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Teacher Readiness to Implement Universal Social Emotional Instruction in a Rural 7-12 Grade School

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**Teacher Readiness to Implement Universal Social Emotional Instruction
in a Rural 7-12 Grade School**

A Project Presented to
The Graduate Faculty of
Minnesota State University Moorhead

By
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In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in
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Abstract

Universal social-emotional learning is shown by research to have positive impacts on academic, social and economic outcomes for students. High quality implementation of universal social and emotional learning is a key factor for seeing these gains. When a universal social emotional curriculum is introduced, several factors need to be addressed at initial implementation for future curriculum to be delivered with fidelity. This paper describes the factors of initial implementation shown by the literature to ensure the highest quality of further curriculum delivery, including establishing a need, listening to teacher voices, addressing concerns, ensuring a good fit with the current school culture, adequate training, and peer and administrative support. Furthermore, this paper describes the outcomes of whether teacher readiness to implement a new universal social emotional curriculum with fidelity improves when such factors are accounted for. If pre-implementation quality is high, literature suggests curriculum implementation is likewise improved.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Introduction

Reform efforts in K-12 schools aimed at improving academic, social and economic outcomes are continuous in the United States and globally (Durlak et al., 2015; Freeman et al., 2014). One important facet is social-emotional learning (SEL), and it has taken a front seat for improving student outcomes for a lifetime. Studies such as the meta-analysis performed by Durlak et al. (2011) demonstrate that when performed with high-quality, universal SEL instruction improves academic outcomes at a rate equal to an 11 percent gain in achievement. The same study determined that negative outcomes were reduced by half. These are powerful indicators that an important part of educational reform must include universal social and emotional skills instruction. Reform efforts in the area of SEL instruction are currently underway within the rural secondary school of the researcher. The research conducted here aimed to identify and utilize best-practices for initial implementation of SEL instruction in order to optimize teacher readiness to implement new curriculum with fidelity.

Brief Literature Review

Social-emotional skills are defined in the United States by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning within the five domains of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making (CASEL, 2020). Universal instruction, regardless of subject, is provided to all students in a school. Universal instruction in social-emotional skills within the five defined domains is shown to have positive impacts on students by vast numbers of studies (Durlak et al., 2011; Durlak et al., 2015; Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Evans et al., 2015; Taylor et al., 2017). Gains include academic performance, individual social emotional skills, prosocial behaviors, and attitudes toward themselves and others, as well as reductions in conduct problems and emotional distress (Durlak et al., 2011). Furthermore, these gains are seen across demographics (Durlak et al., 2011) and into the future as increased income and reduced emotional problems such as depression (Taylor et al., 2017).

Because of this, universal SEL instruction is an important reform effort for American schools. However, the literature also recognizes that high-quality implementation is a key piece of the puzzle. Durlak and DuPre (2008) found schools that met key quality indicators, described later in chapter two, and delivered by school personnel, as opposed to outside providers, provided gains double those of control or poorly implemented SEL instruction. Understanding the key features of high-quality implementation is still a work in progress. What has been determined thus far is that fidelity of program delivery, dosage, engagement and adaptation are high-impact factors (Durlak et al., 2011). In addition, effectively managing teacher resistance has a major impact on those factors (Eichert, 2019). Taking these multivariate components into account was important for solving the problem faced by the researcher: implementing high-quality universal social-emotional learning curriculum in the secondary setting.

Statement of the Problem

At the 7-12 secondary school where the research took place, 2020 MCA data showed that between 52-73 percent of 7-11 grade cohorts did not meet expectations (Minnesota Department of Education, 2021). Because of ongoing lack of progress in student achievement, the school received sanctions from the Department of Civil Rights in 2018. In response to these sanctions, the school has a responsibility to provide universal SEL instruction as part of the enactment of its Achievement and Integration Plan (A&I). At the time the research was conducted, the approach to universal SEL instruction at the research school had been fragmented, and would continue to be, if left unchanged. The universal SEL curriculum in place was highly ineffective. It was seen by students and teachers alike as to be immature and not engaging, and many activities made people uncomfortable. Due to this, fidelity and quality of implementation was very low. Despite meeting the requirements of the A&I Plan, it did not actually move the needle on social and emotional skills of the student body. To truly make a difference in social and emotional skills among students, and therefore, academic, social and economic outcomes, the school needed a curriculum that students can engage with, and simultaneously, that teachers see being both effective and usable within current systems. If high quality implementation is addressed properly,

progress can be made. While the scope of the current study will not address all issues related to high quality implementation, it is an important step, in tandem with other steps currently underway in the researcher's school. The goal is long-term; this study is one short-term benchmark along the way.

Purpose of the Study

The goal of this study was to determine key practices in high-quality implementation of universal SEL curriculum, then incorporate those practices in the decision-making process for the future SEL curriculum to be used at the research school. Implementing SEL curriculum with fidelity has been shown in the literature as a key feature of instruction that achieves the desired outcomes for students. In the beginning stages of curriculum implementation there are several factors that must be addressed to ensure the greatest likelihood of future success. These factors include establishing a need, listening to teacher voices, addressing concerns, ensuring a good fit with the current school culture, adequate training, and peer and administrative support (Dulak and DuPre, 2008). The research performed here attempted to address these factors. If teachers can have these needs met, research suggests this will increase teachers' readiness to implement curriculum with fidelity.

Research Question

When best-practice is used in beginning implementation, how does that affect teacher readiness to implement a new universal social-emotional learning curriculum at the current 7-12 grade secondary school?

Definition of Variables.

Independent Variable: The researcher conducted professional development sessions with her colleagues to demonstrate data regarding current social and emotional skills of the student body, current attitudes of teachers regarding universal social emotional social skills instruction, exhibit potential universal social emotional learning curricula, and facilitate feedback on the curricular options.

Dependent Variable: The researcher interviewed research participants after collaborating with all staff to choose a curriculum, in order to gauge any change in readiness to implement the curriculum with

fidelity. Teachers answered open-ended questions to gain a deeper understanding of perspectives. Themes in teacher responses demonstrated improved satisfaction and readiness.

Significance of the Study

Because research is strong showing the connection between universal SEL curriculum and student achievement improvements, the school chose universal SEL instruction as a goal and priority for meeting their Achievement and Integration Plan. Prior to the research conducted here, universal SEL instruction at the secondary level was performed with low fidelity and poor dosage. This means the district has not seen the gains sought by the Minnesota Department of Education, the Department of Human Rights, or the district itself. Implementing a high-quality universal SEL curriculum with fidelity is critical to these efforts (Durlak & Dupre, 2008; Durlak et al., 2011). In order to do so, the researcher chose to focus on this area with her action research in order to bring about positive changes in academic and social outcomes for all students in the school. If successful, future SEL instruction will be better implemented and gains across the student body should be seen.

Research Ethics

Permission and IRB Approval

In order to conduct this study, the researcher sought MSUM's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to ensure the ethical conduct of research involving human subjects (Mills & Gay, 2019). Likewise, authorization to conduct this study was sought from the school district where the research project took place (See Appendices A and B).

Informed Consent

Protection of human subjects participating in research was assured. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study via the Method of Assent (See Appendix C) that the researcher read to participants before the beginning of the study. Participants were aware that this study was conducted as part of the researcher's Master's Degree Program and that it sought to improve universal social-emotional

learning instruction for all students in the school. Informed consent means that participants have been fully informed of the purpose and procedures of the study for which consent is sought and that they understand and agree to participating in the study (Rothstein & Johnson, 2014). Confidentiality was protected using pseudonyms (e.g., Teacher 1) without the utilization of any identifying information. The choice to participate or withdraw at any time was outlined both verbally and in writing.

Limitations

Limitations for this research within the specific secondary school hosting the research included finding a variety of participants who self-report different degrees of readiness for implementing universal SEL curriculum, finding curricula that had no prep time for teachers and fit within budget constraints, and finding curricula that was a good fit within the school culture and allowed teachers to perceive self-efficacy. Limitations for this research in general, as described by Durlak and DuPre (2008), included lack of full understanding of the most impactful active ingredients in universal SEL programs, having assessment tools for determining students' social and emotional skills that are affordable, reliable, and valid, and a lack of full understanding of how teacher variability impacts student outcomes.

Conclusions

Social-emotional learning has been shown in research to improve a variety of outcomes for students, including academic, social and economic factors that last far beyond the school years. In the district where the research took place, outside demands from the Minnesota Department of Education and the Department of Human Rights, as well as intrinsic desires to do the most for students created a sense of urgency to find universal social-emotional learning curriculum that could be implemented with fidelity. The first step in the process of beginning implementation must consider evidence-based practices. The research study conducted here attempted to reach this goal in order to increase teacher readiness to implement a new universal social-emotional learning curriculum with fidelity.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if using best-practices for implementation of a new universal social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum improved teacher readiness to implement the chosen curriculum with fidelity. This was important because the SEL curriculum being implemented at the research school had been highly unsuccessful, to the point where teachers had developed negative attitudes to SEL curriculum in general and student outcomes were not improving. Social-emotional skills, and the curriculum to grow these skills, includes the facets of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making (CASEL, 2020). Quality implementation of SEL curriculum is the key to sustainability and improved outcomes for students (Domitrovitch et al., 2008; Wanless et al., 2015). Quality implementation includes important teacher and school community behaviors such as fidelity with implementation, sufficient dosage of lessons, adaptation to the curriculum, and support from administration. The contract on the curriculum being implemented for the school in this study was scheduled to end at the conclusion of the school year in which this study was conducted. The information gathered in this study helped the researcher, the Curriculum Director and the Social Emotional Learning Team advise the Principal and Professional Development Committee on a curriculum that was more likely to be implemented with fidelity due to increased teacher readiness to implement the chosen SEL curriculum.

Social Emotional Learning

Student success is empirically shown to be positively impacted by social and emotional learning. The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning has developed a framework of core competencies that are widely accepted as the key domains of social and emotional learning and behavior. These are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making (CASEL, 2020). Studies and meta-analyses are demonstrating significant impacts in outcomes for

students who have received universal instruction in social and emotional skills. Durlak et al. (2011) performed a meta-analysis of 213 school based, universal SEL programs involving 270,034 kindergarten through high school students. They concluded that, compared to controls, when school staff successfully conducted the program, students showed impressive positive effects in academic performance, social emotional skills, prosocial behaviors, and attitudes toward themselves and others, as well as reductions in conduct problems and emotional distress. Effect sizes ranged between 0.22 and 0.57 depending on the outcome being measured, including an eleven-percentile point gain in academic achievement. This meta-analysis also determined that gains are achieved regardless of age, geographical location, racial or ethnic background, and socioeconomic status.

Positive outcomes extend long term. In a meta-analysis of follow-up effects of universal SEL programming, Taylor et al. (2017) determined participants showed significantly better outcomes on many indicators of well-being, again regardless of race, socioeconomic status or school location. The follow-up periods ranged from 56-195 weeks and effect sizes ranged from 0.13 to 0.33 by outcome, with academic achievement rated highest. Other outcome categories measured included relationships, school status, sexuality, income/employment, criminality and mental health. Effect sizes were negative or zero on four measures and positive on 23 measures ranging from 0.02 to 0.76. This is a broad set of effects, yet evidence is clear that SEL predicts healthier outcomes for individuals into adulthood.

There is evidence of financial benefits to society as well. Through a benefit-cost analysis of four popular SEL programs, Belfield et al. (2015) demonstrated that the positive return on investment can be as high as eleven dollars for every dollar spent. Finally, a study by Evans et al. (2015) suggests that targeted interventions for specific groups of students can have unintended negative consequences, including negative self-image and alienation from peers caused by being enrolled in the program, as well as increased anti-social behavior caused by negative peer influences among members of the intervention group, lending additional strength to the value of SEL instruction at the tier one level. The evidence is

mounting that high-quality universal SEL instruction is an important reform effort for American schools, public health, and economic growth.

Quality Social Emotional Learning Programs

Meta-analyses of SEL program implementation have revealed the importance of quality in implementation to provide the outcomes described above. “We should not think of SEL programs as being effective; it is well-implemented SEL programs that are effective” (Durlak et al., 2015, p. 12). Durlak and DuPre (2008) performed a significant meta-analysis of over 500 quantitative studies to determine the impact of implementation on program outcomes. They found that positive effects are only found under conditions of high-quality implementation, and that the converse is also true. In another meta-analysis, Durlak et al. (2011) coded for four indicators of fidelity in implementing SEL instruction: sequenced approach, active learning, focused skill development, and explicit learning goals (SAFE). The providers in the study who met the indicators well showed students had double the gains in academic performance, social emotional skills, prosocial behaviors, and attitudes toward themselves and others, compared to students whose providers did not meet the criteria. Furthermore, students showing conduct problems and emotional distress were half those of students in schools with poorly implemented SEL.

Features of Quality Program Implementation

The question of what key features are required for high-quality SEL program implementation is still being explored. Programming elements to this point have been based off theory and logic models, which focus on the features of the environmental context and the competencies that are targeted for skill building (Durlak et al., 2015). In their meta-analysis, Durlak and DuPre (2008) identified that implementation is multidimensional, including eight components that can be measured to indicate quality: fidelity, dosage, quality of program component delivery, participant responsiveness (also known as engagement), differentiation between components in various programs, monitoring against a comparison group, program reach, and adaptation of program content. Furthermore, they determined there are 23

ecological factors that influence quality of implementation. These factors have been organized into five categories: community-level factors, characteristics of staff delivering the program, features of the program offered, features of the host school and its operating systems, and features of professional development services. Within these categories, factors that are malleable at the school level include some characteristics of staff, features of the program offered, and some features of the school and its systems. Characteristics of staff that can be directly impacted during implementation are generating a perceived need and the benefits to be gained, ensuring staff self-efficacy for implementation, and staff mastery of the new skills. At the level of program features it is also important to ensure it is compatible with the current setting and flexible enough for teacher differentiation. Finally, features of the school which can be influenced and are important for quality implementation include fitting the program with usual school practices, having a shared vision and commitment, sharing decision making and collaboration among stakeholders, using effective communication throughout, having a trusted colleague who is a champion of the program and ensuring administrative support. This is the framework through which the researcher viewed school level implementation.

Fidelity, dosage and engagement with implementation, and the ecological factors that impact them, are frequently explored in literature specific to teacher satisfaction. Teachers demonstrating a positive attitude to the program, who see a need for the program, can see that it fits within the context of the school vision, and feel self-efficacy in delivering the program components will show the greatest indications of high-quality implementation (Domitrovich et al., 2016, 2019; Eichert et al., 2019; Freeman et al., 2014; Martinez, 2016). In addition, programs provided by school personnel were most likely to be high quality, as compared to outside providers using the school setting (Durlak et al., 2011). Key feedback was obtained from teachers reporting high quality implementation. It demonstrated having a voice in the programming choices, administrative support, peer and school connectedness, and coaching were the elements most related to their success (Domitrovich et al., 2016, 2019; Eichert et al., 2019; Freeman et al., 2014; Malloy et al., 2015; Martinez, 2016; Wanless & Domitrovich, 2015). Coaching,

especially coaching that includes reflection, seems to be important because of their effects of reducing stress, improving sense of connection, and gaining self-efficacy (Domitrovich et al., 2016; Martinez, 2016). Even teachers who report low levels of readiness before initiating SEL programming can see the effect of these positive factors. Those who completed the year with high implementation quality reported administrative support, peer connectedness and voice in the process as being vital to helping them overcome the challenges they started with (Bliss & Wanless, 2018). Consultative support from the program creator, such as pre-implementation training and ongoing training during the initial implementation period, is also shown to be a key driver for high implementation quality (Durlak et al., 2015; Freeman et al., 2014). Push-back during implementation of an SEL program is also a factor. Effective responses to push-back include education on the reasons why SEL programming is important, as well as relationship building in order to hear the opposing voices and encourage the supportive voices to speak publicly (Eichert et al., 2019). Motivational interviewing is another method that could be used through coaching and administrative support to allow voices to be heard and evoke change talk (Pas & Bradshaw, 2021). There will never be 100% high quality implementation, rarely even 80%; however, Durlak and DuPre (2008) concluded that 60% fidelity is enough to demonstrate positive effect sizes. It is suggested that other teacher or classroom factors including burnout, classroom management, or other classroom characteristics such as student functioning are likely to contribute to this variation (Domitrovich et al, 2019).

Additional research is needed in key areas for quality implementation. First, the active ingredients in SEL programs need to be studied independently to determine which ones are having the most impact, at what dosage, and after what duration (Domitrovich et al., 2017; Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Durlak et al., 2015). Second, assessment tools for determining students' social and emotional skills are currently difficult and expensive to implement (McKown, 2017; Durlak, 2015). Schools need assessments that can be administered by school staff which are affordable, reliable, and valid. Finally, teacher variability needs to be explored further. While 60% implementation integrity is enough to show positive effect sizes, if the

effects of variability are better determined, integrity can be improved (Domitrovich et al., 2017; Dulak & DuPre, 2008).

Theoretical Framework

Phenomenology is both a philosophy and a research method (Tuohy et al., 2013). Phenomenology looks to explain a phenomenon through the lens of individual experiences. A phenomenological paradigm was chosen because the researcher wanted to understand how collectively choosing a SEL curriculum would affect the readiness of the school's teachers to provide future implementation with fidelity. In order to do so, the researcher needed to discuss their colleagues' thoughts and feelings directly with them and interpret those results. In addition, the researcher was directly affected by this process because they will also implement the new curriculum. Tuohy et al. (2013) described the "core concepts of dasein, pre-understanding, world view existential themes and the hermeneutic circle" (p. 17) and roles of bracketing and ongoing reflection in phenomenological research. Dasein is the concept that we are all humans, interacting with our environment and gaining meaning from those interactions. Pre-understanding is a label to describe the life experiences up to the moment in time the study begins and how those experiences shape the perspectives of those involved in the research. World view existential themes listed by Tuohy et al., (2013) describe four perspectives to consider when identifying pre-understanding: lived space, lived time, lived body and lived human relation. Finally, the hermeneutic circle describes the transactional nature between the researcher and the participants whereby they determine the meaning of the research together. Clearly, these four core concepts of phenomenology affect both the researcher and the participants equally. Bracketing occurs at the outset of a phenomenological study, whereby the researcher determines their personal perspectives and attempts to set them aside in order to gain objectivity. Ongoing self-reflection by the researcher supports ongoing bracketing to prevent bias as much as possible. Concepts such as satisfaction and readiness are internal states of mind within each individual and change over time and through experiences. They are influenced by the environment and other individuals within that environment. In order to evaluate these states of mind and potential changes over

time, phenomenology allowed the researcher to interpret the study results to determine the success of improving teacher readiness to implement SEL curriculum with fidelity.

Research Question

When best-practice is used in beginning implementation, how does that affect teacher readiness to implement a new universal social-emotional learning curriculum at the current 7-12 grade secondary school?

Conclusions

Social emotional learning is empirically shown to improve student outcomes in a variety of measures, including academic performance, behavioral challenges, and long-term life outcomes. Key to gaining positive effects is programming with high-quality implementation. In order to gain high-quality implementation, research suggests several important factors to address during pre-implementation. First, helping staff recognize a need will create a positive attitude and motivation for fidelity. Second, ensuring staff self-efficacy for implementation sets the stage for success, which can be accomplished later through training and coaching. Third, teacher/practitioner voice in the process promotes self-efficacy and continued positive attitudes. Finally, ongoing administrative and peer support ensure ongoing implementation quality remains high. The goal of this action research was to facilitate implementation of these factors alongside the Curriculum Director, in order to improve readiness to implement a new universal SEL curriculum in the school.

Chapter 3

Methods

Introduction

In the field of education, high-quality universal social-emotional learning (SEL) experiences have been shown to improve student outcomes for a lifetime. Studies such as the meta-analysis performed by Durlak et al. (2011) demonstrate that, when performed with high-quality, universal SEL instruction improves academic outcomes at a rate equal to an 11 percent gain in achievement. The same study determined that negative outcomes were reduced by half. However, it is also clear that poor quality SEL instruction has minimal impact. The researcher had been a social-emotional skills teacher for more than five years at the time this research began. She had seen the impacts of quality SEL instruction at the individual, special education level. The researcher had a strong belief that SEL instruction is important at all levels and is supported by literature. Having high-quality universal SEL instruction will improve student outcomes both individually, including academic achievement, increased social-emotional wellbeing and reduced negative social outcomes, as well as improvements across the community in the long term (Durlak et al., 2011; Durlak et al., 2015; Durlak & Dupre, 2008; Evans et al., 2015; Taylor et al., 2017). It is paramount, then, that instruction is implemented with best practices in mind. Beginning with pre-implementation, such practices must be addressed.

Research Question

When best-practice is used in beginning implementation, how does that affect teacher readiness to implement a new universal SEL curriculum at the current 7-12 grade secondary school?

Research Design

A phenomenological research design was chosen for this problem, with a pragmatist approach. The researcher was both a participant in universal SEL instruction and invested in high-quality results for the school. Phenomenological research allowed the researcher to gain a variety of perspectives regarding

implementation readiness. Each participant in the study had their own ideas about the reality of our school culture, the need for universal SEL instruction, what constitutes a curriculum that students will participate in, and their readiness to implement any universal SEL curriculum. Effective curriculum must be determined by the group at large; phenomenology sought to balance existing pre-understanding and worldview perspectives to find a curriculum that improved teacher readiness to implement with fidelity. Using open-ended questions, the researcher was able to gauge the success of collaborative curricular decision making on teacher readiness to implement new universal SEL curriculum with fidelity. All possible research subjects had been previously surveyed, and they all valued social-emotional skills. Utilizing the best-practices of beginning implementation to effect teacher readiness allowed for the school under study to be ready for future implementation that occurs with fidelity, and in turn, improves student outcomes.

Setting

The setting for this study was a 7-12 grade secondary school in the rural upper-Midwest. The population of the town and surrounding community served by the school was about 2500 people. The secondary school had approximately 480 students enrolled. 77% were Caucasian; 21% were Native American; the remaining 2% made up all other ethnic backgrounds; 51% were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (Minnesota Department of Education, 2021). The economy was primarily agriculture, health care and small business. The Minnesota Student Survey is conducted every three years by the Minnesota Department of Education with students in fifth, eighth, ninth and eleventh grades. It gathers information on student perceptions in the categories of activities, demographics, family and relationships, health, mental health, risk factors, school, substance use, and sexual health. Under the mental health category, several sub-categories were used to identify present levels of student perception in the social-emotional categories defined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making (CASEL, 2020). At the time of the research, the most recent survey was conducted in

2019. Students in fifth grade at that time were in eighth grade at the time of this research. Of that cohort, students reported being able to “somewhat/sometimes,” or “rarely/never” demonstrate the social-emotional skills that are defined as necessary for success by CASEL (Minnesota Department of Education, 2021).

Participants

Participants in this study were teachers in the 7-12 grade secondary school. There were 38 teachers; 71% of teachers were female, 29% male. Years of teaching ranged from one to twenty-four. 86% of participants had been teaching in the research school from less than one year to all their careers. On a survey conducted by the school earlier that year, participants had self-disclosed their attitudes regarding universal SEL instruction. The survey was designed by the school this research was performed in and was used to inform instrumentation for the researcher. When asked if improving social and emotional skills improves academic achievement, 43% strongly agreed, 38% agreed, and 19% were undecided. Teacher attitudes about and readiness for implementation of universal SEL curriculum are shown to impact quality of instruction (Durlak and DuPre, 2008; Durlak et al., 2011; Durlak et al., 2015). Understanding the baseline of teacher attitudes in the researcher’s school impacted the current action research.

Sampling

Four teachers were selected based on four categories. Category one: a young teacher, with five or fewer years of teaching at the current school, who was undecided whether universal SEL curriculum improves academic outcomes. Category two: an experienced teacher, with ten or more years teaching at the current school, who was undecided whether universal SEL curriculum improves academic outcomes. Category three: young teacher, with five or fewer years of teaching at the current school, who agreed that universal SEL curriculum improves academic outcomes. Category four: an experienced teacher, with ten or more years of teaching at the current school, who agreed that universal SEL curriculum improves

academic outcomes. This was both a purposive and criterion-based sample. The selection was purposive because the sample must be from the same school as the researcher. Furthermore, the selection was criterion-based because the researcher required a variety of perspectives to determine the scope of readiness of the teaching staff at large.

Instrumentation

The instrument used to collect data from participants in this study was an interview designed specifically for this setting and participant attitudes regarding universal SEL curriculum and instruction. The questions, as referenced in Appendix C, attempted to uncover teacher readiness to implement universal SEL curriculum after participating in the selection of a school-wide curriculum. The purpose of interviews in phenomenological research is to get an in-depth understanding of perceptions and to determine themes about lived experiences (Tuohy et al., 2013). Validity in phenomenological research can be addressed in several ways, including the use of bracketing and member checks (Yuksel & Yildirim, 2015). The researcher undertook bracketing by examining her personal judgements and making conscious efforts to avoid prejudgments during all interviews. The researcher used member checks by asking each participant to review the transcript of their interview to ensure accuracy. Furthermore, the researcher used the same script of interview questions for all participants.

Data Collection

Participants were surveyed using open-ended questions according to the script (Appendix C) in order to gain context on the pre-understandings and world views they held, and any changes that occurred after presentation of the dependent variable. Surveys took between 15 and 25 minutes. Audio recordings were taken to ensure accuracy of recorded responses and for the researcher to transcribe the interviews verbatim.

Data Analysis

Data for this phenomenological research was transcribed from the recordings of participant interviews, then analyzed to find trends and patterns in teacher attitudes before and after professional collaboration to choose the new universal SEL curriculum for the school. The researcher looked for common themes in teachers’ attitudes.

Research Question and System Alignment

When best-practice is used in beginning implementation, how does that affect teacher readiness to implement a universal SEL curriculum with fidelity at the current 7-12 grade secondary school?

Table 3.1.
Research Question Alignment

Research Question	Variables	Design	Instrument	Validity & Reliability	Technique	Source
When best-practice is used in beginning implementation, how does that affect teacher readiness to implement a new universal SEL curriculum at the current 7-12 grade secondary school?	DV: Teacher readiness to implement IV: Presenting possible curricula to all staff, gain feedback, collective choice Demographics: Years teaching, attitude toward SEL	Phenomenological	DV: Researcher created interview IV: Interactive presentation of student and staff data, and curricular options	Bracketing, member checks, same interview questions for all participants	DV: Researcher created interview IV: Interactive presentation of student and staff data, and curricular options	Secondary teachers at Hinckley-Finlayson High School Sample size: four teachers, one from each demographic 1. 1-5 years teaching, undecided about SEL 2. 10 or more years teaching, undecided about SEL 3. 1-5 years

teaching,
agree about
SEL
4. 10 or
more years
teaching,
agree about
SEL

Procedures

First, the researcher provided a presentation to the full staff during professional development. The presentation attempted to establish a need for universal SEL instruction, using available school-wide behavior data and sharing a variety of anonymous teacher perspectives provided in the Curriculum Director's survey. In addition, new curricular options were presented for staff to review and comment on, with the goal of collaboratively choosing a new curriculum for the coming school year. Curriculum specific information included the features of the curriculum, options for differentiation, training opportunities before and during implementation, and time for asking questions.

Next, the researcher allowed three weeks for sampling new curriculum options during the regular advisory period. This allowed for reflection by all staff on curricular options. During this time, the researcher invited the research participants for in-depth questioning about their experiences with the collaborative process, the curriculum options, and their current viewpoints. Participants were invited based on criteria defined in the Sampling section. Upon agreement to participate, the researcher provided informed consent. During the interview, the researcher asked open-ended questions according to the script (Appendix C).

Ethical Considerations

Participants were invited to join the study based on their self-reported level of agreement that universal SEL curriculum is beneficial and their level of agreement that such curriculum improved

academic outcomes for students. All participants were free to decline participation. Furthermore, participants were allowed to answer with any level of disclosure they were comfortable with. They were informed that their identity would remain anonymous when reporting research results, and that no communication with administration would take place, in order to encourage full disclosure.

Conclusions

High quality universal social-emotional learning leads to dramatic improvements in student outcomes (Durlak and DuPre, 2008; Belfield et al., 2015). In the rural secondary school where this research was performed there is currently low-quality universal SEL curriculum implementation. Due to this, students are not seeing increases in outcomes that are so important. The research conducted here attempted to change that by facilitating high quality pre-implementation practices in order to improve teacher readiness to implement universal SEL curriculum with fidelity. The next chapter describes the results found after establishing a need, listening to teacher voices, addressing teacher concerns, ensuring a good fit with the current school culture, planning for adequate training, and providing the basis for peer and administrative support.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The purpose of this action research was to improve fidelity of implementation of universal social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum by using best practices in initial implementation. The research school is a rural 7-12 grade school where current universal SEL instruction is not implemented with fidelity. In order to see the social-emotional, academic and long-term gains that research demonstrates are possible (Durlak et al., 2011; Belfield et al., 2015), universal SEL instruction must be implemented well. In order to facilitate improvements in fidelity, the researcher determined that establishing a need for SEL instruction, giving teachers a voice in the process, providing peer support, and ensuring a good fit within the current school structures were critical pieces to ensure high-quality implementation of a new curriculum (Durlak and DuPre, 2008). The research was designed to enact these factors within the research school.

Data Collection

Data for this phenomenological study was collected via individual interviews with four participants. After the researcher provided professional development that included student behavior data, anonymous samples of teacher perspectives, and new universal SEL curriculum options, participants were chosen based on the criteria of how long they have been teaching and their perspective on the importance of universal social-emotional instruction. Participants were provided informed consent in writing and individual interviews were held privately. Interview responses were recorded and transcribed to determine themes in responses.

Results

RQ: When best-practice is used in beginning implementation, how does that affect teacher readiness to implement a universal SEL curriculum with fidelity at the current 7-12 grade secondary school?

Four themes emerged from the data collected via participant interviews. First, the presentation provided in professional development showing student behavior data, teacher perspectives of social-emotional learning, and new curricular options did not significantly increase teacher readiness to implement universal SEL curriculum with fidelity. However, teacher voice in the curriculum choice process and being able to sample new curriculum before making a choice did reflect an improvement of teacher readiness to implement curriculum with fidelity. In addition, a fourth theme emerged through participants being allowed to expand on their thinking, which was that having an advisory group that remained constant throughout students' entire junior and senior high school careers would improve implementation of SEL instruction and impact.

The researcher attempted to establish a need for universal SEL instruction by providing student-centered data about behavior incidents in school, fellow teacher comments regarding the purpose and implementation of universal SEL instruction and new curricular options to replace the current curriculum in place. Results determined that teachers value the idea of social-emotional instruction, and even after seeing student behavior data and peer perspectives, their attitudes did not change. All four participants responded that "no," participating in the professional development did not increase their readiness to implement universal SEL instruction. One participant stated, "Historically I think it's something I've realized that we've probably always needed, and the presentation helped give us more options to look at," (Teacher 1). Another participant stated, "No, I always kinda wanted to do [universal SEL]. It was just, it kind of reinforced it," (Teacher 4).

Teacher voice in curriculum choice was addressed by the researcher through sharing options in professional development and then seeking feedback during and after the presentation. All four participants expressed that having the opportunity to make their voice heard increased their readiness to implement instruction with fidelity in the future. Teacher 1 stated,

"I think it's important if you want to have a say, that you have that option. If you feel strongly about it and if you're not given that option, we're doing this and I don't have a choice, or any say,

or any input. So, I feel like everybody has the option to give input if they feel strongly about it, which I think is an important thing if you're going to get people to buy in collaboratively to work on a program like that. They may not always agree with everything, as we're always going to disagree with some things. But rather than administration just saying 'Here's what you're going to do,' now we're looking at an approach of 'Let's try some things and see what works best for us.' That's going to be a more positive experience for everyone. We can say, 'This works for us, or let's try something different.'"

Similarly, teacher 2 stated,

“Without a voice in the room that understands what people are going through on the front lines, there's no collaboration at all. So, that's the tether between administration and the people that are actually teaching the stuff. If there's no collaboration, if there's no talking, then it's just orders. It's just a top-down edict that says, 'you're going to do this.' If a person that's doing it says, 'Hey I can't do this,' that's a problem, so it's very important to have that. I don't know that it helps me be ready, maybe a better word is general acceptance. To increase the willingness, or the readiness, to say, 'Hey we're trying this, this is not coming from the very top down, this is almost more of a, we're trying to make it more of a home-grown solution' which would lead to more buy in.”

Teacher 3 expressed that she did not feel strongly one way or the other, but “If I wanted it [a voice], yes.”

The third theme that emerged was trying curricular options during the time normally devoted to the current curriculum helped improve teacher readiness. It demonstrated the pros and cons of the choices, helped establish flexibility and differentiation, and developed a comfort level. Teacher 1 stated, “The topic makes sense,” and “That's heading in the right direction of things that our kids really need.” He also was not supportive of a second curriculum choice because it was too large. He stated,

“[Here’s] another thing that we’re going to do training on, and we’re going to get caught up in it, and then next year we’re going to change again. You’re always going to have staff, including myself, I’ve been here for 24 years, and we’ve gone through five, six, seven different things.”

He was able to express that a large-scale system change was not something he was interested in and felt many colleagues would feel the same. Teacher 2 expressed similar thoughts when he said, “The giant branching thing, I don’t know.” But when referencing a smaller-scale curriculum he said,

“It was some comparison, and we did the entire thing! And they didn’t realize that we did the entire thing. Those *Would You Rather* [questions], those kids loved it, and they just didn’t even realize that we were just actively engaging.”

Teacher 3 expressed that one curriculum option was preferred because it was broken up well and was more flexible to the students in her class, “... because as you talk and ask a question, you can get involvement.” She also felt that the more comprehensive curriculum would be beneficial but was concerned about differentiation. She went on to say, “I think that’s why a lot of these programs don’t work, because it’s not tailored to individual students.” Finally, teacher 4 shared a similar viewpoint,

“The full comprehensive [curriculum] with the training, I love that idea, but I also realize there are some teachers within the district that wouldn’t fully engage with it. And I know that there’s kind of a lot of turnaround in the district, so it would make it kind of not feasible to do that, because we might not have the same teachers in the fall. So, I thought, based off that, [the smaller curriculum] would be more feasible for our district.”

Finally, a fourth theme emerged. All four participants spoke of their own free will about redesigning how the advisory period is executed. Currently within the research school, advisory happens at the end of the second period. Therefore, whatever students happen to be assigned to that class period are also in the teacher’s advisory. Participants expressed that if advisory was grouped according to grade level and SEL need, and had smaller class sizes, it would be more effective. Furthermore, they shared the

view that if the same advisory groups were retained with the same teacher year after year, relationships could be established which would allow deeper social-emotional learning. Teacher 1 stated,

“I think they just become more comfortable with you then. I don’t know if that’s a route we’re going to go, and I know some people are leery, ‘What if I get stuck with so-and-so for five, six years?’ Well, we all have different kids we’re going to have challenges with, but I think kids maybe become more open to you if you have them consistently, rather than, hey, I see you for 45 minutes a day and boom, you’re out.”

Teacher 2 stated,

“I think if we shellacked advisory as a whole and came up with a new concept of how it is done, things would be better. I think that everyone should get a group of kids, everyone should keep that group of kids, they should have them throughout their entire high school career, so that every child has a home base, and it’s not a home base of the day, or of the year, or whatever. And I think that kids would connect with that, they would respond with that, over the course of five-ish years, if you had a kid that you struggled with, that you would have to learn, not just as a teacher but as a student, hey, I’m going to be in this person’s class for five years, we better figure this out. Every school day, that would teach more social and emotional skills than, hey show up, we’re going to talk about your organizational system. And it’s like a family, there’s going to be good times, there’s going to be bad times, and I’m going to be here.”

Teacher 3 stated,

“I think having students year after year is a really good idea. Teachers kinda do this already in their classes naturally, just by getting to know their students, and having those conversations with students. If you have students [you know well] you know you can bring up tough topics.”

Teacher 4 stated,

“Trying to keep the same group of students all the way through from seven through twelve, I think that [is] a great idea. Because I think it’s kind of a home base for students and I know that usually you want to start building that independence but based on my observation of what seventh and tenth graders say, I know that a lot of them don’t have good home lives. So, I think that having the home base within the school and having that teacher that looks out for them all the way through their experience here, would be really beneficial for a lot of students. So, that is one thing that I would like to kind of try to push for a little bit more. Also, it’s a really good lesson to teach kids too, even if you don’t like each other you have to figure it out, you’re going to be in this for a long time, and that’s social-emotional learning right there in itself, even if it’s kind of hidden.”

The following table shows the themes and most pertinent responses that emerged after analyzing participant interview data:

Table 4.1

Research Question Themes and Responses

Theme	Teacher	Comments
Presentation did not increase sense of need	1	“Historically I think it’s something I’ve realized that we’ve probably always needed, and the presentation helped give us more options to look at”
	4	“No, I always kinda wanted to do [universal SEL]. It was just, it kind of reinforced it.”
Having voice in process improved readiness	1	“I feel like everybody has the option to give input if they feel strongly about it, which I think is an important thing if you’re going to get people to buy in collaboratively to work on a program like that.”
	2	“To increase the willingness, or the readiness, to say, 'Hey we’re trying this, this is not coming from the very top down, this is almost more of a, we’re trying to make it more of a home-grown solution' which would lead to more buy in.”
	4	“I will be more knowledgeable in what we’re doing, and we’ll have more transparency across the board. Knowing I’m implementing the same

thing. We are all on the same page, it will make the implementation more smooth for students and staff, I think.”

Trying curricula improved readiness	1	“The topic makes sense.” “That’s heading in the right direction of things that our kids really need.”
	3	“With this one, there’s a question you ask, you go through it, you ask another question. So it’s broken up better. It’s more flexible, the structure of it I would say, because as you talk and ask a question, you can get involvement.”
	4	“The full comprehensive [curriculum] with the training, I love that idea, but I also realize there are some teachers within the district that wouldn’t fully engage with it. And I know that there’s kind of a lot of turnaround in the district, so it would make it kind of not feasible to do that, because we might not have the same teachers in the fall. So, I thought, based off that, [the smaller curriculum] would be more feasible for our district.”
Redesigning advisory will improve readiness	1	“We all have different kids we’re going to have challenges with, but I think kids maybe become more open to you if you have them consistently, rather than, hey, I see you for 45 minutes a day and boom, you’re out.”
	2	“I think if we shellacked advisory as a whole and came up with a new concept of how it is done, things would be better. I think that everyone should get a group of kids, everyone should keep that group of kids, they should have them throughout their entire high school career, so that every child has a home base, and it’s not a home base of the day, or of the year, or whatever.” “Every school day, that would teach more social and emotional skills than, hey show up, we’re going to talk about your organizational system.
	3	“I think having students year after year is a really good idea. If you have students [you know well] you know you can bring up tough topics.”
	4	“Trying to keep the same group of students all the way through from seven through twelve, I think that [is] a great idea. It’s kind of a home-base for students. I know that a lot of them don’t have good home lives. Also, it’s a really good lesson to teach kids too, even if you don’t like each other you have to figure it out, you’re going to be in this for a long time, and that’s social-emotional learning right there in itself, even if it’s kind of hidden.”

Data Analysis

Overall, the results of the interviews were as expected by the researcher, based on the literature review. The researcher attempted to establish need, provide administrative and peer support, and provide voice to teachers to ensure self-efficacy and a good fit for the school, as part of best practices when implementing new curriculum to improve fidelity (Durlak and DuPre, 2008).

The first theme that emerged was that the presentation of student behavior data and peer perspectives regarding social-emotional learning did not improve teachers' sense of need for universal SEL instruction. This was not entirely surprising to the researcher; however, she had hoped that teachers would be more invested in implementing curriculum with fidelity given data. One problem faced by the researcher in this area was the lack of available student data regarding current levels of social-emotional skills. This limitation was known to the researcher after conducting the literature review (Durlak, 2015).

The second theme that emerged was having voice in the process improved teacher readiness, which was an expected result by the researcher. Several references were made by participants that being able to participate in the decision-making process made it easier for them to be willing to use a new curriculum. The term "buy in" came up several times. This is a common language for a teacher's readiness to engage with an initiative or curriculum. Implementing a process to hear feedback was shown in the literature to have a positive impact (Eichert, 2019), and the researcher was able to enact this with interactive professional development and ongoing requests for communication.

The third emergent theme was that sampling curriculum improved teachers' ability to provide actionable feedback. While this was not part of any specific literature-based information, the researcher sought to provide as many opportunities for involvement in the curriculum choice process as possible for teachers. Having the ability to try new options made teachers feel like they were making an informed contribution. Teachers were able to see how different curricula operated and how students reacted. When students demonstrated greater engagement with one curriculum, teachers demonstrated commitment for

continuing to implement it. For example, Teacher 3 clearly demonstrated that one curricular choice was better than another, and if he had not had the chance to try them, he would not have been able to form that opinion. In addition, when teachers felt that the lessons were directly addressing the needs of students, they felt more confident that it was a good curriculum. Being able to sample the curricular options helped teachers form a more complex opinion of the options, improving their confidence and readiness to implement a new curriculum in the coming school year.

Finally, the fourth emergent theme was a surprise to the researcher. Because teachers had an opportunity to give their thoughts freely if they chose to, many expressed that redesigning how the advisory period is executed would improve social-emotional learning even more than simply choosing a better curriculum. The researcher did not have specific examples of these ideas from the literature, but the sense of commitment and energy from the participants on this issue was clearly strong. It also led the researcher to conclude that if these ideas were enacted next year, it would improve both fidelity of curriculum implementation and the school climate overall. This turned out to be an important piece of the picture when trying to get what the literature called a good fit for the school (Durlak and DuPre, 2008).

Regarding phenomenological research in general, and using this interview in particular, the researcher did discover that the planned interview questions were not as effective as she had hoped. When using this type of research method in the future, the researcher can learn from this experience to make questions more general and have fewer of them. Seven questions were too specific; they became redundant and seemed too long for the participants. This would allow more opportunity for participants to share their opinions and be less overwhelming for the participants. Furthermore, the research unfolded on a different timeline than originally planned, leading to teachers having the opportunity to try curricular options prior to interviews. Having fewer, more general questions would have enabled more flexibility for the researcher and the interview questions would have made more sense to the participants.

Conclusions

In conclusion, allowing for teacher voice in the curriculum choice process dramatically improved teacher readiness to implement universal SEL instruction with fidelity. While the presentation provided by the researcher failed to improve the teachers' sense of need for providing universal SEL instruction, having the opportunity to view and comment on new curricular options made a significant impact. In addition, having the interview process allowed for a new theme to emerge that otherwise would not have. By providing this process, teacher voices were heard and teacher readiness to provide universal SEL in a reimagined "advisory" in the coming school year is likely to be met with high fidelity. As research shows, providing instruction with fidelity, the impact of universal SEL instruction in the research school is likely to be improved going forward as a result of this research (Durlak and DuPre, 2008; Belfield et al., 2015).

Chapter 5

Implications for Practice

The purpose of this study was to see if utilizing best practices in beginning implementation of a new universal social-emotional learning curriculum would improve teacher readiness to provide future instruction with fidelity. Best practices include establishing need, giving teachers a voice in the process, providing administrative and peer support, and ensuring a good fit for the school. The researcher attempted to provide these practices through interactive professional development and follow-up opportunities for teachers to provide input. The interviews conducted by the researcher showed that most of the professional development provided did improve teacher readiness to implement future SEL curriculum with fidelity.

Action Plan

I am pleased by the results of my study. I was able to confirm in real time how the literature around best practices in implementing curriculum change was accurate. While establishing stronger need was not accomplished in the way I attempted to do so, the process has still helped teachers within my school be more ready to implement a new curriculum with fidelity. The impact of a peer providing research-based options established confidence in the teaching staff that they had support, rather than a top-down approach being given to them as orders from administration (Durlak and DuPre, 2008). The ability to try new curricula and give feedback gave anyone who wished to have a voice in the process a means to do so (Eichert, 2019). Going forward, the curriculum choice process is not yet complete. I plan to continue gaining feedback and the staff will work collaboratively to choose next year's curriculum. Furthermore, based on the strong feedback, reimagining advisory is important. I will be part of the SEL team that plans the future of advisory and the implementation of SEL instruction. I can use this feedback to help our team shape an advisory that matches the culture of our school better. In addition, I can continue to look for data collection tools that will help the SEL team differentiate by need. Finally, it is

clear from the literature that ongoing feedback and training next year will be critical (Durlak and DuPre, 2008). It is my plan to continue working with the new SEL team to ensure we have opportunities to implement these practices.

By doing this research and enacting the plans I've made based on the results, students will be impacted by having high-quality universal SEL instruction. Over time, research suggests that students will improve their emotional coping skills (Dulak et al., 2011), improve their academic skills (Durlak et al., 2011), and be more likely to see greater life outcomes (Belfield et al., 2015). Given the significant level of dysregulation seen in students nationwide as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, it is the hope that improved SEL instruction in the near-term will improve student regulation, reducing behavior issues that currently are a significant disruption to learning. Furthermore, having a unified and ongoing vision for and implementation of universal SEL instruction is expected to improve school climate (Durlak et al., 2015). Considering the changes we want to make to advisory, specifically keeping students and staff together for the long term, developing stronger, longer-lasting relationships is likely to make these gains possible more quickly. We will know we are successful when we see behavior incidents go down, receive feedback from students, teachers, support staff, administration and families that they are happier and more engaged in school, and see academic data improve.

Finally, going forward in my career at large, I plan to keep these important experiences in mind whenever I am part of a leadership team. Enacting literature-based practices in any future endeavor will ensure the greatest possibility for success.

Plan for Sharing

I plan to share the results of my study with my colleagues and my administrator. I want to thank them for their involvement in this process and encourage continuing collaboration. The major points I will share are the literature-based elements I was using in the process and validate for them that their involvement has matched other study results. I also want to express the importance of an ongoing

feedback process I plan to be a part of next year and ask people to be involved with the future SEL planning team in any capacity they are able, to ensure that the process continues to be fruitful for teachers and students.

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APPENDIX A**Institutional Review Board Approval Letter****Institutional Review Board**

DATE: January 27, 2022

TO: Kristen Carlson, Principal Investigator

Kristie Ronchetti, Co-investigator

FROM: Dr. Robert Nava, Chair

Minnesota State University Moorhead IRB

ACTION: APPROVED

PROJECT TITLE: [1864720-1] Teacher Readiness to Implement Universal Social Emotional Instruction in a Rural 7-12 Grade School

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

APPROVAL DATE: January 27, 2022

EXPIRATION DATE:

REVIEW TYPE: Exempt Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Minnesota State University Moorhead IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Exempt Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to the Minnesota State University Moorhead IRB. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to the Minnesota State University Moorhead IRB.

This project has been determined to be a project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of .

- 1 - Generated on IRBNet

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact the [Minnesota State University Moorhead IRB](#). Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been issued in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Minnesota State University Moorhead's records.

APPENDIX B**Authorization to Conduct Study**

Superintendent
Robert Prater
320-384-6277

HFHS Principal
Brian Masterson
320-384-6132

HE S/FE S Principal
Bonnie Scullard
320-384-6443/320-233-7611

Activities/Athletic Director
Mandy Hartl



**Hinckley-Finlayson
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**Head of Maintenance and
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Joe France
320-384-6277
Cell: 320-279-2413

**Transportation
Supervisor**
Sarah Beckrich
320-384-0434

Food Service Supervisor
Sarah Severson
320-384-6277

January 18, 2022

To Whom it May Concern:

This letter is to grant permission to Kristie Ronchetti to perform action research at Hinckley-Finlayson High School during the 2021-22 academic year. I understand that this study has no risk to participants nor the district. I also understand that all then information gathered will be kept confidential and used only for the purposes of this study.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Masterson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Brian Masterson

Principal, Hinckley-Finlayson High School

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions

The objective of this research is to improve teacher readiness to implement universal social-emotional instruction. This is a complex endeavor. Please be completely honest. All information gained here is kept confidential and is only used to improve how universal SEL is implemented in our school to be most effective for both teachers and students. You can choose not to answer any question you feel uncomfortable with. This interview will remain confidential as your name will not be included in the study. Please state your name and acknowledge that you are being recorded.

1. In what ways did the curriculum presentation increase your understanding of the need for universal SEL in our school, if at all?
2. In what ways did having a collaborative voice in the curriculum choice process improve your readiness to implement universal SEL curriculum next year, if at all?
3. How much more ready do you feel today to implement a universal social emotional curriculum than you did in November when we were surveyed during PLC, if at all?
4. Are any of these choices worse than *Move This World*, and why?
5. Are any of these choices better than *Move This World*, and why?
6. What curriculum did you like best, and why?
7. Would being able to try lessons in advisory this year from all choices improve your confidence in a specific choice?