A Framework for Effectively Implementing Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (EBPs)

Introduction

Many schools and communities implement evidence-based programs and practices with varying levels of success. This "Framework for Effectively Implementing Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (EBPs)" has been designed to maximize the likelihood that your EBP implementation will be successful and result in your desired outcomes.

The framework is based on:

- Interviews with past SS/HS Grantees about their most and least successful EBPs
- SS/HS Technical Assistance Specialists' work with grantees
- Frameworks for best practice implementation

From this research we have identified:

- Common challenges grantees have faced in selecting and implementing EBPs and effective strategies for addressing these challenges
- Key factors that promote effective, sustainable program implementation

This three-stage framework describes the key steps to consider during implementation of EBPs:

- Stage 1: Selection
- Stage 2: Preparation
- Stage 3: Implementation

Before you begin to explore specific areas of the EBP Implementation Framework, briefly review all of the action steps in each of the stages to make sure you have sufficiently touched all the bases that will help you be successful. Action steps provide concrete and practical strategies, tools, and examples from SS/HS grantees' experiences in successfully implementing EBPs.

STAGE 1: SELECTION

You may be looking for an evidence-based program or practice or you may find that a program or practice you are already using does not address your current needs. At this point, you'll need to select a new EBP.

Below are some concrete action steps compiled from best practices and from SS/HS project staff that may help you select appropriate EBPs.

1. Conduct a Needs Assessment

Use existing school and community data and collect new data to identify and prioritize areas of need related to risk and protective factors. A needs assessment can define the scope, characteristics, and consequences of problems, and will help you answer key questions, such as:

- What are the problems that need to be addressed?
- What components require strengthening?
- What areas are not being effectively addressed?
- How safe and healthy is the environment for youth and adults?

Your needs assessment should take into consideration the particular cultural and linguistic context of your community, which will help you select the best possible program for your target population. The results of your needs assessment go into column 1 of your logic model. Use How Do We Know What's Happening: Creating a Data Collection Plan as a guide.

"We used the Protective Schools Assessment. It's an assessment that each school site took to determine where its strengths and weaknesses were. And based on the information from that assessment, sites selected programs."

—*Vail School District #20, Arizona*

2. Identify Gaps

Use your needs assessment data to:

- Identify programming gaps in priority areas for different age groups and to determine if specific populations are not being served by your programs.
- Look comprehensively at other services and interventions that already exist within the school and the community. The Resource Mapping Tool can help you define a continuum of programs (from universal to selective to indicated) for each age group to complement your successful existing programs.
- Look at existing programs that are not producing changes in the populations that they are intended to impact. Poor results may be due to poor program fit, program implementation, or program fidelity:
- If the cause is poor program fit, a different program may better serve students' needs.
- If the cause is poor implementation, implementers might require additional training and support.
- If the cause is poor fidelity, you might contact the developer to help you better understand the elements of the EBP that are critical to ensuring positive outcomes.

In order to decrease suspensions and expulsions, the **Tigard-Tualatin (Oregon) School District** identified programming gaps. The district decided to use a systemic, multipronged approach that addresses the three tiers of intervention. Tigard-Tualatin employs the preventative PBIS approach at the universal level to improve the school climate for all students. The district also has PBIS Teams—Yellow Zone Teams for second-tier selected academic and behavior intervention planning and monitoring, and Red Zone Teams for intensive, targeted third-tier support. Red Zone Teams at each school include the principal or associate principal, school counselors, learning specialists, SS/HS mental health care coordinators, SROs, and the SS/HS juvenile counselor. This team works to implement interventions—based on data collection about absences, office disciplinary referrals, and suspensions—for students reaching identified thresholds in these areas.

3. Find Evidence-Based Programs or Practices

There are a number of methods you might use to identify effective programs or practices for your intended population:

* Search registries of evidence-based interventions, such as the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP), which allows you to sort EBPs by many categories (e.g., topic, age group, race/ethnicity, setting). It also allows you to compare similar programs. Registries often list the evaluated outcomes of effective programs and the populations with whom each program has been implemented with success.
* Ask school districts who have similar demographics and needs what programs and practices they are implementing with success.
* If you are considering a program or practice that has not been used or tested with your specific population, contact the developer to find out if there is evidence on its use with your population, and examine the program's logic model or theory of change to determine if there is anything that indicates efficacy for your intended population.

"What happened was [that] before our SS/HS project, the districts heard from the department of education, "Hey, this is coming down, you've got to have this in place." So our county office provided a lot of showcases about different programs. People went to those, gained information, and then started calling other districts, "Hey, I understand you used Too Good for Drugs. How do you like it? What's your teachers' take on it? How is it, in terms of implementation?" So the feedback for Too Good for Drugs was pretty positive."

—San Diego County Schools, California

The goal of the **Chicago (Illinois) Public Schools, District #299**, SS/HS Initiative was to strengthen and expand on a continuum of services for all students, resulting in positive student outcomes. Recognizing the Illinois Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) standards as benchmarks for positive behavioral and mental health, the Chicago SS/HS Partnership developed the capacity to provide targeted SEL supports to the district's student population. Using district- and school-level data, Chicago's SS/HS Partnership identified evidenced-based interventions and practices, such as Second Step and PBS, to address students' SEL needs, as well as mental health services and supports at each tier in the pyramid model for select schools in the South Shore. These prevention and targeted behavioral supports and strategies integrated positive discipline practices and provided school-based services that helped students meet district and state SEL standards.

4. Convene a Selection Committee

Once you have narrowed your search to a few program choices, it is important to include representatives from key stakeholder groups (e.g., teachers, parents, students, principals, and school staff) in the selection of the EBP. They can help judge how successful or accepted an intervention may be with the intended population, and can help to secure buy-in from the groups they represent.

It's also important to get input from SS/HS partners, as they can help determine a fit with community and institutional capacity, compatibility with their own programs and services, and a commitment of funding and staff.

"The people that were involved in the selection [of the Olweus program] were the principal, students in focus groups, teachers, guidance counselors, and other school staff members, as well as some of our community connection staff working on the Safe Schools grant. It was a group of people because the school staff had to have an 80 percent vote that they're willing to do this."

—Allamakee County School District, Waukon, Iowa

STAGE 2: PREPARATION

Proper preparation is key to successful implementation of programs and practices. It is critical to:

- Learn as much as you can about how the program is working in other communities
- Engage key stakeholders to ensure a receptive environment
- Find the best people to deliver the EBP
- Provide implementers with adequate training and support to ensure effective implementation

Below are some concrete action steps complied from best practices and from interviews with current and former SS/HS project staff that may help you prepare to implement your EBP.

1. Connect with Developer

The developer will often provide training, materials, technical assistance, and guidelines on how to implement the EBP with fidelity while adapting it to meet your community's cultural and linguistic needs, as well as the needs of children and youth with disabilities.

2. Visit Nearby Schools

Contact the developer to find other nearby schools that may be using the EBP with similar populations.

"At one SS/HS site, the principal of a school that was using an EBP came to another school to introduce the program and invited teachers and administrators to visit his school to see it in action."

3. Involve SS/HS Partners

Ideally, partners were already involved during Stage 1: Selection. Partners can provide support and direction at this stage by:

- Promoting community buy-in and ownership
- Increasing staff capacity to implement the program
- Providing opportunities for cross-agency training and planning
- Creating a system for information-sharing around the EBP
- Helping you develop a communications strategy for the EBP

Consider with your Core Management Team how to involve partners in the implementation of your EBP.

4. Select Program Implementers

Choosing the right program implementers is key to effective program implementation. Here are questions to consider in your selection:

- Do potential implementers have the appropriate skill set and the background to deliver the EBP? EBP developers often describe the appropriate skill set.
- How many implementers are needed to successfully deliver the EBP? The EBP developer can provide this information.
- Which partners in the SS/HS Initiative would be the most appropriate implementers? For example, in one community, local law enforcement officers deliver a gang-resistance EBP within the schools.
- Do implementers have cultural and linguistic competence relative to the target population?
- Can the implementers commit to full participation in professional development, such as training, to prepare them for implementation?
- Are there leaders in the school or community whose enthusiasm for the EBP can bring others on board?

"We actually have ATOD educators assigned to implement the EBP at each site, typically two days a week. And they work with the students, the faculty, and the administration to implement the program, and that seems to be going well."

— *St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES, New York*

"A fantastic, highly motivated person, who was committed to the program implemented, PATHS. The teachers and the kids love her personality."

— *Cabool, Missouri*

5. Plan for Professional Development

New programs require staff to develop new skills and knowledge. Before implementing an EBP, staff need a workshop or training to:

- Introduce them to the program and practices
- Foster ownership
- Build in-depth knowledge of the program and the key elements required to implement it with fidelity
- Have opportunities to practice teaching a lesson or using program methods and receiving feedback
- Identify potential challenges and solutions to implementation

You will need to choose the means of providing professional development, and how it will be best carried out in your school, district, or community. For example:

- If you have a large staff, it may be more cost-effective to bring the developer to your school or district and host the professional development event onsite. If this is the case, you will need to find a facility and attend to a variety of logistical details.
- If you have only a few staff, you may want to find an offsite training offered by the developer. Another strategy is to co-sponsor a professional development event with a nearby school district and share the developer's training fees.

Another important factor to consider in your planning is how you will provide professional development support for the program once SS/HS funds are no longer available. SS/HS grantees have used the following strategies:

- Sent key staff to a training-of-trainers event. This builds your internal capacity by equipping staff leaders with the knowledge and skills to provide professional development to new staff who join the school or district in the future or to existing staff who will take ownership of the program once the SS/HS grant ends.
- Built the EBP training into their school's existing ongoing professional development.

- Hired a prevention specialist with expertise in the EBP to implement the program, with teachers as observers for a set period of time. Teachers then slowly transition into the implementer role, with support from the prevention specialist.
- Made sure a critical mass of staff is trained in the program so that the program becomes institutionalized, and program capacity does not disappear with staff turnover.

"In our original grant application, the way it had been designed is that we would implement PATHS for three years in the classroom. During that time period, the teachers are required to stay in the classrooms and implement the lesson with the full-time implementer, with the understanding that when the grant funding runs out and that implementer is no longer available, the classroom teachers will then take over. . . . And so for three years, every week, the teachers have been observing the PATHS lesson, and, in fact, all the teachers are getting ready to go through PATHS training here in August…"

—*Cabool, Missouri*

The **Escondido (California) Unified School District** SS/HS Initiative, CARE Youth Project (CYP) requires extensive training and support. It is a comprehensive approach that includes Early Childhood readiness training for providers, integrates the PBIS preventative school-wide and classroom system of supports, provides an anti-aggression/pro-social skills program for selected middle school students, and implements ATOD and bullying prevention programs. The initiative supports each CYP program by providing intensive trainings:

- Site administrators learn about positive disciplinary practices.
- School site-based teams are trained in implementing the PBIS school-wide framework.
- Site Support Specialists provide ongoing training to school site staff on barriers to student learning.
- Attendance Intervention Specialists provide ongoing training to support staff, including clerical staff and administrators, on attendance policy and the intensive intervention team process that links students with supportive interventions.
- The Behavioral Specialist offers classroom management trainings to teachers and other instructional assistants.

"We have a contracted consultant who comes in every month and meets with [the] school sites . . . very successful . . . people know who she is . . . know she's accessible to everybody if people have questions or run into problems."

—*Pittsfield, Massachusetts*

6. Pilot the Program

By piloting the program on a small scale and demonstrating success with your school population, you can build support and a sense of ownership for the program and then spread the word to other district schools and staff.

Some key considerations for a successful pilot include:

- Select a pilot population that is representative of the community.
- Choose skilled implementers and provide them with adequate professional development and ongoing support during implementation.
- Set up a monitoring mechanism and closely monitor the implementation to ensure implementers' fidelity to the core elements of the program.

"One site sent a teacher from every grade level to a two-day training of trainers for the EBP (Too Good for Drugs). Each of eight schools had representatives at the training, and these teachers piloted the program in their respective classrooms. When the pilot was completed, the teachers convened to discuss their experiences with the EBP. Teachers reported that the students liked it. They felt the program was valuable, a good use of classroom time, and user-friendly. SS/HS staff presented an overview of the program and teachers' feedback to the school board and recommended that the EBP be adopted as a K–8 curriculum district-wide. The school board agreed. Now the school district has an expert at every grade level, and these trainers provide on-site training to their colleagues."

—San Diego County School District, California

The **Albuquerque (New Mexico) Public Schools** designed and implemented the pilot project Prevention Intervention Program for Youth (PIPY), aimed at providing prevention and early intervention services to young people who are at risk of entering the juvenile justice system. The PIPY project was piloted at one of the largest middle schools in the district, which has a high number of referrals to juvenile detention. Bookings for delinquent acts occurring on PIPY pilot school grounds have decreased 53 percent. The school administration also reports that the number of repeat offenders has gone down from previous years—a change that they attribute to on-site caseworkers preventing violence through conflict resolution and immediate referral to prevention programs.

"We piloted [the program] at two of our schools . . . the teachers were happy with the program . . . had wonderful things to say . . . "Wow, this does really work, and I can continue teaching instead of [having] to stop for discipline issues."

—Anaheim, California

7. Develop a Monitoring System

In order for EBPs to be effective, they need to be implemented with fidelity. This requires a mechanism for monitoring the implementation to determine if the core elements of the program are being implemented as designed and to identify supports that implementers may need.

The data you collect about program implementation can help you improve your implementation efforts. Use the EBP Implementation and Sustainability Checklist and your logic model to monitor and document your implementation progress.

There are a variety of methods schools or districts can use--alone or in combination--to monitor program delivery such as:

- **Checklists completed by program staff at the end of each session:** You may ask implementers to check off or list content areas and activities that were completed, and document the extent to which they were completed. You may also want to include a space where they can describe deviations from the session's content or activities. The checklist can be paper-based or online. One community put its implementation questionnaire online via Survey Monkey to facilitate teacher participation.
- **Direct observation**: A supervisor or independent observer may attend sessions and complete a checklist documenting the content and activities that were completed. He or she may also observe and report on other aspects of delivery, such as relationship with students and level of enthusiasm.
- **Videotaped observation**: Sessions can be videotaped to be reviewed and coded at a later time using the same checklists used for direct observation.

The **Pueblo City School District (CO)** SS/HS initiative implemented the Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) to positively change school climate and reduce suspensions and expulsions. The district spent time and resources to develop the right monitoring system to support and accompany the use of PBIS in their schools. The PBIS Specialist worked with the district data staff to add fields and categories to the district system, creating a more comprehensive data collection system to better track and address students' behavior. He also added an interactive software program, Tableau, to visually map, aggregate, and cross-examine discipline behavioral data with other school data. Using Tableau, the PBIS Specialist can examine underlying data for any point or day or student. Data is updated daily and the integrated database system is used in a variety of ways to track practices and improve discipline outcomes:

- Staff map the time of day, location on school property, and day of the week when most discipline issues are happening in an individual school or across the district. Then they ask: What is happening? Where is it happening? Why is it happening? The initiative uses this data in various ways. They have shared it with the School Resource Officers (SRO) at roll call to distribute SROs to the "hotspots" of the school at the appropriate times of day.
- Data is shared with school principals in PBIS teams and leadership teams. In one

school, they found an increase in problem behaviors in the lunchroom. Staff used this data to figure out the underlying problem and ended up changing the number of lunches offered to reduce the amount of students in the lunchroom at the same time, and discipline referrals decreased dramatically.

- The data system allows the district to identify how students with special needs or students from different ethnic groups are affected by disciplinary practices to determine any disparities in enforcement.
- District staff can also track data across programs and services to capture trends over several years and identify the collective impact. They use this data to make decisions on where to put resources within the Response to Intervention (RTI) model.
- SS/HS staff share aggregate level data with school staff and teach them how to interpret the trends. School administrators and PBIS teams can drill down to system level, classroom level, and individual student level data for their specific buildings.

8. Build Program Ownership

There are often challenges to getting teacher and administrator ownership:

- Teachers already have very full plates, and they are under pressure to have students pass state tests.
- Administrators may not want to add additional burdens to teachers' workloads.
- Both teachers and administrators have seen programs come and go without much impact.
- You will need to make clear the connection between the EBP and students' academic success and the potential benefits of implementing the new program.

Here are some strategies to consider:

- Involve teachers and administrators in choosing EBPs that are easy to implement, can be integrated into existing curricula, and relate to the state standards.

"When teachers see what a success the program is and that it isn't as difficult as they thought, they understand the benefits of the program to kids and also to the teachers in creating better classrooms."

—Anaheim, California

Have one-on-one conversations with administrators, who are usually their schools' gatekeepers of staff time and resources—their support for the EBP is key to a successful implementation. Taking time to meet individually with principals and other administrators to discuss the benefits of the EBP and offering assistance when needed will help build a strong relationship and ongoing support for the program.

"We got [ownership] by talking, talking, and more talking . . . demonstrating that it was a useful curriculum . . . meetings with them one on one . . . It was constant the first year."

—Boston, Massachusetts

- Demonstrate how the EBP supports learning (e.g., decreasing time spent on discipline issues and increasing student engagement) so that teachers understand that an investment in the program is worth their time.

"After students who experienced the program at one site in Tennessee started doing much better in school, other teachers became interested and asked to attend the professional development sessions. It was a natural buy-in."

—Franklin, Tennessee

- Give teachers and administrators an opportunity to be professionally trained. Providing professional development on the EBP helps staff increase their knowledge and repertoire of skills so that they feel more competent and capable.
- Hold information sessions on the EBP before it is implemented. Provide staff with details about the program and its expected outcomes.

For successful implementation, you will also need ownership from the community. Be intentional about engaging the community in your initiative. SS/HS sites have used the following strategies:

- Showing videos about the EBP at PTA meetings and at Back to School Nights.
- Holding a community coalition meeting, open to different stakeholder groups, to inform them about the Initiative and the programs being implemented.

"Community members were encouraged to join subcommittees focused on specific age groups, which got them involved at their level of interest. For example, the subcommittee on early childhood-age children helped to develop literacy kits and found creative means of distributing them."

—Black Oak Mine, California

- Forming a relationship with local media to introduce the community to the SS/HS Initiative's work and to highlight future program successes
- Inviting community partners to the EBP trainings, even if they will not be implementers, to build their awareness of and support for the program

Newport-Mesa (California) Unified School District is a large and diverse district, economically and culturally in Orange County. The district's SS/HS Initiative began its efforts by addressing the needs of older students who had been suspended or expelled or who had low academic achievement. Many of these students came from low-income Latino families. Bilingual Outreach Advocates, with experience in both education and social services, contacted the families of these students by phone and in person at their residences to offer to help change the students' behaviors by providing services and a skills program for parents. The SS/HS Initiative used a bilingual (English-Spanish) EBP parenting program, Parenting Wisely, which features materials friendly to families with limited education. The Family Outreach leader, a Hispanic woman with broad credibility in the schools and community, said that the most important thing in working with this community was to be respectful, compassionate, and a good listener: "Even though I am Hispanic, I do not know more about their reality than they do."

After the first six months, the project began seeing improvements in student attendance, discipline, and social behaviors, and a decrease in truancy of almost 50 percent. By the end of the first semester, the district saw improvements in students' academic achievement. In addition, the number of referrals to mental health professionals greatly increased. Word started spreading about the benefits of participating in the program, and families shared stories of improved communication with each other. After the first year, the program had a waiting list.

STAGE 3: IMPLEMENTATION

Effectively implementing your EBPs involves anticipating or identifying problems and challenges and responding to them before they affect your desired outcomes.

Below are some concrete action steps compiled from best practices and from interviews with current and former SS/HS project staff that may be helpful as you implement your EBP.

1. Monitor Implementation

Use the monitoring mechanism you created in the preparation stage to conduct a process evaluation. This will help you readily identify and address needs and challenges as they occur. See the EBP Implementation and Sustainability Checklist.

- Make sure that implementers stick to the core elements of the EBP to ensure that your programs are implemented with fidelity.
- If available, use the developer's EBP fidelity checklists, survey instruments, and teacher implementation logs.
- Peer coaching may be necessary in order to ensure users are implementing EBPs with fidelity.

"[A] part of the evaluation was to have them do a check-off regularly of what curriculum was taught . . . we built in accountability . . . check and cross-check."

—Boston, Massachusetts

- Compare the process data to the targets set in your logic model.

- Depending on the results of your process evaluation, you may need to provide additional preparation or professional development and other staff support, or consider selecting a different EBP.

"At one site, the administrators found out from the data they were collecting and billing from events that one teacher was not implementing with fidelity because [the teacher wasn't] adequately trained."

—Black Oak Mine, California

The **Eudora (Kansas) Public Schools** SS/HS Initiative has established first-tier universal systems by training and staffing coaches and PBIS teams. A district leadership team meets quarterly to monitor implementation and address district-wide needs. To ensure that PBIS is implemented with fidelity and that decisions are driven by the data, additional training is required. To meet these needs, a small group of staff have been trained and certified in the School-Wide Information System—a behavior collection system used in conjunction with PBIS—as well as the School Evaluation Tool, which evaluates the integrity of universal-level implementation of PBIS, and the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool, which checks the fidelity of practices.

Monitoring implementation fidelity and effectiveness helps the district identify ongoing needs for staff development, for example:

- Staff development for principals to help them understand the need to link students to mental health assessment, services, and/or skill-building when behavioral issues are severe or chronic.
- Training to help staff use additional data sources to target individual school issues and update PBIS matrices. For example, bullying is an issue that often surfaces in the school surveys but not as much in the behavior incident report data. Since bullying is often hidden from adults, factoring in a variety of data sources is necessary.

2. Provide Ongoing Professional Development

Professional development is not a one-time event. To be effective, implementers need ongoing professional development and support, such as:

- Coaching and mentoring by skilled implementers
- EBP booster sessions
- Demonstration lessons by skilled implementers
- Regular opportunities to share challenges and successes

Building ample time for professional development into the schedule will demonstrate the importance of the program to staff and that the administration is behind it.

"We hold a monthly core team meeting at each school site. And then we hold a quarterly core team meeting with all the districts so people can share strategies, successes, ideas, those kinds of things, to keep people motivated and interested. It's easy to start [an EBP] and then kind of lose sight of it. We want people to stay on top of it to continue to recognize good behavior, to promote it, to model it, and to make sure that everybody is following the rules consistently."

—Vail, Arizona

"Our trainer for Second Step is someone who has a great deal of experience with Second Step and has made herself available above and beyond the day of the training. She's gone back to the schools additional times with staff to talk with them about problems they might be having."

—Rome, New York

To train new staff, build EBP training into orientation for new staff so that all implementers are properly prepared.

"The biggest challenge will be—because we're a growing district and new staff come onboard— to maintain training of that [new] staff and make sure they understand how PBIS works. We do have a brief training on it that's been built into our new teacher induction, so that will be helpful."

—Vail, Arizona

3. Utilize Key Supports

The developer will often provide technical assistance and guidelines on how to implement the EBP with fidelity while adapting it to meet the particular cultural and linguistic needs of your community.

"If one of the implementers had an issue or problem or didn't understand something, they picked up the phone and called the Mendez Foundation [developer of Too Good for Drugs and Too Good for Violence], and [the Foundation] would tell them what to do, or how to implement this, or how they could change or modify this—or if they needed to change the program and stretch it out over two weeks as opposed to one week, [the Foundation] would give them some corrective ways to make those changes."

—Wheeler, Georgia

The grant itself provides many built-in supports for implementation, through the Technical Assistance Specialists, the Federal Project Officer, the National Evaluation Team, and the Communications and Social Marketing Team.

"[Our TAS] was previously a project director, so she's been really, really helpful from a project director perspective, but also for technical assistance with everything. [She's] guiding us through what her experiences have been, and what might work, and what might not."

— Anaheim, California

"[Our TAS] knows us very well. I think it's important for [the TAS] to really know your program, know how they function . . . and [be able to] support you with fidelity and information. She's helped us with mapping out our needs and come on-site for visits, which I strongly encourage people to do."

—Allamakee County School District, Waukon, Iowa

4. Collect Data

SS/HS grantees cite good outcomes as key to spreading excitement about a program and increasing the willingness of teachers to implement programs. Throughout this stage, the evaluator, partners, and program staff must provide the project director with process and outcome data about the following:

- If the EBP is being implemented with fidelity
- If the EBP is an appropriate fit for our community
- If there is adequate buy-in from staff and partners
- If any adaptations compromise the EBP's core elements
- If the challenges and needs identified by implementers are being successfully addressed by ongoing professional development and support
- If the site is effectively using grant-provided supports, such as the TASs and FPOs
- If the program outcome data are meeting the objectives identified in the logic model
- If processes are being put in place to sustain the program, such as dealing with staff turnover, building staff training capacity, and ensuring that policymakers are willing to integrate effective programs into the system
- Provide regular communication about positive outcomes to implementers, school staff, and community members. Where possible, link EBPs to academic outcomes and to state standards.

If desired outcomes are not being achieved, make adjustments. To understand how data can help make program improvements during this stage, see Evaluation section below.

The **Tigard-Tualatin (Oregon) School District** Check In/Check Out program has been implemented as a second-tier intervention for the improvement of school attendance and school engagement for selected middle school students with attendance or early behavior problems. Key features of this program are frequent feedback to students about their behavior, in order to prevent future problem behavior; positive reinforcement to students for meeting daily goals; data tracking of positive behavior in addition to disciplinary issues; and the acknowledgement of expected behavior through a reward system. There is solid evidence that this approach is working. For example, in 2010–2011, there was a 34 percent decrease in office disciplinary referrals and a 54 percent decrease in suspensions among students participating in Check In/Check Out.

In **Newport-Mesa (California) Unified School District**, a large and diverse district in Orange County, tracking their data and communicating the success of their programs for parents of older children has allowed the SS/HS Initiative to expand their parenting programs to parents of elementary school and pre-school children, addressing behavioral issues before they become more critical and interfere with children's academic success. In addition, the district implemented a software system that tracks students' progress in real time; it monitors student behavior, attendance, and academic outcomes to quickly identify students and families who need support. As a result, instead of intervening to address problems that exist, the district focuses on promoting positive behaviors and preventing risk behaviors in a culturally competent manner.

5. Build Sustainability

You can promote sustainability by creating a supportive infrastructure for your highest-priority EBPs:

- Build the capacity of key implementers by having them attend training-of-trainer sessions provided by the developer.
- Continue to involve school leadership to build buy-in for your program.
- Show how the EBPs complement and coordinate with existing programs.
- Use your Communications Specialist and the resources of the grant-provided Communications and Social Marketing Team to communicate your program successes and to build broad support in your community.
- Work with school leadership and partners to create and institutionalize policies, such as anti-bully and early screening for at-risk youth, that support the work of your most effective EBPs.
- Find ways to leverage your partnerships and to link the functions and outcomes of effective EBPs to school-related goals in order to obtain sustainable funding beyond the grant.

For strategies for building EBP sustainability, see Leaving a Legacy: Six Strategies for Sustainability. The six strategies discussed in this tool include financing, evaluation, partnerships and collaboration, implementation, communications/marketing, and leadership for change.

For the **Chicago Public School, District #299,** implementing programming to support students at all levels of the pyramid required a number of key infrastructural supports:

- Comprehensive professional development, including training and coaching to support the staff implementing the programs
- A screening and referral process that teachers and administrators understood and could readily use to identify student needs and refer them to the appropriate services
- Coordination among departments and school programs and services
- A data system to track behaviors and services (e.g., the School-Wide Information System), monitor the referral process and program implementation, and collect outcome data (e.g., discipline referrals, school attendance)

With the development of a supportive infrastructure, the ability to deliver EBPs increased significantly. Positive outcomes included an increase in average daily attendance, an increase in the number of students who received appropriate referrals for services, and a majority (84 percent) of SS/HS students in grades 6–12 stating that they perceived positive adult support in school.

"We had a strong communication relationship with the local media. They did a radio station program two days a week where they'd talk about the programs, how the lessons were going, how the kids were adapting to it, etc."

—Wheeler, Georgia

"We built a community coalition out of this initiative. This should be useful for sustaining in the future, since having a community nonprofit will allow them to go for a lot of funding that isn't offered to schools."

—Black Oak Mine, California

The **Adams County Youth Initiative (ACYI) (CO)**, has taken numerous steps to sustain their highly successful Incredible Years program and to make it an integrated part of the community. Prior to implementation, a diverse group of stakeholders from across Adams County met to ensure that there was a need for the program and to develop a work plan, which included an evaluation plan to measure program and implementation outcomes. Since program implementation in 2007, program partners have worked to ensure the program continues beyond SS/HS funding. These partners have met 6 times per year for several years to coordinate implementation, and have developed a sustainability timeline that is being implemented in all five districts. Recommendations involve embedding expertise and peer

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coaching capacity at the local level, so that Adams County can sustain program implementation, while reducing reliance on the trainer, Invest in Kids.

The ACYI build the infrastructure necessary to support a long-term collective impact. The initiative is aimed at transforming the lives of Adams County children and young people by coordinating, leveraging, and integrating significant resources to support children through their developmental years. As ACYI/SSHS prepared for no-cost extension and sustainability, they established as a 501C3 with non-profit status, and continue to support early childhood programming including Incredible Years.

EVALUATION

As you move from EBP selection to the preparation and implementation stages, it is essential that evaluators, partners, and program staff provide the project director with frequent, relevant data about the progress at each stage. Your logic model and evaluation plan will help you monitor some of the data you will need.

Evaluating Stage 1: Selection

During this stage, you need to assess each potential EBP in terms of its ability to do the following:

- Address the priority areas identified in your needs assessment
- Reflect the culture of your intended population
- Be implemented with fidelity, given the requirements and constraints on teachers and administrators
- Be supported within the SS/HS budget
- Be sustained, given the potential funding resources available when the grant ends

If a program does not fit all these criteria, you must work with the Federal Project Officer (FPO) and the Technical Assistance Specialist (TAS) to re-evaluate your selection. This is a delicate process, because these programs have been written into the grant application and the expectation is that they've been vetted and selected on the above criteria. However, if the EBP can't meet these criteria after numerous attempts, many FPOs will consider allowing project directors to select another program that the community has the capacity and commitment to implement. Any proposed changes to your selected EBP and related changes to your budget, timeline, and staffing require approval by your FPO.

Evaluating Stage 2: Preparation

During this stage, you should assess each EPB in terms of your group's success in achieving the following program objectives:

- Engaging and effectively training capable program implementers
- Situating the EPB within the existing curriculum
- Collaborating with key partners and the developer

- Garnering buy-in and ownership from parents, administrators, teachers, and students
- Creating a system for monitoring the implementation stage

If the evaluator, partners, and program staff provide information indicating that any of these objectives have not been successfully met, do not proceed to the implementation stage. Instead, you must either work on improving these processes or consider selecting a new program that will have better success at this stage.

For example, if parents and teachers have bought into the program but administrators have not, you must convince the administrators that this program is essential to students' emotional health and academic success, or find another EBP that administrators are willing to support.

Evaluating Stage 3: Implementation

Throughout this stage, the evaluator, partners, and program staff must provide the project director with process and outcome data about the following:

- If the EBP is being implemented with fidelity
- If the EBP is an appropriate fit for our community
- If there is adequate buy-in from staff and partners
- If any adaptations compromise the EBP's core elements
- If the challenges and needs identified by implementers are being successfully addressed by ongoing professional development, monitoring, and support
- If the site is effectively using grant-provided supports, such as the TASs and FPOs
- If the program outcome data are meeting the objectives identified in the logic model
- If processes are being put in place to sustain the program, such as dealing with staff turnover, building staff training capacity, and ensuring that policymakers are willing to integrate effective programs into the system

If for any reason process and outcome data show that implementation is not going well, one or more of the following steps need to be taken:

- Improve program fidelity
- Adjust adaptations to meet program objectives
- Enhance support for implementers
- Take steps toward improving program sustainability

If continued attempts are made and the data do not improve, it is possible that processes from the preparation stage are impacting your implementation, such as lack of sufficient buy-in from parents and teachers. You may need to collect more data to determine whether preparation processes were adequately followed, and take steps to remedy any gaps during the preparation stage.

If these steps fail to improve your preparation processes, or if you determine your program preparation is adequate but full-scale implementation is still not possible, you may need to consider selecting a new program.

If your preparation processes are deemed sufficient, implementation fidelity is high, and adaptations are within acceptable limits, but outcome data are still not showing the expected change, it is possible that the program is not a good fit for your intended population, and you may need to consider selecting a new program. Programs that have been demonstrated to work somewhere else will not necessary work with the particular population you serve in your school or community.

If the program is showing good outcomes but is too costly to sustain past the funding period, despite all efforts to obtain support from community partners and policymakers or to obtain additional grant funds, you may need to consider selecting a new program.

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Department of Health and Human Services, SAMHSA, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. (2009). *Identifying and Selecting Evidence-Based Interventions* (Revised *Guidance Document for the Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant Program*). Retrieved from http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SMA09-4205

> This revised guide, produced by SAMSHA's Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, was developed to assist State and community planners in implementing SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF) for identifying and selecting evidence-based interventions to address local needs and reduce substance abuse problems. The SPF is a five step planning process developed to guide State and communities in their prevention work. The new guidance is divided into six sections that further break down best practices to implement SAMHSA's SPF, particularly around selection of appropriate and effective evidence-based interventions.

Department of Health and Human Services, SAMHSA, National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices. (2010). "Implementation: Making an Evidence-Based Program Work for You." Retrieved from http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/AboutLearn.aspx

> This online course, designed by SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices, provides guidance around selecting and implementing publicly available prevention and treatment evidence-based programs. The course is designed to assist users in deciding how to select the best matched program for their organization's needs and how to carry out the necessary steps for effective program implementation. The course uses a five stage model of implementation which is based on research by the National Implementation Research Network (see Fixen et al).[*] Resources included are commonly used terminology, glossary of terms, resource web links, and references used.

Devaney, E., Utne O'Brien, M., Resnik, H., Keister, S., & Weissberg, R. P. (2006). *Sustainable schoolwide social and emotional learning (SEL): Implementation guide and toolkit.* **Chicago, IL: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL).**

> This implementation guide from CASEL was created to assist school administers and teachers in implementing high-quality, sustainable SEL programs. It includes answers to frequently asked questions by educators, a summary on school reform and organizational change research literature, school district case studies, and a model for implementation and intervention sustainability. The toolkit includes 40 tools for SEL implementation, including example mission statements, needs and resources assessment tools for schools, teacher implementation logs, sample handouts for families, and evaluation surveys.

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(3/4), 327-350.**

> This study, conducted by Loyola University in Chicago, evaluated the impact of implementation on program outcomes and identified significant contributing factors to the implementation process. The results of a meta-analysis of more than 500 related studies show that the level of implementation has a strong effect on program outcomes, particularly for prevention and promotion programs. The authors indicate 23 contextual factors that significantly influence implementation, most notably community setting, provider and innovation characteristics, delivery system, and the training and technical assistance support system. The authors discuss limitations to the present study and suggest future areas of research.

Elias, M. J. (2008). From model implementation to sustainability. In A. M. Blankstein, P. D. Houston, & R. W. Cole (Eds.), *Sustaining professional learning communities* **(pp. 59-95). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.**

> This framework was developed as a synthesis of existing program implementation and sustainability models, and provided the basis for the interview protocol with key stakeholders from model Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs in schools across the United States. The framework comprises three critical elements:
>
> - Motivation and readiness to sustain the program
> - An implementation system that allows for sustainability
> - Validation of the program's value
>
> Findings from the interviews include seven themes common to successful sites, such as clear commitment and participation from key school administrators and compatibility with the school's needs and activities.

Fixen, D. L., Naoom, S. F., Blasé, K. A., Friedman, R. M., & Wallace, F. (2005). *Implementation research: A synthesis of the literature*. **Tampa, FL: University of South Florida, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, The National Implementation Research Network.** Retrieved from
http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~nirn/resources/publications/Monograph/pdf/Monograph_full.pdf.

This paper, produced with support from the William T. Grant Foundation, was developed in response to a lack of information about effective implementation of EBPs, as much of the previous research had focused on development of EBPs. After conducting a meta-analysis of relevant research from 1970 to 2005, the authors reached four major conclusions:

- Information dissemination and training alone are ineffective implementation methods
- Successful program implementation requires a long-term, multilevel approach
- While evidence concerning the influence of organizational and systems interactions is lacking, there is little doubt as to the importance of these relationships on effective program implementation
- The largest knowledge gap in research concerns the relationship among various agency and organization interactions affecting implementation over time

The authors offer implications for future research and recommendations for state and national policymakers.

Gingiss, P. L., Gottlieb, N. H., & Brink, S. G. (1994). Increasing teacher receptivity toward use of tobacco prevention education programs. *Journal of Drug Education,* **24(2), 163-176.**

This study was based on surveys completed by first-grade teachers during the first and second year of the Smoke-Free Class of 2000 initiative. The questionnaires were used to gauge teachers' receptivity toward implementing tobacco prevention education programs, with the underlying goal of creating a broader drug prevention education curriculum. Findings show that while 64 percent of teachers used the received education materials in the first year, 40 percent did not continue their use through the second year, and many teachers who intended to continue implementing the program never actually did so. Analysis of the survey resulted in four primary areas significantly related to receptivity and implementation:

- General receptivity to tobacco prevention education
- Personnel support for teaching tobacco prevention education
- Personal involvement in the program
- School involvement in tobacco prevention

The authors argue that as these areas were found to be predictive of initial and continued use, they can be used to guide further staff development.

Greenberg, M. T., Domitrovich, C. E., Graczyk, P. A., & Zins, J. E. (2005). The study of implementation in school-based preventive interventions: Theory, research, and practice. *Promotion of Mental Health and Prevention of Mental and Behavioral Disorders, Volume 3.* **DHHS Pub. No. (SMA). Rockville, MD: Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.** Retrieved from http://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Implementation-VOL-31.pdf.

The third of six monographs produced by SAMHSA's Center for Mental Health Services as part of its Promotion of Mental Health and Prevention of Mental and Behavioral Disorders campaign, this paper provides a framework for implementing EBPs in a school setting. The paper aims to fill the research gap on EBP implementation, using a theory-driven approach. Topics addressed include:

- Strategies to facilitate effective program delivery
- Seven key reasons for EBP implementation
- A summary of the history of EBPs and their implementation within the fields of education, school-based prevention, and program evaluation
- A stepwise model of school-based prevention EBP implementation with examples from two well-known EBPs (the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies Curriculum and Life Skills Training)

The paper concludes with specific recommendations for practitioners, school personnel, researchers, program developers, funding agencies, and policymakers.

Hall, G. E., & Hord, S. M. (1987). *Change in schools: Facilitating the process.* **Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.**

This book focuses on the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM), a method of understanding how individuals and organizations experience the process of change. This model provides a method, specifically geared toward practitioners and policymakers, for identifying steps in the change process, taking positive steps to facilitate change, and predicting the effects of your efforts. The book offers an overview of CBAM; a literature review on leadership for change issues; teacher perceptions of change and levels of innovation; a discussion of innovation configurations, incident interventions, and intervention taxonomy; case studies; and implications for future research.

Hord, S. M., Rutherford, W. L., Huling-Austin, L., & Hall, G. E. (1987). *Taking charge of change.* **Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.**

This book is based on the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) for understanding how to implement systems change in a school setting. It offers specific diagnostic techniques for identifying and evaluating the personal and professional needs of personnel involved in implementing the change process, and provides three individual strategies for project management.

Rohrbach, L. A., D'Onofrio, C. N., Backer, T. E., & Montgomery, S. B. (1996). Diffusion of school-based substance abuse prevention programs. *American Behavioral Scientist*, **39(7), 919-934.**

> This article discusses the issues surrounding implementing empirically-based substance abuse prevention programs in schools, presents a literature review on determinants of diffusion, and discusses both strategies to increase diffusion and barriers to successful diffusion. The authors conclude by presenting the implications for future research, policy, and program practices.

Rohrbach, L. A., Graham, J. W., & Hansen, W. B. (1993). Diffusion of a school-based substance abuse prevention program: Predictors of program implementation. *Preventive Medicine*, **22(2), 237-260.**

> This study evaluated the diffusion of psychosocial-based substance abuse prevention programs in a school setting, focusing on:
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> - Teacher adoption, implementation, and maintenance
> - Teacher characteristics associated with implementation
>   relationship between integrity of program delivery and program outcomes
> - The effectiveness of teacher training and school principal involvement in increasing implementation
>
> Districts randomly underwent either intensive or brief teacher training, and schools randomly had principal intervention or no principal interventions. Results show that during the first year, 78 percent of trained teachers implemented one or more related lessons; however, by the second year, only 25 percent had maintained implementation. A program including principal intervention increased implementation rates, but intensive teacher training was not a significant factor. Fidelity to program implementation was positively related with immediate program outcomes. Characteristics of implementers compared to non-implementers are then given. The authors conclude that further research needs to be done on how to effectively increase implementation, as results were highly variable.
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> * The SS/HS three-stage EBP Framework incorporates the five-stage NIRN model. EBP Stage 1: Selection corresponds to the NIRN Exploration stage. EBP Stage 2: Preparation includes the NIRN Installation stage. EBP Stage 3: Implementation includes the Initial Implementation, Full Implementation, and Program Sustainability stages of the NIRN model described in this module.