

Readiness Tool: Botvin LifeSkills® Training (LST) Middle School Program

During program selection, it is important to research and compare possible evidence-based prevention programs to ensure that you are selecting the program that is the best fit for your community and available resources. This tool is intended to help you plan for the implementation of an evidence-based program with a commitment to quality and long-term sustainability.

Program Selection

Is LifeSkills Training Middle School Program a good fit for your community? While researching and comparing possible programs, consider the following information to determine if LST is the best fit for your community.

1. Are these the risk and protective factors identified and/or prioritized by your community?

LST Targeted Risk Factors

- Low Perceived Risks of Drug Use
- Sensation Seeking
- Friends' Delinquent Behavior
- Favorable Attitudes toward Antisocial Behavior
- Early Initiation of Drug Use
- Rebelliousness
- Peer Rewards for Antisocial Behavior
- Favorable Attitudes toward Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use

LST Targeted Protective Factors

- Social Skills
- Interaction with Prosocial Peers

2. Is LST appropriate for the population you plan to target?
 - LST is a universal program that targets middle/junior high school students. Initial intervention begins in grades 6 or 7, depending on the school structure, with booster sessions recommended in the two subsequent years.

3. What are the outcomes you intend to change in your targeted population?

LST has been shown to have the following outcomes:

SHORT-TERM

Increased Knowledge Related to Substance Use

- Knowledge about substance use
- Knowledge of media influences to use tobacco/alcohol/drugs
- Knowledge about normative expectations concerning substance use

Improved Self-Esteem

- Development of positive self-esteem
- Healthy coping and stress management techniques
- Prosocial peer relations

Improved Social Problem Solving

- Ability to use effective problem-solving strategies
- Adoption of healthy communication skills
- Increased peer resistance skills
- Confidence in problem solving
- Healthy decision-making skills

LONG-TERM
Reduced Antisocial Behavior

- Decrease tobacco use
- Decreases alcohol use
- Decreases marijuana use
- Decreases inhalants, narcotics, & hallucinogens
- Decreases poly drug use
- Reduces risky behavior
- Reduces violence

Implementation Planning Steps

4. Is it feasible for you to invest in the following key elements **BEFORE** LifeSkills Training Middle School Program is implemented?
- **Teacher buy-in:** Education for teachers as to what the program is, how it will be implemented, what the expectations are for implementing, and what type of support they will receive. This is extremely important and should occur prior to teacher training days.
 - **Teacher training days:** It is vital to train all teachers who will be implementing, as well as those who will be conducting fidelity observations.
 - **Administrative support:** School administrators should plan for support of the teachers implementing LST. At minimum, administrators should make all staff aware of the curriculum being taught and why it is important, how other teachers can incorporate the concepts in their classrooms, provide additional prep time for LST lessons, and allow all LST implementers to meet and discuss how implementation is going on a regular basis.

Academic Connections/Curriculum Standards: The school/district Curriculum Director should work with the district's principals and teachers to determine when and in which subject area LST will be taught and what the specific plan is for each school. The following link can be helpful for this discussion:

<https://www.lifeskillstraining.com/lst-curriculum-alignment-tools/>

- **Curriculum:** Grade-appropriate materials need to be provided for each teacher/facilitator, including a Teacher's Manual, Smoking and Biofeedback DVD, & Stress Management Techniques CD. A Student Guide workbook for each student is also necessary. Curriculum materials can be purchased at: <https://www.lifeskillstraining.com/order/>
- **Class space:** If LST is planned to be implemented during physical education, there must be available classroom space for lessons. There are many challenges related to implementing LST in a gym setting and it is not recommended by the developer. It is noted that LST should not replace physical education if at all possible.
- **Budget:** A budget for annual expenses beyond the initial training and purchase of materials should be developed and incorporated into the school/district annual budget.
- **Data collection and analysis plan:** Determine the following: When will evaluations (pre- and post-surveys) will be completed by students receiving LST? Who will be responsible for distributing, administering, and collecting the surveys? Who will be responsible for data entry? Who will be responsible for analyzing and reporting the data results?

RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO HELP PLAN FOR LST: <http://www.episcenter.psu.edu/ebp/lifeskills>

Implementation Steps

5. Can these expectations for quality and dosage be met within the existing structure and with the existing resources?
- 1-2-day On-site Training Workshop for certification in LST delivery
 - Appropriate time provided for lesson preparation
 - Lesson time of at least 40 minutes.
 - Lessons taught at least one time per week or in a full block of days until all lessons are completed.
 - **Level 1 (Grade 6/7):** Core Level - 15 class sessions (plus 3 optional violence lessons)
 - **Level 2 (Grade 7/8):** Booster Level - 10 sessions (plus 2 optional violence lessons)
 - **Level 3 (Grade 8/9):** Booster Level - 5 sessions (plus 2 optional violence lessons)
 - Plan to inform parents about LST (kickoff event, school newsletters, open houses, assemblies, concerts, conferences, press releases, etc.)

Steps for Assessing Program Impact

6. Does the school have the capacity to collect outcomes data and to monitor program fidelity?

Data collection:

- Pre-surveys completed by students before lessons are taught.
- Post-surveys completed by students at the end of the program.
- It is recommended that a person other than the classroom teacher administer the LST student survey. This should be taken into consideration when planning the data collection process.

Data entry/analysis and PCCD reporting:

- A person(s) designated to take the completed student surveys and enter them into the LST Spreadsheet for Outcomes Analysis and PCCD Quarterly Reporting Tool.
- A person(s) designated to complete quarterly reporting requirements for PCCD.

Fidelity monitoring:

- A person(s) to complete observations (20% of lessons) and provide feedback on implementation quality using the [LST MS Level 1 Fidelity Checklists](#). This can be done by school administrators, an outside observer, or another teacher who has been trained in LST. **All** observers should have completed LST training. A predetermined process for providing feedback on observations should be developed to provide continuous quality program improvement.
- School principals/administrators should plan for group time to discuss implementation challenges and successes as part of regular monthly staff meetings and/or grade level teacher planning meetings.

Steps for Sustainability

7. Can funds/resources be identified to sustain key implementation elements of the program beyond the initial seed funding? Make sure to carefully consider and designate those responsible for sustainability planning and securing funds/resources.
- Will LST program supply costs be built into the school/district annual budget?
 - Will there be funds to provide annual training to LST teachers?
 - Will there be funds to provide training for new teachers?
 - Will there be capacity to purchase/print evaluation tools and analyze outcomes data?

- Will there be capacity to continue to support staff time to conduct observations and monitor implementation quality?

Addressing Challenges during Implementation

8. By carefully pre-planning a LifeSkills Training implementation, you will be addressing most of the common barriers encountered, however, it is still important to develop a plan for addressing day-to-day challenges before starting LST.
 - Who will be the main point of contact in each school when a teacher has question related to LST?
 - Who will be the contact person with the LST trainer to relay questions and answers to teachers and staff?
 - How will school administrators and/or coaches address teachers who are struggling with implementation? What resources will be made available to these teachers?

Additional assistance and resources for implementing the LifeSkills® Training Middle School Program can be obtained by contacting the EPISCenter at 814-863-2568 or by visiting <http://www.episcenter.psu.edu/ebp/lifeskills> .

