

INTRODUCTION

- A university-school district partnership implemented and evaluated the MindUP™ program within a trauma-informed framework.
- This study provides a case example to identify key implementation strategies and how these factors promoted successful implementation of the MindUP™ program in a southern Ontario school district.
- Attention to factors and processes associated with high quality implementation can promote more successful implementation, program effectiveness and ultimately sustainability of such initiatives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Mindfulness-informed social and emotional learning programs are experiencing a surge in popularity. There is a growing body of evidence that these programs provide benefits for students and educators (Crooks et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2020).
- MindUP™ is a classroom based program teaching SEL skills to children through mindful awareness, cognitive neuroscience, and positive psychology (Maloney et al., 2016).
- Implementation quality of evidence-based programs in schools is variable, likely resulting in mixed results in real-world implementations (Domitrovich et al., 2008).
- The Quality Implementation Framework (QIF) provides a structure for considering four important phases in the implementation cycle (Meyers et al., 2012).
- The Quality Implementation Framework (Meyers et al., 2012) synthesizes important implementation factors into four phases (see figure).

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Participants and data collection: 94 educators participated in one of seventeen focus groups or answered focus group questions by email (between 2017 and 2019) 7 social workers participated in a focus group 2 district administrators participated in interviews

Data analysis Qualitative analysis was conducted using a deductive approach to create a codebook based on the QIF phases. Sources were collated and coded using Dedoose Version 7.5.16 web application.

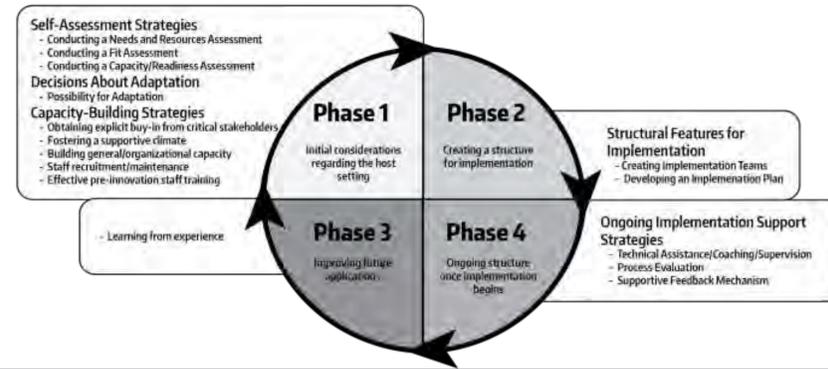
Document Analysis: The following documents were analyzed to supplement focus groups and interviews:

- Initial project plan
- Partnership agreement
- Meeting minutes
- Alignment document (outlining match between MindUP™ and curriculum expectations, the board improvement plan, and the mental health strategy)
- Annual project reports for stakeholders
- Annual reports to funder highlighting successes and challenges

RESEARCH QUESTION

What strategies at each stage of implementation align with the QIF?

Quality Implementation Framework



RESULTS

Strategies aligned with the QIF

1 Initial Considerations Regarding the Host Setting

Self-assessment Strategies

- District administrators identified need for social emotional learning program and trauma-informed training as part of Mental Health Strategy.
- Researchers prepared extensive fit document showing alignment between program and: provincial curriculum expectations, District Mental Health Strategy, and Board Improvement Plan goals.
- District administrators considered the capacity and interest of the school principals before engaging school to participate.

Decisions about Adaptation

- Identifying potential challenges and modifications to fit the Catholic school board context.

Capacity Building

- Extended period of pre-implementation work to develop buy-in.
- Specific focus on stakeholders who might have specific concerns (e.g. religious curriculum coordinator, positive behaviour supports team).
- Training social workers, school principals, other support staff, and board administrators, rather than just implementation educators.
- High quality training in both TIC and MindUP pre-implementation and refresher training throughout.

2 Creating a Structure for Implementation

Implementation structures

- Teachers and Early Childhood Educators (ECE) trained to implement.
- Training multiple educators within schools.
- Community of practice
- Clear implementation plan for school board
- Principals' Breakfast
- Partnership agreement for Steering Committee clearly defining roles and responsibilities.

Sample quotes discussing the QIF-aligned implementation strategies

Phase 1: Initial Considerations Regarding the Host Setting

Almost one year of pre-implementation project work associated with moving beyond isolated classrooms toward a board-wide method of practice:

Investment in the beginning, looking at the alignments and articulating them, sharing the plan with decision-maker level stakeholders to ensure that broad support is there, makes all the difference in the world. We need this to be not just an off-shoot (a nice little program somebody is doing in some classes) but something that becomes how we practice. (District administrator, Interview).

3

Ongoing Structure Once Implementation Begins

4

Improving Future Applications

- Ongoing Implementation Support Strategies**
- Social worker co-implementation or support where indicated
 - Booster training and CoP meetings
 - MindUP resource online sharing site
 - Summer writing team to develop extension activities and parent materials.
 - Ongoing process evaluation throughout.
 - Focus on collecting both process and outcome data.
 - Multiple opportunities for input (e.g. focus groups, feedback surveys, feedback to social workers, researchers, and school board administrators).

- Improving future applications**
- Building mutual trust and reciprocity in research partnership.
 - Data collection with multiple stakeholders
 - Rapid knowledge mobilization to share pilot findings with stakeholders in attractive, plain language formats to maintain high levels of engagement
 - Sharing lessons learned and tips from experienced implementors with new implementors during focus groups, in trainings and booster sessions.
 - Development of videos to share project lessons learned and program strategies.
 - Efforts to listen, reflect, and incorporate feedback into future support strategies and sustainability efforts for school board.
 - Train-the-trainer process

Phase 2: Implementation Structures

Comments on the benefits of school implementation teams and wide network of trained educators:

Tap into somebody within our board who's already done it and ask them because people already have resources and everyone I know is willing to share...access all of the resources that are out there (Educator, Focus Group).

Phase 3: Ongoing Support

SEL support staff were trained in MindUP™, infused and encouraged the program use even throughout the challenges with online learning:

In April, we had [SEL support staff name] come for three sessions and so I decided when she was done that I would pick up where I had left off with MindUP... So, I feel like that was a success because I was able to move that online remotely. (Educator, focus group)

Phase 4: Improving Future Applications

A district administrator referenced the role of our research findings and knowledge mobilization in maintaining engagement with senior decision-makers:

I think the ability of you and your team to pull together updates and reports have been immeasurably helpful for me here; I can give early findings reports to our senior team and show that we're doing this in an evidence-informed way. I think that's very powerful (District project administrator, interview).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- Support strategies aligned with all four phases of the QIF, likely contributing to the ongoing success and growth of the implementation of MindUP™ within the district.
- Spending 10 months on partnership building and initial considerations regarding the host setting (Phase 1) provided a strong foundation for the whole project
- Initial implementation success was enhanced with clear support structures and plans that were communicated to all stakeholders (Phase 2)
- The opportunity for educators to engage in booster training and participate in an ongoing Community of Practice enhanced engagement and fidelity as implementation continued in years 2 and 3 (Phase 3)
- Collecting process and outcome data from multiple stakeholders from outset created a mechanism for data-informed decision-making and continuous quality improvement (Phase 4)

REFERENCES

Crooks, C. V., Bax, K., Delaney, A., Kim, H., & Shokoohi, M. (2020). Impact of MindUP among young children: Improvements in behavioral problems, adaptive skills, and executive functioning. *Mindfulness*, 11(2020), 2433-2444.

Domitrovich, C. E., Bradshaw, C. P., Poduska, J. M., Hoagwood, K., Buckley, J. A., Olin, S., ... Itlington, N. S. (2008). Maximizing the implementation quality of evidence-based preventive interventions in schools: A conceptual framework. *Advances in School Mental Health Promotion*, 1(3), 6-28.

Kim, S., Crooks, C. V., Bax, K., & Shokoohi, M. (2020). Impact of trauma-informed training and mindfulness-based social-emotional learning program on teacher attitudes and burnout: A mixed-methods study. *School Mental Health*, 13, 55-68.

Maloney, J. E., Lawlor, M. S., Schonert-Reichl, K. A., & Whitehead, J. (2016). A mindfulness-based social and emotional learning curriculum for school-aged children: The MindUP program. In K. A. Schonert-Reichl, R. W. Roeser (Eds.), *Handbook of mindfulness in education: Mindfulness in behavioral health*. Springer.

Meyers, D. C., Durlak, J. A., & Wandersman, A. (2012). The quality implementation framework: a synthesis of critical steps in the implementation process. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 50(3-4), 462-480.