



ADAPT

A Division for Advancing
Prevention & Treatment

CULTIVATING PREVENTION



SCHOOL-BASED PREVENTION:

PRINCIPLES, PILLARS &
OPPORTUNITIES FOR
SCHOOL- COMMUNITY
COLLABORATION





ABOUT

The purpose of this guide is to increase awareness and knowledge of important components of a school-based prevention system and highlight opportunities for schools to collaborate with community partners in building capacity to support prevention activities.

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DISCLAIMER

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GLOSSARY

Best available evidence: Integration of the three types of evidence (research, contextual, and experiential) available on a given topic. Classifying evidence as the “best available” acknowledges there are areas in which evidence is still being developed.

Best available research evidence: Outcomes from studies and evaluations on a program, practice, or policy that have assessed whether they have had the intended effect. Studies and evaluations with more rigorous design (such as randomized controlled trials) provide more compelling evidence of effectiveness.

Community partners: A broad descriptor for any community-based professional or organization involved in partnering with schools to promote positive youth development. This may include individuals from non-profit (including coalitions), law enforcement, behavioral health, public health, and other sectors.

Contextual evidence: Considered in conjunction with the best available research evidence and experiential evidence and refers to factors that address whether a strategy is useful, feasible to implement, and accepted by a particular community.

Experiential evidence: Considered in conjunction with the best available research evidence and contextual evidence and refers to the professional insight, understanding, skill, and expertise that is accumulated over time and is often referred to as intuitive or tacit knowledge.

Evidence-based interventions/strategies: Interventions and/or strategies that have proven to be effective for a given outcomes based on the best available research evidence.

Pillars: Fundamental building blocks that provide the infrastructure and support for a prevention system.

Positive school climate: A positive quality and character of a school that fosters youth development by creating an environment in which students and staff feel safe, accepted, supported, and engaged.

Principles: Foundational elements that guide all prevention programs, practices, and policies within a prevention system.

Prevention strategy: A prevention plan that includes goals, objectives, performance outcomes, and key actions. Prevention plans are comprised of programs, practices, and policies that have been studied and found to achieve their intended outcome.

Prevention system: A service delivery system that represents the continuum of prevention services within a designated setting or geographic area.

Protective conditions: Characteristics at the biological, psychological, family, community, or cultural level that are associated with a lower likelihood of problem outcomes or that reduce the negative impact of a risk condition on problem outcomes.

Risk conditions: Characteristics at the biological, psychological, family, community, or cultural level that precede and are associated with a higher likelihood of problem outcomes.

School culture: The shared values, beliefs, and practices within the school community.

School personnel: People who work within a school, such as teachers, teacher’s aids, principals, administrators, counselors, social workers, and others.



SCHOOL-BASED PREVENTION: PRINCIPLES, PILLARS, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL-COMMUNITY COLLABORATION


INTRODUCTION

Preventing substance use in today's youth is a shared goal among many communities and the people within them. Members of the community generally want the best for their youth and future generations, and some intentionally dedicate their time, resources, and professional practice to preventing problems in youth and promoting healthy development. For invested community members, there are multiple pathways and opportunities for engaging in prevention and promotion activities within a comprehensive prevention strategy. A comprehensive community prevention strategy reflects an understanding that youth experience multiple levels of influence at any given point of time and therefore, the strategy streamlines prevention programs, practices, and policies into a variety of settings.

Schools are an essential setting for youth prevention. They offer rich opportunities to positively influence youth in numerous ways and are uniquely positioned to have direct contact with more than 95% of school-aged children (K-12), interfacing with students for around 6 hours per day.¹ Along with parents and caregivers, schools serve as key socialization agents for youth and play pivotal roles in the academic, behavioral, social, and emotional development of youth. Notably, many school-based prevention activities have evidence to support their effectiveness across substance use, mental health, and/or violence prevention outcomes.

Integrating substance use prevention in schools is not a new concept, dating back to the 1950s and 1960s before evidence-based prevention strategies were available.² Since then, the field of prevention science has generated a substantial body of knowledge and best practices to inform what works to prevent youth substance use, including a large body of research conducted in schools. This research has identified several key findings that can guide a school-based approach to substance use prevention²:

1. Effective strategies exist to prevent the onset or escalation of substance use in youth. Yet communities continue to implement programs, policies, and strategies that are not effective or have been shown to increase youth substance use and other negative outcomes.
2. Preventing substance use is multifaceted and requires a comprehensive prevention system composed of clear policies, a supportive and protective school climate for students and school personnel, and a compatible prevention curriculum with demonstrated effectiveness.
3. The most effective prevention interventions and strategies aim to boost protective conditions that promote healthy youth development while minimizing the influence of common risk conditions that underlie substance use and related behavioral and mental health problems (see [Table 1](#)). These interventions and strategies also positively impact school engagement and academic success.

- 
4. A strong and comprehensive prevention strategy employs: 1) robust universal strategies that promote healthy, nurturing environments where children can safely develop and avoid substance use and other negative behaviors; 2) selective strategies that aim to identify and deploy proactive interventions for youth at increased risk for substance use; and 3) indicated strategies that address early signs of substance use and misuse through brief intervention and engagement in treatment.
 5. Delivering evidence-based prevention strategies is hard work that requires training and support, and there are resources and frameworks to help schools and communities select, implement, evaluate, sustain, and scale effective strategies.

A comprehensive school-based prevention system presents an opportunity to fully address the multitude of risk and protective influences on youth and to promote healthy youth development. Yet schools cannot do the work of school-based prevention alone. They need the support of families and community partners.


PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

The purpose of this guide is to increase awareness and knowledge of important components of a school-based prevention system and highlight opportunities for schools to collaborate with community partners in building capacity to support prevention activities. Consistent with the key findings listed above, this resource presents a way of thinking about a comprehensive approach to school-based prevention grounded in four principles and five pillars on which a school-based prevention system can be formed.³⁻⁷ The principles and pillars derive from the common denominators of several comprehensive, multi-level evidence-based school prevention frameworks and systems, including Protective Schools³, Multi-tiered System of Supports⁴, Response to Intervention⁵, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports⁶, and Project AWARE.⁷

This guide starts with a description of the four principles of a school-based prevention system. Then, each of the five pillars are described and examples shared for how community partners can support schools in prevention activities within each pillar.

APPLICATION TO BROADER SCHOOL-BASED PREVENTION EFFORTS

While this resource is grounded in school-based “substance use” prevention, the focus on “prevention systems” more broadly is intentional. The scientific literature is quite clear that substance use and other youth problems and risk behaviors, such as mental health and violence, are highly interrelated as they share common underlying root causes and respond similarly to protective conditions (see Appendix for tables on shared risk and protective conditions).⁸⁻¹¹ Studies have also shown that prevention interventions addressing these common factors support prevention across domains of substance use, mental health, and violence, as well as academic and other areas.¹²⁻¹⁶ Thus, this resource focuses on the key principles and pillars for a prevention system that can be applied to substance use and any other areas of concern that might interfere with students’ success and thriving, such as mental health and violence. Throughout the resource, we draw attention to examples of programs, practices, and policies that have demonstrated



substance use prevention as their outcome. Many of these prevention strategies also support other outcomes (e.g., mental health, violence). By implementing effective prevention strategies that address the root causes of youth substance use and co-occurring issues, schools and communities can select strategies that can prevent several problem behaviors and contribute to positive youth development.

A school-based prevention “system” designates the school as the primary setting for delivery of a continuum of prevention services under which multiple prevention “strategies” may be deployed by school and/or community partner personnel. “Community partners” is used as a broad descriptor for any community-based professional involved in substance use prevention. This may include individuals from non-profits (including coalitions), law enforcement, behavioral health, public health, and other sectors.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

1. To understand the common elements of a comprehensive school-based prevention system.
2. To assess existing efforts in your community. Consider asking the following questions:
 - a. What am I currently implementing?
 - b. Is it working?
 - i. If yes, are there additional needs we could address?
 - ii. If no, why not? Is it a process, staffing, fidelity, or other issue?
 - iii. Am I ready to try something else that has demonstrated to work?
3. To identify evidence-based strategies which incorporate key considerations grounded in the best available evidence.
4. To learn about ways school-community collaborations can build the capacity to implement and evaluate evidence-based strategies.
5. To explore examples of school-community collaborations across the nation and how they have approached working together on school-based prevention activities.
6. To share with others to aid in strategic planning and school improvement activities.

PRINCIPLES OF A SCHOOL-BASED PREVENTION SYSTEM

Principles refer to the foundational elements that guide all prevention programs, practices, and policies within a prevention system. School-based prevention frameworks draw out four principles that represent the guiding mindset of a school-based prevention system: a systems approach, use of multi-level strategies, reliance on the best available evidence, and being data and outcomes driven. These principles are cross-cutting and must be honored as new goals are developed and new strategies are integrated into a school-based prevention system.



Systems Approach

- An integrated service delivery system that represents a continuum of prevention services to address the multiple levels of influence on youth development.



Multi-level Strategies

- A synthesized set of prevention strategies that address the multiple levels of need of youth and their families.



Best Available Evidence

- Integration of the three types of evidence (research, contextual, and experiential) available on a given topic to inform decision-making.

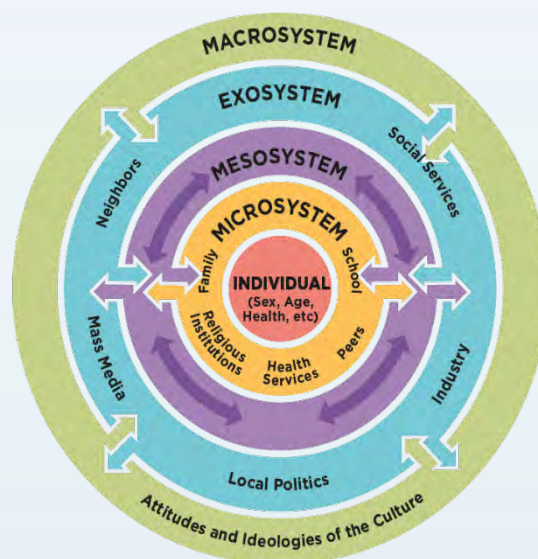


Data and Outcomes Driven

- The use of data to identify needs, develop a strategy, select interventions, monitor implementation, and measure impact.

1. Systems Approach

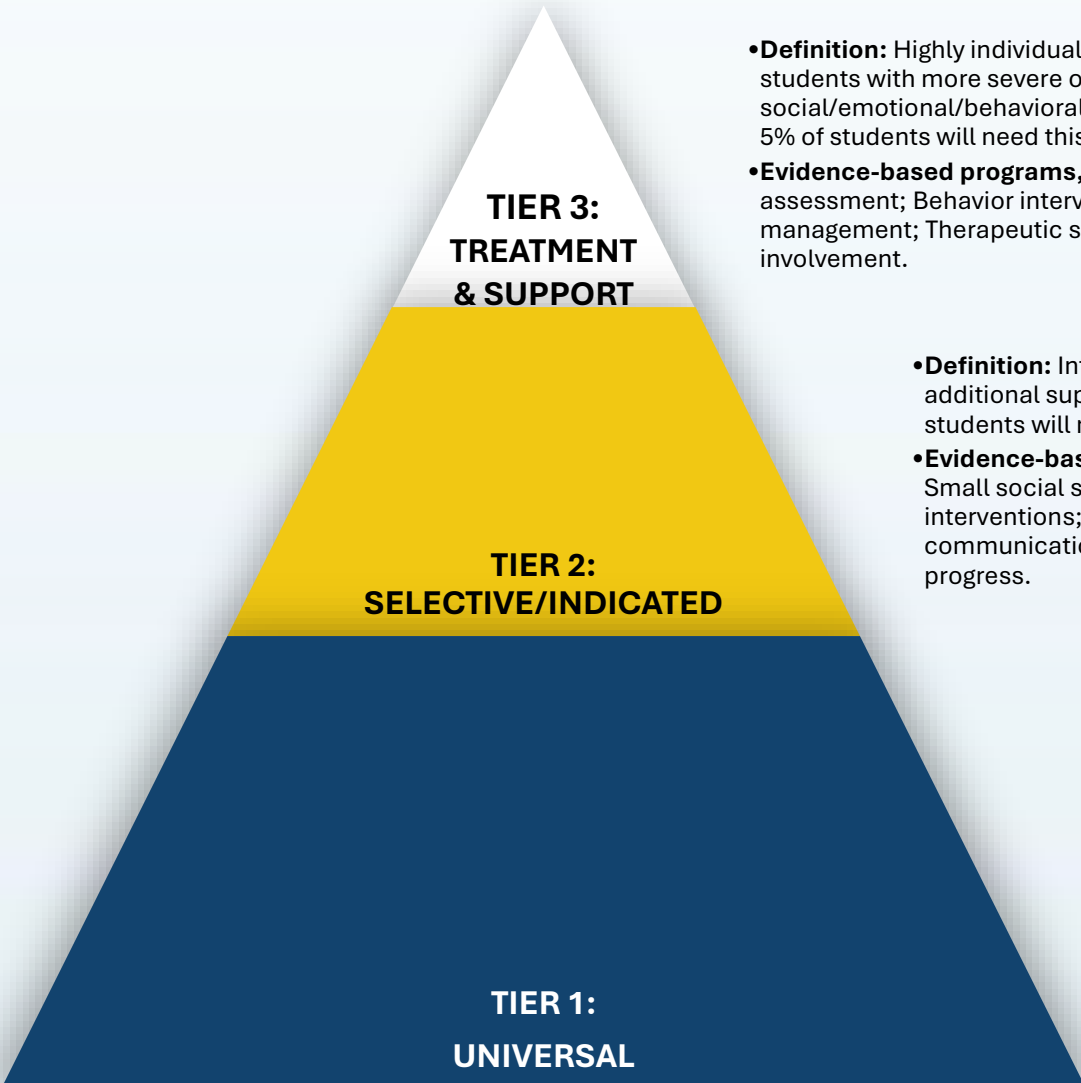
All complex human behavior is shaped by the interaction of personal characteristics and a wide range of environmental influences, including family, peer, school, neighborhood, and policy factors. Together, they act to propel pathways toward or away from substance use, particularly during the critical developmental period of adolescence.¹⁷ Within a school-based prevention system, a systems approach identifies opportunities for intervention across these multi-level spheres of influence on a young person. School structures and systems are designed to support comprehensive and systematic prevention efforts informed by data, supported by training, and using the best available evidence.¹⁷



*Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of development.
Adapted from Bronfenbrenner (1979)¹⁸*

2. Multi-Level Strategies

Implementing multi-level strategies within a prevention system ensures students with varying needs and levels of risk receive the services needed so that all students can succeed in school and life. In substance use prevention, this continuum of prevention-focused strategies is typically described as universal, selective, and indicated prevention.¹⁹ Beyond prevention are a broader continuum of services that includes promotion, treatment, and maintenance/recovery. Schools may refer to these levels on the continuum of services as “tiers” of support, with tiers increasing in service intensity to address not only behavioral needs, but academic, mental health, and social and emotional needs.^{4,20-21}



TIER 3: TREATMENT & SUPPORT

- Definition:** Highly individualized services designed to support students with more severe or persistent social/emotional/behavioral or academic needs. Approximately 1 – 5% of students will need this level of support.
- Evidence-based programs, strategies, activities:** Individual assessment; Behavior intervention plan; Intensive case management; Therapeutic services; More intensive family involvement.

TIER 2: SELECTIVE/INDICATED

- Definition:** Intended for students who need additional support. Approximately 10 – 15% of students will need this level of support.
- Evidence-based programs, strategies, activities:** Small social skills groups; Brief individual interventions; Increased family involvement and communication regarding youth behavior and progress.

TIER 1: UNIVERSAL

- Definition:** Intended for the entire school population.⁶ Tier 1 activities alone will address the needs and support the success of most students (approximately 80%).
- Evidence-based programs, strategies, activities:** Positive school climate; School policies; Positive behavioral reinforcement; Evidence-based prevention curricula geared for grades K– 12.

MTSS Tiered Triangle Framework²²

A prevention system comprised of multi-level evidence-based strategies takes a proactive approach to ensure that all students receive the services they need while promoting the well-being of the entire school population. A comprehensive prevention systems approach may include all three tiers/levels within a school. Levels are coordinated such that students can move among levels with relative ease and minimal disruption.³

3. Best Available Evidence

As emphasized above, prevention systems, data, and practices must be grounded in the best available evidence. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Framework for Thinking about Evidence, "evidence" is multi-faceted and considers **three types: research, contextual, and experiential.**²³

Research evidence results from the completion of research and/or evaluation studies.²³ Research evidence can be evaluated on the strength of the evidence and whether the program, policy, or practice produced the desired outcomes, i.e., effectiveness of the prevention strategy.

To better understand what the research says and to help make decisions regarding what substance use prevention strategies to adopt, a continuum of evidence of effectiveness defines the following categories:

- Well supported (strong evidence of effectiveness)
- Supported (evidence of effectiveness)
- Promising/emerging/undetermined (more research needed)
- Unsupported (evidence of ineffectiveness)
- Harmful (evidence of potential harm)

While research evidence is often considered the "gold standard" in determining an evidence-base, contextual and experiential evidence also need to be considered.²³

Contextual evidence informs how effective implementation is likely to be conducted by assessing: (a) the necessary resources to implement an identified program or strategy with high fidelity or as intended; (b) whether a program or strategy will be useful and is appropriate for that community or setting; (c) whether it will be feasible and successful given the economic, social, geographic, and historical aspects of the community or setting; and (d) the likelihood it will be accepted by the people and decision makers in the community or setting.²³

Experiential evidence refers to the collective experience and expertise of those who have practiced or lived in a particular setting. Experiential evidence can inform the decision-making process by answering questions about what has and has not previously worked in a community, whether the program or strategy would appeal to collaborators and participants, and importantly, whether it would meet the needs and goals of its target population.²³



Attention to all three types of evidence helps to ensure that the identified practices and strategies will meet the diverse socio-cultural needs of the student populations. Throughout this resource, the phrase “best available evidence” is used to refer to the consideration of all three types of evidence, which allows substance use prevention work to be grounded in research evidence while quickly responding to the unique, and often rapidly evolving, challenges of today.

4. Data and Outcomes Driven

The fourth principle of a comprehensive school-based prevention system is the use of data to identify needs, develop a strategy, select interventions, monitor implementation, and measure impact. Regular collection of data throughout the planning, monitoring, and evaluation processes prepares schools to:

- Identify needs and monitor progress so data-based decisions can be made to ensure students receive the most appropriate services within the prevention system.
- Track fidelity of implementation and achievement of objectives.
- Determine whether the implemented strategies are (or are not) achieving the desired outcomes at both student and school levels.
- Engage in continuous quality improvement to identify areas of needed improvement.



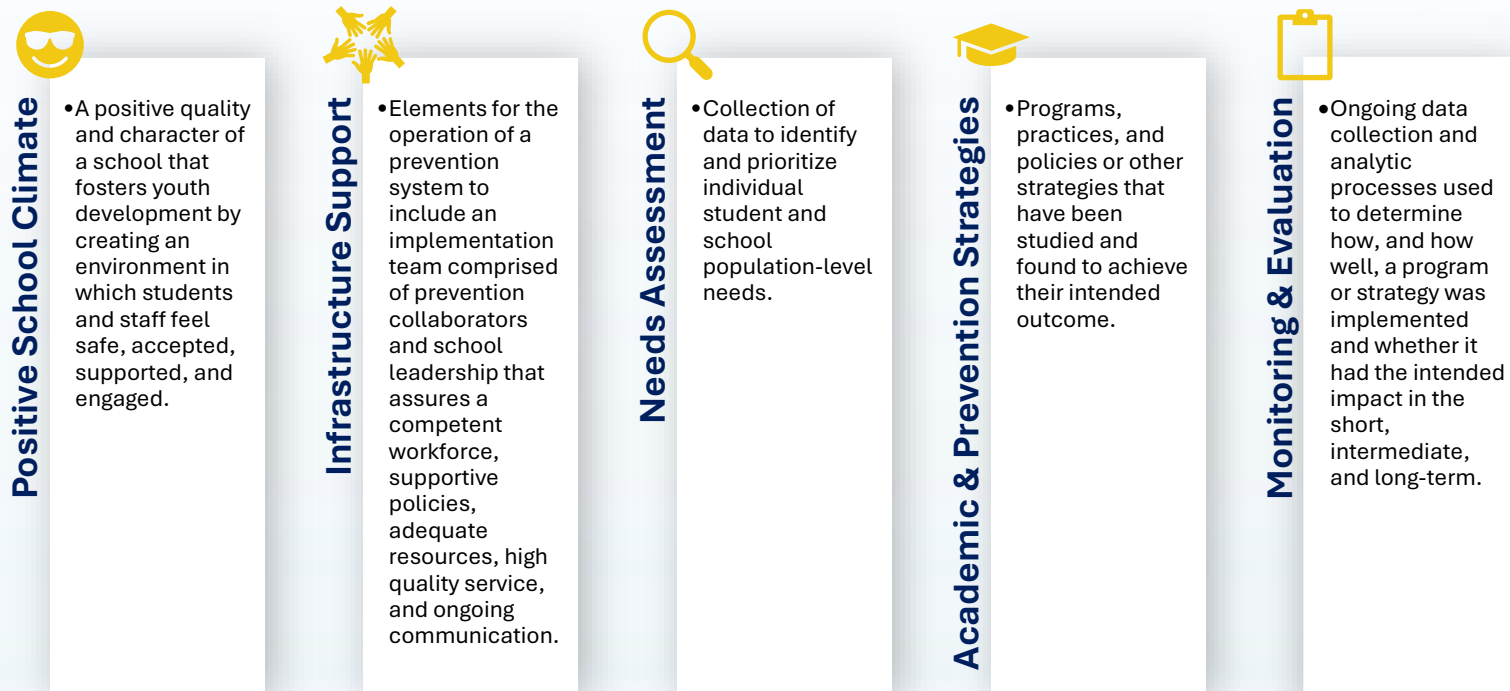
PILLARS OF A SCHOOL-BASED PREVENTION SYSTEM

Principles represent the essential themes that cut across pillars within a school-based prevention system. **Pillars are the unique and concrete set of strategies deployed to achieve prevention outcomes.**

Across the frameworks reviewed for common denominators of a school-based prevention system, five critical pillars stood out: positive school climate, infrastructure support, needs assessment, academic and prevention strategies, and monitoring and evaluation. **This section includes a detailed description of the components of each pillar along with opportunities in which community partners can collaborate with school-based prevention activities.** Opportunities may reflect information sharing or relationship building activities, assessment of needs, implementation of prevention activities, and data collection and evaluation.

While schools may already be engaging in some of these strategies, this guide presents the components of a fully comprehensive school-based prevention system. The intent of this is to provide schools with ideas for where to start, or how to advance, their current prevention work.

Beneath each pillar described below, real examples from communities across the nation are shared to highlight ways in which schools have built capacity for engagement in prevention activities by collaborating with community partners.




1. Positive School Climate

The first pillar of a school-based prevention system is positive school climate. A positive school climate fosters youth development by creating an environment in which students and staff feel safe, accepted, supported, and engaged.

The National School Climate Center defines a positive school climate as one where ²⁴:

- Norms, values, and expectations support people feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe
- People are engaged and respected
- Students, families, and educators work together to develop and contribute to a shared school vision
- Educators model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning
- Each person contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment

Research has found that creating positive school climates can address problems such as absenteeism, bullying, suspensions, and substance use, while increasing academic achievement, graduation rates, psychological well-being, and teacher retention. ²⁵⁻²⁶ Teachers and other school personnel play a critical role in fostering a positive school climate by providing responsive,



supportive interactions with students, and fostering positive relationships with students—where teachers and staff are perceived as understanding and willing to help. These positive interactions help build feelings of safety at school and strongly impact social and emotional functioning.²⁷

Trauma-informed models are one example of a school-wide approach to promoting feelings of safety and empowerment throughout the school environment. These models often include trauma-informed staff training, organizational changes such as new policies, and student trauma-screening.²⁸ Another example of a school climate intervention is Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS).⁶ PBIS is a whole school approach to changing student behavior through environmental change. The goals of PBIS are to design effective environments where teaching and learning can occur, build systems that provide consistency for students and staff, and sustain school environments that make problem behavior less effective and desired behavior more functional. Research shows that PBIS is effective in reducing discipline referrals and improving student and teacher perceptions of school climate.²⁹ The [National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments](#) offers additional resources for school climate improvement.


Within the school climate improvement process, several key activities take place. These include creating a shared vision, building a protective school culture, and increasing leadership commitment. Each of these are described in more detail below.

Vision, Culture, and Leadership

Creating a positive school climate requires development of a shared **school-wide vision** that represents the perspectives of school personnel, students, parents and caregivers, and others involved in the school ecosystem.^{3,30} A shared vision will reflect the type of school that families/caregivers and interested community members want for students and staff.³¹ The school vision then informs policies, practices, and academic and prevention strategies.

Within a positive school climate, schools can build a healthy and protective culture consistent with their vision. Healthy school cultures promote bonding to school and peers³, which is a protective condition for adolescents.³² While climate and culture are similar, school climate refers to the overall environment and feeling of the school, while **school culture** is based on the shared values, beliefs, and practices within the school community.³³ Cultural variables may include surface-level (e.g., language) and deep-level variables (e.g., normative beliefs, communication preferences).³⁴ Key activities in creating a protective school culture are cultivating strong relationships, strengthening school connectedness, celebrating diversity, and promoting inclusivity.³⁰ Enhancing positive relationships with peers and trusted adults also contributes to positive school culture.³⁵

Creating a positive school climate requires an effective and committed leadership team where leadership is shared and exists across levels. While the principal is traditionally the person tasked with overseeing the school climate improvement process, the commitment of leaders at all levels of the school system (e.g., teachers, teacher's aides, superintendent, school board) are essential to achieving a positive school climate. Students also help to create a positive school climate. One powerful strategy to improving school climate is to provide students with opportunities to have their voices heard and provide feedback on the climate and culture of the school. Their input provides valuable information that can inform the planning, implementation, and evaluation of prevention activities. Additional examples of student opportunities for supporting positive school climate may



include student councils, advisory groups, peer mentoring and support programs, and peer mediation programs.

Capacity building opportunities:

- Participate in school-community councils. Offer to participate in the positive school climate improvement process and contribute to the shared vision of the school.
- Publicly support the school's vision.
- Organize school-community meetings to identify opportunities for strengthening school-based prevention.
- Host or organize school/community after-school and weekend events to improve youth's sense of belonging and connectedness.
- Provide opportunities for safe recreational activities that do not involve substance use.
- Recognize school progress in communications geared toward the community.
- Provide consultation and training for teachers and other staff to grow their capacity to support the socioemotional development of students.
- Partner with the school to develop and implement a plan to address areas of concern and celebrate areas of success.

Safety

A sense of safety is a core feature of a positive school climate. Thus, school safety policies are put into place to establish rules and norms that promote physical, social, and emotional safety.³⁶ Corresponding procedures specify how the policy will be implemented and enforced. Several strategies to create safe and supportive schools have been shown to be effective, including: providing mental health supports; restorative practices (as opposed to exclusionary discipline); social and emotional learning experiences; development of positive relationships with students; investing in integrated support systems for students and families; incorporating measures of school safety and student well-being in data collection; and conducting equity reviews on school safety measures and discipline outcomes.³⁷ Evidence-based prevention frameworks, like PBIS, have demonstrated positive impacts on safety and equity, and a plethora of related resources can be found at [Great Lakes Equity Center](#).³⁸

Capacity building opportunities:

- School resource officers can be instrumental in establishing and enforcing positive disciplinary policies, such as a “good school citizen” code of conduct, phrasing rules positively (“walk in the hallways” as opposed to “no running in the hallways”), and reinforcing positive behaviors. This focus on positive youth behavior will help in the development of relationships with students and in being recognized as someone who supports student well-being (as opposed to focusing on negative disciplinary practices).
- School resource officers can receive training in trauma sensitive and trauma-informed practices.
- Provide training and technical assistance on topics such as conflict resolution, classroom management, bullying, anger management, and victim support, or connect schools with other organizations and experts who can provide this.
- Create and/or help run ongoing activities for students that promote safety, such as mentoring, peer mediation, and programs to build conflict resolution skills and problem-solving skills.

- Participate in school safety advisory groups or planning sessions.
- Create and/or help run violence prevention programs and community groups.
- Offer to conduct screenings or train school staff in spotting warning signs of school violence and intervening effectively.

EXAMPLE: POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE


One coalition has supported the development of youth prevention clubs by staffing and coordinating the programming for the school. They also hired two part-time youth coalition peer assistants from local high school prevention clubs. The youth have to be juniors or seniors and be a member of a prevention club. They are paid up to 10 hours per week to attend a prevention club as well as attend outreach events with the coalition's full-time staff. Other ways they have helped is to create social media posts and staff prevention events at schools.

Another coalition provides mentoring to youth. They have secured a Lead Mentor on their staff and engage several part-time mentors who are trained in the role of a mentor and data collection regarding the work they do. This coalition also supports a positive school climate by providing a range of related trainings including anti-stigma training and trauma sensitive educator trainings (ACES 101, Frameworks that Foster Resilience, Strategies for De-escalation, The Nurtured Heart Approach, and Yoga in the classroom). Trainings are offered in an after-school format or on Saturdays and personnel are compensated for their time.

2. Infrastructure Support

For a school-based prevention system to work, prevention strategies must be supported by a selection, adoption, implementation, and sustainment infrastructure that assures a competent workforce, equity, quality of service, and sustainability. Infrastructure development and support can be led by a team of people at the school committed to prevention and to implementing a school-based prevention system. This “**Prevention Team**” may be informed by students (in high schools), school personnel at all levels, parents and caregivers, and community collaborators. The team works to provide continuity in prevention efforts and are involved in aspects of planning, implementation, and monitoring prevention activities. They help with decision-making regarding prevention and communicate with others (staff, students, caregivers, etc.) about prevention. Team members should have credibility within the school, high motivation for supporting prevention, a dedicated focus on equity and fairness, and related technical knowledge, knowledge, and experience.³⁹

In addition to creating a positive school climate, **school leadership personnel** are also vital in supporting prevention through active involvement in the Prevention Team. They can support implementation of prevention services by ensuring prevention is a high priority in the school (and



represented in the school vision and culture) and that staff have the time and resources to implement prevention services.

Additional actions leadership can take to support prevention include participating in prevention strategies, gaining support from school collaborators for prevention, and seeking staff input about what is or is not working.³ **School leaders also help to foster strong, supportive relationships with families and community members.** Families and community partners can both be important influencers of effective prevention strategies. Supportive relationships are achieved with parents and caregivers by offering them the opportunity to provide input to ensure cultural relevance, inviting them to participate in school activities, and having them help plan and implement events. To strengthen relationships with the broader community, school leaders can encourage staff to become involved in health-promoting activities and clubs, provide outreach to the community such as highlighting positive school events, and build collaborations with community groups such as volunteer groups, coalitions, and businesses.³

The Prevention Team and school leadership work together to develop and strengthen the prevention infrastructure within the school by supporting policies and practices, ensuring adequate resources are available, providing professional development opportunities for staff, and fostering internal and external communications with school personnel, students, families, and community members.

Student engagement and input are key in supporting infrastructure. Students should be given opportunities to provide their input regularly, and schools can make an effort to elicit input from across the student body including those students who may be more reluctant to engage and share their input and/or are at higher levels of risk. Benefits of student engagement include giving a voice to student concerns, promoting a sense of belonging at school, increased understanding of students, improved relationships between adults at the school and students, and becoming more responsive to youth needs through the policies and programs in the school.⁴⁰⁻⁴¹

Developing the infrastructure for a school-based prevention system can be guided through existing frameworks, and consultation and technical assistance from experts in the prevention field. One example is PROSPER (PROmoting School-community-university Partnerships to Enhance Resilience), a delivery system designed to facilitate the implementation and sustainability of evidence-based programs for youth using several key steps: forming teams and understanding roles; selecting an evidence-based program; sustainability planning; and evaluation and monitoring.

Policies

School policies regarding infractions related to substance use and the responses to such infractions should be clearly stated and made available to school personnel, students, and parents and caregivers. The responses to such infractions should reflect and support a positive school climate, be based on a model of protecting student health and safety (rather than solely focused on punishment), and include prevention services. Policies can be made that promote students' positive development, acknowledge accomplishments, and reinforce expectations for positive behaviors.³ Examples include:

- Engaging with students to review policies to gather student perspective and feedback to ensure that policies are sensitive to youth and cultural considerations.

- Developing and following time off policies that foster academic achievement and encourage participation in school activities (e.g., time off to study, time off to attend school activities).

Policies also inform the data, systems, and practices needed to effectively implement, monitor, and evaluate multi-level strategies to support student learning and development.

Capacity building opportunities:

- Be informed regarding existing district policies and how they relate to state legislature and state board of education requirements.
- Familiarize yourself with policies that have been shown to be beneficial, and policies that have been shown to not be beneficial. Discuss this evidence with school leadership and personnel. Advocate for policy change, if needed, within the state.
- Align your work with existing policies and advocate for additional/updated policies as needed.

Resources

A common thread throughout infrastructure support is the necessity for resources to foster successful implementation of prevention services. This includes funding, personnel, time, and materials. Without relevant and accessible resources, prevention services will not occur, or implementation may be poor. Resources need to be adequate and effectively allocated, and include:

- Support for staff to implement prevention services
- Support for staff participating in professional development
- Access to any curricula, assessments, tools, or other materials that will be used
- Time to implement prevention services (e.g., schedules that allow for the delivery and support of prevention services)
- Sufficient technology to support prevention services ⁴²

Schools dedicated to developing a prevention system can consider how they might leverage resources and allocate existing resources in meaningful, effective ways. They will also need to grow their resources. **Ways to build resources** include publishing successes to build public support, seeking out sources of funding (e.g., state and local opioid settlement funds), offering students, families, and community members the opportunity to volunteer and contribute, and working with community organizations to share resources. Before starting any new prevention service in the school, consider sustainability and secure the required resources – any service needs to be maintained long enough to see outcomes (the recommended length of time is 3-5 years). ³

School-based health center (SBHC) processes and staff are opportune resources to provide prevention services and mental health care. SBHCs provide health services either directly within the school, or through an off-site facility that is linked to the school. SBHCs help meet students' health needs and provide easier access to healthcare, reducing time missed at school, time missed at work for parents and caregivers, and transportation costs. SBHCs can help ensure that students of varying backgrounds, including uninsured students, receive healthcare. Evidence shows that SBHCs improve educational outcomes (e.g., grades, graduation rates), and health outcomes (e.g., emergency department admissions). ⁴³⁻⁴⁵ Cost-benefit analyses show that SBHCs lead to net savings due to lower healthcare costs and prevention of productivity loss. ⁴⁶

Capacity building opportunities:

- Inform school personnel of services available in the community.
- Organize and host school-community events and discussions.
- Organize and encourage volunteer opportunities within the school and outside of the school to allow students to fulfill school credit or service requirements.
- Leverage your networks to provide subject matter expertise.
- Support schools in identifying specific funding needs to support priorities, and partner to develop and submit proposals to seek external funding.
- Participate in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of prevention services within the school.
- Familiarize yourself with the resources necessary for prevention services that a school wants to provide and share this information with school leadership and personnel.
- Link organizations and service providers with a similar mission to the school to coordinate services.
- Facilitate youth coalition development and engage them as a key collaborator.
- Partner with schools on projects.
- Intentionally include school representatives in your coalition or organization and encourage their participation.

Professional development

Teachers and school personnel need initial and ongoing training to ensure successful implementation of prevention services. Early professional teacher training can focus on equipping teachers with classroom management strategies that have been shown to have prevention outcomes. This allows teachers to deliver prevention strategies at a universal level within the everyday routine of the classroom. Ongoing training should also be established and can include:

- Support for initial and sustained implementation of prevention services
- New school personnel trainings and ongoing training opportunities
- Coaching for specific needs or concerns

Training should inform school personnel on their role in any provided prevention services, the research supporting these services, and any challenges that can be expected and how to navigate them. School personnel should be provided accurate information related to substance use and other negative outcomes (mental health, trauma reactions, etc.), what works for prevention and information about effective models, how information can be made developmentally appropriate for students, classroom management, and interactive learning techniques.

More broadly, **schools need to support professional development** by allocating time and resources for trainings, providing flexibility to staff when needed, and making professional development a priority – through policies, a vision, and systems and structures. It is necessary to identify the needs of the schools and what areas of professional development can help meet those needs.^{3,47}

Capacity building opportunities:

- Provide school personnel with professional development opportunities regarding substance use prevention and other risk behaviors. This may include workshops, presentations, and other trainings offering continuing education units.

- Leverage your networks to provide professional development opportunities through other subject matter experts.
- Inform school personnel on relevant laws, policies, and procedures regarding youth substance use and other risk behaviors.

Communication

An established **two-way communication method** is vital to the success of prevention services within the school. The types of information shared varies depending on who is receiving the information, and what services are being implemented ([Tier 1 vs. Tier 2 vs. Tier 3](#)).

It is critical that leadership and those implementing prevention services provide clear and frequent information to school personnel, to include:

- A description of prevention services and the individual staff member's potential role in the process
- The decision-making process (why a service was selected, including data related to current needs and parent and caregiver input if appropriate/available)
- A process for how school personnel and parents and caregivers will remain informed

School personnel need to understand the essential components of prevention services and should be able to provide feedback to leadership and other key decision-makers about their observations and experiences. This will build buy-in and support to help ensure prevention services are being implemented. ⁴⁷

Families also need to be informed of any prevention services provided by the school before they are instituted, and can even be engaged to help inform programming. Information to share with families includes the services that will be delivered and process for student identification and tracking. Schools need to ensure that families understand the prevention services taking place, including when, why and for whom. Broad information should be provided for Tier 1 services. Any services beyond Tier 1 (i.e., Tier 2 and Tier 3) should be communicated to families. A notice or opportunity to attend a meeting may be sufficient for Tier 2 services. Tier 3 services, however, should provide more frequent communication such as regular updates on a child's progress, and, ideally, collaboration with the family to explore why their child is/is not progressing. Often, professionals outside of the school provide Tier 3 services which require families be integrally involved in their implementation. Thus, communication between families, the school, and professionals implementing a service is critical, as is family support (transportation for youth, engaging in services when appropriate, etc.). Any information provided to families should be easy to understand, culturally appropriate, and available in various languages when applicable. By communicating with families, the relationship between them and schools will strengthen and help prevention services be successful. ⁴⁷

Capacity building opportunities:

- Maintain open, two-way communication channels with the school.
- Serve as an official liaison between the community and the school to help foster relationships (e.g., develop any needed processes and documentation needed to do so).
- Aid schools with how to communicate regarding prevention – how to describe a particular program, what research has found about its effectiveness, what has worked for you/not worked for you in the past with building support for prevention, etc.



EXAMPLE: COMMUNICATION & RESOURCES

A community coalition has created and provided to schools pre-crafted social media to share on their social sites. Content has included sharing the true positive norms of the students and SAMHSA's [Talk. They Hear You.](#) resources to promote parent/caregiver conversations about substance use. Where possible, materials are translated into the primary languages of the school's youth and parents/caregivers. This coalition also partners with schools to support school-based events. For example, they attend a local high school's Trunk or Treat and provide family members with safety tips such as how to sort candy. They also use this as an opportunity to share SAMHSA's [Talk. They Hear You.](#) resources.

EXAMPLE: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

One coalition described the importance of taking time to develop trust and nurture relationship with school personnel. To do so, it can be helpful to make visits to the school and listen and learn from staff. This will help identify areas where you can be of greatest support. Whenever possible, when approaching a school about a program, come prepared with a solution/backup plan to overcome any issues related to capacity. For example, one coalition delivers Narcan training to teachers and non-teaching staff (e.g., bus drivers, food service workers, custodial staff) and offers a "train the trainer" Narcan training so that interested school staff can train new coworkers over time. They also support the school in developing standard operating procedures related to Narcan utilization within the school. This same coalition takes a similar approach with curricular preventive interventions. They offer to pay for teachers, coaches, and staff to take the training in how to deliver the intervention. For those who do not have the time, they will send in their trained staff to deliver the curriculum to the students. By taking on the facilitation of the lessons, teachers receive extra time to grade papers or take a break!



EXAMPLE: POLICIES

One coalition worked with their school's security team (school security officers, school resource officers) to create a positive ticketing program focused on building positive relations with the school's law enforcement personnel. They recognized that youth at increased risk for substance use may be more likely to encounter law enforcement in the context of adverse experiences such as the arrest of a parent/caregiver or domestic violence. To build positive relations with their school security team, the coalition worked with a local printing company to make carbon copy tickets that say, "You've been caught doing something awesome!" The school's security team identified the behaviors that they wanted to "reward" and issue a carbon copy "ticket" when they spot a student engaging in positive behaviors. Positive behaviors range from wearing their student ID lanyards to picking up garbage, to improving attendance. When the security member issues the "ticket", they get to tell the youth "Great job!" and high five the student. In addition to rewarding the positive, this approach is working to building positive relations between students and law enforcement. Once a month, the coalition visits the school with their "swag wagon" and together with a member of the security team, they give students swag for cashing in their tickets. This exchange provides yet another opportunity to reinforce positive behavior with congratulatory statements and more high-fiving! This same coalition has supported their schools in implementing alternatives to school suspensions when a student is caught with a substance. The youth are provided the option of going through one of several curricular interventions or suspension, and there is no limit on how many times the student can opt for the curricular intervention.

EXAMPLE: PROCEDURES AND RESOURCES

One community-school partnership is supported by a coalition's placement of social workers in schools. These social workers form the infrastructure to support prevention efforts. Social workers accept referrals for services for children and families using a strong evidence-based protocol. They also support a tiered model for interventions where students are designated low, moderate, and high risk according to their scores on screening tools (ACEs, Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, and Child Youth Resiliency Measure). According to their risk level, interventions are provided such as case-management, referrals for mentoring, social needs screening and referrals to community organizations, individual and group skill building, referrals for behavioral health therapy, wraparound services, and others. Social workers also support universal prevention through delivery of evidence-based curricula. Through this partnership, the coalition hosts community events at the schools such as Trunk or Treat, Family Photography sessions, and family engagement activities. They also engage community organizations to hold a wellness fair at a middle school that features youth-led events and outreach tables as ways of promoting youth leadership and wellness. Lastly, this coalition implements an approach where law enforcement make referrals to school when children are present at a law enforcement involved event. The school team accepts referrals and then "handles the child with care." This might include awareness or accessing the appropriate supports for the child if warranted.

3. Needs Assessment

School and student assessments are essential to the development of a sustainable, culturally relevant, and comprehensive prevention infrastructure. These assessments reveal the most pressing needs and available resources to inform the selection of interventions and allocation of resources.

Annual school assessments with teachers and staff can identify school and student outcomes of interest, school strengths and assets, gaps in evidence-based programming, and gaps in implementation resources.

Student assessments can identify those who may benefit from more intensive intervention to help address academic, behavioral, social, and emotional needs while also being used to track progress over time.

Given the time required to implement universal data collection from students, **schools may deploy a phased assessment approach** where brief, validated screening tools for student functioning and well-being are used at the universal level to identify students who may benefit from additional assessment and intervention.⁴⁷ Then, more intensive assessments can be used with a smaller number of students to provide a more detailed presentation of strengths and needs so that interventions can be appropriately matched.

Tools used in screening and assessment processes should be valid and reliable. Annual and bi-annual state and federal surveys, such as Healthy Kids surveys, the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, and Monitoring the Future can be considered for identifying the school's needs at the population-level. Additional tools can be found in registries such as the [National Center on Intensive Intervention](#).⁴⁸

Identifying substance use-related needs. In secondary schools, annual student surveys can be used to assess prevalence of substance use as well as the needs of youth related to substance use knowledge, attitudes, perceptions, other youth problem behaviors (e.g., violence), health outcomes, and risk and protective conditions. In elementary schools, students can be screened for behavioral, social, and emotional needs as problems in these areas may increase risk for later substance use.



Elements of a School Needs Assessment ⁴⁹

Data	
Context	Demographics, school policies, school programs
Students	Student performance (graduation rate, postsecondary success, GPA, standardized assessments), attendance, opportunities (participation in extracurriculars, barriers to participation), behaviors (substance use, detention, suspension), and indicators of mental health or other problems
Personnel	Policies and procedures for personnel (recruitment, hiring, professional development, evaluation), school planning, instruction and curriculum, decision-making, leadership
Climate and Culture	Student, personnel, and caregiver perceptions (supportive, safe, high expectations)
Community	Community support, services provided
Data Sources	
Existing archival data from school	
Surveys	
Key informant interviews	
Focus groups	

Capacity building opportunities:

- Support schools in identifying substance use data by sharing with them school-level surveys, such as state-level Healthy Kids surveys, national Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey ⁴² or Monitoring the Future ⁵⁰, and local social norms surveys that can be used to monitor substance use attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors.
- Connect schools with evaluation partners in the community to support them in designing and selecting assessment processes and tools. Often, academic institutions can be engaged to support evaluation.

An evaluation plan should be put into place and implemented to help ensure the effectiveness of prevention services, progress towards short and long-term goals, fidelity, and opportunities for improvement. An intentional, systematic approach is needed to gather all relevant information. Procedures with clearly outlined roles should let school personnel and other relevant collaborators know how data are collected, where data are stored, when to review data, who will review data, necessary documentation procedures, and when/how this information will be discussed and used to make decisions. ⁴⁷

EXAMPLE: STUDENT ASSESSMENT


Schools tend to focus more on needs identification for students identified as needing higher levels of services as compared to identifying population-level needs through universal screening. The state of Idaho conducted a statewide pilot survey of student well-being to anonymously gather information on students' behavioral health. The universal screening approach assessed health (mental, physical), family presence and support, school factors (grades, safety, connectedness), community safety and engagement, peers factors (peer pressure, social support, bullying, sexual harassment), leisure time (extracurricular activity, social media use, isolation/loneliness), substance use (alcohol, drugs, smoking/vaping), and intrapersonal factors (self-esteem, belonging, self-efficacy/awareness, empathy). This initiative was a partnership between the state department of education, local school districts, and a community foundation.

4. Academic & Prevention Strategies ²³

The fourth pillar of a school-based prevention system is the identification and implementation of effective, evidence-supported academic and prevention strategies. Academic strategies include the core instructional curriculum and additional instructional support needed to engage students towards academic achievement ³. Strategies can be used to encourage students to become excited about learning, help them set positive goals, gain confidence, and encourage active participation. Prevention strategies should complement the school's academic/educational strategies.

The process of identifying strategies begins with an assessment of student needs (see Needs Assessment pillar above). Once the needs of the school population have been identified, schools can match strategies to those needs. Several factors need to be considered in selecting strategies. These include curriculum content (match needs and population demographics), implementation factors (past experiences, training and tools available), and administration support (leadership, funding). If the need for adaptation arises, it is recommended to follow best practices for how to effectively maintain fidelity to the core complements of a program while making thoughtful adaptations to meet the needs of the target population. ⁵¹ Where possible, it is ideal to plan adaptations ahead of time while recognizing that adjustments may need to be made during the implementation process in response to new information or circumstances.

While it is important to identify the needs of the school population, it is also important to note that substance use prevention programs are not generally designed for a specific substance. The core components of substance use prevention programs influence contributing factors that ultimately impact the behavior of substance use, regardless of the substance. However, many recent updates to existing evidence-based programs may have additional modules focused on specific substances (e.g., e-cigarettes, opioids). Additionally, many of these programs also address other high-risk behaviors such as mental health and violence.



As described previously, a core component of a school-based prevention system is reliance on the best available evidence when making decisions. Evidence-based prevention programs have been linked to academic achievement and dropout prevention. Selection of strategies need to take into consideration the best available research, experiential, and contextual evidence ²³ and ideally, have been shown to work in schools with a similar demographic profile. ³ **A number of online registries and clearinghouses are available to schools to help guide their selection of strategies across and within tiers of support**, including [Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development](#) ⁵², [What Works Clearinghouse](#) ⁵³, and others.

Given the focus of this tool is on school-based prevention, prevention strategies are described in greater detail below. For the purposes of this guide, these strategies focus on the outcome of substance use prevention. Many of these may also achieve other prevention outcomes such as mental health and violence.

Tier 1 – Universal Prevention

Tier 1 substance use prevention strategies focus on the student population as a whole and commonly take one of two approaches – curricular strategies or environmental strategies.

- Curricula are used to provide students with normative education and help them to develop social, emotional, and behavioral skills.
- Environmental strategies are applied to the whole school and can include policy development and media campaigns.

Characteristics of these strategies that have demonstrated to be associated with positive outcomes are described below ⁵⁴:

Curricula

- Classroom environment improvement programs
 - Delivered during the early school years and include strategies to respond to inappropriate behavior while acknowledging appropriate behavior
 - Provide feedback to students on expectations
 - Actively engage students
- Intrapersonal and interpersonal skills training that includes opportunities to practice decision-making, problem solving, communication (e.g., assertiveness), social, and coping skills
 - Delivering instruction on developing a range of personal and social skills through a series of structured sessions and opportunities to provide booster sessions in subsequent years
 - Delivered by trained teachers or facilitators
 - Include interactive and experiential learning
- Social influence programs that increase awareness of the social influence to use substances, increase knowledge of immediate negative consequences, establish non-substance use norms and promote true, positive norms (such as conveying that the majority of youth do not use substances), and develop social competence related to substance use (refusal and resistance skills)
 - Sessions are delivered through a series of structured sessions and opportunities to provide booster sessions in subsequent years
 - Delivered by a trained facilitator who engages culturally relevant material
 - Include interactive and experiential learning

- Change perceptions of the risks associated with substance use, emphasizing immediate consequences
- Correct misperceptions regarding the normative nature and expectations linked to substance use
- Parenting skills and substance use education for parents and caregivers
 - Sessions are delivered through a series of structured sessions
 - Delivered by a trusted and trained facilitator
 - Include interactive and experiential learning
 - Include culturally sensitive material
- School bonding, or attachment, interventions and policies
 - Support a positive school climate and commitment to school
 - Encourage student participation in school activities

Environmental Strategy

- Media campaigns, such as the social norms media campaign, corrects misperceptions youth and staff may have about youth substance use by promoting the true, positive norms of the student body. By reducing erroneous misperceptions that more youth engage in, and approve of, substance use than is true, student substance use can be reduced.
- School policies establishing clear guidelines prohibiting substances on school premises alongside restorative approaches to addressing incidents and violations.
 - Support normal school routines and functioning rather than disrupting them
 - Developed with input from all collaborator groups
 - Transparency in the language of what is not allowed, the locations/occasions where substances are prohibited, and universally applied to all persons on school property
 - Take a restorative (rather than punitive) approach to infractions and reinforce policy compliance consistently and equitably

Capacity building opportunities:

- Teach culturally relevant curricula designed to help students develop life skills (self-regulation, communication skills, etc.).
- Teach culturally relevant curricula designed to teach safe behavior (avoiding risky situations, getting help from adults, etc.).
- Create or help run extracurricular activities.
- Offer volunteering/civic engagement activities.
- Partner with schools to provide job experience to students (part-time employment, internships, job shadowing, etc.).

Tier 2 – Selective and Indicated Prevention

Tier 2 prevention strategies are provided to a smaller number of students who are at increased risk of substance use engagement. Key components within Tier 2 services include identification of risk (see Needs Assessment pillar), delivery of selective and indicated prevention services, and determining the need to refer for further assessment and/or treatment. Common Tier 2 strategies include social and coping skills groups addressing common needs of a group of students at higher levels of risk, brief motivational and behavioral interventions, and family skills training.

Capacity building opportunities:

- Partner with behavioral health providers to deliver services to students who have been identified as having an increased risk of substance use engagement.

- Volunteer for mentoring programs.
- Partner with schools to provide job experience (part time employment, internships, job shadowing, etc.) to students at increased risk for substance use and other problem behaviors.

Tier 3 – Treatment and Support

As it relates to substance use, Tier 3 strategies represent more intensive services geared toward youth engaging in substance use and/or experiencing problems associated with use. Strategies may include individual assessment, intensive case management, therapeutic services, and harm reduction. **School-based health centers can help to provide services** to a large number of affected youth who otherwise may not have received behavioral health screening and services.

Key components within Tier 3 services include ⁵⁵:

- Clinical assessment of symptoms
- A collaborative, comprehensive treatment plan that guides the student towards goals
- Provision of skills-based therapeutic intervention services and support building intrapersonal, interpersonal, and social skills
- Engagement with parents/caregivers and integration into the therapeutic process

Capacity building opportunities:

- Provide time and/or funding to help address common barriers to engagement in therapeutic services such as transportation and childcare.
- Create and/or participate in programs designed for students identified as needing more intensive services (high truancy, criminal justice involvement, those with mental health disorders, etc.).
- Provide culturally relevant activities to students designed to reduce stress and trauma (music, art, etc.).

EXAMPLE: MULTI-LEVEL PREVENTION STRATEGIES

One coalition supports their schools by having their social work staff and community mentors implement multi-level prevention strategies. Universal (Tier 1) strategies increase awareness (e.g., trauma informed trainings), develop skills (e.g., Too Good for Drugs, Catch My Breath, Positive Action, LifeSkills Training), and provide positive afterschool opportunities. Selective and Indicated (Tier 2) strategies include referrals, risk stratification, wraparound services, and interventions to respond to risk. Treatment and Support (Tier 3) strategies mitigate negative outcomes and resolve challenges the students may be facing. These include family case-management, Nurturing Parenting classes, SBIRT, and behavioral health therapy and referrals to community behavioral health services.

EXAMPLE: CURRICULUM-BASED PREVENTIVE INTERVENTION

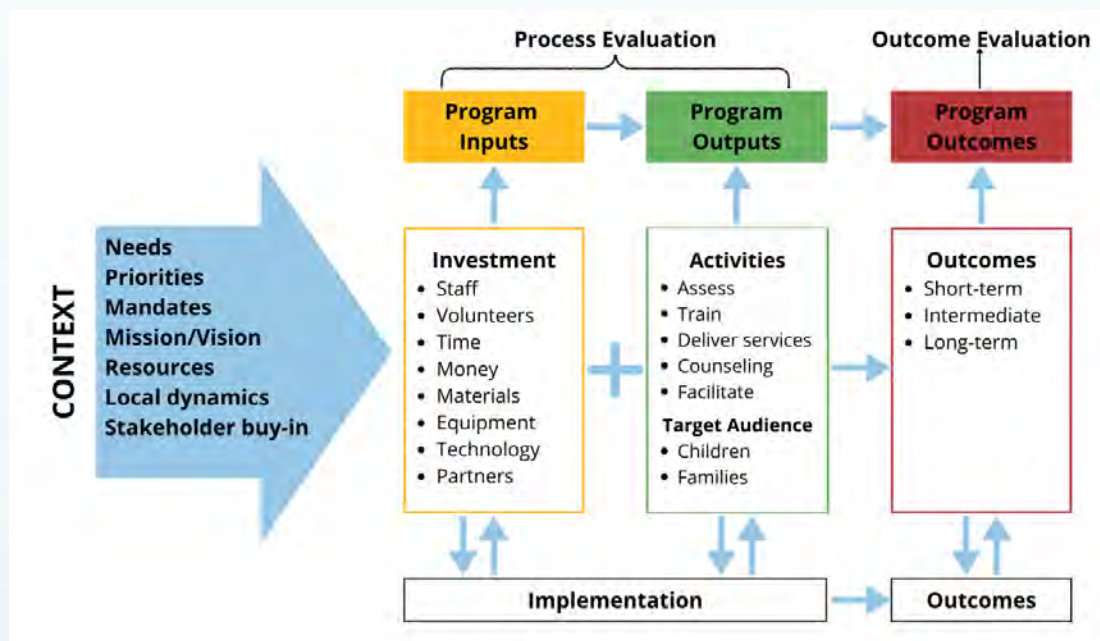
Another coalition pays for school law enforcement officers to receive training in a preventive intervention. They have in place a Memorandum of Understanding that stipulates in exchange for the coalition paying for the training, the law enforcement officer will teach the curriculum to a minimum of two elementary grades per academic year. This same coalition offers a summer camp in partnership with their local police department and school district. The camp runs for two weeks in July. Youth who attend the camp participate in an evidence-based curriculum for substance use prevention facilitated by coalition staff. Students are also introduced to a new protective factor each day of the camp such as art, STEM, physical exercise, etc. Local high school students are hired to work as camp counselors to help operate the camp.

5. Monitoring & Evaluation

Within a school-based prevention system, ongoing data collection is essential for schools to make informed decisions related to monitoring needs, identifying and selecting interventions based on those needs, monitoring the implementation of each strategy, and evaluating student and school progress across and within each of the other three pillars.

Logic Model

The logic model below depicts monitoring (program inputs and outputs) and evaluation (outcomes), with respective metrics. Both process and outcome evaluation comprise a full evaluation.⁵⁶



Adapted from Calculating the Costs of Child Welfare Services Workgroup⁵⁶

Monitoring

Monitoring, or process evaluation, gives information about how and how well an intervention or activity is implemented. At the school level, this type of evaluation data includes tracking records of core planning and implementation activities (e.g., implementation fidelity, process for adaptations) along with program inputs and outputs. Monitoring also supports continuous quality improvement to allow schools to determine whether there was enough time to meet the stated objectives, whether the right partners were engaged, whether any needed cultural adaptations improved uptake and effectiveness of the intervention, and whether there were any barriers to completing the planning and implementation processes. This ongoing monitoring process allows adjustments to be made along the way to improve school efforts and increase the likelihood of achieving intended outcomes.

Monitoring also occurs at the student level and is a critical activity for assessing responsiveness to intervention(s). Student progress monitoring can be used to track any area identified for intervention and multiple data points over the course of the year inform whether growth is occurring

as anticipated. At the school population level, monitoring helps evaluate the effectiveness of instruction over time.⁵⁷

School and student monitoring provide context for understanding the results of the outcome evaluation. Evidence-based programs should include their own pre- and post-tests, as well as implementation fidelity checklists.

Capacity building opportunities:

- Local evaluators can support monitoring processes. Evaluators may be found through academic institutions and online searches through evaluation organizations, such as the [American Evaluation Association](#).
- Leverage culturally relevant expertise to assist in developing appropriate cultural adaptations.
- Leverage your expertise and network to help schools develop evaluation plans and related procedures.

Evaluation

Outcome, or impact evaluation, shows whether the program or strategy had the intended impact on student behaviors and school functioning and may include short, intermediate, and/or longer-term outcomes. While outcome evaluations can be quite broad, it is imperative to determine program or strategy effects on student behaviors. This type of evaluation is essential for garnering support to sustain prevention services.

Within a school prevention system, evaluation may assess the impact of the core curriculum, core instruction, and strategies and interventions implemented across the school population as well as within service levels. Related to substance use, outcome evaluation answers questions that address short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes, such as:

Short term (immediate effects of intervention activities)

- *Were knowledge, skills, and/or behaviors improved?*

Intermediate

- *Were protective conditions enhanced and risks mitigated?*

Long-term (effects that can take years to see)

- *Were health behaviors changed, such as a reduction in how many youth started using substances?*

Evaluation findings may be integrated into a report that can be shared with collaborator groups (e.g., school personnel, parents, community members), and the sharing of evaluation results can serve several purposes, including:

- Identifying opportunities for improvement and more effective tailoring or adaptation of prevention strategies for developmental, cultural, or other important reasons.
- Justifying programming or need for additional resources to sustain or expand services
- Sharing success to build staff motivation for continued efforts.

Capacity building opportunities:

- Leverage your expertise and network to help schools develop evaluation plans and related procedures.
- Connect schools to evaluation resources (documents, trainings, external evaluators, etc.).
- Local evaluators can support monitoring processes.
- Put formal paperwork, agreements, and procedures in place to collect/share relevant data with the school.
- Share and spread school success stories.
- Families, caregivers, and community partners can advocate for continued funding and support of prevention services.

Needs assessment, monitoring, and evaluation data can be collected using both quantitative and qualitative data. Sources of data may include archival data (e.g., past records of substance-related problems such as school-identified youth of concern or youth requesting treatment services in the community, emergency room visits for overdose, etc.), survey data (e.g., national, state, and local assessments of youth substance use), key informant interviews (e.g., interviewing youth or school personnel), and focus groups.

EXAMPLE: EVALUATION

One coalition has helped their school to track process measures during a social norms media campaign. This included holding student focus groups 6-8 weeks into the campaign to elicit student feedback on media and messages. They also tracked other outcomes such as reach, exposure, comprehension, implementation fidelity, and contamination of other co-occurring activities that could counter the campaign messages.

Another coalition performs regular program evaluations, the outcomes of which they disseminate to the school leadership and community collaborators. They operate a monthly newsletter to share successes and use community partner webpages to cross-post and spread success stories.



ADVANCING COLLABORATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Collaboration between schools and community partners helps to ensure that school-based substance use prevention is as effective as it can be. This resource defines “**collaboration**” as the process of working with groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of students.⁵⁸ Benefits of community-school collaboration include: mobilization of resources; opportunities to influence systems and serve as catalysts for advancing policies, programs, and practices; increasing awareness of the best available evidence in substance use prevention; dissemination of critical and timely information; information exchange; data collection; and data sharing, among others.

While community partners and schools may see value in working together to advance a school-based prevention system, schools are complex systems that can be challenging to navigate. Community partners may benefit from dedicating time toward building relationships and collaboration with their local school(s). Key activities to support that process include⁵⁹:


- Understanding how the school district functions (educational priorities, organizational structure, school district policies, etc.).
- Understanding and navigating political or cultural considerations within the school district and community.
- Connecting with and building relationships with educational leaders such as school boards, superintendents, and principals.
- Connecting with and building relationships with key roles within schools such as school counselors, teachers, teacher’s aides, school nurses, school psychologists, and school social workers.
- Developing an understanding of the work of teachers and the demanding day-to-day work within schools.
- Being aware of and able to communicate the connections between substance use and its risk conditions with academic success and learning.
- Sharing how your organization and the school’s mission, goals, values, and work overlap.
- Describing what you and your organization can offer through a partnership with the school, including providing culturally relevant advisory support.
- Reaching out to others in your community or within the field of substance use prevention for advice and discussions around how they successfully built partnerships in schools, especially those who have previously had positive success.

Community partners and schools seeking opportunities to work together in support of substance use prevention can take actionable steps toward facilitating and strengthening collaborative efforts. The following four steps highlight a phased approach to building collaboration.



Example of Successful School-Community Collaborative Effort

One example of school-community collaboration in support of prevention services is [Colorado's Project AWARE](#).⁹ Funded by SAMHSA to Colorado's Department of Education, Colorado's Project AWARE works "to build a comprehensive, coordinated, and integrated school behavioral health services system that supports every student in Colorado in reaching their fullest potential in school and life."^{9,61} This effort has engaged multiple collaborators, including state departments of public health and behavioral health and seven local school districts.



Using the MTSS framework, Colorado's Project AWARE is cultivating wellness and resilience of school youth by ⁶¹:

- Increasing literacy and awareness of behavioral health issues among school-aged youth.
- Promoting social and emotional learning.
- Connecting children, youth, and families who may have behavioral health issues with appropriate services.
- Improving school climate.
- Promoting positive mental health among youth and families through social and emotional learning.
- Building the capacity and leadership to sustain community-based mental health promotion, prevention, early identification and treatment services.
- Providing training for school personnel and other adults who interact with school-aged youth to detect and respond to mental health issues in children and young adults.

Potential Barriers and Solutions

Schools and community partners may easily see the value in implementing effective and comprehensive prevention strategies in support of healthy youth development. Yet there are common barriers that may make this work challenging. The primary task of schools is *education* and thus one commonly cited barrier is the identification of adequate resources. It may be challenging for schools to provide the necessary personnel time and financial resources for prevention services. Shifting priorities within the school or district as well as staff turnover are additional barriers. Community partners can engage their schools to identify existing barriers and collaborate in identifying solutions.

The more school staff and community partners are involved from the beginning, the more likely school- and community-based prevention strategies are to continue and be sustained. Trained prevention professionals can support schools with capacity building by offering to support implementation of prevention services. Community partners can also help schools to identify or secure funding to support prevention services. Funding may be available through local public health departments and local/state government funds, including opioid settlement funds and excise taxes (e.g., from vaping, marijuana sales).



QUICK START GUIDE

1. **Develop or enhance relationships with your schools and/or community partners.**
 - a. Learn about each other.
 - i. Review each other's values, mission and goals. What values and goals do you share?
 - ii. Describe your respective strengths, limitations, and needs related to achieving shared goals.
 - iii. Identify natural points of collaboration and ways in which you can both benefit from partnering on youth prevention efforts.
 - b. Establish communication channels.
2. **Familiarize yourself with national registries such as [*Blueprints for Health Youth Development*](#) and [*CASEL*](#) that can assist with identifying evidence-based strategies to address shared goals.**
 - a. Practice searching for strategies using key terms for known needs such as “substance use prevention” and “youth” and “schools”.
 - b. Review the identified programs and their ratings. Read their descriptions and determine if their requirements are a good fit for your school.
3. **Determine the capacity needs of the school and their readiness to implement an evidence-based strategy to meet identified needs.**
 - a. What personnel will implement the strategy?
 - b. How much does the strategy cost?
 - c. What materials will be required?
 - d. How much time will the strategy take for staff and students?

APPENDIX

SHARED RISK & PROTECTIVE CONDITIONS FOR SUBSTANCE USE, MENTAL HEALTH, AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION

An individual's behavior is largely shaped by the interaction of their personal characteristics and a wide range of environmental influences that, together, propel pathways toward or away from substance use and other negative outcomes. The tables below summarize shared risk and protective conditions for substance use, mental health, and violence prevention across socio-ecological levels of influence (i.e., individual, peer, school, family, community).

Table 1

Protective Conditions for Substance Use, Mental Health, & Violence ^{10, 12-15, 62-69}

Protective Factors	Socio-ecological Level
Supportive relationships with family members	Family
Family provides structure, limits, rules, monitoring, and predictability	Family
Clear expectations for behavior and values	Family, School, Peers, Community
Connectedness with adults outside the family	School, Peers, Community
Opportunities for engagement within school and community	School, Peers, Community
Physical and psychological safety	School, Peers, Community
Presence of mentors and support for development of skills and interests	School, Peers, Community

Table 2

Risk Conditions for Substance Use, Mental Health, and Violence ^{10, 12-15, 62-69}

Risk Factors	Socio-ecological Model Level
Aggressiveness	Individual
Antisocial behavior	Individual
Anxiety	Individual
Conduct disorder	Individual
Depression	Individual
Difficult temperament	Individual
Early substance use	Individual
Favorable attitudes toward substance use and/or violence	Individual
Norms (e.g., advertising) and laws favorable toward substance use	Individual
Substance use among parents, siblings, or peers	Individual, Family
Child abuse/maltreatment	Family
Inadequate supervision and monitoring	Family
Parent-child conflict	Family
School failure	Individual, School, Peers, Community

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