



The YPI Evaluation Newsletter

Central New York Rural Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative

A Report from the Independent Evaluator

Volume III, # 1 (June 2012)

A Report of the Youth Policy Institute, Inc.

The Central NY Rural Safe Schools/Healthy Students Project in Year 3: Program Implementation & School Climate

In the Fall of 2009, the Central New York (CNY) Rural Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) Initiative began its collaboration with five rural school districts, the Cayuga County Department of Health & Human Services, the Cayuga County Sheriff's Department, the

Cayuga-Onondaga B.O.C.E.S, and the Partnership for Results. Led by a Core Management Team convened by the Partnership, this interagency project is implementing evidence-based programs intended to promote safe, well-ordered, and drug-free school environments, and to help children and youth develop the social skills and emotional resilience necessary to avoid violent and other destructive behaviors.

About the Evaluation

The evaluation is being conducted by the Youth Policy Institute. This four-year study of the CNY Rural SS/HS Initiative includes qualitative and quantitative data collection activities designed to gather information about safety, violence prevention, and substance use issues from schools, service providers, staff, parents, and students.

The primary data sources used in this newsletter include student and teacher surveys, interviews with principals, and focus groups with school and project staff.

As noted in previous *YPI Evaluation Newsletters*, the CNY Rural SS/HS Initiative has established a firm foundation for successful program implementation and monitoring. The project had an effective form of governance in place from the outset of project activities, and it continues to operate, providing a high level of administrative oversight. By the third year of the Initiative (the 2011-2012 school year), all but one of the programs and services planned for implementation were operating and reaching

their intended target populations in at least some (but not all) of their intended sites. The project leadership has plans in place to ensure that early in Year 4, all of the Initiative's programs and services will be fully implemented. All project activities are staffed by qualified personnel who are reaching the appropriate target populations.

Over the next several months, this and forthcoming *YPI Evaluation Newsletters* will explore various aspects of this complex, multi-agency project: whether the SS/HS Initiative programs are being implemented as intended; the extent to which research-based programs and services are reaching students and families who will benefit from them; whether and in what ways performance can be improved; and the outcomes of project activities.

This edition of the *Newsletter* is the first in a series of four that will examine the impact of the SS/HS Initiative after three years of activities from the perspectives of students and staff. This first report will review program implementation to date and will examine two categories of impacts closely: school climate and bullying. Three additional reports will examine SS/HS Initiative impact on violence, mental health, and substance use.

Using information from surveys, project databases, site visits, interviews, and focus groups, this report will highlight critical trends occurring in the five participating school districts. Appendix 1 outlines the qualitative and quantitative data sources for this report.

Report Structure and Table of Contents

This report is comprised of three distinct sections:

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In the coming weeks, four additional *YPI Evaluation Newsletters* will examine the impact of the SS/HS Initiative on: (1) bullying; (2) student mental health; (3) student substance use and abuse; and (4) violent behaviors, at school and in the community. This report, Volume III, #1, is accompanied by a separate compendium of data regarding Section IIA (School Climate).

I. Implementation Levels by the End of Year 3

During the second year of project activities, the CNY Rural SS/HS Initiative continued implementing its broad spectrum of evidence-based programs (EBPs). To assess the extent of program implementation, YPI developed a rating instrument based on available research about effective implementation of EBPs.

Each building in the partner school districts implements a range of EBPs. Every program in that building is rated on 5-7 facets of implementation that are related to whether the EBPs will have their intended impact. These facets include:

- (i) How frequently the program is offered (i.e. dosage);
- (ii) How many and what type of people have been trained in the program;
- (iii) What elements of the program are being presented and to what extent;
- (iv) How supportive implementers are of the program;
- (v) How well implementers understand how the program works and what its effects are;
- (vi) Level of fidelity to program protocols and techniques; and
- (vii) Student engagement in the program or intervention.

For each SS/HS Initiative school and core program, YPI has ranked quality of implementation by quartile (legend below):

Quality of Implementation Ratings for SS/HS Initiative Evidence-Based Programs: Participating Schools																
Programs	Cato-Meridian CSD			Jordan-Elbridge CSD			Moravia CSD			Southern Cayuga CSD			Union Springs CSD			
	Cato-Meridian ES	Cato-Meridian MS	Cato-Meridian HS	Elbridge ES	Ramsdell MS	Jordan-Elbridge HS	Millard Fillmore ES	Moravia MS	Moravia HS	Emily Howland ES	Southern Cayuga MS	Southern Cayuga HS	Cayuga ES	A.J. Smith ES	Union Springs MS	Union Springs HS
Life Skills Training (LST)	4	1	2	∅	2	2	4	3	3	4	2	4	3	3	2	3
MOST (Pre-Kindergarten)	2	∅	∅	2	∅	∅	1	∅	∅	1	∅	∅	4	∅	∅	∅
MOST (CREST – elementary)	3	∅	∅	1	2	∅	∅	∅	∅	∅	∅	∅	2	2	∅	∅
MOST (Secondary Schools)	∅	1	1	∅	1	1	∅	1	1	∅	1	1	∅	∅	1	1
Resilience Project	3	∅	∅	1	∅	∅	1	∅	∅	1	∅	∅	1	∅	∅	∅
Safe Dates	∅	4	3	∅	4	4	∅	4	4	∅	4	4	∅	∅	4	4
School Resource Officers (SROs)	4	3	3	∅	∅	∅	4	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	3
Second Step	1	4	∅	4	3	∅	2	3	∅	3	3	∅	4	2	2	∅
Therapeutic Crisis Intervention	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	2	3	3	3	3	1

Legend for Quality of Program Implementation Table

1	<i>First (Highest) Quartile</i> - average ratings in a building of at least 7.6 on a 10-point scale. Implementation (including training, frequency, and fidelity) is likely to result in the program having the effect predicted in program research.
2	<i>Second Quartile</i> - average ratings in a building of 5.1-7.5 out of 10. Implementation is likely to result in the program achieving positive results that are lower than the expected effect predicted in program research.
3	<i>Third Quartile</i> - average ratings in a building of 2.6-5.0 out of 10. Implementation is likely to result in positive program effects substantially below the effects predicted in program research.
4	<i>Fourth (Lowest) Quartile</i> - average ratings in a building of 0-2.5), where implementation is either in its very early stages or not occurring at all and is unlikely to have an impact on the target population.
∅	The evidence-based program cannot be offered at this particular school because it is either not designed to benefit students in the grades at this school or because it is precluded due to grant restrictions.

At the end of Year 3, *four of the nine core SS/HS programs had a high level of implementation in nearly all schools where these programs could be offered:*¹

- ❖ The Resilience Project was implemented at the top two levels in 4 of the 5 elementary schools where it was offered.
- ❖ Pre-K MOST and MOST-CREST services were both implemented at the top two levels in 4 of the 5 schools served.
- ❖ MOST SS/HS was implemented at the highest (purple) level in all 10 secondary schools.

For these four programs, discussed in previous YPI reports,² this generally high level of implementation is associated with positive programmatic impacts. There are several factors contributing to the high level of implementation for these programs: (1) Partnership for Results staff are the primary implementers of the program, reducing the burden on school staff; (2) the Partnership has extensive experience implementing and monitoring these four programs in Central New York Schools; and (3) all four programs (Resilience and

¹ Certain SS/HS programs cannot be implemented in sites where the program is appropriate for implementation because of restrictions in grant funding (e.g. MOST CREST); other programs are limited to students of certain ages (e.g. Resilience Project).

² See, for example, “MOST Services after 16 Months,” *YPI Evaluation Newsletter*, Vol. II, #1 (March 2011); “Resilience Project after 2 Years,” *YPI Evaluation Newsletter*, Vol. II, #2 (July 2011); and “CREST Services from September 2009 to February 2012,” *The CREST Reporter*, Vol. III #2 (March 2012).

the three renderings of the MOST model) have specialized instruments and databases that can provide supervisors with extensive information about caseload levels and fidelity of implementation.

KEY FINDING: **Four of the nine core Safe Schools/Healthy Students programs and services are being implemented in a manner that is likely to produce substantial, positive impacts.**

By the end of Year 3, *five of the nine core SS/HS programs were being implemented at the two lowest levels of implementation in the majority of the schools where the programs were offered.*

- ❖ *The School Resource Officer (SRO) program* was implemented in the top two levels in five of thirteen schools. For the most part, the lower levels of implementation in the other schools was due to a structural impediment – three deputies, assigned to work with thirteen schools, are understandably focusing their energies on the secondary schools. In addition, the delayed development of an SRO database that encourages fidelity to a research-based model may be impeding progress towards high levels of implementation.
- ❖ *Life Skills Training (LST)* was implemented in six of fifteen buildings at the end of Year 2 and was in eleven buildings at the end of Year 3, frequently with the active assistance of Partnership staff. In six of the fifteen buildings in Year 3, implementation was in the top two quartiles. Interviews with school administrators and school and project staff indicate that in a majority of schools, Life Skills Training will be incorporated as an integral part of the health curriculum.
- ❖ *Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI)* has proceeded at a deliberate pace for several structural reasons. TCI requires an extensive time commitment for trainers to become well-versed in the model and to plan turnkey trainings. In addition, participating districts are finding that allocating sufficient time and resources for school staff to be trained in the model is a considerable challenge. As a result, only three school buildings have managed to achieve a high level (in the top two quartiles) of implementation to date with another four schools in the third quartile and nine in the fourth quartile.
- ❖ *Safe Dates* is planned for 8th and 9th grade students at ten schools. At the end of Year 3, it has, to date, only been fully implemented at one of the ten schools. This is partly due to an understanding among the districts and the Partnership that implementation of this program could be delayed to support the implementation of other SS/HS programs.
- ❖ *Second Step* was implemented in the top two quartiles in four of the eleven SS/HS Initiative elementary and middle schools. According to surveys of instructional staff (see table below), there was a modest increase in the percentage of elementary and middle school teachers who were implementing Second Step, growing from 23% in Year 1 to 33% in Year 3. Of these

teachers, less than 1 in 5 was implementing Second Step at a level likely to have a substantial effect on student behaviors (13 or more lessons).

**Implementation of Second Step from Year 1 to Year 3:
Percentage of Instructional Staff Implementing the Program
and Number of Second Step Lessons Completed During the Year**

		% of 2 nd Step Implementers Who Completed:			
	% of Instructional Staff Implementing 2 nd Step	0 Lessons	1-6 Lessons	7-12 Lessons	13+ Lessons
Year 1	23%	61%	23%	9%	7%
Year 2	30%	40%	23%	25%	20%
Year 3	33%	36%	20%	21%	17%

KEY FINDING:

As of May 2012, 1 in 3 instructional staff in participating elementary and middle schools was implementing Second Step, a violence prevention and self-regulation program. Only a small minority were implementing often enough to have a substantial impact on students.

A core goal of this evaluation is to explore whether Initiative activities are having a positive effect on student behavior and school climate. In addition to measuring change over time in areas such as school climate and violence, YPI is also examining whether the quality of program implementation affects the level of change. For example, does a district or school that implements Initiative programs with a high level of fidelity, reaching the target population of students with a high quality of service, achieve more positive outcomes than schools or districts with a lower level of implementation?

Another evaluation goal is to help Initiative stakeholders determine whether specific groups of well-implemented evidence-based programs (EBPs) can produce positive results in certain areas such as violence or student mental health. It is well known that no one program can substantially diminish complex behaviors like bullying; significant reduction in these behaviors requires a well-designed continuum of EBPs acting in concert. The question is whether a subset of programs operating at a relatively high level is effective in addressing a particular issue. This issue will be explored in subsequent issues of the *Newsletter*.

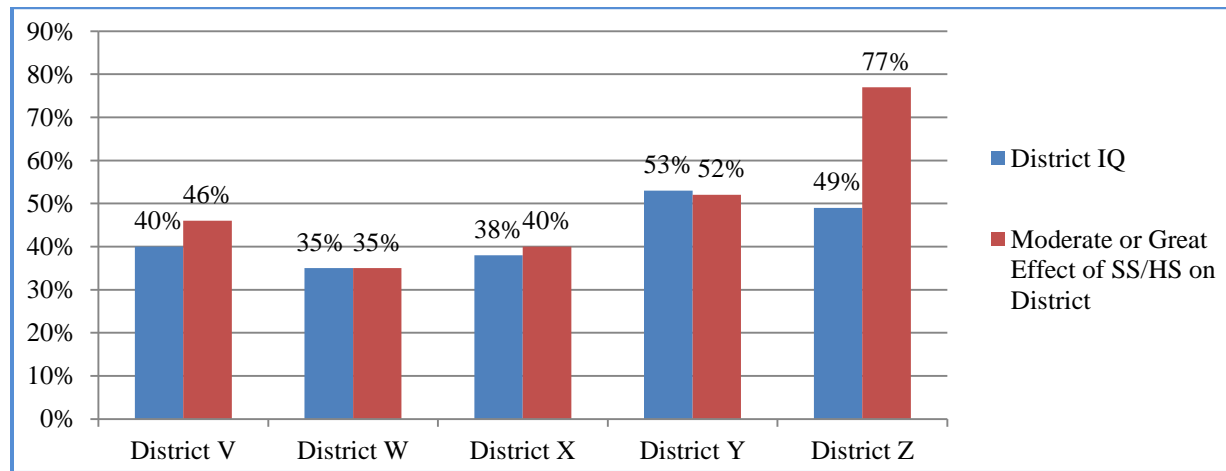
To link quality of implementation with outcomes, it is critical to develop a statistic that precisely reflects the extent to which EBPs have been implemented in a manner that are likely to create the levels of positive outcomes predicted in the program research. A

continuous variable with extensive gradations will permit a precise analysis of the relationship between implementation and outcome. The calculation of this statistic, which we will call **Implementation Quality (IQ)**, is straightforward. As noted above, for each EBP in each building, YPI developed a research-based scoring system that produces a raw score for level of implementation that ranges from 0 to 10:

- ❖ *For a particular building*, the **IQ** is the sum of the raw implementation scores for programs that could be provided in the building divided by the total maximum score for those programs. For example, if a high school has 5 possible EBPs whose raw implementation scores total 25, the EBP Level would be calculated by dividing that score by 50 (the total maximum raw score for 5 programs) and the Level of EBP implementation would be 50%.
- ❖ *For a district*, **IQ** is the sum of implementation raw scores divided by the total maximum score (10) multiplied by the number of programs that could be provided in all the district’s buildings.

*Staff in different districts have different perceptions of the impact of this Initiative.*³ What is striking in the figure below is that there is a clear relationship between the level of EBP implementation (the IQ score) and the percentage of instructional staff who reported that the SS/HS Initiative had had a “moderate” or “great” effect on the school district by Year 3.

Relationship between District IQ and the Percentage of Instructional Staff Indicating that the SS/HS had a “Moderate” or “Great” Effect on the School District: Year 3 Data



³ Each SS/HS district will be notified of its assigned code.

Data from instructional staff surveys clearly indicate that the greater the Implementation Quality (IQ) of all SS/HS Initiative programs provided in a school district, the greater the Initiative’s perceived overall impact.

Instructional staff in Districts W and X, which had the lowest levels of implementation of SS/HS Initiative programs, were significantly less likely to have seen positive change in their districts than their counterparts in districts with high IQs. It is important to note, however, that what holds for districts does not necessarily apply to each school within the district. School IQs, in fact, varied significantly, and this evaluation report, in later sections, will explore the degree to which the level of implementation of EBPs affects a variety of outcomes.

II. Student Attitudes and Behaviors: Student and Instructional Staff Surveys

The following section of this edition of the *YPI Evaluation Newsletter* examines student behaviors and attitudes in a central area that the Initiative is endeavoring to affect over time: school climate and student engagement. Forthcoming editions of the *Newsletter* will explore issues of bullying, student mental health, school violence, and substance use and abuse.

This analysis relies principally on two sources of information: simultaneously administered surveys of students (grades 4-12) and instructional staff (pre-school to 12th grade). Each year, both surveys were conducted near the end of the school year. Participation rates for both surveys can be found at the end of this edition of the *Newsletter* in **Appendix 1: Survey Respondent Data**.

In addition to looking at overall changes in each area from the first year to the third year of the Initiative, YPI also examines five additional factors that can be associated with different levels of change:

- ❖ *Gender*. YPI looks at differences in experiences and patterns of change between male and female students.
- ❖ *Race and Ethnicity*. YPI examines whether students who identify themselves as persons of color (Students of Color) report different experiences from students who self-identify as White or Caucasian.
- ❖ *Grade Grouping*. YPI explores trends in three different grade groupings: Grades 4-5, Grades 6-8, and Grades 9-12.
- ❖ *District and School*. YPI observes whether change occurs consistently across partner districts, or whether there are differences in effects. In addition, YPI examines variations in outcomes as they relate to the quality of implementation of programs in each school building.
- ❖ *Perceptions of Teachers*. Wherever possible, YPI compares student and teacher perspectives to provide the most complete picture of school safety and student behavior.

II.A: School Climate

It is well established in the literature that a consistently positive school climate supports youth engagement, increased achievement levels, and reduced problem behaviors.⁴ Schools with supportive climates share certain core features, each of which will be examined from the perspective of students and teachers for Years 1-3 of the SS/HS Initiative. These core features are:

1. The extent to which schools are seen as being safe;
2. The quality of student-staff interactions, with a particular emphasis on the presence of mutual respect;
3. Student engagement, as measured by attendance and disruptive behavior in the classroom; and
4. An academic environment that challenges students to learn and instills self-confidence.

School Safety

During all three years of the Initiative, over 80% of students consistently reported that they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they were safe at school and over 95% of staff “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that their schools were safe for students (Table SC.1).

	Student Surveys				Instructional Staff Surveys				
	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	
Year 1	6%	12%	57%	26%	Year 1	0%	3%	60%	37%
Year 2	5%	12%	57%	26%	Year 2	0%	2%	56%	42%
Year 3	6%	12%	56%	26%	Year 3	0%	3%	54%	42%

- ❖ In Year 1, female students were more likely than males to “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement that they felt safe at school – 86% of females, compared to 80% of males. *By Year 3, males and females felt equally safe at school (84%).*

⁴ E.g.: Catalano, RF, Haggerty, K. P., Oesterie, S., Fleming, C.B. & Hawkins, JD. (2004). The importance of bonding to schools for healthy development: Findings from the social development research group. *The Journal of School Health* 74 (7), 252-262; Freiberg, H. J. (Ed.). (1999). School climate: Measuring, improving and sustaining healthy learning environments. Philadelphia, PA: Falmer Press; Haynes, N. M., & Comer, J. P. (1993). The Yale School Development Program process, outcomes, and policy implications. *Urban Education* 28(2), 166-199; McEvoy, A., & Welker, R. (2000). Antisocial behavior, academic failure, and school climate: A critical review. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorder*, 8(3), 130-140; and McNeely, C.A., Nonnemaker, J.M., & Blum, R.W. (2002). Promoting student connectedness to school: Evidence from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. *Journal of School Health* 72, 138-146.

- ❖ However, the percentage of students of color who did not agree that their schools were safe was **substantially larger** than the percentage of white students during all three years of the Initiative (e.g.: 28% of students of color in Year 3 compared to 17% of white students; **Appendix. A.1**).
- ❖ During all three project years, as students progressed from primary through secondary school, they still reported that their schools were safe but were less likely to “strongly agree” with that proposition and more likely to “agree.”
- ❖ Across all three years, there were no marked differences at the district level in feelings of safety according to students and instructional staff (**App. A.3**). *However, in some school buildings, there were marked changes in feelings of safety among students from Year 1 to Year 3.*⁵
 - ❖ In the elementary school in District X, the percentage of students who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that school was safe increased from 83% in Year 1 to 92% in Year 3; there were no noteworthy changes in the other elementary schools.
 - ❖ In District Z’s middle school, there was a marked increase in student perceptions of school safety from Year 1-3 (80% to 86%). There were significant declines in feelings of safety in District V’s middle school (84% to 76%) and District Y’s middle school (84% to 77%).
 - ❖ In three of the five SS/HS high schools, there were substantial increases in perception of school safety from Year 1-3: District V (81% to 86%); District X (70% to 79%); and District Y (80% to 85%). There was a substantial decline in District W’s high school, from 85% in Year 1 to 76% in Year 3.

The preceding analysis of perceptions of school safety clearly indicates significant differences in building-level trends. This pattern is seen in many of the crucial outcome indicators of the SS/HS Initiative in areas such as bullying, mental health, and violence and will be discussed in greater detail at the end of this newsletter.

Interactions between Students and Instructional Staff

Students and instructional staff reported different perceptions of mutual student-teacher respect. In all three years of the Initiative, approximately 70% of students “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that most students and staff respected each other. This was the case regardless of gender or race/ethnicity. Significantly more instructional staff, approximately 9 in 10, indicated that there was mutual respect (**Table SC.2**, below).

⁵ There are insufficient staff surveys to permit building by building comparisons.

Table SC.2: Extent to Which Students and Staff (Grades 4-12) Agree or Disagree That “Most Teachers and Students Respect Each Other:” Years 1 -3

	Student Surveys				Instructional Staff Surveys				
	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	
Year 1	8%	20%	52%	20%	Year 1	0%	8%	68%	23%
Year 2	9%	20%	53%	18%	Year 2	1%	11%	65%	24%
Year 3	10%	21%	52%	17%	Year 3	1%	11%	66%	22%

- ❖ *During each year of the Initiative, the higher the grade grouping (4-5, 6-8, 9-12), the lower the student perception of mutual respect between students and teachers. That said, over 60% of high school students reported that mutual respect was apparent from Year 1 to 3.*
 - ❖ *Similarly, instructional staff who taught in secondary schools (grades 6-12) were less likely than primary school staff to “strongly agree” that there was mutual student-teacher respect (App. A.4).*
 - ❖ *When asked whether teachers “care a lot” about students, student responses were nearly identical to their responses about mutual respect between teachers and students. Nearly 100% of instructional staff, by contrast, agreed that they cared a lot about their students, and overwhelmingly reported that they “strongly agreed,” especially in grades 4-5 (App. A.5).*

Student Engagement

Unauthorized Absences. 4th-12th grade students at SS/HS schools were far more inclined to skip a whole day of school than a single class. During all three project years, about 30% of students reported being truant at least one day in the past 30, while 12-15% reported skipping a class. From Years 1 to 3, students in grades 4-12 did not report any overall change in either type of absence (**Table SC.3**).

Table SC.3: School Days and Classes “Skipped” During the Past 30 Days According to Students: Years 1 – 3

	Whole Days Skipped					Classes Skipped While At School					
	<i>0 Days</i>	<i>1 Day</i>	<i>2 Days</i>	<i>3-5 Days</i>	<i>6+ Days</i>	<i>0 Classes</i>	<i>1 Class</i>	<i>2 Classes</i>	<i>3-5 Classes</i>	<i>6+ Classes</i>	
Year 1	69%	11%	6%	8%	6%	Year 1	85%	5%	3%	4%	3%
Year 2	70%	10%	6%	9%	5%	Year 2	88%	5%	2%	3%	3%
Year 3	71%	10%	5%	9%	5%	Year 3	88%	4%	2%	3%	2%

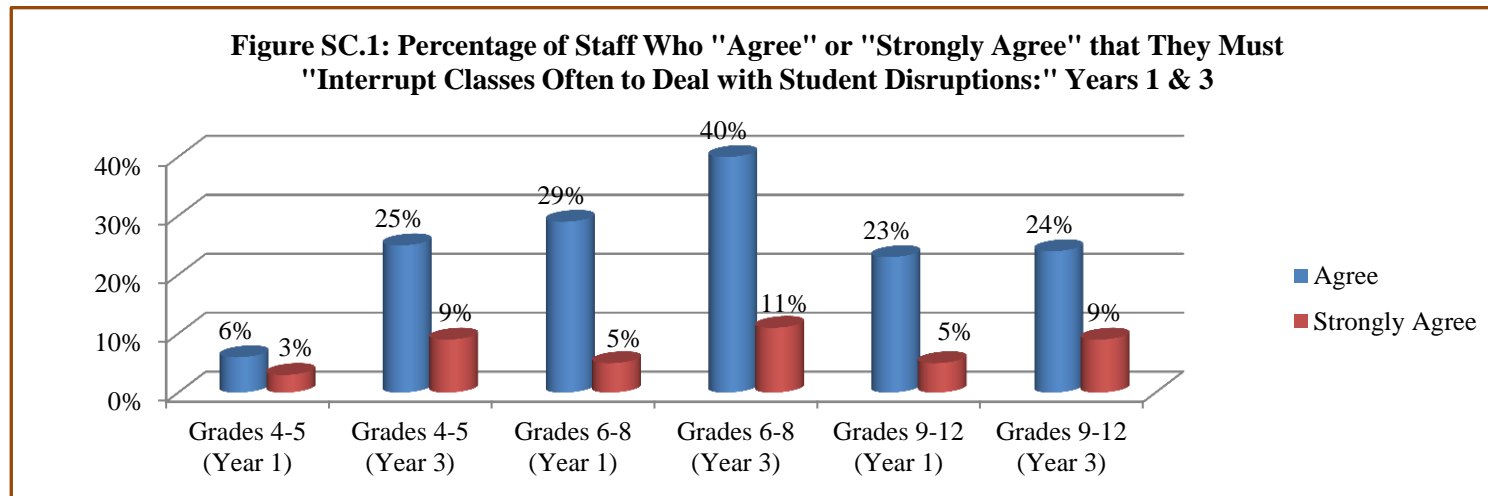
- ❖ During the three project years, students of color were more likely than white students to report unauthorized absences from school or class, particularly for 6 or more days in the previous month.
 - ❖ It is important to note, however, that while white student maintained approximately the same level of truancy from Years 1-3, among students of color it declined substantially – over the three project years, the percentage of students of color skipping at least one day of school in the past 30 declined from 40% to 33% (**App. A.6**).

KEY FINDING: **During all three project years, students of color were substantially more likely than white students to have an unauthorized absence from school or a class, although there was a substantial decline in truancy among students of color from Year 1 to 3.**

- ❖ With each increase in grade grouping (grades 4-5, 6-8, 9-12), the percentage of students each year reporting at least one unauthorized absence from school or class increased.
 - ❖ *From Year 1 to 3, there was one significant trend: the percentage of 6th-8th graders who were truant at least one day in the past month declined from 32% to 24% (**App. A.7**). This was confirmed by instructional staff for this grade group: in Year 1, 6% of middle school teachers reported that truancy was not a problem and in Year 3, that increased to 14%.*
 - ❖ Instructional staff generally reported the same trends as students, with unauthorized absences becoming more of a problem as students advanced from one grade group to the next (**App. A.8**). In Year 3, 58% of 9th-12th grade staff, 36% of 6th-8th grade staff, and only 6% of 4th-5th grade staff reported that truancy was a moderate to severe problem in their schools. *Instructional staff did note one significant trend not reported by students: from Year 1 to 3, the percentage of those teaching in 6th-8th grade who reported that classing skipping was “not a problem” increased from 37% to 52% of respondents.*

KEY FINDING: **Staff and student surveys both indicate a significant decline in truancy among middle school students over the course of the project. Truancy levels of students in grades 4-5 and 9-12 did not change from Year 1 to 3.**

- ✧ With one exception, instructional staff did not report any substantial changes in truancy and unauthorized absences from class. Staff in District Y, however, believed that truancy was an increasingly serious issue in their district; in Year 1, 27% saw it as a moderate to severe problem, compared to 45% in Year 3 (**App. A.9**). Students did not report any differences in truancy levels by school district.



Disruptive Behavior. From Year 1 to Year 3, instructional staff expressed growing concern about the prevalence of class disruptions. As **Figure SC.1** shows, it was viewed as a growing problem in grades 4-5, and particularly in grades 6-8. As seen in **App. A.10**, in 4 of 5 districts, staff reported an increasing problem with disruptive behavior. This was particularly true in District W, where the percentage of staff who agreed or strongly agreed that they often had to manage student disruptions increased from 40% of respondents in Year 1 to 63% in Year 3, and in District X, where it increased from 19% to 41%. According to staff, there was a decline in student disruptions only in District Z, from 38% in Year 1 to 32% in Year 3.

More than 4 in 10 students admitted being disruptive in class at least once a month. However, while instructional staff generally saw this behavior occurring more frequently, there was a *noteworthy decline* in students who reported being disruptive at least three times a month, from 26% of students in Year 1 to 21% in Year 3 (**Table SC.4** below). This decline occurred in all participating districts, and there were no significant differences in levels of disruptive behavior by district.

**Table SC.4: Number of Times During the Past 30 Days Students Reported Engaging in “Disruptive Behavior While in Class:”
Years 1-3**

	<i>0 Times</i>	<i>1 Time</i>	<i>2 Times</i>	<i>3-5 Times</i>	<i>6+ Times</i>
Year 1	53%	14%	7%	12%	14%
Year 2	57%	13%	7%	11%	11%
Year 3	58%	13%	7%	11%	10%

- ❖ In staff surveys, teachers found students in grades 6-8 to be more disruptive than younger and older students. The difference was consistent for all three years, although the contrast was far less stark in student survey responses than in teachers’ responses. For example, in Year 3, 45% of students in grades 6-8 reported being disruptive at least once in a month, compared to 37% of 4th-5th graders and 42% of high school students.
- ❖ *In all three years, male students were far more likely to engage in disruptive behavior than female students, particularly on a frequent basis.* In Year 3, 52% of males disrupted a class at least once in the past month, compared to 32% of female students. 16% of males were disruptive frequently in the past month (6 times or more), compared to 5% of female students.
- ❖ In addition, a higher percentage of students of color engaged in this behavior, particularly 6 times or more in the past month (**App. A.11**).

KEY FINDING: From Year 1 to 3, instructional staff reported a substantial increase in disruptive behavior, particularly in grades 6-8. By contrast, students reported engaging in this behavior less often, but males far more than females and students of color substantially more than white students.

Behavior Resulting in In-School Suspension (ISS) or Out-of-School Suspension (OSS). From Year 1 to 3, the percentage of students who reported receiving ISS or OSS was stable, with about 15% of students receiving at least one day of ISS in the past year and less than 5% receiving OSS. During all three years of the Initiative, 20-25% of male students received at least one day of ISS annually compared to 6-7% of female students. This is undoubtedly a reflection of their greater propensity to engage in disruptive behavior and other behaviors such as hitting, kicking, and pushing.⁶ Males were slightly more likely to receive OSS than females (**App. A.12**).

⁶ Forthcoming report.

- ❖ *In each year of the project, a significantly higher percentage students of color reported placement in ISS and OSS at least once a year. It is noteworthy, however, that from Year 1 to 3, the percentage of students of color receiving at least one day of ISS declined from 27% to 20%. (App. A.13).*
- ❖ *Three SS/HS districts placed fewer students in ISS at least once annually from Year 1 to 3: District V declined from 17% to 9%; District Z from 13% to 8%; and District X from 38% to 31%. In Year 3, as in other years, the percentage of students in District X receiving ISS was more than twice as high as any of the other four districts (App. A.14).*

Aggregate Variable, Implementation Quality, and Program Effect

As noted above (page 10), there are significant building-level differences in school climate trends. It is important to know whether this variation is affected by the building's Implementation Quality (IQ). In other words, are schools with higher levels of implementation of SS/HS Initiative programs likely to see greater levels of positive change in their buildings than schools with lower IQs?

This analysis of the relationship between IQ and program effects at the building level uses only student data; there are too few responses from instructional staff to permit statistical analysis at the school level. Given the large number of student survey questions that address school climate and other behavioral domains relevant to the SS/HS Initiative (such as bullying and mental health), the analysis will focus on clusters of program effects. YPI has developed two aggregate indicators for school climate that are combinations of multiple student survey variables:

- ❖ **Safe and Orderly Environment.** This composite indicator includes the following variables: student perceptions of how discipline is maintained in their school, student perceptions of school safety, and the extent to which students in a building report engaging in disruptive behavior.
- ❖ **Student-Teacher Relationships.** This indicator includes the extent to which students believe that: there are opportunities to interact one-on-one with teachers; their opinions matter; and mutual respect exists between students and teachers.

Safe and Orderly Environment scores were correlated with IQ levels for the participating buildings during Year 3 of the project (the 2011-12 school year). Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was .506, indicating a strong and positive relationship between the level of implementation of SS/HS programs in a building and student perceptions that their buildings were places of safety and order (statistical significance of $p < .032$).

In addition, there was a strong and positive correlation between **Student-Teacher Relationships** and IQ in the SS/HS Initiative schools (Spearman rank correlation coefficient of .455, $p < 0.051$).

KEY FINDING: During Year 3 of the SS/HS Initiative, it was evident that higher levels of implementation of the project's evidence-based programs were strongly associated with more positive school climates.

YPI has also developed four other aggregate indicators that address bullying behaviors, mental health issues, violent conduct, and substance use. It is important to note that this strong relationship between IQ and program effect holds true for the domains of bullying, mental health, and violent conduct, and will be discussed in more detail in forthcoming editions of the *Newsletter*.

APPENDIX 1: Evaluation Data

YPI collected both quantitative and qualitative data to support this edition of the *Newsletter*.

Qualitative data is used to explore the many facets of program implementation, including, but not limited to, the level of adherence (or fidelity) to evidence-based models, the extent to which various initiatives have been incorporated into the activities of schools and other organizations, and the degree to which staff implementing the programs understand those programs well, have what they need to implement them appropriately, and feel they are supported by supervisors.

Quantitative data from student and staff surveys and project databases are used to measure, among other things, changes in student attitudes and behaviors within an academic year, the exact extent to which implementers are carrying out salient components of different programs, and the impact of targeted interventions on participants.

Qualitative Data Sources

- Staff résumés
- Archival data from schools and area agencies
- Site visits to every school in the participating districts
 - Interviews with superintendents, principals, school social workers and other support personnel, and a sample of instructional staff
- Focus groups and interviews with staff implementing Initiative programs (MOST, Resilience Project, Juvenile Intensive Services Team, Life Skills Training, Strengthening Families)
- Weekly contact with Project Director
- Monthly contact with Initiative program supervisors
- Periodic meetings with the Core Management Team

Quantitative Data Sources

- Surveys of students in 4th-12th grade in each district (administered annually in late Spring)
 - Survey uses validated, age-appropriate items to provide precise insight for areas targeted by the Initiative: school climate and student engagement; bullying; mental health; violence; and substance use.
- Surveys of instructional staff in pre-school-12th grade in each district (administered annually in late Spring)
- Data from Initiative program databases developed and maintained by the Partnership for Results (CHARI, PMHP+)
 - Includes demographic, caseload, and outcome data for targeted interventions including MOST and Pre-K MOST, Strengthening Families, and the Resilience Project.

Instrument Review and Monitoring. All of YPI’s evaluation instruments and techniques, including its data collection tools and administration protocols, were reviewed and approved for use in this evaluation by Ethical and Independent Review Services, a national Institutional Review Board (IRB) that ensures that the evaluation meets the highest ethical and legal standards.⁷ The IRB requires an annual approval of evaluation strategies and conduct. Student surveys were completely voluntary; parents and guardians of students under the age of 18 were given an opportunity to review the survey and to refuse participation, and students were allowed to leave any or all questions unanswered.

Survey Implementation Method and Response Rates. Detailed information on response rates for student and instructional staff surveys each year are provided in **Table 1.1** below.

Student Survey Participation. Surveys were administered to students in 4th through 12th grade in the Spring (late May/June) of 2010, 2011, and 2012 (**Table 1.1**). Response rates from 4th-8th grade have been exceptionally high. Response rates at the participating high schools, after dropping in Year 2 in 4 of the 5 high schools, increased in every building but one in Year 3.

**Table 1.1: Survey Respondent Data
Characteristics of Student Survey Respondents: Grade Groupings and Districts in Years 1 -3**

	Year 1 (2009-10)				Year 2 (2010-11)				Year 3 (2011-12)			
	# of 4 th -8 th grade students	% of 4 th -8 th graders surveyed	# of 9 th -12 th grade students	% of 9 th -12 th graders surveyed	# of 4 th -8 th grade students	% of 4 th -8 th graders surveyed	# of 9 th -12 th grade students	% of 9 th -12 th graders surveyed	# of 4 th -8 th grade students	% of 4 th -8 th graders surveyed	# of 9 th -12 th grade students	% of 9 th -12 th graders surveyed
All Districts	1728	87%	1300	75%	1677	85%	1189	67%	1677	85%	1193	71%
District V	337	83%	236	69%	356	89%	246	71%	342	87%	235	74%
District W	482	88%	417	83%	455	80%	366	74%	491	83%	360	80%
District X	329	85%	191	59%	332	84%	159	40%	306	80%	213	52%
District Y	243	87%	199	74%	236	88%	180	67%	261	97%	170	79%
District Z	337	93%	257	82%	298	87%	242	78%	277	80%	215	71%

Survey respondents were generally representative of the student bodies in the five school districts (**Table 1.2:** Survey Respondent Data, below). The percentage of male and female respondents was roughly the same in Years 1 and 3, with a slight shift toward more female respondents in Year 2 (50.8%); this slight gender imbalance is not sufficient to undermine the validity of gender analyses. Nearly nine in ten students responding to the survey were white, reflecting the racial composition of the overall project. There was no significant shift in the distribution of races and ethnicities over time.

⁷ <http://www.eandireview.com/>

Table 1.2: Survey Respondent Data
Characteristics of Student Survey Respondents: Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and English Language Learners in Years 1 and 2

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Ratio of male : female student respondents	50.2% M : 49.8% F	49.2% M : 50.8% F	50.2% M : 49.8% F
Race/ethnicity			
% Asian American	1%	1%	1%
% Black/African American	1%	1%	1.5%
% Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	< 1%	1%	<1%
% Multi-racial	4%	3%	3%
% Native American	2%	2%	1%
% Other	3%	4%	4%
% White	88%	89%	89%
English Language Learners (% of all students)	2%	2%	2%

Instructional Staff Surveys. In May of each project year, YPI administered surveys to instructional personnel in the five participating districts. The surveys are designed to serve two general purposes: (1) to provide another perspective on student behaviors, perceptions, and feelings other than those offered by students themselves; and (2) to systematically gather information on the key procedures of the Initiative’s school-based prevention curricula (Second Step, Safe Dates, and Life Skills Training) and the extent to which instructional staff have implemented these curricula.

Instructional Staff Survey Participation Rates. In all three years, over 85% of instructional staff survey respondents who took the survey were either classroom teachers (62-63% of respondents) or special education or special subject teachers (23-24%).

While the number of respondents varied significantly by participating district, there are enough surveys by school district to draw inter-district and longitudinal comparisons. Overall, the respondents were representative of the population of instructional staff at the participating school districts. In Years 1-3, 73-75% of the respondents were female and nearly two-thirds had at least 6 years of experience in their current role at the school.

The number of instructional staff responses per district varied significantly on an annual basis, although the response rates and district totals are sufficiently high to permit cross-district comparisons over time. For Districts X and Y, the number of responses is too small to permit reliable analyses at the school level (**Table 1.3**).

**Table 1.3: Survey Respondent Data:
Instructional Staff Survey Respondents by District: Years 1 -3**

	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		
	N	% of all respondents	N	% of all respondents	N	% of all respondents	<i>approximate response rates</i>
District V	58	16%	92	26%	97	25%	80%
District W	81	23%	91	26%	83	22%	73%
District X	57	16%	41	12%	60	16%	42%
District Y	82	23%	51	14%	66	17%	83%
District Z	78	22%	78	22%	76	20%	72%
Total	356		353		382		68%