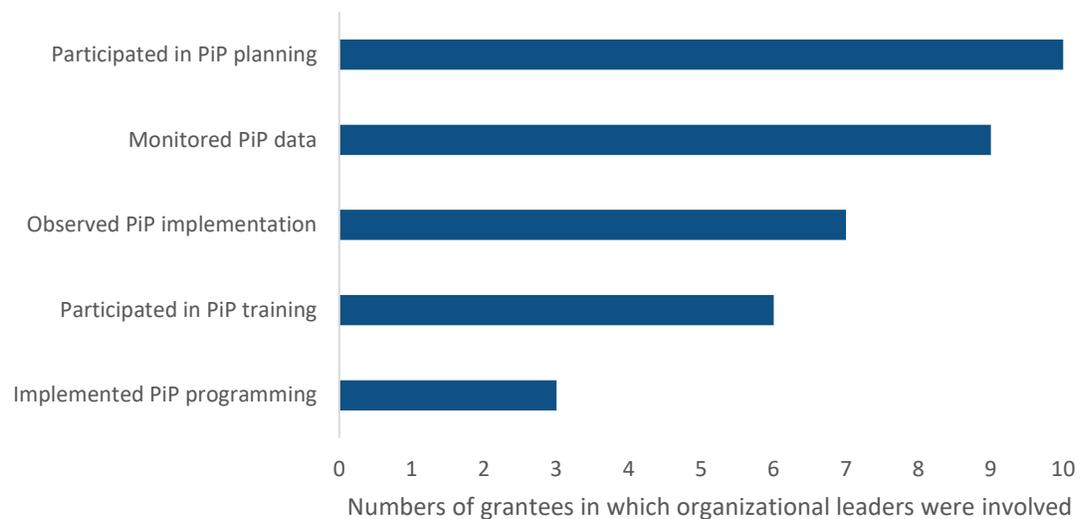
in Prevention programming was delivered during elective periods that could get shortened or that conflicted with more popular electives.

Barriers identified by 5 or 6 grant directors	<p>Policies mandating school schedules (e.g., start/end dates, start/end times) that limit the amount of time available for prevention programming (6)</p> <p>Policies mandating academic activities/benchmarks that, in turn, limit the amount of time available for prevention programs (5)</p>
Barriers identified by 1 or 2 grant directors	<p>Policies that limit what prevention content can be taught in schools (2)</p> <p>Policies that allow individuals or their parents to opt out of prevention programming (2)</p> <p>Policies that restrict what data can be collected or used for program monitoring and evaluation (2)</p> <p>Policies that limit ability to apply for, request, or use funding for prevention programming (1)</p>
Barriers not identified	<p>Policies that limit administrators' ability to require teacher involvement in prevention programs</p>

Leadership

On average, grant directors and implementers agreed that their leaders had knowledge, commitment, and motivation to support substance use prevention and SEL programming. All grant directors also agreed that leaders were supportive of program implementers.

Grant directors reported that their leaders were involved with a number of *Partners in Prevention* activities. As shown in the graph below, leaders' most common activities were planning and monitoring.



In their interviews, grant directors said that leadership was important for a program's success. One grant director specifically mentioned that involving school and district leaders in the selection of the program was helpful.

Voice

All grant directors reported that at least one potential implementer was part of the team that made decisions about which programs their organization would implement for *Partners in Prevention*, what the program logistics would be (e.g., classes or times when *Partners in Prevention* programs would be implemented), and whether they themselves would serve as implementers. At the implementer level, 20%–30% of implementers said that they were part of the teams that made each of these decisions. **The larger a grantee's size, the smaller the proportion of implementers involved in grant decisions.**⁶

No students were part of the teams that made decisions about the programs their organization would implement for *Partners in Prevention* or program logistics, according to the grant director survey.

Implementer Characteristics



The majority of implementers (84%) were general education teachers, either of multiple subjects or of a single subject other than physical education, health, or wellness. They had 1–44 years' experience in teaching, instruction, or program facilitation, with a median of 12 years' experience.

Most implementers were new to prevention programs.

Only 6% of implementers had previously taught the program they were implementing for *Partners in Prevention*, and only 21% had taught another program focused on SEL or the prevention of risk behaviors such as substance use, sexual risk behavior, or violence.

On average, implementers had positive attitudes about the programs they delivered.

Implementers tended to agree that if they did a good job teaching their *Partners in Prevention* program, their students would experience benefits like improved social-emotional skills and academic outcomes, fewer school discipline issues, lower likelihood of substance misuse, and a healthy and productive future.

⁶ The more schools a grantee served, the lower the proportion of implementers who reported being invited to give input on program selection and whether they would implement programming. The more implementers a grantee used, the lower the proportion of implementers who were invited to give input on program logistics.

THE *PARTNERS IN PREVENTION* CONTEXT

In their interviews, grant directors described strategies they used to build and maintain positive attitudes about programming. One grant director mentioned hiring teacher champions who served as a voice and support system for teachers implementing *Partners in Prevention* programming. Teacher champions helped to prepare teachers to deliver programming to students. The teacher champions were especially important in this school, which underwent restructuring in the start of the new school year.

Grant directors mentioned that implementers were especially gratified by the positive response that they observed in students' behavior. One grant director reported that a Second Step implementer was enthusiastic about seeing more student engagement and respect for teachers.

RESOURCES FOR *PARTNERS IN PREVENTION*

Multiple entities provided resources to support the *Partners in Prevention* initiative. HFL provided direct funding to grantees and also funded technical assistance services. In rare instances, outside funders also provided resources. Grantees and schools contributed their own human and capital resources to the initiative, including the training and oversight that functioned as a resource to implementers. This section describes all of these resources in greater detail.

HFL Resources

Funding

Grant directors expressed satisfaction with the amount of funds available to implement programming. As one grant director stated, “Generally speaking, when we wrote the grant we did a great job anticipating costs. So right now we are doing well. The grant has been incredibly instrumental in helping us develop this SEL program initiative. We wouldn’t have been able to do it without the grant.”

Technical Assistance

Contracted staff from the Education Development Center (EDC) provided implementation technical assistance to *Partners in Prevention* grantees.

At the time of their surveys (January), grant directors reported having had an average of 6 hours of direct contact with their EDC technical assistance provider during the 2019–2020 school year. All grant directors reported receiving technical assistance themselves, and about half reported that their implementers also received technical assistance.

Grantees were most likely to access technical assistance via telephone (91% of grantees) and e-mail (82%). Videoconference and in-person technical assistance were less common (36% and 18% of grantees, respectively).

The most common topic for EDC’s technical assistance was developing a logic model, followed by developing an implementation plan. The full list of possible technical assistance topics is shown in the table on the following page.

Technical Assistance Topic	Percentage of Grantees Receiving EDC Technical Assistance for This Topic
Developing a logic model	82
Developing an implementation plan	64
Selecting measurement tools for monitoring/evaluation	27
Using measurement tools for monitoring/evaluation	27
Monitoring implementation against implementation plan	18
Addressing implementation challenges	18
Fostering sustainability	18
Securing training for implementers	0
Integrating curricula into schools	0

About two thirds of grantees (64%) agreed that the ongoing technical assistance from EDC had been useful. Most grantees (82%) also agreed that ongoing technical assistance from curriculum developers had been useful.

In their interviews, grant directors highlighted technical assistance as a valuable component of implementation. As one grant director reflected, "At the beginning I didn't really know what a [technical assistance consultant] was, so I'm glad that I found out. I don't think it would have gone as well or as smoothly as it did at the beginning without the [technical assistance consultants], so I'm glad that we ended up utilizing them."

In their surveys, grant directors reported on how, if at all, their EDC technical assistance consultant had helped them address *their greatest grant challenge*. The most frequent response, by about half of grantees, was that the technical assistance consultant did not help, primarily because the grant directors did not consider technical assistance to be applicable to their challenges or they did not bring the problems to their consultants.

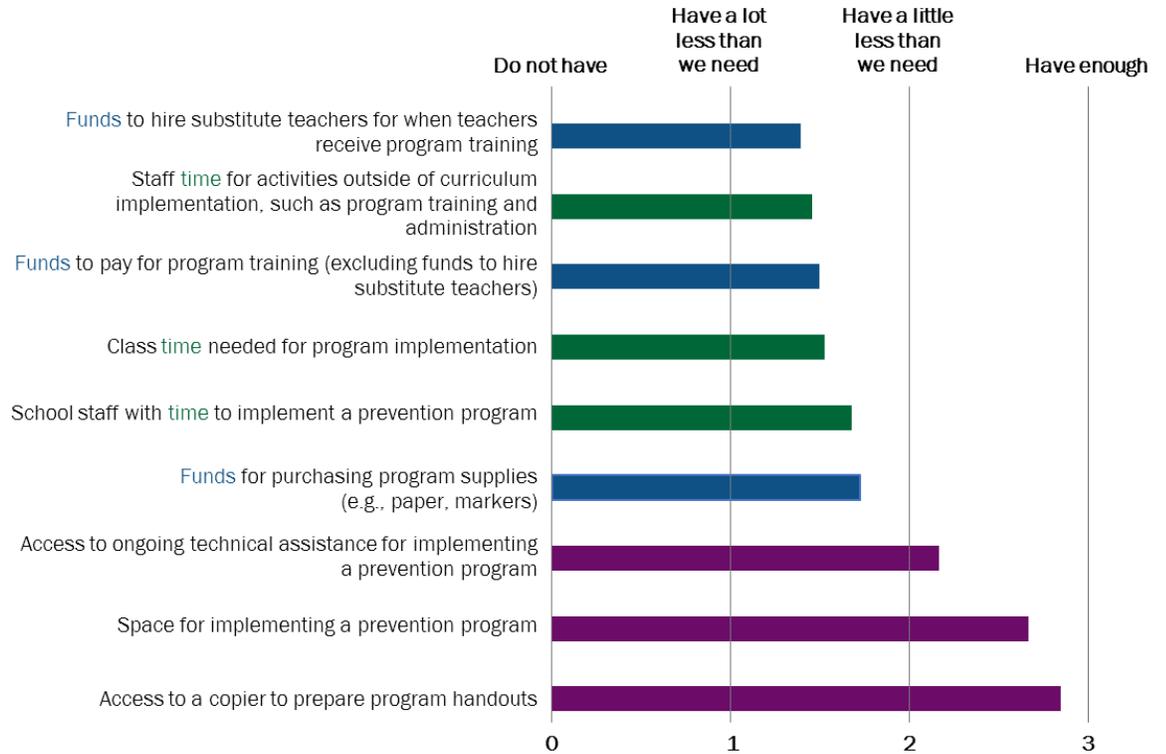
Outside Funding

For most grantees, HFL was their sole source of funding for the implementation and administration of *Partners in Prevention* programs. In their surveys, only two grant directors reported receiving support from other sources, including the Indiana Department of Education and a Lilly Endowment Counseling Initiative grant. In their interviews, two grant directors reported using supplemental funding for *Partners in Prevention* programming. One grantee used Title (number unspecified) money to assist with implementation. Another grantee, who had previously implemented the Botvin LifeSkills program, was able to use program materials received from the La Porte County Drug Free Partnership.

Grantee and School Resources

Beyond the funding that HFL provided, grantees contributed their own human and capital resources to their *Partners in Prevention* projects.

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



Most implementers said that their school had someone they could turn to for questions about or challenges with *Partners in Prevention* implementation. Eighty-two percent of implementers reported that there was someone who could provide general guidance about substance abuse prevention strategies, and 95% said that there was someone who could provide general guidance about SEL strategies.

Training

Grant directors reported on the training procedures for each of the programs that were implemented for *Partners in Prevention*. **Grantees reported providing implementer training for all *Partners in Prevention* programs.** Grantees used several different training modalities, including in-person training (32% of programs), virtual training (e.g., webinar, video conference) with a live trainer (26%), and self-study training that did not involve interaction with a trainer (16%).

Among programs that used a live trainer model, grantees also employed various types of trainers. Program developers or vendors led training for almost half of programs (44%), and a certified trainer from within the grantee organization led a quarter of program trainings.

Most implementers (77%) reported participating in a *Partners in Prevention* program training during summer 2019 or the 2019–2020 school year. Implementers participated in a variety of training types, including self-study (38% of trained implementers), virtual training with a live trainer (29%), and in-person training (29%). Among implementers who were trained, 74% received training before implementing programming, and 25% received training after.

Grant directors reported on whether they planned to require implementer participation in follow-up trainings, such as boosters or annual recertifications, after implementers completed their initial training. Grant directors planned to require follow-up training for about half of programs (47%); for a number of other programs (42%), grant directors were undecided about follow-up training.

In their interviews, grant directors discussed several features of successful trainings. Several grant directors noted that implementers preferred in-person trainings that included participation from colleagues implementing similar programs in other schools.

As one grant director noted, “The best training was when the [program developers] brought someone into the area, and we were able to meet with a couple of schools and have experts in the curriculum come and teach us. That was fantastic. We could ask questions and go through the exercises.”

Some grant directors also noted that implementers benefited from hands-on training with other staff and having multiple opportunities to practice before implementing in the classroom. One grant director reflected, “It really helps that we were all trained first and trained together. And we did all of the exercises before the kids did. There wasn’t any delay or ‘learning as the kids learned.’ We were on top of things, and we knew what to expect.”



Implementation Oversight

In their interviews, grant directors described using various strategies to monitor the progress of implementation, including observations, self-report of implementation details, and student feedback. This diversity of approaches was also reflected in grant director surveys, as shown in the table below.

Implementation Oversight	Number of Grantees
Observations and self-report	6
Observations only	1
Self-report only	1
None	3

One grant director described using teacher and student reflections on lessons to solicit feedback and assess implementer needs for extra support. With the assistance of their technical assistance consultant, this grantee adapted the student forms to produce more meaningful feedback that could be used to improve implementation. Additionally, this grantee offered implementers weekly reminders, quarterly check-ins, and counselors who had more experience with this type of programming to provide support and regular feedback.

Observations

Grant directors reported on whether they observed their organization’s implementers delivering *Partners in Prevention* programming during the 2019–2020 school year. **As of January, 27% of grantees had already observed implementation, and another 36% had not observed yet but planned to.**

Most grantees who planned to observe planned to observe all of their implementers. Two grantees planned to observe 15%–20% of implementers. Grantees planned to conduct a median of 2 or 3 observations per implementer, with a range of 1–20 observations.

For some grantees, grant directors and their staff observed implementers, as described in interviews. In one school, implementers observed one another.

All grantees who observed, or planned to observe, implementers also planned for observers to receive some sort of training. The most common type of training was the implementer training for the program to be observed. Several grantees also planned to have observers go through train-the-trainer training, program-specific observation training, or general observation training.

All grantees that planned observations planned to give implementers feedback about these observations.

Implementers also reported on observations. **Three quarters of implementers said that they had not been observed and were unaware of plans for them to be observed.**



Among the implementers who had been observed, two thirds reported receiving feedback from the observations. Most of this feedback (72%) was delivered verbally only, as opposed to in writing or as a combination of verbal and written.

Implementer Self-Report

About two thirds of grantees (64%) reported that they required all of their implementers to self-report on their implementation, such as through an implementation checklist of session activities. All but one of these grantees reported that they had provided, or planned to provide, feedback to implementers on these data.

About two thirds of implementers (65%) said that they had been asked to report information from their implementation. Among those asked to report implementation information, a minority (38%) had reported information and received feedback on it. As with observations, most of this feedback (64%) was delivered verbally only, as opposed to in writing or as a combination of verbal and written.

Follow-up

Among the grantees who collected observation or self-reported implementation data from implementers, all planned to provide some sort of follow-up for implementers with unsatisfactory implementation. The most common of these approaches was to provide follow-up training (4 grantees) or one-on-one mentoring or coaching (4 grantees). Two grantees also reported that they planned to collect additional data from these implementers to monitor improvements.

PARTNERS IN PREVENTION IMPLEMENTATION

In this section, we provide detailed information on the programs that grantees implemented, the students with whom they implemented, implementation progress, implementation quality, program adaptation, and implementation successes and challenges.

Programming for Students

HFL provided *Partners in Prevention* planning grantees with a list of 30 evidence-based substance use prevention and SEL programs that they could implement for the initiative. Ultimately, grantees chose to implement 9 programs, which are shown in the table below, in Year 1. **The most commonly implemented program was Second Step, followed by Botvin LifeSkills Training.** Individual grantees implemented 1–3 programs.

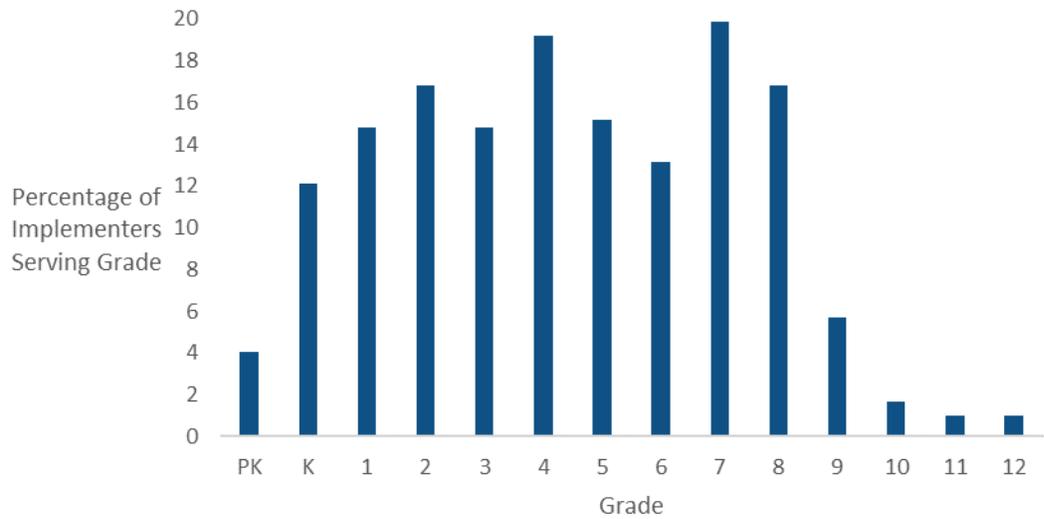
Program	Number Implementing			
	Grantees	Schools ^a	Implementers ^a	
			Primary	Additional ^b
Botvin LifeSkills Training	4	5	54	6
Conscious Discipline	1	1	15	2
Positive Action	1	1	11	1
Ripple Effects	1	1	1	0
Second Step: Elementary	4	22	156	14
Second Step: Middle	3	4	44	5
School Connect	1	1	12	2
Too Good for Drugs	2	2	2	0
Too Good for Violence	2	2	3	1

^a Among implementer survey respondents. Actual number of implementers is typically higher because of survey nonresponse. ^b Eleven percent of implementers reported implementing more than one *Partners in Prevention*-funded program. In the implementer survey, any questions that ask about experiences with a single program ask the respondent to focus on the one program that they implemented with the most students.

Grant directors and implementers both reported on whether their schools implemented any SEL or substance use prevention programs beyond their *Partners in Prevention* programs during the 2019–2020 school year. One grant director reported that the organization implemented Project Alert. Six percent of implementers reported implementing another program, including 5 Star, CLASS, Class Dojo Big Ideas, GoNoodle, Kindness Club, Lil' FISH, Little Guppies, PATHS, PAWS, Positive Behavior and Intervention Supports, Say No to Drugs, and Wildcat Academy. All grant directors and implementers

reported that the messages in these additional programs were consistent with those of their *Partners in Prevention* programs.

It was most common for implementers to serve students in elementary and middle school grades, as shown below. There were relatively few implementers for Pre-K or high school.



Several grantees delivered lessons to students in their main classrooms, according to interviews. Lessons were delivered either by the students’ classroom teachers or by a counselor or lead implementer who visited the classroom at designated times. Other grantees implemented in teacher advisory or elective periods. When lessons were delivered in elective periods, the students’ health and wellness class was typically used.

Implementation Schedules

Grantees developed different models of implementation and schedules for delivering programs.

Several grantees chose to stagger rollout of their programming to one group of students at a time. Some did so to reduce the burden on teachers of implementing a new program. One grant director who implemented programming with multiple grades concurrently, rather than staggering, reflected, “They told me I was crazy for trying to implement all of it at all grade levels to start... and then halfway through I was like, ‘I understand.’”

Not all grant directors were pleased with the decision to stagger implementation, however: one believed that a staggered rollout led to some confusion among students and staff who were not receiving the program. The grant director noted that in Year 2 of the grant, the organization planned to address this challenge by ensuring that all students receive the program at the same time.

Some grantees began implementation at the start of the school year. Others began implementation later in the school year, either by design or because of unexpected delays in receiving program materials.

Apart from disruptions caused by COVID-19, most grantees adhered to their original implementation plans during Year 1. One grantee adjusted its lesson schedule at the beginning of the year to implement lessons with skills that were “easier” to learn first. Another changed the program to be delivered after learning from the program’s developers that the program was not a good fit for one of the age groups with which the organization planned to implement it.

Implementers also reported on their own implementation schedules. **At the time of their survey, relatively few implementers had finished implementing programming with all (8%) or some (3%) of their students.** Among the 89% of implementers who had not completed programming with any students, about two thirds (63%) were on track to finish implementation by the end of the school year; the remaining implementers did not expect to finish before the school year ended.⁷

On average, implementers delivered programming over the course of 6 months. More than half of implementers (59%) implemented program lessons or content weekly during their program implementation time frame. Another 29% delivered lessons 2 or 3 days per week. This result is consistent with interview data showing that, depending on the school and program, implementers delivered lessons daily, a few times a week, or weekly.

Implementation Quality

Implementation quality is a key determinant of program outcomes.⁸ For the *Partners in Prevention* initiative, the concept of implementation quality includes things like fidelity (adherence to a curriculum manual), dose (presentation of all program lessons), strong program delivery skills among implementers, and interest and engagement among students.

In their interviews, many grant directors described the quality of program delivery as high, though some did point to variation across implementers. Some grant directors observed that greater implementer buy-in and preparation contributed to higher-quality program delivery, as did increasing experience with delivering the program. For these

⁷ The proportion of respondents that did not expect to complete implementation went up sharply after Indiana schools closed for COVID-19. Twenty-six percent of implementers who completed the survey before March 19 did not expect to finish implementation, compared with 54% of those who completed the survey after March 19.

⁸ See, for example:

Derzon, J. H., Sale, E., Springer, J. F., & Brounstein, P. (2005). Estimating intervention effectiveness: Synthetic projection of field evaluation results. *Journal of Primary Prevention*, 26, 321–343. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10935-005-5391-5>

Durlak, J. A., & DuPre, E. P. (2008). Implementation matters: A review of research on the influence of implementation on program outcomes and the factors affecting implementation. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 41, 327–350. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-008-9165-0>

grantees, as implementers gained more confidence delivering the program and began to see the impact of the program on students, implementation quality increased. According to one grant director, “Once they got into it they were like, ‘Oh, I like this, and I’m going to incorporate it a little bit more,’ and there’s more buy-in once they started teaching the lessons.”

The small number of implementers who had finished implementation by the time they took their survey reported on the proportion of required program sessions they had implemented. About half of these implementers (55%) reported that they delivered all required sessions, and 30% reported delivering almost all required sessions. This is consistent with interview data showing that, despite COVID-19-related school closures, multiple grantees were able to deliver most or all of their prevention program lessons.

In their interviews, **most grant directors reported implementing programs with fidelity.** One grant director shared, “We’re sticking exactly to the curriculum as it’s written—all of us. Our worry is that if we waver, it changes things, and we don’t want to do that.” Some related that the scripted nature of their selected programs made it easier for implementers to deliver them with fidelity.

In contrast to interview findings, only about half of implementers (53%) reported following their program’s curriculum guide very closely. Another 39% reported following the curriculum guide somewhat closely, sometimes adapting the material as appropriate.

With few exceptions, grant directors gave highly positive reports of student engagement. Several grant directors pointed to the interactive and “relatable” nature of their programs as critical to generating student interest. “There’s no favorite subject other than themselves,” shared one grant director, “so [Botvin LifeSkills Training] gives them a chance to talk about themselves, and how they would handle situations.... They enjoy getting up and interacting with each other.”

A small number of grant directors noted that student engagement varied somewhat by the age of the student. One grant director noted that their program seemed to engage younger and older elementary students more than elementary students in grades 3 or 4. Two grant directors referred to occasional challenges with engaging middle school students, especially in grades 7 and 8. Both attributed this to the students’ developmental stage rather than the prevention program. For example, they thought that, at this age, students are generally less likely to “let loose” in discussions.

The finding that engagement varied by age was echoed in the implementer survey. **Implementers who served older students tended to report lower student engagement scores.**



Most implementers reported that their students were either somewhat engaged (35% of implementers) or almost fully engaged (43%) in *Partners in Prevention* programming. Most implementers (76%) also believed that their students had good or excellent/complete understanding of program lessons.

Program Adaptation

About a quarter of grantees (27%) asked their implementers to change some aspect of the program they delivered, according to the grant director survey. These changes included repeating or reviewing program activities or lessons, skipping or shortening activities or lessons, and changing the order of activities or lessons.

We asked the implementers who reported that they followed their program’s curriculum guide “somewhat closely” or “not very closely” to report on any changes they made. As shown in the table on the following page, **removing, repeating, reviewing, and adding content were the most common types of changes**. Across all types of changes, **the most common reasons for making these changes were not having enough time, wanting to increase student engagement, or wanting to increase student comprehension and retention**.

Intervention for Teachers

One of the intended components of *Partners in Prevention* is activities to improve teachers’ social-emotional competence. The grant director survey asked them to report what activities, if any, they implemented.

Four grant directors left this question blank, and a fifth stated that no programs for staff were in place.

The grant directors who responded affirmatively to the question described the following types of activities:

- Curriculum training (2 grantees)
- Curriculum training refreshers (1)
- Trainings beyond curriculum training (2)
- Videos (1)
- Staff/professional development (2)
- Practice in controlling emotions (1)
- Team meetings (2)

Change Made	Percentage of Implementers Making Change ^a	Top Reasons for Change ^b
Skipped or shortened program activities or lessons	48	Did not have enough time (93%)
Repeated or reviewed program activities or lessons	40	Wanted to increase student comprehension/retention (78%) Wanted to increase student engagement (62%)
Presented additional activities, lessons, or content that were not part of the program	34	Wanted to increase student engagement (86%) Wanted to increase student comprehension/retention (63%)
Changed the format of program activities (e.g., substituted discussion for role play, modified worksheets or homework assignments)	30	Wanted to increase student engagement (69%) Wanted to increase student comprehension/retention (67%) Did not have enough time (53%)
Changed program language or examples	17	Wanted to increase student comprehension/retention (82%) Wanted to increase student engagement (68%)
Changed the order of activities or lessons	15	Wanted to increase student engagement (47%)
Delivered lessons at a frequency different from what program recommends (e.g., implemented lessons on consecutive days instead of weekly)	10	Did not have enough time (77%)

Notes. ^a Percentages are among implementers indicating that they followed a program guide “somewhat closely” or “not very closely.” This excludes implementers who followed a curriculum guide very closely (53% of implementers), did not use a curriculum guide (3%), or had not yet begun implementation for the year (1%). ^b Percentages are among implementers indicating that they made each specific type of change. Implementers could select more than one reason for making a change. Therefore, within table cells, percentages may sum to more than 100%.

Implementation Successes

In their surveys, grant directors listed what they considered to be the greatest accomplishment or success of their *Partners in Prevention* grant in Year 1. **About half of grant directors considered their greatest success to be that implementation was happening and going well.** Multiple grant directors commented that they had already

seen positive outcomes among students and in the school. Several grant directors also said that getting implementers trained represented a success.

In interviews, grant directors shared many program-related accomplishments and the factors that contributed to those accomplishments. **Consistent with the grant director survey, two of the most common examples were that grantees successfully implemented some or all of their selected prevention programs and that students responded positively.** One grant director shared: “The discussions are going amazing.

I’m getting messages from teachers... that there are kids that have never spoken before in class that are realizing that they’re not the only ones going through some of the things and challenges that this prevention program is bringing up, and the discussions, they’re gaining confidence to talk about them.”

“We had a little boy that got in serious trouble on the bus... and he had come back with one of the problem-solving sheets that he went through with his parents. And I thought, wow, I wasn’t expecting that. Small things like that are hard to quantify, but they’re really important and they show that kids are getting it.”

Multiple grant directors also observed positive changes in how students interacted and behaved, both with their peers and with their teachers. “Across all grade levels,” one grant director reflected, “there is just maybe a stronger relationship with their teacher, and it seems like that mutual respect you hope to see in the classroom.... They’re engaged with the teacher; they’re focusing their attention.” Several relayed anecdotes of students using the program-taught skills and language, for example, in solving conflicts or managing their emotions. At one school, a teacher overheard students telling another student, “Stop. You need to name your feeling and calm down,” which is a Second Step lesson.

Other successes cited by grant directors in their interviews included getting staff members and administrators engaged and “on the same page” with respect to SEL and getting buy-in from parents. One grant director commented, “It’s not just Second Step or Botvin. That’s a big part, but it’s principals’ buying in and a whole change of atmosphere. People are realizing that for things to change, we have to change. If we want things to get better, we all have to get better.” Another was pleased to observe that parents were also beginning to buy in to the program. Grant directors attributed these successes to a variety of factors. Implementers played a large role in a program’s success. Grant directors mentioned the importance of implementers’ being engaged, being prepared, working as a team, sharing lessons learned with each other, building trust with students, and generally being enthusiastic about teaching.

When implementers were hesitant about a program, grant directors facilitated successful program implementation by building trust and relationships with implementers and building implementers’ confidence. Sometimes this meant reframing the program for implementers who either did not view themselves as qualified to lead program discussions or who were reluctant to add to their long list of responsibilities. To do so, one grant director stressed to teachers that, although the program may increase their workload, “It’s proven to be beneficial in the long run for teachers in regards to things like substance misuse, discipline, suspensions, and just, overall, trying to develop good, solid students and good, solid people, kind people, nice people—people that, students

that make better decisions.” Some implementers seemed to gain confidence after delivering a few lessons, whereas others appeared to engage more fully after seeing positive changes in the students. Some grant directors also provided stipends for implementers to acknowledge the additional work they were being asked to complete.



Implementation Challenges

Grant Director Reports

In their interviews, about half of **grant directors cited teacher engagement as a challenge to implementation.** Teachers viewed prevention programming as an added burden to their already heavy workload. In organizations where someone other than a classroom teacher implemented programming, several grantees faced pushback from teachers on adding more activities to classroom time. Teacher engagement also posed a challenge for one grant director who supervised staff at multiple schools. As a consequence of having to oversee multiple schools, this grant director struggled to build relationships and trust with the implementing teachers.

Grant directors offered several strategies to increase teacher buy-in and engagement with *Partners in Prevention* programming. One stressed the importance of identifying a teacher who is passionate about the program and can serve as a program “champion,” saying that this person was the ideal teacher to train and engage other teachers.

Another strategy for increasing teacher engagement was to raise awareness about the program. A grant director explained that some teachers were unaware of or did not understand the program, which contributed to their resistance to program implementation. This grant director planned to present on the *Partners in Prevention* program to school staff in the upcoming year.

In addition to raising awareness of *Partners in Prevention* programming, one grant director suggested outlining ways to demonstrate the ease of implementation. For example, the grant director explained, “It is essential to get teachers to realize that after the first lesson, for Second Step, the rest of the week is reinforcement. It’s taking that theme for the week and finding situations to reinforce in the class. It wasn’t taking anything away from instruction or curriculum. At the end of the day, it’s consistency; it’s driving that same message home for those 5 days.”

Grant directors frequently mentioned time-related challenges. In their surveys, about half of grant directors reported that a lack of time for implementation or supporting activities was their project’s biggest challenge.

Grant directors also shared that some programs required more time to implement than is allotted in the scheduled block of time; this limited their ability to implement the program in its entirety. “It’s required for an elementary school to have a 90-minute reading block—uninterrupted. It is hard to find time.”

In addition to navigating around class schedules, implementation teams also had to plan lessons around state-mandated testing. One grant director commented, “The main reason we didn’t start until August was to get testing done, and the reason why we wanted to get implementing done in first semester was that we have two state tests that need to get done in the second semester. We wanted to make sure we would have 10 consecutive weeks to implement.”

In terms of general grant implementation, **several grant directors expressed frustration with aspects of communication about *Partners in Prevention* grant expectations.** Some grant directors expressed that data collection and reporting requirements were not clear to them. Several grantees also commented on their struggle with the logic model process.

“We were on top of things, and we knew what to expect. We were actually really excited about the implementation of the spring semester because we felt really confident, and then COVID happened.”

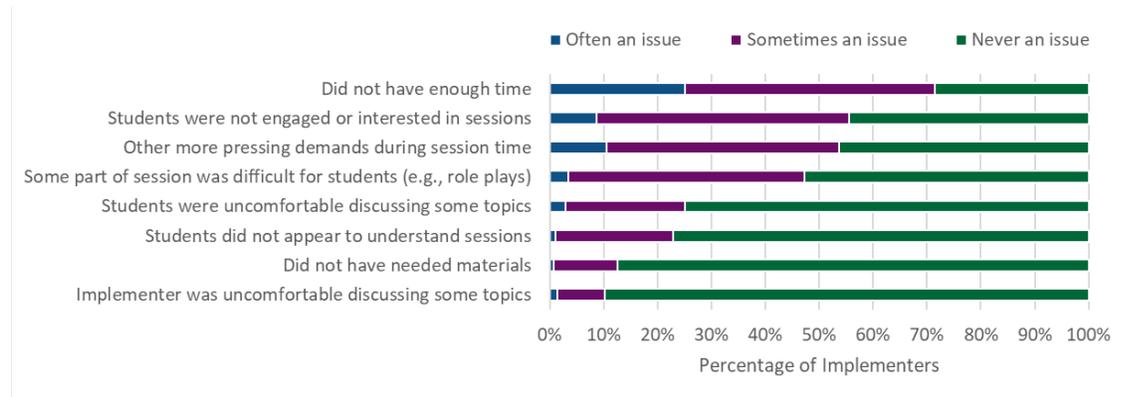
All grant directors mentioned that COVID-19 affected program implementation in some way.

Many grant directors expressed disappointment that COVID had interrupted implementation progress. COVID prevented implementers from delivering all components of the curriculum and limited their ability to receive additional training. “It’s unfortunate having to do this all remotely now,” one grant director said. “Teachers and implementers were just now getting comfortable. True and good discussions were happening with teachers and students that would not have happened otherwise. We are going to be doing this curriculum through Zoom, but you can’t read body language the same way you could in the classroom. Our data will probably be skewed because of this.” In some instances, grant directors reported that they had to stop programming completely because the *Partners in Prevention* program was not available online or implementers did not have time to get implementation materials before the school building closed. One grant director commented that online instruction was focused on core classes, with little time left to deliver *Partners in Prevention* programming.

Although COVID-19 caused disruptions in *Partners in Prevention* implementation, several grant directors identified ways in which their schools had adapted programs to continue remote delivery of the lessons to students. These adaptations included moving to remote learning through Zoom sessions, online streaming resources, e-learning, and Google meetings. One grant director video recorded themselves presenting the lesson, which they planned to send to students along with discussion questions.

Implementer Reports

Implementers also provided information on challenges. In their survey, they responded to a list of potential challenges, reporting whether each had interfered with their ability to implement program sessions. As shown in the graph below, **more than half of implementers experienced challenges with not having enough time, having students not be engaged or interested in sessions, and having other more pressing demands during session time.**



The implementer survey asked respondents to report their greatest challenge and any efforts they made to address this challenge. **Nearly half of the implementers expressed that there was insufficient time to deliver curricula to students.** To address this time-related challenge, some implementers integrated *Partners in Prevention* lessons within morning messages, hallway messages, transitions between classes, academic class sessions, and times that students were standing in lines. A few implementers noted that they reserved time for *Partners in Prevention* lessons first thing in the morning or at the end of class to allow time to cover all material.

The other common challenge, reported by about one eighth of the implementers, was low student engagement. Implementers addressed this challenge by supplementing materials with more engaging activities, changing the given language to increase students’ understanding, providing multiple examples, delivering programming in an upbeat fashion, and using personal and real-life examples.

Only about a third of implementers (31%) reported bringing their greatest challenge to their *Partners in Prevention* grant director. Most of the implementers who reported reaching out to their grant director for assistance in addressing these challenges expressed that the grant director supported them in identifying effective mitigation strategies.

DID *PARTNERS IN PREVENTION* WORK?

In Year 1 of implementation for the *Partners in Prevention* initiative, we are laying the groundwork for eventually assessing program impact on targeted outcomes. In this section, we detail pre-*Partners in Prevention* (i.e., baseline) findings. In future years, we will assess whether outcomes change in a way that might suggest impact of the initiative.

Student Outcomes

School-Level Administrative Data

RTI obtained school-level administrative data for 15 variables related to student achievement, behavior, and standardized testing. We examined trends for the 5 years before *Partners in Prevention* implementation among schools served by *Partners in Prevention*, as well as in Madison County schools. As shown in the table that follows, for 13 of the 15 variables, the trend lines for *Partners in Prevention* schools were comparable to those of Madison County schools. For the remaining 2 variables, the trend lines were parallel. In other words, **historical levels of school-level outcomes were fairly similar between *Partners in Prevention* schools and the comparison schools. This increases the likelihood that any difference in trends after the implementation of *Partners in Prevention* will be due to *Partners in Prevention* rather than to pre-existing differences.**

Outcome	Trend, 2014–2015 to 2018–2019		Differences in Levels and Trends
	<i>Partners in Prevention</i> Schools	Madison County Schools	
Achievement			
Graduation	Stable	Stable	No significant differences
Grade retention	Stable	Stable	<i>Partners in Prevention</i> schools have lower retention rates than Madison County schools
Behavior			
Attendance	Stable	Stable	No significant differences
Excused absences	Increasing	Increasing	No significant differences
Unexcused absences	Stable	Stable	No significant differences

DID PARTNERS IN PREVENTION WORK?

Outcome	Trend, 2014–2015 to 2018–2019		Differences in Levels and Trends
	Partners in Prevention Schools	Madison County Schools	
In-school suspension	Stable	Stable	No significant differences
Out-of-school suspension	Stable	Stable	No significant differences
Expulsion	Stable	Stable	No significant differences
School dropout (cohort)^a	Stable	Stable	No significant differences
School dropout (annual)^a	Stable	Stable	No significant differences
Standardized testing			
ISTEP (grades 3–8) Passing both math and English	Decreasing	Decreasing	<i>Partners in Prevention schools have a higher percentage of passing students than do Madison County schools</i>
ISTEP (grade 10) Passing both math and English^b	Stable	Stable	No significant differences
IREAD^b	Stable	Stable	No significant differences
ACT^c	Stable	Stable	No significant differences
SAT^c	Increasing	Increasing	No significant differences

^a The Indiana Department of Education has not yet provided 2018–2019 dropout data, so these trends are for 2014–2015 through 2017–2018. ^b Indiana first administered the IREAD and the 10th-grade ISTEP in 2016, so these trends are for 2015–2016 to 2018–2019. ^c ACT and SAT data are currently available only through 2017–2018, so these trends are for 2014–2015 to 2017–2018. Also, the Indiana Department of Education has not yet provided ACT or SAT data for private schools, so they are excluded from these analyses.

Teacher Outcomes

Implementers replied to a series of survey questions about their social-emotional competence, including those about the quality of their relationships with students and the implementer's own emotion regulation. Items were scored on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

Implementers responded to seven survey items about their relationships with students, including "I am aware of how all my students are feeling" and "I create a sense of community in my classroom." **On average, implementers agreed that they had strong relationships with their students** (average score of 5.0 out of 6).

Implementers responded to six survey items about their emotion regulation, including "I remain calm when addressing student misbehavior" and "I am able to manage my emotions and feelings in healthy ways." **On average, implementers agreed that they were able to regulate their emotions** (average score of 5.0 out of 6).

As the evaluation moves forward, we will examine whether teacher social-emotional competence improves over the course of the *Partners in Prevention* initiative. Given that Year 1 scores are fairly high, however, it may be difficult for teachers to demonstrate statistically significant improvement over time.

School Outcomes

Programs Embedded in Schools

We assessed numerous facets of *Partners in Prevention* programs being embedded in schools. These included education and involvement of non-implementing staff in programming. In their surveys, grant directors reported on the school staff, beyond implementers, who participated in program training. They also reported on staff who did not participate in training but received information about program content or messages. **Most grant directors (82%) said that they trained non-implementing staff, and 64% said that they shared program messages with non-implementing staff.**

As shown in the table on the next page, grantees were most likely to educate non-implementing teachers and school administrators about *Partners in Prevention* programming. No grantees reported training or providing program information to bus drivers, coaches, custodial staff, or nurses.

DID PARTNERS IN PREVENTION WORK?

Type of Non-Implementing Staff	Number of Grantees	
	Training	Sharing Program Content or Messages
Teachers not implementing program, school librarian	6	6
School administrators (e.g., principal, head of school)	6	4
Guidance counselors, school psychologists	4	0
Clerical or secretarial staff, school aides	3	3
Parents	2	2
School case workers or social workers	2	1
Service providers for students with disabilities (e.g., speech or physical therapist)	2	1
Food service staff	1	1
School board members, trustees, superintendent	1	0
Bus drivers	0	0
Coaches	0	0
Custodial staff	0	0
School nurses or nurses in school-based clinic	0	0

Interestingly, across interviews, only one grant director described offering program training to multiple non-classroom staff, including staff who work in the cafeteria, the administration, and the front office. This was done to ensure that the program’s messages are “not just in the four walls of the classroom; it has to be school-wide.”

Via their surveys, grant directors also reported on parent involvement in *Partners in Prevention*. In general, as shown in the table that below, **it was fairly uncommon for grantees to involve parents in program operations. However, for most programs grantees planned to implement (89%), they did plan to provide the parents of program participants with information and activities to reinforce program messages at home.**

Parent Involvement	Number of Grantees
Provided positive feedback on how they felt program implementation was going	4
Participated in planning for <i>Partners in Prevention</i> project	2
Provided negative feedback on how they felt program implementation was going	1
Provided resources (e.g., money, time, materials) to support program implementation	0

Implementers also responded to a series of questions about the degree to which *Partners in Prevention* programming was embedded in their schools.

- About two thirds of implementers (65%) reported that program materials or messages were often or occasionally incorporated into the school environment, such as in posters or morning announcements.
- Almost two thirds of implementers (61%) reported that program concepts or messages had been incorporated into their school's school-wide expectations. Another quarter of implementers (26%) said that they did not know whether this had happened.
- Most implementers (76%) reported often or occasionally referencing program content or messages when interacting with students outside of program implementation.
- Fewer than half of implementers (40%) reported that they had used program lessons to replace instructional content that they would have had to deliver anyway.

Implementers reported on their involvement of other school staff in *Partners in Prevention* programming. Most implementers (76%) reported that other staff members assisted them with program delivery. Most commonly, this staff member was a guidance counselor (assisting 58% of implementers).

More than half of implementers (61%) reported mentioning school health services, school mental health or counseling services, or both during program delivery.

In their interviews, **grant directors were split between those who were still striving, and occasionally struggling, to embed prevention programs into their schools and those who were ready to share examples of success.**

Multiple grant directors noted that embedding a program is a time-consuming effort. Shifting school culture was not necessarily something they expected to happen in Year 1 of the initiative, but rather is a goal they will continue to pursue. As one grant director reflected, "This [curriculum] has to infiltrate everything that we do.... It's making that switch—it's not a lesson we're teaching, it's making a total switch," which they acknowledged can be a challenge.

Those who were successful at embedding programming during Year 1 often described the embedding process as an effort to extend program language and concepts beyond discrete classroom lessons to the school environment more broadly. For example, one grant director related, "I know it's made me rethink how I approach discipline with kids.... The teachers are also able to handle things more in the classroom because... when they have their classroom meetings, they talk about the terms, they talk about this. It's really helped with their social skills and their interactions."

For the purposes of this evaluation, sustainability was considered a component of programs’ being embedded in schools. In their survey, grant directors responded to questions about their involvement with nine different facets of sustainability planning. For each they responded on the following scale:

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

As shown in the table below, **for many areas of sustainability planning, grantees fell between the stages of “limited discussion with no clear plan” and “discussion with tentative plan”** (i.e., mean score somewhere between 1 and 2).

Sustainability Planning Component	Mean Score
Determine the funds needed to sustain <i>Partners in Prevention</i> programs	2.00
Make the program a line-item in the budget of your organization, schools, or community	2.00
Determine how the program aligns with the mission and goals of potential future stakeholders	1.88
Present outcome data to potential stakeholders (e.g., school board members, principals, parents)	1.88
Secure funds by applying for additional grants	1.56
Secure funds from sources other than grants	1.56
Identify key stakeholders who might support the program	1.38
Discuss with local leaders how the program relates to the community’s overall prevention needs	1.13
Turn over ownership of the program to the community, schools, or other organizations	0.88

Note. Items were scored as No discussion = 0; Limited discussion with no clear plan = 1; Discussion with tentative plan = 2; Discussion with firm plan = 3; and Executed plan = 4.

In their interviews, grant directors reported being at different stages in their sustainability planning process. Some grant directors had not yet started thinking about sustainability, whereas others had sustainability in mind from the onset of programming.

Some grant directors reported strategically selecting programs, such as Second Step, Too Good for Violence, and Botvin’s LifeSkills Training, because they had minimal operational costs. One grant director said, “One of the reasons we chose the LifeSkills program is because the workbook cost was something our school could integrate into the textbook fee to students at a relatively inexpensive rate. The state is able to help fund students who can’t afford these materials as well.”

DID PARTNERS IN PREVENTION WORK?

One grant director from a school implementing Botvin LifeSkills Training reported that lack of future funding would affect the school's ability to sustain *Partners in Prevention* programming. Another grantee described actively seeking additional funding to sustain programming.

Another essential component of sustainability, as cited by several of the grant directors, is getting buy-in from key stakeholders. Several grant directors reported that having buy-in from teachers, staff, parents, the school board, implementers, and leaders is important for sustainability because those individuals are advocates for the program.

Classroom Climate

We presented implementers with a series of statements about the climate of the classrooms in which they implemented *Partners in Prevention* programming. We instructed them to think about what these classes were like in general, rather than just during *Partners in Prevention* programming. Implementers responded on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). As shown in the table that below, on average, implementers agreed that their students were satisfied, they were neutral about whether students got along and were competitive, and they disagreed that students had difficulty with their schoolwork.

Classroom Climate Component	Sample Item	Mean Score
Student satisfaction	Students are happy with the class.	3.81 (agree)
Peer relations	All students in the class get along well with each other.	3.01 (neither agree nor disagree)
Competitiveness	Most students want their work to be better than their friends' work.	3.09 (neither agree nor disagree)
Classroom difficulty	Only the brightest students can do all the work.	2.33 (disagree)

Note. Scores range from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

LESSONS LEARNED

Summary of Lessons Learned Across Data Sources

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

First, **the schools and communities that received *Partners in Prevention* grants generally had characteristics that primed them for success.** All grant directors and most implementers said that substance use prevention and SEL programming were consistent with their organization's mission. Most grant directors also stated that organizational policies were consistent with the initiative.

On average, grant directors and implementers said that their leaders supported *Partners in Prevention*. Implementers also thought that their principals were a source of program resources and that there were people in their school to whom they could turn for help with programming. On average, implementers had positive attitudes about programming, and they had high initial levels of social-emotional competence.

There is room for improvement in implementer training and oversight. On average, implementers were fairly new to the fields of prevention and SEL. However, a quarter of implementers said that they did not receive any training in the program they were implementing, and a quarter of those who were trained said that they received training after they began implementing.

In terms of monitoring, about two thirds of grantees had observed, or planned to observe, implementation, and only about a quarter of implementers reported having been observed or being aware of plans to be observed. About one third of grantees and of implementers did not have self-reported implementation information. A sizable number of implementers did not receive feedback on observations or self-reports.

Implementation quality varied by metric. Grantees and implementers frequently reported that students were engaged in programming, and implementers reported that student understanding was generally good. However, only about half of implementers reported following a curriculum manual exactly.

Lack of time was among the most commonly cited challenges to implementing *Partners in Prevention*. Among implementers, it was the most commonly identified reason for adapting programming. Also, about half of grant directors found that school policies that limited the time available for prevention programming were a barrier to *Partners in Prevention* implementation.

Programs could be better embedded in the school communities. There was room for improvement in implementer-reported aspects of how programs were being embedded in schools, including by incorporating program materials or messages in the school environment, incorporating program concepts or messages into school-wide expectations, referencing program content or messages when interacting with students outside of program implementation, and using program lessons to replace required instructional content.

Both grant directors and implementers reported that implementers had a voice in program planning. However, students and (usually) parents did not.

Although most grantees provided program training or other information to school staff beyond implementers, bus drivers, coaches, custodial staff, and nurses were not included. This omission may be particularly problematic for intervention strategies like Conscious Discipline that focus on school environment change.

Grantees were generally in the early stage of sustainability efforts. Survey results showed minimal sustainability planning to date. Also, grant directors reported receiving little technical assistance on sustainability planning, and few grantees reported having outside funding to supplement *Partners in Prevention* funds. This is not necessarily a critical problem, because grantees were in Year 1 of implementation. However, grantees will need to make steady progress on sustainability planning in order to be prepared to maintain programming and any positive outcomes when *Partners in Prevention* funding ends in 2022.

Additional Lessons Learned From Grant Director Interviews

In their interviews, grant directors shared the advice they would give to (hypothetical) new *Partners in Prevention* grantees.

Planning

Most of the grant directors reported that the planning phase of *Partners in Prevention* was critical for successful and timely implementation of programming. During this planning phase, grant directors suggested outlining long-range goals for the program, including sustainability. “A part of our grant writing involved talking about sustainability after program funding ends. We spoke to [our superintendent] and he decided to allocate funding on the side so we could continue program activities after the 3-year period ended.” This superintendent identified a place in the school budget under the student activities fund that could be used to cover the costs of program workbooks beyond grant funding.



Engaging Staff

A few grant directors recommended identifying staff and implementers who are committed to and invested in programs. These staff are critical resources to secure buy-in and support from other teachers. Additionally, some grant directors suggested involving key staff in the initial decision making. One grant director was grateful that HFL provided funding for them to take a day off from school to convene faculty and staff to discuss the vision for their *Partners in Prevention* programming. The grant director believed that this collaborative decision-making process before program implementation contributed to the success of their program.

Stipend for Implementers

Two grant directors highlighted the benefits of including a stipend for implementers. One grant director stated that a stipend helped secure buy-in and commitment from implementers: “When they wrote the grant, they wrote in a stipend for all the 1st-year implementation teachers. I think that was very smart on their part because they knew the teachers had so much on their plates.”

The lessons learned in Year 1 of *Partners in Prevention* can guide quality improvement efforts on the part of schools, grantees, technical assistance providers, and HFL. These efforts, in turn, may help strengthen the impact of *Partners in Prevention* on student, teacher, and school outcomes.