

# Safe and Supportive Schools (S3)

GRANT DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

**S3 Grantee Profile | Iowa Department of Education**

National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments



Safe Supportive Learning

Engagement | Safety | Environment



## Highlights

The primary school climate improvement goal of Iowa’s four-year<sup>1</sup> Safe and Supportive Schools (IS3) grant was to reduce high rates of drug- and violence-related behavior in 21 high schools across 19 school districts. From baseline to final year, 76 percent of schools with fully implemented interventions and sufficient data reported a decrease in student alcohol use; 62 percent reported a decrease in harassment or bullying on school property; 90 percent reported improved school safety scores; and 57 percent reported a reduction the number of suspensions due to violence without serious injury.

### *How Did They Do It?*

Iowa S3 (IS3) developed an annual school climate survey and worked with the districts and schools to use discipline, incident, and administrative data to choose and implement interventions for specific populations at the school level. Grant activities paid attention to State-, district-, and school-level improvements. Specifically, at the district and State levels, IS3 created a statewide school safety measurement system that enabled schools and districts to make data-based decisions regarding school safety. At the school level, IS3 utilized a school climate improvement five-step process among school teams to maximize progress.

## School Participation

All Iowa public and private schools were invited to participate in S3, but larger schools (7,500+ enrollment), persistently low achieving schools (PLAS), and schools in need of assistance (SINA) were given priority.<sup>2</sup> Initially 12 districts, representing more than 20 percent of the State’s K–12 enrollment, submitted applications. Additional selection criteria weighted current student-reported alcohol use, harassment and bullying, and suspensions for violence. Twenty-one schools were selected out of 47 reviewed.

### What’s in this profile?

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<sup>1</sup> While the S3 grant funded all of the grantees for four years, grant activities extended into a fifth year. This profile summarizes activities reported by grantees across all years in which they were actively working with participating districts and schools to improve school climate. However, the Results section presents data only on schools that achieved “full implementation.”

<sup>2</sup> PLAS and SINA schools do not meet annual yearly progress (AYP) goals under NCLB. See <https://www.educateiowa.gov/pk-12/no-child-left-behind/schools-and-districts-need-assistance-sinadina> for more information.



## IS3 Grant Year 4 Demographics (School Year 2013–14)

This section provides descriptive information about participating districts (also referred to as local education agencies [LEAs]<sup>3</sup>) and schools and the demographics of the students they served. See also Appendix A for a list of IS3's participating districts and schools.

**Number of districts served:** 19 districts

**Number of schools served:** 21 schools

- 19 high schools
- 1 junior/senior high school (grades 6–12)
- 1 junior senior high school (grades 7–12)

**School size:**<sup>4</sup> Range: 165–2,294 students; average: 818 students

**Total number of students served by IS3 schools:** 17,176

### Participating schools' student demographics

#### *Race and ethnicity:*<sup>5</sup>

- 62 percent White
- 10 percent Black
- 16 percent Hispanic
- 3 percent Asian/Pacific Islander
- 1 percent American Indian/Alaskan
- 4 percent two or more races

#### *Other demographics statistics:*

- 50 percent free- and reduced-price-lunch eligible
- 15 percent with individualized education programs (IEPs) in high schools<sup>6</sup>

**Source:** NCES Common Core of Data (CCD)  
(<http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/index.asp>)

## Key Partners

IS3 forged partnerships that were essential to the implementation of the S3 grant. These partnerships complemented the work of grant staff by promoting collaborations across interrelated student service divisions and with community partners. Iowa had many partners that played an integral role. These included:

- [Area Education Agency \(AEA\) Data Consultants and University Partners](#), who assisted in initial development of and data collection for the Iowa Youth Survey.
- [Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development \(ICYD\)](#), which provided administrative representation from all major State agencies that serve youth.
- [Iowa Consortium for Substance Abuse Research & Evaluation](#), which assisted with survey design.
- [Iowa Department of Public Health \(IDPH\)](#), which was the lead on administering the Iowa Youth Survey.
- [Iowa Pride Network](#), which assisted in developing an audit, certification, and recognition model for schools engaged in the [Safe School Certification](#) process.
- [Iowa State University \(ISU\) Extension](#), which helped form Youth Leadership Teams and provided workshops to adults on how to work with the youth.

<sup>3</sup> Grants were awarded to State education agencies (SEAs), and S3 States partnered with a selection of local education agencies (LEAs) or school districts and participating schools. In these profiles, consistent with grantees' use of terminology, we use the term *districts* (in lieu of *LEAs*).

<sup>4</sup> Statistics about schools exclude Armstrong-Ringsted Middle School/High School as data were unavailable via the NCES Common Core of Data.

<sup>5</sup> Percentages were calculated by dividing the reported number of students in a given demographic by the total reported enrollment. Due to data reporting inconsistencies, totals may not equal 100 percent.

<sup>6</sup> The percentage of students with IEPs is based on S3 district-level statistics as this detail was not available at the school level.



- [LCPA Public Strategies](#), which assisted with marketing and communications, including Facebook and Twitter.
- [National School Climate Center](#), which assisted with initial development of the Iowa Youth Survey.
- [RM Consulting](#), which contracted the individuals who performed project evaluation (see the Additional Analyses section for more information).
- **The Learning Supports Advisory Team**, which is a broad-based stakeholder group, convened by the Iowa Department of Education (Iowa DE), that provided IS3 oversight and vetted all of the processes and products created through the grant.

## Project Components

### Infrastructure Development

To the extent possible, IS3 districts and schools built upon existing State student support efforts while also funding significant operational and infrastructure development. Over the course of the grant period, Iowa S3 enhanced its infrastructure by:

- Providing full-time State education agency (SEA) and area education agency (AEA) staff devoted to school climate efforts;
- Contracting with four State consultants to serve on a new data team. Each consultant was assigned to a cohort of IS3 schools;
- Creating toolkits to guide schools through the process of using survey and incident data to improve school climate; and
- Providing professional development via Learning Supports conferences held twice each year.

Four teams oversaw IS3 operations. Their names, frequency, and mode of meeting were as follows:

- Core/evaluation team (biweekly, year-round, via two-hour webinar/conference call; originally started as two separate teams);
- Leadership team (a.k.a. Learning Supports Advisory Team; four times each school year);
- Data team (biweekly during school year, via two-hour webinar/conference call); and
- Professional development team (biweekly during school year, via two-hour webinar/conference call).

### School Climate Measurement

The IS3 was a data-driven effort that utilized administrative and survey data to focus school climate improvement efforts, decide where to concentrate resources, and help select appropriate interventions. These data also were used to develop school safety scores to monitor change over time. The following describes IS3's measurement tools.

#### Administrative Data

Administrative data on attendance and disciplinary actions were furnished through [Student Reporting in Iowa \(SRI\)](#). SRI reduces data burden and encourages better decision making by establishing and maintaining a cost-effective method of accessing and transferring accurate and timely education information among school districts, postsecondary institutions, and the Iowa Department of Education.



## Surveys

IS3 administered the IS3 Conditions for Learning Surveys<sup>7</sup> annually each spring from 2012–14. These surveys assessed perceptions of school climate among students, staff, and parents/guardians and provided all members of the school community an opportunity to share their perspectives. The IS3 Conditions for Learning Surveys were created based on statistical analyses of the results from the [Iowa Youth Survey \(IYS\)](#) and the [Comprehensive School Climate Inventory \(CSCI\)](#), administered in spring 2011. The IYS examined students' self-report of their attitudes and experiences regarding alcohol and other drug use and violence and their perceptions of their peer, family, school, and neighborhood/community environments. The CSCI for students, staff, and parents (a nationally recognized school climate survey) measured 12 essential dimensions of a positive school climate in four categories: safety, teaching and learning, interpersonal relationships, and the institutional environment. New constructs identified through analyses became the IS3 Conditions for Learning Surveys.

In Year 1, students were offered the IYS and the CSCI both online and using paper/pencil. In Year 2 through grant conclusion, the new student IS3 Conditions for Learning Survey was administered online. Staff surveys were completed online in all years. Parent surveys were always offered both online and using paper/pencil. Additionally, all of the parent surveys were available in Spanish upon request.

## School Safety Scores

The **school safety score** is a figure calculated based on a formula that uses survey data, incident data, and other data representing factors known to influence student and school success. The scores were used to facilitate comparisons between schools in the same State and for individual schools over time. The following summarizes Iowa's school safety score.

- *Name of score:* Iowa Safe and Supportive Schools (IS3) Index
- *Formula:* The IS3 Index is composed of three domains: safety, engagement, and environment. Within each domain, there are data elements from survey constructs and administrative data. Each data element is assigned points from zero to three, where zero indicates intensive need for more positive conditions for learning and three indicates optimal conditions for learning. The sum of each data element provides the total points for each domain; the sum across domains provides the final total points for the IS3 Index.
- *Change over time:* Changes in school safety scores are reported in the Results section with other Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) data.
- *Sample school report:* <http://www.iowa-valley.k12.ia.us/Files/!S3results.pdf>
- *Supporting resources:*
  - [Iowa Safe and Supportive Schools Index Overview](#)
  - [All Schools Report: Iowa Safe and Supportive Schools Index IS3 Index Year 4 2014](#)

## **Interventions: Frameworks, Programs, Practices, and Strategies**

Key interventions used by schools were decided at the local level through a comprehensive planning process (see Iowa's Planning Toolkits and Progress Monitoring Survey). IS3 used student survey data collected each spring and its most recent administrative data to inform the selection and implementation of interventions and approaches (see Table 1). The specific frameworks, programs, practices, and strategies were selected based on data and needs in each of the districts. A [Matrix of Programs](#) was provided to districts; the matrix

<sup>7</sup> The IS3 Conditions for Learning Surveys are available upon request from the Project Director. See end of profile for contact information.



indicated which programs had evidence documented by various clearinghouses. Table 1 shows the most frequently used interventions implemented by IS3 and the number of schools using each.

**Table 1. Intervention frameworks, programs, and practices**

<b>Frameworks</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) (15)</li> <li>• Safe School Certification (4)</li> </ul>
<b>Programs</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boys Town Education Model (1)</li> <li>• Capturing Kids’ Hearts* (4)</li> <li>• Check and Connect* (4)</li> <li>• Iowa S3 Continuous Improvement Process<sup>8</sup> (21)</li> <li>• Olweus Bullying Prevention (5)</li> </ul>
<b>Practices</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledgment systems (for students and parents) (13)</li> <li>• At-risk programming (5)</li> <li>• Connecting with students through conversation (8)</li> <li>• Fierce Conversations training (19)</li> <li>• Improvement to the physical environment (15)</li> <li>• Mentoring programs (6)</li> <li>• Positive acknowledgment (14)</li> <li>• Relationship-building strategies (13)</li> </ul>

Notes: \* indicates a program that is classified as an evidence-based program (EBP), meaning it is found on the [National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices](#) (NREPP) or the [What Works Clearinghouse](#); the number of schools using each intervention is noted in parentheses.

### Engagement Strategies

In addition to frameworks, programs, and practices, IS3 implemented a number of strategies to engage different groups affected by school climate. Engagement approaches were also tailored for different audiences.

- **State, district, and school leadership** was engaged through focused school visits to observe firsthand the culture and climate of the school buildings and teams. All schools were visited at least once; the State team visited four to five schools each year of the grant. Visits were tailored around individual school needs. Feedback was provided regarding progress made on the implementation plans, areas of concern/strength, and other additional support as requested by districts.
- **For staff**, in addition to serving on school teams, IS3 also sponsored a statewide Learning Supports Advisory Team, and each AEA supported Learning Supports efforts through various teams at its organization. The goal of these teams was to gather stakeholder feedback and provide support to districts.
- **Student voice** was empowered through student leadership skill development and by increasing the number of and involvement in student clubs and service learning. Additionally, Youth Leadership Teams (YLTs) at each school that were representative of the entire student body regularly reviewed school climate data so they could make recommendations to the Core Leadership team and school staff. YLTs also had discussions with the Lieutenant Governor and served as spokespersons to the local media.

<sup>8</sup> The Continuous Improvement Process developed by Iowa is articulated in the IS3 developed toolkits (see the Product Development and Dissemination section).



- The Anamosa YLT sponsored [Locker 178](#), a locker painted blue for students to anonymously submit reports of wrongdoing, including bullying, to school administration. School counselors and administrators check the locker every two days and take action.
- **Family and community partnerships** were promoted through inclusion of parents and community organizations on school-level climate teams who provided their perspectives on the IS3 initiative. These partners were involved in analyzing data, offering feedback, selecting strategies, and implementation.

### Special Feature: Youth Engagement in Iowa

An important component of the IS3 initiative was the institution of Youth Leadership Teams (YLTs). YLTs consist of five to seven students representing the student population and adult sponsors. These students are trained on how to analyze data as well as how to communicate data to others. The YLTs learn about their school climate data and meet regularly with their peers and school staff to initiate conversations about what the data mean. The goal is to enable students to fully understand the data and empower them to make plans and recommendations for effecting positive change in their schools. A YLT member summarized the value of this work in the following quote:

*“Student voice is important. We haven’t had a lot of voice in our school before this year. Often we get the teachers’ perspective or the board’s perspective, but it’s not the students’ perspective. I think that’s true in a lot of schools. We are the ones who are trying to learn, and we want it to be the best environment it can be.”*

At Anamosa High School, school climate data indicated that bullying was one of the larger barriers to having a safe and supportive school. Data revealed that students were too afraid of telling an adult about the problems they were facing. The Anamosa YLT sponsored a project called **Locker 178**. An empty locker was painted blue and available for students to anonymously submit reports of wrongdoing, including bullying, to school administration. The guidance office checked the locker every two days. The school discovered that students were using the new anonymous, safe space to report incidents, and the counselors were able to act on each complaint.

Students also created two **videos** to share how important a positive school climate was to them.

- From the Iowa State University 4-H Summer [I S3 Leadership Conference: From Individual Passion to Community Action](#): This video features students talking about the leadership skills they are developing and how they are learning to make their voices heard.
- Your Secret Mission is a student-developed video to motivate potential survey respondents.

Students in IS3 schools are making a difference; they are talking about the survey data and the benefits of the grant. According to the data, the “mean score for the survey items that measured positive Student to Student Relationships increased from 2.86 in 2011 to 3.01 in 2014 (on a 4-point scale).”

The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments posted this success story in a spotlight on [IS3 youth engagement](#).



## Training, Coaching, and Technical Assistance

Professional development supports such as training, coaching, and technical assistance let staff know that school climate is a priority. Training helps staff develop the skills needed to understand the issues, use data to guide their work, and effectively implement intervention(s) with fidelity. Coaches can provide a range of supports such as keeping school climate and student support materials up to date, mentoring staff about policies and practices, or conducting observations and performance-feedback sessions. Technical assistance—provided by members of the school climate team or contractors—can support communities of practice among coaches or school staff, help outline training plans, conduct research to support the work, or help school climate teams address issues such as the need for adaptations to interventions.

### Training

IS3 provided a multitude of professional development and other training events for school administrators, teachers, support staff, and partners, including:

1. Ongoing training and consultation via:
  - a. Toolkit distribution;
  - b. Monthly webinars for IS3 coordinators and principals focusing on topics such as survey administration, how to use data, youth and parent engagement, and communications planning;
  - c. Bimonthly webinars for AEA partners focusing on topics such as data analysis, family and youth engagement, survey administration supports, book studies (*Creating a Culture of Achievement* and *Connecting with Students*), theory of change, and what's working/not working;
  - d. Twice-yearly networking sessions at the beginning and end of the school year for AEA consultants and district coordinators to learn from each other; and
  - e. Regular outreach by data consultants to work with districts on data analysis and implementation plan development.
2. Targeted trainings for coaches on topics including but not limited to:
  - a. Olweus Bullying Prevention Program;
  - b. Continuous Improvement Process: Adult/Student Relationships and Discipline Toolkits; and
  - c. Fierce Conversations.
3. Formal training events:
  - a. [Bullying Summits](#) (sponsored by the governor's office in 2012 and 2013);
  - b. Annual [Iowa Safe Schools LGBTQ Conference; and](#)
  - c. Annual [Iowa State Extension 4-H Youth Conference.](#)

### Coaching and Technical Assistance Model

IS3 structured coaching and TA around feedback from designated School Climate Teams. The regularly scheduled webinars provided to coaches and districts (see the Training section) offered interactive information sharing and opportunities for problem solving. IS3 also contracted with four State consultants to serve on a data team, instituted as a result of district implementation plan progress monitoring. Each consultant was assigned a cohort of IS3 schools and helped them use their data (index score, survey data, and any additional data collected at the school) to develop their IS3 implementation plan.



## Product Development and Dissemination

To support training, technical assistance, and program implementation, S3 grantees developed many unique products. These included theoretical and logic models, administrative guides, reference manuals, toolkits, videos, reports, Web pages, briefs, workbooks, fact sheets, rating forms, readiness and implementation checklists, and peer-reviewed journal articles. In addition, grantees developed and offered many training presentations and webinars. These resources were shared broadly among participating districts and other districts that took an interest in the work being done. Key products generated by the IS3 grant include:

### Resources

- [Continuum Mapping Guide](#): This resource was designed to help schools/districts graphically document all of the supports that were available to students across content areas and to identify which students receive those supports across three tiers: core, supplemental, and intensive. A completed continuum map had the potential to help families and other community stakeholders understand all of the activity that takes place in a school or district and where they might have a role to play in promoting student success.
- [Decisions in Motion IS3 Toolkit 1](#): Improving Adult-Student Relationships, a step-by-step toolkit designed to help schools improve school climate with a focus on adult-student relationships.
- [Decisions in Motion IS3 Toolkit 2](#): Addressing Discipline, a framework and concrete action plan for improving school disciplinary climate.
- [Decisions in Motion IS3 Toolkit 3](#): Addressing Bullying, a sample plan and step-by-step guide for schools to develop a plan to address bullying.
- [Decisions in Motion IS3 Toolkit 4](#): Setting Clear Boundaries and Expectations, a framework for creating an action plan for setting clear boundaries and expectations with a focus on school discipline policies and consistent enforcement.
- [Decisions in Motion IS3 Toolkit 5](#): Improving Student-Student Relationships, a step-by-step guide for making a plan to improve school climate by improving student-student relationships.
- [Iowa Implementation Checklist](#): This was used for progress monitoring throughout the IS3 grant and was set up as an online survey (using SurveyMonkey). IS3 AEA coordinators completed it periodically each year for each of their assigned schools.
- [IS3 Strategy Guide Quality Rubric](#): This tool rates programs and curricula based on a review of multiple national registries of evidence-based programs. IS3 identified common elements and defined levels of quality for each element. Selected programs must be rated as “promising” or “exemplary” to be considered for inclusion as a strategy in the district implementation plan.
- [Learning Supports](#): This one-page flier describes how the six content areas of learning supports (e.g., strategies, programs, services, and practices) form the structure for organizing, understanding, and selecting research-based interventions.

### Videos

- [Iowa S3 grant announcement](#): U.S. Senator Tom Harkin and Jason Glass, director of Iowa Department of Education, announce the federal S3 award to Iowa. They discuss how this work will provide students with 21st century skills and set them up for success. An overview of key grant activities is also provided.
- [Iowa DE Director Brad Buck](#), during the April 2014 Iowa Learning Supports workshop, affirming the importance of this work to address the impact of bullying, safety, attendance, and student engagement.



- [Iowa Safe and Supportive Schools Bullying Awareness Video](#), aimed at inspiring Iowa students, teachers, and parents to take positive action against bullying.
- Iowa State University 4-H Summer [IS3 Leadership Conference: From Individual Passion to Community Action](#) student video, where students from across Iowa came together to give a voice to their perspectives on the IS3 work and participate in youth leadership skills development.
- [Round table with the Lieutenant Governor Kim Reynolds](#), revealing authentic student voices on issues in schools and students' desire to contribute to improving their schools. This was filmed at the beginning of the grant.
- [Your Secret Mission](#), a student-developed video to motivate potential survey respondents.

#### Social Media

- Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/SafeSupportIowa>
- Twitter: <http://twitter.com/SafeSupportIowa>

## Results

Monitoring and evaluation activities examined all the data that had been collected in order to determine how IS3's efforts affected school climate in participating districts and schools. Outcome data included survey data, behavioral incident reports and other disciplinary action data, attendance data, and student academic performance. S3 grantees performed a variety of analyses to demonstrate the results of their work. The following sections provide details on reporting requirements as well as additional analyses or evaluations that were performed.

### Government Performance and Results Act Results

The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA) requires all federal grantees to demonstrate their effectiveness on a grant-specific set of indicators. S3 grantees reported annually on four GPRA measures. S3 GPRA measures included the percentage of S3 participating schools implementing interventions that, over the four years of the grant, experienced:

An increase or decrease in the percentage of students who reported:

- Student-reported alcohol use in the past 30 days (GPRA measures a and b); and
- Student-reported harassment or bullying on school property (GPRA measures c and d).

Improvement or worsening of:

- School safety scores (GPRA measures e and f).

An increase or decrease in the number of:

- Suspensions for violence without injury (GPRA measures g and h).<sup>9</sup>

### GPRA Performance Summary

At the end of the grant period, the 21 participating schools that had fully implemented<sup>10</sup> their selected interventions reported the following successes (see also Figure 1):

- Seventy-six percent reported reductions in student-reported alcohol use;

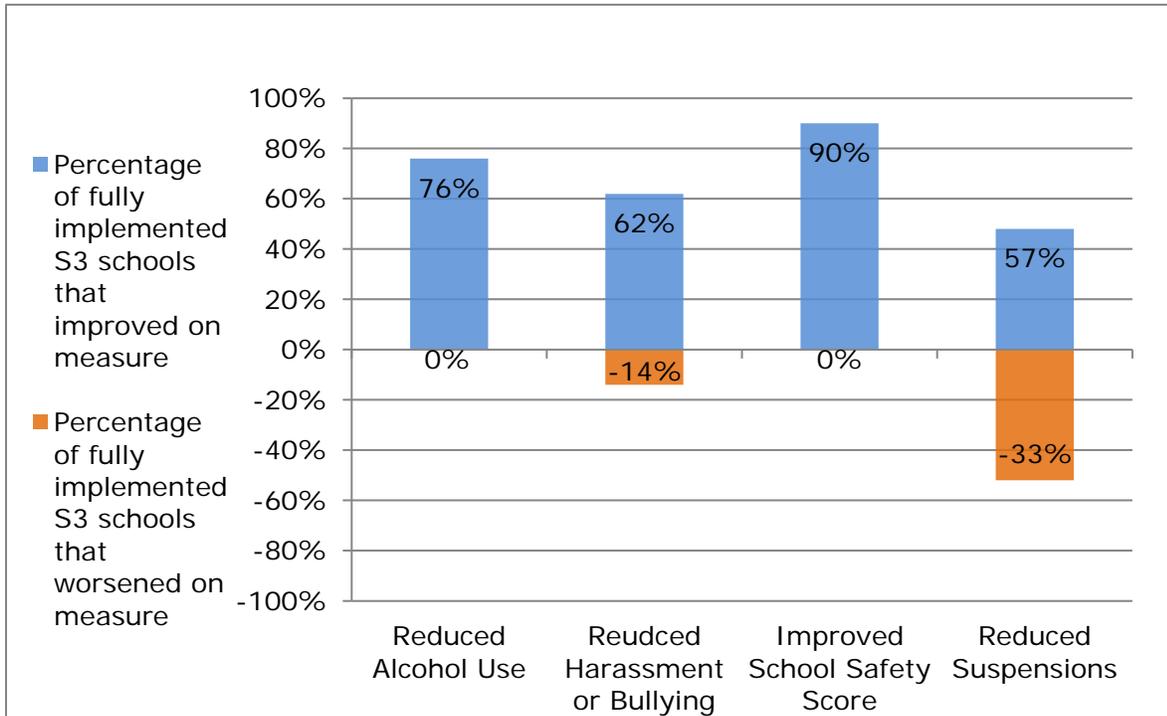
<sup>9</sup> Readers should note that suspension data, in particular, might be affected by changes in State policies during the course of the S3 grant period that may be unrelated to S3 programming.

<sup>10</sup> A school was considered "fully implemented" if the majority of programmatic interventions in the school were fully implemented as planned and the remainder of programs were close to being implemented and/or would be finished by the end of the school year.



- Sixty-two percent reported a reduction in bullying or harassment on school property;
- Ninety percent improved their IS3 school safety score; and
- Fifty-seven percent reported a reduction in student suspensions for violence without injury.

**Figure 1. Iowa GPRA results baseline (2010–11) to final year (2013–14)**



Notes: In 2011, IS3's baseline year, for 30-day alcohol use and harassment or bullying on school property, schools had 50 percent of students take the survey that contained relevant items (the other 50 percent took a different survey). Due to low participation rates, schools with less than 25 percent of the student body represented by the relevant survey data were excluded from GPRA calculations. As a result, five schools had insufficient data to report. Also, IS3's harassment or bullying data include a cyberbullying item. Detail may not sum to 100 percent due to schools that experienced no statistically significant change or that had missing data.

In Year 4, all GPRA measures improved. While alcohol use, harassment or bullying, and school safety scores improved in the vast majority of schools, more than half of schools saw an improvement in suspension/expulsion data. Suspension/expulsion data are reported to the SEA on an annual basis, and due to reporting and cleaning processes, these data lag one year. Analyses performed in Year 5 showed an overall improvement at the State level, indicating that schools did begin to successfully address this GPRA measure in the later years of the grant.

IS3 reported that the high percentage of schools reporting worsening in terms of use of suspensions/expulsions (33 percent) was likely attributable to the delayed implementation of the work focused on decreasing suspensions. IS3 did not implement programs focused on decreasing suspensions until Year 4 of the grant, carrying over into the subsequent no-cost extension year. The reason for the rise in the percentage of schools with increased reports of harassment and bullying (14 percent) was unclear as nothing in particular could explain why they would not have improved.



### Additional Analyses

The IS3 Core External Evaluation team performed additional analyses based on two research questions:

1. Do IS3 interventions, when implemented with fidelity, achieve the intended student outcome?
2. What are the other results (intended or unintended) of program implementation?

*Evaluators:* IS3 Core External Evaluation team, contracted by RM Consulting and led by Dr. Robin Galloway, principal investigator, with Ed Redalen and Stan Slessor

*Analysis approach:*

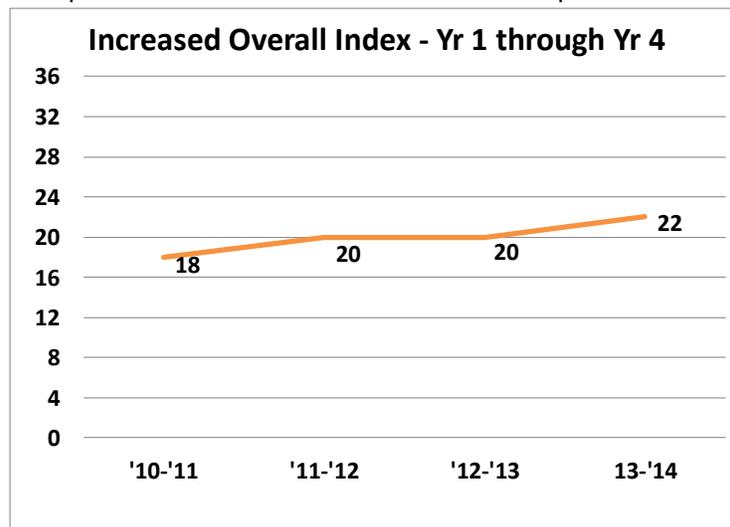
IS3 used a mixed-method design to evaluate project effectiveness by measuring both process and outcomes.

*Summary of findings:*

Overall student outcomes are summarized in Figures 2–6. In Year 5, the survey was optional, and only 17 of 21 schools participated. The four schools that chose not to participate were large, urban schools. As a result, we have included in Figure 3 the Year 5 results from incident data (collected annually by the SEA from all schools)<sup>11</sup> but only Year 4 results from survey data (the final year that all schools participated in the survey). In sum, the 21 Iowa S3 high schools in this first cohort (see the Sustainability and Scaling Up section regarding expansion) improved on 14 of 15 outcome indicators from baseline to Year 5.

**Figure 2. IS3 Index results**

The y-axis reports the IS3 Index score. The total possible score was 36.

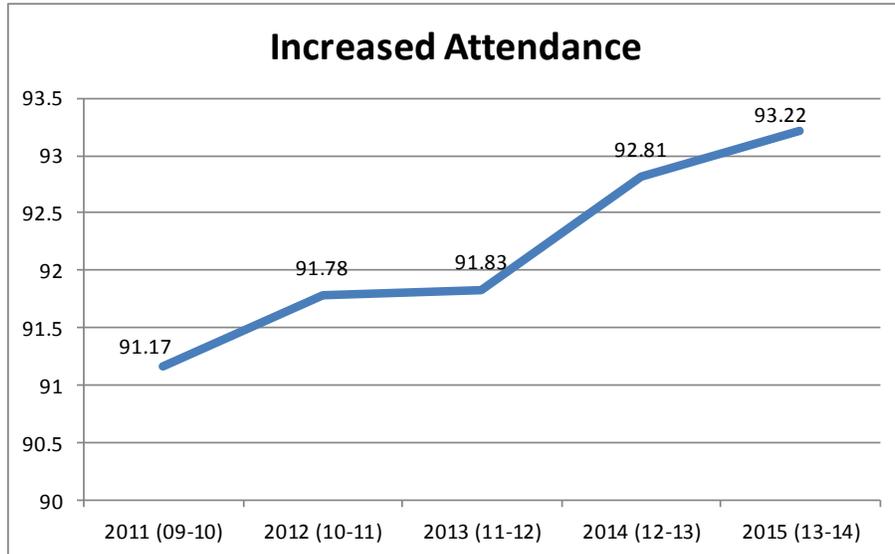


<sup>11</sup> IS3 staff noted that incident data for IS3 lagged one year. As an example, in 2014, IS3 reported survey data from 2013-14 school year and incident data from 2012-13 school year. Because these data lagged one year, IS3 included an additional year of data (2013-14) to reflect the true, final year of the grant. Additional survey data (i.e. student surveys taken in 2015) were not included because 2015 was an optional year to survey, and reporting the data from those schools that participated would be misleading.



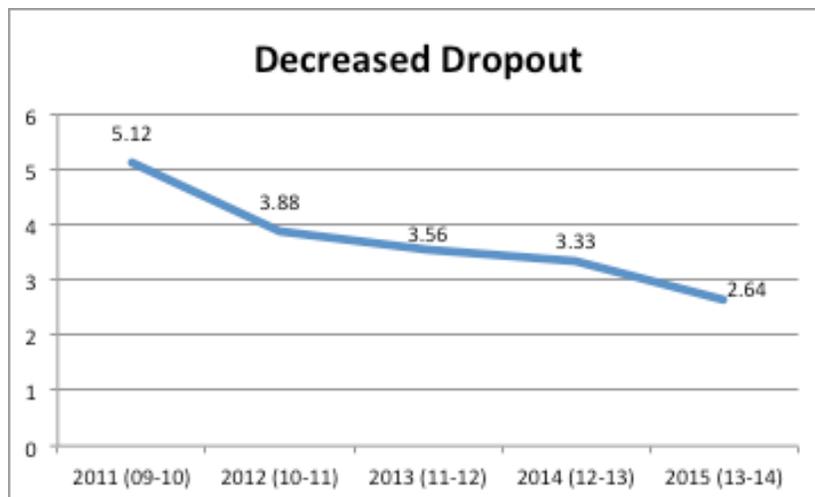
**Figure 3. Change in IS3 attendance rates**

The y-axis reports the average percentage of school attendance. As noted previously, administrative data lagged. The x-axis year labels reflect the year data were reported with the actual year to which the data apply shown in parentheses.



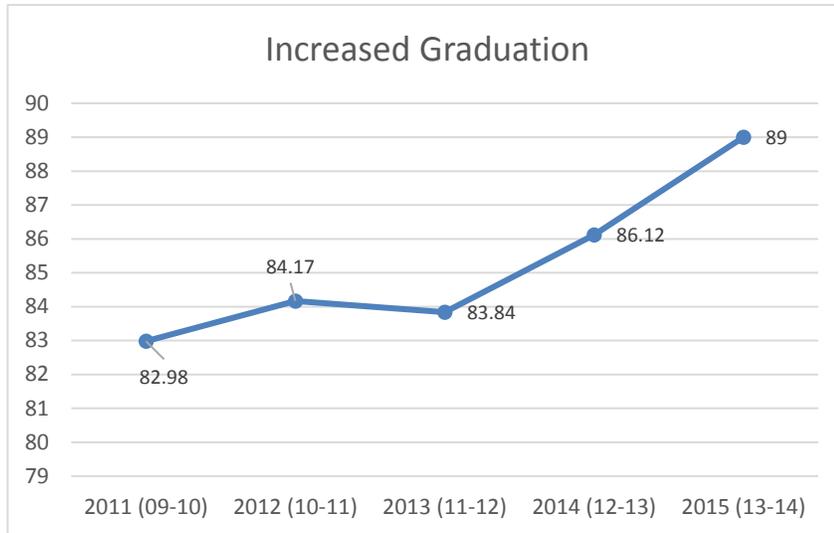
**Figure 4. Change in IS3 dropout rates**

The y-axis reports the average percentage of school dropout. As noted previously, administrative data lagged. The x-axis year labels reflect the year data were reported with the actual year to which the data apply shown in parentheses.



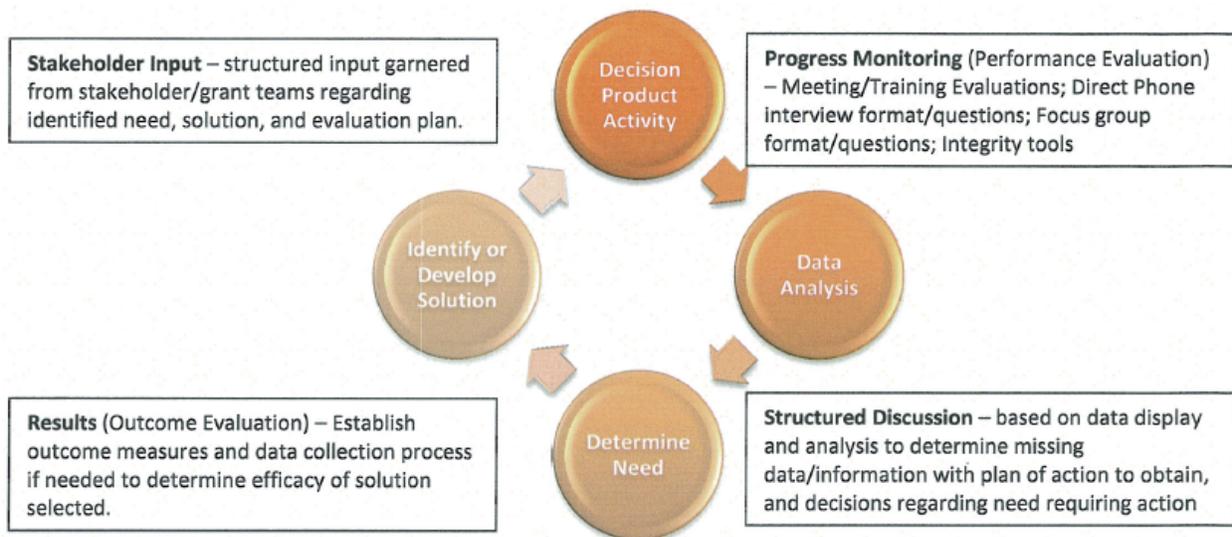
**Figure 5. Change in IS3 graduation rates**

The y-axis reports the average percentage of school graduation. As noted previously, administrative data lagged. The x-axis year labels reflect the year data were reported with the actual year to which the data apply shown in parentheses.



The **process evaluation** utilized an iterative evaluation process (IEP; see Figure 6), designed as a quality control approach to continually refine IS3’s training and technical assistance.

**Figure 6. Iterative evaluation process (IEP)**



IS3 also used an iterative evaluation checklist that reflected key project steps:

1. Evaluation conducted (meeting, training, process, product);
2. Data analyzed and explained;
3. Need determined;
4. Solution identified/selected (i.e., research-based interventions or other strategies);
5. Results (outcome measures) determined; and
6. Stakeholder input obtained.



Regular site visits, online surveys, phone interviews, and staff and student focus groups were conducted with participating schools to monitor progress of the effort.

Several factors, associated with each of the various organizational levels, affected change in outcomes. For each level, these include:

- State education agency (SEA) level
  - Giving area education agency (AEA) coordinators, local education agency (LEA) coordinators, and school administrators opportunities to share thoughts, ideas, and opinions and feel heard and included in decisions;
  - Clearly stating project expectations for all stakeholders including the Iowa Department of Education (Iowa DE), AEA, and LEAs;
  - Offering helpful and informative webinars;
  - Responding effectively to questions and requests for support;
  - Facilitating effective meetings for AEA coordinators, LEA coordinators, and school administrators;
  - Facilitating the AEA coordinators', LEA coordinators', and school administrators' (when appropriate) review of all documents and always making sure the next iteration reflects their suggestions; and
  - Following up with AEA directors to address concerns as they arise.
- AEA level
  - Ensuring that AEA coordinators had a full-time position (e.g., one full-time equivalent [FTE]) and the skills and knowledge to build positive relationships and support schools through the review and analysis of their data and the development of their IS3 implementation plan.
- LEA level
  - Providing high-quality professional development for schools provided by the Iowa DE;
  - Ensuring leadership was in place to help support the effort and hold the staff accountable to the school's beliefs and mission;
  - Providing support through the AEA coordinator or the assigned data consultant;
  - Providing student workshops by the Iowa DE/ISU Extension;
  - Hiring an on-site IS3 coordinator and ensuring that he or she had the support of the school administrator for implementation;
  - Beginning facility improvements or enhancements early in the process to develop momentum;
  - Using data effectively to identify the appropriate needs and develop the plan around this knowledge of needs;
  - Engaging students in planning and implementation and developing Youth Leadership Teams (YLTs);
  - Acknowledging successes; and
  - Networking with other schools to share what they were doing that had been successful and how they had addressed barriers.

Specific staff knowledge, skills, and beliefs necessary to achieve desired outcomes were also identified.



## **Recommended AEA and LEA Coach Knowledge/Skills/Beliefs**

### Knowledge

- Aware of appropriate resources—how they can support the work
- Understand the school improvement process
- Understand foundational tenets of effective cultures<sup>12</sup> and learning supports
- Understand how to review and analyze data effectively
- Presume school staff may not have all the knowledge they need to be successful

### Skills

- Facilitate effective group meetings
- Conduct data analysis
- Teach to various learning styles
- Break down information and help others understand
- Build consensus
- Build positive interpersonal relationships (trust, emotional safety, nonjudgmental)
- Perform as an effective group member (shows up, listens, checks for understanding)
- Move a team from point A to point B

### Beliefs/Dispositions

- Believes culture is important
- Believes culture can change and improve
- Believes in supporting students so they can succeed
- Is ethical
- Perseveres

## **Recommended School Administrator/Leader Knowledge/Skills/Beliefs**

### Knowledge

- Understands that safe, supportive school work does make a difference and why
- Understands what is required/expected of the project
- Understands what data says about the school and how to measure progress
- Understands his or her role as an instructional leader

### Skills

- Facilitation skills or ability to delegate if he or she does not have these skills
- Ability to motivate and inspire staff; skill to “call out” road blocks, guide team
- Ability to advocate to board/community/administration for necessary supports

### Beliefs/Dispositions

- Belief that culture is as important as content areas
- Belief that data are critical to the process
- Belief that one can measure/change school culture
- Belief in the necessity of student voice and parent/community voice
- Supports the AEA and LEA coordinators

### *Reports about analyses:*

- No published reports.

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<sup>12</sup> IS3's use of the term *culture* refers to school/organizational culture, meaning the traditions, habits, and style demonstrated consistently by school leadership and personnel.



## Lessons Learned

As with any pilot program, IS3 experienced its share of implementation challenges and learning opportunities. The following notable issues may be of interest to others:

- The AEA and LEA webinars were consistently seen as useful by the participants but required a considerable amount of preparation to engage the participants effectively and promote discussion. Developing separate webinars for AEAs versus LEAs, using Adobe Connect strategies to facilitate (voting, small groups, etc.), book studies, and sending out questions to participants for reflection two to three days prior to the webinars assisted with promoting discussion.
- Use of the IS3 Web page with all materials readily available for review and access was important during the first two years of the grant. Feedback suggested that this helped with understanding the expectations of the grant and helping AEA coordinators and LEA coordinators feel better organized and supported. As the grant work progressed, this site became less useful to the AEAs and LEAs.
- Having part-time (partial-FTE) coaches proved problematic as their priorities often shifted toward non-IS3 work. This was addressed by holding person-to-person conferences with AEA administrators where AEAs were failing to support one FTE and contracting with five additional State data consultants experienced with working with high schools, using data to inform decisions and school improvement planning. These five consultants were assigned schools needing extra support with reviewing/analyzing their data and developing their IS3 implementation plan based on what their data indicated.
- Including youth voice was a critical component of the IS3 work. Each IS3 high school created a Youth Leadership Team (YLT) that comprised youth that were representative of the entire student body, including nontraditional leaders. YLTs reviewed data, provided feedback on planning to improve data, and helped to implement select strategies.
- IS3 focused heavily on adult-student relationships. In order to achieve changes in school climate, adults had to be willing to make efforts to change their approach to interacting with students. In some situations, this focus was positive because it was something adults could control, and in others, it was negative because not all adults were persuaded of the merits to this approach.
- While physical environment improvements were a “quick win” to begin the grant and increased student and staff buy-in, IS3 limited the percentage of funds that could be used for physical environment improvements to 5 percent after the first year of implementation. The SEA provided recommendations to schools on ways to use funds to intentionally build relationships and promote improvements to overall school climate.
- IS3 implemented Fierce Conversations training to equip individuals with the skills necessary to have difficult conversations in a respectful manner.
- Initially, IS3 schools experienced low survey response rates.
  - One solution was to provide schools with personalized hyperlinks rather than a single, universal link that required entering a building code.
  - School teams also initiated creative strategies to increase survey participation (e.g., texting the link to parents and providing iPads at sporting events). Additionally, student-led teams created survey campaigns and worked with local media.
  - In the last year of the grant, additional funding (5 percent) was offered to schools that met survey response rate goals, which proved very effective and increased participation across all populations.



- IS3 collected high-quality quantitative data; however, tracking process and fidelity related factors was difficult (i.e., exactly what schools were doing, how well they were doing it, and the extent of the impact).
- Upfront communication efforts to publicize receiving the grant, selecting the schools, and doing the work were well received. Partners were involved in communication efforts during the first-year planning phase of the grant, which helped to spread the word and get the schools and public interested in and excited about the work. Communicating the message became more difficult throughout the grant as a result of limited staff time. As the work geared up and responsibilities increased, communication efforts decreased.
- Schools found it difficult to spend their funds as the strategies that were most successful and most often recommended by students cost little or nothing.

## Sustainability and Scaling Up

By the close of the grant, IS3 left the State in a strong position to continue school climate improvement efforts. Specifically:

- The IS3 school climate survey items that informed the IS3 Index were adopted as part of the Iowa Department of Public Health (DPH) survey conducted every other year (in 11th grade only). Because the climate surveys are optional, DPH staff were cautiously optimistic about sustainability, noting that although legislation supports the work, building and sustaining the system would require continued funding.
- At the close of the grant, IS3 was part of an effort to develop a statewide data system to collect survey data from all LEAs across the State. This system is available to Iowa School Climate Transformation Grantees (SCTG) and others to collect school climate data and inform schools of areas needing improvement.
- Iowa's SEA has developed a formal sustainability plan and submitted it to its Iowa Department of Education administration.
- Two additional cohorts of schools were established.
  - A second cohort of 12 high schools working to improve school climate was selected in 2013–14 and began implementing in 2014–15. These schools were selected based on (1) participation in the statewide Iowa Youth Survey, which includes school climate data; and (2) incident data showing need for improvement, including suspension/expulsion, dropout, and graduation rates. During Year 5 of the grant, these schools used the Continuous Improvement Process (CIP) and the IS3 toolkits (see the Product Development and Dissemination section) to create and implement plans to address adult-student relationships and discipline.
  - In the fifth year, a third cohort of schools attended training on the adult-student relationships and/or discipline toolkits. They created improvement plans that could be implemented at their schools.
- A statewide Train the Trainer workshop for the toolkits (see the Product Development and Dissemination section) and CIP was offered. Thirty AEA learning supports consultants and other LEA staff from around the State attended and can now coach schools on how to use the IS3 toolkits to improve conditions for learning.
- IS3 resources, including the toolkits, remain available to all schools at no charge. A Web site is currently being created to allow easy access to these documents for educators around the State.
- Phone interviews were conducted with Cohort 1 school administrators and LEA IS3 coordinators during Year 5 of the grant. Their feedback, summarized in the [External Grant Evaluation Phone Interview](#) report, provided information that was helpful when considering how to sustain the efforts of the grant in the State.



## Contact Information

For more information about Iowa S3, please refer to the information below.

*Grant holder:* Iowa Department of Education

*Web site:* <https://www.educateiowa.gov/>

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S3 Grantee Profiles were prepared for each of the 11 S3 grantees as part of the S3 Descriptive Study (S3DS). The profiles provide detailed information about how each S3 grantee approached and executed their grant, including how intervention schools were selected, key data collection tools and activities, use of programmatic interventions and related supports, products created, findings from their data, lessons learned, and plans for sustainability of their school climate improvement work. The 11 S3 grantee profiles and a cross-grantee executive summary can be accessed here:

<https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/state-grantees/safe-and-supportive-school-s3-grants>.

Grantee profile published on June 4, 2018.



## Appendix A: List of Iowa Participating Districts and Schools

Participating Districts	Participating Schools
1. Armstrong-Ringsted	1. Armstrong-Ringsted Middle School/High School*
2. Burlington	2. Burlington Community High School
3. Columbus	3. Columbus Community High School
4. Council Bluffs	4. Abraham Lincoln High School
5. Davenport	5. Central High School
6. Des Moines Independent	6. East High School
7. Dubuque	7. Dubuque Senior High School
8. East Greene	8. Grand Junction High School*
9. Iowa Valley	9. Iowa Valley Junior-Senior High School
10. Keokuk	10.Keokuk High School
11. Louisa-Muscatine	11.Louisa-Muscatine High School
12. Marcus-Meriden-Cleghorn	12.Marcus-Meriden-Cleghorn Community High School*
13. Oelwein	13.Oelwein High School
14. Olin Consolidated	14.Olin Junior-Senior High School*
15. Ottumwa	15.Ottumwa High School
16. Sioux City	16.West High School 17.North High School
17. Waterloo	18.East High School 19.West High School
18. West Sioux	20.West Sioux High School
19. Winfield-Mt. Union	21.Winfield-Mt. Union Junior-Senior High School

\* This school has closed since the S3 grant concluded.